Title: The Witness, January to December, 1999

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the Witney

Volume 82 • Numbers 1-2 • Jan./Feb. 1999



Community food security

The earth's song

AS SOMEONE WHO IS CURRENTLY contemplating a mid-life career change to the environmental field, I really enjoyed the ecologically oriented October issue. I also think that Marianne Arbogast's excellent profile of Anne Cox demonstrates that while the institutional church may serve Episcopalians well on many levels, there still can be satisfying and life-enhancing alternatives to it.

> Paul Winters Framingham, MA



PLEASE REMOVE OUR SUBSCRIPTION in the name of the former rector of this parish. Reason, if one is needed: *The Witness* has gone off the rails, particularly in two instances, the advert for erospirit, a peddler of

Classifieds

Episcopal Peace Fellowship

letter

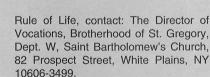
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Order of Jonathan Daniels

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The Witness is seeking a full-time development/marketing director. CFRE preferred. Salary DOE. Send cover letter/ resume/salary history to J. Baker, 13009 230th Ave. SE, Issaquah, WA 98027.

Classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication. smut; and the article about the Wiccan priestess making a neo-pagan brew. I do not wish to be exposed to yet another issue.

> Paul E. Cosby Columbus, GA

I ORIGINALLY ASKED for the sample copy because I thought my partner, who is more religious-minded than I, would like it. Strangely enough, it is I, the atheist, who has read it cover to cover. The issue where you interviewed the witch and people with other ideas was great! I really love nature and have always said that gardening was my religion. How neat to see so many different ideas reflected in your magazine! I just got your subscription letter and would really like to sign up. My partner and I both have disabilities, though, and we are on a very tight income. Is it possible to have a free or lowcharge subscription sent?

> Kelly Sterns Albuquerque, NM

[Ed. note: Yes. Low-income subscriptions cost \$15.]

E-mail Bible study

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU for the wonderful ministry you have lifted up with your magazine! It has enriched my understanding of my own spiritual journey, and stretched me to search for what Christ calls me to be in community with others. We have also begun an e-mail Bible study for our college students, using your magazine and the corresponding study guides as a starting point. What started with a group of 12 has now grown to 35 students spread out across the country. May God bless this ministry and its staff and may God's grace continue to be revealed to us through your work.

> Sam McDonald Chagrin Falls, OH

Witness praise

THANKS SO MUCH FOR *THE WITNESS*. I find I go back to some articles for continued reflection — especially those on subjects I didn't want to think about!

Anne Shaw Warrenton, VA

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EVER SINCE CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS folded in 1993 — I had been reading it for more than 25 years — I had been looking for a replacement. Your magazine has been the only one I've found that came near. Since I am a United Methodist I am not completely familiar with the Episcopal Church, but that hasn't made the magazine less useful to me. Thank you for being there.

Eliza Brunson Mobile, AL

Sanctions and hypocrisy

THE U.S. JUST RECALLED the bombers in mid-flight again from going eyeball to eyeball with Saddam Hussein. This seems to be a continuation of our semi-annual crisis with Iraq. The U.S. has effectively pressured the United Nations to maintain sanctions on Iraq, even after Iraq agreed to allow inspections last year. We have literally insisted that every conceivable building in Iraq be inspected before a lifting of the sanctions is approved. Frustrated with the delays and aware of the consequences of the sanctions on Iraq's population, Iraq's ambassador to the U.N. stated, "They [U.S.] will not kill in a military strike more than they are killing with sanctions every day."

Our policy on Iraq is taking a heavy toll on the lives of Iraq's citizens. According to UNICEF, 150 children are dying daily from malnutrition and illnesses, and since the war ended over one-half million children under the age of five have died. It seems that we care more for our oil interests in the Gulf than we care for the lives of a whole generation of Iraq's children.

The U.S. claims that we are making the Gulf region safe from Hussein's madness by limiting his ability to build and use weapons of mass destruction. Yet it was the U.S. and European countries that sold Iraq the weapons of mass destruction in the first place. In fact, if Iraq were to fire a biological weapon, the missile would probably be from Russia, upgraded by German technology and loaded with a U.S.-supplied bacteria strain. What hypocrisy! The U.S. has the largest stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in the world. We are the only ones to have used nuclear weapons on civilian populations and yet we justify the annihilation of a generation of



children by claiming we want to stop the potential use of weapons of mass destruction.

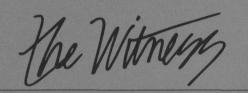
That many American people have learned to hate Saddam Hussein and seem willing to watch further violence rain down on Iraq's people attests to the degree of demonization the government, through our national media, has so effectively generated against Hussein. He is likened to Hitler and deemed a crazed killer using the bodies of his people to protect himself, and some of us are willing to accept a half million deaths as justifiable if it will hasten Hussein's downfall. A half million dead children is not an acceptable cost to overthrow any government!

CIA covert action in the Gulf continues to wage a war of economic sanctions and dirty tricks. Internal and external plots to overthrow Hussein are part of our continuing war against Iraq. Bundestag Presseb in Germany reported last summer that the screwworm epidemic in Iraq, which is devastating Iraq's livestock populations, broke out in 12 of Iraq's 18 provinces, starting in the no-fly zone controlled by the U.S. The sanctions against Iraq include the chemical counter-agents necessary to control the screwworm. Would a CIA that was aware that the Contras were shipping cocaine into U.S. cities deliberately seed screwworm flies into Iraq, destroying their livestock population to undermine Hussein? We should not have to question our government's moral position, but unfortunately that is no longer the case in America.

Peter Phillips

Rohnert Park, CA

[Phillips is director of Project Censored at Sonoma State University.]



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Access to good, non-emergency food is the organizing principle of a new coalition.

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Five different projects demonstrate the range of food security programs.

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School meal programs have become a food security battleground.

Back cover: Still life with peaches, 50A.D., Museo Nazionale Naples/ Scala

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The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, The Witness has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. The Witness' roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. The Witness is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

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- SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$25 per year, \$3 per copy. Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Third Class mail does not forward.

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Community food security: just food

by Anne E. Cox

...They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat.

— Isaiah 65:21-22a

A ta contributing editors' meeting about a year ago, we surfaced "food" as a topic *The Witness* would do well to cover. We laughed about filling the pages of the magazine with favorite recipes for church potlucks, complete with tuna hot dish, or how to make a politically correct stew. But when we began to unpack the topic, it was clearly not light and frivolous. We could look at the politics of food, eating disorders, dietary laws, global anti-hunger work, what it means to eat seasonally and locally, labor issues, agribusiness, the food service industry.

Clearly, food is a juicy topic: What we did not know at that meeting last February is that a whole movement is currently coalescing around the topic of food, that may well revitalize Left politics. The Community Food Security Coalition is a young coalition — four years old, with many of its members in their 20s and 30s — with the simple mission of assuring a sustainable supply of healthy food. But this simple mission gets into every single justice issue there can be as one begins to unpack what a sustainable supply of healthy food is.

Start with the fact that we all need food

to live, and it's clear that food is not a topic just about poverty — as much antihunger work is — but one that cuts across economic divisions. Inside of this is the question of access to food. How "food secure" are we?

Do we have a reliable, non-emergency supply of food? From here we move to the question of the basic food groups we

Food is an organizing topic that can bring together environmental, anti-hunger, community economic development, health, agriculture concerns basically everyone who has begun to smell a rat in the way things are working.

should have to be healthy and vigorous. Are our children, in particular, receiving proper nourishment? Are we eating whole foods or highly processed, high-fat, highsalt foods?

Inside the issue of nutrition is the question of what went into the production of the food. Is the food organic? Or is it grown with the benefit of chemicals or genetic engineering and how is it processed?

Follow the question of how the food we eat is produced and we get to the overall environmental impact of various agricultural practices — organic vrs. "conventional" agriculture, small low-impact farms vs. large, "efficient" factory farms. And embedded in this is the economic impact of farming practices: When small hog farmers are put out of business by large agribusinesses that can underprice their product, whole communities and cultures are disrupted.

And here's where the conversation about food loops back on itself: Are we ruining the environment and losing diversified agricultural knowledge so that eventually we will not be able to produce food at all? Food is an organizing topic that can bring together environmental, anti-hunger, community economic development, health, agriculture concerns — basically everyone who has begun to smell a rat in the way things are working. And it's clearly something in which we all have a stake.

Food security is embedded in the Christian tradition, starting with the creation stories in Genesis in which we are given "every green plant for food" (Gen. 1:30) in affirmation that there is an abundance of what we need to survive. We hold onto the vision of new heavens and new earth at the end of Isaiah that includes food for all, not exploited laborers producing food for others while they starve themselves. And we dwell in the truth of Emmaus that we most know the risen Christ when we bless, break and eat bread at table together.

Perhaps community food security is the recipe many have been looking for to mobilize for concrete changes in the economic and environmental ways we operate in this country.

editor's note

Anne E. Cox is a contributing editor to *The Witness* and lives in Tenants Harbor, Me.

Sacred meals, everyday meals

by Peter Mann

A t the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, the sacred ritual of Sunday eucharist unfolds in the usual way. Ministers process in, songs and readings are delivered, bread and wine prepared, and the aromas from candles and incense fill the great space. Unexpectedly, other smells intrude, from vegetable stew or roast lamb wafting up from the soup kitchen downstairs where a meal is being prepared for hundreds of New York's homeless and working poor.

The ministry of Jesus is shaped by meals. As companion at table, his dealings with people liberate them and bring joy: It is impossible to fast in his presence (Mark 2:18-22). As host at the miraculous meals of multiplication of loaves and fishes, his presence reveals the sheer abundance of God's blessings. Jesus is revealed as bread of life, the true vine, life-giving water. He is the host who "takes and blesses" the food, and the servant who "breaks and gives" it to those at table (Mark 6:41, 14:22).

Thus, the reign of God comes to us in the form of food and drink, as sacred meals. Yet it is easy to miss the transforming power of these meals in the Gospel stories and, potentially, in our own lives. As open table fellowship, not based on spiritual or political hierarchy, prestige or power, they represented a radical form of sharing in which God's outflowing justice and reconciliation were being revealed. Hence, Jesus' table fellowship was rightly perceived as undermining political power and religious law. They led to a Last Supper in which Christ's death was made present in the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup.

It has always been difficult to retain this transformative power of the eucharist as a sacred meal, one which looks back to

One way to rediscover the power of the eucharist is to see it globally and locally, to situate it again within our food system.

these original meals, makes present the Lord's Supper, and looks forward to the future messianic banquet. Already inequality had entered into the early Christian community at Corinth. The well-off had enough to eat; the poor went hungry. The ritual passing of the cup and breaking of the bread became separated from the real meal. The social and spiritual transformation inherent in the sacred meal its power to heal and bring together were endangered (1Cor. 11:17-34).

One way to rediscover the power of the eucharist as sacred meal is to see it globally and locally, to situate it again within our food system. Where is our food coming from? Who controls the food system? Who is growing the food we eat? How safe, healthful and nourishing is our food? It is a corporate, marketdriven food system which produces abundant food and at the same time great scarcity. More than 800 million people in the world go hungry, and hunger is growing even in the rich metropolis of New York City, where soup kitchens and food pantries have increased from a handful in 1981 to more than 1100 today. The inequality between haves and have-nots,

between the well-fed and overfed and the malnourished, intensifies.

Only as we become aware of our food system can the transformative power of sacred meals come into play. Think about the emergency food system, exemplified in the soup kitchen at St. John the Divine. The churches are deeply involved in feeding the hungry and see it as following Christ (Mt. 25:35) and living out the meaning of the eucharist. They share not just food, but also caring and respect. Nevertheless, emergency feeding in soup kitchens and food pantries is ultimately about charity, not justice. However necessary in our present crisis, it does not reach the root causes of hunger and poverty and may even leave these structural causes more intact as governments and corporations retreat from their responsibilities. The sacred meal is not only about giving charity, but building justice, which means changing radically a food system which creates the need for emergency feeding.

Finally, sacred meals have become separated from our family meals. Fast food has spread into the lives of our kids; meals have become deritualized and have lost their socializing power; people eat alone in front of a television. The sharing and empathy associated with sacred meals — think of the eucharist or the Passover seder — is not shaping our everyday meals.

All of these crises — in our global food system, our emergency feeding network, our family meals — are connected. Yet there are also many initiatives springing up to restore the local and global food systems around fresh, nutritious food in all its beauty and diversity — farmers' markets and green markets, community gardens, community supported agriculture, gardening, seed sharing, sustainable agriculture movements around the world building the food security of people rather than corporate profit.

Peter Mann is international coordinator for WHY (World Hunger Year), <pmann@igc.apc.org>.

We raise de wheat

We raise de wheat, Dey gib us de corn; We bake de bread, Dey gib us de cruss; We sif de meal, Dey gib us de huss; We peel de meat, Dey gib us de skin And dat's de way Dey takes us in.

> African-American folk secular from the slavery era.



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Consolidated cornucopia: how corporate food is ploughing small farmers into the ground

by Christopher D. Cook

There's a tornado wreaking havoc across America's farm lands, cutting a destructive swath far wider than any global warming- propelled tropical storm. The eye of this tempest, which has put hundreds of thousands of small farmers out of business or on the poverty line, is the corporate boardroom. Here, executives grind up farms to feed voracious shareholders, and tighten their grip on an ever consolidating food chain.

It's not a conspiracy against small farmers, just monopoly capitalism at work: sprawling agri-food corporations diversifying their portfolios, specializing their holdings, and expanding their empires of ownership and control. A decade of merger mania has resulted in what the USDA calls an "historically high" concentration of ownership throughout agriculture. And global food firms are weaving ever more seamless webs of vertical integration, "from seedlings to supermarkets," as agribusiness expert Al Krebs puts it. Meanwhile tens of thousands of small farms and ranches are being plowed under each year (half a million over the past 15 years), turning rural communities into ghost towns.

Family farms are still a mainstay throughout much of rural America, but their future is bleak and many are already teetering on the precipice of poverty. Farm income is so tenuous that, according to Krebs, if growers relied entirely on farm earnings, "over 80 percent of the farmers in this country would be below the poverty line." An estimated 50,000 farms go bellyup each year due to bankruptcy.

Those farmers who are sticking it out are getting pummeled by a hailstorm of distressing data. Pork and wheat prices are so low that farmers are taking massive losses and racking up more debt. According to the Farmers Home Administration, farmers' bad debt shot up 20 percent in just one quarter of 1998. Farm debt has risen for six straight years, according to the USDA, and is now at its highest level since 1985. A recent Federal Reserve Bank study shows a new drought in farm credit is setting in. The Bank expected total farm income to plummet 15 percent by the end of last year.

Farm income is so tenuous that if growers relied entirely on farm earnings, over 80 percent of the farmers in this country would be below the poverty line.

Everything taken together, "it is a farm crisis of 1980s proportions," says John Crabtree, of the Center for Rural Affairs based in Walt Hill, Nebraska.

The main reason for today's farm crisis is plummeting prices—not for food, but for crops. Since 1980, farmers' share of consumer spending on food has shriveled from 37 cents per consumer dollar to 23 cents, according to the 1998 USDA National Commission on Small Farms.

Mark Ritchie, director of the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, has seen the crop data and heard farmers' laments: "Prices are so low that in some states around 20 percent of the farmers won't get financing next year to farm. The price they are receiving is below the cost of production, and so nothing can be done. Farmers use terms like the coming Holocaust in the countryside."

The price plunge is especially evident in livestock and grains, sectors experiencing rapid consolidation. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, hog prices took a severe nosedive in 1997-1998, falling by 35 percent to their lowest in 27 years; meanwhile soybeans were selling for 24 percent less, wheat prices shrunk 21 percent, and corn by 16 percent. Wheat farmers are losing almost \$2 per bushel: While it costs more than \$5 to produce a bushel of wheat, farmers are getting under \$3. Says Krebs: "The only thing left to do is borrow."

This flurry of price troubles coincided with sharp declines in government farm supports, as the 1995 farm bill's phase-out of subsidies kicked in; the USDA projected a 17 percent drop in government payments to farmers in 1998. As their production rose, farmers' net income was expected to shrink by 8 percent. Amid election season, Congress rushed \$6 billion to farmers. But, in keeping with farm-subsidy tradition, the bulk of the cash went to "the big guys" who produced the most, says Crabtree. "The people driving that decision don't have a concern about whether we have family farmers raising our grain or whether we have corporations doing it."

"Policy choices" aid consolidation Much of the current farm crisis can be traced to government policy and the machinations of the marketplace. Agricultural corporations are simultaneously buying out their competitors and pricing out farmers.

Christopher D. Cook is a freelance investigative journalist based in San Francisco, <cdcook@igc.apc.org>.

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While small farms (those with under \$250,000 in sales) comprise 94 percent of the nation's farms, they take in just 41 percent of all farm revenue. The USDA's 1998 commission on small farms found that "ownership and control over agricultural assets is increasingly concentrated." As a result, "farmers have little to no control over setting the price for their products."

Nowhere is this trend more dramatic than in meat packing, where a 1996 USDA commission on consolidation found that four firms "account for over 80 percent of all cattle slaughtered," while just three firms control 70-75 percent of the lamb market. Monopolistic conditions throughout agriculture, the commission

said, are due in large part to "the merger movement of the past decade."

While the consolidation commission touted production and consumer price "efficiencies" supposedly gained through concentration, its 1996 report also made clear that independent producers are getting priced out of business. The agency found a "depression of producer prices at all levels," and concluded that cattle ranchers' "losses seem out of control and hard to justify in light of the record profits being recorded at the higher levels of the beef industry." Farmer testimonies also revealed that increased concentration leads directly to lower producer prices.

Another USDA finding was particularly ominous: While concentration is pushing producer prices down, it is also encour-



Still Life by William Heda, 1637

aging a type of race to the top among farm lending agencies, which, given the price pinching, are reluctant to finance small farms. "Farmers who have made decent livings and survived the 1980s farm credit crisis are now refused operating loans unless they agreed to expand," the report said. "For these farmers, the price for survival is taking on excessive debt and expanding to factory farm size.

"By granting credit only to large-scale operations on the basis that such operations are the future, these lenders will create a self-fulfilling prophecy," the USDA deduced. "The only operation that will survive will be big operations, not necessarily because of increased efficiency, but because of their access to capital."

But the USDA, by its own

acknowledgement, has expanded these inequities. The agency has, according to its 1998 small farms commission, made "policy choices" that have "perpetuated the structural bias toward greater concentration of assets and wealth in fewer and larger farms and fewer and larger agribusiness firms. Federal farm programs have historically benefited large farms the most. Tax policies give large farmers greater incentives for capital purchases to expand their operations," the commission said.

Louvre, Paris

9

Diet for a corporate planet

Hard times on the farm come amid—and in many ways result from— heady days for the largest agribusiness corporations engaged in a financial feeding frenzy of mergers and acquisitions. In the biggest recent buyout, Cargill (the nation's largest privately held company) snatched up Continental Grain Company's (in the top five among private U.S. grain traders) grain storage, transportation, export and trading operations in North America, Europe, Latin America and Asia. Assuming it passes antitrust muster, the purchase, estimated to be worth between \$300 million and \$1 billion, will give Cargill control over onethird of all U.S. grain exports.

Cargill celebrated the consolidation, promoting it as a boon for farmers. "Together these grain operations will expand farmers' reach into new markets," said Cargill CEO and chairman Ernest S. Micek. "Continental's worldwide grain handling and export facilities will help us move farmers' crops to our processing plants and to our customers more reliably and efficiently."

Even if Cargill's happy projections prove accurate, farmers and agribusiness critics say industry consolidation will choke off any increased cash flow. Exports may expand markets for farmers, but as Food First's Peter Rosset explains, "the bonanza isn't shared with farmers; it's pretty much sucked up by the intermediaries." Krebs puts it even more bluntly: "Farmers don't trade grain, grain traders trade grain."

In fact, Cargill's consolidation could take a big bite out of grain farmer earnings. "It's going to greatly diminish the number of markets that farmers can sell into," says Crabtree, putting grain growers "more at the mercy of Cargill now."

Farmers expect the consolidation will only worsen their recent losses. Before the buyout, Illinois corn grower Floyd Schultz could sell his crops to Cargill or Continental Grains, he told *The New York Times*. Now, he will have to drive an extra 30 miles —costing him an extra 10 cents a bushel to bargain with the nearest competitor, Archer Daniels Midland. Mike Yost, a Minnesota corn and soybean grower, predicts the Cargill deal will cost him about \$2,700 a year in diminished crop value. "We see constant consolidation of both our input suppliers for seed, fertilizer, pesticides and the people who purchase our production," Yost told the *Times*. "Obviously, the trend's not healthy for the American farmer."

In response, several senators and numerous farm advocacy groups are challenging Cargill's acquisition, and calling for the Justice Department to investigate possible antitrust violations.

An astounding portion of the world's food production and supply is controlled by a tiny handful of corporations. Just two companies, Cargill and ADM (a.k.a. "supermarket to the world"), control 75 to 80 percent of the world's grain production.

Food empires

Cargill's mammoth acquisition is just the tip of the merger-mania iceberg. While Continental is ending its century-old grain business, it will use Cargill's cash to further consolidate its livestock holding; earlier in 1998 Continental moved to gobble up Premium Standard Farms, a hog-raising and processing giant. This past June, Monsanto bought up Cargill's international seed operations in Central and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa for \$1.4 billion cash that undoubtedly helped Cargill snag Continental Grain.

As holdings and money change hands, these firms expand and deepen their specialized niches and control over market sectors and distribution channels — making concentrations of ownership and control more and more seamless. When Tyson Foods bought up Hudson Foods for \$651.6 million in 1997, one analyst called the merger "a strategic fit that should increase Tyson's dominance of the poultry industry"—enabling Tyson to control nearly 30 percent of the U.S. poultry industry.

An astounding portion of the world's food production and supply is controlled by a tiny handful of corporations. Just two companies, Cargill and ADM (a.k.a. "supermarket to the world"), control 75 to 80 percent of the world's grain production, according to Krebs, author of *The Corporate Reapers*. "Nearly every product on the market today that has corn in it (such as lysine, citric acids, and sweeteners) comes from ADM," says Krebs. Meanwhile 70 percent of the world's highly lucrative cereal market is controlled by four firms (Kelloggs, Philip Morris, General Mills, and Quaker Oats).

These global food firms are stunningly vast. Cargill, a commodities kingmaker with annual sales of \$67 billion, owns 29 subsidiaries spanning the manufacture, financing, wholesale and transportation of dozens of food crops, livestock, and commodity futures. Its scope captures nearly every aspect of food production, including seeds, fertilizer, feed grain, cattle feed lots, and contract hog production.

Own globally, control locally

The undisputed master of vertical integration is ConAgra (\$24 billion in annual sales). To leaf through the glossy pages of ConAgra's annual report is to take a tour, both up and down a tightly knit food chain and across the borders of nearly every continent on the globe. As the firm boasted to its shareholders, "diversification across the food chain provides limitless opportunities for growth."

Crisp, high-definition photographs illustrate how ConAgra's cornucopia spans the food production continuum. At the bottom of ConAgra's food chain are the essential inputs, such as "crop protection chemicals," fertilizer and seed distribution. Then there's marketing infrastructure, "worldwide commodity distribution and merchandising," and commodity services. The company then skips the dirty business of grain growing and leapfrogs to value-added areas such as barley malting, flour milling and the manufacture of seasonings and "spray-dried food ingredients."

The next several slick pages march through a parade of ConAgra's brand-name products — 21 of which "chalk up annual retail sales of more than \$100 million." The ConAgra supermarket includes "Healthy Choice" and other gourmet frozen foods, Hunt's products, Hebrew National Beef Franks, Van Camps baked beans, and Butterball turkey products.

Each of ConAgra's three major divisions (food inputs and ingredients, refrigerated foods, and grocery products) owns dozens of major brand-names, and many of these holdings in turn own numerous product lines. Curiously, ConAgra's tremendous expanse exposes the company to but may also protect it from — the countervailing winds of prices along the food chain. For example, ConAgra's poultry and turkey operations took a hit in 1997 due to high feed grain prices; but ConAgra itself is heavily involved in the domestic and international grain business.

ConAgra's "diversification" spreads not only across the food chain, but around the world. It sells and markets meat in Korea, Taiwan, China, Mexico, Brazil, Russia, Puerto Rico, Australia and Japan; the company peddles pesticides and fertilizers to customers such as South Africa, Bulgaria, Chile, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Singapore; it also distributes prepared foods in the Philippines.

ConAgra's vertical integration and horizon-less holdings pack a mighty punch when it comes to controlling independent producers. Just as Cargill may soon monopolize grain elevators throughout the Midwest and eliminate growers' negotiating power, so does ConAgra wield neartotal control over regional poultry production. ConAgra and other integrated meat"If you sign a contract with Perdue or IBP," says Food First's Rosset, "every detail of the production process is spelled out: You must construct the animal housing according to their plans, wire the buildings according to their plans, feed the ani-



mals exactly their feed, use exactly the antibiotics they recommend. And they have visits by contract supervisors to make sure that the farmer goes along with it."

While the corporation supplies the baby animals (which remain company property) and the inputs, the farmer shoulders the risk if the animals die off and the corporation determines that the farmer mismanaged its property. Factory farming increases this risk by exposing tens of thousands of animals to bacterial diseases, such as the increasingly common e-coli outbreaks. But, says Rosset, "if the animals die off, the farmer goes out of business, not IBP or Perdue."

Perdue's poultry producer agreement requires contract farmers to provide and maintain all necessary housing, equipment, roads and utilities, and labor, and to use company-supplied feed, medications and vaccinations. The farmer, who is referred to as an independent contractor, must own the land, buildings and equipment — but Perdue may enter and inspect the premises at any time. And if Perdue decides that farmer is not following the company's "established procedures" for raising the flock, the firm can require the producer to pay for necessary adjustments.

Perhaps more onerous are the highly

consolidated conditions under which farmers must sign these agreements. "In reality, we don't really have independent producers in poultry," says the Center for Rural Affairs' Crabtree. "There isn't a chicken market, everybody is vertically integrated." In this context, "it's not the contracting of production that is so troublesome, it is the fact that producers today have to contract with an industry that is so concentrated and consolidated that there is no way they can sit at a table and have any comparable economic power to be able to negotiate an agreement that is fair."

Broad socio-economic trends, such as the rise of two-worker households and the demise of the home-cooked meal, have changed the way food is consumed and produced — largely to the detriment of farmers. As fast food and frozen meals become increasingly popular, farmers' crops represent an ever-smaller fraction of the final product.

Krebs describes how Total cereal added just a few cents' worth of nutrients to Wheaties, yet the product now costs 50 cents more. "The farmer doesn't see any of that profit. When you look at how much of what the farmer actually produces is in the final product, it is minuscule."

The USDA Commission on Small Farms came to a similar conclusion, noting the widening gap both between farm crops and table food, and between farm income and food value. "As farmers focused on producing undifferentiated raw commodities, food system profit and opportunities were shifted to the companies that process, package, and market food," the commission explained. "Consequently, from 1910 to 1990 the share of the agricultural economy received by farmers dropped from 21 to 5 percent."

In today's de-coupled food chain, says Krebs, "most farmers are becoming producers of raw materials for a giant food manufacturing system. They are really not in any sense producing food anymore."

The community food security movement by Laura M. McCullough

D uring the great Irish potato famine, food exports from Ireland never waned; some experts predict that in a few short years Americans are likely to face a similar situation. While food exports will skyrocket to satisfy global demands, food costs for most Americans will increase dramatically.

Twice in this century, Americans have dealt with major food crises. The results were community gardening movements: the Liberty Gardens and the Victory Gardens of the two World Wars. Today, the Community Food Security (CFS) movement is an effort by thinkers, researchers, community activists, farmers, environmentalists, community development advocates and others across sectors and disciplines to move toward sustainable, regional food systems. While the anti-hunger sector has always been about food security — for individuals and families — Community Food Security is broader.

Formed in 1994, the national Community Food Security Coalition intends to bring about a situation "in which all persons obtain a nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable diet at all times through local non-emergency sources." The Coalition, with offices in Venice, Calif., has left this definition purposefully simple. While addressing the key issues, it leaves room for who will be involved and how the goal will be achieved.

Last October, the Coalition held its second annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pa. Among the 130 participants were organic farmers, community food bank directors, cooperative extension agents, horticultural groups, economic development experts, community-based organizations, world hunger activists, academicians, social service providers, urban agriculturists, spiritual/religious leaders as well as representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a representative from the Secretary of Agriculture.

Although some communities appear to be more at-risk than others, when it comes to a secure, sustainable source of good food, the CFS organizing principle is that, "Hey, we all gotta eat."

At one lunch table, an organic vegetable producer from Florida, a Canadian social worker, a Tufts University professor, a representative of the Heifer Project, a community development expert and a director of a Catholic rural social services group discussed the relative merits of urban farmers' markets. The conversation at the next table concerned the loss of small farms, farm families, and the cultural and community deficits these losses continue to create.

Regardless of topic or affiliation, there was a commonality: the notion of food as a

"green stage" on which to build community and from which to address broad social justice and economic issues. All saw the need to create linkages between low-income communities and regional food producers — and the importance of creating multi-faceted regional food systems that re-empower communities and decrease reliance on the corporate food system.

Although some communities appear to be more at-risk than others, when it comes to a secure, sustainable source of good food, the CFS organizing principle is that, "Hey, we all gotta eat." While the antihunger sector has understandable qualms about allocating resources to the long-term work of food systems planning while people are starving, Andy Fisher, Executive Director of the CFS Coalition, points out that "the two movements share the similar goal of a nation without poverty."

Thanks to the effort of the Coalition, the USDA funds an annual grant program (\$2.4 million in 1998) to help communities and cross-sector collaborations develop sustainable, comprehensive, long-term strategies to address nutrition and health, farm and food producer, and local food systems issues. Through this program the Upper Sand Mountain United Methodist Church Larger Parish in Alabama, for example, is training rural low-income families and youth in micro-enterprise in the Sowing Seeds and Stocking Shelves Program. Likewise, the Maine Coalition for Food Security is creating food-system study circles and food policy councils and is organizing a statewide food security conference. And the Tahoma Food System in Washington, in collaboration with the cooperative extension, is working to provide square-foot nutrition, a combination nutrition education/gardening program to at-risk youth, while also working on land use planning and farming issues.

The CFS movement has adopted an asset-analysis approach to problem solving and coalition building, as opposed to

Laura M. McCullough works with the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Atlantic County, N.J. For more information on the CFS Coalition contact <asfisher@aol.com> or <www.foodsecurity.org>; PO Box 209, Venice, Calif. 90294; 310-822-5410.

the victim-based paradigm of a governmental or social service agency identifying a community and problem(s) and attempting to fix perceived wrongs. An assetanalysis is non-victim oriented. It assumes undeveloped and untapped potential already exists within any group and that the place to start is to determine with the community the nature of its assets, while thereby exposing where lapses in food security exist. The ultimate responsibility for shoring up the community's assets belongs to the community itself.

This approach is a radical shift in worldview for many social service and governmental organizations and some find it ideologically threatening. In the face of dwindling funding, some would prefer to see the *status quo* of anti-hunger organizations and service provision industries remain the way it is. But the CFS movement is predicated on the belief that an approach

CFS and anti-hunger advocacy

by Mike Hamm

here has been considerable tension between the Community Food Security (CFS) movement and anti-hunger advocates the last several years that I believe is inherently unproductive. Much of the language of the CFS movement is oriented toward the future. It incorporates a broad range of issues ranging from farmland preservation to land access for community gardens, from food production sustainability to community food access. Types of projects and system processes advocated by CFS activists to date are such that immediate food benefits, if existing, will be limited to a relatively small number of people. Undoubtedly, if implemented on a broad scale and incorporated as policy at local, regional and national levels they would have broad impact.

In contrast, much of the activity of anti-hunger advocates is oriented towards NOW. There is an understanding of immediate need for food by a broad swath of our population and the goal is to assure programs and food to meet those needs, from whatever sources are immediately available.

The work of anti-hunger advocates

often spans a broad range of issues not entirely overlapping with CFS aims. These include the full range of poverty issues from housing to education, from jobs to health care. While CFS touches on some of these, they are generally peripheral to the movement's core interests.

We typically define food security in terms of people (or communities) having access to an adequate, nutritious, safe, and culturally acceptable food supply on a daily basis through non-emergency sources. We typically interpret this as meaning that you either are or are not food secure. We also typically interpret it as individuals and families being self-sufficient and not needing food stamps, food pantries or soup kitchens. In reality, most people have different degrees of food security.

I believe the focus should be more on a person, family or community's movement toward self-sufficiency inside a continuum that runs from zero food security (frank malnutrition and lack of food access) to full food security. Full food security, within the framework of the CFS movement, encompasses a broad array of issues. It is not simply the ability of a person to get whatever food they want, whenever they want it. It includes a range of areas encompasswhich cuts across communities is needed so that the question of meeting the need for food is not focused solely on the needs of a disempowered constituency.

Certainly, this notion extends way beyond food. But, as a "green stage" it is a place we all have to go, since "we all gotta eat." If we can embrace it, one locale at a time, the CFS hope is that we we will begin to address the sustainability and security of the globe at large.

ing the viability of the farms where the food is grown, ecological sustainability of its production, source of food (e.g., global vs. local), and control of production and distribution.

Thus, full community food security encompasses a range of issues beyond access and availability. Within this continuum, there is a tremendous amount of room for movement. For example, those who are unemployed become, hopefully, more food secure when they gain employment and increased money.

This can lead us to realize that there are more fundamental similarities than fundamental differences in what food security and anti-hunger advocates are trying to accomplish in their work: that is, to make sure people have sufficient food in a manner that ensures future generations also have sufficient food. If we understand that both are needed - an orientation towards now and an orientation towards the future — then we can understand that anti-hunger work and food security work are oriented towards helping move people along the continuum toward achieving food security. We can realize that our common goal is the elimination of need for emergency feeding infrastructures, romantic as that goal may be.

— Mike Hamm is director of the Urban Ecology Program at Rutgers University.

Community food security in practice

"Pawpaw guy" revives interest in age-old fruit

by Michelle Gorman

Autumn in Athens County, Ohio, is a sight to behold. By mid-October, the lush deciduous trees of these Appalachian foothills turn into an arresting palette of gold, scarlet, orange and burgundy. And thanks to Chris Chmiel, one tree in particular is quickly gaining recognition in southeastern Ohio — the pawpaw.

Asimina triloba, commonly known as the pawpaw, produces North America's largest native edible tree fruit. This creamy, fleshy fruit, with aliases like "the poor man's banana" and musical tributes like "Way down yonder in the pawpaw patch," is indigenous to the temperate woodlands of the eastern U.S. It grows wild in 25 states east of the Mississippi River.

It's also plentiful in the hills of Albany, Ohio, where Chmiel, 28, lives with his family on an 18-acre homestead dubbed Integration Acres. Chmiel recalls hiking through his woods and marveling at the abundance of pawpaws dangling from the trees. He's passionate about the pawpaw as well as the resurgence of native and wild foods into the American diet.

"I said to myself — why aren't more people eating these?" Chmiel recounted.

Pawpaws are soft and delicate, bruise easily and have a short shelf life. They are typically eaten immediately after picking, and are only ripe and on the tree from mid-September to mid-October (in Ohio).

Around the same time, Chmiel was working as a researcher for Understory, Inc. The agency had received a grant from the U.S Department of Agriculture to conduct an economic feasibility study of non-timber forest products. Included



Michelle Gorman

in the research were traditional forest products like mushrooms, ginseng and goldenseal, as well as more exotic ones like pawpaw.

While working in the field for the grant, Chmiel harvested many a pawpaw. He mashed and froze several gallons of the fruit and a light bulb went off. He propositioned the worker-owned Casa Nueva Restaurant and Cantina in the nearby college town of Athens to host a sort of "pawpaw appreciation reception." He provided the frozen fruit, area chefs crafted pawpaw delicacies and "Pawpaw Night" was born. Patrons sipped pawpaw coladas, sampled pawpaw cream pie and cheesecake and feasted on vegetables with pawpaw curry.

"This was exciting for people — it was a 'new' plant for people to appreciate. It was also one of the bar's highest-grossing Tuesday nights," Chmiel remarked with a grin.

In the fall of 1997, with no food processing experience and little capital, but with immeasurable enthusiasm and a volunteer army of friends, Chmiel undertook the next phase. He posted signs and placed ads across the county, all with the same message - "Will pay for pawpaws." Folks read the signs, and a small legion of faithful pawpaw pickers took to the hills. He purchased bushel after bushel of fresh fruit from the pickers and then processed the mashed fruits into "frozen pulp in pyramidal shapes." He successfully processed and froze one ton of pawpaws into a transportable commercial product available year-round - Pawpaw Pleasures.

Casa Nueva used the frozen pawpaw pulp in menu items like pawpaw coladas and pawpawnero salsa. Over time other culinary delights emerged, including pawpaw ice cream and the pawpaw lassi. A local bagel shop created a pawpaw cream cheese as a sandwich spread, and a bakery offered pawpaw scones.

The following summer Chmiel provided Pawpaw Pleasures to Wild Oats, a natural grocery store chain with a location in Columbus, Ohio. The juice bar there created a refreshing, protein-packed smoothie using the pawpaw pulp. And in the fall, Wild Oats purchased fresh fruit from Chmiel, making pawpaws accessible to the urban shopper. Chmiel also sold freshly plucked Ohio-grown pawpaws to a specialty foods distributor with locations across the U.S.

So in the fall of 1998, with a year of experience under his belt, Chmiel welcomed the ripening of his beloved pawpaw. His dedicated pickers re-emerged for another season, and the pulping and freezing commenced again.

"One guy picked 1,500 pounds this year. He canoed on the Hocking River and rigged up his mountain bike with pails to collect pawpaws. He consistently made over \$10 an hour. Some days he made over \$20 an hour," Chmiel said.

In the height of the season, Chmiel received an e-mail from a chef at the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville, Ky. He was developing a regional cuisine menu for the hotel's four-star restaurant and needed 20 pounds of frozen pawpaw pulp immediately. Chmiel delivered.

"Working with the Seelbach gave some respect, some validity, to my whole product. I'm proud of that. Working with a restaurant of that caliber was really a thrill."

The pawpaw has also fostered community development in Chmiel's hometown. As a member of his local village's economic development committee, Chmiel convinced the city council to debut the Albany Pawpaw Festival next fall, making it Ohio's premier pawpaw event. The village of Albany also named the pawpaw as its official town tree. Enthusiasm spread to the local police department too — the chief authorized the addition of the pawpaw tree to its police logo. Pawpaw plantings along city streets are scheduled for next spring.

With nearly 1,000 pounds of pulp left in the freezer and new accounts cropping up daily, Chmiel is prepared for the pawpaw's rising popularity. He has also sold hundreds of pounds of pawpaw seeds to nurseries, with the hope that the tree will become commonplace again in the American landscape.

"To me what's really satisfying is giving someone my product and having them say 'This tastes great — where can I get some more?" Chmiel said. "This is the fruit of the next century. It's the next kiwi."

Chmiel's next foray into forest food? "Spicebush marinade," he confirms with gusto.

-Michelle Gorman lives in Albany, Ohio. For more information on Pawpaw Pleasures, e-mail Chmiel at <cchmiel@hotmail.com> or call 740-698-2124.

From the ground up: saving the black farmer

by David Hacker

In 1910, black America owned over 15 million acres of land. Black ownership today is less than 2.3 million acres.

In May 1998, a thousand people from around the country gathered in Detroit for the National Black Farmers Conference "From the Ground Up! Saving the Black Farmer." The conference, hosted by congressional representatives John Conyers and Carolyn C. Kilpatrick, was designed to raise awareness of the plight of black farmers, to build momentum for a class action lawsuit alleging discrimination in USDA lending practices against black farmers, and to develop new economic models that could reverse the trend of black land loss and insure a viable future for black farmers.

Now, after years of waiting, at three meetings in Arkansas, Alabama and North Carolina this past November hundreds of farmers were briefed on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) offer to settle the class action lawsuit. The USDA admitted systematic discrimination THE WITNESS



Youth marketer sells locally grown produce at a neighborhood market in Detroit.

against black farmers. Their settlement offer included debt reduction and cash payments of \$50,000 per farmer. The class action suit, which began with an original 350 black farmers, now numbers over 1,000 and a federal judge ruled that it can expand to others who have experienced discrimination. Lawyers are estimating that number to be as high as 10,000.

"Is it enough?" asked Willie Head, Jr.,

a farmer who attended the briefing in Durham, N.C. "No, it's not enough for the suffering we have endured for years. Not enough to replace the legacy that has been destroyed for the oncoming black generation." Although the farmers at the meeting were divided, "you have to take what you can get," Head continued. "'In God We Trust' it says on the back of those bills. The government ought to be much truer, honorable."

Many black farmers farm on small acreages with limited resources and little access to credit or government programs that can subsidize needed improvements. "Good old boy" networks of larger farms and agency officials work against their entering effectively into the mainstream American food system. When the weather is bad, like this past summer's two-month dry spell, it means an irrigation pond runs dry while the larger white farmers run their government-subsidized deep wells. At the local produce auction, brokers work together to fix prices, often buying produce for half of what the small farmer could get from national distributors if they had the capability to sell directly. Head is a third-generation farmer who

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recently inherited the family farm after his father died. But he also inherited his father's debt. "We're just hanging on," Head says, "that's about all we're doing, hanging on."

With the help of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Head and 29 other farmers with a total of 1,200 acres between them have formed the South Georgia Vegetable Growers Cooperative and are now selling to farmers' markets in Atlanta and to buyers from New York and New Orleans. Together they hope to be able to operate their own packing shed with a loading dock to accommodate semitrailers. Many members are also getting assistance in transitioning from conventional agricultural practices to organic.

Across the country, collaboratives with land grant universities, black-owned manufacturing companies, community organizations and government are helping to build the capacity of black farmers to develop alternative marketing strategies. Spearheaded by John Conyers' office, the Cassopolis Black Farmers' Marketing Project is working with eight farmers in Southwest Michigan with about 600 acres among them to develop specialty niche markets, high-value fresh produce and value-added products. The New Florida Coop is selling fresh and processed vegetables directly to school districts, learning as they go the structure of cooperatives and the dietary guidelines of school food service programs.

Last summer, bins of watermelons were for sale at a local gas station in Detroit with signs saying "Save the Black Farmer," as one individual took to the road in his own tractor trailer and brought back produce from Georgia. The Gardening Angels, a group of seniors in the Detroit Agriculture Network who grow food on vacant lots, tell their own family stories of land lost and stolen. The Detroit Farmers' Cooperative, a project of seven market gardens in the Detroit Agriculture Network, employed youth marketers this summer who learned to grow and market their own food. Some of these urban youth will be the seeds of a next generation of black involvement in agriculture.

DeWayne Boyd of the National Black Farmers Association, an organizer of the May conference, sees tremendous potential in new relationships being formed on a national level between the USDA and organizations like the Arkansas Land and Financial Development Corporation and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, for the purpose of working with the many individual and community-based efforts now laying the groundwork for developing a sustainable system to market produce from black farmers.

— David Hacker is Urban Agriculture Coordinator for the Hunger Action Coalition of Michigan and coordinator of the Detroit Agriculture Network, which aims to cultivate urban land for agriculture.

Tohono O'odham community food system

by Tohono O'odham Community Action

The Tohono O'odham and their ancestors have lived in the Sonora Desert for approximately 10,000 years. The Tohono O'odham Nation encompasses 4,600 square miles in southern Arizona.

Extreme damage to the traditional Tohono O'odham food system has had dire consequences, including destruction of economic self-sufficiency, the threatened loss of key elements of the O'odham Himdag (Desert People's Way), and extremely high rates of nutrition-related disease.

The O'odham traditionally combined dry-land farming, the collection of wild desert foods and small amounts of hunting to provide food for their families and communities. These strategies served the O'odham well until relatively recently. The O'odham still used traditional methods to cultivate more than 20,000 acres using dry-land methods as late as the 1920s. By 1949 that number had declined to 2,500 acres. Today that number is certainly less than 100, perhaps not more than 10. At the same time, the once common practice of collecting and storing wild foods declined in an equally dramatic way. Despite these declines in the traditional food system, there are still members of the community who remember when the O'odham were entirely food self-sufficient.

Virtually all elements of traditional culture — ceremonies, stories, songs, the language — are directly rooted in the system of food production. O'odham culture is truly an agri/culture. For example, the saguaro harvest and the wine ceremony served as the cornerstone of O'odham life for centuries, calling forth the monsoon rains that make agriculture possible in the arid desert environment. Today, only a small portion of the O'odham community participates in this sacred rite. The ceremony is in danger of being lost precisely because it no longer has any connection to the material reality of people's lives. When food comes in cans from the grocery store or in sacks from USDA commodity distribution programs, it no longer really matters to most people whether or not the rains come. In such circumstances, there is no longer a compelling reason for a key element of Tohono O'odham culture to continue.

For centuries, traditional desert foods — and the effort it took to produce them — kept the Tohono O'odham healthy. Over thousands of years, the Tohono O'odham metabolism had become especially well adapted to the foods of the Sonora Desert. The intro-JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999 duction of processed foods, however, changed all of that. The new foods were metabolized by the body in a much less efficient manner, leading to a previously unexperienced disease among the Tohono O'odham: adult-

onset diabetes. As recently as the early 1960s, diabetes was unknown among the Tohono O'odham. Today, more than 50 percent of the population develops the disease, the highest rate in the world. The disease has even begun to appear in children as young as seven. Several scientific studies have confirmed that traditional O'odham foods — such as tepary beans, mesquite beans, cholla (cactus) buds and chia seeds - help regulate blood sugar and significantly reduce both the incidence and the effects of diabetes. In a very real sense, the destruction of the traditional food

system is killing the Tohono O'odham. A project of Tohono O'odham Community Action (TOCA), the Tohono O'odham community food system program nurtures the creation of a food system in which economic/food system development takes place on three different levels. First and most impor-



Winter vegetables by Mary Azarian

tantly, families and communities are provided with the resources they need in order to grow and collect traditional foods for their own consumption, encouraging and expanding the possibility for self-sufficiency. Second, the program creates opportunities for people to engage in micro-enterprise projects by marketing their surplus O'odham foods to local institutions where they are served to other community members. Third, after

> all local need has been met, additional micro-enterprise opportunities are developed by marketing to surrounding communities.

> Through the establishment of community gardens, redevelopment of traditional flood-based farming, creation of partnerships with schools and other institutions and implementation of a desert foods collecting program, the program is a comprehensive response to the near total destruction of the traditional Tohono O'odham food system.

TOCA may be reached at <synread@earthlink.net>. Artist Mary Azarian's work can be obtained from Farmhouse Press, RD2, Box 831, Plainfield, VT 95667.

San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners

The San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) was founded in 1983 because its founders felt a pressing need to support those interested in urban greening, neighborhood beautification and local food production in San Francisco, the nation's third most densely populated city. SLUG is now an organization with 24 full-time staff with an annual budget of over \$3 million.

Through raising an awareness of social justice, community development and ecological sustainability, SLUG strives to connect San Francisco residents to the power gardening has to transform individuals and communities. Currently, the organization supports and coordinates more than 100 community gardens, including gardens in schools, hospices and women's shelters; teaches gardening, land stewardship and community outreach to 6,000 youth and adults annually; and provides services to more than 2,000 members and gardeners city-wide. SLUG has launched a new Welfare to Work program, tackled restoration projects and expanded outreach to local communities.

SLUG provides job training to lowincome people, particularly in southeast San Francisco, as crews learn the skills required for jobs in carpentry, landscaping, native plant restoration, horticulture and organic gardening. Projects range from creek restoration to regular maintenance in each of San Francisco's 42 public community gardens.

An important source of employment for the SLUG crews is an ongoing partnership with the Caritas Management Corporation. Caritas hires SLUG to landscape and maintain the grounds of six housing developments throughout the city, where the crews learn to use organic gardening techniques. This is rare in commercial landscaping, an industry traditionally dependent upon chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Every Saturday the SLUG maintenance crew visits a community garden in San Francisco. The crew works with the gardeners to revitalize and reconstruct the space, ensuring the safety and manageability of the garden. In addition, SLUG educators teach organic gardening and composting workshops at the gardens on a regular basis.

The St. Mary's Urban Youth Farm has become a model for urban agriculture and youth employment. The Farm is known both as a location for job training and opportunity and as a source of fresh organic produce for the community. Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

Working at the St. Mary's Farm the summer of 1998, over 80 SLUG teens built a pond, restored native habitats, grew vegetables and cared for fruit trees. The youth interns assigned to the Farm's

crop areas learned techniques to maximize food production under the guidance of Urban Agriculture Coordinator Kathi Colen. A former instructor at University of California at Santa Cruz's Farm and Garden Apprenticeship program, Colen introduced new plant species to the teens, from purple potatoes to companion plants which attract beneficial insects.

In addition to tending crops, the SLUG crew broke ground on a bee deck, which will house several hives of bees provided by the

San Francisco Beekeepers Association. Once the hives are up and humming, the teens will learn to care for the bees and harvest the honey, which will be processed and packaged for sale through Urban Herbals, SLUG's youth enterprise program. The teens are also growing tarragon, jalapeños and garlic, all earmarked for Urban Herbals vinegar and salsa production.

Kevin Robinson, President of the Alemany Resident Management Corporation, attributes his start in community activism to the time he spent working in the Youth Garden Internship Program. "I think SLUG uses gardening as a tool to do some things that no other organization



Garden shed by Mary Azarian

has done," he says. "It is really hard to bring youth from different backgrounds together, but I have seen a lot of kids whose lives have been affected dramatically, positively, by just going through [SLUG's youth programs]. Doing this type of work crosses culture, class and all of those boundaries."

As welfare policy in the U.S. changes, so is SLUG's role in San Francisco. In partnership with other local non-profit and for-profit companies, SLUG has designed the Southeast Job Training Collaborative. This is a comprehensive program designed to assist in the transition from welfare to full-time, living-wage employment. SLUG is working with

agencies including Young Community Developers, the San Francisco Shipyards Training Center and HMR Global Recyclers to offer a complete path, from welfare to work, through which participants will be prepared, trained and placed into a new career with the skills and retention support they need to succeed.

SLUG is already intimately connected with the low-income communities and public housing developments of southeast San Francisco, the area which will be hardest hit by the welfare changes now going into ef-

fect. SLUG has applied to the Department of Labor for funding for the Job Training Collaborative, and is hoping to honor its commitment to the local community with this program.

- from SLUG Update, Fall 1998

For more information on SLUG contact: <www.slug-sf.org>; 2088 Oakdale Ave., San Francisco, Calif. 94124; 415-285-7584. Artist Mary Azarian's work can be obtained from Farmhouse Press, RD2, Box 831, Plainfield, VT 95667.

Just Food in New York City

by Kathy Lawrence

Just Food began in 1994 as an all-volunteer effort to promote a more holistic approach to food, farming and hunger issues. The effort grew out of the ongoing work of regional food system activists and NYC-based groups who recognized both the magnitude of the region's food system problems and the need to bring diverse groups together to build understanding and cooperation. When formally established in 1995, Just Food pledged not to duplicate the work of existing groups. Instead, Just Food links existing resources to develop collaborative projects that preserve open space, develop community leadership, boost local food production and equitable distribution and create jobs. The vision is simple and radical: communities and individuals working together to create good food, good jobs, strong communities and a healthy environment.

Just Food's "CSA in NYC" program helps Northeast farmers and New York-

ers of all income levels build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships. Through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) arrangements, city folks pay in advance for a share in a farm's upcoming harvest. This enables the farmers to receive fair and guaranteed payment for their products while CSA members receive shares of freshly-picked, organic vegetables from June to November. Since the summer of 1996, Just Food has helped six regional farmers establish CSA operations in eight neighborhoods in four boroughs. To help find ways for all New Yorkers to have access to safe, fresh, nutritious food, Just Food is developing partnerships with low-income communities to create viable CSAs in their neighborhoods.

Just Food initiated and continues to coordinate the City Farms program, a collaborative project that works intensively with community gardens to develop a sustainable network of food-producing gardens in New York City. In its 1997 pilot season, City Farms worked with four gardens that produced and donated food to nearby food pantries. Two of the gardens also marketed a portion of their produce, totaling \$1,200 in revenues. Combined, the gardens involved 31 growers and 57 volunteers, reached over 750 food program clients and sold to over 200 shoppers at local farmers' markets.

In 1998, City Farms worked intensively with eight community gardens and offered support to over 20 additional groups — providing hands-on technical assistance in organic growing techniques; capacity building and volunteer management; food harvesting, storage and preparation; nutrition education; building community partnerships for garden preservation; and developing marketing skills.

Other Just Food programs include a two-year "participatory action research" project to support the viability of Northeastern farms and help urban ethnic food buyers gain access to high quality, fresh agricultural products from the Northeast region by linking them through marketing relationships. Just Food also sponsors an annual "Your Food Today and Tomorrow" conference, which brings together groups working on food, farming and hunger issues to learn more about local food systems and how to support a more just and sustainable food system.

Contact Just Food at: <justfood@igc.org>; 625 Broadway #9C, New York, N.Y. 10012; 212-677-1602.

Hate websites

Christian hate websites are proliferating on the Internet, according to Witness contributing editor Virginia Ramey Mollencott, who passes along an October 27, 1998 viewpoint article on the topic by Mike Celizic in The Record, a newspaper serving Passaic County, N.J. Neal Horsley, for example, operates a site called "The Nuremberg Trials," which supplies a list of abortion providers and their photos, addresses, license plate numbers and other information sent in by informants as an aid to persons wishing to track clinic personnel down and stop them, including by violence. According to Celizic, Horsley openly applauds the killing of physicians who perform abortions at his site.

"Among the groups who join Horsley in cheering the death of doctors who perform abortions are the Ku Klux Klan and many ultra-right militia groups," Celizic writes. "Follow the links among their websites and you are soon reading about the benefits of dissolving the Union and rounding up, jailing and killing homosexuals. You will also learn about the dangers of the United Nations, secular humanism, the European Common Market and the public school system."

Mollencott, a prominent writer and spokesperson on behalf of homosexuals and others who are denied their civil rights or otherwise ostracized on account of their sexuality — and an out lesbian — notes that she is among the names mentioned on some of these web sites, "along with my phone number, address and a map of my home area. We need to pray for one another's safety and to combat the idea that targeting people falls under freedom of speech."

2001–2010: decade of peace and nonviolence

In an historic vote on November 10, 1998, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously voted to proclaim the first decade of the 21st century "The Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001–2010)." The call for the decade came from an appeal to the U.N. signed by 23 Nobel Peace Laureates, including Nelson Mandela, the late Mother Teresa, Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire from Belfast, Northern Ireland, organized the effort.

The proclamation invites each member state to take the necessary steps to teach the principles of nonviolence at every level of society. U.N. bodies, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, religious leaders, the media, performing artists and civil societies are called upon to support the decade for the benefit of the children of the world.

> — Fellowship of Reconciliation, <fellowship@igc.apc.org>

Eco-Church

"Eco-Church" is a project of the North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology (NACCE) aimed at promoting small ecumenical groups of Christians devoted to environmental activism. The new church groups are not intended to compete with existing churches, but "may well attract those who have left the traditional churches in search of a more Earthcentered Christian spirituality."

An adult study curriculum is aimed at Earth literacy and Christian theology. "Children, in addition to learning the story of Jesus, will learn to love the natural world as God's sacred creation in which we humans have a special role."

> - Weaving the Connections, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, Autumn 1998

most takes

Organizing farmworkers by Farm Labor Organizing Committee

he Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) was founded in 1967 by Baldemar Velasquez, and in 1979 was formally organized as a labor union of farmworkers working in the Midwest. After unsuccessful attempts to establish a dialogue with Campbell Soup Company, FLOC workers voted in 1978 to strike all Campbell's tomato field operations in northwestern Ohio. When strikebreakers were brought in and the corporation mandated that its growers use mechanical harvesters, FLOC called upon public support in the form of a citizens' boycott of all Campbell Soup products.

In February 1986, after two years of on-and-off talks, FLOC, Campbell Soup, and Campbell's tomato growers in Ohio and its Vlasic pickle growers in Michigan signed a unique three-year labor contract covering 800 farmworkers. The contracts set hourly wage rates for workers on harvesters and for truck drivers. Piece rates were also set for hand pickers, plus incentive payments for higher yields. In addition, the contracts established a paid holiday (Labor Day) and set up an experimental health insurance program. Full prior disclosure of conditions of employment (the time period, place, pay rates, and activities) was established. And at the end of the season, each worker was to be provided a full itemized written report of all earnings and expenses.

FLOC had originally stated that its long-term goals included structural changes in the agribusiness system that affected farmworkers' lives. The contracts with Campbell Soup was only the start, and similar agreements with Vlasic, Heinz, Green Bay, and Aunt Jane corporation and their pickle growers in Ohio and Michigan were subsequently signed. In all, over 7,000 workers are now represented by FLOC under union contracts.

One grower near New Bern, N.C. said, "The North won the War on paper but we confederates actually won because we kept our slaves. First we had sharecroppers, then tenant farmers and now we have Mexicans."

In subsequent years, all contracts were renewed. Perhaps one of the most important features of these contracts was that they formally eliminated sharecropping arrangements. All workers were now clearly classified as paid employees with a minimum earnings guarantee. They also received incentives for quantity and quality of the cucumbers picked. In addition, they received workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and social security. Clauses were also included that provided field sanitation facilities and protections against pesticides. Furthermore, only workers 15 and older could be employed, thus contractually eliminating child labor. "Elimination of the sharecropping system was was won by farmworkers," Velasquez says, "not by lawyers or politicians."

Organizing in North Carolina With farmworkers in all the major pickle operations in the Midwest under contract, FLOC has turned its attention to North Carolina, where most of the same companies also have pickle operations. Over 1,000 migrant workers in North Carolina have signed union authorization cards asking FLOC to represent them. Many labor, church, and civic organizations have endorsed FLOC's efforts to bring the same self-determination and improved conditions achieved by Midwestern farmworkers to North Carolina.

The conditions of farmworkers in North Carolina are among the poorest and most oppressive in the nation. The workers are supportive of FLOC's efforts, but are afraid because of grower intimidation. One grower near New Bern said, "The North won the War on paper but we confederates actually won because we kept our slaves. First we had sharecroppers, then tenant farmers and now we have Mexicans." A grower in Harnet County said that the H2-A (foreign "Guest Worker") Association owned the workers, and that he could not talk with FLOC representatives without going through the Association.

In Pink Hill, about 100 H-2A workers escaped their grower under the cover of darkness. They were forced to work a 14hour day with only one half-hour break. This break consisted of getting on a bus driving from the field to the camp, eating lunch, and driving back to the field. They said they had no mattresses or sheets. One worker who was interviewed was identified as "Worker #4." All the workers in the field had hats with their numbers. The grower is known among the workers as El Diablo (the Devil). There are rumors that he has held workers at gunpoint, has beaten workers, and has bragged about having a graveyard for

Most of the above history comes from W.K. Barger and Ernesto Reza, *The Farm Labor Movement in theMidwest* (U. of Texas Press, 1994). Mike Ferner of FLOC and Matt Emmick of the National Farm Worker Ministry contributed to the material on North Carolina. For more information on FLOC contact: <www.iupui.edu/~floc>.

workers who can't keep up — though he swears he is an upstanding individual.

In June 1998, FLOC leaders, farmworkers, and farm labor supporters from area and national churches, organized labor, and other groups concerned with justice, marched from Mt. Olive, N.C. to Raleigh to call attention to the need for self-determination among North Carolina's farmworkers.

Velasquez said, "This march is to focus the conscience of the country on how immigrant laborers in America are forced to live and work. We believe that in order to start changing the public policy that leads to such notorious conditions in agriculture, we must negotiate directly with the parties that have the power to make change. In North Carolina that means corporations like the Mt. Olive Company, with the resources and the obligation to initiate desperately needed improvements in wages and conditions."

He also stated, "This fight is not about overpowering an opponent. This fight is not about doing someone else in. It's about reconciling the oppressed with the oppressor. It's about reconciling the exploiter with the exploited - for everyone's good. We're not here to castigate anyone as an enemy. I've met with (Mt. Olive CEO) Bill Bryan twice. He's an amicable man doing his business. But at some point, Mr. Bryan and the executives there have to talk and reconcile the differences between us." He also said, "Bill Bryan is saying the farmworkers are not company employees, just like Campbell's CEO did 20 years ago. It took a six-year boycott to make our point, but eventually we succeeded. We have more time than the company has money."

James Andrews, state AFL-CIO president, pledged the support of his 150,000 members "today, tomorrow, and as long as it takes to get justice for those folks that work every day in the fields."

The executive director of the National



The Gleaners by Jean-Francois Millet, 1857

Louvre, Paris

Farm Worker Ministry, Virginia Nesmith, brought her organization's backing with her from St. Louis, stating, "We walk with a God that has always walked with those who want to go from darkness into light, from slavery into freedom, and from fear into truth."

Mt. Olive officials have thus far refused to bargain a contract with FLOC to improve the wages and conditions of the migrant workers who harvest pickling cucumbers for the firm. In October 1998, a group of FLOC, religious, labor and local citizens met in Raleigh to discuss plans for a national boycott of Mt. Olive Pickles. Velasquez explained, "We are confident that Mt. Olive CEO William Bryan will eventually come to the table because FLOC is in North Carolina to stay. If it takes a national consumer boycott of Mt. Olive products to get his attention, this meeting takes us one step closer to that. Mr. Bryan can sit down with us at the table now, or after a crippling national boycott of his company's products. But one way or the other, we will win a contract!"

Mt. Olive Pickle is the largest pickle company in the South, and second in the U.S. behind Vlasic Corporation. Although the firm has traditionally marketed its products only in the South, it has recently begun an aggressive sales campaign in major Midwest cities, making it more vulnerable to a boycott, according to FLOC. The meeting concluded with an agreement to begin a nationwide consumer boycott of Mt. Olive products on March 17, 1999 if the pickle giant has not yet signed an agreement.

"Between now and St. Patrick's Day," Velasquez says, "we will be appearing before church conferences and union conventions to build support, and meeting in the homes of hundreds of supporters in cities and towns across the country. When we announce the boycott, it will not be called off until an agreement is signed."

Healthy farms, healthy kids

by Michelle Mascarenhas and Robert Gottleib

while across America, kids' stomachs are rumbling, sometimes from hunger, sometimes from eating unhealth-ful foods, many youth, parents, teachers, principals and even food service directors are starting a rumble to revolutionize school food services.

Schools have become a food security battleground. The high fat, high salt, caffeine-laden diets that prevail among school-age children have created a schools-food paradox; whether the kids get too many or too few calories, the food that school-age children eat intensifies rather than solves problems of food insecurity.

Why is this so? For one, many children are overweight and/or undernourished. Second, what is offered in the schools is often the only meal available for many school kids. Food insecurity is a condition that far too many low-income children confront daily, both inside and outside the schools.

But there is hope. The problem of access to fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate food in schools can be addressed through innovative food security strategies. These include programs to improve school nutrition, buy from local farmers, start school gardens, and train high school students to become entrepreneurs to improve the food system in their communities. These types of programs exemplify how using locally grown sources can provide high-quality food for school children while strengthening local food systems.

Why school meal programs? In the first half of this century, the U.S. Armed Services began noticing marked malnutrition among military recruits and draftees. Malnourished as children, many of these men had developed health problems that made them unfit to serve during wartime.

Fast food and junk food companies also often pay for advertising in "educational" videos that are shown in classrooms. Thus, fast food is often legitimized by the schools as much as it is in the larger society.

In order to reduce the alarming rate of malnourished children, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) started the National School Lunch Program in order to assure that every child would receive at least one meal each day. The National School Breakfast Program was instituted with the recognition that all children, regardless of income, need breakfast in order to concentrate on learning.

These programs assure a free or reduced-price breakfast or lunch for children in families meeting certain income eligibility requirements. They also assure the school districts and other agencies that administer the programs a reimbursement for every meal served under the guidelines.

But today, as they see what is being served in school cafeterias in their communities, many concerned adults are asking, "What happened to the goal of serving meals to help make children healthy?"

In many school districts across the country, food services have shifted from operating under a mission to provide nutritious meals to children to a mission to generate sufficient revenues to cover costs. In their book, What Are We Feeding Our Kids?, Michael Jacobson and Bruce Maxwell describe the current framework under which school food services often operate. As a consequence of perceived financial constraints, many food service directors have chosen to contract out to fast food chains, sell soda and chips to generate additional revenue, sell exclusive contracts to brand-name junk food producers, or purchase the cheapest possible products which meet the USDA guidelines for school meals.

Faced with cutbacks in funding, many school food services have chosen to:

• select the lowest-priced bid without heavily weighing in quality or freshness;

• reduce labor at the school site and purchase preprocessed foods or foods which are prepared at a central kitchen, taking control away from the school site and giving it to the central administrators;

• privatize school functions by providing exclusive contracts to companies such as Coke or Pepsi in exchange for donated amenities such as sports scoreboards. In early 1998, a student at Greenbriar High School in Evans, Ga. was suspended for wearing a Pepsi shirt on his school's "Coke day." School officials had launched Coke day in order to show regional Coke officials that the school was highlighting

Michelle Mascarenhas is the Project Manager of the Community Food Security Project at Occidental College, <mm@oxy.edu>. Robert Gottleib is Professor of Urban Environmental Studies at Occidental College. This article appeared in *Community Food Security News*, Fall, 1998. Artist Mary Azarian's work can be obtained from Farmhouse Press, RD2, Box 831, Plainfield, VT 95667.

Coke in order to win a \$500 contest.

Fast food and junk food companies also often pay for advertising in "educational" videos that are shown in classrooms. Thus, fast food is often legitimized by the schools as much as it is in the larger society.

Some observers have noted that many eligible children do not use federal meal programs because they simply do not like the food. At the same time, because children are bombarded with advertising for fast food and junk food, they often request these brand name foods at school and choose them over healthier, unbranded choices which do not have catchy messages attached to them.

The impact of poor nutrition on children is staggering. Having a poor diet during childhood can contribute to obesity, anemia, susceptibility to lead poisoning, and poor school performance. In contrast, those children who eat fresh fruits and vegetables can get a head start in reducing their future risk of certain cancers, heart disease, hypertension, and other chronic diseases. The ability to learn and function more effectively is also strongly linked to diet.

Innovations in school meals

Innovative school districts and community members are doing the following to increase access to fresh, nutritious, culturally appropriate foods in schools:

• using locally grown and/or locally prepared food in the cafeteria;

• educating students about where food comes from through school gardens and farm tours;

• involving students in preparing culturally appropriate and nutritious meals;

• helping students develop life skills through cooking classes, gardening and nutrition education.

In Los Angeles, the Occidental College Community Food Security Project launched a successful Farmers' Market Salad Bar in the 1997-1998 school year at



Farmhouse pantry by Mary Azarian

a school where half the students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The program was extremely successful at getting kids to make healthy choices because the food was freshly harvested by local farmers and chopped with love by parents and staff.

School gardens have also become a popular strategy for connecting children directly to producing fresh foods, learning about nutrition, health and the environment in the process. In many schools, gardens are used as outdoor classrooms for math, science, biology, reading and writing lessons.

On the national level, the USDA and other federal agencies can encourage buying produce from local farmers. Recognizing this, the USDA has launched a small scale "farm-to-school" initiative. This initiative now needs to be expanded in order to identify and begin addressing the barriers to farmers and school produce buyers making local connections. For instance, some districts have found that USDA "standard pack and grade" restrictions limit a small farmer's access to school markets. The USDA should study this and other such barriers and work with farmers, school districts and food security advocates to develop solutions. Finally, the USDA should support and publicize pilot projects such as farmers' market purchasing programs.

Today, many teachers and school nurses complain that the cafeteria often undercuts their efforts to educate students to make healthy choices. At the state level, education departments should work with health departments to integrate the mission of providing food to children with the mission of improving child health.

At the local level, this would translate into an integration of nutrition education and growing healthy food in the garden with serving fresh, nutritious and tasty food in the cafeteria. This may mean bringing cafeteria staff into the classroom to conduct cooking classes or involving parents in the development of the menus so that nutrition education is conducted for the whole family.

'In that great gettin' up morning': an anniversary interview with Barbara Harris

by Julie A. Wortman

Julie A. Wortman: On February 11, 1989, you were consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts, becoming the first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion. I was one of the hundreds of Episcopalians from all over the country who crowded into that cavernous public auditorium near Copley Square for the occasion. Scores of ordained woman, in particular, made it their business to vest so that they could be part of the opening procession - it took at least a half hour, if not longer, before all the visiting and local clergy had filed in. And then there was the ripple of applause that announced that, although most in the congregation couldn't yet see you, you had finally entered the hall. Everyone who was there will have their own memories of that event, but after 10 years, what do you remember best about that historic service?

Barbara Harris: Much of it remains, but the most dramatic thing for me was walking into that auditorium in the procession, seeing that throng of people, which I did not anticipate, and hearing people calling my name, calling out, "We love you," and applauding. It was humbling, it was moving, it was overwhelming.

The other thing that sticks in my mind was that I was to come in on some very stately music and the timing got a little out of sync and the St. Paul A.M.E. choir was supposed to have finished the pre-service

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



music, but as our part of the procession came in, they were singing, "In that great gettin' up morning" and "Ride on, King Jesus." And I said to Ed Rodman, who was one of my attending presbyters, "What a hell of a welcome!"

J.W.: Do you have a sense of what your consecration meant to people then? B.H.: For many, my consecration was the beginning of the completion of the ordained ministry. But for some I became something of an icon. In a *Witness* article

I think many people hoped that I would speak to issues that were important to them in a way that was going to make a difference. But although I could speak to the issues, and I did, it was unreal to imagine that alone I could make any dramatic change.

at the time Carter Heyward very wisely cautioned people about placing unreal expectations and demands on me as one person who could not fulfill all their hopes. **J.W.:** What do you think people hoped? Afterall, before you were elected bishop you were associated with *The Witness* and had a pretty good reputation as a rabble rouser, a troublemaker.

B.H.: I think many people hoped that I would speak to issues that were important to them in a way that was going to make a difference. But although I could speak to the issues, and I did, it was unreal to imagine that alone I could make any

dramatic change. I found that out very early in the House of Bishops because as the only woman there I could be ignored. And for much of that first one or two years, I think I was.

J.W.: What are the issues to which you have given the greatest attention during these past 10 years?

B.H.: Certainly, one of my concerns has been that we be a more inclusive church. But I've also been concerned with issues such as the death penalty, with issues of quality education for children, affirmative action, and equality of opportunity which we have not addressed fully.

I have a particular concern about increasing the number of people of color in the ordained ministry and to that end, along with my diocesan bishop here in Massachusetts, Tom Shaw, and the bishops of Ohio and Los Angeles, we are hosting a conference for young people of color to explore vocations and ministry in the Episcopal Church.

J.W.: I have heard it said that the church is not a friendly place for someone who is a person of color pursuing ordination. Do you think it is?

B.H.: Historically the church has not been friendly to people of color. I think there are places in the church that are serious today about embracing people of color in the ordained ministry because there is a realization that they are needed if the church is going to grow among people of color and thereby give legitimacy to the church's claim of being catholic.

J.W.: Did becoming a bishop change your ability to be a rabble rouser? What kind of shift did that entail?

B.H.: The shift has come in that you don't have the freedom to move and do what you could do in a less structured role. You get elected to be a bishop to a much broader constituency and your actions get tempered whether you want them to or not, by virtue of the role to which you have been elected. And certainly, as a suffragan bishop, I didn't have the power of a diocesan bishop.

J.W.: Is there any opportunity, any possibility, that the Episcopal Church is going to be a place where things are

going to be turned upside-down?

B.H.: I don't know that the church will ever turn things really upside-down the way that we would like to see them turned upside-down. But I think one good barometer of where the church is, is to

track the votes in the House of Deputies. At the last General Convention in Philadelphia in 1997 a vote on blessing samesex unions lost by one vote in each order. That was a pretty good barometer for me that the church is not as far to the right as it sometimes appears. I think the voices on the right are strident, but their intensity is out of proportion to their numbers. Unless the makeup of the House of Deputies changes drastically between now and the next General Convention in Denver in 2000, that vote might be positive next time.

J.W.: I'm kind of hopeful that there will be something significant around the issue of money and debt coming up at General Convention 2000 - especially following Lambeth's call for forgiveness of third-world debt. Do you have a sense that that's likely to be the case?

B.H.: With the subject having been so thoroughly addressed at Lambeth, I would hope that the bishops would take some leadership in bringing that issue to the church in a way that the church could make a positive

response, be energized to take this issue and claim it as one for which the church has some responsibility. But that leadership, and the teaching surrounding that, needs to come from bishops who were exposed to this issue in depth at Lambeth. If we fail to take on that issue and if we allow sexuality and the ordination of women to dominate the convention in Denver, then we will have missed the opportunity to fulfill our responsibility as Christians concerned for the lives of fellow Christians in developing countries and foreign nations. I would be content with less legislation, fewer resolutions, and to see a commitment emerge to really positively tackle this whole issue of international debt by in some way addressing the people responsible in and



Barbara Harris

for monetary funds, the World Bank and others. If we could get church people to engage them, and our legislators on the national and state and local levels, that would be a marvelous piece of ministry. J.W.: It surely would. Who are your allies these days as you work for justice?

B.H.: Well primarily my allies are in the church and I find them in such coalitions as the Consultation, the Urban Caucus, the Massachusetts Council of Churches and individuals in the Episcopal Church and other denominations who have a

keen sense of justice issues.

J.W.: Do you find you have allies among progressive male bishops? Is the Urban Bishops' Coalition still a force?

B.H.: The Urban Bishops' Coalition has gone by the boards. Two of its strongest

> leaders are no longer in the House - John Walker of Washington, D.C. is dead and Arthur Walmsely of Connecticut is retired. There are still bishops in the House who stand for the progressive values the Urban Bishops' Coalition held up, but they are not a real force, because they are not very organized. And because of the emphasis in recent years on being polite and collegial, I think the progressive bishops are reluctant to take decisive action that might be seen as strategizing. Progressive people, it seems, still want to give a hearing to all sides. Meanwhile, more conservative people tend to ramrod their views through and that is why they were successful at Lambeth on the anti-gay and anti-women's ordination votes [See TW 9/98, 10/98 and 11/98].

> J.W .: When in your work are you the happiest? When do you feel like you're most yourself?

> B.H.: When I can address issues of public policy in light of the Gospel. That's when I feel that I am doing what God has called me to do. And that is very fulfilling. I have been absolutely, singularly

blessed in the past four years to work with Tom Shaw as my diocesan bishop. The team ministry that we share has opened up many more opportunities for me to be the person that was consecrated 10 years ago than was possible early on in my episcopacy.

J.W.: And preaching is one big piece of that?

B.H.: Yes, it is. I have many opportunities to preach and I try to use those opportunities to the fullest extent and I try to bring into all of my sermons what I feel

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is the gospel call to justice. So that as I speak to a group about stewardship, I talk about investing in the church, and investing in peace, investing in justice. I consider that God has given me a gift to speak clearly and that it is my responsibility to use that gift.

J.W .: In using that gift you've been an important mentor to many in the church. But who have been your mentors?

B.H.: I've always looked to my clergy mentors. My rector, Paul Washington; Van Bird, who was so instrumental in my formation as I was preparing for ordination. I consider Sue Hiatt a mentor because of her very clear understanding of ministry and particularly of women's ministry. I count some women of color in other denominations as mentors despite the fact that my personal contact with them is limited, but I have occasions to hear them and read their writings. Women like Delores Williams, Jacqueline Grant, Katie Cannon, Joan Martin, Ella Mitchell.

J.W .: You mention people from other denominations from whom you learn. What do you think the future of denominationalism is? There are some people who are saying a period of postdenominationalism is emerging.

B.H.: That eventually may be true, but I would think it is some years away in that denominations are wedded to preserving institutions and guard them almost jealously. Efforts at ecumenism have been in most instances furtive, without a lot of depth. Even this whole series of covenants and concordats have not really plumbed the depths of being together as Christians in a really meaningful way, in ways that could shape and change things in the world.

J.W .: What would be necessary to get to something like that?

B.H.: For me it would mean a serious commitment to working together in a coalesced effort that didn't require any one group to get credit for what was undertaken and to address issues in a way that our present statements don't do. because our present statements get so watered down as we try to appease all of the constituencies and all the factions

involved. If we could do away with watereddown statements and say we're going to roll up our sleeves and take some concerted action that was "full speed ahead and damn the torpedoes!" it could make a difference. That to me would be serious ecumenism.

J.W.: Do you see any signs that young people are taking on the work for justice? B.H.: I went to a conference on economic justice recently where younger people played an impressive role. And a young

Many young people operate outside of the church because for them the church is not willing or able to move in the forceful, dramatic ways that are needed to make a difference.

lawyer I've known from childhood is using his legal abilities for a coffee cooperative. To see young people like these seriously moving on issues is a hopeful sign.

If young investment brokers and young lawyers like my friend and young people in other professions could come together and look at the stake that we all have in rectifying the power imbalances, the economic imbalances, the environmental imbalances, and the educational imbalances in our communities it would be wonderful. But many of these young people operate outside of the church because for them the church is not willing or able to move in the forceful, dramatic ways that are needed to make a difference. Within the church they're not freed up enough to move the way they see that we need to move to address these issues. I would say that it's because we are wedded to preserving the institution and we are using old models that no longer work. We are so busy trying to make nice, but you cannot temporize with injustice.

J.W.: So you're not seeing that new blood in the church.

B.H.: No. We've missed a generation in the church. In this diocese, we are making a conscious effort to develop leadership among young people who are still with us in the church and to provide a place for them to exercise that leadership. If we can successfully do that, we may hold on to some of these people who are going to be the professionals of a few years hence. We've created a youth leadership academy that begins with sophomores in high school who make a three-year commitment to this program. It's brand new. But if we can help that leadership to develop and emerge and repeat that successfully year after year, by taking a new group of sophomores in high school and keeping them involved by providing meaningful opportunities for them to exercise their gifts for leadership, maybe some new leadership will emerge. And that's where I'm pinning my hopes.

J.W.: The question that is frequently asked at anniversary moments like this is, what difference have women bishops made? B.H.: Oh, I think having women bishops has made a tremendous difference in that compared to the male bishops we tend to be more outspoken, more forthright, more honest in what we say on the occasions that we speak. I think, too, that we tend to demand greater accountability in the dialogue and in addressing issues.

Women have also made a big contribution to the church in other ways, which we musn't overlook. Women scholars, for example, have made a contribution to biblical criticism, to theological reflection, in ways that we did not see a quarter of a century ago. There has also been great cost, great personal cost. I think about the first 11 women ordained in the Episcopal Church. There was great personal cost to several of them. But they persevered and did not necessarily count that cost. So the gifts that women have brought to the corporate table, not just in the House of Bishops, have been tremendous. The very fact of our presence has made a difference and I think that the ministry of laywomen has been enlarged and emboldened by women's gains in the ordained ministry.

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

Remembering Frances Schwab and Mary Durham

In 1998 the Episcopal Church lost two elder activists, Frances Schwab and Marv Durham, both of whom will be sorely missed by their many friends and colleagues. Each was a staunch and enthusiastic supporter of The Witness.

Schwab, 85. died in May 1998 in Boston, Mass, A social worker, she became active in the Congress of Racial Equality during the 1960s and was one of the



Frances Schwab

early members of New England War Tax Resistance. She later joined the Christian pacifist group Ailanthus, which held protests against weapons development.

Schwab was a member of Boston's Church of the Advent and a member of St. Hilda's Fellowship, which she helped form in 1981. She was also an associate of the Episcopal Society of St. Margaret and member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

Mary Durham, died 89. in November 1998 in Beverly Hills, Mich., a suburb of Detroit. A member of the Society of the Companions of the



Mary Durham

A gathering of rural chaplains

The farm crisis in the U.S. again has reached a critical stage. It is known that the loss of family farms can function as a "seedbed" for unrest, community trauma and an increase in acts of hatred. violence and domestic abuse. Recent data from the Heartland Network, a United Methodist-related rural center serving annual conferences in the Midwest, indicates that the crisis in agricultural communities is deepening. For instance, on September 14, 1998, a Missouri farm sold a semi-trailer load of wheat in St. Louis for \$2.12 per bushel. After paying the trucker 32 cents per bushel, the farmer received \$1.80 per bushel. Last year that same farmer received \$3.74 per bushel, a decrease of 43 per cent in one year's time, with no drop in the costs of cultivation, seed, fertilizer, and other inputs. Between 1997 and 1998 most commodity prices have shown heavy decreases.

At the same time, in many rural communities, the loss of farms and home-town businesses, an unstable economic base, and emerging cultural diversity have resulted in racist responses and outright violence/terror, according to data collected by The Center for New Community, an ecumenical program working nationally and providing information on various kinds of violence and hate activities. Small towns and open country communities and their churches are often in denial of and rarely are equipped to deal with these kinds of prejudice and acts of violence.

The Rural Chaplains Association of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church is calling for a gathering early in 1999 to address these issues. This Gathering will provide updated information on the reality of the economic crisis now facing many farm families and will alert rural chaplains to potential acts of hate and violence. Organizers have set a goal for participants of at least 30 United Methodist chaplains and 30 other church and community leaders.

For more information, contact the Rural Chaplains Association, PO Box 29044, Columbus, Ohio 43229; telephone/fax 614-882-6067.

Holy Cross, she worked long and hard for women's full inclusion in the life of the church and was among the first women seated as deputies to General Convention - and continued to serve as a deputy to General Convention for many years afterwards.

Durham held numerous other diocesan and national church offices, including membership on the national Executive Council. She was a strong proponent of women's ordination and of racial and economic justice. At the time of her death she was actively involved in organizing a Michigan chapter of the Episcopal Women's Caucus.

Durham was a member of Christ Church Cranbrook, in Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

Stock given in memory of **Katharine Parker**

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company (ECPC), publisher of The Witness, is pleased to announce it has received a gift to its endowment fund of 200 shares of stock worth more than \$10,000. The gift is made in memory of Katharine Parker. an active Episcopalian, who felt called to the priesthood all her adult life. The Episcopal Church, however, did not allow women priests in time for Parker to pursue ordination.

Income from ECPC's investments. which are managed in a socially responsible manner, is crucial to the ongoing life of The Witness. The ECPC board and the magazine's staff are very appreciative of this gift and the support it represents for our work.

Honest, our revamped website is up and running!

Numerous readers contacted us to ask if our November announcement of a revamped website, complete with updates on co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's medical situation, was a hoax. It wasn't. Check out <www.thewitness.org>.

Sweet charity?

by Marianne Arbogast

Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement, by Janet Poppendieck, Viking, 1998.

▼ ood King Wenceslas was not so good after all, Janet Poppendieck suggests in her new book, Sweet Charity?, in which she challenges the growing institutionalization of "emergency" food programs and the disappearance of a government safety net. Instead of carrying food to the needy, Poppendieck asks, "suppose Wenceslas had turned his attention to mobilizing the poor of his kingdom to assert their rights to a fair share of the fruits of their toil, and to creating structures of mutual aid as a hedge against want." Then, of course, he might not have been regarded as quite so saintly, but in the long run, the poor would have been better off.

Poppendieck diagnoses our society as afflicted by "the Wenceslas syndrome," "the process by which the joys and demands of personal charity divert us from more fundamental solutions to the problems of deepening poverty and growing inequality, and the corresponding process by which the diversion of our efforts leaves the way open to those who want more inequality, not less."

Marianne Arbogast is *Witness* assistant editor, <marianne@thewitness.org>, and comanager of Manna Community Meal in Detroit, Mich.

revieu/

A sociologist, Poppendieck visited food pantries and soup kitchens across the country, interviewing staff and volunteers. The result is a provocative history of the proliferation of emergency food programs since the early 1980s, a description of their shortcomings and inadequacy as a centerpiece of social policy, and a challenging analysis of their usefulness to an array of societal interests — some benign and others highly questionable.

Poppendieck believes that the side benefits of soup kitchens and food pantries are so numerous that "if we didn't have hunger, we'd have to invent it."

Poppendieck believes that the institutionalization of emergency food programs has been abetted by their ability to fulfill a host of functions beyond their apparent primary purpose - from waste reduction to community service opportunities to support for the right-wing claim that volunteerism is a viable alternative to government protection of economic rights. She devotes a whole chapter of her book to describing the many benefits experienced by volunteers in food programs: companionship, physical exercise, a sense of purpose and a way to relieve the guilt of privilege. In her view, the side benefits of soup kitchens and food pantries are so numerous that "if we didn't have hunger, we'd have to invent it."

As Poppendieck explains, "emergency food" has become a euphemism. Large

numbers of people rely on soup kitchens and food pantries not to tide them over temporary crises, but as normal, ongoing sources of food. Food banks build their own facilities and engage in long-term planning and development as efficiently as any business corporation.

Poppendieck offers a compelling critique of "hunger" as the way we identify the problem.

"We need to avoid getting caught up in debates like those that characterized the hunger wars of the mid 1980s, about whether people are actually hungry, because it is the wrong question. A program or policy that tries only to prevent acute hunger is aiming too low. ... We need to aim for the creation of a just and inclusive society that taps everyone's potential and makes us all better off in the long run, not just a society where no one starves."

It would be hard to respond to this with anything but a resounding "amen." That is the book's strength — and its weakness. As a passionate affirmation of human dignity and equality — and a warning that these values may be imperiled when emergency food becomes the norm — Poppendieck's work is challenging and inspirational. What it doesn't offer is a practical alternative course of action.

At times, Poppendieck seems to imply that government entitlement programs can accomplish what needs to be done. She defends food stamps, pointing out their drawbacks — from insufficient allotments to the hassle involved in the application process — but implying that these could be remedied. At other times, her perspective seems broader, but is spelled out only in the vaguest of terms. For instance, she puts forth this vision:

"Imagine that we opened community dinner programs in our public schools, where parents picking up their children from after-school programs could share a meal with them, where senior citizens could enjoy an inexpensive night out, where teenagers could learn culinary skills and earn a little spending money, where local artists could display their work and musicians could perform and poets could read. Suppose that churches and synagogues could purchase tickets for such meals and distribute them to the hungry people who now congregate in their soup kitchens and food pantries so that these people will be less isolated, more integrated with the larger community."

I'd like that, too. But right now, the hungry people at the soup kitchen where I work can barely co-exist in the same building with a social service agency doing street outreach to women. In the space of one week, as a recent letter from their director protested, they had to contend with one of our mentally ill guests who exposed himself to women on their doorstep; another - alcoholic as well as mentally ill who screams continually, claims to have head lice and is trying to spread them to others; and a parking lot drama in which two men — armed with a knife and a metal pipe — came after one of our guests who had stolen something from their car.

I resonate with the spirit of Poppendieck's vision, but it seems more an image of the heavenly banquet than an action plan for the foreseeable future. Hunger in the U.S. is related not only to economic inequality, but to mental illness, substance abuse and other problems that afflict our entire society and need to be addressed on many levels.

Poppendieck expresses optimism about the potential for building a movement around "an inclusive vision of economic fairness and security," that "will integrate rather than segregate poor people, that will cast them in the role of fellow workers for the greater good rather than grateful recipients of our exertions on their behalf." She doesn't insist that we all drop our soup ladles and pick up our pens or placards; she does endorse models of cooperation and the integration of poor people into meaningful roles — values that many involved in soup kitchens and pantries hold deeply and find painfully difficult to implement.

The Catholic Worker has always argued for radical social change, even while making soup. Although our volunteers at Manna Community Meal span the political spectrum, I seriously doubt that any are tempted to regard the soup kitchen as a solution to poverty or hunger. Most are deeply concerned about preserving the dignity of our guests. Many are committed to political work with organizations like Bread for the World or Pax Christi. When we speak to church or school groups, we talk about the arms build-up and misplaced government priorities. For three years now, we have turned down interview requests with reporters from the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*, in support of their striking workers. These are small steps toward economic justice, but they are the ones we can see before us — as we also see before us the faces of brothers and sisters who are hungry today.

Many of us look for inspiration to saints other than Wenceslas. Dorothy Day liked to quote Vincent de Paul, who admonished that we need forgiveness for the bread we give the poor. And there's Dom Helder Camara, who observed that "If you feed the poor, they call you a saint; if you ask why people are poor, they call you a communist." We believe we need to do both.

Still, it is worth considering whether the growing numbers and respectability of soup kitchens, food pantries and food banks are dulling our sensitivity to the scandal of the need for them. If Poppendieck's book inspires more people to ask why people are poor, and to be alert to ways of fostering change, it will have served a good purpose.

BACK ISSUES

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In the midst of today's critical showdown between independent, family-owned producers and agricorporations, Missouri farm crisis activist Rhonda Perry relies on the power of what she calls "transformational organizing" to defeat the seemingly invincible profit-hungry agri-giants. It's an approach she has learned over a decade of working and worshiping with black urban congregations — congregations who since the late 1980s have been steadfast in supporting Missouri farm families in their fight to stay on their land.

"Five Kansas City (Mo.) churches were the places that supported the farmers in 1986," Perry says, referring to the historic 145-day action in Chillicothe, Mo., when farmers took overaU.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) office to protest unfair lending policies made unendurable by the unjust actions of a federal administrator.

"The ministers of these black urban congregations saw this as an opportunity to really link up — a way to fight the growing right-wing racist activities of the rural posses of that time. For many of the farmers this was their first experience where black preachers were on the courthouse steps with them. It was their first experience with understanding that you can't work for justice in isolation, but that you have to figure out ways for everyone seeking justice to work together. The black churches were there for the farmers and that changed the farmers. The rural churches in our own [white] communities were not there."

Perry is program director for the Mis-

Witnesses, the quick and the deed

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

"For many farmers, working with the black churches was their first experience with understanding that you can't work for justice in isolation, but that you have to figure out ways for everyone seeking justice to work together."



Rhonda Perry

Organizing in the midst of rural crisis by Julie A. Wortman

souri Rural Crisis Center (MRCC), a group created by Roger Allison to organize the Chillicothe protest. After Chillicothe, MRCC played a leading role in securing lending reform through passage of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1987, a bill that saved thousands of family farms with its common sense requirement that restructuring a farmer's loan must take precedence over foreclosing when restructuring the loan costs the government less than foreclosing would.

"The government had been foreclosing left and right, at a cost of billions of dollars," says Perry. "And there was no system by which borrowers could appeal. It didn't matter if you were a good farmer or what your cash flow situation was."

Perry's parents, Ron and Joyce Perry, were founding members of MRCC — and were among those who were able to save their farm because of the new legislation. Away at college studying psychology during the Chillicothe action, Perry remembers watching from afar as her once staunchly conservative parents were transformed by their work with MRCC into progressive grassroots activists of a Jesse Jackson stripe.

"Jesse Jackson played a major role in channeling farmers' energies and their anger toward progressive farm organization," Perry explains. "He had a message of hope that meant a lot to farmers."

Perry's own conversion to farm organizing work came during a visit home to Missouri a few years later — she had abandoned a master's program in psychology and was traveling from temporary job to temporary job around Montana in the process of figuring out what else to do. Her parents urged her to attend an MRCC annual meeting.

Perry relishes the memory: "The keynote speaker was a preacher from Kansas City talking about 500 years of resistance Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

and how we all had to work together. The farmers were pretty uncertain at first, but by the end of this guy's talk everyone was on their feet, wildly applauding. Right then and there I decided that this is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life."

The next Monday she quit her job and signed on with MRCC. "I had to run a phone canvass to raise the money for my keep!" Perry laughs.

Roger Allison, MRCC's founder and current executive director, eventually became her husband. Together, in addition to working for MRCC, they now also operate an 800-acre farm of their own on which, among other things, they raise hogs.

MRCC membership has steadily grown since Allison created it in 1985. At the beginning of 1988, 438 families belonged. Today, MRCC claims over 3700 families statewide. A core group of over 100 leaders is actively involved in developing chapters and program committees. About 75 percent of MRCC's membership lives at or below the poverty level, prompting a strong organizational focus on economic development and food cooperative programs that emphasize community-supported agriculture. The coops currently supply highquality, reasonably priced food to over 1,000 limited-resource rural families each month.

But in the current economic climate, with every agricultural commodity being produced at a substantial loss to producers as the multinational agricorporations overproduce and wait out competitors in the battle for market share (and while consumers continue to pay high prices for their food), MRCC faces a daunting uphill battle in its quest to preserve family farms. Resistance to the federal government-encouraged corporate takeover of agriculture, especially to the industrialization of livestock production and the environmental destruction associated with it, has become a prime focus of MRCC energies, involving determined coalition building

with environmental and animal welfare groups. (Traditional hog farmers like Perry and Allison don't apologize for raising animals for slaughter, but they do oppose raising animals in confining misery and injecting them with hormones and synthetic growth promoters and feeding them antibiotic-laden feed and water.) In 1995, for example, MRCC kicked off a highprofile campaign against factory farms called Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment and in 1996 the group spearheaded a successful legislative fight to create buffer zones around hog factories, provide a bonding fund for the cleanup of waste cesspools, establish a notification process for neighbors of proposed facilities and provide for community controls.

"Corporatization is not based on consumer demand."

But the centerpiece of MRCC's efforts has been its Patchwork Family Farms project, a cooperative of family hog farms that raise their animals in a traditional way according to strict environmental and animal welfare standards. The Patchwork producers are paid 15 percent more per hog than they would get at market and never less than 43 cents a pound (the current market price is 16 cents per pound).

"Patchwork produces clean meat and the animals are raised humanely," Perry says with pride. "We haven't found anybody yet who has said, 'I'm only going to buy meat raised by a corporation!' Our meat tastes better and the price is competitive. Corporatization is not based on consumer demand."

The Patchwork Family Farms cooperative has no shortage of farmers wishing to participate, but developing the storage and transportation components of the operation has been a slow process. A grant from the Episcopal Church's Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief in the aftermath of the 1993 flood disaster made it possible to buy a 21-foot freezer truck that was a godsend to the enterprise.

"Our analysis was that the reason so many farmers got wiped out by the flood was because they were on the edge anyway," Perry says. "So we were looking for ways to make farmers economically viable."

More recently, MRCC has received a \$195,000 three-year grant from the USDA that will pay for two part-time sales people, a second delivery truck, a driver and a full-time Patchwork project coordinator who will oversee production, labeling and processing of the Patchwork products. Last year, Patchwork sales amounted to \$130,000, a figure Perry hopes will double over the next three years.

Perry and the other Patchwork farmers also regularly take their products to church — namely to the five Kansas City congregations who participated with MRCC in the Chillicothe protest a dozen years ago.

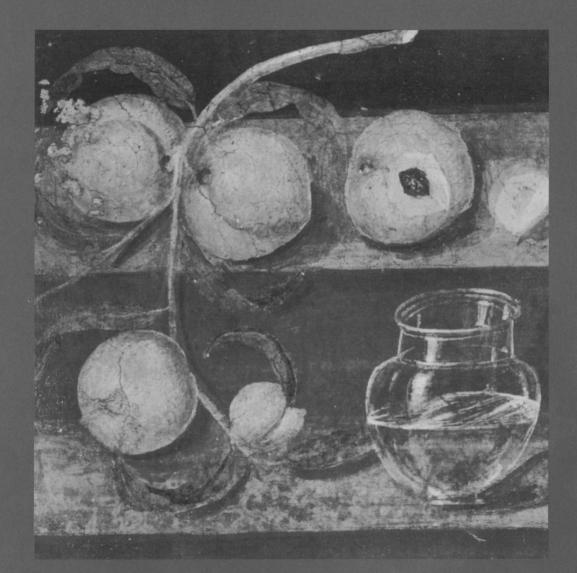
"But we don't just come to sell Patchwork," Perry stresses. "We come to go to church. These people have become our friends. Every year we bring them to our farms and every year they bring us in to the city for Martin Luther King Day."

Worshiping in these congregations, Perry admits, has become her chief source of spiritual nurture.

She returns to her emphasis on transformation: "These churches are about transformational organizing. They are talking about the issues that are facing their community and about coming together to do something about them."

Perry pauses for a moment to reflect on why these are the churches that have replaced the ones of her Southern Baptist heritage.

"Once you have that kind of church experience," she says at last, "it is hard to go back. It is hard to go to a place where the people talk about the Bible but nothing else."

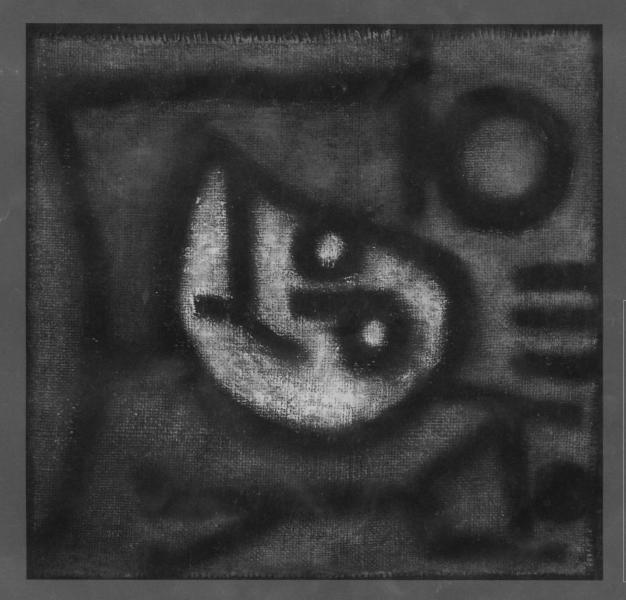


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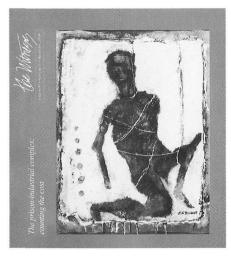
HIV/AIDS: Overcoming religious barriers to prevention



Volume 82 • Number 3 • March 1999

The prison-industrial complex

I AM WRITING to comment on the excellent series of articles about the prison-industrial complex in the November, 1998, issue of *The Witness*. I am an Episcopal seminary graduate student at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. I have also been an inmate in a California state prison for over 13 years, since I was 17 years old. I have lived through the explosive growth of the prison system, with the corresponding decline of meaningful rehabilitative programs. My experience has given me an intimate perspective



on the substantial topics raised in your last issue.

The fiduciary incentives for building prisons is clearly a problem in California, where corrections is big business. Over the last 15

Classifieds

Order of Jonathan Daniels

letter

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order of persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 8374, Richmond, VA 23226 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

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Be part of the advocacy for full inclusion of gays and lesbians within the church by attending "Beyond Inclusion: Making the Justice Connections," April 15-18, 1999 at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York. Presentations will be made by The Rt. Rev. Bennett J. Sims, "From Convention to Conviction"; The Rev. Dr. Renee L. Hill, "Homophobia, Racism, Sexism: A Complex Design"; and Dr. Deirdre J. Good, "The Use of the Bible in Debates about Same-Sex Unions." There will also be a variety of workshops conducted by an exciting line-up of leaders of the church. For more information and materials, contact: Beyond Inclusion, 132 N. Euclid Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101; (626) 583-2740; or check our website at <www.beyondinclusion.org>.

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Classifieds

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years, the number of California prisons has increased fourfold and the inmate population has outpaced that growth, rapidly approaching 200 percent capacity. In the same period of time, California has moved from first place to last among states ranked for public school quality. The California Correctional Peace Officers' Association (CCPOA), representing the prison guards, is the most powerful union in our state. Their backing has made a significant difference for the last five elected governors. The CCPOA has also successfully supported numerous "tough-on-crime" bills, like the three-strikes initiative, which disproportionately target minorities. You could not find a clearer example of a political force ensuring its future viability. Corrections is one of the largest industries in this state and it has a vested interest in recidivism.

While your series of articles clearly, and eloquently, defines many of the problems with the current system, I believe the tone of the proposed solutions hinders the movement for change. Yes, most inmates do come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Broken homes, poverty, substandard education, crime-ridden neighborhoods and substance abuse are common denominators among the prison population. Yet, casting criminals as victims of society undercuts the responsibility they must take for their actions.

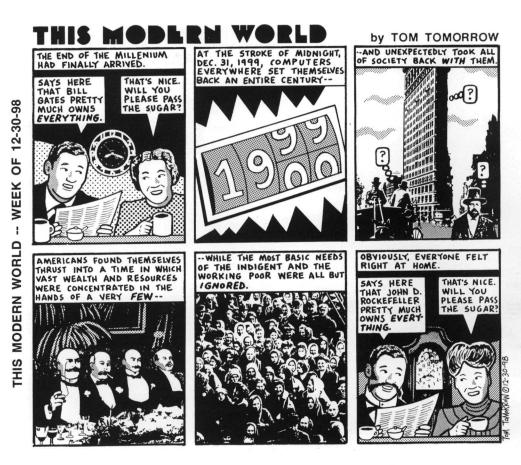
Excusing and mitigating criminal behavior, because of a person's background, is nearly as dehumanizing, in a subtle way, as the current conditions within our prisons. It sends the message, "You are incapable of rising above your background. We don't expect more from you." Alternatively, the system sends the message, "You don't want to change. We expect the worst from you." The first sounds patronizing, the second sounds harsh. Both extremes deny the dignity of accountability and remove the possibility of transformation. To have both justice and mercy, responsibility and reconciliation, we must find a middle ground.

There certainly is a pressing need for compassion and thoughtful dialog to effect systemic change for crime victims and criminals. It is the strategy that I question. We seem to be caught between well-meaning, sympathetic liberals, who want to treat criminals rather than jail them, and right-wing, ultra conservatives, who want to lock people up and throw away the key. These two minority camps do not speak the same language and will never truly communicate with each other. Presently, it is easier for the vast, silent majority in the middle to err on the side of caution, allowing politicians to continue warehousing people.

The majority of Americans do not care whether a criminal comes from a disadvantaged background and they do want criminals to be punished. Hardly a day passes when I am not horrified by gruesome images of violent crime on the evening news. Although I am aware that FBI statistics report violent crime at a 25-year low, the flood of sensationalized media makes it difficult to believe. The middle majority cares about their tax dollars and, currently, they are being manipulated into believing that they are getting the best return for their investment. The rational evidence proves this to be untrue, but that message is not getting across to the majority of voters. Convincing the middle that crime and recidivism can be reduced for less money is the only practical way to change the current system. Political rhetoric will follow the majority vote.

Conditions within state prisons are driven by the political sound bite. Conditions within private prisons are driven by the profit margin. Neither possess a central mission of rehabilitation and reconciliation. I propose a third alternative: private, nonprofit correctional facilities run by social service agencies, charitable organizations and/or churches. Nonprofit organizations are guided by their mission statements. In this case, the primary missions would be accountability, rehabilitation, restitution, reconciliation and community healing. Like the private prisons, a nonprofit facility can operate at a lower cost than state prisons, thus providing an incentive to taxpayers. But without the profit motive, considerable resources would be available for innovative programs to reduce recidivism.

Our Episcopal Church has a long tradition of standing in the bridge position, finding the middle ground where people can come together. In a nation polarized by the effects of crime, we are called to leadership in facilitating communication. This will require honest dialog, realistic solutions, and a willingness



to face many of our deepest fears and prejudices. Crime victims will not find healing without a measure of justice. Criminals will not find reconciliation without a measure of mercy. We must find the balance between the two.

James R. Tramel Vacaville, CA

WHEN CHRISTIANITY & CRISIS folded, I received The Witness instead. I wasn't going to subscribe — until I read the last issue on the prison system. Powerful! I'm afraid of what I'd miss!

Carol L. Fitch Bethesda, MD

MY BISHOP SENT ME A COPY of your November 1998 issue. Well done! As far as I can determine, the Episcopal Church has never condemned slavery, and no one at "815" or the Washington, DC "lobby" seems at all interested in doing so.

Bill Austin Asheville, NC

IN THE NOVEMBER 1998 ISSUE of *The Witness*, Leah Samuel details the work/ministry of Joyce Dixson. A most fine and inspiring example of excellent reporting.

> Bradford D. Harmon Torrington, CT

The earth's song

THANK YOU FOR THE OCTOBER IS-SUE. I believe that the original basis of the significant elements of the Bible was environmental — i.e. the garden of Eden yarn

letters continued on back page

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Volume 82 • Number 3 • March 1999

8 Theology in a pandemic by Mary E. Hunt

Feminist theologian Hunt calls for a new, bold theological agenda that moves beyond a sex-centered focus, and even beyond any commonsense notion of economic and geographic determinism, to grapple with the new reality of HIV/AIDS in these times.

$12\,$ Prevention is achievable by Michael H. Merson

No cure has been found for HIV/ AIDS, making prevention of transmission a critical priority. Public health expert Merson says successful prevention can be achieved if there is the political/social will.



14 HIV/AIDS: overcoming religious barriers

A Jew, Muslim, Buddhist and Christian discuss elements of their religious traditions which inhibit HIV/AIDS prevention and care while appealing to core values as the antidote.

Co-editors/publishers Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann Julie A. Wortman **Assistant Editor** Marianne Arbogast **Magazine Production** Maria Catalfio Bill Wylie-Kellermann **Book Review Editor Poetry Editor** Gloria House Manana Controller Roger Dage **Promotion Consultant** Karen D. Bota Patricia Kolon, Martha Dage, **Office Support** Beth O'Hara-Fisher, Mary Carter

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, The Witnesshas been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. The Witness' roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. The Witness is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

Cover:	Death	and	Fire	by	Paul	Klee,
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Can we at least agree on the need to save lives?

by Julie A. Worman

A swe were completing this issue on HIV/AIDS, word spread through our rural peninsula of a tragic accident:Two workers from a local construction firm were drowned when their skiff capsized on the short trip across Port Clyde harbor from a job site on Hupper Island. Two companions survived.

We could hear the Coast Guard helicopters and watch the procession of emergency vehicles from our house. We wondered, sick at heart, if we might know the men who died.

Local conversation is now focussing on what happened and why. Was the small boat overloaded? Was it foolish to attempt the crossing, however small the distance, on a day when winds and sea prevented fishing boats from leaving their moorings? Were they going too fast in their haste to put the work day behind?

None of the answers to these questions will likely lead anyone to believe that the two dead men got what they deserved. The community will enfold their families with love and care and the local clergy (mostly different persuasions of Baptist) will acknowledge the incomprehensibleness of such tragedy and console the grieving with a vision of God's unfailing love.

Unless, of course, it turns out that the two who drowned had been drinking on the job. Or, alternatively, if the two who drowned were hardworking and devoted family men, while the two who survived had a history of incurring bad debts or beating their children or becoming involved in brawls or frequenting gay bars. I can think of a dozen scenarios that would easily muddy the theological and moral waters, each suggesting a different sort of God and thereby calling the community to a different set of responses.

Prevention would require an enormous shift of focus from accepting death to insisting on life.

The theological disarray among both churchgoers and the unchurched in our small coastal community is nothing out of the ordinary — I've experienced it in every community where I've lived, from New York to Washington, D.C., from Ann Arbor, Mich. to Topeka, Kan. As much of our public policy and private actions testify, the powers and principalities of this world thrive on such widespread muddlement, costing lives at every turn. But with HIV/ AIDS the particular consequence is deathdealing in a way that seems especially diabolical. In full knowledge that a cure will not be discovered any time remotely soon, we allow our confused theologies to block the one sure-fire way to save lives: a single-minded, comprehensive and vigorous nationwide prevention program.

As public health expert Michael Merson points out in this issue (p. 12), preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS is possible! But it would require an enormous shift of focus — from accepting death to insisting on life. Instead of telling our young people that we'd rather have them dead than sexually active, a message we convey everytime we deny them the opportunity to learn about sexually transmitted diseases, we could entrust them with enough information to keep them alive for the badly needed conversations about just what constitutes "good sex" anyway. And we could use clean syringes to offer a sign of respect to those addicted to injection drugs, rather than insisting that we hate their habit more than we value their lives.

Such an agreement will not be easy, but I saw signs of the possibility at last November's AIDS & Religion in America conference sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based AIDS National Interfaith Network, in which the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition actively participates (see <www.ANIN.org> for more on ANIN and the conference). Those assembled represented an extraordinarily vast range of faith perspectives, including a wide spectrum within Christianity. Some presenters offered views that made participants squirm with discomfort or see the with disagreement, but in the face of such a stunning array of difference there was only one possibility: a focus on flesh-and-blood essentials. Like what it takes to save lives while praying for a cure. In such an atmosphere, it was impossible to imagine ever again finding acceptable the sort of infighting and theological hairsplitting that year after year drown so many denominational gatherings in a sea of paper, restraining forward movement on critical life-anddeath issues to a geologic creep.

If we don't find a way to get our hands on some life preservers soon, whatever our confusion about God, vast numbers of lives will be tragically lost.

editor's note

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

O n January 1, 2000, many computer programs and microchips will turn from "99" to "00," which they will read as 1900, not 2000. The result of this will be varied, according to Larry Shook, an investigative reporter and coeditor of *Awakening: The Up Side* of Y2K, which explores the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem, or what some folks are calling the "millennial bug."

"Some computers will stop working," Shook says. "Some will make big mistakes that, while they might be messy, will at least be noticeable. Others will commit sinister little errors that could slowly befuddle the nervous system of the global economy. Food, water, electricity, fuels, telecommunications, financial services, transportation, health care, world trade of every kind — the list of critical systems that could be impacted is endless."

This is a technically fixable problem, and many utilities and corporations depending on these embedded microchips have been working on replacing them. But it is also a huge problem: While only around 5 percent of the estimated 20-70 billion computer chips in use worldwide contain the year problem, experts do not know *where* those 5 percent are located. Jim Lord, a retired U.S. Navy officer and electronics specialist who has become a leading advocate of preparedness for the Y2K problem explains that it is a "big simple problem."

"If I gave you a shoebox full of marbles on Wednesday with a cloth and a can of polish and asked you to polish all the marbles by Saturday, you wouldn't have any difficulty," Lord says. "Now imagine the same assignment, but instead of a shoebox, imagine the Grand Canyon filled

"If I gave you a shoebox full of marbles on Wednesday with a cloth and a can of polish and asked you to polish all the marbles by Saturday, you wouldn't have any difficulty. Now imagine the same assignment, but instead of a shoebox, imagine the Grand Canyon filled to the brim with marbles. That's Y2K." — Jim Lord

to the brim with marbles. That's Y2K. It's a simple problem of overwhelming magnitude."

This simple problem may well trip up all of us, not just those who use computers. Estimates are that the average American is in contact with 70 microprocessors before noon each day, from those in cars to those in medical equipment. And here is where the magnitude of the problem reveals itself: Failures in just a few of these chips will threaten the functioning of health care, utilities, governments, transportation, food supplies, public safety, finance, telecommunications, defense.

No one knows for certain what the disruption will be on January 1, 2000, but it is clear that since we are interconnected through technology, a computer failure in one location can a have a chain-reaction sort of effect. Thus, if one of an oil rig's 10,000 embedded microchips fails, this could not only affect oil production, but also transportation and food and medical supplies. This raises the question of how prepared we are for a nationwide, worldwide shutdown if the systems on which we depend fail.

Some are preparing themselves for Y2K by adopting survivalist techniques, evidenced by newspaper headlines such as this one from the September 6, 1998 edition of the *Dallas Morning News*, "A Cave in Arkansas, Will Y2K Usher in TEOTWAWKI? [The End Of The World As We Know It]." On October 15, 1998, *The New York Times* reported that "10 percent of the nation's top executives are stockpiling canned goods, buying generators and even purchasing hand guns" because they are concerned that "the nation's computer infrastructure will go on the fritz."

On the other hand, *The Utne Reader* has issued a supplement to the magazine, a Y2K Citizen's Action Guide, encouraging preparation for the year 2000 by focussing on neighborhood preparedness, public citizenship, and developing communities geared for mutal support. Shaunti Feldhahn, in her book, Y2K/The Millennium Bug — A Balanced Christian Perspective, also encourages neighborliness, drawing on the Christian mandate to "love our neighbors," along with preparedness along the lines of Joseph who prepared for famine in Egypt by stockpiling food.

- Witness staff

Utne Reader's Y2K Citizen's Action Guide can be purhased for \$4.95 at bookstores nationally. It is also available on-line at <www.utne.com/y2k>. A daily feed of stories from a special reporting team along with wire reports can be seen at <www.Y2Ktoday.com> and a national clearinghouse for personal and community Y2K preparedness efforts is provided through The Cassandra Project, <http://millennia-bcs.com/casframe.htm>. [Ed. note: For those interested in such things, Cassandra's curse was to always speak the truth and never be believed.]

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

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Theology in a pandemic by Mary E. Hunt

G ugu Dlamini, a 36-year-old South African woman, died on December 22, 1998, after revealing on December 1, World AIDS Day, that she was HIV positive. On December 21 a man attacked her, saying that she should keep quiet about her HIV status. He insisted that she behave like most of the other adults in her area, 30 percent of whom are said to live with the virus, and refrain from speaking about it.

She asked the local police for help, but was reportedly ignored. That night, some of her neighbors in Kwamashu, on the outskirts of Durban, beat her with sticks and stones and ripped down her house. The alleged reason for such brutality was the shame they thought she brought on their community. Gugu Dlamini, mother of one son and a volunteer for the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS, died the next day.

Theologies, all the lofty definitions to the contrary notwithstanding, are, finally, kind and just responses to human suffering and injustice, or they are blasphemy.

Last November, participants in the AIDS National Interfaith Network (ANIN) Conference, "AIDS and Religion in America," held at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga., learned from the Centers for Disease Control experts that what we had become accustomed to thinking of as a white, gay, male disease in its first 15 years is now in fact a global pandemic. Poor people, especially poor women of color in Sub-Saharan Africa, are among the fastest growing cohort of those infected. We learned that 89 percent of the people infected live in countries that together account for less than 10 percent of the global Gross National Product. Devastating as it has been in gay male and African American communities in the U.S., among intravenous drug users, and indeed throughout the developing world, we have only seen the tip of the HIV/AIDS iceberg. If projections are correct, when the huge populations of India and China are hit with full force, the number of people in-

Theologies are, finally, kind and just responses to human suffering and injustice, or they are blasphemy.

fected will grow astronomically. The disease now mirrors the spread of poverty and discrimination in an increasingly globalized world. This is the new reality of HIV/AIDS on which theology is based.

Pooling moral energy

I engage in theological work enthusiastically because I believe, with moral theologian Daniel C. Maguire, that we must bring to bear "the renewable moral energy of religion" on the growing HIV/ AIDS pandemic. No longer is it my religion or yours that will answer the unanswerable, but our religions together — better, us as religious people struggling to live with integrity in the face of a powerful disease. Religious people struggle to pool our moral energy at a time when so much of it is depleted. But this kind of "ecological" approach to religious ethics — recycling what is useful I begin at home, with the literature and efforts of various Christians during the first stage of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I pass over the hideous anti-gay, anti-drug user diatribes by so-called Christian bigots as simply hate speech or theological pornography. But when I survey the rest, there is a mixed bag. The best Christian responses have not been on paper but in person hands on and loving — whether in the provision of medical services or meals, in celebratory funerals or pastoral counseling for people who have been infected.

Now that some people with economic access to combination therapies are living much longer and much better, such efforts will need to be augmented, indeed refocused on life-affirming rather than deathaccepting attitudes. But the vast majority of people around the world who live with HIV/AIDS will not live long enough for such medical advances to be made economically accessible to them. This scandal foreshadows the theological agenda ahead - namely, one that is focused squarely, though not exclusively, on economic, racial and gender equality, and one that includes a healthy dose of humility as we live as generations before us have lived with forces we cannot finally control.

Exaggerated emphasis on things sexual and drug-related

The theological work as such has been less solid. Some reflection has been clear and strong — disease is disease and Christian love calls for action. But there is also a great deal of equivocating and tentativeness, as if this disease were different somehow from every other disease. It is as if it had its innocent and its guilty victims, as if it were a sexual rather than a medical matter. Indeed there has been an exaggerated emphasis on things sexual and drug-related, as if single, albeit re-

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Feminist theologian **Mary E. Hunt** is cofounder and co-director of WATER, the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, based in Silver Spring, Md., <mhunt@hers.com>. Artist **Joe Bussell** developed his *Apartment Series* in response to his work with S.A.V.E. House, a Kansas City AIDS hospice.

peated, acts, especially unprotected anal intercourse and needle sharing, were the problems. Such timid, uninformed views poison the best theological efforts.

The theological case has been further weakened by many Christian teachings against homosexuality, against same-sex marriage, indeed in some cases such as Catholicism, against the use of condoms for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. This approach has taken the place of a clear condemnation of the socio-economic and theo-political conditions that undergird the pandemic. There is little self-reflective work that lays the blame for some of the spread of this disease on such teachings, with the accompanying setting straight of the theological record. That is ahead of us, but only after a more constructive agenda is accomplished.

Social myopia

Generalizations are dangerous, but I think it is safe to say that Christian responses to the first wave of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, some noble and notable exceptions to the contrary, mirrored general U.S.social attitudes. In this view, HIV/AIDS is a disease of those people who act badly, who put themselves and their children at risk. Therefore, the reasoning goes, they do not deserve the same measure of compassion and active assistance rendered to others. Who or what God is in all of this is not clear. But what is clear is that HIV/ AIDS is something that people want to go away, and the sooner the better. While such theology does not cause a pandemic, it is not helpful and causes harm of its own. Only the most myopic view can see the powerful, growing global force of HIV/AIDS "as if" it were something unique to certain relatively few and already discriminated against people.

Sadly, history will have its way, theology notwithstanding. HIV/AIDS will be a shaping global force in the new millennium. It

The Apartment Series by Joe Bussell, 1985

is rapidly becoming a factor in how the world looks - 16,000 people are infected every day, 11 million people die a year (1997) and 8 million children are the orphaned offspring of those who have died of HIV-related illnesses. These numbers hide the faces --- Gugu Dlamini and her orphaned son, John Boswell and Marlon Riggs, your friends and mine. But they lay out the parameters of a pandemic that our children and theirs will inherit. We owe them condoms. But we also owe them the resources that come from our various faith traditions to help them make sense of and assign meaning to this horrendous problem. More to the point, we owe them our best faith-filled reflections to help to solve it.

Making sense of complexity

It is a complex scene. Despite the general trends of racism, poverty and gender discrimination, there are no easy explanations of who is infected and who is spared. For example, increased education does not always correlate to low rates of infection. The very people with more educa-

> tion in some developing countries are the same ones who are most at risk. For instance, educated, newly prosperous men may use their disposable income to hire prostitutes (male and female), thus adding to their risk despite their social status. Women in the same contexts may be at greater risk because their social mobility is curtailed. They may be less savvy about sexual relations and thus in harm's way, given the options of their men. The UNAIDS/ WHO Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic, June 1998 concludes: "The more we learn about the way HIV moves through communities, the more we understand that

the relationship between HIV and other social and economic phenomena is rarely simple." Even my liberationist approach that relies heavily on socio-economic data is inadequate. This pandemic defies all. Prayer can't hurt.

Four areas of theological concern

The new reality of HIV/AIDS calls for a new, bold theological agenda, a big move beyond the sex-centered focus that has characterized the first wave, and even beyond any commonsense notion of economic and geographic determinism. I see four important areas of concern for theological reflection and religiously informed action.

First, the very way in which we do theology needs to shift from micro to macro approaches.

Globalization is an economic, political and medical reality. Religious pluralism is a given. Correspondingly, theology must



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be done in much wider conversations than those to which Christians are accustomed.Tired, empty ecumenical exercises are not what I have in mind. Rather, I imagine and have begun to engage in vigorous interreligious work that is focused not on ideological issues of belief, but on practical matters of action. One such project involved a dozen women from eight countries and five faith traditions. This can be tried in communities where people of many faiths, and, just as importantly, of no faith whatsoever, get together to cope with the concrete needs of HIV/AIDS prevention and care for those who live with the disease. It is the theological wave of the future.

Globalization causes as many problems as it solves, cashing out to fewer people making more decisions for everyone else. So this new theological approach needs to find antidotes to elitism, ways to include more and more voices in the theological conversation even when we do not understand one another fully. The Atlanta ANIN conference was strong on this dynamic, with participants literally stretching in their seats to understand and respond to one another. It is an image I carry - people with necks craned, eyes and ears wide open; the usually loquacious listening for a change; the timid speaking their words perhaps for the first time. This theology is done with hearts and minds, books and bells, bows and promises.

How rich and fruitful this approach can be. How different it is from the now boring rehearsals of the same old arguments in denominational meetings, how antithetical to the notion of voting on truth. The theological paradigm has shifted from single denominational wranglings to interreligious conversations. One proof is that the former do not work well anymore and the latter are energizing. What the Divine seems to require of us is that we simply try to understand the big picture, impossible as that may turn out to be. This legacy of the HIV/ AIDS pandemic to theology is welcome.

Asking the right questions Second, theology is the art of asking the right questions so that a range of useful answers might emerge.

The late Dr. Jonathan Mann, World Health Organization AIDS pioneer and Harvard University professor who reflected on AIDS in the 1994 Harvard Divinity School Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality entitled "Health, Society and Human Rights," observed, "The history of our confrontation with AIDS illustrates that how we define a problem determines what we do about it." Now, more than ever, his insight rings true. HIV/AIDS has become, if not a survivable disease for most people who are infected, at least a preventable one.

Religious people are shapers of questions. We are sensitive to image and symbol, to nuance and interpretation. We puzzle over priorities and wonder about why things happen as they do. While some of us love things in neat boxes and others can live with ragged edges, we are religious; that is, we are linked to one another, in that we seek to ask questions that make a difference.

Theology is an exploration that helps us learn to live comfortably without "right answers," to live in global community despite differences. It begins with concrete data like the above analysis of how the pandemic is taking shape so as to locate questions of ultimate meaning and value in the reality of people's lives. Part of the learning curve is facing facts and rejecting stereotypes, honoring people ahead of philosophical and religious categories. It means changes both in what we think and how we think theologically so that new questions, and, of course, some tried and true old ones, can guide the way.

Given what we know about HIV/AIDS, it is morally and theologically embarrassing, intellectually shoddy to be debating endlessly the pros and cons of same-sex relationships. Clean water, sterilized needles, good nutrition, the end of homohatred/heterosexism, and access to jobs are all factors that are at least as likely as sexual practices to have an impact on HIV/AIDS spread. I await the day when these matters fire up the debates at religious gatherings, when they make headlines because religious people have made assuring them for all a matter of their faith.

Let's practice getting at the right questions. The heinous impact of HIV/AIDS on women means that discrimination against women and girls is no longer a matter only of opinion, but of deadly consequences. This ups the theological ante on feminist/ womanist/mujerista work in religious groups that persist in beliefs and behaviors that put women and their dependent children at risk. For example, prohibiting women from having access to condoms, indeed restricting women's social role so that they cannot survive economically and socially without depending on men, puts them in an impossible situation when it comes to responding to men's sexual advances. This is not a sexual matter or a theological proclivity. It is a matter of social justice, indeed in the face of this pandemic, a matter of life and death. Women's well-being is now central to, not tacked onto, HIV/AIDS work as we move from burying to preventing. So too must it become normative not nominal in theology.

Shift from judgment to prevention Third, given the trajectory of HIV/AIDS, the theo-ethical gaze must shift from judgment to a concerted effort at prevention.

Lacking a cure or a vaccine, prevention is the best hope. The primary theo-ethical question at hand is how to prevent its spread — how, on the basis of deeply held convictions can we bring values to bear that will alter the course of a pandemic. This requires honest, widespread talk about difficult topics. It calls for serious changes of attitudes, especially in communities where people die from the stigma of the disease because they are shunned or beCopyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

cause they cannot ask for help without losing their insurance, their job, their children or their dignity.

The good news on the HIV/AIDS front is that prevention works. The UNAIDS/ WHO Report sums this up: "The best prevention campaigns work simultaneously on many levels - increasing knowledge of HIV and how to avoid it; creating an environment where safer sex or drug-taking behaviors can be discussed and acted upon; providing services such as HIV testing, treatment for other sexually transmitted diseases (which if left untreated greatly magnify the risk of HIV transmission) and access to cheap condoms and clean injection equipment; and helping people to acquire the skills they need to protect themselves and their partners. Structural changes can help, too, by empowering people and reducing their vulnerability." This clear articulation of how to move toward preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS offers a theological preamble for the next decade. If religious people were to put as much energy into this agenda as we now have to put into services we would see measurable results.

Prevention may not make glitzy theology. But it is good public health, and good public health is, it seems to me, part of divine goodness. Moreover, couching matters of condom use and economic justice, of equality for women and access to affordable health care in the framework of HIV/ AIDS prevention, begins the theo-political discussions where people live and die. For example, in Roman Catholic circles where I hang my faith hat, condom use is still, unbelievably, a matter of debate. To think of condoms as necessary barriers to disease and not optional forms of birth control may help move the matter along.

Likewise, to put universal health care and needle exchange in the U.S. back on the table seems to me a theological imperative, a matter of ultimate meaning and value. The deep problems of whether to advise HIV-infected mothers in developing countries to breast-feed or not to breastfeed are theological in their reach. Such women face age-old dilemmas of how to act in the best interest of their children and of themselves when resources are scarce and their choices are dismal. Breast milk can kill or it can cure. If there is no money or clean water for formula what choice do they have?

These are the theological conundrums that keep me up nights. They are questions about what really matters, a change of pace for those accustomed to the drone of safe and predictable theological debates. God deliver me from such wastes of time while

Prevention may not make glitzy theology. But it is good public health, and good public health is, it seems to me, part of divine goodness.

these women and their children suffer.

Truth-telling and hope

Fourth, the most important theological question is not what the Divine thinks about HIV/AIDS, but how human beings can act in loving and just ways during and after the pandemic.

Many people, especially Christians, have become used to asking what the Divine thinks about such massive evils as HIV/ AIDS. I have wondered so myself in passing. But frankly, I do not trust anyone who claims to know because the magnitude of the suffering and devastation, the orphaned children and bereft lovers, surpasses my ability to imagine. What I can fathom is how human beings ought to act in loving and just ways now, and, may it be soon, when this pandemic is over.

Faith provides a two-pronged aid to the theo-political task: truth-telling and hope. Regardless of our religious flavor — Bud-

dhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim or what have you — faith claims are always about the deepest truths we know. Now that we have learned not to absolutize them but to socialize them, not to clutch them to ourselves but to hand them to others for consideration and respect, the religious practice of truth-telling is very helpful.

In the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic truth-telling can save lives. It is what allows us to name ourselves publicly as HIVpositive and expect compassion. It is what allows us to admit fear and expect support. It is what compels us to ask hard questions and face issues others would postpone facing. It is what attracts people to build religious communities where "what you see is what you get." It is one of the few common names for the Divine that we pray. It is a start.

Hope is religions' other contribution to a world waking up to a pandemic. Again, it comes in many shapes and sizes depending on the religious group. But in the face of HIV/AIDS hope is not trivial. It is what allows us to imagine a future free of infection, a time when our children might enjoy the delights of creation without worry. When religious efforts to work on HIV/ AIDS are evaluated it is astonishing to see that despite all the good works that religious people do — food programs, home visiting and even political action — what means most to people who suffer is that they receive hope from us.

Hope borders on the absurd in light of a vicious pandemic. Hope did not keep Gugu Dlamini from being killed. It did not make her son less an orphan. But hope gives me, and perhaps you, a way to believe that we can stem the tide. Indeed hope fuels the powerful notion that we can and must prevent suffering and bring about justice. For the foreseeable future, hope is the only guarantee we have that HIV/AIDS will not have the last word. To tell the truth, it may be enough to keep us working to end a pandemic.

Prevention is achievable

by Michael H. Merson

stimates at the end of 1997 indicate that, since the start of the pandemic, approximately 42 million adults and children had been infected with HIV and 11.7 million of them had developed AIDS. Ninety percent of all infections have occurred in developing countries. Despite these daunting numbers and the well-known fact that it is difficult to change wellestablished behaviors, there is increasing evidence, worldwide, that AIDS prevention is possible.

The greatest challenge now facing HIV prevention has been the advent of new and improved anti-retroviral therapy. The new combination therapy has been shown to have the potential to greatly prolong the lives of HIV-infected persons and to markedly improve the quality of their lives. However, it is making HIV prevention more difficult, as it gives the impression that there is a "cure" for AIDS, thereby discouraging the need to practice safer sexual behavior. This situation is made even more dangerous by the increasing prevalence of HIV strains resistant to these drugs due to poor adherence or intolerance to the drug therapy. Because of these concerns, it is essential that health care providers emphasize the importance of prevention when administering anti-retroviral drugs and that the media and pharmaceutical industry not exaggerate the benefits of this therapy.

A classic STD

In planning prevention interventions, it must be borne in mind that HIV infection is a classic sexually transmitted disease (STD). Like other sexually transmitted diseases, HIV can be spread parenterally (through blood) and perinatally (from mother to child). While the percent of infections transmitted parenterally through injecting drug use worldwide is relatively small (around 10 percent), this route is responsible for half of all new HIV infections in the U.S. and has been the major means of introduction of HIV into all Asian countries that now have major epidemics, as well as some countries in South America. Most perinatal infections occur in Sub-Saharan Africa and other underserved areas where heterosexual transmission is common. While antiretroviral therapy is highly effective in reducing transmission from mother to child, there is little or no access to these drugs in many developing countries.

Preventing sexual transmission As the vast majority of HIV infections worldwide are sexually transmitted, international HIV prevention efforts have placed greatest emphasis on interrupting this means of transmission. In almost all settings, heterosexual transmission is the predominant mode of sexual spread. The main approach to prevention of sexual transmission has been the promotion of safer-sex messages through a wide variety of channels along with the provision of condoms. When properly manufactured, stored and used, condoms are virtually 100 percent effective in preventing HIV transmission, as best evidenced in studies of discordant couples (when one member of a couple is positive). In many countries educational interventions have been successful in increasing safer-sex practices, including in high-risk populations, such as men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers and their clients, truck drivers, factory workers and the military. Many of these projects have been undertaken by community-based organizations who deliver safersex messages and provide condoms.

Because of the increasing rates of infections in youth and the declining age of first intercourse, prevention efforts have frequently been undertaken in schools. The most effective sex education programs in schools have emphasized abstinence from sex for those who have not been sexually active and prefer to remain so and use of condoms for those who are sexually active. Some schools make condoms available through health educators. Such programs have been successful in increasing condom use and reducing pregnancy rates and rates of new sexually transmitted diseases without increasing sexual activity.

Another type of effective prevention intervention has been condom social marketing programs. These programs use modern marketing techniques to promote and sell condoms at a low price to high-risk populations using multiple channels. They seek to make condoms popular and to decrease any inhibitions associated with their use. Condom sales in 37 developing countries, with social marketing assistance from U.S. organizations, increased from 20,000 sold in 1987 to 530 million sold in 1997. In Switzerland a national condom social marketing program directed at adolescents and young adults has been credited with slowing the epidemic there.

One other type of preventive intervention has been voluntary testing and counseling programs. These programs were

Physician **Michael H. Merson** is Dean of Public Health at Yale University School of Medicine. This piece is adapted from Merson's presentation to last November's AIDS & Religion in America conference in Atlanta, Ga. sponsored by the AIDS National Interfaith Network.

originally used primarily to detect HIVinfected blood donors, but have become commonly used by those wishing to know if they are infected. They have been found to be effective in bringing about safer-sex practices, when counseling is done effectively and both partners of a couple are tested and counseled.

Structural interventions

Beyond behavioral and STD treatment interventions directed toward individuals, interventions that change law, policies or administrative procedures (structural interventions) or alter living conditions, resources, opportunities or social preserves (environmental interventions), and thus are directed toward societal change, are also effective in preventing sexual transmission. One of the most effective of these has been the 100 percent condom use policy in brothels in Thailand. This intervention, which has brought about nearly universal condom use in brothels, has been responsible for the dramatic decline in HIV and STD infections in that country between 1990 and 1995. Other similar types of interventions include the removal of import taxes on condoms (to decrease their price) and the education of women so that they need not be sex workers to earn income.

Injected drugs

Most of the experience in programs to reduce HIV transmission among injecting drug users (IDUs) has been in developed nations. The most effective programs are based on the principle of harm reduction, i.e., reducing the risk of HIV infection in those injecting drugs. Such programs also reduce the incidence of other parenterally transmitted infections, particularly hepatitis. One type has been community outreach programs, which involve the recruitment of outreach workers who seek out IDUs and provide them education on safe injection practices, bleach to disinfect injection equipment, and condoms, while offering them access to counseling services and drug treatment. These programs have been particularly effective in providing services for hard-to-reach drug users.

A second type of program is syringeexchange. These programs exchange dirty needles and syringes for clean ones and provide preventive messages and access to health care and drug treatment. Their effec-

HIV prevention is "countercultural" in that it requires that we discuss sexuality openly, admit that adolescents have sex, recognize sexual diversity and delink condom use to distrust of one's partner.

tiveness in reducing HIV transmission without increasing drug use has been clearly demonstrated.

Successful prevention

There are increasing numbers of countries that have mounted successful prevention efforts. Countries like Thailand, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Senegal and Switzerland have implemented programs that have decreased sexual transmission. So have gay men in this country. Countries like Australia and New Zealand have illustrated the achievements possible through harm reduction programs in decreasing transmission through injection drug use.

One reason why these countries have been successful is that they have formulated prevention policies on the basis of sound science. This has enabled them to combat the many myths that have characterized this pandemic. These include the myth of complacency ("We won't/don't have the problem"), the myth that condoms are not effective, that sex education in schools leads to youth having more sex, that syringe exchange programs increase drug use, that sexual behavior cannot be changed and that we need to wait for a vaccine before HIV will be prevented (a vaccine will help, but all experts agree that it is at least a decade away).

Overcoming some of these myths is often not easy, even in the presence of solid scientific data, because they are based on moral beliefs and teachings. Indeed, HIV prevention is "countercultural" in that it requires that we discuss sexuality openly, admit that adolescents have sex, recognize sexual diversity and delink condom use to distrust of one's partner.

Successful prevention programs have also combated the discrimination and stigmatization often associated with HIV and AIDS. Such stigmatization and the resulting discrimination are particularly difficult for populations that are already stigmatized, such as gay men, drug users, commercial sex workers and, in this country, communities of color. Successful programs have also resisted efforts, often generated by discriminatory policies, to try and prevent HIV infection through mandatory testing and quarantine, which can never be effective in controlling this disease.

Countries that have achieved successful prevention have had strong political leadership from government, the private (business) sector, and leaders in other sectors of society (including sports, entertainment, academia and religion). They also have encouraged grass roots action by community-based groups, including persons infected and affected by HIV who often are the best carriers of prevention messages.

HIV/AIDS: overcoming religious barriers

Substituting Jewish values for moral etiology

by Leila Gal Berner

Until very recently, the world Jewish community has been slow to respond to the AIDS epidemic. This slowness of response is due to a confluence of factors, not insignificant among them Judaism's adherence to the idea of moral etiology. Along with the ancient belief that physical illness is a consequence of immorality, the Jewish community has indulged in intense denial that AIDS is a "Jewish" issue. Popular Jewish belief has been that there are few Jewish homosexuals, even fewer promiscuous Jews, even fewer Jewish substance abusers, and virtually no Jewish women whose behavior would put them at risk for AIDS.

As Andy Rose points out, "AIDS brings together some of the most difficult issues of our culture: sexuality, drug abuse, illness, disability and death." This confluence of moral judgment, taboo and stigmatization has caused the Jewish community to collectively turn its attention away from the challenge of AIDS.

Moral etiology

With its origins in the Hebrew Scriptures, the notion of "moral etiology" may be defined as the belief that physical affliction and disease (such as AIDS) is straightforward divine punishment for sinful behavior, and that sinners do not merit the care of the larger, more morally righteous community. A prime example of the biblical link between sin and physical affliction may be seen in Numbers, chapter 12 in which Miriam challenges Moses' exclusive leadership of the Israelite people. "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?..." For this extraordinary challenge to her brother's authority, Miriam is punished by God:

"When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow..."

In Jewish tradition, Miriam's "sin" was to assume that she could prophesy along with her divinely selected brother. Her punishment was leprosy. In post-biblical, rabbinic Judaism, the word metsora (translated as leprosy) has even been interpreted as an synonym for "motxi rah" — to emit evil, suggesting that a leprous person or someone afflicted with a severe skin disease is literally "oozing evil" through his/ her physical affliction. In contemporary terms, moral etiology is essentially "blaming the victim" for his/her illness. This blaming is, in my view, the real "dis-ease" in our culture: Predicated on the erroneous assumption that somehow ill people are greater sinners than the rest of us, it prevents humane, decent caring for the ill to take place, it isolates those most in need of community, it secludes those most in need of inclusion, it pushes away those most in need of embracing.

Challenging divine control Contemporary Jewish theology has come to challenge the basic assumption of moral etiology. Indeed, in Reconstructionism (the denomination to which I belong), the idea that God is the direct purveyor of punishment for sin has been significantly questioned. Rather than being viewed as a supernatural force working upon a passive creation in an old-style system of reward and punishment, God is seen as the creator of nature who then functions through nature, rather than outside it, within natural processes (including illness) rather than above these processes.

The implications of such a "trans-natu-

ral" theology are that while God may have created the natural world, in all its infinite complexity, even the Holy One cannot always control that world. Thus, the notion of moral etiology falls away: Human beings are not afflicted with disease because God wills it as punishment for sin. Rather, people become ill because the forces of nature, in their own mysterious and perhaps random way, take their own course. Thus, illness and disease become neutral realities, no longer laden with moral significance. This approach is summarized well in Rabbi Harold Kushner's wellknown book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People: "Could it be that God does not cause the bad things that happen to us? Could it be that He doesn't decide which families shall give birth to a handicapped child ... but rather that He stands ready to help ... us cope with our tragedies if we could only get beyond the feelings of guilt and anger that separate us from Him? Could it be that 'How could God do this to me?' is really the wrong question for us to ask?"

In this approach, then, moral etiology becomes irrelevant. What is much more pertinent is that God is viewed as the ill person's companion, present to assist the afflicted as he/she struggles with illness. In this theology, God is not the Great Judge or Castigator, but rather the Friend, the Comforting One, the One to whom an ill person might turn for solace and embrace.

Traditional Jewish values

From this way of thinking, an approach to people with AIDS emerges that rejects the notion of moral etiology and promotes a far more constant and solid notion in Judaism — that Jewish behavior must reflect not only the divine spark that resides in each human being, but must also be guided by Jewish values, taught by Judaism's sages to the people over millennia. Following is a brief summary of some of the Jewish values that should, in my view, guide the religious Jewish community's response to the AIDS epidemic:

Tzelem Elohim: A central teaching of Judaism (derived from Genesis 1:26-27) is that each and every individual is made in the image of God and is therefore to be approached (as we approach God) with dignity and respect. Thus, people with AIDS should be treated with sensitivity and honor, as should all humans. The stigmatization to which people with AIDS have been subjected must cease, and they should be welcomed and embraced.

Bikur cholim: Visiting the sick. As Francine Klagsbrun points out, "The model for visiting sick people is God, whom the Book of Genesis tells us, visited Abraham when the patriarch was recuperating from his circumcision. To visit a person who is ill became a religious obligation, and in every Jewish community, down to our own day, special societies have been formed to visit poor or lonely patients who may not have others to depend on." Until recently, Jewish "bikur cholim" societies had not extended their services to people with AIDS, but increasingly the Jewish AIDS community is becoming included in this communal service. As Jewish values increasingly come to guide our communities, the umbrella of care has been expanded to include people with AIDS.

Gemilut chasadim: Deeds of loving kindness. As with *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick), the Jewish value of *gemilut chasadim* is derived from a mandate to emulate the Divine in all that we do. As Rabbi Joseph Telushkin points out, "The [ancient] rabbis considered God to be the original exemplar of acts of loving-kindness [and] the Torahitself commands people to walk in His ways [Deuteronomy 13:15]. Thus, because God clothed the naked — 'And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them' [Genesis 3:21]—you too should clothe the naked. Because God visited the sick —



The Fiddler by Marc Chagall, 1912/13

'The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre' [Genesis 18:1] — you too should visit the sick. Because God buried the dead — 'He buried [Moses] in the valley of Moab' [Deuteronomy 34:6] — you too should bury the dead. Because God comforted mourners — 'And it came to pass after the death of Abraham that God blessed his son Isaac' [Genesis 25:11] — you too should comfort mourners (based on Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sotah 14a)."

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Kol Yisra'el arayvim zeh la-zeh: Communal responsibility. "All Jews are responsible one for another," the Babylonian Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shevuot, 39a) teaches. This dictum was intended to convey the message that when a Jewish person is in need (whether financially, emotionally or physically), it is always the responsibility of other Jews to assist him/her. Thus, in accordance with this central value, Jews should establish communal mechanisms and institutions to address the needs of community members with AIDS. Such institutions should include medical, psychological and social service agencies, financially supported and sponsored by the Jewish community.

Tzedakah: Charity. The Jewish value of charity goes beyond the Christian notion of *caritas* in that it encompasses the notion that all charity is actually a religious obligation aimed at balancing the scales of social justice. The Hebrew word, *tzedakah*, itself derives from the noun, *tzedek*, which means "justice." Thus, the religious Jewish community's charitable response to the AIDS epidemic should extend far beyond the confines of financial support; it should

also enter into the arena of legislative and judicial advocacy on behalf of people with AIDS. In this way, the Jewish community would be fulfilling the biblical commandment, "Justice, justice you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20).

A final thought: As the Jewish community has distanced itself from those afflicted with AIDS, it might do well to consider that redemption for the Jewish people, and the world as a whole, might very well be found precisely in the afflicted corners of our society:

"Where," Rabbi Joshua asked, "shall I find the Messiah?"

"At the gate of the city," [the prophet]

Elijah repled.

"How shall I recognize him?"

"He sits among the lepers,"

"Among the lepers?" cried Rabbi Joshua. "What is he doing there?"

"He changes their bandages," Elijah answered. "He changes them one by one" (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, 98a).

[Rabbi Leila Gal Berner is Visiting Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at Atlanta's Emory University, and founder of the Center for Jewish Ethics at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Penn. This piece is adapted from her presentation at the 1998 AIDS & Religion in America conference held in Atlanta, Ga.]

African-American Muslims and AIDS: a paradigm of engagement

by Amir Al-Islam

Islam has been one of the most significant forces of reform in black America, transforming the lives of thousands of persons who had succumbed to subcultural lifestyles of crime and substance abuse. After becoming Muslims, however, these same individuals have transformed their lives and are now productive citizens who are leading the fight against crime and immorality.

The unique ability of Islam to function as a catalyst for the social transformation of African Americans is attributable to its strong emphasis on disciplined behavior and its contribution to the development of a positive sense of self. However, before conversion, many African Americans were engaged in behavior that is considered at-risk, particularly drug abuse, and as a result, we are now witnessing increased incidences of AIDS in the Muslim community. This is not to say that there are no Muslims who are engaging in at-risk behavior, but from all indications, the overwhelming majority of Muslims that contract AIDS fall victim because of past behavior. Still, if you ask some of the Muslim leaders about AIDS in their community, they would say "Muslims don't have AIDS." In their attempt to put the best construction on the state of moral behavior within the Muslim community, Muslims oftentimes are in denial, and this does a disservice to those persons who are suffering from the disease, regardless of the cause.

Background: Islam among African Americans

The most significant development of Islam among African Americans began during the early 1900s with what are called "proto" Islamic movements, such as the Moorish Science Temple. By the 1920s the Ahmadiyyah movement, which originated in India, began converting African Americans to their interpretation of Islam. However, the largest and most influential "proto" Islamic movement began a decade later with the advent of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam grew into one of the most powerful and influential social movements in African American history, second only to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Elijah Muhammad was responsible for attracting a large number of followers to the Nation of Islam during the early 1930s and 40s. However, it was Malcolm X, a new convert from prison, who attracted the majority of followers. Malcolm joined the Nation of Islam in prison in 1947, and during the 1950s was principally responsible for increasing its ranks. He quickly moved up in the organization from Minister to National Spokesman and close confidant of Elijah Muhammad. However, after finding out about Elijah Muhammad's infidelities, Malcolm lost confidence in his "divine leadership" and eventually left the Nation of Islam. In 1964 Malcolm made his famous Pilgrimage to Hakkah and converted to orthodox Islam, the form of the religion which originated in the 6th century in Arabia.

In 1965, Malcolm X, Al Hajj Malik Al Shabazz, was assassinated. Two members of the Nation of Islam were charged with his murder. A decade later, in 1975, Elijah Muhammad appointed his son, Wallace D. Muhammad, to lead the organization. Wallace Muhammad had already rejected his father's teachings and, upon taking the reigns of leadership of the Nation, he quickly transformed it into the orbit of orthodoxy. This event was not without controversy. Minister Louis Farrakhan, an understudy of Malcolm X, after accepting Wallace's leadership, eventually left the organization and reverted to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and re-established the Nation of Islam, which still continues today. Other African American Muslims who were not members of the Nation of Islam, however, continued embracing orthodox Islam.

Presently there are African American Islamic centers and schools throughout the U.S. While there is a large second generation of African American Muslims, the majority are converts to the faith.

Teleological world view

The foundation of a Muslim's belief and worldview is teleological, seeing the world in terms of a divine will or plan, with a distinct purpose. Muslims see belief in God and obedience to God as an essential element of salvation and reward and this is achieved through prayers and righteous conduct. In addition, they see disbelief and disobedience as actions and behavior that earn God's wrath and punishment, in this world and the hereafter. Consequently, AIDS, viewed through the prism of "sin," is brought on by at-risk behavior that displeases and disobeys God, and therefore will result in punishment. A sinner contracting AIDS is a confirmation of God's promise that whosoever disobeys Him will suffer his wrath. So many Muslims look at the disease as a sign of God's truth being manifest and a warning to believers to obey God's instructions. The Holy Quran emphasizes over and over again the importance of obedience to God.

Another critical point to understand is that Muslims are not only required to obey God individually and collectively, but they are required to enjoin others to engage in righteous conduct: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting all that is good and enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, they are the ones to attain felicity" (Holy Quran, Yusuf Ali, 3.104).

In addition, the identity, position and status of a Muslim is determined by the performance of good deeds: "You are the best of people evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah" (3.110).

Three critical questions

So, in actuality, Muslims consider themselves among the best people, if they adhere to the dictates of God's instructions and conform their behavior in accordance with His divine instructions. And AIDS is often seen simultaneously as a confirmation of God's promise to punish those who disobey Him and an affirmation of one's faith that God keeps His promise. So, for Muslims, there are three critical questions which must be considered regarding AIDS: 1) Should Muslims separate the at-risk behavior associated with AIDS from the disease? 2) Should Muslims advocate safe-sex or other preventive measures which are often philosophically and theologically contradictory to their faith? 3) How do Muslims speak out, advocate and care for those who have been stricken "by God" for their sins?

This is truly problematic for many Muslims, and in order to attempt to mobilize the Islamic community to address the epidemic of AIDS, discursive networks must be created which deal with these critical issues. I maintain that there is a way out of this quagmire. I believe that we can establish a modality in which Muslims can engage in the struggle to rid the world of the scourge of AIDS, while maintaining their religious and moral worldview, and not compromise their religious beliefs. This "paradigm of engagement," however, must be deeply ensconced in the traditions and ethical teachings of Islam and operate within the Islamic conceptual framework. So, it is within the Islamic framework that I propose the following:

First, Muslims should deal with the person with AIDS as a fellow human being who is ill and draw from the sources of the Holy Quran, which focuses on Allah's mercy and forgiveness:

"Say, O my servants who have transgressed against their souls; despair not of the mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is oft-forgiving, most merciful."

Second, I propose that Muslims reflect on the essence of Allah's message, which commands them to help those that are less fortunate.

Third, Muslims should become advocates in support of more health care, medicines and education, particularly for African Americans who are witnessing an increase in HIV infections, remembering the famous words of their Prophet Muhammad who stated: "I heard the Messenger of Allah saying: 'He who amongst you sees something abominable should modify it with the help of his hand: and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should do it with his tongue (speak out against it) and if he has not strength enough to do it, then he should hate it in his heart, and that is the weakest of faith" (Hadith 365, reported by Abu Sa'id al-khudri).

Fourth, Muslims should become advocates for an increase in funds for HIV/ AIDS research. This is supported by the teachings of Islam which state: "It was reported that the Prophet said: 'Verily, Allah has not let any malady occur without providing its remedy. Therefore seek medical treatment for your illnesses" (Hadith reported by Anas Ibn Mas'ud and documented by Ibn Majah).

Finally, Muslims should also provide education for the Muslim community about AIDS, so that in the event that non-Muslim members of their families are infected, they will know how to care for them. In addition, Muslims should develop strategies to care for members of their congregations that are infected but may be too embarrassed to come forward, remembering what the Quran says about Prophet Muhammad and mercy: "We have sent you, O Muhammad, as a mercy to the worlds."

[Amir Al-Islam is Secretary General of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, U.S.A. This piece is adapted from his presentation to the 1998 AIDS & Religion in America Conference held in Atlanta, Ga.]

Buddhism and sexual ethics in the age of AIDS

by José Ignacio Cabezón

In terms of the number of adherents, Buddhism ranks as one of the major religious traditions in the U.S. today, and as the number of Western converts to Buddhism and of East and Southeast Asian immigrants to this country (and their offspring) increase, so too will Buddhism's importance. Increasingly, Buddhist voices will have to be included in any attempt to treat social issues like the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a way that is reflective of the religious diversity of North America.

Buddhists, of course, are as susceptible to HIV infection as anyone else, and given the linguistic and cultural obstacles that impede attempts to educate the immigrant Buddhist communities in the U.S., it is clear that many Buddhists are at far greater risk for infection than the population at large.

It is also important to remember that HIV/AIDS is not only a national problem but an international one. Indeed, the problem at the national level can be isolated from the international crisis only in theory. The proportion of the problem in Buddhist Asia, especially in Thailand, is by now well known. Hence, Buddhism, as the religion of a vast number of infected and at-risk individuals worldwide, must be considered in any discussion that would attempt to assess the systemic relationship of religion to AIDS, even if that conversation is ostensibly a national rather than a global one.

Buddhist sexual ethics

Given that sex is one of the principal modes

of transmission of HIV, the work of Buddhist theologians like myself who are critically engaging the classical texts to formulate a sexual ethic that is at once Buddhist and relevant to men and women in this country, may have particular relevance.

Like most pre-modern traditions, the Buddhist doctrine of what constitutes sexual misconduct (log par gyem pa) for lay men and women seems anachronistic by contemporary standards. First, it presumes men as its sole audience. Women are considered only as potential objects for intercourse ('jug par bya ba), and not as independent subjects, making the doctrine androcentric to the extreme. The doctrine is also infused with an ethos of homophobia. For example, whereas female prostitutes paid for directly by a male "customer" are considered "suitable (bkrod par bya ba) objects," no man (skyes pa) or hermaphrodite (ma ning) is considered a suitable sexual partner for a man. Moreover, as regards the actual act of sexual intercourse, only the vagina is considered a suitable "point of entry." This implies that all forms of oral and anal intercourse, as well as masturbation, are proscribed. There are also prohibitions regarding place (e.g., not in public, not on rough ground, etc.) and time (e.g., not during certain auspicious days, not during daylight hours, no more than a certain number of times in an evening, etc.).

But I do not wish to imply that the Buddhist doctrine of sexual misconduct is

without its virtues. For example, the prohibitions against underage sex, against infidelity, and the attempts to create boundaries for sexual activity generally are certainly positive aspects of the doctrine. Equally noteworthy is what is not prohibited. (1) There are no restrictions against sexual relations between consenting unmarried adults; (2) there is no appeal to "nature" or "the natural" in attempts to formulate what constitutes a proper sexual act; and (3) there is no notion that procreation is the sole purpose of sex.

The first of these facts implies that from a Buddhist viewpoint premarital sex is permissable, the second that a theoretical construct — the natural — that has been so exploited to condemn alternative sexual practices and lifestyles in the West is never relied upon for similar purposes in the Buddhist sources, and the third, that sex simply for pleasure is recognized as ethically valid.

Now the purpose in bringing up the classical doctrine of sexual misconduct is not to rehearse the traditional line, but to point out that this is for Buddhists today the starting point for theological reflection. On June 11 of last year His Holiness the Dalai Lama met with a group of gay and lesbian Buddhist leaders to discuss Buddhist sexual morality and its implications for the gay community. At this meeting, the Dalai Lama brought up the portion of the text that sanctions prostitution as a way of making the point that a good deal of the classical doctrine may be specific to a certain place and time, and that it may therefore have to be reinterpreted so as to make it relevant to contemporary culture. After stating that

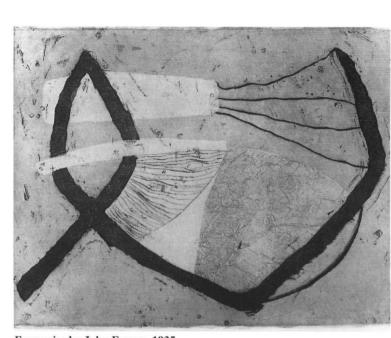
the purpose of the doctrine is to lessen attachment, he saw the absurdity in the tradition that claims that it is permissible for a man and a wife to have sexual intercourse up to five consecutive times in an evening, while prohibiting men and women to have sexual contact of any kind with a person of the same sex even once in their lifetime. The Dalai Lama stressed that he was not in a position to unilaterally reformulate the doctrine on his own - that in Buddhism this must be done through consensus. Nonetheless, he urged those of us present to work at the scientific, social and theological levels to bring about such change.

This meeting opened up for me the possibility of doing theology in a new key: one which is ever willing to confront, and in no instance to give way to, the evils of androcentrism and homophobia. There are, I believe, several key principles that must undergird a Buddhist sexual theology, and these are principles that have a direct impact on issues related to HIV and AIDS. These principles are more fundamental than the legalistic, rule-defined formulations found in the classical treatments of proper sexual conduct. More fundamental in that they constitute the very foundations for Buddhist ethics. While responsible Buddhist theologians cannot afford simply to dismiss the traditional textual material, neither can they fail to ask themselves whether, in our present context, the classical proscriptions are consistent with these more fundamental principles. In crafting a Buddhist sexual ethic that is relevant to today's world, it is these principles that must serve as the theologian's guide.

What are these, and what are their implications for HIV and AIDS?

Confronting reality

First is the general Buddhist commitment to confronting reality. A Buddhist sexual ethic must be constructed in response to actual human desires and behaviors, and it must take into account the actual state of the world as the environment in which human action takes place. We live in a world where the vast majority of human beings are sexually active, where sexual desires and acts are as diverse as human beings themselves,



Expressive by John Ferren, 1935

and where a virus that can be transmitted during sex can lead to illness and eventually to death. Buddhist sexual ethics must confront these facts. It cannot proceed as if we lived in a world where celibacy ---or even heterosexual penile-vaginal intercourse — was the norm, nor can it proceed as if we lived in an AIDS-free world. For example, in this age of AIDS it is unconscionable for a contemporary Buddhist theologian to simply tout the traditional line that unprotected penilevaginal intercourse with prostitutes is permissible. It represents a violation of the first fundamental principle: that we take the reality of human beings and their surrounds into account in ethical reflection. This is especially true when failure to take HIV and AIDS into account in moral decision-making could lead to an even greater evil: the infection of one's sexual partner.

Eradication of suffering

Second, the primary goal of Buddhism is the eradication of suffering, not only for oneself, but for others as well, and the primary purpose of ethics is to minimize the amount of harm we do to ourselves and to others. Attachment or craving is considered one of the major sources of human suffering. Any pleasurable action breeds attachment, and sex is considered the most pleasurable action in which human beings can engage. Thus, one of the functions of Buddhist ethics is to limit human sexual activity so as to diminish the amount of sexual craving, and therefore the self— and other — harm that we do in the pursuit of such craving.

Some men and women, it is clear, are capable of strict vows of celibacy, and this is considered by most Buddhists the most effective means of curbing sexual desire, allowing monks and nuns an extraordinary foundation on which to make great spiritual progress. But even the Buddha, who was himself a celibate monk, was cognizant of the fact that not everyone would be called to a celibate life. How then can lay Buddhists, who, it is recognized, will not be celibate, diminish sexual attachment? This is clearly one of the chief concerns of lay Buddhist sexual ethics: to allow for sex while seeking to minimize it and the attachment that it breeds. How should this be accomplished? Clearly not by proscribing Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

homosexual relationships or by prohibiting certain non-harmful sexual acts. If a person finds sexual fulfillment only with a partner of his or her own sex, or is only sexually fulfilled by engaging in certain types of non-harming sexual acts (e.g., oral or anal intercourse or masturbation) with a consenting partner, then to prohibit such types of sexual expression is to de facto condemn such a person to involuntary celibacy, which, far from reducing sexual attachment, engenders a frustration that increases both sexual desire and sexual action itself. The negative implications of this to the spread of HIV and AIDS should be obvious.

The true Buddhist solution, then, is not the blanket condemnation of homosexuality or specific forms of sex, but the encouragement of relationships that have the capacity to keep sexuality within bounds, that diminish promiscuity, and that reduce attachment to a minimum. Relationships that, while satisfying sexual desire, help to control it by providing such boundaries, can serve as the basis for human spiritual flourishing. As such, they must be supported, both at the theological and at the institutional level.

The Buddhist principle of *ahimsa*, or "non-harming," must also be a cornerstone of its sexual ethic. In today's world this requires that, in most cases, those of us who are sexually active make ourselves aware of whether or not we are HIV-positive, and that in all instances we exhibit a commitment to safer sexual practices.

Helping others

Third, and finally, Mahayana Buddhists believe that they have a responsibility not only not to harm, but also to help others. The Mahayana commitment to love and compassion requires Buddhists to work to eradicate the suffering of others. This means, among other things, working to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation and on HIV status. The Mahayana commitment to love requires Buddhists to give others happiness, especially those who are sick and marginalized, e.g., due to AIDS. These dual principles — compassion and love — I see as being the basis for the tremendously important hospice work that is being done by Buddhists chiefly, though not exclusively, in the San Francisco Bay Area. (One of the earliest AIDS hospices in the country is the Maitri Project, which is associated with the Hartford Street Zen Center. Another, now more extensive, undertaking started in the same year [1987] is the Zen Hospice Project, which was originally established as a project of the San Francisco Zen Center.)

It is my hope that at the very least this brief statement will give the reader a sense of the way Buddhists are dealing with the issues, and of the advantages of taking a more religiously and culturally inclusive approach to religion and AIDS in America.

[José Ignacio Cabezón is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colo. This piece is adapted from his presentation to the 1998 AIDS & Religion in America Conference held in Atlanta, Ga.]

HIV/AIDS and 'holy hatred'

by Randall C. Bailey

One of the major problems we face in dealing with AIDS is the theology of "otherness," which characterizes missionary religions like Christianity. Such religions posit an in-group/out-group mentality, which is expressed in the dictum, "I'm OK, but you're not. And the reason I know that I'm OK is that I'm not you!"

These religions which teach intolerance of people who practice another religion, depict followers of other religions as heathens, pagans, infidels, "kaffirs," savages. These religions also malign the cult practitioners of these other religions by renaming them as sorcerers, witches, magicians, witch doctors and the like. These maligning religions have at their root a demonology of "otherness." Once one is able to place another in this outsider category, oppression of them becomes not only normative, but theologically sanctioned. One is able to practice a "holy hatred" of them, steal their land, enslave them, exploit them in any form. This oppression is sanctioned, because the theology has allowed the dehumanization of the other and the idolatry of the self. Once one practices this dehumanization with those of another religion, one easily extends this "holy hatred" to the variables of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and whatever variable becomes convenient. Since the other is not understood to be like the self in humanity, one need not respect any of their life qualities with the "Blessed Assurance" that one is practicing the will of God. In this way the treatment of people with AIDS (PWAs) as non-humans is sanctioned religiously.

Conquest theologies

This theological construct of "otherness" is closely bound to conquest theologies. Once I declare people "other," I can steal their land. Thus, the invasions of one part of the globe by people from other parts is fed by this theology. Once one declares the local inhabitants "other," one can do anything to them. And what better way to declare them "other" than to label them negatively with sexual innuendo?

This theology of conquest not only functioned for Israel in biblical times, but

also for Europeans who massacred native people in the Americas, Africa, Pacific Islands and Asia. This tendency guides the space exploration of this era with the depiction of life on other planets as "sub-human" and therefore, we may invade this space. In this way the interlocking oppressions of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism and militarism keep mutually reinforcing each other, with the help of the oppressed, themselves. Just look at how David refers to the Philistines as "the uncircumcised ones," (1 Sam. 17:6), thereby reducing them to the phallus and sanctioning the murder of Goliath by chopping off his head. We read it and are immune to the interlocking oppression and say, "Yeah, God!"

Closely akin to this theology is the desire to be more than conquerors and to be on the right side. The insidiousness of this tendency is that those who are declared to be "other" in one dimension, are willing to place their neighbor in the "other" category in respect to another variable. Thus, those who are oppressed on one variable, are willing to join with oppressors on a variable upon which they are not oppressed, but viewed to be normative. In other words, people oppressed on the variable of race are willing to oppress others on the variable of sexual orientation. Similarly, those oppressed on the variable of sexual orientation are willing to oppress others on the variable of nationality. Similarly those oppressed on the variable of nationality are willing to oppress others on the variable of gender. Thus in some communities, PWAs who get the disease from drug usage are viewed as more acceptable than those who are gay.

A theology of amelioration

Somehow, we do not learn from our oppression not to be oppressors. Rather we learn how to be oppressors. We do not have a theology of liberation. Rather we have a theology of our own amelioration. In essence we do not, or refuse to, understand that many of our privileges come from oppressive systems. Thus, we look for the privilege and nurture it, thereby being coconspirators with oppressive forces.

A corollary ethic to this theology of otherness/self-amelioration is an ethic of dispensability. We declare that certain people are not needed. This ethic usually begins in the benign form of making objects dispensable and discardable. We move from things to people in rapid succession. This is hooked up with globalization and its destructive forces. We give pharmaceutical companies exclusive rights to drugs. We certify drugs as "orphan drugs." We then allow exorbitant amounts of money to be charged for these drugs. We only allow certain people to have access to them. Thus, PWAs in South Africa and Uganda have a life expectancy of six months, because medications are impossible to secure in their contexts under these conditions. We patent drugs which will make a few rich, while exploiting the fears of others. We declare certain segments of the population, since they are not us, as expendable. Thus, since the first group of primary contractors of HIV were gay males, who were viewed as the "other," and thereby expendable, there was nothing done. Once part of this group was willing and able to pay the price of medication, they were moved up on the "expendability ladder" and treated at a high price.

As long as we do not develop an ethic which values human life, which values life in all forms, we shall enforce the "ethic of expendability." Insurance companies can cancel policies and no one says anything, because it is happening to the "expendable." Landlords can evict people and there is no outcry, because these people are expendable. You see the picture.

Needing an ethic of neighborliness

There is no ethic of neighborliness. We do not engage the powers and principalities which are wreaking havoc in the lives of PWAs. Rather we close our eyes to them. We hold healing services but no accompanying demonstrations at the national headquarters of these companies. We do not recognize the healing power of such actions. We leave that to ACT UP. We do not want to jeopardize our own incomes. We'd rather say, we'll pray for you in some ecumenical/interfaith way, but don't ask us to be neighbor and stop the carnage on the Jericho Road. Isn't it enough to bind you up and put you in a hotel somewhere?

We do not recognize that communal action against legislation which supports heterosexism is a healing event. We do not recognize that staging protests against the inundation of the black, brown and Asian communities with drugs is a healing action of neighborliness. Rather, we opt for the safe and respectable. There is no turning over of tables and chasing out the money changers of the biomedical conglomerates. There is no organizing against politicians who reduce funding for AIDS research, training, and education. That is not healing, we think. Let us rather once a year hold a service, not expecting God to say, "I hate, I despise your festivals. Remove from me these choirs. Let justice roll down. Get out there and do some social intervention of true neighborliness. That is the healing I desire."

And then God adds, "If you do both, I'd even be able to enjoy the worship."

[Randall Bailey is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Ga. This piece is adapted from his presentation to the AIDS & Religion in America Conference held last November in Atlanta, Ga.]

Facing the truth

On March 30, 1999, PBS will air a special with Bill Moyers called *Facing the Truth*. The subject is the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the commission was established to investigate the human rights violations committed between 1960 and 1994 during the fight against apartheid. It was hailed worldwide as a model for healing the wounds of history. "We needed to acknowledge that we had a horrendous past," Tutu says. "We needed to look the beast in the eye, so that the past wouldn'thold us hostage anymore."

The commission has now published findings compiled from the testimony of more than 21,000 people, and the record is undeniable: Human beings did terrible things to one another, very often in the name of God, country and duty. In the face of that honest reckoning, reconciliation is proving difficult.

The story transcends South Africa's history and boundaries with profound questions about justice, oppression, evil and forgiveness. "This is a moral universe," Tutu says, "and you've got to take account of the fact that truth and lies and goodness and evil are things that matter."

Moyers notes that while filming *Facing the Truth*, he thought he was looking at a mirror image of the U.S. "We, too," he says, "are still wrestling with the legacy of our past. My hope is that by hearing these stunning stories — told by blacks and whites, victims and perpetrators, the unrepentant and the merciful — Americans will be stirred to look hard at the social and moral dilemmas of our own legacy."

Interfaith Voices

Interfaith Voices of Peace and Justice is

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a communications network and database for North American faith-based groups working for the betterment of society. The system provides a variety of ways representatives from these groups can interact with one another in the search for a common peace and justice agenda.

The network is building on a base of 560 authorized members and 449 authorized member organizations, and has over 600 subscribers to *Interfaith Voices*, their electronic newsletter.

This new project is developing many new features, including an array of specialpurpose e-mail networks and a database/ directory system for members and organizations. The network is also creating a polling system that will allow its diverse members to respond to detailed questions oncritical issues, seeking for the "common factors" shared by all members.

The web site is <http://origin.org/ ifv.cfm>. The address for print publications is PO Box 270214, St. Louis, MO 63127. Toll free: 888-454-8296. email at <ifvoices@aol.com>.

Hot peppers and parking lot peaches

The Community Food Security Coalition announces the release of its newest publication, Hot Peppers and Parking Lot Peaches: Evaluating Farmers' Markets in Low Income Communities. This report explores a breadth of issues associated with direct marketing in inner city communities. It presents case studies of nine farmers' markets in California and the East Coast, enumerating guidelines for successful market operation and development. It also includes a literature review of barriers associated with fruit and vegetable consumption, including cooking and shopping habits of low income individuals and their implications for farmers' markets. The report concludes with an analysis of policy barriers and opportunities at the federal and state (California) levels, as well as a series of policy recommendations.

The report (65 pp.) is available from

CFSC at PO Box 209, Venice, CA 90294. The cost is \$10 plus \$2 shipping. For more information contact CFSC at 310-822-5410 or check out the executive summary at <www.foodsecurity.org>.

90 years of The Progressive

The January, 1999 issue of *The Progressive* magazine marks its ninetieth anniversary with a taste of both the history of the magazine as well as current writing. Archival pieces include a 1917 editorial from founder Robert LaFollette, Ernest L. Meyer's "Plunderers in Paradise" about the bombing of Hiroshima, and James Baldwin's "Letter to My Nephew." John Kenneth Galbraith, Nat Hentoff, Ralph Nader, Wendell Berry, Kate Clinton, Barbara Ehrenreich, Molly Ivins, June Jordan, John Nichols and Howard Zinn all contribute as well. To order, contact <www.progressive.org>.

NAFTA at 5

A new study by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch — *NAFTA at 5: A Citizen's Report card* — shows that the North American Free Trade Agreement's reallife outcomes fail the "do no harm" test.

NAFTA boosters promised it would create 200,000 new U.S. jobs annually,but hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs have been lost. Why? Under NAFTA a U.S. trade surplus with Mexico crashed into \$13.2 billion deficit. Worse, 40 percent of so-called U.S. exports to Mexico under NAFTA are parts for assembly at lowwage, U.S.-corporation-owned plants, which quickly return finished products for sale in this country.

The real extent of U.S. job losses under NAFTA is hinted at in one narrow government program that has already certified 214,902 U.S. workers as NAFTA casualties. When we surveyed companies that made promises in 1993 to create NAFTA jobs, 89 percent admitted they had failed to do so. Many had relocated jobs to Mexico.

> Lori Wallach/Michelle Sforza, The Nation, 1/25/99

Breaking silence in Harare

by Louie Crew

Last December, when the the World Council of Churches (WCC) met in Harare, Zimbabwe for its 50th anniversary and its 8th Assembly, the WCC properly reminded us of the Council's distinguished record of risk-taking. Long before it was popular to do so, the WCC funded resistance groups fighting colonialism and apartheid in Africa, often over the strong protests of its constituents in power in those countries. The WCC has also consistently funded humanitarian relief for refugees in countries ripped apart by strife.

As important as they still are, these commitments are now safely in the mainstream and require few new risks for the Council. Many at the Assembly wondered whether the WCC could muster the will and the nerve to take on new and unpopular social justice issues for the marginalized.

Those gathered for the WCC's 50th anniversary in 1998 looked remarkably different from those gathered in 1948, each difference the result of a slow but steady change over the Council's

five decades: Few women were present in 1948; in 1998 they were nearly 40 percent of the delegates. Few people of color were present in 1948; in 1998 they outnumbered whites; the Orthodox were not present in 1948, but joined the Council many years ago. In 1998 we assembled in Africa, not in Europe or North America. **Debt and human rights** Two of the biggest new "issues" before the

8th Assembly were the debt crisis affecting impoverished countries in the "two-thirds world" and details of a new statement on human rights.

Delegates easily rallied to support debt relief; let's hope that they will make just as forceful and cogent an effort to influence the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through their own church members who participate in the decisions of those bodies.

An escape from scapegoating

Homosexuals are useful as scapegoats. But at the WCC 8th Assembly we were not used as scapegoats in the same way we were used at the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops held in England last summer (see *TW*5-11/98). Why? No one knows for sure, but I offer some suggestions of my own.

First, Lambeth demonstrated a remarkable shift in power from bishops of the white north to bishops in the global south. The new majority agreed theologically and liturgically on few things, but most agreed in opposing homosexuality. Voting on the divisive issue became just too tempting to resist:

> It was a clear and concrete way to demonstrate the new hegemony.

> Second, resolutions of the WCC are even less binding on members than are those of the Lambeth Conference on the provinces and dioceses of the Anglican Communion. Why invite a fuss? After all, in an ecumenical body as huge and diverse as the WCC, there are already far more divisions than there are in any one communion: Those who choose to take the WCC seriously are far less willing than were the



U.S. delegates to the 8th WCC Assembly in Zimbabwe joined a human chain around the Assembly hall chanting, "Cancel the debt." ENS/Jim Solheim

With the new human rights statement, the Council exhibited embarrassing moral timidity: Several attempts to express concerns about the violation of human rights of lesbians and gays were blocked. The silence stares in the face horrendous abuses against the political and civil rights of lesbians and gays, such as those in the host country Zimbabwe and in many other parts of the world, where homosexuals are routinely fired from their jobs, cut off from benefits, jailed and otherwise persecuted. Zimbabwe's President Mugabe routinely refers to lesbians and gays as "lower than pigs and dogs."

bishops at Lambeth to push for a vote designed to have winners and losers.

Third, the most logical opponents to rally around an anti-lesbigay agenda are themselves at great odds with each other, namely the Orthodox and the Evangelicals.

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Louie Crew is the founder of Integrity, an organization of Episcopalians that advocates for the rights and concerns of lesbigay church members, <lcrew@newark.rutgers.edu>. See his full WCC diary at <http://newark.rutgers.edu/ ~lcrew/wccdiary.html>.

Repeatedly the 8th Assembly heard the Orthodox complain against the proselytizing of the Evangelicals, especially now that Evangelicals have easier access to Orthodox countries previously isolated by the Iron Curtain.

Zimbabwe's contribution to the gentler response

Zimbabwe itself gave two gifts that helped to minimize the risk of gay bashing at Harare: First was President Mugabe himself. Mugabe is Zimbabwe's very own "Fred Phelps" (the Kansas-based homophobe who pickets Episcopal Church conventions, calling us the "Fag Church"). Even those who have no particular welcome for lesbians and gays want to disassociate themselves from Mugabe's patently self-serving and hateful rhetoric. Any attempt to mobilize against lesbigays would have invited Mugabe to step into the leadership, and few wanted to give him that opportunity. [Before returning to speak to the Assembly on December 8th, Mugabe had spent only seven days in Zimbabwe in all of 1998. Meanwhile, during this same year, the Zimbabwe dollar fell 70 percent against the U.S. dollar.] Mugabe managed to toe the line and avoid mentioning lesbigays when he addressed the Assembly, but after the meeting broke up, he could not resist and told a reporter that the WCC is the proper body to "purge homosexuals."

Padares

The second gift of Zimbabwe was more positive: the Shona tradition of Padare. A "padare" is a meeting place for common deliberation. The WCC used padares as opportunities to explore differences. Padares are not tied to any legislative agenda. They are strictly for discussion. They encourage respectful listening. There were hundreds of padares on a full range of subjects throughout the Assembly. The 22 padares devoted explicitly to lesbigay issues were among those best attended. In the second week many had to be turned away because of lack of space. These sessions had the irenic effect of the common worship tables and Bible study initiated at the 1988 General Convention in Detroit. It's very hard for persons on either side of issues to demonize each other when we pray together and share our stories.

In addition, opposition to lesbigays was largely forced underground at Harare. The Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) stalked us, albeit clumsily. Signs announcing our meetings were torn down. We replaced them so steadily that after a while the vandals gave up.

On only one occasion did homophobia turn truly nasty. Melinda Medew of Fiji showed me a nasty bruise on her arm and explained that she got it at a padare featuring

Those who choose to take the WCC seriously are far less willing than were the bishops at Lambeth to push for a vote on homosexuality designed to have winners and losers.

Cristl Ruth Vonholdt, a German psychologist whom the American Anglican Council had brought to the Lambeth Conference. Atboth meetings Evangelicals distributed hundreds of copies of a book in which Vonholdt claims to "heal" homosexuals.

"After 45 minutes of Vonholdt's hate speech," Medew told me, "I asked whether we would be allowed to respond to the false witness against us. We were told we could not reply, and some of the young African gays stormed out. I saw two of them crying. I wanted to stay in the padare rather than to give the presenters license to continue to harass us in our absence, but I also wanted to be available to my African brothers. As I stood in the doorway, one of Dr. Vonholdt's compatriots shoved the door to make me leave."

The WCC bureaucracy also forced some of the opposition to lesbigays to go underground in the way that it opposed lesbigay subjects from being named in the new WCC human rights resolution as much as many of us feel that it should be.

Support without forcing a vote

United Church of Christ moderator Paul Sherry made the most forceful support of lesbigays at the Assembly, and he did so by specifically refusing to amend the human rights resolution in ways that would force a decision which supporters of lesbigays would most certainly have lost. "I speak in support of the proposed policy statement on human rights," he began gently. "However, I am saddened that the statement does not more sharply specify those whose basic human rights are severely threatened, particularly gay and lesbian people. Therefore, though I do not intend to offer an amendment to the draft document, it is my urgent hope that we as the World Council of Churches, despite our differences in understanding regarding sexual orientation, will increasingly commit ourselves to protect the basic human rights of gay and lesbian people. I understand and respect the differing theological postures on the appropriateness of homosexual orientation. But that is not the issue here. Rather, the issue is the protection of basic human rights for all God's children, without exception. Otherwise, I fear our stated commitments will increasingly ring hollow. Every day gay and lesbian people face verbal abuse, physical harm, and even death. A year ago, Amnesty International documented scores of instances in countries all over the globe in which individuals are being targeted for imprisonment, torture and murder simply on the grounds of their sexual orientation. In my own country, but a few weeks ago, a young college student was brutally beaten and hung on a fence to die, simply because he was gay. The silence, in the midst of this ugliness, is deafening. I urge us all to break the silence."

GALZ

One of the most moving experiences for me was the opportunity of getting to know and work with Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ), a group of several hundred members.

GALZ is not primarily a secular group, as it has been portrayed by the press. Most

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members are involved in faith communities. All but one of their major leaders are black. One woman is a Baptist minister. Her straight sister is a member of GALZ in support of her, and at great risk, since she is employed as a secretary to the Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), an organization which has been particularly perfidious in its treatment of GALZ. The parents of the sisters were murdered when they had political differences with the government.

Given the obsessive hostility towards homosexuality in this country, the WCC was hesitant in accepting the ZCC's invitation to have us meet here. To woo the Council, the ZCC made overtures to GALZ to meet with them and to educate themselves regarding lesbians and gays. In good faith, and with some surprise at the welcome, GALZ members at great risk came to meet with them and to share details of their lives. Many ZCC members expressed surprise that GALZ members were Christians and on a faith journey. The ZCC also engaged the considerable talents of GALZ members to help in the drafting of statements to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UN's Declaration of Human Rights. [Once the WCC

Nuclear gambling

The Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF) is combining this year's annual conference with a pilgrimage to the Nevada Nuclear Test Site as part of the Healing Global Wounds Mother's Day Event, led by Corbin Harney of the Western Shoshone. The May 7-10 weekend will begin in Las Vegas with speakers who will address the effects of nuclear testing on the land and on the lives of the people who live near the test site. There will also be a chance to join a nonviolent civil disobedience action at the test site. For info.: <www.nonviolence.org/ epf>, or call EPF's Washington, D.C. office at 202-783-3380.

issued the invitation, however, the ZCC immediately treated GALZ as anathema. Contact with them was dramatically reduced, and hostile statements regarding homosexuality poured forth from ZCC, especially from the Anglican Bishop of Zimbabwe, echoing the rabid statements of the country's president.]

Overall, the Assembly seems to me to have been a great success as a means for lesbigays to educate the church universal. Lesbigays responded to that challenge with great dedication and care. More and more churches will come to the 9th WCC Assembly in 2005 eager to learn about their lesbigay neighbors, and many more straights will come to report of their faith journeys with their lesbigays.

Before we left Harare, over 75 lesbigays present constituted ourselves as The International Lesbian and Gay Christian Network (ILGCN).



ENS/Max Hernandez

Aided by Phoebe Griswold (wife of the Episcopal Church's presiding bishop), the Bishop of Honduras, Leo Frade, and members of a local Anglican congregation, along with a youth brigade, distribute food and other supplies to local residents. The supplies were funded by the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief.

With 90 percent of Honduras' banana crop wiped out, \$255 million in banana exports have been lost for two years at least. In Nicaragua, 30 percent of the banana crop was destroyed and across Central America thousands of acres of sugar cane, coffee, tobacco, pineapples, melons and vegetables are gone. The losses mean hundreds of thousands of people may be without income for months or longer. Crop losses mean job losses in these countries where per capita annual incomes average \$1,900 or less.

"The process of reconstruction must focus on the people, not just the infrastructure," says Noemi Espinoza, president of the Christian Commission for Development in Honduras. "Many of those who died or disappeared during the storm lived at the margins of society, on riverbeds around the edges of industrial areas or on steep hillsides in the country. They were the expendable ones about whom the government has never been concerned. As we begin to rebuild our country, they must be taken seriously. They must be taken into consideration." — Nan Cobbey [Cobbey is features editor for Episcopal Life, the national newspaper for Episcopalians, <ncobbey@dfms.org>. For information on how to make donations to the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief call them at 1-800-334-7626.]

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MARCH 1999

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ELIZABETH MILLER

AUDREY L. MILLER

Homosexuality today: a sacramentalist perspective

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

Love Undetectable: Notes on Friendship, Sex, and Survival, by Andrew Sullivan, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

ndrew Sullivan is a contributing writer for the New York Times Magazine, senior editor for The New Republic, columnist for London's Sunday Times, and author of Virtually Normal, Same Sex Marriage: Pro and Con, and now Love Undetectable. A gay HIV- positive Roman Catholic, Sullivan is controversial in the lesbitransgay community for several reasons. Libertarian types dislike his rejection of what he calls "libidinal pathology" in favor of same-sex marriage that would "channel sex into love and commitment and responsibility." Unable thus far to find a suitable partner for himself, he nevertheless insists that opposition to gay marriage is not at all about marriage, but about the conviction that homosexual love is inferior to heterosexual love — a conviction that is held by many homosexuals as well as heterosexuals. About samesex marriage I am with Sullivan 100 per-

Witness contributing editor and lesbian activist Virginia Ramey Mollencott is author of Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism and Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response (with Letha Scanzoni).

review/

cent, except that ideally I would prefer a complete disconnection between church and state.

A more complicated reason for Sullivan's controversial status within his own subculture is the fact that he sometimes lets cats out of bags, revealing to the world what some activists might prefer to hide from public awareness. For instance, Sullivan describes the huge drug-enhanced "circuit" dance parties that have become features of emergent post-AIDS gay male city life.

More important to Sullivan's controversial status is the fact that he sometimes generalizes in ways that could be useful to those who oppose gay-straight equality. For instance, in Love Undetectable he remarks that "There is little doubt that the ideology that human beings are mere social constructions and that sex is beyond good and evil facilitated a world in which gay men literally killed each other by the thousands." And that "narcissism and promiscuity will likely endure as intermittent elements of gay culture, just as camp and drag will. But we will measure our progress by the extent to which these ways of managing the pain recede." The problem is not that there is no truth in such statements, but rather that they provide sound bytes to be quoted by those who hate homosexuals.

I think of Toni Morrison, who will not allow white interviewers to steer her into saying anything that could be used against the black community. She plants her concerns about black behavior firmly within the parameters of her fiction, from which it is very difficult to retrieve anything quotable for the evening news. We who write only non-fiction are more limited than Morrison, and certainly I agree with Sullivan that homosexual leaders should not continue to extoll everything and anything just because it is done by homosexuals. But there is a fine line between calling an oppressed group toward responsible behavior and providing assistance to the oppressors. Sullivan sometimes ventures mighty close to that line.

Another contributor to Sullivan's controversial status is his penchant for setting up oppositions and then locating his own position somewhere between them, a practice that may irritate those who are relegated to one of the "extremes." Liberals, Sullivan says, are "suspicious of particular loyalties and seek to embrace universal values and egalitarian politics," while conservatives prefer particulars to universals and therefore would prefer nationalism to internationalism, friendship to love. Sullivan then proceeds to lay out a moral middle way "to preserve the values of friendship while not denying the moral values of love."

Sullivan's middle way contrasts passionate love (eros) with friendship (philia) in a way reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' The Four Loves. If "love solves a need," friendship is "an act of radical choice"; love requires illusions and threatens humiliation, but in friendship, humiliation is impossible; love promises union and abandon, while friendship demands constancy and discipline. All of this sounds very patriarchal, and indeed Sullivan astonishes by claiming that Montaigne's was the first and last serious modern treatment of friendship. Had he read Mary Daly's Pure Lust (1984), or Janice Raymond's A Passion for Friends (1986), or especially Mary Hunt's Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship (1991), he would have known that his own best insights are those that come closest to the lesbian feminist consensus on the topic.

"Human friendship," Sullivan writes,

"is *agape* plus intimacy ... the fullest realization of love." Good — but feminists would not have tried to split *eros* from *philia* and *agape* in the first place; and while we might agree with Sullivan that charity is "the universalization of friendship," we would not agree that it is "impossible on earth." Rather, feminists believe that friendship is plural, is constantly multiplying, is deeply political, and ideally culminates in global community.

During his finest moments, Sullivan is a shrewd analyst and master of a deftly beautiful style. His title Love Undetectable reverberates at many levels. I sense the title's relevance again and again - in Sullivan's description of the "undetectable virus" and the secret grief of Halloween crowds in San Francisco when new combination therapies appeared to promise the end of AIDSas-plague; in the recognition that during the plague, people who had thought they didn't care for each other could achieve solidarity; and above all in the elusive shift Sullivan perceives in the significance of homosexuality itself: "From being an undetectable, unmentionable love, homosexuality has slowly become a symbol of the subversive and transformative frontier of love as a whole, a sign not of dysfunction or disease but of liberty and self-knowledge."

Sullivan is insistent about drawing distinctions some people might prefer to leave more open. For instance, he spotlights the obvious differences between homosexual and heterosexual love - gays do not encounter a radically different gender in love and sexuality, and have no intrinsic ability without acknowledging that these distinctions are valid only on the most literal level. I agree, however, with his description of the great divide between gay male culture ("almost a painting in testosterone") and lesbian culture, where "personal competition sometimes cedes to an almost stifling emphasis on consensus and conformity."

Sullivan provides an informative dis-

cussion of reparative therapy and its claim to be able to "cure" homosexuality. However, he relegates to a footnote one of the most ironic and telling details concerning reparative therapists. Their most outspoken practitioner, Charles Socarides, has a homosexual son who is the Clinton administration's chief political liaison to the gay and lesbian community. Because Socarides attributes homosexuality to "an over-controlling mother and a father who was disengaged," who had "forfeited his

As Sullivan asserts, the only ethic the church has offered to homosexuals is "an unethic, a statement that some people are effectively beneath even the project of an ethical teaching."

rightful duties as a father" and had "given his son no real role model," it is no surprise that in his book *Freedom Too Far* Socarides does not acknowledge his own son's homosexuality.

Sullivan's discussion of Freud is stimulating: "If one is to infer what is normal from what is embedded most deeply in human identity, then, for Freud, it is clear that bisexuality is the norm, and that both heterosexuality and homosexuality demand equally searching explanation." Now isn't that a paradigm that could enliven churchly discussions of human sexuality!

Sullivan is clear about the ethical vacuum created by clerical obsession with the letter rather than the spirit of the law: "I have never heard a homily that attempted to explain how a gay man should live, or how his sexuality should be expressed. I have heard nothing but a vast and endless and embarrassed silence, an awkward, unexpressed desire for the simple nonexistence of such people." That has been my experience also. And during my 44 years of college teaching, I found gay and non-gay students of every religion and no religion very willing to discuss sexual ethics — and almost pathetically eager to hear what I as an older woman had to say. Anything to break the vacuum!

As Sullivan asserts, the only ethic the church has offered to homosexuals is "an unethic, a statement that some people are effectively beneath even the project of an ethical teaching." Those who currently oppose gay marriage, including a majority of Anglican bishops worldwide, should ponder what Sullivan says about marriage: "It is the mark of ultimate human respect; and its automatic, unthinking, casual denial to gay men and women is the deepest psychological and political wound imaginable."

As for the currently fashionable claim that Christian people love homosexual sinners but hate their sin, Sullivan supplies a corrective: "When you begin to see homosexuality not as some bizarre and willful attempt to practice a specific sexual act, but a deep and complex part of a human person, a person who needs as much love and as much divine love as any other person, then it becomes clear how it is, in fact, impossible to hate the 'sin' and love the 'sinner.' Or how the very formulation is in fact a way of denigrating homosexual people, denying their humanity, erasing their integrity. It is as if we were to say that we loved Jews, so long as they never went to a synagogue." Exactly!

Sullivan's sacramental world view, implicit everywhere, is illustrated by his final paragraph. He describes going out on a boat with 12 others to empty into the ocean the ashes of his friend Pat, who has died of AIDS. The ashes overboard, he dives into the water "after Pat" amidst the "strange gray mist," and finally resurfaces into a pure sweet breeze. It is a ritual of dying into newness of life — a baptism in love undetectable.

ew people have played as central a role in church life as Jimmy Allen. As president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1978-79, Allen occupied the top leadership position in the nation's largest Protestant denomination. He has advised government leaders on religious freedom, founded a Christian television network and consulted with secular media on religious news coverage. Yet Allen's current prominence as an author and speaker on the church's response to AIDS comes not from his renown in Christian circles, but from the ordeal of finding his family cast out of them.

In 1985, Allen's daughter-in-law and two grandsons — one newborn, the other three years old --- were found to have AIDS, contracted from a blood transfusion his daughter-in-law, Lydia Allen, had received during the birth of the first child. When his son Scott Allen - then minister of education at a Disciples church in Colorado Springs - informed his senior pastor of his family's illness, he was immediately fired from his job. The family was asked to remove their three-year-old son, Matt, from the church's day care center, and not to return to the church.

The family joined grandparents Jimmy and Wanda Allen in Fort Worth, and began to search for a church where Matt could attend Sunday school. Armed with a videotape of Matt playing with his pediatrician's children, Jimmy Allen approached friends who pastored congregations in the area. Over and over, he was turned down.



Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of The Witness, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

"I have been deeply disturbed by the loss of focus of organized religion, and I think it's a virus of its own, with its own kind of death, moving in the body of believers."



Unburdening a secret by Marianne Arbogast

"Inever expected that the church I loved so much would become our greatest source of sorrow," Allen writes in his book, Burden of a Secret (Ballantine, 1995), an account of his family's experience with AIDS. "The rejection of the churches when we reached out for help was one of the most devastating aspects of our entire ordeal with AIDS."

When Allen's younger grandson, Bryan, died at nine months of age, a pastor friend who made a condolence visit to Wanda Allen practically flew from the house when he learned the baby had died of AIDS. Another friend, a mortician, agreed to supervise Scott and Lydia Allen in preparing their son for burial, but refused to so much as touch the infant's body himself.

In an effort to protect Matt from rejection and harassment, the Allens guarded their privacy for years, revealing the reason for Lydia and Matt's poor health only when they felt it necessary. Unwelcome at

churches and day care centers, Matt found playmates at a fast-food restaurant.

"McDonald's playground was the place we had to find the first socialization for him," Allen says. "You could go in and play and no one asked you for a health certificate. Of course, he was no threat to anybody — they were threats to him [because of his failing immune system]."

But when Lydia Allen died in 1992, the weight of secrecy became too heavy to bear.

"I could feel Scott's anger rising as he sat rigidly through the songs, eulogies, and prayers," Jimmy Allen writes. "After the service, Scott got up and left the church without a word to anyone. Before doing so, he said to me in a terse, quiet voice, 'Nobody said the word AIDS in the whole service.'

"He was right. It was then that I saw how wrong we had been in trying to keep our secret, even if we had done it for the right,

noble reason of trying to protect Matt."

The Allens found "going public" easier than they had anticipated. Churches which had rejected Matt were challenged by reporters, and many eventually developed AIDS ministries. The provision of clear, direct information was helpful in allaying fears, and the family found support from many quarters. Shortly before Matt died at the age of 12, his elementary school held an outdoor "Circle of Life" ceremony for Matt to celebrate his life.

Jimmy Allen is still living with AIDS in his family. Another of his sons, Skip Allen, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1986. Although Allen is unable to accept his son's gay lifestyle, he is clear about his love and respect for him. "He moves creatively and caringly among the dying, comforting and serving other victims of AIDS," Allen wrote in his book. "He loves God."

Today, due to the protease inhibitors and "cocktail" that Skip Allen has been receiving, the progression of his disease has been slowed.

"We just had his 45th birthday celebration," Jimmy Allen says. "We didn't think he'd be here. He's lost so many people around him, he's dealing with the survivor syndrome. But he is surviving."

Allen's son Scott, once a minister, has not returned to church. While his estrangement has pained Allen, it has also led him to new insight about God.

The type of rejection Scott experienced "has a damage far more than the immediate," Allen says. "But it has driven him into searching for ways to express God in his life, outside of the 'religion' things. He and I have had vast discussions about that. It has stretched my own understanding of God but it has not eliminated the basic root systems that I believe are important. But I've discovered there's an Abrahamic faith factor that many of us in the Christian movement have missed. Where the Bible says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness,' Jimmy Allen is engaged in what he calls a "lovers' quarrel" with the church.

"The churches have become places of misguided loyalties and purposes," he contends. "I have been deeply disturbed by the loss of focus of organized religion, and I think it's a virus of its own, with its own kind of death, moving in the body of believers. When we miss the heartbeat of God we miss the heartbeat of it all. And the heartbeat of God is not that people gather and sing praises to him, it's that people

"We've missed the fact that believing God and letting God communicate with us is much larger than any sect or any religious movement."

reflect him, that they experience him and become like him."

Allen feels that a focus on numbers has driven out the basic mission of proclaiming the gospel to suffering people.

"I have pastored a megachurch myself, so I know the temptation, but the fact is, if we are not the salt and the light, if we are not the caring people of God, then we are not in touch with his basic heartbeat, and that's where the life comes from. The renewal of love for the marginalized may be the source of spiritual energy for us in the future, if we get back in touch with God at that level."

Since writing his book, Allen has been besieged by requests for help.

"There's been an opening up of a whole phalanx of pain-filled people who have reached out as a result of the book," he says. "We've had for the last four years pilgrimages up to this mountain where I live [at Big Canoe, Georgia] from all over the nation, of people who are coming with their own pain about being shut away, not knowing how to deal with family, being ignored or rejected or shunned by their own congregations."

In addressing AIDS prevention, Allen defends the church's promotion of abstinence, but is also in favor of education on risk reduction.

"There's been a restoration of emphasis on the quality of relationship in love — in such things as the 'Love waits' efforts of the churches — to help young people to commit themselves to higher idealism. A number of people in the AIDS community see that as negative or at least irrelevant. It is not irrelevant to help people understand what love means and what sexual commitment means.

"But the other side of it is that there are those that are falling through the cracks in great numbers, and we need to help them understand how to avoid dying from a disease. So I think that sex education needs to be encouraged, and a lot of our churches are finding it very difficult to do.

"I think the sexual mores of our society are in such flux that we need to re-establish some principles. At the same time, one of the principles is that to live is better than to die. We need to help people stay alive.

"Needle exchange programs raise the same issue. Do you encourage people to use drugs by giving them needles so that they won't be killed by a disease? The answer, of course, is that they don't take drugs in order to have a good needle."

In caring for AIDS victims, Allen sees questions of guilt or innocence as immaterial.

"Of course there are people who are more responsible for what they have brought on themselves than others," he says. "But the fact is, HIV/AIDS victims are dying. That's the issue. The issue is that there are people made in the image of God for whom Christ died who are suffering and dying."

continued from page 3

was, I believe, referring to earth, and specifically, I suppose, Babylon, which I believe is now Iraq. It seems that this area was originally lush and forested: you know, with those huge, ancient, and (obviously) sacred groves. Now it is dust and rubble. This is what the ancients were talking about: and a vestige has remained in the Bible, in spite of the endless greed-driven editing and re-editing over the centuries.

Would it make sense that any God would create this paradise, then encourage the created to destroy? We do what we can by restoring vacant inner-city buildings. Every such structure brought back and occupied is at least one building that need not be built on what should be prairie or forest. We use train transportation whenever possible, the most environmentally sound ever conceived, other than walking or riding a bicycle.

Basically the framework of development must change — back to city and country; rather than the slather of sprawl over all. This is occurring; people are realizing that endless commuting is no pleasure; the cities are being restored. It's a long battle, of course, because there is so much money to be made consuming land and resources.

Robert and Rebecca Venn Kenosha, WI

Witness praise

I KNOW WHY *BELOVED* didn't do well at the box office. It is strong medicine as is your magazine. It holds up a mirror we don't like or want to look into. As Joan Baez recently said: This country is in a state of denial.

What keeps us going: knowing there are others who care and haven't just succumbed to wealth, immorality and power and who have decided not to ask any more than that of our leaders and our country and ourselves.

> M. Knight Monroe, NY

I REALLY LIKE *THE WITNESS*, as does my husband. The interesting thing about this is that he is an atheist who generally thinks Christians miss what should be their call to radical politics.

Lana Galyean Prunedale, CA

I LOVE THE MAGAZINE! Diversity of points of view on subjects that I would never receive from other religious publications which are well thought out.

Vera Johnson Roanoke, VA

EVERY ISSUE I'VE SEEN has contained numerous precious insights, many of which I've felt, but not been able to express. My whole community, a Catholic Worker house of various persuasions, has enjoyed what you've covered and how.

Jim Haber San Francisco, CA

I AM ALWAYS CHALLENGED by the pressing justice that engages you and try to translate the themes to my world of inner urban ministry.

> Bill Lawton Potts Point, NSW Australia

Witness praise - and prayers

THE WITNESS HELPS TO KEEP ME SANE in a mad world! My prayers are with Jeanie as she faces this difficult time! Mary Lou Berry Euclid, OH

[Ed. note: Witness co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, her family and The Witness' staff want to acknowledge the many messages of encouragement, support and prayers which have come from readers as Jeanie receives treatment for the brain tumor which caused her collapse last Labor Day Weekend. As we go to press with this issue we are feeling cautiously optimistic about her progress in fighting the cancer. But prayers are still very much in order!]

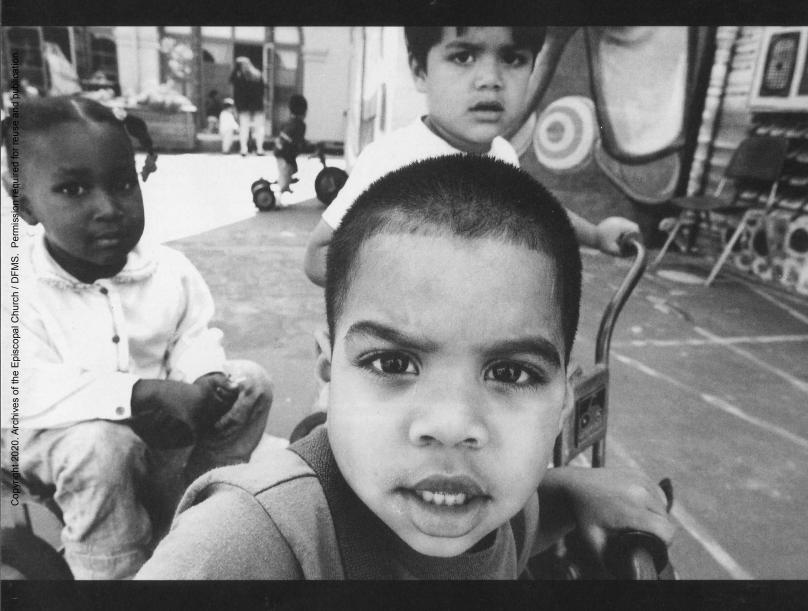
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Volume 82 • Number 4 • April 1999



A national disregard for children

Community food security

I'M WRITING IN RESPONSE to Anne Cox's "Editor's Note" in your Jan./Feb. issue, re "Community Food Security: just food."

I admire Anne very much — as I do all of you at *The Witness* —but I am tempted to ask, "So what?"

The Food Movement is the oldest of the modern movements. Indeed, all of the ones now are spiritual children of the Anti Corn Law League.

When the League succeeded in getting the Corn Laws repealed the movement fell apart into all of the other questions/concerns that people have. Abolition, Suffragism, Socialism, and the Irish Question come to mind.

But, where are all of those questions today? The English are still in Ireland. People who now have the vote may wonder how



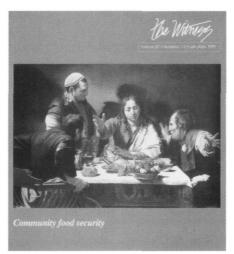
Classifieds

Executive Director opening

The Episcopal City Mission (ECM) is a faith-based ministry that promotes social and economic justice through congregations and community-based organizations to identify and eliminate the systemic causes of poverty and oppression through the sharing of resources within the Episcopal Church and our broader society.

ECM seeks an Executive Director to design and implement strategies to work effectively with community groups, foundations and other organizations within the Church and to manage its ongoing programmatic, fundraising and constituent-building activities.

Candidates must possess related community or faith-based activist experience and proven leadership and management skills. Call 617-482-4826 x691 for full job description and application instructions.



much value it is. And those who aren't hungry may be eating contaminated food.

I'm not much for getting involved in the food movement. Not because I'm against people eating. I'm not even involved in the ecology movement. And I would definitely prefer to continue breathing.

Rather, I guess that I would say that everyone has their favorite movement and the place is still a mess.

Director of Religious Education and Youth

St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Day School, an urban parish of approximately 600 members and a private day school with approximately 450 students, preschool through eighth grade, is seeking a qualified full-time Director of Religious Education and Youth. Familiarity with Episcopal or similar religious tradition is required, as is education and training or strong experience in Christian religious education. Ordination is not a prerequisite but persons who are ordained or anticipating ordination are encouraged to apply. Parish leadership has made a fresh commitment to a new emphasis on Christian Education. We need a person with strength and vision to take us into this new phase of our life together.

Please contact The Rev. Robert E. Wood, Rector, St. Paul's Episcopal Church & Day School, 11 East 40th St., Kansas City, MO 64111 or call 816-931-2850; fax 816-931-0072. I've been pestering people for years about sharing political power. And most folk have reacted as if that made me a quaint eccentric. While that might even be true, I prefer to think of myself as an ignored prophet.

Maybe what I should say is that we can go on ignoring each others' movements and the world will continue a mess precisely because we are ignoring each other. Or maybe we can begin to try to figure out priorities of the various movements. And maybe even begin to solve some problems.

To me it is a variation on the old argument as to whether to give a person a fish or teach them how to fish. And to me the answer is neither. Rather, to me, the answer is to divide the power so that there is a political structure that can enforce sane fishing regulation to ensure that there are enough fish for the future; and jobs so that folk can afford fish.

But! Maybe even we Church folk can begin to make some sense out of our part.

Another line of "movement" started when the earliest Church decided to solve two of its problems by creating the diaconate to do the work and appointed their Greek members the first of those deacons. Second-class Chris-

Seabury-Western Young Adult Ministry Program

Seabury-Western Theological Seminary invites inquiries and applications for Young Adult Ministry: A Curriculum for the Postmodern Church. Students may choose MTS., M.Div. or Certificate curriculum. For more information, call 847-328-9300 x26.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 8374, Richmond, VA 23226 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-

tianity is that old! Things haven't changed all that much when blacks and women are still tokens among the clergy within a church in which they make up the majority.

Black people started their march toward what we like to think of as "equality" with the question of baptism a few centuries ago. Just as women may eventually extend their recent ordinations to include political parity.

It would seem that the human needs some sort of religious conversion to make even small changes.

But! Can we speed the process?

If I might be permitted to borrow a bit from Julie Wortman's interview with Barbara Harris, "In that great gettin' up morning," Ms. Harris says, "Compared to the male bishops, we (women bishops) tend to be more outspoken, more forthright, more honest in what we say on the occasions that we speak."

That isn't surprising. Men never have been known to be all that honest; either with others or even with themselves.

Indeed! That is what the whole fuss of the impeachment is about. To give the right wing devils their due, they are correct when they say that there should be some measure of

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Beyond Inclusion

Be part of the advocacy for full inclusion of gays and lesbians within the church by attending "Beyond Inclusion: Making the Justice Connections," April 15-18, 1999 at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York. Presentations will be made by The Rt. Rev. Bennett J. Sims, From Convention to Conviction; The Rev. Dr. Renee L. Hill, Homophobia, Racism, Sexism: A Complex Design; and Dr. Deirdre J. Good, The Use of the Bible in Debates about Same-Sex Unions. There will also be a variety of workshops conducted by an exciting line-up of leaders of the church. For more information and materials, contact: Beyond Inclusion, 132 N. Euclid Ave., Pasadena, CA 91101; (626) 583-2740; or check our website at <www.beyondinclusion.org>.



honesty. It is just that they don't volunteer to let go of their own versions of dishonesty. And I would be so impudent as to ask women: What are the limits of your own honesty?

It really doesn't make a lot of difference whether men waste their arguing about Impeachment or piddle along not solving other problems. Or, for that matter, women rationing their own honesty.

Whether it is women priests not noticing a next step in the logic of their ordination political parity? — or men playing mental pocket pool as to whether honesty needs an oath before it becomes mandatory, the human problem is rooted in our habit of denial. Everybody seems to figure that nothing is important enough to do until the "right people" agree! I guess that the white power structure

John Pruesner

The Witness has received a contribution from Lucinda Martin in memory of John Pruesner, "a wonderful [Episcopal] priest," who died in Kansas City, Kans., this past January. *The Witness* staff and the board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company is grateful that Martin has chosen to honor Pruesner in this way. will be fated to keep on bumbling because blacks and women (and whoever) are too timid to tell them that they are bumbling because they might get upset and deny somebody a crumb that they may — eventually not have to bother giving them anyway. Maybe that is what is meant by "games people play."

I am also reminded of Ms. Harris' old saying: "The struggle, indeed, continues." I would just ask Ms. Harris, Ms. Cox, and the rest of you good folk at *The Witness*: How long?

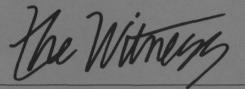
John Kavanaugh Detroit, MI

1998 fundraising campaign

EACH YEAR'S END, I make up a contribution list. Each year I wonder if the result of the money I send to church budgets cancels the money I send to other organizations. It is not so with my contribution to *The Witness*. While much of the church might frown on the things I choose to fund, I believe you would rejoice! Thanks for the voice you bring.

> Martha Cornish Atlanta, GA

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More than 14.1 million U.S. children live in poverty, putting them at risk of malnutrition, homelessness, abuse and neglect. Welfare 'reform' is only making matters worse.

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Cover: Children at government Alain McLaughlin/Impact Visuals.

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our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. The Witness' roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. The Witness is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent

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cating for those denied systemic power as well as

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

- Letters Editorial
- - Vital Signs

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What's in a name?

by Julie A. Wortman

he Witness has always endeavored to keep the level of hope greater than the level of despair. But this month it has been a special challenge to remain sanguine as we've probed the dimensions and strength of the forces which are damaging the health and welfare of American children. As Children's Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman notes with justifiable, perhaps weary, outrage, "millions of children are growing up unsafe, unstimulated, under-educated, sick, hungry, neglected or abused." More scandalous still is that so much of this suffering has been cultivated and sanctioned by government social policies that stem from a national idolatry of market capitalism which relentlessly drums a mantra of profit, profit, profit into the public ear.

It is not that good people in every community and every state aren't addressing children's needs in countless imaginative and concrete ways. Here in Maine, Jim Hanna of the Maine Coalition for Food Security has been working on making sure that hungry children have nonemergency access to nutritious food. My friend Deborah Cotton has for several years been part of a cadre of Knox County adults mentoring adolescents caught breaking the law for the first time - shoplifting, drug possession, drunk driving - in the knowledge that some truthful talk, combined with respectful work on decisionmaking skills, can help shift kids away from self-destructive behaviors (the program's success rate is 98 percent). Our neighbor across the road, Jack Carpenter, has pioneered a program that brings at-risk youth and local adults together for camping trips that provide a basis for moving from shared fun to sharing concerns about deeper issues. In affluent Camden, students in the alternative high school are getting help in establishing a shelter for homeless teens from advisors and community leaders who understand that many of the clients will be students at the school. In



Lewiston, Norwich House provides a supervised setting for teen mothers (and their children, who otherwise would be taken from them) in desperate need of personal support and mentoring in life and parenting skills. Outright is a recently established Portland-based non-profit that already has a mushrooming program of support and drop-in services for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth who need safe, positive and affirming environments in which to be themselves. And the faith-based Genesis Community Loan Fund headquartered in nearby Bristol, invests in enterprises that provide low-income families with affordable housing and transitional accommodations for mothers with children suffering from domestic violence (see TW 12/98).

Every reader will have their own list of encouraging near-at-hand examples of people and programs concretely meeting daunting needs. Such witness is crucial in saving lives. But my pessimism is based on a suspicion that the bad-news statistics will continue to accrue unless more of us in this country have a radical change of heart that results in elected leaders and a public policy that value children's lives more than money.

I find myself engaged by author Patricia Hersch's (see p. 16) observation that each of us can begin to change a national climate that devalues the lives of children by making a point of greeting the kids in our neighborhoods by name. For my friends Deborah and Jack and for all the folks involved in programs we cite as causes for hope, it is the children and families they have come to know who keep them committed to the work. So it seems likely that the more children we each know by name, the more we will know of their lives. And such familiarity should make it less and less possible to remain content with politicians, government leaders and policy makers - perhaps even ourselves - who shrug off kids' reality with simplistic or dismissive generalizations, claiming as justification for budget cutbacks a cupboardis-bare economy.

So what's in a name? Perhaps the strongest basis for hope.

editor's note

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Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>. Artist **Dierdre Luzwick** lives in Wisconsin.

Naming our demons?

by Holly Lyman Antolini

66 don't think people understand what Marilyn Manson is about," commented my 15-year-old daughter one afternoon last spring.

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Mo-hom," she complained in disgust at my ignorance, "HE is a rock musician, heavy-metal, who's put out a CD called 'Anti-ChristSuperstar.' Lots of teens listen to him, especially guys. People think he's some kind of Satan-worshipper but I think they just don't get what he's doing."

I listened with respect: This teen has a lot of perceptive good sense. But I had no way to judge her remarks.

Oddly, within the week, there was a page-long article in *Time* describing Manson in some detail, including a story of some young men in Texas who, after listening intensively to the musician, had committed some violent acts for which Manson, when queried, declined any responsibility. Now I was curious to know more.

I borrowed a copy of "Anti Christ Superstar" (from a teen friend of my daughter's who was a bit tentative about loaning it to a priest!). Its lyrics, twisting with irony and laden with violent and explicit sexual imagery, reeked of despair: despair over our American addiction to materialism, our abiding religious hypocrisy, our masochistic worship of the excesses of "stardom." "His despair is not my despair," I pondered, "but his questions are my questions!"

The music itself surged with all the energy the words might have sapped. Texts from the Books of Revelation and Daniel were turned on their ears. This young man knew his apocalyptic Bible, but hated the evangelical tradition of goodversus-evil dualism from which his knowledge stemmed. He seemed in his lyrics to hold out no hope of release from the evils he named, yet the music itself, the sheer act of its composition and performance, embodied that hope in a shockingly confrontative mode.

Could it be that our youth are finding in Marilyn Manson a more honest and morally challenging truth-teller than they are finding in the churches?

I picked up a copy of Manson's autobiography, *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell*, written with collaborator Neil Strauss and as saturated with disaffection, drugs, and sexual acting-out as Manson's music. "As a performer," Manson writes, "I wanted to be the loudest, most persistent alarm clock I could be, because there didn't seem like any other way to snap society out of its Christianity- and media-induced coma."

Can we Christians bear to hear the wakeup call? We are alarmed about the rate at which teenagers are declining to go to church or participate in church-related activities. But could it be that our youth are finding in Marilyn Manson, with his potent arsenal of angry and destructive imagery, a more honest and morally challenging truthteller — albeit a truth-teller with no salvation to recommend — than they are finding in the churches which would presume to guide them into All Truth? Consider the impact of the advertising which barrages these young people daily and hourly from TV screens, magazines, the Internet, buses, billboards, even school scoreboards and bulletin boards — images and messages designed to convince them that they can never consume enough. And for many teenagers sexualized romance has replaced God as the icon of salvation, with drugs and alcohol offering a way of dulling disappointments.

Perhaps we are unwilling to face these things because we are unwilling to look at how we ourselves participate in these same idolatries and wrap ourselves in a comforting cocoon of illusions - that petroleum resources will last forever, that nuclear weapons will never degrade or be detonated, that the disproportionate rate at which North Americans are consuming the world's resources is OK, that we can technologically "fix" global warming before it's too late. How can we ask our youth to put their faith in the freeing, forgiving and healing love of Christ if we do not let that love empower us to meet these questions and dilemmas head-on and convert us to a more humane and sustainable way of life?

The alarm Marilyn Manson sounds is indeed apocalyptic and terrifying, not because he is a Satan-worshipper, but because he names our demons. If his despair and its popularity are any indication, our children are at profound risk. As are we. Manson challenges those of us in the churches to resist chastising him and his listeners with religious platitudes and nostrums and take up our own crosses, heading for the Jerusalem of our own addictions, self-delusions and self-gratifications.

If we can find the grace of a deep trust in God that would enable us to step away from the temptations which absorb us, perhaps our children can do so also. Perhaps that Way of the Cross will open a way of salvation not just for them, but for us all.

Holly Antolini is an Episcopal priest living in Cushing, Me., <hantolin@mint.net>.

Our Children

by Aneb Kgositsile

Every child in this maze, this labyrinth of horrors, this no-way-out alley of a society, this carcass of a culture, every child runs through this terrain with fear in his heart.

Every child runs with fear, with fear in her chest, fear in her legs, with fear she is panting, panting. Her heart is pounding, pounding with fear. She cannot see, for fear floods her eyes like tears she dare not cry.

O, my sisters! O, my brothers! Our children are running, running, circling in traps that we must dismantle.

He is running the whole day, and when he collapses in bed, he sleeps like an old man ready for death.

Is there peace in his dreams? Does he tumble in the park's lush green? Does the laughter in his throat throw his head back in abandon? Do his eyes glint when he giggles? Oh, my brothers! Oh, my sisters! They are running, running!

She is running, running, colliding into each day, pretending to be a child, veteran of a desperate marathon. She is running for her life. She is fighting the maze for her life. She is staring down death in the faces of her playmates. She is surviving the planet's deadliest course.

Oh, our children are running, running, circling in traps that we must dismantle. Oh, my brothers, my sisters! Place a hand on her shoulder. Touch his pounding chest. Hold them till their legs come to rest. Give them safe harbor.



Squandering the future: a nation of children living in poverty

by Camille Colatosti

hildren are the future," says Mary Cooper, the associate director of the Washington office of the National Council of Churches. "If we do not care for children now and provide resources that will make them productive adults then we put our own future at risk."

Unfortunately, putting our future at risk is exactly what we, as a nation, seem to be doing. The latest census bureau statistics, from 1997, show that approximately 20 percent of the nation's 70 million children live in poverty. This means that more than 14.1 million children are poor, living in families whose income falls below the federal poverty guidelines of \$256.35 a week, or \$13,330 a year, for a family of three. Even in this boom economy, the number of children in extreme poverty — those living below onehalf of the poverty line — grew by 400,000 in the last two years.

What does this mean for kids? The effects of poverty on children are devastating, says Greg Duncan, a professor of education and social policy at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University. "Poor children are almost seven times more likely to experience child abuse or neglect than the non-poor. Poor children are 3.5 times as likely to suffer from lead poisoning. They are 2.2 times more likely to experience violent crime. And they are twice as likely to repeat a grade or to drop out of school." In addition, they are more likely to suffer illness, malnutrition, lack of selfesteem, and other dangers.

The childhood stage in which poverty occurs also matters, says Duncan. "Family economic conditions in early childhood appear to be far more important for shaping ability and achievement than are economic conditions during middle childhood and adolescence. Episodes of deep poverty early in childhood appear most

"Can an \$8.7 trillion American economy not afford decent jobs, quality child care, education, and health care for all its children?" —Marian Wright Edelman

detrimental to children's cognitive development."

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, calls child poverty "unforgivable."

"The rosy view of American prosperity at the top hides deep and dangerous moral, economic, age and racial fault lines lurking beneath the surface," she points out. "Shamefully high child poverty rates persist and children are the poorest group of Americans."

Poverty limits options and may deprive children of hope, Edelman adds. "When legitimate avenues of employment are closed, poor youths turn to illegitimate ones, especially the lethal underground economy of drugs and crime fueled by out-of-control gun trafficking."

The result is violence that often kills — and imprisons. In fact, says Edelman, who points to a fivefold increase in the U.S. prison population since 1970, the government's investment in prisons suggests that incarceration is an expected option for poor youth.

"Almost one in three young black males and one in 15 young white males between ages 20 to 29 are under some type of correctional control (incarceration, probation or parole). Two-thirds of state prison inmates in 1991 had not completed high school and one-third had annual incomes under \$5,000."

Joseph Califano, head of Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, reports that if present trends persist, one of every 20 Americans born in 1997 will spend some time in jail, including one of every 11 men and one of every four black men.

"Is this America's dream for its children and itself?" asks Edelman. "Can an \$8.7 trillion American economy not afford decent jobs, quality child care, education, and health care for all its children?"

Children and welfare reform

The problem of child poverty has been exacerbated recently with welfare reform legislation. In October 1996, despite protests from Edelman and others, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act [see *TW* 3/98]. This law, which took effect on July 1, 1997, replaced existing welfare programs with a new federal one — Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). This program places strict guidelines on benefits. Families may receive help for no more than two consecutive years and no more than a total of five years.

As Edelman sees it, the President eliminated one program without putting anything better in place. "The President signed

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

it and he negotiated it all along, so I give him full responsibility with the Congress for this extraordinary backward step. He understands these issues profoundly and could have put forth a better alternative. He and the Congress cut child and family nutrition programs and support for legal immigrants without touching a dime in corporate welfare and without touching a dime of Pentagon welfare. It is unfair and unnecessary."

A monumental task now is to convince policy makers of the devastating impact of TANF. As Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, of NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby, explains, "Congress tells us that they need 'documented pain."

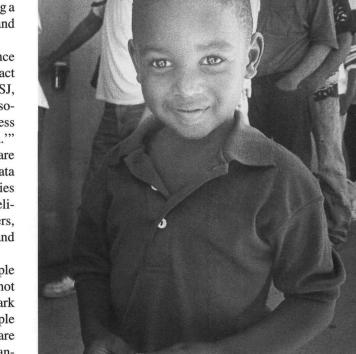
To attain written proof that people are suffering, NETWORK is gathering data by surveying 10 states and 60 agencies owned or operated by a variety of religious orders — soup kitchens, shelters, clinics, schools, literacy programs and more.

"There is a huge increase of people who are not receiving assistance and not working — and who are suffering," Clark says. "We're also finding that people who are working without assistance are not making it. They are using food pantries and soup kitchens more and more. In the last six months, there is a whole group of people who are newly homeless: mothers and children."

Arloc Sherman, the senior researcher for the Welfare Monitoring Project of the Children's Defense Fund, the most comprehensive assessment to date of the impact of welfare reform on children, agrees.

"The data tell a consistent story," Sherman explains. "Lots of people are moving from welfare to work and most of the time at below poverty-level jobs. Some people do move from welfare to something better. Many more, though, move from welfare to worse."

Moving from welfare to worse Among former recipients who find work,



Michael Freeman waits for his mother to get his family's allotment of food from the churchrun Povarello House food program in Fresno, Calif. Thor Swift/Impact Visuals

71 percent earn below the poverty level for a family of three, averaging about \$250 a week. A joint report from the Children's Defense Fund and the National Coalition for the Homeless, entitled *Welfare to What?: Early Findings* on Family Hardship and Well-Being, examined more than 30 state and local studies to conclude that, by March 1998, 19 months after welfare reform went into effect, "only 8 percent of the previous year's recipients had jobs paying weekly wages above the poverty line, barely up from 6 percent in March 1990," before welfare reform was enacted.

At the same time, the report revealed that the percentage of those with weekly wages below 75 percent of the poverty line was up from 6 percent to 14.5 percent. Only 22 percent of recent recipients had combined household earnings that brought them above poverty.

TANF allows for former recipients to maintain food stamps and Medicaid even after they find work, but many people do not know this. Sherman explains that "states are not doing enough to keep people informed." In most cases, he be-

lieves, this is unintentional, more the result of bureaucratic mix-ups and miscommunications than a malicious attempt to deprive people of benefits. "But not in New York," says Sherman. "New York is famous for making it deliberately hard for people to continue to get food stamps."

States have likewise done a poor job of disseminating information about CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program. Each state re-

ceived a block grant that was intended to provide health insurance for all poor children, but lack of information about the effort has kept enrollment low. Today, 11 million children in the U.S. remain uninsured. More than 90 percent of these children have working parents.

"More and more families have emergency needs as a result of welfare reform," points out the NCC's Cooper. "People who lose welfare and their food stamps need assistance, like funds to pay utility bills or emergency food for their children."

The impact of chronic hunger

Almost 10 million American kids suffer every day from chronic hunger. According to Second Harvest, the largest charitable hunger-relief organization in the U.S., children compose 38 percent of the 26 million hungry Americans.

To alleviate the suffering, Second Harvest operates 200 Kids' Cafes as part of its Childhood Hunger Initiative, a campaign to eliminate child hunger in the U.S. These cafes, located in 21 states, serve as foodbanks for children. Their goal is to feed and train today's needy children to enable them to become selfsufficient adults.

The need for such programs is tremendous, says NETWORK's Clark. "We're



Well-child clinic in Colebrook, N.H.

finding that parents are not able to feed their children adequately. They are trading off: going to soup kitchens or shelters to eat because they do not have enough money for their children. Soup kitchens used to have a stereotypical male population. Now, soup kitchens are overwhelmingly female with children."

The Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, a collaboration of pediatric specialists and advocates from six medical institutes, is also concerned about the quality and quantity of food that poor children eat. Founded to monitor the impact of welfare reform on the growth and health status of young children, the program, known as C-SNAP, is located in Boston's Medical Center and examines children in Arkansas, California, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.

The goal, says Anne Skalicky, C-SNAP's multi-site coordinator, "is to link those at risk of growth or nutrition problems to clinical, social or other services, as well as to monitor and analyze data collected."

Using a "health and hunger scale" from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, C-SNAP assesses whether or not children always have enough to eat, and whether or not they have the kinds of food

that they require for proper nutrition.

As Skalicky states, "This is the only study right now that is measuring kids and asking detailed food security questions."

Why is this important? Because "malnutrition is a key issue for children," says Deborah Frank, the director of the Growth and Development Program at Boston Medical Center and one of C-SNAP's principal physician investigators.

Most obviously, the mal-

nourished child will be underweight and will not grow to be as large as a child who receives proper nutrition. (Although, Frank adds, "if you can refeed a malnourished child, you can get him to where other kids are in terms of size.") But the more long-lasting effects of malnutrition concern what Frank terms "cognitive depletion."

Dan Habib/Impact Visuals

"Think about how you feel when you are fasting," she explains. "You are cold, and achy and grouchy. You may lack energy. A child who is underweight may feel this way all the time. Learning suffers even before physical growth. Malnutrition may actually alter brain transmitters. Kids who are malnourished as infants are likely to have serious problems in school through high school."

The anti-hunger programs currently in place are inadequate, says Frank. The federally-funded Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) provides only enough formula for a child's first four months. After that, kids need more than WIC provides and poor parents may have few options.

"The assumption of WIC — and all of these programs," says Frank, "is that these will supplement people's cash income, but in cities with high utilities and rent, like Boston, that supplement becomes people's total food budget — and it is not enough."

Homeless families

When poverty reaches extreme levels, families may struggle not only for food, but also for shelter. Extreme poverty — 50 percent or more below the poverty line — frequently leads to homelessness.

Barbara Duffield, the director of education for the National Coalition for the Homeless, a non-profit advocacy network seeking to end homelessness through education, policy and grassroots organizing, explains that "homeless families are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. Poor families are getting poorer." According to a survey conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, homeless children compose about 25 percent of all the homeless.

"Homelessness," Duffield explains, "disrupts virtually every aspect of family life and disrupts education. With every move or change of school, three to six months of education is lost." Kids may need to change schools because of short periods of homelessness, or because the district says that the child is no longer a resident.

The National Coalition for the Home-

less, along with other organizations, seeks the adoption of a federal law that gives homeless children the right to stay in school.

"Currently," says Duffield, "there are some laws in place, but they need more teeth." The school situation has improved for homeless children, though. "In the mid-1980s, 50 percent of homeless kids



Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals

The Kensington Welfare Rights Union staged an economic human rights bus tour to over 30 cities during the summer of 1998 as part of an effort to gather economic human rights violations by the U.S. to submit to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. The union is joining with other organizations in a campaign to pass a 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution that provides all citizens with a job and a living wage.

> were thought not to be in school. Now, roughly 75 percent are in school. But still a sizable number are not."

For homeless children, school can pro-

vide a stability that is missing in every other aspect of their lives.

According to the Institute for Children and Poverty, "more than half (53 percent) of homeless children transferred schools at least once during the last school year; 7 percent of homeless children transferred three times or more; 27 percent of homeless children missed at least 10 days

of school during the last year; 12 percent of homeless children missed more than 20 days of school; one in five (21 percent) homeless children have repeated a grade in school, a rate more than double that of all school-aged children nationwide. One in 10 are in special education classes."

In 1998, the Institute for Children and Poverty completed what it terms the first widespread study of family homelessness. Looking at 10 cities across the nation — Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Eugene, Milwaukee, New York City, Norman, San Antonio, San Francisco and South Bend — the Institute concluded, "Homelessness today is a family issue." The study interviewed 777 families, representing 2,049 children including 1,508 children in shelters and another 373 in alternate care.

The findings are disturbing. Over half (58 percent) of homeless families are African-American, compared to 12 percent in the general population, followed in frequency by whites, who compose 22 percent of homeless families and 74 percent of the general population.

Eighty-one percent of homeless families are headed by a single parent. Seventy-eight percent are headed

by a single mother. Sixty-two percent of these mothers never married. Only 5 percent are not citizens but green card holders. Less than 1 percent are undocumented immigrants.

What are working parents to do?

"Whether it is child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten or afterschool activities for school-age children, far too many American children and families are not getting what they need because good programs are often unaffordable and difficult to find," says Children's Defense Fund founder and president Marian Wright Edelman.

The most recent census information, from 1997, shows that almost two-thirds (65 percent) of women with children younger than six and more than threefourths (78 percent) of women with children ages six to 13 are in the labor force. In addition, 59 percent of women with children younger than three are working. For most, employment is not a luxury, but essential. Fifty-five percent of working women in the U.S. bring home half or more of their family's earnings. But even with this effort onethird of the children of working mothers are poor.

The 7.7 million children under age five whose mothers were employed were being cared for by someone other than their parents while their mothers worked: 33 percent were in child care centers; 21 percent were in family child care; 33 percent were cared for by relatives; and 6 percent were cared for by nannies in their own homes.

For many families, child care costs are unaffordable. Full-day child care costs anywhere from \$4,000 to \$10,000 a year, and about half of America's families with young children earn less than \$35,000. A family with both parents working full-time at the minimum wage earns only \$21,400.

Helen Blan, the child care director of the Children's Defense Fund, notes that parents face higher tuition costs for quality child care than for public college. "While many parents believe college costs will be the biggest expense they face for their children, in fact many will spend more in a year on quality child care than on public college tuition."

Many advocates also express concerns about the quality of child care. Much of the care that is available isn't regulated. Only 23 states have training requirements for child care teachers and there are no federal requirements. In addition, the turnover among child care workers, the second low-

Full-day child care costs anywhere from \$4,000 to \$10,000 a year, but half of America's families with young children earn less than \$35,000.

est paid occupation in the U.S., is extremely high. The three million child care workers in the country — 96 percent of whom are women — average less than \$12,000 annually. Fewer than 30 percent receive employer-paid health insurance. Most earn no paid vacation and fewer than one in five has a retirement plan.

Head Start

One of the most successful federal programs concerning young children's welfare is Head Start, a preschool program for children at-risk. As Blan, of the Children's Defense Fund, explains, "Head Start works. Research shows that children who participate in Head Start are less likely to be held back in school or be assigned to special education classes, and they tend to be healthier. Studies also show that Head Start has immediate effects on children's selfesteem, achievement, motivation, and social behavior." Unfortunately, Head Start is underbudgeted. Only about one-third of all children who are eligible, or 752,000 children, are able to attend due to funding limitations.

Perhaps more troubling than the federal government's underfunding of Head Start and child care programs is the reluctance of some states to make use of the federal dollars available. The federal government provides funding for child care through Child Care Development Block Grants grants given to the state to ease the cost of care for parents. But, says Mary Elizabeth Clark, SSJ, of NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby, "a lot of the money for child care just sits at the state level because the state has to match it and states are unwilling. They may say that they are saving funds for a rainy day, or they may mandate a co-pay so high that people can't afford it. The state of Ohio actually sent back money that they said they didn't need."

"Self-care"

For older school-age children, the care options diminish. The Children's Defense Fund estimates that nearly five million children leave school each day for empty homes. According to the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College, children in "self-care" are more likely to have poor self-adjustment, to exhibit poor academic performance, to experience increased isolation and loneliness, to have decreased self-esteem, to have increased susceptibility to problem behavior and to be significantly more likely to use cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reveals that students who spend no time in extracurricular or afterschool activities are 50 percent more likely to have used drugs and 37 percent more likely to become teen parents. A 1990 University of California study showed that unsupervised children are at significantly

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higher risk of truancy, stress, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior and substance abuse.

Michelle Seligson, executive director of the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, believes that without programs for middle and high school students, the majority of children in this age group spend their out-of-school time watching television. "We know the impact of that on kids," Seligson says. "Kids read less, play less, and are more aggressive. On average, American children spend 40 hours a week watching television and playing video games, more hours than they spend in school, and children in low-income households are estimated to spend 50 percent more time watching television than their privileged peers."

The necessary ingredients for healthy kids, Seligson argues, are caring relationships and constructive activities.

"Kids do better in school, are more self-assured, if they attend carefully planned but flexible programs where the primary work of the adults is caring about and for the kids. We develop a sense of self not in a vacuum but in relation to others."

But the creation of such programs is expensive. Few school districts have extra funds. Most afterschool programs — 83 percent — depend on parents for their survival, and many parents simply cannot pay. As a result, poorer children may not have the same exposure to ideas, skills and positive relationships with adults and peers as wealthier children. With fewer opportunities in childhood, poor kids may grow to feel isolated, constricted and full of self-doubt.

The need for additional programs is great. Today, only 30 out of every 100 schools offer some kind of extendedday program, and in rural areas, only 18 out of every 100 schools do. -C.C. The typical homeless family in the U.S., then, is composed of a single African-American mother, about 30 years old, with between two and three children, whose average age is five.

Most people are not homeless forever, but neither is homelessness brief. Duffield explains: "Most are homeless for about eight months. But more people go through homelessness than ever before, and many go through it two or more times. Homelessness is a bigger problem than most people realize because homeless children are invisible. They are not the people on corners or in the media. But they are there. Look around your community and you'll see them."

To Duffield, there is nothing inevitable about homelessness. "It hasn't always existed and it doesn't have to continue. If we think about the history of homelessness, we'll recall the hobo figure or the man on Skid Row. Family homelessness is a product of the early 1980s and onward. In Los Angeles, for example, the number of shelter beds for families tripled between 1986 and 1996."

"Now, we're at the end of the 1990s and people are used to it. But we shouldn't be. We're at the largest affordable housing gap since 1970. Between 1990 and 1995, we lost one million units of affordable housing. There was a shift in resources."

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development reports that households with housing costs exceeding one-third of their monthly income are at risk of losing their home and eventually becoming homeless. A recent study of the homeless in Newark, N.J., for example, found that one in every four households had housing costs greater than 50 percent of their monthly income.

The primary reasons families cited for becoming homeless were doubled- and tripled-up living situations. Cydelle Fox, a research associate at the Institute for Children and Poverty, explains that "this is common among low-income families unable to afford their own housing. They begin a nomadic journey, living with relatives or friends for some period of time before having to finally go to a shelter."

Along with housing costs, Fox also found that welfare reform has contributed to homelessness. "Nineteen percent of families in shelters had their benefits cut in the six months prior to arriving at the shelter. As a result of the cuts, 50 percent said they became homeless. We were shocked because we didn't expect to find results from welfare reform that quickly.

"A few months ago, in San Diego and Washington, D.C., we saw that up to onethird of the homeless had their benefits cut. Of those, 77 percent said that they became homeless as a result.

"Of those whose welfare benefits were reduced or cut, 31 percent found a job, but 64 percent lost that job within the year; and 11 percent surrendered at least one child to alternate care as a result."

Foster care

There is a strong link between homelessness and foster care. Many foster children grow up to be adults who suffer homelessness. Fox explains, "Among homeless adults in New York, 20 percent had been in foster care as children." In addition, poor parents are at risk of losing their children because poverty is a reason for having a child removed.

"The sudden increase in foster care placement in San Diego in the last year reflects these findings," says Fox. "While foster care placement remained constant at around 200 between 1994 and 1997, in the last year that number has more than doubled to 409."

There are times when Child Protective Services (CPS), which oversees the foster care system in the U.S., must step in and remove a child from an abusive parent, but, for more than 25 years, the effectiveness of state and local Child Protective Services has been questioned. Agencies have been accused of both interfering in family affairs and failing to act to protect children. The story of Kayla

McKean, a 6-year-old Florida girl who was killed by her father in January, is not unique. Social workers ignored all the signs, including Kayla's black eyes and the fact that she was tied up when they visited her home just days before her murder. Jack Levine, president of the non-profit Center for Florida's Children, says, "Give me a reason not to be outraged. A series of mistakes turned out to be a death sentence for this little girl."

Seeing Child Protective Services as itself a "series of

mistakes" is not uncommon for children's advocates. Leroy Pelton, a social services expert, explains, "The structure of CPS links a helping mission to support families with a coercive mission to investigate families and remove children." These contradictory roles may make it impossible for CPS workers to do their job. Add to this the almost three million reports made to CPS annually, and agency underfunding, and you have a recipe for failure, says Pelton. About one-third of the reports made to CPS each year are substantiated. Of these, about half (52 percent) are for neglect and 25 percent for physical abuse. The remainder are for sexual or emotional abuse.

As Pelton explains, "Caseworkers' decisions about specific cases are the heart of child protection, but the CPS system has only a limited capacity to tailor its response to individual condi-

tions: Fewer than one-third of CPS direct service staff hold social work degrees. Turnover is high and job satisfaction and salaries — are low. In 1997, the median salary for caseworkers with master's degrees in social work was under \$33,000.



A.J. Wolfe/Concord Monitor/Impact Visuals

Roy Higgins holds a fish he caught at Drakes Park in Pittsfield, N.H. Many youngsters in this area live in families experiencing cycles of poverty.

"Large caseloads in CPS and cuts in community services curtail agency efforts to help troubled families, and the effects of treatment programs on families with differing risk profiles are not well understood," says Pelton.

"Family poverty makes maltreatment [of children] more likely, especially if parents are unemployed, use drugs, or lack parenting skills. Government efforts to reduce poverty could help to prevent maltreatment."

- Leroy Pelton

Pelton proposes a solution. "Family poverty," he says, "makes maltreatment more likely, especially if parents are unemployed, use drugs, or lack parenting skills. Government efforts to reduce poverty could therefore help to prevent maltreatment and relieve pressures on CPS."

> Unfortunately, government efforts have moved in the opposite direction. Welfare reform legislation has left the most vulnerable population in the country children — more vulnerable than ever.

> Saving children's lives, says CDF's Edelman, would require an honest examination and determined transformation of "the values and priorities of the wealthiest nation in history," a nation which condemns its children to poverty.

> "How do we reverse the prevailing political calcu-

lus that would rather pay three times more to lock children up after they get into trouble than to give them incentives to stay in school and out of trouble through good afterschool and summer programs, jobs and service opportunities? How do we make it easier rather than harder for parents to balance work and family responsibilities and to get the community and financial support they need to carry out the most important role in America?"

With poor U.S. children worse off now than they were two years ago, there seems little national will to find acceptable answers to such pointed questions. But for those seriously committed to the well-being of this nation's children the proper focus seems clear. As Edeleman says simply, "I'm for ending child poverty as we know it, not for just ending welfare as we know it."

Creating a Hitler

The comparison of Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, invoked to justify economic sanctions against Iraq, may be a selffulfilling prophecy, according to Dennis Halliday, who resigned his post as head of the UN Oil for Food program in Iraq last fall in protest against the sanctions.

"National Socialism grew up because of the Versailles Treaty and the harshness of the conditions we placed on Germany after the First World War," Halliday said in an interview with The Progressive (2/99). "The conditions that are being placed on Irag are rather comparable, and we're getting the same kind of results. And that's very dangerous. If Saddam Hussein is gone tomorrow, the system can continue: The party is there, the military is there, his people are still there. There's not necessarily going to be a dramatic change. And because of the sanctions, we are building a new generation of Iraqi leaders who are as mad as hell, who are introverted more of the Taliban model."

In March, Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Mairead Corrigan Maguire of Northern Ireland and Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina traveled to Iraq as part of a Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) delegation. The delegation delivered nearly 1,000 "Covenants of Peace," signed by North American religious and secular communities, apologizing for the way the U.S. has treated the Iraqi people. According to UNICEF, at least 200 children are dying each day as a result of the economic sanctions.

Rethinking curriculum priorities

Standard curriculum guidelines are inadequate for addressing the needs of at-risk students, says teacher Charlie Ross, who has worked with children in crisis for 27 years.

"There is a common perception even amongst those of us in the alternative schools, that somehow our curriculum should be running parallel to the district's so that our kids will be kept up to speed in terms of their writing skills, math and science," Ross says (*Timeline*, 11-12/ 98). "The reality is that if you increase their reading level from 5th grade to 10th grade, you've done a wonderful service for that student. However, you will not solve their primary problem. That's not the solution to the issues they're facing.... But who in any junior high would say that we're going to devote the semester to parenting skills, conflict resolution, communication skills, and violence prevention? What board would approve that? Very few.

"But look at the economics of what we're doing. If you save four kids a year from \$40,000 incarceration, then you can justify the cost of your whole program. It seems to me that fiscal conservatives would look at that and say, 'Wow, prevention is cost effective, it would work."

CAT scans and salsa bands

Research has demonstrated that "exposure to music in early childhood opens neural pathways that facilitate pattern recognition and other basic mental processes," Jim Carnes reports in *Teaching Tolerance* (Spring 1999). "Educators fighting the erosion of arts from the curriculum can now bolster their arguments with CAT scans."

Carnes writes that "the State of Georgia is attempting to institutionalize the socalled 'Mozart effect' by sending every newborn home from the hospital with a classical tape or CD. The idea raises provocative questions: Of what value is music for children beyond its power to boost IQs?

"What distinguishes the European focus in recent cognitive research on music from earlier 'evidence' that we now call scientific racism? What resources at home and at school — does a meaningful music curriculum require?"

Reporting on a program that brings Puerto Rican salsa bands into low-income Philadelphia schools, Carnes reflects that "the stated premise of the Philadelphia salsa project needs no scientific proof: *'Qué triste sería un pueblo sin música'* — How sad would be a people without music."

The art of community

A weekend on "the art of community" will be held June 4-6 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Open to members of neighborhood associations, intentional communities, coop houses and co-housing groups, the weekend will include workshops on conflict resolution, sustainable communities in urban neighborhoods and fundraising. For more information contact MidAmerica Housing Partnership, 701 Cedar Point Road NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402; 319-365-3501; <qathering@ic.org>.

Amnesty targets U.S. police brutality

Police brutality in the U.S. is a "widespread and persistent problem," according to a recent report released by Amnesty International as part of its first worldwide campaign on human rights issues in this country.

"The human rights situation in the U.S. is bad, and our research shows it is getting worse," Amnesty's secretary general, Pierre Sané, told *Z Magazine* (1/99). "It is getting worse because there is a sort of warlike mentality in this country. There is a war on crimes, there is a war on drugs, there is a war on illegal immigrants, there is a war on terrorism. Law enforcement agencies are given a lot of scope to deal with these issues, which are presented as national threats. ...

"Certain groups can be targeted today, which gives police officers a sense of impunity, a sense of being above the law. Tomorrow it could be members of 'good society' who will fall victim to a police force which will not be held accountable, and that is not being sanctioned when abuses are being committed."

most takes

What is ailing America's adolescents? an interview with Patricia Hersch

by Julie A. Wortman

Journalist Patricia Hersch is author of the widely acclaimed A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence (Fawcett Columbine, 1998). A former contributing editor to Psychology Today, Hersch has written and reported about adolescents for many years, most notably about homeless adolescents in San Francisco and New York. A Tribe Apart offers an in-depth look into the lives of eight teenagers living in Hersch's own community of Reston, Va., where she and her husband have raised three sons. For three years she immersed herself in the lives of these young people, observing them in and out of school, listening to their stories and probing their thoughts, feelings and actions in an effort to understand the realities of their lives — and the ways those truths put their well-being at serious risk. Her subjects speak frankly about their "double" lives as teens who appear to be conventional students but who also live in a world where teens commonly are sexually active, well acquainted with drugs, alcohol and peer violence, and frequently suffer from domestic abuse and neglect.

Julie A. Wortman: Do you have an impression about why *A Tribe Apart* has attracted so much attention?

Patricia Hersch: Yes, it provided the missing piece. It provided people with the feeling that they finally had a basis for a conversation about issues surrounding adolescents. I felt frustrated with myself that it took so long to write — six years —

but it takes a really long time to get to know people well and to discover the very complex inner workings of adolescents. And once that was on the table, people just grabbed it. It's immensely satisfying to have been able to begin to create a conversation.

J.W.: The book is called "a journey into the heart of American adolescence." The way you present their lives is highly imaginative, almost like reading a novel. What led you to decide to package your findings this way?

We have put a very unfair burden on parents, saying that parents have to do everything. I believe it is society's job to be a healthy presence in the lives of young people growing up.

P.H.: The approach I chose was one of the things that made the book take so long. I literally transcribed every word of every interview, so I had these eight humongous notebooks filled with not only what they said, but with what I said. At first, I tried all these different charts, chronologies, columns for different people. But finally I said this is ridiculous; I just have to immerse myself into the texture of their lives, the flow of their lives as they lived it and see what comes into my heart about it. The thrust of each person's story was there in these interviews. It was not something I made up. I

wanted people somehow to get the essence of these kids the way I was getting it, and also to sense their maturing over time.

J.W.: I'm interested in knowing your picture of a healthy adolescence.

P.H.: Number one, children need, as Cornel West has put it, that sense of being in the guts of their parents' lives. Kids need to know that they are the most important thing to their parents, more important than their work or anything else. Children need to feel a sense of love and security and that they can trust their parents to be there when they need them to be there to support them and to guide them through growing up. What that means is not necessarily that the parent always physically be there, but it's a sense of availability any parent can convey if they feel it. And if they don't feel it, the kids can pick that up in an instant.

I also feel that there should be some sense of time-appropriate growth and development. I don't think that requiring a child to be basically independent at age 10 is appropriate. I think that kids need to have the time and space to mature physically, psychologically, emotionally, and to get their work done at school. Those are the primary tasks of childhood.

It is important to stress that other adults besides parents have a key part to play in the growing up of children. We have put a very unfair burden on parents, saying that parents have to do everything. I believe it is society's job to be a healthy presence in the lives of young people growing up, meaning that as a society we must get our act together on values and morals. I don't know why this is so hard, why it has to be a political or religious battle. If you sat down a group of this country's adults and asked them what they think should be the basic qualities of a decent, happy human being, most would come up with similar lists.

J.W.: You say, "Adolescence is a jour-

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



Slam dancing at a New York park concert

ney, a search for self in every dimension of being." And you say that young people need adults as role models, not moving targets, as they make that journey. Does the fact that so many adults in our culture seem themselves to be engaged in a search for self make them moving targets?

P.H.: The reason most adults remember their adolescence with a twinkle in their eyes, even as they complain about it, is because developmentally, as adolescents are questing, they are feeling their own power: that power to discern, the power to make decisions, the power of knowing and relating to a larger world and knowing that that world will keep on getting bigger as you get more access to it. And I think many adults today are continuing

to strive to grow and change and remain curious. I'm not at all comparing that quest for the full life with the mass confusion of not knowing which end is up that characterizes society today. I think that's a loss of basic values; what the kids are doing is seeking basic values.

Kids see being grown up as a horrible state of being because it looks like such drudgery. While parents, especially women, may feel like we've overcome lots of barriers and now have access to great opportunities, all the kids see is wiped-out, stressed-out parents and it looks awful and unsatisfying. Not to mention that most of the kids feel really gypped. I can't tell you how many kids tell me that they're going to have the old-

Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals

time traditional marriage because they think that kids should get more of their parents' time.

J.W.: Are you advocating the old model of stay-at-home mothers?

P.H.: The model of a mother at home in the kitchen waiting for the kids with freshly baked cookies was an aberration. Prior to the 1950s and 1960s, a mother's role had never been solely to be in the kitchen, but children were never left alone so much because if mom wasn't there, there was an extended family member or a boarder in the house or the children were brought out into the fields with the parent. One way or another — and I know we can criticize many aspects of this — children's lives were structured so that

there was a great deal of adult involvement in them. The prosperity that came after World War II was also the basis of the tremendous mobility in American life. Families no longer were together, and patterns that had been in place were changing. Moms in the kitchen smoothed over the transition. So we tend to think that it is mothers in the kitchen that make healthy kids, but it is just that somebody in the kitchen helps to make healthy kids.

For the past 25 years we've been a working society and nobody has really taken that into account. Women aren't out there working because of women's lib. They're out there working because it takes two incomes to support a family and because women are as well educated as men. So it is not a parent issue. When parents start leaving their kids alone at age 10 it is because as a society we have not put our great inventive American heads together to figure out what we need to do in terms of the children. In Israel, when they needed men and women to fight a war and develop the land, they designed the kibbutz. I'm not saying that we should have the kibbutz system here, I'm just saying that societies do have an obligation to raise their children and this society is acting as if this problem is going to take care of itself.

J.W.: So it is too simplistic to blame "the breakdown of the family" for the problems that face teens?

P.H.: Right. My youngest son had both parents working at home for almost all of his school years. So he had every opportunity: a nice peaceful community and two parents who love each other and who could take him anywhere he needed to go. And yet, when he was a young adolescent and he wanted to run outside in the wonderful areas he had to play in, he had nobody to play with because his peers were told to stay in the house until their parents got home and, as they got older, many then had to take responsibility for

younger siblings. So my son was as stuck in front of the television set as any other child. That's a perfect example of why individual families cannot do it alone. We have to do something as a society to remedy the situation. A lot of parents would be more than happy to spend more time at home, but that requires that the work place be more accommodating.

J.W.: You talk about the difference between the world adolescents grow up in today as opposed to the world their parents grew up in?

P.H.: Today's kids are just in total freefall. Until I began researching *A Tribe Apart* I would have found certain aspects of their lives unimaginable. They don't have cur-

There's not a kid that I've been in contact with that has not seen one and usually several deaths of young people in their social circle.

fews. They see parents sleeping around. As their hormones begin raging they have empty beds in empty houses available to them every day. Some parents think it is cool to smoke dope with their kids. Others let their kids stay home alone when they go out of town — eighth graders. There's no similarity of expectations or morality across the board. So it's confusing for the kids.

J.W.: I was interested in two scenarios in your book. The first involved some of the kids going to a community-hosted forum on ethics where at one point they shock the adults present by offering their view that in some situations cheating on an exam is the best option. The other involved the student newspaper and the outraged reaction of teachers and adults to a front-page story on two teens who had recently become mothers. In both cases I'm wondering about the issue of moral decision making and where you see we are with a community consensus about that.

P.H.: Punitive acts against cheaters or teenage moms don't seem to have much effect. The kids just get more clever at cheating. I think kids need help in understanding life a little bit better.

That gets me back to where we were before: the basic tenets of a decent and fulfilling life. If you talk honestly with kids and give them the chance to learn from others' stories about the ramifications of certain choices, they can make better choices for themselves. I don't think it does anything for anybody to keep saying that if a person does thus and such they're bad, they're evil. I think that we need to really get into the heart of things. We've got to discuss values with them or else they're going to just try to make sense of it with each other and you can't expect teenagers to get it right.

J.W.: Are there adults trying to have that conversation with young people?

P.H.: I don't think so. If people were engaging in the larger issues, I don't think some of the political things that have happened lately would have happened. People are so inundated with things that they know are kind of seamy or not quite right that they don't even pay attention any more.

The thing that I feel so badly about is that I think kids are missing a lot of wisdom and very meaningful connections they could make with each other that will enhance their lives. For example, there's very little, for lack of a better word, courtship. Boys and girls stay away from each other and then they hop into the sack. Romance is none of the gradual holding hands. Any of it that happens happens in the third grade, and that's insane. So kids aren't learning about intimacy, about love. That's really sad. But they are learning about loss. There's not a kid that I've been in contact with that has not seen one and usually several deaths of young people in their social circle.

J.W.: From suicide?

P.H.: There are suicides. There are drug- or alchohol-related accidents, even murder.

J.W.: This double life of kids. You bring that out very strongly in the book. These kids are good students, reasonable students, active in athletics and other activities, and then they are leading these lives where they're doing drugs at lunchtime, cutting classes, helping their friends get abortions, getting drunk at parties, roaming the streets at 3 a.m. It seems like most adults don't have any picture of that.

P.H.: I didn't know it was going to be like that either. But that's what I found. It is outside the realm of our imaginations that such a life has developed, although I should clarify that what looks like a double life to us is lived as one integrated life by them. I think maybe one of the roles my book is serving is to help us see this. It's pretty undeniable. Statistics and certain good studies back it up. It's not just the kids in Reston, it's kids everywhere. It's why, when I go to locations to speak, I like to spend some time with young people in the area. Within minutes we are talking about the whole realm of things that are important to them, not just the bad things. And then I can go to the adults I am speaking to later in the day and not only say this is what I discovered in my book, but I can also bolster it and say, look, this is what your kids told me.

J.W.: Are people horrified?

P.H.: Well, yes. They just don't want to believe it.

J.W.: What is your sense of the religious community's impact on the lives of adolescents?

P.H.: People seem to be surprised when I say that six of the eight kids in my book had a tie to formal religion. And not meaningless ties. They went to church. One was bar mitzvahed. Some were more

Addressing deadly consequences

Deadly Consequences: How Violence is Destroying Our Teenage Population and a Plan to Begin Solving the Problem, by Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D. (with Michaele Weissman), Harper Perennial, 1991.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, former Commissioner of Public Health for Massachusetts, gained national recognition in the late 1980s for her work in violence prevention among adolescents. Her interest in the topic was stimulated by her work as a medical resident at Boston City Hospital. The typical "stitch them up, send them out," medical response to patients injured by violence led to her examination of violence as a societal "disease" that could be prevented through public health strategies. She developed and wrote the first violence prevention curriculum for schools and communities, entitled Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents. Deadly Consequences followed, presenting the public health perspective to a mass audience. In this book she writes:

Educating students about violence is not an easy process. Not in this society, but if we do not tell kids that it is alright not to fight, no one else will. I think often about a young man I taught in one of my early violence prevention courses. The student talked about a friend of his who had been stabbed in a fight. The ambulance took about 20 minutes to arrive. The friend bled to death while waiting for medical help. The student was terribly hurt and angry about this death, which he felt was preventable. During the discussion that followed I understood not just with my head, but with my whole body, what I mean when I tell students that the violence prevention curriculum challenges them to claim their anger as normal and to use it to better themselves and their families.

In class that day we listed the young man's options:

1. He could beat up the ambulance driver.

2. He could slash ambulance tires and break ambulance windows.

3. He could take out his anger on a cat or dog.

4. He could beat up a little brother or sister or someone else.

5. He could write a letter to the city. (This is the typical adult, middle-class response, which has little meaning to poor kids. Letter writing, however, can work and adults should offer to help teenagers do it.)

6. The young man could get so angry that he decided to finish high school, become an ambulance driver and hope to chart the response times of ambulances in every neighborhood in the city. If the response times in poor neighborhoods were longer than in rich ones, he could blow the whistle.

This last option is a strategy of the oppressed which works. All of our great black leaders, from Harriet Tubman to Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela, have channelled their anger at injustice into a force to reshape the world. This is what the violence prevention curriculum is all about. It is not about passivity. It is about using anger not to hurt oneself or one's peers, but to change the world. active than others. What I found is that they're hoping that answers will come to them in church. They're always looking for a place to get some real perspective about values that is based on a knowledge of their lives. And that, of course, is the real bugaboo, since most adults have no idea what's going on in their lives. The kids end up being frustrated. However, I think that church can be a very positive venue for kids to find some meaningful links. It's a great place for kids to get intergenerational contact. It is a place where the heavy issues could be addressed. Just putting kids in a youth group isn't good enough. Kids want to have a meaningful role. A reason that Habitat for Humanity works so well is that it is extremely tangible; it puts generations together to work on a common goal; it makes life better for people. Most kids have very big hearts.

Kids need a *community* of worship to which to belong, a place where practices of faith are visible and really lived. They need adults who are able and eager to explain what the practices mean whether they involve worship, daily prayer or works of charity and justice and how they invoke and respond to a larger reality. The adult members need to invite the youth to participate in everything the faith community does to impart order and meaning to life. And the religious community also needs to be strongly connected to the larger community that surrounds it.

J.W.: What about school? It seemed like some of the school experiences you describe were fabulous, but in other cases school sounded like prison.

P.H.: Schools are very individual. And, like always, there are some really wonderful teachers and some really terrible teachers. But I would say that the main problem is that school is not integrated into the other circles of kids' lives. For example, a sad example, I was speaking

to sixth graders about things they might want me to tell their parents at this meeting we were to have that night. A little sixth grade girl raises her hand, sighs and says, "I have to take care of my two little brothers every morning for two hours and 15 minutes and sometimes I would just like to go up to my room and be alone before I go to school.

Helping adolescents keep from self-destructing could be as simple as learning to call the kids in your neighborhood by their first names. The most important thing is to be real.

But my mom says I have to stay with my brothers every single minute until we go to school." She was 11 and her brothers are something like 8 and 10, and I thought, that's a huge responsibility for a little kid. I'm sure her parents just have no other options. But after doing that for two hours and 15 minutes, how's she going to feel in school? These days, too, there are so many lost kids. I see smart kids acting out in school, getting really terrible grades, just to say to their parents, in your face, in your face. During previous decades, those who dropped out were just a footstep away from stepping back in, but today's kids are so much more self-destructing in a lot of more subtle ways that I'm afraid that it's not going to be so easy for them.

J.W.: What would you say to average people about how they can help adolescents today keep from self-destructing? P.H.: It could be as simple as learning to call the kids in your neighborhood by their first names. The most important thing is to be real. Listen to what the truth is about adolescent life and face it squarely. And then be available. Kids need to know that there are people around to help talk through things, their own particular things, without being judged. And be involved. Go to kids' activities, help create fun and meaningful options for them. Even if you don't have kids yourself, understand that these kids are the next grown-ups. TW

Percentage of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who attempted suicide in the past year: 36.5
Percentage of heterosexual students attempting suicide: 8.9
Percentage of gay, lesbian and bisexual students threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the last year: 66.7
Percentage of heterosexual students threatened or injured: 28.8
Percentage of gay, lesbian and bisexual students who have used cocaine: 31 Percentage of heterosexual students who have used cocaine: 11.8
Average age of self-awareness for gays, lesbians and bisexuals: 10-12
Average age of first disclosure for gays, lesbians and bisexuals: 16
Sources: 1995 Mass. Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Penn State University papers - Maine Times, 11/12-18/98

Kids for sale: making profits from elementary school

by Rachel Brahinsky

D onald Fisher is well-heeled and well-positioned to invest large sums of money where he sees fit. As founder and CEO of Gap, Inc.

— which includes the Gap, Old Navy and Banana Republic — and as a high level political consultant, Fisher is one of the most influential businessmen in the country. In the past he has invested in timber land and biotechnology. Recently, the khaki tycoon turned his eye to public education.

Last year Fisher invested \$25 million in the Edison Project, a forprofit corporation that manages public schools. He tells reporters that he thinks education should be more uniform nationwide. And he believes strongly in the power of market capitalism. A company that ties the two together wins his approval — and his cash. "There's a problem when each school has its own philosophy," he confessed to *The San Francisco Chronicle* last fall. "They need to be more like our stores."

By investing in the Edison Project, Fisher lends strong support to a company that has brought standard corporate strategies into the realm of public education. With the primary goal of making a profit, the Project strives toward uniformity in its products (from test scores to morality), weeds out teachers who don't buy the corporate line, and avoids students whose needs don't fit into the money-making formula. And partially because many Edison schools



Bosnian refugee student at a Chicago elementary school. Loren Santow/Impact Visuals

are charter schools, partially because they know how to strike a deal, the Project has nimbly shied from public accountability.

Elementary schools — the new emerging market

Edison is the brainchild of Chris Whittle, probably best known for his earlier venture into the education-as-business world, a company called Channel One, where he provided schools with technology free of charge. His "free" satellite dishes and televisions were given on the condition that students watch a 15-minute broadcast of news and commercials (including ads for Snickers and Coca-Cola) each morning. In 1991, Whittle sold that enterprise to fund his new project. Eight years later, Whittle's Edison Project manages 51 public schools in 12 states. Most are

> early elementary academies, to be followed by middle and high school programs as the Project expands. Whittle has schools in cities as diverse as Chicago and Battle Creek, Mich.; Worcester, Mass. and Sherman, Tex. The schools are funded primarily with public dollars. Each district gives the share of its funds earmarked for its school to the Project, which then divides its holdings among its schools. Once the company boasts at least 100 schools Whittle's stockholders will begin to make good on their investments. This year Whittle hopes to open 30 new schools; by 2004, his goal is 250. To pique communities' interest in Edison, Whittle offers computers for children to take home and provides increased technology in the classrooms. To follow through on this promise, in the first eight years of its existence, the Project has accepted millions in private donations and investments which have helped buoy the corporation. (It hasn't been too hard to attract investors. In Donald Fisher's case, it must

have helped that his son John, who owns 4 percent of Edison's privately held stock, stands to profit from his father's generous donation.) But while the company acknowledges the generosity of its donors, Edison literature defines the schools as public-private partnerships, claiming that they, as a private entity, can make

Writer **Rachel Brahinsky** lives in San Francisco, <rbrahinsky@hotmail.com>.

more efficient use of public funds.

San Francisco school board member Jill Wynns is not deceived by the Project's PR. "What the privatizers will tell you is, give us the same money and we can do a better job," she says. "But what Edison is doing is un-leveling the playing field in favor of a for-profit company, to the detriment of other public schools."

In making the Project affordable and potentially profitable — Edison's financial planners took a tip from Donald Fisher. Each school has matching materials and goals, taught in the same manner. "The schools are run with identical guidelines," says Gaynor McCown, Vice President of Corporate Strategies. "We'll earn money by having a very set curriculum."

A McDonalds style education It might save money for the company in the long run, but in San Francisco's Edison school this fast-food approach has created an array of problems. Teachers have been "de-selected," in the words of the administration, and nobody knows who sits on the Edison advisory board required of all charter schools. And, despite the fact that the Project was brought in because the Thomas A. Edison Elementary School (the name similarity is a coincidence) once had some of the lowest test scores in the city, some troubled students have been rejected, or "counseled out."

"When we're talking about improving education for the students who were at the school before, we're not really seeing that," says Lindsay Hershenhorn, a former teacher at the school. "I don't see it addressing the deeper problems [like poverty and unemployment]. These people have no intention of improving the public schools. That's not their goal."

Jill Wynns agrees. And when she read about Fisher's chain-store philosophy of education, she was dismayed. "Do we believe that an effective way to run schools," Wynns asks, "is to run every school in exactly the same way, using the same words on the same days with the same pictures on the walls?"

When pressed, both McCown and Edison Principal Barbara Karvelis counter that the curriculum is flexible. In fact, they say, every classroom is different because, though students read the same books and take the same tests, theirs and their teachers' personalities differ from those in the next classroom.

"Everybody knows," Wynns returns, "that when you walk into The Gap in San Francisco or Wichita, Kan., it's exactly

"The schools are run with identical guidelines. We'll earn money by having a very set curriculum." — Gaynor McCown, VP of Corporate Strategies

the same. And that's how [the Edison Project] is."

McCown defends the rigidity of the curriculum, emphasizing that it is "research based." Perhaps for some students the \$40 million that Edison spent researching their program was well spent. But critics in San Francisco say that a cookie-cutter Edison curriculum won't work for their kids.

"The very idea of profiting from schools is based on the notion that when they have enough schools they will begin saving money, using the same materials on a national level," Lindsay Hershenhorn explains. "But this concept fails to recognize that communities are not all the same, communities have different needs."

This particularly raises problems for low-income and special needs students with whom Edison has a poor track record. The Boston Renaissance Academy, one of the corporation's earlier ventures, was slapped with a Civil Rights lawsuit when one student was found to have been physically restrained on a regular basis throughout the school day. José Alicea, a parent elected to the school's advisory board, told the *Phi Delta Kappan* last March that school officials were arrogant and careless in relating to the low-income families whose children traditionally attended the school.

"The people at Edison didn't understand what they were coming into, and they didn't do their homework," he said. "They don't have a clue to handling people from non-mainstream, non-privileged backgrounds."

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) produced a report last year which alleges that not only don't Edison administrators understand the needs of lowincome communities, they make a concerted effort at reducing the low-income, special needs population at their schools in order to save money. Parents point out that Edison's recruitment posters appear directed towards middle-class families.

The AFT report also contends that Edison has a pattern of seeking out middle-class kids in order to boost its test scores. The report demonstrates that the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunches at a school tends to drop when Edison takes over, that in the five schools studied by the AFT, the percentage of low-income students dropped between 6 and 10 percent in the first few years. Their conclusion: "Since there is a strong correlation between student achievement and socioeconomic status, fewer poor children at Edison schools would probably increase the likelihood of higher test scores."

San Francisco parents and teachers are concerned that the same will happen there.

Presently the school is nearly half African American and half Latino; the lion's share of these youth reside in the Mission District and Bayview Hunters Point, two of the city's poorest neighborhoods. In order to serve these children — after all, these are the kids whose low test scores prompted the district to hand the school to Edison — Hershenhorn says that an educational atmosphere is needed that acknowledges their needs.

But children requiring special attention

have already been "counseled out" of the school. That is, Edison officials told parents that the school was not capable of dealing with their "problem" children.

Jill Wynns tells one story: There was a kindergarten kid that lived near Edison, a recent immigrant. On the first day of the school year, his mother brought him down the street to enroll. With the assistance of a friend who works for the school district, the enrollment papers were filled out and the boy was

accepted on the spot. Within a few hours, however, both his mother and her friend received word that there was a problem with the paper work, and that the boy could not stay at Edison elementary. Under pressure from the district official, the Edison faculty eventually admitted that the truth was the child was acting out in class and the teachers were not capable of handling the situation. When further pressed, the staff permitted the boy to attend school, but only for two hours each day.

McCown defends the practice, stating, "If we can serve their needs, we do. If we can't, it's only the responsible thing to do to counsel a student to move on."

Wynns contends that since Edison re-

ceives public money to run the school, it should be required to accept every student, just like a regular public school.

"This should not happen," she declares. "Edison accepts the money from the district that is supposed to go for special services for these kids but then does not provide the services. So where does the money go?"

In fact, because Edison is a private entity, it's hard to find out how they spend their money. In general, financial



Ronald McDonald visits a public elementary school in Ukiah, Calif., nominally to discuss safety. Evan Johnson/Impact Visuals

information about the school is kept quiet; no one knows exactly how the district's money funnels through the corporation down to its students. And the channels that are supposed to make information more readily available to the public are not in place. All charter schools are supposed to have an advisory board that provides oversight for the program. Six months after the school opened its doors it was not possible to acquire a list of board members.

Get with the program, or get off the bus

The growth of Edison's programs has introduced a new approach to labor relations in education — one that is decidedly non-union. Most of the nation's public school teachers are represented by one of several unions; Edison teachers do not benefit from union protections and guarantees. The San Francisco Edison school pays teachers based on its own scale, bypassing the established union contract, even though their teachers are district employees whose salaries come from public monies.

As with students, when staff members aren't the Edison "type," they don't last long. Lindsay Hershenhorn says that she

> was asked to leave last spring when principal Barbara Karvelis felt she was not "on board" with the goals of the Project which was then involved in negotiations with the school district. After Hershenhorn's departure the Edison Charter Academy lost approximately 10 teachers in the first half of its first year as a private academy, the majority of whom still will not speak about the school publicly. Of these "de-selected" teachers, Karvelis says simply: "They weren't right for

the program."

Even in the wake of public criticism, the San Francisco school district leadership has embraced this take it or leave it management style, reinforcing Edison's decision to make staff and students conform. In a *San Francisco Bay Guardian* article last September, Superintendent Rojas made it clear that he won't put up a fight if Edison's labor practices don't meet union standards.

"If you have a disagreement [with Edison management], you can leave and go to a school that has binding arbitration," Rojas told the *Guardian*.

"If a grievance procedure and binding arbitration are what make you an educator, transfer out now."

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A do-or-die target audience

by Jane Slaughter

The tobacco industry may have gotten its biggest boost in years from the movie *Titanic*. It was probably historically accurate to show Leonardo di Caprio's character puffing away, and Kate Winslet using cigarettes to defy her mother. But the message this blockbuster sent, that smoking equals freedom, must have gladdened the hearts of Philip Morris marketing execs.

Every day, 3,000 American kids become daily smokers. That's not "3,000 kids take a puff for the first time." (That figure is 6,000.) It means that 3,000 girls and boys under 18 — more than a million a year — become regular smokers, well on their way to addiction.

Anti-smoking activists argue that a big part of the reason teenagers smoke is that tobacco companies aggressively market directly to kids. Using the unyielding logic of capitalism, the companies *have* to do so: They need replacements for their current customers, who either quit or die. Since practically no one over the age of 18 takes up smoking (almost 90 percent of adult smokers began at or before that age), teenagers are cigarette companies' do-or-die target audience.

It appears to be working. While adult smoking has generally been decreasing, over the past 10 years the number of kids under 18 who become daily smokers each year has increased by over half a million, a greater than 70 percent increase. Thirty-six percent of high school students smoke (as compared to 25 percent of adults), and 16 percent of high school boys use smokeless tobacco. Over 250 million packs of cigarettes are illegally sold to kids each year. If current trends continue, almost a third of these underage smokers — five million people—will ultimately die from tobaccorelated causes.

Of course, kids aren't thinking about "ultimately." Who's cool today looms far larger. The tobacco companies know this and exploit it to the max.

Industry still effective in court But isn't the industry on the run? What about that multi-billion-dollar settlement they signed last year?

In some senses, yes, the industry is on the defensive, but Philip Morris, RJR and Brown and Williamson still hold enormous influence in politics - and enormous influence on kids' perceptions. In 1996, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued strong rules to restrict marketing of tobacco and young people's access to it. But the industry blocked most of those rules through court challenges. (The only FDA rule now in effect establishes 18 as the nationwide age for purchasing tobacco and requires retailers to check photo I.D. of anyone who appears younger than 27.) In 1998, the industry succeeded in defeating the McCain bill, which would have subjected tobacco to FDA regulation.

At the end of last year, 46 states signed an agreement with the tobacco industry, to settle lawsuits that had been brought by states' attorneys general. Although the amount of money the companies will have to pay sounds large — \$206 billion between now and 2025 — apparently they can afford it; none is threatening bankruptcy. The industry spends \$5.1 billion a year on marketing and advertising to increase cigarette consumption.

The settlement, which will not fully take effect for months, does prohibit some of the tobacco companies' favorite ploys such as billboard ads; brand-name sponsorship for concerts, football, hockey, baseball, soccer, or events where contestants are under 18; free giveaways of cigarettes or spit (smokeless) tobacco products; sales or giveaways of merchandise, such as caps, T-shirts or backpacks, that carry tobacco brands or logo (30 percent of 12-17 year-olds, both smokers and nonsmokers, own at least one tobacco promotional item).

The settlement fails to prohibit, however, some important marketing strategies: • Selling cigarettes in vending machines and self-serve displays (Some anti-smoking advocates argue that marketers like self-serve displays because they encourage kids to shoplift.);

• Displaying advertising where tobacco is sold and at sponsored events;

• Using human images that appeal to kids, such as the Marlboro man (cartoons are banned—no more Joe Camel);

• Advertising in newspapers and magazines, including ones with large youth audiences such as *Sports Illustrated* and *Car and Driver*;

• Using cigarette brand names to sponsor auto racing and rodeos, even when tele-vised.

The FDA rules would have prohibited these tactics, and also:

• Prohibited the sale of single or loose cigarettes and required packages to contain at least 20;

• Limited all outdoor and all point-of-sale advertising to black-and-white text only;

• Limited tobacco ads to black-and-white print only, in publications that have more than two million readers, or 15 percent of their total readership, under 18 years of age.

Stronger than peer pressure

Even if the more severe restrictions on

Writer **Jane Slaughter** lives in Detroit, Mich., <Janesla@aol.com>.

advertising someday go into effect anti-smoking groups are pushing for new legislation this year — will they really reduce teen smoking? The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids cites a study published in The Journal of the National Cancer Institute, which concluded that teens are more likely to be influenced to smoke by advertising than they are by peer pressure. The researchers called up kids who said they'd never taken a puff, and then matched up those kids' recognition of cigarette ads, their reports of smoking among their peers, and their willingness to say they might try a cigarette some day. The study is not terribly convincing. A telephone survey where Mom and Dad might be listening? What kid won't at least try it once?

But if this attempt at scientific proof is not persuasive, the sales evidence is: Eighty-six percent of kids who smoke prefer Marlboro, Camel and Newport the three most heavily advertised brands — while only about a third of adult smokers choose these brands. Marlboro, the biggest advertiser, takes almost 60 percent of the youth market, but only a quarter of the adult market. One study showed kids to be three times as sensitive as adults to cigarette advertising. Most of the nonsmokers in the survey cited above could name a "favorite" ad.

Between 1989 and 1993, when advertising for the new Joe Camel campaign jumped from \$27 million to \$43 million, Camel's share among kids increased by more than 50 percent, while adults showed no switch to Camels.

A 1994 article in the *Journal of the AmericanMedicalAssociation* documented a rapid and unprecedented increase in the smoking initiation rate of adolescent girls in the late 1960s, after the launch of women's cigarette brands like Virginia Slims.

The smokeless tobacco people have

successfully turned "chaw" into a product whose main market is young men rather than old ones. They did this partly through introducing "starter products." "Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy, if you know what I'm saying," said a former U.S. Tobacco sales rep.

Analyzing messages

Some middle school kids in New Jersey have produced a sophisticated analysis of cigarette ads. On the C.O.S.T. (Children Opposed to Smoking Tobacco) website, they reproduce an ad for Kool, which shows a girl seated behind a guy on a motorcycle. Surely the guy is cool; "after all, he's on a motorcycle. ... But notice how his picture is

"Cherry Skoal is for somebody who likes the taste of candy, if you know what I'm saying," said a former U.S. Tobacco sales rep.

faded out. Doesn't that signal he's on the 'way out' as far as this girl is concerned? Why is she ignoring him? The people at Brown and Williamson would like you to believe it's because he doesn't smoke. Notice that her eyes are on the guy with the cigarette."

Kool is running a whole series of print and billboard ads with this theme. Note that the message goes beyond "girls want guys who smoke" to the even more insidious "girls don't want boys who don't smoke."

The makers of Misty cigarettes use the slogan "Slim and Sassy" — what two qualities could possibly appeal more to teenage girls? In a Virginia Slims ad, a very confident-looking young woman is leading a young man by the hand. "Think about it," argue the kids from COST. "When a woman smokes, she gives up her sense of independence, because she becomes dependent on nicotine."

The industry fights any restrictions on advertising tooth and nail. An internal Philip Morris document from 1981 says, "Today's teenager is tomorrow's potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens. ... The smoking patterns of teenagers are particularly important to Philip Morris."

Smoking can do more than kill you Eric Lindblom of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids says a multi-faceted approach is needed to keep kids from picking up the habit. "It's much more complicated than telling them 'smoking will kill you," he acknowledges. "You need to tell them the immediate health and cosmetic and social impacts.

"You also need to make tobacco harder to get, at higher prices. The more inconvenient you make it, the more likely smokers are to stop. Smokefree workplaces have a good impact, for example.

"All these things that work somewhat work a lot more powerfully when they're combined."

The Campaign is asking concerned parents to do two things this year: First, pressure your state legislators and governor to allocate a hefty portion of the tobacco settlement money for smoking prevention programs. Polls show that most people want at least half this windfall to go for anti-smoking programs, but state governments may use it for whatever they choose. Second, lobby Congress to designate nicotine a drug and therefore cigarettes, as a drug-delivery device, under the jurisdiction of the FDA.

For Children Opposed to Smoking Tobacco, contact Mary E. Volz School, 509 W. 3rd Ave., Runnemede, N.J. 08078; <www.costkids.org>. For The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, call 1-800-284-KIDS or <www.tobaccofreekids.org>.

Theological education for a new century?

by Carol Bell

Steven Charleston, chaplain at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., is former Episcopal Bishop of Alaska and a longtime advocate of culturally relevant theological education grounded in the needs and realities of local faith communities.

Carol Bell: As we enter a new century, what kind of direction do you think theological education for Episcopalians should take?

Steven Charleston: It seems to me that if the church is to move forward, we will need a coherent, cohesive, and comprehensive look at theological education - from Sunday School all the way through and beyond retirement. It's something a person needs to feel engaged in, and excited about, at every stage of life. Sunday School is the ground level of theological training. Theology isn't something we suddenly come to as adults. If a man or woman has not had some indepth background before becoming an adult, that person either will be always playing catch-up, or will be just plain illequipped to understand why theological education is important at all. Theological training is a process that goes on throughout life; it renews us, gives us new insights and new skills as our ministries change through life.

C.B.: When you speak of theological education, what exactly do you have in mind?

S.C.: When I speak of theological education, or theological training, I'm talking about it in the traditional sense of "equipping the saints." Theological education, whether it's for lay persons or ordained persons, has the same purpose: to give us the knowledge and skills that



Steven Charleston

we need in order to carry out the ministries we are called to do. So to me it is a very pragmatic issue for the church. We need leadership in the church at all levels, and theological training is the primary way in which we can help people claim the ministries or gifts that they have.

C.B.: How and where is such broadbased theological education taking place in the church today?

S.C.: I'd say it's taking place primarily in the many dioceses across the U.S. where we have really been forced to confront the fact that we can no longer provide seminary-educated priests for every single congregation. It's taking place because communities that cannot rely on the traditional model of one parish/one priest have to think of new models. And these communities begin to experiment. And we begin to see some very creative new ways of designing education. By necessity, these folks have come to the realization that theological training is a community effort. They now realize that theological education is something that's localized within the life of a community. And it is also something that must be made culturally relevant for people.

Those two insights, localized education and education that is culturally relevant, are going to be two paths, two highways, that will carry us into the 21st century. The more we bring theological learning to the very heart of our communities, with local people involved as both learners and as teachers, the more it will have the ripple effect that we need — which is to engage people of all age levels, of all backgrounds, and of all offices or callings, in one common enterprise.

And that's what's starting to happen. It is happening in different dioceses in different ways, but it is happening all across our church.

C.B.: What are some specific examples? S.C.: Well, it's happening in Province I, and it's happening in Northern Michigan. In Minnesota and South Dakota, there has been some very creative work bringing theological training out into the reservations. In Alaska, they are working hard on the idea of involving the whole village, the whole community, in the process. (Whether the village is a rural town or a suburb or a city, the village is a model of the place where training occurs.) New models of education are also being designed in many of the dioceses in California and throughout Province VIII. It's happening in Navajoland and in Florida; African-American training is taking place in Atlanta. There are many others; I'm only trying to point to a few that I personally know better than the rest. Within reach of most of our church communities are all sorts of resources and many, many people engaged in such alternative theological education.

C.B.: In a community-based model, how is theological education introduced, and how does it take place?

S.C.: Teams of people go to local communities from the diocesan center where there are resources and training for people to do the work. Teams of people, both lay and ordained, go out into the village and conduct the training on the

Writer **Carol Bell** lives in the Diocese of Northern Michigan,

<cedars1@northernway.net>.

local level. Folks of the community come to the training, and among them, there might be one or two who are looking toward ordination, either to priesthood or diaconate.

C.B.: Does it happen, in these alternative models, that a person who is headed for ordination might change her direction as the education process goes on?

S.C.: That's exactly right. And that brings up an interesting point. Theological education is unlike education for any other vocation. Most of our education in this culture is product-oriented. That is to say, it trains you to do a particular job. You're being prepared, and when you're done, you can now do the work. Theological training is not product-oriented, it's development-oriented. And that's quite a different proposition.

Theological education may well change your vision of yourself — and of your vocation — as you're going through the process. We come to theological training open-minded and openhearted, not at all sure what God has in store for us, just enjoying the journey. Then the process begins to shape us and transform us. Theological education, at its best, is a transforming experience; its whole purpose is to transform our lives.

C.B.: So how do you begin the process? S.C.: I think the very point of genesis for theological education is in spirituality and worship. Transformative education emerges from the Spirit, emerges from within the worshiping community. The workshop arises out of worship. Consequently, we must begin our theological education very intentionally with spiritual formation that is done in the context of worship. People must feel, in the deepest sense possible, a connection with God and with one another. Without such a spiritual center, our theological education will not hold. We may be momentarily excited about a particular piece of information, or by an idea, but it doesn't integrate. It is spirituality that integrates knowledge into a person's life, and that's why spirituality is so central, so important.

C.B.: You mentioned local community participants as both learners and teachers?

S.C.: Yes. We never learn better than when we're teaching what we know. People whose spiritual formation has already begun, will then go into theological training, and as they are educated, they will gain new information and new skills, and then, I think, the logical and organic next step is for them to teach. We become teachers and learners simultaneously. So local people become trainers, and eventually these folks become a source of continuity for theological education in that place. Certainly, local folks will continue to teach others in that place. But they can also travel into new communities

We might not be able to take every single person off to seminary, but we can bring much of the quality of seminary education out to the grass roots, where community-based education will be available to everyone.

bringing their ideas and their fresh insights with them. Eventually it becomes a wonderful cycle of people who are both learning and teaching and doing on the home front, and enjoying the excitement of going somewhere different and sharing with others in a community that is not their own.

Once this kind of cycle begins to move within the life of a diocese, I think it takes on new energy, refreshing, renewing and exciting church members all across the diocese.

C.B.: In this alternative model are there special courses for those who will be ordained?

S.C.: People going on to ordination might be learning deeper skills, say in church history or in the Bible, but they will work

together with men and women who are becoming Christian educators or evangelists or youth ministers or the like. We might not be able to take every single person off to seminary, but we can bring much of the quality of seminary education out to the grass roots, where communitybased education will be available to everyone. The theological education process carries people along as partners. In an ideal setting, we really could not distinguish among those sitting in the room as to which ones might want to become diocesan workers or Sunday School teachers or priests or evangelists or deacons. Such an educational process follows the ancient scriptural model that suggests we are all called together to exercise our different ministries and gifts. C.B.: What role can the seminaries play in this?

S.C.: Often we have thought that the alternative training I've been describing is in conflict or in competition with our great institutional centers of theological education. That's a big mistake. If we are to have a strong future, we must recognize a cooperative spirit between the seminaries and the local alternative models. It is important to understand the seminaries as partners with dioceses in developing local leadership. And we need to be able to see our seminaries as centers of deep spiritual formation, as well as centers of education.

Furthermore, we must renew our understanding that seminaries are not just for educating ordained leadership. They are really educational centers for all the people of God — lay and ordained. And because of that, perhaps by virtue of that, the seminaries become cultural centers as well, open marketplaces that allow people to speak to one another in their own idioms; the seminaries become vibrant and exciting and inclusive centers where people have a sense of ownership and involvement in the transformative process.

C.B.: How can alternative models of education be sure to honor a variety of cultures and make them part of the educational experience?

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S.C.: On the grass roots level, we need to make sure that our trainers represent what we are trying to teach. Our theological education needs to be a multi-cultural experience, and that means we must involve teachers from many cultural backgrounds. Are we really looking at theology from a holistic viewpoint of the many different ways that our various cultures have come to understand the Gospel? In the materials used, in the list of readings, in the examples cited, we must make sure we are integrating the best of every culture because, in doing so, we not only broaden the base of our education, but we also open another door through which people may come in and participate.

C.B.: If a congregation, or diocese, is not very culturally diverse, are there ways in which local communities can draw on the rich traditions, insights and theologies of other cultures?

S.C.: Here's something that I think is very hopeful: If you and I were having this conversation even 20 years ago, we would have been hard pressed to come up with ways by which we could experience this rainbow coalition of many cultures - especially in some small parish that is fairly homogeneous. But today we have an absolute wealth of resources. We have the theologies of African Americans, feminists, Asians, people of Latino background, and Native Americans. We have had an enormous renaissance of cultural contributions to Christianity in this last century. It started with liberation theologies in the late 1950s and 1960s and it has just mushroomed to a point where we now have vast amounts of material and information, in a variety of media, available and accessible to us all.

And now that we have this wonderful warehouse of knowledge from which to draw, we also have the means to bring it through technology, through the Internet, through satellite communications.

I find it exciting that at the threshold of a new century we have all the tools needed for a major breakthrough in theological training.

Religious leaders urge Palestinian human rights

Over 1,000 clergy, including over 145 Protestant and Catholic bishops, as well as numerous lay religious leaders have called on the Clinton Administration to press the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian Authority, headed by Yasir Arafat, to cease violating the human rights of Palestinians.

The statement was delivered in late January to U.S., Israeli, and Palestinian officials in New York, Washington, and other cities by SEARCH for Justice and Equality in Palestine/Israel, a Bostonbased human rights group seeking a just Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The human rights petition calls on President Clinton to "publicly urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to abide by international law and human rights conventions" and to link U.S. financial aid to Israel and the Palestinian Authority to their "compliance with human rights covenants."

In Israel's case, the Clinton Administration is asked to adhere to U.S. law which prohibits economic or military aid to nations "engaging in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

Clinton is asked to "urge Israel to dismantle all settlements except where settlers are willing to live as equal citizens within a Palestinian state," and "to return all land and water resources confiscated from Palestinians since 1967."

The religious leaders cite Israeli violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention, both signed by Israel and the U.S. These violations continue despite Israeli-Palestinian agreements at Oslo and Wye, and include torture, settlement expansion, destruction of homes, confiscation of land and water resources, prevention of family reunification, and collective punishment. The statement also deplores the use of torture, secret trials, and press censorship by the Palestinian Authority.

Charges of human rights violations by Israel and by the Palestinian Authority are based on reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, the State Department, the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups.

The petition calls for an undivided Jerusalem where Israel and a Palestinian State will have their respective capitals in West and East Jerusalem.

In releasing the statement, SEARCH's Executive Director Edmund R. Hanauer noted that past resolutions of the major mainline Protestant and Orthodox churches as well as the Roman Catholic church agree with many, if not all, of the statement's concerns for Palestinian rights, including a halt to Jewish settlements, self-determination for Palestinians, and religious and political equality in Jerusalem.

"If President Clinton heeded Judeo-Christian values and international law," Hanauer said, "his policies would reflect the positions of U.S. religious leaders and Israeli human rights groups, not those of the Israeli government and the Israeli lobby in the U.S."

Signatories include Edmond L. Browning, past Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church; Herbert W. Chilstrom, past Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; over 145 bishops from the Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Antiochian, and Catholic churches; and five past Moderators of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

- SEARCH for Justice and Equality in Palestine/Israel, a Boston-based human rights, public policy organization committed to a just Palestinian-Israeli peace. For a text of A Clergy/Religious Leaders' Petition on Palestinian/Israeli Human Rights contact Laurel Nelson of SEARCH, P.O. Box 3452. Framingham, MA 01705-3452; <Inelson@peakpeak.com>.

Vital Signo Vital Signo Vital Signo Vital Signo

Safe passage

by Lucy Abbey, IHM

Safe Passage: Making It Through Adolescence in a Risky Society, by Joy Dryfoos, Oxford University Press, 1998.

eading Joy Dryfoos' book, Safe Passage, is like walking with an experienced sage on a kind of three-dimensional journey through what she calls the "Safe Passage Movement." I walked with her geographically across this country to visit programs and places where the journey of growing "through adolescence in a risky society" is intentionally structured to be holistic for youth, their families and the communities in which they live. I walked with her historically, hearing about what has been done, what is being done now, and what needs to be done in the future. And I heard her analysis, coming out of her experience as a social analyst, policy maker and activist in the field of teen pregnancy prevention. I felt myself to be at a huge display of programs dealing with the real life situations of today's adolescents, what Dryfoos calls the "new morbidities" - sex, violence, substance abuse and depression.

Despite being written by someone who has written for the research community, the book is not full of jargon. Dryfoos has accomplished her goal of reaching a much wider audience, which I take to be people like me, on the front lines of community work — people with a great deal of experience, some good ideas and insights and a lot of frustration. She has 15 pages of references and I found the index helpful when I wanted to revisit something in light of later reading.

In the heart of the book, Dryfoos describes five outstanding "safe passage" programs already up and running in different parts of the country. She relates these efforts to the larger concept of "full service community schools," institutions that draw on both school resources and outside community agencies. In this approach, the school building becomes the place where previously fragmented programs are made available on a "one-stop" basis.

In the "full service community school" approach, the school building becomes the place where previously fragmented programs are made available on a "one-stop" basis.

Yet I question Dryfoos' easy expectation of social reform taking place from within the systems (educational, political and social) that have historically not been open to reform, either from within or without. I read the book during the same week in which I attended an intensive four-day workshop on "Undoing Racism," so I read with a strong awareness of being white and, by that reality alone, part of the oppression that keeps other people shut off from making decisions about their own destiny. Dryfoos talks about and presumes community involvement, dialogue and collaboration. However, I believe that we as a society with a white power structure cannot presume that this dialogue and collaboration will be either easy or straightforward.

One omission that kept registering with me was the lack of recognition of the role of churches in the Safe Passage Movement. This red light kept blinking every time Dryfoos mentioned the "wrap around" that must include schools, health services, case management, law enforcement, community agencies, etc. Until page 262, where churches make a 10-line debut as one of seven "non-governmental organizations" that could have a role, I could count on one hand the number of times churches are mentioned. I see this as a "for instance" of the lack of awareness of the structure of a separate society that whites too often do not even know about. As noted in the book, the Quantum Opportunities Program (one of the five models singled out from across the nation) grew out of the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) which was founded 34 years ago in Philadelphia by cleric Leon Sullivan. However, Dryfoos does not make the connection that I know from my years in Philadelphia, that Sullivan did not initiate the OIC apart from his role as a pastor. Indeed, a survey of the African-American society in any large industrial city will reveal that some of the most comprehensive and holistic approaches to the needs of African Americans (jobs, education, job training, tutoring, residence for the elderly and others) come from the African-American churches. It is there that the organization, leadership, wisdom and strategic planning that respects and preserves the values of African-American culture and history can be found.

One person can only do so much. I personally am grateful for what Dryfoos has done. I urge others who are concerned about the future of our youth to read the book. Then, let's talk. And let's get busy. One thing we all can agree on is that there is no time to lose.

review/

Lucy Abbey, IHM, currently does pastoral ministry in Detroit, Mich., and works with a community action organization which is part of the congregation-focused network of the Gamaliel Foundation.

Those who have read Jonathan Kozol's Amazing Grace may recall Kozol's first impression of Martha Overall and the Episcopal church she pastors in the South Bronx.

"Walking into St. Ann's Church on a hot summer afternoon, one is immediately in the presence of small children," Kozol writes. "They seem to be everywhere: in the garden, in the hallways, in the kitchen, in the chapel, on the stairs. The first time I see the pastor, Martha Overall, she is carrying a newborn baby in her arms and is surrounded by three lively and excited little girls. In one of the most diseased and dangerous communities in any city of the Western world, the beautiful old stone church on St. Ann's Avenue is a gentle sanctuary from the terrors of the streets outside."

Four years later, St. Ann's is more than ever a children's sanctuary. Its massive driveway — unneeded for parking, since virtually none of the parishioners are affluent enough to own cars — has been painted green and decorated with a labyrinth and children's games. A large garden, which Overall calls "one of the few safe places in the neighborhood," boasts a new swing set, a rare commodity in the crowded and desperately poor community. An afterschool literacy program has doubled in size, and now includes a computer lab and math program.



Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>. *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, by Jonathan Kozol, was published by Crown Publishers, Inc. in 1995. "It's the only church I know of where children come without their parents. They come here and consider it their own."



Martha Overall

Creating a safe place for dreaming by Marianne Arbogast

"It seemed to me the essence of St. Ann's, that the thrust of its ministry had to be for the children," Overall says. "Most of our neighborhood is children — unfortunately, most of the poor are women and children.

"There are many Sundays when we seem to have more children in the congregation than adults — it's kind of bubbling with spirit! It's the only church I know of where children come without their parents. They come here and consider it their own. To me, that's what Jesus meant when he said, 'I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.' The real thrust of our ministry is for these children to have abundant life."

Overall's own relationship with St. Ann's began more than 20 years ago, when she was working as an attorney with a Manhattan law firm and attending St. James' Church on Madison Ave., a sister church to St. Ann's. "One day the community ministry officer called me up and said that some people from St. Ann's were having a sit-in because somebody was ripping off poverty programs that were supposed to be helping their neighborhood," Overall says. "He asked me to help them, and I started coming up here. I was enchanted by how much they cared about helping people who were in many ways helpless."

She was convinced that "the best thing I could do was make as much money as possible and give it all to St. Ann's." But a family crisis intervened. Her brother, to whom she was very close, contracted AIDS and Overall moved to San Francisco to be with him.

"I was caring for him, but he was teaching me a lot about spirituality and a lot about empowerment," Overall says. "Like many people I know who have AIDS, he radiated a godly presence. With this disease — which I think is the most horrendous ever encountered by the human race — he was able to say before he died that the last months of his life were the best months of his life. I learned that the essence of our being, and what we give to one another from our humanity, is far more important than the materialistic or ephemeral things that we seem to give value to these days."

After her brother died, Overall returned to New York and enrolled at Union Theological Seminary. She did field work at St. Ann's, and the day after her ordination, began ministry there as a transitional deacon.

Asked about the needs of the children in her neighborhood, she answers simply: "Food. Clothes. Boots for when it rains. Just the basic necessities of life. We have one child that we managed to get into boarding school, and he has received some awards. The dean of his boarding school, in one of his most recent report cards, observed, 'This child thrives on routine.' That's exactly it. When he doesn't have to worry about being fed, when he doesn't have to worry about his mother's welfare case being closed and having to advocate for her at the welfare office because she speaks only Spanish, when he doesn't have to worry about their being evicted from their apartment, he does wonderfully."

Quality education is a critical need. "To me, the top priority is education,

To me, the top priority is education, because that's what gives children a chance for a future. A classmate of mine in seminary was a black woman from Soweto, and she described to me that the education there was designed to give blacks nothing more than enough education to become domestic servants. Unfortunately, that's the kind of education that the children in our poor areas are receiving."

Racism and denial block meaningful change, Overall believes.

"These kids are pushed into the ghetto, more than they ever have been before, out of view and out of the newspapers. I can't tell you how many people who read *Amaz*- ing Grace called me up or wrote me and said, 'I didn't know it was like this.' We're just three subway stops from Manhattan! There's also the current trend towards social darwinism—thinking that it's good to just let everybody fight it out, and let the fittest survive, when in fact these children have their hands tied behind their backs.

"We need desegregation of schools and, really, of housing, because that's where segregated schools come from. We need a total commitment to our public school system, not siphoning off kids from public schools, but rather a commitment to cutting class size, improving materials, proper buildings and equipment."

Overall points to St. Ann's afterschool program as an example of what can happen with sufficient funding and dedication.

"We have a child who was in special education, and everybody thought he wouldn't be good for anything in later life, but he's now on the honor roll."

"The first year, the literacy program results were so terrific, every child but one had his or her standardized reading test scores go up significantly. We have a child who was in special education, and everybody thought he wouldn't be good for anything in later life, but he's been in our afterschool program and he's now on the honor roll. Since we've gotten the computer lab he's really found his niche."

The children in the afterschool program "feel safer in dreaming of going to college," Overall says. "We have a whole cadre of little girls who want to be doctors."

The spotlight that Kozol's book turned on the neighborhood brought some positive changes, Overall says.

"The Department of Housing and Ur-

ban Development has taken back those 38 buildings which are described in the book, including the one where the little boy died in the elevator shaft. They put security guards in them and renovated them.

"The book really has moved people's hearts. A wonderful man replaced our 30year-old play equipment with some up-todate, durable equipment. We were able to renovate our basketball court. And the spring before last, an Episcopal parish in Barrington gave us some money to polish our church floor and to paint the church, and that brightened everybody's spirits."

But in other ways, the challenges have increased.

"One of Jonathan's main themes was, if life is this way for these children now, how can they tolerate it being made worse by budget cuts? And indeed, some of those cuts have come to pass. Since the welfare cuts, our pantry program has been deluged, primarily by families with children. And the privatization of medical care has had some horrendous effects."

Overall is aware of her own need to set limits and find ways to avoid burnout.

"My temptation is to take a lot of the children and have them with me all the time, and I know I can't do that — it wouldn't be good for either of us. I try to get a certain amount of solitude, because I find that very important."

But she also says that her six years at St. Ann's have made her "a whole lot more optimistic."

"The children are just constant surprises. For the past three weeks, I've been wearing a crucifix made out of a wire hanger with a pair of pliers. It's a beautiful, elegant thing, and it was done by one of the children who seems disturbed, and sometimes even has a tendency to violence. So it's saying to me, don't give up.

"The children know that they're loved here — I think that's the most important thing. They know that they're loved, they know that they're looked for."

continued from page 3

Off-the-grid resistance

THANKS SO MUCH for the extra issue of the December issue of *The Witness*. Now I have one to keep and one to pass on!

I thought it was a terrific issue. I thought Peter Selby's article was so good that I sent him an e-mail about it. I've been doing a lot of talking about the Lambeth Sexuality Resolution and I always do it in the context of world debt and third world poverty. Selby's article will help me make the connection all the more clearly.

Keep up the good work.

Catherine Roskam Dobbs Ferry, NY [Ed. note: Roskam is suffragan bishop of New York.]

Katherine Parker

IN THE JAN/FEB ISSUE of *The Witness*, I was elated to have read of the gift of stock ("over \$10,000") in memory of Katherine Parker, "an active Episcopalian, who felt called to priesthood all her adult life ... however, the Episcopal Church did not allow women priests in time for Parker" to be ordained. In choosing *The Witness* for her mother's memorial, Betsy also honored THE publication which was primary advocate for women's ordination and inclusiveness in our church. It is a perfect choice, in value with Kit Parker's life and ministry.

Kit was a beloved member of All Souls, Diocese of San Diego, who enthusiastically supported her call to priesthood. The Rev. Arnold Fenton, rector, presented her to Diocesan standing committee as a first woman to apply in late 1970s. The bishop and standing committee had been elected because they opposed ordaining women, so Kit was denied. She was told: "Come back next year!" Fr. Fenton asked: "After she grows a mustache?"

> Mary Eunice Oliver San Diego, CA

The prison-industrial complex

THANK YOU FOR THE FREE COPY of the issue on the prison-industrial complex; I heard about you from my son, who is in Jackson Prison Parnall Corr Facility. His case is like some of the ones in story books. Hard to believe, being that he is a black male. I am going to subscribe to *The Witness*. You tell it like it is.

Birdes Gardner Ypsilanti, MI

I JUST READ YOUR NOVEMBER IS-SUE which dealt a lot with prisons and prison issues. I found the information to be true as I have experienced it, working in a prison with prisoners. The information was well presented and thought provoking. I was inspired to continue to work to create change in that system. The prisoners who have read the magazine felt hope that someone understands their situation and is helping to create needed change also. Thank you!

Barbara Lambert <blambert@voyager.net>

Witness praise

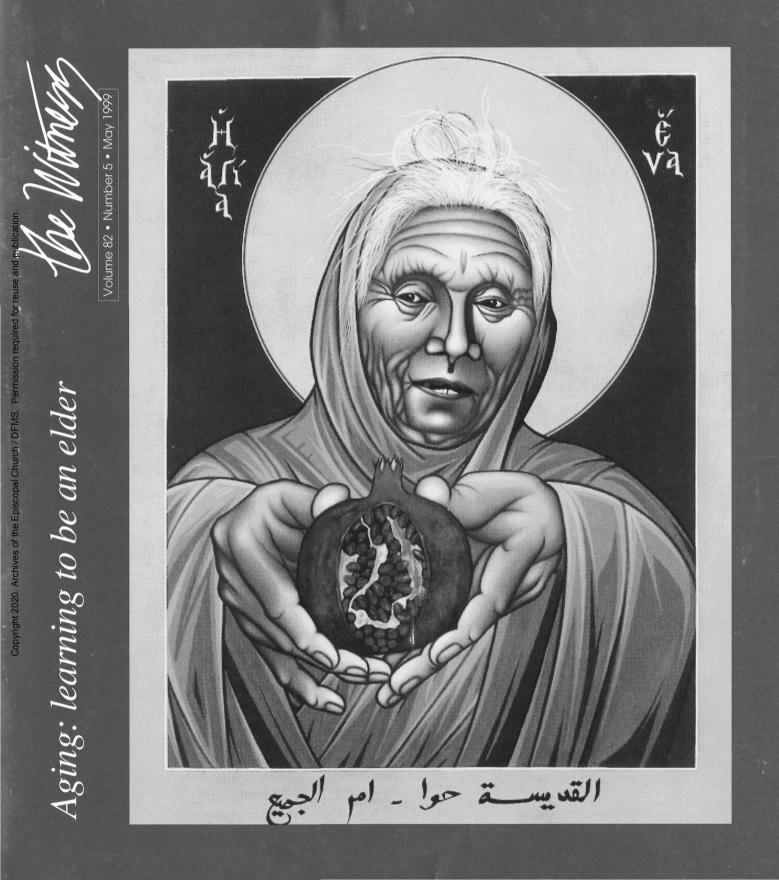
I ALWAYS ENJOY The Witness. It is the only magazine which deals with tough issues in some depth. You provide a real service to the church in making us think and continue the dialogue.

> Jim Wilson Louisville, KY

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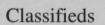
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Encouragement

READING EACH NEW VOLUME of *The Witness* from cover to cover, I often note letters from people who say how outraged they are by your magazine, and instruct you never to darken their mailboxes with it again.

Although I realize how important subscription income can be, I do hope none of you are at all discouraged by these requests. Indeed, you should be glad to receive them, because they tell the truth. *The Witness* is no bland, one-size-fits-all publication, but one that has the courage and vision to take stands, take sides, and pay the price. For those of us who already agree with you, or those who need some nudging or some valuable enlight-



letter

Order of Jonathan Daniels

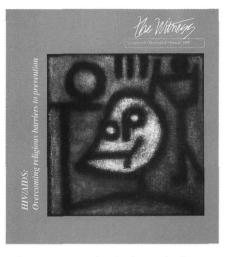
The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 8374, Richmond, VA 23226 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

Internet volunteers needed

Where the Son Shines, a website dedicated to connect Christians for outreach, is in need of chat room hosts/ monitors to keep our chat rooms friendly, safe and topic focused. For details visit <http://www.wtss.com>.

Travel to Nicaragua

Travel to Nicaragua this summer and work on a village water or sanitation project. El Porvenir, a California nonprofit organization, offers a two-week work



ening, you are an inspiration and a beacon. Never doubt the value of the ministry you do.

And so I say, keep up the good work. Do it for the church, which is going through a very perilous time right now. Do it for those who need to hear your message, and for those who do not yet understand or believe it. Do it for

experience July 3-17 and August 7-21. Small groups of up to 10 persons live and work in a rural village participating in the construction of a well, latrine, or lavandero project. Many opportunities to meet and talk with Nicaraguans in all walks of life, see other parts of the country before and after work project. No construction experience or Spanish required. Cost \$650 plus round trip airfare to Managua. For more information call (916) 736-3663 or write El Porvenir, 2508 42nd St., Sacramento, CA 95817 or e-mail at <epeeuu@igc.org> or visit <www.elporvenir.org>.

Episcopal Peace Fellowship

"Will you strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being?" Our Baptismal Covenant calls us to do just that. Since 1939 the Episcopal Peace Fellowship has provided community, support and fellowship to Episcopalians committed to answering this call. Won't you join us? Contact EPF, P.O. Box 28156, Washington, D.C. 20038; 202-783-3380; <epf@igc.apc.org>. the future of justice in our country. Do it for Jeanie, bless her brave heart.

Sallie E. Shippen Ashland, OR

Community food security

I HAVE JUST READ the January/February issue. Maybe I am too slow of mind in my old age, but somehow I fail to comprehend what you want us to do about the plight of the farmers. I too am appalled by the mergers and buy-outs. But isn't that capitalism at its best? (That is why I am a socialist!) Everyone's doing it — auto companies, funeral homes, cemeteries, grocery store, drug stores, department stores ...

The most surprising thing to me in your last issue is that no one seems to question the waste of land in raising meat. We are vegetarians basically on the basis of morality, but health, economics and ecology would be sufficient reason.

> Felix A. Lorenz, Jr. Northville, MI

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

Stringfellow book available

A Keeper of the Word, edited by Bill Wylie-Kellermann, gleans the most significant of William Stringfellow's work including never-before-published material. A Harlem street lawyer, social activist, writer and theologian, Stringfellow is enjoying new-found popularity with a new generation of Christians for his commitment to truth and justice in a corrupt and unjust world, and for teaching us how to "live humanly in the midst of death." \$15 including shipping/handling. Checks/ Visa/Mastercard to: *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210; 1-800-300-0702.

Inferior style and content

I AM NOT RENEWING because I find your articles generally inferior in literary style and content and theologically unstimulating.

Sally Llewellyn Atlanta, GA

Prison-industrial complex

I ENJOYED YOUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE issue so much I gave it to a friend, who is director of a criminal justice ministry. She's going to subscribe also!

> Jack Knipper Tulsa, OK

YOUR ISSUE ON PRISONS was valuable in successfully stopping a fourth prison here. Mary Brigid Clingman, OP Lake Providence, LA

Barbara Harris

THANK YOU for your February anniversary interview with Barbara Harris.

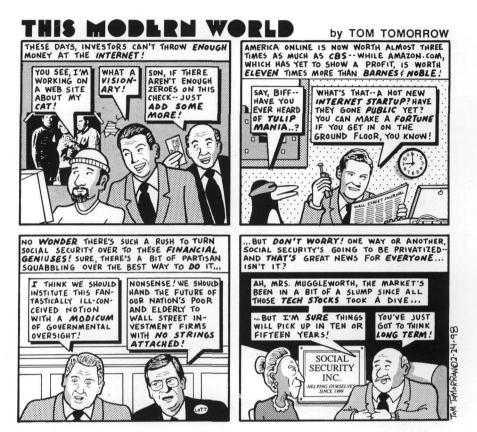
I still think her consecration is the most important event in human history since the Incarnation.

Robert H. Beveridge Livingston, TX

Proposing a 'Creation Season'

MY WIFE AND I WERE among the nonvoting members of the 25-person Episcopal Church delegation to the World Council of Churches' Assembly in Zimbabwe last December. One of the major concerns was economic justice, both nationally and internationally, which was also a theme in your magazine a couple of months earlier. Our world, as well as Christian vision and effort, clearly need a new major systematized philosophy and political structure for transforming our dangerously ill-balanced economic plights and pursuits into a healthy stewardship in relation to Nature, human nature and money matters.

Such concern, especially in regard to Nature, was part of your December issue's emphasis on ecology in Christian perspective. This very concern has been made a liturgical priority in the church at which I now serve (in retirement), Emmanuel Episcopal Church in



downtown Baltimore, Md. Two lay leaders, Bob and Lucy Wood, initiated a plan by which the church emphasized a special "Creation Season," from St. Francis Day in early October until late November's Thanksgiving Day. I gave the kick-off sermon, emphasizing that such a season deserves to be incorporated in all churches' liturgical calendars as this would provide us for the first time with a season reflecting the first paragraph of the Creed. From Advent through Easter seasons the focus is around Jesus Christ (the Creed's second paragraph); and the long Pentecost season is oriented around the Holy Spirit (the Creed's third paragraph). God as Creator (the Creed's first paragraph) is the most basic of all, yet with no liturgical season emphasizing it. Hence we propose a Creation Season be adapted by all, especially in the face of industrial culture's insensitivity so often toward Earth, on which we all are dependent.

> David W. Commack Baltimore, MD

Witness praise

I TREASURE The Witness!!

Carol Berrigan Syracuse, NY

YOU ALL DO WELL IN BEING APART from yet connected to the Church. Keep up the good work.

Dennis Serdahl Mountain Home, AR

THANK YOU FOR YOUR EXCELLENT magazine. I look forward to it each month and am amazed at your creativity in developing such a variety of themes.

> Marie Fehribach Sterling Heights, MI

PLEASE let us know if your address has changed! Returned magazines cost us money — and you frustration!



Volume 82 • Number 5 • May 1999

8 Trading speed for a wider perspective by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

With her world radically altered by a brain tumor, Wylie-Kellermann discovers blessings in her condition. blessings she can imagine extending into old age.

10 Portraits of generosity by Robert Raines

Reflecting on aging, author Raines sees the last years of one's life as ones that can be devoted to mentoring.

14 One hand clapping by Sy Safransky

Ram Dass was a spiritual teacher for editor Safransky. Since being surprised by a stroke, Ram Dass' speaking tours and writing efforts have pretty much stopped, but his witness continues.

19 Youth and age: a view from the Bible by Carole R. Fontaine

Our youth-obsessed culture would make no sense to people of biblical times, who depended on the wisdom of elders for survival in a difficult climate, according to professor Fontaine.

22 Three million 'invisible' seniors begin to organize by Virginia Mollenkott

At a conference addressing the realities confronting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) seniors, participants gained a sense of the gifts held in the LGBT community.

Cover: Eve, the Mother of All *by* Robert Lentz, Alburguergue, N.M. Back cover: Grandfathers, Fathers, Uncles and Friends by Bonnie Acker. This image and others are available m Syracuse Cultural Workers. talogues, for \$1, can be requested by calling 315-474-1132.

Contributing Editors

Anne E. Cox Gloria House Manana Andrew McThenia Erika Meyer

Ched Myers Virginia Mollenkott Butch Naters Gamarra

Vital Signs Advisory Group Ian Douglas **Gay Jennings Elizabeth Downie** Mark MacDonald **Emmett Jarrett Muffie Moroney Gayle Harris** Altagracia Perez this issue.

2	Letters	24	Vital Signs
5	Editorial	28	Keeping Watch
7	Poetry	29	Review
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The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, The Witness has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. The Witness' roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. The Witness is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted

Teaching what you know to be true

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

I ronically I was starting to prepare an issue on aging when I was felled by seizures last Labor Day. I had a couple of the articles in hand, so when I was able to return to the rotation for the May issue, I decided to complete the topic I had partially begun. It seems like a strange one for someone many doctors believe won't live to see it, but it's an important topic and besides, I'm hoping to prove them wrong.

A variety of books on aging are suddenly available in bookstores. I think there are two reasons. The first is that whenever the baby boomers experience something, they see it as if they were the first. The first to realize that adult society was corrupt and needed to be changed in the 1960s and now the first to have a creative idea of how to age, one that includes becoming whole, learning and teaching others - to garden, to care for the earth, to pray, to organize politically. The other reason is complex. The 1950s really did do a job on the generation that preceded us, diminishing their confidence in their own body-knowing (take, for example, the way hospitals encouraged women to give birth while totally unconscious). The generation that is currently retired may be at a loss for how to step up to being elders. (And, of course, they probably remember the grief baby boomers gave them when they tried to speak with authority a few decades ago.)

This issue is focussed on people who through aging, and often through catastrophic illness, have taken stock and decided to teach what they know to be true.

Elders usually must let go of their expectations to be power brokers, but they are also often positioned in a way that allows

them greater freedom to act politically. Recently my partner Bill and I were at an Ash Wednesday vigil at the local manufacturer of cruise missile engines. Except for a few college students, we were probably the youngest people there — which isn't saying much since we are in our 40s. On one level, that gave us an opportunity to Why is the peace movement so white, so middle class and now so elderly? But in thinking about it, where would we prefer that elders be? What better task could they adopt than to witness against fire power that can carry nuclear payload, but now is used in first-strike attacks against countries

Perhaps our elders can help us learn to relax, to take delight, to notice creation as well as to step up to challenges.

like Iraq or the former Yugoslavia? The conviction of these older ones is a gift to us. (I remember during a civil disobedience campaign against this same manufacturer in the early 1980s hearing a senior citizen say to a young mother who was agonizing about whether to do the action, "You take care of your babies. I'll do this in your name and, before long, you can do this in the name of another mother.")

Some mysterious tension lies in the balance between the humility that elders learn as they relinquish power in the workplace and, perhaps, succumb to physical challenges or illnesses, and the breadth of perspective they gain as elders. They can teach us that some things won't be changed, that some things deserve to be protested even if they are unlikely to change, that life is short and that younger people generally take it too seriously, chasing their tails when they could be giving thanks. Perhaps our elders can help us learn to relax, to take delight, to notice creation as well as to step up to challenges as we see fit and feel called. Perhaps they will remind us that the One who set this whole thing, often quite messy, in motion is a loving God.

I find myself increasingly willing to listen. I hope that the elders in my life will be willing to speak and that my generation (You remember us? We're the ones who said, "Don't trust anyone over 30.") will step up to the need when our turn comes. I guess we'll have to believe that we've learned something and trust that it can be communicated. Of course, no one has ever complained that the baby boomers were reluctant to speak their minds or underconfident in their opinions. We'll manage.

One of my favorite elders is my godmother Grace Mulhauser who died some years ago. If anyone had a right to be bitter, she did. In the early 1940s she was married and raising her only son in Cleveland, Ohio where she and her husband worked with black writers, including Langston Hughes. When World War II arrived, her husband had to serve. When it ended, he refused to come home, staying in Japan. Alone, she raised their son. When the Vietnam War arrived, her son was taken, despite the fact that he had three children. He was killed. Finally, on the day of his funeral, when fellow soldiers were expected, she woke to discover several inches of snow on her beloved Virginia soil. She told me later that she stamped her foot and said, "God, I am continued on page 6

editor's note

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

Receiving golden grace

People always ask the same question: "Don't you get stung?" Yes! I do! I do get stung. I try to avoid it and, as I get more experienced, it happens less and less often. But it's a small price to pay for a golden reward.

I'm a hobbyist beekeeper, living right outside Washington, D.C. in a quiet little suburb about 15 minutes away from the buildings and monuments — and power brokers — that make the city both famous and infamous. In my backyard are two hives of bees, sitting largely unnoticed between tulip poplar trees at least 130 feet high. These two hives supply, year after year, enough honey to satiate me, my family, my friends and their friends. Maybe even their friends' friends. Depends on how good the honey flow is.

Before I kept bees, I never knew there was such a thing as a honey flow. But there is: Spring after spring in my area the tulip poplar and black locust trees burst into bloom and for a short, mad season the universe is filled with rivers — no, oceans — of nectar. This is not simple abundance, this is provision on the most lavish of scales. The honey flow makes the biblical promise of "a land flowing with milk and honey" into something much more than quaint imagery.

Bees are so amazing. I could (and often do) go on and on about the fantastic things they do. But there are two spiritual lessons in particular that I have learned from beekeeping. The first is the nature of gift. I've already mentioned the honey flow — how every year, almost without fail, the humblest of trees produce more honey than any one person could possibly consume. I tend my bees. I supply a dry, sheltered area with early-morning sun and afternoon shade; I position the hives so that they face southeast — a direction bees prefer; I make sure they are near a water source. They repay me by bringing in and storing PURE GIFT in quantities that not only supply their needs but mine as well. I'm often asked if I sell my honey. How could I? It's gift and I delight in giving it away.

The second thing I've learned from bees underscores the great spiritual truth that God is in the business of bringing life out of death and light into darkness.

Bees don't hibernate. Instead, when it gets cold they cluster together. The bees on the outside of the cluster vibrate their wing muscles — they shiver, if you will — and in this way bring the temperature inside the hive to about 57 degrees Fahrenheit. This enables the bees to survive, and they exist

continued from page 5 not Job!"

She taught me lots by example. She referred to herself happily as "an old lady in tennis shoes." She collected her women friends in her yellow Volkswagen bug and took them into her beloved mountains for picnics. (She spoke of the protests when the interstate was blasted through the mountains.) She taught literacy at the jail. She told me she had succeeded in getting a banjo admitted for one prisoner. She was proud of being Virginian and proud that her father always loaned money to African Americans and that he noted that he had always been repaid.

In terms of deliberate messages, she did tell me that she had signed up for a three-year Bible study course at her this way, consuming relatively little of their stores, until the winter solstice.

But then, at the darkest, coldest time of the year, the queen begins to lay eggs again. And when she does, the bees must raise the temperature inside the hive to a level that will support new life. How warm must it be inside the hive then, during the darkest, coldest time of year?

Ninety-three degrees Fahrenheit. Isn't that amazing? From my perspective, in late December spring seems impossibly far away. Everything is brown, dead, frozen, and dreary. I struggle with depression. I note with sorrow the passing of another year. I dread the early darkness.

But outside, in my beehives, the queens are laying eggs and the bees are keeping the nurseries warm enough for them to survive. The bees must now consume more and more of their stores, but those eggs will turn into the worker bees that will enable the hives to become strong enough to take advantage of the honey flow—still months away. That's worth getting stung now and again.

church and been surprised by the content. "Don't wait 'til you're my age to discover the Bible," she admonished. She also told me to choose a partner with full lips because kissing skinny lips could be so unsatisfying.

After her death she appeared in a dream. It was ferociously intense. She told me, "I used to think that I was supposed to teach you things, but now I know that I simply had to love you!" She hugged me.

I'd like to be old like she was (although I don't want to be Job either). She had a lovely humility and sense of humor, combined with a clear idea of what was just. She knew her foibles and her strengths. Days that were crystal clear, she celebrated and called "Adam's birthday." I do too.

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Rosemary George is an Episcopalian living in Falls Church, Va.

The old woman teaches the young girl about her body

by Red Hawk

Grandmother, my breasts are so small, she said as they sat in the hot spring. The old woman said nothing at all for a long time, just sat staring at the trees through the rising steam. The long guiet made it seem she had not heard; she had of course. Then she turned. These are not a source of strength, she said with a touch to the young girl's budding breast, unless you heart is free of desire, depends on no one. Such a clear heart is a place of rest. a source of strength, and loving harmony. The heart of a free woman is the force behind her beauty. Only remorse will come to her who is in thrall to fair face or full breast; she feels the sting of time, old age is a gall. But the free woman will sing as old age beauties her and fills her heart; her love will never fail her or depart, not when death makes its claim on face and breast, not when sun falls and Earth comes to its rest.

- from Journey of the Medicine Man, August House, Little Rock, AK, 1983.



THE WITNESS

7

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Trading speed for perspective

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

aybe 10 years ago I was on a retreat and we were asked what we loved most or what gave us passion. I forget the exact question, but I remember my answer. It was, speed.

I loved launching into life, moving my soul and mind quickly. I loved taking on a project with an unreasonable deadline and completing it on time. I didn't mind pushing my body. I imagined that anyone who was not as speedy wished they could be.

So it was interesting visiting my partner Bill's Mom in Florida in March after my seizures in September, surgery in October to remove the brain tumor the doctors had located and after learning the diagnosis — a grade four cancerous tumor. My perspective has changed radically. I have a new understanding of slowness. For one thing, when you can't speed, you are primed to notice more things.

I've also had to struggle to regain a relationship with my body that I had always taken for granted. Sometimes now there is a lag between when I think, "Walk" and when my legs move. Sometimes, often, I needed help getting up. During treatment sessions I rode in wheel chairs, learning the etiquette of how to ask people who were helping me to move the chair in a way that I felt comfortable with. I had to learn patience with the fact that I had no control over how or where I went. The most I could do was ask. For some reason this came particularly clear to me when Christmas shopping with Bill. He parked me in an aisle he wanted to explore, but I was aware that one aisle over there was something that had caught my eye. I got there, but in the interim I waited.

I've learned to ask for help, to wait, even to assess whether the thoughts that cross my mind are really worth expressing. A lot of things strike me funny. And best of all, I've discovered that God is in the mix more than I had feared.

So sitting by the pool in Bradenton, Fla. I looked into the faces of senior citizens and noticed when physical tasks were challenges. I heard people talk about repeated surgeries and I knew the trauma of admitting yourself, signing the forms that suggest that death is an unlikely but possible result of treatment, allowing needles to be poked through your flesh, submitting to general anaesthetic, praying constantly. I felt complete solidarity.

And, to my surprise, I am not jealous of those who can attain light speed. Instead it seems somewhat narrow take, for example, people who need to use their cell phones in grocery stores. At the same time, I've gained a stronger sense of compassion. These days I simply offer a smile and people seem to understand the solidarity.

I've had plenty of time to think about the nature of prayer. My oldest sister said, "I don't want to believe in a God who counts the numbers of prayers offered and decides, 'Okay, that person can live; she had more than 'x' number of prayers.'" Of course, I agree with her. Plus everything in scripture seems to indicate that God has a preference for the abandoned. I struggled with what kind of prayer I could voice without being presumptuous. Finally, I realized that I could say with wholehearted conviction, "I choose life!" This didn't presume that I would live, but I liked it because it was unambivalent.

I was intrigued to find that Reynolds Price, whose book A Whole New Life (Plume, 1995) has meant the world to me through all this, was also drawn to this scripture about choosing life. Price writes:

"Clear as the offered choice is, such a reach for life is another tall order, especially for a human in agonized straits. But even if you omit the last phrase from God's proposition (that you last to love him, even if you're a confirmed disbeliever), you're still confronted with another iron fact. The visible laws of physical nature are willing you to last as long as you can. Down at the core, you almost certainly want to survive.

"You're of course quite free to balk that wish, by killing yourself and ending your physical will to endure; but amazingly few pained people choose death by suicide."

Price, in his 50s, was diagnosed with a tumor inside his spinal cord running from the nape of his neck downward 10 inches. His intelligent, patient-oriented critique of the hospitals, medical staff and drugs delighted me and made me feel less crazed. I was profoundly struck by his conclusion that the 10 years (and now more since the writing) which he has spent in a wheel chair have actually been *better* than the 50 that preceded it:

"By very slow inches, as I've said, the decision to change my life forced

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor/ publisher of *The Witness*,

<jeanie@thewitness.org>. The mural was painted by the Break the Silence Mural Project, a group of Jewish women artists in solidarity with Palestinian desire for independence.

itself on me; and I moved ahead as if a path was actually there and would stretch on a while....I traveled toward the reinvention and reassembly of a life that bears some relations with the

now-dead life but is radically altered, trimmed for a whole new wind and route. A different life and — till now at least, as again I've said — a markedly better way to live, for me and for my response to most of the people whom my life touches.

"I've tested that word better for the stench of sentimentality, narcissism, blind optimism or lunacy. What kind of twisted fool, what megalomaniac bucking for canonization, would give his strong legs and control of a body that gave him 51 years' good service with enormous amounts of sensory pleasure (a body that played a sizeable part in winning him steady love from others) and would then surrender normal control of a vigorous life in an ample house and far beyond it in exchange for what?-two legs that serve no purpose but ballast to a numb torso and the rest of a body that acts as a magnet to no one living, all soaked in corrosive constant pain?

"I know that this new

life is better for me, and for most of my friends and students as well, in two measurable ways. First, paraplegia with its maddening limitations has forced a degree of patience and consequent watchfulness on me, though as a writer I'd always been watchful. Shortly after my own paralysis, I heard two of Franklin Roosevelt's sons say that the primary change in their father, after polio struck him in mid-life and "Forced to sit, denied the easy flight that legs provide, you either learn patience or you cut your throat, or you take up a bludgeon and silence whoever's in reach at the moment. As

> I survived the black frustration of so many new forms of powerlessness, I partly learned to sit and attend, to watch and taste whatever or whomever seemed likely or needy, far more closely than I had in five decades. The pool of human evidence that lies beneath my writing and teaching, if nothing more, has grown in the wake of that big change."

> My condition is less clear. I can still walk and move freely most of the time. I seem to have my wits about me, although sometimes I'm not sure of that. I know that I am now predisposed to seizures, some of which leave me unconscious, by virtue of the scar tissue in my brain.

> As I look toward the possibility of aging — and everything feels tentative — I'd like nothing better. I don't feel as afraid of witnessing the diminishment of my physical abilities, because I have already experienced an increasing freedom with limited disability. It's quite likely true that nothing short of physical limitations would allow me to surrender the grandiose belief that I'm

called to fix everything or die trying. Knowing that there are things I can't do, I can appreciate that I am along for the ride. And I like the ride. I'm also prepared to trust that, in the end, all will be well.

MAY 1999

Mural painted in occupied Palestine, 1989

grounded him firmly, was an increased patience and a willingness to listen. If you doubt that patience must follow paralysis, try imagining that you can't escape whoever manages to cross your doorsill.



9

Portraits of generosity

by Robert Raines

or years Tom Stoddard, a gay attorney in his 40s, headed the Lambda Legal Defense Educational Fund, a gay and lesbian legal rights group, working on behalf of the gay community, especially those suffering from AIDS. Then came the moment when he learned that he himself had AIDS, and found himself nursing the same wounds, taking the same medications, and haunted by the same fears as his clients. He wrote, "I became the client as well as the lawyer...My most effective antiviral drug is political commitment, because it gets me so worked up ... I'm very glad to be living this ... I feel as though I'm on a precipice. I worry that I might fall, but my perspective is now broader and deeper. I see an all-encompassing vista, one that connects the past to the future, one that ties me to all other people who have suffered." Tom Stoddard, his life foreshortened by AIDS, fueled by an early and urgent wisdom, devoted himself to mentoring gay and lesbian attorneys, seeking to make this country a more safe and just place for its homosexual citizens in the coming generations. An elder before his time, Stoddard died two years ago.

Some traumatic event — serious illness, the death of a loved one or a dream or a marriage, forced retirement — may wake us up to our limited and precious lifespan, refresh our compassion and turn us to generous investment in the next generation. "Generosity is the soul of eldering," writes Theodore Roszak in his book *America the Wise*.

In this essay I want to paint portraits of women and men whose generosity of spirit in the travails of aging has touched me and encouraged my own generosity of soul.

Maggie Kuhn was retired by the Presbyterian Church at age 65. She went out to found the Gray Panthers, an advocacy group of people 55 and older, who, by the thousands across the country, worked on justice issues for people of all ages. Maggie, a little woman with a white bun of hair on her head and a glint in her eye, engendered passionate social concern in others. She lived in Philadelphia until her death at 89. Two weeks before she died, she stood on a picket line with transit

workers seeking a more just wage. When I remember Maggie I ask myself, "When was the last time you walked on a picket line, marched down a street or stood vigil for a just cause?" Maggie embodied the Kirkridge (Retreat and Study Center) motto "Picket

Commitment for the long haul, fidelity to vocation, concern for coming generations. Such long-haul commitment happens in ordinary communities, embodied in extraordinary people.

and Pray." Perhaps her most generous gift to others came after she was required to retire.

While one may anticipate retirement as a time to major in personal pleasure and leisure, there may also grow in us a desire to give back, contribute to the common good, leave the campground a little cleaner than we found it. A Matthew 25 (verses 31ff) survey of one's community or city will turn up those who are in need: the poor, sick, imprisoned, stranger, etc. Who are the people, what are the institutions and causes one wants to nourish and support with time, energy and resources?

Douglas Steere was Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College, mentor of hundreds of students and colleagues, and an irenic generator of interfaith dialogue and friendship all over the world. He came into my life when I was a young minister in Philadelphia, generously welcoming me into his circle of colleagues, offering me opportunities of relationship and experience otherwise beyond my reach. Douglas quietly mentored me on my spiritual journey without laying any agenda upon me. In the years that followed my departure from Philadelphia, now and then a postcard would arrive, with Douglas' nearly illegible scribble, sending greeting and asking how things were going. I realized that Douglas was

> there for me and many others, and I was nourished, comforted and built up by his reaching out.

> I always felt, secretly, that I wasn't quite worthy of this great human being's friendship, and yet all the time his friendship was conferring worth

on me, and my own capacity for friendship was being enlarged by being the beneficiary of his. What a friend we had in Douglas, whose generosity of befriending made better friends of us. So who is it that I might send a postcard to today, or phone, or visit or pray for? Might I grow in my generosity of befriending?

Paul Mellon, who died recently at 91,

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Robert Raines, 72, is a pastor in the United Church of Christ. After serving as director of the Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center in eastern Pennsylvania for 20 years, Raines now lectures and conducts workshops nationwide. His latest book is *A Time To Live: Seven Steps* of Creative Aging, (Plume, 1997).

was born into a wealthy family, went to Yale, and devoted himself to philanthropic pursuits throughout his life. Exceptionally modest, he was a true philanthropist, a lover of humankind. At Yale he endowed professorships and built many buildings, but steadfastly refused to have a building named for him. Instead of trying to make a name for himself he created space where others in coming generations could name themselves.

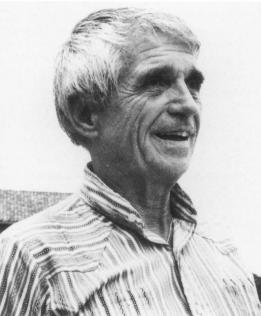
Parents, teachers, managers, social workers, coaches, journalists, clergy and politicians are among those who may try to create space where others can name themselves and develop their own destinies.

There is a philanthropist slumbering in the soul of each of us, wanting to give whatever are our treasures to those who come after us.

One such person is Oseola McCarty. She has lived in Hattiesburg, Miss., in the same house since 1947. She was reared in a house of women --- her grandmother, mother and aunt. As they all fell sick over the years, she cared for them until they died. She dropped out of school when she was 8 and began work as a laundress. Never married, she lived very simply, and put a few dollars in the bank every week. In the summer of 1995, Oseola, then 87, asked her banker to give her life savings away --- to fund scholarships for poor students at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Her gift amounted to \$150,000. It generated attention all across the country and additional gifts, and breathed a cleansing wind through many souls. Today her portrait hangs in the administration building of that university, the first portrait of a black person to be displayed there. Oseola McCarty, philanthropist, true lover of humankind, gave her "widow's mite," demonstrating that the acts of the apostles keep on happening in our midst.

What is my treasure?

How may I give it away? Some of us may not have accumulated much cash across the years, but perhaps our compassion has grown, and a little wisdom come



Daniel Berrigan

our way, and a certain simplicity of soul. If we want to, we can find our own ways to become true philanthropists, to give ourselves away for love of humankind.

Twenty-nine years after he went to prison in South Africa, and two years after he was elected president of his country, Nelson Mandela made a state visit to London, where he was the honored guest of the Queen, and feted as a king in a country where Margaret Thatcher once called him a "terrorist" and dismissed the possibility that he could one day govern South Africa as a pipe dream out of "cloud-cuckoo land." While there, he invited Lady Thatcher — who as Prime Minister in the 1980s refused

> to endorse international sanctions against the white supremacist government - to Buckingham Palace where they held a 20-minute chat. No details were released, but when earlier in the week he was asked about her stand, Mandela said, "Let bygones be bygones." She said nothing. Mandela of the generous heart, free of bitterness, magnanimous, willing to forgive, an elder among the nations. As was King Hussein, who made peace with his enemies, went to Israel when several Israeli children were killed by Jordanian-based terrorists and knelt before families asking their forgiveness, who pardoned his own would-be assassins, who, two months before his death, came to encourage the Wye agreement by his presence.

Mev Puleo

One thinks of Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Elizabeth McAlister, Anne Montgomery, Elmer Maas and so many others who have seeded two generations of peacemakers in this country by their resistance to nuclear and other weapons. Commitment for the long haul, fidelity to vocation, concern for coming generations. Such long-haul commitment happens in ordinary communities, embodied in extraordinary people.

THE CHURCH NEEDS THE WITNESS, especially as long as there are so many in the church like me who don't agree with much of what it says and who are benefited by hearing it anyway.

> - The Rev. Merrill Orne Young A reader in Surry, VA

Mary Daly targeted by right-wing law firm

A legal challenge to feminist author Mary Daly's 20-year policy of teaching men separately at Boston College has resulted in Daly cancelling her spring term classes and, she says, may force her into retirement. The National Catholic Reporter reports that the challenge comes from the Center for Individual Rights, a conservative, public-interest Washington law firm which is acting for a single male student at the college. Daly defends her policy as necessary for preserving a safe space for women to talk freely, and says she has found that women in mixedgender classrooms direct part of their attention to the way men are reacting to class content. University administrators point to federal law prohibiting discrimination based on gender, and assert that "separation is inherently unequal."

Daly, who uses the same course material for male students, but in separate sessions, says that "one of the hallmarks of a great university is that it allows for diversity of methodology. ... The right wing is trying to make this an issue of discrimination when it is about refusing to dumb down education and about the right and obligation of faculty not to be forced to accept students in their classes who are not qualified and do not have the prerequisites."

The Center for Individual Rights, which has a history of challenging affirmative action policies, promised in a recent fundraising letter to devote increased resources to fighting radical feminism.

U.S. ranks low in human development

Using a new poverty index designed to



measure deprivation in industrialized countries, the U.N. ranked the U.S. worst of the 17 industrialized countries rated in a recent study (*Dollars and Sense*, 3-4/ 99). The U.N.'s Human Development Report 1998 revealed that, despite having the highest Gross Domestic Product per capita, the U.S. has a significantly larger percentage of its population — 19 percent — living below the poverty line than any of the other nations. (The United Kingdom came in second last in this category, with 13.5 percent below the poverty line.) The U.S. also ranked worst in Iow life expectancy, and second worst in illiteracy.

Clinton a "liberal Republican"?

The fervor to impeach Clinton arose out of far-right resistance to his "liberal Republican" policies, Manning Marable believes.

"What Clinton has done is to preempt the public policy space that liberal Republicans used to occupy," Marable writes. "Take a look at Clinton's new budget proposal.... The classical Reagan themes of military spending, law and order, tax cuts and privatization are all here. On defense, Clinton's budget would spend an extra \$112 billion through 2005, giving the military the largest increase since the Reagan administration. The budget includes a \$10.5 billion system to defend against long-range missiles - an irrational and unnecessary expenditure. On crime, Clinton wants another \$1.3 billion to finish hiring an additional 100,000 police officers that were originally part of the 1994 federal crime law. To appeal to middle class and conservative voters, Clinton asked for \$130 million for charter schools, which operate largely independently from public schools.

"But Clinton's budget has enough concessions to the Left to keep most Democrats and even progressives like feminists, labor union and civil rights groups backing the administration. For example, on the issue of environmentalism, Clinton's budget asks for \$33.9 billion, the highest figure ever requested by any president. The budget pledges millions of dollars for Title I grants to schools in urban and poor areas. Another \$1.4 billion would be used to hire 38,000 new teachers.

"The issue was never about whether progressives and liberals ought to defend Clinton, but how we can halt the authoritarian danger of the Far Right. Clinton's personal behavior was stupid and self-indulgent, but we must be very clear that a greater danger confronts us."

GM vs. Microsoft

At a computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated: "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25 dollar cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon." In response to Gate's comments, this list [abbreviated for our purposes] began circulating on the Internet.

"If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:

- 1. For no reason whatsoever your car would crash twice a day.
- Every time they repainted the lines on the road you would have to buy a new car.
- Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason, and you would just accept this, restart, and drive on.
- 4. Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
- 5. Occasionally for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key, and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
- 6. GM would require all car buyers to also purchase a deluxe set of Rand McNally road maps (now a GM subsidiary), even though they neither need them nor want them. Attempting to delete this option would immediately cause the car's performance to diminish by 50 percent or more."

A militant activist seeks to become an elder

[Russell Means, the angry young man representing the American Indian Movement (AIM), made an unexpected appearance in the pages of Modern Maturity, the magazine of the AARP. Although the interview covered lots of ground, the focus was on aging.]

Russell Means explained that in his tribe, four names are selected for each child at birth. These names are conferred at times of passage. In his case, he explained, "I was given a name when I was born, *Wanbli Ohitika*, which means Brave Eagle. So, of course, I was always running around taking dares, getting in lots of mischief. Being a pain, sometimes, I bet. I really took the name to heart.

"My second name was *Cio* (pronounced SHE-oh), a bird from the prairies, the plains, that does a beautiful dance during mating season. The white man calls *cio* 'prairie chicken.' A lot of imagination there, you know. But we call it *cio* and the word describes the dance and gives you a picture. Indigenous languages always give you pictures. When I was a young man I was given the right to dance and became a champion fancy dancer at some of our traditional Indian dances.

"I was given my third name in 1972 at a July 4th celebration at Porcupine, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation three years after I joined AIM. *Oyate Wacinyapi*. Works for the People."

The fourth name selected for Means is one he said that he hoped to earn by becoming an elder. He said it is the name of a very respected leader from the past, a person of great patience and wisdom.

Means says that his desire to become an



Russell Means

Nancy Shia/Impact Visuals

elder prompted him to seek counseling. "To become patient and wise you can't be an angry person, and I was quite an angry person. My marriage was falling apart, and I didn't want to lose my wife or children."

Means, who said he had very few friendships with white people, was surprised by his experiences in therapy. "I found myself with all these prosperous, rich, powerful white people." Like him, they were in pain. "I thought about the curious thing that makes us all human beings. It's not our pigmentation, not race. It's not our cultures. It's our feelings. We all hurt. We all feel joy. We are all vulnerable. If we recognize that within one another, then race and pigmentation would not separate us the way they do."

The entire interview, which includes Means' views on women and on racism, is posted at <www.thewitness.org> or call The Witness office to request a copy.

One hand clapping

by Sy Safransky

n 1971, I was hitchhiking around the U.S., searching for answers. I'd just switched my religious affiliation from devout agnostic to confused seeker. Instead of deriding the spiritual life, I was struggling to make sense of it, trying to separate the real from the bogus, the flower from the thorn.

One summer day, I visited a commune somewhere in California. I no longer recall the name of the commune, or what town it was near. I remember walking down a long dirt road to get there. I remember orange groves, avocado trees. I remember a modest clapboard house.

That's where I discovered *Be Here Now*. On a windowsill. Beneath a pair of lacy white curtains. Next to a shiny white commode.

Being an inveterate bathroom reader, I picked it up and started reading. It wasn't great literature, but, from the first page, the book drew me as powerfully as anything I'd ever read. As soon as I could, I bought a copy of my own. Though more than a quarter-century has passed since then, in some ways I've never put it down.

Psychedelic enlightenment

Here was the story of Richard Alpert, a bright Jewish intellectual who, by the age of 30, had climbed to the top of the academic ladder. Though he was a professor of psychology at Harvard and a highly regarded therapist, he felt that something was missing from his life, and that psychology didn' treally have a grasp on the human condition. He ate too much, drank too much, and got terrible diarrhea every time he had to lecture. After five years of psychoanalysis, his own therapist had told him, "You are too sick to leave analysis."

In 1961, Alpert was introduced to consciousness-expanding drugs by a new colleague at Harvard, Timothy Leary. On his first trip with psilocybin, Alpert underwent a profound shift in awareness.

Images of his different identities professor, lover, son — appeared and faded before his eyes. Then his body started to fade away. He panicked, feeling more and more distraught; then, all at once, he was engulfed by a sense of calm.

For the first time, he wrote, he sensed his inner self — the universal essence within each person that is "independent of social and physical identity ... beyond life and death." It was the most exhila-

I studied Ram Dass' spiritual odyssey as if it were a map to some mysterious continent whose existence I'd only recently discovered.

rating, deeply religious experience of his life.

Eventually fired from Harvard because of his experiments with drugs, Alpert spent several years exploring inner realms of consciousness with psychedelics. There were parallels, he believed, between his LSD trips and the enlightenment experiences described in certain Hindu and Buddhist texts. There was also a big difference: No matter how high Alpert went, no matter how ecstatic and transforming his visions, he eventually came down. It was, he wrote, "as if you came into the kingdom of heaven ... and then you got cast out again."

Finding a guru

After six years, and more than three hundred psychedelic trips, Alpert went on a pilgrimage to India, hoping to find someone who could give him more enduring answers. He traveled for several months before encountering Neem Karoli, an old man said to possess extraordinary powers.

Neem Karoli asked Alpert to come closer. He then described what Alpert had been doing the previous evening. He whispered that Alpert had been thinking of his mother, who had died a year earlier. This was true. Then Neem Karoli leaned back, closed his eyes, and said that she had died of an illness of the spleen, something Alpert had discussed with no one in India.

Alpert's mind raced, searching for an explanation, but he couldn't come up with one. When his mother had died the year before, Alpert hadn't even cried, believing that, as a result of his experience with

psychedelics, he'd come to terms with death. Now Alpert felt a wrenching in his chest. He bent down, put his head in Neem Karoli's lap, and started to weep. "And I cried and cried and cried,"

he wrote. "And I wasn't happy and I wasn't sad. It wasn't that kind of crying. The only thing I could say is that it felt like I was home, like the journey was over."

Alpert spent the next six months with Neem Karoli, practicing meditation and yoga, following a strict vegetarian diet, and taking in what he could of the guru's wisdom. Neem Karoli — called by his devotees Maharajji, a common title of respect in India — lived simply, showed no interest in worldly possessions, and gave no lectures. But, for Alpert, just being in this

Sy Safransky is editor of *The Sun*, in which a longer version of this essay originally appeared. Ram Dass, who over the years has given away nearly all his money to charitable causes, continues to require expensive round-the-clock care. Donations or requests for his books or tapes may be sent to the Hanuman Foundation, R.D. Medical Fund, 524 San Anselmo Ave., #203, San Anselmo, Calif., 94960 or call (415) 499-8586. Updates on his health are available at <www.ramdasstapes.org>.

man's presence was profoundly moving. It wasn't Neem Karoli's display of paranormal powers that impressed Alpert so much as the intensity of his compassion. The guru seemed to know Alpert's every thought yet embraced him anyway. Never before had Alpert experienced such unconditional love.

'Where's the medicine?'

One night, Alpert came across the LSD he had carried in his shoulder bag to India. He

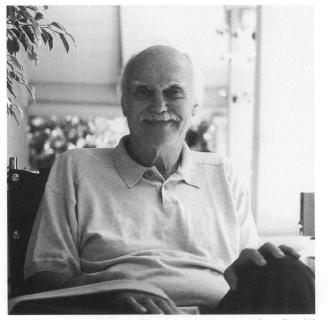
wondered if Neem Karoli could tell him whether psychedelics offered a genuine mystical experience. The next day, before Alpert could say anything, Neem Karoli started teasing him. "Where's the medicine?" he asked. Then Neem Karoli extended his hand. Would the "medicine," he inquired mischievously, give him any special powers? Alpert handed Neem Karoli 900 micrograms of pure LSD, an unusually large dose, and watched as the guru put the pills in his mouth and swallowed. Alpert waited anxiously to see what would happen next. This was the strongest hallucinogen known to humankind. This was a drug that exploded in your brain like the most beautiful, the most dangerous, bomb in the world; sirens should have been wailing.

But Neem Karoli just sat outside all morning, chatting with visitors, drinking tea, and occasionally glancing at Alpert with a twinkle in his eye. That was his answer. Whatever states of awareness LSD made accessible, Neem Karoli lived in without drugs. "Everywhere I had gone with LSD," Alpert wrote, "my guru already was."

Neem Karoli encouraged his followers to "love everybody" and "serve everybody," saying, "The best form in which to worship God is every form." Before Alpert left India, Neem Karoli gave him the name Ram Dass, which, in Sanskrit, means "Servant of God."

Beyond LSD

I studied Ram Dass' spiritual odyssey as if it were a map to some mysterious continent whose existence I'd only recently discovered. A year earlier, I'd taken LSD for the first time; I, too, had experienced a radical shift in consciousness as I'd glimpsed my true self, and tasted the glory at the heart of creation. At the age of 25, I'd begun to believe again — not in the storybook God



Ram Dass

George Rosenfeld

of my childhood, nor in the existential angst I'd worshiped as an adolescent, but in an infinitely loving intelligence that permeated everything.

LSD was my sacrament. Under the right circumstances, it allowed me to part the curtain of everyday awareness. But, each time, I would come down. The white light would fade, a world shining with the joy of existence would give way to neon signs and honking horns. As Neem Karoli told Ram Dass, drugs may strengthen one's faith in higher states of awareness, but they couldn't be a path to enlightenment. "It's better to become Christ than to visit him," Neem Karoli said, "and your medicine won't do that for you."

I, too, wanted to experience transcendent states without drugs. I, too, wanted more enduring answers. In Ram Dass, I discovered someone who spoke to me in a way that few spiritual teachers could, translating esoteric ideas into an accessible, appealing language as he discussed yogic powers and the great spiritual traditions of the East one moment, and sex, comic books,

> or American politics the next. I was moved by the core of earnest seeking I felt in him, and impressed by his lucidity. The facile uses to which the phrase "Be here now" has since been put belie the depth and beauty of his message: that the universe is a seamless whole; that behind our seemingly separate bodies and personalities we share one consciousness; that, if we can learn to quiet the chatter of our rational minds and the seductive crooning of our egos, we can begin to connect with the deepest truths about ourselves.

> I was fascinated, too, by Ram Dass' transformation from a respected Harvard professor — a man who played the cello, collected antiques, hosted dinner parties, and owned a Mercedes, an MG sports car, a motorcycle, a sailboat, and a

Cessna airplane—into a bearded renunciate in a white robe and beads; in his own words, "nobody special."

In the pages of *Be Here Now*, I'd found my first spiritual teacher.

Truth waits for us

The divine mystery is mysteriously purposeful, Ram Dass wrote, even if that purpose is often hard to understand. The next message is always waiting for us; we'll hear it when we're ready to hear it. Timing is everything — and the universe's timing is, well, impeccable. On a summer day in 1971, in a commune somewhere in California, I was reminded that, even as we search high and low for truth, truth sometimes waits for us, quietly and inauspiciously, until our pants are down around our ankles.

A human hero

Two years later, in North Carolina, I interviewed Ram Dass for the first time.

I was nervous about meeting one of my heroes, worried about the kind of impression I'd make. But Ram Dass greeted me as if we were old friends. He was taller and lankier than I expected, with a bushy beard and clear, intelligent eyes. We sat outside and talked about ego and nonattachment, drugs and meditation, romantic love and divine love. Though Ram Dass knew that the magazine I was interviewing him for didn't even exist yet, he was generous with his time and his answers. He laughed easily, especially at himself. He was wise without affecting a professorial air. Here was a man who communicated something important without acting important.

Finally, I relaxed enough to tell him a little about myself. He listened carefully, neither encouraging nor discouraging my confessions. When I mentioned my experiences with LSD, and complained about the lows that inevitably followed even the most exalted highs, he smiled. "After you've gone through that a few hundred times," he said, "you start to meditate." He hugged me before I left, a big hug from a big man.

I've interviewed him on several other occasions, read all his books, listened to dozens of his tapes. More than any other spiritual teacher I can think of, Ram Dass has been willing to discuss his hang-ups and self-deceptions, to share even the most embarrassing personal stories, no matter how disillusioning they might be. Ram Dass has never claimed to be enlightened — far from it. He's talked frankly about the difficulty of living like an ascetic when he first got back from India, of changing from holy robes to jeans before slipping out for pizza and a beer, of his embarrassment at being recognized as he stood in line to see a porno movie. More genuinely himself in front of an audience than many of us are with our closest friends, he once said, "Ram Dass wants nothing but the joy of being in your presence. Meanwhile, Dick Alpert is saying, 'You want to come up and see my holy pictures?'" If his candor has made him less of a demigod in my eyes, it has at the same time made him more believable, someone who not only speaks the same language I do, but stutters over many of the same phrases.

When Ram Dass became sexually involved 20 years ago with a flamboyant spiritual teacher from Brooklyn—a married woman who claimed to have ex-

Ram Dass once said, "The highest compliment people pay me is, 'Thank you for being so human.' Isn't that an extraordinary compliment?"

traordinary psychic powers — many of his followers were disappointed. They felt that, in making exaggerated claims for her, Ram Dass had deceived and manipulated them. He later insisted this teacher had deceived and manipulated him. After 15 months, he disavowed her teachings and said of the experience, "I was totally seduced by the whole melodrama, like a tourist, open-mouthed, watching a fakir do the Indian rope trick ... Finally, I had to admit that I had conned myself."

In the wake of the controversy, the *New York Times Magazine* attacked Ram Dass as a liar and a charlatan, and a former Harvard colleague accused him of being no less power-hungry and sexually obsessed now than he had been in his days in Cambridge.

Honest about lies

Ram Dass wrote an apology, published in *Yoga Journal*, called "Egg on My Beard." In it, he wrote "Of more significance than my embarrassment is the issue of truth. Maharajji insisted that I tell the truth no matter how embarrassing. For he said, and I believe, that truth will make you free."

But lies come in all sizes; big lies that ruin everything; little lies we carry around like loose change, not really enough to buy anything. Interviewing Ram Dass a decade after his involvement with the controversial teacher, I asked whether he was always completely honest.

He thought for a moment, then said no; he was too enamored of a good story, and was sometimes willing to trim edges to make a story more beautiful. "I'm truthful about the big things," he said, "but not about the little things."

I was disappointed. But I knew how tempting it was to stretch the truth, just a hair's-breadth, for the sake of a story; it was a siren call I had to resist nearly every time I sat down to write.

"But when you're asked a direct question," I pressed, "do you ever find yourself not being truthful then?"

"I won't say a direct lie," he replied, "but I will infer something that could be a lie, make it appear a certain way by the way I use words, take the edge off, take the pain away from myself. I'm working to get straighter and straighter. Sometimes I just don't feel safe enough to be that truthful."

Here was a man who had studied under one of India's great teachers; a man who had chanted and meditated and endured the most rigorous monastic schedules; a man who had studied the Bhagavad-Gita and the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation, the I Ching and the Tao Te Ching, the Old Testament and the New Testament. And I still couldn't expect total honesty from him?

His honest answer: No.

I knew Ram Dass was human. I just

didn't want him to be that human. Though not old enough to be my father, Ram Dass was still something of a father figure to me. I wanted him to be fearless, though he never claimed to be. I wanted him to be perfectly truthful, but he insisted on being perfectly himself.

Ram Dass once said, "The highest compliment people pay me is, 'Thank you for being so human.' Isn't that an extraordinary compliment? I mean, if I put something on my tombstone, it would be 'He was human.' Isn't that bizarre? After all these years of trying to be holy?"

Perhaps a spiritual teacher didn't need to be a saint to turn on a light for me. Perhaps he just needed to know where the switch was — and to believe less than I did in darkness.

Talk radio

In January of last year, Ram Dass wrote to me saying that, at 65, he was hoping to travel less and start a national call-in talk show on AM radio.

Talk radio! It didn't fit the image I had of one of America's countercultural icons, but the more I thought about it, the more sense it made. Gone were the beard, ponytail and beads; these days, Ram Dass was a casually dressed, clean-shaven man (only the mustache remained), whose audiences were more conventional-looking, too. Most of them had never taken psychedelics or studied Eastern mysticism. ("You can get to God standing on one finger and eating a steak," Ram Dass insisted. "There is no route to God that is the way.") Some radio listeners would likely find his relationship with his guru distasteful, but I knew Ram Dass could handle tough questions.

Ram Dass was still writing and lecturing and, true to his guru's injunction, devoting a great deal of time to serving others. He started the Hanuman Foundation, which has supported spiritual work with prisoners and with the dying. He helped form the Seva Foundation, which has worked to eliminate blindness in Nepal and to aid poor villagers in Guatemala. And he had extended a helping hand to many other, smaller organizations.

Christ, Buddha, Bob Dole

For Ram Dass, individual change and social change have never been mutually ex-



An old sage

Republic of China

clusive; he's insisted that the spiritual and the political can't be separated. "Suffering hones our relationship with the mystery of the universe," he has said. "If we try to close our hearts to it, we cut ourselves off from the boundless spiritual energy that surrounds us." (During the most recent presidential election, Ram Dass had images of his guru and Christ and Buddha and Republican candidate Bob Dole — on his meditation altar at home. He said he'd feel his heart open as he greeted the first three, then tighten when he came to Dole. It showed him where his "spiritual homework" was.)

Just as surprising to me as the idea of a radio show was Ram Dass' desire to travel less, to slow down. He's only 65, I thought. Now that I was in my early 50s, 65 no longer seemed that old to me. Maybe Ram Dass had just been weary the day he wrote me; even his handwriting looked less confident than usual. He'd always struck me as a healthy, energetic man, someone likely to keep up a busy schedule for years to come. Naturally, I'd imagined the same about myself: that by dint of right thinking and right effort and the right combination of vitamins and minerals, I'd keep going right up to the finish line, right through my vigorous 60s and 70s and - yes, honey my vigorous 80s. No, old age wouldn't be a muddy rest stop on a forgotten road. Old age would be a joyous culmination of a life's work, a triumphant final chorus.

A paralyzing stroke

A month after receiving Ram Dass' letter, I was putting the finishing touches on the 256th issue of *The Sun* when the phone rang. It was my friend Van. Ram Dass had suffered a major stroke, he said. It didn't look good. The stroke had left Ram Dass virtually without speech and paralyzed along the right side of his body. It was too soon to say whether he'd recover, or how complete his recovery might be.

I started asking Van questions I knew he couldn't answer — one way to keep bad news from sinking in. I didn't know much about strokes, only that someone could be healthy one day, cheerful and vigorous and full of life, and the next day be reeling as if from an ax blow. I knew that, even if a stroke didn't kill you, you might wish it had — rather than spend the rest of your life unable to go to the bathroom by yourself, unable to finish a sentence, unable to keep your muscles from trembling or spittle from running down your chin, unable to do anything about the pained look in a loved one's eyes. During the past year, Allen Ginsburg and Timothy Leary — two of Ram Dass' oldest friends — had died. Now Ram Dass had been crippled by a stroke. I knew that none of us would be here forever. Still, the truth of impermanence was like a banner headline I ignored until someone picked up the newspaper and whacked mein the head: Wake up! Maybe I was dreaming I could protect myself against life's uncertainties by eating less, by exercising more. Beautiful dreams.

Eloquent with silence

I called the Hanuman Foundation. I found out that the stroke hadn't affected Ram Dass' memory or his ability to understand what was said to him. He was, however, suffering from "expressive aphasia," an inability to put his thoughts into words.

When the stroke occurred, Ram Dass had been at home in San Anselmo, California, with his portable computer on his lap, rewriting a chapter for an upcoming book on "conscious aging."

For decades, there had rarely been a topic on which Ram Dass had been reluctant to speak. Now he'd been silenced not by a government censor, not by an angry ayatollah, but by a blood clot in the left hemisphere of his brain.

"The paradox," Ram Dass once said, "is that it's all perfect and it all stinks. A conscious being lives simultaneously with both of these."

Ram Dass spent two weeks in the hospital and another two months at a rehabilitation center before being sent home in a wheelchair. "We have no idea what his recovery will ultimately look like," said Marlene Roeder of the Hanuman Foundation.

Three months after the stroke, Ram Dass was interviewed by Don Lattin, a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "Reporters often smooth the rough edges of their subjects' quotes," Lattin wrote, "and that's especially the case in this story. But it's also important to understand the degree to which Ram Dass must struggle to convey an idea. For example, when explaining how he must now be eloquent with silence, rather than with words, Ram Dass takes a minute and actually says, 'If you ...if you...like a friend of me, of mine, said...you've been so eloquent...um...aren't you eloquent with words, uh, with silence...eloquent with silence.'''

The stroke and the death of his friends, Ram Dass told the reporter, had helped him understand why so many old people seem to live in the past: Getting older has nothing to offer them.

"Before my stroke," Ram Dass said, "I was looking forward to the things I wanted to do."

"Are you still?" Lattin asked.

"No," Ram Dass replied. "But I'm still committed to being here now."

Spiritual homework

I want to see Ram Dass as he is here and now: not the barefoot pilgrim, not the psychedelic outlaw, not the consummate storyteller sitting cross-legged on stage in front of a thousand admiring faces. It's hard for me to accept that half his body has left town, no forwarding address. But that's *my* spiritual homework. Didn't Neem Karoli say the best form in which to worship God is every form? God isn't in heaven, stroking his beard like some grand chess master. God is right here, right now. God is the luminous mystery at the heart of creation and God is here in the joys and sorrows of the world.

As I write this, Ram Dass is still confined to a wheelchair, though he's learning to walk with a special cane. He can read or write only with great difficulty because his vision was also impaired by the stroke. His speech has improved dramatically and the effects of the aphasia are still apparent.

Everything in life can teach us something, Ram Dass suggested, if we see our lives in spiritual terms. In a sense, Ram Dass has been preparing all his life for this challenge. I'm sure he wishes things were different, but I suspect he's able to observe those wishes for what they are — wishes.

At least he hasn't lost his sense of humor. When a friend jokingly suggested that he go on the lecture circuit with Stephen Hawking, the paralyzed physicist, to help pay his medical expenses, Ram Dass laughed. Then, waving his functional arm in the air, he said, "Finally, the sound of one hand clapping."

Facing heaven and hell

Perhaps it's no surprise that, in the wake of Ram Dass' stroke, I've become more devoted to my own spiritual path. On LSD, I used to race up and down the halls of my psyche trying every single door, and sometimes I'd discover heaven, and sometimes I'd stumble into hell. These days, instead of tearing around the house, I sit in the corner every morning with my eyes closed: Heaven and hell are there; every truth, every falsehood. I've meditated sporadically for years. The difference is now I do it every morning - no matter how I'm feeling, no matter how late I've been up the night before. When the alarm goes off, I don't pretend it's a mistake. The alarm is rude — like birth. like death — but never a mistake.

Ram Dass taught me not to be prejudiced against the invisible. Coax it, he said. Be patient. Everything will reveal itself.

Ram Dass taught me to think in ways I'd never thought before. My thoughts became bigger than my life, and my life changed.

If Ram Dass couldn't always give me what I longed for, that's as it should be. As someone once said, the goal of spiritual practice is to love the pitcher less and the water more. I love the water. And the man who filled my cup, the man whose body is broken now — I love him, too.

Youth and age: A view from the Bible

by Carole R. Fontaine

he world from which the biblical witness emerged was not like ours: We are separated from it by time, custom, culture and belief, no matter how seamlessly we may try to live out a biblically inspired faith. To understand how different was the value of youth and old age, we must shed our world with its valorization and commodification of youth, turning our backs on our bottles of Rogaine and tubes of Alpha-hydroxy wrinkle creams. The ancients would have laughed at the way we have reversed the "natural" order of their world for the fleeting tokens of a youthful appearance. As the Book of Proverbs puts it,

A gray head is a crown of glory; It is gained in a righteous life!

Not exactly what the advertising industries would have us believe!

The valuing of youth and age in the Bible grows directly out of the social development of the societies that give birth to these stories. Small-scale agricultural communities are obsessed with survival — as well they should be, for the continuation of life in such circumstances is not a "given" upon which a group can count, but a blessing to be received and nurtured. In early Iron Age Israel, for example (the time when Israel was settling in Canaan and forming its foundational beliefs), life expectancies were about half as long as those we experience

under modern conditions. In order for a family to raise two children to adulthood, at least four must be born; in order for a group to survive, all members were required to be fertile. No wonder such honor was conferred upon parenthood, to mothers and fathers alike: A male did not become an adult until he had married and fathered a child; a woman had little status as an "individual" until she successfully gave birth. Prolonging the time before starting a family would have been considered an aberration of the most primal kind: The individual parents, the extended family, the clan and the tribe all required an ongoing supply of new persons added into their number to ensure viability in relation to working the land. Like all agrarian societies, but exacerbated by the problems of food production in an arid region, Israel needed people if it was to prevail over the disasters of drought, famine, pestilence and war.

Beyond the need for successful reproduction to properly meet the demands of food production so critical to the small village economy, Israel needed more. Like all such peoples in largely other-thanliterate societies, Israel required a way of nurturing its children into adulthood, so that the new generation could replicate the technologies appropriate to that group's geographical micro-environment. Growing food in the tribal region of Benjamin was different from what was required in the Galilee. One could not pull up the most recent satellite photos of weather systems off of the Internet in order to respond to nature's ceaseless changes; there was no commodities mar-

ket well supplied with crop forecasts, global information or local variations. Knowledge - one of the biggest keys to survival in traditional societies - came in a human package, in the form of the elderly. If babies were, for the reasons above, the blessed signs of an auspicious portion from the Lord in Israel's world, then the aged were the key to those children's hope of a future. The wealth of knowledge represented by someone who had survived through mid-life and on into old age was a living testament to God's care for the people. Note how male and female slaves change in value as they progress from infancy to old age in Lev. 27:1-7: While those in the time of their greatest fertility and strength are given the highest valuation, the elderly are clearly a better "investment" than children, with aged women losing less of their value than men of the same category. The jaded saying of our own culture, "Been there, done that," betokening our ennui with repeated experience and our consumerized drive for the new and unusual (which someone just happens to have available to us for only \$99.95!), would have had meaning to the biblical world, but not the negative one we assign to it. "Been there? Ah, yes, there is a place to find water for the flock beyond that dried-up river - when I was young, I remember that we sometimes found a seasonal stream beyond that rock. ..." "Done that? Indeed! This is how we have dug our cisterns and repaired our growing terraces ever since our parents came into this land. ..."

We see the ongoing relevance of the aged to the life of the community in both its male and female variations. What village could survive without the elders at the city gate who reviewed legal precedents from their oral traditions in order to sort out the day-to-day squabbles of land tenure or civil rights for the widow? What family could do without the midwives

Carole R. Fontaine is a professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Andover Newton Theological School and co-editor of *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible*. **Borealis Press** is in Ellsworth, Maine.

whose technical knowledge was passed from mother to daughter, generation after generation? Those fortunate enough to live long could count on the respect of their communities, even when their strength failed and their value as laborers was limited, because they represented public resources of knowledge vital for

their people's increase. The old were as necessary to survival as the young, and sometimes more so, for the young are notoriously inexperienced, and, hence, in danger where there was no wisdom to guard them from hazardous follies. The deference due one's parents, one's teachers, the city elders, and the accomplished craftsperson were no idle commands: It was those very people who ensured the prosperity of the young. They had earned their place of honor, and continued to live in the midst of the extended household, sharing their experience, teaching and love with their successors, bound together by a common covenant of interdependence. Take all the old folks away and keep them ghettoized together with no loving grandchildren to be minded and told their family stories, no household family pet to purr beneath their

trembling hands, no adult child to tell them how the harvest was going?! Unthinkable!

That is an exile in which the biblical world never participated; to have done so would have been to beggar the future of one of its most essential assets: the witness of human experience. Again and again, we see the Bible bind the generations together: "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of sons is their fathers" (Prov. 17:6); "Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the Lord!" (Ps. 148:12-13a).

If we wonder why the societies of the Bible do not seem to offer much help for the struggles that beset our families day care, common shared time, adequate health care, domestic abuse, elder care—



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that is because they had already coped with such issues through their social organization of the multi-generational family. Our families proceed about their business differently, not because women, the ones who traditionally tended the welfare of the household, have deserted their divinely ordained domestic tasks to seek selfish fulfillment in the workplace, however. The problem is with modern economics that have forced people into work outside the home, even when they might choose otherwise; we no longer exist in the self-sufficient family and village units that undergirded the Bible's social world. One paycheck no longer provides adequately for most families, so most family women must work, whether they wish to or not. Further, with the sense of the "good life" so linked to a consumer world-

> view where "whoever dies with the most toys, wins," no wonder families are always running and striving after wind! The problems with modern families will not be solved through graceful submission of wives and mothers, but by a metanoia concerning what is truly of worth to us, an economic system which is more just to its workers, and health care which is more flexible and based on humanistic values rather than the "bottom line."

> Now clearly, the portrait of biblical society set out above reflects the ideal, and the reality may well have been a bit different — or why so very many warnings about honoring the aged and respecting the parents (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Prov. 23:22, etc.), were there not some tendency to do otherwise? If "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days" as we hear in

Job 12:12, no wonder young hot-heads like Elihu chafe under the social customs that require them to defer to those less physically able, but more seasoned in experience (cf. Job 32:6-9). The Bible is clear that the relationship between old and young is not always so rosy, especially where the aged hold the power and social position that youth covets. Young, fertile co-wives scorn the older, barren ones (Gen. 16); the youthful heir yearns for his father's throne and all the power it confers (2 Sam. 15); sexual abuse of all sorts appears in the Bible's pages, much of it with a familial twist that reminds us there is not much new under the sun where human sin is concerned.

Further, old age, like childhood, in the world of the Bible was viewed as no picnic, no "golden years" of responsibility-free existence because every worker, young or old, was needed.

Moreover, the flesh inevitably breaks down, at worst canceling out all possibilities of pleasure, or at best, severely limiting one's abilities to enjoy one's blessings (Ecc. 12:1-7; cf. 2 Sam. 19:35).

By Ecclesiastes' time in the Persian or Hellenistic age, family responsibilities were viewed by that sage as so onerous that they could make a man (and he does mean men!) forget to celebrate the good things in life (6:3). This biblical voice is well noted for its annoyance that not only can you not take it with you when you go, you may have to leave it to a wastrel idiot who never worked for it! Here the Bible is in clear agreement with the Egyptian Vizier Ptah-hotep who had mourned over a millennium or two earlier, "What old age does to men is evil in all respects!!"

Old age, like poverty in Tevye's saying in *Fiddler on the Roof*, may not be a disgrace, but it's no great honor either!

Throughout the Bible, we hear the plea of the aged, begging God not to forsake them, as family, strength, and health are all too apt to do (Ps. 71; 90), and God's reply in Isaiah 46:3-4 responds to the defencelessness of both the very young and the very old:

"Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."

That God's oracle should speak so precisely to the human condition, with all

its vicissitudes and fears of change, is an indication that here is indeed a threshold of experience to which the modern-day heirs to the Bible must attend. The church may not pass by on the other side, nor consign its old and young to the care of a Providence which sometimes seems to have gone off-duty in the current century. If, as a Job's elderly friend Eliphaz the Temanite tells him, "You shall come to your grave in a ripe old age, as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season" (5:26), such a fitting end will not happen by accident. It must be as intentional as the planting, as much tended as the field that grows, as joyfully claimed as the harvest that informs this metaphor of human life. From cradle to grave, the church must ally itself with those who have no other helper but God. A childhood free from want or violence, and a good death free from burden and humiliation: These are biblical birthrights for which we must continue to struggle.

Life is short, and therefore, precious; death is certain, and therefore, pointless to fear—and we are accompanied along the way by the One who brought us from the womb and who receives us at the end. Old and young, we walk the same path together.

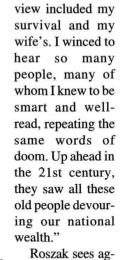
Celebrating America's elderly as a resource

After he and his wife survived lifethreatening illnesses, Theodore Roszak began to think hard about aging. They

joined a cardiac rehabilitation program and discovered that the participants were all united in their joy to be alive. "This mixture of risk. awe, and gratitude started me thinking about the dramatic changes in life expectancy that have occurred in my time." Roszak writes in America the Wise: The Lon-

gevity Revolution and the True Wealth of Nations (Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

"Those thoughts grew more searching," he adds, "when, as of the mid-1990s, the media began issuing warnings about the disasters that longevity was threatening to visit upon our society in the years ahead. Social Security ... Medicare ... how could we possibly afford these fiscal horrors? The 'horrors' these pundits seemed to have in



Marion Honors, CSJ ing Americans as a

resource. Each is an individual "who no longer has to worry about raising a family, pleasing a boss, or earning more money." Instead, these people may have the freedom to "think deep thoughts, create beauty, study nature, teach the young, worship what they hold sacred, and care for one another." -J. W-K.

Three million 'invisible' seniors begin to organize

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

O ne lesbian senior commented that at the time of the Stonewall Rebellion (1969), "When somebody died, it was like a library burning to the ground." The lack of available history was emphasized at a conference on aging in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) communities that drew 600 participants in May 1998.Filmmaker Lucy Wines said that "when stories aren't passed on, it is like group suicide."

Delighted surprise erupted in a packed housing workshop when a presenter praised the American Baptist Homes of the West for hiring sensitivity trainers for all their senior residences. I was impressed that during this secular conference there was a great deal of appreciation of any Christian support for the well-being of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

The Baptist initiative carried the force of perhaps 50 sermons, falling on that workshop like a rushing mighty wind.

Sponsored by Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE) and Fordham University's Ravazzin Center for Social Work Research in Aging, the conference attracted a diverse cross-section of professionals — social workers, gerontologists, researchers, mental health and other health care workers, LGBT seniors, and lesbian and gay activists concerned about the senior members of the community.

In these heady days of Gay Pride, it is easy to forget that, in almost half of the U.S., LGBT people are still, legally speaking, unapprehended felons. But old LGBTs tend to retain awareness of that fact.

What became painfully obvious is that LGBT seniors are the most under-served aging population in the U.S. It took 35 years for lesbian activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin even to get sexual orien-

Books:

Long Time Passing: Lives of Older Lesbians edited by M. Adelman. Boston: Alyson, 1986.

Gay and Gray: The Older Homosexual Man, R. Berger. N.Y.: Haworth, 1995 (second edition).

The Oldest Gay Couple in America: A 70 Year Journey Through Same Sex America by G. Harwood. Secaucus, N.J.: Carol Publishing, 1997. tation on the agenda of the White House Conference on Aging, partly because of the difficulty of advocating for an invisible and unnamed constituency. Most LGBT people in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s — more than three million in the U.S. alone - are deeply closeted for two major reasons: because of the pressures of a society that assumes heterosexuality, and because a great deal of social and psychological gay-bashing goes on at agencies serving the needs of elderly people. In these heady days of Gay Pride, it is easy to forget that, in almost half of the U.S., LGBT people are still, legally speaking, unapprehended felons. But old LGBTs tend to retain awareness of that fact.

The conference featured not only plenaries but also symposia, workshops and strategical planning circles, some of which became the basis for ongoing working committees.

Isolation, a problem for seniors generally, is vastly exacerbated for LGBT seniors, 66 percent of whom live alone after age 65 — twice the number in the general senior population.

A recent survey found that 20 percent of LGBT seniors have no one to care for them should they become ill, as opposed to only 2 percent of heterosexuals. One strategic planning circle emphasized that many LGBT seniors will not go to main-

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identities Over the Lifespan: Psychological Perspectives by A.R. D'Augelli. NY: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lumbda Gray: A Practical, Emotional, and Spiritual Guide for Gays and Lesbians Who Are Growing Older by K.W. Reyes, M. Thompson and J. Adelman. Van Nuys, CA: Newcastle, 1993.

Old Lesbians Organized for Change: P.O. Box 980422, Houston, TX 77098

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, born in 1932, is a member of both SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment) and OLOC (Old Lesbians Organized for Change). SAGE is actively seeking volunteers to gather LGBT written and oral histories, and is sponsoring a Heritage Portrait Exhibit to put a face on the fromerly invisible elderly in the LGBT community. (SAGE — Senior Action in Gay Environment: Terry Kaelber, Executive Director, 305 7th Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10001.) Artist Michael Bergt lives in Santa Fe, N.M.

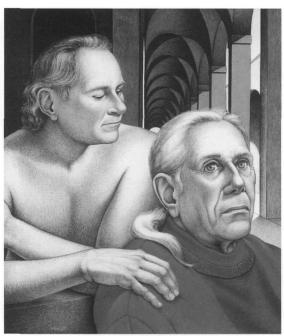
stream senior centers, or if they do, will not identify themselves as sexual minorities, because many agencies are not supportive and many social workers need sensitivity training.

Many LGBT seniors also will not seek out the assistance of mental health professionals, because mental health licenses still require pathologizing people with a medical (or pseudo-medical) diagnosis. Because of the isolation of LGBTs who grew up in the 1930s, 1940s, or 1950s when their orientation was defined as either sin or sickness, group therapy seems to work best, providing more affirmation and mutual support than individual therapy. (Terry Kaelber, Executive Director of SAGE, points out that SAGE buses and marchers draw great outpourings of love from the sidelines at the annual NYC Gay Pride Parade — and that for many seniors, that response is the first affirmation they have ever received for their sexual identity.)

Housing is a major concern for LGBT seniors, many of whom would like to live in a gay-owned or at least gayfriendly care facility when they can no longer stay in their own homes. In this regard Lisa Hamburger, San Francisco's Senior Housing Consultant, remarked that "Sexual preference deserves the same respect accorded to other accepted differences. A resident should equally and easily be able to request and receive Kosher food, fish on Fridays, or a rainbow flag to hang on Freedom Day." Major housing needs were identified: to interest investment bankers in building LGBT-owned retirement and care facilities; to educate the LGBT community concerning how long it takes to develop a new market, and how to go about doing that; and to provide sensitivity training for staff members at existing facilities, so they would no longer assume and act as if every

resident were heterosexual.

Overriding objectives emerging from the conference had to do with breaking down isolation not only of individuals but also of LGBT organizations, so that



Michael Bergt

each group would not be forced to reinvent ways of overcoming obstacles. A web site is being established. A national directory of agencies is being prepared as a resource not only for professionals but for LGBT seniors traveling or moving to unfamiliar towns or cities. Transgender elders are using the Internet to discuss their issues and are forming a national group to set their agenda for further action.

Researchers on LGBT aging are networking with the goal of translating their findings into language understandable to non-specialists, language that in turn can be translated into effective social change. church leaders seeking speakers or other assistance for outreach to LGBT seniors are welcome to contact SAGE at its New York headquarters.

Interest in religion and spirituality ran

high at the conference. Every registrant's packet contained a list of gay-friendly religious services, something I was glad to see. But at the same time I couldn't help imagining a conference on, say, non-

> white aging, where it would certainly not be necessary to distribute a list of religious services where non-white people could hope to find a friendly welcome. Not even churches or synagogues on the Religious Right are overtly proud of being racist, but some still flaunt their heterosexism and homophobia!

> The workshop on Spirituality and Aging, so crowded that not even standing room remained, had major input from a rabbi, an African-American pastor, a professor of religion, and myself. I was astonished when the room erupted into laughter and applause at the mention of humankind's living within the womb of God the Mother Almighty (Acts 17:28). Somehow I could not have predicted such excited interest from a group of LGBT seniors, gerontolo-

gists, and others who serve the non-heterosexual aging population.

People were interested in spirited aging, in identifying with a Self that is larger than the body-identified ego and in getting or staying involved with healing the disease of the U.S. and, indeed, the world.

The following back issues of The Witness contain articles which relate to Learning to be an elder:

•Who is mentoring today's young adults? (9/98)

•The welfare of children (4/99)

•Christians and Buddhist wisdom (6/98)

Send a check for \$3 per issue ordered to The Witness, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. For charges, call (800) 300-0702, or fax (313) 841-1956.

Tibet: a dilemma for Christians in the West

by Dennett C. Slemp

nce China invaded Tibet in 1950. some 1.2 million Tibetans have died by direct force, the consequences of China's imposed agricultural policy (unsuited to the Tibetan climate), imprisonments and other abuses. Tibetans receive long prison terms for any independence activities, even for singing independence songs or putting up posters. Torture in prison occurs all too frequently. There are programs of forced abortions and sterilizations. Largescale environmental abuses occur. The greatest current threats to the survival of Tibetan civilization are the extensive infusion of ethnic Chinese into Tibet and the investment of vast amounts of money which marginalizes the Tibetan population.

Such activities have been reported for years by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Asia and similar responsible human rights organizations. They have been reported also in the annual U.S. State Department Country Reports on China.

Essentially, cultural genocide is occurring. Tibet is being made Chinese. The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) apparently hopes that by

Dennett Slemp is a priest in Richmond, Va., <73523.704@compuserve.com>. He became personally involved in the Tibetan issue in 1995, while traveling with a Christian spiritual journey group in Asia which visited the Tibetan Government in Exile Center in Dharamsala, in far northern India.



dominating and assimilating Tibet it will insure its own political stability — in a country with growing unemployment and many ethnic groups, some of which are already restive, an independent Tibet poses a distinct threat.

Buddhism: the heart of Tibetan identity

The heart of Tibetan identity lies in its Buddhist religion. During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese destroyed all but about 12 of Tibet's 6,000 monasteries and temples. Although many now have been restored, China has placed surveillance committees in monasteries and convents to prevent disapproved

Essentially, cultural genocide is occurring. Tibet is being made Chinese.

political activities. It has imposed a "reeducation" program on the monks and nuns. It has forced them to villify the Dalai Lama and to disavow any allegiance to him. It has removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from the monasteries and convents.

During his visit to China in early summer of 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton spoke boldly and publicly on national television about Tibet. President Jiang Zemin's response gave hope to Tibetans that the PRC would enter into direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama regarding the situation in Tibet and Tibetan autonomy. However, just the opposite has happened. Suppression in Tibet began to increase during late 1998, as did the propaganda attacks on the Dalai Lama. The U.S. State Department stated: "Toward the end of 1998, the Government renewed its campaign to discredit the Dalai Lama and limit the power of religious persons and secular leaders sympathetic to him. Beginning in late fall, Tibet's official newspaper renewed its harsh propaganda against the Dalai Lama with articles condemning his 'separatist activities.' The 'patriotic education' of monks and nuns continued to be an important part of the campaign, and was extended into monasteries throughout Tibet. ... There were reports of imprisonment and abuse or torture of monks and nuns accused of political activism, the death of prisoners, and the closure of several monasteries."

Western church silence

Western churches are cautious about advocating for Tibet, largely, it would seem, out of concern for repercussions on Christians in China by the PRC.

In the 19th century, Western nations grossly abused and humiliated China in the Opium and other wars (and in their settlements) and then in suppressing the Boxer Uprising in 1900. With some justification, the missionary activities of Western churches became identified in the Chinese mind with these experiences. During the Communist takeover, Western Christianity remained suspect. This transferred to the Chinese Christian church. The Maoist government devastated that church, its people and buildings during the Cultural Revolution. Fortunately, since that time the church has established some credibility with the government that Christians can also be loval Chinese.

However, the Chinese church today has to live within strict governmental guidelines, organizational structures, and policies. A basic guideline is the "Three-Self" program: self administration, self support and self propagation, designed at least in part to prevent foreign influence. Structurally, all Protestant denominations are forcibly merged into one Protestant Church. The only other denomination allowed to exist is the Catholic Church. Both of these denominations are required to be registered with the state. This allows visibility and control. They may not advocate for policies contrary to government policy. As long as these two

"registered" churches live within the government parameters, they are permitted considerable freedom, including the freedom to carry out significant charitable programs.

The national administrative body for the Registered Protestant Church in China is the China Christian Council (CCC). The CCC also serves in a liaison capacity between that church and the Chinese government. The mainline Western Protestant and Anglican churches relate primarily to the Registered Protestant Church through the CCC.

However, not all Chinese Christians are willing to live and minister within either of these Registered churches. They worship and work within illegal "unregistered" churches. Among Protestants at least, these tend to be fundamentalist in orientation. These churches are subject to confiscation of church property and arrest of church leaders and members. Torture and deaths have been reported. Because of governmental control of information, it is difficult to get an accurate assessment of the pain of Christians in the unregistered churches, but there are sufficient reports to warrant attention and concern. Both the registered and the unregistered churches are growing rapidly, which increases the government's apprehension and watchfulness.

Breaking the silence

The Jewish community, and to some degree the Catholic church and the Presbyterian Church USA have begun speaking out about Chinese suppression of Tibet's government and people. The Episcopal Church has also begun to respond. Resolutions have been passed by nine diocesan conventions, one province (representing all the dioceses in the mid-Atlantic states) and, in 1997, by the denomination's General Convention.

The General Convention resolution affirmed the importance of Tibetan culture and religion that teaches nonviolence and peacemaking as a way of life and expressed concern for the safety and future of Tibet's people. It sent greetings of affection to the Dalai Lama and encouraged the Episcopal Church to engage in dialogue with Buddhists through the Presiding Bishops's Committee on Interfaith Relations or other venues. It sent warm greetings of affection to the CCC and expressed a desire for further dialogue with the CCC to develop deeper ties and to seek a better understanding of the situation in China and Tibet. It encouraged the Archbishop of Canterbury to insure representation from the CCC to the 1998 Lambeth Conference. It expressed "a hope for the development of direct dialogue between representatives of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama and/or representatives of the Dalai Lama, leading to an increased

Western churches are cautious about advocating for Tibet, largely, it would seem, out of concern for repercussions on Christians in China by the People's Republic of China.

understanding and respect between the Tibetan and Chinese people."

Prior to the passage of the General Convention resolution, a much stronger resolution had been proposed. That resolution called on the PRC to cease immediately human rights abuses. population transfers of Chinese into Tibet, interference in Tibetan religion and to demilitarize Tibet. It called on the PRC to recognize Tibet's autonomy, cooperate with the establishment of Tibet as a Zone of Peace (as proposed by the Dalai Lama). and to provide full access to United Nations' observers. It called on the U.N. to monitor the above actions and the U.S. government actively to support them. It requested the Presiding Bishop to meet with the Dalai Lama, together with leaders of other U.S. religious bodies, to discuss what further support might be provided. Finally, it requested the Anglican

Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference, and the member churches of the Anglican Communion and their dioceses to pass similar resolutions and take similar actions.

CCC/Three-Self response

Informed of this resolution, the China Christian Council, together with the National Three-Self Committee, issued a very strong "Statement on Tibet" which warned churches in the West not to pass such resolutions lest it severely damage the relationship between the Chinese church and Western churches. It condemned "biased groups" which "view the current world situation through cold war eyes." The statement continued: "Unfortunately, some churches and church groups overseas have been influenced by such views and have felt the need to echo them, churning out opinions and wishing to pass some sort of resolution on the Tibetan question and to make accusations against new China. The 'facts' on which these accusations are based are anti-China propaganda and a complete distortion of reality. They slander the peaceful liberation of Tibet as a 'Chinese invasion' which 'led to the deaths of 1.2 million Tibetans.' They further claim that 'in an effort to uproot Tibet's own cultural and religious traditions a great number of Han Chinese immigrants were brought in who now outnumber the native Tibetans.'

"We sincerely hope that insightful persons in churches and church groups overseas, relying on their God-given wisdom and sense of justice, will oppose this detrimental current of opinion among international Christian circles, offering no support to the Dalai clique's plot to split the Chinese nation, and that God's justice may truly prevail. If this dark trend wins out, it will greatly offend the sensibilities of Chinese Christians and do great damage to relations between the Chinese Church and churches and church groups overseas."

The CCC clearly was worried. Through a trip arranged by the national office of Peace and Justice Ministries of the Episcopal Church, I was enabled to travel

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to Nanjing to talk with Han Wenzao, the new President of the CCC, about the Tibetan concern. Although he was personally most gracious and hospitable, I found that his position on Tibet was congruent with the CCC/Three-Self statement and, more importantly, consistent with a Chinese government statement on Tibet that I had downloaded from the Internet before leaving for China. He warned that a strong resolution by the General Convention would create problems for the Protestant Church in China.

Han's concerns strongly influenced the shaping of the General Convention resolution ultimately passed. The strength of this resolution, however, was that, while expressing concern for the Tibetan people, it reached out in relationship to both the Dalai Lama and the CCC and affirmed the importance of dialogue and being wellinformed. It also said more than it seemed to say. By calling for direct dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the PRC Government "leading to increased understanding and respect between the Tibetan and Chinese people," it gave support to the Tibetan effort for direct dialogue around the issue of "autonomy." without actually using that incendiary word.

Episcopal Church response

Following up on this resolution on Tibet and on one other resolution (that called for dialogue with the Church in China). four representatives from the national Episcopal Church met in Nanjing in early summer, 1998 with the leadership of the CCC. They discussed issues of human rights and policies of U.S. companies doing business in China.

In the spring of 1998, 11 Episcopal bishops sponsored a resolution on Tibet to the international Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. The conference, however, never formally acted upon it. Another resolution will be presented to the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council.

Tough dilemma

I believe the churches are called to face into the Tibetan dilemma and wrestle with it openly and deeply, because it truly is their dilemma as well. The parable of the Good Samaritan validates the cry for help not by kinship, proximity, security, convenience or creed but by the need and pain of the most vulnerable person/community that is crying out. If we interpret this parable only individualistically and not also corporately as whole church bodies relating to other whole communities in distress, we miss much of its point for today.

The churches will have to wrestle with the tough dilemma of whether they will risk creating problems for the vigorous and growing Christian churches in China in order to help save the rapidly perishing Buddhist civilization in Tibet.

There is a Buddhist story about a monk who was walking beside a stream. He looked in the water and saw a scorpion stranded on a leaf floating by and about to drown. The monk climbed on the limb of a tree out over the water. reached down, grabbed the scorpion, and put it on the dry land. In the process, the scorpion stung him. A companion walking with him said. "Don't you know it is the nature of a scorpion to sting?" He answered, "Yes, but it is my nature to save." If the churches do not find some way to try to save, or at least to comfort, they, too, will deny their very nature, while reducing the substance of their interfaith dialogues and relations. I pray that many denominations and churches will look closely at the Tibetan situation and find a way to respond in compassion.

Easily accessible sources on the Tibetan situation are: International Campaign for Tibet - ask for the new video of Archbishop Tutu and other Nobel Prize winners speaking on the issue of the Panchen Lama and Tibet, 202-785-1515, <www.savetibet.org>; Amnesty International, 212-633-4200; Human Rights Watch/Asia, 212-972-8400; Time-Life's video on Tibet ("Lost Civilizations" series), 800-621-7026.

Urban Caucus meets in Jackson

The 19th annual assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus held in Jackson. Miss., this past February offered participants a strong sampling of local ecumenical efforts in the areas of economic and racial justice. Welcomed by the Episcopal Bishop of Mississippi, Chip Marble, along with the state's Roman Catholic and United Methodist bishops, who regularly work together to advocate for the victims of "welfare reform," the group dined at the Stewpot, Jackson's daily food service ministry to poor people, and toured the sites of John Perkins' "Voice of Calvary Ministries." Perkins, the author of With Justice for All (1982), is the inspiration of a movement for Christian community development throughout the U.S. His three point program - relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution - unites social and racial justice concerns with economic justice issues and a radical focus on neighborhood.

Assembly participants were briefed on the recently formed Amos Network, a community organizing effort of Jackson's local religious community affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, and on the Algebra Project, a ministry with school children pioneered by Robert Moses, whose activism in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the Civil Rights period is well-known. Moses' work is based on the premise that anyone who can count can learn algebra. He further argues that the Algebra Project is a tool for community organizing: As children realize their capacity to learn, they also increase their capacity to demand better schools, gualified teachers, and enriched opportunities for themselves and their peers.

EUC participants also heard from Bennie Thompson, U. S. Representative from the Delta District, who had been chased by police dogs from the State Capitol as a student at Tugaloo College. Now, in Congress, he advocates for African-American farmers and workers' rights in the "global marketplace."

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The center of the EUC's attention in Jackson was anti-racist ministry, a topic which has been the group's leading focus for the past eight years. The work of the EUC's Ed Rodman, Charlie Virga and Sandra Peters, along with the "King Day Dialogues" (originally sponsored by EUC and occasionally supported by the national church), has now been incorporated as The National Institute for Dialogues on Multi-Culturalism & Anti-Racism.

As usual, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship held its annual luncheon in the context of the EUC assembly, and this year, for the second time, the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ) met in conjunction with the Caucus. The networking among Episcopalian activists that such joint meetings makes possible is an essential element in the growth of a progressive movement within the church.

- Emmett Jarrett, TSSF (A priest serving in Georgia, Jarrett is a member of The Witness' Vital Signs advisory group.)

Doss resigns as bishop of **New Jersey**

After years of confrontation and polarization with his diocese, Joe Morris Doss resigned as Bishop of New Jersev on March 12.

The resignation takes effect in the fall of 2001 but Doss will take a "sabbatical leave of absence" beginning no later than June 30 or as soon as an interim bishop is appointed.

Doss said that he wasn't resigning because of the lack of support, or because of a continuing investigation of his financial stewardship, but because he couldn't provide leadership for "the battered and beleaguered diocese." He said that he had come to the conclusion that he was "in the way" of a process of healing and reconciliation.

Challenges to his leadership have plagued Doss almost from the time of his election in 1994. Despite the use of an outside consultant and a diocesan wellness committee, the confrontation escalated into calls for the bishop's resignation from the Diocesan Council

and Standing Committee.

A recent attempt by Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to mediate a plan calling on Doss and diocesan leaders to "exert every reasonable effort to maintain a professional and collegial relationship with each other" in return for the early retirement of the bishop in 2002 was not accepted by the diocesan representatives. They demanded that the bishop leave as soon as possible, promising a generous separation package.

The package includes full salary and benefits until retirement and additional payments to his pension, \$200,000 for the educational costs of his two children, \$150.000 for the mortgage on his home. \$30,000 moving expenses, \$20,000 to replace his automobile, and a payment of \$100,000 "payable at any time within the next three years at the bishop's request." Diocesan officials admitted that they were not sure how they could implement the package since financial support for the diocese has been eroding. Revenues for 1998 were \$1.5 million, according to the treasurer, Peter Hausman. The diocese has paid only a fraction of the \$500,000 it usually sends to the national church in the last few years.

"I'm aligned with the group that wanted him to leave, but I don't think we can celebrate." said Alan French, head of the Standing Committee, in an interview with the Newark Star-Ledger. "It's been a horrible ordeal. ... I think it's a tragedy, but it's a tragedy that he brought on himself. Lots of other people were harmed over these years. Careers were destroyed."

A Doss supporter said that it was "a combination of exhaustion, pressure and a careful assessment of what is possible for him to do and what is not possible" that led to the resignation.

-James Solheim, Office of News and Information for the Episcopal Church

Alabama murder of gay man

Episcopalians in Alabama joined public outrage over the February 19 murder of a "quietly gay man" in Sylacauga, a small

town about an hour's drive from Birmingham.

Henry Parsley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, called the murder a "tragedy." adding that "this sad event in our state reminds us all of the terrible consequences of prejudice and hate in our life together." He added, "Let us prav that it will spur us to deeper tolerance and understanding in our human differences."

A pair of local construction workers confessed to the crime, admitting that they killed Gaither because he was a homosexual, according to the sheriff's office. Charles Butler and Steven Mullins were charged with murder. They admitted that they lured him from a local bar, beat him with an ax handle, put him in the trunk of his car, drove to a secluded spot on the banks of Peckerwood Creek, beat him again and then set his body on fire in a pile of discarded tires.

Many people compared the crime with the murder of Wvoming college student Matthew Shepard. Alabama's hate crime legislation does not cover sexual orientation, only racial and religious persecution, but a legislator has announced his intention to introduce an amendment.

The Alabama Integrity chapter, an Episcopal Church gay/lesbian advocacy group, deplored the failure of a Hate Crimes Resolution at the diocesan convention only a week earlier. The resolution didn't even make it out of committee, said Ron Gatlin, convener of the chapter.

In a letter to deputies and alternates to the Episcopal Church's General Convention, Pamela P. Chinnis, president of the House of Deputies, said that "as people of conscience we must take action against murderous prejudice wherever it appears in our churches and communities."

Enclosed with her letter was a new "Stop Hate" brochure produced by the Episcopal Church's Peace and Justice Office. The brochure will be sent to all parishes.

-James Solheim, Office of News and Information for the Episcopal Church

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Alternative service for drafted dollars

by Marian Franz

[As this issue of The Witness goes to the printer, NATO forces are bombing Yugoslavia, prompting protests (both categorical and hesitant) from denominational leaders and faith-based organizations and councils. Perhaps, in addition to prayer, there is more that Christians and other persons of faith can do to register their deepest convictions.]

D o you find praying for peace while paying for war a contradiction? If so, you're not alone. We at the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund often receive copies of letters sent to Members of Congress such as this one:

"To continue freely participating with my tax dollars in the suicidal armaments race is clearly for me a sin on at least four counts. First, the sin of premeditated murder against my brothers and sisters; second, the sin of suicide against my own person; third, the sin of injustice against over 25 percent of earth's people who are

eping Watch

Marian Franz is director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund. This article first appeared in NETWORK Connection, a publication of NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby in Washington, D.C. New members can join NETWORK for \$35. Contact NETWORK at 801 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, Suite 460, Washington, D.C. 20003; 202-547-5556; <network@networklobby.org>; <www.networklobby.org>. homeless, ragged, hungry and sick through no fault of their own; and lastly, the sin of idolatry for trusting in armaments rather than in Jesus Christ. God said, 'Thou shalt have no strange Gods before Me.' Let it be clearly understood, I must never voluntarily pay these war taxes, war interest and war penalties!!!'"

We have witnessed a dramatic increase of citizen support for the peace tax fund, one that goes far beyond the historic peace churches.

Refusing to pay taxes is a true act of courage. Citizens risk fines and jail sentences to follow their beliefs and withhold taxes that support war. Many impoverish themselves and their families rather than be legally bound to pay such taxes. Despite these hardships, a small but growing number of people are refusing to pay that portion — roughly 50 percent — of their income taxes that supports war.

Tax protestors are acting out of their commitment to one of America's highest ideals: religious freedom. Indeed, my own family immigrated to the U.S. in search of this freedom. But religious freedom was to prove illusory. A relative of mine was one of hundreds of conscientious objectors (COs) who went to prison rather than fight during World War I. COs then were not only imprisoned but were often mistreated. If they refused to wear an army uniform, for example, they were severely punished. My relative was one of 16 COs who died in prison. His body was sent home for burial *in uniform*. The family buried their son in his own clothes and moved to Canada.

Today, COs in our country are not sent to war. Yet how can the conscience be still?U.S. military spending is now \$8,271 per second; \$725,274,725 per day; \$5,076,923,076 per week. And still, we're told that's not enough. This year, \$9 billion was added to the military budget, with another \$12 billion next year and \$110 billion in the next six years.

At the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, we are promoting a way that will permit sincere COs to pay their full tax obligation without violating deeply held religious or ethical beliefs. The Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill in the U.S. Congress seeks to restore freedom of religion to taxpayers whose convictions forbid participation in war, whether that participation is physical or financial. Just as World War II provided alternative service for drafted soldiers, the peace tax fund provides "alternative service for drafted dollars."

We have witnessed a dramatic increase of citizen support for the peace tax fund, one that goes far beyond the historic peace churches to include mainline denominations and conservative religious bodies. Many supporters are by no means pacifist, but are appalled at the infraction of religious freedom. Around the world, 18 nations now have similar peace tax campaigns. These campaigns will meet together in Washington, D.C. in July 2000.

The moral witness must be made. As Supreme Court justice Harlan Fiske Stone said: "It may well be questioned whether the state which preserves its life by a settled policy of violation of the conscience of the individual will not in fact ultimately lose it by that process."

Living for change

by Nkenge Zola

Living for Change by Grace Boggs, University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

t was quite a jumble of experience to have my re-reading of Detroit activist Grace Lee Boggs' autobiography *Living for Change* interposed with the voice or sight of Grace herself. Here I am, just getting going on the passages that describe Grace as a girl child subject to the predilictions of her Chinese heritage. ("When I cried, the waiters used to say, 'Leave her on the hillside to die. She's only a girl ...' Later they told me this as a kind of joke ... it was no laughing matter.") Next thing the phone rings. It's Grace, exuberantly sharing an observation or an offer of her chicken soup.

Decades after first meeting Grace, I remain dazzled by the quality of her energy and commitment to politics as excellence. Perhaps her most indispensable quality, present throughout the book, is her ability to pose questions. Her simple query can require a respondent to back up before answering.

In writing, as in living, Grace expresses herself clearly — sans superfluous word or confused emotion. Reflection and recollection co-mingle. It seems impossible but in nine chapters we learn a whole heap of a lot about this woman and the times she has inhabited; what living in the household of her restauranteur father was like; what was required of her, being one of three people of color on the Barnard College campus in 1934; how she identified with her father rather than her mother; her discovery that to have a philosophy was as serious as your life, but that to develop oneself as a philosopher could be among the most exhilarating of challenges; what qualities black people contributed to the humanity of the U.S. Even as a youth Grace Boggs lived as though ideas, passion, focus and clean common sense were the equivalents of bread, rice, water and good health.

Through *Liv*ing for Change we become fellow travellers through significant social events, told through the vision of a woman who recognizes



Grace Boggs

the value of a life of learning. She's maintained friendships over three, four, five and six decades and is open to making new ones every day. Her longer friendships weave throughout the book in Freddie Payne, Carol Ferry, Louis Tsen.

The Great Depression, world wars, radical responses to each and all — these are told with the same clarity as the events that have made her adoptive home of Detroit both democracy's arsenal and the crucible for new ways of exercising community into the next century.

Political activism and personal relationships with individuals such as the brilliant West Indian thinker and activist C.L.R.James, and her Alabama-born partner and husband of some 40 years James Boggs, are not spared her piercing analysis. Her realization after James' death that she was on her own meant that she could and would continue with what she loves — the politics of transformation.

Yet, it is in the very beginning of the book that Grace reveals a most essential means by which her lively spirit is preserved. And it is in these words that any questing human can also find a most necessary admonition against the seductive malaise of self pity and victimhood: "My father ... never saw himself as a victim. Life to him was an adventure through which you are constantly learning and growing from your failures as well as your successes." It is this passage in Living for Change that I find most liberating. Because of the general dissolution of community and family life in the U.S., ironically following the social activism culminating in the 1960s, it is so easy for today's young people, and, indeed those who were young at the time of the great movement, to shine personal hardships into a badge that blinds one from their own experience.

Since Boggs is founder of Detroit Summer, a program for youth dedicated to the re-spiriting and rebuilding of Detroit, it is not surprising that listening to the reflections of older — okay I'll say it — EL-DERS — is key to the daily practice of the young people who in July come from all over the nation to make murals, urban gardens and metamorphose vacant, littered lots from eyesores to neighborhood parks.

Living for Change is definitely the story of a political life, yet readers without the least interest in politics will find in this 84-year-old's account 20th-century enrichment to carry them into the 21st.

review/

Nkenge Zola is news anchor and reporter for WDET, Detroit's public radio.

There is no more delightful place to be than in a room with Vincent and Rosemarie Harding. Their spirits are full, engaging and expansive. They insist on calling you by your whole given name so that they may speak with the essence of who you are, not your superficialities. For the 40 years of their marriage they have been witnesses to continuing in the struggle, both as a couple and as freedom fighters for justice.

As an elder, Vincent Harding is right where he needs to be, at the connecting place where old and young meet. As a professor of religion and social transformation at Iliff School of Theology he has the opportunity to

teach and listen to younger folks. He hears from them a deep hunger for mentors and elders.

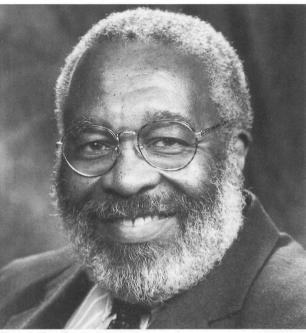
"They are looking for connectedness to their history," Harding says, "Whether racial history or the history of those who have been involved in the struggle. The younger ones want to know where they fit in that history.

"They also want a sense of purpose beyond their most narrow individualistic career. They have an urging in them to know that they are for something beyond ordinariness. They want someone to help lift up that desire and help them see it more clearly. And they really want to hear the stories that the elders can tell."

As both an elder and an historian, Harding has lots of stories to tell, both his

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

Rose Marie Berger is an assistant editor for Sojourners magazine, <rberger@sojourners.com>. "We are greatly imperiled when we put sitting in front of a screen higher than sitting with each other."



Vincent Harding

Accepting the mantle of mentor by Rose Marie Berger

own and others. He considers it a privilege to reflect on those who mentored him.

"The first person who comes to mind as a mentor is my mother, Mabel Broome Harding. She was a mentor without any education or training. She went to school through the eighth grade in Barbados and always had a very high regard for education. She encouraged me in the area of schooling and churching without being officious about it.

"One of my high school biology teachers, a Jewish woman named Irene Berger, was also clearly a mentor. She never allowed the fact that I was a child of a single mother on welfare to stand in the way of my possibilities. She helped me get my first after-school and summer jobs. I could always talk to her. She had the gift of availability.

"Another very important person was my pastor, Philip J. Bailey of the Victory Tabernacle Seventh Day Christian Church in Harlem. Pastor Bailey originally came from Jamaica and was a self-taught preacher man. He was grooming me to come after him in the ministry. It was a sad time when, after college and the army, I decided to go another way with my life rather than fill his shoes. He was a model in education and in ministry.

"The last person to mention as a mentor is Howard Thurman. When I was working on the founding of the Martin Luther King Memorial Center, Mrs. King introduced me to Howard Thurman. He became my adopted father, my pastor, and my spiritual guide. He helped me through some very tough times when I was really struggling as a result of my own foolishness. He always told me that I was loved and respected and that he expected great things from me even in the midst of struggle."

To really enter into an eldering or mentoring relationship requires a willingness to reflect deeply on one's own experience and draw out what is most helpful. It also requires willingness to accept the fact that the world around us needs elders and accept the calling of one's own age and experience. When Harding passed 60 people came up to him unabashedly and asked if he would mentor them, even people he didn't know. It has pressed him to reflect deeply on the place of elders and mentors in our society today.

"The most natural place for the elder," Harding believes, "is that place where he or she can be in the teaching role. Not teaching with any sense of arrogance, but teaching out of gratitude for the opportunity."

There are numerous challenges that threaten eldering and mentoring relationships in the U.S. One, says Harding, is the increasing dispersion of our lives, especially in the African-American community. Where the black church was once a pillar of the community and strongly inter-generational, he now sees a trend toward divisions by both class and generation. "One way of dealing with this dispersion," Harding says, "is addressing its root causes and creating substitutes for the dispersed family and community. I start all my classes by asking students to say where they spent their childhood. Most tell of being in families with no geographic stability. How many of our societal institutions—military, business, or the church—encourage dispersion, as if stability were not an important value?

"Another great challenge facing the nurturing of these relationships is the

"The major role of the mentor is to encourage, to let people know that they are magnificent and that they have magnificent possibilities."

entertainment industry. When we embrace the values of an entertainment culture, we disrupt the rituals of family and community. We are greatly imperiled when we put sitting in front of a screen or machine higher than sitting with each other."

In 1997, Rosemarie and Vincent Harding and their daughter Rachel Harding began working with others to

We're grateful for your support

This month subscribers will be receiving a letter from John Zinn, treasurer of The Episcopal Church Publishing Company, asking for financial support for *The Witness*. As Zinn notes in his letter, this is our one-time annual request for gifts and donations in support of our efforts to raise consciousness about — and stimulate faithful, effective response to — the social, economic and environmental issues of these times. This year's fundraising appeal occurs as we are completing our selection of a full-time Development/Marketing Director to help expand *The Witness'* reach. We're hopeful about the future and grateful for our subscribers' aid and companionship on the journey.

> J. W-K. and J.W. (Requests for ECPC financial reports may be directed to Zinn c/o *The Witness*' Detroit office.)

form the Gandhi-Hamer-King Center for the Study of Religion and Democratic Renewal at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colo. An essential part of the Center is work is videotaping public interviews with veterans of various struggles for freedom and equality in the U.S. as well as pro-democracy movements from around the world. The Center is a mentoring organization.

"We bring the elders to a public place where they can be met, touched, and encountered by younger people. We are also developing retreats where we bring the generations together to meet, eat together, and tell stories. A few months ago we had Sonia Sanchez at the Center and both my daughter Rachel and myself interviewed her, so we had two different generations interviewing her from our own perspectives. This was really quite amazing."

During a taping with Civil Rights activist C.T. Vivian, a young man from an African country in the midst of great strife stood up. He told about his many years as a pastor in his country until he lost all hope that there could ever be positive change in his homeland. With this loss of faith he left the struggle and came to the U.S.. As he listened to C.T. Vivian his belief began to be restored. He said, "I now know that I have to return to the struggle to bring peace to my country, but I also know that it will cost me my life."

These are some of the results of mentoring. The Hardings are feeling an increased responsibility to be elders beyond their immediate relationships. They are searching for ways to share their experiences with an extended community who hungers to know its place in history. Harding concludes, "The major role of the mentor is to encourage, to let people know that they are magnificent and that they have magnificent possibilities."



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Volume 82 • Number 6 • June 1999



Embracing a politics of place: the Penobscot watershed

A national disregard for children

I WAS QUITE INTERESTED in the editorial, "What's in a name?" in the April issue and your mention of Deborah Cotton's group that works with an alternative sentencing program for first-time juvenile offenders. For the last nine years I have volunteered with a program called DECISIONS, which pairs trained community volunteers with inmates at the Tennessee Prison for Women. We use a structured curriculum which teaches a fivestep decision-making process over eight weeks.

About one and a half years ago we piloted the program at the juvenile facility down the street from the prison and are currently updating our curriculum to make it more appropriate for use with teenagers. I'd like to be in touch with Cotton to find out more about the program with which she works.

Kathy Masulis Nashville, TN [Ed. note: Cotton's group is the Knox



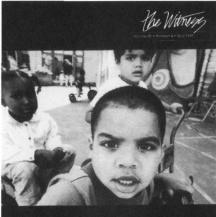
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Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301.310-674-7700.



A national disregard for children

County chapter of Jump Start, a program which Doug Sharlow helped found and now directs. Write him c/o Kennebunk Police Department, PO Box 247, Kennebunk, ME 04043 (phone is 207-985-6121).]

YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT Martha Overall and her work (TW4/99) gave an added face to us readers of Jonathan Kozol's Amazing Grace. What she does is no less a work than that of Mother Teresa's order in India. My prayers are certainly with her. Thanks again for the work you all do at The Witness.

> Betsy Willis Zionville, NC

Stringfellow book available

A Keeper of the Word, edited by Bill Wylie-Kellermann, gleans the most significant of William Stringfellow's work including never-before-published material. A Harlem street lawyer, social activist, writer and theologian, Stringfellow is enjoying new-found popularity among Christians attracted to his commitment to truth and justice in a corrupt and unjust world. \$15 including shipping/handling. Checks/Visa/Mastercard to: *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210; 1-800-300-0702.

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

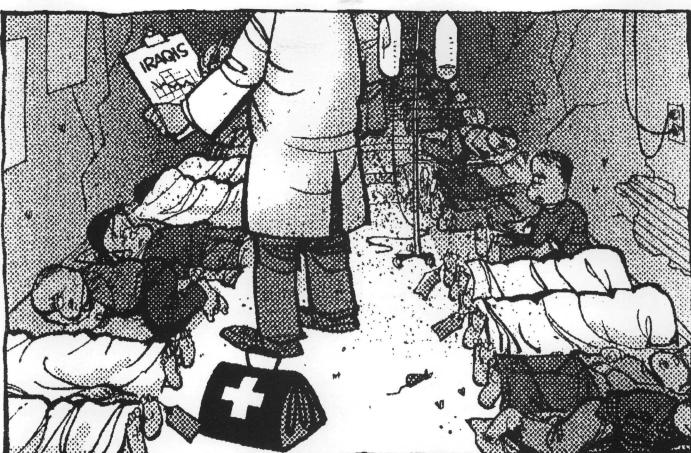
HIV/AIDS: overcoming religious barriers to prevention

SOME OF THE COMMENTS by writers in the March *Witness* have continued to buzz around in my brain. I am pleased that this publication which early on tackled AIDS as a public and theological issue has revisited it.

As a hospital chaplain, I began caring for people with HIV when the first case was diagnosed in my major medical center back in the early 1980s, when terms like GRID and ARC were common. For a while I saw all the PWAs in my institution until after three or four years there were too many for one chaplain to visit. I was one of the founders of Boston's AIDS Action Pastoral Concerns Committee, the Province I and the Diocese of Massachusetts AIDS Task Forces, and an AIDS educator and trainer of educators back in the mid-1980s. I want to testify that there were Christians, Episcopalians among them, involved from the very start of AIDS care, and that from those days we were "prevention not judgment" oriented. Churches started from zero knowledge and a lot of fear, and quite quickly many sought education and began to wrestle with the call of compassion over and against their fear.

During the first five years of AIDS in America, we began to talk of the impending devastation when HIV reached parts of the world with no medical care or money for condoms and education: parts of Africa and Asia, in particular. In 1989 the downtown church of which I had become rector was involved in a clean needle exchange and condom distribution. It was not just "a few heroic exceptions" involved in AIDS care and prevention — there were rooms full of Christians, Unitarians and Jews from the start, and I want to give public thanks for them.

We have far to go still. I am now in Missouri, and the rural areas outlying St. Louis are still places where residents are afraid to seek care from local doctors because of the danger of violence and ostracism by neighbors should their HIV status become known. But many clergy and churches here — not all, but many — welcome those living with HIV, and provide tender care to them, even while they still struggle uneasily with



issues of homosexuality and drug addiction. Progress is deep but uneven, but praise God for all those good souls who have labored so hard for a decade and a half and are still at work.

Jennifer Phillips St. Louis, MO

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PLEASE CANCEL. We are so disgusted with the Episcopal Church, which is being messed up by its ESA and Roman Catholic wannabees.

Peter Tringham Fort Worth, TX

Subscribing

THANK YOU FOR SENDING ME the Oc-

U.S. WAR OF ATTRITION

tober 1998 issue of *The Witness* on earthbased spirituality. I have no idea how *The Witness* came into my home. After letting it alone for a while I opened it and after reading some of the articles I knew I wanted to have more. I am subscribing and also sending \$3 for the back issue, "What to do with what you don't believe."

> Beulah Soliz Lincoln Park, MI

Renewing

YOU'VE HEARD MANY TIMES that the world really has to be falling 'round my ears to keep me from reading each issue from first to last page before I sleep on the day it comes! Keep up the good work!

> Elisabeth Rees Ann Arbor, MI

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15 The bioregional vision: an interview with Kirkpatrick Sale by Julie A. Wortman

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by Holly Lyman Antolini An Episcopal priest responds to a call to return to the land and a life of quiet simplicity.

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Maine's groundfish industry is suffering from a sharp decline, part of a worldwide fishing — and ecological — crisis.

23 Bringing creation into the church by Heidi Shott

Episcopalians in Maine have decided it is time to bring a theological perspective — and commitment — to Maine's watershed politics. Co-editor/publisher Julie A. Wortman **Co-editor** Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann **Assistant Editor** Marianne Arbogast **Magazine** Production Maria Catalfio Bill Wylie-Kellermann **Book Review Editor Poetry Editor** Gloria House Manana Controller Roger Dage **Development/marketing** Wes Todd Patricia Kolon, Martha Dage, **Office Support** Beth O'Hara-Fisher, Mary Carter

The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

The editor whose editorial appears on page 5 crafted this issue.

Cover: Flying Across the End of the Island by Eric Hopkins (Hopkins lives in North Haven, Me. More of his work can be seen at <www.erichopkins.com>.) Back cover: Lone Rock and Sea by Rockwell Kent, 1950, Collection of the Farnsworth Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1972.

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Embracing a politics (and spirituality) of place

by Julie A. Wortman

hen my partner Anne and I moved to this beautiful peninsula on the west edge of Penobscot Bay, there were those who behaved as if we were either very irresponsible or crazy. At the time, it is true, the explanations I offered for our anything-but-precipitous decision to abandon the relatively secure known of metropolitan Detroit for the downwardly mobile unknown of Martinsville, Me., seemed woefully inadequate, even to me. But, finally, after two years of immersing myself in the rhythms of the tides and seasons, working the earth, walking the beaches and kayaking among seals, I'm beginning to have words for the quest which brought us here.

Quite simply, we longed to see if we could begin living life from within nature rather than apart from it, hoping that if we could internalize the metabolism of earth, sea and sky our souls would find badly needed nourishment. Depleted by social and cultural pressure to keep ourselves informed about

— and appropriately responsive to every oppression, aggression and exploitation taking place on this globe, we hoped that by living very locally we might discover an activism scaled to the limits and range of our energy and consciousness, an activism that we'd find absorbing and recreative rather than exhausting and



Morning walk, Martinsville, Me.

dispiriting.

Aspirant "dwellers in the land" is what writer/activist Kirkpatrick Sale would have called Anne and me if he'd known us as we plotted this move (for an interview with Sale, see page 15). In his 1985 book of the same name, Sale writes: "In *The Interpreters*, a book written at the height of the Irish Revolution by the Irish author known as AE, there is a passage in which a group of prisoners, a disparate lot, sit around discussing what the ideal new world should look like. One of them,

Julie A. Wortman

a philosopher, advances the now-familiar vision of a unitary world order with a global, scientific, cosmopolitan culture. Another, the poet Lavelle, argues fervently against this conception, trying to show that the more the world develops its technological superstructure, the farther it gets from its natural roots. 'If all wis-

dom was acquired from without,' he says, 'it might be politic for us to make our culture cosmopolitan. But I believe our best wisdom does not come from without, but arises in the soul and is an emanation of the Earth spirit, a voice speaking directly to us dwellers in this land.'"

Our current world bespeaks the triumph of the philosopher's vision, but at disastrous environmental and social cost. Relearning the wisdom which comes from the earth, Sale says, is the project of creating an ecological world, which requires that we create a society that thinks and operates bioregionally. This issue of *The Witness*, focused on the region of the Penobscot River and Bay, offers a glimpse into the implications of such a perspective, since it is contradictory to talk about bioregionalism in the abstract.

But some simple, appealing principles do apply. Instead of focusing on national and world politics, bioregionalism is a citizenship pri-

marily of one's region and local community — a natural, comprehensible scale that encourages rather than discourages active participation. Instead of a focus on

editor's note

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

nomics that rapidly depletes natural resources, the emphasis is on cooperative, self-sufficient and sustainable strategies. Likewise, a bioregional perspective embraces nature's own inclination towards diversity and decentralized decision-making. Not so simple is un-

competitive, global eco-

Not so simple is unlearning the detachment of the industrio-scientific world view. What's required, I'm finding, is a discipline of paying attention. So most every day I walk an hour in the woods and along the shore, intent on noticing the direction of the wind, the status of the tide, the flight of an

osprey or the course of a deer swimming to a nearby island. I heed with anticipation our dogs' zealous stalking of beaver, loons and seals, taking note, too, of the surprising (and sometimes unpleasant) array of natural artifacts they uncover. I store away for future reference neighbors' instructions on when and where to successfully harvest fiddleheads or on how to dry edible seaweed and which kinds are best. At neap tide, from May to November, I devote hours of singleminded focus to measuring and describing juvenile lobsters for the Lobster Conservancy. And, finally, I'm monitoring the progress of the moon across our night sky in hopes of understanding its relationship to our seasons and tides.

I've been aware that this self-imposed practice of noticing the peculiarities of this place has made me more mindful in a variety of ways, just as bioregionalist theorists like Sale would hope. I have been taking greater and greater care about putting food on our table that we've grown ourselves or can obtain from local organic producers (we are participants in a cooperative venture with several other households to grow a wide range of crops

We hoped that by living very locally we might discover an activism scaled to the limits and range of our energy and consciousness, an activism that we'd find absorbing and recreative rather than exhausting and dispiriting. that can supply us through the winter). Threats to the quality and reliability of our water supply have become regular topics of discussion — and the reason for attending community hearings and meetings. And whenever I have the choice, the goods and services I purchase are ecologically responsible and obtained from regional providers.

But most importantly, I can see, these small commitments, along with the fierce readiness I now feel to fight for the health of the clam flat I can see from my bedroom window, are flowing from — and restoring — my sense of groundedness in a larger life. Thus anchored, I've a renewed feeling of solidarity with this land, sea and sky — and with all those who understand creation as God's gift and determine to live accordingly. This change of heart alone, I'm very grateful to say, was well worth the move.

Pulling the Dory by Winslow Homer, c. 1880, Collection of the Farnsworth Art Museum, Bequest of Elizabeth B. Noyce, 1977

Flame-Heart by Claude McKay

So much have I forgotten in ten years, So much in ten brief years! I have forgot What time the purple apples come to juice,

And what month brings the shy forget-me-not. I have forgot the special, startling season

Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting; What time of year the ground doves brown the fields

And fill the noonday with their curious fluting. I have forgotten much, but still remember The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,

But cannot recollect the high days when We rooted them out of the ping-wing path

To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen. I often try to think in what sweet month

The languid painted ladies used to dapple The yellow by-road mazing from the main,

Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple. I have forgotten — strange — but quite remember The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year We cheated school to have our fling at tops?

What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?

Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,

Even the sacred moments when we played, All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,

At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade. We were so happy, happy, I remember, Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.

- from The Negro Caravan, ed. Sterling Brown, Citadel Press, N.Y., 1941

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Turning back to the river

by Murray Carpenter

Moose wades in a quiet cove, loons yodel and brook trout sip mayflies off the placid surface of Penobscot Lake. Here in Maine's dense spruce and fir forest, a mile from the border separating the U.S. and Canada, snowmelt and rainfall gather into the bogs that become the rivulets that become the brooks that join to become Maine's largest river the Penobscot. Two hundred river-miles south and east, after dropping more than a thousand vertical feet, the river feeds Penobscot Bay, among the richest lobstering grounds in the world.

The Penobscot watershed is enormous, nearly the size of Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined. But Massachusetts and Rhode Island have more than 7 million residents — over 800 people per square mile. The 8,600 square mile Penobscot watershed has just 180,000 residents — less than 20 people per square mile - and the vast majority are concentrated in the lower watershed from Bangor to the bay. The region is sparsely populated but it is not all pristine. Protecting and restoring this heart-of-Maine watershed is a huge and exciting challenge that is inspiring Mainers from the woods to the sea.

A forest owned by paper companies Penobscot Lake is surrounded by the vast, sparsely populated working forest known as the north woods. The country is wild, dotted with lakes and ponds, buried in deep snow in winter. It is the land of black bears and blackflies, the best wild brook trout habitat in the country, and the summer home to over 20 species of nesting warblers. Although the land is wild, most is by no means wilderness. Nearly all of Maine's north woods have been owned by paper companies for over a century, and the land is criss-crossed by thousands of miles of logging roads (many built in the last quarter century after down-river log drives were phased out). Much of the land is logged regularly and managed intensely.

Public concern over timberlands man-

The fate of the north woods is uncertain, as corporations are trading off parcels of land like so many squares on a Monopoly board. Well over 15 percent of Maine's total land area changed hands in a series of land deals in 1998 and early 1999.

agement reached a crescendo when a referendum to ban clearcutting nearly passed muster with Maine voters in 1996. Referendum advocates said banning the logging practice would better protect wildlife habitat, lead to more sustainable wood yields, and protect water quality in the bogs, brooks and rivers that lace the north woods. Clearcutting can harm water quality by raising water temperature, increasing turbidity and sedimentation, and even changing water chemistry and pH levels. Even small water quality impacts on little north woods brooks are significant when the same impacts are being felt on hundreds of other brooks in the watershed.

RESTORE: the North Woods

The fate of the north woods is uncertain now, as corporations are trading off parcels of land like so many squares on a Monopoly board. Well over 15 percent of Maine's total land area changed hands in a series of land deals in 1998 and early 1999. Jym St. Pierre wants to see the north woods Monopoly board rearranged a bit. St. Pierre, a former staffer for the state agency charged with regulating the vast unincorporated area that comprises the north woods, now works for RESTORE: the North Woods. The non-profit group wants to see much of the woods protected as a national park.

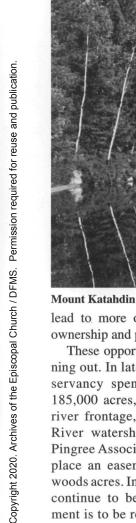
The Maine Woods National Park would encompass 3.2 million acres, an area larger than Connecticut. The park would protect the headwaters of five major Maine watersheds — the Allagash, Aroostook, Kennebec, St. John and Penobscot — so the boundaries of the proposed park are not linear, they follow watershed lines. The headwaters of these rivers are so intertwined among a series of high lakes that the waters from Telos Lake in the Allagash drainage were once diverted into the Penobscot drainage, in order to float logs downriver without paying a Canadian duty. St. Pierre is well-aware of the area's importance as the sponge from which the waters of five rivers are wrung. "Everybody's downhill from here," St. Pierre says.

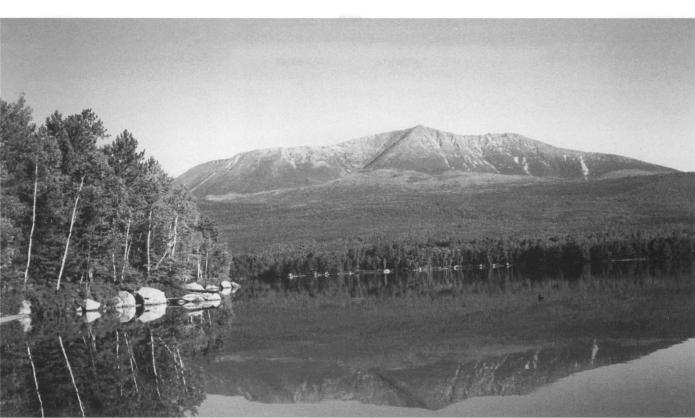
St. Pierre hopes the high pace of land sales in the north woods and the growing interest in Maine's wildlands will lead to more land being protected.

Sale of the century

"It really is the sale of the century," St. Pierre says. "I think some of the ownership changes we are seeing are going to

Murray Carpenter lives in Belfast, Me., and writes for the *Maine Times*, an alternative weekly. Photographer Jane Roundy lives in Owls Head, Me., and Buffy Parker is a photographer who lives in Stockton Springs, Me.





Jane Roundy

lead to more opportunities for public

ownership and protection." These opportunities are already pan-

ning out. In late 1998 the Nature Conservancy spent \$35 million to buy 185,000 acres, including 40 miles of river frontage, in the upper St. John River watershed. Two months later Pingree Associates announced plans to place an easement on 250,000 north woods acres. In both cases the land will continue to be logged, but development is to be restricted and public access forever guaranteed.

In March, Plum Creek Timber Company (which bought 905,000 acres of Maine woodlands last year) offered 3,800 acres, including 65 miles of river and lake frontage, to the state of Maine for just over \$5 million. Legislators are hoping to pick up the tab from the state's current \$46 million budget surplus. Meanwhile, two timber companies are trying to sell another 745,000 acres of Maine woodlands. As these transactions proceed at a dizzying pace, the legislature is scrambling to ready a public lands acquisition bond that could be as high as \$100 million.

St. Pierre thinks protecting the north woods is an urgent and exciting opportunity. "This is the last biggest undeveloped, unprotected place in the eastern U.S.," St. Pierre says. "It's our generation that will be making those decisions."

The brook turns river

Below Penobscot Lake, Penobscot Brook tumbles into a wooded gorge, and ripples over smooth, mossy granite shields creating nature's own water slides, perfect for swimmers to fannyslide into ice-cold plunge pools. Several miles downstream it joins the South Branch of the Penobscot River, and a few miles further on picks up the North Branch. The growing river feeds Seboomook Lake, then emerges to flow north and east as the West Branch of the Penobscot.

By now the brook has become a mighty river. When most people think of the Penobscot, they see the picturepostcard image of the West Branch as it blasts frothing out of Ripogenus Dam, thrashing, tumbling and brawling beneath the dramatic faces of Abol Mountain and mile-high Mount Katahdin, the highest point in Maine. Here the river is a major recreational destination. Anglers are attracted by its reputation as the best landlocked salmon fishing in the country. And rafters by the thousands bob down the class IV rapids throughout the summer, brightlycolored, adrenaline-charged crazies white-knuckling their paddles.

The north bank of the river here has long been protected as Baxter State Park, the legacy of Governor Percival Baxter who spent years buying up over 200,000 acres of this high and wild country with his own money, then donated the park to the state. More recently the state acquired 2,699 acres along the south side of the river, and added the land to the park. Even along this heavily used recreational corridor, the big river and high mountains retain much of the wildness that attracted Henry David Thoreau, and inspired his book *The Maine Woods*.

The industrial influence

Below Baxter, the West Branch tumbles down to its confluence with the East Branch just below the milltown of Millinocket. The river changes character here. From Millinocket to Bangor, the river slows, broadens, and braids among islands through mostly flat country. Here the trout and salmon give way to warm water fish such as smallmouth bass (not native to the river, but long ago introduced and now thriving), pumpkinseeds and pickerel. Canoeing the river here is a Huck Finn pleasure. Great blue herons stalk green frogs in the shallows, snapping turtles bask in the slow side channels, bald eagles soar overhead and bass rise splashily along the edges of the channel.

There are a good many bass in the river, but you might think twice about

While the pulp and paper mills clearly produce the bulk of the dioxin, the source of the PCBs and the mercury is less clear. Much of the mercury may arrive in polluted air from the midwest that drifts over Maine. eating them. Paper mills in Millinocket give the Penobscot its first major dose of directly discharged industrial wastewater. Downriver, the river also receives effluent from mills at Lincoln, Old Town, Brewer and Bucksport. More industrial discharge flows to the river from a factory in South Orrington. The river also catches effluent from 10 municipal wastewater treatment plants between Millinocket and Bucksport. Some of the industrial wastewater contains traces of dioxins — highly toxic by-products of the chlorine bleaching process used in some paper-making.

Following the discovery, in the early 1980s, that Maine's river waters showed high dioxin levels, the state issued fish consumption advisories. The current warning for dioxins and PCBs (another group of toxic chemicals) advises against eating more than 12-24 freshwater fish per year from the lower Penobscot River. Additionally, all inland waters in the state carry this fish consumption advisory for

A strategy to save and restore forests

Any strategy to protect forest biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of forest products would have to contain reserves, low-impact forestry and demand reduction. All three parts of this strategy work together for forest protection. If one of them is absent,this means that forests, wildlife or people will be harmed either at another location or at another time.

Reserves: We need wild, unmanaged areas as a baseline against which to measure our impacts and as a place to allow and study natural processes and forest dynamics. We need reserves to ensure that all habitats and species are protected — including ones that are sensitive to human encroachment or that require old growth. We also need wild places for spiritual renewal.

Low-impact forestry: We need forest products. Wood can be a renewable resource if forests are managed in a sustainable manner. Obtaining wood products can cause less environmental harm



Logs piled up in Millinocket

J.Wortman

than obtaining some wood substitutes. Low-impact forestry strives to reduce the known undesirable impacts so that after the cutting is done, there is still a recognizable and functional forest. Lowimpact forestry also ensures that forests are not overcut — they can continue to grow in height, volume and complexity.

Demand reduction: Demand reduction ensures that any local reduction in cut, due to reserves or lower-impact forestry, does not get translated into greater environmental or social damage elsewhere. Demand reduction deals with waste and inefficiency, but it must also address the trend of unlimited growth of consumption. One does not have to live near the forests to participate in demand reduction.

— Mitch Lansky, forest policy analyst and author of "Beyond the Beauty Strip: Saving What's Left of Our Forests," in Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, March-May 1998 mercury: "Pregnant women, nursing mothers, women who plan to become pregnant, and children less than 8 years of age should NOT EAT warm water fish species caught in any of Maine's inland surface waters: consumption of cold water fish species should be limited to one meal per month."

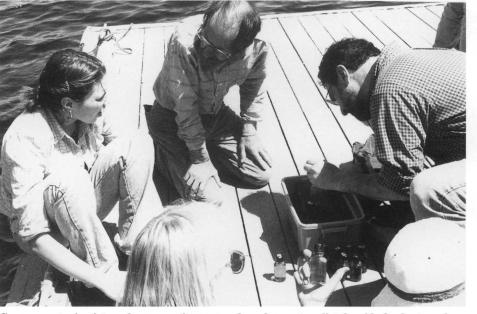
Tracking toxins

While the pulp and paper mills clearly produce the bulk of the dioxin, the source of the PCBs and the mercury is less clear (with one obvious exception, about which more later). Much of the mercury may arrive in polluted air from the midwest that drifts over Maine. It is not just fish that are affected by these water pollutants. Worse off are the top-of-thefood-chain animals that feed on

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smokestacks in Ohio emit mercury that poisons fish and loons in Maine.

In an effort to reduce dioxin emissions, Maine mills are changing their chlorine use, from elemental chlorine to chlorine dioxide. According to Barry Mower of Maine's Department of Environmental Protection, the levels of dioxin the Penobscot Indian Nation. The Penobscots were traditionally subsistence fishermen. Now they are advised not to eat the fish that their forebears ate for centuries. The Penobscot River surrounds their reservation on Indian Island near Old Town, and Banks wonders if the elevated cancer rates on



Government scientists and conservation groups have begun to enlist the aid of volunteers in collecting data on water quality in the Penobscot River watershed. Here students from Camden High School share their expertise with potential adult volunteers.

fish — the toxins become more concentrated as they move up the food chain. In 1996, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said dioxins released in wastewater from the Lincoln Pulp and Paper Company were at least partially responsible for reduced reproductive rates of bald eagles nesting nearby. Even far downstream, in Penobscot Bay, dioxin concentrations are high enough to have prompted the state to advise pregnant women not to eat the tomalley (liver) of Penobscot Bay lobsters. The dioxins are clear evidence that water pollutants don't respect political or geographical boundaries. The river ties us all together: Paper-making in Lincoln taints lobsters below Bucksport, and in fish have dropped greatly over the past few years, and things should continue to improve. New state legislation will require fish below the dioxin-producing mills to have no more dioxin than fish above the mills by 2002.

"Concentrations are coming down," Mower says. "We're hopeful."

Many environmentalists, however, would like to see chlorine phased out entirely.

The Penobscot Nation: fighting for subsistence

Perhaps no one is more aware of the problems surrounding fish consumption than John Banks, the Director of the Natural Resources Department for The tribe has recently become a formidable force in Penobscot watershed issues, reinforcing the notion that effective environmental advocacy springs from a deeply rooted understanding of an area.

Indian Island are

related to the di-

oxin in the river.

"We know the place intimately. We've been here since the ice age," Banks says.

Over the last decade or so, Banks says the tribe has

been more actively fighting for a cleaner river. At least part of the fight will involve cleaning up the sediments trapped behind the many hydroelectric dams in the river system. Toxins that would normally be flushed downstream with the current instead settle out in the still waters behind the over 100 dams in the watershed. Cleaning up the sediments won't be easy, Banks says, because the corporate river users "play the blame game." The hydro dam operators say "we don't pollute" while the paper mill owners say, "it's not our fault" that there is a dam preventing the river from flushing. Even on the dam front, though, the Penobscots won a major victory in 1998

Traveling fish: a health index

There may be no better indicator of the health of the Penobscot watershed than the "diadromous" species which converge here each spring — migratory fish that spend part of their lives in freshwater and part in saltwater. These fish require more than good water qual-

ity in a single stretch of river, they require entire healthy ecosystems that can cover thousands of miles.

Any June morning below the Veazie Dam a salmon might swim past a striped bass eating an eel — the salmon just in from the north Atlantic wintering grounds near Greenland, the striped bass recently arrived from its birthplace in the Chesapeake Bay, and the eel spawned in the Sargasso Sea.

The Penobscot River I was once packed with

millions of migratory fish. The fish supported the Penobscot tribe's subsistence fishing for centuries, and many Mainers depended on income from commercial salmon, shad, alewife, smelt and striped bass fishing through the 1800s. Today the river is perhaps best known for the hatchery-augmented run of Atlantic salmon that still supports sport fishing in the Bangor area. Sadly, the salmon are now in perilous decline, with Maine's few remaining wild salmon now considered strong candidates for endangered species status.

Before the great dam-building era of the 19th century, the annual salmon

spawning runs likely numbered 40,000 to 75,000 and ranged far up both branches of the river. The salmon runs tapered off quickly after dams cut off most of their spawning habitat. Now, despite massive stocking efforts, the annual salmon run has declined to 1,300 or so, down by half



A salmon angler fishing below Veazie Dam, the first obstruction to fish passage on the Penobscot River Murray Carpenter

Any June morning below the Veazie Dam a salmon might swim past a striped bass eating an eel — the salmon just in from the north Atlantic wintering grounds near Greenland, the striped bass from its birthplace in the Chesapeake Bay, and the eel spawned in the Sargasso Sea. in the last decade.

If salmon were once abundant in the river, shad were super-abundant. Biologists estimate two million of the three-toseven pound fish spawned in the river annually, ranging as far as 100 miles above Bangor. Even after dams prevented shad from reaching the best spawning grounds, the commercial shad catch in

> 1902 was 731,000 pounds. Precious few shad remain, perhaps a thousand, maybe less. Alewives and blueback herring, smaller cousins of the shad, once abounded in the river, with alewife runs estimated at 25 million annually. In May 1827, one seine haul in Bangor was reported to have landed 7,000 shad and 100 barrels of alewives. As with shad, an uncertain low number of alewives and bluebacks remain. Rainbow smelt, small troutlike fish which ascend rivers to spawn in early spring, have declined from their pre-dam spawning runs of

Murray Carpenter

up to five million fish. And sturgeon, archaic behemoths growing to over 10 feet in length and 300 pounds, used to return to the river each year, but are now rarely seen.

The American eel has the opposite life cycle from all the fish above. The eels are spawned in the Sargasso Sea, then drift north in the Gulf Stream. After over a year they have turned into slender transparent, two-inch-long elvers that ascend Maine rivers. The males mature in the lower reaches of the tidal rivers, and the females ascend as much as a hundred miles upstream, sometimes surmounting dams by wriggling up the faces, or sliding through streamside grasses after the rains.

Eight to 17 years later, the eels, some now four feet long, journey to the Sargasso Sea (south of Bermuda and east of the Bahamas), to spawn another generation. A recently booming elver netting industry (up until this year, when the market took a nosedive, elvers were sold for up to \$300/pound to markets in China and Japan, where they are raised to adulthood and served up for dinner) landed over 7,000 pounds of Maine elvers in 1997, a number that likely represents over 18 million baby eels. But even the fishermen-sponsored Maine Elver Association concedes the fishery is rapidly being over-fished.

While most of the modern fish runs are scarcely shadows of their former abundance, there may be some good news on the horizon. Increasing numbers of striped bass have been swimming in the Penobscot over the past decade, and salmon anglers often catch stripers below the Veazie dam, where they congregate in late May and June. In the fall of 1998, a dam removed on Souadabscook Stream, a large lower Penobscot River tributary, opened the 160 square-mile watershed to migratory fish for the first time in over 200 years. Within months of the dam's breaching, at least one pair of salmon spawned in the stream. Shad may soon benefit from a restoration program initiated by the Penobscot Indian Nation and several federal and state agencies. And the energy company that recently bought several large hydropower dams in the lower Penobscot basin has expressed interest in improving lower river fish passage, long-deferred by the previous owner.

- Murray Carpenter

when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission nixed Bangor Hydro Electric Company's plans to build Basin Mills dam, just north of Bangor. Among the many concerns raised about the dam was its impact on the river's imperiled Atlantic salmon, which hold spiritual importance to the Penobscots.

As the Penobscots work to protect the river they have gained many partners, from fishing clubs to the Maine Council of Churches. Banks says the Episcopal Diocese of Maine formed a committee to look at watershed issues and has been "a very strong advocate of the tribe." Additionally, the tribe is one of five in the country now working with the Environmental Protection Agency to draft a watershed assessment and management model. Overall, Banks thinks the future of the river looks bright.

"I'm very optimistic," Banks says. "I'm very hopeful. Things are moving in the right direction. There's a lot more education."

The river wide

Below Old Town the river powers a series of huge hydro-power dams, the lowest spanning the river just north of Bangor. From here to its mouth at Penobscot Bay near Bucksport, the river becomes a long estuary. Fresh and salt water meet and mix here, churned by the 13-foot tides that extend above Bangor. The river is broad and deep enough to accommodate shipping, and barges regularly bring oil to ports in Bangor and Brewer. Here, too, the impacts of human settlement are more apparent. Polluted runoff from roads, shopping malls, and new housing developments drift toward the river.

The lower river also has another industrial heavy hitter: HoltraChem Manufacturing Company in South Orrington. HoltraChem uses as much as 3,000 pounds of mercury annually to manufacture chlorine and other chemicals for the paper industry. The plant has discharged approximately six pounds of mercury to the river annually, released as much as 800 pounds up its smokestacks, and accidentally spilled a hard-to-measure amount into the river. Now the river sediments below the plant are heavily contaminated. A 1998 report by a Maine agency said: "The upper Penobscot Estuary and River at Orrington have mercury levels that exceed — by orders of magnitude — any others found in the state. In fact, the DEP has been unable to find any areas in the country with higher concentrations."

A bill passed by the state legislature in 1998 requires the company to phase out their mercury discharges to the Penobscot, and reduce their airborne mercury emissions by two thirds. And in late 1998, the company broke ground for a new brine containment system to help prevent further spills to the river.

Still, the company draws fire. A March demonstration targeted the industrial collusion of HoltraChem and the paper mill in Lincoln. Demonstrators briefly blocked the riverside railroad tracks in Costigan, between Bangor and Millinocket, to bring attention to the chlorine, caustic soda and bleach riding the rails upstream from HoltraChem to the mill.

Richard Stander was one of the protesters. He lives within sight of Penobscot Bay in Stockton Springs, near the head of the bay. Stander has been actively working to bring attention to the Penobscot watershed's troubles since he realized the mercury from HoltraChem was affecting the water near his home, where mussels show elevated mercury levels. "The water comes down the river, takes a right at the bay, and laps up on our shores," Stander says.

Stander has helped to organize a group called Friends of Stockton Harbor, which is working to protect the it is important for everyone to work on their own piece of the puzzle. The river recovers While the water quality challenges of the river can paint a bleak picture, all of this is changing. Water quality, in general, is improving. No longer is the river viewed as a convenient dumping ground for waste and trash. One of the most popular eateries in Bangor, a brew pub called the Sea Dog Tavern (in a building Penobscot where floodwaters once flowed chest high), now boasts of its riverfront location. Bangor is even developing a riverfront trail system. A great testimony to the river's re-

portion of the bay near his house. "We

want to understand this piece of the

watershed," Stander says. Now he and

his partner Nancy Galland are also try-

ing to use the existing municipal frame-

work to protect local water quality by

reviving the town's long-dormant Conser-

vation Committee. Stander says that al-

though the watershed is

dauntingly large, it is all interconnected, and

Riverkeepers expeditions. Since 1994, the Riverkeepers have organized annual canoe trips from the headwaters to the sea, sampling water quality, teaching students and learning about the river on the way.

Another emblem of growing love of the river is the annual Penobscot River Festival in Bucksport, where school kids and millworkers, greenies and grannies, gather at a beautiful waterService helping to restore Penobscot salmon runs, has been one of the festival's organizers since its inception in 1996. The festival was the brainchild of one of her colleagues who knew that salmon require a healthy

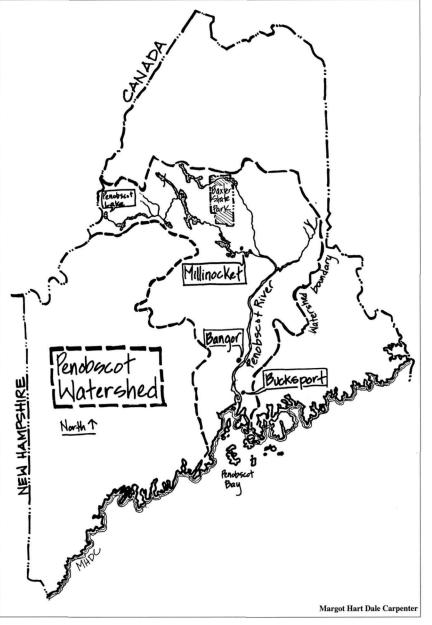
> watershed, and recognized the need for more education. "I think a lot of people take the river for granted. We drive by it everyday and just see its shiny surface," Domina says. "It is really exciting when you think about what's going on beneath the surface."

Domina has conveved her excitement to the hundreds of school children who visit the festival annually to learn about the river, the dams and the fish. Attendance has grown steadily since the first 700 children toured the festival in 1996 -Domina expects 2,000 to attend in 1999. After this year's festival 4,500 students will have attended, one out of every 40 people in the watershed.

Domina says people used to turn their backs to the river and buildings faced away from the waterway, but all that is changing, and riverfront parks like Bucksport's are more

front park in the shadow of the Champion mill to celebrate the river that ties them together. Cheri Domina, who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

popular than ever. "We've come so far with it!" Domina says. "People are excited to see the river. People are turning back to it."



vival is the popular

Penobscot

The bioregional vision: an interview with Kirkpatrick Sale

by Julie A. Wortman

In 1985, Kirkpatrick Sale's Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision (Sierra Club Books) put forward the philosophy and rationale for bioregionalism. In it he wrote: "I have been led to this consideration of the shape of the bioregional vision, inevitably as it were, by the trajectory of my previous work: on American radicalism, on American regionalism, on the abject failure of American giantism. It expresses for me not merely the newest and most comprehensive form of the ideals of decentralism, participation, liberation, mutualism and community that I have expounded in all that work—but, as it stems from the most elemental perception of the crises of the planet, the ideals of ecological sanity, regional consciousness, speciate humility and global survival. It is for me, therefore, not merely a new way of envisioning and enacting a very old American ideal, but also a crucial, and perhaps virtually the only possible, means of arresting the impending ecological apocalypse."

Sale is a contributing editor of The Nation and the author of many books, including Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution (Addison-Wesley, 1995).

Julie A. Wortman: Have you seen any indication that the bioregional vision has been taking root since *Dwellers in the Land* was first published in 1985?

Kirkpatrick Sale: In some respects the movement has remained fairly static. The main means of communication is Planet Drum, which continues to send out a publication three or four times a year from California, and there are still biannual congresses that are held. But I don't detect any real momentum there. It tends to be a lot of the same people over and over again.

However, at the same time, the idea of bioregion has taken hold in lots of places. People are talking about it and mapping their own bioregions. The latest thing I got was a map from somebody in the U.S. Forest Service who had done a highly scientific designation of North America by bioregions. And I've noticed that for the academic geographer bioregions have become a familiar concept. So it's had that kind of official recognition and I

The basic understandings of ecology have not generally been part of progressive politics. Environmentalism is seen as a matter for the Sierra Club. But I'm finding progressive politics rather vacant these days progressives think largely in terms of electoral politics and government as solutions. keep hearing about people who have organized themselves into bioregional groups or who have had college projects of mapping out their bioregion. And New Society Publishers has also been putting out a series of books on bioregionalism — they published *Dwellers in the Land* in 1987 after Sierra Club dropped it. In that series there's a useful book by Douglas Aberley called *Boundaries of Home* (1993) on mapping your bioregion [see *TW* 10/95].

J.W.: The ideals that you talk about in *Dwellers in the Land* — decentralism, participation, liberation, mutualism and community — seem to be ideals that are much more possible to realize by focusing in on the local. But so many people in the progressive community tend to focus on global politics. Do you encounter progressives who are changing their focus?

K.S.: Well, I don't know. I happen to be involved with a group of people who are concerning themselves with antiglobalism, so I know that that's an active sentiment. The trouble is that there are not enough people in that grouping who are talking about localism as the opposite of globalism, as the alternate way to organize the world, since globalism is going to be so destructive.

The basic understandings of ecology have not generally been part of progressive politics. Environmentalism is seen as a matter for the Sierra Club. But I'm finding progressive politics rather vacant these days — progressives think largely in terms of electoral politics and government as solutions.

But once you start thinking in terms of the local, then you are pointing in the direction of thinking bioregionally.

J.W.: Would the Community Food Security movement qualify as bioregionalist?

K.S.: Well, there's quite a number of groups doing food work and community-

Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>. Photographer **Buffy Parker** lives in Stockton Springs, Me. Planet Drum can be reached at Box 31251, San Francisco, CA 94131.

supported agriculture. These are local ways of operating that don't necessarily call themselves bioregional, but which in fact are acting out the principles of bioregionalism. Another connection is through the simple living movement, which obviously overlaps with the community agriculture and local food-growing movements as well. And, again, that represents the direction towards self-sufficiency to which bioregionalism points.

I should note that I am part of the group that has finally established an independent organization to keep the ideas of back-to-the-land movement pioneers Scott and Helen Nearing alive [TW 9/92. We've taken their home, Forest Farm, in Harborside, Me., and established the Good Life Center [named after their best-known book, Living the Good Life: How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World (Schocken Books)]. We are raising funds and publishing their material and material about them. Many of the people involved with the Good Life Center think in terms of bioregions and use that rubric to describe what they're doing.

J.W.: You say in Dwellers in the Land that there are plenty of people who are focusing in on very specific topics - like water quality --- but who know they have to be part of a larger effort. Is the Green Party trying to work that sort of coalition? K.S.: It would be hard for me to say. The last I looked at the Green Party in New York City - I live only 60 miles from Manhattan, in Cold Spring, N.Y. - there was no understanding of ecology, much less bioregionalism. And the people who ran for office here in this county were running on essentially an anti-development platform. I would bet they would mostly know the word bioregional, but I don't think that that formed a big part of their approach. The Green Party - with which I was involved for the first six or seven years - has been a disappointment in that regard because it has tried to be a kind of a left-liberal catchall. And so, in spite of the name of the party, the environmental part of that has never been a big component.

J.W.: What do you think it's important for the average person who's at least superficially attracted to bioregionalism to understand about it? What's the piece of work they need to do in order to "get" what bioregionalism is?

Corporations are antithetical and hostile to the idea of bioregionalism, not only because they don't like to operate at that scale, but also because it emphasizes local self-sufficiency. And of course self-sufficiency is anathema to capitalism, which has to have increasingly wider and open markets to survive.

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to imagine the alternative to the [ecological and social] peril the industrio-scientific paradigm has placed us in. It is simply to become "dwellers in the land." ... But to become dwellers in the land, to come to know the earth fully and honestly, the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand place, the immediate specific place where we live. The kinds of soils and rocks under our feet; the source of the waters we drink; the meaning of the different kinds of winds; the common insects, birds, mammals, plants and trees; the particular cycles of the seasons; the times to plant and harvest and forage --- these are the things that are necessary to know.

K.S.: Well, where does your water come from? That's the first understanding to get — to understand that it comes from someplace and goes someplace and that you are a part of it and that anything you do to harm it will be harming you and others. That gets you thinking about sewage and garbage and agricultural run-off. And next you begin to understand what a healthy ecosystem is at a bioregional level. I mean, the way to "get" bioregionalism is to think about water.

Water is going to be an increasingly serious issue as the water systems increasingly get fouled. On the Hudson, where I am, the river is a good deal cleaner than it used to be and the worst of the superfund sites have been — or at least claim to have been — cleaned up. And there are sewage treatment plants everywhere up and down the river now which there weren't 20 years ago. So something has been done, but it's been done because people began to understand that they were killing the river. But even so there are PCBs in the river that are never going to be removed.

J.W.: The way corporations operate

The limits of its resources; the carrying capacities of its lands and waters; the places where it must not be stressed; the places where its bounties can best be developed; the treasures it holds and the treasures it withholds — these are the things that must be understood. And the cultures of the people, of the populations native to the land and of those who have grown up with it, the human social and economic arrangements shaped by and adapted to the geomorphic ones, in both urban and rural settings — these are the things that must be appreciated.

That, in essence, is bioregionalism.

— Kirkpatrick Sale, Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision, 1985

seems so contradictory to a bioregional perspective — do you have a perspective on standing up to them?

K.S.: You're quite right that corporations are antithetical and hostile to the idea of bioregionalism, not only because they don't like to operate at that scale, but also because it emphasizes local selfsufficiency. And of course self-suffi-

ciency is anathema to capitalism, which has to have increasingly wider and open markets to survive. But as corporations gain more power, they represent a greater and greater threat to any successful operations on a bioregional level — which only goes to suggest that the various groups that are working to limit corporate power make the most sense. Such groups are consciously trying to get state legislatures - which incorporate corporations - to exercise their powers to limit and control corporations. But this whole voluntary simplicity movement is also inherently anti-corporate, as is the

J.W.: Are you aware of any international coalition building around bioregionalism? K.S.: Yes. Peter Berg and the people at Planet Drum have taken that on as a kind of mission and there are bioregional groups in Japan. In fact the opposition to what the Olympics did there to destroy the ecosystem of that particular valley where the winter games were held was



Naturalist and Maine Guide Tom Seymour shares his expertise on local edible and medicinal plants with participants in the Penobscot Bay Marine Volunteers program, an effort sponsored by a partnership of state government and several non-profit organizations to cultivate local knowledge of the bay's marine ecology. Behind the volunteers, across the water is the General Alum complex, a chemical plant whose alleged negative impact on the bay's water quality has been a matter of contention with local conservation advocates.

community-supported agriculture movement.

J.W.: And I suppose the focus on water that you suggest would be a good way to begin trying get at corporate practices? K.S.: Well, yes. Corporate agribusiness, for example, is a major polluter of water and a major user of water. But corporations being what they are, and the economic system being what it is, I don't see that trying to get them to change is probably a very fruitful way to go. Better the idea of withdrawing from corporate influence—that is to say, living simply and locally. led by people who were explicitly bioregional.

J.W.: *Dwellers in the Land* seems to very clearly state the case for bioregionalism, but I'm wondering if you've changed or adjusted any of the views that are contained in it over the past 15 years?

K.S.: I don't think so. I used it recently in teaching a course in England and it stood up pretty well. If anything, I think it's going to be more and more relevant. I think it will be especially relevant when this global system collapses.

J.W.: Are you seeing that coming soon? **K.S.:** Well, I have predicted that it will

occur by 2020, by which time we will need books like that one and others by people who have been in the bioregional movement as guidelines for how to remake our life when it is no longer dominated by corporations and massive governments.

J.W.: Will those governments and corporations collapse because of having just

used up resources?

K.S.: Partly that, but also the ecological disasters that will go along with that — from global warming to new diseases, to ozone layers vanishing and water drying up and forests being cut. The combination of those continuing crises will produce connected and multiple disasters.

J.W.: I guess Y2K is becoming a kind of warning bell for some people?

K.S.: Well, yeah, it is an expression of people's doubts and fears about this technology around us. But it's also being used opportunistically by people who want to raise issues of community and self-help and the like.

J.W.: Is that contrary to a bioregional perspective?

K.S.: Not at all, it's quite consistent. I'm just a little cynical about taking Y2K as the reason for doing this kind of organizing, since I don't believe that in fact all that much is going to happen when January comes around.

J.W.: But the ecological disaster is coming?

K.S.: Yes, that is going to come and I don't see any means of halting it, at least as long as corporations remain as powerful as they are. They will sow their own destruction, it seems quite clear to me.

J.W.:You say that bioregionalism taps a deeper wisdom that comes from the earth. And there are a lot of people yearning for a more grounded spiritual life. Do you think people will begin to shift to a bioregional perspective out of a simple desire to become more spiritually grounded?

K.S.: Well, I would say that maybe what I underplayed in *Dwellers in the Land* was the necessity for a spiritual basis for one's identity with the earth. In fact, I think if there's going to be any successful lives for us or even successful resistance to the corporate onslaught, it will come from people who have a spiritual identity with the earth.

That, of course, inevitably leads to a bioregional understanding. But I'm not sure how many people who are searching for spiritual answers are going in the direction of nature and the earth, as they ought to.

J.W.: I was really taken by your observation about how indigenous people sort themselves out tribally in a kind of bioregional way. So you can look at the tribes and where they are located and it pretty much follows bioregions. It seems to me that that would suggest that there is a real good reason for a person with a bioregional perspective to make alliances with native people.

K.S.: That has always been an important part of the bioregional movement. A good percentage of native people still retain perceptions out of their tribal experience that are identical with bioregionalism, though of course they use other words to describe it.

What I would say to progressives is that what you've left out of your politics all along is a spiritual understanding. And the spiritual understanding we ought to have is connected to that of the native populations, for whom the earth was a sacred goddess.

Of prayer and compost

by Holly Lyman Antolini

"Be All You Can Be!" dares the Army advertisement. "What an appropriate motto for the late 20th century in the U.S.!," I think to myself. Implicit in the message: grab all you can grab; don't let anyone stand in the way of your maximum potential for success; focus your energy on your own accomplishment.

I look out my window at the view of our farm, worn gently into my mind by long familiarity. Balm of Gilead trees, shattered with age and warmed with lichen, cut the sweep of meadow. Wind tosses the March snow, shimmering, into the sunstruck air. In the distance, beyond the leafless alder thicket, the river flashes. "Be all you can be." Now the voice is coming to me, not as the strident ad's challenge to some grandiose "self-actualization," but in the "still, small voice" which comes to us only in the wilderness, after the trappings of identity and security have been stripped away from us and our souls have been bared as the wind is now baring the meadow of snow. In that raw simplicity, the small voice woos us into trusting a potential which is to be life-giving not just to ourselves but to all of God's

Holly Lyman Antolini is an Episcopal priest who lives in Cushing, Me., <hantolin@mint.net>. Artist Eric Hopkins lives in North Haven, Me. More of his work can be seen at <www.erichopkins.com>. creation. It is a potential which may in fact demand the sacrifice of our own most obvious accumulation, success or accomplishment for its realization. "Be all you can be," by way of the Cross.

Unlike Abram and the Israelites, I have not had to travel far to find myself in the wilderness. The wilderness is my home: 66 acres of meadow and woodland on the St. George River in Cushing, Maine. I share it with my husband, two teenaged daughters, two dogs and a cat, not to mention an "honorary grandfather" whose home resides on our lower meadow. For the last six years, I have traveled away from it to serve a tiny congregation further up the coast, spending two and three days away weekly. In the press and shuffle of keeping up with that ministry and family and our local school board, the farm dropped into the background, a mere setting for all the scurrying around.

It wasn't until my sabbatical last fall, in the midst of a quiet moment under the oaks of the 6th century monastery of St. Kevin in Glendalough, Ireland, that the call of the still, small voice made itself heard. "Come back to the farm," said the voice, "It was given to you as a gift of ministry. Stay in it and pray in it. Learn whatever it can teach you about God and about your own humanity, about what is necessary for life and health and well-being and what is not. Cultivate food on its meadowland, using the organic resources the land offers. Cultivate its woodlot as a sustainable energy source. Look for other ways to produce your own energy. Your family

and your farm are essential to your vocation. Ask them what life you may need to lose in order to save life, and find in them the grace to offer it. Be still there, and know that I am God. Compost your life!"

This was a startling call. To answer it meant moving "off the professional grid" in the sense of the "be all you

can be" of ordained, parochial ministry in the Episcopal Church. No Church Pension Fund increase! No salary (and a third less family income)! No "preaching station!"

Yet St. Kevin himself set the example, his ministry at Glendalough beginning, so the legend says, with two years spent in silent prayer in a cave set high above the river on the north side of the valley. And so much about this call made sense. How long have I preached about the call to "lose" some of our material excesses in order to regain a sense of proportion in our relationships both in the human community and its surrounding community of nature? And how long have I twisted in discomfort as I did so, knowing that I had not dared substantially to undertake what I was recommending, and worse, knowing that I was dreading the loss of prerogatives that forfeiture seemed bound to include? Now the Holy Spirit was insisting: "Don't just toes and pray, as the term, which means "desert" or "wilderness," suggests. Gradually, word of their presence gets around and others seek out



Windy Clouds by Eric Hopkins, 9/1995

preach this word; LIVE it."

There are other Christian precedents for this kind of call. In the Russian Orthodox Church, folk have long been called into *poustïnya*, a ministry in which they retreat into the woods to grow their own pota-

In the Russian Orthodox Church, folk have long been called into poustïnya, a ministry in which they retreat into the woods to grow their own potatoes and pray, as the term, which means "desert" or "wilderness," suggests. the poustinniki for spiritual counsel. The poustinnik's is a life of quiet simplicity, not the ordered, vowed. communal life of the monasteries of the West-Church. ern Might this call be to a poustinya (including family and computer!)?

There is nothing very novel in all this. Many before me

have sought to live simply, faithfully, devoting themselves to prayer. Many have sought to develop an environmentally sustainable style of life. Many have realized that their relationship with God is mediated to them crucially through their relationships with neighbors, and not just human neighbors but all living neighbors. As I prepare to leave my ministry at St. Brendan the Navigator, Stonington, in early June to begin this poustinva of prayer and compost, I am grateful for the many other "saints" who have gone this way before me, and are traveling this way now, and whose wisdom will enrich and uphold me. May we all grow more faithful to the still, small voice, and learn to "be all we can be," for the world's sake.

At the point of no return?

by Lisa Duchene

B uilding a good fishing net is a mysterious art in motion, much like spinning a spider's web. There are little parts and pieces that each do a specific task in scooping fish off the bottom of the sea floor. If it's done wrong, the catch will be off, or the net may dig into the bottom deeper than it should.

"You've got to be able to imagine the net on the bottom of the ocean and what each section looks like," said Lendall Alexander, Jr., a third generation fisherman from a tiny Maine fishing village called Cundy's Harbor.

Alexander learned how the net works from his father and from other mentors on the sea. As he grew up, he never wanted to do anything else but fish. But during his lifetime the fishing way of life has changed so dramatically that his boys — Duane, 15 and Levi, 11 — may never need to know how a net is built.

Less than 25 years ago, the government encouraged the New England fishing fleet to power up. It did. Fishermen became very good at catching large amounts of fish and now the stocks of groundfish such as cod and flounders are crashing. There is no relief in sight, just more dismal news from scientists and more rules for fishermen.

It's not clear exactly when the balance of the sea began to get out of whack, but this is the generation of fishermen paying up and facing the loss of their way of life.

"The sea is covered with fishes,"

Giovanni Caboto, an Italian sailor, reportedly said of the Gulf of Maine just five years after Columbus' first voyage. There were so many codfish that the earlier generations of fishermen would row out in dories, never losing sight of land, and haul nets full of codfish into their boats by hand.

Today, at Vessel Services, Inc., a commercial fishing supply company in Portland, Me., there is a quote taped onto the cash register: "Will the last fisherman to leave the Gulf of Maine please shut out the light?"

Most fishing off New England takes place within about 200 miles of the coast, between the shore and the Continental Shelf. When the glaciers pulled away, they carved the sea floor of the Gulf of Maine into basins, valleys, ledges, ridges and underwater islands. That makes for many different kinds of bottom and many different areas for fish to live.

There are huge tides in the Gulf of Maine that mix up the sea and spread nutrients around the water column, making for a strong first step in the food chain. But from the beginning, people have changed the gulf — by changing the mix of species by fishing out ones that are commercially important over centuries; by changing the sea floor through trawling.

The decline occurring now goes back to the 19th century at least, according to Peter Foster Larsen of the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay Harbor, Me. It's not the first time people have fished a species to the brink of where it can no longer support an industry, he says. First it was halibut, then it was redfish, river herring, striped bass. So in one respect the groundfish crisis is only the latest in a series.

But there are two factors that make this crisis different: First, the government is now mandated to protect fish stocks. Second, this problem is part of a worldwide fishing crisis — there aren't many new species anywhere to which fishermen can turn. Almost twothirds of the world's 200 commercially important stocks have been either overfished or fished to the edge of what they can bear, according to a 1997 statement from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, huge factory trawlers — the name for ships that drag nets along the sea floor to catch fish — from the then-Soviet Union and Eastern European countries discovered these rich fishing grounds off the coast of New England. They would come so close you could see them from shore.

In 1976, Congress passed the

NEARLY EVERY ASPECT of the Gulf of Maine, from the status of specific stocks to the prognosis for an entire sea, is dogged by such descriptives as puzzling, poorly understood, mystifying.

Despite the uncertainty, a few things are clear: The arms race in fishing technology has reached the point of mutually assured destruction; the distrust between fishermen and fisheries managers has bred disaster; the hunting and gathering techniques that for centuries allowed this small body of water to feed a region cannot feed the world. — editorial, Bangor Daily News, 8/29/98

Lisa Duchene lives in Phippsburg, Me., <Lisa_Duchene@coconetme.org>.

Magnuson Act that established a 200mile limit and put regional fish councils in charge of making sure stocks were properly managed. Foreign boats were booted outside that line.

Scientists say that their studies of fish populations show that change. The index that indicates the general abundance of groundfish dropped by almost 70 percent between 1963 and 1974, "reflecting substantial increases in exploitation associated with the advent of distant-water fleets," wrote Steven Murawski and Frank Almeida in a 1998 report on the status of fish stocks off the Northeastern U.S.

The fish stocks recovered in the mid to late-1970s. But the American fleet was building up — the government was offering tax incentives for fishermen to buy bigger and better boats.

For years scientists warned fish managers that they were allowing too much fishing on the stocks. But the regional councils were unable to make tough political decisions.

Add to that the understanding and communication gap between scientists and fishermen. The two groups don't even have the same names for fish: a slimy, brown fatty fish with mouth so big it can swallow a basketball is called a "goosefish" aboard a scientific vessel and a "monkfish" aboard a commercial boat.

In the early 1990s an environmental group forced the government's hand when it sued it for failing to prevent overfishing. The consent decree from the lawsuit led to a set of rules that cut fishing in half.

Then, as stocks continued to decline, the government began putting tougher and tougher measures in place. In the early 1990s, there were no restrictions on fishing days. Now, most fishermen are limited to 88 days of fishing each year. The government has also stepped in and bought fishing vessels, closed huge portions of the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank and established daily limits on how much fish boats can catch.

Last December, fishery managers realized that the fleet was way ahead of

Less than 25 years ago, the government encouraged the New England fishing fleet to power up. It did. Fishermen became very good at catching large amounts of fish and now the stocks of groundfish such as cod and flounders are crashing. There is no relief in sight, just more dismal news from scientists and more rules for fishermen.

schedule on catching the fishing year's quota of cod, while scientists reported that the cod population was at its lowest in 30 years. Managers decided to cut the cod catch by 80 percent. The New England Fishery Management Council cut the daily cod catch from 400 pounds to 200 pounds and closed new sections of the sea to fishing. There is also now a proposal to cut that daily catch even more and to require boats to tie up for a month at a time.

Fisherman Charles Saunders thinks it is just a matter of time before crashing stocks and more new rules force him out of the Gulf of Maine, so he has started to fish parts of Georges Bank. The difference? About a 20-hour commute — a steam of 100 miles aboard his 70-foot dragger, the Mary Ellen before he even sets a net.

He also thinks it's just a matter of time before the fishermen are written off entirely. "They'd like to color us gone," he says grimly.

Once, there was talk of breeding cod in hatcheries and releasing them to the wild. But the fry were dying mysteriously. A scientist's study revealed a nutritional problem, but by the time the riddle was solved, says Saunders, who was then head of the Maine Fishermen's Cooperative Association, the backers of the project had lost interest.

What seems clear is that the marine ecosystem is changing. Last summer, state marine scientists who study the shrimp stocks began noticing a drop in water temperature.

Pollution is also part of the picture — non-point pollutions from spilled oil, air emissions and lawn fertilizers, but also pollution from specific points such as paper mills. Dioxin levels have been so high in Maine rivers that there are warnings on consuming too much freshwater fish. The effects of dioxin on marine fish have still to be studied.

The impact of lobstering may also be significant, Saunders says. "We're involved on this coast in a massive aquaculture effort to raise lobsters but in the process we're biologically loading the bays that would otherwise be nursery sanctuaries for the fish."

Saunders realizes this way of life is slipping away. Between cuts to days at sea and government boat buybacks, a form of "attrition" has taken a lot of power out of the New England fishing fleet. It used to be that on a fishing trip into the gulf he would see boats all the time. Now, he can go days without seeing any boats. Nonviolence training needed in schools

In the wake of the school violence in Littleton, Colo., the Fellowship of Reconciliation joined Creative Response to Conflict (a school conflict resolution program) in calling for national implementation of peace education and conflict resolution in every school and community in the U.S.

According to Priscilla Prutzman of Creative Response to Conflict, conflict resolution skills include "learning communication skills, cooperation, learning to appreciate ourselves and others, learning to appreciate all kinds of cultures, learning to appreciate all students' differences, and creating an environment of safety and inclusion."

"This tragedy is no accident," said Neera Singh, FOR's Youth-Nonviolence trainer. "We live in a culture of violence."

"Violence is the major component of much of our entertainment industry," the FOR press release stated. "Our government is using massive violence to try to resolve the conflicts in Yugoslavia and Iraq, military training is promoted in many of our private and public schools, and the U.S. has become the largest exporter of military equipment in the world. Is it surprising that our children have learned to emulate their elders?"

A press release from Billy Graham in response to the tragedy asserted that "the problem is not guns — rather the hearts of people which need to be changed."

The children of the trees

"I'm constantly asked if I'm hopeful, and it's not an easy question to answer, except that there's no existence without hope," eco-theologian Thomas Berry said in an

most takes

interview in Parabola. "I still work toward a healing of what's wrong, and to create a desirable future. I think constantly of the future of the children, and of the need for all children to go into the future as a single, sacred community. The children of the trees, the children of the birds, the children all children, including the human children, must go together into the future."

Military admits Y2K lies

The military has "acknowledged falsifying Y2K readiness reports," according to a recent issue of *Nukewatch Pathfinder*. "The Defense Special Weapons Agency (which is in charge of nuclear weapons security) has admitted it skipped mandatory tests on 60 percent of 'mission critical' computer systems and then claimed the systems were compliant. The office even failed to develop required contingency plans that would take effect in the event of a failure of critical systems. In November, the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee gave the Pentagon a D-minus grade on its Y2K progress."

A more excellent bread

The real issue confronting the church today is "whether the news of God's abundance can be trusted in the face of the story of scarcity," Walter Brueggemann writes in *The Christian Century*.

"According to the Nike story, whoever has the most shoes when he dies wins. The Nike story says there are no gifts to be given because there's no giver. We end up only with whatever we manage to get for ourselves. This story ends in despair. It gives us a present tense of anxiety, fear, greed and brutality. It produces child and wife abuse, indifference to the poor, the buildup of armaments, divisions between people, and environmental racism. It tells us not to care about anyone but ourselves — and it is the prevailing creed of American society.

"... What we know in the secret recesses of our hearts is that the story of scarcity is a tale of death. And the people of God counter this tale by witnessing to the manna. There is a more excellent bread than crass materialism."

Call for probe of Colombian murders

Following the murders of three American human rights workers in Colombia in March, the U'wa Defense Working Group released a statement calling for "a full investigation by the U.S. government and independent human rights observers into the deaths of our three colleagues.

"We call on the State Department to ensure that the possible role of paramilitary groups is fully investigated, and we call upon the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) to clarify their involvement, if any.

"The U'wa people's rights and ancestral land remain under threat from the proposed oil project [exploration by Occidental Petroleum which the activists had opposed]. ... The well sites in question fall within an area the U'wa consider their ancestral land.

"On several occasions last year, Terry [Freitas, one of those slain] reported being followed and observed by individuals believed to be associated with paramilitary activity. On the same trip, Terry was forced to sign a statement by the Colombian military, which essentially absolved the Colombian military of any responsibility for his safety. He interpreted this as an intimidation tactic.

The deaths of our friends underscore the need for immediate steps to peacefully end the escalating violence in oil regions and against human rights advocates in Colombia."

The statement quoted an U'wa statement of Aug., 1998, which asserted: "Today we feel that we're fighting a large and strong spirit that wants to beat us or force us to submit to a law contrary to that which Sira (God) established and wrote in our hearts, even before there was the sun and the moon. When faced with such a thing, we are left with no alternative other than to continue fighting on the side of the sky and earth and spirits or else disappear when the irrationality of the invader violates the most sacred of our laws."

Bringing creation into the church

by Heidi Shott

M aine has been called everyone's favorite other state, and people who spend just part of the year here don't like its quaintness mussed with. The weekly newspaper in my own midcoast community is often filled with letters from people with out-of-state addresses who are appalled at the painting of telephone poles by children, the arrival of a fast-food restaurant, the occasional attempt at a miniature golf course.

Those of us who live here know that the troubles Maine faces weigh more heavily on issues like the cutting of our great Northern forest pitted against a sustainable timber industry and much-needed well-paying, skilled jobs; the concerns of growing sprawl in the smaller communities around our cities; the mysteries surrounding the lobster fishing industry like water temperature, too large a harvest, and the dimensions of the trap; the often poor quality of our air which has picked up the filth of the major Northeastern cities; and the sometimes erratic quality of our fresh water lakes, rivers and streams.

One alternative Maine license plate brightly decorated with a loon reads, "Maine: A Natural Treasure." No one questions the truth of such a statement whether you are native or transplant, summer person or vacationer. Many people would argue that the responsibility for ensuring that Maine stays that way lies with all people who consider it their own. We Christians are often confounded by the complicating factor that we don't own anything.



Pulpit Harbor Evening by Eric Hopkins, 12/1995

The notion of stewardship, environmental or otherwise, requires us to care for and nurture what belongs to God. Several years ago the Stewardship Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine recognized that the stewardship of the beautiful state we live in should be something Episcopalians become more aware of and concerned with, and hence, the Committee on Spirituality and the Environment was born.

But what to do? Episcopalians are busy people. Many are already active in the National and Maine Audubon Societies, the Nature Conservancy, scores of local watershed associations, the Gulf of Maine Foundation and many others. The committee has decided that advocacy is not the appropriate avenue for diocesan involvement, but that the church has a unique role to play. Committee co-chair Roger Smith of Manchester explains the mission of the group this way: "We feel the church has a different message. The environment is a spiritual issue, and we've concentrated on raising people's awareness that the environment is something Christians need to be concerned about. "

Some of the work the committee has engaged in is the development of Creation Cycle liturgies that are provided to Maine congregations for use on the seven Sundays between the Feast of St. Francis and the beginning of Advent. "We used the basic service and added lessons, collects, and readings that focus on the environment and our relationship to it. The liturgies are a way to draw attention to the emphasis on creation found in scripture." The group has

Heidi Shott lives in Newcastle, Me., and is communications officer for the Diocese of Maine, <heido@lincoln.midcoast.com>. Artist Eric Hopkins live in North Haven, Me.,<www.erichopkins.com>.

also produced a Litany for Rogation Day to be used in a similar way.

Another method of drawing attention to the spiritual aspect of the environment has been by offering "Days of Reflection" in various regions of the diocese. In 1995 the committee brought Carla Berkedal from Seattle to consider the notion of "Living Simply." Berkedal founded the group Earth Ministries which has been a leader in environmental education and advocacy. Last month the committee sponsored a day of reflection at St. Bartholomew's in Yarmouth on Celtic Spirituality which has a long tradition of incorporating and celebrating the natural world in its spiritual vision.

In 1994 the diocesan convention charged the committee to draft a theological statement on earth stewardship. In addition to that task, the group decided to take the project on the road. Over the past several years members of the committee have led directed meditations at regional workshops where individual members of the diocese were encouraged to write their own theological statements about their place in nature and their responsibility as a steward of God's creation. A starting place for many people was the text from Roman 1:20: "Ever since the creation of the world, God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made."

Libby Moore, a member of the committee, wrote in her statement, "When I am in the woods on the first warm day of spring and see the green of unfurling mayflowers that feeds my soul, and smell the old brown pine needles warming and hear the warblers calling for mates, I respond with love. My heart opens to the Creative Impulse present in that day, that made that day, and will be there after that day ends. I am in the Creation; I am of the Creator." Another participant wrote, "I have known all my life that since the natural world and the divine were inseparable, the environment needed to be treated with the same respect we try to give to God's human creations."

Maine Episcopalians are not alone in their desire to connect their faith and spirituality with environmental concern. In 1996 Tom Arter, a naturalist and nature photographer from Damariscotta and parishioner of St. Andrew's, Newcastle, read in the Maine Council of Churches (MCC) newsletter that one of their efforts involved spirituality and the environment. That piqued his interest and led him to call Tom Ewell, executive director of the MCC. Their discussions led to an event

"The church needs to bring a difference to the table. We are able to provide a theological basis for why we should be advocates of the environment."

- Roger Smith

celebrating the Damariscotta River watershed in February 1997. Since that time the MCC has developed a Spirituality and Earth Stewardship Program that has recently received a program grant from the United Church of Christ. Another watershed event focused on the Kennebec River is scheduled for June 13 at Vaughn Woods. The all-day event will include a nature walk, watershed education, and a celebration and thanksgiving service focusing on creation and what can be done to preserve Maine's watershed. As a part of its earth stewardship program, the council will continue to sponsor similar events in other parts of the state. Ewell, explained, "This effort enriches our spiritual lives by deepening our connections

to the earth and to one another. Our series of watershed celebrations offers opportunities for Maine communities to come together to learn more about our local watersheds: why they are important to our spiritual, recreational, and economic lives and what, as stewards of the earth, we can do to preserve and protect them." The MCC program also provides access to a speakers' bureau for church and community talks by environmental experts, tips for contacting legislators and government officials about environmental legislation, and training for those seeking to facilitate public discussions on environmental concerns.

As a participant in the Maine Council of Churches effort, the diocesan Committee on Spirituality and the Environment continues to seek cooperation between various stakeholders in environmental stewardship. The group has worked with the Natural Resources Council and with the diocesan Committee on Indian Relations around the issues of the Penobscot River watershed and the Penobscot Tribe. Roger Smith says, "Cooperation is one of our goals. The Sierra Club and the National Environmental Trust of Maine have made contact with us to look toward collaboration. The church needs to bring a difference to the table. We are able to provide a theological basis for why we should be advocates of the environment."

Gil Birney, of St. Nicholas', Scarborough, makes a compelling theological case for taking environmental stewardship seriously. "In John's Gospel, when the risen Jesus meets Mary in the garden, she sees him as a gardener. The vocation given in Genesis is affirmed and empowered and offered to us all by the love which raised Jesus from the dead and raises us from lives of fear and selfcenteredness to the life of love. In this love we struggle to cultivate relationship with one another and the whole earth as God's garden."

On being a woman bishop

by Denise M. Ackermann

Living at the Edge: Sacrament and Solidarity in Leadership by Penny Jamieson (London, Mowbray, 1997).

Participating in the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion last year left me with a fantasy: I have been given the authority to draw up a list of prescribed readings for a gathering of bishops of my church. At the end of the course I examine them. Not simply for content, but in terms of the broadening and deepening of their understanding of their particular ministry. My head fills with titles of books on ministry, on the offices of the church, on spirituality and theology, novels and poetry. At this point the vision evaporates. Reality takes over. My fantasy crumbles as just another rather preposterous pipe dream.

But I do recognize its origins. First, I have seen too many bishops who, overwhelmed (if not overly impressed) with the responsibilities of their office, are rendered impotent to seize the opportunities and the challenges offered to them. Second, they lie in my own experience of the power of the written word. Third, I believe in learning as a lifelong process. Consequently, I long for all the clergy to have time off and the space to read, think and meditate.

This is exactly what Penny Jamieson, the first woman in the Anglican Communion to become a diocesan bishop, did. On holiday at a small settlement on the North Otago coast of New Zealand, with time to reflect on her understanding of the church, she explored her experience of the episcopacy. Her experience of being a woman, and thus an outsider, who has become an insider, is clearly reflected in the title of this absorbing book, *Living at the Edge*. This work is not an apologia for women bishops. It is also more than simply a reflection on the office of a bishop. It is a book which is deeply concerned with the nature of the church. But it is still more. It bears the mark of spiritual wrestling, of trust in prayer and of the celebration of faith. Never sentimental or pious, the author comes across as a truly prayerful bishop. For anyone who loves the church despite its obvious shortcomings, this book offers much food for thought. Its themes are significant and appropriate, and the author's struggles with the

This work is not an apologia for women bishops. It is also more than simply a reflection on the office of a bishop. It is a book which is deeply concerned with the nature of the church.

challenges of the office of bishop are unfeigned and candid.

Understanding the nature of power is central to exploring the episcopacy - a recurring theme of this book. After looking generally at the diffused nature of power as well as its inevitability, Jamieson explores power in the church. On her election as bishop she realized that she would have to come to terms with the perceptions of power related to the office of bishop as well as the particularity of being a woman in that position. Many women are confronted with the ambivalent nature of assuming and exercising formal power. "Spiritual power," writes Jamieson, "is the power to influence others through one's own being - by example, by kindness, by wisdom, by love, and above all through prayer. Institutional power, it is said, has to do with ambition and exercising control, while spiritual power, on the other hand, has to do with surrendering control." This ambivalence of, on the one hand, being a woman who has authority and power by virtue of her office, and on the other, knowing that true power lies in powerlessness and surrender to God, runs through this work.

Jamieson proceeds to discuss the responsibilities and challenges of leadership in the church through the lenses of "discerning," "caring" and "holding." Her reflections take place within the reality of the Anglican church in New Zealand's unique constitutional recognition of its three cultural strands: those of the Maori, the Pakeha (successors of the colonists) and the people from the Pacific countries. Holding the unity of the mission of the church in the face of diversity is not easy, but Jamieson believes that it is possible when the basis of unity is found in love as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ.

I particularly liked the chapter devoted to ethics. Bishops, by virtue of the authority of their office, often have to make ethical judgments which affect the life of the church. Such judgments are based on an analysis of the ethical demands of a particular situation. Christian ethics derive from discernment, nourished by prayer and undergirded by sound analysis of the context. Here Christian feminist ethics prove to be helpful. Jamieson comments that "the raw material for feminist ethics is the lives and experiences of women" (p.90). As such, feminist ethics are more relational than conventional ethics. This emphasis on relationships, our relationship with ourselves, with others and with God, makes for an ethical approach that is intensely humane,

Vital Signa

Denise M. Ackermann is Professor of Christian Theology at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, <ackerdm@wn.apc.org>.

generous and open. Questions of poverty and the unequal distribution of resources. sexual ethics, clerical ethics, the ethics of human relationships in marriage and same-sex relations, then cease to be a string of "thou shalt nots" and instead became integral to the ongoing struggle to become truly human people living in a web of relationships.

Against the backdrop of an ethic of relationship Jamieson tackles the thorny question of authority in leadership. The need for authority is undisputed. The challenge is to exercise authority in a proper way. Women with authority have to deal with cultural prejudices which are unfriendly to the idea of women in leadership positions. However, relational authority, backed by a relational ethic, becomes authority which is exercised in mutuality. This kind of authority fits in comfortably with the notion that leadership is itself a gift, a charism just like any other. given for the building up of the whole Body of Christ. Viewed in this way leadership is a sacrament. This is a powerful argument against the temptation to abuse positions of leadership and to confuse authority with power as dominance. I trust that at some future date, Jamieson will explore the role of the bishop in facilitating the diverse gifts of the people of God as the means of creating and sustaining a lively participatory community of faith.

The three weeks spent at Lambeth with over 800 bishops was a mixed experience. There were times when I despaired for my church. I heard a great deal of theological nonsense and cultural prejudice from bishops who confused power and politics with calling and true authority. I was also encouraged by other bishops who, like Jamieson, continue to wrestle with the temptations and the challenges of their particular office. Jamieson's book would be pretty near the top of my list of prescribed readings. For those of us who are not bishops, it combines theological reflection with experience in a manner which is both readable and exciting.

Favoring justice over lying fallow

As I read the Bible, justice

is propelled by the jarring

rush-in events of the Holy

of the People of God.

Spirit within the body politic

by Richard Shimpfky

Many reports have circulated about the annual winter meeting of the Episcopal Church's bishops last March at which the bishops said they would try to steer next year's General Convention away from legislative confrontation on the "hot-button" issues of gay/lesbian marriage and ordination. Frank T. Griswold, the church's presiding bishop, says he hopes that, in the spirit of the biblical Jubilee, General Convention 2000 will provide plenty of time for "lying fallow" in pursuit of "a less urgent

decision-making process. Witness board member Richard Shimpfky, Bishop of the Diocese of El Camino Real in California. offered this reflection

following the bishops' gathering:

The conference reflected the growing mood in the church to avoid confrontational posture, especially legislative posture. I was a little shocked to hear even some of our women call for less General Convention legislation even fewer General Conventions. The "legislative hot-button" is, of course, homosexuality, but 25 years ago it was the ordination of women. I wondered if these women actually believe that, if in 1976 the church had eschewed legislation, as now suggested, there would be any women in the House of Bishops today.

Justice is justice, be it women's place or the place of homosexual persons in the large room God has called Anglicans to uphold. I fear the House isn't clear enough about our call to the active life in Christ.

God does not intend us as a monastic community; we host monastic communities and the church of leaven. salt and seed. The awful things going on in our prisons, the Matthew Shepherds and Billy Jack Gaithers who are being murdered, the curse of the nation's growing support of organized gambling, the pitiful plight of farm workers - these things can't take second place to lying fallow. We have to tend to our spiritual needs while fighting the good fight; we are a public church by way of our establishment beginnings, a church with a mission responsibility to

> the whole society.

As I read the Bible, justice is propelled by the jarring rush-in events of the Holv Spirit within the body politic of the People of

God. The widow in her injustice knocks urgently upon the door and the Spirit will not quit until she has her due! Confrontation, no, but courage in daring speech is called for in our corporate conversation and debate.

One final observation: I heard so many references to the bishops being the leadership of the church. True, but only one-half of this church's leadership. In 30 years I don't remember a time in this church more tending toward hierarchy. It does not bode well, I think, to forget that the General Convention is the single magisterium in our most democratic polity. Probably the Genral Convention should meet more - not less — in this moment in the church's ongoing life of mutual ministry and leadership among the four orders, for the sake of her mission. My deep conviction is that only through focus on mission can the church's problems be contextualized and moved beyond.

Vital Signo Vital Signo Vital Signo Vital Signo

TV offers illusion of war

by Norman Solomon

hile bombs keep exploding in Yugoslavia, a fierce media war is raging on television.

The real war has little to do with the images squeezed into the TV frame. On the ground, in Yugoslavia, the situation is all about terror, anguish and death. On the screen, the coverage is far from traumatic for the viewing public — despite the myth that television brings the horrors of war into our living rooms.

A war "is among the biggest things that can ever happen to a nation or people, devastating families, blasting away the roofs and walls," media critic Mark Crispin Miller wrote many years ago. But TV viewers "see it compressed and miniaturized on a sturdy little piece of furniture, which stands and shines at the very center of our household."

TV news programs sometimes claim to be showing us what war is all about, but that's an absurd pretense. While television "may confront us with the facts of death, bereavement, mutilation," Miller commented, "it immediately cancels out the memory of that suffering, replacing its own pictures of despair with a commercial, upbeat and inexhaustibly bright."

In the all-out propaganda war now underway, the Clinton administration's strategists have played catch-up. "The problem is they didn't start the communications until the bombs started falling," says Marlin Fitzwater, who spoke for President Bush during the Gulf War. "That's not enough time to convince the nation of a course of action."

Top U.S. officials have made up for lost time — blitzing the media with endless briefings, grainy bomb-site videos and live TV interviews as the missiles continue to fly. Even after it became clear that the NATO bombardment was greatly intensifying the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo decried by the White House, the warriors in Washington were sticking to their

TV news programs sometimes claim to be showing us what war is all about, but that's an absurd pretense.

very big guns. As the second week of bombing began, just about the only worry they seemed willing to acknowledge involved a possible shortage of cruise missiles.

Meanwhile, the *Financial Times* reported last Wednesday, both the U.S. and Yugoslav governments have a stake in downplaying the carnage from the bombing. "The citizens of the NATO alliance cannot see the Serbs that their aircraft have killed," the British newspaper noted. "Serbia's state-run television, while showing ruined civilian homes, shields its viewers from bloodied corpses that might spread panic among an already highly strung population."

Traditionally, American television networks like to show U.S. bombers taking off but decline to show what the bombs on board end up doing to human beings. So, American firepower appears to be wondrous but fairly bloodless.

As for history, ancient and recent, it is usually rendered murky by the TV networks. The latest coverage has run true to form. "Distortion of important background by Western broadcasters, whether intentional or not, has also helped NATO's cause," the *Financial Times* observed.

"The stated aims of NATO's bombing campaign have also been muddied, by both heads of government and the Western media," the newspaper added. "A common phrase heard on the lips of correspondents of CNN ... is 'forcing Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to return to the negotiating table.' Yet Madeleine Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, and Robin Cook, British foreign minister, made it clear after the breakdown of peace talks ... that the autonomy deal offered by the West - and signed by the Kosovo Albanians - was no longer negotiable. There was in reality no table to return to."

Skewed facts and selected images on television make it easier to accept — or even applaud — the bombs funded by our tax dollars and dropped in our names.

The bombing has brought about the collapse of internal opposition to the Yugoslav regime, opposition that was previously quite strong. NATO has done what Milosevic had been unable to accomplish on his own — decimate the ranks of Serbians resisting his tyranny. Even now, the tragic realities of that process are getting little mention in American news media.

Keeping Watch

Norman Solomon's new book, *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*, has just been published by Common Courage Press.

The lure of the local

by Gloria House Manana

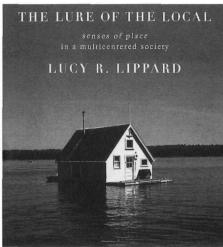
The Lure of the Local by Lucy R. Lippard, The New Press, N.Y., 1997.

T he Lure of the Local explores the meaning of place in our lives, the significance of our emotional and imaginary attachments to sites of the natural environment and to specific structures and artifacts. For the author, the local, the Maine of her childhood, is "an anchor [in her] driftings," an organizing focus for her preoccupation with the spatial dialectics of center, the experience of rootedness in a place, and movement to and from centers — which characterizes the lives of millions of Americans.

The author points out that "most people do not have the time or inclination to ponder the meaning of place," and scholars have only just begun to give it serious consideration. The emerging multidisciplinary field of spatial studies is only a couple of decades old, and still struggling to find its



Gloria House Manana is a contributing editor and poetry editor for *The Witness*, and author of *Tower and Dungeon: A Study of Place and Power in American Culture*, Detroit, Casa de Unidad Press, 1991.



own language and theoretical constructs, frustrated by the extent to which spatial experiences remain for most people in a category of "taken for granted," unconscious or unexamined.

However, if you love drives into

Lippard writes that the examples of art included in her book serve as models, "providing one or more facets of the potential for a local art that would merge with and/or illuminate a place." One effect of this multi-layered approach is that the reader comes away with a newly trained eye for reading the environment.

the country because it seems your eyes rejoice in the green of the landscape; if you languish over photos of the houses and rituals of your childhood; if you plan annual trips to your hometown, treasure weathered doors, fences and rusted implements of unknown usage; or fantasize about the people who built the 19th-century farmhouses you pass on the highway; and if you have taken time to ponder why a particular site or geographical area elicits powerful emotions in you, this book will intrigue and delight you. The author has provided a cultural and political grounding for such feelings and experiences in her reflections on the issues of personal, group and national identity, in her references to the important thinkers in this field, in her demonstration of the way places become repositories of specific histories, and in her vision of the significance our sense of place could have in the constructing of communities of the future.

The book has an unusual, engaging multidimensional structure: The reader is carried along by the flow of cultural and philosophical discourse, which is the main text, while the author's personal narrative of the lore and history of Maine floats above (literally at the top of the page); then there are the photographs of landscapes, art works, art installations in museums and other public spaces that seem to balloon the experience out past the pages, evoking the reader's own memories and associations. The reader's eyes move up and down and over these pages, connecting the layers of words and images at will.

In organizing the book in this manner, the author has integrated her "lived experience" in Maine with a broader attempt to theorize about spatial experience, and she has illustrated the crucial role artists may serve by creating works that help us achieve positive relationships with our specific living spaces. Lippard writes that the examples of art in-

cluded in her book serve as models, "providing one or more facets of the potential for a local art that would merge with and/or illuminate a place." One effect of this multi-layered approach is that the reader comes away with a newly trained eye for reading the environment and analyzing our interaction with it.

Lippard's readiness to include all cultural perspectives in her analyses is an extraordinary and commendable aspect of her work. Her book demonstrates multicultural study at its best. Here we find scholars and artists of a multitude of backgrounds presented as equals, the operative criterion being the relevance of their work to the issues at hand. Lippard knows all the key European and EuroAmerican contributors to the field, from French philosopher Michel Foucault, who could be called the father of spatial studies, to culture critic

Raymond Williams, to planners Kevin Lynch and Delores Hayden, as well as lesser known, but innovative geographer William Bunge. Lippard presents these "stars" of the hegemonic center in the company of scholars who have been marginalized traditionally, such as Native American historian and attorney Vine Deloria, African American professor and prolific culture critic bell hooks, Yi-Fu Tuan, a spatial studies pioneer, Chicana writer and professor Gloria Anzaldua, Native American literary critic Paula Gunn Allen and many others, thus dismantling the center/margin paradigm in favor of a multicentered orientation — the absolutely essential stance as we en-

largest Grange membership nationwide; it peaked in the 1940s and today stands at 11,000, with some communities increasingly active [*Lure of the Local*, p. 148-149]. ers ter the new millennium, one that has as been brilliantly argued for by Kenyan ive writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book, *Moving the Center*.

> I have never seen a comparable breadth of cross-cultural familiarity, respect and inclusiveness in an American cultural writer of EuroAmerican descent. For example, comparing the aesthetic assumptions of Native American and EuroAmerican filmmakers, Lippard insightfully explains how a Native

American artist is likely to perceive and relate to the land according to beliefs about its sacredness, its natural patterns and rhythms. A film by such an artist might mirror the cyclical or circular nature of those pat-

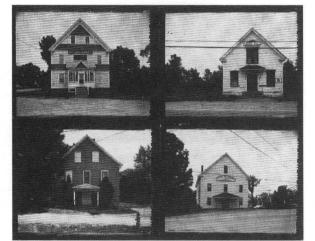
> terns and rhythms, producing an art form very different from the linear narratives characteristic of European aesthetics. Good sign for the future of cultural studies and cross-cultural politics in the U.S.

Lippard points out in the book's final section, entitled "Entering the Big Picture": "Nothing that excludes the places of people of color, women, lesbians, gays or working people can be called universal or healing. Before we can find the whole, we must know and respect the parts." She appears to have worked over long years to understand the parts of our national cultural/racial mosaic, the diversity of ways we interpret place, and to envision how we could collaborate to protect and nurture each other and the environment, upon which we are utterly dependent. TW

New *Witness* development/ marketing director

This month Wes Todd begins work full-time as our director of development and marketing. He succeeds Karen Bota, who has been our very able part-time promotional consultant for several years.

Todd has 18 years of experience in publishing. He and his family live in Thomaston, Me.



Rose Marasco, Grange Hall Exteriors, detail from the 60-

Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Me. The Grange, or

community, site of social, educational and cultural events

Patrons of Husbandry, is an agriculturally-based secret

society founded in 1867, open to both men and women

and once enjoying a national membership of over one

as well as debates, public suppers and games, cooking,

needlework and art contests. In 1887, Maine had the

image series "Ritual and Community: The Maine

Council, University of Southern Maine, and the

million. The Grange hall was the center of the

Grange," 1990-91, sponsored by Maine Humanities

rowing up on Indian Island in the Penobscot River in Maine, Ruben (Butch) Phillips enjoyed a close relationship with the river which shares the name of his Penobscot tribe. "I swam in it every day in the summer," Phillips recalls. "I ate fish from it and drank it."

At the time, Phillips had no reason to suspect that these activities were dangerous. "It wasn't until about 1959 or so that we started to see warnings, 'Don't swim in the river.' And then later, in the 1970s or 1980s, came warnings saying, 'Don't eat the fish.""

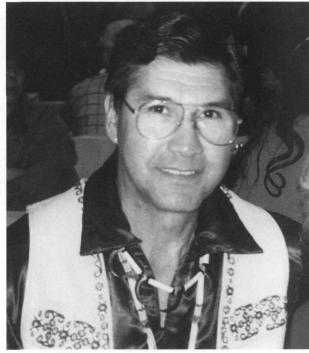
The threat came from dioxin, a byproduct of the use of chlorine by paper mills on the banks of the Penobscot. "The Penobscot have a very high incidence of death by cancer," Phillips says. "We don't know why, but a lot of things point to the river. The Lincoln Pulp and Paper Mill is 30 miles above Indian Island and the effluent goes out into the Penobscot River. Dioxin is a cancer-causing agent."

For the Penobscot people — whose reservation is comprised of all the islands in the Penobscot River — the poisoning of the river is felt as a physical and spiritual assault.

"The river is our lifeblood," Phillips says. "We live in the Penobscot River, and it's been that way for thousands of years this is our ancestral homeland. The river was our highway, the way we got from one place to another. We received our sustenance from the river. The river and the land surrounding it is not only the source of our

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

"One of the main reasons why we're fighting this battle so strongly is, what's the sense of having the right to fish if we can't eat the fish?"



Butch Phillips

'The river is our lifeblood' by Marianne Arbogast

physical well-being — it's our spiritual center, our heart, as well. We believe that the land has given us life, and we should not only protect it, but enhance its life, so that the bond with the land will survive into the next generation."

Phillips has a long history of leadership around issues affecting the Penobscot people. He served as one of four negotiators for the Penobscot nation in the Maine Indian Land Claims Negotiations, which led to federal recognition of the Penobscot Nation and their territory in 1980. He has also served as lieutenant governor of the Penobscot Nation, tribal representative to the state legislature, chairman of the tribal Fish and Game Committee, and a member of the Hydro Review Committee (a.k.a. the "damn dam committee," Phillips says) which reviews the re-licensing of dams on the river. While lieutenant governor, he was awarded a grant for a video project which produced the documentary, "Penobscot: The People and Their River."

The story of the past century and a half has been a story of disregard for the Penobscot River, Phillips explains. "Over the past 150 years, our people have seen a tremendous change in the Penobscot River, first due to the lumbering operations that started around the 1830s or 1840s. We saw an increase of traffic on the river due to the driving of logs down the river to the sawmills. Then, to improve the log driving, they started building dams on all the major tributaries through the river, raising the water and blocking our means of transportation up and down the river. Later the

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

dams were built bigger and more permanent for hydro-generation.

"A community sprang up around the Penobscot, and with the community came the pollution from municipal waste, and then from the paper mills.

"These dams and this pollution drastically affected our sustenance through fishing. The salmon, shad and alewives came up our rivers in abundance, and we fished for them and dried them and used them for sustenance all winter long. With the coming of the dams, which were built without any fish passage means, the runs of salmon and shad and alewives stopped to the point where they were practically extinct.

"There was a tremendous change on the Penobscot River and, of course, that had a tremendous change on the Penobscot people. It changed us not only physically but spiritually as well."

The dawn of Indian rights movements in the 1970s brought a spiritual reawakening, Phillips says. "Probably because of national movements by Indian groups, and the land claims settlement in 1980, more people started coming back to our reservation," he says. "More people were rekindling interest in the old ways."

Part of the rekindling involved a return to spiritual practices that had been suppressed by Christian suspicion of native traditions. Phillips, who grew up Roman Catholic, says that during his childhood it would have been "unheard of" to take part in ceremonies honoring ancestors or traditional worship.

"Here was this school on an Indian reservation, all Indian kids, and there was nothing Indian about that school at all, with the exception of one picture hanging on the wall of a Mohawk nun, Kateri Tekakwitha but we never knew anything about her. Every other picture was of George Washington, the pope, the bishop. There was nothing indigenous — you didn't speak the language, you didn't talk about Indian issues."

Today, the same school --- where

Phillips' wife teaches — is a changed place.

"Everything in it is Indian," he says. "You walk in the building and the tribal seal is in the floor tiles. There are totem poles and Indian artwork and baskets. The water fountain has 'water' written in Penobscot over it."

While Phillips notes that many of the Penobscot people have integrated Christian faith with ancient traditions, he finds his own spiritual home in traditional Penobscot religion.

"I think of myself as a traditional person — however, I don't flaunt it, I don't preach it," he says.

"When we pray, we are actually giving thanks to all our relations, all mother earth and all the creatures."

"The traditional ways were very personal. It was really a way of living. The very basis of Indian spirituality is having a deep connection with the land. When we pray, we are actually giving thanks to all our relations, all mother earth and all the creatures."

Phillips spends much of his time outdoors, and is currently engaged in building a traditional birchbark canoe, using a process revived by his nephew, Barry Dana, after decades of disuse. Eighteen years ago Phillips' nephew began a new tradition that has become a significant yearly event: a Labor Day weekend run along the river from Indian Island to Mount Katahdin, where the Penobscot River begins.

"Katahdin sits right in the center of our land," Phillips says. "It has always been the sacred place in our land. Always."

The "Katahdin 100" is "a spiritual run to the mountain," Phillips explains. Some participants run the entire distance, while others canoe 60 miles and then run the final 40. Phillips is currently involved in a dis-

pute with the authorities of Baxter State Park, to convince the authorities to waive fees at Katahdin Stream Campground, where the run ends.

"We're not asking a whole lot, but just that on that particular weekend we be allowed to go there without any fee to complete our run and do our spiritual exercises. They agreed to work with us to find a solution, and since then we have looked at a couple of sites that the park authorities are possibly willing to designate as a special site for the spiritual use of native people."

Phillips sees some signs of hope for the future of the Penobscot River, but takes a pragmatic view of limitations.

"We'd like to have the Penobscot River back the way it was 150 years ago — freeflowing, no dam — but that's not realistic. The dams are there and they're not going to go away. We have attempted and in some cases succeeded in having fish passages put in, where the fish can easily go up over the dams. And we have mitigated downstream passage of fish as well, so they can come back out into the ocean after they've spawned, instead of going through the turbines in the powerhouse and being all chewed up and killed.

"The major issue today is that the Lincoln Pulp and Paper Mill continues to dump dioxin into the river. They say it's at an undetectable amount, but we say any amount of poisons in that river is unacceptable."

The Penobscot nation has water quality specialists who monitor the river, analyzing water samples and reporting on their findings to the state.

"We have aboriginal rights to fish in the Penobscot River — we never ceded that right to anyone," Phillips says. "But one of the main reasons why we're fighting this battle so strongly is, what's the sense of having the right if we can't eat the fish? I would like to see the river cleaned up to the point where we can once again swim in the river and once again eat fish out of the river."

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Volume 82 • Number 7-8 • July/August 1999



Journeys of the spirit: the power and politics of pilgrimage

Aging: learning to be an elder

I WAS PLANNING NOT TO RENEW in a general cutback — then got the May issue on aging and loyed it. This is not the place to "cut back!" Please reinstate me.

Gay Lloyd Pinder Seattle, WA

I WRITE TO THANK Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann for her marvelous ministry and especially her work in *The Witness*. She is very much in my prayers for God's real healing and has my respect and gratitude for her approach and attitude. I, too, am a great fan of Reynolds Price's *A Whole New Life*.

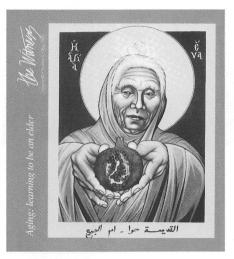
> Sam Hulsey Fort Worth, TX

Classifieds

letter

Trinity College chaplain

Trinity seeks a Chaplain for our liberal arts college community. The Chaplain conducts regular services, provides counseling, coordinates the work of religious organizations, facilitates worship and spiritual observances for people of all faiths, and promotes spiritual life on campus through traditional and nontraditional ministering. We seek an energetic, persuasive communicator, with the enthusiasm and experience to work with a diverse student body and to anticipate students' differing needs. Candidate must be an ordained Episcopal priest and should have an advanced degree. Prior chaplaincy experience not essential. Interviews will commence as excellent candidates are identified. Ideal starting date: Aug., 1999, but all applications accepted. Send applications and nominations to: Dr. Sharon Herzberger, Vice President for Student Services, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 06106, or fax to: 860-297-4229. Inquiries



A national disregard for children

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MOST RECENT focus on children. It was typically well done. In support of your reporting, I would like to recommend a valuable resource for churches wanting to explore how they can respond to

may be made to 860-297-2085. Trinity College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Applicants with disabilities should request any needed accommodation to participate in the application process.

Promotion/development opening

Associate for Promotion and Development responsible for marketing, public relations, fundraising, grantwriting and endowment development at Kirkridge Retreat Center. For job description and terms, contact: Search Committee, Kirkridge, 2495 Fox Gap Rd., Bangor, PA 18013.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 8374, Richmond, VA 23226 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

the needs of children. Enclosed is a copy of the "Children's Charter for the Church" and supporting background materials. A video introduction can be obtained with these materials from Episcopal Parish Services (815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017).

The Charter is a call to the church to respond in new and intentional ways to Christ's mandate to care for, respect and bring all children to Christ. If we took it seriously it would revolutionize our ministries around children. A team of nine people from our diocese attended a conference on implementation of the Charter that was held last fall. We came away with a new commitment to work for change in our diocese and are actively trying to implement the charter here.

If your readers would like more information on this, please contact Robyn Szoke, the new officer for Children's Ministry at the Episcopal Church Center in New York (800-334-7626). Readers may also wish to look at the yearly Children's Sabbath program from the Children's Defense Fund and some advocacy resources from Friend-

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1999-2000 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301.310-674-7700.

Stringfellow book available

A Keeper of the Word, edited by Bill Wylie-Kellermann, gleans the most significant of William Stringfellow's work including never-before-published material. A Harlem street lawyer, social activist, writer and theologian, Stringfellow is enjoying new-found popularity. \$15 including shipping/handling. Checks/Visa/ Mastercard to: *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210; 1-800-300-0702.

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

ship Press (800-889-5733).

Klara Tammany Missioner for Christian Education Episcopal Diocese of Maryland Buckeystown, MD

Yugoslavia web site

AS MY FRIENDS KNOW, I am not real fond of war. The greatest damage seems done to people — often women, children and elders — who have nothing to do with decisions being made by those in power. And for us in the U.S. — so often the leading power in recent allied wars — it has been next to impossible to hear our global sisters' and brothers' voices over the clamor of guns and bombs.

But today the worldwide web has changed all that.

A friend in Oakland, Calif., kindly sent me this web address — www.keepfaith.com/ that is a web site by Ivanka Besevic, a 74year-old retired journalist in Belgrade. Her daughter in the U.S. is updating the site daily with e-mails from Ivanka and transcriptions of their occasional phone conversations.

I trust her voice will move us all — whether to action such as e-mails to elected officials and protest marches, or simply to a deeper compassion for all persons caught in the middle of this tragic conflict.

If Ivanka's voice speaks to you, please send this URL along whatever strand of the web you can!

Patricia Lay Dorsey <PLaydorsey@aol.com>

Deadly 'humanitarianism'

AS WITH U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN WWII (apparently the favorite comparison, although it has very serious limitations) and much like the low-intensity overt war against Iraq and the covert wars in other parts of the Third World, there's absolutely no reason to believe U.S. involvement in ex-Yugoslavia is for humanitarian purposes, despite the fact that President Slobodan Milosevic is a dangerous and dreadful dictator. This neither bears out in the present case nor does it hold water historically. If it were so, there were many other things that could and should have been done, both much earlier and quite differently. They

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weren't because it isn't.

Indeed, U.S. intervention is having the opposite and disastrous effect of: creating more refugees, wounding and killing civilians and refugees, destroying vital infrastructure (such as roads, bridges, hospitals, utilities, media outlets, etc.), producing environmental disasters, using deadly depleted uranium/radioactive weapons, polluting ground water in addition to the Danube River and the Adriatic Sea, silencing Yugo dissent, excluding pacifist leaders and options, solidifying nationalist support, fostering jingoism, encouraging the heroin trade, skirting international law and snubbing the UN, ignoring world opinion, promoting U.S. hegemony, expanding the influence of the corrupt CIA, pushing a humiliated Russia into a corner, threatening international peace and security by (mistakenly?) triple bombing the Chinese Embassy and killing three Chinese journalists while injuring others (Peter Dale Scott claims a similar incident occurred in Hanoi during the Vietnam War), bombing Bulgaria, wounding Italian fishers, using racist rhetoric to compare Europe with the Third World, killing animals, bolstering already bloated military budgets and expanding the military-industrial complex, publicizing the "need" for NATO, experimenting with new weapons of

mass destruction, lying and misleading the public, reaffirming that social problems should be resolved with brute force, serving as role models to suburban teenagers, marginalizing and managing women, proving that might makes right in politics, thereby promoting the global arms race, diverting attention from other major problems (starvation around the world, U.S. war in Iraq, child poverty, lack of national healthcare, corporate welfare, decaying cities, environmental crises, growing inequalities, ethnic cleansing in allied countries such as Turkey and Indonesia), et al.

It is, unfortunately, becoming increasingly clear that NATO stands for No Action is Too Obscene! Let's stop the obscenity and return to the fine art of diplomacy. Let's stand for peace and justice!

Dan Brook <CyberBrook@california.com>

Holy Week in Baghdad

I WAS WITH A GROUP WHO VISITED Baghdad over Holy Week 1999. We took medical supplies and medical books from Canada and the U.S. We took the medical supplies to the Red Crescent Society and the books to the Medical School at the University

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by Bill Wylie-Kellermann Bill Wylie-Kellermann reflects on Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land in light of the biblical accounts of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. and the danger of the "domestication" of pilgrimage to serve political and economic interests.

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The Witness offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917. The Witness has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. The Witness' roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. The Witness is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece of art.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

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Risking new worlds

by Marianne Arbogast

Ver the course of the past year, a small procession of walkers wound its way down the eastern U.S. coastline, then traveled inland to Florida. After sailing to Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti (and some pressing further south to Brazil) they crossed the Atlantic, resuming their walk in Africa.

Those who took part in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage felt drawn to trace, in reverse, the journey of African slaves to this continent and, in so doing, to help reverse the spiritual legacy of slavery inherited by the descendants of slaves and slave owners. Their journey was a difficult one, undertaken with scant resources, major logistical uncertainties and astonishing trust in the ability of a diverse group of people to survive the rigors of such a trip together. In the tradition of pilgrimage, many kept journals and wrote letters. Their accounts reveal a full range of emotion: exhaustion, exultation, anguish - but, beneath it all, the sense of participating in a profound spiritual work [p. 14].

These pilgrims are among many today who feel a pull to leave home and ordinary comfort zones in order to be physically present in places of spiritual, social and historical significance. Such journeys often seem connected to aspects of history or human experience that have been neglected or forgotten, as if the earth itself beckons witnesses to the buried roots of human suffering and struggle.

In the U.S., a number of recent pilgrimages have focused on the history of slavery. In addition to the Interfaith Pilgrimage, another "Middle Passage Pilgrimage" beginning in July of this year invites people to join an Atlantic cruise to witness a ceremony at sea, at which a monument commemorating slaves who died en route will be lowered to the floor of the Atlantic. Afterwards, the ship will continue on to Africa. And several years ago, historian Anthony Cohen chose to forego a typical research environment for a challenging personal journey along an Underground Railroad route [p. 18].

"Pilgrimage sites break away from the recognized centres of organized religion and from the control of their authorities," Virgil Elizondo writes.

Another increasingly widespread form of pilgrimage is the quest for a deeper connection with one's personal or family history, and the earth places which are intertwined with it. *Witness* staff member Martha Dage traveled to Russia last summer on such a journey, returning with a stronger sense of family and spiritual identity [p. 22].

The recovery of lost but crucial pieces of human experience links these contemporary sojourns to more traditional pilgrimage journeys. Numerous Christian pilgrimage sites have sprung up in honor of Mary, in a church that has suppressed the feminine face of God. Often these sites have rested on the religious testimony of women, the young and the poor.

"Pilgrimage sites break away from the recognized centres of organized religion and from the control of their authorities," Virgil Elizondo writes in his introduction to a volume of theological reflection on pilgrimage(Concilium, 1996/4). "Maybe they can be attributed to God's sense of humour which keeps legitimate authority -whether ecclesial or academic - from taking itself so seriously that it confuses itself with God." Pilgrim sites, Elizondo says, "witness to the limits of any official religion or theology which tries to corral and imprison the mysterious infinity of God's love as it continues to be made manifest amongst us through the poor, the needy, the lowly and the unauthorized of society."

This may even be true of a secular site such as Graceland, a major U.S. pilgrimage destination [p. 20]. Reflecting on the magnetism of Elvis Presley's home, Ken Sehested notes his "redneck" roots and the persisting bias against those who share them.

But if the origins of pilgrimage are popular and spontaneous, its expressions are susceptible to domination by an array of powers. Examining the pattern of pilgrimage in the life of Jesus, Bill Wylie-Kellermann calls for vigilance to the domesticating influence of economic and political interests [p. 8].

Yet these very hazards may attest to the power of pilgrimage. It is dangerous to venture forth into unfamiliar places with open eyes and open hearts. It may well threaten the stability of entrenched worldviews and world systems. At least, many of today's pilgrims hope so.

editor's note

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

Following the spirit's compass

by Lauren Artress

Pilgrims are people in motion, passing through territories not their own seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word "clarity" will do as well, a goal to which only the spirit's compass points the way.

- Richard R. Niebuhr

he act of pilgrimage is as old as the human spirit. It is found in all the major religious traditions, especially during the most holy times of the year. The Jewish peoples walked long distances to be in the holy city of Jerusalem during Passover; the Muslims walked to Mecca to circumambulate around the Kaaba, the sacred stone where Mohammed sat when he became enlightened. During the Middle Ages, Christian communities packed up their belongings and fixed food without fat so it would not spoil. They wore special clothing and began the long walk to Jerusalem, completing what was a oncein-a-lifetime commitment to visit this holy city. These communities sang familiar songs and chants as they walked through the muddy road-less countryside. They wore passport-like medallions sewn into their clothes to identify themselves as pilgrims on a religious trek, not thieves, merchants or crusaders.

Pilgrimage became threatened once the Crusades made a battleground of Europe. After the Second Crusade, it became dangerous and, therefore, expensive to travel. The Catholic Church appointed the pilgrimage cathedrals to serve as the destination of peoples' journey. Chartres Cathedral in Chartres, France — 80 kilometers southwest of Paris — was one of the most significant pilgrimage cathedrals for many centuries. Our Lady of Chartres — as the Cathedral is specifically known — is a monument built in honor of Mary. She is envisioned in stone and glass 176 times. The labyrinth, a 42-foot circle with one clear, yet circuitous path to the center, was laid in the stone floor of the nave of Chartres Cathedral around 1201. Pilgrims would



enter and circumambulate around the cathedral and then enter the labyrinth to walk the path which was symbolic for the journey to God. The center of the labyrinth is named "the New Jerusalem" to underscore the pilgrim's achievement of having reached the Holy City.

After the Middle Ages the act of pilgrimage lost its widespread acceptance. Western culture rebelled against the suffocating Christianity that governed peoples' lives. The invisible world was rejected because it could not be seen through the empirical methods of the new science. Tourism became the accepted mindset for travel. Though pilgrimage continued in the 19th century — especially to places like Lourdes for people seeking physical healing — it became marginalized to the sidelines of a busy, preoccupied, extroverted, consumer-oriented culture. That is, until recently.

Pilgrimage is currently experiencing a revival in popularity. The renewed interest is due to several factors. One is the demise of the Berlin Wall and the opening of Eastern Europe. Another is the increase in the numbers of Muslims identifying strongly with the sacred city of Mecca. Perhaps the reason closest to home is the spiritual hunger that is becoming conscious in the Western World. Life is most meaningful when we are living a symbolic life, but we have lost our connection to meaningful symbols.

Tourism — the biggest industry in the world — is taxing our planet's resources without delivering on the hoped-for fulfillment of finding deeper meaning. The knack of pilgrimage is to allow travel to become sacred, to see the world with fresh eyes and return renewed and nourished by a new vision of oneself. In his book The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred, Phil Cousineau says that "the ambitiousness of the goal and the intensity of devotion ensure that the sight of new landscapes, the smell of novel foods, the encounter with unusual customs - all converge to create a new way of experiencing the world."

This is what sets those on pilgrimage apart from the tourists. Tourists come to observe and take pictures, pilgrims endure at least minor discomforts to participate in something greater than themselves.

One can sing and pray with others at a sacred site, remember lost loved ones at the site of a tragic accident, walk a labyrinth on New Year's Eve, join in construction of a new home supervised by Habitat for Humanity or travel to a distant place to help save wildlife threatened in an oil spill. The way one participates is determined by one's own spiritual compass, directing each person toward meaning in their life.

Lauren Artress is canon for special ministries at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco and creator of Veriditas, the Worldwide Labyrinth Project.

Villanelle for a Corpus Christi Procession, St. Louis 1995

by Jennifer M. Phillips

Carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass past fifteen sites of murder in our streets down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

boys amble out of the brickfronts, eyes of isinglas, our prayer a language from some faded, foreign star carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass

with eyes anticipating nothing, idly they pass our brocade and battered hopefulness, scatter down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

We would call the roll of this remediable class among the litany of the watching saints carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass

but they have vanished over the rubbled grass, behind the Ford on blocks, the burned garage, down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

Fifteen corners, the pavement plain, unstained and unremarkable, where our prayers anoint the dead carrying sad Christ in his cabuchon of glass down fractured concrete, the city's sprung compass.

Jennifer Phillips is the rector of an Episcopal Church congregation in St. Louis, Mo.



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A politics of pilgrimage

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

ot long ago, I dug out an old journal notebook. It covered a period (20 years ago) during which I walked 230 miles with friends across much of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. We began in Wisconsin at the test site for a military antenna — an electrified grid signaling device, virtually the trigger finger for deep-running nuclear first-strike submarines like the Trident — and we ended at a S.A.C. base near Marquette where the next portion of it was slated for construction.

In between we camped along the road, spoke in small-town churches and halls, nursed blisters, showed a home-made slide show, were treated to potluck dinners and Finnish saunas, passed out leaflets, and discussed what kind of direct action we should undertake when we arrived at the base.

I think that journey could be fairly called, in Martin King's apt phrase, part of a "pilgrimage to nonviolence." Ironic, I suppose, that our faces should be set like flint toward a place of violence and death, a nuclear camp as it were. And yet we knew that place to be sacred earth, holy ground, albeit occupied and wired. Our hearts were intent on defending and reclaiming that holy space in the name of humanity. Even earth itself.

I mention the journal, not merely because of the spiritual connection between journaling and journeying, but because I came upon notes there for three little talks I gave around campfires on the way.

Gandhi's salt march

One of those was simply an historical recounting of Gandhi's Salt March in 1930, which was an early but decisive event in the campaign for independence from the British. Almost identical in time and distance to our own, he (and the building multitude) covered 241 miles in 20 days.

He led this mass walk to the sea, spent a night in fasting and prayer, then next morning bent down by the shore to scoop up a handful of salt — God's free gift which was at the same time illegal to

When Jesus enters the Temple, having finally arrived at every pilgrim's destination, he makes for the currency exchange to engage in a direct and dramatic action: turning the tables and reclaiming the space.

possess because it had been neither produced by the government monopoly, nor taxed. The *satyagrahi* began distributing leaflets on how to produce tax-free salt. Sixty thousand people were imprisoned for resistance. Eventually, waves of Gandhi's "truth warriors" proved unstoppable by British clubs in their nonviolent siege of the salt works. The back of English moral authority was visibly broken. Who would have imagined that by his simple and graceful act, holding aloft a handful of seasalt, the collapse of imperial rule could be set in motion?

Walking meditation

Another campfire discussion was about walking as contemplation, walking as a meditational posture, walking as prayer. The Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, had already in those days circulated a little pamphlet of meditations for activists which included instruction in this kind of practice: "Walk in a way that prints peace and serenity on the earth. ... Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet." Yet, though he urged walking not in order to arrive, but simply to be walking, we had our eyes on a prize. We were making a beeline. The trick, it seemed, was to make our way of walking one with that goal, one with the Spirit we sought. To make the end and the means one. In a certain sense, we walked as an act of preparation, conditioning our hearts for crossing the line onto the base, cultivating with each step a spirit of nonviolence. (Compared to most other modes of transport, walking is literally the most nonviolent, treading lightly upon the earth). And ours was a walking intercession. We walked in the name of and on behalf of victims. We prayed their prayer step by step by step.

The pilgrim way of Jesus

The last talk was of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. That long walk has been the pattern and path of Christian pilgrims for near two millennia now.

His way of the cross (the Via Dolorosa), the place of crucifixion and the empty tomb have been the heart's yearning and goal for generations of travelers. And yet Jesus himself went up to Jerusalem in the company of pilgrims, a throng making their way to the Temple at festival time.

The Scriptures suggest that his own inner journey of prayer and faithfulness, overflowing with tears more than once, was one with that bodily walk. Little wonder that the early faith community named themselves "followers of the Way."

The synoptic gospels emphasize this

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is book editor for *The Witness* and author of *Seasons of Faith and Conscience* (Orbis, 1991) and *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow* (Eerdmans, 1994).

journey by making it the fundamental structure of their narratives. Jesus only goes up to Jerusalem once, but it is a big trip, the big trip of life and death.

In Mark it appears as a straight and immediate trek, albeit with discipleship teaching along the way, while in Luke the

pilgrimage takes a rambling route through marginal and nominal communities with lots of eating and drinking en route. The film, The Gospel of Matthew, quite literal in its portrayal, represents Jesus hurrying on the road, teaching over his shoulder as he goes, with the disciples stumbling along behind in their struggle to keep up. In each of the synoptics a central crisis of identity - Who do people say that I am? - signals the advent of the journey, the turning of his face to Jerusalem. He joins the Passover pilgrimage with a certain intent of heart.

His own walk is disciplined and conscientious. Along the way Jesus is making preparations, inner and outer. He repeatedly alerts the disciples to the inevitable outcome, what they realistically may expect: The Human One will be delivered up and crucified. His teaching is urgent, building community in movement. When it comes time for the actual procession into town, preparations have been made

(Mk.11:1-7, par.). When it comes time for the passover meal, preparations are again found in readiness (Mk. 14:12-16, par.). The implication is that his going up to Jerusalem is well thought through. Being in the company of the Passover pilgrims, remembering the walk to freedom, is intentional.

Passover was a singularly tense and

potentially explosive time in Jerusalem. Streets swelled with an unruly crowd, liberation tunes in the air. An uprising at passover time had been brutally crushed by Herod's son, Archelaus, in 4 B.C.E. He unleashed his entire army, including cavalry, against the crowds, sparking the



Gate into Old Jerusalem

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

notorious series of insurrections which erupted throughout Palestine that year. Josephus reports of the period a few years subsequent to Jesus' death that Roman procurators regularly posted a company of soldiers in the porticoes of the Temple to quell any threat. No wonder the eagerness of the chief priests to arrest and kill Jesus is mitigated by their uneasy concern: "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people" (Mark 14:2).

Domesticating pilgrimage The public tension, of course, was the manifest contradiction of walking to a freedom celebration while remaining under domination, foreign and domestic.

How could the ruling authorities keep the explosive tension under control? Posting a guard of soldiers? Partly. By making the high priest, festival officiant, virtually an imperial appointee? That, too. But primarily in the domestication of the festival — by making the feast of liberation and the collective pilgrimage serve the interests of big business, by turning it into the entrenched foundation of an urban economy.

Jerusalem was a one-industry town. Among the three main pilgrim feasts, Passover was the centerpiece of its life - the first-century equivalent of the Christmas rush (just to mention another commercially domesticated festival). The city's population of 30,000 could be inflated by several times that, to as many as 180,000 people. That's a lot of rooms at the inn. By Torah interpretation the "second tithe" was to be consumed within the city walls. Pilgrims from a distance would con-

vert the tithe to money and spend it at festival time. Around all this grew further commerce and an urban service industry. Moreover, the Temple was a massive stockyard and slaughterhouse: As many as 18,000 lambs might be sacrificed in the ceremonies. Think of the Temple workers involved: the money changers and sellers of animals, of course, but also

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the stone cutters, carpenters, metal artisans, and construction workers engaged in the ongoing luxurious rehabilitation of the Temple and its precincts. Vested interests abide at several levels of class and status. The pilgrimage generates capital. Whence its evangel of freedom? All but dead and buried?

When the city comes into view, according to Luke, Jesus begins to weep. And when he enters the Temple, having finally arrived at every pilgrim's destination, he makes for the currency exchange to engage in a direct and dramatic action: turning the tables and reclaiming the space. This is no undisciplined outburst, but the longstanding design of his heart. The house of prayer has become a den of thieves. The place of pilgrimage has become a dead end. The festival of freedom has become a political and commercial captive.

It is almost as though, in confronting the powers, Jesus calls to the feast: "Come alive." To the authorities: "Let my people go." And to the pilgrims: "Walk to freedom."

A political economy of religious tourism

Ten years ago I sat on the steps of the Temple contemplating that event. My partner Jeanie and I had travelled there as participants in an interfaith human rights delegation. We had met with folks speaking from many different sectors in the conflict. We had journeyed to camps and a hospital in Gaza, a Jewish settlement, a Christian town in the occupied territories which had been sealed off for its organized campaign of tax resistance, a kibbutz, and a peace community with an interfaith school.

We'd met with representatives and Knesset members from Likkud, Labor and right-wing orthodox parties, members of the Palestinian National Council, plus the American Consul General. Our group had sat with Palestinian prisoners, hospitalized children with bullet wounds, and professors from universities closed by the occupation. Of course, we saw lots of church people and clergy, joining them in worship of various traditions. And we'd met with extraordinary nonviolent activists and human rights advocates carrying on against crushing odds.

Holy Land pilgrimage is not only big business in the economy, it is virtually subsidized by the state as Israeli public relations.

Yet this walk through the remains of the Herodian temple was the first talk with an archeological scholar, and something was stirring in me. We were hearing of arches and stone-cutting techniques, but I couldn't help imagining a biblically literate holy land tour combined with an astute awareness of Galilean peasants both then and now, one alert to issues of justice in the book and on the ground. Hermeneutics and history. A pilgrimage of head and heart. Not Jesus in a firstcentury vacuum. Not human rights without recourse to scripture and prayer.

Actually, most churchly tours to Israel and Palestine are substantially politicized, unbeknownst to their pastoral leadership. Holy Land pilgrimage is not only big business in the economy, it is virtually subsidized by the state as Israeli public relations. Of course, airfares are kept low by a subsidized airline with which others compete. Pastors and their spouses usually travel free in exchange for organizing the group stateside. And there are free FAM (familiarization) tours, usually including a hotel package, sometimes offered to entice group leaders and give them an advance sense of ersatz expertise.

The consequence is a seductive indebtedness, a no-questions-asked trusting of the travel agency.

And the actual cost is high. It means seeing a certain view, a certain guided itinerary, most likely on a pre-arranged and unchangeable schedule. Which is to say, it means not seeing certain people and scenes. It means staying in a hotel in West Jerusalem (and perhaps never comprehending that Arab East Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories). It means never having any actual contact (in worship, conversation or hospitality) with Palestinian Christians, second- or third-class citizens, who are also among those enduring the slow transfer out. (A recent book by Hilliard and Bailey, Living Stones Pilgrimage, University of Notre Dame Press, 1999, is a guide book designed precisely to overcome this deficit).

Above all, it means being in the hands of a Jewish tour guide. One version of a statement widely attributed to Moshe Dyan goes, "I'd rather have a Palestinian in the cockpit of an F-14 than at the microphone of a tour bus." For the last 30 years, since the 1967 War, hardly any Palestinians, Moslem or Christian, have been licensed as guides. Their number is dwindling through the attrition of age and death. Pious pilgrims have social reality defined for them by guides. Social space can be marked as "safe" or "unsafe," and so to be entered or avoided. A sight pointed out on the right can obscure barbed wire on the left. A security checkpoint for closing down and sealing off an area can be viewed as little more than a toll booth. The official narrative tells the state's sanctioned story - and it is worth the price of a couple of tickets.

To be honest, I found the Christian holy sites singularly unmoving. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for example, in the Old City, two orders of monks worked loud competition, chanting aggressively to outdo one another in clashing musical idioms. In my head I kept hearing, "He is not here! He is not here!"

An oddly impressive fact about the Holy Sepulchre is that when Omar conquered Jerusalem for Islam in the seventh century he was invited to pray in the chapel. But he declined, saying that if he did, his followers would destroy the shrine

to build a mosque on the site of his prayer! He went some measure away and knelt down. There, today, stands the mosque of Omar.

The same may be said for the Churches of the Annunciation. Nativity, and Gethsemane. I simply wasn't drawn in or held. Though I would love to have contemplated the Jerusalem skyline at length from the "Gethsemane" grove of trees on the Mount of Olives, its tightly secure formal garden escaped my interest entirely. I did hunger for a unity of spirit and prayer with the host of Christian pilgrims who had bowed their hearts here or there, but I really wanted oneness with them as brothers and sisters who enjoined the incarnation, who took up the cross, who lived the freedom of the resurrection, not simply ventured out to honor or touch its empty cave or rock.

A pilgrim after all

There were three places I found myself deeply moved. One was Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Mar-

tyrs and Heroes Monument. To be sure, the memorial does function in the iconography of state theology, telling a sanctioned pre-history. It is the obligatory first stop, explaining and justifying. The museum concludes its walking tour of images with the raising of the Israeli flag.

Still, the place, or its equivalent, is not to be missed on any adequate tour of the

20th century. The thing is rightly done, putting history and art in the service of genuine memory. It grants room to take counsel with one's own soul. So often on the trip, in the hospitals or the camps, we encountered the reality of suffering. My eyeballs, in those moments, seemed made of glass, never yielding to tears. But at the



Israeli soldier

memorial, space is carved out and silence preserved. Here I was able to weep.

In the art museum is a room of children's drawings made in the European ghettoes and the camps. I stopped before this watercolor rendering: the dark world of the camp, dingy with the smoke of the dead. Angling down left to right is a narrow shaft of light which serves as a pathway out. At its base is a body pale and prone. A woman in gold leads strongly by the hand another failing figure in blue. She points upward to a tree or beyond. Suddenly come my tears, the weight of the entire memorial and its history pressing them up and out.

The other two places which did move

my heart unexpectedly were the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall — the very places from which the sparks of Middle East conflict fly upwards.

From West Jerusalem the entrance to both the Dome and the Wall are the same, but a simple structural bridge keeps the two streams of pilgrims from contact. Everyone entering the Plaza of the Western Wall must pass through a metal detector and the alert eye of armed Israeli Defense Forces. The Moslems go down, then up a stairway and over.

The Dome of the Rock was built on the leveled surface of the Temple Mount. Inside is the rock on which their ancestor Abraham (yes, one and the same) came near to sacrificing, as they have it, Ishmael. It is also purported by tradition to be the rock on which Mohammed stood when he

ascended into heaven. Jeanie and I accidentally violated the sanctity of the Dome by kissing just outside the door. Security guards scrambled toward us, walkie-talkies in hand. "The man in the red shirt is kissing a woman!" I apologized genuinely and vociferously.

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

What I liked about the Temple Mount was its contemplative spaciousness.

Jeanie first pointed it out to me. Here was a holy place with room to move, places to sit, children dancing and playing, pilgrims streaming by.

I didn't expect to like the Western Wall, often called the Wailing Wall, the famous section of exposed stone from the Second Temple where faithful Jews come to mourn and pray. I knew of the Arab homes confiscated and demolished to make its wide plaza. But we went on Sabbath eve.

My head covered with a paper skull cap the wind threatened to snatch, I went to pray. The wall is worn smooth by touching. Worn smooth by many with whom I knew I'd agree about some things (the fidelity of God and the gift of the book) and yet disagree about others (politics, perhaps, and state



Olive branch

Bill Wylie-Kellermann

theology and two-state solutions and so on). When I put my palm to the wall, prayers welled up in me. They poured forth unbidden. For our daughters, for a friend in the Tel Aviv hospital, our delegation, the people who had met with us (many taking risks to do so), for the divided families shouting across the border in Gaza, for Israelis acting with vision and for truth, for the soldiers who are barely older than the Arab youths who throw the stones, for the prisoners of Ansar 3, for the survivors of holocaust, for the presence of justice, for an end to nuclear weapons here and in my own land, for the coming alive of my own church and tradition, and for some clear leading about how I might offer even a gesture of peace.

All these were prayers arising from and set free by my journey. The inward arrival of an outward walk. Those prayers live within me yet. As a pilgrim, after all, I carry them home.

Associated Church Press praises The Witness

The Associated Church Press honored *The Witness* with four awards at its annual convention this past April. An award of excellence went to *The Witness*' department, "Witnesses: The Quick and the Dead," based on profiles in 1998 by Marianne Arbogast and Julie Wortman. ACP judge Nancy Moffett of the *Chicago Sun-Times* said the series "glows with [the subjects'] own words," illuminating their struggles for the benefit of readers' own reflections.

Three awards of merit went to freelance writer Christopher Cook for his feature article in the March 1998 issue on "America's Welfare Capitalists," to Bill Wylie-Kellermann for his guest editing of the January/February 1998 issue on "Sports as a Principality" and to Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann for her interview with Michael Moore, "Roll the cameras no matter what I say,"



"On the eve of the Superbowl, The Witness dares to argue that sports are too often the object of our misguided love." featured in July/August 1998.

"On the eve of the Superbowl, The Witness dares to argue that sports are too often the object of our misguided love," noted ACP judge Ed Golder (Grand Rapids Press) of Bill Wylie-Kellermann's sports issue. "In an issue that probes the dark underbelly of this American religion from violent metaphors to multimillion dollar player contracts the writers bring their faith to bear in fresh and creative ways."

Judges praised Christopher Cook for making a "persuasive case that privatization is turning public assistance into a profit-making venture for corporations," and highlighted the "lively and literate" way Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann got beneath "the stock replies of a much-interviewed subject" in her conversation with *Roger and Me* director Michael Moore.

Watch out for Tinky Winky!

If the anti-gay Christian Action Network (CAN) has its way, TV shows like *Will & Grace, Dawson's Creek* and maybe even *The Teletubbies* will carry "homosexual content" warning labels. CAN petitioned the Federal Communications Commission in March to add an "HC" warning label to the TV ratings system.

The TV ratings system features letterbased warnings including "L" for profane language, "S" for sexual content, "V" for violence and "D" for suggestive dialogue. It was devised and is administered by five of the major broadcast networks — ABC, CBS, WB, Fox and UPN. NBC and other networks have refused to adopt the system. But because the system is voluntary, and was devised by the networks, only they have authority to change it.

That didn't stop the Christian Action Network. Because some TV broadcasters already place warning labels on programs containing violence, sex and adult language, they should warn parents about gay content as well, CAN President Martin Mawyer said in announcing his idea. Mawyer, a former staffer for the Rev. Jerry Falwell, made his pitch less than two weeks after Falwell warned parents that the Teletubby Tinky Winky is gay because he's purple, sports a triangular antenna and carries a red purse.

Other shows that would earn an "HC" rating from CAN include *NYPD Blue* and *Spin City*. It is unclear whether CAN would insist that C-SPAN be rated "HC" during appearances by openly gay Reps. Barney Frank, Tammy Baldwin or Jim Kolbe.

— Tony Varona, HRC Quarterly, Summer 1999

Terminator technology

Monsanto, the large agro-chemical company that brought us toxic pesticides, Agent Orange and other environmental disasters, is at it again. This time, the company is attempting to increase its profits by ensuring that farmers are forced to buy seeds every year, rather than saving seeds for replanting as farmers have done for millennia.

In March 1998 the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Delta and Pine Land Company, now a Monsanto subsidiary, were granted a patent on a genetic engineering technique commonly referred to as "terminator technology." Plants engineered using this technology would contain a gene for a toxin that will render the seeds sterile. In addition to the resultant economic burden on farmers who are forced to buy new seed each year, there are environmental risks involved. Scientists warn that the trait for seed sterility could transfer to surrounding plants, thus spreading sterility through the ecosystem and posing an irreversible threat to biodiversity. In regard to "terminator technology," the United Nations Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP IV) urged "Parties, Governments as well as civil society and public and private institutions to consider the precautionary approach in its application." The fact that the USDA may receive royalties from this technology gives the agency a financial incentive to work for the industry's benefit, even at the expense of farmers and the environment.

The corporations involved in genetic engineering would have us believe that these new crops are a panacea for the world's hunger problems. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. By favoring farming systems that diminish plant diversity and promote large-scale industrial agriculture over family farming, developments such as terminatory technology will threaten the food security of farm communities worldwide.

> — Naomi Perian, *Greenpeace Magazine*, Spring 1999

Newspaper carriers: outside the law?

In their weekly internet column "Focus on the Corporation," Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman report that a 1994 Newspaper Association of America survey found there were about 450,000 child and adult carriers in the U.S. and that only 5.9 percent of carriers were covered by workers' compensation.

"The reason newspaper carriers are not covered by workers' comp is simple enough," say Mokhiber and Weissman. "In a decades-long campaign, the newspaper industry has successfully sought to exclude newspaper carriers from workers' comp laws, minimum wage laws, workers' safety laws, right up to and including social security laws."

University of Iowa Professor Marc Linder exposed the situation in an article published in the *Loyola Poverty Law Journal* entitled, "What's Black and White and Red All Over? The Blood Tax On Newspapers — or, How Publishers Exclude News Carriers from Workers' Compensation" (August 1998).

Linder sent his article to reporters and columnists around the country who had covered his research in the past, but was told they would never get the story past their editors. One reporter proved the exception: Associated Press workplace reporter Maggie Jackson interviewed Linder and others about the newspaper delivery-workers' comp issue and wrote the story. Her bosses at AP, a cooperative of newspaper companies, "spiked" it, Jackson said.

"When asked about the workers' comp problem, newspaper industry executives argue that since carriers are independent contractors and not employees, the carriers must assume the risks," say Mokhiber and Weissman.

Linder says that he found a few newspaper executives willing to treat carriers as employees and provide them with workers' comp coverage — among them independently owned publications such as *The Columbus Dispatch*.

(Focus on the Corporation is posted at </br><www.essential.org/monitor>.)

most takes



African dance at the farewell ceremony at the Leverett Peace Pagoda

Daniel A. Brown

Portraits from a pilgrimage: reversing the Middle Passage

R rom May, 1998 through May, 1999, participants in the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage traveled, in reverse, the route by which African slaves were brought to the American continents. The pilgrimage, initiated by Clare Carter, a nun of the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Order, and Ingrid Askew, a member of an African-American theater group, drew about two dozen core walkers, along with hundreds of others who joined the pilgrimage for a day, a week or a month.

From the New England Peace Pagoda in Leverett, Mass., the pilgrims walked down the coast to Georgia, where they traveled inland, stopping at significant sites of the civil rights movement. The mayor of Richmond, Va. publicly apologized for the history of slavery in the city in a ceremony welcoming the pilgrims.

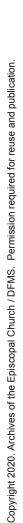
Bishop Desmond Tutu addressed the group in Atlanta, Ga, telling them they were walking the pilgrimage "to say to the world, 'Don't forget.' We are not going to forget so that we may heal the pain and the anguish. We are not going to forget so that we never repeat this. Let this never again happen to any of God's children."

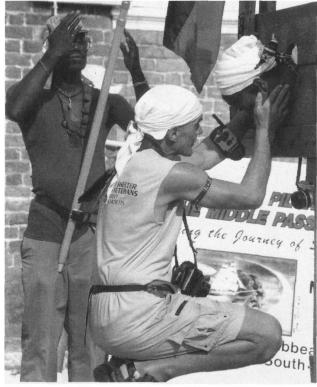
After traveling by bus to Key West, Fla., the pilgrims took boats to Cuba, Jamaica and Haiti. After a respite in Puerto Rico, most of the group flew to Cape Verde, an island off the coast of Africa, while eight continued down to Brazil. From there, two found passage on a ship crossing the Atlantic, and others traveled by plane. In Africa, the pilgrimage route included Senegal, The Gambia, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and South Africa.

The following reflections, excerpted from letters and journals of four of the pilgrims, offer glimpses into their experience of the journey.

Daniel Brown: Differences in perception

The pilgrimage is undergoing serious growth pains when I arrive. After an initial euphoric honeymoon, the group has found itself below the Mason-Dixon line, visiting sites of auction blocks, slave rebellions and executions. These locales traumatized the African-American members while eliciting a jarring curiosity from their European-American allies. No-







Bill Ledger, a Vietnam veteran from Dorset, Vt., comforts Tizita Assefa of Ethiopia who has placed herself in the stocks at Old Williamsburg to reconnect with her enslaved ancestors. Daniel A. Brown

Pilgrims pray at the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charlotte, S.C. Skip Schiel

where were these differences in perception more visible than at Old Williamsburg Va. Like Sturbridge, Village, Williamsburg is a living history museum of colonial America, with period costuming, prim shops and hordes of tourists. In the center of town are the stocks and pillories where families can insert themselves for a great photo-op. To me, it's all very quaint. Our procession spontaneously sidetracks over to the stocks. I'm about to jokingly put myself in them when I hear the sound of anguished cries rising from the black women near me. Several of them have fallen to the ground, weeping. I stop in my tracks, then slowly back away. Other women wordlessly take water and slowly bathe the wooden edifice, a ritual cleansing of its pain, blood and terror. They are encircled by their brothers and sisters as the Buddhist monks

immediately form an outer circle of prayer around them. The air becomes electric. Several white men in colonial costumes and tricorn hats wander by, oblivious to this transformation happening in their midst. Ramona Peters (Nosapocket), of the Mashpee Indian nation, shocks us by naming a reality deleted from the history textbooks. Her eyes flash as she speaks: "Is this what you want to see in the middle of your town? People brutalized and humiliated. Violence as entertainment. They did this to their women, their children, their African captives and anyone who dissented. And they are still doing this to us today!" She is so upset, she is shaking. Tizita Assefa, an Ethiopian woman of immense grace and dignity, quietly places herself in the pillory. Creating connection with her African ancestors, tears roll down her eyes and stain the bleached,

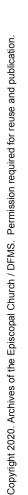
grey wood. Bill Ledger, a veteran of both the Vietnam War and earlier pilgrimages, puts his camera aside and lovingly begins to caress her face. It is an act of compassion and bravery, happening at a time when some black participants have expressed their leeriness about their white counterparts even being present at such an emotional outpouring. But we seem to be carried along by a spirit larger than ourselves here.

Prayers are said, libations are poured in the African tradition of honoring ancestral spirits, and the walk is resumed.

Renay Mercer: Pregnant with blessings

Spiritually, this journey has been trying. At times it is difficult to be on the land where my African ancestors gave their

15







Foot massage, Trenton, N.J.

Boat crossing to Cuba

Jennifer Iré

lives in order to feed white capitalism.

Toward the end of the U.S. portion of the journey we traveled from New Orleans, La. to Natchez, Miss. While in Natchez we fasted and were in silence for three days. We stayed on an old plantation and slept in the slave quarters. The evening that we broke the fast and silence, we held a ritual to honor our ancestors who had given their lives on that land. Part of the ritual was an altar that was made up of bricks that the enslaved Africans made with their own hands. At the center was a brick that had the imprint of one of their hands. During this ritual several pilgrims offered prayers, flowers, drumming, dancing, incense and candles in order to give honor and respect to God and the ancestors. I felt overcome with spirit, and danced around the circle of the group. When the dancing had stopped within me, I felt the spirit of one of my male ancestors telling me, "Renay, you

are pregnant with many blessings. All you have to do is trust." This is what this journey is about for me.

Gregory Dean Smith: Symphony of drums

In South America, we have covered many of the sites germane to our African ancestors: ports of disembarkment, whipping posts, plantations, cathedrals built by Africans, African burial grounds, slave quarters, holding cell areas. We have walked this earth, eaten, laughed, shared stories and exchanged cultural experiences and histories with the people of Bahia, Brazil. There were more Africans brought here than anywhere in the world.

We met the founder of a movement called Filho de Gangi (Sons of Gangi). Beautiful black women and men who are devotees of Gandhi wore all-white robes. Nearly 6,000 of them walked in a proces-

sion during Carnival de Bahia. Another group that showed what a black procession should look like was Ele Ave. Thousands of women and men dressed in twopiece white outfits with colorful prints of drums and dancers elegantly designed on them. Each section of drummers was led by the master drummer who walked backwards while conducting his orchestra. There were fine, beautiful sisters, wrapped in gorgeous white-printed sarongs, moving and dancing in rhythmic unison to the drums as they moved down the street.

Carnival Bahia is a continual symphony of drums, all kinds of drums and string instruments. Even the young kids practice their rhythmic patterns on the drums and in Capueira (the martial arts/ dance) much like the youth in North America practice their rap and hip-hop dance.

There are many kids sleeping on the streets. There are many reduced to beg-





National Dance Company of Cuba welcomes walkers and performs traditional African dances of the Orishas (sacred deities of Africa) on the grounds of a former slave plantation.

ging, young and old alike. A legion of trinket sellers swarm the tourist, all selling the same items to survive. Yes, racism is alive and well in Brazil. Neoslavery is accomplished here just as in North America.

Kathleen Anderson: Door of no return

Friday, we held a ceremony on Gorée Island, Senegal which included many people of this island community. Several traditional drummers led our procession around the island, culminating at the seaside in front of the so-called Door of No Return. With us, walking back through the slave house came the thousands of ancestral spirits we've collected coming through the U.S. and the Caribbean, as well as those raised up as we drummed our way around the island. Reversing the exit of our ancestors, coming back through

Reversing the exit of our ancestors, coming back through the Door of No Return, deeply impacted the African Americans and the Africans in our entourage.

the Door of No Return, deeply impacted the African Americans and the Africans in our entourage. As one young man remarked, "Never has anyone come back through that door. Thank you, this should become an annual event." Imagine, Africans from the Diaspora, Africans from the motherland reentering the door so many thousands of our ancestors departed from expecting never to return again. Imagine the tears which flowed from our eyes, the rejoicing which ensued, the whoops and shouts, the rhythmic beat of the drums celebrating our return home. In the vestibule of the house of slaves, pilgrims and community members danced rejoicing.

This is a powerful journey. Last week as we walked to Albreda, The Gambia in the high heat of the sun, I couldn't help but think of those captives who walked this same route to the slave ships.

With each step through the powdery, dusty red earth I thought of them chained together, walking into a hell they could never have imagined. I thought too of Josee and Nelson — the Bahai and her husband who hosted 17 pilgrims in their home in Cape Verde — escaping war-torn Guinea-Bissau with their two small children. There is so much work to be done to undo the legacy of slavery.

Tracking the Underground Railroad

by Leah Samuel

retracing the steps of thousands who used the Underground Railroad to run away from involuntary servitude and gratuitous cruelty.

While Cohen happily admits to having gained much, this pilgrimage to the past had not been his intention, at first. He had only meant to study history, not live it. In his senior year at American University, Cohen's interest in African-American history prompted him to study the Underground Railroad.

"I wanted to focus on an aspect of history that was largely unrecorded," he explained. "But the Underground Railroad was a secret system, and therefore there was little written evidence of it."

Much of the written material Cohen did find were either fictional accounts of slave travels or books highlighting the abolitionist movement. But Cohen wanted to find out where the Underground Railroad was — the physical layout of the routes that slaves traveled as they left the southern U.S. and found the way to Canada.

Cohen's first stop took him through the libraries, courthouses, and archives of his native Maryland. During the years of American slavery, Maryland was a free, or non-slavery, state.

"Any slaves coming up the east coast

would have to pass through Maryland," Cohen explained.

"So I started looking through old newspapers and found runaway slave notices. I noticed horses and wagons were used, disguises were used, as well as black and white accomplices. I found out about a Quaker community near our county who helped slaves escape,

Intrigued by the story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who had himself shipped from Virginia to Philadelphia, Cohen decided to take part of his trip in a box, enlisting friends to ship him from Philadelphia to New York. It was an incredible ordeal.

and kept diaries from that period. I went to the courthouse and found [records of] people who had been tried and convicted of harboring slaves." Assisting slaves in escaping was a federal crime at the time of the Underground Railroad, a fact that made even more remarkable its existence and its success.

Between 30,000 and 100,000 African-American slaves freed themselves this way between the 1830s and the end of the Civil War. "After about six months of research, I was able to reconstruct a number of different escape routes," Cohen said. "So basically, I wrote my paper for my senior thesis and thought that was the end of it."

After he graduated, Cohen went to work for the Montgomery County Historical Society. A director there read Cohen's paper and asked him to use it as a basis to write a guidebook for people taking driving trips through the area. After the book was published, Cohen found himself called upon to speak to schools.

"One time, a kid thought that because I knew about all these escape routes, I was a runaway slave," he laughs. But it was that innocent misunderstanding by an imaginative child that led Cohen to seriously think about using his research to recreate the fugitive life of those before him who were determined to no longer be slaves.

He got help with the trip from the National Parks and Conservation Association, with the goal of eventually creating a series of historic Underground Railroad sites. The NPCA supplied Cohen with a cellular telephone, a toll-free telephone number and a web site where he could document his progress, and where history buffs and others could track his journey.

Cohen chose one of the Underground Railroad routes he had originally mapped out. From May 6 to June 15, 1996, he traveled from Sandy Spring, Md. to Niagara Falls, Canada. Though much of the trip was on foot, Cohen also went by horse, boat and train, seeking out the most historically accurate modes of travel. He met people along the way who, hearing of his effort, took part in their own way.

"I met people in their 80s and 90s, who as children in the early 1900s, met some of the escaped slaves," he said.

Leah Samuel is a Detroit-based freelance writer.

"Sometimes, these people would show me where their parents and grandparents hid slaves.

"I was taken in by people who were very good to me," Cohen said. "They would get me something to eat, let me make long-distance calls, let me sleep or sit up and talk. I got really close to people, then said goodbye in the morning. You found and lost your home day by day. I thought, 'How could anybody stand this?'

"When traveling that route, I realized that the Underground Railroad was not all good," he added. "While it took you away from slavery, it also took you away from your family, and everything you knew, for the promise of something you didn't know."

Cohen's journey was filled with much fear and uncertainty, and no guarantees. Often he didn't know where his next ride or sleeping place was coming from. Sometimes, people he thought would come through for him did not.

WISHING YOU HAD HELD ON TO THAT OLD ISSUE OF THE WITNESS?

The topics explored in the pages of *The Witness* seldom go out of date. And study groups interested in a particular issue are likely to find a number of back issues which pertain.We still have copies available for most back issues. To order, send a check for \$3 per copy ordered to *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967, or fax (313) 841-1956.



Anthony Cohen

This was similar to the experiences of slaves, Cohen concluded, and he soon learned to accept his emotions as they came.

Because he was particularly intrigued by the story of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who had himself shipped from Virginia to Philadelphia, Cohen decided to take part of his trip in a box, enlisting friends to ship him from Philadelphia to New York. It was an incredible ordeal. With only his cell phone and a bottle of water, Cohen lay folded up in the box as it was loaded onto a train, bound for New York.

"Workers came and sat on the box, the weather was hot and I was sweating," he said. At one point he witnessed, through an air hole in the box, an unlocked freight-car door sliding open during the train ride.

"I thought I was going to fall out," he said. "I kept thinking that if the box fell out I would die, but that if I stayed in the box, I'd die from the heat."

When Cohen's box arrived in New York, it was mistakenly marked for further travel to Long Island, but he was rescued by friends who found him and pulled him out. By that time, Cohen had become so dehydrated that he was unable to urinate for almost three days.

"I kept thinking, 'My God! I was in the box for six-and-a-half hours and Henry Brown spent 26 hours in his box," he said.

Cohen engaged in numerous conversations along his way. "I think history and identity are important to people," he says. "People I met would go into their feelings on race, and they were really honest. One white man who heard my story confessed that he owned a piece of land in the 1960s, and when a black couple came by to buy it, he told them it had been sold, under pressure from his neighbors. He said he regretted doing that, but that he was glad he lived long enough to see people differently."

"I also met an old woman from Germany who, as a child, was taught to play games based on the Underground Railroad," he said. "She told me her parents taught her the games so they could prepare for hiding Jews during World War II."

Cohen is working on a film documentary and a book about his trip. The web site (www.ugrr.org/wwwhome.html) continues to gain the interest of those wanting to know more about the Underground Railroad. Meanwhile, Cohen hopes to raise money for the restoration of some of the safehouses the slaves used.

"History, I think, is a measuring stick to show us how far we've come," he said. "When we lead our daily lives, history is the here and now. But we can find within ourselves a connection to the past, a time when there was no political correctness. We in America talk about being a multicultural nation, but mentally, we're still trying to get there."

'We shall all be received in Graceland'

by Ken Sehested

I 'll never forget the experience. Our interfaith delegation of Jews, Muslims and an assorted variety of Christians had eaten a late dinner in a downtown restaurant in Zagreb. We had been invited by the Franciscan Abbot of Croatia to lead an interfaith service for one simple, dramatic purpose: to declare that the God of Roman Catholics, of the Orthodox and of Muslims — the dominant and warring religious subcultures shared no part in the violence engulfing the region.

My roommate and I were walking to catch the trolley, making our way back to our borrowed apartment. Then, out of the shadows, a guest joined us. His appearance was that of the homeless; his face and voice, of mental dysfunction. But not in the least bit menacing. Jovial, in fact.

We quickly sensed he was wondering where we were from, no doubt having been intrigued at the sound of our oddsounding language. "I'm from Pennsylvania, in the U. S.," said my friend Charlie, a resident of one of the Bruderhof communities. "And I'm from Tennessee," I said, speaking slowly and distinctly, vainly hoping that my modulation would make it easier to comprehend. The furrowed brow and shake of the head from our gentle inquisitor indicated his incomprehension.

Then an idea came to mind: "I'm from Memphis," I said. Suddenly his face was illuminated with recognition, and he roared out, "ELVIS!", and began a swivelhipped pantomime. You'd be surprised at how many times Elvis, and his Graceland home, have served to "locate" me in the mind of those who know little U.S. geography.

I've been to Graceland myself, during my eight-year Memphis residency. Well ... not exactly inside Elvis' actual house, which happens to be the second-most visited house (behind The White House) in the nation. But I've carted many outof-town guests there — including Baptist pastors from Ireland and from Cuba, and a touring group of South African antiapartheid activists, each of whom said they'd dreamed of going for years.

I was stunned when I first learned how spectacularly popular Graceland is as a ground zero for pilgrims. Nearly threequarters of a million people visit annually, 25,000 of those for the August anniversary of Elvis' death. They come from around the world. Even Israel has an Elvis fan club.

Evidently, one of the currently popular impersonators is a lesbian who performs Elvis tunes accompanied by her band, the Straight White Boys. Another — "El Vis," from Mexico — has cut

A disowned history of oppression

In a recent article in *Newsweek* magazine, one of their finest writers used the epithet for the poor, white, rural working class of the South in the lead article, stating, "President Clinton can bark orders like a redneck drill sergeant." I wrote a letter of protest. An inquiry as to why it was not published might be appropriate.

Is it because the larger culture, the allegedly sophisticated culture, needs and will find or create someone upon whom to place the blame for our interminable racist society? "We are not racist. They are the racists. Not government. Not commerce and industry. Not the media. Not the mainline churches. They, the rednecks, are the racists."

In Virginia at one point more than 70 percent of the white population was of indentured stock. While African Americans created a conscious culture out of their slavery — history, art, literature, music — the poor white, ashamed that his progenitors had been brought to these shores as servants, would be apt to tell the grandchildren their ancestors landed at Plymouth Rock. If a redneck were to deny and conceal her own slavery, then she had to dwell on the slavery of others, and with manipulation by the gentry deem herself better because of skin color.

Here is the real tragedy. Race has been the trump card used to keep the poor white and the poor black as enemies. The phenomenon, the music, the life of Elvis Presley, with all its foibles, sought something he simply intuited by being redneck, sensitive and brilliant—to heal that rift, to bring the two to see that their tragedies were one and the same — the same pain, the same maltreatment and exploitation, the same enemy that continues to promote the cleft between them for political and economic gain.

> — Will Campbell, at an Elvis Presley symposium in 1995, later published in Baptist Peacemaker

Ken Sehested is executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and lives in Clyde, North Carolina.

numerous albums. The King's appeal is extraordinary.

The majority of those who make the trek are, like Elvis himself, residents of the lower end of the economic spectrum. The scholars say that Graceland's appeal is precisely because Elvis represents the archetypal poor-boy-who-made-it-big.

The Memphis Chamber of Commerce is happy to be among the beneficiaries of such projection (Graceland rakes in \$90 million in annual revenues). The city's keepers of higher cultural standards are simply embarrassed at having "Redneck Heaven" as a symbol of the city.

We Southerners can be a bit touchy about our backwater, redneck image. You remember that Jeff Foxworthy joke: "You might be a redneck if ... hail hits your house and you have to take it to the body shop for an estimate." Then again, you might be a redneck if ... yuppies get rich making fun of you.

Unlike the "n" word, referring to African Americans, or the "w" word for those crossing the Rio Grande from Mexico, or even the "g" word for Asian-Americans of all sorts, no one ever bothers to substitute a single-letter abbreviation for "redneck."

Have you ever considered where the word comes from? In an earlier genteel age, the vast majority of "white" Southerners were not. Given the agricultural economy of the region, and the inability to own slaves even if they wanted them, most spent long days in the sun, bent over, neck exposed. The skin's discoloration was the inescapable mark of one's class.

I've always thought it odd that political progressives have warm, romantic associations with foreign-sounding words like peasant or *campesino*. Yet the closest English-equivalent is redneck.

Peasant dresses and shirts are the stuff of boutiques. Rednecks shop at Goodwill and Salvation Army.

We progressives are as fickle as the rest, I guess. I'll never forget my astonishment when, having fled my homeland as a student to embrace the cosmopolitan life of New York City, I arrived just in time for pointy-toed cowboy boots to come into style in Greenwich Village, and country music star Hank Williams Jr. to showcase at The Bitter End. Mesquitegrilled cooking, and later, "Cajun food," became the culinary rage in The City (as New Yorkers are wont to say). In West Texas, where I grew up, mesquite wood was what you used to barbecue if you couldn't afford the luxury of store-bought charcoal. And down the bayous of South Louisiana, where I went to high school, Cajun food was what the mongrel-breed illiterates out in the swamp ate.

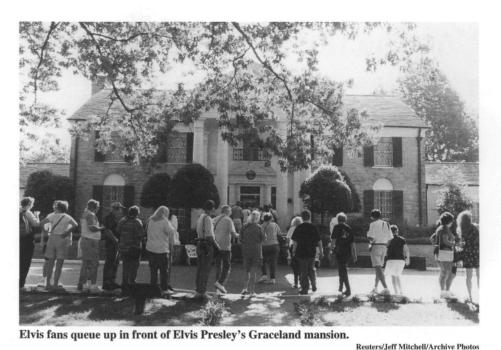
I keep hoping that the few major funding sources for peace activists will develop a predilection for Southern drawls. But so far *The New Yorker* magazine's caricatured map of the U.S., which denotes little evidence of intelligent life between the coasts, continues to shape the cultured mental grid of sophisticated progressives and reactionaries alike.

Like most pilgrimages, my own involved a journey of great physical and cultural distance. But like T.S. Eliot's explorer, I have arrived back where I started, "and know the place for the first time."

And because of that I am acquainted with the incredulous response, in John's Gospel (1:45-46), to Philip's claim to have "found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth."

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" was Nathaniel's sarcastic retort. Nazareth, it would appear, was within the borders of first-century Palestine's redneck country.

You'd be surprised at what's going on in the Nazarethian backwaters and along the "blue highways" which are folded into the fabric of the land between the coasts and out of the glare of big-city lights. As Paul Simon says in his "Graceland" song: "I've reason to believe we shall all be received in Graceland."



Coming home in Russia

by Martha Dage

n August 3, 1998, I board the plane from Copenhagen to St.Petersburg. I stare at my fellow passengers. These must be Russians. What will I learn about them? What will I learn about myself on this trip?

Making my way to my seat, I am struck by one man's face. It bears an uncanny resemblance to a picture I have seen of my father at a similar age. My father, who was born in St. Petersburg, and whom I met only once, when I was already an adult.

Larissa Radetskaya, my Englishspeaking guide, greets me warmly at the St. Petersburg airport.

She and I sit in the back of the car speaking English, while Anotoly Garshin, a Russian, in whose apartment Larissa has arranged for me to board, and his friend, the driver, sit in front. Their appreciative laughter greets my first Russian sentence. "Ya gavaryou tolka nemnochka pa roosky." (I speak only a little Russian.)

"You will be changed," a friend had predicted as I prepared for this trip. She cited the suffering and poverty of Russians as the reason. However, at no time during my week in St. Petersburg do I see anything horrifying or even surprising to me, since I live in inner-city Detroit

The one exception is the arrival at Anotoly's apartment. There is nothing really wrong with the apartment itself. It has adequate space and plumbing and a telephone, which, if one shouts, is perfectly serviceable. It's just that from the outside, it looks nothing like an apartment building.

We turn into a courtyard which appears to be at the back side of a factory.

"This is Anotoly's door," says Larissa, indicating an unlikely opening at the side of one building.

Gradually it dawns on me that these are not warehouses but residences.

Inside Anotoly's door, I find myself in a pleasant, light-filled apartment with white walls and parquet floors. My room is simple and clean. An icon hangs above the couch which my host quickly folds out into a bed for me.

Anotoly, a chemistry professor whose small salary necessitates that he offer

My sister and I, though we are foreigners who speak little Russian, are always accorded a warm smile of recognition or even a courtly bow, when we explain to Russians who our grandmother was.

hospitality to foreign visitors, is a charming host. He speaks simply. Having studied one year of college Russian, I can usually understand him.

After being plied with much food (unavoidable for a guest in Russia), I am left alone for a few hours to rest in the apartment. I am delighted to have the solitude. I stare out my window at the framework of a building rising from the mud. It will be a library some day but my host is not sure when, since it has already been under construction for seven years.

St. Petersburg. I breathe in and out. I am euphorically grateful to God to be here.

It's hard for me to say when my fascination with Russia began. It had always been there, waiting beneath the surface to blossom, ever since I learned at the age of 6 from my American mother that my father, whom I had never met, was Russian. It took root more deeply and painfully when, at 13, I learned more. His aristocratic family had been forced to flee Russia for their lives at the time of the revolution. He and my mother had not married. He didn't acknowledge me as his daughter.

My interest in Russia seemed to disappear altogether for about 10 years when, in my 20s, I became deeply involved in the mysticism of the omniscient, impersonal God of Eastern religion.

When I returned to the Episcopal Church in my early 30s, curiosity about my father surfaced again Finally, I searched him out and talked with him once. Politely, in his accented yet intimidatingly fluent English, he acknowledged that it was possible I was his biological daughter.

He told me the family medical history and his mother's maiden name. But, after that, he never answered my letters. Then he died.

In my early 40s, I still felt missing pieces, gaps in my sense of identity that wanted filling.

Following leads from the one conversation with my father, I located his other daughter, my half sister. There followed three years of correspondence, phone conversations and visits back and forth between my sister and me. Now we know each other, like each other even.

"Marta, your sister's on the phone," shouts Anotoly, who is back in the apartment, knocking at my room door. My sister is on the phone. My sister! For me!

Martha Dage teaches Spanish at Friends School and has worked part-time in *The Witness*' Detroit office for two years.

In St. Petersburg! A fine line of excitement, energy zings through my body from my toes up to my head.

"Hello!" I shout into the phone.

That first evening, Larissa and my sister and I do what residents of St. Petersburg love to do on summer evenings. We walk around gazing at the beautiful city in the light that never fades. We stroll

along the banks of the majestic Neva River. We see the Bronze Horseman, the statue of Peter the Great of whom Pushkin writes. We stand in the Isaac's Square with St. Isaac's Cathedral on one side and Catherine the Great's palace on the other.

"Does it look the way you thought it would ?" asks Larissa.

I ponder the question. The grand scale of the buildings, the spacious squares and

the wide avenues of the city remind me of Scandinavian cities I've seen. And yet, from time spent in India, there is something I feel and recognize here as Asian.

Finally I answer that I didn't have particular expectations. It's more as if there was always a blank space inside of me waiting to know just what St. Petersburg looked like, what it felt like. Now, these broad vistas, this indefinable evening light, the sounds of automobiles and gentle Russian voices are gradually filling that space.

It is marvelous for my sister and I to be here together. Unlike me, she was raised with a sense of herself as Russian, yet the iron curtain rendered St. Petersburg as impenetrable to her as it was to me. Now we can freely visit the Hermitage Museum where the furnishings and coaches used by the tzars appear more grand than in a fairy tale, and where we stumble upon four rooms of Picasso in the Impressionist Section. We climb to the top of St. Isaac's Cathedral where we see the whole city spread out before us in a stately expanse. weather) to St. Petersburg University. I have made contact with Oxana Vahromeeva, a young woman whose subject area is womens' history at the university. She has found the student records of our grandmother, a Bestuzhevsky student, one of the first women to attend this special womens' college of the university. From among the very wealthy and

> the nobility, only intellectually capable women could attend the Bestuzhevsky courses. These idealistic young women introduced progressive ideas, such as health care for the poor, into the larger society. Even the Soviets taught about the Bestuzhevsky students in a positive light. My sister and I, though we are foreigners and speak little Russian, are always accorded a warm smile of recognition, or even a



Martha Dage [center] visits her Teleios partner Evgenia Kuzmina [left] and her volunteer, Olga Rubis [right]. The Teleios Foundation is an Episcopal Church program working with the Orthodox Church in St. Petersburg by connecting older women, seminary students or needy families there with sponsors here. For more information write: P.O. Box 7213, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702; e-mail <teleios@aol.com>.

One day I am taken to visit my partner in the Teleios Fund, a babushka (grandmother) for whom I send regular financial support. Vera Sorokina, the Russian administrator of the program, escorts me up the six flights which my 80-year-old partner must climb daily. My partner lives in one room of a communal apartment. She and her caretaker have prepared tea for me with tomatoes, cucumbers, watermelon, bread and even sweets. Since these women have very little money this is, to me, a holy meal - and indeed, we stand facing the icon corner and say the Lord's Prayer in Slavonic before we begin.

Another day, my sister, Larissa and I slosh through mud and rain (typical courtly bow, when we explain to Russians who our grandmother was.

Now Oxana ushers us into a one-room museum. Historical photos and books line the walls, while a magnificent, tiled Russian stove presides in one corner. Soon we sit together in her office while she graciously serves loose tea without a strainer in ill-matching plastic cups. Instead of sugar we are offered varenia, fruit preserves, to sweeten it.

We give Oxana copies of our grandmother's passports, letters and some pages of literary criticism she wrote (which a Russian friend in America has described as "a treasure" for their exquisite use of the Russian language). She gives us a copy of our grandmother's diploma and other records.

Our exchange is a warm one. Russians are generally grateful for any bits of their history lost through Communism. For me, every time I hear Oxana refer to "your grandmother" I grow a little inside. It confers on me something I've been missing all my life, a sense of my Russian identity.

My week is now almost over. I reflect on my friend's prophecy that I would be changed in Russia. Although I've seen beautiful sights and been warmly received by hospitable people I don't feel fundamentally changed.

Sunday morning I head for the liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral. I get off the bus and cross a little square. The blue domes of the cathedral emerge from behind the trees. There's an ineffable freshness in the air.

The church has two floors where two liturgies are being simultaneously celebrated. I go up to the second floor. I am happy to find that, although I don't understand the Slavonic, the melodies being sung are familiar from the Orthodox church I have attended in America. I can find myself in the English/Slavonic liturgy book I've brought along.

I stand taking in the particularly Russian combination of grandeur and intimacy which surrounds me. The vaulting iconostasis hides the priest. Icons, illumined by the warm glow of candles, nestle in corners and by pillars around the church. Worshipers stand, in no particular formation, on the thickly carpeted floor. The choir's a cappella singing is so lovely that it produces in me an inner fluttering which I recognize as an indication that I'm overdosed. My senses cannot fully register this glory.

Celebrating the Eucharist, after the priest repeats the words of Christ, "This is my body," and "This is my blood," he then offers Christ's body and blood back to Him with the words, "Thine own of thine own we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all." Many worshipers prostrate to the floor and I do, too. The choir begins to sing so beautifully that I am almost physically dizzy.

From deep inside me, pushing aside everydayness, a passionate yearning to merge myself totally into God wells up. I feel certain that this yearning is not only in my heart, but that it is the collectively experienced meaning of our liturgy. This is the same feeling that fueled all my years of involvement in Eastern religion. Never, even faced with the undeniable truth that the Eastern religious group I belonged to was an exploitative cult, have I been able to deny that I was touched to the very core of my being by God when I was there. That experience has remained an inner barometer, measured against which, all my subsequent 15 years of Christian worship have always fallen short.

But now, unexpectedly, I am reunited to my first spiritual awakening. I know what part of my soul is Russian. I'm home!

The next day I leave Russia, changed.

Pilgrimage culture shock

They all laughed hard. Not uncharitably, mind you, but lustily and joyously; and I really did not mind. Though, if the truth be told, I was confused because the cause of their laughter was myself. And yet, so far as I knew, I had done nothing funny, nor did I look unusual to myself.

For it was a pilgrimage, wasn't it? We all were to assemble at a given address, on that particular date, to go to the shrine of the Martyred Jesuits in Auriesville, N.Y.

Well, here I was, with my hobnailed boots, a knapsack, and a precious gourd of water. What was so funny about that? Finally, one good soul exclaimed, "Katie, you don't mean you thought we were walking to Auriesville! That's hundreds of miles away. We are going by bus, you nut ..."

It was, I confess, my turn to look astonished, and finally to laugh. A pilgrimage by bus! I had never heard of such a thing. And in my lifetime I had made many pilgrimages.

A pilgrimage was a sort of prayer: an act of penance, thanksgiving or praise. How all this could be accomplished in a short bus ride was more than I could figure out. But then I was in America and not in Russia. I climbed meekly into the bus.

As we rolled through a beautiful countryside, I was back in the soft pastel-shaded summer of northern Russia.

The family walks with us to the village green. Here the rest of the pilgrims are assembling, all dressed alike. All are barefooted. They may be, and sometimes are, princesses and dukes or peasants and paupers. But no one can tell which is which.

We start chanting the litanies — we will keep that up at regular intervals all through the journey. In between the litanies there is great silence, in which each talks to God in their own way.

The bus lurched. Someone laughed. In the back of the bus someone started to sing "Mairzy dotes."

My hobnail boots were heavy on my feet, my knapsack heavy on my lap. My heart was heavy with a strange sorrow.

Maybe it was just homesickness.

- from My Russian Yesterdays, by Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Madonna House Pub., Cumbermere, Ont., Canada.

Pilgrims' tales

Dream pilgrimage

In February, 1937, when I was 14 years old, I became very ill with scarlet fever. Out of the seven children in our family, only the two oldest escaped the disease. My younger brother, age 4, died at its hands. On the night of the day on which he had been buried, the fever raged in me and I was close to death. I was unconscious for a time and then I was in a state of sort of semi-consciousness.

During this period I was aware that I was in my bed in my home and very ill, but somehow not far from me was an open field with a large round pit with a low wall that was rounded at the top enclosing the pit. Ladders were placed at different points around the wall of the pit and small dark scantily clad men were busily climbing up and down the ladders, going in and out of the pit.

They were not at all frightening, just intent on what they were doing. Although the pit was tranquil in appearance I somehow thought it must be hell and the little men had come to take me there as soon as I died. But I had complete certainty that I was not going to die although the doctor, nurse and others surrounding me were quite uncertain about whether or not I was going to pull through. I recovered from the illness and amazingly I had no permanent ill effects, although my temperature had been well over 108 degrees.

The image of the round pit and the small men remained with me after my recovery. The fact that I continued to wonder about its meaning, I believe, was evidence that the interpretation of its being hell did not explain the true meaning.

Forty years later, when I was 54, I was visiting friends in Santa Fe. One day we went to Bandelier National Monument

with its ancient Indian ruins. As we walked into the canyon, one of the first things I saw was a round, walled pit, that looked very much like the pit that appeared to me in my illness. I asked, "What is that?"

I was told that it was a *kiva* which was used by the Indians for religious activities. I felt that at last I had some inkling of the meaning of the strange apparition I had had on the night that I came so close to death.

I feel sure that there was some connection between these small

dark men, their ceremonies in the *kiva*, and my healing. A few years after the visit to Bandelier, I had the opportunity to move to Santa Fe and I felt drawn to do so. Occasionally, I go back to the *kiva* in Bandelier and just feel its energy and sit quietly by its side, still wondering about the precise connection between it and me.

- from a letter by a Roman Catholic sister in her 60s, in The Archetype of

Pilgrimage by Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift, Paulist Press, © 1996 by The Institute for World Spirituality



Native street procession, mural by Prefete Dufaut

Womb of the Goddess

Goddess rituals sometimes involve pilgrimages to sacred places. Non-native North Americans are beginning to recognize the deep loss we suffered when our ancestors were uprooted or uprooted themselves from lands that held memories stretching back through the generations. The earth holds the energies of the beings who have lived upon it. Sacred places hold the dreams, visions and hopes of all the people who have visited them. The idea of pilgrimage stems from this fact. A pilgrimage can be as simple as returning each year to a favorite park at a specific season. Some non-native Americans have also begun to visit the places known as sacred by Native Americans.

Many from European-based cultures gain sustenance from visiting sacred places in Europe.

One group of women traveled together to Crete to contact the energies of ancient cultures that celebrated the Goddess. During their pilgrimage, they hiked together up the side of a mountain to a small cave called Trapeza. Archaeologists say this cave was inhabited in Neolithic times, six to eight thousand years ago. The women were aware that caves were once viewed as the womb of the Goddess, the opening to the center of the earth, the place of mysteries.

The Trapeza cave has two small enfolding rooms. The women gravitated to the smaller one, placing candles and a terracotta image of a Neolithic Goddess on a stone in its center. Libations of milk and honey were poured on the rock, and a song was sung. Then each woman spoke all the names she could remember of her motherline. "I am Carol, daughter of Janet, daughter of Lena, daughter of Dora, who came to the United States from Germany, granddaughter of Mary Rita, daughter of Elizabeth who came from Ireland," and so on around the circle. This was followed by the naming of female mentors and friends.

As hundreds of female names echoed off the walls of the cave, the group sensed its connection to Neolithic women who may have sat in a circle in that same cave, remembering ancestors.

> from Rebirth of the Goddess: Finding Meaning in Feminist
> Spirituality, by Carol P. Christ, Perseus Books, 1997

Mount Kailâsa

Kailâsa is a temple of the Absolute. Unlike any mosque, cathedral or shrine, it is not man-made. Kailâsa simply is; it stands there. It has been discovered as a sacred symbol by most of the South Asian religions (Bon-Po, Hindus, Jainas, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc.). But it was already there.

Many pilgrimages are hazardous, but this one is especially risky. Neither modern rescue facilities are available

The overwhelming presence is that of the Earth. She is there with the moon and the sun, and there are the stars that move around smoothly and without hurry.

nor the traditional ones, since the long route of pilgrimage from Katmandu, Kodari, Nyalam, etc. has practically no pilgrims. The subjective aspect of this experience is that one has to be prepared to risk one's life — especially if one is not young and not trained in walking at high altitudes.

But if during the night the subjective awareness prevails, during the day the objective awareness is overwhelming. For hours and days the scenery is timeless and the landscape is out of history. All human concerns tied to temporality dissipate. Human history, both personal and collective, sinks into irrelevance. The immense valleys, the distant peaks, the lack of trees, the rocks and rivers, the vast highlands, all exist without history. They don't come from an origin and go to an eschaton. They are simply present.

In our modern times, most of human existence is lived on the river-bed of

history. Most of our human actions are goal-orientated and our lives are eschatologically conditioned. We seem to live for tomorrow, to work for the future and act in view of some goal to be attained in time. Death frightens because death frustrates all our projects and interrupts our dreams. We live projecting, believing we go somewhere in history. All this disappears in the high plains of Tibet. It is not that history stops. History is simply not there. Life is of the present. If you have to live life to the full, you have to live it today without waiting for the morrow, without reserving energy for the future.

The overwhelming presence is that of the Earth. She is there with the moon and the sun, and there are the stars that move around — smoothly and without hurry.

The pilgrim goes "there" just to go there, just for nothing — and if one has the secret desire for "merits" (*punya*) one is soon disappointed. The pilgrim interrupts all the chores and "important" activities of ordinary life and is not even sure to be able to resume them after the journey.

Paradoxically enough, the pilgrimage helps us realize that the way is to no-where, that it is now-here. It is the first step that counts. And each step is the first — and the last.

- from A Pilgrimage to Kailâsa and Manasasaras, by Raimon Panikkar, Concilium, 1996/4, SCM Press Ltd. and Orbis Books

Has your addressed changed?

PLEASE let us know if you have moved! Returned magazines cost us money — and you frustration!

EDS honors Wylie-Kellermann

he Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., awarded Witness co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann an honorary doctorate for her social justice commitments during the seminary's commencement day festivities May 27, 1999. Louie Crew (champion of the full inclusion of gay/lesbian/bisexual/ transgendered Episcopalians in the life of

the church), Rena Weller Karefa-Smart (a lifetime proponent of global ecumenism) and Roy I. Sano (a United Methodist bishop who has been a longtime advocate for multiculturalism and racial justice) were also honored.

Thompsett, Fredrica the seminary's dean of students, commended Wylie-Kellermann for her honorary degree with the following observations:

"Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, yours was a childhood and adolescence saturated with the life and politics of the Episcopal Church - your father,

Sam Wylie, was the chaplain at Brown University when you were born and he later served as Dean of The General Theological Seminary in New York and Bishop of Northern Michigan. It was perhaps inevitable, then, that at Columbia's School of Journalism, following undergraduate work at the University of Michigan, your nose for incongruity led you to choose as the subject of your master's thesis an analysis of the relationship between New York's St. James Episcopal Church on Madison Avenue and St. Anne's Episcopal Church in the Bronx. This project marked the beginning of a career devoted to a search for this nation's - and this church's conscience, a search that has taken you into the streets and to military installations, science laboratories, picket lines and courtrooms.

"Your first job out of journalism school, with Associated Press, took you to Detroit, a city which has claimed your heart and commitment ever since. After covering the Republican Convention in 1980, you became involved in an effort to save Detroit's Poletown community, an immigrant neighborhood of 4,200 residents occupying 465 acres with 144 local businesses, 16 churches, two schools and a hospital. When General Motors proposed to raze this historic



Jeanie and Bill Wylie-Kellermann

enclave for a Cadillac plant, the only group opposed to the project were the residents: Poles and blacks who together waged a fruitless struggle against the powers that be. You were arrested for an act of civil disobedience in a Poletown church that was destroyed in the course of this struggle. Your book, Poletown: Community Betrayed (published by the University of Illinois Press in 1989), chronicles and analyzes the Poletown struggle. The film Poletown Lives!, which you co-directed and wrote, won first prize in the American Film Festival for Social Issues Documentary.

"Since 1981 you have lived in the neighborhood of Detroit's Catholic Worker community. You fell in love with Bill Kellermann when you and he were arrested during an anti-nuclear arms vigil at Williams International (which manufactures Cruise Missile engines) during Advent 1983. The early energy of your courtship was marked by your efforts to get yourselves handcuffed together when you were taken to court.

"During your time in jail you began writing Michigan's bishop, Coleman McGehee. He subsequently asked you to join his staff to work on social issues. Later, from 1985-1991, you became editor of the Diocese of Michigan's newspaper, The Record. In 1991 you became editor of The Witness magazine and co-editor in 1997, offering the church an unpredictable and often courageous challenge in matters of justice, spirituality and resistance. In

1996 you were a founder of Readers United, started as a community response to the Detroit Newspaper strike, which helped facilitate 300 arrests in support of strikers.

"You have always sought to teach your daughters Lydia and Lucy that prayer, praise and protest are a part of daily existence whatever a person's age and so have included them on solidarity trips overseas and at local protests and Advent vigils. And now, as you battle to survive the assault of a brain tumor, you are teaching them that there is much to be learned in every situation,

including and perhaps most especially when our lives are most threatened. 'Some things won't be changed,' you have written, 'and some things deserve to be protested even if they are unlikely to change - life is short and younger people generally take it too seriously, chasing their tails when they could be giving thanks."

The seminary's faculty had recommended Wylie-Kellermann for the honorary degree, Thompsett concluded, "in recognition of the gift that her continuing resistance and sustained spiritual journey have been to us all."

Vital Signa

EPF activists arrested at Nevada test site

A dozen members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF), including EPF vice president Janet Chisolm and *Witness* co-

editor Julie A. Wortman, were arrested on Mother's Day, May 9, with an estimated 156 other protesters at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. The civil disobedience, which involved crossing into the test site, was part of a Healing Global Wounds "Honoring the Mother" gathering aimed at drawing national attention to continuing radioactive poisoning of Western Shoshone land by the U.S. government.

Before the crossing, Ian Zabarte, of the Western Shoshone National Council, put test site officials on notice that they were trespassing on Shoshone lands and were

in criminal violation of international law. The arrestees were detained and released on site.

Around 350 people participated in the three-day Healing Global Wounds event May 8-10. EPF sponsored a one-day conference on nuclear issues in Las Vegas on May 7 and celebrated a Eucharist at the test site boundary on Mother's Day morning.



Members of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship gather to celebrate a Mothers' Day Eucharist just outside the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. J.Wortman

On Monday, May 10, 175 people participated in a Western Shoshone occupation of the test site by entering the site, erecting a teepee and joining in a Sunrise Ceremony led by Corbin Harney, the spiritual leader of the Western Shoshone Nation. Another teepee was set up over five miles inside the test site perimeter, high on a ridgetop overlooking Mercury, Nev., the community which serves test site personnel. A third teepee was

> erected well inside the front entrance to the test site.

Lands for the Nevada test site were seized from the Shoshone in 1948. One hundred families were forcibly relocated from lands guaranteed under the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley. This was only the second time since 1947 that the Shoshone were able to have morning prayer on this portion of the property, which covers 1,250 square miles.

— Healing Global Wounds/ Shundahai press release, <www.shundahai.org/ HGW>. (Healing Global Wounds is a multi-cultural alliance of organizations and

individuals seeking restoration of respectful, sustainable living with the Earth. HGW, which is part of the Abolition 2000 Global Network, coordinates spring and fall gatherings at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.)

We welcome you, but not your gun

The State of Utah has one of the most liberal concealed weapons laws in the nation. It is legal for someone to carry a concealed weapon into a church, synagogue, or mosque. But this year the legislature informed the religious community that if you do not want to have guns brought into your worship services, you must publicly post your desires.

Recently, congregations in the Episcopal Diocese of Utah have been receiving a large enameled metal sign that says: "The Episcopal Church Welcomes You But Not Your Gun." In the top corner is the Episcopal shield and in the center is a gun in a red circle with a line through it.

Utah's bishop, Carolyn Irish, has convened a meeting of religious leaders in the state to ask the Governor to call a special session of the legislature to look at our gun laws with the hope of having them tightened. To this end this group of religious leaders, with funding and initiative from the diocese, hosted a vigil for peace at the State Capitol on April 29. It was geared for young people to share their feelings about violence in their schools. We had a couple hundred people show up (plus all the local media). There were about 12 speakers, all high school or college students. It was a very powerful and moving evening.

> — Lee Shaw (Shaw is an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Utah, <WinstonLS@aol.com>.)

Speaking out against the bombing

As church agencies such as Action by Churches Together work to provide food and other aid to refugees of the Kosovo conflict, people of faith here in the U.S. continue protesting the U.S./NATO aggression in the former Yugoslavia. Writes Witness reader Dotty Dale of Bellingham, Wash .: "Three of us invited others of various faith communities to meet and consider how to speak out against U.S. bombing of Yugoslavia. Twenty responded! In less than two weeks we gathered 400 signatures and \$2,000 for a half-page ad in two local newspapers. We were not alone. We just needed to find one another."

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Vital Signo - Vital Signo - Vital Signo - Vital Signo-

Middle passage

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Middle Passage, a novel by Charles Johnson, Scribner Paperback, 1998.

R utherford Calhoun left New Orleans in 1830, stowing away on a ship to Africa, not as a pilgrim, but in order to avoid a marriage to a Boston school teacher that was forcefully suggested by his creditors. Nonetheless, the trip changes him profoundly.

A gambler, a drinker, a ladies' man, Calhoun was a smart, well-educated and recently freed young man who felt he had been wronged by his brother's choices and planned to capture as much adventure and wealth as he could on his own.

The ship he impulsively boarded, the *Republic*, was, it turned out, heading to Africa to pick up slaves for the return run. An awkward situation, but Calhoun wasn't known for his sense of solidarity. In fact, the "wrong" committed by his brother was that when their master was dying, they were assured their freedom and the older brother was invited to say what he would like out of all the man's possessions. Calhoun had dreams of wealth and servants, but his brother chose to share the wealth with all the African Americans in their area. Calhoun was livid.

With some of the best writing I have encountered in years, Charles Johnson describes the innerworkings of Calhoun's mind as he learns the psyches of his shipmates — educated officers and uneducated, violent misfits in the crew. He then exposes the thoughts in Calhoun's mind as the Africans are loaded on board, members of a rare and accomplished tribe, the Allmuseri.

The reader also learns that the Allmuseri's influence reached the crew long before their bodies were loaded on the boat. They were rumored to be extremely capable and powerful spiritually, only captured because they had been starved by a drought for three years. The white crew was edgy and afraid, wondering if the tribe members could shapeshift, could break their chains with their wills, could bring on madness amongst their captors. Worse yet, with the 40 slaves, the captain also brought on board a large crate about which he would say

The white crew was edgy and afraid, wondering if the tribe members could shape-shift, could break their chains with their wills, could bring on madness amongst their captors.

nothing but which required to be fed.

Calhoun, by virtue of his education, becomes a confidant of the self-centered captain and of the first mate. Likewise, by the color of his skin, Calhoun was able to have a relationship with at least one of the captured Allmuseri.

Several mutinies are planned — at least one by the ship's crew which believes, probably rightly, that the captain's plans will bring them all to their deaths. But there are other factions amongst the crew, and the heaving misery and latent power of the 40 captives.

The reader, like Calhoun himself, can't figure out where Calhoun's allegiances lie. The captain, who knows that he will die, asks Calhoun to keep the ship's log, so that the three men who funded this journey will have an account of the captain's faithful effort to bring the cargo back. In the process, he confides the name of the funders - one of whom is the very African-American underworld boss who was ready to force Calhoun to marry the school teacher. Calhoun is stunned that a black man would make money off the enslavement of other black people. This may be the first glimpse of solidarity we see in him.

To avoid the conflict of interests to which he has committed himself, Calhoun hands a key which he believes will unlock the chains to one of the Allmuseri he has gotten to know.

The author's writing about language, about cultures, about the ways that the Allmuseri have changed the crew and the ways the crew have changed the Allmuseri is fascinating. Gradually, Calhoun begins to see that his brother could easily be one of these principled Allmuseri men. And now an Allmuseri girl child has laid a claim on his heart. Finally, with all the intrigue, blood lust and danger at sea, Calhoun concludes he has had enough adventure. He's even looking back at the school teacher with a different understanding.

So, as with all good pilgrimages, the one who undertook the journey comes home changed.



Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is co-editor of *The Witness*, <jeanie@thewitness.org>.

F or the past three years Rosemary Williams has led American women into such countries as Haiti and Bosnia to confront first-hand their own material wealth and what it costs them. The stark contrast between what they own and what others live without often triggers a stunning reappraisal of their lives.

For Williams, leading such pilgrimages flows directly from her own experience with personal wealth and the meaning of money. And the changes she sees in women who travel alongside her are akin to what has gone on — and continues — in her own life.

"What happens on a trip to Haiti or Bosnia is that it is harder to come home [to the U.S.] than it is to leave," said Williams, who leads the Women's Perspective division of the nonprofit organization called Ministry of Money.

"When you go to Haiti, of course you see the poverty, the desperation, the lack of food and hospitals, the lack of clean places to just sit and think. But when you come home you realize that at the flick of a finger you can have anything you want. It becomes harder to adjust to the privileges of this country."

The privileges have been many for the 62-year-old Williams. She attended Manhattanville College in New York, a private girl's Catholic school which has drawn students from elite Catholic society families, including Jean Kennedy and Ethel Skakel Kennedy. After her marriage, the Brooklyn native moved to Con-



Kate DeSmet is a locked-out *Detroit News* religion writer.

"Something happens to you when you go to a place like Haiti. We see things back here at home that we've never seen before because we walk around with blinders on."



Rosemary Williams

Putting money in perspective by Kate DeSmet

necticut with her husband, giving birth to five children and raising their family with comfortable means, good schools, and vacations at some of the best resorts.

After Williams and her husband divorced, she studied economics and became a banker and financial planner.

Williams loved to shop, with a particular eye for buying clothes that matched the seasons of the year and the styles of the times.

Then, in the late 1980s, she accepted an invitation to speak at a luncheon sponsored by an Episcopal women's church group. She offered advice on managing money. Afterwards, the pastor handed her an envelope containing information about a group called Ministry of Money. The organization, based just outside Washington D.C., has been conducting workshops since the early 1970s examining the meaning of money in a wealthy western society. The ministry believes how we value money is often reflected in our relationships, our mental health, our search for God.

Williams was intrigued and decided to volunteer as a financial planner.

"I couldn't believe that I actually had an opportunity to combine my spiritual beliefs with my technical knowledge," she said. In the mid-1990s she was hired to lead the Women's Perspective unit, which focuses specifically on money and spirituality in the lives of women. For Williams, the job shift was also a major life shift.

"I gave up a career as a financial plan-

ner, which means I earn less money, I travel a lot, I don't buy what I used to. I don't think I need as much as I used to think I needed. And I've seen this happening to a lot of the women when they come home from our trips."

To date, Williams has made 26 trips to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. There have been only a few trips to Bosnia, in part because of the ongoing fighting and violence in the wartorn Balkans. Williams' trips are for women, although Ministry of Money sponsors similar trips for both genders. More than 700 travelers have taken part in what the ministry refers to as "reverse pilgrimages" since 1982.

"The idea isn't so much to go to Haiti to do good for others, although that's part of the plan," Williams said. "But once we get there and become part of the daily fabric of life we discover how much is being done for us, how much we learn from the people, especially the women."

This past May, a return trip to Haiti was scheduled around visiting a hillside community developed more than 10 years ago by a group of Roman Catholic nuns. The pilgrims, who stayed in Haiti for approximately seven days at a cost of \$1,500, worked in the local embroidery factory, the hospital and school, and an orphanage.

With the help of an interpreter, the American pilgrims get involved in the Haitian women's day-to-day life. Yet, Williams added that it is impossible to work with the same stamina or strength of the women of Haiti.

The degree of work astounds the American pilgrims who, on recent trips, have included a retired United Church of Christ minister, a middle-aged female farmer from Iowa, college students working on doctoral dissertations, and one young mother who had never crossed the borders of her own home state.

"Even though we get women from all

different backgrounds they all seem to choose this experience for the same reason—it has to do with the meaning of life and how we're connected to other people in the world," Williams said.

"And something happens to you when you go to a place like Haiti. We see things back here at home that we've never seen before because we walk around with blinders on."

She recalls a trip Ministry of Money made to Haiti with both men and women. The group walked past a village of immense poverty and proceeded to climb a hillside where the houses of the wealthy

"I realized just for us to have coffee that morning somebody had to roast, shell and grind the beans."

were located. At the top of the hill, the group could look down and see both the wealthy homes and the desperately poor village below. A man in the group began to cry.

"He said he had never noticed before that back home (in the States) he lived on the hillside, that he had wealth and that he had never noticed those who did not," Williams said.

On another trip, the women traveling with Williams were offered an opportunity to take a bath in a Haitian village with no running water. Williams said a young pilgrim returned from her bath in tears. "I couldn't understand why she was crying and she said, 'No one has ever taken care of me like that. Even when I was in the hospital the nurses didn't care for me like that.'

"I didn't understand what she meant. Then I was taken to a three-walled cinder-block stall that contained a bowl filled with water. I took my clothes off and threw them over a wall. A Haitian woman came in with a bar of soap and a cloth and I thought I was just going to wash up. But she began to wash me. It was the most loving, gentle experience I'd ever had. It was incredible that someone would take care of me so personally. They gave up their beds for us, they bathed us. I understood what the young girl meant — no one had ever taken care of me like that before either."

Then, one morning after breakfast in a village home where they were staying, a woman traveler asked if she could take home some of the good coffee they'd been served.

"Within the next 15 to 20 minutes we heard this loud banging in the backyard," Williams said. "There were two women picking coffee beans and a young man pounding the beans with a stick. I realized that just for us to have coffee that morning somebody had to roast, shell and grind the beans. The women get up at 3 or 4 a.m. and walk miles with enormous buckets just to get water.

"When I came home I realized how I can just get up, walk to the bathroom, flush the toilet, have healthy water, plug in the coffee maker, and get the newspaper delivered. What I can do in this one hour they couldn't do in one day."

Such experiences have led Williams to simplify her own life, to cherish relationships over material things, and to travel deeper along the paths where she feels led by faith.

"I'm going to places I don't understand, and I'm walking into situations that I don't know how to deal with, and I'm depending on God for guidance, seeking the spirit and moving with the spirit," she said. "I had to give up a lot to do this, but I don't miss those things I had before. I don't yearn for the cars, the clothes, the gadgets, the jewelry. I'd say my faith has increased a thousand-fold and I'm not done yet. I can see myself doing this for a very long time."

Letters, continued from page 3

of Baghdad. This is prohibited under the sanctions. We visited the children, who, according to UNICEF, are dying at the rate of over 200 per day due to the sanctions. There may soon be a whole generation of people missing. Iraq is in the grips of worldwide corporate greed. It is over oil. The Gulf War was the result of Kuwait stealing Iraqi oil. The world's producers supported Kuwait. After the war the embargo was imposed. The killing continues until Iraq privatizes the oil, so that the oil companies have control. The people and their leaders have been demonized by the world media.

We met with a representative of the Middle East Council of Churches. He told of what a wonderful country Iraq was before the Gulf War. The highest grade of social services and health care in the Middle East. The war and sanctions are destroying the people.

We visited the Humanitarian Office of the U.N. We learned of the Oil for Food Program of the U.N. which only provides \$177 per person for a year. This is to cover food, medical services, shelter and education. Totally inadequate.

Iraq has a choice to stop the killing by privatizing the oil reserves and turning them over to the transnational corporations.

Going to Iraq was a road to Damascus experience for me, an Anglican.

Jim Pence Vancouver, BC

Littleton school shootings

AS A PARENT, FORMER HIGH SCHOOL teacher and coach, I am horrified and moved to tears regarding the tragedy in Littleton, Colo. The fact that this could have happened anywhere is particularly appalling. With eight school shootings taking place in the past two years and now this, the worst outbreak of school violence in this nation's history, one must surely pause and wonder what is going on.

This tragedy is a symptom of a very deep problem within this country. Our congress and state legislatures, led by right-wing conservative politicians, have fostered a culture of death and punishment for the last two decades. The nations' and the states' highest courts have wiped their feet on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Individual freedoms and safeguards are being lost at an appalling rate. State-sponsored terrorism (against its own citizens) is the root cause (and model) that perpetuates this extreme expression of anger and hate. An anger born of alienation, rejection and hopelessness. Police have become paramilitary units designed to wage war against citizens. Unrestrained police-spawned violence has extended from coast to coast, with a California teen shot 19 times while sleeping in her car and in New York, an unarmed man shot 41 times. Senseless draconian drug laws and heavy-handed enforcement have resulted in over 900 thousand people in prison. With the recent proliferation and expansion of death penalties at the federal level and stampede at the state level to get "on board" with the feds holding out the carrot of "tough-on-crime legislation," the baby is being thrown out with the bath water. Just what do you expect? The United Nations, The European Union and Amnesty International have all cited the U.S. for human rights violations in regard to its death penalty stance and the rate at which its citizens are being incarcerated. Violence begets violence and please do not trivialize or underestimate this most basic of all facts.

As a nation we need to change and to heal. We need to stop all of the violence at the state and federal level of sponsorship. We need to rethink our philosophy of crime and punishment. We need to deal with one another at a human and caring level. We need to adopt a policy of reconciliation and forgiveness, not retribution and punishment.

> Milton L. Rice Norfolk, MA

Restorative justice

JUST FINISHED READING your November 1998 issue on prisons, etc. Your readers may be interested in a conference the Diocese of Washington is sponsoring on restorative justice to be held at Washington Cathedral on October 15-16, 1999. We are working with the national office of the NAACP, the Restorative Justice Institute, Prison Fellowship International and the Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy. For information people can call me at 703-671-7610.

> John Frizzell Alexandria, VA

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The Witness Volume 82 • Number 9 • September 1999 Living in debt

A politics of place

THANK YOU FOR SENDING ME the June 1999 issue of The Witness. Right now I am deeper in paper than I care to admit so I will not be subscribing. I'll check to see if the church where I'm attending receives a copy and encourage them to get it if not. I am a member of Peace Action and try to stay knowledgeable on local environmental issues. I applaud the Short Takes piece on nonviolence training (I know the mediation training our children received while in public school was helpful) and the Thomas Berry encouragement for everyone to be thinking of how to give children the awareness of the sacred community around them. I will keep this issue and hopefully find time to read other ones.

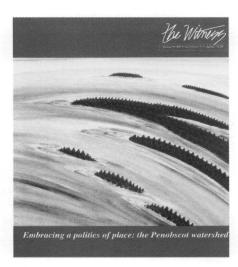
Cathy Markatos <markatos@mindspring.com>

AS SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS visiting Maine and would like to live there, I particularly appreciated the June issue centering on the state's ecology. I think the formation of the Committee on Spirituality and the Environment in the Diocese of Maine is an initiative that should be emulated throughout the rest of the country. As Vice President Al Gore eloquently outlines in his book, Earth in the Balance, saving the environment should be the central organizing principle around which all our policy-making decisions in government are made, as well as those in our personal lives, and it's encouraging to see the Episcopal Church playing an active role in raising the level of awareness concerning the ecological crisis in which we now find ourselves.

Paul Winters Framingham, MA

THANK YOU FOR THE JUNE ISSUE of *The Witness*. What a gift! Not only have you underscored the "place centeredness" which





is essential to truly incarnational theology, but you have illustrated it with one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

From my student days at the University of Maine in Orono, I have treasured the Penobscot watershed, and still make annual pilgrimages to the awesome beauty of Baxter State Park. Murray Carpenter's article read like a trip through time and memory, as I pictured each location along the Penobscot from Seboomook Lake to Bucksport.

If each of us could take a favorite watershed and travel it with mental images as *The Witness* enables us to do with the Penobscot, we should see what we have despoiled and, I trust, take the personal and political steps necessary for restitution.

> Philip C. Jacobs Canton, MA

Living at the edge

THANK YOU FOR PRINTING Denise M. Ackermann's review of *Living at the Edge: Sacrament and Solidarity in Leadership* by New Zealand bishop Penny Jamieson. As a one-time scapegoat, I have been quite estranged from the church and, to some degree, from Christianity as a whole. Reading Jamieson's book allowed me to imagine that somewhere or somehow I might be able to again be part of that imperfect institution that, in so many ways, I still love. In fact, as I came to the end of her text, I was able to pray again, for the first time in at least four years. Thank you for leading me to this useful book.

> Elaine Caldbeck Evanston, IL

Classifieds

R & R: Martha's Vineyard Island

"Granny's House" guest suite, Edgartown, Mass. Private entrance, kitchenette, bath/ laundry and serene master bedroom connect to sun porch via wraparound deck overlooking seven-circuit labyrinth. Shaker furnishings feature queen fourposter bed and writing table. TV/VCR, telephone, bed linens provided. Sleeps two; no smoking, no pets, please. \$95.00/ night, \$650.00/week. "We make you kindly welcome." (508) 627-6075.

Episcopal Peace Fellowship

"Will you strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being?" Our Baptismal Covenant calls us to do just that. Since 1939 the Episcopal Peace Fellowship has provided community, support and fellowship to Episcopalians committed to answering this call. Won't you join us? Contact EPF, P.O. Box 28156, Washington, D.C. 20038; 202-783-3380;<epf@igc.apc.org>.

FOR Nonviolence Education & Training Coordinator

F.O.R., a national interfaith peace organization, seeks "Nonviolence Education and Training Coordinator" to organize and lead nonviolence education and training programs. Application deadline Oct 1, 1999. Starting date: Jan. 3, 2000. Send resumes and contact Yvonne Royster for application form. The Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. 914-358-4601. Fax: 914-358-4924.

Witness classifieds

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

Learning to be an elder

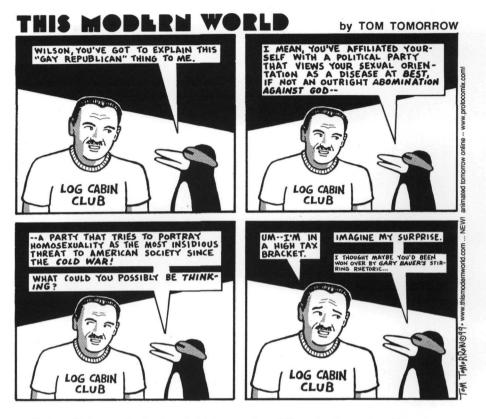
IT'S HELL TO GROW OLD! It becomes a world of contradictions. "Golden Age" my eye! Here I am living in an organism that ceases to function as it has always done. I am amazed at how hard it is to get up off the floor if I am there for some reason or another. Sometimes when I start off walking after sitting for a while I tend to veer off to the right for no intentional reason. Something has gone wrong with my internal gyro. When I see young people dancing or running or having some sort of active fun on TV, something inside says, "You used to do that. Don't you wish you could do it again?" I hang my head and the voice inside says, "Of course, you idiot!"

The doctor tells me that I have some nerve damage in my lower back from a rear end collision and that my nerves to my legs do not reliably respond to the directions from my brain anymore. "No, there is no remedy," in answer to my query. That is only one of the many contradictions in the world of the senior. Many of my friends that I would enjoy being with have gone on their journeys to warmer climes or to that pie in the sky everyone talks about.

The biggest contradiction is that inside I am still the same as I was at any age in the past, but when I want to do any of the things that I used to do that gave me joy and enhanced my life, I am blocked by a body that is either incapable or unwilling.

There are compensations. I have a treasure of experiences and information that I can dive into any time I begin to feel deprived. I believe that what I have stored should be worth millions, but I have yet to find a way to merchandise it. I imagine many people in my age group would have the same complaint.

There are memories: I can remember the thrill of riding up on the high teetery seat of my grandmother's buggy, holding onto her knitted shawl to keep from falling. I remember an odyssey to New Mexico and Colorado with my homeless family while Dad tried to find a job during the depression of the early 1930s. I remember when we bought our first automobile after our return, a 1924 Chevrolet with disc wheels, that was just as old as I was. I remember the Sunday picnics with all the neighbors and the appearance of the "bootleg-



gers" who sold the men flat bottles of whiskey that were easy to hide in their coat pockets. I remember when the whole neighborhood gathered at the deepest and widest part of the canal or river to have a swimming party. It was probably there that I remember the first of many times that I fell in love and the sweet languid feelings I had whenever it happened. I remember the excitement of going to school and how I could lose myself in the books and the adventures they offered. Memories too numerous to tell, but each with a flavor that I can savor from the life I have lived.

So — it isn't all bad! My life is just a series of ups and downs. Like everyone else. It's like Chekov said, "Any idiot can face a crisis. It's day-to-day living that wears you out."

> Quentin Kolb Salt Lake City, UT

IN YOUR ISSUE ON AGING, Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann reflected in an editorial about a recent peace action that she and Bill attended. She shared that she and Bill were the youngest couple in attendance, but for a few Catholic Worker folks. I found this incredibly disturbing. Where is Generation X in the peace movement?

I am pastor and church planter of Little Calumet Christian Fellowship in Hammond, Ind., near the Chicago border. We are intentionally multicultural and bilingual. We are the first Mennonite Church in North America to form a worshiping congregation by and for Generation X. When I am honest with myself, I am forced to ask, where are we in the struggle for peace?

I oftentimes preach and teach Jesus' third way to those in my community of immigrants, refugees and marginalized. I must confess that I have not been involved in many peace actions in the last few years. I have not encouraged my congregants to participate in the struggle for peace either. For these and other sins of apathy and complacency I am truly sorry and I publicly repent.

Rocky Kidd Little Calumet Christian Fellowship <rockykidd@usa.net>

continued on back cover



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 \mathcal{S} Living in debt: a national way of life by Camille Colatosti The current 'financial boom' in this country affects only about 10 percent of the population — and is financed by growing household debt.

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Trade liberalization and globalization seem to be benefiting no one except the powerful, financiers, speculators and traders.



22 Searching for economic alternatives by Peter Werbe

From microcredit to barter, the search for economic alternatives is both encouraging and elusive.

Cover: Woman with the Gambling Mania by Théodore Géricault, c. 1822, Louvre, Paris.

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Co-editor/publisher	Julie A. Wortman
Co-editor	Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
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Since 1917, The Witness has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience --- advo-cating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal church, we are a journal of spiritual guesting and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

On radical intentions

by Julie A. Wortman

hese days my partner Anne and I are trying to figure out how to finance the small barn that we need to house Anne's fledgling landscape and twig furniture enterprise. We are weighing options, calculating and recalculating income and expenses. We have worked hard to live within our means, although we still owe the bank for both our house and truck.

Living on half of what we used to, we're aware we now give money away at a dramatically reduced rate. Most notably, we no longer pledge substantial financial support to a church congregation. But each month we and the other members of our small community circle try to give an agreed-upon amount to a fund we keep against future possibilities, whether disastrous or enticing. Not an interestbearing account, just some cash kept in a safe place.

We began the fund more than a year ago. One of our number now needs the money very badly and the circle takes joy in its ability to help. No repayment, no judgment, no strings. The money will accrue again. And there may be other times that the support we can offer one another will beneficially include money, though money is the least of it. Our weekly time together, spent holding one another's stories as we each reach for the deepest possible personal integrity and spiritual understanding, has been shifting our sense of where our security and abundance lie.

We often pay lip service to such liliesof-the-field matters in church settings, but for me the bone-deep knowledge that all will be well has come since Anne and I left conventional parish life. Few congregations, I know, may be able to sustain the sort of soul-searching conversation that has nurtured the sense of solidarity which is increasingly setting the members of our circle free, but in these halcyon economic times there seems a crying need.

Consumerism takes as axiomatic that the good life always has a price tag or should.

The topic of "stewardship" comes up in our churches, of course, but timed largely in relationship to the annual pledge drive to support the church budget. The talk is superficially about using our personal resources of time, talent and money for the glory of God, or out of gratefulness for all that God has given us — with the biblical tithe a convenient flat-tax standard of how to put a dollar value on the church's and/or charity's share. One recent diocesan stewardship column even went so far as to counsel that we allow God's love to go [financially] "unrequited" at our moral peril.

Such claims, I'm bound to believe, must be the result of cultural conditioning. Consumerism takes as axiomatic that the good life always has a price tag — or should. In this regard I think of the credit card company which is a prime employer in three towns near us here in Maine. Local boosters are pleased by the company's expanding presence. As one editorial enthused following the recent opening of a new call center in Rockland, "These are [300] well-paying jobs with benefits, and it is a non-polluting industry. Not to mention that [the company] is generous with its money within the community."

Driving by the chief executive's sprawling residence on the outskirts of Camden, a complex which now has a spectacular ocean view (thanks to the clear-cutting of trees in defiance of shoreline zoning laws, the financial penalties calculated as part of the job's cost), one gets the clear impression that business is good. And it will probably remain so as long as expanding numbers of customers cannot pay off their credit balances at the end of each billing period. Considering the stratagems employed to encourage such spending, I find myself wondering if the definition of "non-polluting" isn't sometimes too narrowly applied. But the company awards numerous educational grants to area schools and funds a variety of public improvements, so no one, as it were, "goes there."

We each calculate virtue by a different standard, but it seems that in the church, at least, we ought to be able to find a way to shift the focus. After all, the kernel of intention contained within the topic of stewardship is remarkably radical - to truly consider, together, the spreadsheets of our lives from the perspective of God's economy, both in personal and community/environmental terms. How we make our money is at least as significant as how we spend the income. The ultimate accountability, of course, is between the individual and God. But the communal conversation, if risked, seems the critical first step in unmasking the powers' grip on our lives. TW

editor's note

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

Cruel Kosovo legacy: cluster bombs

by Frida Berrigan

G areth Evans and Balaram Rai are NATO's first casualties in Kosovo. The two members of the British army's Gurkha Field Squadron were victims not of Serb sniper fire but an unexploded NATO cluster bomb. The bombs which they were trying to disarm could have been unguided CBU-87s, built by Alliant Tech Systems in Minneapolis, or Textron's new sensorfuzed CBU-97. Regardless of the pedigree, the origin is clear and the Clinton Administration has a special responsibility to take the lead in banning them.

The Pentagon and NATO are still staunchly defending the use of cluster bombs in NATO's air campaign in Kosovo, arguing that the weapons are effective against troop concentrations, airfields and other large military targets. But the bloody track record of this small but lethal munition raises serious questions about its legality under the Geneva conventions, which emphasize the need to minimize civilian casualties. A few examples should suffice to explain why they should be outlawed. On April 24, five Kosovar brothers and their two cousins were playing in a field when they found a small yellow canister the size of a soda can. One of the brothers began to pry open the canister as the two cousins hurried off to report their finding. All five brothers died when the canister exploded. As Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch has noted, the colorful canisters pose a special risk to children, who are "particularly drawn to the volatile live remnants."

On May 8, NATO cluster bombs hit a market in Nis, killing 15 people. *The San*

Francisco Chronicle described the carnage: "The bombs struck next to the hospital complex and near the market, bringing death and destruction, peppering the streets of Serbia's third-largest city with shrapnel and littering the courtyards with yellow bomb casings. ... In a street leading from the market, dismembered bodies were strewn among carrots and other vegetables in pools of blood."

The effects of cluster bombs were not limited to Serbia and Kosovo. Since the air war began in March, fishing revenues

Cluster bombs are not designed to act as land mines, but in practice they do. As a senior NATO commander acknowledged in April, the high dud rates of cluster bombs dropped on Kosovo and Serbia means that "the place is littered with thousands of these things."

along the Italian coast have dropped by 20 percent, because fishermen are afraid their nets will contain bombs instead of fish. Gimmi Zennaro was severely wounded in his hand, leg and abdomen when something which looked "like a bottle of Pepsi" came up in his net and blew up. "T'm alive by a miracle. All NATO had to do was tell us and we could easily avoid those areas," he noted. Other fishermen have been injured, and some killed, by the bombs, which were released from NATO planes short on fuel or experiencing mechanical difficulties as they returned to the Aviano airfield from bombing runs.

Paul Watson, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter stationed in Kosovo, has reported on the cruel effects of cluster bombs, which are designed to maim what they do not kill. As a doctor in Pristina's hospital, which treated hundreds of people wounded by cluster bombs, describes it, "The limbs are so crushed that the only remaining option is amputation. It's awful, awful."

One route towards banning cluster bombs would be to include them in the International Treaty to Ban Land Mines. which went into effect on March 1, 1999 after being ratified by 81 countries. (This would require the Clinton Administration to ratify the treaty, which it has shamefully neglected to do so far.) The treaty defines an antipersonnel land mine as a device "designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons." Cluster bombs are not designed to act as land mines, but in practice they do. As a senior NATO commander acknowledged in April, the high dud rates of cluster bombs dropped on Kosovo and Serbia means that "the place is littered with thousands of these things."

Another approach to banning cluster bombs would be to have them defined as inhumane weapons in their own right, independent of their status under the land mines accords. However he chooses to proceed, President Clinton should take steps now to eliminate cluster bombs from the U.S. arsenal, and to get the U.S. to join the majority of the world's nations that are already supporting a ban on antipersonnel land mines. Until he does so, his ongoing attempts to present himself as a "humanitarian" in the wake of the Kosovo conflict will continue to ring hollow. TW

Frida Berrigan is a Research Associate at the World Policy Institute at the New School in New York, <BerrigaF@newschool.edu>.

Lyric #3

by Kofi Natambu

THIS MINIMAL EXISTENCE IN THE EXTERNAL WORLD THE WORLD OF THINGS. THE REALM OF NOISE: CLOTHES CARS CIGARETTES LIQUOR **RATTLING CONVERSATION** THIS IDLE FEELING OF MOVEMENT WITHOUT MOTION TIME WITHOUT MEMORY LIVING WITHOUT FEELING WORDS COLLIDE INTO EARCAVES BUT DON'T RESONATE WHERE IS THE SOUND? THE TRAJECTORY OF SIGHT IS FLAT/THE RHYTHM OF LIGHT IS LOST THE COULDS STAND ABOVE NOT BEYOND. THE EARTH GROANS BELOW NOT BEYOND THE SUN HIDES BEHIND THE SKY A BROKEN MASS PEEKING THRU STRUCTURES THAT BAN LOVE. THIS FALSE DENIAL IS THE DONUT WORLD: THE WORLD OF WEIGHT BUT NO DEPTH THE WORLD OF MATTER BUT NO ENERGY" THE REALM OF NOISE clothes cars cigarettes liquor rattling conversation ...

OUR GESTURES SPEAK FEAR YET WORDS BOUNCE ALONG THE BOULEVARDS IN SLICK PATTERNS: THESE HORNRIMMED BLOOD-DRAINED MEEK VIOLENT SYLLABLES FALLING DEAD FLIES OUT OF BLEEDING MOUTHS. (the sullen shrug the accusing smile

(the subcrising the accus

the jagged laughs the mumbled cries)

OUR GESTURES SPEAK PAIN YET WORDS STAGGER CASUALLY DOWN ALLEYGLASS VOCAL CHORDS INTO THE CROWDED MENTAL STREETS THESE EXCREMENT EARS SWOLLEN POPCORN LIPS WOODEN TONGUES THIS EXTERNAL WORLD: THE WORLD OF DOLLARS, THE REALM OF COIN: MEAT BRICK SUGAR METAL BILLBOARD: THE REALM OF NOISE

THIS BLANK EXISTENCE IN THE EXTERNAL WORLD THIS WORLD OF SHADLOWLESS KILOWATT FACES DULL, BLINKING FINGERS CRAZY NECK JERKS STUMBLING ANKLE WALKS DANCING EYE SCREAMS THE REALM OF NOISE O WHERE IS THE SOUND?



From The Melody Never Stops (Detroit: Past Tents Press, 1991)

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Living in debt: a national way of life

by Camille Colatosti

heck n Go: The fastest way to payday." "Cash Connection: Instant Cash for Any Good Check; Pay Day Advances; No ID Required." These are a few of the signs that greet me as I take an afternoon walk in my urban Detroit neighborhood. When I return home, I see that, in today's mail, there are three credit card solicitations. One company has pre-approved me for \$25,000, another for \$20,000. The third company is less specific. All offer "cashback" bonuses and "low" interest rates (one boasts 3.9 percent, the second 5.9 percent and the third a whopping 9.9 percent). A company from which I already have a card offers to raise my credit limit to \$100,000. Unasked, all of these companies want to loan me money. What's the catch?

Could it be, as Vince Passaro noted in the August 1998 *Harper's*, that "the cards offered at lower rates convert to usury-rate cards in three to twelve months"? That 3.9 percent interest rate converts to 19.2 percent? One late payment and the rate will increase even further.

Or could the catch have something to do with the growth of so-called credit card banks (banks with more than \$1 billion in assets and with credit card balances equal to at least half of total assets)? Janet Yellen of the Federal Reserve Board notes that the return on assets for the roughly 30 credit card banks in America is double that of all commercial banks — a 2 percent annual return as compared to the 1.1 percent for all commercial banks.

Or could it be that the credit card companies and pay chains assume that I am one of the many Americans in debt and willing to spend beyond my means? As Passaro notes, "Across America, the citizenry has managed to rack up \$1.2 trillion in consumer debt, which is five times the national defense budget."

Today's credit card industry Is today's personal debt different from the debt of the past? As in the past, a large portion of this debt rests in household

"Let's distinguish between debt and credit. I don't think there's something inherently wrong with debt. Many of us are in debt: for our homes, our mortgages. The issue is how we're using money and what we're using it for."

— Nan Stone

mortgages. There is an extent to which a mortgage is seen as a manageable, acceptable, perhaps even desirable debt. The differences between debt in the past and in the present seem to lie almost wholly in the nature of the credit card industry. As Nan Stone, former editor of the *Harvard Business Review* and senior research fellow at Harvard Business School, explains, "Let's distinguish between debt and credit. I don't think there's something inherently wrong with debt. Many of us are in debt: for our homes, our mortgages. The issue is how we're using money and what we're using it for."

Stone adds, "Consumer credit in the form of credit cards is a new phenomenon. When I got married 30 years ago people didn't have credit cards, though some had store charge cards, but they had to be pretty credit-worthy. Early on, the history of your own earnings and how you handled other debts was screened.

"I have to believe, just on the basis of solicitations that come not only to my husband and me, who are employed, but to my daughter, who is not employed but who is a student, that it is easy to get credit and easy to get overextended. The economics of credit cards is that they make money on the interest that is charged on balances. So, in a sense, the more you charge and the larger your balance, the more profitable you are as a customer to them. And if you have multiple cards, it is easy to get overextended."

Currently, credit card debt is rising twice as fast as total loans. Revolving credit card debt, in fact, is growing at a rate of almost 20 percent a year.

According to the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances, since 1983, the number of U.S. households with at least one credit card rose from 66 to 75 percent. Most families — even those below the poverty line - have more than one card. Perhaps more important, the percentage of all U.S. families holding some kind of credit card debt (which means not paying the balance every month) has, since 1989, risen from 37 percent to 43 percent. Among poor families, 36 percent own a card and 69 percent of those maintain a balance. In fact, over 15 percent of poor families maintain a credit card debt that equals their monthly income. For 11 percent of poor families, the debt exceeds twice their income. For families who live at 100-150 percent of the poverty line, 23

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

percent maintain a debt that equals their income and 15 percent have debt that exceeds twice their income. Statistics are similar for those who live at 150-200 percent of the poverty line. Even among middle-income families, 15 percent have debts that equal their income. Seven per cent have debts that are twice their income. The average credit card share of nonmortgage debt is 39 percent.

Edward J. Bird, associate professor of public policy and political science at the University of Rochester, explains the "practical significance" of this debt. "Consider that at an interest rate of 18 percent, a household with \$833 in monthly income, or \$10,000 annually, and a credit card debt of \$2,000, would take fully 14 months to pay off the debt if it devoted 20 percent of its income — \$167 monthly -to the task. If instead the household made a minimum payment of \$50 a month — 6 percent of its income - it would have to do so for more than five years to be debt-free."

If the family fell behind or missed a payment and received a late charge, it would take even longer.

The deregulation of finance laws Since the late 1970s and the early 1980s, says Doug Henwood, editor of the *Left Business Observer*, finance laws have been deregulated. "This makes it possible to



Provincetown Housetops by Mildred McMillen, 1918

create clever new instruments that allow peopletoborrow beyond their means. Usury laws have been repealed and so lenders may charge as much as 20 percent or more."

The number of credit cards being of-

fered to consumers has increased more than 300 percent in the past decade. A National Bankruptcy Review Commission report notes that, since 1994, over 2.5 billion credit card solicitations have been mailed to individuals. The August 1998

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issue of *Harper's* notes that Fleet Financial Group mailed more than one million unsolicited checks in denominations ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,000 in 1997 alone.

For those shut out from credit cards and traditional lending, there exists what Michael Hudson, editor and co-author of Merchants of Misery: How Corporate America Profits from Poverty, calls the "poverty industry" - finance companies and high-interest mortgage lenders who are "raking in big money by targeting people on the bottom third of the economic ladder - perhaps 60 million consumers." As Hudson paints it, a consumer "with a dubious credit record pays as much as 240 percent for a loan from a pawnbroker, 300 percent for a financecompany loan, 20 percent for a second mortgage and 2000 percent for a quick 'payday' loan from a check-cashing outlet." Profiting on people's desperation to obtain cash now. NationsBank, for instance, makes big money from America's largest pay chain, Cash America, with 325 outlets across the U.S. Consumers receive a payday advance. The catch? They must turn over their paycheck, along with a weekly interest rate of at least 20 percent. Associates Corporation of North America, a lesser-known subsidiary of Ford Motor, targets low-income and minority consumers, making home equity loans at more than twice the prime rate.

Why are so many people willing to pay 20 percent interest? Why do American consumers have such high levels of personal debt? And why now? Some say that people today aren't frugal, aren't willing to wait to purchase what they want, as they did in the past. Hillary Rodham Clinton, quoted in Roger Rosenblatt's book, *Consuming Desires*, bemoans unchecked "consumer capitalism" as undermining "the kind of work ethic [and] postponement of gratification historically associated with capitalism." Maybe. But, says Rosenblatt, unlikely: "America did not transform itself into history's most powerful civilization by abjuring material goods. Directly and indirectly, some 90 percent of the American work force are in the business of producing consumer goods and services."

Henwood adds, "People are so conditioned to borrow and to spend. I don't want to assign personal blame to any of this." He sees consumer debt not so much as a personal problem but a social one. "The American economy," he says, "is built around

The University of Rochester's Edward Bird found that credit cards are one element of the safety net "alongside welfare programs and individual savings." But today welfare has been nearly depleted and people's savings are low.

credit and debt. We have this consumption economy. Today, we have what some call a 'miracle economy.' But it is built on what seems like unsustainable levels of consumption that depend on credit. For an economy that is booming, we should be doing better than this and this is not the case."

Aspiration — and desperation Still, debt comes not only as a result of the gourmet cookware stacked in the kitchens of couples who eat every dinner out (and charge it) or from suburban utility vehicles and Rolex watches. But expenditures of these types are the ones that most often make the headlines. The July 18 *Sunday New York Times Magazine*, for example, reported on two public-school administrators who earned \$180,000 a year, owned a \$350,000 home, had 24 credit cards, racked up \$800,000 in debt and had only \$10 in cash. Most people, in fact, who get into debt trouble do so because, as John Schmitt an economist from the Economic Policy Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that specializes in labor and workplace issues — explains: "People's income has been stagnant or in some sense falling for over 20 years. In the 1980s, family incomes grew more slowly than they had in the past, and when they did grow it was because people were working more hours. By running faster, people could stay in the same place. In the 1990s, family incomes were falling despite increased hours at work."

To Henwood, debt comes largely from a combination of "aspiration and desperation." Aspiration: "People at the lower end are trying to maintain the appearance of middle-class standards of living. People in the middle-class are trying to look wealthier than they are." And desperation? "The welfare state is deficit. One reason that people go bankrupt is that there is no welfare state, nothing to help in an emergency, such as a job loss or health problems."

Schmitt agrees. "Credit cards," he states, "are potentially a valuable and useful tool for financial management. They allow you to spread out the payments. There is a long tradition of efficiency of trying to match the debt that you incur to the life of the product. It takes five years, for instance, to pay off a car loan, and it is assumed that the car will last at least that long. A credit card allows you to buy a winter coat that you could pay for all winter. A card can also help in troubled times. If you lose a job, and it takes two to three months to find another, the credit card can help you get by."

The University of Rochester's Edward Bird found that credit cards are one element of the safety net "alongside welfare programs and individual savings." But today welfare has been nearly depleted and people's savings are low. Henwood Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

notes that today's savings rate is the lowest it has been since the 1930s. "We are consuming at 110 percent of our income." The savings rate for the first quarter of 1999 is negative. Many poor people depend on their credit cards more and more to help them maintain necessities: food, shelter, heat and so on. This dependence on credit cards masks the absence of a social policy system that sustains the poor. Yet, the need for such a system could make itself known in dramatic ways, especially if, in a recession, interest rates rise and people lose their jobs. At that point, credit cards will not be enough, especially not for those who have already exhausted their credit.

Schmitt continues: "One of the weirdest things about the 1990s is the boom in the stock market." This boom affects only about 10 percent of the population. The wealthiest 1 percent of the population averages \$7.5 million in stock; the next wealthiest 9 percent averages about \$250,000 each in stock. The rest of the population has a minute amount — or none.

"The typical family," says Schmitt, "right in the middle of the wealth distribution, owns only about \$7,000 worth of stock — in all forms — mutual funds, 401ks, stock that their aunt left them when she passed away. This is not the kind of stock that allows you to retire at the age of 50."

Yet, it is the stock market that the media always looks to when it gauges the country's economic health. Americans are told that the economy is healthy and that they should go out and spend. And Americans have been willing to do this, even as they become more and more indebted.

To gage America's economic health accurately, says Schmitt, we should look at people's net wealth. "How much do you own versus how much you owe? Families' net wealth has actually declined despite the increase in the stock market because households have acquired more debt. For the typical family, the stock market doesn't matter at all to their net wealth."

In fact, the boom in the economy is financed by debt. As Schmitt explains, "On the one hand, more than any other factor, the growth in household debt, from 75.5 percent of total personal income in 1989 to 84.8 percent in 1997, has fueled the current economic recovery. The 'American model' has a lot to do with the U.S. financial system's ability to channel enormous volumes of easy credit to consumers through credit cards and a wide range of real estate-

"Credit card companies charge 15 percent interest on average and pay 5 percent. They make 10 percent. They will give cards to everyone. They are just complete bloodsuckers. They want it both ways. They want to be able to give cards to anyone and to get all of their return." — Doug Henwood

backed loans."

The downside is that growth is unsustainable if your debt increases faster than your income. Eventually, the borrowing and debt will catch up with you. Indeed, more and more people are hitting bottom every day.

Bankruptcy at all-time high Given the levels of indebtedness in America, it should not be surprising that the number of people declaring personal bankruptcy in the U.S. is at an all-time high: nearly 1.4 million in 1998.

The Federal Bankruptcy Code provides two avenues for personal bankruptcy in America: chapter 13 and chapter 7. Under chapter 13, an individual files a plan with the courts for repayment of debt over a period ranging from three to five years. During this time, an individual's credit remains intact. Under chapter 7, all debts are purged and for a decade or more the stigma of bankruptcy remains on the individual's credit. About 30 percent of those declaring bankruptcy choose chapter 13, while 70 percent choose chapter 7.

News stories about personal bankruptcy focus primarily on the affluent, people like Robert and Karen Kornfield, who filed to eliminate \$534,000 in debt despite an annual income of \$336,000.

Yet, most people who file for bankruptcy do not make six-figure salaries. Boston-based bankruptcy attorney Warren Agin notes that "most people who are in bankruptcy are here for one of two reasons. First, most have experienced a life event that made it impossible to pay back their debts. For example, a woman loses her husband, who made lots of money, and she cannot pay back debts; or someone loses a job; or someone develops a serious illness and can no longer work."

The second group of people who file for bankruptcy, says Agin, are people "who got into trouble not because of a life event but because they incurred more and more debt each year and have reached the point where it has become impossible for them to pay it back."

Indeed, consumer advocates often see the bankruptcy laws as offering an important safety valve — a way out for consumers, especially if, as New York attorney James Shewick, puts it, "they can't pay off debts after two years using disposable income on a strict budget."

Agin notes that most bankruptcy clients are people who have gone through credit counseling and have tried to pay back the money they owe. They simply cannot. "And even when they have these high debts, they can still get credit. Even when they are in bankruptcy proceedings, they are getting credit solicitations from credit card companies. Some companies even offer them credit right after bankruptcy is complete."

Most people who file for bankruptcy do so, says Agin, because they are desperate. They come to the office crying, telling stories of their efforts to pay their debts.

"Debt is a de-politicizing force," says Henwood. "People see indebtedness as a personal failing, and they suffer in silence." Instead, they should be angry at a system that lets them pile on so much debt, and at finance companies that charge so much interest.

As Henwood sees it, "Credit card companies make oodles of money. They charge 15 percent interest on average and pay 5 percent. They make 10 percent. They will give cards to everyone. They are just complete bloodsuckers. They want it both ways. They want to be able to give cards to anyone and to get all of their return."

Warren Agin agrees. "Many people do not realize that, when using a credit card, you are using very expensive money. If you cannot bring your balance to zero at the end of the month, you shouldn't use the card. But credit companies sell the idea that people can use credit to live a better lifestyle and this is simply not true. Many people have credit card debt that is equal to their yearly salary and they are still getting credit card offers. In certain segments of the credit card industry, there is no credit scoring. The companies don't check and don't care. The cards bank on people getting into debt and paying high balances."

As Economic Policy Institute's Schmitt explains, America's bankruptcy laws "are one of the few things about this country that we do extremely well." Bankruptcy laws give people a second chance. "This allows people to take risks and to try new things. So if you fail in a business or your finances get out of hand, you can go bankrupt, go through probation and then get back on your feet."

Some people see the increase in the number of bankruptcy filings as proof that consumers are taking advantage of lax laws. A couple different House and Senate bills, loosely called the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1998, seek to make the bankruptcy laws more stringent than they are. The reforms are designed to prevent people from abusing the system and to require people who have the ability to pay back

"I'd love to see a bill that says that companies cannot cold call, can't use mass mailings, cannot pre-approve consumers, and cannot send those ready checks with their high interest rates."

— Warren Agin

their debts to do so. Agin believes that there is little abuse of the current laws; people who file for chapter 7 have no assets. The bills, he says, were essentially drafted by the credit card industry. Ultimately, Agin believes, "changes would make bankruptcy law so complicated that many people would not be able to file. Attorneys and judges think this is a bad statute — and a terrible thing for consumers."

President Clinton has vowed to veto the bill, so change is unlikely at the current time.

Muzzle credit card marketing? Instead of new bankruptcy laws, says Agin, what we really should be doing "is systematically changing the way credit cards market. I'd love to see a bill that says that companies cannot cold call, can't use mass mailings, cannot pre-approve consumers, and cannot send those ready checks with their high interest rates."

Nan Stone, however, hesitates to put in place laws that prohibit certain market ac-

tions. "Personally," she explains, "I have issues with unrestricted multiple mailings to people but I would be loathe to set up some sort of super agency that would control who will have credit. After all," she notes, "the openness makes it possible for people to spend and have more opportunities."

She would instead like to see a financial system that makes business decisions based on ethics. "We need people behaving responsibly in all activities of life, including business decision-making. A free enterprise system is not perfect, but it's better than the alternative. That said, the burden is on individuals to make responsible decisions, to have a sense of reciprocity and obligation to other people."

For many, this sense of human responsibility and reciprocity needs to extend beyond the personal level to the level of social policy. That is, while it is important that everyone be kind to his or her neighbor and ethical with the people with whom he or she does business, it is also essential that society make necessary changes to alleviate inequality.

As Schmitt puts it, "Essentially, we have a very unequal society. The increase in debt today isn't that people are less careful about finances than they were in the past; the increase in debt comes because people need debt to maintain a certain standard of living. What we need to do is allow wages to grow in line with the productivity of the economy."

Alleviating debt, says Schmitt, is, in a way, simple: Increase wages for middleincome and poor people. "We need," he says, "a significant redistribution from top to middle to bottom." Once complete, he believes, bankruptcy rates would return to past levels, household debt would decrease, savings would increase, people would work fewer hours and households — that is, families — would, most likely, find life easier — and happier.

Should Social Security play the stock market?

There are, says Robert Reischauer, senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution, "three and only three ways to close Social Security's long-run fiscal deficit. Taxes can be raised, benefits can be reduced, or the return on the trust fund's reserves can be increased."

Almost all discussion of reform has focused on the third option: increasing return by investing Social Security funds in the stock market. Reischauer believes that a portion of the fund could be invested in private assets, and that controls could be placed on this investment to prevent political factors — lobbyists and so on — from influencing the investment. Other economists are less sure that political factors can be controlled. Moreover, they are unconvinced that private investment of Social Security funds will solve the current crisis.

Economist Ellen Frank, a member of the *Dollars and Sense* collective, explains: "Since the 1980s, American workers have been paying more into the Social Security system than retirees are taking out. These excess payroll taxes, now running at about \$100 billion per year, go to the Social Security trust fund, 'saved' for the coming baby-boom retirement, when there will be as few as two workers for every retiree. The trust fund now contains some \$900 billion; by 2021, it will be worth nearly \$4 trillion dollars.

"The Social Security Administration (SSA) predicts that sometime early in the 21st century, workers' payroll taxes will equal only three-quarters of the benefits currently legislated for retirees. To cover this potential shortfall, the SSA plans gradually to spend down the trust fund, until 10 or 20 or 30 years later, depending on whose numbers you believe, the \$4 trillion runs out. This, in a nutshell, is the Social Security 'crisis.'"

A Republican plan to solve the crisis involves investing the trust fund in the stock market to make it grow faster and last longer. A Clinton plan, though slightly different, relies on this same investment strategy. Frank sees some problems with this plan, because the stock market is risky. The boom that exists now, funded primarily on debt, may not last.

Moreover, private investment will not be enough to resolve the crisis. Even proponents of stock market investment of Social Security funds recognize this. These same economists also propose Reischauer's second option: cutting benefits by raising the retirement age to 67 and reducing cost-of-living adjustments. Some propose drastic benefit cuts, from the average \$700 a month today to about \$400 a month. There is also talk of raising the retirement age to 70.

Aside from the risk of private investment, Frank sees another, and more important, problem with playing the stock market: The Social Security trust fund itself exists primarily on paper. There is really nothing to invest in stocks. When workers pay into the fund, money goes to the U.S. Treasury, which spends it and issues bonds. There is no large sum of money sitting in a vault in the Treasury Department. The fund is used as it is collected, paying for roads, schools, welfare, defense weapons and so on. Frank explains, "When the bonds are cashed in, in 2020, the Treasury won't have money for them unless it taxes people again or prints more cash."

So, asks Frank, why are we saving these extra taxes if doing so really will not ease the baby boom retirement burden? She argues that the Social Security trust fund, sold to taxpayers by Ronald Reagan, serves to "disguise the shift of federal tax burdens from the wealthy to those with moderate and low incomes. Nearly one-third of federal revenues derive from the payroll tax, perhaps the most regressive of all federal taxes." The one-fifth not needed for current Social Security benefits right now is used in government spending.

Paul Precht, also from *Dollars and Sense*, proposes another solution, the first option that Reischauer mentioned: Increase taxes, but not on everyone, only on the rich. If there is not enough money in the Social Security fund, asks Precht, "why not increase Social Security taxes on the wealthy — only their first \$68,400 of wage income is currently taxed." Why not tax all of it?

Frank makes a compelling plea: "All the trust funds in the world cannot change the fact that, in 20 years or so, the task of caring for the growing ranks of the aged will fall, inevitably, to the younger generation and will require their labor, energy and commitment. If the workers of the 21st century are ill-fed and uneducated, if the environment is ravaged, the air unbreathable, the climate hostile to health, the aged will languish, regardless of the money put aside today. As a society, the U.S. is not well set up to care for an aging population and there is no reason to believe that throwing money at Wall Street will improve this situation. We lack affordable and accessible housing and transportation; pollution and climate change are taking a harsh toll on the elderly; Medicare is riddled with fraud and our nursing homes are a national disgrace.

"Imagine how secure our retirees could be made if funds were used to construct housing, train scientists, clean up the environment, build public health facilities and educate future workers."

- Camille Colatosti

An interview with John Stauber by Jane Slaughter When I interviewed John Stauber, he'd just returned from a meeting of CJD Voice, an organization of people whose family mem-

bers have died of the human equivalent of mad cow disease. The public relations campaign to deny the possibility of this disease in the U.S. was one of the most effective in recent memory, with the livestock industry, its public relations firms, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture working together to keep Americans in the dark about the risks.

Stauber is co-author, with Sheldon Rampton, of Mad Cow USA: Could the Nightmare Happen Here? as well as Toxic Sludge Is Good for You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry. Through the Center for Media and Democracy, a small nonprofit based in Madison, Wis., Stauber reports on how the multibilliondollar public relations industry manipulates public opinion and the flow of information.

T.W.: Before we talk about how the happyface economy is promoted and sold, why don't you start off by telling the story of one of the most effective public relations stunts in recent history, the events held in October 1990 to propel the U.S. into the Gulf War? John Stauber: At the time, virtually no one in the country had any idea of the extent to which pro-war sentiment was paid for and mobilized by the ruling family of Kuwait, using what was then the world's largest public relations firm, Hill & Knowlton. It wasn't till a year after the war ended that a reporter named John MacArthur revealed in the New York Times that Hill & Knowlton had pulled a stunt that had a critical role in influencing the congressional debate and American sentiment on whether or not to support war.

Who says the economy is booming?

At what appeared to be a congressional hearing on Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, a very

Most economists would agree that the number one engine fueling the current "good times" is consumer spending and the willingness of consumers to go into debt to make purchases.

young teenage girl was brought to testify. She was identified simply as Navirah, and the committee was told her actual name had to be kept secret because her family back in occupied Kuwait might be at terrible risk. Nayirah described how she had been a worker in a Kuwaiti hospital working with young infants, and she personally saw hundreds of tiny infants torn out of their incubators, left to die on the floor while these incubators were taken by Iraqi soldiers back to Iraq.

T.W.: Where there was of course a shortage of incubators ...

J.S.: No one was really thinking too critically because it was such a well-orchestrated, heart-rending testimony. Watching this crying girl trying to get out this horrible testimony was a real kick in the gut.

What John MacArthur revealed a year

later was that Nayirah was in fact the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S., and that it was highly unlikely she was even in the hospital she said she was in when she said she was there. In fact, there was not a shred of evidence that could be produced to support her allegations that even one baby was killed in this way. This had been a classic wartime propaganda stunt to mislead the Congress and especially the American people so that support would swing to going to war against these horrendous baby killers.

T.W.: Does it appear that Hill & Knowlton knew the story was a lie?

J.S.: I think it's obvious that Hill & Knowlton knew it was being fabricated, or scripted it themselves. But partly because of the lock-step way in which the news media in any country tends to follow the lead of its government when it comes to war and peace and foreign policy issues, the media failed to pick up on information available in the PR trade press that the Kuwaitis had hired Hill & Knowlton, a very powerful, well-connected firm with special ties to both political parties; that Craig Fuller, a close personal friend of George Bush and a government official in the Bush Administration, was now working for Hill & Knowlton heading up this campaign; that Frank Mankiewicz, the former Kennedy confidant and George McGovern campaign coordinator, was handling media relations; and that millions of dollars were being spent to purposely mislead the news media, to make sure that U.S. foreign policy moved in the direction dictated by the Bush Administration in its eagerness to go to war. The information was available, but there was no investigative reporting. The propaganda campaign worked beautifully.

T.W.: They swallowed it whole!

J.S.: Whenever I tell this story to an audience, I find that 97 percent has never heard this information, and the other 3 percent just have a hazy recollection that some time

Detroiter Jane Slaughter is a freelance writer, <Janesla@aol.com>.

after the war somebody revealed that some sort of PR stunt was pulled.

T.W.: But everybody remembers the incubators?

J.S.: Yes. I suspect that if you did a survey to find what people remember about that war, you'd find that they remember that the Iraqis even resorted to killing babies in incubators.

T.W.: Is this blatant concoction of a lie a usual tactic that PR firms use to manipulate opinion, or are they usually more subtle?

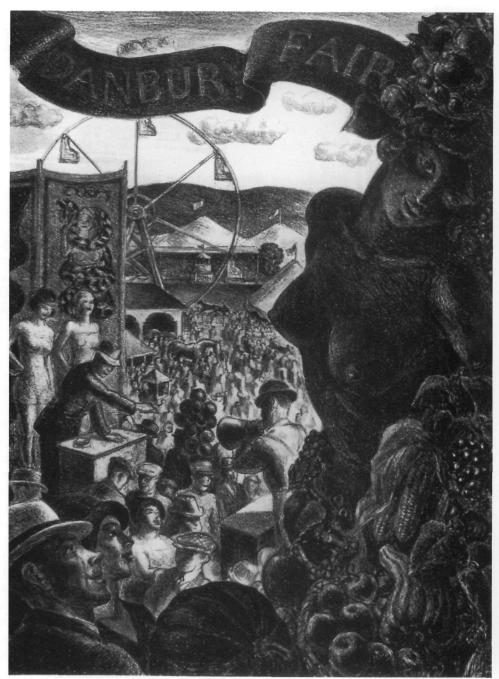
J.S.: To the average person this would appear to be a horrendous case of organized lying. But to public relations practitioners, the truth is very elusive and malleable. According to the industry, the truth exists in many different versions, and no one has any monopoly or ownership on the truth.

T.W.: How post-modern.

J.S.: Very. And very convenient. So the truth becomes whichever story prevails. In debating PR practitioners about concepts of truth and morality, they say, "You have your truth, I have my truth, those people over there have their various truths, and we all do the best job we can at getting our truths explained and prevailing, and may the truest truths prevail."

Propaganda exists to make sure that its targets believe and think and act, or don't act, in certain ways. They martial whatever manipulative and rhetorical and political tools they can toward that end. And that becomes rationalized as a noble endeavor, because they also borrow the idea from attorneys that in the "court of public opinion," everyone has a right to representation. Of course, what "everyone" means is "everyone who can afford to hire public relations practitioners."

So, you ask me, is telling outright lies their favorite tactic? No, simply because they don't want to be caught telling out-



Danbury Fair by John Steuart Curry, 1930

right lies. But the overall strategy is to create whatever truths can be created to attain their tactical objectives, which are always to manage and manipulate opinion, behavior, habits, votes.

T.W.: We're always reading and hearing in

the media that the economy is in great shape, the greatest ever. And then on the other hand, polls show that many people feel very insecure. They think it's quite likely they'll be downsized out of a job. So there seems to me a big gap between what people who are not on Wall Street feel as the reality of their lives, and what they're being told about their lives. What do you know about manipulation of our perceptions of the economy?

J.S.: This is a little like talking about foreign policy issues, where, as I said earlier, you usually have the major political and economic players, the status quo interests, in a fairly strong consensus. To the Fortune 500, to the people who are benefiting from this so-called prosperity, it's critical that a don't-worry-be-happy-keep-spending prosperity prevails. That's what everyone wants to project.

I think everyone is aware of how strange and new and volatile the global financial world is, and the one biggest concern for U.S. economic institutions and politicians across the board is that consumer confidence remain high. Most economists would agree that the number one engine fueling the current "good times" is consumer spending and the willingness of consumers to go into debt to make purchases.

If you look back at the severe stock market dip last October, with recessions and financial crashes around the world, especially in Asia and Russia, you would have expected the American economy to get caught up. But it didn't, and in retrospect the reason is the ability of Alan Greenspan and the Clinton Administration to send out a strong message of consumer confidence. Consumer economic habits didn't change, the cutback in interest rates sent a strong message, and consumers literally bought the U.S. out of any sort of recession.

But in terms of specific public relations campaigns that are funded by industries or government to keep the happy-face façade on all this and keep hidden the fact that the rich are getting richer at a record pace and that gross poverty persists, I'm not aware of those campaigns.

T.W.: Are you saying that the government doesn't need to contract with Hill &

Knowlton because the consensus is so great that the people who run the media just run these stories on their own, without being massaged by PR professionals?

J.S.: What we typically find, Sheldon and I, when we research an area, is that once you force your way behind the surface you're usually shocked at the extent to which the issues are being managed and manipulated. I would say that if some investigators looked at the propaganda

There are these consensus economic issues, like moving people off welfare, that Clinton has pioneered. It's unclear what the human consequences are, and it's unclear that anyone in government or economic structures cares, as long as large sections of Los Angeles and Detroit aren't burning.

machine behind the feel-good economic news, and looked at some of the major Wall Street players and trade associations and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Clinton Administration, you would see a number of propaganda machines that are cranking out messages that are designed to influence public perception and public behavior on the economy.

But it's a consensus issue because it's to the advantage of upper-class and uppermiddle-class people, including journalists making six-figure salaries, to keep the good times going. There's a strong awareness now that the good times that these people are seeing are based on keeping a happy face on the economy.

Now, that's usually true. It's not usually

in the best interests of any politician or established economic interest to say, "Look folks, there's some really bad economic news on the horizon." Think back to Jimmy Carter and the oil crisis and his fireside chats with this sweater, saying to Americans, "We've got to get used to conserving, to cutting back, to dealing with limits." That's not a message anyone wants to hear. The liberal economic system is built on the idea that we need to keep the pie expanding, rather than starting to proportion the pieces more equitably.

It seems to me that Clinton-Gore are continuing the Reagan trickle-down approach. There are these consensus economic issues, like moving people off welfare, that Clinton has pioneered. It's unclear what the human consequences are, and it's unclear that anyone in government or economic structures cares, as long as large sections of Los Angeles and Detroit aren't burning.

T.W.: Just let those people drop off the face of the earth?

J.S.: The sands are shifting so quickly for everyone that it's very difficult to get a handle on where this global economy is going. The downsizing, for instance, that looked so severe and so painful, is now cast historically as a brilliant move that was wonderful for the economy.

T.W.: "The economy" being something that is separate from "human beings."

J.S.: The Clinton Administration from day one has been in love with the global economy, with its push for free trade, GATT and NAFTA and its commitment to high technology industries, whether it's Silicon Valley or biotechnology. The people who run the Clinton-Gore Administration are right out of Wall Street. There's been a political battle between them and the large sectors that represent everyday working Americans, from Ralph Nader to unions and farm groups. And the Clinton Administration has won that struggle, at least temporarily. *T.W.*: Just how big is the public relations industry?

J.S.: The public relations industry is huge and pervasive but also very invisible, and it strives for invisibility. One estimate is that there are 170,000 professional PR practitioners in the U.S., working for firms, government agencies, nonprofits. For Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations firm now, in 1997 their net fees, after expenses, were \$264,545,502. They had 2,129 employees and they operated in over 30 countries. Most of the big public relations firms are now owned by giant advertising companies. Burson-Marsteller, for instance, is owned by the Young & Rubicam advertising company.

Both advertising and public relations are forms of propaganda, the difference being that advertising is very much in our faces. If we turn on the TV and there's an ad, hopefully something in our critical consciousness says, "Don't believe this, it's an ad." It's cleverly designed to manipulate you into buying a product or voting for a candidate or thinking in a certain way but it's an ad.

The whole idea of public relations is to slip below that critical screen and place the message in the mouths of people we trust. So when the plastics industry or the cattle industry or the pesticide industry needs to be believed on an issue of public health or food safety, they are likely to contact Dr. C. Everett Koop, the former Surgeon General, who is, surveys show, one of the most trusted public figures in America. And if Dr. Koop says pesticides are safe, or we have no mad-cow disease risks in the U.S., that's believable. He's reported and he's respected, when in fact that message has been delivered at the behest of industry.

The same thing works with journalism: If you see on the evening news a report about a promising new drug, you think a reporter investigated that. They went out and gathered information, they looked at all sides, and they put together this threeminute piece. In fact, that very probably was a VNR — a video news release, of which probably 10,000 are produced every year. They look like news stories, but they're paid for by a drug company, produced by its public relations firm, and delivered via satellite to the TV news director, who airs it as news.

To my knowledge, there isn't a single TV news department in the U.S. that does not use video news releases, and there's not

To my knowledge, there isn't a single TV news department in the U.S. that does not use video news releases, and there's not a single one that identifies on the screen to viewers that this isn't news.

a single one that identifies on the screen to viewers that this isn't news, it's public relations.

The networks use them too. At the network level the firm will work with a particular reporter or show to give them an exclusive. They'll sit down and customize a story for the *Wall Street Journal* or one of the network news programs. It'll look like it's been an awful lot of work by the journalist, when in fact it was an awful lot of work by the public relations firm, which succeeded tremendously because the journalist cooperated and passed on the story.

There's so much dependency on corporate advertisers and their public relations experts to provide the content that "the news" has become pretty much a joke. Good reporters tend to be the exception. **T.W.:** What percentage of the news in a

T.W.: What percentage of the news in a daily newspaper comes directly from a PR firm?

J.S.: It's fluid, but a few academic studies have found that anywhere from 40 to 80

percent of what you see, hear or read as news is either the direct result of a public relations campaign or very heavily influenced by public relations.

The really insidious and evil aspect of the video news release is that the journalists, the TV news directors, are perpetrating the deception. If you call the public relations firms and say, "These video news releases are fake news," they say, "Hey, we're a public relations firm. This is what we do. If you've got a gripe, call the TV news directors." And they're absolutely right. Throughout radio and television this is a growing phenomenon.

T.W.: Are there tell-tale signs so the viewer or the reader can spot PR masquerading as news?

J.S.: The typical VNR format is: "We have promising news about a new drug. If you're a sufferer from a certain type of cancer, the good news is there's a new drug under development." Then they go to a doctor or a medical ethicist, somebody the public is going to trust, who says, "If we can just get this approved and on the market, it's going to save lives." Then they might go to somebody who is suffering from a disease that this drug is apparently going to cure. Then they come back to a reporter who doesn't work for the local station, or to a local reporter who's not on camera with these figuresafter all, this is the Satellite News Room — and he or she reads a script that says, "We're extremely hopeful that this will be approved, and we'll keep you posted." Then they move back to the news anchor, who says, "Thank you, Jeff," or "Thank you, Cindy, that was an extremely encouraging report." This is feel-good news. T.W.: In your book you describe a typology of activists. The PR firms who defend corporations help them divide the critics into three categories.

J.S.: One of the firms specializing in intelligence-gathering on activists is a firm called Mongoven, Biscoe & Duchin. They work

for maybe a quarter of the hundred largest companies in the world, monitoring activist issues across the board, everything from human rights to environment to local toxics issues to biotechnology to organic farming to church groups. They specialize in a divide-and-conquer strategy whereby they, on behalf of their clients, engineer a deal that can get described as a win-win solution to a problem — both sides happy — but inevitably, in retrospect, is revealed as a major public relations victory for the corporation. The way they do that is by gathering intelligence on activists, and they classify them into three categories.

First is "the radicals." The radicals may actually be very politically conservative. They may not view themselves as radicals, but they advocate a fundamental solution to the problem — they don't want the toxic dump made "as safe as possible," they want the toxic dump not constructed. They don't want the Nestle company to do a more socially responsible job of marketing its infant formula, they want the marketing of infant formula in Third World countries stopped. The name of the game is to marginalize and defeat the radicals.

The way that's done is by identifying two other groups: the "idealists" and the "realists." The idealists, Mongoven, Biscoe, Duchin say, are often church people. They've listened to the radicals and are really concerned, and tend to agree with the radicals that there's a serious problem, people are getting hurt, and it needs to be fixed.

The third group, on which the entire strategy hinges, are the so- called "realists." The realists often work for nonprofit organizations or government agencies. They tend to be people who are perceived as working for social change, but who in reality are working to sit down with corporations and cut a deal.

So the way the scheme is run, the corporation goes to the realists and says, "Look, we've got a problem here. We recognize it, but we're not going to give in to these radicals. We have our rights too. Isn't there some deal we can cut?" They begin talking with the realists, and they come to an understanding.

The public relations industry views large, nonprofit environmental organizations, like the Environmental Defense Fund, as essentially groups that have often sold out in the past and are willing to continue to sell out to stay in business. Because these are large, multimillion-dollar businesses that just happen to be organized as nonprofits and to be in the business of convincing their

The idealists, Mongoven, Biscoe, Duchin say, are often church people. They've listened to the radicals and are really concerned, and tend to agree that there's a serious problem, people are getting hurt, and it needs to be fixed.

contributors and the public that they're advancing a public-interest agenda. But in order to do that, they have to have victories, and one way you can get victories is by cutting deals with corporations.

So there's a need for large, nonprofit public-interest organizations to be able to say, "We aren't like those wild, idealistic radicals who can't get anything done and are saying nasty things about the free enterprise system. We are actually accomplishing something."

A good example of this strategy working is the arrangement — the partnership — between McDonald's and the Environmental Defense Fund. McDonald's was finally forced to get rid of that wasteful, polluting plastic clamshell that engulfed every hamburger they sold. They were forced to do that by a grassroots campaign, but they gave the credit to the Environmental Defense Fund. And the Environmental Defense Fund praised McDonald's as one of the world's most environmentally responsible companies.

So there's a huge payoff when this strategy works properly. But the key is identifying the realists, and once you've got a deal in the works with the realists, you bring in the idealists. Mongoven, Biscoe, Duchin say you have to be very, very careful in handling the idealists, because, after all, these are people who aren't doing what they're doing for money; they're doing it out of the best human intentions empathy and concern and wanting to see things better. The way, they say, to get to the idealists is to identify leaders who can be convinced that the radicals are wrong and the realists are right. Once you bring the idealists on board with the win-win solution, the radicals are completely marginalized.

This type of campaign is used in almost every contentious situation where corporations are up to no good and somebody's organizing to stop them.

T.W.: What can groups without much money do to counter corporate PR, and get the media to cover their point of view? **J.S.:** We recommend a book called *Guerrilla PR* by Michael Levine, who is in no way a radical social activist. He's a 46-year-old, right-leaning Hollywood publicist. He wrote this book not for citizens or activists necessarily, but for anyone who wants to launch a publicity campaign for the work they do, whether it's selling a hula hoop or trying to address an injustice.

He says, "Look, you're the expert. You know your issue better than anyone else, and public relations isn't rocket science. There's a whole bunch of publicity techniques that are rather simple if you just know what they are, and here's what they are."

Also, it's most important for citizen activists to learn media relations skills. Reporters are individual human beings who are very approachable.

If you feel that the local TV station or newspaper is doing an inadequate job of reporting an issue, it's very important to get on them. That's what the public relations firms do — they use a carrot-and-stick approach. Of course, they're probably working for a company that's also spending huge amounts of money advertising in that newspaper or on that TV station, and have other ways of behind-the-scenes influencing news coverage.

But appealing to the civic responsibility of editors and journalists to get the whole story, and criticizing and complaining and monitoring the media, these are all fairly inexpensive techniques.

What happens is that all too often people at the grassroots don't really understand how media relations and publicity work. A typical reporter at a mediumsized paper gets anywhere from 20 to 50 to 100 PR contacts in a given day. Somebody types up a news release, they might just blindly send it, and then when the media doesn't get it because it's buried under a blizzard of professional phone calls and professional news releases, community activists often just throw up their hands and say, "Well, see, it's the corporate media again, they're not going to do anything for us." But calling an editor, calling a reporter, setting up a meeting, sitting down with them, monitoring their coverage, giving them feedback-all these techniques are completely aboveboard and need to be used.

To contact the Center for Media and Democracy, or subscribe to the quarterly PR Watch, write to 3318 Gregory St., Madison, WI 53711. Phone 608-233-346. Email 74250.735@compuserve.com. Website: http://www.prwatch.org/

Anti-native violence

In response to violence against native people following the recent hunting of a whale by Makah people, a "Declaration Against Racism" is being circulated by a group called Settlers In Support of Indigenous Sovereignty. While allowing for differences of opinion regarding the whale hunt itself, signers affirm that they are "united in our condemnation of the racist tactics which are being used to oppose the hunt."

According to the declaration, "the backlash has included bomb threats against native schools, and threats to shoot native people as 'revenge' for the whale. Native people have been refused service by white owners of stores and other businesses in the Pacific Northwest. One native man was beaten so badly he is now in a wheelchair."

The declaration reads, in part:

"1) Racism in all forms must be opposed. We reject any attempts by environmentalists, animal rights activists, or any other groups to use racism to gain support for a cause.

"2) We call on all groups and individuals concerned about the whaling to take a strong stand against the racist backlash that is currently happening as a result of racist and inflammatory rhetoric used by environmental and animal rights groups such as the Sea Shepherd Society.

"3) We recognize and support the sovereignty of all native nations, including the Makah. We reject attempts to use this whale hunt to undermine native nations struggling to assert their sovereignty.

"We reject the polarization of this issue into 'Makah vs. the whales.' We believe that this oversimplification of the Makah whale hunt plays up racist stereotypes instead of addressing questions of animal exploitation."

To sign the declaration, contact <sisis@envirolink.org>.

Organic school lunches

In the Farmers' Market Salad Bar Program in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, about 75 percent of the produce is organic. This includes lettuce, carrots, strawberries, celery, raisins, sprouts and sunflower seeds. The district prioritizes purchasing organic for items that have been found to have high pesticide residues.

The program, begun two years ago, is available in nine schools, and accounts for about a third of the total meals served at these schools.

Although the cost of organic produce is usually higher, the overall salad bar cost is lower than the cost of the district's hot meals (42 cents compared to 58 cents). In addition, the program has drawn adults, who pay more for their meals, into the cafeteria to purchase school lunches.

More information on this program is available from Michelle Mascarenhas, <mm@oxy.edu>.

Disenfranchised in the U.S.

The U.S. is now "the only 'democracy' that denies people the right to vote after their prison sentences," *Dollars and Sense* magazine reports. According to Human Rights Watch, one-third of the disenfranchised are black men. Prisoners are denied the vote in 46 states; parolees in 32 states; and probationers in 29 states. Fourteen states permanently bar exconvicts from voting.

"Lawyer Andrew Shapiro observes, 'an 18-year-old first-time offender who trades a guilty plea for a lenient nonprison sentence (as almost all first-timers do, whether or not they are guilty) may unwittingly sacrifice forever his right to vote."

most takes

The unfulfilled promise of 'free trade'

by Grace Braley

eople don't know about the mil-66 lions of new jobs or the bigger paychecks that export-related jobs pay. ... We want every man, woman and child in America to understand that trade is good for them," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce, William M. Daley. He was on a late spring campaign to build support for administration trade policies. A yellow van of protesters followed his caravan from Boston to Fall River and then to Rhode Island. The Wall Street Journal took notice and reported it. In Chicago, there were more protesters, and the Chicago Sun-Times said, "Daley is facing considerable skepticism from the American public."

As seen by people like the protesters chasing Secretary Daley, there are neither new jobs nor bigger paychecks. For many, wages are frozen or even cut by a company threat to move to Mexico.

Statistically, U.S. wages have decreased 3 percent in 10 years when adjusted for inflation. A family which used to be able to meet basic needs and take a vacation every year now finds itself dependent on two salaries and more working hours, and still has difficulty meeting the cost of essentials - food, utilities, insurance, transportation. This is as true in Mexico as in the U.S., except the gap in purchasing power is far greater for the Mexican family. Research by the National Association of Commercial Enterprises in 1996 showed that consumption of basic foods in Mexico had declined 29 percent in 18 months, with the price of beans increasing 240 percent, edible oils 70 percent, pasta 102 percent. Government reports indicated that 158,000

children under age 5 were dying yearly of diseases associated with malnutrition. As more than 28,000 businesses went bankrupt, a member of a national union said wages had fallen 35 percent over five years from 1993 to1997.

For Enrique Rivera, the 1994 *peso* devaluation meant that he couldn't afford to buy the material to make *muchilas* (shoulder bags). "I used to get the basic materials from the U.S. and Taiwan, costing \$5 a bag, which I sold for \$10. Now the price increases every month. It costs \$10 to make the bag but there is no market to sell at \$20. People come asking for used bags or for me to repair their bags."

Several hundred thousand U.S. jobs have been lost during the 1990s period of free trade with Mexico and Canada.

Street markets were full of cheap imports. He let three workers go. His sewing machines were idled. He sold sandwiches for awhile, then found work with a messenger service to support his wife and four teenagers.

David Francis of the *Christian Science Monitor* wrote last May that in industrial nations, "corporate stocks have risen \$7 trillion in value since last October." But such prosperity eludes families and individuals in the U.S. who can't even afford health insurance, some 41 million people.

Several hundred thousand U.S. jobs have been lost during the 1990s period of free trade with Mexico and Canada. The AFL-CIO claimed a loss of 220,000 to 420,000 jobs by 1997, while the Department of Labor certified that 214,902 workers had lost their jobs by December, 1998, due to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), which took effect in 1994. Accounting for new jobs created as a result of NAFTA has been elusive. Perhaps half a million new jobs emerged in the U.S., but Public Citizen Global Trade Watch claims they are not due to NAFTA and reports that Daley's Commerce Department canceled its survey of companies before 1997 because so few jobs could be attributed to NAFTA. From California to Massachusetts, business and government claim that there are more export dollars and better productivity, but not more jobs. For example, as of 1997, Pennsylvania was one of the top 10 states to have increased exports. However, it is also one of the top five in certified loss of jobs, according to statements by researcher Paul Kengor of the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy.

Two hundred workers were fired when Swingline Staple closed its Long Island City, N.Y., factory in mid-1997, moving production to Mexico. One Swingline employee, Nancy DeWent, a single mother of a 9-year-old boy, had been with the company for 20 years and was earning \$11.58 an hour. She is quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor* saying, "I don't know what I'm going to do — they've taken just about everything away but my pride."

Mattel, the toy maker, claimed in 1993 testimony before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade that NAFTA would have a very positive effect on its more than 2000 U.S. employees. But in 1995, the Labor Department certified that 520 workers from Mattel's Medina, N.Y., facility were laid off due to increased company imports from Mexico.

Hundreds of accounts such as these add up to the enormous job loss. In the international picture, China keeps export prices low by using prison labor, a practice that has also become a growing trend in the U.S.

Freelancer **Grace Braley** also works for the Ecumenical Development Corp.-USA in New York, <echale@cyburban.com>.

Thousands of young women in China, Bangladesh, Thailand, Burma, the Northern Marianas, migrate to work in factories where they experience terrible working conditions and even worse living conditions in residential dorms.

In 1996, in an address to Maine Business for Social Responsibility, CEO Bruce Klatsky of Phillips-Van Heusen offered a reason for locating U.S. factories overseas: "Why are we in places like Honduras? To stay competitive. ... We must manufacture in this country or our American associates will suffer and so will business."

Likewise, when Allied Signal CEO Lawrence Bossidy was asked by CNN anchor Lou Dobbs in 1993, "Do you think jobs will move to Mexico [under NAFTA]?" he answered that he thought the jobs had already moved. Less than two years later, according to a *CovertAction Quarterly* report, Allied Signal workers in Ohio, Texas and North Carolina were certified as displaced by the company's move to expand its Mexican plants.

The lines that connect globalization to the local market are complex. Each trade agreement overrides national legislation, requiring that laws interfering with implementation must be changed or eliminated. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a global trade body which grew out of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). It makes legally binding agreements and mediates disputes over trade barriers. According to a Public Citizen Global Trade Watch report, there has already been a WTO ruling that forced the U.S. to make changes in the Clean Air Act. And the threat of involving the WTO also convinced the U.S. to modify the Marine Mammal Protection Act and lift regulations protecting dolphins from tuna fishermen.

U.S. companies have also been on the offensive. Gerber Products Company, for example, threatened a GATT/WTO challenge (through the U.S. State Department) to a Guatemalan law which prohibits pictures of babies on labels of baby food. Although infant mortality rates had dropped after the law passed and UNICEF had held the legislation up as a model, the Guatemalan government was intimidated into exempting imported baby food from its stringent infant health laws.

Loss of environmental and health protections has not deterred first world nations, who hope to initiate a "millenium round" of trade "liberalization" at a World Trade Organization meeting of min-

and change policies in agriculture and

intellectual property rights. According to

a report from Martin Khor of the Philip-

pine-based Third World Network, "De-

veloping countries will be pushed to give

up more and more of existing policies

that protect their domestic economies,

and allow foreign firms the right to take

QUESTIONS: NOULDYOU LIKE NOULDYOU LIKE FRIESWITH THAT? hap SAT SAT

Rally against North American Free Trade Agreement, Lansing,

meeting of ministers from 134 nations at the end of November in Seattle. Among items on the agenda may be proposals to open up global investment without local restrictions, eliminate tariffs on wood products Mich., September 1993 Jim West over their national markets. ... Developing nations would no longer be able to give preferences or protections to local investors, firms or farmers." As South African president Nelson

As South African president Nelson Mandela, asked at the February, 1999, World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, "Is globalization only to benefit the powerful and the financiers, speculators and traders? Does it offer nothing to men, women and children who are ravaged by the violence of poverty?"

Searching for economic alternatives

by Peter Werbe

I tused to be that the only debt considered admirable was a home mortgage, which was viewed not only as the basis of family and community, but also, ultimately, as a good investment. Thrift, along with sobriety and decency, was encouraged as a virtue. If you wanted an item, you "saved up" until you had enough money to buy it. Or you went to a neighborhood department store and put what you wanted on Lay-Away, making weekly, non-interest payments until you reached the purchase price and could take it home.

Now, being "maxed out" on your credit card — at the limit of what you can charge — is something almost taken for granted by many people. There's even a television show that seems like a parody of the modern credit predicament on the Lifetime Channel, unabashedly called "Debt." The object of the program is to win enough to pay off what the contestant owes on their credit card.

Indeed, credit cards have become so ubiquitous that thoughts of alternatives become difficult.

Need for consumer education

Mike Hudson, author of Merchants of Misery: How Corporate America Profits from Poverty (Common Courage Press, 1996) thinks a good way to start is consumer education. "Only a small portion of cardholders understand what APR [annual percentage rate] is," he says. "It's pitiful."

For instance. if you charge \$2,500 and pay only the minimum required monthly payment, it would take 34 years to pay off the balance. Hudson urges shopping around for the best available rate and to pay off the monthly balance, something that is good advice but often difficult for those on the lower levels of the financial pyramid.

He also advises people to stay away from rent-to-own centers and pawn shops. These establishments cater to the working class and poor, but also prey on them. Pawn shops can legally charge an APR of up to 300 percent, and rent-to-own deals frequently wind up costing the consumer nearly three times an item's retail value.

Although most reports of the Grameen microcredit experiment and its many emulators give them a glowing thumbs up, some people remain skeptical.

Commitment to savings

Jane D'Arista, director of programs at the Financial Markets Center in Philomont, Va., advocates a role for credit unions in avoiding high interest rates. Credit cards from these financial institutions often carry a manageable 10 percent APR as opposed to the whopping 17 percent for cards issued through banks.

She also thinks the role of credit unions could be expanded so that they are organized much like the banks that currently issue cards, but with a twist that would encourage thrift and limited indebtedness. "You would need a group of people who were committed to saving," she proposes, and "you would receive a credit line on the basis of how much you save."

This would maintain the convenience of cards — which are often necessary in the modern consumer market — while allowing the holder to carry a balance without dipping into their savings. "If you ran into difficulty," she says, "the savings would be there to cover the outstanding balance."

D'Arista points out that the Germans resisted credit cards for years on the grounds that it would undercut savings. Currently there is a negative savings rate in the U.S. An incentive for fiscal balance between savings and debt could also come through the tax structure, D'Arista adds. "If you have a savings balance it would lower your taxes, and if you have a credit card balance, it would raise them."

Still, in a globalized economy where three men, including Bill Gates, have more wealth than the poorest 43 countries in the world, efforts to step outside the world of credit cards and cultivate sources of financing and exchange that are not driven by the quest for profit run against the tide.

Microcredit

One such effort to circumvent the current maldistribution of wealth is known as microcredit. This strategy for the alleviation of poverty has its genesis in an effort that began in Bangladesh during the early 1970s. An American-trained Bangladeshi, Muhammad Yunus, realized that lack of access to credit was one of the reasons poor villagers were unable to elevate themselves from the country's grinding poverty. Beginning with loans often under \$5 at 1 percent interest, Yunus' enterprise became the Grameen Bank and has loaned over \$2 billion to 3.5 million poor people, mostly women, since its beginnings.

Often loan seekers are so poor they haven't the collateral to support even a loan from between \$40-\$100, so this brings the community into play. The applicant is encouraged to find a group of four others in her village to also seek loans. The first two are granted the loans and the others help make the fledgling business a success. If after six weeks the first applicants have been making their loans payments, the next two get the money they seek, and after a

Peter Werbe, <jocks@wrif.com>, is host of Detroit's longest running talk show, Nightcall, on WRIF-FM. Artist **Judith Anderson** lives in New York state.

similar amount of time the remaining applicant gets the loan. According to Yunus, this creates a sense of interconnected responsibility that has debt default at lower rates than those banks specializing in lending to the wealthy.

The Grameen model has found expression around the world in such projects as AACION in Latin America, SEWA in

India, and in the U.S. at several commercial banks such as the South Shore Bank of Chicago and even smaller institutions like the Waldo County Credit Union in mid-coast Maine. The Spring 1999 Catholic Peace Voice mentions similar non-profit microcredit programs such as the Ms. Foundation, the Good Faith Fund (a project of the Arkansas Enterprise Group), the Self-Help Credit Union of North Carolina. the Lakota Fund and Appalachian By **Design** as examples oflocalinitiativesto jump-start small entrepreneurs. The dark side of success

As is frequently the case, success stories

abound. The Good Faith Fund reports that one of its typical loan recipients — they're 87 percent women and 85 percent African American — managed to parlay a \$5,000 loan into a thriving dry-cleaning business which now employs 10 people. But although most reports of the Grameen experiment and its many emulators give them a glowing thumbs up, some people remain skeptical that such efforts do more than thrust a few people out of poverty and into the small business class. Reacting to the Arkansas case, Doug Henwood, editor of the *Left Business Observer* (LBO) says, "Now she [the dry-cleaning owner] can



Henwood disputes the capacity of small loans to have a general effect on poverty. "The mythology of microcredit is grossly overblown," he charges. According to him, Grameen's record is nowhere near as good as is claimed. And most of the money, he says, is controlled by men even though its purpose is to empower women.



Ultimate Grace by Judith Anderson, 1995

exploit 10 people!" Indeed, many of the businesses funded by microcredit remain on the margins of the American economy, usually situated in poor neighborhoods and can remain competitive (or even in business) only by paying non-union, mini"They're trying to formalize this informal sector — a bunch of marginal, small businesses by putting a positive microcredit entrepreneur spin on," he says. "But it's just what poor, Third World people have been doing forever," he says, referring to the pooling of small loans.

But can all of the success stories from Bangladesh to the Mississippi Delta be without any impact on the lot of the poorest people in a nation?

Critics including Henwood agree that selected individuals can alter their economic standing by participation in the loan programs. However, they argue that their main function is a promo-

tion of the 19th- entury Horatio Algerraising-oneself-up-by-one's-own-boot-straps myth. Microcredit plays well in the media, according to this argument, because it is market friendly and doesn't require government spending. But ultimately it has Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

little or no positive effect on the larger social and economic configurations of inequality of wealth or the solution of the problem of indebtedness. For example, Chicago's South Shore Bank is often cited as an example of microcredit success, but a recent Harvard Business School study comparing U.S. Census Bureau data for the South Shore neighborhood compared to similar surrounding neighborhoods shows no evidence of any macro improvement as a result of microcredit funding. According to Henwood, "They come up with a cheery anecdote about a success story here and there, but it's not visible in any study." He thinks it's understandable why: "It's a small amount of money operating at the margins of a very large problem."

Henwood believes the solution to poverty doesn't reside inside an economy which is heavily stratified by class and where wealth is highly disproportionately distributed.

"Ultimately," he asserts, "it's a political question. What poor people need is education, health care, housing and other resources. There's no substitute for public funds." Microcredit, he says, is an attempt to come up with market solutions for what higher wages and a welfare state should accomplish.

Reviving barter

Maybe microcredit won't change the world we live in, but there are some things people can do on the local level to shift the focus — and perhaps, promote change.

One effort to circumvent the lure of credit is the utilization of the old system of barter to substitute for an exchange of cash. A web search turns up over 32,000 entries on bartering, many of them, surprisingly, between corporations, and much of it over the Internet.

One of the best known community bartering programs is the Ithaca (N.Y.) Money System. They've operated since 1991 and have issued over \$60,000 in Ithaca Dollars with over 2,000 people and 350 businesses earning and spending the alternative currency dubbed Hours.

"We printed our own money because we watched federal dollars come to town, shake a few hands, then leave to buy rainforest lumber and fight wars," explains founder Paul Glover. "Hours help us hire each other to get what we need."

The bills are based on \$10 which is the average wage in Tompkins County, N.Y. They come in five denominations and can buy plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, nursing, chiropractic and child care, and numerous other goods and services. Even

A web search turns up over 32,000 entries on bartering, many of them, surprisingly, between corporations, and much of it over the Internet.

the best restaurants in the quaint college town set in the Upstate Finger Lakes District accept them. The Ithaca Money directory features 1,500 listings of people and businesses cooperating in the system.

Besides supporting neighborhood entrepreneurs, participants become involved in a web of authentic face-to-face friendships, not one based in cyberspace. "We're making a community while making a living," says Glover, who takes pride in the work his plan has done to increase spending locally. He says long-range goals include zero-interest loans, purchasing land to insure it remains as farms, and construction of a community economic development center to be called Hour Town.

The Time Dollar Exchange system A different sort of bartering system that also emphasizes cash-less, credit card-free neighborhood-based exchanges is Minneapolis' Community Barter Network (CBN).

Established almost four years ago, CBN is a neighbor-to-neighbor exchange of ser-

vices for credits. Members earn credits for everything from shoveling snow to music lessons and child care. Credits are then exchanged for another service offered by a CBN member. The project was set up through the auspices of Pilsbury Neighborhood Services, a large citywide social service agency, which also includes a settlement house. Carole Broad set up the program based on the Time Dollar Exchange system, innovated 10 years ago by D.C. School of Law professor Edgar Cahn. Script is not issued and exchanged because the accounting is done by computer.

Broad says reasons vary for joining CBN. "Often it's solely on a personal level. People are able to get home repairs done, for instance, that they never would have been able to do if cash was required." The 250 participants are primarily white, working class people, two-thirds women, in a racially mixed neighborhood.

Broad also cites the benefit of CBN in building community — the program holds monthly potlucks — as well as keeping the neighborhood's money in the area. Also, she says, "some people take part for philosophical reasons like staying away from government and the almighty dollar."

CBN is expanding and will soon open a store which will carry small household and personal care items which are redeemable through Time Dollars. Cahn's motivation in creating the system stemmed from the philosophical aspect Broad mentions, but also as a way to improve the material and spiritual condition of the poor. In a series of essays about redefining work, he cites Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King as inspirations.

"Time Dollars are more than simply an inexpensive way to expand specialized social service programs with volunteers," Cahn asserts. "The Time Dollar currency enables human beings to redefine themselves as assets, each and everyone one with something special to contribute."

Calling for Jubilee debt relief

by Frank T. Griswold

nce a decade, all bishops of the Anglican Communion — nearly 750, including the 38 heads meet at what is known as the "Lambeth Conference" to share common worship and celebrate the diversity of backgrounds, cultures and thought represented by our Communion. At our most recent gathering last summer, debt relief for the poorest countries was a chief topic of concern. Those of us from rich nations, like the U.S., Britain and Canada, were challenged to look at the effect of debt on the people of Africa and poor countries elsewhere. Bishops from poor countries were challenged to consider how debt relief could be used in productive ways, benefiting the poorest of society, not squandered. We all had to recognize that both bad lending and bad borrowing contributed to the current crisis.

Despite these challenges, we adopted without dissension a bold statement for the cancellation of unpayable debts to poor countries and for responsible action from debtor and creditor countries, governments and NGOs, to use debt relief to benefit the poorest members of society.

Year of Jubilee

I believe two concerns undergird our statement in support of debt relief — the biblical call for Jubilee, and our ministry to the poor. First, the worldwide movement for debt relief — Jubilee 2000 — draws its inspiration from the biblical texts in Leviticus 25. God speaks to Moses on Mount Sinai of keeping a sabbatical year, working the fields and vineyards for six

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years, and then letting the ground rest, recuperate, on the seventh year (Lev. 25:1-7). Many in academia, religious vocations and others continue this cycle today, with sabbaticals every seven years. From this context of Sabbath, God then commands that after seven years times seven, there be a Year of Jubilee on the 50th year. "And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev. 25: 10). In the Jubilee Year, God calls his children to allow the land to lie fallow, to set slaves free, to return land to its original owners and to cancel debts (Lev. 25: 8-55).

The essence of Jubilee is related to suspending patterns — patterns of work, patterns of domination, patterns of acquisition. It recognizes the need for things to rest, to restore "right relationships" and recover equilibrium in the world. There is little doubt that the Jubilee Year, as described in scripture, eluded Israel as a historical reality. Nonetheless, this notion of suspending the usual patterns, particularly restoring relationships among people and with the earth, remained an important element of early teaching and shaped Jesus' ministry in his time and beyond. It remains a challenge for us today.

Combating poverty

The second concern, combating poverty, is of course another great challenge to us as people of faith. For me, for the Anglican bishops, and for most advocates for debt relief, the reality that overwhelming debts push the poorest members of our earth deeper and deeper into poverty is cause to take action. These poor countries are caught in a cycle of debt they cannot escape, borrowing more money to make payments on old debts.

Sometimes countries cannot service

all of their debt. But largely they do, and at tremendous human cost. In some cases, paying debt service takes 30-40 percent of their budgets, shifting money away from investments in human development, agriculture, clean water and protecting the environment to pay back rich donor nations.

Should these governments make better spending decisions? Yes, they probably could better prioritize what little they have. But, while we can spend time finding out who is to blame, and plenty of blame can go around, we must recognize that it is the poorest people, mostly without a voice, who end up paying the price for debts taken on without their input or concerns.

And, of course, I believe we should pay our debts as a rule. But, again, that standard must be weighed against the cost of human suffering. In these poorest countries, the abject poverty and human toll is almost unimaginable by U.S. standards. Nearly one billion people live on \$1 a day. One in five children die before their fifth birthday from preventable disease. Such suffering cannot be ignored. Something must be done.

Debt relief for poverty reduction

Fortunately, we can take concrete steps to address the debt crisis, and begin to create conditions in which many of these countries can lift themselves from poverty. I applaud Chairman Leach, a new friend and fellow Episcopalian, and Congressman LaFalce and many others for their introduction of H.R. 1095, the "Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act." This bill is carefully crafted to provide substantial debt relief to those countries that are committed to poverty reduction and good governance. The bill would (1) write off most debt owed to the U.S. by heavily indebted poor countries, (2) make a substantial contribution from the U.S. to the HIPC Initiative, the official debt relief mechanism of the World Bank and IMF, (3) call for significant reforms of the HIPC Initiative, including

Frank T. Griswold is Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA). These are excerpts from a statement he made before the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services last June.

providing greater debt relief, faster, for more countries, with greater transparency and civil participation, and (4) create a mechanism by which the money realized from debt relief would be used for poverty reduction, such as education, health care and water sanitation.

I believe this bill fulfills a difficult task. It offers a Jubilee vision of debt relief, moving the U.S. into a position of world leadership on this issue. At the same time, it lifts up Lambeth's call for debt relief to genuinely benefit the poor by creating sophisticated mechanisms for poverty reduction, accountability and good governance. The bill mandates that any country receiving debt relief must

Getting to enough by John Zinn

Most of us at one time or another have said in frustration, "Enough is enough!" It is ironic that this is such a common expression since knowing what is enough does not seem to come naturally. In this respect, my problem is books.

In truth, there is nothing that I would rather do than read a book. The reality, however, is that, given other responsibilities and interests, I can at best read 12-18 books a year. However, my purchases of books have had little or nothing to do with my ability to consume or use them. I would guess that, on average, I have easily bought 40-50 books a year. Thought about like this, the bottom line is pretty obvious a lot of unread books.

There are some very real negatives to this gap between purchases and use. I have bought books on subjects that I was interested in even though I couldn't read them. Over time my interests have create a Human Development Fund, into which the money that would otherwise have gone to servicing debt is directed for programs to combat poverty and protect the environment.

Civil society, including representatives of NGOs and churches, must be part of the establishment, administration and monitoring of this fund. This approach is modeled on the education fund developed in Uganda where debt relief money has been committed to education. Tanzania has set up a similar education fund, and Zambia proposes directing debt relief to HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention. These developments are cause for celebration. But the aims of these and

changed and I now own a lot of books that I no longer have any interest in reading. In other words, the money was wasted. Perhaps even more embarrassing is the habit of buying a book in hard cover, not reading it and then seeing it come out in paperback.

Why is this important? It is especially important because money used to acquire more than we need or can use is not available for other things. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of Standard Oil, who was at one time the richest man in the world, understood this clearly. Supposedly (Iread this in a book) Rockefeller was once furious with a street car conductor who failed to give him a dime change. Rockefeller, a lifelong tither, told the conductor, "I need that money for overseas missions." That may be a little extreme for someone with that much money, but for us it can be a very serious issue. We only have so much money, not just to give, but to use for very real responsibilities like a college education for children or preparing for our retirement. Money spent on things we don't need or cannot use is money gone forever. And if we use credit card debt to buy other countries cannot be realized without the financial commitment from creditor nations. Without funding, debt relief will not happen. I ask you, our Congress, to support H.R. 1095, to create the U.S. policy and mechanisms for responsible debt relief ... and then I ask you to fund the U.S. share.

Estimates of the cost of this proposal are hard to solidify. But I am encouraged by the fact that the U.S. can purchase back the debts at a fraction of the face value of the original loan, at sometimes as low as 7-10 percent. This means for a relatively small expenditure we can provide a large amount of relief. Rarely are such bargains found that can help so many.

things we don't need we have compounded the problem. Buying something we don't need may be a sin; paying interest to a finance company for something we don't need or can't use has to be a sin!

I have grappled with the book issue for a long time. Since last year I have tried to apply a basic premise. I will only buy a book if I am ready to start reading it immediately. Thus far it is working. I have bought far fewer books and have less incentive to go to Barnes & Noble or Borders. But it is and will be a struggle.

I believe that tithing has helped me to come to grips with this issue. To give away 10 percent of one's income requires more careful management. But what I think is far more important is that giving away 10 percent of one's income makes one much more conscious of the whole issue of our relationship to material things. It doesn't make one any holier or any better than anyone else. But it does help one or force one to think seriously about these issues and ultimately to take action. Or put more simply, tithing can help us get to enough.

John Zinn is treasurer of both the Diocese of Newark and the Episcopal Church Publishing Company board.

Freed to live in radical simplicity

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

The Street Lawyer, by John Grisham (NY: Dell Publishing, 1999)

here's a joke that goes like this: The United Way, realizing that it has never received a donation from the city's most successful lawyer, sends a volunteer to visit his expensive office.

"Our research shows that though your annual income is over a million dollars, you don't give a penny to charity. Wouldn't you like to give something back to your community through the United Way?"

The lawyer thinks for a minute and says, "Did your research also show you that my mother is dying after a long, painful illness with huge medical bills far beyond her ability to pay?"

Embarrassed, the United Way rep mumbles, "Oh ... no, we didn't know that."

"Moreover," says the lawyer, "my brother, a disabled veteran, is blind and confined to a wheelchair, unable to support his wife and six children."

The stricken United Way rep begins to stammer an apology, but is cut off.

"Did your research further show that my sister's husband died in a dreadful car accident, leaving her penniless with a mortgage and three children?"

Now humiliated and beaten, the United Way rep says, "I'm so sorry, I had no idea."

But the lawyer continues, "So ... if I don't give money to them, what makes you think I would ever give any to you?"

Perhaps the most striking scene in John Grisham's unexpected novel, *The Street Lawyer*, is when "Mister," a duly angry homeless man, takes nine top-drawer Washington attorneys hostage at gunpoint in their own posh conference room and orders their tax returns faxed in from the beancounters downstairs. He then proceeds to interrogate them pointedly about their habits of giving. "Not to Yale or the United Way," he says, "but to poor people." They are each remarkably like our friend in the joke, and none have the moral good sense to be embarrassed.

Except one. When the tense opening

I'm astonished at the number of folks I know who have, in fact, cast away fortunes, stock options and securities for a freedom of radical simplicity.

scene is abruptly and brutally resolved, the blood of the victim is upon our narrator. And it will not let him rest. It drives him in a quest of downward mobility, tracking Mister's story, confronting the spiritual toll his own life has taken, and eventually leading him into a passion, albeit rare among lawyers, for justice. He betrays his class to become a poverty lawyer. Along the way he uncovers an intrigue of highpowered D.C. real estate schemes implicating his own firm deeply in Mister's life and death. He plays street hardball with the firm and in the end the guilty (note: individuals, not structures) get their sweet comeuppance.

Grisham has done a bit of homework, certainly cutting carrots and garlic, stirring the soup in one or more of the D.C. soup kitchens. He has the geography down and his glimpses of streetfolk, in their tender wiles, thick-skinned endurance and ingenuity, are recognizably lifted from experience.

Not to say that this is great writing. Recently in Washington, I saw Carol Fennelley, a friend who helped found, and ran for years, the Community for Creative Nonviolence shelter which is detailed in the narrative. She was holding a signed copy of the book. I said, "Reads like a screenplay, no?" She replied without dropping a beat, "Perhaps a made-for-TV movie!"

Nor is it likely that Grisham imagined that a saga touching on the political economy of homelessness would be his next holiday blockbuster. Still, one has to wonder about the consequences of such a book on its author. As I think about it I'm astonished at the number of folks I know who have, in fact, cast away fortunes, stock options and securities for a freedom of radical simplicity. William Stringfellow comes to mind, poised for a Harvard-trained career, and making instead for East Harlem and "street law," before there was even a name for it, in the 1950s.

I'd be glad if our novelist felt the call, his spiritual economy vulnerable to moral incursion and even collapse. But then the book contracts and movie rights outrun the billable hours and bonuses of even his fictional partners. His fate is more than likely covered by the disappointing conclusion — a cheery ending about the big firm salving its wounded pride and conscience with a philanthropic program of obligatory *pro bono* work. I'm sure the beancounters will find it deductible.

Grisham's hero, however, goes farther and deeper. Perhaps his best unmitigated wish. Yet to be followed. It is a way not

review/

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is Director of the M.Div. Program for the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago.

Conduct unbecoming

by Mary E. Hunt

famous feminist author burst my bubble. I was an impressionable graduate student when this writer whose work I loved came to visit my campus. Her public lecture was characteristically excellent, but up close and personal, over dinner with a small group and in the car between events, she was, how to put it delicately, difficult. She complained about everything, seemed put upon even to be there despite a hefty lecture fee, and acted as if her attentive audience was boorish. I was crushed, having lived with the naive expectation that great artists were necessarily good people. Ah, youth! But it raised for me the matter of what we can expect from whom, an issue I continue to ponder.

Some similar issues surfaced when the dean of Harvard Divinity School, Ronald F. Thiemann, was forced to resign "for conduct unbecoming a dean," allegedly due to large quantities of pornography found on his computer. What are the parameters of behavior expected for religious and clergy professionals? After all, theologian Paul Tillich was said by his wife to have been a porn aficionado, so perhaps Dean Thiemann felt that he was just another of a long line of prominent theologians who enjoy it. Is it fair to



Mary E. Hunt is co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) in Silver Spring, Md., <mhunt@hers.com>. expect more from someone who created the Center for the Study of Values in Public Life? Perhaps it was only his research! Whatever the circumstances, well beyond my ken, the questions endure far beyond one dean or one institution. They are not trivial; they can cost jobs or even lives.

What are the parameters of behavior expected for religious and clergy professionals? After all, theologian Paul Tillich was said by his wife to have been a porn aficionado, so perhaps Dean Thiemann felt that he was just another of a long line of prominent theologians who enjoy it.

I see these issues in many settings where power and privilege abide. Academics have both. Clergy sexual misconduct is a prime example, but doctors who sexually abuse patients, lawyers who break the law, not to mention presidents who have sex with their interns, bring us up short with a barrage of complicated ethical issues. What can we legitimately expect of whom? Was Luke right when he wrote, "To whom much is given, much is expected"? And if so, who decides what is expected? Judgments are always dicey. Who among us is not capable of behavior that flies in the face of what we represent? I seek some useful ways to think about such matters so that fairness to all involved results. A great deal has been done to protect those who are victimized, as it should be. But what about situations where reputations are lost over hearsay, jobs threatened by shadows cast by idle gossip? How do we adjudicate cases with competing claims? In the Dean's case, mixed opinions on pornography and substantive claims to the right to privacy make for difficult judgment calls.

No magic solutions here, but perhaps two suggestive observations will help. They represent a minimalist approach, but I hope that they will start a conversation worth having now that issues of power are well established as relevant to ethical reflection. Consider them a first word, not a last, on a serious topic.

First, I believe that it is legitimate to expect that there will be coherence between what we see and what we get. This is not arrived at easily, but it erases a layer of duplicity so often clouding awareness. Social expectations of people in power are not capricious, but commonsensical. They are often inflated, but they are real and have consequences for which those in power must take some, though not all, responsibility.

For example, patients expect their doctors to practice what they preach about health. Some lose all perspective when the doctor becomes ill, has a heart attack or dies. Intuition plays such tricks. But knowing that example is powerful and that the white coat carries weight, a doctor who is remiss about her/his health conveys a message, however unintended. That is why medical schools now include serious attention to personal well being as part of their curricula.

Religious professionals experience

the rub frequently, bumping up against their humanity at regular intervals and with mixed results. They are sometimes mistaken for the divine, considered by some congregants to be beyond reproach. Such expectations, however misguided, go with the territory. One must be prepared to handle projections and deflect unreasonable expectations. But there is privilege in the position that comes with a price. Thanks to the exemplary work of Marie Marshall Fortune and her colleagues at the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, many seminaries are now including such issues in their curricula, preparing religious professionals to deal with professional ethics in a preventative rather than reparative mode.

No amount of training prepares one for the experience of being a doctor with a heart problem, a clergyperson with an addiction, or a professor with a personality disorder. Nonetheless, I contend that

WISHING YOU HAD HELD ON TO THAT OLD ISSUE OF THE WITNESS?

The topics explored in the pages of *The Witness* seldom go out of date. And study groups interested in a particular issue are likely to find a number of back issues which pertain.We still have copies available for most back issues. To order, send a check for \$3 per copy ordered to *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967, or fax (313) 841-1956. the *sine qua non* for holding the job is simply that one seek treatment or otherwise attend to the problem so as to square up appearance and reality. Then what we see is what we get — a human being doing the best she/he can. No more and no less is required.

A second observation that helps to move this conversation is my claim that the burden of proof always lies with the one with the greatest power. It would be nice to believe that life is

Power is a cumulative matter — symbolic as well as real, psychological and spiritual as well as economic . That is why few thought that President Clinton had been victimized by Monica Lewinsky and most felt that, despite her wiles, she was the young woman intern with the older, well-connected man.

evenhanded, but the fact remains that power is unevenly distributed in most instances. A professor has it, a student does not. A university is in the driver's seat, an employee, even a dean, is a passenger. It is my contention that justice is served only when the effort is made to equalize power while at the same time acknowledging the structural reality that some have more than others, whether we like it or not. Justice is done when there is some compensatory action to level the playing field. Sadly, we don't see it often.

Of course power is hard to see or capture. It is a bit like the old chestnut

about pornography, "I know it when I see it." Concretely, in clergy sexual misconduct there is no doubt that the religious professional acting in an official capacity has more power than the average congregant, even the largest donor to the church. Power is a cumulative matter — symbolic as well as real, psychological and spiritual as well as economic . That is why few thought that President Clinton had been victimized by Monica Lewinsky and most felt that, despite her wiles, she was the young woman intern with the older, well-connected man. I can still hear the voice of a famous feminist ethicist who heard about a faculty member sexually harassing a student. She had only one question for the professor: "Do you realize in the case of this student that the burden of proof lies with you?" I wish she had been one of President Clinton's religious advisors.

Most power imbalances are not quite so bald. Rather, they are part of the social subtext of racism, economic injustice, gender disparity and the like that ground everyday life. They form the backdrop for webs of relationships in which we all live. They are complicated, but that does not mean they can be passed over. Here my suggestion is that efforts to change structural power dynamics need to be part of the job description of those who live on the receiving end, on the topside to whom those underneath are always in debt. Otherwise, claims to be breaking down barriers or otherwise assuming equality where it does not exist ring hollow.

I repeat that judgments are always dicey. But we make them all the time regarding conduct, beginning with our own. The key is to find ways to think inclusively so that justice is done for everyone. It begins to sound like a job for the Divine, but it is one we humans must share, to the best of our ability.

ill McKibben has been called a "grinch" (a charge he vigorously disputes) and an "environmental wacko" (a charge — by Rush Limbaugh - which is included among the backcover endorsements of one of his books). His 1989 book. The End of Nature, the first popular work on global warming. was widely hailed as a critical warning cry on the consequences of unlimited human expansion and exploitation of the earth. For many years, McKibben has used his gifts as a writer to raise somber issues concerning the survival of the planet. But these days, though he frankly asserts that the problems are only getting worse. McKibben is talking about joy.

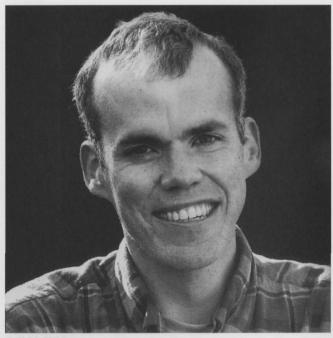
"The more simply I lived, the more I began to sense that the things that gave me joy and pleasure were contact with other people and contact with the natural world around me, two things that, for the most part, fall outside the boundaries of the consumer society," McKibben says. "It began to become clear to me that, if there was any Achilles' heel to the amazing consumer monolith — bounded by the suburb on one side and the shopping mall, the theme park and the TV network on the others - it was that it didn't make us quite as happy as it said it was going to. If it really delivered the pleasure it claimed it would, then I think neither appeals to ecological sanity nor one's personal financial health would be enough to challenge it."

McKibben cites his experience with a "Hundred Dollar Holiday" campaign,



Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

"It's obscene, the number of people who go deeply into debt at Christmas. People are very grateful and very eager to try some other way."



Bill McKibben

The beginning of joy by Marianne Arbogast

which he helped launch through his small Methodist church in the Adirondacks. "The people I was working on this with were good, pious environmentalists," he says. "We thought that was the reason we were doing it, the thousands of acres of trees cut down for wrapping paper, or whatever, but really, that wasn't the reason. We quickly discovered that we and other people responded to this idea because we wanted Christmas to be more joyful. The Center for a New American Dream did a poll last year which found that under a quarter of Americans were left feeling joyful at the end of Christmas - which is pretty terrible! It's a holiday of absolutely unalloyed joy, and somehow we've managed to make it to the point where most people dread its approach. It's obscene, the number of people who go deeply into debt at Christmas and who are still paying it off the following November. People are very grateful and very eager to try some other way."

In a book titled *Hundred Dollar Holiday: The Case for a More Joyful Christmas*, McKibben describes his own family's custom of a Christmas morning walk, scattering grain and seed for the birds and animals, "a mark of the bond we share with the rest of creation."

"The point is, Christmas is not enough fun," he argues. "I mean, if it brings you pleasure, if really, in the end, what does it for you is going to the mall and buying immense amounts of stuff and having people give you immense amounts of stuff — then God bless you, you might as well stick with it. I think that's a small percentage of people, probably small enough that the world would be able to stand their particular hobby."

McKibben, who has been working on revisions for a 10th-anniversary edition of *The End of Nature*, has not backed off from his blunt predictions of ecological upheaval.

"All that's happened in the 10 years since I wrote the first book is that science has become completely clear that the phenomenon of climate change is utterly real and deeply scary. And the political world has become, if anything, less responsive to it than it was a decade ago. The U.S. has increased its fossil fuel use about 15 percent in this decade, despite knowing better. Wal-Mart sells more stuff each year than they did the year before, cars get bigger, houses get bigger, so I think we're still losing some of these particular battles pretty overwhelmingly."

Asked about the critique of "simple lifestyle" as a luxury for educated, middleclass Americans with lots of choices (and, perhaps, savings and investments to support them), McKibben stresses the urgency of the crisis.

"I don't think, in the end, that these things are 'lifestyle choices," he says. "Clearly, that's how they present themselves for the moment, but I think we need to figure out how to live in this world, and anyone who believes that six billion, soon to be 10 billion people on the planet are going to be able to live at the level of middle-class, suburban Americans, has not confronted the physics and chemistry very thoroughly."

He also points out that spiritual traditions throughout the ages have counseled simplicity as a path to "a meaningful, deeply joyful life. The gospels are one long explanation of why we'd be better off thinking a lot less about stuff and money, and a lot more about the things that really matter. It's a powerful tradition that reflects all the other great gurus, cranks and crackpots of world history from the Buddha up through Thoreau. Now, at the end of the 20th century, that line of gurus is joined by a line of scientists who say that any other approach is going to overwhelm the world we live in."

McKibben lives in a wood-heated home in the Adirondacks with his wife, Sue Halpern (also a writer) and their sixyear-old daughter Sophie. He and Halpern have consciously chosen to limit their

"Find one thing that brings you real pleasure — a sensible, useful change. If you live in a place where you can give up your car and ride a bike, or ride the bus, there's a real start. Or get rid of your television, or change the way you eat. Start from there and see what happens."

family to one child, a decision he explores in a recent book, *Maybe One*. Their house is "statistically bizarre," he says, in not containing a television.

"It's a great help in giving us more hours a day to enjoy ourselves, and in not constantly teasing us with some more things we might like to have," McKibben says. His daughter reads a lot, and he feels that "her mind still more or less belongs to her.

"Even in places like where I live, which are very far in the woods, people spend as many hours watching TV as anywhere else. Kids' mental lives are more likely to be lived in Southern California than in the Adirondacks." (McKibben has written that "one billion people, one human in five, see the TV program *Baywatch* every week. That's more than take communion each week or bow toward Mecca; and, of course, it inspires others to worship the gods of our consumer pantheon.")

"The only way to combat it is — at as early an age as possible — to get them out in the woods and the lakes and the mountains," he says. "We've spent a lot of time getting kids outdoors. It's very hard, I think, to do even one long, ambitious trip into the wilderness and not be changed by it in a deep way."

We need to relearn lost joys, McKibben believes.

"We've consumed till it seems highly unlikely more consumption will fill the various holes in our lives," he wrote in his 1995 book, *Hope: Human and Wild*. "Now we have the chance to back up to say that we will take our satisfaction not from the pelt of the beaver and what it will buy, but from the slap of beaver tail on the water and from the swamp maples turning red in mid-August around the edge of beaver ponds."

He suggests starting small.

"Find one thing that brings you real pleasure — a sensible, useful change. If you live in a place where you can give up your car and ride a bike, or ride the bus, there's a real start. Or get rid of your television, or change the way you eat. Start from there and see what happens. Try to live a little more elegantly and gracefully than we're encouraged to by the Martha Stewarts of the world — whose only idea of how to do things is to buy some more stuff.

"A hyper-consumer society like the one we live in is an extremely difficult place to be subversive," McKibben reflects. "Although *The End of Nature* was widely read, it became clear to me that appeals like that are unlikely to really change the way we live. The only genuinely subversive thing you can do in America is to have more fun than other people."

Letters, continued from page 3

ON AUGUST 30, 1998 MY WORLD was changed for the better. I was out walking and I fell off a bridge and broke my back. My T-12 vertabrae was destroyed and I became a paraplegic in the blink of an eye. I now walk with my mind. I am beginning to write a book, tentatively called *Other Muscles*, because now I use other muscles to move my legs. It will be an autobiography, since I have been travelling to this point in time my entire life.

I haven't led an exemplary life, but that is all changed now. I believe in redemption. My accident has brought my life into focus and I now realize that I was meant to be a teacher and a witness. I was born in a small town in northern Indiana where I wasted my youth. For the last 12 years I had been living in Chicago. I was helping a friend with his mother's estate in Colorado when the accident happened. I worked in the real estate field for almost 25 years and I now see the futility of chasing material possessions and trying to control people and events. I saw death and destruction firsthand and participated in some of it.

I want to tell the entire world and especially young people the things that I know. All I see is death, destruction and waste, but I still have incredible hope for humankind. Just like I have hope that I will walk again someday. I still don't know where I am headed in life, but I don't worry about it. My chair has given me an extraordinary vantage point and I want to use it for good.

I was sitting in the doctor's office the

other day and an 83-year-old lady asked if my injuries were permanent. I told her the doctor thought so, but that I didn't. She told me that her husband had recently become paralyzed and the doctor didn't know the reason. He was having a hard time accepting it and she asked if I could speak to him and I gladly accepted. The more I thought about this the better I felt. I could finally be of use to someone and that is the greatest feeling a human being can have.

David E. Marckres <CRPPLCRRK@prodigy.com>

THE AGING ISSUE IS SUPER; your "trading speed" piece is even better.

> Dick Kirchhoffer Whitefish, MT

A national disregard for children

YOU FOLKS HAVE DONE IT AGAIN. You manage to expose that underbelly of our society that is so vulnerable and so overlooked by the culture ... the devaluing of our children ... yet they are our most important product. I teach Godly Play in a classroom of 3-,4-, and 5-year-olds each Sunday. I can say without a doubt there is more deep theologizing done by our students than I am ever conscious of in the adult groups. There is one little boy who constantly reminds me that God is everpresent ... Maybe I am not so present, but God is. When Van prays, I have no doubt of the Presence of his loving, accepting, listening God.

Why do we have to constantly remind the powers that be that we need to support all the

programs for children within the church? And the people who give their time to them? What a privilege it is to be with these children as they tell me about God!

Keep up the wonderful work you folks constantly do. You prod the places we want to forget and attack us in our comfortable pew! Thanks be to God!

Betsy L. Willis

<b

The prison-industrial complex

WHEN I WROTE MY ARTICLE about prisons for profit a year ago (TW 11/98), Tennessee was on the verge of privatizing all its prisons. It seemed "a done deal." But my conjecture proved wrong, thanks to the hard work of the Tennessee State Employees Association (including many state correctional officers), Reconcilation, Inc. (a prison families' support group), African-American ministers' groups, progressive union members, a few Tennessee Conference United Methodists and others who formed a loose coalition that succeeded in convincing enough state legislators that privatization was not a good idea.

> Sam Hine Plough Publishing House Farmington, PA

Witness praise

THE WITNESS COMES, I read it cover to cover. New Yorkers stack up unread. Nancy Arthur McDaniels Saint Paul, MN

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Volume 82 • Number 10 • October 1999



Nuclearism today

The politics and power of pilgrimage

BILL WYLIE-KELLERMANN HAS DONE it again. He has masterfully made an often depicted remote, irrelevant Jesus of the 1st century into a vibrant essential Jesus of the 20th century (7-8/99).

He has clearly shown that the politically sanitized cultural worship of God that Jesus' whole life railed against then is often the same worship of Baal we encounter masquerading as authentic religion in our culture today.

His "Jesus is not here" take of sacred Holy Land sites is an apt naming of the commercialization and Caesar-blest pilgrimages that seem so ubiquitous.

> Ron Dale Warren, MI





Journeys of the spirit: the power and politics of pilgrimage

IN AN ARTICLE WHOSE TONE was one of respect, you should have spelled his name correctly. It's El Vez — check out <http:// www.oms.com/bigpop/elvez.htm#ElVez>. Or to quote this site, "El Vez may not be the King, but he's undoubtedly El Rey of Mex-Americana.

"For the last eight years, he has wowed crowds worldwide with revues that combine

the histories of American music and Chicano culture, putting the tequila in musical shots, the salsa in grits, and the Memphis in the Mariachis."

Mary E. Donlon <MaryDonlon@compuserve.com>

A politics of place

I'M COMPELLED TO WRITE about the subject matter of the June *Witness*. By way of introduction, I have been a member of St. David's parish in Topeka for nearly 30 years, I'm an ecologist, currently employed at the Kansas Division of Environment (Bureau of Water), I organized the "Caring for Creation" conference in Kansas City for the church in 1994 and am editor of a book published just this year.

GOOD FOR YOU!! I am absolutely at my wit's end with organized religion and very organized government either ignoring or covering for corporate malfeasance in the environment.

I believe that the magnificent ecosystems we live within were divinely, each very specifically created, to help all life thrive — not just humans. I take Garrett Hardin's "com-

Classifieds

Order of Jonathan Daniels

The Order of Jonathan Daniels is an ecumenical religious order in the Anglican tradition of Vowed and Oblate lay persons of both genders, single, committed or married, living and working in the world, who are engaged in justice ministries. Write: OJD, P.O. Box 4372, Portland, ME 04101 or <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

R & R Martha's Vineyard Island

"Granny's House" guest suite. Private entrance, kitchenette, full bath/laundry, master bedroom, small enclosed sun porch and wraparound deck overlook outdoor labyrinth. Shaker furnishings feature queen four-poster bed, wing chair, writing table. TV/VCR, telephone and linens are provided. Sleeps two; no smoking, no pets, please. \$75/night, \$500/ week Oct.-May. "We make you kindly welcome." (508) 627-6075 for brochure or reservations.

EPF volunteer editor

The Episocpal Peace Fellowship seeks an editor of the quarterly EPF newsletter, hopefully someone who has been involved in peace/justice work and in the Episcopal Church. Interested people can contact Verna Fausev at <vfausev@aol.com>.

M.Div. Internship program

The Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago offers a six-month M.Div. internship program beginning January 11 which integrates a ministry experience with a full semester of course work. Classes include: "Urban Principalities and the Spirit of the City," "Christology and Culture," "Church-based Community Development," "Dimensions and Dynamics of Urban Ministry" and "Spirit and Rhythms of Urban Preaching." Faculty include: Yvonne Delk, Calvin Morris, Ched Myers, Kaziputalimba Joshua and Jim Perkinson. Contact: Bill Wylie-Kellermann at SCUPE, 200 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 (312-726-1200).

National Conference on Iraq

A National Organizing Conference on Iraq will take place Oct. 15-17 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. The Conference will bring together grassroots groups around the country to share experiences and strategies for creating a national agenda to end the sanctions. Contact Deana Rabiah, 313-842-7010 or 734-677-0959; <http://www.umich.edu/ ~drabiah/iraq>.

Witness classifieds

Witness classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Deadline is two months prior to publication. mons" (as in *Tragedy of the Commons*) to encompass not only land, but air, water, and non-toxic food — those elements vital to life which are now polluted even in areas of the earth that have hardly seen a human. Example: last year Yosemite, this year the Rockies — I couldn't take clear pictures of the mountains due to the "haze" (like "harvesting" is used for wildlife slaughter, "haze" is used instead of air pollution). Air pollution is everywhere, it's just that not everywhere are there mountains as backdrops so that it is visual. Rather than seeing it, it is known by the 40 percent increase in asthma the last few years.

My book, *The Piracy of America*, is an anthology about corporate manipulation of elected officials who manipulate government bureaucrats in order to protect corporate profits, thus resulting in an increasingly degraded environment. And it implicates a church whose bank rollers are part of the corporate oligarchy in such a way that the church is afraid to speak out in defense of that which the Creator so magnificently designed to sustain life. And that's why my thesis is that we are no longer a democracy or a "Christian" nation.

I appreciate your taking on this subject and reminding us once again that we have more to learn than we can ever imagine. As Thomas Berry said (he wrote the foreword to the book, by the way), "Unless the feminine is taken into the counsels of decision making, the human species will not survive." We need heavy doses of right-brain thinking.

I appreciate your attention to an incredibly vital foundation of life.

Judith Scherff <chaw@cjnetworks.com>

Shalom Center website

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE the recent establishment of The Shalom Center's website: <www.shalomctr.org>. Please visit our website and look at the work we are doing. We would like to set up reciprocal web links with other organizations and individuals whose work we support and admire. Please drop us a line at <Shalomctr2@aol.com> if you are interested.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Rachel Gurevitz The Shalom Center



Witness praise

IT IS WONDERFUL to have a spiritually exploratory and fulfilling publication that isn't afraid to question! Finally, a magazine with which I can connect. I can't wait to share *The Witness*!

Betsy Hutcheson Salem, VA

THE WITNESS EXPRESSES OUTREACH to marginalized persons, spirituality as lived by Jesus and a much needed shaking up of the traditions of the Episcopal Church (I say this as a faithful Episcopalian!). Keep up your good work.

> Anne C. Cook Suffield, CT

THANKS FOR THE MONTHLY BRAIN and soul food!

> Debbie Wollard-Kidd St. Clair Shores, MI

THE WITNESS REMINDS ME of what is important. Please, continue to keep me honest! Mary Robb Mansfield Montpelier, VT

IN THIS AGE OF STOCK MARKET frenzy it is refreshing to read about the

issues that really matter. That is where the real wealth is found.

Gary Mongillo Southington, CT

I LEFT ORGANIZED CHRISTIANY several years ago but this magazine gives me hope that we earthlings are not all bigots!

> Anne Shaw Warrenton, VA

I HAVE GREATLY ENJOYED, relished and devoured each morsel of *The Witness*. It has nourished my heart and soul to "keep on keeping on" in the social justice arena. Recent interviews with such personal heroes/heroines as Barbara Harris and Steve Charleston and others continue to revive my spirits. Thanks for letting me have the honor of subscribing!

> Margo McMahon Amherst, MA

I LOVE *THE WITNESS* very much. It is everything you said it was and some more. You are doing much more than two promises. The issues are for real, some you would never read any place else but *The Witness*.

> Pearl Hicks West Chester, PA

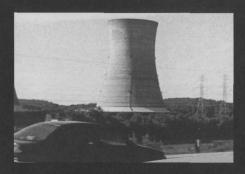
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8 Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell

With the political dynamics of the Cold War gone, author Jonathan Schell says the time is right for eliminating global nuclear aresenals. But do the nuclear powers have the needed political resolve?

14 Nuclear weapons today by Camille Colatosti

Nuclear weapons still claim a sizeable chunk of the U.S. defense budget, with new weapons continuing to be developed. Still, the vast majority of people around the world support the abolition of nuclear



20 Selling peacetime nuke power by Leah Samuel

The nuclear power industry is working hard to convince the public that nuclear energy's peacetime role is not full of toxic danger. It's an increasingly hard sell.

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

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

Cover: Boundary fence at the Nevada Test Site near the Mercury, Nev. gate, May 1999, by Julie A. Wortman.

Back cover: Maine Yankee VI by Yvonne Jacquette, 1983 (oil on canvas, 79 x 70 in.), Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, NYC.

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Grounds for arrest

by Julie A. Wortman

n recent years I've had a flat-line reaction when I hear news that a handful of veteran activists have managed, yet again, to gain access to a nuclear submarine or to a nuclear missile silo on which they have hammered out their outrage or spilled sorrowful blood. Such dogged, often sacrificial, devotion to keeping the threat of nuclear warand the expense of nuclear deterrence before the public's eyes has value, Iknow. But although I spent a lot of time in the 1980s vigiling and protesting outside nuclear weapons manufacturers, at the Pentagon and on the steps of a variety of federal government buildings, I have lately had no wish to praise or follow. The shrill drama has seemed disconnected from real life, somehow, although I'll admit that I've had difficulty explaining why.

So, when I journeyed to Las Vegas to participate in the Healing Global Wounds' "Honor Your Mother Gathering" at the Nevada Test Site (NTS) last spring, I wasn't much tempted by the organizers' promise that there would be a chance to participate in one or more acts of civil disobedience. But I was to experience a change of heart.

The shift began with a forum on nuclear issues hosted by the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, where I was startled to discover that although the audience seemed uniformly in favor of nuclear abolition, at least half the group thought non-military applications of nuclear technology were probably acceptable. As one presenter expressed it, "If the world is going to have an industrial-based society, nuclear energy is the best way to go."

That session offered a useful reminder of a prevailing mind-set: Continuing to develop and deploy weapons of mass destruction seems obviously undesirable and probably immoral. But maybe, just maybe, now that we have the means to profitably utilize the power of the atom, it would be imprudent to repudiate peacetime applications altogether.

How is it, I found myself wondering, that mass destruction delivered by nuclear missiles seems to so many a clearer evil than mass destruction delivered by a corporation or a utility company or a government corps of engineers?

For the next two days I had plenty of chance to chew on that conundrum at the

The land doesn't distinguish between the peaceful or aggressive intentions that lead to its poisoning.

Healing Global Wounds campsite near the Mercury, Nev., gate into the NTS. Here the desert vistas are vast, the ground rocky and the vegetation sparse. For centuries this has been Western Shoshone land, as recognized by the U.S. government in the Treaty of Ruby Valley in 1863. It was in 1948 that the U.S. forcibly removed over 100 Shoshone familes from the Rhode Island-size area it wanted for the NTS, marked now by the barbed wire fence we could see across the highway.

"Be aware that the desert around you is extremely fragile," gathering organizers cautioned. "While we may be camped in an area that looks free of wildlife, it's not. Many animals and plants make this their home. Don't move rocks or rip out bushes. Whole ecosystems live under them."

Avoiding washes or "very dusty looking low areas" was also recommended, since "the dangerous fallout from above-ground testing tends to accumulate in these areas."

Just visible on the horizon was Yucca Mountain, a site within the NTS of sacred importance to a variety of tribal groups in the region. Its future as a storage facility for spent reactor fuel is being hotly contested and the forces in favor are formidable. A Healing Global Wounds information sheet noted that the NTS is already the dumping ground for nuclear waste from clean-up efforts at other nuclear weapons facilities, though the cleanup budget here is small. A nuclear dump down the road near Beatty, Nev., reportedly is leaking into the groundwater after only 20 years.

The land, it takes little imagination to see, doesn't distinguish between the peaceful or aggressive intentions that lead to its poisoning. Its distress only spreads and deepens as we stockpile against possible attack, as generators hum.

Both the U.S. federal government and the Western Shoshone people claim sovereignty over this territory. One considers it expendable, useful largely as a huge toxic dumping ground. The other cherishes its wildness and seeks its healing.

The thought, very simply, pushed me over the edge. I knew I wouldn't be able to leave this place without making some clear witness on behalf of the forces of life, some embodied response to the land's fierce but fragile beauty and the indifference with which it has been violated.

And so, on Mother's Day, clutching a yellow permitissued by the Western Shoshone authorizing my passage onto their land, I joined with 197 others in entering the NTS. I didn't feel righteous or courageous. I did, however, feel in deep solidarity with real life. I could feel it under my feet.

editor's note

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

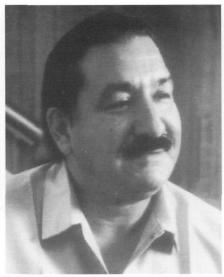
Set Leonard Peltier free

by Steven Charleston

I would hope that the campaign to have him freed will succeed. I certainly support it very passionately and am willing to do whatever it is that might be necessary to help. Because it is a blot on the judicial system of this country that ought to be corrected as quickly as possible. — Desmond Tutu, April 19, 1999

Designed Tutu, the former Archbishop of Capetown, South Africa, was speaking of Leonard Peltier. Tutu had come to Lawrence, Kan., to give an address at the university there but took time to phone Leonard Peltier, who for the past 23 years has been an inmate at Leavenworth Penitentiary. Like so many thousands of others around the world, Tutu has come to regard Leonard Peltier as a true political prisoner, a person held captive for no reason other than the fact that he embarrasses the government and embodies the hope of an oppressed minority.

To understand Peltier's case it is necessary to step back into a moment of history that our judicial system has sought to erase. The time was June 26, 1975. The place was the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Over 150 FBI agents, state troopers, SWAT team members, and U.S. Marshals descended on a small section of the reservation known as the Jumping Bull ranch. They were there to eradicate the presence of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from the reservation. Like the Black Panthers, AIM was targeted as a "radical" organization. Its membership was harassed.



Leonard Peltier

Its phones tapped. Its mail opened and read. Its leaders hunted.

Leonard Peltier was one of those leaders. Along with national figures such as Dennis Banks and Russell Means, Peltier was an outspoken proponent of Native American rights. On that June day he was gathered with other AIM members, including women and children, trying to survive the onslaught of a military presence which included helicopters and armored personnel carriers. As might have been predicted (or even planned) an exchange of gunfire occurred as two FBI agents chased a mysterious red pick-up truck onto the Jumping Bull property. When the dust settled, the two agents were dead and the pick-up had vanished.

Later trials attempted to fix the blame on AIM members, but failed in court. The government's case was outrageous in its doctoring of evidence and dependence on phony affidavits. Finally Leonard Peltier was the last defendant, the last hope of the FBI for revenge in the murder of two of its own. The details of the trial are far too complex to recite here (a full account is given in Peter Matthiessen's powerful book *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*) but the end result was Leonard Peltier's conviction in 1977 and his sentencing to two consecutive life terms. The evidence against him was so obviously manufactured that in April of 1999 Amnesty International once again called for his "immediate and unconditional release." At the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris, Leonard Peltier was recognized as a human rights defender and the assembly called for his release.

The time has come to free Leonard Peltier. In fact, the time is 23 years overdue. As of this writing, Peltier's health raises serious concern for his family and friends. If we are going to act with any sense of justice for this innocent man, then we must act quickly.

This November, thousands of Native American people and their supporters will be in Washington, D.C. for a month-long effort to galvanize attention and action on Peltier's behalf. They will be asking President Clinton to end this national shame and release Leonard Peltier through an act of executive clemency. I am asking all persons of good conscience to please help in this effort. Please get in touch with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee right away to learn more, to offer financial support, and to plan for ways to be involved. At the very least, I ask you to join me in writing to President Clinton and your other national representatives, urging them to free Leonard Peltier this November.

My appeal, like that of Desmond Tutu and Amnesty International, is a cry for justice. Simple human justice. Therefore, I speak directly to every bishop in our church: Please, do not sit down this November to a table overflowing with the bounty of our nation without remembering Leonard Peltier. We cannot be thankful for our privilege while ignoring his sacrifice.

Steven Charleston, former Bishop of Alaska, is President and Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. For more information please contact: Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence, Kansas 66044; clpdc@idir.net>.

I'm Going to Plant a Heart on the Earth

by Rosario Murillo

I grow like a plant

without remorse and without stupidity toward the hours loosened from the day pure and secure as a plant without crucifixion toward the hours loosened from the night — A. Césaire

I'm going to plant a heart in the earth water it with love from a vein I'm going to praise it with the push of muscle and care for it in the sound of all dimensions. I'm going to leave a heart in the earth so it may grow and flower a heart that throbs with longing that adores everything green that will be strength and nourishment for birds that will be the sap of plants and mountains. I'm going to spit a heart into the earth with all miseries and rebellions a heart that procures galaxies that belches drums of all tongues a garden of botanical lights like a mirror turning toward the sun. I'm going to feel a heart in the earth above the black white and yellow earth above flesh of all colors. I'm going to cast a heart over the earth a conversation of anguish and hope above all a heart without ties or timetables without cufflinks or valises or numbers

a heart that will not learn equations or deviations atomic theory or relativity that knows nothing of nuts and bolts, that is not acquainted with watches a heart that uses no credentials that hangs no diplomas that attends no cocktail parties or banquets an open heart that will never have doors I'm going to write a heart that knows no arithmetic that won't leave some to one side and others on the floor in fractions that suffers only childbirth and feigned illness I'm going to fly a heart like a comet one of blood and cosmic dust a mixing of earth with stars a heart that has no country that knows no borders a heart that will never be fired that has never signed a single check that has never had a strongbox a heart, unnerving, unnameable, something simple and sweet, a heart that has loved.

Translated by Barbara Paschke. Reprinted from Hauling Up Morning: The 1990 Peace Calendar of the War Resisters League.

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7

Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell

by Peter Werbe

When Jonathan Schell published his bestseller, The Fate of the Earth, in 1981, it was hailed as the definitive warning of nuclear peril during the Cold War. Now, several books later, Schell is back with a call to end that risk once and for all. The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now (Owl Books, 1998), confronts the danger of globalization of these weapons of mass destruction in our era.

Schell reports on conversations with more than two dozen leading figures of the Cold War, the very generals and politicians who devised and executed the nuclear policies of the Cold War, all of whom agree that the time for abolition has arrived.

Jonathan Schell is also author of The Time of Illusion, and Writing in Time. He was a writer for The New Yorker magazine for 20 years, a columnist for Newsday from 1990-96, and he now teaches at Wesleyan University and The New School.

Peter Werbe: We see the word "time" repeatedly appearing in the titles of your books; I take it that's not an accident. **Jonathan Schell:** It's not an accident and

in the case of the title of my most recent book, it has two meanings. One of them is that I think with the end of the Cold War we've been given the time, a period of time, a gift of time, if you like, in which it is actually possible, if we can muster the political will, to abolish nuclear weapons — get rid of them once and for all. The second meaning of the gift of time is time in the largest sense, that is, the future of our species and its continuation. **P.W.:** Most of us thought with the collapse of the Soviet Union we were out of the woods in terms of nuclear problems. Why are we still at risk?

What we face now is the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations such as India and Pakistan, and soon, conceivably, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria various countries that would like to get them and show every sign of being able to do so one day or another.

J.S.: The nuclear danger did, indeed, dissolve in the form in which it existed during the Cold War. I don't think tomorrow we're going to wake up in the middle of a new Cuban missile crisis with Russia as once we did with the Soviet Union. I think people feel a justified relief, almost a sense of miraculous deliverance from a terrible danger that hung over us for 50 years. The mistake, though, would be to imagine that was the only form nuclear danger can take. In fact, what we face now is a profounder form which really

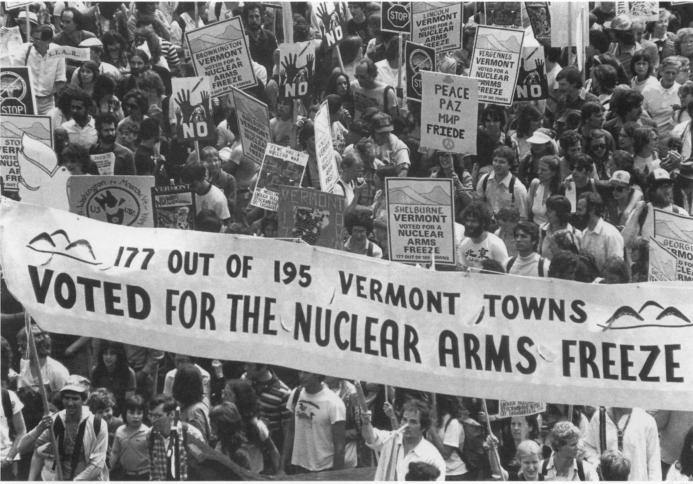
has more to do with the very essence of the danger. What we face now is the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations such as India and Pakistan, and soon, conceivably, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Syria — various countries that would like to get them and show every sign of being able to do so one day or another.

It's not only that, but also the spread to terrorist groups, sub-national groups, and so on. This peril stems from knowledge; it's information and we live in the Information Age and it's in the nature of that knowledge that it can spread. Although the apocalyptic danger that existed during the Cold War has abated somewhat (although the arsenals are still there), the peril is taking a new form. All the ingredients are out there for nuclear disaster all the equipment, the knowledge and the groups.

P.W.: There was such great public anxiety during the Cold War about the possibility of a major nuclear exchange. Now, it seems like a distant memory, something akin to the Red Scare of the 1950s. We know it existed, but it seems like ancient history.

J.S.: That's exactly true. We've entered into a crazy situation because the danger has abated, but it's a cold fact that Russia has 7,000 nuclear weapons pointed at the U.S. right at this minute and they're under very poor control. The U.S. government has been over there recently trying to help them out with their Y2K problems and if some wires get crossed over there on New Year's Day, it's going to be a very different Millennium then the one

Peter Werbe is the public affairs director for WRIF and WCSX radio in Detroit, >jocks@wrif.com>. Photographer **Jim West** lives in Detroit.



Participants in a march and rally for nuclear disarmament in New York City, June 12, 1982.

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we're hoping for.

P.W.: I thought the Russian nuclear weapons had been detargeted and that cities like New York were no longer under the gun?

J.S.: No, that's not true. There is a detargeting agreement, but it's purely cosmetic. They can retarget them by pushing two digits on a computer. The two arsenals are facing one another exactly as they did during the Cold War.

P.W.: Why is this still the case if the Cold War is over?

J.S.: Why, indeed? Out of sheer thoughtlessness or sheer momentum a situation exists where the weaponry of the Cold War is still around even after the Cold War itself has ended.

P.W.: How much actual danger were we in during the years from 1949 through 1989?

J.S.: We were in extreme danger. From a technical point of view we remain in extreme danger because the nuclear posture of that period and today is launch on warning. That means, if the U.S. detects or thinks it detects that Russia has launched its nuclear arsenal, there's about half an hour in which to decide whether to retaliate or not. When you make the necessary offsets for the amount of time it takes to notice that and to take note of it at the command centers, and also the time it would take for the command to our

forces to strike back at Russia, it leaves the president no more than five minutes in which to decide whether or not to launch an annihilating strike against Russia. That's true for them on the other side. We have been and remain in a situation of most extreme peril. During the Cold War, you had overlaid upon that all the tensions of the deep and systemic hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and we don't have that now. Today, there's more of a danger of accident or something strange happening over there like a coup or a governments coming to power that's unfriendly to us. They've fired about four government in a year and it's an extremely unstable situation.

P.W.: People mention the phrase, Weimar Russia, alluding to the period that prefigured the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, and you have right-wing politicians in Russia during the NATO war against Yugoslavia in the wings calling for retargeting American cities.

J.S.: I wish the Russians well and I hope they're going to be able to put together some reasonable politics, but they haven't so far. You honestly have to say the political situation over there is filled with the greatest unpredictability and so those arsenals that are sitting there pointing at us right at this very minute and can arrive in half an hour are not something that we can afford to neglect.

P.W.: Couldn't you be charged with being a Chicken Little? We went through 40 years of the Cold War with a Cuban Missile Crisis and fake warnings from our radar and nothing happening. The argument would be that the viability of the nuclear system to be self-controlled has been shown by five decades of restraint.

J.S.: I say, thank God, we got through that entire emergency. To say what you said, however, is a little like saying, well, we put a bullet in the chamber of a gun and played Russian Roulette; we spun the cylinder a few times, put it to our head and we didn't blow our brains out. Now, it's as if we were to take that gun and pass it along to our children and say, this is a very wonderful and safe game to play. I'm not a Chicken Little; I don't predict doom; I don't predict anything because I don't know what's going to happen in this world and I don't think anyone does. I do know there's a bullet in the gun that can put an end to the human species forever. The time to take note is before we blow our brains out; there's not going to be any conversation about it afterwards.

P.W.: In your book, you interview more than two dozen leading figures of the

Cold War such as Vietnam-era defense secretary Robert McNamara, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and even the last commander of the Strategic Air Command, General George Lee Butler. What gave you the idea these men would be as critical of our nuclear weapons policy as they turned out to be?

J.S.: This constituted a wonderful opportunity. A couple of them began to speak out and I figured if a few were speaking out there probably were more. I made an investigation, and found that, indeed, there were a couple of dozen who, having been through that horrifying experience of the

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Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, had come to the conclusion that it simply was intolerable to go on with these terrible weapons now that the Cold War was over.

P.W.: Many of these men were the leading architects of the dangerous policies they've become critical of after the fact and after the period during which their criticism would have been more helpful. **J.S.:** It would have been best if they had spoken up at the time, but I give them credit for looking back and reflecting and for telling us now where things went wrong. After all, the crimes in this world are heaped to the skies in all lands, and the willingness to look back and say, we made mistakes, or I made mistakes, is very, very rare. What's important is what these people are saying. The historical moment of the end of the Cold War has given us a fantastic opportunity to do something wonderful and remarkable, which is to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. What inspires them, and what inspires me, more than anything else, and more even than the sense of new danger, great as that is, is the hope that we can solve the problem if only we can develop the political will to do so. What I am chiefly interested in now is to bring this issue back to public consciousness, back into the political arena, not so we can weep and wail about it, but so we can finally do something about it.

P.W.: What other names familiar to the public did you interview for your book? J.S.: One very notable person is General Charles Horner, who was commander of the air forces in the Gulf War and a supporter of Ronald Reagan, who, by the way, was the most abolitionist-minded of all the presidents. Horner says that if he would have had nuclear weapons available during the Gulf War, he wouldn't have known what to do with them. He says they're simply useless from a military point of view. That's something I also heard in Russia where I interviewed several generals. These weapons lack military utility. There is a very strong school of thought among the military that these weapons should be abolished not only on moral grounds, but also from a strictly strategic and military point of view since they're unusable and, hence, useless.

P.W.: These men were once the military and political leaders of their respective countries. Are they still influential enough to affect the current policies of their governments?

J.S.: A lot of them are retired and retired people are not running the show. Once you have people who are running the show talking the way these fellows do,

you've won. Then, they'll change the policy and get rid of the weapons. Still, they are highly respected people who are listened to by the people now in government since they were their predecessors and mentors. It's a very important signal that there is such an important body of opinion among people who were in government that getting rid of nuclear weapons is not pie in the sky, it's not a utopian ideal; it's something that makes practical sense and can be done now if only we decide to do it.

P.W.: It's not as though nuclear weapons in the U.S. are like a malfunctioning air

conditioner that you can put out at the curb on trash day. Institutionally, militarily and to some extent emotionally, our respective nuclear systems form the basis of each side's power and prestige.

J.S.: The way McNamara puts it, nuclear weapons have no utility in a situation in which you are not faced with a nuclear threat. That is to say, any threat that's out there of a conventional kind, can and should be dealt with by conventional means.

That's something the U.S. has in abundance since we spend about five times as much on the military as the next highest spender, which is Russia. On the one hand, you don't need them in those conventional situations. That leaves a situation in which you face a nuclear threat and they're used for deterrence purposes. Of course, when you talk about abolishing nuclear weapons, you're not talking about abolishing just U.S. ones; you're talking about abolishing them globally. Therefore, that threat is removed. At that point, there is no need to have them.

A second consideration, if you stop to think about it from a military point of view, is what can conceivably threaten the U.S.? There's no conventional force that can do that. The only serious threat of a military character that the U.S. faces is from weapons of mass destruction. So, the curious fact is that the U.S. more than any other country probably has the most to gain from the global abolition of nuclear weapons along with other weapons of mass destruction.

P.W.: Abolition sounds reasonable on every conceivable basis; why isn't it being done?

J.S.: That's something rather mysterious to me. I don't have a good answer to it except that when the Cold War ended everybody lost the thread of concern for the nuclear question. I think it happened within the government and outside it in



the public. In a way, you can understand it because the end of the Cold War was such a revolutionary change. The Cold War gave us a context in which we could consider the entire nuclear question. When it dissolved, we didn't really know how to think about it any more and, for a while, we had the illusion it had gone away. I think the tests earlier this year in India and Pakistan, and the danger of their spread in the Middle East, may bring people's attention back to it, and they'll see that it's there, albeit in a new form. One, I'm afraid, that makes the possibility of use more likely than was the case during the Cold War. Maybe not as many of them will be used as the Cold War threatened — an all-out exchange, but there is a much greater likelihood of use because you've got more actors involved; you have more decision makers. **P.W.:** Is there institutional and bureaucratic resistance to abolition within the government and military?

J.S.: Tremendous, of course. If you have a weapons system on which you're spending \$40 billion a year, that translates into tremendous bureaucratic and political clout. The nuclear laboratories have terrific influence in Washington. They don't want to go out of business. They have gigantic new programs of research and development going on, and a new socalled stewardship program. In the absence of public concern and attention in

> the political sphere, those influences are going to dominate the way they always do. On the other hand, if you do develop political pressure, political and public awareness, things can be changed, and this has happened in the past.

> **P.W.:** I know you care about the planet, but is there also a deep personal fear you share about the dangers you describe?

J.S.: I have a particular reason for a level of personal fear on this one. I

happen to live 10 blocks from the World Trade Center, which is everyone's favorite target for a terrorist attack. I have a very lively concern that the next time one of these violent incidents happens like the Oklahoma City federal building or the Trade Center bombing, it's going to be with a nuclear weapon or some crude nuclear device.

P.W.: During the Cold War you had happiness and a life and were productive, but was there always a cold chill in back of it all?

J.S.: Yes, although I'm not so much living with daily anxiety that the Russians are going to shoot their missiles at us because I don't think that's in the cards politically. What I really do fear on a daily basis is that we'll wake up — although some of us won't wake up be-

cause it'll be all over — and learn that some terrorist group or some state has used a nuclear weapon where they're having a hot war. India and Pakistan, for example, have very bad intelligence about each other. That's a situation that's full of danger. In addition, I feel we're lucky to wake up in the morning and discover that some city hasn't gone off. The moment that happens, think of the waves of terror that would spread around the world. Let's suppose it's Washington-that's a likely one. We have no defense against that right now. The old joke is, how do you get a nuclear device into the U.S.? And the answer is, hide it in a bale of marijuana. I interviewed a U.S. physicist who was in Russia talking to one of his counterparts who said they have 20,000 plutonium pits in one storage area in Tonsk. Just think of what that means. The infrastructure there is rotting away. They can't pay their scientists. How long before some rogue scientist sells that stuff to Saddam Hussein who is just itching to get it? Or to the Aum, the folks in Japan who put nerve gas in the subway. They were looking for nuclear material. The low levels of control and maintenance means the spread of this technology is not something that can be prevented. In other words, this is old technology. It's like a television set. It's not a mystery anymore.

P.W.: I have a book at home called *Basement Nukes* which tells how to build an atomic bomb.

J.S.: Well, there it is. You could do it yourself. So, this is not abstract and this does create a feeling of personal anxiety and horror. What really possesses me now is the feeling of opportunity. We've lived for 50 years with these damned things. The end of the human species is threatened and yet we were told, you can't do anything about it because we were facing the Soviet Union. Big totalitarian power. We can't get rid of our nuclear weapons. We can't be sure that they have done it, too. They won't honor agreements, we can't verify, we can't inspect, etc. Then that monster just evaporates one day. And it's gone. Suddenly, the door is open. Suddenly, we can do what we could not before. We can take advantage of this amazing opportunity to go to the lair of these things and kill them off. We've had about 10 years now and we've completely overlooked the chance. Ten years from now there is no saying who will have their hands on them. Will it be 10 countries, as it's eight now? Will

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it be 20, 30, what will it be? Then, it may be too late. Right now we can still do it. We have eight countries. I think it is manageable. But with 20 or 30, I don't know. So, really it is the feeling of opportunity. I'm not in this to make people scared or wallow in gloom. The whole point is to do something — now, while we have the chance. That's what really moves me more than personal fear.

P.W.: You talk about the need to bring this on to the public agenda, but it doesn't seem to be. Are there many people involved in this effort?

J.S.: There have been some very promising developments which I hope are going to bear fruit soon. There's a new group called Project Abolition which has former senator Alan Cranston as its chairperson. Also, the president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and other groups which brought about the Freeze movement are setting up an office and beginning to do something. In another promising development, General Lee Butler has established the Second Chance Foundation, and he's devoting his efforts on a policy level to removing the nuclear danger. In New England, there were over 30 town meetings which voted in favor of abolition, but it wasn't well reported. That was how the Freeze movement got started in the 1980s. There are lots of little things bubbling around the country and signs they'll be coming together soon. P.W.: You mention several group efforts; is there much an individual can do? J.S.: There's a lot an individual can do. I doubt if someone got out in the streets very many people would be following along. Likewise, I think it makes little sense to go to the presidential candidates because they're going to say, where's the public on this one? I think the place to go is wherever people get together to do anything of a civic nature. For instance, a teachers' group or the PTA or the bar association - in other words, civic society, in general. Go to those organizations and say, how would your organization like to consider the proposition that the policy of the U.S., together with other nations, should be to abolish nuclear weapons? I think that the common sense of it is overwhelming and an individual will have terrific success with it. The American Medical Association already supports that goal. Also, a number of city councils, such as Hartford and Philadelphia, have voted in favor of this, but these aren't covered in the media.

It wouldn't be marching in the streets, but quiet and enduring organizational support from a lot of professional, labor, women and environmental organizations of all kinds. Then, you would go into the political sphere and tell the senators and the representatives and the presidential candidates, look, we have all these organizations in your community who favor this goal and what are you going to do about it?

New Abolitionist Covenant

[The following is excerpted from the New Abolitionist Covenant, revised in Nov., 1998 at the New Abolitionist Covenant Retreat at Kirkridge Retreat Center. The original New Abolitionist Covenant was developed and distributed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the New Call to Peacemaking, Pax Christi USA, Sojourners and World Peace Makers.]

IN THE FALL OF 1981, a group of Christians gathered to discern an appropriate response to the nuclear arms race. The result was a "New Abolitonist Covenant" that made clear that the only appropriate response by people of faith was an unequivocal rejection of the nuclear arms race and the dangerous and blasphemous assumptions on which it relied. The Covenant noted that:

"Some historical issues stand out as particularly urgent among the Church's fundamental concerns. These overarching moral questions intrude upon the routine of the church's life and plead for the compassion and courage of God's people everywhere."

Slavery was such a question for Christians in the 19th century. The existence of nuclear weapons poses such a question today. Today the global context is significantly different than it was in 1981. The Soviet Union no longer exists, brought down not by weapons of mass destruction, but by the unstoppable aspirations of its own people and the people of Eastern Europe to be free. The nonviolent revolutions of 1988-89 released the creative forces of millions of people to determine their own futures and brought down the Berlin Wall through "people power" rather than nuclear confrontation.

Now, a decade after the end of the Cold War, we find ourselves faced with another moment of truth. But this moment is now more an historic moment of opportunity and hope, rather than a reaction to crisis based upon fear of looming nuclear war. The geopolitical rivalry between two superpowers is over. Yet, many of the weapons amassed throughout that struggle have survived the struggle itself and are today in search of new justifications and new missions to fulfill. Moreover, the weapons themselves remain on Cold War levels of alert. Thousands of the most destructive weapons ever created remain ready to be launched within minutes. Whether they are used intentionally or by accident, all of God's creation, and indeed, humanity's future itself, remains under constant threat of annihilation.

A century ago, thousands of Christians from diverse traditions came to see that slavery was an evil that challenged the very integrity of their faith. They believed that for any person to claim ownership of one human being by another mocked the fact that each person is loved by God and made in God's image. These Christians began to preach that to follow Christ meant to turn away from the institution of slavery, to refuse to cooperate with it, and to work for its abolition. Though this seemed like an absurd, unattainable goal, they insisted that God required nothing less. They came to be called abolitionists.

The continued reliance on nuclear weapons today has brought us to a similar crisis of faith. The existence and spread of nuclear weapons is not just a political issue any more than slavery was, it is a question that challenges our worship of God and our commitment to Jesus Christ. In other words, nuclear catastrophe, either by accident or design, presents us with more than a test of survival: It confronts us with a test of faith. We are Christians who now see that the continued possession and development of nuclear arms is more than an issue of public policy. We believe that the wholesale destruction threatened by these weapons makes their possession and use an offense against God and humanity, no matter what the provocation or political justification.

[The] continued development, testing and reliance on nuclear weapons is an evil we do not accept. At stake is whether we trust in God or the bomb.... The maintenance and development of nuclear arsenals is a sin against God, God's creatures and God's Creation. There is no theology or doctrine in the traditions of the Church that could ever justify the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Whether one begins with nonviolence or with the just war doctrine, nuclear weapons are morally unacceptable. ... Through the grace of God we have survived the most dangerous moment in history. We have been given a precious gift, a "gift of time." We are compelled to respond to this gift.

That response begins with repentance for more than half a century of accepting nuclear weapons. Repentance in a nuclear age means non-cooperation with the continued reliance on nuclear weapons and the turning of our lives toward a culture of peace and nonviolence. ... No longer trusting in nuclear weapons, we refuse to cooperate with preparations for their use or threatened use. Trusting anew in God, we will begin cooperating with one another in preparations for peace.

Nuclear weapons today

by Camille Colatosti

here is a serious misconception that the end of the Cold War meant the end of nuclear weapons," says Frida Berrigan, a research associate at the Arms Trade Research Center of the World Policy Institute, a think tank at the New School for Social Research in New York City. "The U.S. is spending more money this year on nuclear weapons than we spent during the height of the Cold War. We're acting as though there is still a threat. We're even funding nuclear weapons research and development at very high levels."

Approximately 36,000 nuclear weapons remain in the global arsenal. Together, they have the combined explosive power of 650,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs. (On August 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan, killing an estimated 100,000 people instantly. Tens of thousands more slowly died from radiation poison and the city was destroyed.) According to Physicians for Social Responsibility, a group of doctors and medical professionals working for 30 years to prevent nuclear war, 6,838,000 people in the U.S. would die immediately from an accidental launch of nuclear weapons from a single Russian submarine. Millions more would die from radioactive fallout.

There are five large nuclear weapons states — the U.S., Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China. The U.S. has approximately 12,070 nuclear weapons; Russia has 22,500. The other nuclear weapons states have far fewer weapons: Britain has 380; France has 500 and China has 450. Eight additional countries including India, Pakistan, Israel, Japan and Korea — have declared or undeclared nuclear weapons capabilities.

According to Stephen Schwartz of the Brookings Institute, the U.S. spends approximately \$35 billion a year, or 14 percent of its defense budget, on nuclear weapons. That is \$96 million a day. In 1998, for instance, the U.S. spent \$24.7 billion on operating and maintaining the nuclear arsenal. This includes new weap-

The U.S. government, under pressure from the nuclear industry, has put in place a new "Stockpile Stewardship Management Program." Through this program, the U.S. develops nuclear weapons using sophisticated laboratory experiments, called "subcritical tests," and computer simulations.

ons development. The U.S. put about \$5.8 billion towards "the legacies of the cold war" — environmental restoration, waste management and clean-up. Another \$4.3 billion went towards the development of a ballistic missile defense program. In fact, nearly \$67.6 billion has gone towards Reagan's much-maligned "Star Wars" program since 1983.

Berrigan explains that the influence of the nuclear lobby on Congress has a lot to

do with the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament. "The end of the Cold War could put those people out of work," she says.

Stockpile Stewardship program

The U.S. government, under pressure from the nuclear industry, has put in place a new "Stockpile Stewardship Management Program." Through this program, the U.S. develops nuclear weapons using sophisticated laboratory experiments, called "subcritical tests," and computer simulations. This is the nuclear arms race in the information age; the U.S. Department of Energy will devote \$60 billion over the next decade to high speed supercomputers, underground nuclear weapons experiments, high energy lasers and diagnostic facilities, all designed to simulate the very nuclear bomb tests that activists have struggled for decades to ban.

The Department of Energy, which oversees Stockpile Stewardship, defends the development of new weapons as a response to "emerging threats." The new B61-11 earth-penetrating nuclear bomb, for example, enables the U.S. to hit deeply buried targets, like those military leaders believe exist in Libya.

According to Gregory Mello, an engineer and environmental scientist who now serves as the executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a non-profit, research-oriented nuclear disarmament organization based in Santa Fe, N.M., "The B61-11 gravity bomb is the first new nuclear capability added to the U.S. arsenal since 1989. It was developed and deployed secretly, without public or congressional debate, and in apparent contradiction to domestic and international assurances that no new nuclear weapons were being developed in the U.S."

He continues, "The excessive scale, aggressive course, and concrete results of the Stockpile program, such as the introduction of the B61-11 earth-penetrating

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

weapon, is proof that the U.S. is insincere about its long-term commitment to arms control and non-proliferation."

Expansion of NATO, chilled relations with Russia

Recent NATO actions fuel suspicions that the U.S. lacks sincerity about nuclear disarmament. The war in Kosovo chilled the relationship between the U.S. and Russia. Nuclear weapons negotiations came to a halt as the war advanced and NATO exerted its dominance.

Jim Bridgeman is the research and resource coordinator of the Peace Action Education Fund. Peace Action, formerly SANE/FREEZE, was

founded in 1957 and is the nation's largest grassroots peace and justice organization. "Before NATO began bombing Serbia," says Bridgeman, "there was an agreement between the U.S. and Russia to set up a mechanism to safeguard each other's nuclear arsenals and to share experts. This cooperation ended when NATO began bombing.

"The U.S. is now making new nuclear warheads, proceeding with Star Wars, expanding NATO, antagonizing Russia and bombing left and right," says Bridgeman. "We're behaving like an imperial power and not like a world leader working towards peace and freedom."

For Bridgeman, the expansion of



Visitors inspect the restoration progress of the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on April 6, 1945. A controversial exhibit at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum to mark the 50th anniversary of the event, "The Final Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II," was drastically scaled down after congressional critics and others complained that the exhibit as proposed portrayed U.S. actions in the bombing in a negative manner.

NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — is problematic. NATO, he argues, is a "relic of the cold war and it should be dismantled." It came into being after WWII in order to "protect" Western Europe from the "Communist menace." The recent expansion of NATO to include former Soviet states, such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, is a sure way, says Bridgeman, to "put the U.S. and Western Europe in a hostile relationship with Russia. A more suitable organization for security in Europe, and one the includes Russia, is the European Union."

General George Lee Butler, retired, a former commander of the Strategic Air Command and a nuclear weapons expert, also questions the role of NATO. As reported by Jonathan Schell in *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now*, Butler wonders, "Why is it that, showing a singular failure of vision and willingness to begin afresh, we are hell-bent to expand NATO? We could easily have proposed working for a few years, on a collegial basis, with our former adversaries, to rewrite the rulebook regarding how the world proceeds at this point. This shouldn't be just a dialogue between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. It should be 1945 afresh — starting again, with a whole new construct."

Yet, starting "afresh" seems to be exactly what the U.S. government — and, perhaps, the Russian government as well Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication

— cannot do. A December 1997 Presidential Decision Directive revising the nation's plans for fighting a nuclear war was no revision at all. The first directive issued since Reagan's presidency in 1981, this "new" plan still targeted the former Soviet states. In the directive, Clinton concluded that nuclear weapons were to remain the cornerstone of U.S. security for "the indefinite future."

The Directive mandated that 8,000 strategic warheads be deployed, the maximum number allowed under existing U.S./Russian treaties. The Directive also expanded targets in China and added new countries to the target list, those with "prospective access" to nuclear weapons.

Douglas Roche, a former member of the Canadian parliament and author of The Latest Evil: The Moral Case Against Nuclear Weapons (1997), fears that the end of the Cold War, rather than leading to nuclear disarmament, has instead changed the face of the arms race. He explains, "A new technology race in the quest for more innovative and lethal weapons has broken out. ... The U.S. government intends to ... significantly enhance its scientific and technical capabilities by undertaking the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons." New projects include the earth-penetrating B61-11 bomb, as well as a replacement for Trident submarine-launched warheads, a new Trident missile, a new submarine, and research into a high-powered radio-frequency warhead to be used to take out a nation's electronic systems.

Roche notes that Clinton's Presidential Directive also broadens the potential use of nuclear weapons, including against non-nuclear states, in retaliation for chemical and biological attacks.

Treaties

Daryl Kimball, the executive director of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, an alliance of 17 non-proliferation organizations, fears that, "On the whole, the tremendous historic opportunity to move towards a nuclear-free world brought on by the end of the Cold War has been missed. It has not been seized on by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, and the actions of other countries, like India, Pakistan and Iraq have not helped the situation." (In May 1998, India revealed that it had conducted five underground nuclear tests. Within weeks, neighboring Pakistan revealed that it had conducted six.) Despite this pessimistic view, there are some important treaties in place.

In the first presidential directive issued since Reagan's presidency in 1981, Clinton concluded that nuclear weapons were to remain the cornerstone of U.S. security for "the indefinite future."

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty The most recent is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. When President Clinton signed it in 1996, he called it "the longest sought, hardest fought prize in the history of arms control." While that may be debatable, the CTBT has been long in the making. Proposed by Dwight Eisenhower in 1958, the treaty bans all above- and underground testing of nuclear weapons. Since 1945, more than 2,000 nuclear devices have been exploded. The inability to test will make it harder for countries with advanced nuclear weapons to produce new and more threatening types. It also helps stop the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations.

Signed by 149 nations, including all five nuclear powers, the treaty will not enter into force until ratified by all 44

nations with seismic monitoring stations on their territory. This includes both India and Pakistan, who have, thus far, refused to sign.

Though the U.S. has signed the treaty, the Senate has not yet ratified it. In order for ratification to proceed, the treaty needs to first be viewed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Chair of that committee, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), has blocked its consideration.

For Jim Bridgeman, "The fact that the U.S. has not ratified the CTBT means we're begging for a more dangerous world by not putting in place the mechanism to curb nuclear weapons. Without the CTBT in place, it makes it easier for others to make and test weapons and join the nuclear club. India's and Pakistan's testing last year pointed to this. They wanted to join the nuclear club and show power."

As important as ratification is, however, the treaty does have some weaknesses. The treaty does not inhibit computer simulations and laboratory testing, so research and development, like the U.S. development of the B61-11, can continue. Likewise, it does not include language about the wider goals of nuclear disarmament.

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty entered into force October 3, 1972, was amended in 1974, and was finally signed in September 1997. It focuses on missile defense systems and specifically applies to the U.S. and Russia. It is weak enough to allow the U.S. to continue its research and development of missile defense systems like Star Wars, systems that, experts conclude, simply do not work. Despite its weakness, however, some conservatives in the U.S. Senate hope to abrogate the treaty completely to allow further defense system development.

START I, II and III

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties, between the U.S. and Russia, are de-

START I, in force since 1991, limits the U.S. and Russia to 6,000 warheads and 4,900 ballistic missiles per side, not much of a reduction, but something.

Negotiations on START II were completed in 1997. This reduces U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces to between 3,000 and 3,500 delivery vehicles each by 2003. The U.S. has ratified this

treaty, but the Russian Duma has not. In fact, once NATO began bombing Kosovo, the Duma put this ratification on indefinite hold.

The lack of ratification means that formal negotiations have not yet begun on START III, which would reduce the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals to between 2,000 and 2,500 delivery vehicles. START III would also, according to a framework agreed to by Presidents we're not going to go below START I unless Russia ratifies START II. So, consequently, with this artificial number, we are going to start producing nuclear warheads in Los Alamos."

Beginning in 2000, the Department of Energy plans to produce up to 80 newly designed warheads for the U.S. Trident nuclear submarine fleet. At 475 kilotons, these nuclear weapons are 20 to 25 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that wiped out Nagasaki, Japan.

does not require disarmament.

Still, one promising part of the NPT can be found in Article VI. This commits the signatories to "good-faith negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament." While good-faith negotiations have not yet begun, activists are hopeful that, as a result of public pressure, a NPT review conference scheduled for April 2000 will produce meaningful results.

Abolition 2000

An ambitious campaign, known as Abo-

lition 2000, is tak-

ing Article VI of

the NPT seriously.

The goal of Aboli-

tion 2000 is to ne-

gotiate a treaty to

eliminate nuclear

weapons by the end

Nuclear Age Peace

Foundation, clari-

fies, "We're not

asking that weap-

ons be gone by the year 2000, but we

are asking that a

treaty be negoti-

ated. This can hap-

pen rapidly if there

is the political

will."

Krieger, of the

of 2000.

Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) (a.k.a. atom smasher) at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, N.Y.

Clinton and Yeltsin, require the destruction of nuclear warheads. START I and II require only that warheads be taken off delivery systems, but they can be stored for possible reassembly at a later date.

Peace Action's Bridgeman believes that Russia cannot afford to maintain its warheads at START I levels. "The entire Russian federal budget," he says, "is now \$25 billion — one-tenth of the previous military budget alone." Even without ratifying START II, Russia cannot go above the treaty's mandated levels. But, says Bridgeman, "The U.S. has a law that says

The Non-proliferation Treaty

The Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was reviewed and indefinitely extended in 1995. This treaty, which covers the five nuclear weapons states - US, Russia, Britain, France and China - acts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons capability. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in Santa Barbara, Calif., explains that this treaty provides "indefinite extension of the status quo, giving special nuclear status to the five declared nuclear states." The treaty forbids the spread of nuclear weapons but Kirk Condyles/Impact Visuals

Abolition 2000 began during the April/ May 1995 conference to discuss the extension of the Non-proliferation Treaty. Over a dozen non-governmental organizations from around the world joined together in an "abolition caucus" at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The caucus put forward a statement urging the goal of a nuclear abolition treaty by the year 2000. "Unfortunately," says Robert Moore, the executive director of the Coalition for Peace Action in Princeton, N.J., "this commitment was not included in the final agree-



ment extending the NPT. Therefore, the Abolition Treaty 2000 campaign was launched as a citizens' initiative in August 1995 on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

The Abolition 2000 network has now grown to over 971 citizen action groups in 79 countries, including 343 in the U.S.

According to public opinion polls conducted by the Oxford Research Group, an independent research organization, and the Mellman Group, the vast majority of people around the world support the abolition of nuclear weapons: 66 percent in the U.S., 70 percent in Great Britain, 89 percent in Australia, 78 percent in Japan, 61 percent in Russia, 98 percent in Norway, 87 percent in Germany and 71 percent in Canada.

'A lot of loose nukes'

Kimball, of the Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers, finds that "the public is supportive of nuclear disarmament, but they are not all that concerned. Nuclear disarmament does not seem like a salient issue to most people. It is not an issue that ranks higher than the future of social security or education or crime in the streets in opinion polls. The public doesn't understand how these abstract nuclear issues affect them in a personal manner."

Jim Bridgeman, of Peace Action, agrees. "In the 1980s, when 750,000 people gathered in Central Park to protest nuclear weapons, when the public was motivated by movies like *The Day After*, people felt like the Cold War was heating up and disaster was possible. Now, with the Cold War over, the public assumes that everything is okay, but it isn't. There are a lot of loose nukes. Accidents can happen at any time."

Kimball elaborates. "Because the U.S. and Russia can fire within a matter of minutes 5,000 long-range nuclear weapons, there is a potential for an accident or inadvertent launch. These weapons are on hair-trigger alert status. If the U.S. or Russia detect something on early warning radar, their strategy calls for an immediate and overwhelming response. If there is a mistake, a blip of the radar screen that is really a flock of Canada geese or a civilian satellite, this could lead to an overwhelming and devastating nuclear response. Russia, especially, cannot afford to maintain early warning systems so their security is worse than ever, and U.S. security depends on the health of the Russian system."

Bruce Blair, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who served as an

The August 1999 Peace Action conference — Beyond the Bomb — attracted over 300 people, double the 1998 total. The group rallied at Los Alamos National Laboratory, slated to begin production of nuclear bombs in 2000. Over 400 people protested at the lab and 70 activists, including the actor Martin Sheen, were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

Air Force launch control officer for Minuteman nuclear missiles in Montana, has written of his concern about strategic command and control of nuclear weapons, arguing as early as 1985 that the extreme vulnerability of U.S. command and control means that, in practice, the U.S. does not have the ability to wage a protracted nuclear war. Command and control in Russia, he says, is even more vulnerable. His latest book, *Global Zero* Alert for Nuclear Forces, argues that safety should be at the center of arms control. In other words, treaties should not just limit numbers of weapons — a strategy sometimes referred to as "vertical" disarmament — but should also slow down reaction time, so that no launch is automatic. This focus on command and control is sometimes known as "horizontal" disarmament.

Kimball adds, "Threats also come from the potential for nuclear war between other nations, those hot spots right now in South Asia, like India and Pakistan. Leaders of both nations have made dozens of statements that they might have to use nuclear weapons. This should concern everyone, since one-sixth of the world's population is in South Asia. The consequences of this war are on a scale that no one can contemplate.

"Until the Test Ban Treaty is signed, the proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries without them — or to terrorists — is a greater danger today than it was during the Cold War since nuclear weapons, especially Russian nuclear weapons, are less secure today than they were under the Soviet Union," says Kimball.

Anti-nuclear activism

While anti-nuclear activism is not at the height it was during the Nuclear Freeze movement of the 1980s, it is, says Krieger, more focused now than ever before. "In the 1980s, we mobilized a lot of people but we asked for too little and achieved too little. It wasn't enough simply to freeze the numbers where they were. The numbers were too high. Most people did view the freeze as only the first step toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. But we didn't know how to take the next steps."

Today, activists are moving beyond a call for a nuclear freeze to the demand for nuclear elimination. While the overall number of anti-nuclear activists has decreased since the 1980s, core activist leaders have grown stronger, becoming better informed about the issues and more aware of what needs to be done. The August 1999 Peace Action conference — Beyond the Bomb attracted over 300 people, double the 1998 total. The group rallied at Los Alamos National Laboratory, slated to begin production of nuclear bombs in 2000. Over 400 people protested at the lab and 70 activists, including the actor Martin Sheen, were arrested for acts of civil disobedience.

"It's not the overwhelming numbers that we had in the 1980s, but it does show a steady growth of recognition that the time to act is now," says Krieger. "Everyone can get involved. You don't need to travel to New Mexico or get arrested. Simply join a group. Write your representatives and demand that they take a strong position. Speak to other people and let them know how important it is to act now. Take resolutions to local city councils."

Krieger, working with Abolition 2000, is concentrating on two major strategies. First up are "abolition days," from March 1-8, 2000. These will be days of education and action around the world, days of teach-ins at universities and lobbying of representatives.

The second strategy involves preparing for the Non-proliferation Treaty review conference, which begins in April 2000.

"Abolition 2000 sees that review meeting as a critical point in the effort for abolition," says Krieger. "Many nonnuclear nations are getting anxious about nuclear states not dealing with Article VI,

Organizations and resources

Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers 110 Maryland Ave, NE, Suite 5050 Washington, DC 20002 202/546-0795 www.crnd.org

Council for a Livable World 110 Maryland Ave, NE, Suite 409 Washington, DC 20002 202/543-4100 www.clw.org/pub/clw/welcome.html

Federation of American Scientists 307 Mass Ave., NE Washington, DC 20002 202/546-3300 www.fas.org/

Los Alamos Study Group 212 E. Marcy Street, Suite 7 Santa Fe, NM 87501 505/982-7747 www.lasg.org/ Nuclear Age Peace Foundation Global contact for Abolition 2000 PMB 121 1187 Coast Village Road, Suite 1 Santa Barbara, CA 93108 805/965-3443 www.wagingpeace.org

Peace Action 1819 H. Street, NW, Suite 420 Washington, DC 20006 202/862-9740 w w w . w e b c o m . p e a c e a c t / abolition2000.html

Physicians for Social Responsibility 1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 700 Washington, DC 20005 202/898-0150 www.psr.org which requires good-faith efforts towards elimination. Non-governmental organizations and activists think that the nuclear states have been acting in bad faith and that this needs to stop."

A New Agenda Coalition, composed of non-aligned, non-nuclear states — Mexico, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand and South Africa — put forward a resolution in June 1998 calling for more action on nuclear disarmament. Specifically, the resolution demanded the "full implementation of the decisions adopted by the NPT parties in 1995." It also provoked a fierce debate about NATO's continuing dependence on the potential first use of nuclear weapons.

Importantly, among the United Nations, the resolution garnered 114 votes. Only the nuclear states — U.S., Britain, France, China, Russia and states from the former Soviet bloc, as well as India, Pakistan, Israel and Turkey voted against it.

Giving ammunition to activists and the New Agenda is a 1996 World Court opinion that concluded that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal unless the existence of the state is threatened.

"The issue really isn't complicated," says Krieger, "Our national security should not be based on killing hundreds of millions of people and threatening to destroy the human species."

Fortunately, many world leaders agree. They are realizing what General Butler, the former U.S. Strategic Commander, understands, "Nuclear weapons are irrational devices. They were rationalized and accepted as a desperate measure in the face of circumstances that were unimaginable. Now as the world evolves rapidly, I think that the vast majority of people on the face of this earth will endorse the proposition that such weapons have no place among us. There is no security to be found in nuclear weapons. It's a fool's game."

Selling peacetime nuke power

by Leah Samuel

s of the end of 1998, there were 429 nuclear reactors operating around the world. They produce about 20 percent of the world's electricity. Meanwhile, the industry and its regulators are looking for ways to store and even reuse the mounting waste that comes from that production.

They've got a problem, though. Many citizens, nourished on Cold Warera information, continue to believe that nuclear energy and its by-products are dangerous to their health. That means that the nuclear industry — in order to continue making money must overcome such resistance so that the public will welcome nuclear energy and its by-products into its communities on an expanding scale.

Citizens' concerns about nuclear energy and waste are not unfounded. While there's a much longer, more scientific way to describe the danger, the short version of it this: Nuclear material decays, like many things. As it decays, it throws off alpha particles, which are tiny, invisible bits of radioactivity. Once inside a human or animal, these particles enter and damage cells, causing the abnormal cell changes that become cancer. Nuclear material remains active for anywhere from 100 to 250,000 years, potentially affecting multiple generations of species.

Weapons and peacetime use linked

The biggest concern used to be that nuclear destruction would be delivered by nuclear weapons. While this threat continues, much of the thinking on nuclear energy in the last decade has been refocused on nuclear energy's peacetime production and use. But nuclear-industry experts point out that it is difficult to separate the issue of peacetime nuclear power use from the issue of weapons.

"Power plants can easily be converted to produce weapons-grade plu-

The world would need about 50,000 power plants in order to make nuclear power its sole source of energy. Putting power plants in so many places means giving more countries the ability to create nuclear weapons.

tonium," says Mike Moore, editor of the bimonthly Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.

"Even though the Cold War is over, things are more dangerous than at the height of the Cold War. In order to have nuclear power provide most of the world's electricity, you're going to need so many plants so widely dispersed, that it becomes dangerous again."

Moore estimates that the world would need about 50,000 power plants in order to make nuclear power its sole source of energy. Putting power plants in so many places means giving more countries the ability to create nuclear weapons.

"If we had thousands of nuclear

power plants around the world, it would be hard to oversee that," says Moore.

And many nuclear reactors operating power plants, says Moore, are not safe because they are based on reactors used during wartime.

"The [nuclear reactors] we built in the 1950s and 1960s are built up from submarine reactors and are not designed for major power-production use," says Moore.

"There are newer designs that would have been better, but those are not being followed. They didn't want to slow down and build better reactors."

Pushing nuclear power

The industry pushes nuclear power nonetheless. Part of that push requires convincing us that nuclear power is necessary.

"The industry has convinced people that they will freeze in the dark if they don't use nuclear energy," says Faye Brown, campaign director with Honor the Earth.

Keeping the public in the dark is another industry strategy.

"At the regulatory level, there's a tendency toward deregulation," says David Kraft, director of the Nuclear Energy Information Service. "Government agencies are given a pass or even allowed to regulate themselves, so that it becomes more difficult or less meaningful for the public to participate."

The other part of the industry's push consists of telling the public that nuclear power and all its wastes and by-products pose little or no danger, or that they would be safe if handled correctly.

This is the stance of publications like the *Bulletin*. Despite Moore's acknowledgement of the dangers of peacetime use, the *Bulletin* still advocates for it.

"I don't want to say that nuclear energy is not dangerous," he says, "but its danger is often over-dramatized."

Freelancer Leah Samuel works for the Detroit-based *Labor Notes*. Photographer Jim West lives in Detroit.



Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant, Middletown, Pa., 1997.

The Nuclear Energy Institute puts out this seemingly contradictory message as well. With a membership that includes 41 U.S. utilities that own and operate nuclear power plants, it advertises a mission "to promote peacetime use of nuclear energy." Even so, the NEI points out that in comparison with a nuclear bomb, "in a nuclear power plant accident, you have a smaller explosion, with steam blowing open its container, but the extent of death from radiation is likely to be the same."

Especially since, adds Kraft, nuclear power plants do not always operate safely.

"There's a trend to do questionable

practices on maintenance and save money," he says. "They're starting to do repairs and refueling while reactors are operating. Efficiency goes up but safety goes down."

Subtle influences

Sometimes the industry seeks to influence public opinion in very subtle ways. For example, publishing company McGraw-Hill produces seven newsletters for, about and supporting the nuclear industry and nuclear power. McGraw-Hill, however, is also a leading publisher of science textbooks for elementary, middle school, high school and college students. Arguments against the use of nuclear energy often J.K. Condyles/Impact Visuals

get short shrift in these materials. While the publisher argues that its textbooks "allow students to decide for themselves" about nuclear energy and nuclear waste, its proximity to the industry would be at least unsettling for many.

The industry has even co-opted part of the environmental message. Paul Loeb is an activist and author of *Nuclear Culture: Living and Working in the World's Largest Atomic Complex.*

"Thirty years ago, even [some activists] were saying that we should be environmentally responsible and use nuclear energy," he says. "People like that had bought into the consensus." Brown says of the industry, "They'll say, 'We don't emit greenhouse gasses,' but they don't tell us that they produce tons of radiation."

And the nuclear industry is also hard at work to defeat proposals for alternative, non-polluting forms of energy production, like solar and wind power.

"The money in solar and wind energy would not be concentrated in so few hands," says Michael Keegan, an organizer with the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes. "It would be an economy more based in equity. It's labor-intensive power, so you have to hire a lot of people. But you can't hoard the wind and sell it to people, so the power industry doesn't want it.

"Nuclear culture reaches into the democracy and the economy," added Keegan, citing high costs to consumers, and high contributions the industry makes to lawmakers. "It's a feudal economic order. People work a job to come home and pay utility bills. We're producing energy in the most pathological, expensive way possible, with the worst possible outcome."

Pervasive nuclear culture

The nuclear industry, along with all of its supporters in the corporate, scientific and political communities, has had over 50 years to weave itself into the fabric of U.S. culture. Nuclear culture



Workers check on spent fuel rods stored in a pool of water next to the nuclear reactor at the Big Rock Point Nuclear Power Station in Charlevoix, Mich. The plant is being decommissioned. Jim West

— which includes that still-prevalent ideal of the "nuclear family" and all the values that go with it — says that citizens must, quite simply, accept what large entities like corporations or governments do or say. Nuclear culture also says that corporations and governments are simply smarter than citizens, and have only their best interests at heart. It says that they are too powerful to be defeated. Therefore, the culture implies that to oppose the "authorities" is not only wrong, but more importantly, it is fruitless.

The result is that the public often will not ask questions.

Moore, a former newspaper reporter, believes that the public simply is not interested in understanding nuclear energy.

"We are getting into areas that are so specialized and arcane that ordinary readers aren't going to be interested in those details," he says.

But the Nuclear Energy Information Service's Kraft says the industry uses that assertion to avoid putting out information.

"Once people understand that you don't have to be a nuclear physicist to get it, they want more information," he says. "There are a lot of things the public doesn't get, but they still have to make decisions about these things.

"Nuclear issues are the same way," he says. "We want to take the technical

gobbledygook out of it, to take it out of the realm of mystery that the industry keeps it in."

Nuclear fatalism

Other times, those who are aware lack confidence in their ability to fight back. "When you are constantly told that

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what you do doesn't matter, you believe it," says Kraft. "And it's not just true about nuclear energy."

Loeb connects the strong influence of nuclear culture to the existence of nuclear weapons.

"The willingness to live with potential annihilation has made us more willing to live with things like environmental problems," says Loeb. "It makes us fatalistic about other things as well."

What seems to work, when fighting against nuclear power plants and their wastes, is to fight against nuclear culture using cultural phenomenon which would support opposition to it.

In this culture, physical or psychological proximity to people's personal lives make an issue more meaningful. Quite simply, with the issue of nuclear energy, the picture becomes clearer when people are closer to it.

Bringing nuclear danger close: Yucca Mountain

One environmental fight which may bring the threat posed by peacetime uses of nuclear power more clearly to public consciousness is the struggle to keep nuclear wastes out of Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

Yucca Mountain is a place of worship for the Western Shoshone and Paiute tribes of native peoples. But the Department of Energy is also evaluating the area for permanent nuclear waste storage. This process has involved environmental impact and feasibility studies, and the DOE is currently conduct-



Sample fallout shelter, Levittown, Pa., early 1960s

Nuclear culture — which includes that still-prevalent ideal of the "nuclear family" and all the values that go with it — says that citizens must, quite simply, accept what large entities like corporations or governments do or say.

Jack Rosen/Impact Visuals

ing public hearings on the issue.

It is not by chance that every industry proposal for nuclear waste sites being considered targets an area occupied by people of color or the poor, argues Honor the Earth's Brown.

"There's something we call nuclear colonialism," she explains. "The reason that the industry targeted Native people is that they have the least economic and political power. [Nuclear power plant officials] are looking for a political solution — some way that they'll get the least resistance."

While Yucca Mountain is holy ground to native peoples, this is not just a fight over the sanctity of the mountain. There are serious safety and health considerations as well. There have been 621 earth-

quakes in the vicinity, with Richterscale measurements of 2.5 or higher, in the past 20 years. There are 33 faults and seven small volcanoes in the area as well. One study found that an earthquake could push groundwater into the proposed storage area, forcing plutonium into the atmosphere.

At the same time, the utility companies are lobbying Congress to change the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. If they are successful, the law will allow them to temporarily store the waste in front of the mountain until the DOE approves storage inside it.

What may get the attention of non-

Indians and people of privilege, however, is that the nuclear waste the utility companies want to store here must be shipped in — by train and by truck — from all over the country. As a result, these dangerous materials will pass by and through hundreds of cities.

"We are all Indians when it comes to Yucca Mountain," says Honor the

Earth's Brown. "That's because it's not just about dumping this dangerous garbage where the Western Shoshone and Paiute people live," but also about exposing dozens of other communities to possible contamination as it is transported to Nevada.

An industry on the defensive

Despite the power of the nuclear industry to influence government policy and public opinion, Loeb believes the anti-nuclear forces may have won the cultural war against the nuclear industry.

"In the time of [President Richard] Nixon, a thousand reactors were going to be built in the

next 10 years," he says. "It sort of rolled along on schedule, then it stopped. People started asking questions. They said, 'Don't you need safety systems?' and 'What are you going to do with the waste?' By holding [nuclear companies] accountable, what was once expected to happen by now hasn't happened."

Kraft adds that in addition to public opposition, the nuclear industry may be collapsing under its own weight.

"As huge and massive as the indus-

try is, the fragility is incredible," says Kraft. "If you enforced all the regulations on the books, the nuclear industry would shut down. Some of the plants are so old and inefficient, they're just closing down. The cost of getting things back up to even questionable standards would cost too much."

Activists say that the prevalence of nuclear culture, and the renewed push



A private corporation began placing cement containers such as this one around Ward Valley in preparation for making the site into a radioactive waste dump. The Colorado River Native Nations Alliance, consisting of the Fort Mojave, Chemehuevi, Cocopah, Quechan and Colorado River Indian Tribes, has long opposed the siting of any type of radioactive waste facility on the Ward Valley land they hold sacred. Last April 3, the U.S. District Court refused to force a transfer of land to the state of California that could lead to the dump.

by the industry to indoctrinate the public with it, is the industry's desperate attempt to save itself.

"The nuclear industry hasn't given up, but it is certainly on the defensive," says Loeb. "Anywhere you go with a proposal for a reactor or waste storage site, you're going to get opposition. Thirty years ago, the arguments of the nuclear industry were taken for granted. It will be an uphill battle for the industry to get that back."

Anti-nuclear coalition-building

Loeb also believes that anti-nuclear activists have to remember that "victory doesn't always happen in mass ways, but one person at a time."

In August, environmental activists gathered in Soni Springs, Michigan for an "action camp" sponsored by the Coalition for a Nuclear-Free Great Lakes. The group spent a week learning to

fight more effectively against nuclear wastes in the environment.

"We did a week-long, intensive training on nuclear issues," says Kraft. "Like how to deal with the media and what to say, how to organize a group, how to form coalitions and why."

Kraft believes that building coalitions is one of the most important skills for environmentalists in the future.

"There are very few elements and institutions left in society where people feel that good vibe, that meaningfulness," he says. "Churches do that. For better or worse, they do it. And we

should do it. Building this movement is a subset of building community."

Loeb says that doing this allows activists to recognize and harness the cultural forces which would contradict nuclear culture.

"We'll keep winning by teaching an ethic of responsibility and accountability, because the nuclear industry does not fit into that," he says. "The basic story that must continue to be put forth it that it is irresponsible to put out technology that has so many costs deferred to the future."

Fighting linguicide

Ninety percent of the world's languages may die out within a century, according to a story in *Action*, the newsletter of the London-based World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The Association co-sponsored a hearing on "Languages and Human Rights" in May of this year. The hearing raised issues around the accelerating disappearance of the world's languages.

"The linguistic diversity that has been an essential characteristic of the human species is being replaced by a system in which some languages are expanding at the cost of others," *Action* explained. "This is now true within nation states and the global system. Control over someone's language has become one of the primary means of exerting power over other aspects of people's life.

"Language is the house of our identity,' asserted Ariel Dorfman, the respected Chilean writer, at the May hearing. 'If they burn down that house we are left with nothing. It is essential to understand that every language in the world, whether five or five billion people speak it, has equal rights. When you destroy a language, you destroy the capacity of human beings to be as diverse and as plural and as expansive as possible."

Cases were presented on behalf of Creole languages, Kurdish languages, Sign languages, bilingual education in California and Berber language (Tamazigh).

Kurdish language was considered to be under particular threat of "linguicide."

According to WACC, the use of Kurdish in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria "is seen by the governments as a threat to the State.... The speakers of Kurdish, which has been used in the Middle East for thousands of years and is spoken as a mother tongue by between 25 and 30 million people, have few if any rights.

"Turkish policy in education, in the public sphere, political life and the media, is genocidal and linguicidal ... Only those who deny their Kurdish cultural and linguistic identity can function as full members of Turkish society. Severe prison terms are imposed on those who campaign for Kurdish (including a peaceful solution to the 'Kurdish question'), refer to Kurdish in public or the media, demand education in the Kurdish language or through the medium of Kurdish, and a number of other activities which are expressions of cultural identity."

Mauritians oppose U.S. nuclear base

The Mauritian organization Lalit is building an international campaign to close down the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia Island. The island was offered to the U.S. for a base by Britain in 1965, after Britain bought a string of islands from the Mauritian government for three million pounds and the right to sell sugar in the U.S. market. Between 1965 and 1969, Mauritians were moved en masse from their homes.

"In the mid-1990s, the British government admitted that the colony should eventually be returned to Mauritius, but only when 'the islands are no longer needed for the defense purposes of the U.K. and the U.S.,'" writes Rajni Lallah in *Reconciliation International.* "Lalit thinks that time is now.

"Internationally, Diego Garcia has been a 'hidden issue,' despite UN resolutions condemning Britain for illegally occupying the islands in the 1960s, and statements from the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity. But lately Diego Garcia has been in the news. In the 1991 Gulf War and during the more recent bombing of Iraq, U.S. B-52s took off from Diego Garcia Base. U.S. missiles were launched from vessels at the base against both Sudan and Afghanistan last year, in the wake of the Nairobi and Dar-Es-Salaam bombings. Following the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, President Clinton did not deny that the U.S. stocks nuclear weapons there.

"The Pelindaba Treaty for a Nuclear-Arms-Free Africa was signed in June 1995 by all African nations. But when the five nuclear powers were asked to endorse the document, the U.K. and U.S. refused to sign unless the Mauritian islands were excluded from the Treaty. Lalit claims that 'as the U.S. prepares for a "re-colonization" of Africa, through eligibility clauses of the Africa Growth and Opportunities Bill in front of the U.S. Congress, we are concerned that the U.S. will increase its "economic interests" in Africa, and that this will, in turn, be a further excuse for maintaining its military presence on Diego Garcia."

Tallying auto debt

Despite the fact that cars are the single largest contributor to global warming, "the total cost of America's auto-dependency remains a dirty but hidden secret," writes Jane Holtz Kay, author of *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America and How We Can Take It Back (The Nation,* 8/8/99).

"The roads we build to serve the car, the fuel we extract, the industrial energy consumed in producing 15 million motor vehicles a year are enormous — and largely unrecorded. U.S. cars and trucks carry three-quarters of a trillion dollars in hidden costs. Often lacking a dollar sign, their tally ranges from parking facilities to police protection; from registry operations to uncompensated accidents. Cars bought on the installment plan drive up consumer debt by 40 percent, making the General Motors Acceptance Corporation the largest consumer finance institution in the world."

Other costs include "car-bred sprawl" and the wetlands and farmlands paved to accommodate it, Kay says.

"What false economy allows us to dismiss these debts? To simply credit highway-based transportation as 18 percent of our gross domestic product more than health and education combined? What perverse sense of the environmental balance sheet lets us tamper with the fate of the planet without noting these debts?"

most takes

Independent bookstores fight back

by Patricia Holt

ne of the shocks to emerge in recent years from the book industry is the fact that blockbusters such as *Angela's Ashes* and *Cold Mountain* almost didn't make it into America's consciousness.

These books hit best-seller lists, publishing experts agree, because of the thousands of privately owned, independent bookstores around the country that discovered them and spread the word. Everything else followed far behind in terms of stimulating the books' early sales.

One would think that these neighborhood bookstores — their numbers so diminished and their efforts so embattled in the "bookstore wars" of recent years would be celebrated by publishers for saving such worthwhile books from obscurity. Instead, independent bookstores are increasingly abandoned by publishers as a kind of dying breed, as though they have already been Starbucked, Costcoed, and Amazoned right out of existence.

One would think independent bookstores have played no historic part in preserving the best of American literature. And yet, noted modern writers who were once unknown — Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, Anne Lamott, Ethan Canin, Alice Walker, Dorothy Allison, Cormac McCarthy, Barbara Kingsolver,



Patricia Holt, former book editor and critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, currently writes an e-mail column called "Holt Uncensored," distributed free by the Northern California Independent Booksellers Association <www.nciba.com>. Charles Johnson and many others — would never have been widely read if it were not for the support of this network of independent bookstores.

As we reach the end of the 20th century, perhaps the greatest shock is that these privately owned neighborhood bookstores, so key to the health of literature in the U.S., are dying.

Under-the-table deals?

The problem began in the 1970s when the first wave of chain bookstores (B. Dalton, Waldenbooks) brought thousands of quickprofit mall stores into competition with traditional neighborhood bookstores. The result: 1,000 of the 7,000 independent bookstores in the U.S. closed down within the decade.

With more chains, department stores, and price clubs in the 1980s (Crown, Walmart, Costco), and the most recent wave of chain superstores with CDs, videos, and cafes, in the 1990s (Barnes & Noble, Borders), a few thousand more independent bookstores have gone under, bringing the total number of independents (according to the American Booksellers Association) from 5,132 in 1991 to about 3,200 today, many of them teetering close to bankruptcy.

What no independent can compete against are the alleged illegal discounts and underthe-table deals that independents believe publishers have been giving the chains from the start. The courts have agreed with independents in two separate lawsuits, but abuses continue, according to allegations in the American Booksellers Association's own lawsuit, set for trial next year.

As a consequence of the chains' success, the percentage of books sold by independents has fallen disastrously. According to the Book Industry Study Group, in 1991 independent bookstores accounted for the largest share (32 percent) of the book market. Today that percentage has dropped to 17.2 percent, leaving independents in third place, below chain bookstores (26 percent) and price club/department stores (20 percent).

Enter Amazon.com

By 1998, Amazon.com (launched in 1995), the first of the snazzy, reader-friendly bookselling Web sites, had begun to pull ahead of chain booksuperstores in sales while at the same time its stock price soared at unprecedented rates. By mid-April 1999, although Borders and Barnes & Noble kept showing declines, the stock of Amazon, which has never shown a profit and loses millions each quarter, was up more than 75 percent for the year.

The fun of browsing through Amazon's cyberstore with its virtual shopping carts, irreverent "customer comments," and alluring discounts (including the online moratorium on sales tax) has pulled many a loyal customer away from independent stores and onto the Web. Media adoration of "e-commerce" during the 1998 holiday season glorified Amazon and resulted in further hemorrhaging of independent bookstore sales.

A few cracks have opened in Amazon's armor, beginning with recent disclosures that this hip and "customer-centric" online marketplace has been taking money from publishers to place titles on its best-seller list and "recommendations" in such categories as "Destined for Greatness," without telling customers.

Amazon now tells readers about paid placements (on a hard-to-find page). Some customers seem to have lost their loyalty along the way and often go searching for cut-rate imitators like
bestsellersforless.com>.

Enter Bertelsmann

The bookseller wars are chaotic and damaging enough, but at least the separation between church and state (publishing and bookselling) remained sacrosanct — that is, until last year, when two events brought the industry into cataclysm.

This occurred in the midst of the "merger

mania" in New York that has reduced the publishing industry from 30 houses a few decades ago to about seven conglomerate firms today. Not only have foreign houses begun to dominate the scene, but Bertelsmann of Germany, the largest publisher in the world, has initiated a series of takeovers with horrifying repercussions.

Last year, though it already owned Bantam Doubleday Dell, Bertelsmann acquired Random House with all its many imprints (Knopf, Pantheon, Crown, Times, Ballantine, Vintage, Villard, Fawcett, etc.), then proceeded to buy one-half of barnesandnoble.com, the online division (and competitor to Amazon) of Barnes & Noble.

Wham! What had been feared before, that publishers were cozying up to booksellers in compromising ways (asking chains to approve jacket illustrations, flap copy, even the authors' texts), seemed frighteningly real. Piling all the imprints together under the Random House imprint, Bertelsmann controlled more than a fifth of the publishing market; now its investment in Barnes & Noble meant Bertelsmann controlled a major player in the bookselling side as well.

And then, wham! again, Barnes & Noble announced its intention to buy Ingram, the largest book distributor in the country, whose main clientele up to that point had been — ta da! — independent bookstores. This meant that Barnes & Noble would have access to the financial records of competitors it was mowing down right and left, and also have the power to direct sales of best-selling books to itself first. A nationwide protest of the Ingram purchase has brought thousands of letters and calls to the Federal Trade Commission, which has the authority to approve or disapprove the sale. (Industry observers think the FTC will approve it when it makes its decision later this year.)

Wham! Wham! Wham! With the decline of independents, publishers are cutting back on the sales representatives who visit each store to present the publisher's list of upcoming books to the store's buyers. This means that books by unknown or highly literary authors will not be explained to store buyers in a way that would inspire the staff to read them, promote them, hand-sell to customers, and get word-of-mouth going.

Fighting back

In the last few years, independents have joined together to sue the pants off the chains; create their own web sites to compete with Amazon; "brand" consumers' consciousness with "Book Sense," a branding and market-

What no independent can compete against are the alleged illegal discounts and under-the-table deals that independents believe publishers have been giving the chains from the start. The courts have agreed with independents in two separate lawsuits.

ing campaign for independents that will also offer a national gift-certificate program that operates like FTD; fight the Ingram sale; and, by God, make a stand.

Do they have a chance? Perhaps. Famous authors such as Barbara Kingsolver, Larry McMurtry and Adrienne Rich are speaking out in support of independents by writing letters to newspapers, making speeches, appearing on radio and television. Meanwhile, Who Loved Ya (First) Baby campaigns (my term but that's what they are) have started up among independents to educate authors like Frank McCourt (*Angela's Ashes*) and Stephen King to stop appearing in television ads promoting Barnes & Noble.

Other support is coming from friends of

the bookstore groups that are sprouting to help independents bring in donations, host benefits, offer lectures, present authors and conduct classes, book clubs, writers' groups, etc. Planning commissions and city councils are also beginning to deny petitions by chain bookstores to locate 25,000-square-foot-superstores in areas where they would compete unfairly with independents, while some redevelopment money is being directed toward independent bookstores to help revitalize seedy areas and give the independents a chance to compete. Community centers are also forming with space for galleries, theaters, computers, cafes, conference rooms, and, at their core, independent bookstores.

So let's all slow down and remember this wonderful tradition of independent bookselling. Let's get out of the fast lane and recognize that the human element (conversation, selection, trust, opinion, love of reading, expertise, community involvement) has always been a staple of the neighborhood independent bookstore.

So here's how you can become a foot soldier in the war to preserve the heartful caretakers of American literature:

1. Pledge to buy nothing but books as gifts for every holiday; concentrate your shopping at one or two or a handful of independent bookstores and never set foot in a Barnes & Noble or Borders store again.

2. Seek out the best web sites of independent bookstores and never order from Amazon.com again.

3. When in doubt, buy big gift certificates right now at your local independent — this helps finance the store (cash flow is the hardest problem for any retailer right now) and brings in more walk-in traffic.

4. Join a Friends of the Bookstore group if you can find one, and if not, start one.

5. Attend autographings and other in-store events.

Do you love your neighborhood? Then love that neighborhood bookstore, because if you don't, it's not going to be there tomorrow.

The last cheater's waltz

by Janet Chisholm

The Last Cheater's Waltz, Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest, by Ellen Meloy, Henry Holt and Company, 1999.

I suddenly realized that the music I had chosen at random, Paul Winter's *Anthem*, overflowed with a sense of vast space and time and was the perfect accompaniment. I was reading Ellen Meloy's new book about the unique history and breathtaking beauty of the great southwestern desert. Both the music and her words painted visions of a sacred, abundant and eternal creation.

In The Last Cheater's Waltz, Meloy, the naturalist, sets out on a personal journey to learn about the area of New Mexico where she is building a small solar home. She devises and fleshes out her own "Map of the Known Universe." With organic and sensual descriptions of both the inanimate and animate, she details the wonders of the great desert: its plants and wildlife, with their peculiar adaptations and mysterious dormant periods that climax in a multitude of resurrections after a single soaking rain; its colorful pallet of rock and sand, and the ancient geological formations which reveal upheavals and re-creations of the landscape over several million years; its archeological sites with



Janet Chisholm is vice president of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, <JGChisholm@aol.com>.

The Last Cheater's Waltz BEAUTY AND VIOLENCE IN THE DESERT SOUTHWEST len Melov

1997 Whiting Writer's Award Recipient

artifacts and bones, remnants of ordinary living and ritual, mass executions. This desert is both ancient and alive.

The sense of pleasure and feelings of security Meloy experiences initially, however, are disturbed forever. Determined to understand more about her corner of the universe, she reads and researches, talks with residents, and analyzes rocks. Clues lead her to Los Alamos, home of the Manhattan Project; to Trinity, site of the first atom bomb test; and to the missile range at White Sands. She discovers the source of the uranium ore is her own back yard. Moving ever deeper, she comes to the ghastly realization that her new homeland is "an abused, outback colony of the Cold War," and the birthplace of today's nuclear horrors. She calls it the site of the only nuclear war in the history of the world, "the bombing of the American West."

Meloy informs the reader that physicists and engineers traveled to the great desert and called it "nothing," nothing but space and emptiness. Most had no connection to the place or its history; they used the land to develop and test the most lethal weapons possessed by humans, the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their nuclear descendents. Later scientists pursued a variety of "peaceful" nuclear projects under banners like Atoms for Peace and Operation Plowshare, where they invented household conveniences like atomic kitchens and pursued geographic engineering to build dams and to release underground reserves of natural gas. They abused the land and left it pockmarked, poisoned and littered with tailings and radioactive garbage. Meloy finds one sign cautioning that the surrounding land will be dangerous for the next 2,000 years.

As Paul Winter played the "Kyrie" from the *Earth Mass*, Meloy's story really began to hit home — my home! I grew up on that great southwestern desert, in the "nothing out there" state called Nevada. And that desert, I was taught, looked like the Holy Land — like the land of prophets, of Jesus' 40 days and 40 nights, of nativity, crucifixion and resurrection. Riding my horse for miles across the unfenced land, I had felt free, safe, healthy and secure in the vast beauty, as if I were in my own Garden of Eden, just as Meloy described it.

These memories were shaken four years ago when my mother phoned me in Connecticut. She knew about the lump in my breast and my scheduled surgery, but her concerns were intensified by recent medical news. Researchers now believed that the winds swirling in the Las Vegas area during the bomb testing in the 1950s had carried radiation and were the cause of the high cancer rate in residents, especially in those who were children at the time. Years ago we heard about the hundreds of sheep that died downwind in Utah, and more recently we learned about Utah towns plagued by cancer. As I recalled, no one seemed very worried about the dangers at the time — loyalty and trust in the government and in nuclear testing had been strong.

Mother and I recalled how we rose early on days the bombs were scheduled, driving north before dawn - just as we did for Easter sunrise services. We took the newspaper map and directions along and hoped for a good parking spot. Hundreds of families, cars full of children, lined the Tonopah highway. We convinced our grandmother to come, too. It was the chance of a lifetime, we thought. I remembered the hush that draped itself across the line of cars - the eyes all rolled in one direction and staring, afraid to blink and miss the spectacle. There was barely a hint of morning on the horizon. Then, at a time precisely chosen (soon we would know whose watch was really most accurate!), a powerful light exploded into the dark; and huge billows tumbled up and out, forming the famous mushroom shape.

"Did we hear a sound, Mother? I don't remember. Surely there was a terrifying boom."

"Yes," she answered, "it shook the ground and shot through the air into our homes, breaking windows and cracking the plaster and walls, tumbling dishware and other breakables onto the floor. There were thousands of insurance claims. It felt like an earthquake, but it was not an act of God. I later talked with a man who worked for your father who said he suffered from terrible skin cancer and had to stop working. He had been the only insurance investigator allowed on ground zero after a blast to assess the damage. He told me that the soles of his boots were eaten off after one walk-through; he was always purchasing new shoes! He was never warned of the dangers. We were all so trusting in those days."

Meloy's book, though carefully constructed, reads like a surreal diary of dreamlike associations. She juxtaposes visions of natural beauty with horrific nuclear insights. She skillfully changes levels of abstraction and shifts focus from one field of expertise to another with seeming abandon, while preserving connections and carrying her readers along. She rushes along tangents which appear irrelevant at first and later prove not only interesting but integral. Expounding briefly on the abstractions of physics, she

Melloy calls her new homeland the site of the only nuclear war in the history of the world, "the bombing of the American West."

returns to metaphysics. From high ideals she jumps into concrete examples of her own limitations and weaknesses, laughing at mistakes, wrong assumptions and fears with a gentle, self-deprecating sense of humor. This continual pattern of approach-and-retreat, or changing of the scenery, provides emotional relief and a chance for the reader to absorb new revelations without becoming too overwhelmed; it allows time to take a deep breath before resuming the journey. But Meloy offers only a temporary distraction or reprieve before she refocuses again on ground zero.

"To rechart my own terrain, I simply had to explore it with reflexes, not reason, with lips on the scarlet velvet of claret cups, bones and skin absorbing every molecule of sand, river, rock, and lucid desert air. All I had to do was savor the desert stillness, that spare landscape of absence and seeming nothingness that in the end I knew to be so potent and full. The Map of the Known Universe, I had hoped, would be a witness of the senses, a map of my own body.

"Following a night of wailing violence outside the screenhouse, I sat myself down in a decrepit lawn chair beside a sliver of ditch water and hoped for toads. At first it seemed the proper refuge to still the fermenting ironies that grew yeastier with each foray into the Known Universe. I dragged with me, however, not soporific Thoreau or sinuous Rilke but the Los Alamos Primer and a treatise on particle physics that promised once and for all to unravel the cosmic onion."

Meloy has carved a gem with so many facets. It begins as music and art; evolves into history, anthropology, geology and biology; turns to mystery and adventure; and becomes her personal odyssey and protest. Replete throughout with metaphors of the human condition, it inspires reflection about physical and emotional distance and about the meaning of "home."

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They said, Do this, do that, don't look left or right, don't read the text. Don't look at the whole machine. You are only responsible for this one bolt. For this one rubberstamp.

— Mordechai Vanunu, from Ashkelon Prison, Israel

This September 30 marks the 13th anniversary of the kidnapping of Mordechai Vanunu by Israeli agents in Italy, after Vanunu revealed details of Israel's secret nuclear weapons program to the London press. Demonstrations are planned at Israeli embassies throughout the world, demanding Vanunu's release after 13 years of imprisonment — all but a year-and-a-half of which were spent in solitary confinement.

Vanunu, a former technician in Israel's nuclear weapons facility at Dimona, was the son of orthodox Jewish parents who had moved to Israel when he was 9. His interest in religion and philosophy led him to take courses at a university in Beersheba, where he met Palestinian students, became committed to Palestinian independence, and began to question his nuclear weapons work. Before leaving his job in 1985, Vanunu secretly took photographs which revealed the extent of Israel's nuclear weapons program. He then left Israel and traveled through Russia, India, Southeast Asia and Australia.

In Sydney, Australia, he was befriended by David Smith, a young Anglican pastor



Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

"I think that many people understand what I have done. They support it because they know the perils of nuclear arms."



Mordechai Vanunu

Imprisoned by nuclearism by Marianne Arbogast

who shared Vanunu's enthusiasm for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He was soon drawn into the life of the church and decided to become a Christian.

Several weeks after his baptism Vanunu met with a reporter from *The London Sunday Times* and agreed to go public with his knowledge and photos of Israel's nuclear weapons program. In September of 1986, he was flown to London by the newspaper. There, he was trapped by Israeli agents, who used a woman posing as a tourist to lure him into a trip to Rome. In Rome he was kidnapped, drugged, imprisoned in a crate and returned via freighter to Israel. Charged with espionage and treason, he was placed in solitary confinement at Ashkelon Prison, a maximum security facility south of Tel Aviv.

Early letters from Vanunu to David Smith conveyed his faith and a belief that he soon would be released.

"This period in the prison I want to use

to develop my knowledge and my faith in Christianity, because now I know that my task in this world is to devote myself for working and helping other people," he wrote in February of 1987. "By God's will I'll be free, and I want to come to St. John's church and stand in the church on Sunday morning and pray and speak to all the people and to open their hearts for the love of God."

Even after his trial was postponed twice, he remained hopeful.

"I am spending 24 hours every day alone in a cell reading the Bible and other books," he wrote in June, 1987. "Here I am alone in my faith, but by reading the New Testament I feel encouraged, and it gives me strength."

"No one can say what will happen," Vanunu wrote in August. "But by God's will everything will be all right, and I'll be free soon. I think that many people understand what I have done. They support it because they know the perils of nuclear arms."

But Gilbert Sinden, a priest from St. George's College in Jerusalem who had been visiting Vanunu, sensed that the winds were blowing in another direction.

"One thing concerns me," Sinden wrote to Smith that summer. "He really does seem to think that he will be acquitted at his trial, or at worst given a very light sentence. ... I feel it is important to build him up to be ready to receive a very harsh sentence. ... He is spiritually very strong, and I'm just praying for wisdom for us all to help him continue so."

Sinden's forebodings proved accurate. Vanunu was convicted and sentenced to 18 years in prison. He would remain in solitary confinement until March of 1998.

As time went on, Vanunu's letters began to reveal the toll that isolation was taking on him. His mental health suffered: He saw conspiracies everywhere, accused even former friends of cooperating with Israeli security services, and attributed to the security services extraordinary power and influence. At times his opposition to the Israeli state took on an anti-Jewish tone.

"Psychologists and psychiatrists who have seen the letters say they are a classic example of someone who has been isolated from the world for a long time," says Sam Day, coordinator of the U.S. Campaign to Free Mordechai Vanunu, who edited a volume of Vanunu's letters to Smith titled *Faith Under Seige*.

"He went through a stretch of extreme paranoia," says Mary Miller of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, who has maintained a correspondence with Vanunu. "It is a major worry on the part of his supporters. But in the words we lightly use, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

Although Vanunu's release into the inmate population has eased the conditions of his confinement, it has also brought new problems, Miller says. His contact with Palestinian prisoners has been limited, and he has had difficulties relating to the Jewish prisoners, some of whom have harassed him and tried to compel him to observe shabbat. The prison administration has either ignored the problems or responded by returning Vanunu to solitary confinement.

Vanunu receives few visits, since visitors have been restricted to family members and most of his family has disowned him. An American couple, Nicholas and Mary Eoloff, have been allowed to visit Vanunu after adopting him under Minnesota law. Catholic peace activists, the

"Vanunu stands as the person inside the system who has risked more than any other person to blow the whistle, question the enterprise and ignore the secrecy mystique that normally protects nuclear weapons from examination."

— Sam Day

Eoloffs began corresponding with Vanunu after reading about him in *The Progressive*.

"We decided if we could adopt him, they might be willing to release him to come to us," Mary Eoloff says. Although that has not happened, the Eoloffs are now planning their fourth trip to Israel to visit Vanunu.

"He is very gentle, very intellectual, very aware of what's going on," Mary Eoloff says. "He is an amazing reader. He could really see that it was the destruction of creation that people were manufacturing. His determination to be firm in what he believes strengthens him in one sense, but in another it destroys him. If he would relent, I'm sure they would release him — but he will never do that."

Edmond Browning, former Presiding Bishop of the U.S. Episcopal Church, accompanied the Eoloffs on their first trip, but was not allowed to see Vanunu. Riah Abu El-Assal, the Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, has also been denied access.

"I've gotten the Episcopal Peace Fellowship involved, first, because he is a nuclear resister," Mary Miller explains. "The second thing is his conversion. It is clear to me that his pacifism is not just a political but a Christian pacifism on the issue of nuclear weapons. And there are precious few Anglican prisoners of conscience in this world."

"Vanunu stands as the person inside the system who has risked more than any other person to blow the whistle, question the enterprise and ignore the secrecy mystique that normally protects nuclear weapons from examination," Sam Day says. "I regard him as an example of a person who risked all and has suffered as much as anybody in nuclear openness. It is also a very important human rights case — 11plus years in solitary is a form of torture and psychological assault."

Thirty-six members of the U.S. House of Representatives have written to President Bill Clinton asking him to intercede with Israel for Vanunu's release on humanitarian grounds. Jimmy Carter has publicly supported his release, along with Amnesty International, the Federation of American Scientists and the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

"He would have been out years ago if he had promised to say nothing about the kidnapping in Italy or about Israeli nuclear weapons," Day says. "He became eligible for parole in 1998, but he has been turned down as a security risk because he won't promise to keep his mouth shut when he leaves. I believe we ought to really heed what he's saying and follow his example by questioning the nuclear enterprise in our own country."



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the Witness

Volume 82 • Number 11 • November 1999



Harvest feast?

Living in debt

MY NEIGHBORS, and others living in the thousands of working class neighborhoods throughout the country, are directly feeling the crunch of the increasing gap between the rich and the working class. They know directly and first hand that the people they are closest to and could become at any moment are the homeless that hang out in our community. They know and have a first-hand grip on words like Warren Beatty's (our man Bulworth) recent guest editorial in The New York Times who forcefully shouted out the following: "One hundred million Americans left behind in the prosperity of the global economy; that we need as a society to achieve universal health care, lift 35 million of our people out of poverty, a segment of our population that has remained virtually constant for 20 years, to give the 25 percent of our children who live in poverty a decent start in life, and to protect our environment and improve our schools and to rouse the nonvoting half of our population to participate in public life."

Mr. Beatty is reminding us of the biblical mandate for us to get mobilized and organized again to address the marginal, "the outsiders," in our society. More important, to mobilize and organize the marginal outsider again so that they can themselves address the increasing gap between those who have and those who have not in our society.

Although Mr. Beatty was addressing everyone, his message has particular bearing on the life and mission of the church. Perhaps it is time, again, for the Episcopal Church and other denominations to begin to think beyond feeding programs, handouts, and charity as an appropriate response to people in need in our society. We need a much deeper and broader strategy to respond to Mr. Beatty's editorial and to the people in my neighborhood of Dunbar John Springs living on the edge, people who with the slightest nudge could drop out of





society altogether.

Perhaps it's time for the Episcopal Church and other denominations to lay to rest its 25-year obsession with gender wars, and recognize that women and gays are fully human beings and have equal access to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of membership and leadership in the Episcopal Church. Perhaps, it is time for the church to address what is really on peoples' minds in our society: making a living wage, having safe and friendly neighborhoods, decent viable schools, and having access to the basic necessities of life like health care and adequate housing.

Perhaps it is time for the church as a community and an institution to enter into the life of people on the margins in order to save itself — to risk death in order to have real life. Perhaps it is time for the Episcopal Church to listen to Warren Beatty's final editorial words, "If not now, when"?

> Paul W. Buckwalter Tucson, AZ

A politics of place

THANK YOU SO MUCH for sending me *The Witness'* June issue, "Embracing a Politics of Place: The Penobscot Watershed." It was beautiful. A wealth of issues covered. As a socialist, I disagreed with some of Kirkpatrick Sale's philosophy, but found the interview thought-provoking, graceful and illuminating. Have marked passages to copy from "Bringing creation into the church," "On being a woman bishop," and "Favoring justice overlying fallow." Will send the magazine on to my niece Roan Katahdin, who changed her name following a walk from Mt. Katahdin to Mt. Roan (i.e. the Appalachian Trail).

I also invite *Witness* readers to write to Mordechai Vanunu and to get involved in the international campaign for his release [see

Several typographical errors in Kofi Natambu's poem escaped our proofers during production of the September 1999 issue. We're running his poem here in full with sincere apologies.

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Lyric #3
by Kofi Natambu
THIS MINIMAL EXISTENCE IN THE EXTERNAL WORLD
THE WORLD OF THINGS. THE REALM OF NOISE:
CLOTHES CARS CIGARETTES LIQUOR
RATTLING CONVERSATION
THIS IDLE FEELING OF MOVEMENT WITHOUT MOTION
TIME WITHOUT MEMORY
LIVING WITHOUT FEELING
        WORDS COLLIDE INTO EARCAVES BUT DON'T RESONATE
WHERE IS THE SOUND?
THE TRAJECTORY OF SIGHT IS FLAT/THE RHYTHM OF LIGHT IS LOST
THE CLOUDS STAND ABOVE NOT BEYOND.
THE EARTH GROANS BELOW NOT BEYOND
THE SUN HIDES BEHIND THE SKY A BROKEN MASS
PEEKING THRU STRUCTURES
THAT BAN ITS LOVE.
THIS FALSE DENIAL IN THE DONUT WORLD: THE WORLD OF WEIGHT
BUT NO DEPTH
THE WORLD OF MATTER BUT NO ENERGY: THE REALM OF NOISE
clothes cars cigarettes liquor rattling conversation ...
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TW10/99]. His address is Mordechai Vanunu, Ashkelon Prison, Ashkelon, Israel. For more information contact U.S. Campaign to Free Mordechai Vanunu, 2206 Fox Avenue, Madison, WI 53711, phone/fax (608)257-4764.

Jeanie Shaterian Berkeley, CA

WHAT A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE it was to read the June copy of *The Witness*. It was like fresh air blowing in through an open window. I found myself reading and nodding my head "yes" and finding the affirmation of many beliefs, thoughts I have in that which was written. We do so like to find others who "agree" with us, don't we?

I'm particularly intrigued with the note about future issues, especially "pilgrimage" [see TW 7-8/99]. I have been walking the medieval route to Santiago de Compostela, Spain for the past three years (in two-week segments). This October, I plan to go to France and walk for three weeks the French part of the Camino. I will cross the Pyrenees at St. Jean de Pied and enter Spain through Pamplona where I started walking before. Pilgrimage is a subject which intrigues me greatly.

> Sandy Lenthall Williamsburg, VA



Honorary doctorate

I WAS THRILLED when I read that Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann had received an honorary doctorate from the Episcopal Divinity School [see *TW* 7-8/99]. I agree with all the reasons

continued on back cover

OUR GESTURES SPEAK FEAR YET WORDS BOUNCE ALONG THE BOULEVARDS IN SLICK PATTERNS: THESE HORNRIMMED BLOOD-DRAINED MEEK VIOLENT SYLLABLES FALLING DEAD FLIES OUT OF BLEEDING MOUTHS. (the sullen shrug the accusing smile the jagged laughs the mumbled cries)

OUR GESTURES SPEAK PAIN YET WORDS STAGGER CASUALLY DOWN ALLEYGLASS VOCAL CHORDS INTO THE CROWDED MENTAL STREETS THESE EXCREMENT EARS SWOLLEN POPCORN LIPS WOODEN TONGUES THIS EXTERNAL WORLD: THE WORLD OF DOLLARS, THE REALM OF COIN: MEAT BRICK SUGAR METAL BILLBOARD: THE REALM OF NOISE

THIS BLANK EXISTENCE IN THE EXTERNAL WORLD THIS WORLD OF SHADLOWLESS KILOWATT FACES DULL, BLINKING FINGERS CRAZY NECK JERKS STUMBLING ANKLE WALKS DANCING EYE SCREAMS THE REALM OF NOISE

O WHERE IS THE SOUND?

From The Melody Never Stops (Detroit: Past Tents Press, 1991)

Classifieds

Episcopal Urban Interns

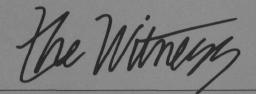
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Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly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

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Looking for a reason to feast

by Julie A. Wortman

I tend to avoid like the plague the ecumenical or interfaith community Thanksgiving services most local churches feel obligated to hold at this time of year. In fact, I find these events excruciating — both awkwardly orchestrated (in an attempt, perhaps, to avoid any possible offense) and bizarrely vacuous (which probably accounts for the usually sparse attendance).

I wonder why local church leaders put themselves through the exercise. There is, after all, nothing sacred about Thanksgiving Day. This is a national holiday whose only religious connection has to do with the colonist Pilgrims who happened to be a religious sect. It is grimly ironic, in fact, that the first official proclaiming of a "Thanksgiving Day" was to celebrate the massacre of 700 native people guilelessly gathered for their own traditional religious observance of thanksgiving (page 24).

I suspect it is the Christian community, in particular, which, like a moth drawn to flame, is compelled to find some sort of religious significance in a holiday whose central image is a meal celebrated out of gratefulness for a victory (though admittedly few are likely to be aware of the referenced massacre, inclining to think instead mostly of the invaders' hard-won survival). And since we've been told from childhood that the Pilgrims were seeking religious freedom when they ventured across the Atlantic, it understandably looks like a good opportunity to celebrate and foster mutual respect of difference — and knowledge of the (surprising?) fact that most everyone cherishes similar sorts of blessings.

The universal nature of life's blessings is the focus, in fact, of the collect for Thanksgiving Day found in the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer: "Almighty and gracious Father [sic], we give



Harvest by Mary Azarian

you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we pray, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

No prayer could more aptly contain the impulse behind this issue. In our significantly urbanized, suburbanized and regional sprawl-ized national life, the joy and relief that accompanies a harvest successfully weathered is, of course, mostly lost. As is the sober, bone-weary knowledge of the labor involved — or even what "in season" means when it comes to our favorite fruits and vegetables. Our ignorance also embraces a scandal. Men, women and children are dying in the fields which yield such national abundance. And the crops themselves increasingly pose a risk to the very welfare of the creation we boast as God's own, including to the health of those we warmly invite to dinner.

As people who find contained in a meal the very substance of salvation, it seems sacrilegious for Christians not to be scrupulously mindful of the qualities and cost of the national feast. Perhaps, as with much of the Thanksgiving Day story, we'd prefer not to delve too deeply. If we did we'd

probably find the occasion would better merit a fast.

But fasting is not the only form of resistance we can choose if we take the church's prayerful Thanksgiving Day intention as our own. Every community member has a hunger for healthy food, sustainably and justly produced — which gives flesh to the interfaith solidarity for which so many church leaders seem to long.

Perhaps in working towards that aim we'd generate some community religious gatherings with true heart, everyone compelled to

attend because of a passionate need to express deep gratefulness for a common goal achieved — a living-wage campaign successfully undertaken, an attempt to water down food labelling standards successfully rebuffed, a program of communitysupported agriculture successfully established.

To my mind such victories would be well worth celebrating — maybe even worth a feast.

editor's note

Julie A. Wortman is publisher and co-editor of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>. Artist Mary Azarian's work can be obtained by contacting Farmhouse Press, RD2, Box 831, Plainfield, Vt. 05667.

Thanksgiving without apologies

by Marianne Arbogast

hanksgiving can't help but make vegetarians feel defensive. While other holiday meals may be centered around meat, no other holiday has meat as its central symbol and tradition. By the time most of us draw our first traced-hand turkey in kindergarten, we have learned to recognize it as the American Thanksgiving emblem.

"Warn your guests (or your host) beforehand," vegetarians are advised in etiquette columns, as though not serving or eating turkey on Thanksgiving is a definite lapse in appropriate behavior. A sympathetic internet site assures vegetarian hosts that "there's no need to apologize," then recommends a diversion tactic: "Keep it simple and upbeat, then tell your guests about the menu and how happy you are that they'll be coming."

I have to admit that I'm most grateful when Thanksgiving is over each year it's hard to relax and enjoy a day requiring warnings and possibly apologies.

Six years ago — when I realized I could no longer cook meat with a quiet conscience — I faced the problem of an annual volunteer appreciation dinner that I co-host with others who share management of a soup kitchen. In the past, the Thanksgiving week meal had always featured turkey; this time, a co-worker and I spent days planning and preparing an elaborate vegetarian feast. With a few exceptions, the response was resoundingly lukewarm. We've now moved the dinner to December, when the absence of meat seems to give less offense to those we are seeking to honor.

Yet the earliest record of Thanksgiving makes no mention of turkey. In 1621, the governor of Massachusetts proclaimed that a day be set aside to "render thanksgiving ... for the abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables."

Rita Laws, writing in *The Vegetarian Journal*, says that the traditional Native American diet, shared with the first European settlers, was largely vegetarian:

The earliest record of Thanksgiving makes no mention of turkey.

"Among my own people, the Choctaw Indians of Mississippi and Oklahoma, vegetables are the traditional diet mainstay. ... Many of the Choctaw foods cooked at celebrations even today are vegetarian. Corn is so important to us it is considered divine. Our corn legend says that it was a gift from Hashtali, the Great Spirit.

"Many history textbooks tell the story of Squanto, a Pawtuxent Indian who lived in the early 1600s. Squanto is famous for having saved the Pilgrims from starvation. He showed them how to gather wilderness foods and how to plant corn. ... For most Native Americans of old, meat was not only not the food of choice, its consumption was not revered (as in modern times when Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving as if it were a religious duty). ... Big celebrations such as Fall Festivals centered around the harvest, especially the gathering of corn."

I know better (usually) than to lecture anyone on vegetarianism. I'd like to avoid self-righteousness. And often, I just don't know what to say about something that seems, to me, embarrassingly simple. Turkeys, pigs and cows want to live, just as I do. They suffer terror and pain when attacked and killed. I don't need to eat meat to live. Even setting aside compelling arguments about health, hunger, ecology and unspeakably cruel factory farming practices, I find that more than sufficient reason to reject eating them.

A cookbook on my shelf quotes Plutarch's defense of Pythagoras' vegetarian lifestyle:

"Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstinence from flesh? For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies, and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. ... For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life to which they are entitled by birth and being."

Carol Adams, author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, quotes a poem by Virginia de Araujo, who writes about a friend who creates a feast from vegetables,

& says, On this grace I feed, I wilt in spirit if I eat flesh, let the hogs, the rabbits live, the cows browse, the eggs hatch out chicks & peck seeds. I can't look at a dead turkey and not see the living one or the bleeding, dying one.

"Meals are the scene of life and death," one Zen teacher writes, enjoining mindful eating. That's true no matter what we eat — something dies, something else is given life. But, paying attention, I'd far rather owe my life to wheat and corn stalks, fruit trees, potato and bean plants, than to the slaughter of feeling, suffering fellow creatures. I'm grateful even on Thanksgiving — to be able to do that.

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*, <marianne@thewitness.org>.

Desire and Free Trade

by Charles Gervin

All day, this particular Grey day, after Thanksgiving We, carrying our car coats, Haunted the malls; Seeing so many pale, but never exact Reflections or repercussions of ourselves In the chrome, on glass And in the ridged chic of the mannequins Until everything-even ourselves were reduced Into a thick numbing stupor.

We ate our hot dogs and drank A gigantic cherry-coke at the snack bar Of a bright yellow linoleum fast food joint, Then we took to the lanes again Hoping to find something, anything.

From Hipology, Broadside Press, Detroit, 1990.



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Harvest's blood, sweat and tears

by Jane Slaughter

sked how long she's been a farmworker, Lucia Salinas answers simply "all my life." Her parents and grandparents were migrant farmworkers, and she was born while her mother and father were on the road, picking cotton in north Texas. Her life has been split between a home base in Donna, Tex., and the flat fields of Michigan. She's picked tomatoes and cucumbers and oranges and asparagus and cotton; this fall she's working "from when the sun is up and the sun is down, Monday through Sunday" to grade the potatoes that her husband and the other men dig out of the ground on a farm near Samaria, Michigan.

Salinas is 40 years old. She and her husband and their two children still at home spend April to November in a camp for migrant workers, provided by the farmer who is their employer. They are paid \$6 an hour; at the end of the season they receive a bonus that the farmer determines. Their rooms are cramped, and showers and toilets are shared among the 10 families in the camp, in separate buildings away from the living units. Still, they are luckier than some migrant camp dwellers, since they have flush toilets rather than Porta-johns. Salinas and the other women have made the outsides of the units bright with flowers.

Throughout our talk, Salinas speaks of her four children. The two teenagers have

trouble every year when they switch schools in mid-semester. On the bus, Michigan kids taunt them as "tomato pickers." "They don't even know what we do," says Salinas. "They don't realize, what they're eating, where it comes from." She is trying to convince and prod her children to finish their schooling so they will not have to suffer as their parents have.

Migrant farmworkers live and work in conditions that give them a life expectancy of 49 and an infant mortality rate 25 percent higher than the national average.

Migrant farmworkers live and work in conditions that give them a life expectancy of 49 and an infant mortality rate 25 percent higher than the national average. The state of farmworkers' health has been a national scandal for decades, of course, and the federal government has responded in some ways. Slowly, a few protections have been won—requirements for drinking water and toilets in the fields, rules on pesticides, clinics for migrants. But enforcement of the few laws that exist is abysmal, and the government-supported clinics reach only 15 to 20 percent of those who need them.

When Salinas heard that a social service agency called Migrant Health Promotion was offering training to become a Camp Health Aide, she was eager to learn all she could. She displays a sign outside her door, "*Promotora de Salud*" ("health promoter"), and is eager to share her knowledge with neighbors and co-workers and "mostly, to feel like I'm somebody." It was only a few years ago that Salinas' family worked in far worse conditions. She tells of the asparagus farmer in Three Rivers, Mich., who refused to provide sanitary facilities in the fields and grumbled when the workers built their own outhouse. She tells of family members trying to make a joke of peeing behind a tarp, because there was no other place to go. She visited friends whose camp buildings had "no sheetrock, just outside walls" and "bunk beds with yucky mattresses, holes everywhere."

Salinas hopes these conditions are part of her past, but a growing number of farmworkers are living them — and worse — today. A key reason is that a rising share of the farm workforce is foreignborn and undocumented, and employers can take advantage of this intimidated workforce without fear of revolt.

Americans are accustomed to thinking of our country as one that, for better or worse, has just about left its agricultural past behind. The family farm is indeed in a long decline. But more interest in healthy eating habits has had an important effect: Over the last 20 years the U.S. production of fruits and vegetables - which depends on "hired" farmworkers - has expanded by two-thirds. More than 85 percent of the fruits and vegetables grown here are hand-harvested and/or cultivated: Workers stake tomatoes, hand-pick apples and peaches, harvest asparagus or chilies, separate scabby potatoes from the blemish-free specimens consumers demand. Almost all this work is seasonal, providing no permanent full-time jobs. So farmworkers adapt their life cycles to those of the crops. Most of the 40 percent

Detroiter **Jane Slaughter** is a labor writer, <Janesla@aol.com>. Photographer **Jim West** also lives in Detroit. **The National Farm Worker Ministry**, a faith-based group that champions the efforts of farmworker unions, can be contacted at 1337 W. Ohio St., Chicago, IL 60622; (312) 829-6436; <www.nfwm.org>.



Camp Health Aide Lucia Salinas (right) talks to Noelia Gloria about Gloria's health questions at Lennard's camp near Monroe, Mich. Gloria's two-year-old daughter, Juanita, looks on.

who migrate to find work shuttle between a home in the southern U.S. or Mexico and fields further north.

At least 69 percent of the 2.5 million hired crop farmworkers in this country are foreign-born now, compared to 60 percent just in 1989. In the Florida citrus groves and the North Carolina tobacco fields, young Latino immigrants have replaced U.S.-born African Americans. Two researchers noted dryly in a June 1999 occupational medicine journal, "In spite of U.S. agriculture's unprecedented dependence on foreign-born hired farm workers, lawmakers and agencies have been unable to reconcile this dependence with immigration policy." In 1995 about 37 percent of hired farmworkers were undocumented, a dramatic change from 1989, when the figure was 7 percent.

Many of these foreign-born workers speak only Spanish, but a growing number are indigenous people from southern Mexico or Guatemala — Mixtecs, Zapotecs and Maya — who speak their own languages. A survey of 19 labor camps in San Diego County, Calif., found that 40 percent of the residents spoke one of 14 indigenous dialects. Another segment of farmworkers are Haitians, speaking Creole.

Poverty and poor health

The health problems of farmworkers can be thought of in three categories, although all are connected. First are specific injuries and illnesses caused by field labor as it is now organized. Second, for farmworkers who are migrants, are the problems caused by moving from one place to another. Third are the health problems endemic to poverty plus racial discrimination.

Andrea Steege, a researcher with the federal government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

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(NIOSH), says poverty is the most important cause of farmworkers' ill health. "If they didn't need a job so badly they wouldn't put up with the work conditions," Steege said. "And they definitely wouldn't migrate."

Maria Rodriguez-Winter of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO (FLOC), sees each factor at work. She organizes the union's summer mobile clinic that visits migrant labor camps near Toledo, Ohio. Each camp receives one three-hour visit per year - a drop in the bucket compared to workers' health needs. Some of those recruited from Oaxaca and Chiapas have never seen a physician, says Rodriguez-Winter. She sees ringworm and blackened, fungusinfected toenails caused by working in wet fields; rashes - poison ivy is common in the fields, in addition to pesticides; and above all "backaches, muscle aches, leg aches."

"We will write up prescriptions," she says, "but many don't have the money to pay for it. Their home state clinic might provide prescriptions, but they don't have enough medicine to last the whole time they're up here, so they ration it out by half. We refer them to clinics that are funded to deal with farmworkers, but there are long waits. Mostly they just say "me aguanto" — 'I'll bear it' — until I get home."

Nurse Mary Jane Flores, a volunteer on the clinic project, spoke of the frustrations: "When we couldn't take care of a problem they presented we would refer them to the migrant clinic. But it's only available on Monday nights, and they can spend hours and not be seen. You and I would be up in arms, but they just take it."

According to a 1997 survey, three out of five farmworkers earn annual incomes below the poverty level (now \$16,700 for a family of four), and half earn less than \$7,500. Clearly, when the decision is between food and medicine, or between visiting the doctor and staying on the job during peak earning season, in-your-face economics trumps health care.

Farmworkers' economic barriers to good health are very high. Often stuck in isolated areas, they may lack transportation to a clinic. Very few farmworker employers provide health insurance, and only 12 states require workers compensation coverage. Even in states that do require workers comp for farmworkers, such as California, it may be problematic for a worker to use it: The worker must

In some other industries that are prone to repetitive strain injuries, unions — or workers comp costs have forced employers to reengineer work procedures or redesign tools. Farm employers have no such incentive. Labor is cheap and replacements are plentiful.

know that he has a right to it, initiate a case, prove that his injury was workrelated, and fight the employer through the appeals process. Some states impose a 45-day residency requirement for Medicaid eligibility, and the undocumented do not qualify for Medicaid in any case. For farmworkers who are citizens or working legally, estimates are that only 35 percent of those with children use Medicaid. These circumstances cause farmworkers to postpone seeking health care until their condition becomes so severe that they cannot work, and then hit the emergency room.

Moving from state to state compromises the ability to deal with many serious diseases. As a mostly Latino population, farmworkers are particularly susceptible to diabetes. Diabetes, along with tuberculosis, hypertension, cancer, and HIV, require careful monitoring and follow-up both by the patient him or herself and by a health care worker. Even if the money can be found, this kind of attention is not likely when the worker is a migrant.

A list of chronic health problems On top of these problems come the problems that arise from the arduous conditions of field work itself.

Musculoskeletal disorders. In 1995 a NIOSH panel determined that the two top priorities for improving farmworkers' onthe-job conditions were musculoskeletal disorders - sprains and strains - and conditions caused by pesticides. Backaches and pain in the shoulders, arms and hands are the most common ailments farmworkers report, and also the top two reasons they become disabled. Much field work is stoop labor, with the worker literally bent double. Workers must kneel frequently, often carry heavy weights in awkward positions, work with their arms above shoulder level, and perform repetitive movements, such as cutting, with their hands and wrists. Sometimes the whole body is subject to vibration from farm equipment. One out of four farmworkers works piece rate, which is an incentive to work fast without stopping. And farmworkers are not covered by the federal law requiring time-and-ahalf pay for overtime, so long hours exacerbate the effects of high-stress repetitive motion.

In some other industries that are prone to repetitive strain injuries, unions — or workers comp costs — have forced employers to reengineer work procedures or redesign tools. Farm employers have no such incentive. Labor is cheap and replacements are plentiful.

Pesticide-related illnesses include

'We are treated like slaves'

In June 1999, at the peak of the cucumber harvest, the National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM) sent a delegation to four North Carolina labor camps associated with the Mt. Olive Pickle Company. Mt. Olive is the target of an organizing drive and boycott by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO (FLOC). The delegation talked with Mexican men employed under the government's H-2A "guestworker" program, which allows about 20,000 farmworkers to work temporarily and legally in this country, and also with undocumented workers.

One H-2A grower told the NFWM delegates that his workers had harvested cucumbers from 6 a.m. till 6 p.m. that day, although on some days they worked only 10 hours, others 14. In their 12-hour day, the crew of 16 had picked 35 boxes of cucumbers, each box weighing a thousand pounds. Each worker had picked well over a ton of cucumbers. This considerate grower asked the delegates not to keep the workers up too late. He also mentioned that he'd like to see the workers pay part of the cost of their housing. He was resentful that other, non-H-2A growers right down the road got away with providing shabbier living conditions.

This housing, home to undocumented workers, was run-down and crowded. The delegates described a 10 x 11 foot room with walls painted black, holding four cots with misshapen bedsprings, about 18 inches apart. There was no room for other furniture, though crates and buckets were brought in for chairs. In one house, the windows consisted of shutters and screens, no glass. Electricity was not always available.

Some workers were hesitant to speak

with the visitors, but others complained of their low pay and their complete dependence on their crewleader, the "coyote" who had brought them from Mexico to North Carolina. The coyote charged \$1,500 for the trip — 44 men in a truck and was deducting the amount in installments from workers' paychecks. The workers expected to be in debt to him for about two years.

For picking cucumbers that would be made into Mt. Olive brand pickles, these workers received 60-65 cents per fivegallon bucket, a rate which had not increased in three years. At the grading station, a bucket sold for 80-85 cents the crewleader kept the difference. They had been promised 28-40 hours of work a week, but because the grower hadn't had much work for them in the "off-peak" season before the harvest, they had averaged instead only 20-28 hours.

Because these were not H-2A workers, nine percent of their pay went for Social Security and taxes. Each paid \$45 a week to the crewleader for food - two meals a day, mostly rice and beans. They paid extra for coffee, drinks and pastries. During the work day they were off an hour, unpaid, for lunch, and two 15-minute breaks. Asked if they had any outside contacts or activities, they said no, it is either work or la casa, although they did point to a volleyball net they had strung up outside. It was an isolated area, with no transportation available. One worker said, "The reality is that we are treated like slaves. I think dogs are treated better than we are."

These workers had had little or no contact with FLOC's union drive. All agreed that it would be very hard for them to complain about conditions for fear of blacklisting (one worker emphasized this by "slitting" his throat with his thumbnail). While they talked, a man began pacing back and forth outside the room, peering through the screen and at one point calling inside, "We are here to work!" The workers said that this was the crewleader's brother.

A few weeks later, near Raleigh, N.C., a Latino migrant worker collapsed in the 98-degree heat. He was admitted to the hospital with a body temperature of 108, and later died. The hospital's chief of emergency medicine said several farmworkers had been admitted to the intensive care unit. "I don't want to see any more people with brain damage," said Dr. Kathleen Clem. "It's so preventable, it's tragic."

FLOC organizers say that cucumber pickers in North Carolina are regularly kept in fields through the heat of the afternoon. Because cucumbers mature rapidly when it's hot and humid, the growers tell harvesters to work faster when it's hot. They report one grower for Mt. Olive, Ken Murray, who "doesn't give the workers any water breaks, and when he does give water it doesn't have any ice, and if they want cold water, they have to pay for the ice."

On July 15 some of Murray's workers decided to stop working rather than risk heat stroke; he called the North Carolina Growers' Association, which sent an employee to threaten them. "The workers told us," said the FLOC organizers, "that they didn't care if they did get sent back to Mexico, because they couldn't work more that day."

Along with other agribusiness companies, Mt. Olive has signed a letter to Congresspeople urging them to adopt a new "guestworker" bill. -J.S. Copyright 2020. Archives of the Episcopal Church / DFMS. Permission required for reuse and publication.

dermatitis, cancer, eve injuries, and respiratory diseases. Don Villareio, Ph.D., and Sherry Baron, M.D., write in Occupational Medicine State of the Art Reviews, "Although a great deal of research has been conducted on the toxicology and health effects of pesticides in general, few of these studies have been directed at the hired farmworker population" - the population most exposed to pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 300,000 farmworkers suffer acute pesticide poisoning each year. A mid-1990s survey found that only 30 percent of those who mixed or applied pesticides could read English well. Under rules only implemented in 1995, the EPA requires pesticide training programs, a time lapse between spraving and workers' re-entering fields, and decontamination washing facilities.

But Mike Ferner of FLOC says, "The EPA caved in to the industry on pesticide 'drift' and did not require that adjacent fields and labor camps be notified of spraying." Asked about enforcement of existing rules on non-union farms, Ferner's only response is a rude noise.

At Salinas' camp, the fields come right up to the workers' back doors. Her husband, who is in charge of applying pesticides, always tells the camp residents to stay inside when he is going to spray. But some exposure is inevitable, and for a long time, the camp had only one shower for men and one for women. "During the season we were up till one o'clock in the morning taking a shower," says Salinas. The workers successfully badgered the state housing inspector to make the farmer add more showers.

The Institute for Southern Studies, in a July 1999 report, "Uprooting Injustice," notes that the state of North Carolina employs only seven pesticide field inspectors, none of whom speaks Spanish. In the first nine months of 1998, they inspected 451 farms certified for "restricted use" pesticides. At this rate, ISS notes, it will take 43 years to visit the 26,000 such growers in North Carolina.

Traumatic injuries. Agriculture has the third highest occupational fatality rate (owners and workers combined), after coal mining and fishing.

Respiratory disease. A 1988 study found reduced lung capacity among tomato and citrus workers in California and surmised that the cause could be silicates in the soil or pesticides such as paraquat.

Mike Ferner of FLOC says, "The EPA caved in to the industry on pesticide 'drift' and did not require that adjacent fields and labor camps be notified of spraying."

Skin diseases. Agricultural workers have the highest incidence of skin disorders of all industrial classifications, twice as high as manufacturing workers.

Tuberculosis. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that farmworkers have a six-fold greater risk of TB than the general population of working adults. One reason is crowded living conditions.

HIV. Studies have found HIV-positive rates among migrants eight to 32 times higher than the national average.

Slave-labor bill?

The worst conditions will become more common if growers have their way in Congress. The National Council of Agricultural Employers is pushing a bill to bring up to 350,000 "guestworkers" per year into the country, under a government-sponsored program that farmworker advocates call "legalized slavery." The growers claim a shortage of farm labor. Many studies, however, including a 1997 review by the Government Accounting Office (GAO), document a surplus of farmworkers, as evidenced by the steady decline of their wages.

The growers' other argument for bringing in foreign workers is that Americans just won't take such hard jobs. New America News Service points out: "Americans do all sorts of tough, dirty seasonal work, laying asphalt on highways, mining coal, roofing in 100-plusdegree weather, constructing buildings. The difference is that these jobs pay much better and usually offer benefits that everyone other than farm workers takes for granted."

The proposed law, which some Representatives called a "de facto slave- labor program," would not require growers to provide housing and transportation, as under the current, more limited program ("H-2A" — see sidebar). Instead, workers would get a housing stipend — \$125 a month in Oregon, for example. Individual workers would no longer be entitled to the minimum wage — companies could pay workers as a group that averaged the minimum.

The GAO concluded that such a bill would result in the firing of tens of thousands of current workers as growers replaced them with even cheaper ones.

A similar bill was voted down in 1998. But farm employers will doubtless continue seeking to hire cheap foreign labor without the inconvenience of relocating abroad. In an interview with New America News Service, a Georgia onion grower who employs H-2A workers said, "If we had a bunch of American workers, we'd have to hire someone like a personnel director to deal with the problems. The people we have now, they come to work. They don't have kids to pick up from school or take to the doctor. They don't have child support issues. They don't ask to leave early for this and that. They don't call in sick. If you say to them, 'Today we need to work for 10 hours,' they don't say anything." TW

Suing sweatshops

Global Exchange has filed lawsuits against U.S. garment manufacturers for false claims of "no sweatshop" policies and misleading labels.

"When the Gap uses the label that says 'Made in Mariana Islands U.S.A.' they are clearly trying to mislead consumers into believing that the garment is made by American workers protected by U.S. labor laws," Medea Benjamin, codirector of Global Exchange, writes.

"Saipan is an island in the Northern Marianas which American gained control of after World War II. It is ironic that an island thousands of American men died on, fighting to free it from tyranny, is now the site of sweatshops where thousands are practically enslaved.

"Last year, an estimated \$1 billion worth of wholesale so-called "Made in the U.S.A." clothing was made in sweatshops on the island of Saipan by workers who are lured by false claims of high wages and 'American-style' living, only to be paid slave wages, suffer constant risk of injury or death from unsafe working conditions, and be housed in overcrowded barracks surrounded by barbed wire.

"Workers must stay on the job in order to pay off exorbitant recruitment fees often as much as \$7,000 — that are a precondition of their employment. Unilaterally determined costs for food and housing of up to \$200 a month is also deducted from their paychecks.

"Since they are forced to work for about \$3.00 an hour, these workers may need to work up to 2,500 hours just to break even. The effect is to keep workers in a state where their wages may be less than the payments owed for their debts.

"Workers have been threatened with violence or deportation when they report violations of safety or human rights laws. Retribution is also threatened against their families in their home countries, who often are without resources or influence."

Contact Global Exchange, 2017 Mission St., Room 303, San Francisco, CA 94110; <www.globalexchange.org>.

Jury acquits anti-nuclear activists

Eight anti-nuclear activists who blocked traffic at Bangor Nuclear Submarine Base on Aug. 9, 1998, were found not guilty of disorderly conduct by a jury this past June.

The defendants presented an international law defense based on the Hague Convention of 1907, the Nuremberg Principles and the 1996 World Court ruling on the illegality of nuclear weapons. District Court Judge James Riehl, in his instructions to the jury, told them to take into account the fact that international treaties supercede local, state and federal laws.

On Aug. 9 of this year (the 54th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki), activists returned to the base with a banner reading, "Bangor Closed — Trident violates International Law." After blocking incoming traffic for a short time, four protesters were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

The protests, organized by the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, have focused specifically on stopping a proposed nuclear missile upgrade at Bangor.

U.S. funding Colombian paramilitaries

"Drug war" money sent to Colombia is financing right-wing paramilitary activity on a massive scale, according to Amnesty International's 1999 report.

"You are unwittingly complicitous in some of the worst mass murders in the hemisphere today," Amnesty's Carlos Salinas told *The Progressive* (Sept. 1999). "If you liked El Salvador, you're going to love Columbia. It's the same death squads, the same military aid, and the same whitewash from Washington.

"The Colombian police and military are not fighting a drug war," a *Progressive* editorial states, reporting that the Administration is considering an additional \$1 billion in emergency aid primarily for Colombia (already the third largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world). "They are fighting an old-fashioned civil war against leftwing rebels who are gaining strength. This is the emergency the Pentagon worries about — not drugs. Colombia is strategically located, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. And it has vast oil and mineral reserves that multinational corporations have been exploiting for years, often under the armed guard of the Colombian military."

"More than 1,000 civilians were killed [in 1998] by the security forces or paramilitary groups operating with [U.S. military] support or acquiescence," the 1999 Amnesty report says. "Many were tortured before being killed. At least 150 people 'disappeared.' Human rights activists were threatened and attacked; at least six were killed."

War tax resistance

The 8th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns will be held in Wash., D.C. July 6-9, 2000. This will be the first such conference held in the U.S. Previous conferences were held in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Spain, England and India. The conference will take place on the campus of the Catholic University of America. All those interested in issues related to the conscientious objection to military taxation are invited to join the gathering.

For details and registration information, contact the Peace Tax Foundation, 2121 Decatur Place, NW, Wash., D.C. 20008, 202-483-3751. Registration must be made by the end of 1999 to guarantee a place at the conference.

most takes

'Food. Health. Hope.': Monsanto, the transgenetic revolution and ethics

by Donella Meadows

C orporate demonizing will not transform industrial agriculture, but less hubris and more openness to organic agriculture might help.

Last fall at a prestigious environmental forum in San Francisco the small group of terrorists who throw gooey pies in the faces of offensive corporate executives pulled off a direct hit on Monsanto's CEO, Bob Shapiro. The pie was made of tofu, in protest against the company's genetically engineered soybeans.

In India, there's an uprising going on under the name "Operation Cremate Monsanto." People are torching the company's test plots of genetically modified cotton.

In England, protesters pull up plots of transgenic potatoes and corn. In other EU countries and Japan, there are energetic political movements to ban genespliced foods altogether.

In Canada, Monsanto sent Pinkerton detectives out to do DNA tests on canola crops, and maintained a hotline so farmers could turn in neighbors for keeping and replanting gene-spliced seed, rather than buying it each year from the company as their contracts require. Outraged farmers claimed that Monsanto's patented genes appeared in their fields not through replanting, but through pollen from neighboring fields.

American consumers, Monsanto claims, have accepted gene-spliced foods — but the company must know better, because it fights aggressively against any labeling for gene-spliced products. In a recent *Time* magazine poll 81 percent of respondents said transgenic foods should be labeled; 58 percent said they wouldn't buy them.

American consumers, Monsanto claims, have accepted gene-spliced foods — but the company must know better, because it fights aggressively against any labeling for gene-spliced products.

Sincere desire to offer hope The transgenetic revolution has engulfed agriculture with unbelievable speed. As of 1996, virtually no transgenic crops had been planted. In 1997 they covered 19 million acres. In that year, more than half the world's soybeans and one-third of the corn contained genes pasted in from other forms of life.

Isn't that great? say Monsanto scientists, several of whom I know and like. Pesticide-containing potatoes can be grown with fewer harmful sprays. (But not with no sprays, because, so far, the spliced potato can only fend off one of its many pests.)

Soybeans engineered to resist Monsanto's herbicide, Roundup, can grow in uncultivated fields, the weeds controlled by the herbicide. There's no need to turn the soil, so there's less tractor fuel used and less erosion.

The Monsanto folks honestly see themselves as helping to feed the world. "Food. Health. Hope." is their new company motto. They have taken a public stand for environmental sustainability. They're working hard to cut their toxic emissions and fossil-fuel consumption. Many of them are sincere; this is more than a public-relations ploy. So it's especially maddening to those of us who also want the world fed and the environment sustained to see this company get pie in its face, literally and figuratively, again and again, and to deserve it.

Like every big organization, Monsanto's right hand doesn't always know what its left hand is doing I'm told that corporate headquarters found out about the spying in the canola fields of Canada only when the story hit the press, and has now put a stop to it.

A culture of power and desperation

Monsanto has other problems. One is a culture of power, common throughout the corporate world — a habit of imposing the company's will on others and on nature, a habit of not listening to people and/or not respecting them. Of assuming, for instance, that if people don't want to eat genetically engineered

Donella Meadows is a contributing editor to *Whole Earth* magazine,

<Donella.H.Meadows@Dartmouth.EDU>. This article is used with permission from Whole Earth No. 97 (Summer 1999). Call 800-783-4903 for subscription information.

food, they must be ignorant. Assuming that a few million bucks' worth of reassuring ads will bring them around.

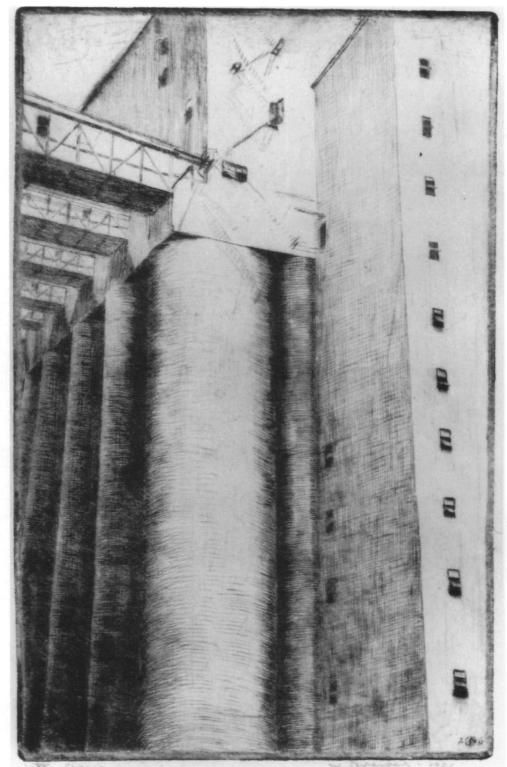
Other problems are particular to Monsanto: a defensiveness (that derives, I suppose, from a nasty environmental history), and a desperation, because CEO Bob Shapiro has bet the company on genetic engineering, and the bet is a long way from paying off.

Narrow expertise. A size that makes coordination and thoroughgoing integrity impossible. Power wielded with arrogance. Defensiveness edging toward desperation. I'm not sure whether any human organization should "own" the codes for life, manipulate them at will, and spread the results throughout nature on a massive scale. But if one should, I wouldn't choose an organization with Monsanto's characteristics for the role.

A question of ethics

My most fundamental reason for viewing Monsanto's corporate direction with concern is ethical. It is one I can hardly articulate, because it's the philosophical, gutlevel instinct that made me an organic grower in the first place. It is so hard to talk about worldviews. It's like trying to see the lenses of one's own eyes, trying to bite one's own teeth, trying to explain one's language without using that language. It has to do with what is proper and improper for people to do to other living things.

But here's the best I can do in expressing where I'm coming from. I love science and rationality but I hate the basic premises of the industrial revolution. Donald Worster, in his 1988



Grain Elevator No. 3, 1926, by Werner Drewes

book, *The Ends of the Earth*, describes those premises this way:

"The capitalists ... promised that, through the technological domination of the earth, they could deliver a more fair, rational, efficient and productive life for everyone. ... People must ... think constantly in terms of making money. They must regard everything around them — the land, its natural resources, their own labor — as potential commodities that might fetch a profit in the market. They must demand the right to produce, buy and sell those commodities without outside regulation or interference."

All agriculture involves forcing human will onto natural ecosystems. But organic agriculture is at least about doing so from a position of respect for what nature does and how it does it. It's about learning from nature, dancing in harmony with it; using natural forces with gratitude and for generous purposes, to further the health of people and ecosystems. At least so far, organic growing is based on interaction, caution, humility. [N.B. The globalization of organic agriculture, however, is posing concerns. See "Organic Incorporated," in Whole Earth No. 92.]

Chemical agriculture, monoculture, big-time farming, global markets, money calculated in millions and billions, all that stuff looks like hubris, greed, way too much power administered with way too much self-confidence despite a historic trail of grievous damage to people and to nature. Genetic engineering looks like more of the same, ratcheted up one more step in power, and therefore in danger.

Good intentions, reckless system The funny thing is, the people who do it, in my experience, aren't greedy, aren't reckless, aren't arrogant. When I asked my Monsanto friend whether, in engineering his potato, he felt like he was playing God, he smiled — he's a gentle person — and said, no, it just felt like he was going to the lab and working on challenging scientific puzzles. I believe him; that's his passion, a passion I once shared, and one that can indeed serve generous purposes, furthering the health of people and ecosystems.

But as we have learned over and over (as science should have learned from the atomic bomb, if nothing else), one has to be aware of the purposes, overt and latent, of the larger systems within which one works. Monsanto isn't uniquely bad, as its critics claim it to be. The system of which it's a part industrialism, capitalism — isn't uniquely bad either. (Consider, as we all said in the Cold War days, the alternative.) But the industrial/corporate system is, we all know, reckless, proud, driven by a never-satisfied need for more, more, more and apparently unable to learn from its historic trail of

This kind of extreme failure even to hear an argument, much less process it, alerts me that this is not a rational discussion at all, not on either side, mine either. This is a paradigm gap, a worldview argument, a disagreement about morals and values and the deepest, most fundamental assumptions about how the world works. grievous damage to people and to nature.

"I guess you don't care if people starve," said a biologist I deeply respect, an environmental hero, who is fervently in favor of genetic engineering. He constantly accuses me of wanting to go back to the low-yield, tinyfarm agriculture of a century ago.

A paradigm gap

I tell the genetic-engineering proponents that there are alternatives to industrial agriculture, with its monocultures generating the hordes of pests that necessitate the pesticides. I show them data from organic farms getting yields as good as their chemical-doused neighbors. I point out that there is already enough food to feed the world, that hunger could be ended by sharing that food, and/or by sharing technologies that can raise lots of food without poisoning the earth and without invading the genomes that nature has evolved. I don't think this information even reaches their auditory nerves, much less their brains.

This kind of extreme failure even to hear an argument, much less process it, alerts me that this is not a rational discussion at all, not on either side, mine either. This is a paradigm gap, a worldview argument, a disagreement about morals and values and the deepest, most fundamental assumptions about how the world works.

Some people of my worldview would ban genetic engineering altogether as an act of hubris as extreme and dangerous as the development of the atomic bomb. I wouldn't go that far. Heck, I was trained as a molecular biologist. I think this is cool science, which could lead us to understand so much; to have, within my worldview, even deeper respect for the biosphere in which, somehow, staggeringly, all life evolved including (and not ending with) one

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Seven reasons for rejecting a potato

"Why won't you grow my potatoes?" a puzzled Monsanto scientist asked me. His bioengineered potatoes carry a gene spliced in from a bacterium called Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt), which parasitizes a number of insect larvae. One strain of Bt is particularly fond of the relentless Colorado potato beetle.

In nature, Bt lurks in the soil and gets splashed up onto, say, potato leaves. If a beetle grub ingests Bt while chomping on a leaf, the bacterium multiplies in its gut. Within hours, thousands of Bt offspring have produced a specific toxin that kills the grub. Then the bacteria, having feasted on the grub's dissolved innards, pour out of its body. Not pretty, just nature at work. A potato beetle is Bt's way of making more Bt.

Maybe once or twice a growing season, organic farmers like me spray Bt to control potato beetles if grubs get out of hand — which they don't always do, because we never plant acres and acres of continuous potatoes. We rotate crops to keep these pests from building up. We don't need much Bt, especially since it's alive; once we've applied it, it reproduces itself for a while, until it can't find any more grubs.

Now comes Monsanto, snipping out the gene that tells Bt how to make that specific beetle toxin and sticking that gene into the Russet Burbank potato, the most widely grown potato in the world, the one that supplies all the fast-food fries. The spliced potato, trademarked NewLeaf, makes the toxin constantly in small amounts in every one of its cells.

My friend at Monsanto honestly sees this potato as a wonderful advance, saving organic farmers the trouble of spraying Bt and conventional farmers the danger of spraying beetle-cides. He can't understand why I wouldn't welcome it with praise and rejoicing and use it on my organic farm.

Sigh. The reasons seem so obvious to me. In order of increasing seriousness they are:

1. FOOD SAFETY. When I spray Bt on my potatoes, its poison gets made only within the guts of beetle grubs. If it gets out onto the potato leaves when the grubs die and dissolve, it quickly washes away. The NewLeaf potato bears the toxin in every cell, even in the tubers we eat. We can't wash it out. The entire plant is a pesticide.

2. COMPANY GOOFS. Monsanto revealed recently (and quietly) that huge quantities of another of its biotech prod-

Biotech companies love to talk about feeding the world, but their products must pay off in a market that measures dollar demand, not human need.

ucts, a gene-spliced canola seed, had been mistakenly sold with the wrong gene in it, one that had not been tested or licensed. The problem here is not that companies make mistakes — of course they do — and not that the unlicensed canola gene was necessarily dangerous. The problem is that genetic engineering, like nuclear power, is not an arena where we want mistakes to be made.

3. PEST RESISTANCE. Whenever a pest comes in contact with a poison, it's possible that a few members of its fastbreeding horde can survive, because they bear some genetic trait that allows them to detoxify, avoid, or defuse the poison. Those resistant pests are the ones that live to produce the next generation. The Colorado potato beetle is second only to the green peach aphid in its acquired resistance to hard-core pesticides. But it has never developed resistance to Bt. Organic farmers haven't blown Bt's cover, because they use it spottily and on the surface of the leaves.

But fields of potatoes carrying Bt toxin inside every leaf during the whole growing season are something new under the sun. I can't imagine a more perfect setup to select for resistance. The Diamondback moth, for instance, is already resistant to Bt's gut assaults. Experts, including Monsanto's own, estimate it will take five to 10 years before the NewLeaf potato will destroy both its own effectiveness and that of a good organic-crop-protection tool as well.

You might wonder why Monsanto would develop a product that is almost certain to render itself impotent. I wondered too, until I came across this quote from a company spokesman: "Resistance is unlikely to happen within five years, and within that time frame we'll offer new technology that will further reduce the likelihood of resistance." Don't worry. We'll destroy nature's tool for beetle control, but you can always come to us for a new one. It will even be a better one. Trust us.

4. FURTHER CONSEQUENCES IN NATURE. In 1996, Danish scientists watched a gene for herbicide resistance in canola jump the farm fence to enter one of canola's wild relatives. Will the ability to make beetle toxin suddenly show up in, say, wild nightshade, which is a relative of the potato? Or could resistant beetles, no longer held in check by Bt, become more effective pests to other members of the nightshade family

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(which includes tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants)?

Another possibility is that cut-andpaste genes will travel via the very viruses that the gene splicers use to do their work. Viruses are routinely used as carriers to insert genes into the target cell of the potato or sheep or whatever. Wild viruses may—no one knows—be more likely to pick up a transplanted gene than a native gene. If a cut-and-paste gene has been engineered to fight a virus, that virus (if the gene fails to destroy it) or another one could acquire and spread the gene.

And then there's the already demonstrated food-chain effect. Aphids in Scotland ate Bt potatoes; when the "good guys"—lacewings and ladybugs — ate the aphids, they died from gut upset.

Once a gene has been loosed, it's way beyond our recall or can only be recalled through a massively expensive mobilization of people and resources (think of the smallpox virus).

5. "JUNK" DNA. Genetic technology sounds like a precise science, but in fact it's primitive and messy. It doesn't matter whether plants are sexually crossed; or seeds are radiated or chemically induced to mutate; or genes are inserted into cell tissue; or chromosomes are shot with new genes by a micro-gun. No one is quite sure where the genes will go, how they will glom on to the chromosome, what sequences of "junk" DNA (meaning DNA that scientists can't see any use for) may come along with the desirable genes, or how the "junk" DNA may influence the cell. What outcomes might there be from this fairly random and uncontrolled process? No one - no scientist, no regulator, no activist hyping these threats, no gene-splicer making light of them - really has the slightest idea.

6. BREAKING THE SPECIES BAR-

RIER. Nature doesn't normally cut and paste single genes from bacteria to potatoes, toads to petunias, people to sheep. Though the DNA of a sunflower is essentially made of the same stuff as that of a chimpanzee, numerous physical, behavioral, and biological barriers prevent their specific genes from creeping, swimming, or leaping into each other's DNA. Contrary to the claims of biotech companies and consistent with the intuition of everyone else, the various critters within which nature packages various lengths and combinations of DNA do have some boundaries, which presumably have some evolutionary value. Moving single genes from any species to any other is not just a small extension of the age-old human practice of breeding roses or cattle. It's a whole new twist.

Moving single genes from any species to any other is not just a small extension of the age-old human practice of breeding roses or cattle. It's a whole new twist.

7. THEPACE AND THE SELECTION MECHANISM. For several billion years evolution has proceeded in fits and starts, but generally slowly. In the the hands of biotechnicians, farmers and breeders, the rate of evolution speeds up enormously, and species are selected by their ability to fit not into nature, but into markets.

From a systems point of view these are two of the most profound interventions one can make in a system. Speeding up the rate of change relative to the rate of corrective feedback means a system can't manage itself, nor can it be managed. If there are terrible consequences from even one of our imaginative gene- tinkerings, we are unlikely to find out about it in time to cleanse nature of our mistake. We are not helping this problem by conducting our genetic-manipulation experiments in corporate secrecy, overseen by underfunded and politically compromised regulatory agencies, nor by putting these corporations under such stress from stock-market expectations that they must roll out their experiments by the millions of acres over just a few years.

Even more profound than destabilizing a system by changing it faster than its feedback mechanisms can function is derailing it by setting an entirely different goal around which those feedback mechanisms can "true." For billions of years nature selected species survival according to the ability to thrive and reproduce in the physical environment and in the presence of all neighboring species. For 10,000 years, farmers have selected for what can be manipulated by people in order to feed people. Now the criterion is what can be patented and sold in huge, global-market quantities.

Biotech companies love to talk about feeding the world, but their products must pay off in a market that measures dollar demand, not human need. By far the greatest effort has gone into the potato that makes fast-food fries, not the yam grown by folks with no cash. The corn that feeds America's pigs and chickens, not the dryland millet that feeds Africa's children. The diseases of the rich, not the plagues of the poor. There is some public funding and corporate charity directed toward gene manipulations that might conceivably help feed the world, but the vast majority of minds and bucks are working on caffeine-free coffee beans, designer tomatoes, seedless watermelons. They always will, if the market is the guide.

— Donella H. Meadows

critter that actually has the ability to begin to understand the very genetic, evolutionary processes that produced its own species.

I wouldn't stop genomic and tissue-culture science. I would probably, with great dare, go along with some commercial applications of the science. I can't see any problem, for example, with the use of gene-spliced bacteria in vats, turning out inexpensive insulin for diabetics — though I'd want to know how the spent vats are emptied into nature. Some day I would hope gene-repair therapies could ease a lot of human suffering. I would hope we would never use this technology to design our kids or our crops.

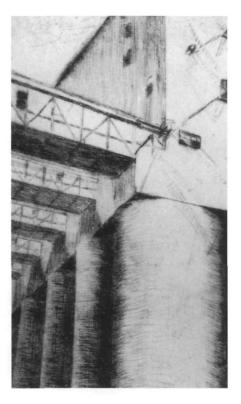
The whole public and nothing but

But I shouldn't be the one to choose; that's my main point. Nor should poor Monsanto. Nor should the frightened Monsanto- demonizers.

Gene-manipulation decisions are more than present-day life or death; they are long-term-future life or death — they determine the course of evolution. The decisions (including "ownership" of the genes and/or technologies) should be firmly in the hands of the most knowledgeable and ethical people we can find. For that role I nominate the public, the whole public, and nothing but the public.

Should you think the public an inadequate safeguard, let me share some genetic-technology guidelines recently formulated by a group selected to represent "average" Australian citizens:

1. Regulation should be developed by a Gene Technology Organization (GTO), a statutory authority with well-balanced representation and commercially significant sanctions. Its deliberations should be public.



2. No new commercial releases or unlabeled importation of genetically modified foods (either whole or processed) should be permitted until a) the GTO is in place, b) a clear Australian position on the Biosafety Protocol has been established, and c) an all-encompassing labelling system has been introduced.

3. Decisions by any regulatory body should take into account more than just science. The overriding principles when drafting legislation should be the environment and the physical, mental, and social health of individuals.

4. Australia should support a regulated and precautionary approach to trade in relation to GMOs [Genetically Modified Organisms].

5. Environment and Health Departments should develop strategies to prepare for any health or environmental problems from GMOs — for example, an adverse-reactions register. 6. Independent assessment of the viability and impacts of choosing non-GMO options should be carried out, and this information communicated to the public.

7. Ethicists should be included in all GMO policy-making.

8. There should be an inquiry by the ACCC (Consumer and Competition Commission) into multinational monopolies in the food industry.

9. Government should embrace a commitment to bring together all stakeholders to reach agreement on mutually beneficial solutions, rather than the way different interests now compete to lobby government.

I'd suggest even stronger safeguards, at least until my own government finds its way back from plutocracy to democracy, but I consider that Australian draft a better start than anything I've heard from Monsanto, or from anyone else.

WISHING YOU HAD HELD ON TO THAT OLD ISSUE OF THE WITNESS?

The topics explored in the pages of *The Witness* seldom go out of date. And study groups interested in a particular issue are likely to find a number of back issues which pertain.We still have copies available for most back issues. To order, send a check for \$3 per copy ordered to *The Witness*, 7000 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210-2872. To charge your back issue to Visa or Mastercard, call (313) 841-1967, or fax (313) 841-1956.

What's in the choice of a Thanksgiving turkey?

by Jane Lamb

o "talk turkey," says one dictionary definition, is to speak frankly; to get down to business. Turkey in this country is certainly business, in a big way. About 300 million turkeys are raised in the U.S. each year, according to the National Turkey Federation (NTF). But are they all alike? A quick perusal of the poultry cases at the supermarket reveals a variety of choices and prices to ponder. A stop at the local health food store or farmers' market adds further possibilities to the list. Which turkey is the best to buy for your Thanksgiving table and why?

The National Turkey Federation represents for the most part the huge "conventional" producers who process as many as 70,000 birds per day for an average 99 cents per pound. Frozen supermarket turkeys average 10 cents less per pound than fresh. The holiday season brings supermarket turkeys down to as low as 59 cents — actually a loss leader that is made up for by the price of stove-top stuffing, cranberries and all the rest of the special occasion goodies. These prices are the result, the NTF points out, of "technical advances in turkey genetics, production and processing [which] have created a turkey that produces a pound of meat while using a smaller amount of feed and in less time, than most other domestic

meat-producing animals." Modern turkeys are bred to have more breast meat and meatier thighs than their wild ancestors.

On the other end of the scale are the small, local growers of "free-range" turkeys (birds that spend much of their life in outdoor pastures), costing \$1.85 and more per pound. Interestingly, the holiday, free-range turkey prices go up at the health food store, a basic, supply-and-demand factor. As nutrition-

The term "no hormones added" cannot be used on a label unless it also states that federal law prohibits the use of hormones. However, antibiotics, which are allowed, are widely used as growth promoters.

and-environment-conscious consumers are proving more and more willing to pay the extra price for "organic" vittles, it is not surprising that the market for free-range, locally grown turkeys (and chickens) is keeping pace. Ounce per ounce, free-range birds have 2 percent more breast meat than conventional turkeys and 20 percent less fat, according to *The Green Guide* (published by Mothers and Others, New York, N.Y.). Turkeys develop their frames first and put on weight toward the end of their short lives — six to eight months, depending on the breed. Free-range turkeys are bred to grow for the longer period and have more time to develop meat after their bone structure is established.

Few "organic" turkeys

Let it be said at the outset: Verv few free-range turkeys are organically raised, for a number of reasons. On the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been wrestling with a national standard accurately defining the term "organic" since Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990. At present, the USDA will permit the use of the term "organic" on the label of a meat or poultry product only if it is accompanied by a factual statement that the product has been "certified organic" by a certifying entity other than the USDA. Definitions vary from state to state, but those of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), one of the leaders in the quest for a national standard, are among the most comprehensive.

Bob Neal raises close to 4,000 birds a year at The Turkey Farm in New Sharon, Me., the only large producer of 100-percent free-range turkeys in the state. He cites two major barriers to MOFGA "organic" certification. First, organically grown feed is practically unavailable and definitely not at a costeffective price. In order to survive, turkey poults (chicks) must be protected from the parasite coccidiosis. The only preventions MOFGA will allow is vaccination of individual birds by a veterinarian or raising turkeys on wire so they can't pick up the disease from the ground.

"No vet in Maine will do it," Neal says, "and raising turkeys on wire damages their legs. They develop weak joints and that becomes an animal welfare question." He treats his young birds

Jane Lamb is a freelance writer in Brunswick, Me. She is a regular contributor to *Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener* and a contributing editor of *Down East* magazine.

with Aprolium, a non-antibiotic parasiticide, to prevent coccidiosis, but they receive no other medication, and only drink unchlorinated water.

"I don't think we know much about chlorine, only that it's a very strong chemical," he says.

But it's not impossible to obtain an organically raised turkey if you live in the right place. Charlotte Young and Jim Baranski may be typical of dedicated growers in other states. They raise about 50 MOFGA-certified turkeys a season (as well as chickens and

laying hens) at Shalom Farm in Franklin, Me. They meet the standards, Young explains, by feeding only organic grain (from Vermont Organic Grain Co.) and using no medication, even for coccidiosis. Young learned from a veterinarian that coccidiosis is always present to some degree on a farm and to wipe it out completely prevents animals from developing resistance. Turkeys are the most difficult

birds to get started, but absolute monitoring of temperature before they are feathered out and ready to go outdoors is more important than medication, she has found. Turkey mortality rate is higher than for other birds, but "we figure it into our business plan," she says. Whole certified organic turkeys, all sold locally, go for \$2.25 per pound at the farm and \$2.80 per pound at the nearby Hancock County Organic Grow-

ers Cooperative.

'Natural'

"Natural" is another term found on many turkey labels. The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) stipulates that to be labeled "natural" the product contain no artificial ingredient or added color and be only minimally processed, in a way that does not fundamentally alter the raw product. The use of antibiotics is covered under a separate provision: "The term 'no antibiotics added' may be used on labels ... if sufficient documentation is

Growth hormones and feed additives

"Growth hormones" raises a red flag in the minds of many consumers. The USDA prohibits the use of growth hormones in raising poultry. The term "no hormones added" cannot be used on a label unless it also states that federal law prohibits the use of hormones. However, antibiotics, which are allowed, are widely used as growth promoters. "These subtherapeutic doses of antibiotics are suspected of being a major cause of antibiotic resistance,"



Diane Schivera, a technical assistant for MOFGA, has recently argued in "Petition to Preserve the Usefulness of Antibiotics" (Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener, 9-11/ 99). Bacteria which survive antibiotic treatment for disease are the fitter strains and quickly proliferate, rendering that antibiotic ineffectual.

Bob Neal of The Turkey Farm in New Sharon, Me., is Maine's largest producer of freerange turkeys. Here a shopper tries a sample of marinated turkey cutlet at his booth at the Brunswick Farmers' Market. Jane Lamb

"One strain of salmonella, for

provided by the producer." The NFT points out that when FDA-approved antibiotics are used, a withdrawal period is required before the turkey can be slaughtered. FSIS monitors the administration of antibiotics and randomly tests flocks for residues.

"Therefore, consumers can be assured that turkeys do not contain antibiotic residues when they go to market," their literature says. example, is resistant to five of the strongest antibiotics used to treat humans," Shivera points out. England and Denmark have banned the agricultural use of antibiotics used in humans as growth promoters. Shady Brook Farms, a Virginia fresh turkey producer that markets under their own name in the New England supermarket chain, Shop 'n Save (Hannaford Bros.), however, openly states that they add "growth promotants" to feed and only add antibiotics when necessary due to illness.

Turkeys labeled "self-basted" have been injected with a solution containing butter or other edible fat, broth, stock or water, spices and flavor enhancers. The label must include a statement identifying the total quantity and common name of all such ingredients.

Fresh vs. frozen

The USDA has very strict temperature requirements for fresh and frozen birds. To be designated "fresh," the turkey's internal temperature can never have been below 26 F. (This accounts for the ice crystals sometimes found in "fresh" turkeys.) Between 26 F and 0 F the turkey must be labeled "hard-chilled" or "previously hard-chilled." Frozen turkeys must be kept at a constant 0 F or below from the time of slaughter until purchased by the consumer. Frozen turkeys will keep in the freezer for up to 12 months. Hard-chilled birds should be treated the same way as fresh, according to package directions.

Turkeys are what they eat

Turkeys are usually fed a balanced diet of corn and soybean meal with a standard supplement of vitamins and minerals. (Free-range turkeys get the added benefit of micronutrients in the green vegetation they forage in the field. A common practice is to move turkeys from pasture to pasture, like other livestock in a "rotational grazing" program.) Feed companies will supply producers with special formulas. Bob Neal favors a more complex diet incorporating five grains: soy for protein, corn for energy and fat, canola meal, alfalfa and barley, and no animal byproducts.

"Animal byproducts" are the viscera from slaughterhouses, processed in rendering operations and added to conventional feed to increase fat and protein content. If they come from nonrelated species such as lamb and beef, they're OK, says Neal, adding that no North American breeder would consider using poultry-byproduct feed. "But my clients won't accept any meat byproducts," he points out. He has to drive to Connecticut for the feed that meets nutritional requirements of the British United Turkey of America, a bird bred especially for free-range culture.

Bioregionalists frequently point out the costs to consumer and environment of the long haul for both feed and product and the many advantages of almost anything locally produced. Turkey farm owner Bob Neal delivers his free-range turkeys to 23 stores and sells weekly at the Brunswick Farmers Market, all within a 90-mile radius.

Turkeys raised 'the old-fashioned way'

Ken Charles, fourth-generation owner of the Charles Poultry Company in Lancaster, Pa., raises 3,000 free-range turkeys a year for the holiday market "the old-fashioned way," he says. "No antibiotics, no animal byproducts, no chemicals in the water and no electricity." Members of the Dunkards (Church of the Brethren), "somewhere between Amish and Mennonite," he and his family carry on the business established by his grandfather in the late 1800s, raising and processing poultry in their modern, USDA-approved and inspected plant. "Our turkeys are hand-fed," he says. "They're very selective eaters. Some pick out the corn, some pick out the soybeans. They feed better in the sun, but they can eat in the shade if they want to. We're very proud to raise turkeys to the highest standard. We market a very special bird," a local breed that's a family secret. Charles trucks his turkeys to supermarkets large and small in the New York City area, where regular customers reserve 30 to 40 percent of the birds and the rest are "up for grabs."

But not all free-range turkeys are produced on small farms. At Misty Knoll Farm in Fairfax, Vt., John Palmer raises 20,000 free-range turkeys (and many more chickens) a year, using no antibiotics or animal byproducts, only corn, soy, vitamins and minerals. He grows his own organic grain, but not enough for his needs, he says. Misty Knoll sells fresh turkeys from June through January, frozen turkeys the rest of the year. About 20 percent are sold locally. A few are shipped as far as California and Texas, but the biggest volume goes to New England and New York markets. Palmer provides fresh turkeys for another big New England supermarket chain, Shaw's.

Humane treatment?

The NTF is quick to point out that humane treatment of turkeys is critical to the profitability of the industry. "Research shows that birds subjected to stress such as atmospheric conditions, crowding, disease and heat do not gain as much weight or utilize feed as efficiently as their less stressed counterparts." (There's a widespread belief, however, that producers who take a factory farm approach to raising turkeys may give the birds something like valium to relieve stress, though we couldn't confirm this.)

The NFT also states that turkeys

raised by its members are housed in scientifically designed, environmentally controlled barns with room to roam and free access to water, noting that "The National Turkey Federation does not condone mistreatment of turkeys."

Bob Neal notes that his free-range turkeys, which live in a colder climate zone than most, prefer to be outdoors, and only come inside during heavy snow and ice storms.

"They have the choice and they stay outside," he says.

Processing the birds

"The turkey industry provides stable employment for thousands of Americans," says the NFT. "The jobs pay workers with limited education an above-minimum wage and in many cases a full range of employee benefits, including health care. Although modern turkey processing plants are becoming increasingly mechanized, they still depend on skilled labor ... Plant operators value their staffs and strive to create and maintain a clean, safe, [work] environment."

Despite such well-documented cases of serious health and safety violations as those committed by the DeCoster Egg Farms in Turner, Me., a case which is still unresolved, the NFT adds that the poultry industry has for 30 years been proactive in workplace safety, with safety training, ergonomically designed work stations and medical intervention programs.

Shady Brook Farms in Dayton, Va., (more generous with information than other big producers) reports that they employ 1,600 local people in their production plant. "We offer an excellent package of wages and benefits ... health insurance, life insurance, dental and optical insurance, as well as a retirement plan. [We] believe in lifelong learning and we offer 100 percent tuition reimbursement to any employee who wishes to go to college [as well as] free GED and ESL classes to interested employees."

Shady Brook adds that the turkeys are grown on farms in the Shenandoah Valley within 30 to 40 miles of the processing plant. Individual farmers may hire workers "under their own business arrangement."

At Misty Knoll, John Palmer works with his partner, Rob Litch and three full-time employees. Part-time workers, some of them documented migrants from Jamaica, come to Misty Knoll after the Vermont apple-picking season. "They all have valid green cards and are trained by the Vermont Department of Employment. We have approved living conditions and a guaranteed wage per hour, in the \$7 range, more than the minimum."

Palmer added that USDA inspectors examine every bird processed at Misty Knoll, live and again after slaughter. While this seems within reason for a producer of 20,000 birds a year, it's rather beyond credibility for a company that handles "70,000 to 80,000 birds per day at Carolina Turkerys," in "the world's largest processing plant under one roof," as was proudly — and innocently — revealed by an employee, even if one drops a zero off the figure to get a more conservative 7,000 to 8,000.

Bioregional issues

Bioregionalists frequently point out the costs to consumer and environment of the long haul for both feed and product and the many advantages of almost anything locally produced. Bob Neal, who is licensed to sell only within Maine, delivers to 23 stores and sells weekly at the Brunswick Farmers Market, all within a 90-mile radius. He has to drive to a Cargill outlet in Connecticut at a \$20-per-ton saving over a closer mill in Vermont to pick up his special feed and makes a 25-hour round trip to Carlisle, Pa. where the price of poults is half that of a nearby New Hampshire supplier, cost-effective though exhausting trips. Shaw's fresh turkeys travel about 200 miles from Vermont to their Massachusetts distribution point and their house label 600 miles from North Carolina. Hannaford's fresh turkeys come 600 miles from Virginia to their Scarborough, Me., warehouse and their frozen ones about 850 miles from the Midwest. This does not include the distances to both chains' retail stores throughout New England. It's about 200 miles from Ken Charles's farm in Lancaster, Pa., to New York City.

As for the other big environmental question, the National Turkey Federation cites 90 percent of Virginia poultry growers in a "voluntary nutrient management plan" (which seems to refer to the prevention of manure runoff into streams and groundwater) and notes that the poultry industry is leading the National Poultry Environmental Dialogue with the USDA Environmental Protection Agency to "develop nationwide pollution control strategies for poultry product." Nothing is said about the disposal of offal (the viscera from slaughtered birds).

Bob Neal composts manure and bedding for his own gardens; offal goes to Living Acres, a nearby compost plant. Misty Knoll composts manure on site to use on their own fields. Viscera goes to a rendering plant in Canada (Fairfax, Vt. is not far from the border) where it is cooked down and used in pet foods and cosmetics.

So what's in the choice of a Thanksgiving turkey? Perhaps, with all the options consumers face and the economic and environmental impact they represent — it is more important to start talking turkey than ever before.

Plumbing Thanksgiving's 'Untold Story'

by Anne Scheibner

have recently returned to live in southeastern Connecticut where I grew up and where the English colonial ancestors on my mother's side of my family lived. At the local Episcopal church one of my fellow communicants is Elizabeth Theobald. She is Cherokee on her mother's side of her family and recently moved to this area to become Director of Public Programs for the newly opened Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. Recently we talked about the perspectives we had each inherited about Thanksgiving.

"For native people, every day is a day of thanksgiving," Theobald said. "There are 500 different tribal groups within the U.S. and each one has its own special and unique traditions of celebration. But there is a basic underlying belief that everything is a gift. Giving thanks for everything is simply part of daily life: for water, air, the earth, animals and plants, stars and all living and non-living things including the landscape; for having stories to tell and a family to tell them to. So the idea of Thanksgiving is not a day of specific observance. It is a sense of cultural and personal identity for native people. The gifts of the land are not natural resources, i.e. things to be used or consumed. The Wampanoag's sharing their knowledge of how to raise corn was not just a 'friendly gesture'; it was a sharing of spirituality."

My own assumption about the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving was that, of course, it was the first on this continent. It never occurred to me that native people had been celebrating harvest festivals for thousands of years before the Europeans came and did not need European help in knowing how to give thanks.

Theobold also noted that Thanksgiving is a popular "Indian time" for us non-native people.

"For three weeks in November, the museum is packed with school tours. It represents the same frustration for us that I've heard a number of black people express about non-black people designating one month as 'Black History Month,' as if that history weren't real and ongoing all year. It's a real dilemma for those of us

How many school children know the reason Squanto knew English?

involved in education: Do we allow ourselves to resent the relegating of Native Americans to background for the Pilgrims and all the stereotypes and myths that go with the non-native story of the 'First Thanksgiving' or do we see the interest during this month as an opportunity to educate?"

Although the gathering at Plymouth may actually have been for treaty making, it had the markings of a harvest festival. Thanksgiving for the Pilgrims and Puritans was typically a religious observance occasioned by specific difficulties or events and marked by prayer and fasting. As one colonist's letter describing a Thanksgiving Day feast during the Revolutionary War mentions, Grandmother Smith on that occasion "did her best to persuade us that it would be better to make it a Day of Fasting & Prayer in view of the Wickedness of our Friends & the Vileness of our Enemies."

Given the text book illustrations I grew

up with, it never occurred to me that Europeans were in the minority at that 1621 gathering in Plymouth. Massasoit, Sachem of the local Wampanoag tribe, brought 90 braves to that event; the ravages of disease during the winter of 1620-21 had left not more than 50 Pilgrims.

The Pilgrims' contribution to the feast owed great thanks to Squanto, the Wampanoag who befriended them and taught them how to grow the corn and fish and forage. What school child does not know the name of Squanto and his role in aiding the inherently superior European settlers to overcome initial hardships and adversity? Racism needs to be carefully taught and this cameo appearance by Squanto has been a prime lesson in that curriculum.

How many school children know the reason Squanto knew English? I certainly never knew that in 1615 he and 26 other Pawtuxet (the Wampanoag name for Plymouth) and Nauset Indians were taken by the English Captain Thomas Hunt and sold into slavery in Malaga, Spain. Squanto subsequently escaped to England and made his way back to Pawtuxet six months before the Pilgrims arrived only to find his people wiped out by the smallpox which Captain Hunt's vessel had also brought. Slavery, of course, was something that I was brought up to believe was the problem of the South and was what gave the North its great moral advantage in the Civil War. It is part of the Untold Story.

It is also part of the Untold Story that Plymouth is where the head of Massasoit's son, Metacom, called by the English "King Philip," was brought and placed on a stake for public display following the 1675 conflict known by the victors as King Philip's War. Jill Lepore's 1998 book, *The Name of War*, explores the meaning of the conflict itself, the identity issues at stake on both sides and the ways in which the memory of the struggle was used even in the 19th

Anne Scheibner is an artist and economic justice activist living in Connecticut. Artist Mary Beckman lives in Boulder, Colo.

century to justify continued fear of native people and their continuing internment and removal.

I grew up within five miles of the site of the killing of 700 Pequot men, women and children by colonial troops in 1637. The occasion was the Green Corn Ceremony thanksgiving festival — Schemitzun now a public annual festival under the sponsorship of the Mashantucket Pequots. To commemorate this "victory over the enemy" in 1637, the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony proclaimed the first official "Thanksgiving Day" which was

then celebrated by New England colonists for the next hundred years.

The current fourth-Thursday-in-November model of an urbanized and consumer-oriented national holiday has lost both its harvest festival core and its religious import, except for the sparsely attended local ecumenical services which still seem mandatory. It is still a day for feasting, although as fewer and fewer people know how to cook for four, let alone for 40, it is not the family gathering it was. But

it is the busiest airport day of the year and I suspect that has to do with the memory of "home" as being central to economic as well as emotional life. The homes the English colonists established were farms and therefore centers of local economic life. The New England landscape that is so central to my sense of beauty and identity — the stone walls and meadows which destroyed the native people's way of life, introducing ideas of bounded ownership and domesticated herds of animals — is now threatened by new economic forces of urban sprawl and housing developments. Stereotypes are debilitating to both sides. But as one of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum's resource papers points out, it scarcely does any good to have the stereotypes of ignorant, naked savages replaced by ones of brutal, greedy whites. Our children need better options from us than that. But it is hard. As Elizabeth Theobald pointed out to me, the concept of grace and the tradition of giving thanks in both native and Christian traditions should be a point of possible mutual understanding and companionship.

One of the pieces in Thanksgiving: A

Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636 and settled in the area which he named Providence, Rhode Island. I remember Roger Williams as being persecuted for his religion and as a representative of the struggle for religious freedom. What I didn't know was that when Williams arrived in the Bay area, he preached on two major themes: the separation of church and state and the invalidity of the king's patent to seize land. Both Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay rejected his insistence that just title could be had only by buying the land directly from the Indians. Awiakta sees Roger Wil-

> liams as a companion and peacemaker in those difficult days and someone who earned the trust of the Narragansett from whom the Rhode Island colony purchased land. The fact that he was doing this at the time of the Pequot War indicates the deeper tragedy that Europeans could have been companions on life's journey rather than conquerors and establishers of a new economic and social order.

The hope, vision and commitment to work toward relationships based on just stewardship of the land as our common responsi-

bility to God and our mutual care for the local community is something for which I can be most thankful, although I have come to realize how resistant I am even to naming the history which so complicates the mythic and racist views of my own identity with which I grew up. Beginning to learn and talk about the Untold Story and the traditional native worldview, with which I find much to identify, has been difficult but necessary for me as someone who wants to be part of rebuilding a sustainable economy and community in the place which I, too, call home. TW

The Guardians by Mary Beckman

Native Perspective (Oyate, Berkeley, 1995, 1998) which Theobald's staff gave me to help make up for my enormous cultural deprivation and lack of knowledge includes an excerpt from Marilou Awiakta's book *Selu: Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom*. Awiakta (Cherokee) describes two attitudes toward Native people that were evident during colonial times. One was that of companion, "a desire to coexist peacefully, as beans and squash do with corn. The other was the attitude of use and consume, as lethal to the concept of democracy as the corn borer is to the grain."

Roger Williams was banished from the



Report from Iraq

by David Smith-Ferri

n July 18, 1999, with the summer sun high and hot overhead, Zaineb and her husband, Jamal, left their seven daughters in the care of a neighbor, climbed into their cranky pickup truck, and clattered 40 kilometers through the Iraqi desert to Najaf, a town 125 miles south of Baghdad in the so-called "southern no-fly zone." At the hospital there, a sonogram showed Zaineb was pregnant with a boy. A boy! Overjoyed, the couple chose to visit a relative before returning home. But a half hour later, on a remote stretch of road, a bomb from a U.S. fighter plane landed near their truck, instantly killing Zaineb, Jamal, and their unborn child, and ending their dream.

Four days afterward, as part of a Voices in the Wilderness delegation, I visited Najaf, stopping first at the hospital to speak with survivors. Among the wounded was a young man to be married the following week, now paralyzed and unable to speak because of shrapnel in his brain. Across the room lay a 7-year-old boy whose right arm was severed by the explosion.

What do you say to a child who has just had his arm amputated, consequence of a



David Smith-Ferri lives in Ukiah, Calif., where he is a poet and the stay-at-home father of a 7-year-old girl. He travelled to Iraq last July and August with the Chicago-based organization, **Voices in the Wilderness** (773-784-8065; www.nonviolence.org/vitw). missile strike? How does a child make sense of sudden, random violence and its effects, of a foreign menace unleashing hatred from the sky? The personal meanings of some experiences, like slumbering beasts, lie in wait. As Christians, however, standing in the hospital among the wounded, the meanings for us were clear enough: In the very desert where Isaiah preached nonviolence, where Christ healed the lame and bid people of all ages be like children, U.S. bombs are crippling people and destroying childhood.

A religious leader told us that youth in his community want to leave the country. He has always implored them to stay, "but it is getting harder to preach hope."

After visiting the hospital, we drove to the bomb site. A crowd of roughly 150 people, a turbulent sea of faces and gesturing arms, shortly surrounded us. In chaotic fashion, people pointed out bloodstains on the road, took off their shirts or rolled their pant legs to show us bandaged wounds, brought us over 30 separate bomb parts, and repeatedly tried to direct us to houses in the community where other injured people lay recovering. Eventually, the sea parted, and a spokesperson emerged to address us. He asked the same question we had heard expressed, angrily or wearily, at every bedside in the hospital: "Why is your government doing this to us? Why are they killing innocent people?"

Before I travelled to Iraq, I spoke with friends who were concerned for my safety. "Life is cheap there," some of them said. But never once while in Iraq did I feel physically threatened. Iraqis at every level of society treated us with kindness and grace. "Hospitality," a businessman told me, "is in our bones." But standing in the hot sun in Najaf, with a mounting pile of bomb parts nearby and surounded by evidence of a recent missile strike, I did indeed feel expendable, a small creature breathing in the shadow of a monster.

U.S. and British war planes, without U.N. authorization and in blatant violation of international treaties, "patrol" the airspace over roughly two-thirds of Iraq daily. During the first seven months of 1999, there were more than 115 missile strikes, over 40 percent of which resulted in civilian casualties, an assault on the people of Iraq which only rarely flares in the American consciousness. Part of what goes unmentioned in U.S. media reports is the terror these bombings engender. Every day, we were told, residents of Najaf hear U.S. warplanes fly overhead; because there is no pattern to the bombings, they never know if or when bombs will fall, and they are essentially powerless, with no influence over either their government or U.S. policies and actions.

When considering the effects of bombings on people in Iraq, it is critical to remember that they fall on a society which has been subject for over nine years to the most comprehensive embargo in history, an embargo which ensures that people are out of work, malnourished, drinking disease-laden water, and unable to obtain necessary medications. A doctor in Najaf, recognizing our interest in the bombings, cautioned us: "Let's be clear. The bombings are very dramatic, but it's the sanctions that are killing us."

Though poorly publicized, the scale of the ongoing humanitarian tragedy in Iraq

— thousands of young children and old people dying every month, over a million severely malnourished children — has been well-documented from the earliest days of the embargo. It is staggering to see infants and young children dying slowly of curable diseases, slipping like water or sand through their parents' fingers. At each bed in the pediatrics ward of

a hospital in Basra, we sked the doctor for a prognosis, and at every bed he said, "This child will die ... that child will die." Finally, he turned to us sadly, "Look, they're all going to die. They're all going to die."

What is perhaps less welldocumented, however, is the hopelessness which has begun to creep like a red tide, poisoning Iraqi society. This is particularly acute among young people, for whom the future offers no horizon toward which to journey, no star to guide or challenge. We met young adults ---trained as engineers, architects, teachers - working as hotel receptionists, selling cigarettes or kerosene on the street, driving taxis. Hans von Sponeck, head of the U.N. Oil for Food

program, commented on this: "A whole generation of young people tomorrow's leaders — cannot apply their training. This is what we are doing with sanctions, and I cannot accept this ethically." He went on to say that "no one wishes to defend the Iraqi regime, but these young people are innocent of what has happened here."

A religious leader told us that youth in his community want to leave the country. He has always implored them to stay, "but it is getting harder to preach hope."

Parents feel this pain and powerlessness as deeply. Toma, a 35-year-old Kurdish resident of Baghdad, gently exhorted me to speak to Americans about the hardships in his country. "It is not for me," he explained. "I have lived my life. It is for my children." Sattar, the kind and competent Iraqi man who served as our driver, chose not to enter the hospitals we visited: "In our country, the faces of dving children follow us wherever we



Ali Fadil, a 7-year-old Iraqi boy who lost his arm in a U.S./U.K. missile attack in the southern "no-fly zone."

go," he said. "I have two children. I worry every day about their future." At our parting, a businessman with whom I had shared dinner held my hand and implored passionately: "Please tell the American people we are not their enemies. Tell the American people we love them, but we must have our lives back."

For me, the impulse to travel to Iraq arose because I was finding it difficult to sleep at night pondering reports coming out of Iraq, and because of evidence of a direct link between suffering in Iraq and U.S. policies and actions. Many of us are deeply disturbed by the effects on Iraq of U.S./U.N. policies. For those of us who feel called to go to Iraq, it remains possible: Voices in the Wilderness continues to take delegations of Americans regularly. But whether or not we actually travel to Iraq, the bulk of the work of solidarity happens here in the U.S.

My trip made it absolutely clear to me that there are people in Iraq whose very lives depend on our solidarity. Repeat-

> edly. Iragi people asked us to tell their stories, to be a voice for them here in America, where their voice is not heard. In trying to honor this request, there are four simple things we can do. First, we can learn about and enter imaginatively into present-day Iraq, by reading about it, watching videos, listening to speakers and praying. This places us alongside the people, where solidarity begins. Voices in the Wilderness has information about books, videos and speakers, and many reports about life today in Iraq.

> Second, we can share our thoughts, feelings and questions with people around us, perhaps stimulating their interest. Third, we can contact our congressmembers by phone, letter or e-mail. This is crucial.

Let us educate our congressmembers and implore them to support Congressional hearings and formal investigations into the effects of U.S. policies in Iraq, policies which cost taxpayers upwards of \$2 billion annually.

Fourth, in all of this, we can align ourselves with other people in our communities who are working for peace and justice, so that we have support and so that our voices speak together, powerfully. U.S. foreign policy is a hand at the throat of ordinary Iraqi people. I believe it is ordinary American people who will demand that it release the pressure and let go.

Food as the focus of desire

by Judith P. Carpenter

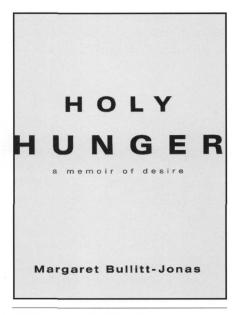
Holy Hunger: A Memoir of Desire by Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (N.Y.: Knopf, 1999).

*oly Hunge*r is a difficult book to write about; the subject is difficult and therefore so is the reading. It is the excruciatingly honest story of the author's secret addiction to binge eating and her eventual journey into recovery through the 12-step program – all set in the context of her painful family story. I grappled with this book, as I have grappled with my own history of food addiction and recovery. I find that I have profound respect for Bullitt-Jonas' courageous effort — and ambivalence about the result.

I believe, though, that this could be a life-saving book for someone still lost in food addiction, and Bullitt-Jonas claims this is her primary purpose in writing. She describes poignant vignettes from her childhood through early adulthood. We come to know about not only countless intimate details of her increasingly desperate and shame-filled binges, but also her emotionally inaccessible and depressed mother and her overbearingly exacting and alcoholic father. Bullitt-Jonas grew up in the context of great economic and educational privilege. Her mother came from wealth. Her father was a professor of 18th-century lit-

review

Judith Carpenter lives in Tenants Harbor, Me., and is part of the Greenfire Retreat House staff and community.



Although Bullitt-Jonas notes that abstinence is an act of resistance to the status quo, there is virtually no analysis of the systemic power dynamics involved.

erature at Harvard and Master of Quincy House there. The family presented a highly successful public face, which shattered when her father was asked to take a leave because of his problem with alcohol and her mother left him. The family's private face remained, however, one of denial, disconnection and demands for perfection.

Bullitt-Jonas began eating early on for solace and escape. As she grew, so did her compulsion. Although she and her siblings each pursued different paths to outward success, she followed most closely in her father's footsteps, ever seeking his elusive love and approval by excelling in academia and entering a Ph.D. program in comparative literature at Harvard. However, the feelings which were disallowed expression in her family and which, despite years of therapy, were continually buried under food, almost killed her.

The turning point — for which the reader feels as eager as the writer --- comes in the aftermath of a family intervention with her father regarding his drinking. In desperation Bullitt-Jonas sought help on her own behalf from the alcohol counselor who had helped with her father. She began to discern the spiritual roots of her problem. In Holy Week, 1982, at age 30, Bullitt-Jonas returned to church after years of absence, committed herself to a therapy group for adult children of alcoholics and prepared to enter Overeaters Anonymous (OA). She learned that emotional and spiritual recovery begins with physical recovery - with ceasing to eat anything other than the food on one's daily food plan no matter what!

As with every recovering addict in a 12step program, Bullitt-Jonas gradually discovered the freedom and joy that comes from being part of a truth-telling community and from abstinence. She also discovered that changing the habitual responses of a lifetime, learning to stay with restlessness and emptiness, and dealing with feelings of anger, shame and loss are incredibly difficult tasks. For Bullitt-Jonas, communicating with her mother was crucial to recovery. She needed to know her mother's inner story in order to know herself. She had to deal with her father's continued drinking and his death in 1985. It took years of inner work before she could write this true and loving story - the only kind of story, she says, that can bring healing to others.

Holy Hunger is indeed "a memoir of desire"-surface desires, desire gone awry, and the underlying desire for fullness of life, for God. Bullitt-Jonas offers many clues to the daily nature of the spiritual

journey, but personally I wanted more than I found. I wanted her fuller story, not just the food and family-of-origin story. I wanted to meet the maturing woman who became a priest, wife, mother, spiritual director, retreat leader, lecturer on spirituality at the Episcopal Divinity School and, most recently, the first woman to be appointed chaplain to the Episcopal Church's House of Bishops. I wanted more of her wisdom than was shared. Perhaps that will come in another book. Perhaps this painfully confessional account had to be written first as part of her own redemptive process. This is an important book. It reveals the underside of a very secretive subject and

underside of a very secretive subject and thus might be of great help to active food addicts or to those who know one. But this is a far-from-perfect book on the subject. Although Bullitt-Jonas notes that abstinence is an act of resistance and challenge to the status quo, there is virtually no analysis of the systemic power dynamics involved. She does not deal with such questions as, What is going on with the food industry that makes our global eating patterns so unhealthy? Why are young girls and women so vulnerable to eating disorders? How much is the mega diet industry fueling preoccupation with weight and the resulting diet/binge addictive cycle?

There is also no analysis of the dynamics of class, race or educational privilege no acknowledgment of how this privilege has protected as well as wounded Bullit-Jonas. OA may be relatively accessible, depending on where one lives, but Bullitt-Jonas seems to have both the time and the money to take advantage of many other resources and opportunities. There may not be a valid hierarchy of pain and suffering in the human experience, but there are systemic hierarchies of oppression which can significantly affect people's access to life-fulfilling possibilities. As a result, I sadly suspect there may be many food addicts who will have trouble finding themselves in Holy Hunger. TW

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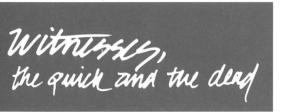
B aldemar Velásquez's decision to organize farmworkers in midwestern fruit and vegetable fields was propelled by one simple ingredient: anger. What has kept him in the struggle is another ingredient he has heartily cultivated in recent years: his Christian faith.

Velásquez, who lives in Toledo, Ohio, is a 52-year-old father of four and the founder of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). The union has 7,000 mostly Spanish-speaking farmworkers picking tomatoes, cherries and peaches in places like Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana. For Velásquez, as for the late Cesar Chavez who organized farmworkers in the western U.S., spiritual matters underpin the struggle made on behalf of others.

"I get my foundation from reflecting on what is written in the scriptures," said Velásquez, who was raised Roman Catholic but in recent years has attended evangelical Christian churches.

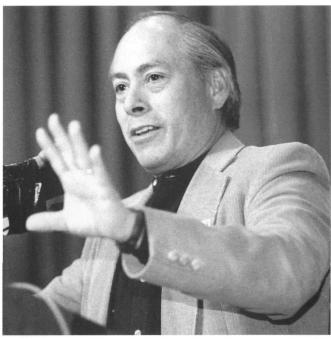
"I believe that our battles in this world, as noted in Ephesians 6:12, are not against flesh and blood but powers and principalities. You see these horror movies where people are possessed. Well, people are possessed with good things or bad things in their hearts. We're engaged in an ideological struggle to make people live up to the lofty philosophies they profess to believe in."

One person Velásquez would like to see living up to professed ideals is Bill Bryan, a man described as a devout Methodist who also happens to be the CEO of



Kate DeSmet is a locked-out *Detroit News* religion writer, <kdesmet@home.com>.

"We're engaged in an ideological struggle to make people live up to the lofty philosophies they profess to believe in."



Baldemar Velásquez

Jim West

Ordained to organize by Kate DeSmet

Mt. Olive Pickle Company in North Carolina. Mt. Olive, the country's second largest pickle company, is FLOC's latest boycott target. The union wants to organize the 5,000 workers who work in difficult and, in some cases, life-threatening circumstances picking cucumbers purchased by Mt. Olive.

The boycott is supported by more than 100 religious denominations and labor groups, including the AFL-CIO. FLOC is also mobilizing activists in cities where Mt. Olive pickles are sold and targeting Mt. Olive's financial structure for "soft spots," as Velásquez puts it.

In many ways this is a classic labor struggle: a wealthy corporation versus struggling workers and union leaders. Bryan says he won't negotiate and calls the FLOC boycott "blackmail." Yet when Velásquez answers back, his tone is hardly classic for such labor battles. Instead, the union leader's response is decidedly evangelical — with an adversarial bite.

"Bill Bryan professes to believe Christian ideas. He also has a vested interest in the seeding, planting and selling of pickles. Many thousands of undocumented Mexicans are working to make that possible. The scriptures, particularly in Leviticus and Numbers, are clear: God watches jealously over the widow, orphans and aliens. God says we are not to exploit, take advantage of, or abuse any of these or we'll answer to him. For the sake of his soul, Bill Bryan has to be reconciled with the workers."

Along with religion, Velásquez learned

early about the power of his own anger. He was angry at how his parents, five brothers and three sisters were treated as farmworkers in the early years of his life. They'd migrated to the Midwest from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas in the late 1950s to pick sugar beets, apples, cherries and potatoes.

"We got stranded in Ohio because we didn't have enough money to go back home," Velásquez said. "We had to borrow money all winter just to eat and then, the next spring, we had to work for free to pay off our debts. We were indentured servants for seven to eight years just to get out of debt. By then I was in high school and I was just so angry about what I saw."

What he saw among fellow farmworkers were the devastating effects of "stoop labor": a mortality rate of 47 years; a high infant mortality rate; belowpoverty wages; child labor; and rodentinfested housing.

In the mid-1960s, as a college student, he came in contact with civil rights and anti-war activists. One summer he volunteered with C.O.R.E. (Congress of Racial Equality), living in a Cleveland tenement building with an African-American activist. One morning the activist asked Velásquez why the tenement's rats didn't bother him. Velásquez replied that "growing up as a farmworker you get used to such things. My brother and I had a game with the rats that used to crawl up the couch when we were trying to sleep. The rat would fall on our blanket and we'd suddenly flip the blanket and see how far the rat would fly."

The black activist looked at Velásquez and said, "Good Lord man, why aren't you doing something for your own people?" Velásquez said he went back to college with "that question and a dark cloud over my head."

The cloud lifted the next summer. He went cherry picking in northern Michigan, spending all his free time with the question, "If I were going to organize me as a farmworker, what would I have to do to convince myself?" He scribbled his ideas down on notepaper at night, and set out to meet other organizers. In 1969, he traveled west and met Chavez of the United Farm Workers union for the first time. When asked his impression of Chavez, Velásquez replied: "I knew that was exactly what I wanted to do."

He went back home and concentrated

Velásquez says he's determined to convince evangelical conservatives to heed the Bible's call for social justice.

on the fertile fields of the Midwest. By 1979, FLOC was officially organized as a union. It was during that time Velásquez and fellow activists made headlines by taking on one of the country's largest corporations: Campbell Soup Co.

FLOC conducted an eight-year strike against Campbell's to unionize the thousands of farmworkers picking tomatoes for the soup giant. A national boycott and demonstrations led to historic agreements between Campbell's, the growers, and the farmworkers. Eventually FLOC won similar agreements with Heinz, Vlasic, Aunt Jane's and Green Bay.

It remains a different story in the south where FLOC is now focused. One study reports that farmworker conditions in North Carolina, where Mt. Olive Pickle Co. operates, are among the poorest and most oppressive in the nation. Most workers are putting in 10-hour days with few breaks, living in houses with no stoves or beds. One worker collapsed from heat stroke in a tomato field and lapsed into a coma from which he has not recovered. Another Mexican worker, Reymundo Hernandez, disappeared and was later found dead.

"A worker found Hernandez' skull under a pecan tree," Velásquez said. "All that remained were his clothes and sandals. They took what was left to the coroner's office and his remains stayed there for several months. The company never even paid to have them shipped back to his widow. That didn't happen until we found out about it and took care of it." Hernandez had died from pesticide poisoning.

This man's tragic death deeply affected Velásquez. He retells the story to anyone he believes could be motivated to action — especially fellow evangelicals. Velásquez says he's determined to convince evangelical conservatives to heed the Bible's call for social justice.

One example: Two hundred conservative students from Toledo Christian High School, where two of Velásquez' children are students, attended a recent FLOC rally. The reason? Velásquez said it was because he "told the truth" during a school meeting about worker conditions. He spoke of Hernandez' death and asked students to pray and fast for Hernandez' widow. He even asked them to donate their lunch money to her. The students raised \$1,000. Velásquez went a step further: He arranged for a small delegation of students to personally deliver the money to Hernandez' widow, who lives in a small Mexican village. The group "was deeply affected by the poverty they saw," Velásquez said.

Velásquez said he feels "ordained" to organize the oppressed while reaching out in reconciliation to those who do the oppressing either through word, deed or inactivity.

"If we have a God who will release us from bondage we can walk like a winner and not a victim," Velásquez said. "And as a winner you can afford to be gracious."

Letters, continued from page 3

and observations that EDS made in granting her this honor.

I met Jeanie at the 1997 Finger Lakes Conference (Province II of the Episcopal Church) as she was the keynote speaker and participant. I was still recovering from some serious disability, discrimination and retaliation and sought solace and restoration in the conference. Her being the keynote speaker called me there. I encountered Jeanie's presence to me in this way that I shall treasure and never forget. Within the communities of baptized Christians, she is one of the few people that related to me as whole again. May you feel my full sense of presence to you. This comes with thanksgiving and blessings of Life.

Catherine Edwards Rochester, NY

Wedgwood shooting

WHEN I TURNED ON THE TELEVI-SION and saw the words "Shooting in Fort Worth Church" spread across the screen I felt sick. It is a terrible thing to see any city suffer such an attack. But when it is one's own beloved city, the sense of dread and horror is overwhelming. Despite being in the third-fastest-growing county in Texas, Fort Worth still is a large city that feels like a small town. That means many people in Fort Worth will know someone who was at Wedgwood Baptist Church Wednesday night, or they will know someone who knows someone who was at the church.

That was brought home to me after the shooting as I was waiting in line to donate blood at the Carter Blood Center in Fort Worth's medical district. Although it wasn't the Carter office closest to the church, I talked with people whose relatives or friends had been at the church or who had some tie to it. Among them were two Mexican-American construction workers who had worked on building projects at the church, an African-American "biker for Christ" who had a buddy who had a son at the youth rally Wednesday evening and three downtown businessmen who knew Wedgwood's pastor.

Also waiting were an African-American sales executive who had a customer who went to the church, a young Anglo mother whose baby sitter attended the church, an older Asian woman whose yard was mowed by a Baptist seminary student and an older Anglo gentleman who said his wife's best friend attended the church.

But what struck me even more about the folks waiting to donate blood was the fact that most of them had no personal connection to the church. This mannerly, motley crew was made up of people of many races, ages, occupations and faiths. They had only one thing in common: They all lived in Fort Worth, and they were stunned, outraged and saddened beyond belief that such a violent attack had happened in their town to people who, except for an accident of local geography, might have been their next-door neighbors. That fact alone was more than enough to make them feel deeply connected to the victims and their families and to the stunned congregation of Wedgwood Baptist Church.

That was true even though many never even had been to the Wedgwood area of the city, much less to the church. Others, like me, knew the church only from driving by it. My daughter attended a grade school only blocks from the church. For years, we lived in a neighborhood just north of it. The church was part of our daily landscape, a reference point to use when giving people directions. But even that tenuous connection proved a powerful bond as I watched heartbreaking footage of injured and dying people, traumatized teens and terrified parents. Those are my neighbors, and what hurts them hurts me.

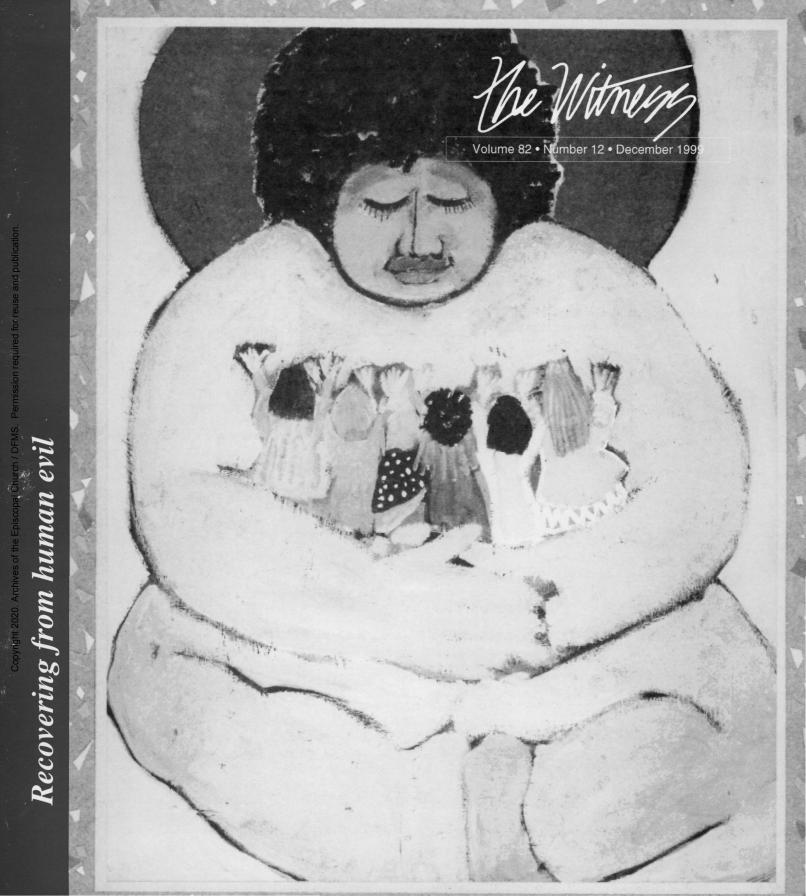
In the days to come, this shooting in a church in Fort Worth will become just one more item on the steadily growing list of such incidents. It will be trotted out as a "sidebar" story the next time some sick or frustrated man with a gun walks into a school, church or business in Somewhere, America, and begins shooting. But here in Fort Worth, it will remain the main story for a long time. For those people we saw on television Wednesday night aren't just interchangeable characters in a story called Violence in America. They are our neighbors, linked to us not only by a place on a map but by places in our hearts.

> Katie Sherrod Fort Worth, TX

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Nuclearism today

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

Mark P. Blaise Page Las Vegas, NV

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

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

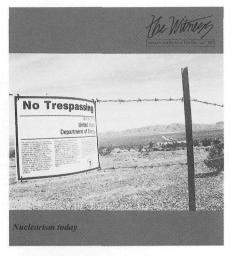
All this plus the excellent items on nuclearism today, taking me back to my arrest at the Nevada Test Site in 1989. Thank you for your ongoing ministry for peace and justice.

> Dorothy Dale Bellingham, WA

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

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





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

> Pat Roberts Lawrenceville, NJ

Millennium 2000

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

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

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

Thich Nhat Hanh writes that during the Vietnam War, when he encountered Christians who were truly living out their own tradition and actively working to help establish peace, it allowed him to experience Christianity not as an imperialist power but as a living truth. In *Living Buddha Living Christ*, Hanh quotes Professor Hans Kung: "Until there is peace between religions, there can be no peace in the world." Hanh continues: "People kill and are killed because they cling too tightly to their own beliefs and ideologies. When we believe that ours is the only faith that contains the truth, violence and suffering will surely be the result." Hanh concludes his book with the following thought: "We can enrich one another's spiritual lives, but there is no need to alienate people from their ancestors and their values. ...True understanding comes from true practice. Understanding and love are values that transcend all dogma."

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

Chris Montesano Nevada Desert Experience Las Vegas, NV

Living in debt

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

Paul Winters Framingham, MA

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

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

Jan McKown Haysville, KS

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

Witness praise

YOUR WONDERFUL JOURNAL REPRE-SENTS American Anglicanism at its best. Rev. Magee Cashmere, WA

Renewing

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

Please renew my subscription when my current one runs out.

Mary Kiefer Cleveland, OH

Renewing with reluctance

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



analysis which, I think, characterized *The Witness* previously and made her distinctive. I think definitely that we are on the edge of a new "kairos" in the political and economic arenas. We certainly feel this in Los Angeles because of recent involvements here, interfaith and multiracial. I think the church must avoid what I sometimes think is an East Coast "ennui" — a tiredness of spirit. On the contrary, our mood here — which we think is catching on elsewhere — is *Adelante!* And, *Venceremos* (We shall overcome).

> Dick Gillett Pasadena, CA

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Scripture Conference at CDSP

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

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

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

Classifieds

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

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Volume 82 • Number 12 • December 1999

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 Fighting evil 'down under' by Camille Colatosti

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

23 'A cave with no exit' by Mitsuye Yamada

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

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

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

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

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

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Evil is real; God is crucial

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

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

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

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

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

In this issue, we have people

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

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



Night of Miracles and Wonder by Constance K. Alford

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

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

This issue is dedicated to people whose life circumstances are dire. And the question, naturally, is *can* they find alternatives? Can they find a place for themselves in the lap of the Mama Goddess who will hold them close until they are touched? Or is there some-

where else they can sit?

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

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

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

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

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

editor's note

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

The funeral — an unlikely speaker

by Marsha Arons

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

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

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

"In 1944, in Auschwitz, a young Polish Jew, Esther Lewandowski, was brutally raped by a Nazi officer. She was 13 years old. What was unusual about this act was that the officer allowed her to live. Indeed, he forced her to come to him several times until he left suddenly after a few months. He had no idea that the young Jewess whose life he neglected to take would have a reminder of his coldhearted use of her other than painful memories. The reminder was an infant son. Esther's childish figure and the starvation rations in the camp enabled her to hide her pregnancy. Indeed, it was common for women to stop menstruating in those conditions, so it was possible that Esther did not even know for sure she was pregnant. Of course, if it had become known, she would have been put to death immediately.

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

"I am Esther's son by the Nazi officer. But Isaac Ross was my father."

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

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

"I am Esther's son by the Nazi officer. But Isaac Ross was my father in every sense that matters. He loved me, nurtured me, and gave me an identity I could cherish. More important, he loved my mother with all his heart.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mandela Comes to Motown

by Hilda Vest

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

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

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

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



'Red thread'— a cry of hope

by Jennifer Atlee

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

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

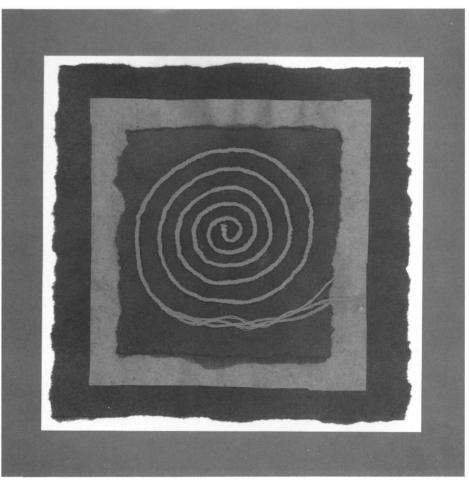
Now aged 37, Atlee has two daughters 11 and 2, Carmen and Olivia. Living outside Philadelphia, the family currently stays in a lower middle class neighborhood, on the border of a wooded Indian burial ground.

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

"I used to hear voices say things like, 'Go sit under a tree,'" Atlee says. "So, I would go until I found the right tree and sit." returned to the U.S. after 11 years of working with victims of war and rural *Campesinos* in Nicaragua in 1995. I came back because I had nothing left to give. I was dried up and dying inside. The injustice and evil which had been heaped upon the people of Nicaragua in those 11 years had overwhelmed my spirit. The contra war which my country had financed and promoted with a crazed vengeance had slashed the moorings of my soul and set me adrift in a desolate wasteland in which I could detect no hope, meaning or purpose in life.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

In 1988, I spent the year working for the Guatemalan Church in Exile based in Managua. I was pregnant and could not keep up with the physical demands of my work in the northern war zones. During that year, as invisible hands knit a child in my womb, I sat in front of a computer translating the testimonies of Guatemalan victims of military repression. Their stories were brutal, grisly and endless. During that year a stream of horror beyond belief entered my ears through tapes gathered by priests working clandestinely in the Sierra and Highlands of Guatemala. Day after day, I strained to hear soft voices, telling unthinkable stories on crude recordings. I rewound over and over, careful to catch every word, every detail, and to work their stories onto paper, into English and out into the world.

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

In retrospect, I realize that the life being spun in my womb provided a balance to the atrocities which were spinning in my head. This balance must be maintained in order to survive. New thread is spun even as the weaving is being unraveled and destroyed. The Guatemalan women knew this. In the midst of exile and genocide, the women had one constant request: Red Thread. They needed red thread. Vibrant Mayan Red. Color of blood. Color of life. Even as their people, culture, and souls were being massacred, the women needed red thread. They had to keep weaving.

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

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

Recovering through soul work

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

Jean offers hospitality to sisters in her congregation who have been victims of political violence. She says the pattern is the same — they seem to be not present/checked out; they will try to harm themselves physically, have nightmares, are obsessed with past events, have eating disorders. Synapses in the brain are actually severed by the trauma. They can be regenerated, but they need help. What helps them recover is soul work: centering prayer, holding a human hand, stillness, quiet, beauty, nature, music, all of this helps to reconnect severed threads.

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

Being with those in pain

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

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

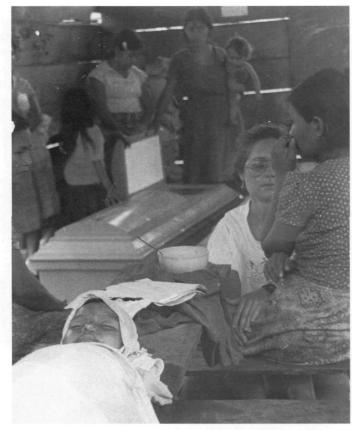
As I reviewed events in my mind,

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

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

The women crowd around us, smiling, holding onto us, telling us what happened. They said the contra started yelling at them from the hills: "Why are you living in this Sandinista *asentamiento*?" They told the women to come to them if they wanted to be spared. A few women started running toward them, most fled to the mountains to hide. The contra were firing on them, yelling, "Next time we'll kill you all."

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



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

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

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

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

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

-J.A.

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

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

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

I am spinning out red thread. But what constantly threatened to undermine me was the fear that this was all pointless — it didn't matter. This voice would say, "Would you look around you — nobody cares what happened in Nicaragua. Nobody cares. Oliver North is a hero — and makes \$10,000 a pop for talking about American values. Nicaragua is totally forgotten—done and over with. It doesn't matter. So what? People were slaughtered there. That's life — forget it. Get a house and a sports utility vehicle like everybody else."

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

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

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

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

The next sign came in a dream, I saw this huge black woman, sitting on a wooden birthing stool, barefooted, knees stretched wide apart, so that her red gingham skirt hung deeply like a hammock. Her skirt was full of people and she started talking to me. She said:

Come close chile and listen to me I's so full of the pain of my people so, so, full of all that gotta change of all the things that happened God don't forget and we ain't movin till every tear is wiped dry. Every single tear, they all count. The human race ain't movin till we heal and learn to live right.

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

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

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

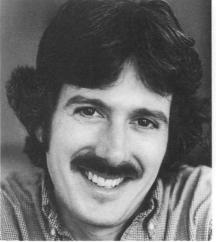
Disassembling apartheid: an interview with David Goodman by Edie Bird

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

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

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

I think the answer lies in the fact that apartheid works. Apartheid means separateness in Afrikaans. It worked. It succeeded in separating people. Whites were totally ignorant of what blacks were going through on a day-to-day basis, the squalor and poverty with which they lived, even though these were their maids and gardeners. But blacks were intimately familiar with white life because they worked in their homes. It was the servants' labor that made South Africa such a comfortable place to live for whites. I



David Goodman

Paul Weinberg

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saving 'white' civilization

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

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

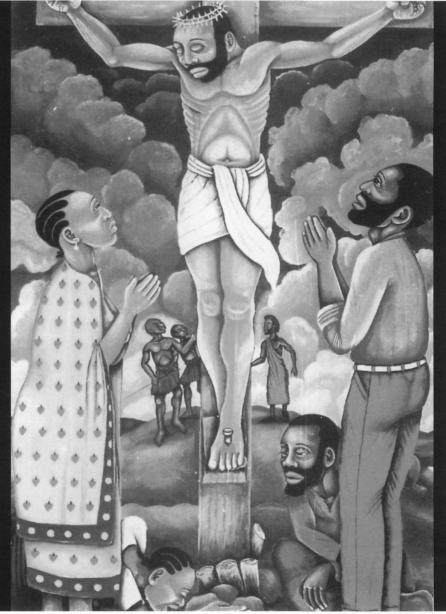
Edie Bird is a writer and priest in Arkansas, <ebird@earthlink.net>.

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

Heartfelt apologies?

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

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



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

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

— David Goodman

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

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

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

'Evil in silence'

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

THE WITNESS

that worth?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reconciling president

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

D.G.: It's crucial. Mandela singlemindedly focussed his presidency, which ended in June, on reconciliation. He understood that without reconciliation there could be no discussion of education and healthcare and the economy. It would all be lost in this never-ending conflict. He led by personal example.

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

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

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

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

Whites forfeit cash?

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

D.G.: It has to be led by the government. I don't think it's something that individual whites can take on by themselves. The government has been slow to take on that issue because it is an extremely sensitive one. The international financial community does not take kindly to redistribution of wealth and reparation taxes. The national government needs to make a dramatic attempt to redistribute the spoils of apartheid.

South Africa has a "commitment to building a very idealistic alternative to what was in the past, building something better, building a real democracy out of the ashes of apartheid. I'm not saying that South Africans have gotten to the promised land yet, but they really are trying very hard. One has in South Africa a sense of triumph."

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

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

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

a TRC needed here in the U.S.?

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

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

You find hope?

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

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

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

15

'Professionals don't cry'

by Rachel Naomi Remen

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protecting ourselves from loss rather than grieving and healing our losses is one of the major causes of burnout. Very few of the professionals I have treated for burnout actually came in

saying that they were burned out. I don't think most of them knew.

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

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

of numbness. We burn out not because we don't care but because we don't grieve. We burn out because we have allowed our hearts to become so filled with loss that we have no room left to care.

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

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

The burnout literature talks about the factors which heal burnout: rest, exercise, play, the releasing of unrealistic expectations. But in my experience burnout only really begins to heal when people learn how to grieve. Grieving is a way of self-care, the antidote to professionalism. Health professionals don't cry. Unfortunately. "These people were counting on our strength," he said. I had let them down. I took his criticism very much to heart. By the time I myself was senior resident, I hadn't cried in years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Fighting evil 'down under'

by Camille Colatosti

Australia, is an unassuming structure tucked between a railway station and an elementary school. Yet, each day, counselors there work miracles. Kalbe, translated into English, means "heart."

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

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

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

There are also special programs for

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

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

Doctors, friends, family members and Australia's Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs refer refugees to Kalbe House. QPASTT is a govern-

ment program, funded to facilitate the resettlement of refugees. As Lobsinger explains, "The government has demonstrated a real commitment to supporting people who are victims of

human rights violations." Even with government support, however, Kalbe House often feels a crunch. Lobsinger adds, "We could do so much more if we only had the funding."

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

Those who survive torture must com-

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

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

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

"Children suffer the most, and there are the fewest resources for them. They need a great deal of attention." — Chris Lobsinger the world still practice torture regularly. This is an increase, not a decrease. Most of us believe that the world is getting more humane, but the reality is that torture is getting

more prevalent."

Lobsinger notes that recovering from torture may take a lifetime.

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

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

Witness staff writer Camille Colatosti is on the English faculty at Detroit College of Business, <colakwik@ix.netcom.com>. Vietnamese artist Vo-Dinh released a series of anti-war images distributed by the Felowship of Reconciliation during the Vietnam War. Contact Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma at <www.qpastt.org.au>.



Vo-Dinh

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

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

"They then flee to countries of first asylum." These are the countries closest to their home - Germany for those from the former Yugoslavia or the U.S. for those from Central or South America. In this country of first asylum, the refugee tries to get some protection. Some will stay in this country for four or five years.

"Many will languish in refugee camps," says Lobsinger, "and many will ever. There is a lot of damage done just because of process. People wait so long for counseling that they may experience mental illness; they may relive their torture. This is when Post Traumatic Stress Disorder may appear. The refugee may suffer panic attacks or depression.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therapy and community

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lobsinger tells another story: the story of single mothers from Somalia, a country whose Muslim culture differs greatly from that found in the West. "Most of the Somalian women who come to Australia come with children — four or five after their husbands have been killed," explains Lobsinger. "They are proud women used to looking after the household in a particular way, and used to a husband who plays a particular role, especially in terms of disciplining young boys. For many of these women, when their sons turn 15 or so, they stop listening to the mother 100 percent of the time. They are begging for male guidance. Their mothers can't control them, can't keep them in school. On top of that, the mothers' beliefs and culture prevent them from taking on the man's disciplinarian role."

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

The evil in all of us

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

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

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

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

U.S. weapons in East Timor

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

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

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

Right wing: 'Boycott military'

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

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

Child labor and global debt

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

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

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

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

The psychic cost of violence

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

"Grossman, a career military man with degrees in psychology and history, begins with the landmark study of S.L.A. Marshall (Brigadier General)," explains reviewer Laura Hembree. "When investigating firing rates in WWII, Marshall made an extraordinary discovery: 80 to 85 percent of combat soldiers in firing zones would not fire their rifles. Ardent du Pique's investigations of French soldiers in 1860 came to similar conclusions, as did examinations of the kill rates of the Napoleonic and American Civil wars, and accounts from officers in WWI.

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

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

Native farmers report bias

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

most takes

The Cambridge Accord

n Friday, October 1, 1999, Steven Charleston, President and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School and former Bishop of Alaska, published "The Cambridge Accord." The Accord is intended as an international response to increased violence against homosexual persons around the

world. Of special concern are recent developments in the African nations of Uganda, Kenya, and Zimbabwe where the presidents of these nations have publicly cited biblical sanction for labeling homosexuals "un-African" and outside the law. In Uganda, the President has ordered the arrest and trial of all homosexuals, with a possible term of life imprisonment if convicted. President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has publicly characterized homosexuals as "lower than pigs and dogs."

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

Charleston hopes to find common



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

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



Coptic textile design

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

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

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

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

The Cambridge Accord

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

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

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

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

deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

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

'A cave with no exit'

by Mitsuye Yamada

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

> - Okinawan poet, Shiro Yu, "Soshite sengo" (And then came postwar, 1982)

Clined the wide corridors as we left the jetway and entered the airport at Okinawa. Tropical, just like Hawaii, I thought.

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

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

The museum's main exhibit featured murals and paintings of the mass forced suicides of civilian Okinawans in 1945 during one of the most brutal battles in World War II, the Battle of Okinawa. The paintings were by the Japanese artists Iri and Toshi Maruki. I remembered seeing reproductions of "The Hiroshima Panels," depicting the human suffering in the aftermath of the atom bomb, by the same husband and wife team and being powerfully moved by them. But they were black and white photographs in the pages of a book. Those reduced reproductions were, no doubt, nothing compared to the actual murals. In the main hall at the Sakima Museum in Okinawa, I stood immobi-

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

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

On one side was a huge painting of the exterior of a cave, cold and mute, with the legend that indicated that the people who were in this cave survived. On the other side, a full blown interior of the cave, a mountain of human bodies in different stages of death. Images of suffering of such enormous magnitude pierces you to the core. It was almost too much to bear. I remembered Toshi Maruki's comments regarding the Hiroshima paintings, that "no painting will ever fully capture the tragedy of Hiroshima . . . The reality is far, far worse."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Battle of Okinawa during World War II brought home to the Okinawans the startling fact that Japan considered them dispensable people. They learned later that Okinawa was the "sacrificial stone" (as in the game of go) to delay the Allied invasion of mainland Japan. They thought the Japanese military was there to protect them from the Americans, but finally realized that Japan used the island and its people as the last bastion of defense against the advancing U.S. Marines, and abandoned them to the enemy. When the shooting stopped, the war-ravaged land and people gratefully accepted the rations, medicine and candy from the Americans. They did not realize that by doing so, their farmers would be forced off their land at bayonet-point and that the U.S. military forces were there to stay, occupying 20 percent of valuable land on their small island. They now feel twice betrayed, by the Japanese and the Americans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The urgency with which many Okinawan citizen groups work to rid

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

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



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

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

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

Sakima Art Museum

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

> After all these years we are still in a cave that has no exit. Shiro Yu, 1972

> > TW

Hell, healing and resistance

by John Bach

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

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

Honest books about war serve the same purpose.

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

review

ten.

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

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

Hallock is a superb organizer, obviously a good listener who engendered trust, an astute observer of contemporary warmaking, an unapologetic Christian, and a good writer. What he brings most to the

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

men and women of the book, and those of us lucky enough to read it, is an unabashed sense of dedication and caring. He stakes no claim to dispassion or objectivity — much to his credit — and dares to write about how his heart was affected by what he heard while collecting these stories. The pay-off is that the same thing happens to the reader; the book demands that you think with your heart and guts and not just your educated brain. It's like rubbernecking at the scene of a terrible accident and resolving to pay more attention to the road. It is an antidote to sanitized and bloodless history.

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

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

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

lies, lies, lies.

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

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

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

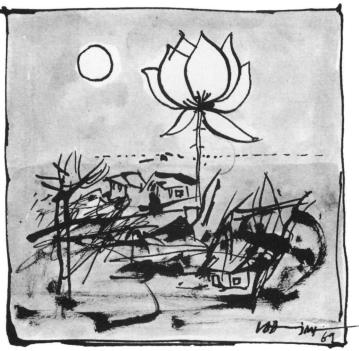
Much of the veterans' testimony confirms the 1960s' adage that no matter

how depraved, vicious and weird you thought things were, they were probably worse. So we learn about the sailors, stoned out of their minds, who lob huge shells from their ship miles off shore into a green jungle country and kill a number of our own Marines. And the Delta Force sharpshooter, taken off his regular job as an assassin of drug lords and Central American revolutionary leaders, to fire upon his own troops in Panama in order to keep them sharp and morale high. We learn, too, that within U.S. prisons religious objectors to WWI were tortured, sometimes to death.

The scope of Hallock's undertaking is immense; it is more of a compendium than

a collection. Yet I wish he had included two more categories of "veterans" and given them a chance to speak to us. The Atomic Veterans were the personnel who were experimentally placed facing ground zero during nuclear tests, and who now pay the price with cancer.

And what better way to learn about the nature of war and what it does to the soul of a man or country than to listen to the women who were forced to "service" our service men? The number of officially sanctioned prostitutes in Vietnam, the conditions of the brothels, the new strains of venereal disease all testify to immediate realities that have little to do with noble concepts like defending freedom. And currently the thousands of women and girls who "comfort" our defenders-of-corporate-America in the Philippines, Europe, and Korea are recruited out of poverty and enslaved economically. The same can be said of the domestic scene around



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

any military base.

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

Hallock is especially good in writ-

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

"We need to create 'spaces' in which to share the pain. We need to listen and to understand; most of all, we need to

> believe them when they cry, 'No more war, ever again!' This is something all of us can do. Sadly, there are so many veterans with PTSD that everyone who reads this book will know at least one. That's a good place to start.

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

I write this as our country has started to bomb Iraq again

— after a long embargo that has killed half a million Iraqi kids. It is as though our crops have been contaminated, and we've gone insane. This is the book that reminds us.

Moving?

Please let us know your change of address!!! Contact us at 313-841-1967 or <office@thewitness.org>.

wo years ago, Angelique Cooper, then 26 and freshly arrived in Minneapolis after fleeing civil war-ravaged Liberia (by way of Guinea), rarely made it through a night without dreaming of neighbors scattering for shelter under a shower of bullets, of people shot before her eyes, of armed adolescent boys looting once-peaceful suburban homes and shops. During the day, despite determined efforts to suppress a deep rage over seven years of dislocation and loss, she'd find herself greeting commonplace frustrations with explosive anger. Recognizing the possible signs of trauma, the immigration lawyer she'd engaged urged her to get some help. Hesitantly, Cooper agreed to get an appointment at the city's Center for Victims of Torture and Trauma.

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

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

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

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

Witnesses, the quick and the dead

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

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



Angelique Cooper

Recovering from civil war by Julie A. Wortman

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

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

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

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

"I had been sheltered all of my life," Cooper says. "All I had to think about was to get up in the morning and go to school, study my lessons and make good grades." Although other members of her family chose to leave the country as Taylor's forces grew more threatening, Cooper and her grandfather, a lawyer, remained at home, her grandfather believing the conflict would not escalate as it did.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Looking back on the situation now, Cooper believes that she owes her survival in large part to the strong devotional life her staunch Episcopalian grandparents had instilled in her as a child.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Phillips, Butch 'The river is our lifeblood' [Marianne Arbogast] 6/99 Vanunu, Mordechai

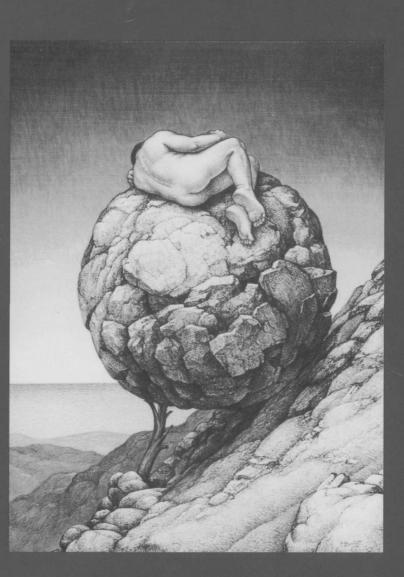
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