(te•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

The Political Psyche
Andrew Samuels
Israel's Lost Opportunities
Jerome Slater
The Tuskegee Experiment
David L. Kirp

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Affirmative Action

Peter Gabel



John Hockenberry
Wheelchair Intifada

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Angels in America

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Spirituality and Politics

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High-Tech Populism

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Book of Ruth

World War II: Fifty Years Later

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05 64858

To Those Born Later

I
Truly, I live in dark times!
The guileless word is folly. A smooth forehead
Suggests insensitivity. The man who laughs
Has simply not yet had
The terrible news.

What kind of times are they, when
A talk about trees is almost a crime
Because it implies silence about so many horrors?
That man there calmly crossing the street
Is already perhaps beyond the reach of his friends
Who are in need?

It is true I still earn my keep
But, believe me, that is only an accident. Nothing
I do gives me the right to eat my fill.
By chance I've been spared. (If my luck breaks I am lost.)

They say to me: Eat and drink! Be glad you have it!
But how can I eat and drink if I snatch what I eat
From the starving, and
My glass of water belongs to one dying of thirst?
And yet I eat and drink.

I would also like to be wise.
In the old books it says what wisdom is:
To shun the strife of the world and to live out
Your brief time without fear
Also to get along without violence
To return good for evil
Not to fulfil your desires but to forget them
Is accounted wise.
All this I cannot do:
Truly I live in dark times.

II
I came to the cities in a time of disorder
When hunger reigned there.
I came among men in a time of revolt
And I rebelled with them.
So passed my time
Which had been given to me on earth.

My food I ate between battles
To sleep I lay down among murderers
Love I practised carelessly
And nature I looked at without patience.
So passed my time
Which had been given to me on earth.

All roads led into the mire in my time.
My tongue betrayed me to the butchers.
There was little I could do. But those in power
Sat safer without me: That was my hope.
So passed my time
Which had been given to me on earth.

Our forces were slight. Our goal
Lay far in the distance
It was clearly visible, though I myself
Was unlikely to reach it.
So passed my time
Which had been given to me on earth.

III
You who will emerge from the flood
In which we have gone under
Remember
When you speak of our failings
The dark time too
Which you have escaped.

For we went, changing countries oftener than our shoes
Through the wars of the classes, despairing
When there was injustice only, and no rebellion.

And yet we know:
Hatred, even of meanness
Contorts the features.
Anger, even against injustice
Makes the voice hoarse. Oh, we
Who wanted to prepare the ground for friendliness
Could not ourselves be friendly.

But you, when the time comes at last
And man is a helper to man
Think of us
With forbearance.

—Bertolt Brecht

TIKKUN

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Letters

Pulp Fiction

To the Editor:

Thank you, thank you for Donald Lazere's article on the degenerate modernism of *Pulp Fiction*. We thought we were alone in our lament over the brutalization and trivialization of violence and destruction in that movie, offered in the name of art.

Let TIKKUN and other "meaning"-minded contemporaries create alternative images of power to inspire the hearts and minds of a generation longing for connection, community, compassion, and courage. And may it be soon.

Sara Schley and Joe Laur
Wendell, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Lazere considered Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* a notch above *Pulp Fiction*. Yet Stone's work is so laden with symbolism that I found it profoundly ridiculous and childish. Stone's flagrant overuse of cinematography techniques was overdone and boring.

I doubt also Lazere's judgment that *Pulp Fiction* glorifies violence. Tarantino's movie clearly shows a man who eventually sees the light (that robbery and violence is not the answer) and contrasts that with a man who does not. And why pick on *Pulp Fiction*? If moral values are Lazere's central concern, there will be few American movies from which to choose.

Amiha Sobhan
Hampton, Virginia

Gabel on Democrats

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel ("Community & Democracy: Creating a Parallel Universe," March/April 1995) presents a critique of the Democrats that is

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equally applicable to the environmental movement.

Take, for example, the debate over global warming. It has often been reduced to debates over scientific certainty clouded by economic and ecological disinformation from both sides. Missed in the noise is the opportunity to craft a vision of a global ecological context and with it a framework for ecologically responsive decision making.

The current environmental ethic of scaring people half to death that they will become crispy critters due to global warming is not going to inspire people to run out and sign up for saving the planet. What the current environmental movement lacks is a transformative vision.

Some ecologists suggest that if the governing powers of the earth simply managed resources better that sustainable development would appear out of thin air. This is the ideology of management which makes the false claim of being free of the influences of conflicting power interests, unburdened by the inefficiency of bureaucracy, and unhindered by the apathy of consumerism. But sustainable development will have to grapple with very deep issues of social justice that are not matters of "management," but of social justice.

A transformative vision must ensure that social justice and environmental ethics are partners. This can be as simple as ensuring that hazardous waste is not dumped in minority neighborhoods or as encompassing as altering international trade relations so that pesticides banned from use in the U.S. are not available for export overseas.

A transformative vision supports community dialogue and civic consciousness. It teaches people that through their participation in the public realm, and through engagement in responsible and equitable problem solving, they become capable of transcending the limitations of self-interest.

Dan Yurman
Idaho Falls, Idaho
dyurman@igc.apc.org

To the Editor:

Gabel is right about the Democrats. They've bought into what Mary Ann Glendon calls the "property paradigm" which characterizes all rights as "property" and sees the function of government as aiding individuals to protect their "rights." What Gabel is calling for is essentially a resurrecting of civic republicanism—the view that all citizens

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Wendy Orange HEALING ISRAEL'S TROUBLED SOUL: Our Israel correspondent returns from her latest visit to Israel to give us her insights on how to bring healing.

Michael Lerner JEWISH RENEWAL: philosophy, politics and psychology. A perfect opportunity to get to know the editor of TIKKUN and to find your place as writer or activist in the TIKKUN community.

Peter Gabel THE DENIAL OF DESIRE AND THE POLITICS OF MEANING (and its implications for contemporary political issues like affirmative action, abortion, etc.)

Larry Bush A SECULAR JEW IN JEWISH RENEWAL

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FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS & MEANING

MAJOR PROJECTS CURRENTLY BEING PLANNED:

Conference on Blacks and Jews: Healing the rifts between the two groups that form the backbone of the liberal and progressive forces in the U.S. (building on the recently released book, *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin* by Cornel West and Michael Lerner).

National Summit on Ethics and Meaning to be held in Washington, D.C. in the early part of 1996.

Creation of local chapters of the Foundation (please join the Foundation and we will send you information on how to start a local chapter.

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must act in ways that benefit the community, even if that requires a limitation on one's rights.

At the university where I teach, I see many students fighting against societal alienation. Yet from their perspective their goal is much narrower: to find some kind of security. Many of these students come from professional households where there has been a divorce, so many of them feel abandoned. They are often sad and angry. Our task is to help them obtain security by teaching that "security" really means connection to others and spiritual fulfillment through commitment to the good of the community.

Mark Andrew Sherman
Asst. Prof. of American Politics and Public Law, American University
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

If workers were ever to turn up at a meaning-oriented union of the sort that Lerner and Gabel seem to be wishing could exist, who do you think they would find in charge of programming? It wouldn't be Lerner and Gabel, but the same old gig-chasing crowd of consultants and Mill Valley-style presenters, convinced (as are so many professional social case workers) that they know what's best for their recalcitrant clients—and their own elite interests. As for intellectuals on the Left, my own long acquaintance with academic liberals would confirm the late Christopher Lasch's assessment of them as generally infected with disdain and distrust of ordinary working people, who they assume from their comfortable enclaves, are low-brow gun nuts with rude manners ... a waste of time to talk to.

A more modest, but still very difficult societal goal for TIKKUN would be to aim at balancing the national obsession about individual rights and entitlements with a deeper, active sense of responsibility, obligation and duty, toward rebuilding the fragile microstructure of civil society.

Thomas Fitzgerald
Ann Arbor, Michigan

To the Editor:

Gabel says that the Gingrich victory offers us an opportunity to escape the tired old liberalism of the past and create something new. I wish he was right, but I don't see it. With people being thrown off of welfare and other forms of public assistance, the level of pain among the poor will be greater than ever, and hence the appeal of the liberal argument ("this is no time to be visionary, because the best is often the enemy of the good, and your energies would be far better spent alleviating this immediate suffering than engaging in utopian schemes that might never come to fruition") is likely to be stronger, not weaker, in the coming years. Frankly, I believe that most of my fellow TIKKUN readers, like liberals throughout the society, are going to end up voting for Clinton. And it is precisely because he knows that, and knows that we have no place to go, that he can take us for granted and position himself further and further to the Right. I only wish TIKKUN hadn't endorsed him so enthusiastically in 1992.

Lisa Anne McCormick
Nashville, Tennessee

Editor responds:

Even though they may vote for him, Many liberals and progressives are likely to withhold their active support from Clinton in 1996, so that if he is the candidate, most people will realize that even his supporters see him as a "lesser evil" choice rather than as someone anyone really cares about. This might still work for him if the Republicans offer a milquetoast candidate and if progressives are unable to field a credible third-party alternative. But should the Republicans nominate someone with passion and convictions, or should the Left find a way to run a candidate who supports a politics of meaning, Clinton may be in very deep trouble. Meanwhile, some progressives are beginning to make the following argument: As long as liberals and progressives accept the logic of lesser evil-ism, the evils with which we get presented by an ever more compromised Democratic Party may be greater and greater. As a magazine, however, we never take stands backing or opposing any particular candidate (and it is a complete media-generated misrecollection to state, as some do, that TIKKUN backed Clinton in 1992).

Clinton's Betrayal

To the Editor:

"Clinton's Betrayal" (editorial, March/April 1995) captures what many disenchanted and dispirited Clinton supporters now feel. My wife and I, having grown up with and attended high school with the president (in Hot Springs, Arkansas), feel this sense of betrayal perhaps more acutely than most. Yet we blame ourselves for allowing ourselves to be deceived by clinging to false hopes and expectations that bear little relation to the reality of Bill Clinton.

We thought we had much in common with this man—not simply hometown roots, but the shared dream of a generation that, once it became our turn, we could somehow make this country live up to its ideals. Now it is clear how little we could possibly have in common with someone so consumed by the arrogance of power.

We thought he believed in and stood for something. Now it is clear there is no matter of principle that commands his allegiance more than his own self-interest and self-aggrandizement.

We thought he was a man of ideas—a seeker of substance over cosmetics. Now it is clear he is simply attracted to pop clichés and buzzwords that create the appearance of substance. He is ever more likely to view a "politics of meaning" as good p.r. than as a legitimate philosophical basis for action.

We thought he had spent his entire life preparing to be president—to govern effectively. Now it is clear he was only preparing himself to become president—to get elected.

Even if Bill Clinton is re-elected, his will have been a failed presidency. His betrayal of us—the people—will reflect his betrayal of himself.

Gregory D. Foster
Vienna, Virginia

To the Editor:

After watching the way that the Clintons betrayed both the politics of meaning and their personal connection with you, and agreeing with you that the massive defection from liberal politics was dramatically aided and abetted by Clinton's abandonment of principled politics (precisely what people have come to expect from mealy-mouthed liberals), I come to a conclusion you seem unwilling to draw: The liberal and progressive forces in this country, and the many disadvantaged who depend on the safety networks that they created, would have been better served had Bush won re-election! Had Clinton lost, the more conservative wing of the Democratic Party would have been given their best shot, so that liberals could have argued for a more principled candidate in 1996. Had Bush won, the country would be steaming with upset about the failure of the Republicans to deliver very much for the econ-

omy or the country, and would certainly not have elected the Gingrich minions. Had Bush won, Democrats could have ensured that safety networks would have been stronger and less likely to be dismantled.

I know the argument that says, "We tried this crazy thinking in 1968 and we got Nixon." But I suspect that had Humphrey won, we might still be fighting a war in Vietnam and might not yet recognize China (to prove that he wasn't a capitulationist to anti-communism). Nixon agreed to the very strengthening of safety and health procedures at the workplace and environmental reforms that the Gingrichites are now empowered to dismantle. I hated Nixon, and still think he was a disgrace, that many people died unnecessarily because of his prolonging the war, and many people (including, I understand, the editor of this magazine) were jailed for their opposition to the war. Nevertheless, the picture is sufficiently complicated for this kind of argument not to serve as a total refutation of my contention that the dynamics of a Bush presidency would have been preferable to the dynamics of a Gingrich-led Congress and a capitulationist President Clinton.

Jennifer Braddock
Washington, D.C.

Remembering Hebron

To the Editor:

A few historical notes on the massacre of Palestinians as they prayed in their mosque over a year ago:

Three months before the massacre, there were quite detailed accounts of settler violence in the Israeli press. This violence often occurred in the presence of the army, which was doing nothing to stop the religious settlers. The commander of a unit stationed in Hebron told a journalist, "The soldiers are forbidden to arrest a Jew, except if he hits a soldier, or shoots an Arab in the presence of a soldier." Yet, in the United States, there was at best sketchy news of the combination of settler violence and army inaction. Meanwhile, there was the often expressed conventional wisdom that the test of the upcoming autonomy would be how well the Palestinians self-police. Yet how much could they be expected to self-police when Israel, far from self-policing, was standing by or pretending not to see when Israeli settlers acted in violent and provocative ways toward the people they were occupying?

Jim Rissman
Verona, Wisconsin

Sexual Ruthlessness

To the Editor:

As a psychiatrist with more than thirty years' experience in treating individuals and couples, I am appalled by Michael Bader's advocacy of "ruthlessness" (lack of compassion) in sexual relationships. The one factor that can pervert sexual relationships is this very ruthlessness.

By compassion or ruthlessness, we either confirm our partner's personal value, or desecrate it.

What does Dr. Bader dispense to his patients by this truly barbaric attitude?

Francis J. Durgin, M.D.
Fayetteville, New York

What's In a Name?

To the Editor:

You invite readers to suggest a better term to identify those who are adherents to the politics of meaning (November/December 1994). I suggest the key is in seeking to build relationships on the basis of genuine respect. In a politics of respect, one approaches others in the pursuit of common (communal) purposes with the assumption that they are decent human beings who have good reason for their views and preferences, even if these appear to be very different from one's own. One's obligation is to listen with respect, and to seek out the possibility that there is a place within your common "citizen" status for coordinated or collaborative action. The parties to such an endeavor should be able to come away with validation of their mutual citizenship, even if, at the same time, they find no immediate common ground for their future action.

A person who really was into this politics would be called a "true respecter."

Michael A. Moss
Albany, New York

It's the Economy

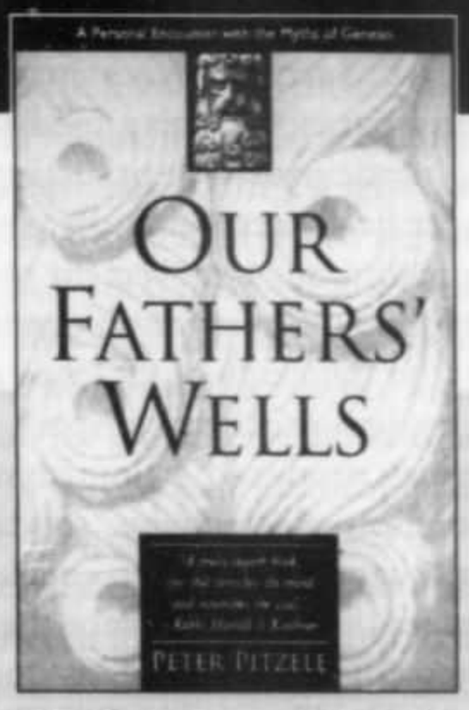
To the Editor:

I agree with much of your argument for a politics of meaning, but you are wrong in claiming that Clinton's economic policies were working (and that

(Continued on p. 91)

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McNamara's Repentance

It gives scant satisfaction to the tens of thousands of Americans who gave their lives or limbs in Vietnam for an immoral and unnecessary war, or to those of us who relinquished U.S. citizenship rather than fight, or went to prison for demonstrating against the war, or sacrificed careers and friendships in order to stand true to their moral beliefs, to know today that the people we then proclaimed were lying to us are finally beginning to admit their perfidy. Robert McNamara could have saved hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of lives had he spoken clearly and unequivocally at the time. For the past many years, in a small yet valuable way, McNamara has been doing acts of repentance (for example, actively participating in the anti-nuclear movement), and his recently published book, *In Retrospect*, represents another important step forward. Our task is not to judge him—indeed, we should welcome his penitential acts and hope that they spur others who justified the war to take similar steps of contrition. Instead, we must challenge those who continue to distort the historical record and to defame the movements of the Sixties that became radicalized precisely because those in the movements understood the magnitude of American crimes. For twenty years, Americans have been barraged by a systematic campaign of media and government disinformation aimed at stigmatizing the Sixties movements and the liberatory energies they embodied.

Surrounded by F.B.I. agents-provocateurs who encouraged violence and paranoia, facing media that were all too willing to participate in legitimating the American system by uncritically accepting the government's way of viewing reality, some movement people fell into alienating rhetoric and irresponsible actions. Yet for the most part, the moments of violence were rare and the utopian dreams worthy of respect. The Sixties and early Seventies produced a flourishing of countercultural and intellectual creativity, solidarity, and ethical commitment that have not been equaled in the America of subsequent decades. Yet since the end of the war in 1975, the media and conservative politicians of both parties (aided by liberals like Bill Clinton who lack the courage to defend the movements that momentarily allowed them to transcend their narrow self-interest and connect to a higher moral purpose) have imposed on the American people a distorted memory syndrome that demeaned, trivialized, and dismissed as generational rebellion the high moral purpose that motivated millions of Americans to oppose the war.

McNamara's book calls for a national atonement for Vietnam. We should designate a week in 1996 dedicated to honoring all those who resisted the war, as well as the millions of people who served their country and were betrayed by it, and the millions more who took steps in their personal lives to act courageously. If it doesn't happen in any other way, we who are organizing the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning will dedicate a segment of that event to remembering and honoring the antiwar movement and those who stood for idealism, whose acts have been ridiculed or minimized by the media. If McNamara's book makes that process of memorialization and healing more possible, he has finally begun to give his country the service he pledged to it. □

Israel as Banana Republic?

Pressed by a TIKKUN interviewer a few years ago about the risks that West Bank settlers could prevent implementation of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, Abba Eban insisted that Israel was not a "banana republic" whose policies could be dictated by a small minority. Yet it was just that term that began to surface in peace movement circles in Jerusalem in April 1995, after it became clear that a handful of Hamas terrorists seemed to have the power to derail the entire peace process (in synchronistic harmony with right-wing Israeli settlers). An April poll in the West Bank revealed that 70 percent of the Palestinians supported Yassir Arafat's demand that all Palestinians surrender their weapons and a similar number opposed the most recent terrorist attacks on Israelis.

Nevertheless, the Hamas terrorists, assisted by Israeli right-wingers, have managed to create a widespread feeling among Israelis that no one on the Palestinian side "really" wants peace, and thus tied the hands of Yitzhak Rabin's Labor government. Other peace activists deny the "banana republic" analysis and suggest a bolder and more discouraging hypothesis: Rabin knew full well that if the media were allowed to dramatize Palestinian terror attacks to a far greater extent than they had when terrorist acts during the tenure of the Begin and Shamir governments also threatened the lives of Israelis, that this would inevitably undermine a peace process about which he

was always ambivalent. These peace activists argue that Israel would never be stopped if it actually was determined to carry out a policy, and that the failure of the Rabin government to move resolutely forward and implement national elections is a function of Rabin's lack of interest in an exchange of land for peace. □

The Cold Face of the Contract

It's an often-repeated mantra among progressives that the political parties have become virtually interchangeable. And as we read accounts of President Clinton's accommodation to the tenets of the Contract with America—his jockeying to match the Republicans tax cut for tax cut, welfare reform for welfare reform, his endorsement of the line-item veto, and his reactive zeal to reexamine affirmative action—we find little disconfirming evidence for the alarming prospect of the melding of the two-party system into a meaningless mush.

Those who've fallen prey to this malaise should try watching C-SPAN for an evening, as I did in March on the day that the Gingrichites passed their so-called welfare "reform." Watching a congressional debate can offset the tendency to reduce American political discourse to a set of intellectual constructs, ideas on the page, arguments to refute. Turning on the tube and seeing our elected representatives in action reminds us of the facts on the ground in the American political debate—who comprises the cast of characters and the contents of their particular arguments.

I found stark differences between the two parties in Congress and, among the rank-and-file members, people who spoke my language. It was a real education—enough to get a depressed progressive's pulse beating a little faster.

For starters, take the complexion—literally—of the GOP: While I hesitate to resort to essentialist arguments, the Gingrichites are the most homogeneous bunch of people you're likely to see in 1995, hardly a brown or female face in the group. In contrast, the Democrats really do look so much more like America, including Asian- and African-Americans, Jews, Latinos, in addition to the caucasians.

But more than in color or ethnicity, the contrasts show up in their worldviews. In the floor debate on the "reform" of the welfare system, the Republicans displayed a strange dispassion about the human beings under discussion. They favored abstractions, with lots of speeches about self-reliance versus helplessness, initiative, and cultures of dependency. When they invoked real people, the images were warm and fuzzy, nostalgic anecdotes about the Old Days, Horatio Alger, the American Way—nary a Republican from modest beginnings neglected to include a bootstrap-pulling allusion. Did all of these people grow up on Walton's Mountain?

When the Democrats took the floor, they provided a much-needed reality-check: Maxine Waters, the child of a welfare mother, offering herself to America as the embodiment of the way in which the investment in her family had paid off; Eleanor Holmes Norton, passionately denouncing the immorality of the Republican plan for America's poor; Barney Frank, underscoring his GOP colleagues' hypocrisy in preaching the virtues of "devolution" when they're dealing with programs for the young and the poor, yet touting centralized control when they turn to the things that matter most to them, like amending the Constitution or changing our tort laws.

The Republican House members' most revealing tendency was their penchant for zoological metaphors. A casual channel-surfer might have thought the remote control had landed on "Wild Kingdom," so much talk was there of wolves and alligators by Republicans reaching for metaphors to capture their views of the poor. (See Charles Derber's article, "The Politics of Triage," on p. 37 of this issue for an account of their arguments.) The social equation, as the Republicans explained it, is simple: Feed, clothe, and house those welfare recipients, and they'll lose the will (or is it the know-how?) to do it for themselves. But what's the converse? Let them loose in the wild, and they'll learn self-reliance.

Putting aside the disturbing equivalence of the poor with nonhuman creatures, there's an even more alarming corollary to the Gingrichites' Darwinian metaphor. A social system in which the survival of the fittest is the highest good holds clear and catastrophic consequences for the weak and the helpless among us. How can those with a professed reverence for life (at least before birth) push for a polity red of tooth and claw?

In the current political climate, it is heartening that the Democratic members of the House continue to speak out, reminding Americans that the social contract between the government and its citizens grows from an understanding of the imperative to protect the disadvantaged—a far cry from the Gingrichites' neat Calvinistic equation of poverty with moral failure. □

—Alice Chasan

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EDITORIAL

Fiftieth Anniversaries of 1945

The Second World War

The Second World War was one of the great tragedies of human history, involving the unnecessary and premature deaths of more than forty million people. Its commemoration this year should have been marked by worldwide mourning for all who were lost, an international dialogue on why it happened and what could be done to prevent a recurrence, and an international effort to stamp out all the remnants of racism, xenophobic nationalism, and the demeaning of the powerless. Linked by satellite, using T.V. screens in every village and neighborhood in the world, a week-long teach-in presenting a wide variety of perspectives on how best to create harmony and caring among all peoples and how best to speak to the alienation and pain that lead people to seek scapegoats and create enemies should have preempted all other programming and been the focus of a planet-wide cessation of all work, as the peoples of the world mourned the past and planned for a different future.

The world owes a special debt of thanks to the nations who contributed most to the defeat of the Nazis, particularly the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. It has been culturally cool for decades for liberals and the Left to emphasize the evils in United States history, and doing so has at times been a necessary corrective to the mindless glorification of American history and a refusal to acknowledge the powerful racism, sexism, class oppression, and arrogance of power that have often shaped American reality.

Yet the Left has suffered from its own distortions, failing to adequately acknowledge the beautiful elements in American life and American history or to embrace and exalt the many moments in which the American spirit manifested in idealism and caring. To be sure, there were elements of imperial ambition and narrow self-interest that eventually pushed America's ruling elites into World War II. But for the majority of the tens of millions of Americans who self-consciously mobilized their energies to fight the Nazis, it was a societal-wide dedication to democracy and human freedom, plus a hatred of fascism and the racism and anti-Semitism that accompanied it, that moved them to unprecedented levels of sacrifice and unprecedented levels of idealism and caring for others.

There was in the United States at that time a sense of community and shared purpose that stands in marked contrast to the rabid individualism and selfishness of later decades. "Oh, sure," the skeptic responds, "we don't doubt that solidarity is possible when there is a societal enemy causing a national crisis. But without the external enemy, such solidarity is impossible." Even if that were true, the human race would not lack enemies for the next many thousands of years, once we had mobilized each other to see poverty, hunger, ecological insensitivity, racism, sexism, ignorance, alienation, fear, unnecessary pain, disease, spiritual or ethical deadness, inability to play and innovate, and lack of mutual recognition and caring as the external enemies against which the human race needs to mobilize.

We owe a special debt to the millions of men and women who joined the armed services and who risked their lives. In the Sixties, many of us found their blind patriotism quite disturbing when it was mobilized to support U.S. policies that we correctly identified as contrary to the purported American commitment to democracy. Yet however their loyalties were manipulated by Cold War propaganda, millions of these people continue to deserve our appreciation and homage for what they did.

So, too, we owe much gratitude to the former Soviet Union. This magazine has consistently rapped the distortions of communism and has challenged the one-dimensional views of human nature that underlie much of even the undistorted versions of Marxist materialism. Yet we simultaneously reject the wild historical distortions imposed on the West by the Cold War frenzy, which made it difficult for us to acknowledge the courage and caring of tens of millions of people in Eastern Europe who mobilized against Hitler.

True enough, Stalin himself tried an alliance with Hitler that was only abandoned when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. But for most people in the Soviet Union,

that alliance was only a temporary stratagem to give the Soviets greater time to prepare for a war that was inevitable and that was necessitated by the inherent conflict between fascistic and socialistic ideals. During the war, more than twenty million Soviets died. Let their memory also be blessed.

There were some people in Eastern Europe who welcomed the Nazi troops. They willfully joined the Nazis in hunting down Jews and in suppressing all who had been part of the liberal and socialist past. They and their spiritual heirs now run much of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. True enough, communist totalitarianism deserves the major blame, because the post-World War II regimes it imposed on Eastern Europe eventually became so odious that the right-wing nationalists and the right-wing church became symbols of popular resistance. Yet the champions of the Cold War in the West deserve some of the blame as well for the reemergence of racist and xenophobic forces in Europe.



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Many Jews opposed a quick return to democratic forms in the countries of Europe that had large popular fascist movements. They had witnessed in the 1930 how those democratic forms could quickly be subverted by Nazis, and they believed that a long reeducation process would be necessary before they would trust the masses of Europe. If even now, fifty years later, anti-Semitism gets too respectful a hearing in these countries, imagine what it might have been like had these same forces been given full freedom in 1946 or 1947.

Even today, then, though we welcomed the collapse of communism, we understand the mixed nature of that blessing. The right-wingers who dedicated so much effort to undermining communism without ever wondering about the nature of the world that would follow may have bequeathed to us an age of rising anti-Semitism and xenophobic nationalism. The Cold Warriors were all too happy to welcome into their fold unrepentant Nazis and anti-Semitic nationalists. They deserve part of the blame for why the hatreds that should have been uprooted in the post-World War II era were never fully eradicated.

Yet the totalitarians who appropriated the language of socialism to justify their own class rule deserve much of the responsibility. By discrediting the antiracist and universalist consciousness traditionally associated with the Left, they helped relegitimate the anti-Semitism and xenophobic nationalism that has typically been an element of the Right.

No wonder, then, that a commemoration of 1945 is incredibly complex, requiring, as Marla Stone suggests below, a full recognition of the ways that the meaning of World War II became another piece of contested territory during the Cold War.

A Fitting Memorial: A Rejuvenated and Empowered United Nations

The hopes of the world for international cooperation were dashed during the Cold War. The United Nations, created as an instrument for keeping world peace and promoting health, education, scientific advances, and tolerance among nations and peoples, became a debating forum for national self-interest.

It is tempting to imagine that the best way to memorialize World War II would be to rejuvenate the United Nations. There are many reasons why today, more than ever, we need a strong and powerful world body. Ethnic conflicts such as those facing the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, the many conflicts in the southern tier of the former Soviet Union, and the ongoing conflict in Bosnia, call for a strong international force with the moral authority to intervene. The growing global ecological crisis requires a voice that can speak with genuine authority on behalf of all the peoples of the world and impose

restrictions on the way that the international free market encourages production and distribution of goods in ways that sometimes undermine the viability of the life-support systems of the planet. And the power of corporations to dictate economic terms to the working people of the First World—under threat that they might relocate to a Third World where workers are considerably less powerful—can only be countered by an international authority that has the ability to supervise and restrict the flow of capital and to protect the rights of workers.

But the U.N. has been unable to do any of this because it has neither the power nor the moral authority to act as a real force in international affairs.

The authority of the U.N. could only be established if it were understood to be speaking from the standpoint of a higher moral commitment to the well-being of the human race. Countering the selfishness that often gets defined as "national interest" or justified in terms of the free marketplace, the U.N. could have become the voice of the rational long-term interest of the human race. Instead, it has emerged as nothing more than a compendium of short-term interests of the ruling elites of each member state. To the extent that the U.N. is correctly understood to be nothing more than an accumulation of self-interests, it doesn't hold moral sway over any of us. And this then undercuts its legitimacy to intervene in Bosnia or on behalf of working people or the world's ecological survival.



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For years, many of us who supported a strong United Nations watched in dismay as the General Assembly sullied its moral credibility by endorsing positions like the disgusting "Zionism is racism" resolution. Liberals began to doubt the very possibility of a world body, and support for the U.N.—already under severe attack from conservatives—faded in the United States.

Those who fantasize about creating a world government often come up with very convincing political plans for how a government could be created, its powers, its electoral mechanisms. But they are wasting their time. The reason we don't have a more effective international body is not for want of a plan, but because ruling elites in the most powerful countries would oppose such a government, fearful of the constraints it might place on the ability of corporations to exploit the world's resources and to use the world's populations for cheap labor, and fearful also of the aspects of themselves that might wish for a very different kind of world and might too quickly join in a plan that would prove utopian and even hurtful. This opposition could only be overcome if the rest of us came to believe that a world organization embodied our highest moral vision, and believed that it was respectful of the cultural, national, religious, ethnic, racial, gender, and other differences and did not seek to impose a homogenized reality.

Many nations actually underwent some part of this transformation in orientation during World War II. Although xenophobic nationalism in the '20s and '30s helped create the war, it coexisted with a progressive nationalism that led many countries to fight Hitler. Many liberals have tended to dismiss all forms of nationalism as equally destructive, but in fact there can be healthy elements in nationalism that recognize the need for moral relationships among nations. The willingness to give up national autonomy in specified situations for the long-term best interests of the nation is a central element in a healthy nationalism, just as the capacity to give up some degree of ego autonomy at particular moments in a personal/sexual relationship is central to its health. We already have examples in the history of many nations in which precisely this kind of self-limiting was achieved for the sake of a higher good. To make it really happen, many powerful countries would have to find themselves engulfed by a citizenry that had committed itself to an ethos of caring and concern for others, that had come to realize that living in a world governed by that principle was in their own long-term best interests, and that felt happier and more alive precisely because they had begun to establish that kind of reality in the context of their own national communities.

A politics of meaning has great importance for for-

eign affairs. To the extent that people believe that everyone is motivated by short-term self-interest, it becomes extremely difficult to generate trust and a sense of shared purpose. Far from asking ourselves how to build an international community, many Americans today are focused on how to dismantle or severely curtail the national government that they do have—and for good reason, since they see that government as yet another extension of the ethos of selfishness, and not as a vehicle for mutual caring and community. On the other hand, if we succeed in the next fifty years in building a successful politics of meaning movement, and thus generate a societal ethos of caring and community, that orientation toward the well-being of others will generate a kind of internationalism far different from the corporate internationalism that characterized American foreign policy during the past fifty years. Such an America could have as profound an impact on the larger international climate as a materialistic and self-interested America has had in the past fifty years. An international authority that could be understood to be created for the purpose of internationalizing an ethos of caring would have incredible moral authority and would soon gain the power to protect the environment, the rights of working people in all parts of the globe, and the ability to intervene in local conflicts.

Perhaps we do not need one single international body like the United Nations, but a set of non-governmental organizations and international bodies that have overlapping authorities to act on a variety of different issues. Yet, unless we create some international bodies that actually wield this kind of moral authority, escalating ethnic conflicts threaten to spread, ecological deterioration will proceed apace, and the economic power of working people in the advanced industrial societies will continue to decline (and, absent a powerful politics of meaning movement on the Left, those working people increasingly will be drawn to fascistic elements on the Right).

Isn't the commemoration of the end of World War II the time to initiate this conversation?

The Holocaust

The world has not yet confronted the Holocaust in a serious way. Instead, there has been a massive process of denial of the pain. The despair that follows the dashing of our highest hopes, the horrendous anger and rage inside a nation that would allow it to respond to a political party of violent haters, the desire to be psychically subordinated to someone more powerful, the glorification of irrationality and the abdication of critical capacities, the human betrayals, the ability of people to shut their ears to the cries of their neighbors, the inner deadness that allows people to "just do their duty, follow orders, and act according to the requisites of their job"—none of this has been adequately confronted by our society, or by the Jewish people.

Quite the contrary. Because meritocratic fantasies shape the dominant thought patterns of modernity (what happens to you in life is a function of your merit, your smarts, your energy, and you have nobody to blame but yourself), Holocaust survivors in particular and the Jewish people in general have been trapped by an unwarranted self-blaming for what happened to them. To alleviate this self-blaming, many Jews refused even to acknowledge the fate of survivors, or to assume that the survivors had somehow brought this on themselves (e.g., by collaborating or by not being Zionists or something of the sort). Later, again in the service of denial and repression of the pain, Jews built museums such as Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, set up national days of commemoration (*Yom ha'shoah ve'gevura*), wrote novels and poems and endless books and made a few memorable movies. By drowning in endless Holocaust reminders, we often managed to avoid confronting the experience of shame, humiliation, and powerlessness. Thus developed the obsession with the Holocaust that led TIKKUN'S former Israel correspondent Adi Ophir to predict that in several hundred years there would be a new Holocaust-centered Judaism with its own commandments ("I am the Holocaust, thou shalt have no other genocides before me," and "Remember the Holocaust memorial to keep it holy").

Some have suggested that we are giving the Holocaust too much attention, but according to this analysis, the problem is that we have given it too little attention. We've allowed those who wish to keep the whole thing at a level of emotional distance to set the terms of memory, and they've done so in a way that focuses our attention on the last stages in the experience (ghettoization, transport to the concentration camps, extermination) and not on the earlier stages (the crisis in Europe in the aftermath of World War I, the rise of fascism, our neighbors' rejection of us, the responses of the Zionists and religious parties, etc.). So we all have a good cry, but it is never cathartic because there is too much repressed memory, too much emotional content buried in our collective memories and never confronted.

Central to the denial is the Zionist transformation of Yom HaShoah into an event remembering not just the Holocaust but "*gevurah*," our strength or heroism. There were certainly many moments during their ordeals when Jews fought back, and, on the individual or collective level, performed acts of unbelievable hero-

ism and courage. But the need to emphasize the heroic was part of the Zionist attempt to deny our vulnerability as a people. The acts really worthy of memory were those that seemed consonant with the building of a powerful military state of Jews who would never again need to depend on anyone. "The rest of the world could go to hell," these Zionists seemed to suggest. "We don't need them anyway and our vulnerability stems from not recognizing that. Had European Jewry recognized that sooner, they would have followed their Zionist brothers and sisters to Palestine and been saved." From this mind-set came the fantasy of total independence and autonomy from the rest of the world that leads some Israeli right-wingers to imagine that they could forever rule over the Palestinians. They dismiss the growing anger from the rest of the world, whose moral sensibilities are suspect, since they were silent while we were being herded into the crematoria.

This fantasy of "a nation that dwells by itself" first emerged in the aftermath of our first genocidal experience (in the aftermath of Pharaoh's order to kill our firstborn males and our own subsequent liberation from slavery) and has proved false over and over. We might wish to be free of the pathologies of the world, or to deny our own. But that imagined world in which our fate is independent and we are self-determining is a fantasy, ranking with the fantasy of middle-income Americans that "we made it on our own," without regard to the assistance that they and their parents and grandparents received from the G.I. Bill, mortgage assistance, subsidies to colleges and universities, Social Security, minimum-wage legislation, safety and health legislation, and governmental expenditures on defense and on infrastructural development of selected elements in the economy. Just as many European Jews were deeply mistaken when they felt that "the world can take care of itself, and we should focus our attention inwardly on our own communities' affairs," so Israelis today court future disaster when they think they can ignore the larger ecological, population, and hunger issues in the world, as well as the growing worldwide consensus against one people ruling over another by force.

These illusions obscure our actual interconnectedness with the non-Jewish world, our need for that world to be less crazy and less hurtful, and our vulnerability should that world not be healed. *Tikkun olam*, the healing of the world, is endorsed in liberal Jewish circles when it is understood to be a luxury, a choice engaged in by suburban Jews a few times a year when they engage in acts of charity toward the less fortunate. It feels very different when one begins to recognize it as a pressing necessity.

All this may sound incomprehensible to those whose understanding of the Holocaust was shaped by the Cold War dialogue that followed 1945 (see Marla Stone's article below). Because both the communists and the West were determined to rally sectors of the German population to their side of the Cold War struggle, each side bought into some variant of the view that fascism had magically descended upon Germany in 1933 and had been extinguished in 1945 when sanity and the good Germans returned to power. Consequently, there was no need to understand what caused the rise of fascism, only to celebrate its defeat and replacement by a healthy new world (except, of course, in the other part of Germany governed by the other side in the Cold War).

Once one realizes that we are very interconnected to the rest of the world, that fascism is a perennial possibility, then we are drawn to look back into the world of Jewish politics in the 1920s and early 1930s and to notice how poorly the Jews and the Left dealt with the rise of fascism. Fitting into the modern world, trying to be the epitome of German culture, many German Jews abandoned the social justice orientation of the Jewish tradition and focussed on self-advancement. We are even forced to confront the fact that many rich Jews collaborated with the Right in laying the foundation for fascism's ascent through much of Europe, that many communists refused to confront anti-Semitism within their own ranks, and that many Jews had bought into the success-oriented middle-class lifestyle

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of their neighbors and had little understanding or caring for the plight of the majority of their fellow citizens whose lives were filled with pain and desperation.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi raises the question of whether Jews can ever ask about their own responsibility for the Holocaust. The question can only be approached when we first reassure others that we *do not mean that Jews were the sole or primary cause for their own destruction, or that they are morally culpable, or that non-Jews who hurt us are one whit less morally culpable.* To the extent that the question is approached from the standpoint of self-blame, or as a way to insist that we forgive the perpetrators, it will justifiably raise so much resistance that it is best avoided. But if we start by insisting that what others did to us was totally outrageous and unjustified, and that nothing the Jews did before or during the Holocaust could be used to justify the actions of others or to reduce their responsibility for having failed to stop the whole process, maybe then we could confront Reb Zalman's question.

When we begin to approach this question, we find a world that was filled with people who had been traumatized by the First World War, whose suffering was never publicly confronted by the societies that had lost millions of people. Jews, like most other elements in the European middle class, imagined that that abandonment and avoidance of the recent past was really possible. Just as American society refuses to deal with the meaning of Vietnam, but merrily jogs toward its future, never connecting its present social ills and pathologies with its own recent past, much less its current obsession with "making it," so too the interwar years were dominated by European ruling elites and middle classes whose focus on "making it" or keeping power made it impossible for them to understand the pain and rage that surrounded them. Unable to see that millions of people were in deep pain and upset, they could only write off as "irrational" and hence inexplicable why so many people seemed to be responding to xenophobic nationalism and racism. In fact, following the lead of the Left, many Jews thought they had responded to this phenomenon when they would denounce fascism, never seeking to understand its appeal and hence never able to develop an effective counter-strategy.

As readers of this magazine know, we believe that there was nothing inevitable about the fascists' rise to power in the 1930s any more than there was anything inevitable about the recent electoral successes of the American Right. It appears inexplicable or irrational only because most liberals and most Jews have been unwilling to consider the pain generated by the spiritual and ethical crisis stemming from the triumph of individualism, materialism, selfishness, and cynicism in the modern world. In fact, one Jewish newspaper reviewing my book, *Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation*, went so far as to suggest that its attention to the pain of others in discussing the Holocaust really was an attempt to exonerate them from their responsibility for participating in anti-Semitic movements—as though noting the pain was itself a form of moral turpitude (hence the move among some Jews from "nobody knows the trouble I've seen" to "nobody else is in pain but us").

Neither the Left nor the Jews adequately recognized or addressed the pain that surrounded them. In an equation that has been made time and again in the twentieth century, both the Jews and the Left wrote off anyone who responded to racism as essentially a racist, anyone who responded to sexism as essentially a sexist, anyone who responded to nationalism as essentially a xenophobe—and that there was nothing to say to these people but to see them as irredeemably evil and unreachable. While for all practical purposes that may have been true of the hard-core fascistic elements that formed the core of fascist parties in the 1920s, it was *not* necessarily true of the many millions of people who initially did not respond but were eventually drawn to the Right. Those people might have been prevented from doing so had their pain and their problems been understood and acknowledged by a Left that was sensitive to the meaning crisis of the contemporary world.

In their focus solely on economic crisis, the Left had no room for thinkers like the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, who analyzed the attraction that many ordinary Germans felt to the nationalist community the Nazis were attempting to revive. What the Left lacked was any sensitivity to the hunger people had for a framework of meaning and purpose, one that valued them not for what they accomplished (either as productive workers who would be honored by the socialists, or as successful competitors who would be honored by the bourgeois parties for their economic successes) but for who they were as human beings independent of what role they could carve out for themselves in the capitalist market. What German, Polish, Hungarian, French, Italian, etc. nationalism could do was to tell each person that they were valued because they were a German, Pole, Hungarian, Frenchman, Italian, etc. without regard to what they did or did not accomplish—and this feeling of being recognized and deserving of care regardless of what they accomplished just because of who they were gave to people a sense of importance and value for their lives that the market and those who flourished within it (the Jews, for example) refused to give them.

Faced with the lack of supportive institutions or

(Continued on p. 89)

The Politics of the Dead

Marla Stone

In the spring of 1945, a powerful desire to begin again comingled with the passion for revenge. While the crematoria of Auschwitz bore witness to the depravity, the chance of redemption out of the ashes offered desperately needed hope. Could the victory over the Axis and the burial of the dead open toward something better? Could the victims of the Holocaust not have died in vain?

Onto this terrain were grafted the ideological battles of the postwar settlement. Both West and East, NATO and the Soviet bloc competed for the "true" anti-fascist mantle, fought to claim the victims of the Nazi death camps as their own and to remake them in their own image. At the level of rhetoric, 1945 embodied the triumph of anti-fascism over racism and genocide, of humanity over barbarity, and of justice over terror. In practice, rivals in the throes of another global struggle claimed the same legacy and distorted it to political ends.

A.J. GARCES



So, the dead became pawns in the next battle. The business of geo-politics and ideological war soon replaced the work of reweaving the moral fabric of both the victors and the vanquished. The winners erected monuments, leaving the work of understanding and rooting out fascism for later, or not at all. The memory of the victims of the Holocaust, in their variousness as racial, ethnic, political, and social enemies of the Reich, were transformed into tactical assets in new campaigns and new national myths. Both sides mobilized the physical and psychological debris of the Nazi terror in accordance with current frameworks. At Dachau, in West Germany, the Jewish victims and the story of anti-Semitism predominated, with the camps' original inmates, the Nazis' political enemies, communists, socialists, Social Democrats, all but ignored. In the East, at Sachsenhausen, for example, the dead were "international anti-fascists and anti-imperialists united against Nazism"—the communists and socialists. Depending on your position in the post-war competition for hearts and minds, some dead counted more than others.

Since almost nowhere were all the dead commemorated, the totality of the concatenation of forces which merged to produce the Nazi mass-murder regime and its Final Solution have evaded understanding. The moral and ethical meanings of the war and the genocide were subordinated to the political mobilization of the Cold War. The myth that the United States fought the war to save the Jews (the only visible victims in the collective American mind) was ex-post-facto grafted onto our self-image in the democratic vs. totalitarian dichotomy of the post-war era. The integration of the Holocaust into the ideology of the American Century led to the location of the largest Holocaust museum outside Israel in Washington, as well as a host of smaller American sites of commemoration.

The anti-genocidal rhetoric has proven empty. Like a repressed memory or a pathology uncontended with, genocidal passions have vigorously returned to Europe. Western governments are again appeasing hyper-nationalist, racist, and anti-Semitic movements. The German government's reaction to seven thousand acts of right-wing violence between 1992 and 1993 has been to limit immigration and revise the right to asylum. In the epicenter of hatred, Bosnia, the United Nations watches the destruction of a nation and its people. There are concentration camps in Europe today; Bosnian civilians are being ethnically cleansed and an internationally recognized government, Serbia, maintains that an ethnically pure nation is a legitimate goal. The United Nations and NATO negotiate with Radovan Karadizc, a leader who presides over rape camps, deportations, and ethnic terror.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation rings hollow against a backdrop of ethnic violence, racial hatreds, anti-immigrant passions, and neo-fascist politics. The memory of the victims of the Shoah should have and might have been recruited in the name of universalism, tolerance, and pluralism. In the wake of the Cold War manipulation of the memory of the Liberation, we are left with far too few tools with which to fight fascism and genocide in our own day. □

Marla Stone is assistant professor of European history at Occidental College.

Their War and Ours

Michael Kazin

For my parents, it would always be "the War." I never met anyone of their generation whose lives didn't seem to pivot around that awful—and glorious—time. First, the Nazi attacks on German Jews, then the encroaching fear as Hitler's legions conquered their neighbors, then the tragedy of the Spanish Republic (no one in my family even considered going to Spain until Franco was in his grave), then the shock of Pearl Harbor, the delirium of mobilization, FDR's jaunty inspiration, the quiet tales of soldiers who didn't think they were heroes, the love affairs vivid with the sweetness of extremity. Then, after it was supposed to be all over, they discovered the Holocaust. Now, the war would never really end. Germans would always be the enemy.

But, for the Sixties generation, our war was Vietnam. The good guys wore black pajamas, ate rice, and thoroughly humiliated the big liberals who still worshiped FDR. With the all-knowing naiveté of youth, we imagined we had put our parents' war behind us. But our passionate support for the Third-World peasants would have been impossible if we had not learned from the war against Hitler that one must stand up against evil—whatever the consequences. And our war was sweet too, as long as you were protesting rather than fighting it.

Now, there is no war to call our own. Instead, there are many small wars, each with its atrocities and domestic partisans and flurries of outraged op-ed pieces. But the streets don't fill with chants about Bosnia or Rwanda. And college students, no longer blessed with easy prosperity (or the post-scarcity visions it helped generate), worry about losing their loans and starting a career.

A.J. GARCES



Can we find that "moral equivalent of war" William James wrote about, hopefully, before the first Great War opened the curtain on a genocidal century? Or should we even try? Perhaps it's enough to live decent lives—treating others humanely as co-workers, neighbors, lovers, and citizens while throwing in, from time to time, an election campaign, union organizing drive, communal crime watch, or environmental protest.

But, like it or not, a politics that can transform society and not merely improve it, a little, *does* require much the same psychology as war. We would not have won World War II and won, by losing, in Vietnam without that urgency, that certainty, and that zeal. I mistrust the politics of combat, but I also miss it. And, like a certain lapsed German Jew, I am weary of interpreting the world in various ways. We need to change it. □

Michael Kazin is author of The Populist Persuasion: An American History *(Basic Books, 1995). He is book editor of* TIKKUN *and teaches history at American University in Washington, D.C.*

No Cause for Celebration

Lawrence L. Langer

In August of this year a group called Omega will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by bringing together people "who have transformed their experience of the Holocaust into heroism, hope, and healing." We blame Holocaust deniers (and rightly so) for pretending that the mass murder of European Jewry never took place; what are we to say of those "holocaust deniers," including, alas, rabbis and survivors themselves, who agree to join in a venture that promises to extract from this painful legacy "transformation and new life"?

A few months ago I interviewed a woman who outlived the Holocaust. She spoke of her mother's twelve sisters. All were married, and each one had from three to six children. We tried to reach a total number, and arrived at the approximate figure of seventy family members. "Not one of them returned," she murmured. "All gassed." Probably in Auschwitz.

Nonetheless, Omega is proposing a summer weekend workshop honoring the liberation of that death camp "in which we experience the triumph of the human spirit in the face of unspeakable evil." Never mind the millions murdered: "This works a kind of healing magic," the brochure tells us, "on our own struggles with good and evil."

What has the Holocaust to do with a "celebration" of the liberation of Auschwitz that "offers a vision of wholeness in which the blessing of life is sanctified"? Nazi Germany shattered a people, its culture, its heritage, killed its offspring before they had a chance to be born. Is this to be a source of spiritual inspiration? Jewish renewal remains a challenge for all of us, but not at the price of Jewish amnesia. We cannot speak of "wholeness" in the same breath as Holocaust, nor can we "celebrate" new life without at the same time paying homage to old death.

Frivolous rituals like these make one wonder whether we will ever be able to bear the legacy of historical memory, the burden to recall the worst even as we ply our daily lives toward a friendlier future.

Heroism, hope, and healing indeed! The gravest insult to the Jewish dead in the Holocaust is to hide them behind a curtain of redemptive rhetoric until the greatest crime of the twentieth century dwindles into a source of consolation for our own blunted souls. □

Lawernce L. Langer's most recent books are Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays and Art From the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology *(Oxford, 1995).*

Imagine

Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

Imagine the unimaginable; the Holocaust.

Imagine we are making an unvarnished audit of the Holocaust and our reactions to its horror.

Imagine we do this without the censorship of political correctness in general and without the Jewish PC that tells the story one way when we are among ourselves and another when we make statements we wish to be "good for Jews."

Imagine we even dare to ask the question: What was our own contribution to the Holocaust?

Imagine that we knew also about our own shadow side in it.

Imagine we are faced with what we actually knew when it was happening and we have to admit our paralysis.

Imagine we looked at our vows not to let anything like this ever again happen in the light of our responses to the genocides in Africa, Bosnia, and so many others.

Imagine what we will have to tell our children and theirs about our feeble responses.

Imagine that we finally after fifty-odd years gathered a meeting of our rabbis, theologians, and *machers* to assess what we have learned from the Holocaust and what we as its consequence need to change about how we are and what we think, teach, and do.

Imagine we went public with our findings.

Imagine what our new *Ani Maamin* credo would have to be.

Imagine what pain we would have to face.

Imagine what carrying this pain in a less than conscious way costs us in terms of our vitality and how it distorts our future.

Just imagine! □

Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi is a rabbi, teacher, and professor emeritus at Temple University.

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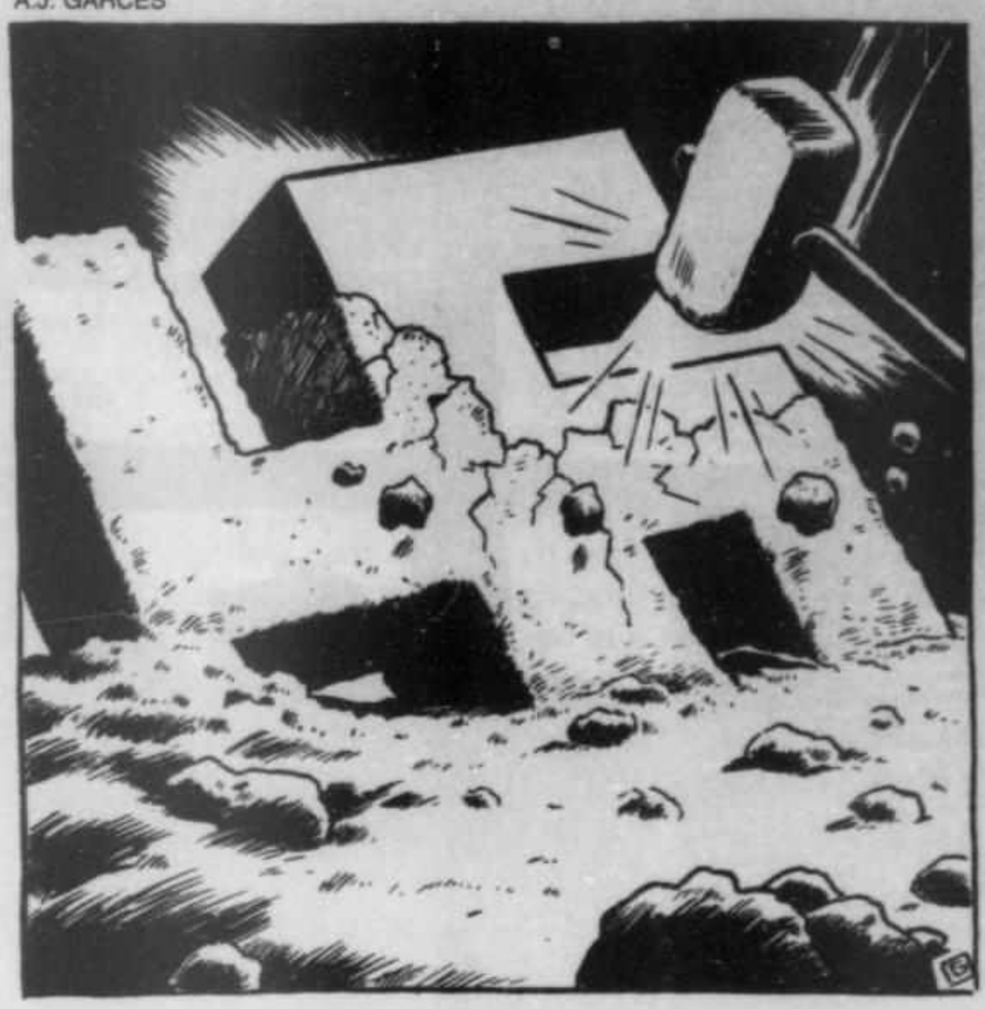
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A Clear and Future Danger

Deborah E. Lipstadt

The Third Reich was defeated in May 1945 but Nazism was not. Neo-Nazis throughout Europe desire to resurrect National Socialism and make it a politically viable movement. They do so in various ways, among them denying the Holocaust. Motivated by an adoration for Nazi Germany and an abiding anti-Semitism, they will redouble their efforts once no survivors remain. Holocaust denial is not a clear and *present* danger. It is a clear and *future* danger. When there is no one left to say "this is what happened to me" then it will be easier for deniers to say "it is not true."

A.J. GARCES



The deniers' *modus operandi* has broad implications for neo-Nazi and extremist activities, not just for Holocaust history. Currently most deniers and neo-Nazis can be directly linked to a neo-Nazi or racist past, as was David Duke in this country. A new corps of extremist leaders is emerging. It is zealously careful about avoiding a public racist past. Unlike David Duke, they will not be photographed in Ku Klux Klan uniforms or swastika-bedecked clothing. Such pictures could discredit their attempts to find respectability and a politically viable voice. As they try to permeate the mainstream, they will tone down their rhetoric so that it will appear more logical and less shrill. They will talk of the "dangers" to their culture posed by those who are of a different heritage [read color or religion]. In fact, their racism and anti-Semitism is in fact more dangerous because the packaging is not only more sophisticated but more palatable to the general public. This, of course, is not unlike what is happening in this country. The reason David Duke's star was eclipsed in the last election was that his message was presented in a slightly smoother way by Pat Buchanan who did not have the overt connections with racist groups that Duke did.

Deniers have made it easier for those who do not take such an extreme position to voice their arguments. In Germany there are many who wish to think of Germans as the Nazis' victims. In May they celebrated Germany's liberation from Nazism. They minimize or relativize Germany's wrongdoing. When they are criticized they hide behind the disclaimer: But we are not denying, we are just relativizing or contextualizing.

Holocaust denial is not just a manifestation of a rise in neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism. It is also a reflection of the nutty notion that there are two—or more—sides to every issue. It is historical deconstructionism at its worst. Student editors who accepted the ads denying the Holocaust felt compelled to do so because they wanted to be open-minded and present "both sides." Television producers who try to get me to appear on their shows with a denier say I should so their audiences will hear "the other side." Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee from Nazi Germany, made the point in "Truth and Politics" that "freedom of opinion is a farce unless truth is respected." Currently on college campuses to argue that some ideas are, to quote the Harvard *Crimson*'s editorial explaining why it rejected the Holocaust denial ad, "utter bullshit" and do not deserve to be explored in the marketplace of ideas is to be seen as narrow-minded and unenlightened. This attitude, coupled with the increasing tolerance for extremism and anti-Semitism, has created an atmosphere which has allowed Holocaust denial to fester and grow. □

Deborah E. Lipstadt, the author of Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory, *is Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University.*

National Interests and Selective Memorialization of Atrocities

Rosemary Radford Ruether

The end of World War II fifty years ago revealed the most shocking systemization of atrocities against groups of human beings in human history. These revelations are burned in my own mind by images of the Nazi death camps in newsreels at the movies when I was nine years old. The United States and other Allied nations expressed the judgment of humanity against the Nazi war criminals in the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

PEARL R. GLUCK



Yet we now know that American judgment against Nazis was very selective. Many Nazis were protected and allowed to escape in exchange for information gathered in the camps and in the assault on the Soviet Union. Recently, new revelations have come to light of systematic atrocities committed by the Japanese against war prisoners who were dissected alive and infected with diseases to test chemical warfare. Chemicals were also dropped on Chinese cities to test their capacity to start plagues. The Japanese in charge of these experiments were protected by the occupying American army in exchange for information on these experiments.

The United States emerged from World War II as the most powerful military and economic world power and was positioning itself for world hegemony. It responded to revelations of atrocities by its enemies, not through consistent humanitarian principles, but selectively according to whether it saw the criminals as having information valuable to its national interests.

Our own ability to remember and to judge such atrocities in the past, as well as human rights abuses by governments today, remains captive to this selective politicization of what is to be remembered and what is to be ignored, repressed, and forgotten. We have seen this at work in the refusal to take the atrocities in Bosnia as a serious issue demanding sustained international concern. If we are to remember the Holocaust, and the many atrocities of the past and present, in a way that mobilizes us against such abuses at all times and to all people, these memories must be freed from their selective exploitation or repression in the service of national interests. □

Rosemary Radford Ruether teaches theology at Garrett Theological Seminary and is on the Graduate Faculty of Northwestern University. She is author most recently of Gaia and God: An Eco-Feminist Theology of Earth Healing *(1992).*

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the End of the Holocaust: A Reading List

Literary Responses

See Under: Love, by David Grossman, Simon & Schuster, 1990.

The most important Holocaust novel ever written, both because of its immense sensitivity and because of its brilliant complexity. Grossman is a world-historical literary talent. Reading the first section of this book is an experience you will never forget and will thank TIKKUN for having urged upon you—it gives an understanding of the enduring impact of the Holocaust and should be required reading in every public school in the world.

Art From the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology, edited by Lawrence L. Langer. And also, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* by Lawrence L. Langer. Both published by Oxford University Press, 1995.

The first book is the most powerful collection of essays, diary selections, fiction, and poetry ever assembled on the Holocaust. Langer's collected essays show him to be an unflinching observer who refuses to romanticize the victims or the meaning of this terrible tragedy.

Black Bread: Poems After the Holocaust, by Blu Greenberg, KTAV Publishing, 1994.

Blu Greenberg, who gained renown as a feminist pushing the limits of the Orthodox world, insisting on staying within the fold even as she explores its halakhic possibilities, suddenly reemerges as a sensitive and talented poet. Each poem tells a story; cumulatively they are as powerful and disturbing. A fitting read for the fiftieth anniversary.

The Meaning of the Holocaust: Political, Ethical and Spiritual Approaches

Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature, by David Kraemer. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Although not *about* the Holocaust, this book prepares you for the kinds of traditional theological responses that have been tried through the ages. God's absence from history was an issue from the moment the Romans began their barbaric rule over the Jews. Kraemer has a subtle and powerful mind and his work shows how top-notch Talmudic scholarship can help clarify contemporary debates.

Jewish Renewal: A Path to Healing and Transformation, by Michael Lerner. Putnam Publishing, 1994.

Although we will not review our editor's book, we can at least mention that chapters seven and eight together with his last chapter answer the following questions: "What kind of God can a rational person believe in after the Holocaust?"; "Can one still believe in the goodness of humanity or its possibility for transcendence?" and "What implications does the Holocaust have for what is permissible in the State of Israel?"



PEARL R. GLUCK

Modernity and the Holocaust, by Zygmunt Bauman. Cornell University Press, 1989.

A brilliant sociological analysis of the causes of the Holocaust.

Conscience and Courage, by Eva Fogelman. Anchor Books, 1994. A book that analyzes all the difficult issues that came up for those who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis, and what we can learn from them.

The Historical Dimension

Two useful histories are *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry*, by Leni Yahil. Oxford University Press, 1990; and *The Holocaust: the Jewish Tragedy*, by Martin Gilbert. Fontana/Collins, 1986. Tom Segev's *The Seventh Million: the Israelis and the Holocaust*, Hill & Wang, 1993, gives a powerful indictment of the Zionists' problematic response during World War II and the disturbing reception of Holocaust refugees who often found themselves despised by a society devoted to heroism and scornful of weakness. *Masses and Man*, by George Mosse, (Wayne State University Press, 1987), gives a deep understanding of the cultural basis for the rise of fascism. And Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust*, (Free Press, 1993), gives us a powerful account of the assault on truth and memory that has been part of the political landscape of the Right both in the United States and Europe. □

American Public Memory on the Washington Mall

Edward T. Linenthal

On April 22, 1993, the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—an institution devoted to the idea that public representation of shattering historical events contributes to the civic health of the nation—attracted worldwide attention. On January 30, 1995, Smithsonian Institution Secretary I. Michael Heyman announced the cancellation of the National Air and Space Museum's exhibit, "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II." These two museums are but a few blocks apart, but their respective stories reveal the capricious nature of American public memory.



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

While those responsible for shaping the Holocaust museum faced a variety of vexing questions regarding the appropriate location of Holocaust memory in American soil, in an appropriate building, and in an appropriate narrative, there was never a doubt that visitors would confront a complex story of American engagement with the Holocaust. They not only see comforting images of Americans liberating concentration camps, and learn that America became home to thousands of survivors, but they also learn that official anti-Semitism kept thousands of Jews from legally emigrating to America before the war. They learn the heartbreaking story of the SS St. Louis, turned away from American shores in 1939. Many of the 939 passengers on board eventually died in the Holocaust. Visitors are confronted by the argument of historian David Wyman that the United States could have and should have bombed Auschwitz, destroying the gas chambers and crematorium, thereby saving thousands of lives, but refrained from doing so. No simple narrative of American heroism is told in this museum.

The curators of "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II" also wanted to present a complex narrative about the use of atomic weapons and the dawn of the nuclear age. Just as the Holocaust museum focused on an event it deemed "unique," so too did the Air and Space Museum focus on the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as events that changed the world. Its narrative included the fifty-year history of historians' debates over the decision to drop the bomb. Rather than simply assert that the bomb saved lives and ended the war, the curators presented arguments that the reasons behind the use of the bomb were, as historian Michael Sherry notes, more complex, including "the precedents set by firebombing, the psychological impact of the nuclear bomb, the lives to be saved by quicker termination of the war, the desire for revenge, the assertions of Japanese fanaticism, the need to justify an enormous investment, the technicians' desire to test their creation in the most dramatic way, the alarm that might be felt by the Russians, the supremacy the bomb's use might confer on the United States, and the shock to be given to a war-mad world." The narrative included a unit that focused on the horrible human consequences of the weapons, and concluded by reminding visitors of the brooding omnipresence of the nuclear threat.

Between January 1994 and January 1995, fierce debate ensued, as critics argued that the script was fatally unbalanced, lacking the essential context in which the story of the bomb must be told—the horror of the Pacific War and the very real fears of horrendous casualties in the

Edward T. Linenthal, professor of religion and American culture at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, was a member of the advisory committee for the exhibit "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II." He is the author of Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields *and his recently released* Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum *(Viking-Penguin USA).*

planned invasion of Japan—misremembering the Japanese only as victims and passing over too lightly their roles as aggressors and perpetrators in World War II, and by inference, characterizing Americans as the aggressors in the Pacific War. By October 1994, a thoroughly revised script included few photographs of Japanese victims, many photographs of mushroom clouds, no indication that there had been enduring debate regarding the use of atomic weapons, inclusion of the pre-bomb context of the Pacific War, and the exclusion of the postwar context of the legacy of the bomb. Many critics remained unsatisfied, claiming that the exhibition was still offensive to veterans, and several members of Congress sought to regulate public memory by threatening to cut the Smithsonian's budget and to hold hearings to determine fault for an "un-American exhibit."

Why can a complex story of America's role in the Holocaust be told in one museum but a complex story of the use of atomic weapons cannot be told in another? Both are public museums. Both are situated "on" the Mall. One answer is that the Holocaust museum was designed as both a memorial—a place of commemoration—as well as a history museum. It had clearly delineated commemorative space, the Hall of Remembrance, and historical space, the Hall of Witness. Presentation of historical complexity took place within an atmosphere of commemorative respect.

Like many other museums, the National Air and Space museum is not designed as a commemorative institution. Its exhibit did not offer thanks to veterans, but sought to examine a riveting historical event. The lack of attention to commemorative sensibilities on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the bomb and the end of the war registered among some critics as an act of gross insensitivity.

Another answer lies in the location of each narrative in American memory. The Holocaust often serves as our official "comfortable horrible" memory. The implications of making it a more complex story does not threaten us, for it is still viewed as someone else's history. Insofar as Americans were complicit bystanders half a century ago, that guilt is paid for by a penitential act: federal support for the Holocaust museum. For politicians, Holocaust memory has been rhetorically useful—recall President Clinton's wish that it remain "ever a sharp thorn in our national memory"—but kept from making too much difference. A case in point is the official resistance to using the Holocaust as a model for how Americans should respond in Bosnia. In the fall of 1992, the U.S. State Department decided not to charge Serbia with genocide out of fear that the United States would be forced, because of the international Genocide Treaty, to intervene. In the months leading up to the opening of the Holocaust Museum, State Department personnel were reportedly discouraged by their superiors from drawing close parallels between the Holocaust and events in Bosnia.

The use of atomic weapons is a more visceral, volatile American memory, a narrative that "matters" in ways that the Holocaust does not. There are, notes M.I.T. historian John Dower, two clashing narratives about the bomb, the heroic and the tragic. The heroic narrative views the bomb as an instrument that brought a quick and victorious end to a long and bloody war. The commemorative message accompanying this narrative is, "remember what we did and honor the memory of those who did not come back." The tragic narrative accepts the fact that the bomb ended the war, but places it in a long and regrettable history of the terror bombing of civilian populations during the war, and as a harbinger of an arms race that promised the increased efficiency of mass destruction. The commemorative message is, "never again." Except for some historians, who were contemptuously marginalized, there was no community invested in telling—or defending the telling—of the tragic narrative in this exhibition. To those for whom the bomb symbolized the saving of lives and the end of the war, the museum's planned exhibition appeared as an act of defilement—profaning the temple of aerospace triumph—the National Air and Space Museum—and an act of dispossession—having a sacred story "stolen" from them by historians and museum professionals.

Neither of these narratives is "wrong." They emerge out of different sensibilities, are concerned with different questions, pay attention to different "facts," and engage some of the same facts in different ways. Unfortunately, critics believed that the only compensatory memorial act was what some historians characterized as the "historical cleansing" of the exhibit, and exclusion of the tragic narrative.

At the Holocaust museum, the boundaries of memory were open to complexity and irony. At the Air and Space museum, the boundaries were resistant to any alteration. "I don't want sixteen-year-olds walking out of there thinking badly of the U.S.," exclaimed Representative Peter Blute, a Massachusetts Republican, explaining his vigorous opposition to the planned exhibit at the Air and Space Museum. History, in this view, is to be therapy, presented to make people "feel good." If, in Mr. Blute's America, museums in the nation's capital are supposed to present sanitized puffery, one wonders if he wants the Holocaust Museum to alter its narrative as well—and if he is willing to threaten their federal funding—so that the cleansing of public memory will continue on its menacing way. □

The Other Holocaust Museum

Jon Wiener

Los Angeles has the other Holocaust museum—it's glitzy, appeals to the MTV generation with interactive multimedia, and counts Arnold Schwarzenegger among its fund-raisers. But it's different from Washington's U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in another way: instead of treating Jewish suffering as unique, its slant is that cooperation between people of different groups to defend the civil rights of all minorities makes the best defense against racial and ethnic violence.

What lesson should a Holocaust museum teach? Of course it's important to have museums that refute the claims of the "Holocaust revisionists," but "it happened" is only the beginning; more significant, and more interesting, is the question, why, which in turn raises the question, how can we prevent anything like it from happening again?

Because of the extremity of the Holocaust, these questions test the limits of historical understanding. Yet they apparently were not so formidable to the people who first conceived of a memorial to Jewish victims of the Nazis. Drafted during World War II by Mordecai Shenhabi and presented to the Jewish National Fund, the proposal for what became Yad Vashem, the official Israeli Holocaust monument, declared that the Nazi extermination of Jews was the result of "a thousand years of trying to live in countries that are not ours." As Tom Segev argues in his book, *The Seventh Million*, this understanding of the Holocaust stemmed from the Zionist perspective: The Jews' existence in the Diaspora, caused by the absence of a homeland, made the Holocaust possible, and the state of Israel was the solution.

In the United States, Jewish approaches to Holocaust memorialization have derived from a different preoccupation: literature, monuments, and memorials have emphasized the Holocaust's uniqueness. It is thus offensive to much of organized American Jewry to compare the Holocaust with other historical crimes. When spokesmen for other minorities have argued that their people have suffered as much or more than European Jewry, American Jewish leaders have countered by accusing them of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, considerable scholarly energy has gone into what historians of Judaism call "the exceptionality debate," the argument that the Holocaust is only the most terrible manifestation of the widespread, enduring, potentially murderous Gentile hostility toward Jews.

In contrast, Los Angeles's Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance, which opened in February 1993, is predicated on a different lesson. The museum's structure and emphases suggest that Jewish suffering is not unique; the exhibits call attention to the past and present victimization of many other peoples in ways that have much in common with the Jewish experience. Not only should Jews never forget what happened in Europe during World War II; not only do we want others to remember that it happened; we need to appreciate each others' experiences of oppression and to ally to fight intolerance.

To see how the Museum of Tolerance makes its argument, I bought a ticket one hot morning in West L.A. and joined a tour group that consisted mostly of high school kids brought on a field trip.

The museum doesn't waste any time conveying its message. On the day of my visit, just inside the ticket booth was a poster announcing the "30th anniversary commemoration" of "Freedom Summer 1964"—observing the "martyrdom" of "two Jewish civil rights workers" and one African American in Mississippi. A memorable emblem of Black-Jewish alliance, the poster made a fine starting point for the museum, which is divided into two parts: the initial section, called the "Tolerancenter," and the Holocaust museum proper. By placing the Tolerancenter first, the museum seeks to reach an audience that is primarily not Jewish, consisting mainly of students brought to the museum on class trips—and in contemporary Los Angeles, that population includes a large percentage of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students. The museum has anticipated two potential problems with their audience: first, they may react to the story of the Holocaust by asking, why should we care? These are the Jews' problems, not ours. And second,

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what about us? Didn't our people suffer too? By making the Tolerancenter visitors' initial experience, the museum has preempted both of these objections: By acknowledging, indeed emphasizing, other groups' victimization, by connecting the Jews' story to that of others, the museum has attempted to win interest, sympathy, and attention for the story of the Holocaust.

Despite its promise, the Museum of Tolerance fails to deliver; its methods for conveying the excellent lessons it purports to teach are ineffective and at times offensive. Visitors enter the Tolerancenter down a corridor with a display titled "We the People," composed of huge slides of what our guide called "happy times, multiracial good times"—picnics, parades, and baseball games—featuring cute kids of different colors. At the end of the corridor are two doors to the exhibits, one marked "Prejudiced" and the other "Unprejudiced." The guide invited each of us to enter through the appropriate door. But when someone tried the "Unprejudiced" door, he discovered it was locked; after some embarrassed laughter, everyone entered through the door for the "Prejudiced"—to be greeted by a sign acknowledging the "potential for violence within all of us."

This may sound like a stupid gimmick, but it rests in a serious pedagogical theory: instead of asking visitors to identify with the victims, we are identified with the perpetrators. It's a startling message, since our coming to the museum ought to demonstrate that we are among the virtuous. It's especially startling for Jewish visitors: How could we, the victims, be perpetrators? To suggest that victims can become perpetrators offers an extraordinary truth.

But this potential remains unrealized. Around the corner, an exhibit tells us, the prejudiced, that we shouldn't accept stereotypes, such as "fat men are jolly." The museum could have challenged stereotypes that matter, like "welfare mothers are lazy," or "Black teenagers are violent gang members," or "Palestinians are terrorists." But the exhibit's creators apparently didn't want to confront the more destructive and pervasive stereotypes.

The Tolerancenter—a big room filled with dazzling video screens and flashing colored signs beneath a black ceiling—looks like the video arcade in a Las Vegas casino, which is more or less the idea. Upon entering, the guide sets visitors loose to explore the Tolerancenter on their own. The main exhibit consists of a high-tech video display, running at six different "workstations" around the room, titled "Understanding the Los Angeles Riots." Here again the designers made a bold move to address the most urgent issues of social conflict, to show that our story didn't end with the defeat of fascism in 1945, remaining at the center of our experience, in our city, today.

But again, the promising conception was not fulfilled. During my tour, all the monitors seem to be showing different stages of the same fast montage of horrifying and heartbreaking news clips, accompanied by a voice-over: "everyone was victimized," the narrator says, as a sobbing Korean woman wails on screen outside her looted shop. "The community was destroyed," a Black man says. "Pain and grief crossed all racial and ethnic boundaries." We saw once again the most sickening footage from the Los Angeles riots, the live TV broadcast of white trucker Reginald Denny's head being bashed in by young Black men. Then the video cut to Black people looting in a festive mood. These are precisely the images that reinforce the stereotypes of Black people: young Black men as inhuman and vicious; poor Blacks as lawless looters; whites and Asians as their helpless victims. It's the same thing we get on local T.V. news every night—no surprise, since most of this footage came from television news.

The interactive part of the display consists of a touch-screen menu that invites viewers to choose among six topics, including the media's role in the rioting, "economic conditions," "ethnic tensions," "police mistreatment of minorities," and "criminal and gang activity." At the end of each segment the viewer is asked his or her opinion about what caused the riot—anger over the verdict, or poor economic conditions, or criminal and gang activity? The results "thus far" are then displayed on bar charts, with the responses to each question divided among six ethnic groups. The bar charts make for lifeless video—and I can only think intentionally so—in comparison to the footage of Black looters.

The Museum of Tolerance starts with a message of universalism; it ends with a message of unique Jewish suffering.

Another exhibit, the "Whisper Gallery," shifts the perspective away from that of the prejudiced and attempts to give us the experience of a victim who is the target of racial epithets. Visitors may enter a dark tunnel where racial and ethnic epithets are whispered, presumably at us. On opening day, Simon Wiesenthal himself explained to reporters, "This is very important, because words can kill … Nazis didn't start with gas chambers. They started with dividing people."

Although *Time* Magazine's reviewer found the

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FICTION

The Sampolne Rebbe

Isaiah Spiegel
translated by David H. Hirsch

Last year there was no summer at all in the ghetto. Soon after Pesach an ice cold wind suddenly started blowing again. Sterile clouds floating by left a trace of sickly pallor in the hollow sky. Winter refused to loose its grip, and ever since Hanukkah a gray mist of evaporating snow remained suspended over the rooftops. People thought that as soon as the sun grew stronger the mist would disappear and the blue sky would emerge. But well into summer the sky was still not to be seen. At the crack of dawn, when the sun was just coming over the horizon, then just barely, perhaps for a split second, it might be possible to catch a hint of a shred of blue sky. But in an instant the shred of blue would dissolve in a blast of demonic wind bringing down a curtain of soot. The diabolically frigid wind blew freely through the window frames and attic openings. Jews who had discarded their heavy winter clothes now retrieved them from their bench-chests and once again started looking for something to chop into kindling. The sun did not show itself in this ghetto for whole days at a time. Only a bleak darkness sifted through to the streets. Each day the twilight grew denser. Once in a while a yellowish spot with vivid reddish edges, resembling an enormous brass coin, would break through the clouds, then slowly slide into obscurity, as if in an eclipse.

A feeling of terror settled down on the Jews who remained in the little street, but the terror was accompanied by a desperate hope that ultimately they would be comforted. Reading some of the ancient mystical texts that had been preserved, someone had ascertained that in this very year there would be a great upheaval and disruption among the angels that would lead to the dissolution of the world. All this was to happen at a time when the Jews were going through great troubles and persecution. By means of certain allusions and numerological speculations it was discovered that this fated year would begin with the disappearance of summer. First there would be days that were short and truncated. The sun would appear only fitfully before being

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PEARL R. GLUCK

extinguished altogether. It would hang like a feeble lamp in a void among the desolate angels. Birds in midflight would descend to earth like falling stones.

There was a second sect of Jews on the same street who said just the opposite: The sun would indeed no longer be seen, and would appear to be extinguished. But by manipulating certain texts and interpreting various biblical sayings, the sages of this sect demonstrated that these signs would only be an indication that the world was on the verge of the great moment of destruction when there would be days with no light. The sun would appear to be dead. The stars would disappear from the firmament. Powerful blizzards accompanied by thunder and lightning would break out. But all these happenings would be signs of a new beginning … And all these things would surely come to pass at a time when Jews are in deepest distress. And in the year of greatest Jewish suffering, a dazzling light would appear in the

east with the morning stars. And that light would come like a flame which would eliminate all evil from the world, uprooting Satan and all the slaughterers of the Jewish people. The seeming destruction would actually be the moment of illumination and redemption ....

In the peculiar weather of that summer, women and elderly Jews of the little ghetto actually saw all manner of signs that had already been set forth in the sacred books. The decrees of the Germans had plunged the Jews into their moment of deepest darkness. Everywhere one looked, abandoned courtyards were laid waste and resembled houses for purifying the dead. Naked corpses lay rotting and unattended in the open air, and no one came to pick them up. Dead people sat at tables, leaning on their elbows, as if they were in a trance. Near their gray lifeless heads lay dried-up potato peels.

At the first sign of sunset the few Jews left on the street used to steal into the Sampolne Rebbe's room to recite evening prayers in secret. In a double wall in his apartment, the Sampolne Rebbe had hidden a miniature Torah which was wrapped in a blue velvet mantle studded with a variety of glowing stones. Nobody knew where the old man had obtained the miniature Torah. People whispered that all the auguries and prophecies were coming from the old man himself, from the Sampolne Rebbe. At every prayer session he preached good tidings to the Jews, reading prophecies of redemption out of the sacred texts.

The Rebbe of Sampolne was sitting alone in his room, bent over a crumbling, dusty book. There was nothing in the room but a bucket of water and, in a corner, a bench with three legs. The fourth foot was a stack of red bricks. A fat old cat that had been following the Rebbe around for the last few months was seated on the windowsill. At night the cat, lying next to his skinny feet, would even share the Rebbe's dreams. The whole thing was bizarre, since there were no cats at all in the ghetto, and yet this cat had waxed fat and flourished with the Sampolne Rebbe. The Rebbe always slept in his stockings, with the sack for his prayer shawl open at his side. He used to rouse himself suddenly out of his sleep, throw the prayer shawl over his shoulders, and suddenly start raising a racket. He roared, shouted, and stamped his feet on the floor. Neighbors would wake from their sleep, thinking the Germans were dragging Jews out into the courtyard again. But the Rebbe did not shout long, because his strength would fail him and his weak heart couldn't stand the strain. He would start to cry and would collapse like a weak newborn lamb. The cat would remain wrapped around his feet wailing like a child. The Sampolne Rebbe would stand next to the window, supporting himself with both hands on the window frame, and look at the stars. Then he would roll up the window and stretch out both his long yellow waxen arms, which resembled two Day-of-Atonement candles.

"*Gevald*, sweet Father!... How Long? How long? I ask you!... How long must I, the Sampolne Rebbe, pound on Your gates of mercy? *Gevald*, sweet Father! *Gevald*!"

For a long time he stood there at the window, wrapped in his prayer shawl, and shouted through the courtyard to the stars.

Long before the war had started, Jews had considered the Sampolne Rebbe something of a scatterbrain. When someone used to visit him he would first start shaking the visitor and would then honor him with a few fiery slaps. After a while he would take a peasant fiddle with three strings out of the closet and play a lovely melody. As he played, the Sampolne Rebbe kept yelling:

"Jackass! ... Peasant dunce! ... Do you not hear the melody of the Messiah descended from David?"

Then a little later he would throw the visitor out of the house.

The more the Sampolne Rebbe punched people and chased them from his presence, the more the Jews flocked to him, if only to hear his fiddling. There were some who claimed that after they heard his fiddle-playing their hearts opened. A festive light illuminated their entire inner being. But most of the Jews would have none of it. They concluded that the Sampolne Rebbe was simply a madman. Or else they suspected him of being involved in some sort of black magic.

As the yellowish twilight of the ghetto grew denser, the Sampolne Rebbe gave orders to pack up what little remained of Jewish artifacts, make small bundles, and prepare for great happenings. Jews said that at night they clearly saw in the dark sky how the great stars in the west were extinguished one at a time and then disintegrated. They fell in tiny fragments over the abyss where the ghetto was located.

The thirteenth day of the month of Sivan began in denser darkness than any of the preceding days of the month. The paltry light of dawn quickly melted, and at high noon deepest night returned. A persistent darkness shuffled into the remotest corners of the ghetto. The sun never rose. All the Jews of the street ran through the backyards to the Sampolne Rebbe. Women wanted to start a loud wailing, but when they saw the Rebbe's room filled with people, and the Rebbe himself pacing the room in his high white stockings, they fell mute. The crowd that had gathered in the little room was in a state of high excitement. Recognizing the truth in all of his prognostications, the Jews now gathered

around the Sampolne Rebbe and looked submissively into his distorted pale face, which was flushed with the flame of an inner unearthly ecstasy. Under his torn smock, the trousers kept falling down over his white socks. As he bent over to lift his trousers, he got stuck, and remained stooped over for a long time, as if crying into his lap. At the same time, the yellow star on his shoulder started glowing with a beautiful golden radiance. The room was so dark now that the people inside couldn't see each other's faces. Children in their mothers' arms started crying and whining, "Mama." The people in the room were so tightly squeezed together they had to stand on one foot. Outside, the darkness threatened like a disheveled witch. The Sampolne Rebbe tossed the prayer shawl over his shoulders, and lifting a Torah above the heads of the people shouted in a hoarse voice: "Jews, be prepared! Let us go, let us all go! ... Brace yourselves, Jews! ... We are leaving right now ... Let us all leave together! ... Follow me, Jews!"

He was the first one out. The rest of the crowd walked behind him under the lightless sky, treading on the stones in fearful silence. Not a pinpoint of sun came from above. They formed a long line because the street was a narrow one that ended in a high dark wall. The Sampolne Rebbe stayed in the lead, carrying the miniature Torah. The crowd, following him through a narrow door, was now walking on soft earth. Nobody knew why they suddenly stopped on the barren ground that led to the cemetery. They realized where they were when women falling in their flight found themselves holding onto tombstones. Frightened, they ran closer to the old man from Sampolne and began shouting: "Sampolne Rebbe! ... Where are you taking us? Sampolne Rebbe! ... Turn back, don't go there ... That's where the barbed wire is! ... Sampolne Rebbe! ... Sampolne Rebbe! ..."

But the Sampolne Rebbe no longer heard anything the women shouted to him. He just kept walking with the Torah enfolded in his arms, and began singing a melody in muffled tones. It was an old traditional melody—and several Jews started singing along with him in the darkness. All of a sudden a cold, frosty wind started blowing. Snow even started to fall. Tiny flakes studded the Jews' heads, like a sprinkling of silver coins. A bolt of green light cut through the darkness of the fenced-in field. The Jews walked in narrow paths among the ancient Jewish tombstones. The snowstorm and the lightning were the last of the signs contained in the sacred texts. By this time the Sampolne Rebbe was carrying a child in one arm and the wrapped Torah in the other. He was dancing, while shouting to those behind him:

"Jews, don't be frightened! ... Just look around you—all fences are falling! ... All boundaries are disappearing! ... With determination, Jews, we are getting out! ... Out! ... Out! ... Look, there are no more fences! ... Jews, sing all praise to the Creator of the Universe!"

And, indeed, the Sampolne Rebbe was the first to set foot on the little patch of ground near the old fallen gravestones. But he suddenly slipped, and as he was falling banged his head on one of the stones. He immediately regained his feet and kept on going. Another bolt of lightning lit up the burial mounds. Green streaks snaked out of the darkness. The snow flurry swirled around them. Now the Sampolne Rebbe could see distinctly the shadows rising from death mounds—men, women, and children, some still in their loose-fitting death shrouds and others completely naked. They were all moving eastward. Another bolt of lightning lit up the sky behind the throng. They kept moving forward, faster, drenched in a shimmering green light. □

Lodz Ghetto, 1943

In a double wall in his apartment, the Sampolne Rebbe had hidden a miniature Torah.

Born in Lodz, Poland, in 1906, Isaiah Spiegel was educated in Jewish schools and later taught Yiddish language and literature up to the time of the German occupation in 1939. Until 1944, when he was deported to Auschwitz, he lived in the Lodz Ghetto, where he wrote a substantial number of short stories. Having survived Auschwitz, he returned to Lodz and retrieved some of the stories that he had hidden away, rewriting them where needed. A collection of his stories titled Malchus Getto (Ghetto Kingdom) *was published in Lodz in 1947. Spiegel emigrated to Israel in 1951, where he lived and continued to write until his death in 1991. Other Spiegel stories published in English include "Bread"; "Ghetto Kingdom"; and "A Ghetto Dog." "The Rabbi of Sampolne" is from volume II,* Shtern Leichtn in T'hom, Stars Twinkle in the Abyss *(Tel Aviv, Israel Book, two volumes.)*

Lost Jewish (Male) Souls

A Midrash On *Angels in America*

Jyl Lynn Felman

Tony Kushner's 1993 Pulitzer-Prize-winning play, *Angels in America*, is very gay. And Jewish. It's about assimilation, self-loathing, and men with lost souls; the betrayal of the faith and the abandonment of a moral vision. Depending on who the viewer is, there are two versions of the play, playing simultaneously. There's the deeply moving, virus-infected, *goyishe*-gay-who-divinely-hallucinates; plus Mr. married-Mormon-coming-out-of-the-closet to pill-popping-straight, soon-to-be-happy-ex, Mrs. Mormon —AIDS version. Then there's the culturally lost, wondering-in-secular-exile, ambivalent *treyf*, quasi-civil-libertarian-melting-pot-mess, full-of-self-deception, painfully revealing Jewish version, located in the extremely bizarre triumvirate of Roy Cohn, Ethel Rosenberg, and the imaginatively invented totally believable (character of) Louis Ironson. Ultimately, one plot informs the other as the characters move in out of their tightly woven, interrelated narratives. But *Angels in America* will always be my *Jewish Fantasia on National Themes*. It resounds in my ears like the long, hard, final sound of the *shofar* calling the People Israel to worship in a postmodern, Hillary Clinton-reconstructed, school-prayer-reinstated, third-wave-neo-Newt-Gingrich era. Where, lying at the foot of the Statue of Liberty, Jewish identity is in fragments while lost Jewish (read male) souls seek solace in the exact same, singular, superclean anus of a closeted, self-righteous, God-fearing married Mormon faggot. Yes, *Angels* is about Jewish male self-loathing in the twentieth century held tightly within the ever expanding embrace of Miss Liberty's very tired, porous hands.

Angels opens with a quintessential, North American Jewish moment: A very old rabbi with a heavy Eastern European accent, long beard, and stooped shoulders presides over the funeral of a woman who has spent the last ten years of her life at the Bronx Home of Aged Hebrews without a visit from her grandson, who lives minutes away. At the funeral, the rabbi reads out loud the names of the family mourners whose roster by the third generation is generously sprinkled with one Gentile appellation after another. For the Jew who dies alone without family or community, Kushner has written the new "Diaspora *Kaddish*." Rabbi Chemolwitz publicly admits that he doesn't know the deceased Sarah Ironson or her family. But he knows Sarah's journey and the meaning of that journey, which in the end is more important than knowing the person herself. For it is in the irreversible departure from Eastern Europe to the climactic, but culturally dislocating arrival at Ellis Island where Jewish continuity is affirmed. Listen to the rabbi:

> Rabbi: (He speaks sonorously, with a heavy Eastern European accent, unapologetically consulting a sheet of notes for the family names): … This woman. I did not know this woman. … She was … (He touches the coffin) … not a person but a whole kind of person, the ones who crossed the ocean, who brought with us to America the villages of Russia and Lithuania—and how we struggled, and how we fought, for the family, for the Jewish home, so that you would not grow up here, in this strange place, in the melting pot where nothing melted ….

By using the plural "we" rather than the singular "she," the rabbi purposefully includes himself in the historic crossing of Ashkenazi Jews from the old country to the "new" country. And with the public insertion of himself into his "eulogy for the unknown," he affirms Jewish continuity in spite of the fact that he is presiding over the funeral of a Jew he did not know for a family he does not know. Then, through the brilliant use of the second-person "you," Kushner personalizes the impersonal space of the estranged Diaspora Jew from his/her cultural roots. Alone in the middle of a pitch-black stage with the coffin of our ancestors, the

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stooped rabbi stands facing the void. At the exact same moment, the audience is dramatically transformed into the future generations—not only of Sarah Ironson's family, but of the Jewish people in general. Then to us, as Jews, the rabbi speaks:

> Descendants of this immigrant woman, you do not grow up in America, you and your children and their children with the *goyische* names. You do not live in America. No such place exists. Your clay is the clay of some Litvak *shtetl,* your air the air of the steppes—because she carried the old world on her back across the ocean, in a boat, and she put it down on Grand Concourse Avenue, or in Flatbush, and she worked that earth into your bones, and you pass it to your children, this ancient, ancient culture and home. (little pause.)

When the audience is secured as the next generation, the rabbi ends his eulogy with a bitter, painful admonition:

> You can never make that crossing that she made, for such Great Voyages in this world do not any more exist. But every day of your lives the miles that voyage between that place and this one you cross. Every day. You understand me? In you that journey is ....

In *us* that Journey *is*. Even if we want to forget where we came from, we can't. It's impossible. The journey lives in us, in spite of us; not only as cultural, but also as spiritual inheritance.

By opening *Angels* with this scene, Kushner claims his rightful place in the Jewish lexicon of post-Holocaust writers confronting secular Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Yet the questions *Angels* ask around sexuality, autonomy, and cultural preservation belong within the ethnic, narrative tradition that began in the old country with Sholem Aleichem's Tevye, asking *The Almighty* for guidance in raising his Jewish daughters in a secular world. And that particular ethnic tradition continues on today (in the New World) with the "all-American, Jewish everyman" plays of Arthur Miller, Paddy Cheyefsky, Nathanael West, and Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*. But Kushner, writing in a post-structuralist age, explodes the boundary of tribal sensitivities. He uses a sexuality clearly constructed outside of procreative, nuclear, heterosexual marriage as the postmodern metaphor for the new, self-loathing Willy Loman. Willy has become "Nelly," and so very fey at that.

Louis Ironson is the post 'Nam, civil rights redux, contemporary Jewish Nelly. Not a likeable, hardly sympathetic liberal, Jew-boy fella. The son of good Jewish lefties and a failure by his own admission, he's a word processor working in the courthouse basement of the Court of Appeals in Brooklyn. (He never made it to law school.) After his grandmother's funeral, he confides to his *shiksa* boyfriend Prior Walter that he hasn't visited Bubbe Sarah for ten years; she reminded him too much of his mother. With this confession, Kushner appears to play into the Philip Roth/Norman Mailer, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, hate-your-mother-yiddische-mamma's-boy stereotype.

But Louis's absence from his family must also be read in the context of the historical abandonment of an entire people and the shame that abandonment produced. Louis doesn't visit Sarah because he is afraid of his mother's shame; the shame of the little *feygelah* who leaves home not to marry and make a fortune, but to fuck other little *feygelahs*, Jew and Gentile alike. Louis has internalized the family shame and projects this shame onto his grandmother. So he cannot visit her out of fear of revisiting his own (Jewish male) self-loathing. This singular act of abandonment of an immigrant grandmother, by a self-loathing Jew, forms the controlling metaphor upon which Kushner seeks to negotiate the question of morality in human relations in the age of AIDS.

Louis Ironson abandons his virus-infected lover just as he abandoned his grandmother. Ignorant of Jewish tradition and afraid of what he's about to do, Louis checks with the rabbi after Sarah's funeral.

> Louis: Rabbi, what does the Holy Writ say about someone who abandons someone he loves at a time of great need?
>
> Rabbi: Why would a person do such a thing?
>
> Louis: Maybe because this person's sense of the world, that it will change for the better with struggle, maybe a person who has this new-Hegelian positivist sense of constant historical progress towards happiness or perfection or something, who feels very powerful because he feels connected to these forces, moving uphill all the time... maybe that person can't, um, incorporate sickness into his sense of how things are supposed to go. Maybe vomit ... and sores and disease ... really frighten him, maybe ... he isn't so good with death.
>
> Rabbi: The Holy Scriptures have nothing to say about such a person.

For Kushner, speaking rabbinically, abandonment is

an act of moral as well as spiritual impotence. For Jews—Israeli and Diaspora—abandonment is not only a twentieth-century (Jewish) *leitmotif*, but also a historical obsession. And, in the age of AIDS, both public: medical, governmental, and religious, and private: family, friends and colleagues, abandonment has become a controlling metaphor for gay suffering. Appropriately then, Kushner uses a gay Jew as cultural icon, representative of the "desertion dilemma," so



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central to both the Jewish and gay communities.

Out of his internalized self-loathing, Louis abandons his grandmother—his roots. Because of his shame, he is unable to comprehend that he is about to abandon his lover, Prior, in the exact same way. With the creation of Louis Ironson—secular Jewish faggot that he is—Kushner locates the question of abandonment outside a religious context. Throughout *Angels*, Louis seeks to locate moral justification for the immoral abandonment of those he loves.

Enter the character of Roy Cohn, who has built a career on the totally fallacious moral justification of the stupendously grotesque, immoral act. Kushner uses Roy Cohn's assimilated, self-loathing Jew-boy persona to mirror the self-loathing Louis Ironson. Are they identical characters? In the play, Louis abandons his literal family, the-mother-of-his-mother. And he deserts his life-partner, sick with AIDS. Roy abandons his metaphoric mother, Ethel Rosenberg. And he forsakes his homosexual brothers by always fucking in a locked closet. Both men are isolationists, living in *Galut*—contemporary Jewish exile. Louis lives outside Jewish communal life, whereas Roy is completely acommunal. Thus, the narrative function of Roy Cohn in *Angels* is to create an alter ego for Louis, a point-counterpoint from which Kushner positions assimilated and estranged, very middle-class, Jewish male identity. In this context, the audience sits as the *Bet Din*, a Jewish court, judging the morality of Louis Ironson—the newly wandering, perpetually meandering,

Kushner begins and ends Angels *with a* Kaddish—*transformed into a postmodern mourning prayer for lost Jewish souls.*

Diaspora Jew. Next to Roy Cohn, Louis looks good, or so it would appear.

But why make the central characters of your play self-loathing gay Jews? Because Kushner, himself a gay Jew, employs one identity to inform dramatically upon the other. Ultimately he uses the condition or state of Diaspora, male "Jewishness," as cultural signifier for "gayness." He draws thematic parallels between assimilation and self-loathing within the Jewish male psyche, and location and dislocation within the gay male psyche. (The only women in the play are dead, angels, or crazy.) And—for the first time in contemporary, mainstream, *Broadway* theater—Kushner dares to use the homosexual persona to reveal Jewish male neurosis. Thus, there is a certain post-structuralist symmetry being constructed around the social identities of Jewish and Queer. Kushner exposes the vices of one identity with the other, and vice versa.

The challenge, then, lies with the heterosexual audience, both Gentile and Jew. As innocent bystander, the Gentile must resist the desire to distance the self from these characters precisely because of their Jewishness and/or their homosexuality. But for the male, heterosexual Jew to identify himself with either Louis Ironson or Roy Cohn is a far more difficult predicament. To identify with them as Jews is to locate the exiled self in a pattern of familiar, albeit uncomfortable, neurosis about "Hebrew" circumcised maleness and to face the internalized shame of the classic pariah.

The queerness of Roy Cohn and Louis Ironson does

not invalidate their Jewishness; on the contrary, it illuminates. For the author, the social (not to mention historical) link between Jew and homosexual is clearly potent. He knows personally that it is in the intersection between assimilation and self-loathing that both Jews and homosexuals are caught.

Kushner then collapses the borders between sexuality and ethnicity: A fragmented id becomes a fluid ego, although often a despised one at that. Finally, as if he is writing *responsa* to Harvey Fierstein's "mother" in the groundbreaking *Torch Song Trilogy*, when she forbids her son to mention Jewish and gay in the same *Kaddish*, Kushner refuses to split off the self. The problem is that what he offers in the characters of Louis and Roy, point-counterpoint, are too easy to reject precisely because they are so full of self-loathing. So Kushner strategically introduces (into the play) the "sacred" secular Jewish mother, Ethel Rosenberg, who was betrayed by all the prodigal Jewish sons: Irving R. Kaufman, Irving Saypol, Roy Cohn, and her own brother David Greenglass. She is the final link between the men, Jewish identity, assimilation and self-loathing. It is the presence of Ethel Rosenberg in *Angels in America* which calls into question Jewish male morality in the postmodern era.

The first scene when Ethel appears, Roy is very sick—so sick he can barely function and is about to collapse. In a chilling moment that leaves the audience psychically suspended, Ethel Rosenberg calls 911 for an ambulance to take Roy Cohn to the emergency room. Throughout *Angels*, Cohn reflects on his proudest moment; his greatest singular accomplishment—according to him—the epitome of his power (and the height of his assimilation and self-loathing) was when he persuaded Judge Kaufman to sentence Ethel to death in the electric chair. Kushner successfully exposes Roy's misogyny and internalized anti-Semitism. So when Ethel calls for the ambulance, it becomes apparent that she has come back to haunt her executioner and witness his demise. Kushner has made Roy Cohn, in the last weeks of his life, dependent on Ethel Rosenberg. Face to face, the Jewish son meets the (Jewish) mother he ruthlessly betrayed.

Ethel appears next at Cohn's hospital bedside. She announces that the end is near. Cohn is about to be disbarred, and Ethel has come back for the hearings. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the balance of power shifts between the abandoned mother and the son who abandoned her. Until now, Roy was in charge. But with his impending disbarment, his total collapse, political and physical, is imminent.

At the same time, Louis has taken a lover, left the lover, and (near the end of Part Two) begged Prior to take him back. Tightening the symmetry in the play, Kushner parallels Roy's disbarment with Prior's refusal to take Louis back. Because of their immoral and unethical behavior, both Louis and Roy are thrown out and rejected by their own people. But unlike Louis, Roy has no shame. Thus, by the play's end, the characters of Louis Ironson and Roy Cohn are distinguishable. The audience slowly develops a limited sympathy (but never compassion) for Louis, whose lover will not take him back. But for Cohn, there is nothing. Ethel is there to witness it all. Her appearance at Roy Cohn's hospital bed, in the middle of the AIDS epidemic, is a *coup de théâtre*. Kushner has brought Ethel back to say *Kaddish* for Roy—the "infected" Jew for whom there is no prayer.

Framing the "Jewish Play" within the play, Kushner begins and ends *Angels* with a *Kaddish*. The first *Kaddish* was not just for Sarah Ironson, Louis's grandmother, but rather for an entire era, including a lost sense of Jewish peoplehood. The last Prayer For The Dead, coming almost at the end of Part Two in *Perestroika*, is truly a restructuring of the post-immigrant Jewish experience. The *Kaddish* has been transformed into a postmodern mourning prayer for lost Jewish souls. And it is in the final act of *davening* that Louis, Ethel, and Roy become the unholy triumvirate.

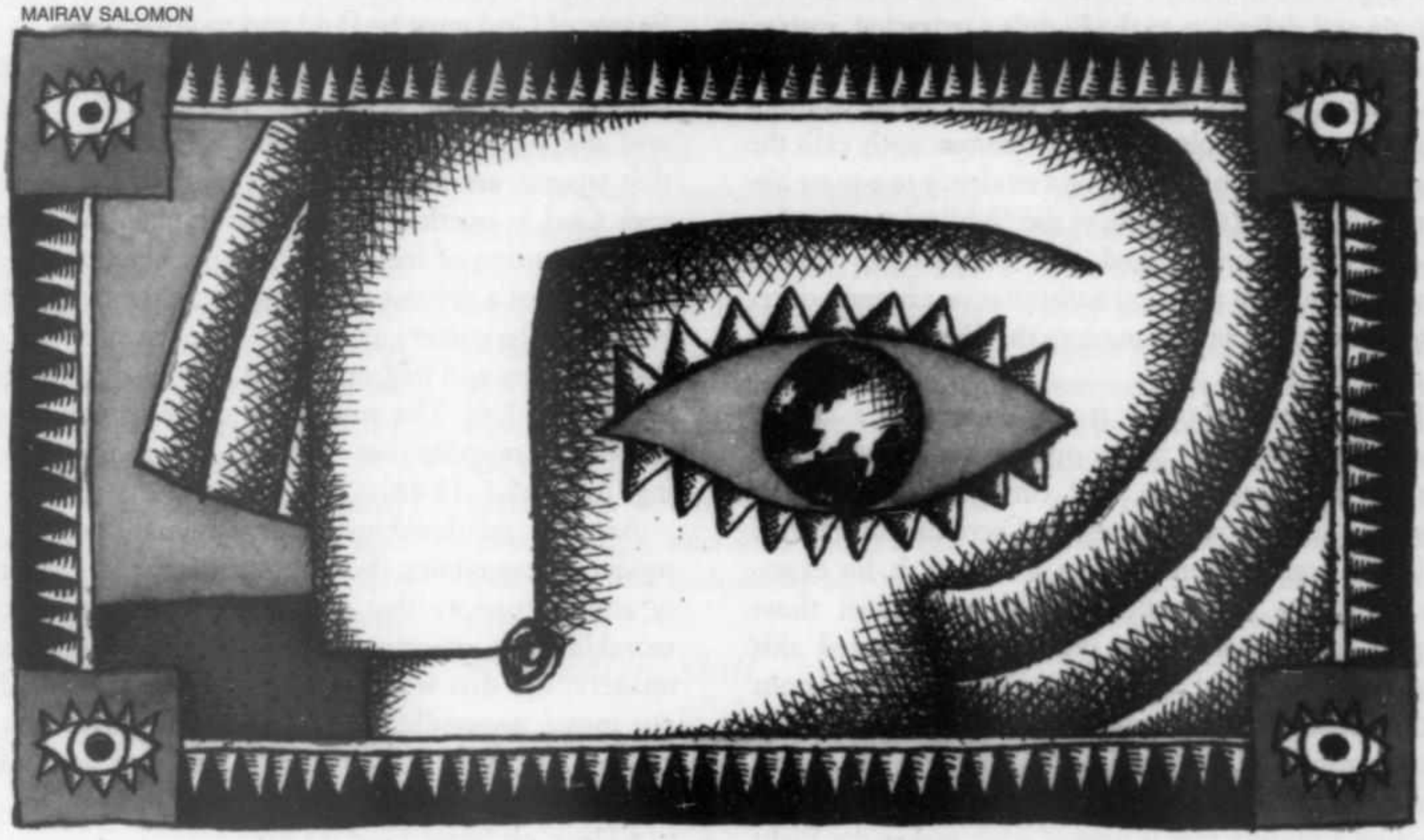
At the request of Prior's nurse, Belize (who stole Cohn's personal supply of AZT), Louis has come unwillingly to say *Kaddish* for Cohn. When he begins, Louis mixes up several Hebrew prayers until, out of nowhere, Ethel appears at the foot of the bed to lead Louis in the *Kaddish*. In this moment, Kushner exposes the true condition of the exiled Jew. Louis is the post-Holocaust Jew who quotes Hegel, but does not even know the *Kaddish*. He is truly lost; the product of his own shame and self-loathing, he cannot mourn properly. And Ethel, dead already forty-two years and for whom we still say *Kaddish*, is the only one who knows the words.

The scene is both emotionally satisfying—Roy Cohn is disbarred and finally dead—and disquieting. The new Diaspora Jew wanders around in *Galut*, intellectually informed, but culturally ignorant, sexually despised, and profoundly isolated. This, then, is the consequence of Louis's abandonment of those he loves. Having been only for himself—who is he? A combination of Willy Loman redux and Tevye's nightmare of a son-in-law. And who are we, Jews, Gentiles, and heterosexuals who disassociate ourselves from Louis Ironson, as though his dilemma is not ours? In the Diaspora, as Tony Kushner deftly shows with his "Gay Fantasia On National Themes," the question of abandonment simmers in the melting pot, boiling over whenever the temperature gets too hot, scalding everybody in sight. □

Spirituality and Politics
Lessons From B'not Esh

Judith Plaskow

MAIRAV SALOMON



One of the earliest and most important lessons I learned from my Jewish feminist spirituality collective, B'not Esh, concerned the connection between spirituality and politics. In seeking to get to know each other when we first met in 1981, we spent three sessions in small groups sharing our spiritual pasts, presents, and futures. The past and the present, we had no difficulty discussing. When it came to the future, however, my group seemed to veer from the subject into numerous digressions.

After repeatedly chiding ourselves for talking about work, community, relationships, politics—in short, everything but spirituality—we suddenly realized that, in fact, we were addressing those realities that stood between us and our ability to imagine our spiritual futures. If we wanted to live as feminist Jews, we would have to help create communities—and create a world—in which such a spirituality would be possible. For all of us, this was a key moment in understanding the relationship between our individual spiritual lives and the wider social and political contexts in which we lived. As feminists, we were committed to the notion that "the personal is political": That many of women's seemingly personal problems are a function of fundamental social inequities, and can be resolved only as those inequities are addressed.

Now we began to see that "the spiritual is political." Our difficulties in projecting our spiritual futures were likewise connected to larger structural issues. Both the ways in which Judaism as a religious tradition diminished us as women, and the demands and priorities of the larger social system constituted impediments to our relationship with the sacred. In this situation, politics, we realized, is the necessary work we do to make the world safe for our spirituality.

We made less effort to define "spirituality" precisely. The group implicitly understood it as both ongoing mindfulness of the sacred in the ordinary moments of

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our lives, and special moments of vision and celebration, of particularly intense connection between ourselves and the sacred.

In the aftermath of the 1994 elections and the increasing influence of the Christian Right, I keep coming back to these insights as a potential source of an alternative religious/political vision. On the one hand, it is clear that religion and spirituality are much too important to many people's lives to surrender their mantle and definition to the Right's patriarchal, authoritarian, and individualistic reading of a complex biblical tradition. On the other hand, unless we are to fall into what liberation theologian Hugo Assman aptly calls the "fundamentalism of the left"—a tendency to equate liberating texts with the whole of the "biblical message"—it must be acknowledged that progressives cannot advance the same neat and authoritative program of religious principles and injunctions that the Right pretends to offer.

Progressive spirituality is, by definition, a critical spirituality, cognizant of the oppressive strands within the Bible and tradition, and concerned about their power to shape consciousness and actions. As we tried to imagine our spiritual futures as B'not Esh, for example, we were repeatedly brought up against those aspects of Judaism that themselves impeded this process. Mindful of the tensions and contradictions within each religious tradition, a liberating spirituality must consciously ally itself with some strands against others. But this means it is unwilling to claim the absolute authority that is part of what makes the Right so attractive.

In other columns in TIKKUN, I have discussed the problem of authority and laid out a feminist critique of various aspects of Jewish tradition. Here, in an effort to formulate an alternative to the right-wing version of a religious politics, I want to suggest some positive elements of the spirituality and politics I have experienced through B'not Esh as well as in other contexts.

• A progressive spirituality affirms and fosters the humanity and dignity of each and every person, in the context of community. To use biblical language, it recognizes that every person is created in the image of God, and that that image is intrinsically relational: Male and female he created them. The divine image inheres not only in those who have status according to various social hierarchies, but also in those of are of "no account" by any historical measure. Just as the Israelites in Egypt were liberated from bondage and entered into the covenant at Sinai as two moments in the same process, so various oppressed groups in contemporary society have awakened to their own value and demanded recognition and rights as persons and as partners in creation. For me, the process of discovering in community with other women the power of our individual and collective voices has also been a process of connecting with larger currents of power and energy which ground and sustain both community and self. Formed in the divine image, we also grow into that image as we claim our role as agents in naming and shaping the world.

• If all are created in the divine image, then our images of God must be fluid and multifarious.

Feminist experiments with female imagery are at once an expression of the bursting sense of "I am/we are" that accompanies liberation, a form of insistence that women are in God's image, and an invitation to seek God in overlooked places in human experience. This expansion of metaphors for the sacred is just the beginning of a process that must name the divine presence in all the corners of creation. The sea monsters and the deep, fire and hail, snow and frost also praise God (Psalm 148:7-8). The wild ass and the ostrich have a power and purpose that surpasses human understanding (Job 39:5-8, 13-18).

Because relationships among human beings are unique in containing the potential for the full mutuality and reciprocity that form the foundations of the moral life, it is important that we use anthropomorphic imagery, and that we broaden it as far as possible. But our moral responsibility extends to the entire web of creation, all of which manifests and can symbolize divine presence and activity.

• Hear, oh Israel, God is One.

These diverse images of God are not the names of multiple divinities, but guises of the One that manifests itself in and through the changing forms of the many. The notion that all of creation is taken up in a larger unity is a fundamental moral principle: Everything is connected; each of us is responsible one for another; ultimately we are more alike than different from each other. The relationship between particular images of God and the divine totality finds its analogy in human community. As each image of God is also a face of the divine whole that embraces the diversity of an infinite community, so individuals and groups within the human community also belong to a common humanity. Just as we need to lift up particular metaphors for God without forgetting that they are aspects of the One, so we desperately need to learn to value human diversity without forgetting the many things that bind us together.

• A progressive spirituality is aware of the structural injustices in both religious traditions and the world that diminish the humanity of many groups of persons. It is,

(Continued on p. 85)

detach here

DETACH AND CIRCULATE

TIKKUN'S POLITICS OF MEANING

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE STRATEGY FOR THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING

The politics of meaning is an attempt to shift the dominant discourse of our society from an ethos of selfishness and cynicism to an ethos of caring and idealism.

The bottom-line consciousness of our society is based on the notion that human beings are only motivated by material self-interest. Hence, individuals will only take initiative if they are given material incentives, and the real way to judge the productivity of any operation is the degree to which it generates profits.

The politics of meaning, on the other hand, seeks a different bottom line, based on the notion that human beings have both material needs and meaning needs. While we do not discount the reality of self-interest in human affairs, we also have ample evidence that most human beings seek to transcend the individualism and selfishness of the competitive market and to root themselves in communities of meaning and purpose that connect them to a higher spiritual and ethical framework for their lives. Many people will report that they live by the "bottom line" consciousness of the society—because they feel they have no alternative, given their perception that everyone else is doing that. But they feel trapped and resentful that they live in that kind of society, and they often turn to right-wing religious or political movements because they offer a discourse that addresses these "meaning" needs.

Unfortunately, liberals and progressives have denied or ignored the meaning needs. The Right has been able to present itself as the only political force that cares about the pain that people experience in their personal lives when selfishness triumphs and shapes their world. Ironically, the Right also champions the ethos of selfishness and individualism and materialism in the economy! How does it get away with playing both sides of the street? Easy. The liberals and the Left don't seem to have a clue about the meaning needs, and so cede all these issues to the Right.

The politics of meaning suggests a new bottom line: Let every social policy and practice, proposed legislation, and economic and political institution be judged as productive to the degree to which it tends to produce human beings who are idealistic and not cynical, caring and not selfish, demonstrably capable of sustaining loving and committed relationships, and who are ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive and alive.

A Paradigm Shift

This is a paradigm shift as dramatic as the paradigm shift sought by the women's movement. Just as women were faced with the challenge twenty-five years ago, "Show us a single society in the history of the human race that is not patriarchal" (and they couldn't, but didn't let that stop them from struggling for one), so we similarly cannot show a single society in which this politics of meaning has been the bottom line, and will not let that stop us from struggling for one. In fact, we believe that the dynamics of unimpeded selfishness have led to a monumental ecological crisis and a monumental social crisis (manifested in rising alcoholism, drug abuse, family breakdown, and societal violence). Many people will eventually come to see that their long-term self-interest is being destroyed by a society that validates every individual and corporation seeking their own narrow material short-term self-interest.

Didn't people try this in Eastern Europe with disastrous results? Nope—far from it. Eastern European totalitarian regimes never really could mobilize people to transcend their own self-interest, because everyone there knew that all this talk about the "common good" was only a fig leaf covering the naked self-interest of the communist ruling elites. People understood that all the fancy talk about socialism and caring were not real. It wasn't that they felt that they lived in a society committed to higher ideals but they personally couldn't overcome their selfishness—it was that, for good reason, they found it hard to sustain the belief that those with power were really committed to the common good. Non-material incentives only work if people really believe they are "all in it together," not that some elite is using the language of common purpose or the call to sacrifice as an excuse to consolidate their own power.

Hardball Politics

The Politics of Meaning is actually far likelier to succeed as an alternative to the Right than any of the alternatives being proposed by the Democrats, liberals or the Left—because none of them understand the actual pain that most Americans face in their personal lives, pain that is rooted in the crisis of meaning. Many liberal intellectuals dismiss words like "pain" and "meaning" as too flaky or New Agey. They think they are being "tough-minded" when they stick to economistic approaches to people's needs or to a focus on political rights.

Liberals imagine that they can build an alliance between the poor and middle-income people that will sustain significant public sector expenditures for the poor. Their strategy: provide economic benefits for middle-income people (e.g. tax benefits to offset college tuition or retraining), and that way they will share a stake in protecting the public sector. The conservatives wish to make

an alliance between middle-income working people and the rich, so they offer an even sweeter economic deal to middle income people: we will reduce your taxes drastically, in the process cutting out most of the services to the poor while increasing the construction of prisons and law enforcement. The conservatives are willing to cut taxes more than the liberals can possibly expand benefits to middle income people (since those benefits have to be paid for by middle income peoples' taxes). So if the argument remains on economic grounds, conservatives win.

A politics of meaning strategy, on the other hand, shows people that the deepest pain in their lives is rooted in the ethos of selfishness. To the extent that they want to live in a different kind of world—a world in which their own personal lives and family relationships feel more stable and secure, a world in which there is more loving and less mutual distrust, a world in which people feel valued for who they are and not just for how much money they can make for themselves or their employers—they are going to need to live in a society where selfishness all around them decreases. And that becomes a way for people to understand that their own long-term self-interest lies in living in a world where the poor do not get abandoned (since they can understand, were the case ever made to them, that the kind of selfishness involved in abandoning the poor is precisely the kind of selfishness that undermines all that they want for themselves in their own lives).

Summary of Platform Points

The Foundation for Ethics and Meaning will lead a campaign to get people to challenge the ethos of selfishness and support a politics of meaning. Just as some people wanted a full description of what a non-patriarchal society could look like, so today people want a full description of what public policy would look like if it took the ethical, spiritual and psychological needs of people seriously. We can give some hints here about some policy planks, but we are not deeply committed to any particular idea. We present them only so that you'd get the general idea of direction—because we hope that you will join us in refining these ideas! Become part of the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, and join with us in expanding and refining this thinking. Here are summaries of some representative meaning-oriented policies:

Health

The whole approach to training, rewarding, and promoting health professionals must be reworked to reward the ethos of community service. Professional training for those desiring to be doctors and health care professionals should be fully funded by the community, and these trainees should also receive a "family living" stipend to support their families during their training. Doctors' salaries subsequently should not exceed four times the average wage in the communities that they serve. A single-payer system similar to that functioning in Canada could provide care for all.

Since physical healing is closely connected to psychological and spiritual well-being, our approach to health care must serve the full human being. Health care delivery must not only emphasize significant empowering of the individual, and involvement of the client's social support system in a collaborative effort with health care professionals to devise a process of treatment, but it must also mobilize the spiritual and ethical resources of the individual and community to developing programs that sustain wellness.

To encourage community caring for the sick, people should be allowed at least two hours leave from work each month to visit the sick.

Racism

People are deeply frustrated by work that offers them little opportunity to serve the common good and to fully use their highest moral and spiritual capacities. And they are frustrated by living in a society in which human relationships seem so clouded by selfishness and self-interest. The Right offers a simple explanation: There is some "other" who is screwing things up and introducing selfishness into what might otherwise be a fulfilling community.

For much of Western history, the "other" of choice has been the Jews, and it was in that position that ruling elites could mobilize anti-Semitism whenever popular unhappiness threatened to well-up against the existing system. In the United States, the "other" has been African Americans, though recently Jews, gays, and lesbians, feminists and even liberals have been added to the list.

The Right appeals to people's feelings that they are under-recognized in this society and that, surrounded by an ethos of selfishness, nobody really cares about them anymore. "Look," the Right says, "the liberals are using government to take your money and give it to Blacks, women, gays, etc.—and these groups are getting the attention and caring that you deserve." The resentment that is built in this way could create the foundation for a genuine fascist movement in the U.S. in future decades.

Yet the Left responds by lecturing people about why they are being immoral unless they care about the "most oppressed." This only intensifies the problem, because it makes most people feel that their own oppression is not understood or cared about by liberals and the Left. And since the liberals and the Left believe that the only real oppression is the denial of political rights or economic impoverishment, they really don't see the pain that middle-income people are in.

The only way to counter this is to talk about that pain and help people see that the ethos of selfishness is rooted in the dynamics of the competitive market, not in something that Blacks, feminists, gays or immigrants are doing. The Left objects to this, because middle-class oppression seems so much less substantial than economic oppression, particularly after the Gingrich cuts. Our point, however, is that lecturing people about racism or sexism doesn't really change things. If you want to actually be in a position to help the most oppressed, you have to be willing to take seriously the pain of middle-income people—and not do that opportunistically, but because you realize that they too are human beings whose needs genuinely concern you. Conveying that message is at the heart of a politics of meaning.

Community Service

All schools and government institutions (such as military installations, law enforcement agencies, media outlets, and state universities) should allocate four hours per week for community service in some project fundamentally different from and unconnected to the kind of work that the people in the institution normally do.

Sabbatical Year

Every employee should be given a paid sabbatical every seventh year, which may be used in two ways: either job retraining, education for its own sake (unrelated to one's career), or community service. A partnership between public- and private-sector institutions should develop a wide range of possible community service projects, provided that they do not aim to provide infrastructure support for profit-making institutions.

Work

Workers should be allowed to elect safety-and-health committees charged with restructuring workplaces to make them health-maximizing. Since psychological health requires empowerment and genuine decision-making, these elected committees should have the power to restructure the workplace to give workers genuine ability to use their intelligence, creativity, and ability to be cooperative and self-regulating. Worker control of this kind is to be distinguished from "total quality management" or other management schemes designed to promote greater worker "involvement" while leaving ultimate decisions where they have always been. The politics of meaning seeks to shift the bottom line, so that the ultimate criterion for a healthy workplace is the degree to which it promotes human beings capable of sustaining loving relationships, etc. While there is ample evidence that such workplaces also have the capacity to increase the involvement and energy that workers give to work, that increase may in part depend on the degree to which workers feel that they are working for themselves rather than for someone else who owns but does not work. Workers should elect their own supervisors, and top management should be replaceable by "recall" votes of the workers in the institution.

All able-bodied persons receiving public support should also be required to work. But the work provided must meet the standards described above, and adequate training and child care must be available so that people can take advantage of these possibilities. We should seek to create an ethos of respect for work, and an understanding that we are all in this together, and hence working for the common good is a moral requirement rather than an externally imposed burden.

Investment

America's economic life requires planning, coordination, and vision, and hence cannot be determined primarily by the needs of individual corporations for profits. But the need for national planning should not be the excuse to create new governing bodies through which the rich can pursue their interests. Instead, we should elect a national economic congress that does not make decisions, but rather shapes major alternatives to be presented to the rest of us in national economic referenda.

The new investment policies will aim to achieve the following:

- Creation of productive jobs of two sorts: jobs that create needed goods, and those that free others to put more energy into their work (e.g., child care or education or caring for the elderly or the sick).
- Reindustrialization of the cities–but in ways that are ecologically sound.
- Creation of urban banks to extend loans to minority entrepreneurs and to community groups to create productive small businesses.
- Double the rate of housing production. Tax capital gains in real-estate speculation and tax unused land at a rate higher than land that is put to productive use.
- Create jobs with massive governmental expenditures focused on rebuilding America's productive infrastructure in ecologically sound ways. For example, invest in an extensive system of rapid inter-city trains and other forms of mass transit.

A Progressive Perspective on Being Pro-Families

We mean to support the rich variety of ways that people have made long-term commitments to each other to sustain loving relationships through time and to share the common responsibility of raising the next generation. By "family" we include single-parent families, gay and lesbian families, and other arrangements aimed at providing a stable and lasting framework for loving relationships and within which child-rearing may take place.

The pro-families program will include:

- Comprehensive community controlled, publicly funded child care, provided by professionals paid respectable wages and given extensive training and ongoing supervision.
- Subsidize families to take care of aging parents at home, plus training for seniors who have retired from their jobs to become support personnel for others who are aging.
- Maternity and paternity leaves of up to six months, plus the right to come to work late when necessary to provide care for children or aging parents.
- Reduce stress at work by increasing worker powerfulness at work.
- Reward caring behavior in the economy.
- Eliminate the vestiges of inequality in family life, sex roles, and the economy.
- Fight for public validation of caring as the most noble activity for men as well as women. Validate loving behavior as the most valuable behavior in the society—reward it economically, politically, and socially.
- Create networks of family support networks so that people can share information about ways to deal with the inevitable tensions that emerge in family life.
- Train family support professionals who can act as consultants to family support networks.
- Create public events to honor those who have maintained loving commitments.
- Provide adequate support institutions for those who seek to leave oppressive families. But validate the ethos of "working things through."
- Provide choice on abortion. But create

an ethos that opposes abortion as a method of birth control except in extreme circumstances. In other words, in matters of divorce and abortion, fight for rights, but create a community ethos that tilts toward responsibility and commitment so that those rights are not used lightly. These are not matters that can be legislated.

Children who grow up being treated respectfully and lovingly are most likely to know how to treat others respectfully and lovingly. Being respectful, however, does not mean giving in to all of children's wants (which are themselves often formed by the larger society and television) nor does it mean avoiding all forms of discipline. Self-discipline and learning to take responsibility are important gifts that parents must give their children. But too often parents use these words as a cover to pass on to children the same arbitrariness, emotional cruelty, and sometimes even violence that they experienced when they were children. We urge parents to join parenting groups in which the difficult issues can be discussed with others and problem-solving can be encouraged. The highest honors in a community should be given to parents who have been most successful in raising loving children.

To be pro-family does not entail covering up or rationalizing away all the problems and tensions in families. Nor does it mean acquiescing in the ways that people actually suppress their real selves in order to become "good couples." In calling for a progressive pro-family perspective we are not cheerleading for existing family relationships. To be really pro-family means to recognize the pain and frustration so many people experience in family life, to get those secrets out of the closet and into the public domain. People can then learn from each other's experience, stop blaming themselves inappropriately for those problems, and begin to help each other work them through.

Individual Responsibility

Our goal is to increase a sense of responsibility to the community and to counter the self-indulgence and me-firstism that has been associated both with the economic arrangements of a capitalist society and with the pursuit of unlimited individual rights and entitlements associated with the "me-generation" mentality that flourished in some sectors of the 1960s counter-culture and in subsequent Yuppie cultural realities. There has been an excess of this kind of privileging of selfishness, both on the Right and on the Left. We wish to foster a sense of communal responsibility to the common good.

But we wish to avoid the mistakes of previous attempts at community that counterposed the common good to individual freedoms. We are strong supporters of the liberal rights agenda, and will never accept communities that do not respect individual freedom or individual privacy. We do not want a society in which every decision of personal life is subject to collective scrutiny or control. A politics of meaning, then, is not a communitarianism that seeks to abolish rights. Rather, it is a philosophy that seeks to counter the way that this society today has shifted too much in the direction of individualism and the pursuit of rights with a new emphasis on community responsibility.

Ultimately, our highest responsibility is not to the specific community in which we live, but to the ethical and spiritual principles we hold, which may provide a basis of critique for any existing community. It is in the name of these values that we critique American society for its excessive materialism and selfishness; and it might well be that in the name of similar values we would critique any overly communitarian society that acted in ways that did not adequately acknowledge the infinite preciousness of every human being created in the image of God.

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What You Can Do

• THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS AND MEANING, the institutional vehicle we are creating to conduct the Campaign for a Politics of Meaning, will be supported by your membership and donations. Checks made to TIKKUN magazine are tax-deductible. The Foundation will not engage in support for specific pieces of legislation nor will it support candidates for office.

• SUBSCRIBE TO TIKKUN MAGAZINE. In TIKKUN you'll find articles in every issue that address the latest thinking about the politics of meaning.

• OTHER IDEAS? After you've joined the Foundation, write us with your ideas about what you want to do as part of this project, and what you want us to do! Write to: TIKKUN Magazine, 250 West 100th St., NY, NY 10025.

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MJ595

Peter Gabel's piece is the first of a series of discussions that TIKKUN will run in the next few issues aimed at understanding and responding to the systematic attack on African Americans in American political and cultural life. The recent publication of Michael Lerner and Cornel West's book, *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin,* is another part of our campaign to prevent Blacks from becoming isolated or feeling that they have to face the assault by themselves. Gabel presents one interpretation of how the attack on Blacks has managed to gain mass support, and how we might reframe our political direction. His aim is to subvert the conservative effort to eliminate any social programs that benefit the oppressed.

Affirmative Action and Racial Harmony

Peter Gabel

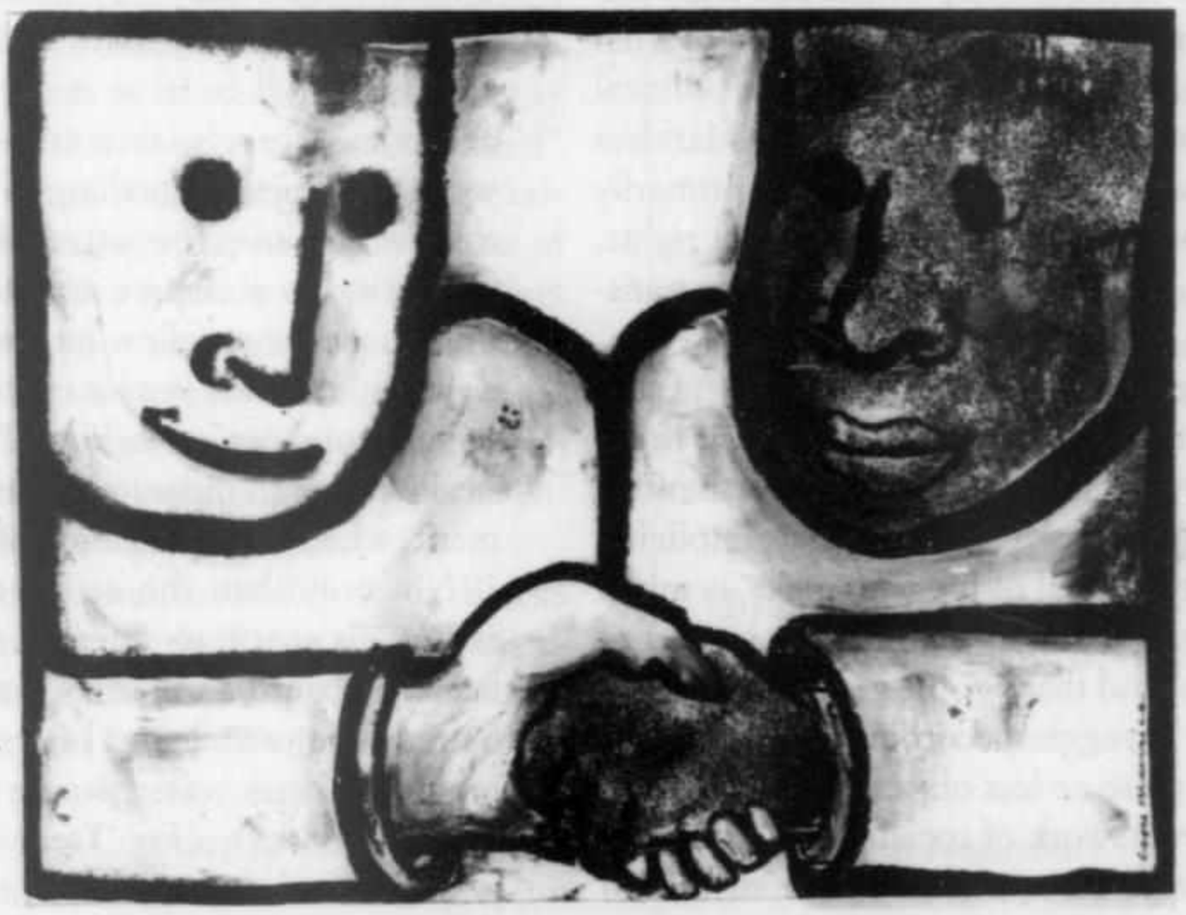
Unless there is an unforeseen upsurge of emotionally compelling support for affirmative action by a cross-racial coalition in the near future, its demise appears likely to be the next nail in the New Deal coffin. Should we understand this as being the result of a new wave of mean-spiritedness or even racism that is sweeping the white population, of which the first indication was the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California?

No.

No more accurate is Secretary of Labor Robert Reich's economic explanation that non-college-educated white males are facing declining real incomes, or the more conventional Left economic analysis that ruling elites are shoring up their own power by pitting white and minority sectors of the working class against each other.

The reason for the success of the assault on affirmative action is that the idea of affirmative action has largely lost its idealistic meaning, emanating from a vision of true racial equality, of inclusion of all people in a loving and non-exploitative human community that emerged from the spirit of the civil-rights movement. That idealistic meaning was part of a larger challenge to the alienation that pervades American society, to the selfishness and individualism that is fostered by the competitive marketplace and that makes the creation of loving human relationships and cooperative human community so difficult.

This idealistic meaning of affirmative action has been replaced by its virtual opposite, a meaning that actually defends the legitimacy of the competitive marketplace and the alienation that it engenders while claiming that Blacks and other minorities should be given preference over "more qualified" whites for jobs and for admission to college and professional schools. The justification for this special treatment is that past discrimination resulting from the history of slavery and legalized segregation has created an unequal playing field that favors whites and denies minorities "equality of opportunity" in their effort to make it in the marketplace—therefore, minorities should be given a leg up in spite of their relative "lack of merit" until the effects of the past discrimination are eradicated.



CYN MAURICE

Peter Gabel is president of New College of California and associate editor of TIKKUN.

When Martin Luther King, Jr. cried out that he had been to the mountaintop and was never coming down, he wasn't talking about making it in the competitive marketplace. He was talking about transforming our cruel and alienated world so that people would recognize, respect, and love one another across the richness of their racial differences. Within this idealistic vision, affirmative action was an expressive call to act together affirmatively to eradicate the anti-human humiliation of racism. And affirmative action does still retain an echo of this deep ethical meaning that spread through American culture as a result of the transcendent energy and spiritual presence of the civil rights movement itself. Few of us can see clips of that famous "mountaintop" speech by Dr. King and not be deeply, momentarily stirred by the memory of our own connection to the sense of ethical purpose and community to which he was able to give voice.

But as I argued in the last issue of TIKKUN ("Community and Democracy: Creating a Parallel Sphere"), it was precisely the failure of progressive forces to make this idealistic vision of a transformed human community the centerpiece of its political and legal claims that in significant part led to the erosion of the transformative appeal of this century's social movements, including the civil-rights movement. In place of the vision of a higher ethical community evoked by the images of the mountaintop and the promised land, civil-rights activists and lawyers found themselves arguing only for "equal rights," for the elimination of discrimination within the alienated world of competitive capitalism. In part, this narrow view of racial justice was forced upon them by the individualist assumptions of American law, by the absence from the Constitution and from the history of American political and legal culture of any substantive ethical/communal vision of what our collective life ought to be like. In part, our political imagination was constrained by the legacy of Marxism and of the New Deal to think of racial justice primarily in terms of economic redistribution and liberal rights, rather than in terms of the creation of a spiritually transformed civil society.

The consequence of this despiritualization of the meaning of affirmative action has been to make it rational for whites and even many Blacks and other minorities to oppose it. Affirmative action today implicitly affirms the idea that the goal of life is to make as much money and get as much status as possible in a market of scarce opportunities, and that people generally succeed in this competitive struggle according to their own merit, measured by more or less objective criteria. This is the background framework of social meaning against which people are expected to measure their success in life, their ultimate sense of self-worth. The theory then assumes that objectively less-qualified minorities should be allowed to deprive their white competitors of deserved success, recognition, and money because of past discrimination of which their current white competitors are not guilty.

Except in the most narrow legalistic sense, I think it is impossible to defend this impoverished market-based meaning of affirmative action.

First of all, it is an approach to law and social policy that legitimizes the very competitive and individualistic social reality that has to be changed if people are to begin to lead meaningful, socially connected and humane lives. However they express it, most people know this at a gut level. Why would they be motivated to fight for a program that, in its despiritualized form, is basically an affirmation of the status quo?

Second, most white people do not feel "privileged" in this society—they feel isolated, disconnected from any consistent sense of social validation, and like failures according to market criteria of success and worth. Why should they give up the modicum of potential recognition and success that affirmative action tells them they have won fair and square in order to help someone else "less qualified" whom they have not personally injured? Most white people are secretly enraged that nobody seems to care about them, and they blame themselves for not having made it on their own. You can't tell them they have a moral responsibility to sacrifice their hopes of escaping their humiliation for the sake of helping others because of sins they believe were committed long before they were born.

Third, just as market-based affirmative action implicitly legitimizes the competitive marketplace, it also legitimizes meritocracy (by making an "exception" for minorities). As it operates in the United States, meritocracy is an evil because it denies people unconditional acceptance for who they are—each of us is made to feel we must achieve something to "merit" recognition, worthiness, and love. Instead of eliciting people's talents and capacities in a climate of trust and support for their intrinsic value as fellow human beings, we have created a system in which people chronically feel they are about to be "found out" as lacking. They spend their lives frantically trying to measure up to some external criteria of merit, while often dreaming of failure.

Not only that, the actual criteria used to measure, say, one's merit to attend college or law school are frankly absurd, and they breed injustice and racial hatred. They are absurd because standardized tests that require anxious young people to read and answer questions about, say, "Fig Trees in the Amazon"—under pointless and sadistic time pressure—have nothing to

do with the true social or ethical reasons why we should want the younger generation to pursue an education or a profession (for example, they value shallow cleverness and meaningless manipulation of concepts over engaged empathy and the desire to create a good world).

Such criteria breed injustice because they purport to be objective measures of "merit" when they were in fact developed by white ruling elites, following the collapse of the supposed "natural" superiority of the aristocracy, to measure the capacity of test-takers to perform the arguably shallow, detached, and manipulative tasks that they, the test-makers, value. As someone who has been a law professor for more than twenty years, I feel confident in saying that the Law School Admissions Test, and then the Bar Examination, measure value-laden skills of this type that are neither "objective" measures of merit to be an attorney, nor do they measure in the slightest degree the ethical and empathic capacities or the sense of justice that one ought to demonstrate to become a lawyer. These tests breed injustice because they tell whites they objectively merit things that they do not objectively merit, and they breed racial hatred because minorities know this to be true but they cannot influence the negative judgments imposed upon them.

Why should we support a market-based theory of affirmative action that legitimizes meritocratic judgments that are evil in themselves and that breed injustice and racial hatred?

Fourth, market-based affirmative action is often humiliating to Blacks and other minorities because it treats them as unqualified and defective, as if they do not "really" deserve their admission to college or professional school or their job. This is one reason that almost 50 percent of minorities are currently opposed to affirmative action (ABC/*Washington Post*, March 24, 1995). It is unjust for them to be made to feel this way because it is not true that they are "less qualified" except on the basis of (usually) idiotic non-objective criteria that are utterly stacked against them. In the case of legal education, this injustice is made worse by the fact that law schools for the most part value the same shallow, detached, verbal manipulations that the tests measure (compassion and a sense of justice are largely irrelevant to success in law school, although they are essential to a morally significant legal practice).

This structural humiliation inevitably leads Blacks and other minorities to act out their rage at being disrespected and humiliated, often in the form of politically correct, victimized denunciations of whites that frighten most decent white people, who, after all, believe they have done nothing wrong. Contrary to the charges often levelled against them, most of these whites are not

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racists, and, in addition, they have been told by the society (through policies like affirmative action) that they "deserve" whatever they've managed to achieve. When they are attacked, guilt-tripped, and threatened with losing even the patina of self-worth that they might gain from becoming a professional, they are even less able to hear the echo of idealistic meaning that affirmative action once had and further lose hope that they can be part of an effort to bring about the kind of community that would embody true mutual recognition and racial justice. Although these whites would prefer to be part of just such an effort to build a society based on transcendent meaning and high ethical purpose, they settle for a retreat into private life and for the crumbs of professional recognition. And they move toward a conservative politics that validates both their anger and their retreat from hope, because the alternative seems so unsafe and crazy.

Although I will vote against any attempt to abolish affirmative action, I don't see any real promise of salvation in supporting a market-based approach to it that seems so clearly ridden with contradictions and assumptions that we are opposed to. I think we must recognize that it may well increase rather than heal societal racism. But what is the alternative?

Think again of the original impulse behind affirmative action, the impulse to go beyond the mere removal of barriers ("overcoming discrimination so we can all be free to compete in the marketplace") and instead to take affirmative steps to achieve true racial justice and equality. The key point about this idealistic meaning is that far from appearing to exclude whites, it served to connect whites to a higher sense of purpose, something that would give our lives meaning in part by freeing us from the so-called privilege that is actually an empty prison. That idealistic meaning of affirmative action also connected us to Blacks and other minorities rather than separating us from them.

Redeeming that impulse today means developing a cross-racial strategy that, instead of pitting whites and Blacks against each other (threatening one group or the other with invalidation and social exclusion), unites them in a challenge to the phony meritocratic criteria that historically have divided them.

As an example, consider the following possible ballot initiative that might compete with California's anti-affirmative-action initiative next November:

> Public employees in the State of California shall be hired not on the basis of race, gender, or other external characteristic, nor on the basis of standardized tests, but on the basis of a history of service to their community and State as revealed by exemplary work with church groups, schools, the elderly, and other populations in need. In order to increasingly link public employment with an ideal of service emerging from all of California's communities, hiring policy should to the extent possible seek participation from every neighborhood within each locality and from each Assembly District within the State. The capacity to foster the development of racial harmony, as demonstrated by an applicant's history of service, may be one factor considered in determining qualification for public employment as defined in this initiative.

The point about this proposed initiative is that it begins to foreground the idea that empathy and caring for others are the qualities that we value in public officials and public employees, from politicians, to police officers, to housing authority staff, to street cleaners. It begins to redefine worthiness in a way that assumes one must go through a process of moral development to be selected to work for one's community, rather than passing an idiotic multiple-choice test. It makes inclusion of all communities, rather than the selection of one over another, a moral value for its own sake (as opposed to a manipulative strategy for remedying past exclusion). And it explicitly includes race in a way that speaks to people's belief in and longing for cross-racial mutual recognition rather placing races in opposition to each other, as market-based affirmative action does.

You could, no doubt, find a million things wrong with this initiative: What about necessary qualifications for skilled positions? What about how it could be manipulated? What about the civil service, etc. Certainly we would want TIKKUN's legal staff (i.e., those of you who are lawyers) to make sure it's not unconstitutionally vague or subject to some other fatal flaw. But if we could start by thinking about what's right about it, about what kind of society it points toward and what human needs it speaks to, and about what contradictions in our current market-based thinking it begins to overcome, I'm sure we could fix it. And it would pass. □

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The Politics of Triage

The Contract with America's Surplus Populations

Charles Derber

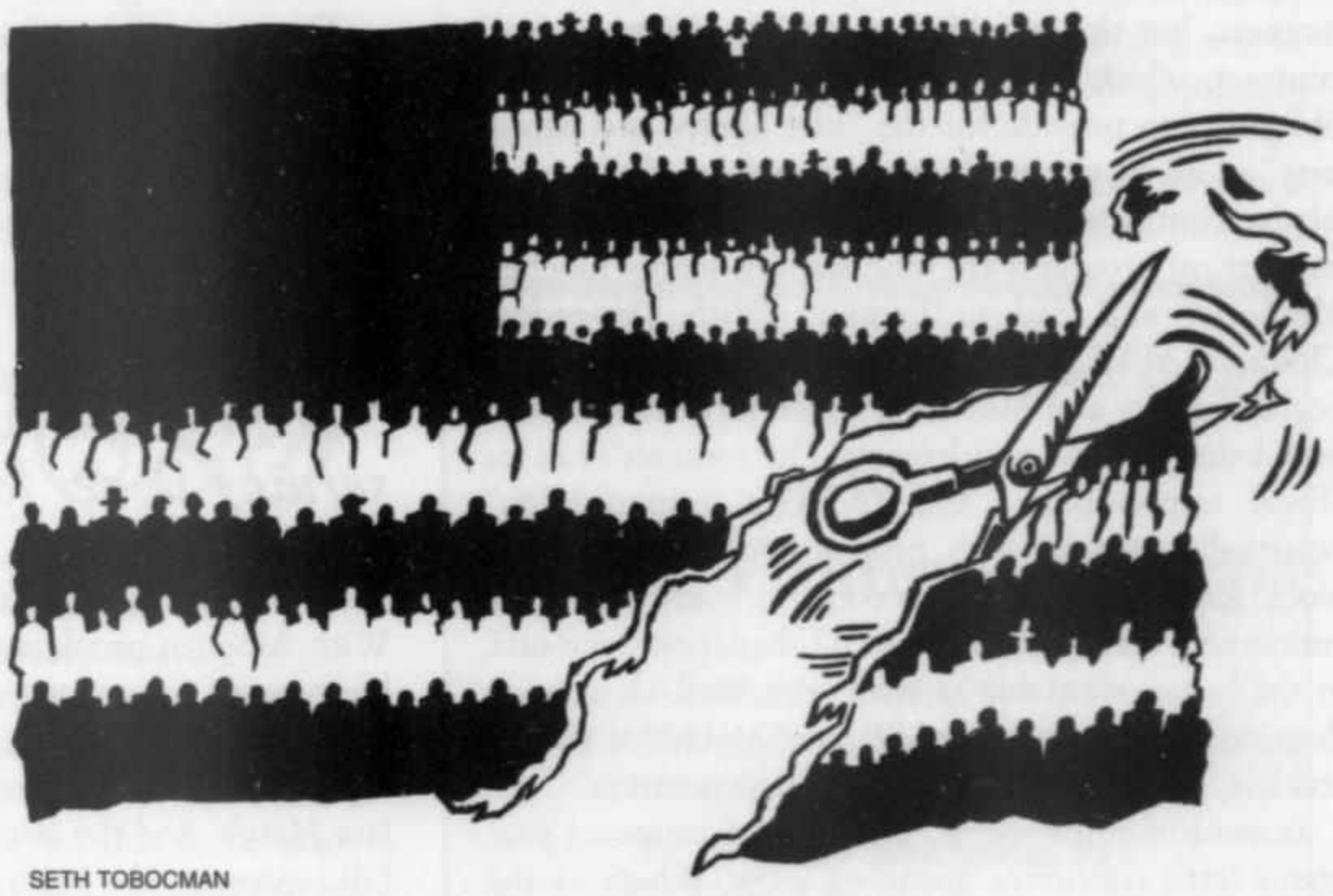
The poor in this country are the biggest piglets at the mother pig and her nipples. The poor … give nothing back. Nothing.

—Rush Limbaugh

Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich is now America's most influential and publicized politician, getting almost as much newsprint as O.J. Simpson. Gingrich deserves the attention, for he is ushering in a revolutionary form of politics that I call triage. It is potentially the most important development in American politics in fifty years, and while the staying power of Gingrich, who is personally unpopular, remains uncertain, the spirit of triage he represents is likely to endure into the coming millennium.

"Triage" is a term initially used in military medicine for the decision to abandon terminally ill or horribly injured patients in order to save others whose treatment is less time-consuming or costly. It has been employed in a different sense by sociologists to mean the sacrifice or abandonment of the socially weakest sector of society—the definition that I propose here. Triaged populations are cast-offs, non-persons stripped of economic prospects and social status.

One can distinguish economic, political, and cultural triage, all of which are now surfacing in the United States. Economic triage can be seen in the withdrawal of viable employment or liveable wages from sectors of the labor force, creating surplus populations with no economic prospects. Cultural triage is manifest in intellectuals' embrace of ideologies that explicitly justify the abandonment or elimination of surplus populations. Political triage involves the explicit decision-making by government leaders to stop assisting—with money, housing, or other services—the abandoned groups.



SETH TOBOCMAN

New Deal and Great Society social legislation guaranteed all American citizens entitlements to food, shelter, and other basic necessities. This social contract, which prevented the need for triage, has been the foundation of the liberal welfare state for fifty years. In the name of personal responsibility, Gingrich's counter-revolution would destroy the entitlements of dependent populations. According to Gingrich's scenario, Americans would survive only by taking responsibility for themselves; the shiftless and

This essay is adapted from Charles Derber's forthcoming book, a revised edition of Money, Murder, and the American Dream: Wilding from Wall Street to Main Street, *to be published by St. Martin's Press in January 1996. His newest book is* What's Left?.

irresponsible would lose their life-support system and sink or swim on their own. This solution resonates deeply with the individualism of the American Dream and with the mood of hard-pressed Americans seething with rage about welfare, crime, and "bleeding heart" liberalism.

The Gingrich revolution has gained momentum because it translates abstract philosophical individual-



ism into a radical and concrete legislative agenda, symbolized by the Contract With America. The contract proposes to dismantle much of the federal government. Yet, it is not government downsizing per se, but the change in its "covenant" with the people, that turns the contract into a manifesto of triage.

The contract comes closest to the explicit language of triage in denying welfare benefits to single poor mothers, but this is folded into a broader new social contract, which terminates the federal government's obligation to provide for the "life, liberty and happiness" of all its citizens by permanently abolishing legislative entitlements. The most discussed and maligned entitlement programs are food stamps, school lunches, Medicaid, and Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC)—the "safety nets" for the poor. But Social Security and Medicare, which serve the broader population, are also entitlements. The contract's call for "fiscal responsibility" and "personal responsibility" potentially puts all such programs on the chopping block, since the Gingrichites construe every manner of entitlement (except those—like oil-depletion write-offs, or the home-ownership interest deduction—which are disguised entitlements for the comfortable) as fiscally reckless, sources of the "culture of dependency."

Instead of entitlements, the contract proposes programs with restrictive spending caps. Whatever the social need, Congress would allocate a fixed amount for each state's discretionary use. If more people were to need subsidized food or health care than the cap permitted, a selection process would be required to determine who received aid. This is explicit political triage, in which government, rather than ensuring the survival of the entire population, designates certain sectors of the population as undeserving of support.

While Gingrich does not say so explicitly, his contract takes aim at inner-city populations. Gingrich's anti-entitlement revolution is, in part, a backlash movement, scapegoating and abandoning responsibility for groups toward whom the majority of Americans, themselves economically squeezed, can muster little sympathy or generosity. Conservative Republican Jack Kemp, sensing the exclusionary direction of his own party, recently pulled himself out of the Republican race for the presidency in 1996, saying, "I believe in inclusion, not exclusion. I believe that the party will never be whole again until blacks feel comfortable in our party." Registering his dissent with the Gingrichites, but unwilling to take them on, Kemp added that his party "is coming dangerously close to being portrayed as though all we want is little government and big prisons."

The triage sensibility has seeped into the political culture of both parties. In 1995, when a *New York Times* reporter asked Avis LaVelle, an assistant secretary in Clinton's Department of Health and Human Services, whether she could defend welfare and Medicaid as entitlements, she responded "No, I can't … It's just not smart for us to take an advocacy position one way or another. The ground is shifting under our feet."

The new politics of triage has emerged as the cutting edge of domestic policy. It is most obvious in the welfare-reform debate, but it is also deeply affecting immigration and other policy areas, creating larger and more diverse triaged populations, both within and outside our inner cities.

"Welfare Queens" and the Undeserving Poor: Targets of Triage 1

A systematic agenda to abolish welfare lies at the heart of the current politics of triage. The Contract With America proclaimed that it was time to cut off life support for anyone who didn't go to work. While the Senate will in all likelihood modify the landmark legislation passed in the House of Representatives in late March, and the President may veto it, the House bill represents the knife edge of triage that is likely to dominate the political scene for years to come. Proposals that are not passed or signed into law in this congressional session will certainly reappear until triage is discredited or succeeds in disposing of the growing "surplus" populations.

On March 24, 1995, the House of Representatives passed a harsh version of the contract's welfare-reform proposal. It abolishes federal programs such as AFDC and repeals such entitlement laws as the Food Stamp Act of 1977, the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, the National School Lunch Act of 1946, and the Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983, replacing them with block grants to the states. The legislation

removes any individual entitlement to welfare, cuts off unmarried mothers under eighteen from cash benefits, strips non-working recipients of benefits after two years, and eliminates benefits to all recipients after five years. It also bans disability payments to drug addicts, alcoholics, and some disabled children, while radically cutting the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps pay winter heating bills for the poor, disabled, and elderly. While the legislation retains food stamps as a federal entitlement, largely because Republicans from agricultural states feared loss of income to their farmer-constituents, it reduces food-stamp funding by $20 billion, or 14 percent, and excludes impoverished childless adults from food stamp support.

Billed by its proponents as "tough love," the legislation would save $69 billion over five years. Such "love" is actually a form of misogyny, targeting intensely vulnerable young women and their children, many of whom were not only the victims of irresponsible young men but of the general social backlash against women that the Gingrichites opportunistically exploit. The Congressional Budget Office reported that in five years the House legislation would exclude more than half of the five million mainly female-headed families currently on welfare. Clinton's Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, asserted that 5.3 mil-



lion children would be stripped of benefits, a number confirmed by a Republican spokesperson.

Vermont Governor Howard Dean, reacting to the Gingrich plan, said that "When Americans elected the new majority" in 1994, "they voted to do things in a new way, but I don't think they voted to starve children." Gingrich responded, however, that those most at risk could be taken from their mothers and put in orphanages subsidized by the savings from welfare cuts. He recommended that critics such as Hillary Rodham Clinton—who called it "unbelievable and absurd" to put "children into orphanages because their mothers couldn't find jobs"—watch the 1938 Spencer Tracy movie, *Boys Town*. But Secretary Shalala pointed out that Gingrich's plan would reap only $293 million in welfare savings for the states—enough to fund only 8,029 spaces in orphanages for the millions of kids who might need them.

Gingrichite Representative Jim McCrery of Louisiana admits that many welfare mothers who could not become self-sufficient after five years might have to give their "children up for adoption, place them in a group setting or foster care." He says this is "a price worth paying" to solve the welfare mess and help future generations. The Republican plan raises the specter of thousands of new "boarder babies," like those taken from mothers on crack during the 1980s—children consigned to custodial care with minimal personal contact.

Under the House welfare plan, the states would become the effective executors of triage, forced to find strategies for selecting recipients who would be cut off and exposed to starvation or homelessness. State welfare monies would be mercilessly squeezed by the immediate five-year cut of $69 billion, and by future federal cuts due to deficit pressures, recessions, and pressure to "lowball" benefits, out of fear that those states with more generous benefits would become magnets for the poor. Vermont's Governor Dean has predicted that the new plan would "starve children and kick old people out of their houses." Even Pennsylvania's Republican Senator Rick Santorum, an extreme conservative, acknowledged, "you're going to have millions of women and children with absolutely no support out there."

Radical Gingrichites such as Michigan governor John Engler, who has eliminated the welfare program

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for presumed able-bodied recipients in his state, zealously embrace this new states'-rights regime, saying that the federal government should "concentrate on foreign affairs" and butt out of most domestic policy. Without federal regulations, states could be innovative in designing their own triage strategies, such as putting time limits on welfare, eliminating additional payments, food stamps, or school lunches to support a child born to a welfare mother, or denying payments altogether to single mothers under a particular age.

Even before passage of the House legislation, some governors had been experimenting with triage. Governors Engler in Michigan, Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin, Pete Wilson in California, George Pataki in New York, and William Weld in Massachusetts had all deeply slashed their welfare budgets, typically targeting teenage welfare mothers and, in Pataki's case, also the blind and elderly disabled. The governors pioneered strategies to exclude those who didn't get a job quickly; Weld gained national attention for a proposal that gave thousands of Massachusetts recipients only days to find a job or lose all public support.

The block-grant plan in the House bill would give states and local governments powerful new incentives to cut welfare spending as a way to induce poor people to go elsewhere. For example, when Michigan ended its general relief program to childless adults in 1991, about a third of the 80,000 recipients left the state, presumably for more prosperous or generous states where they could get a job or welfare. The idea of using welfare "reform" as a strategy for ridding jurisdictions of the onerous burden of the poor surfaced as early as 1973, when Roger Starr, then New York City's housing director, argued in a *New York Times Magazine* article titled "Making New York Smaller" that officials should organize "planned shrinkage" of the poor population because the city could not support them all. The current



crop of welfare "reformers" may have been influenced by Starr's article; that could help explain the apparently senseless welfare-reform strategy of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who has just requested Governor Pataki to cut back even further his aid to the city, including several hundreds of millions of welfare and medical assistance to the Big Apple's poorest inhabitants.

Among the proposed Pataki cuts that Giuliani endorsed were emergency rent subsidies for welfare families facing eviction. Since state law requires the city to house homeless families, and it costs $32,000 a year on average to do so, Giuliani's proposals make no sense unless he is assuming that welfare families facing eviction will actually leave the city. This would once and for all unburden the city of its overwhelming welfare costs and fulfill the triage vision enunciated many years earlier by William F. Buckley when he ran for mayor of New York:

> What is the point of encouraging them to stay, when they might go elsewhere, where employment opportunities are greater, the cost of living less, living conditions better?....What is the argument that holds that New York is better off now that it would be with several thousand fewer people living here ... ?

Saving the Poor? Welfare, Work, and Triage

Gingrich's defense of triage politics rests on the notion that it will save the "deserving poor" willing to work, and would destroy the incentives that encouraged generations of welfare "queens" to "free ride" off hard-working citizens. The conservative worldview to which Gingrich and his disciples adhere holds that the leading cause of poverty is poverty programs; they thus frame welfare abolition as a movement not to abandon the poor but to rescue them. For example, during the floor debate on the House welfare bill, Representative Dan Mica of Florida said that "unnatural feeding and artificial care creates dependency." Celebrating after the passage of the House legislation, Mica made reference to the zoo sign, "Don't Feed the Alligators," noting that alligators can feed themselves and their children when left to fend for themselves. GOP Representative Barbara Cubin of Wyoming took the microphone, comparing the "induced" dependency of welfare mothers with that of caged wolves: "What has happened with the wolves, just like what happens with human beings, when you take away their incentive, when you take away their freedom, when you take away their dignity, they have to be provided for." Now, she said, it was time to liberate them to survive on their own.

A mainstream political consensus, including President Clinton and most other Democratic leaders, accepts the critique of welfare entitlements as undermining personal responsibility; their underlying supposition is that the poor could find jobs that pay a living wage. But critics such as University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson have noted that over the last three decades high national unemployment rates, the

flight of corporations from the inner cities, and the disappearance of unskilled jobs have made it impossible for many of even the most motivated welfare mothers or fathers to find any jobs at all in ghetto poverty zones where the unemployment rates hover as high as 50 percent. For example, this year Philadelphia Mayor Edward Rendell declared that there are no jobs for single mothers who want to work in his city. He indicated that changes in the Pennsylvania welfare system had terminated benefits for 5,500 Philadelphians in 1995, while during the same period only 355 new jobs were created statewide.

But even assuming jobs are available, Northwestern University sociologist Christopher Jencks shows that most would not pay enough to allow single mothers to support their kids. Reviewing studies carried out in Chicago, Boston, San Antonio, and Charleston, Jencks shows that the majority of welfare mothers were barely surviving—despite unreported income lifting them above the official poverty line. More revealing, interviews of single working mothers in the same cities showed that they are also in borderline economic peril, largely because of the high costs of doctors' bills and child care.

Jencks concludes that the average single working mother in 1995 would need $1,500 a month to get by without help from the government, requiring a much higher wage than the going rate of five to six dollars an hour that poor working women can expect. If subsidized child care or national health care were available, the gap between their wages and the cost of basic necessities would narrow, but the Gingrichites opposed health and child care as entitlements; House Republicans have proposed cutting the already sparse federal aid to child care $2.5 billion over five years.

Jencks suggests that unless the government were to ban single parents from having kids, the drive to end welfare is doomed—unless Americans are prepared to see many families—including those with single parents who work—go hungry or homeless. "Welfare reform" as currently envisioned is inevitably a triage strategy, not only for welfare mothers who don't find jobs but for many who do. They will be thrown into the already vast pool of poor working parents whose jobs do not pay enough to feed and house their children.

Radical changes in the welfare system—or even abolition—are not necessarily triage. Welfare has failed to end poverty, re-integrate the poor into society, or make the lives of the underclass tolerable. A government-sponsored program to guarantee full employment with a higher minimum wage, combined with job training, national health care, and subsidized child care, would permit a humane elimination of much of our archaic welfare system, allowing welfare recipients to move into the labor force and support their families.

Full employment would require, however, that government and business join forces to develop and retain jobs and fund major training programs, especially in areas devastated by triage policies. Many other innovations are also possible and promising. Among these are pilot programs in Canada and New York City that convert welfare payments into money and training to start new small businesses owned and operated by welfare mothers. Even orphanages, restructured as community homes in which both mother and children are brought together to live, get emotional support, and learn parenting and employment skills may be an imaginative possibility—assuming they are adequately funded and democratically administered by the residents.

Current welfare proposals are a form of political triage not because they dismantle the current entitlement structure, but because they fail to ensure viable alternatives. Both Gingrichites and Clintonites are unwilling to finance the job creation, skill training, health-care system, and child care necessary to abolish welfare as we know it. Reflecting the Washington mood, Iowa Republican Congressman Jim Nussle mocked ideas about guaranteeing child care for welfare mothers preparing to go to work: "Pretty soon we'll have the department of the alarm clocks to wake them up in the morning and the department of bedtime stories to tuck them in at night. It's not the government's responsibility." Speaker Gingrich, dismissing the notion that poor kids had an entitlement to school lunches, said they were too costly, and that "It doesn't say anywhere in the Declaration of Independence ... that anyone is entitled to anything except the right to pursue happiness." But if the Congress and the President were prepared to attack and dismantle "corporate welfare," embodied in outlandish subsidies to business and tax loopholes to the wealthy, money could be freed up without ballooning the deficit, permitting a radical shrinking of the welfare system supporting both the rich and poor and not allowing anyone to starve.

Unwelcome Immigrants: Targets of Triage II

By a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent, California passed Proposition 187 in late 1994. The initiative—a possibly unconstitutional measure which would ban state services such as health care, education, food stamps, and welfare for illegal immigrants—was led by Republican presidential hopeful

Governor Pete Wilson. Prop 187, along with the larger anti-immigrant movement it symbolizes, is perhaps the clearest model of triage politics, for it explicitly delineates a sector of the population as unworthy and strips it of resources necessary for survival. As the Prop 187 fervor spread beyond the public sector, many private California charities and donors also declared that none of their funds would go to help illegal aliens.

Other consequences were immediately apparent in California after the passage of Prop 187. Fearful illegal immigrant parents stopped sending their kids to schools, clinics, and hospitals. An eleven-year-old boy died because his undocumented parents were afraid that bringing him to the emergency room would lead to deportation. Critics warned of public-health disasters and riots in California counties with high percentages of illegal aliens, while noting the hypocrisy of Prop 187 sponsors who hired illegal immigrants as gardeners or nannies. Wilson himself had only a few years earlier fought hard to allow California growers to bring in cheap undocumented workers from Mexico which led, by some estimates, to more than three million new illegal aliens in the country.



Prop 187's victory helped spawn similar initiatives in other states with large illegal alien populations, including Florida, Texas, New York, Arizona, and Illinois. Henry Hyde of Illinois, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, promised that he would introduce a national variant of Prop 187 in Congress in 1995. Some saw Prop 187 foreshadowing a grim nativist politics of the late 1990s, much as California's Prop 13, the original tax revolt initiative, anticipated the anti-tax revolution of the 1980s.

Stronger efforts to seal the borders may reduce the inflow of illegal aliens, but they are unlikely to satisfy the cruel political impetus that underlies the new anti-immigrant politics. Republican leaders like Wilson have found in Prop 187 a powerful political wedge for diverting middle-class rage about dwindling paychecks toward "undesirables"—scapegoat populations who can be portrayed as unfairly competing for jobs and draining public budgets. Despite protests by "compassionate conservatives" like Jack Kemp, who opposed Prop 187 as a callous betrayal of the American spirit of inclusiveness, the national Republican Party sees anti-immigration politics as a ticket to the White House in 1996 and beyond.

Triage politics has spilled over from illegal aliens to legal immigrants. The Contract With America proposed to save $22 billion by kicking legal immigrants off Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income and barring them from sixty additional health, education, housing, and other programs, including school lunches, foster care, and emergency home-heating assistance. States would be free to follow suit; a few hard-hearted states cutting off legal immigrants would likely trigger a scramble as other states followed suit, fearing that their more generous provisions could act as a magnet for immigrants. For a nation of immigrants to repudiate legal immigrants so harshly shows both the fever pitch of triage politics and its utility to leaders desperately seeking to manipulate the acute economic frustrations and racial tensions among ordinary Americans in the 1990s.

Apartheid in America? Hard Triage and the New Underclasses

Multiple forms of triage have the potential to produce an American apartheid, similar to the former racial system in South Africa, which created separate homelands for Blacks and a militarily enforced racial caste system that divided the population into unbridgeable worlds of rich and poor. By the early 1990s, sociologists were seeing evidence of a new American underclass, physically, economically, and socially separated from the rest of the population. Made up mainly of Blacks and other minorities packed into urban ghettos, this new underclass runs the risk of becoming a separate nation within a nation, cast off by the rest of society and controlled by police and prisons.

Apartheid, American style, is a culmination of economically systemic and politically purposeful triage, coming to fruition in the 1990s. In the 1980s, the rise of the global economy and the flight of American factories to the Third World fused with the politics of Reaganism to lay the foundations for the triage of inner-city minorities. A "soft triage" was emerging: Driven by global competition and greed, America's corporations downsized and relocated to the suburbs and abroad. In the 1990s, greater economic globalism, technological change and deindustrialization, combined with the newly explicit exclusionary politics of the Gingrich era, have contributed to a "hard triage." The abandonment and containment of the new underclasses is planned and ideologically justified.

Hard triage is partially grounded in economics. As globalization progressed and more corporations fled to the Third World through the 1980s into the 1990s,

the American poor lost their usefulness as a reserve labor force, becoming permanently expendable. The increasing capacity of the poor in the Third World to take over the role of the reserve labor force for American multinational corporations, together with the growth of labor-saving technology that eliminated huge numbers of low-skilled jobs, permanently froze increasing numbers of the American poor out of the labor force.

As economic triage hardened, so did politics. Under Reagan's soft triage, the still functional underclass would be supported, albeit marginally, through welfare; Reagan himself always insisted that he would sustain a "safety net" for the truly needy. In the Gingrich era, this "softness" has given way to hard political triage, embodied in the abandonment of the poor explicitly rationalized and spelled out in the Contract With America.

The Bell Curve: Sociobiology, Intellectuals, and the Culture of Triage

This new purposefulness was accompanied by a rising culture of hard triage offering formal intellectual and moral legitimations of abandonment. One of the leading theorists of this movement has been Charles Murray, who first came to national attention during the Reagan years. In his 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, Murray proposed as a "thought experiment" the idea of abolishing welfare and letting recipients sink or swim on their own, an idea viewed at the time as inhumane. Murray offered the moral defense of triage that was resurrected by the Gingrichites ten years later: Destroying the safety net was the only way to end the culture of dependency and nurture personal responsibility among the poor.

In 1995, when his welfare proposals had shifted from social-science fiction to government policy, Murray wrote a more expansive moral tract, *The Bell Curve*, based on a genetic interpretation of the failures of the poor. Co-authored with Richard Herrnstein, a prominent Harvard psychologist who died in 1994, *The Bell Curve* argues that biologically rooted racial differences in intelligence explain the rise of the new underclass and the increasing economic division between rich and poor. Murray suggests that the gap will inevitably grow, since the high birth rate of the genetically unendowed underclass, combined with the new cognitive demands of a high-tech economy, will turn an increasing number of poor Americans into a surplus population.

Murray has made triage of the poor a matter of biological destiny and moral necessity. Efforts to integrate them into the economy through training or social programs, he argues, are genetically doomed; at best, some of the poor could gain legitimate membership in society by accepting the declining number of badly paid low-skill jobs offered to them. The genetic differences, Murray claims, offer a foundation in nature for an emerging apartheid-like caste system, which would physically, politically, and economically separate the underclass from the larger society.

While Murray's justification for stigmatizing the poor may be perfectly suited to the contemporary mood, the moralizing of triage has a long history. When German leaders in World War I decided to let thousands of handicapped or emotionally disturbed patients die in hospitals from starvation, German doctors and psychiatrists argued that the deaths were compassionate to the victims and good for the health of the nation. By World War II, when Nazi physicians began gassing their patients, health officials and intellectuals sought to persuade the public that physically and mentally handicapped people were sub-human and unworthy of help. This twentieth-century euthanasia movement in

(Continued on p. 86)

ELEVATIONS



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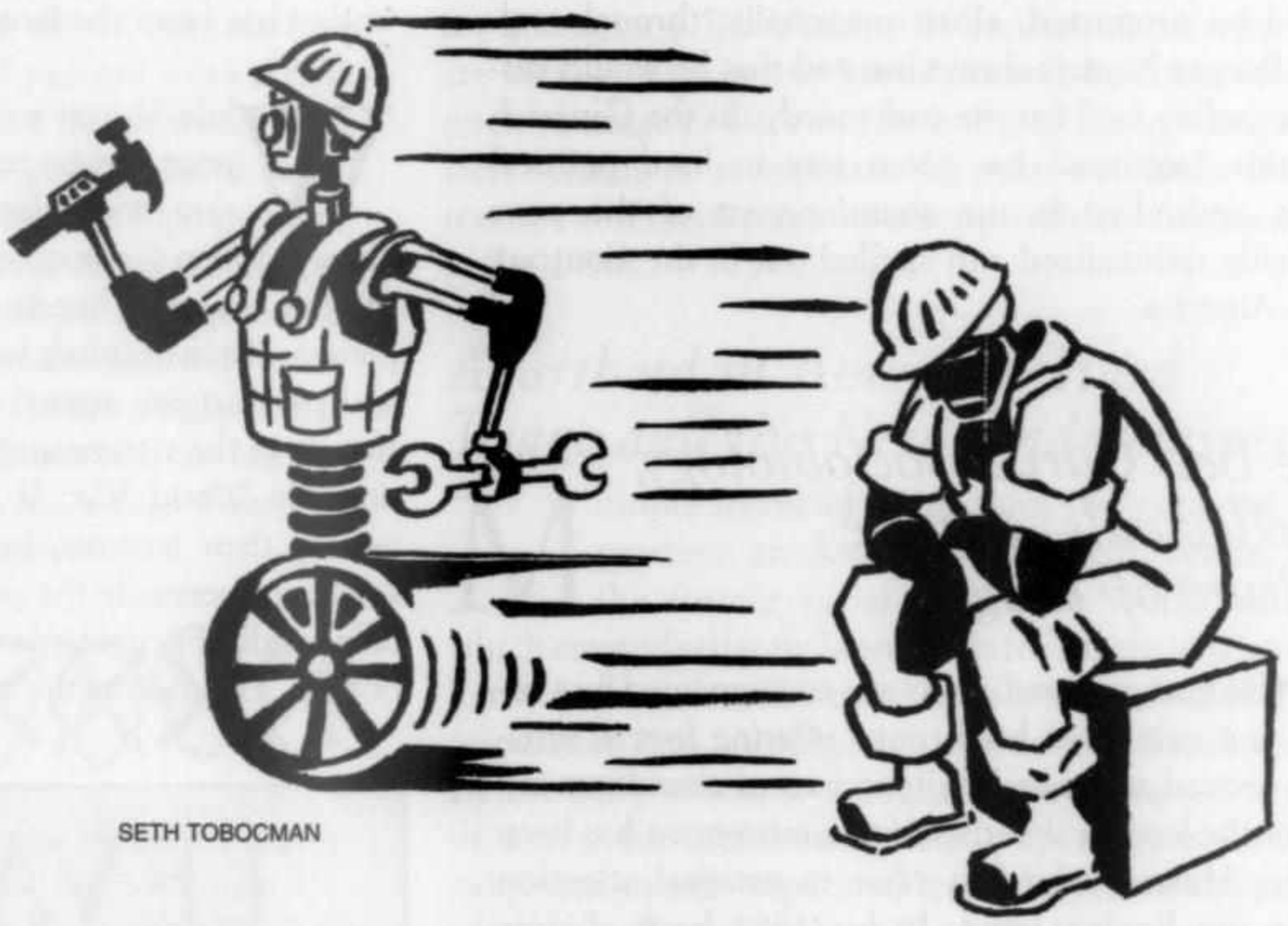
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High-Tech Populism in the Information Age

Jeremy Rifkin



SETH TOBOCMAN

Immediately following the November elections that swept the Republicans into power in the U.S. Congress for the first time since 1952, pollsters asked voters in focus groups why they switched their party allegiance so abruptly. To their surprise, the pollsters found that the real causes fueling voter unrest had little to do with either the Republican Contract for America or President Clinton's New Covenant for America. Rather, voters were registering a far deeper fear—one that was little talked about during the campaign. Sensing that an enormous shift is taking place in the economy, millions of Americans are beginning to worry that there may not be a place for them in the new high-tech Information Age. Talk of balancing budgets, imposing term limits on Congress, and ending unfunded mandates does little to address the underlying concerns of a workforce plagued by declining real wages, dead-end jobs, part-time temporary employment, and long-term structural unemployment.

Concern over diminishing jobs in a changing economy is being voiced with increasing frequency in Congress and in state legislatures, as politicians turn their attention to the welfare issue. While there is general agreement among the leaders of both political parties that welfare benefits must be limited in duration and that all able-bodied people must be retrained for jobs, neither Republicans nor Democrats have bothered to ask the more fundamental question: What jobs?

Jeremy Rifkin is the author of The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era *(Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam). He is president of The Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, D.C.*

We are long overdue for a political debate in this country—and indeed around the world—over how best to address the profound changes taking place in the nature of work as we make the transition into the Information Age. That debate should include a discussion of alternative ways of defining human worth now that the commodity value of most people's labor is diminishing in an ever-more automated global marketplace.

The Dawn of a New Economic Era

After years of wishful forecasts and false starts, the new computer and communications technologies are finally making an impact on the workplace and the economy, throwing the world community into the grip of a third industrial revolution. Information Age technologies are already eliminating entire employment categories. Many jobs are never coming back. Blue collar workers, secretaries, receptionists, clerical workers, sales clerks, bank tellers, telephone operators, librarians, wholesalers, and middle managers are just a few of the many occupations destined for virtual extinction.

Although recent government reports claim that unemployment in the United States has declined slightly, they conceal a darker reality. New technologies and corporate re-engineering have displaced millions of American workers, who now labor at low-wage, dead-end jobs, or as temporary employees without benefits. Millions of others have become so discouraged that they have ceased looking for work and therefore go uncounted in the official unemployment figures. More than 15 percent of the American people are currently living below the poverty level.

Earlier industrial technologies replaced the physical power of human labor, substituting machines for body and brawn. The new computer-based technologies, however, promise a replacement of the human mind itself, substituting thinking machines for human beings across the spectrum of economic activity. The implications are profound and far-reaching. To begin with, more than 75 percent of the labor force in most industrial nations engage in work comprised of little more than simple repetitive tasks. Automated machinery, robots, and increasingly sophisticated computers can perform many, if not most, of these jobs. In the United States alone, that means that in the years ahead more than 90 million jobs in a labor force of 124 million are potentially vulnerable to replacement by machines. With current surveys showing that fewer than 5 percent of companies around the world have even begun to make the transition to the new machine culture, massive unemployment of a kind never before experienced seems all but inevitable in the coming decades.

Of course, market optimists continue to argue that the new technologies of the Information Age will pave the way for an array of new products and services that will create even more jobs. In a debate on CNN more than a year ago, Dr. Laura D'Andrea Tyson—then president of the Council of Economic Advisors and currently the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy—accused me of shortsightedness and reminded me that the invention of the automobile eliminated thousands of jobs in the buggy industry, but created even more jobs in the fledgling auto industry. Tyson is right that the Information Age will create many new products and services, some with nearly universal market potential. But while in the past, mass labor was required to produce these goods, in the future they will be churned out in near-workerless factories and marketed by near-virtual companies.

Most defenders of the "trickle down" theory of technology continue to hold out hope that the expansion of markets and the prospect of a global trading economy will keep enough people employed, at least in the United States, for the foreseeable future. Murray Weidenbaum, president of the Council of Economic Advisors under President Reagan, and now director of the Center for Business at Washington University in St. Louis, argues that new markets, especially in Asia, will provide sufficient purchasing power to keep Americans employed in the coming century. Unfortunately, Weidenbaum and others fail to take into account the fact that companies all over the world will be competing for these same new markets, reducing the job-creating potential in the United States in the years ahead. Equally important, virtually every country in the world is creating a two-tier society, in the wake of the dramatic changes occurring in the nature of work. The top tier is made up of the knowledge workers of the emerging Information Age—entrepreneurs, scientists, technicians, computer programmers, professionals, educators, and consultants, and comprises less than 20 percent of the workforce in every country. The bottom tier is made up of the diminishing manufacturing and service sector jobs of the industrial era. The question is whether one-fifth of the world's population—those gainfully employed in the emerging knowledge sector—have sufficient purchasing power to absorb the dramatic increases in production arising from the new Information Age economy.

The reality is that the world is polarizing into two potentially irreconcilable forces—on one side, an information elite that controls and manages the high-tech global economy; and on the other, a growing number of permanently displaced workers with few prospects and little hope for meaningful employment in an increasingly automated world. While the knowledge sector and new markets abroad will create some new jobs, they will be far too few to absorb the millions of people displaced by the new technologies of the high-tech revolution.

Up to now, the politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties have steadfastly refused to address what is likely to be the seminal economic and social issue of the next several decades—what to do with the millions of people whose labor is needed less, or not at all, in an ever-more automated global economy. Instead, they have gushed over the great technological breakthroughs that are driving us ever faster into the world of cyberspace and issued breathless pronouncements on the wonders that await us along the information superhighway.

While both Newt Gingrich and President Clinton have embraced the Information Age, extolling the virtues of cyberspace and virtual reality, the Left's response has been to continue to fight a rear-guard action, targeting ideological issues and concerns of a bygone industrial era. In this respect, the Left's current

profile bears a striking likeness to the populists of the turn of the century, who fought to maintain an agrarian culture that was quickly being subsumed by the forces of urbanization and industrialization.

In the meantime, few intellectuals and even fewer activists have seriously examined the critical issues raised by the Information Era—especially the question of how to ensure that the dramatic productivity gains of the new high-tech global economy will be shared broadly among every segment of the population. A fair and equitable distribution of the productivity gains would require a dramatic shortening of the work week in countries around the world and a concerted effort by central governments to provide alternative employment in the Third Sector, or social economy, for those workers whose labor is no longer needed in the marketplace. If, however, the dramatic productivity gains of the high-tech revolution are not shared, but rather used primarily to enhance corporate profit to the exclusive benefit of stockholders, top corporate managers, and the emerging elite of high-tech knowledge workers, chances are that the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots of the world will lead to social and political upheaval on a global scale.

What is required now is a bold new social vision and broad-based political movement that can speak directly to the challenges facing us in the new economic era. We need a high-tech populism for the Information Age.

The Thirty-Hour Work Week

To begin with, the business community and elected officials ought to focus serious attention on shortening the work week to thirty hours by the year 2005. The new technologies, after all, were supposed to free us for greater leisure, not longer unemployment lines. In the Industrial Era, when new technologies boosted productivity and reduced labor requirements, working people organized and demanded their right to share in the gains with shorter work weeks and better pay and benefits. Much of the impetus for the five-day work week at the beginning of this century came from the Jewish community. Particularly in the clothing and textile unions, Jewish labor leaders argued that productivity gains ought to be shared with millions of working Americans by reducing the work week from six to five days—allowing a day of rest on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

Today, reformers around the world are beginning to call for a thirty-hour work week to bring schedules in line with the new productive potential of Information Age technologies. In France and Germany, mainstream politicians as well as business and labor leaders have joined together in support of a radically reduced work week. The thirty-hour week will likely be introduced in parts of Europe within the next three to five years.

Harried by the stress of long work schedules, working Americans are likely to give broad support the thirty-hour work week. While many Americans have lost their jobs or are working only part-time as temps, those still holding on to a full-time job are being forced to work even longer hours. Many companies prefer to employ a smaller workforce at longer hours rather than a larger one at shorter hours to save the costs of providing additional benefits, including health care and pensions. Even with the payment of time and a half for over time, companies still pay out less than they would if they had to pay for benefit packages for a larger workforce.

The thirty-hour work week is a powerful vision and could unite a diverse number of constituencies. For example, a six-hour work day would mean that most parents would have schedules that jibed with their children's school day. For parenting organizations, women's groups, and religious organizations that have decried the loss of parental supervision in the home and the disintegration of the American family, bringing parents' and children's schedules into synch is an idea whose time has come. For organized labor, whose power has been steadily eroding for several decades, the six-hour day offers an opportunity to regain a foothold in the emerging Information Age. Working together, these groups could wield real clout and mount an effective grass-roots campaign for the steady reduction of work hours in American society.

Still, the argument persists that fewer hours at existing pay could put companies at a competitive disadvantage globally. One way to address the concern is to extend generous tax credits for shifting to a shorter work week and hiring additional workers. The size of the tax credit could be determined by the number of workers hired and the total amount of the increased payroll. The loss of revenue up front, some argue, would likely be made up for later by the taxable revenue generated from more workers bringing home a paycheck. The Clinton administration has already floated the idea of providing tax credits to companies that hire welfare recipients, setting a precedent for a broader initiative that would cover the bulk of the workforce. Finally, the government might consider granting additional tax credits to those companies also willing to include a profit-sharing plan along with a reduction of the work week, to allow workers to participate even more fully in the productivity gains.

The Third Sector and The Politics of Meaning

While the demand for a thirty-hour work week ought to be the rallying cry of a new high-tech populist movement, it should be accompanied by a new vision of a post-market era. We need to begin to ponder the unthinkable—to imagine new ways of living in the Information Age.

With the need for mass labor diminishing in an increasingly automated global economy, new opportunities for engaging human labor become possible. Unfortunately, we have become so used to thinking of ourselves almost exclusively as producers and consumers that the very idea of creating a revolutionary new context for human activity seems almost fanciful. Yet, we are at the moment in world history when machine technology can begin to substitute for human toil in the production of goods and delivery of services. Large numbers of people are being freed from the production process. Whether that emancipation from the marketplace leads to chronic unemployment, the increasing polarization of rich and poor, and class warfare on a global scale, or a renaissance of the human spirit and a transformation of consciousness largely depends on whether a new populist movement can combine the demand for economic justice with a call for a new way of living in the world. This is the critical juncture where the "politics of materialism" and the "politics of meaning" join together to create a powerful new paradigm for a post-market era.

The first question to ask is what do we do with the increasing numbers of people whose labor is simply not needed in the marketplace, even with a reduced work week. It is unrealistic to believe that the local, state, and federal governments will continue to act as employers of last resort, as they have for the past half-century. In the wake of mounting debts and deficits, government, at every level, can be expected to downsize and diminish in the years ahead. With both the marketplace and government playing a reduced role in the work lives of millions of Americans, the Third Sector, or non-profit community, becomes the last best hope for both restoring the work life of the country and creating a new politics of meaning that can move our society into a post-market era.

For more than 200 years, Third Sector activity has shaped the American experience. While historians are quick to credit the market and government sectors with America's greatness, the Third Sector has played an equally aggressive role in defining the American way of life. The nation's first schools and colleges, its hospitals, social service organizations, fraternal orders, women's clubs, youth organizations, civil rights groups, social justice organizations, conservation and environmental protection groups, animal welfare organizations, theaters, orchestras, art galleries, libraries, museums, civic associations, community development organizations, neighborhood advisory councils, volunteer fire departments, and civilian security patrols are all creatures of the Third Sector.

Third Sector organizations serve many functions. They are the incubators of new ideas and forums to air social grievances. Community associations integrate streams of immigrants into the American experience. They are places where the poor and the helpless can find a helping hand. Non-profit organizations such as museums, libraries, and historical societies help preserve traditions and open doors to new kinds of intellectual experiences. The Third Sector is where many people first learn how to practice the art of democratic participation. It is where companionship is sought and friendships are formed. The independent sector also provides a place and time for exploring life's spiritual dimension. Religious and therapeutic organizations allow millions of Americans to leave behind the secular concerns of daily life. Finally, the Third Sector is where people relax and play, and more fully experience the pleasures of life and nature.

The American people ought to consider making a direct investment in expanded job creation in the non-profit sector, as an alternative to welfare, for the increasing number of jobless who find themselves locked out of the new high-tech global marketplace. The state and local governments could provide an income voucher for those permanently unemployed Americans willing to be retrained and placed in community-building jobs in the Third Sector. The government could also award grants to non-profit organizations to help them recruit and train the poor for jobs in their organizations.

An income voucher would allow millions of unemployed Americans, working through thousands of neighborhood organizations, the opportunity to help themselves. Providing a social wage in return for community-service work would also benefit both business and government. Reduced unemployment means more people could afford to buy goods and services, which would spur more businesses to open up in poor neighborhoods, creating additional jobs. Greater employment would also generate more taxes for the local, state, and federal governments. A rise in employment would also cut the crime rate and lower the cost of maintaining law and order.

Providing income vouchers directly to individuals

who are able to secure a job in a non-profit neighborhood organization is a far less costly and more effective way of addressing the problem of structural unemployment than setting up expensive government programs and the bureaucratic machinery to administer them. By making the individual qualify and compete for a job in the non-profit sector, we retain much of the incentive normally associated with employment in the marketplace. Then too, non-profit organizations are, more often than not, organic creations born in the neighborhoods they serve and, therefore, generally more attuned to the needs of local communities than are government-administered public programs. For all of these reasons, a re-emergent Third Sector seems a likely successor to more government in addressing the very real and pressing needs of the millions of Americans left by the wayside along the information superhighway.

The Third Sector cuts a wide swath through society. Non-profit activities run the gamut from social services to health care, education and research, the arts, religion, and advocacy. The sector is made up of millions of volunteers as well as paid employees. There are currently more than 1,400,000 nonprofit organizations in the United States with total combined assets of more than $500 billion. A study conducted by Yale economist Gabriel Rudney in the 1980s estimated that the expenditures of America's non-profit and voluntary organizations exceeded the gross domestic product of all but seven nations in the world. The non-profit sector already contributes more than 6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and is responsible for 10.5 percent of the total national employment. More people are employed in Third Sector organizations than work in the construction, electronics, transportation, or textile and apparel industries.

Today, non-profit and voluntary organizations are serving millions of Americans in every neighborhood and community. Their reach and scope often eclipse both the private and public sector, touching and affecting the lives of every American, often more profoundly than the forces of the marketplace or the agencies and bureaucracies of government.

Although non-profit and voluntary organizations exist in most other countries, nowhere are they as well developed as in the United States. Americans have often turned to non-profit and voluntary organizations as a refuge—a place where personal relationships can be nurtured, status can be achieved, and a sense of community can be created. Max Lerner, the economist and educator, once observed that through their affiliations with civic organizations Americans hope to overcome their sense of personal isolation and alienation and become part of a real community. This is a primordial need that cannot be filled by either the forces of the market or the dictates of government. Lerner writes, "It is in them [civic associations] … that the sense of community comes closest to being achieved."

The Third Sector incorporates many of the necessary elements for a compelling alternative vision to the utilitarian ethos of the marketplace. Nonetheless, the spirit of the social economy has not yet jelled into a powerful countervailing worldview capable of setting the agenda for a nation. This is due, in large part, to the extraordinary hold that the values of the marketplace have had over the affairs of the nation.

The market vision, wedded to a materialistic cornucopia, glorifies production principles and efficiency standards as the primary means of advancing happiness. As long as people's primary identification is with the market economy, the values of expanded production and unlimited consumption will continue to influence personal behavior. People will continue to think of themselves, first and foremost, as "consumers" of goods and services.

The Third Sector vision offers a much needed antidote to the materialism that has so dominated twentieth-century industrial thinking. While workers in the private sector are motivated by material gain and view security in terms of increased consumption, Third Sector participants are motivated by service to others and view security in terms of strengthened personal relationships and a sense of grounding in the larger community.

The third sector's role is likely to increase significantly in the years ahead for the simple reason that many of the tasks performed in this sector involve intimate social skills that are not easily reducible to computerization. Ironically, what we have come to think of as high-status skills in the marketplace—even professional jobs requiring years of training—are often reducible, at least in part, to digitization and automation. Already, sophisticated information technologies are replacing many of the conventional tasks of engineers, architects, managers, accountants, lawyers, and even physicians. On the other hand, many of the skills we've traditionally relegated to the bottom of the economic pyramid and treated as low-status occupations are far too complex to be replaced by computers and robotization. The skills of an adult-care worker managing a day-care center and nurturing the lives of twenty children are far too complex to be subsumed by the new technologies. In the coming decades, we are likely to witness a profound shift in what we regard as "meaningful" work, as market skills become more automated and intimate people skills in the Third Sector become more valued.

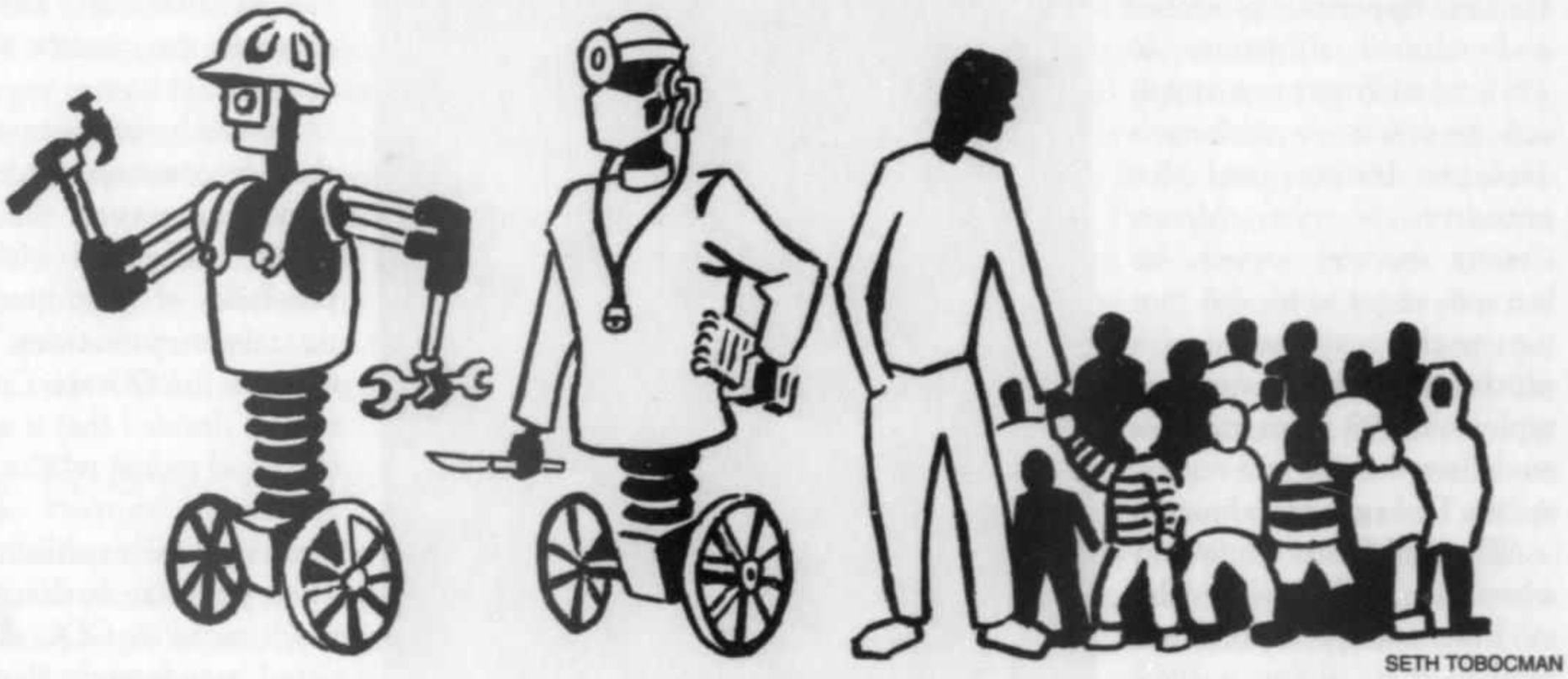
Financing a Third-Sector Income

Paying for income vouchers and for re-education and training programs to prepare men and women for a career of community service in the Third Sector would require significant government funds. Some of the money could come from savings produced by gradually replacing many of the current welfare programs with direct payments to persons performing community-service work. Government funds could also be freed up by discontinuing costly subsidies and tax breaks to corporations that have outgrown their domestic commitments and now operate internationally.

Cutting unnecessary defense programs could free up additional funds. Despite the fact that the Cold War is over, the federal government continues to maintain a bloated defense budget. While Congress has scaled down defense appropriations in recent years, military expenditures are expected to run at about 89 percent of Cold War spending between 1994 and 1998. In a 1992 report, the Congressional Budget Office concluded that defense spending could be cut by a rate of 7 percent a year over a five-year period without compromising the nation's military preparedness or undermining national security.

Perhaps the most equitable and far-reaching approach to raising the needed funds.would be to enact a value-added tax (VAT) on all high-tech goods and services. While the VAT is a new and untried idea in the United States, it has been adopted by fifty-nine countries, including virtually every major European nation. By enacting a VAT of between 5 and 7 percent on all high-tech goods and services, the federal government could generate billions of dollars of additional revenue—more than what would be required to finance a social wage for those willing to work in the Third Sector.

Vested interests as well as the new Republican majority in Congress and in many of the state legislatures are likely to resist the idea of providing a social wage in return for community service. Yet, the alternative—leaving the problem of long-term technological unemployment unattended—would create far more onerous burdens for our society. A growing underclass of permanently unemployable Americans could lead to widespread social unrest, increased violence, escalating crime and incarceration, and the further disintegration of American society. Eventually, society will have to ask whether it makes more sense to spend approximately $30,000 per head to keep millions of people in jail each year, or use those same funds for job retraining and income vouchers so that people can find meaningful work in non-profit organizations in the Third Sector, servicing their neighborhoods and restoring their communities.



SETH TOBOCMAN

In the debate over how best to divide up the benefits of productivity advances brought on by the new high-tech global economy, we must ultimately grapple with an elementary question of economic justice. Put simply, does every member of society, even the poorest among us, have a right to participate in and benefit from the productivity gains of the information and communication technology revolutions? If the answer is yes, then some form of compensation will have to be made to the increasing number of unemployed whose labor will be needed less, or not at all, in the new high-tech automated world of the twenty-first century.

By shortening the work week to thirty hours and providing an income voucher for permanently unemployed people in return for retraining and service in the Third Sector, we can begin to address some of the many structural issues facing a society in transition to an automated

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Blood, Sweat, and Tears

The Tuskegee Experiment and the Era of AIDS

David L. Kirp

Last winter, as controversy swirled over the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster as U.S. Surgeon General, opponents produced a bombshell allegation: In 1969, when Foster was a medical professor at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute and vice president of the Macon County medical society, he learned about and did not protest the continuation of a protracted study of untreated syphilis in 399 Black men—a study later known and reviled as "the Tuskegee experiment."



RENE CARSON

What did Foster know and when did he know it? The medical society's president recalled that, during a 1969 meeting at which U.S. Public Health Service officials briefed the group, Foster sat two or three chairs away. Foster himself remembered things differently—he insisted he was not aware of the Tuskegee experiment until it became national news in 1972, when he reacted with "outrage."

In this barrage of charge and counter-charge, one central fact went unnoticed: *Until the Tuskegee story broke in 1972, no one of any stature ever challenged the experiment in its forty-year history*, despite the fact that the existence of the project was well known—indeed, articles in leading medical journals regularly updated the study's findings. Furthermore, as James Jones observes in *Bad Blood*, the definitive account of the Tuskegee study, that fateful 1969 meeting followed on the heels of a high-level review of the experiment, undertaken by the federal Centers for Disease Control, which concluded that, on scientific grounds, the research should continue.

Research was one thing, though, common perception something entirely different. When confronted with the possibility of "wild journalistic misinterpretations," the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) decided that it would be "good public relations" to garner the support of the local medical establishment. They got that backing and much more. A CDC official noted wonderingly that the doctors "actually agreed that if they had a list of the individuals [in the study] they would not knowingly give them antibiotics," not just for syphilis but also for the wide range of infections that were routinely treated with antibiotics. The endorsement prompted the CDC to renew its search for all the original study participants still living and to continue the study until the last of them had died.

But three years later, Tuskegee became news, a medical outrage that rivaled the Nuremberg revelations about Nazi scientists. Congress investigated and passed legislation placing new strictures on the conduct of medical research. Nevertheless, this flurry of publicity and policy-making ignored the extent to which the medical and scientific establishment had endorsed the research. And the scientific establishment fled from responsibility. "Shocked and horrified" was the reaction of an assistant secretary at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare—an inadvertent adaptation of the famous line from *Casablanca*—and the

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same theme was sounded by the CDC, the Tuskegee Institute (where much of the research was carried out), and the local doctors' group. "A literal death sentence was passed on some of those people," one federal official piously declared, as if an alien authority had passed that sentence.

A generation later, Tuskegee stands as a synonym for racial genocide in our time, especially among African Americans. That's why the contention that Dr. Henry Foster was a knowing, if minor, player in this drama has such potency all these years later. Yet an exclusively racial reading of Tuskegee tells only a partial truth, for the critical lessons to be learned really have much less to do with race than is generally supposed, and much more to do with the hubris of the researchers and the power of medical hierarchy.

In the Black community, though, the reverberations of Tuskegee extend far beyond the fate of another hapless Clinton appointee. Among African Americans, the widespread perception that the experiment emblemizes Nazi science in America laid a foundation for deep distrust of the authority of public health. This mind-set of disbelief is contributing to another contemporary tragedy, far more serious in its implications than the original one, as Blacks view AIDS through the prism of Tuskegee.

The Tuskegee Follies

Among the ironies of the Tuskegee chronicles is the fact that the project's initial focus—combating syphilis among rural Black men—was unabashedly progressive. In the aftermath of World War I, widespread concern about venereal disease and social hygiene spurred Southern states to open syphilis clinics. But while whites and city dwellers received treatment, rural Blacks were excluded. The Rosenwald Foundation, a New York City-based charity funded by German-Jewish immigrants which focused on aiding Blacks, stepped in: Together with the U.S. Public Health Service, the foundation opened rural clinics in six Southern states. One was situated in Macon County, Alabama—among the nation's poorest counties and home of the all-Black Tuskegee Institute—where the syphilis prevalence rate among Black males was an astounding 36 percent.

Like the rest of the Jim Crow South, these clinics had to be run on a segregated basis. Foundation officials feared their venture might reinforce the mistaken belief that syphilis was really just a Black problem. But the need for care was undeniable—in Macon County, syphilis rates were three times higher among Blacks than whites; besides, using Black as well as white doctors in the clinics represented racial progress. A Black doctor who reviewed the Macon County program reported that "to the extent that the demonstration has caused county, state and federal authorities to take an interest in the health problems of a very backward Negro community, the effort is very much worthwhile." But with the advent of the Depression, the state of Alabama couldn't take over the clinics, the Rosenwald Foundation withdrew its funding, and in 1931 the program lapsed.

The researchers were reluctant to quit the field, however. They proposed a "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male." Treating syphilis was clearly preferable to leaving it untreated, but since no one would subsidize treatment, the researchers hoped to "salvage [something] of value from the defunct treatment program." The investigation also had a progressive rationale: Dramatic findings of adverse effects from withholding treatment were anticipated, and these could be used to goad politicians into delivering the necessary care. While the Rosenwald Foundation declined to participate in the study, the Public Health Service financed it. Two generations later, critics focused on the fact that the experiment's only subjects were Black. "There are still federal officials who feel they can do anything where black people are concerned," the *Baltimore Afro-American* editorialized. Yet at the outset, there *was* some scientific justification for investigating the distinctive effects of syphilis on African Americans. Norwegian researchers had already detailed the grim effects of syphilis when left untreated among white males. It made sense to limit this new inquiry to Black men, contended a syphilologist consulted by the PHS—not because Blacks were more expendable than whites, but because in its manifestations "syphilis in the Negro is in many respects almost a different disease from syphilis in the white," and so merited separate study. That surmise turned out to be unfounded. But to have ignored the clinical evidence, to have insisted from the outset that syphilis had to be color-blind in its etiology, would have substituted ideology for science.

This historical recital is no defense of the Tuskegee study, either at its inception, when it was intended as a year-long investigation, or over the course of what became the most protracted inquiry ever conducted into the untreated effects of disease. Yet the experiment's deepest flaws have little to do with race. Instead, they are embedded in what was then regarded as "normal science."

Even as, year after year, researchers kept persuading the Public Health Service that "many interesting facts could be learned regarding the course and complications of syphilis," what was being investigated, and why, continued to change. Initially, the emphasis was on a

posited link between syphilis and heart disease among Blacks, a pattern that leading researchers believed to be more pronounced than among whites; a "perfect gold mine of cardiovascular syphilis" was anticipated. Later, when it became evident from examination of the subjects' medical records that most actually had received some treatment, the focus shifted to the efficacy of *partial* therapy. By the 1950s, with the surviving subjects well into their fifties and sixties, the study was being represented as a benign inquiry into the processes of aging.

Throughout this forty-year history, two things remained constant. The focus was always on death and dying, not treatment; and the subjects never knew that they were participants in an experiment. Although Public Health Service physicians regularly performed clinical evaluations on the Tuskegee subjects and offered medical help for non-syphilis-related maladies, they didn't provide the medication that could have reversed the course of the syphilis. Mercury and arsenic compounds, the standard syphilis treatment when the study began, were withheld from the subjects; and later, when penicillin became the "magic bullet," it was denied too. With a cure at hand, this was bizarre science, but the rationale for persevering ostensibly drew upon researchers' canons—there were things still to be learned, and introducing treatment would interfere with this learning. The discovery of penicillin made Tuskegee an even more unique trove, went the Catch-22 justification, since the situation could "never be duplicated."

Not only did the Tuskegee investigators withhold effective therapy—during World War II, they also intervened to prevent the men of Tuskegee from being treated, persuading draft boards to exclude them from service as medically unfit, rather than arranging for treatment. These repeated denials of medical help had fatal consequences, as data collected by the Public Health Service unsurprisingly showed higher rates of morbidity and mortality among the subjects than among the experimental controls. At least a hundred men died from complications attributable to syphilis—men whose lives could have been prolonged had the experiment never happened. Tuskegee turned doctors into observers and called upon them to chronicle, rather than prevent, harm.

The subjects themselves knew nothing of the doctors' true objectives. They had been lured into participating with a pocketful of cash, the pledge of free medical care, and the promise of a paid-up funeral. Told only that they had "bad blood," a diagnosis that carried many different meanings, mostly fatalistic, they were instructed when their presence was required by the "government doctors."

In 1932, when the Tuskegee experiment was launched, and for decades thereafter, judgments about what topics merited study were left entirely to the experts. In the design and execution of medical research, no one ever questioned the putative scientific benefits of the enterprise or weighed those benefits against the human suffering that was being inflicted.

Means sometimes evolve into ends when organizations lose their way—so too in Tuskegee. A succession of researchers who had worked on the experiment were promoted to head the Public Health Service division that kept the experiment going; in effect, they were evaluating their own handiwork. So ingrained in the organization's collective mentality was a belief in the investigation's importance, so total was the incuriosity about their subjects' lives, that when principles for human experimentation were developed at the Nuremberg trials, no one thought to reassess the Tuskegee protocol. The experimental regime was so completely and unthinkingly accepted that researchers would have rejected as slanderous any comparison with Nazi science. It was not until 1965 that an outsider wrote to question the "moral judgments" of the researchers—and that challenge was quickly dismissed as eccentric.

Beyond Tuskegee: Science and Hubris

Such behavior, far from being unique to Tuskegee, typified "normal science" during the 1940s and 1950s in both the empirical and normative senses of that phrase. Retarded children at the Fernald School in Massachusetts were used as guinea pigs in radiation tests, while in New York City retarded youngsters housed in a stygian pit known as Willowbrook were deliberately exposed to the hepatitis virus as recently as the early 1960s. To be sure, retarded children, like the poor Black men of Tuskegee, are pretty powerless, and so especially vulnerable to domination by scientific authority. But the malevolent consequences of scientific authoritarianism were widely felt across the social spectrum. Radiation experiments, which have only recently come to light, offer a telling example. During the '40s and '50s, some 9,000 Americans from all walks of life were used as guinea pigs in 154 tests carried out by the Atomic Energy Commission, and yet more radiation tests were being conducted by the Pentagon.

The policy reforms adopted after the 1972 Tuskegee disclosures were supposed to end such mistreatment by making science accountable to authorities outside the community of scientists. Experimental subjects became invested with legal rights—including the right to exercise

informed consent—and protocols were drafted to limit the possible risks of research. Institutional committees were established, nationwide, to monitor medical studies.

Still, reports of Tuskegee-like abuse continue to surface more than two decades after the Tuskegee revelations. A severely disabled patient at the UCLA Medical Center killed himself in 1993 when the hospital stopped providing his normal medication as part of an experiment. Although it was claimed that the patient's family had given its consent for the procedure, that "consent" turned out not to be much more informed than at Tuskegee. In the mid-1980s, French doctors knowingly distributed HIV-contaminated batches of Factor VIII, a blood-protein concentrate that hemophiliacs depend on for their survival. While a supply of uncontaminated Factor VIII was available, the decision was made to use up the old stores, and some 300 Frenchmen died as a result. Explanations for this sorry episode sounded like Tuskegee *redux*: the arrogance of the experts, who demanded autonomy, and their disdain for the hemophiliac victims.

Marketplace imperatives have also contributed to Tuskegee-like medical mistreatment. In the "bad blood" case, for instance, the contaminated supply of Factor VIII was worth millions of dollars, and the government bureau that ran the program was unwilling to swallow such a loss. In another case, the American firm of C.R. Bard, fearful that it was losing its share of the market in heart catheters, started selling untested models. But the new devices began failing almost immediately; at least one person died, and twenty-two others had to undergo emergency heart surgery. In 1993, the firm pleaded guilty to more than 300 instances of human experimentation and accepted a $65-million fine.

"For a company to engage in a pattern of using unsuspecting patients as guinea pigs and operating rooms as laboratories for unapproved products," said David Kessler, head of the Food and Drug Administration, "shows a blatant disregard for the health and safety of the patients who literally entrusted their lives to the company's products." Substitute "government" for "company," and this condemnation fits Tuskegee like the proverbial glove.

Tuskegee and AIDS

Viewed in the context of these medical misadventures, the abuses of the Tuskegee experiment can be seen to stem from the arrogance and sense of the inviolability of medical inquiry. Yet the racial reading of Tuskegee remains powerful among African Americans, many of whom have applied to AIDS what they regard as the lessons of Tuskegee. The 1993 edition of *Bad Blood* added a provocatively titled chapter, "AIDS: Is It Genocide?," which summarized polls showing that Blacks are far more likely than whites to believe that AIDS was deliberately caused, and that a sizable number say AIDS is another Tuskegee, another act of genocide. The fallout from such sentiments is distrust of the preventive strategies urged by public-health authorities—reluctance to "own" the epidemic, as Harlan Dalton wrote in his influential essay "AIDS in Blackface," despite its disproportionate impact on the Black community.

The Tuskegee experiment is not, of course, the only reason for this inclination to denial. The early search for the origins of AIDS evoked legitimate fears that African Americans would get blamed for the virus because of its apparent African origin and its prevalence in Haiti; the Black Coalition Caucus, a group brought together by the CDC in 1988 to offer counsel on AIDS policy, issued a manifesto whose opening paragraph declared that "in no way will American Blacks permit this deadly AIDS epidemic to be blamed on or attributed to the existence of Black people." Moreover, AIDS was initially regarded as a gay disease, a characterization that played into the "don't ask, don't tell" view of homosexuality prevalent in the Black community. The link between AIDS and intravenous drug use also stirred resistance to such useful prevention strategies as the exchange of intravenous needles.

If the government could carry out the Tuskegee experiment, why couldn't AIDS have been concocted in a government lab?

These concerns all reflect resentment at white dominance of the process of picking social priorities—determining that certain problems, like AIDS, matter more than others, such as drug abuse, whatever African Americans might think. Distrust follows from that anger, a belief that AIDS is not merely a virus but a metaphor for pervasive racism. The conversation-stopper is the charge, partly premised on Tuskegee, that the disease represents an act of genocide against African Americans, a government campaign to eliminate the Black race.

The 1988 "Black Coalition Caucus manifesto" demanded "absolute assurance that CDC AIDS testing and counseling initiatives are not just another Tuskegee tragedy being perpetrated on the black race." The Nation of Islam distributed pamphlets claiming that AIDS was a plot to kill off Blacks, while *Essence* maga-

zine, published for a mainstream Black audience, ran an article titled "AIDS: Is It Genocide?", which quoted a Black AIDS researcher as asserting "a possibility that the virus was produced to limit the number of African people." A Black Studies instructor was more straightforward. "Our whole relationship to whites has been that of their practicing genocidal...behavior on us from the whole slave encounter up to the Tuskegee Study." "Thousands and thousands of our people" were killed by Tuskegee, he added, exaggerating the actual toll in order to capture the demonic character of these events.

The *New York Times* began a lengthy account of the "AIDS conspiracy" theme with a quote from Keith Brown, a Black man whose brother died of AIDS. "I don't want to believe that AIDS is some kind of government plot, but I guess I do. I believe it." The 1990 article cited national polls reporting that three Blacks in ten believed AIDS might well have been "deliberately created in a laboratory in order to infect black people." A follow-up *Times* editorial chided Blacks for the "bizarre" belief in an "AIDS 'Plot.'" Even some "dedicated health workers engaged in the fight against AIDS" consider the epidemic to be the work of man, the editorial declared incredulously, noting that suspicion extended to AIDS treatments and preventive measures, with drugs like AZT dismissed as poison, condoms seen as a population control measure, needle exchange rejected as a tactic to weaken the community by encouraging drug abuse, medical treatment refused out of distrust. "Destructive paranoia," thundered the editorial writer.

While the consequences of maintaining a conspiratorial mind-set about AIDS are surely terrible, the rhetoric of ridicule has persuaded few paranoids (few non-paranoids, for that matter) to abandon their convictions. In pitching its message, The *Times* relied entirely on science, while forgetting that there's more than ample evidence in the record, dating back to slavery, to justify suspicions about officially endorsed palliatives for Black woes. For Keith Brown, the tie to Tuskegee came straight from his family history. His parents had recently told him that a distant relative was among the untreated Tuskegee Blacks, and "when I heard that, it blew my mind."

If the government could carry out the Tuskegee experiment, the argument runs, why couldn't AIDS have been concocted in a government lab? At the outset of the epidemic, some gay activists drew upon a parallel history of government abuse of a vilified minority, as well as a deep-rooted animus toward the health establishment, to argue that AIDS was planned as a strategy aimed at eradicating homosexuals. In the early 1990s, Steven Thomas and Sandra Crouse Quinn of the University of Maryland's Minority Health Research Laboratory heard similar questions while promoting AIDS prevention for African Americans. Among Black churchgoers surveyed, nearly half thought the government was not "telling me the truth about AIDS"; two-thirds either agreed with or were unsure whether AIDS "is a form of genocide against the black race."

Everywhere these researchers went, Blacks pointed to a link between Tuskegee and AIDS. Thomas and Quinn labeled this view a "disaster myth," a way to survive a catastrophe that, by discouraging efforts to bring the epidemic under control, courts catastrophe. "To develop and implement HIV education programs that are scientifically sound, culturally sensitive, and ethically acceptable," they sensibly conclude, requires a full airing of these Black fears of genocide—including, critically, a candid discussion in which the topic of how Tuskegee went so badly wrong is taken up by the public health officials who for more than twenty years have ducked such an exchange.

The accusation against Dr. Henry Foster offers a new opportunity to begin honest talk about Tuskegee. If that conversation does occur, African Americans should find it easier to rejoin the conversation about AIDS—as activists, not as victims of a disaster deliberately caused by someone else—and so claim sovereignty over the epidemic. The alternative is to keep citing theories of genocide, whose lineage goes back to Tuskegee, to justify the alienation of the powerless and the abdication of the leaders. That approach only prolongs—multiplies a thousand-fold—Tuskegee's killing power. □

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Radwan

John Hockenberry

Author's Note:

In early 1988 I was sent off to Jerusalem to cover for National Public Radio what was then the biggest story in the world: the Palestinian uprising, what the residents of the Gaza Strip and West Bank territory called the Intifada. It was my first foreign assignment, and besides notebooks and tape recorders I hauled a small truckload of tools and spare wheelchair parts with me past some very skeptical Israeli security officials and the legendary suspicion of Israeli customs. I had no idea what to expect in this place. Wheelchairs were hardly unknown in Israel but they were unknown in the Middle East press corps based in Jerusalem. I would confront the physical terrain of Israel head-on, while trying to keep up with the most unruly, competitive gang of reporters in the business. I wanted to be prepared for any contingency.

What I discovered was that my own prejudices about being physically different in America, and the ways I was treated at home didn't apply here. Further, the assumptions and experiences of disabled people in Israel compared to disabled Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza couldn't have been more different. My wheelchair became an unexpected window into a place I had expected to find culturally, linguistically, and physically impenetrable. My nearly three years in Israel were a voyage of personal discovery that also revealed much about one of the world's most intractable political confrontations. In such a place, even wheelchairs could become weapons, and the struggle to find physical independence in a wheelchair could be a provocation for horrible violence. My closest disabled friend in Israel or the Occupied Territories during my stay was a young Palestinian man named Radwan. I taught him many wheelchair skills. He taught me one unforgettable lesson.

The cliché about the Middle East is that the conflicts are all 2,000 years old, and I went there fully expecting to find people tyrannized by questions left unresolved for centuries. But Arabs and Jews spend more time arguing about and acting on their contemporary history on a day-to-day basis than with anything from their ancient past. The most emotionally powerful places are also the most recent monuments: Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial; the simple tragic memorials to the Young Arabs who died during the Intifida, scattered throughout the occupied territories; the place in the old Jewish quarter where the Israeli army soldiers reached the Western Wall during the Six-Day War; the silent, rusted Israeli war memorials from the forties. It is largely the present and very recent past that drive the conflicts between Jews and Arabs.

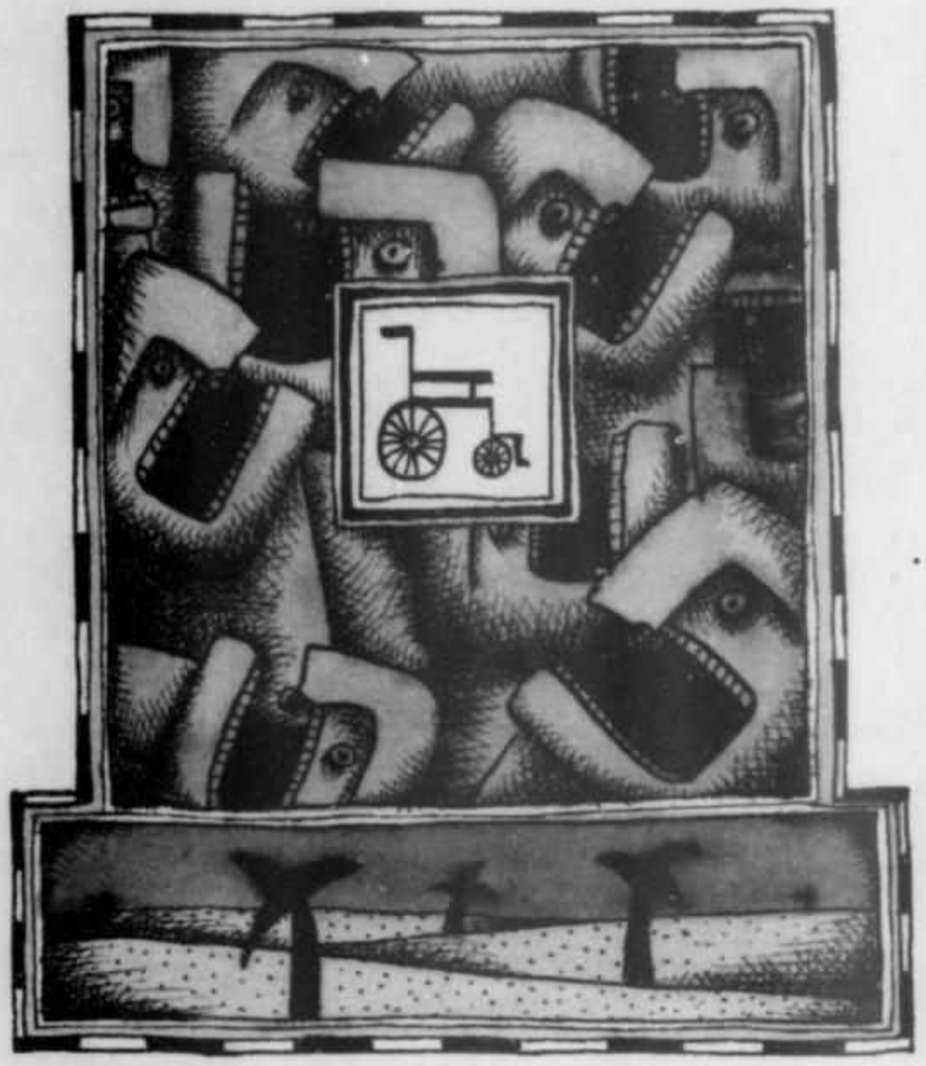
There is a place on the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem where the hills rising off the coastal plain open out onto a wide basin of trees and stone. The Jerusalem road creeps along on an ascending ridge between two enormous valleys. On either side of the road is a precipitous drop to the bottom of a canyon, and all around there is a spectacular view of the ancient mountain range upon which the city of Jerusalem, a bit younger than civilization itself, is perched. Dotting the walls of the canyon are houses and apartments, some of which are about as old as modern Israel. From them, you can observe the road and the heavy traffic between Israel's two largest cities.

On the right side of the road, just before it plunges back into the twisty forest switchbacks for the last miles to Jerusalem, is a little memorial to sixteen people, Arabs and Jews, who died on July 6, 1989. Upon that spot, shortly after twelve noon, the regular Israeli "EGGED" Jerusalem-Tel Aviv bus number 405 lurched from the road and crashed into the ravine on the southern edge of the canyon. An Israeli housewife in one of the valley houses watched the crash from a distance and remarked on how the bus seemed to bounce in slow motion. It came to rest long before the sound of the crash and the screams of those inside reached her window.

One of the last times I saw my paraplegic friend, Radwan Abu Smaish, was a few days before the crash of that bus. I had seen him many times after our first encounter. Our relationship had grown since I had shown him a few wheelchair tricks at Mokassad Hospital, away from the sand and filth of the Nusirat refugee

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John Hockenberry, a reporter and co-anchor for ABC News' "Day One," *worked for more than ten years as a correspondent and anchor for National Public Radio. His first book, a memoir,* Moving Violations: War Zones, Wheelchairs and Declarations of Independence *is due to be published by Hyperion in July.*



MAIRAV SALOMON

camp, his family's home in Gaza. While I spent each day covering the Intifada, he missed most of it. When we would meet, I would tell him about what I had seen in the occupied territories, and he would tell me the new physical skills he had learned.

Radwan's possessive friend, Abdel Hadi, whom I recalled from that first day at Mokassad, still visited regularly. He and others from Gaza would keep their friend up-to-date on who had been arrested, expelled, injured, or killed. As time went on though, Radwan seemed to lose interest in the Intifada's day-to-day trade in blood, hatred, and insults. He was gaining instead a deeper passion for the challenges of his new life. It was a passion that set him apart from his Palestinian brothers fighting on the front lines against Israel. Radwan's political ideas and support for the PLO did not change, but his new life divided him from the others in ways that would, in time, become clear.

More and more young people had gotten spinal-cord injuries from the fighting, and on Radwan's ward there was now a gang of little boys in wheelchairs. On the outside they were tough, loud martyrs who made sure you knew which faction of the PLO they had given up their legs for, and would happily die for even now. They raced up and down the halls in their noisy, creaking chairs, but when Radwan appeared they looked more like the vulnerable young men they were, fearful of what kind of life they now faced. Radwan led them around like a coach. I would arrive for a visit and we would hold impromptu workshops, with Radwan asking me to demonstrate something he knew I could do, but the other boys didn't believe possible. I would go from the floor to my chair and Radwan would say, "*Na'am, kol mumpkin.*" "It's all possible."

Not a lot was possible for Radwan and his boys as long as they used the dreadful wheelchairs supplied by the hospital and the Palestinian rehab organizations. Radwan had acquired a serviceable but still fairly primitive wheelchair and was spending considerable time out of bed. But going back to his home in the Gaza Strip was out. Compared to my own, Radwan's chair was maneuverable only with difficulty even on linoleum. In the sands of his home of the Nusirat refugee camp, it would be impossible.

I had decided months before to give Radwan a new chair from the extra components and spare wheelchair I had at my home in Jerusalem. I got around to bolting it together that July. I narrowed the frame to fit Radwan and raised the seat up in a more standard position rather than the steeply raked angle I preferred. The chair was a Quadra ultralight with two sets of wheels, twenty-four-inch thin, high-pressure bicycle wheels installed. I told him that the wider twenty-fours would work better in sand, but that at Mokassad and around Jerusalem these thin tires worked fine. With its black aluminum frame, its wheels cambered outward in the provocative slant preferred by American crips, and its black nylon upholstery, Radwan's chair was one of a kind at Mokassad. It had no armrests. It put the heavy Eastern European models to shame with their cheap, flaky chrome, boxy suspension, and ugly car-seat upholstery.

The chair had one problem. I had spares of every part except for front caster wheels. My two swiveling casters were six inches in diameter, and fully pneumatic; they were the most specialized parts on my wheelchair. While the larger rear wheels and much of the frame were standard bicycle components and easily available, the caster wheels, tires, inner tubes, axles, and bearings were available only by special order from the wheelchair company back in California. I had brought only one set of air-filled casters to Israel. Just in case of a big emergency, I had some neoprene solid wheels that were for use on hard, flat surfaces and were made for playing basketball on gymnasium floors. The neoprene wheels were small in diameter and sank like table legs into any soft surface. But they were all I had for Radwan's chair.

I brought the chair for Radwan to Mokassad one sunny afternoon along with a full set of tools for adjusting it to Radwan's body. I placed the tools in my lap and pushed the empty chair along next to me through the hospital hallways on the way to his room. Two young boys saw me get out of the elevator and rushed to get Radwan, who emerged in a blue sleeveless T-shirt that showed his developing arms. The frail bony limbs of just a few months ago were gone.

Radwan was a real crip now. He inspected the chair as a competitor in the Tour de France might look over a new bicycle. He did a smart, swift transfer from his chair into the new black one. Radwan's legs were long and his footrests needed to be adjusted. When it looked like the chair fit him, Radwan took off down the hall for a test run. The boys followed. He came back smiling.

"It is so very light, John," he exclaimed, going up on two wheels. "It makes everything that is difficult very easy." He threw his long arms wide and twisted his upper body from side to side in a gesture of physical freedom. "It is better," he said, nodding. "No armrests." Radwan said something in Arabic to the boys in the hall and they removed their armrests and set them all in a pile on the floor. One of the boys in a particularly bad chair with nonremovable armrests pointed to Radwan's now-empty chair. Together Radwan and I picked him up and placed him in the chair, where he immediately removed its armrests and smiled. We were all on the same team now.

Radwan noticed that the casters on his new chair were different from the air-filled ones on my chair. "I think yours are better," he said. "These are good for sand." He looked doubtfully at them. I told him that I would order new casters as soon as I could. "I just wanted you to start using the chair right away while you are here at Mokassad."

"I am going home to Gaza at the end of the week," he said. It would be his first trip home in a wheelchair. I told him that until he got the new casters he should try to take heavy sand on two wheels, keeping the small, solid wheels from touching the ground. "That will keep you going for now." Before I left, we took the twenty-seven-inch wheels off and put the wider twenty-fours on for the sand in Nusirat refugee camp. The late afternoon sun made long, spiny shadows through the spokes of all the wheelchairs as we laughed and compared tricks in the lounge at the end of the hall. I spent a few hours with my tools, tightening bolts and straightening spokes. We had an arm-wrestling contest that I won, and a hallway race that I lost. We didn't speak of the Israelis or the PLO once. The last thing I saw when I left in the elevator were the caster wheels on Radwan's new chair. I thought about all the sand I had seen in Gaza.

The red "EGGED" public buses that crisscross Irael every day are not wheelchair-accessible. Israeli crips have their own government-supplied cars, and so accessibility for the buses is not seen as pressing need. My first view of the inside of an EGGED bus was the twisted metal and burned upholstery inside EGGED number 405 when it was hauled back up the side of the canyon where it crashed on July 6. It must have been a horrible burning ride down to the bottom of the canyon. The impact had peeled back the roof, and rescue workers had cut wide, square holies that looked like new doors in the body. The bus looked flimsy, like something made from paper maché. In one of those strange moments in which the oddest of thoughts pops into your head, as it was hauled away for salvage it occurred to me that it wouldn't be so difficult to make the buses accessible.

Sixteen people died on EGGED number 405. If it had been just another of the hundreds of road accidents in Israel that each year kill an Intifada's worth of people, it would have been forgotten. The Israeli media reported the crash as a bus attack. The first stories said that a Palestinian terrorist had stabbed the driver. Later stories made no mention of a knife, instead, survivors on the bus said that a young Palestinian man stood up as the bus entered the canyon road, grabbed the steering wheel, and pulled it hard to the right, causing the driver to lose control of the bus. As I was on my way to meet the incoming casualties at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem I heard that the police were claiming that the suspect, who survived the crash, was an Islamic fundamentalist because he had a beard, was apparently carrying a Koran, and was said to have yelled in Arabic as he grabbed the steering wheel, *"Allahu Akbar";* "God is Great" is what the police claimed he had yelled.

The Jews and the Palestinians all agreed that a man had stood up and yelled something as he grabbed the steering wheel. The Jews claimed that he was crazy and had been a threatening presence from the moment he got on the bus. The Palestinians, who were just as shaken by the trip over the cliff, said that he seemed to be a weak, sad young man who looked lost when he stood up to grab the steering wheel. They were sure he had not yelled *Allahu Akbar.* "It was a name," one man said to me from his bed. "Marwan or Radwan." He could not remember.

The suspect's name was released the day after the crash. Abdel Hadi Ghneim was a religious student from Nusirat refugee camp, according to the police. The Israeli reports were dominated by calls for the death penalty in the Knesset. Government officials said the bus killings were a new strategy by the PLO to hit Israelis across the green line, where they were most vulnerable. The PLO's outward face of moderation that had led to a renewed dialogue with the United States was false, they said. The U.S. State Department condemned the incident and called once again for an end to violence. After just a few days, the bus crash and its sixteen dead took its place on the vast scorecard of the Arab-Israeli conflict where brutality was ranked and classified, but where no single act of violence could ever be decisive.

A friend of mine obtained a copy of the official Israeli police report of the bus incident. The report speculated on Abdel Hadi's ties to religious fundamentalist radicals in the Gaza Strip. The report said that Abdel Hadi had

admitted to causing the bus crash, but unlike most Islamic fundamentalists who survive their attacks to be interrogated, he did not claim it was all for the glory of Islam. The report noted without comment that he had been depressed over the crippling injury suffered by his best friend, whom he had seen a few days before. My blood ran cold as I stared at the paper scribbled with translation marks. The friend was another young man from Nusirat refugee camp: Radwan Abu Smaish.

I knew both the killer and the man in whose name he had killed. I had felt my own personal outrage from the ceaseless violence in the Middle East on other occasions, but nothing could compare to the feeling I had as I stared at the police report and thought of Radwan, and the face of Abdel Hadi standing so close to his friend at the hospital, beaming with pride at his sacrifice and injury. I thought of Radwan in Gaza the week before. I thought of Abdel Hadi on the bus shouting Radwan's name at the terrified riders. Most of all, I thought of the red neoprene casters on the chair I had given to Radwan.

The motives of a distant foreign crime far removed from my life, my country of birth, and the people and places I knew suddenly revealed themselves to me with perfect clarity in a language I knew very well. From the detached perspective of a journalist reporting on a passing incident of violence, I was transformed into an accomplice to the deaths of sixteen people. I knew without asking a question that Abdel Hadi had seen Radwan trying to get through the sands of Gaza with those hard caster wheels, that he had seen how impossible it had been for his friend to move. He did not see that Radwan was out of bed, physically stronger, and exploring a world that he hadn't even imagine from his hospital bed a year earlier. Abdel Hadi could not see that Radwan saw the inappropriate caster wheels as a simple mechanical problem that he would fix with some wrenches and a new set of wheels when he got back to Jerusalem. Abdel Hadi could only see Radwan's injury and subsequent difficulties as a form of torture inflicted by the Israelis.

"Abdel Hadi saw me in that chair for the first time in Gaza," Radwan told me, "and he became crazy."

"But Abdel Hadi knew you were a paraplegic for more than a year." I was angry. It seemed an insult to everything I had lived for since my accident in 1976 that someone could find an excuse to kill sixteen people because of what he felt after seeing someone in a wheelchair. "Did he like you better lying there sick in bed at Mokassad Hospital?" I asked. "Why did he suddenly decide to kill a busload of people?"

Radwan looked puzzled. There was so much he had learned from me. It was odd to him that I had to ask him these questions about his friend Abdel Hadi. "It is a very bad thing that Abdel Hadi did. He was wrong." In his broken English Radwan explained that as long as he was in a hospital bed, Abdel Hadi could imagine that he, Radwan, would eventually get well and walk out of the hospital, and they would both go on with their lives.

"Did you ever think Abdel Hadi would do what he did?"

Radwan lowered his head, and it was clear he understood why I was so offended and angry by what had happened. But Radwan also knew how upset his friend had been seeing him back at home in the black aluminum chair. Radwan had wanted Abdel Hadi to know that he could make a life for himself in the chair, but that was not what he saw when Radwan went to Gaza. "In the chair, Abdel Hadi could only see my legs not working. In the chair, he knew that I would never stand up. It was too much pain," Radwan said, and then he asked me a question. "Don't you know someone like this?" I closed my eyes. I was still disgusted at Abdel Hadi, guilty over why those people had died, and angry with myself for not having the right caster wheels for Radwan. But for the first time in years I thought of my friend Ricky, who was with me in 1976 when I had walked for the last time. That the pain Ricky had felt after my accident, and the changes that had taken place between us in the years after, was something like Abdel Hadi's anger

(Continued on p. 88)

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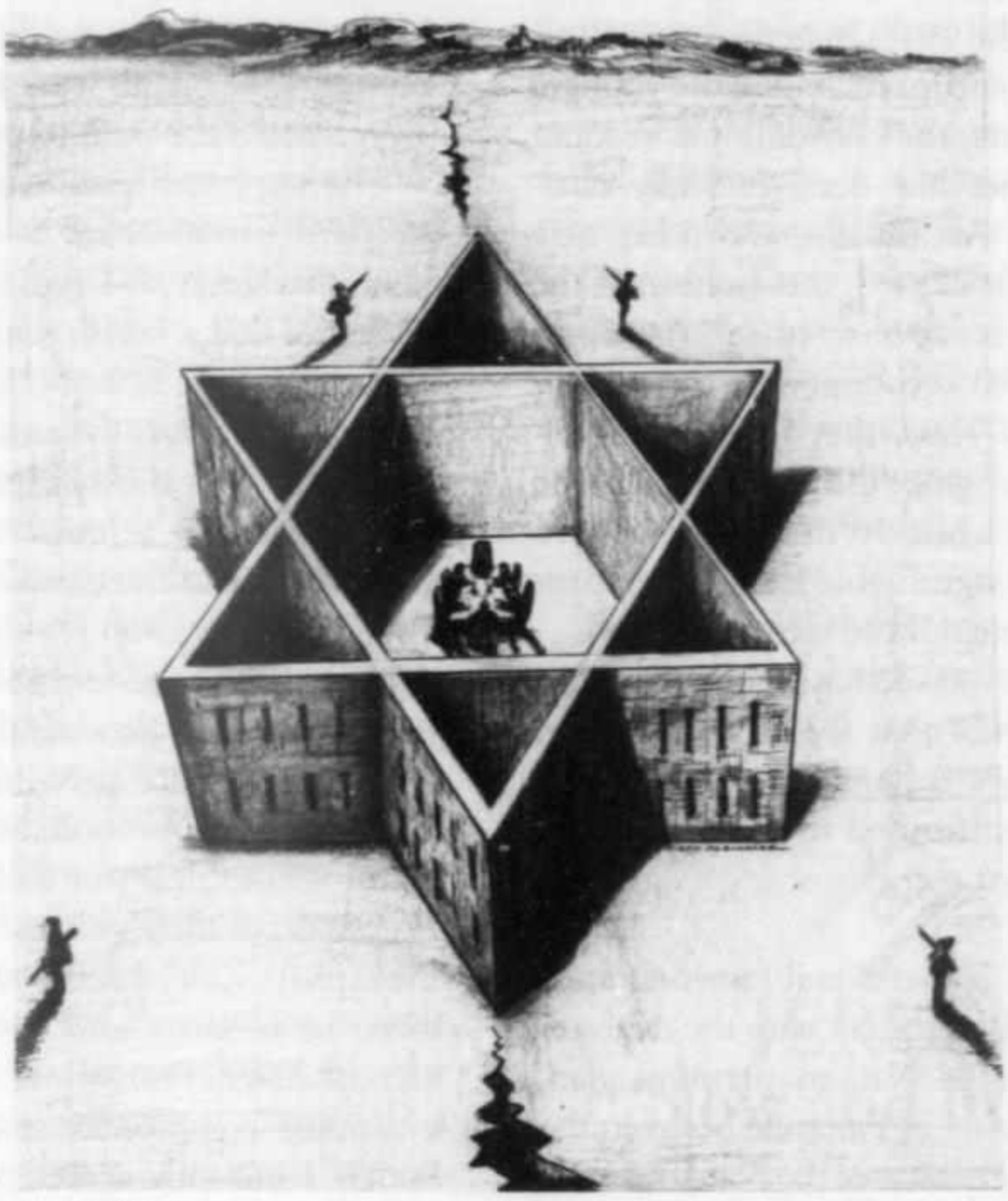
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Lost Opportunities for Peace

Reassessing the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Jerome Slater



CYN MAURICE

Among the most enduring and potent of the conventional beliefs about the Arab-Israeli conflict—an article of faith in Israel widely accepted by the outside world as well—is the view that until very recently the Palestinians and most Arab states refused to recognize the existence of Israel, rejected all compromise, and sought its destruction. Israel, by contrast, has always been ready to negotiate peace, but, in Abba Eban's famous epigram, "The Arabs never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity."

But a new wave of Israeli historical scholarship, emerging in the last decade or so, has revealed that the conventional history is wrong or seriously exaggerated in its account of the 1948-56 period. Although it focuses primarily on the origins and early years of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this new Israeli historiography strongly suggests that Israel has been at least as responsible as the Arabs for the ongoing enmity from 1948 through the present. In fact, the Israelis have been far less ready for genuine compromise on the central issues of the conflict—the status of the Palestinians and the final borders of the Israeli state—than the dominant mythology implies. And there is now considerable evidence that the policies of the most important Arab states and the mainline Palestinian leadership have been considerably more complex and differentiated than was previously understood. Neither Yassir Arafat and the PLO nor the most important Arab states have been uniformly "rejectionist" throughout the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict; at various times, most of the Arab actors have been open to the possibility of genuine compromise.

Despite widespread interest in the new Israeli historiography, the conventional version of the Arab-Israeli conflict still prevails among Israelis and American Jews. And setting the historical record straight on this emotional issue involves far more than intellectual debate; the conventional account has spawned myths, misperceptions, and attitudes that continue to block the changes in Israeli thinking that are essential if there is to be a comprehensive, just, and stable settlement in the region.

To be sure, there has always been dissent from the prevailing orthodoxies. Aspects of mainstream Zionist and Israeli policies have been challenged by religious leaders, philosophers, and educators such as Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, J.C. Talmon, and Yishayahu Leibowitz; intellectuals and writers such as Simha Flapan, Amos Oz, and Amos Elon; Zionist leaders such as Nahum Goldmann; retired military men such as Mattiyahu Peled and Yehoshafat Harkabi; and leading foreign office officials and diplomats such as Eliyahu Sassoon and, more recently, Abba Eban. Even a few major government leaders, especially Moshe Sharett

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Jerome Slater, professor of political science at SUNY/Buffalo, is the author of a number of books and articles on international politics. He is currently working on a book on U.S. policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 to the present.

and to a considerable extent Levi Eshkol, acknowledged Israel's share of responsibility for the conflict with the Palestinians and argued for more conciliatory policies. Nonetheless, the hardline policies of the dominant Labor leaders—David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir, etc.—invariably prevailed as government policy, even before the rise of the Likud.

Moreover, until the emergence of the new historians, most Israeli academicians reinforced rather than challenged the orthodoxy. As a result of the recent declassification of Israeli, American, British, and United Nations documents from the 1948-56 period, as well as, perhaps, a less ideological approach among the younger generation of Israel scholars, the conventional account of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been radically challenged. As Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and other new historians have convincingly argued, the Zionism of the "old historians" led them, consciously or subconsciously, to craft their accounts to accommodate the nation-building process in Israel. Thus, they ignored, downplayed, or even failed to recognize the darker side of the Israeli experience, creating a history, in the judgment of Morris and Shlaim, "indistinguishable from Israeli propaganda" or "the propaganda of the victors."

While many readers may find these judgments too harsh, there can be no doubt that the scholarly rigor, richness of detail, and powerful argumentation of the new historiography has contributed to the dissolution of the old nationalist/Zionist consensus.

In its main outlines, the conventional historiography holds that Arab-Israeli strife began with the Arab rejection of the 1947 United Nations partition plan, which provided for the division of Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs and the creation of the State of Israel. Although the Zionist leadership, in a spirit of compromise, accepted the plan, the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab states, especially Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, dismissed it out of hand. In May 1948, after the Zionist defeat of Palestinian terrorism and the proclamation of the State of Israel, the leading Arab states invaded Israel in an unprovoked act of aggression. In the course of this war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living within Israel's boundaries fled to neighboring Arab states, ordered or urged to do so by Arab leaders; the Zionists had urged the Palestinians not to leave, willing to allow Arabs and Jews to live side by side within a Jewish state.

After the war, the old account continues, Israel sought to settle the conflict on the basis of compromise, but could find no Palestinian or other Arab leaders with whom to negotiate, and therefore saw no choice—"*ein breira*"—but to rely on military might. The problem of the displaced Palestinian population, now refugees, remained unresolved, largely because its persistence suited the cynical purposes of the Arab states; the result was the growth of Palestinian guerrilla terrorism, based in the refugee camps along Israel's borders. Over the next thirty years, the situation remained largely unchanged: The Arabs rejected Israeli and international compromise proposals, and new wars broke out in 1956, 1967, and 1973—the outcome of continued Arab rejectionism and aggression. This monolithic hostility was not breached until Egyptian president Anwar Sadat decided to make peace with Israel in the late 1970s. Until very recently neither the Palestinian leadership nor any other Arab leaders have been willing to follow Egypt down the path to peace.

The new Israeli historiography has decisively refuted this standard narrative. In its essentials, the revised history holds that the Arab-Israeli conflict is rooted in the Zionist insistence that a Jewish state must be created in Palestine, the original biblical homeland of the Jews, despite the fact that for 1,300 years the area had been largely inhabited by Arabs, the overwhelming majority of whom rejected the establishment of a Jewish state there. After the Balfour Declaration and the creation of the British Mandate over Palestine, stepped-up Jewish immigration met with violent Arab resistance and terrorism—which in turn engendered Jewish counter-violence and terrorism.

As the violence grew, the British and, in 1947, the United Nations proposed various compromise partition plans. While it was true that the Arabs insisted on the full realization of their political rights and therefore rejected these plans, Zionist acceptance of compromise was much more ambivalent and partial than the conventional account holds. Primarily as a tactical move rather than as a genuine compromise, Ben-Gurion and other Jewish leaders reluctantly agreed to the U.N. partition plan. In fact, they agreed only to the part of the plan that created a Jewish state, ignoring other major components of the overall compromise, particularly the creation of a Palestinian state and the internationalization of Jerusalem.

There is no serious doubt that Ben-Gurion planned initially to build up the economic and military strength of the Jewish state and later to acquire—by force if necessary—as much as possible of the rest of "ancient" Palestine, which at least in principle included lands going considerably beyond those claimed for "Eretz Israel" today: the West Bank and Jerusalem, the East Bank of the Jordan River up to Amman, Gaza, and much of the Sinai Peninsula, southern Lebanon, the Golan Heights, and other parts of western Syria. As Ben-Gurion wrote to his son in 1937:

> A partial Jewish state is not the end, but only the beginning. The establishment of such a Jewish

> State will serve as a means in our historical efforts to redeem the country in its entirety .... We shall organize a modern defense force ... and then I am certain that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country, either by mutual agreement with our Arab neighbors or by some other means .... We will expel the Arabs and take their places ... with the force at our disposal.

As subsequent events show, Ben-Gurion's promise was not empty talk.

In 1948, the Israeli leadership took advantage of the Palestinian resistance and the Arab attack to drive hundreds of thousands of Palestinians out of Israel, into Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. There were a number of motivations: security against continued Palestinian violent resistance, the ideological commitment to create a thoroughly Jewish state, and the desire to settle Jewish immigrants in the newly vacated Arab homes, villages, and farmlands. In any case, little or no evidence has been found to support the contention that most of the Arab refugees voluntarily left their homes and villages in the expectation that they would soon return on the heels of victorious Arab armies; rather, they were forcibly expelled by the Israelis or fled out of legitimate fear of Israeli violence.

Even more than the creation of Israel itself, the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948 is perhaps the most pivotal event in the entire history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, for it gave rise to Palestinian terrorism and guerrilla warfare dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel and the return of the Palestinians to their homeland. Acknowledging no responsibility for the plight of the Palestinians, Israel met the violence with a policy of massive counter-violence. The cycle of violence in turn triggered the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1982.

Tragically, the past may once again be prologue. The current lack of progress on the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, if not soon resolved, will probably block an otherwise attainable Israeli-Syrian peace agreement, and it is increasingly likely that it will eventually undermine the Israeli accords with Egypt and Jordan as well as the de facto peace with Saudi Arabia.

Immediately after the 1948 war, several opportunities for peace arose. In the summer of 1949, representatives of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon agreed to meet face to face with Israel at the Lausanne Conference to discuss a general settlement on the basis of the 1947 U.N. partition plan. The Arab leaders contended that peace could be reached if Israel returned to the pre-war partition boundaries and accepted the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees, but Israel refused to return to the former borders as well as any other territorial compromise and argued that since it had no responsibility for the flight of the refugees, it would accept the return of few if any of them.

Had Israel been flexible, would that flexibility have been matched by an Arab willingness to compromise at Lausanne? The territorial issues would have been difficult, for the Israelis could justifiably claim that the Arabs had rejected compromise until they lost the war. On the other hand, the initial Arab rejection did not undermine the compelling logic of partition, and if the leading Arab states were now willing to accept the state of Israel within its 1947 boundaries, together with U.S. and international guarantees, a significant step would have been taken to meet legitimate Israeli security imperatives.

Similarly, there was room for compromise on the refugee issue. U.N. and U.S. mediators proposed that Israel take back 250,000 refugees and promised substantial financial aid in resettling the remainder in Arab countries; there were many indications that the Arab states would accept such a compromise.

After 1948, the Israelis might have ended hostility with the Palestinians, and therefore with the Arab world, by either of two courses. The best way—both in terms of justice and long-term peace and

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stability—would have been to have agreed to the repatriation of substantial numbers of Palestinian refugees, along with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and a compromise over Jerusalem (internationalization, partition, or shared sovereignty).

Another course was also available: the "Jordanian solution." The new Israeli scholarship has meticulously demonstrated that Israel could have reached peace agreements with Jordan at any point from 1948 through the late 1980s, thereby transferring the Palestinian problem to the Jordanians. Until 1988, Jordan's Hashemite monarchs Abdullah and Hussein were no less opposed than Israel to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, as required by the U.N. compromise plan, since they claimed Jordan's sovereignty over the area. In a number of secret meetings with Zionist leaders, Abdullah made it clear he wished to collaborate with Israel so long as Israel relinquished its claim to the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem; Hussein followed essentially the same policies from 1950 to 1988. In return for Israeli agreement to those terms, Jordan would have stayed out of the 1948 and 1967 wars, suppressed the Palestinian nationalist movement in the West Bank and Gaza, and agreed to a number of measures to meet legitimate Israeli security concerns. Moreover, by settling with Jordan while simultaneously ridding itself of the Palestinian problem, Israel would have greatly increased the likelihood of a comprehensive settlement of its conflict with the Arab world.

But the Zionist leadership wanted Gaza, the West Bank, all of Jerusalem—and more—for Israel. During the 1948 war, Ben-Gurion had reluctantly decided that, for the moment, the strong opposition of Britain and the United States to an Israeli takeover of the West Bank as well as the military power of Abdullah's British-led Arab Legion precluded an Israeli attack on the West Bank. But there would certainly be no Israeli acceptance of Jordanian sovereignty, as opposed to an unacknowledged, temporary, and reversible acquiescence to Jordanian rule.

Israeli policies thus made a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan impossible and contributed significantly to Jordan's reluctant decision to join Egypt and Syria in the 1967 war, which in turn gave Israel the opportunity it had been seeking to seize East Jerusalem and "Judea and Samaria."

Israel also had opportunities to end its bilateral conflicts with Syria and Egypt (even before the 1978 Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement) and simultaneously to resolve or at least ameliorate the Palestinian problem. In 1949, the Syrian military regime of General Husni Zaim made a remarkable offer to Ben-Gurion: In exchange for Israeli agreement to allow Syria to retain a small strip of territory bordering the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee, captured by Syrian forces in 1948, Syria would agree to negotiate a formal peace with Israel and would further agree to the permanent resettlement in Syria of some 350,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war, about half of those who had fled or were driven out of Israel. Despite urgings by the U.S. government, U.N. mediator Ralph Bunche, and some Israeli diplomats—notably U.N. Ambassador Abba Eban—the Israeli government refused even to discuss the matter with Zaim.

The issue was not merely territory per se but also—at least equally important—water. Syria wanted guaranteed access to the waters of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee, and was prepared to make peace and go a long way to resolving the Palestinian refugee problem in order to get it. But Ben-Gurion intended Israel to keep all of the Galilee's water for its own use. He also refused to acknowledge that the Israeli government had any responsibility for the plight of the refugees, demanded complete withdrawal of Arab armies from all territory allocated to Israel by the U.N. partition, and refused to return any of the new territory (that is, territory not allocated to Israel by the U.N.) that Israel had acquired in the 1948 war.

Just before and even during the 1948 war, the Egyptian government made several efforts to explore the possibility of concluding a separate peace with Israel, provided Israel would cede part of Gaza and a narrow strip of the Negev Desert. Security concerns as well as nationalism drove the Egyptian overtures; fearing further Israeli expansionism, Egypt wanted a territorial buffer zone. As it turned out, the fears were well founded, for Ben-Gurion ignored the Egyptian proposals and deliberately provoked further military clashes with Egypt in order to seize all of the Negev, Gaza, and large parts of the Sinai (from which Israel withdrew in 1949 only as a result of strong pressures from Britain and the United States).

Immediately after the 1948 war, Israel again turned a deaf ear to Egyptian signals that it would negotiate a political settlement if Israel consented to Egyptian control over Gaza and withdrew from the Arab areas of Palestine and parts of the Negev. Ben-Gurion ignored Egypt's signals; he still coveted the Sinai Peninsula and expected Israel to acquire at least part of it through subsequent military conquest—as indeed it did, however temporarily, in 1956 and 1967.

Even so, opportunities for peace continued to arise. In the early 1950s, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser consistently restrained Palestinian guerrilla raids from Egyptian territory, and there were unofficial,

secret exploratory peace negotiations between the Nasser government and representatives of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett. There is considerable evidence that Nasser was seriously weighing at least a de-facto peace with Israel. But Israeli hardliners led by Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan overruled Sharett and arranged a series of provocations that effectively sabotaged the incipient negotiations with Egypt. In response, Nasser began active support of the Palestinian guerrillas and turned to the Soviet bloc for arms. The deteriorating spiral led to the avoidable wars of 1956 and 1967.

Despite the initial Arab refusal after 1967 to enter into any negotiations with Israel, within a few years the rejectionist position of the major Arab states as well as the Palestinians gradually gave way to pragmatism, opening up a number of opportunities for either comprehensive or bilateral settlements.

From the end of the 1967 war through the late 1980s, Jordan's King Hussein and Israeli political leaders conducted a series of secret meetings to explore the possibility of a separate Jordanian-Israeli peace. Hussein proposed a settlement based on territorial compromise accompanied by strong measures to reassure Israeli security concerns: If Israel agreed to Jordanian sovereignty and political control over most of the West Bank, Jordan would agree to some reciprocal exchange of territory, would prevent the creation of a Palestinian state, would station only small numbers of its armed forces in the area, and would probably even allow Israel to retain some of its forces unofficially in strategically important spots. The Jerusalem issue, highly important for symbolic and religious reasons to both Israel and the Muslim world, would be resolved on the basis of shared sovereignty: Israel controlling West Jerusalem and Jordan, East Jerusalem.

Israel's rejection of the Jordanian proposals was clearly not primarily motivated by genuine security concerns, since Israeli security would have been greatly enhanced by an Israeli military presence in an otherwise demilitarized West Bank controlled by a friendly state with its own urgent motivations to suppress Palestinian nationalism. The real obstacle, of course, was the ideological or religious insistence on full Israeli sovereignty and control over all "Judea and Samaria," including Arab East Jerusalem.

Egypt's policies also began to shift shortly after the 1967 war. As a result of the Egyptian defeat in 1967, the devastation of Egyptian territory and population centers in the Suez Canal "War of Attrition" in 1969, and probably above all the evidence that Israel had nuclear weapons, it appears that by the end of 1969 Nasser had concluded that Egypt no longer had a rational military option against Israel and therefore should press for a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli settlement, provided Israel withdrew from the Sinai and Gaza and returned them to Egypt. By 1971, Nasser had publicly accepted U.N. Resolution 242, the U.N. Jarring Plan, and the U.S. Rogers Plan, all of which required Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and Gaza in return for the end of the state of war between Israel and Egypt, security guarantees for Israel, and free navigation for Israeli ships through Egyptian-held territory.

But Israel preferred the territorial status quo to peace, refusing even to discuss these potential settlements and ignoring all overtures from Nasser and Sadat; as Moshe Dayan put it, "I would rather have Sharm al-Sheikh and no peace than peace without Sharm al-Sheikh." As a result, Sadat concluded that Egypt had no choice but to break the deadlock with a limited war. Although the October 1973 war did have that effect, initiating a chain of events that culminated in the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement, the evidence is overwhelming that essentially the same settlement could have been reached

The New Israeli Historiography

The most important works of the new Israeli historiography are: Uri Bar Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (Frank Cass, 1987); Michael Bar-Zohar, *Facing a Cruel Mirror* (Charles Scribners Sons, 1990); Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Original Sins* (Pluto, 1992); Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* (Pantheon, 1987); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Cambridge University, 1987); *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford University, 1990); and "*The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past,*" (TIKKUN, November/December 1988); Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (I.B. Tauris, 1992); Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (Free Press, 1986); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan* (Columbia University, 1988).

A number of non-Israeli scholars have also made major contributions, including David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (I.B. Tauris, 1988), Fred Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma* (Syracuse University, 1985); Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe* (Faber and Faber, 1987), and especially the recent monumental work by Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Indiana University, 1994).

almost a decade earlier, without war.

There are also intriguing indications that Syria under Hafez Assad might have been prepared for at least a cold peace with Israel in the 1970s. In several meetings with Henry Kissinger and later Jimmy Carter, Assad privately said that he would accept U.N. 242 and end the state of war with Israel if Israel withdrew from the Golan and "restored the rights of the Palestinians." In return, Assad indicated he would accept the demilitarization of the Golan and would consider Palestinian rights to be restored by some form of Jordanian control over the West Bank, not necessarily only by the creation of a Palestinian state. Although in recent months Assad has gone somewhat further, publicly declaring he is ready for a "land for peace" settlement with Israel, his position is not dramatically different from his earlier stance, strongly suggesting that a more forthcoming Israeli position might have produced a settlement with Syria some time ago.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, Israel's refusal either to repatriate the Palestinian refugees, allow the creation of a Palestinian state, or agree to Jordanian control over the West Bank and Gaza resulted in the radicalization of Palestinian nationalism and the emergence of the PLO as the dominant Palestinian organization. In its early years, the PLO was clearly maximalist: It insisted on the complete "liberation" of all of Palestine and resorted to guerrilla warfare and outright terrorism to achieve this goal. The evidence is strong, however, that from the early 1970s onward the maximalist position gradually began to give way, albeit ambiguously, inconsistently, and tentatively, to a willingness to seek a political solution based on compromise with Israel.

Israel ignored the emerging indications of Palestinian pragmatism and the hints that a compromise settlement might be acceptable. Even so, the PLO's position continued to evolve slowly until, in 1988, it officially accepted a two-state solution of its conflict with Israel. Under the terms of the 1988 PLO commitment, a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, would be largely demilitarized, would agree to international peacekeeping forces along its borders to ensure demilitarization and peace, and would end terrorism and all forms of attack on Israel from its territory.

The Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir remained unmoved by these public and unambiguous changes in the PLO's position, but under Rabin, Israel finally agreed to recognize the PLO and to begin the process of negotiating a political settlement. Yet at this writing,

(Continued on p. 88)

Sikkum

Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies, edited by Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum, Yale University Press, 1994.

Feminist scholarship makes a significant contribution to the study of Jews and Judaism, undermining the claims to universality of earlier generations of Jewish scholars who generalized from the experiences of men, and earlier generations of feminist scholars who essentialized the category of "woman" and ignored class and ethnic differences among women. Although Judaism has a patriarchal culture, the specific ways that patriarchy gets played out in men and women's lives is shaped not just by Jewish tradition, but by the impact of the gender arrangements of the larger societies in which Jews live. In contrast to those surrounding cultures, Judaism is often less patriarchal than is typically assumed. Yet it also debunks the traditional myth of a sacrosanct Jewish family safe from the ravages of the outside world; Jewish families like all others are also the locus of conflict and political struggles. This collection demonstrates the wealth of insights that Jewish feminist scholarship has to offer feminists in other disciplines and Jewish thinkers and scholars of Jewish studies.

The Jewish Family and Jewish Continuity edited by Steven Bayme and Gladys Rosen, KTAV Publishing.

Articles by Natalie Friedman, Rela Mintz Geffen, David Biale and Gerald Bubis remind us that the current family ideal of which the Jewish community is so proud is a relatively recent constructions. For most of Jewish history, the Jewish family included one man with several wives and favored first-born sons over all other children. Those who today resist new conceptions of family life evolving in the late twentieth century could learn from this volume that while family has remained a central vehicle for the transmission of Jewish culture, its form has dramatically changed and is likely to continue to evolve in response to developments in the larger societies in which Jews live.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality, edited by Lawrence J. Kaplan and David Shatz, New York University Press, 1995.

This collection of interpretive essays reveals the depth, range, and creativity of Rav Kook, one of Orthodoxy's great twentieth-century mystics, halakhic thinkers and Zionist communal leaders. The collection highlights the internal tensions and contradictions which emerge as orthodoxy struggles with the opportunities and traps of post-emancipation Western culture. As an example, consider the political paradox of Rav Kook's mysticism. As it embraces a kabbalistic people-centered Jewish nationalism, it must thereby distance itself from the universalist perspective also inherent in ecstatic Jewish mystical visions. This may help us understand the fact that both political liberals and extreme nationalists have claimed Rav Kook as their source. □

(Please make copies of this and circulate to your friends, colleagues, co-workers and neighbors—this is something concrete that you can do in response to the rise of the Right)

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—Isaiah

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Ethics Summit
We will create an annual Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington, D.C., and a series of regional ethics summits, aimed at bringing people together to discuss their vision of the common good, the deprivation of meaning in American society, the crisis in relationships, the decline of ethical values in the corporate, governmental, social, personal and media arenas.

There are millions of people who *already* share a desire for a society based on caring and idealism. Unfortunately, most of them believe that they are alone and that in "the real world" these ideals must be relegated to the side and that politics must be based on endless compromise with the ethos of selfishness and materialism that dominates in *both* major political parties. One major goal of the Summits on Ethics and and Meaning is to bring these people together so that they can see that they are not alone and begin to forge an effective social movement. The summits will begin a national dialogue on a new way to think about politics—one that is ethically and spiritually sensitive and that challenges the ethos of selfishness in the economic sphere while challenging the self-indulgence and unwillingness to make sacrifices for the sake of long-term commitments that sometimes characterizes an overly permissive liberal culture. We will also challenge the moral relativism that has mistakenly been thought to be the requisite of a tolerant attitude toward others.

Full Employment and Fulfilling Work
We will foster a campaign for full employment and meaningful work. Too many Americans are caught in a trap between unemployment and overwork. They are expected to exhaust themselves in the world of work and find themselves with little energy to build families, friendships, and communities in the little time outside of work. Yet many feel that their work does not contribute to the common good or to any higher ethical or spiritual purpose. We shall struggle for changes in economic life that ensure full employment and work that is humanly fulfilling and that recognizes the centrality of rest and adequate time to build loving relationships, strong families, and lasting friendships.

Progressive Pro-Families Movement
We will foster the development of a pro-families movement that supports people to build long-term loving and committed relationships. Recognizing the diversity in family forms, we will support all kinds of families and not

MORE ON BACK

CONTINUED:
attempt to impose a particular lifestyle or cultural form. But we will challenge the ethos of selfishness that undermines loving commitments, and the market values that encourages people to use and then discard other human beings as we use and discard products consumed in the market. We will help build family-support networks, encourage family education and parenting skills, and organize national and regional "Family Day" at which people can explore the problems we all face in family life, acknowledge the strengths of our families, and develop progressive agendas to build community institutions that support love and caring.

Education

While we oppose the introduction of prayers in the school, we will support programs to teach ethical sensitivity and values. In particular, we shall encourage schools to develop a curriculum that teaches empathy and gives that equal importance to the teaching of other skills.

Public Intellectuals

We will foster a campaign to encourage intellectuals to use their talents to address the needs of the communities within which they reside, and to address the central intellectual issues facing our society. In part this will require them to leave the narrow academic language whose use has been rewarded and engage in public discourse that is accessible to the ordinary intelligent human being. In part this will mean demanding that universities begin to award tenure and promotion on the basis of the degree to which scholars are involved in developing and fostering a public intellectual life outside academic circles. Intellectuals can thus model an ethos of service, caring, and social responsibility that is needed throughout the society.

Reenvisioning Professional Life and the World of Work

We will bring professionals and people in workplaces together to reconceptualize their own areas of work to imagine what it would be like if the bottom line were no longer profit and power, but promoting ethically, spiritual, and ecologically alive and sensitive human beings.

Cynicism and Selfishness in the Media Project

Our goal is to help people become aware of the degree to which we all absorb messages about the inevitability of selfishness and cynicism from the media—and to encourage the media to voluntarily allow people to *also* see reflected in the media the more idealistic, caring and spiritually sensitive parts of our being. At the same time we will fight against attempts by the Right to impose a single "correct line" on the media or to involve themselves in the kind of self-censorship that produces a media devoid of complexity, erotic energy or rebelliousness.

Black–Jewish Reconciliation

Jews and Blacks form the backbone of the progressive social-change movements, yet in the past decades they have often been engaged in struggle with each other. Our goal is to educate against anti-Semitism in the African-American community and against racism in the Jewish community, and to bring both communities together to play a leadership role in a national Campaign for a Politics of Meaning.

Religious Renewal

We believe that true ethical and spiritual sensitivity requires a fundamental challenge to the selfishness and individualism of our economic and political institutions, and to the patriarchy and chauvinism and racism that flourish in some religious circles. But we also challenge the failure of liberals to understand the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human needs.

The Foundation aims to be the expression of progressives in all the religious traditions, progressives from various spiritual disciplines, as well as those who feel more comfortable describing themselves as agnostics or humanists. We oppose reactionaries who use religious language to serve the goals of cruelty and the perpetuation of needless suffering, and then have the audacity to call that the service of God!

We will use radio talk shows and television, public religious celebrations and rituals to expose and combat the distortions of the religious tradition by those who wish to equate it with their own insensitivity, hatred, punitive attitudes, and demeaning of others.

There are renewal forces in every religious tradition—committed to rejecting the misuse of spiritual ideals that have been appropriated to justify oppression and cruelty. We will support these renewal forces and become a center in which they can dialogue with each other.

•FOR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS, PLEASE FILL OUT THE FORM BELOW•

TIKKUN -- THE MAGAZINE OF THE POLITICS OF MEANING

Though TIKKUN was created as the liberal alternative to *Commentary* and the voices of Jewish conservatism, about half of the articles in any issue are addressed to the intellectual/cultural/psychological/political issues facing the entire society. In every issue there are discussions advancing the theoretical foundations for a Politics of Meaning and discussing strategy. We also will have updates on activities of people involved in building the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning. We hope that you will both join the Foundation and become part of the discussions that take place in TIKKUN. They go together.

In TIKKUN you'll find authors like Cornel West, Michael Lerner, US Senator Paul Wellstone, Adrienne Rich, Amitai Etzioni, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Robert J. Lifton, Jeremy Rifkin, Carol Gilligan, Hazel Henderson, Allen Ginsberg, Eva Fogelman, Peter Gabel, Andrew Samuels, Harvey Cox and many more.

Join the conversation… Subscribe now when you join the Foundation.

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"Two Things Have I Heard"

Psalms in the Voice of Paul Celan

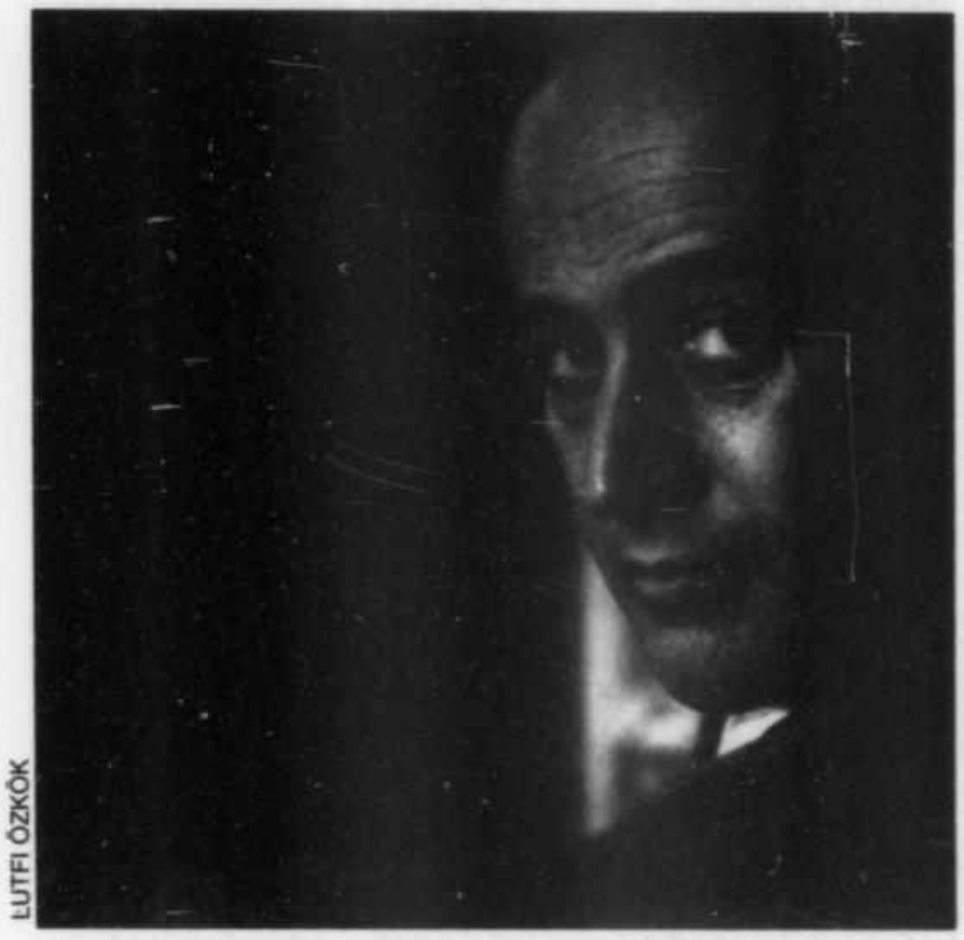
John Felstiner

One line from a 1966 poem by Paul Celan simply transliterates the Hebrew *Ashrei*, meaning "happy," which is Psalm One's opening word that reverberates throughout the Psalms and Jewish prayer. In Psalm 84, for instance: "Happy are they that dwell in Thy house, They are ever praising Thee." But Celan wrote this: *Aschrej, / ein Wort ohne Sinn*, Ashrei, / a word without meaning."

Paul Celan had cause enough for denying any word of God's saving grace. Born to German-speaking Jewish parents in 1920 in Czernowitz, Bukovina, the eastern outpost of the former Austrian empire, and a recalcitrant Bar Mitzvah during Year One of the Thousand-Year Reich, he underwent the education reserved for such children of that time and place: Romanian Iron Guard anti-Semitism, Russian occupation, SS Einsatzkommando 10B, overnight loss of both parents, nineteen months at forced labor, Soviet takeover, and then exile with literally nothing left but a mother tongue that had turned into the murderers' tongue, passing through what he called "the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech."

To study and translate Paul Celan, as I've been doing for some time now, has meant gauging the strain of Jewishness in him—the trace but also the trauma of it—and trying for English versions that do not crudely alienate an already alien, darkened voice.

After two years mulling over Celan's poems, I first put pen to paper in December 1980. Those weeks remain vivid, because while toting my newborn son in a Gerry-pack, I'd walk around the block shaping a sentence until he fell asleep, then stand at a file cabinet in my study to write down the sentence, and when he woke up, go out walking again for the next sentence. Ever since, I've had a somewhat bittersweet measuring rod of my project: the boy's growing grasp on life alongside the book's overlong gestation. Now *he's* into young manhood and *it's* just coming out.



LUTFI ÖZKÖK

Paul Celan, Paris, 1963

As the 1980s rolled by and the millennium has come into sight, I've been following one thread (among many) in Celan's writing, tugging gingerly because I've been unsure about how much to make of it: namely, the presence in his poetry of biblical echoes. To judge from most European and American studies of Celan, you would think he'd been formed from a spare rib of Martin Heidegger. After I had spoken at a French colloquium in 1984, an eminent academic stood up to warn against *surjudaïsant* Celan, "over-Judaizing" him. And a few months later, one cold night in Normandy while working through Celan's personal library, I came upon a thick black volume with flimsy pages in Hebrew. A German research team had recently combed the library and, unable to identify this volume, had placed in it a slip saying *Wichtig?*, "Important?" The book that stymied them was the Bible.

I have found the Hebrew Bible pervading Celan's work. Recently, I made WordPerfect search the pages of my book on Celan for the word "Psalm," and my heart rejoiced to see fifty-nine occurrences—yea sixty, if you

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count the introduction. Here, then, are a few moments from the new Psalter that emerges in Paul Celan's writing.

During spring 1943, when he'd been at forced labor for almost a year, Celan wrote a lyric titled "Out of the Depths." And a quarter-century later, the *De profundis* of Psalm 130 surfaced again, in a poem beginning "Wan-voiced, / flayed from the depths." What also came to him in wartime Romanian labor camps was, not surprisingly, the Psalm of exile, 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows." On learning in 1943 that his mother in Transnistria had been shot as unfit for work, her son wrote about "the torn strings of a strident and discordant harp."

Around then he called another poem "*Chanson juive*" (Jewish Song), then retitled it "*An den Wassern Babels*" (By the Waters of Babylon). Its first word forms the link with tradition: "Again by darkening pools / you murmur, willow, grieving." Later during the war, he remembered the next verse of Psalm 137: "For there they that led us captive asked us for words of song." Because orchestras were commanded in Auschwitz and elsewhere, Celan's now-famous "*Todesfuge*" (Deathfugue) counterpoints oppression with music: "He shouts jab this earth deeper you lot there you others sing up and play," *ihr andern singet und spielt*. In Vienna after the war and then in Paris, Celan remained acutely a Jewish exile poet. "I sing before strangers," he wrote in 1948, and a decade later, having fiercely, blood-brotherly translated Stalin's victim Osip Mandelshtam, who perished in Siberia, he sent this collection to his fellow-exile Nelly Sachs, inscribing it in Hebrew: *Im eshkachech yerushalayim* ... , "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget ... "

Early on, Celan had recourse to the Psalms for what they traditionally offered: archetypal lament—he found no use for their element of praise. In corroborating grief, the Psalms could also console. But in 1957, '58, and '59, he wrote poems that don't merely re-voice, they revoke the ancient plangent source. His *Tenebrae*, for instance, begins: *Nah sind wir, Herr*, "Near are we, Lord, / near and graspable." Had I the nerve, I'd render Celan's *Nah* as "Nigh," because it calls up Psalms: *Karov Adonai*, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart" (34:18), and "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him" (145:18). But Celan's poem goes on to co-opt crucifixion imagery for the excruciation of Jews in the gas chamber: "Grasped already, Lord, / clawed into each other, as if / each of our bodies were / your body, Lord." Now we remember that *tsuris* is also "near" in the crucial Psalm beginning, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (22:12) No wonder, then, that Celan's *Tenebrae* goes on to a blasphemous triplet—"Pray, Lord, / pray to us, / we are near"—that recalls the Hebrew poet Bialik after the Easter 1903 Kishinev pogrom: "Heavens ... You pray for me!"

In spring 1958, Celan was composing "*Engführung*" (Stretto), a long sequence that opens with "Grass, written asunder," *Gras, auseinander geschrieben*. "Surely the people is grass," cries Isaiah from exile, and the Psalmist says, "I am withered like grass" (102:11). But Celan had recently translated the death-camp documentary *Night and Fog*, where a strange green grass has sprouted and covered Auschwitz earth. So in his poem, "Grass, written asunder" is pushing back oblivion. The poem ends at the Auschwitz shooting wall with broken verses: "the / choirs, back then, the / Psalms. Ho, ho- / sanna." Though Bach's glorious *Osanna in excelsis* is a shout of praise, in Psalms the Hebrew *Hoshia-na* means "Save [us] please!" (118:25) Celan's "Ho, ho- / sanna" reduces to a stammer or derisive hooting, with echoes of the marching song, "For we are Hitler's brown-clad host—Huzza, ho-ho!" All this stretches what we call biblical allusion to the breaking point.

A year later, in July 1959, Celan composed a stunning poem that takes place on the same terrain as "Deathfugue," with prisoners shoveling graves. It begins:

Es war erde in ihnen, und / sie gruben,
THERE WAS EARTH INSIDE THEM, and
they dug.
They dug and dug, and so
their day went past, their night. And they did not
praise God,
who, so they heard, wanted all this,
who, so they heard, witnessed all this.

They dug and heard nothing more;
they did not grow wise, invented no song,
devised for themselves no sort of language.
They dug.

These diggers who "did not praise God" stem from a Psalm: "The dead praise not the Lord, Neither they that go down into silence" (115:16). Immediately after the war, Jacob Glatstein invoked (or revoked) the same Psalm by beginning a Yiddish poem:

We received the Torah in Sinai
and in Lublin we gave it back.
Dead men don't praise God.

Celan's dry lines belong to a new Psalter and its defunct covenant with a God
who, so they heard, wanted all this,
who, so they heard, witnessed all this,

der, so hörten sie, alles dies wollte,
der, so hörten sie, alles dies wusste.

Venerable instruments of lament and praise, Psalms are starkly set off by Celan's line, "they did not grow wise, invented no song." In Psalm 107, "Who so is wise, let him...consider the mercies of the Lord," and in 98, "Sing unto the Lord a new song, For He hath done marvelous things." For Celan, after the things that were done, "new song" had to strike at the heart of lyric surety as well as psalmic succor. It had to rupture, contradict, annul. I think here of Primo Levi calling the stories he heard in Auschwitz "stories of a new Bible," and of his 1946 poem, "*Sh'ma*," where what we're commanded to hear is not the Lord our one God but the waste of humankind.

Incidentally, it may come as a surprise that Primo Levi himself once translated Celan, in a sense. In his 1982 novel *If Not Now, When?*, the partisans' song says that their slaughtered brothers "have dug themselves a grave in the air." Levi was honoring Celan's words from "Deathfugue" by giving them to Yiddish-speaking resistance fighters. I wrote asking about this, and he replied (in English): "I 'stole' this image from Celan's "Todesfuge," which struck me deeply .... But, as you know, in literature the borderline between stealth and homage is blurred."

The poem that, after "Deathfugue," has drawn most attention is one that Celan in 1961 titled "Psalm." Its title, deceptively easy to translate, yields right away to an anti-Creation:

> No one kneads us again out of earth and clay,
> no one incants our dust.
> No one.

And if that threefold denial were not enough, Celan's next line turns the pronoun "No one," *Niemand*, into a name, addressing One who is not to be named: *Gelobt seist du, Niemand*. "Praised be Thou, No One," we would render this, but in a German prayer book that some refugee friends had salvaged, I found the Ashkenazi rite using *Gelobt seist du* for the basic Hebrew benediction *Baruch ata* (and later I found the Israeli poet Natan Zach's translation of "Psalm," with *Baruch ata* for that phrase). So I turned *Gelobt seist du, Niemand* into "Blessèd art Thou, No One," letting childhood Sabbaths cling to Celan's new name for *Adonai*, a God not mystically ineffable now but hidden, eclipsed, renounced.

On his birthday in 1965, Celan wrote down a motto, "Ride for the Truth," above a list of poems for an upcoming collection. *Reite für die Treue*: it sounds like Teutonic cavaliers or knights on crusade, but the poet at forty-five took his motto from Psalm 45, in Martin Buber's version. Celan by this time was afflicted with intermittent depression rooted in his wartime losses, postwar neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism, plus a groundless plagiarism charge pursued in the German press. Frequently hospitalized, he underwent painful drug and shock therapy. Meanwhile, his doggedness to "ride for the truth" put a strain on tried-and-true religion. His lyrics spoke of "smoke-spent" prayers, "psalm-hooved" stallions, "o-, o-, o- / pen-leaved Bible mountains." One poem began: "Spasms, I love you, psalms."

Around Christmas 1966 he wrote the poem centering on "*Ashrei*," which, transliterated from Hebrew, sounds exotic within postwar German verse:

> Ashrei,
>
> a word without meaning,
> transtibetan,
> squirted into
> the Jewess
> Pallas
> Athena's
> helmeted ovaries.

That word *Ashrei*, lovingly illuminated in medieval manuscripts, is now "without meaning" because no Jewish community is left in Europe, much less any such happiness, and because Celan's German audience will not recognize *Aschrej*. Or they may (just possibly) mistake it for the Yiddish *a schrei*, "a scream"—but is that really a mistake, given Celan's annunciation? Instead of Mary Immaculate and the Greek goddess of war and wisdom, we have Nazi sterilization experiments on Jewish women, introduced here by the first word of Psalms. *Ashrei*: Celan heard the Yiddish scream inside the Hebraic blessing, and doubtless he remembered that in prewar Jewish prayer books, the German for *Ashrei* was *Heil—Heil dem Manne, der* ... , "Happy is the man who ... "

During his last decade, Paul Celan was truly one of those who, as the Psalmist says, "going through the vale of misery use it for a well." The sharper his distress, it seems, the richer his writing. What drove him was the need to voice utter loss, to make absence present. "Blessèd art Thou, No One." In his notebook once, Celan wrote out St. Jerome's Latin and Luther's German from Psalm 139: "The night shall be light around me." This cannot have said to him what the Psalmist affirms—that when we make our bed in hell, behold, *Adonai* is there; but rather, Celan heard that night was the only day he had.

I have taken the title for this essay from Psalm 62: "One thing hath God spoken, Two things have I heard." Besides its several recognized interpretations, this enigmatic thought suggests that for Celan, history refuted God's word.

In June 1967, Celan experienced one heart-lifting moment. While troops were regaining Jerusalem's Old City, he wrote unambiguously: "the Peat-Bog Soldier of Masada / makes a homeland for himself." Addressing Jews in Israel and himself as well, he said: *du / erstarkst und / erstarkst*. "You / strengthen and / strengthen," my no-longer-revisable page-proofs read, but I wish I'd made it "you / go from strength to / strength," like the Psalmist through the vale of misery.

In a poem from December 1967, Celan could cite Isaiah—"Ryse up Ierosalem and / rowse thyselfe"—and even close with the Hebrew *kumi ori* ("Arise, shine"), but not before also saying *Schlammbrocken schluckt ich*, "I swallowed bits of mire." Psalm 69 fits Celan only too well: "I am sunk in deep mire … my throat is dried … Deliver me out of the mire." Yet there's this from Psalm 40: "He brought me … out of the miry clay … And He hath put a new song in my mouth."

Finally, in October 1969, Celan made his long-deferred trip to Israel, taking joy in the old-new Hebrew language now spoken within a free Jewish collectivity in the promised land he himself had not chosen. Visiting Yehuda Amichai, he recited some Bialik from childhood memory, and he had a loving encounter with a woman he'd known in prewar Czernowitz. Celan's first poem after returning to Paris joins erotic, historic, and messianic recognitions. One stanza reads: "there stood / Jerusalem around us," *es stand / Jerusalem um uns*. Celan's few words, "there stood / Jerusalem around us," call up a much-favored pilgrim Psalm: "Our feet are standing within thy gates, Jerusalem" (122:2), and another: "Jerusalem, mountains are around her as the Lord is around His people" (125:2). For a moment, at least, mother tongue and holy tongue come into near-unison, saying not two things but one.

A few months after declaring "there stood / Jerusalem around us," Celan went from the Pont Mirabeau into the Seine River and though a strong swimmer, drowned unobserved. His wounds could not heal: that break between *Adonai* and *Niemand*, between *Ashrei* and *Heil*, the saving and the deathbringing word, could not fuse. Yet we understand this, indelibly, thanks to Paul Celan. Out of the mire we do hear new song. □

JEWS & BLACKS



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Father's Day

David James Fisher

Last June 19, I made a Father's Day excursion, journeying from Los Angeles to Riverdale, New York, to visit with my ailing dad at the Hebrew Home for the Aged. Dad had always joked about the inequity that his birthday and Father's Day tended to coincide, robbing him of the double recognition (and doubling of presents) that he loved. Several weeks before my visit, he had suffered two "minor" strokes. If ever there was a misnomer in medical vocabulary, "minor" stroke is it: No stroke is minor, especially for someone who was eighty-three years old, with a history of cardio-vascular symptoms, Parkinsonian syndrome, incontinence, impaired ability to walk, depression, and senile dementia. The stroke produced some weakness on his left side; he was also exhibiting violent, agitated, and at times unmanageable behavior toward those attempting to assist him.

As I drove to the nursing home, several ironies occurred to me. My father had been a physician who specialized in vascular and peripheral vascular disease, tending to treat an elderly population. The inevitable passage of time has reversed the physician-patient relationship, but without the patient having any realistic hope of healing himself, with no option of recovery. My dad knew nursing homes intimately from his medical training and practice; he consistently spoke of his hatred for them, even the well-run ones, finding them confining and depressing. He was right, of course.

I experienced guilt about my limited caretaking for my dad. My bad conscience for not taking him in to live with me and my family is considerable, even though space and circumstances do not realistically permit such an arrangement. I have a small home in Los Angeles, already overcrowded, with a toddler and infant both still in diapers. My father would require twenty-four hour attention, several shifts of full-time aides. But to encounter him here as an inmate seems unbelievable, slightly unreal. I berate myself for not doing more for him. The guilt, sadness, and self-reproaches often become unbearable.

I found my father sitting slumped over in a wheelchair in the lounge of the Hebrew Home, surrounded by magnificent art. The Hebrew Home in Riverdale prides itself on its extensive collection of paintings and prints; along the corridors one finds original Picassos, Chagalls, and Ertes, as well as an excellent collection of Judaica. The beautiful paintings and lithographs provide a glaring contrast to the condition and appearance of the residents. In this bright, spacious room, I discovered rows of geriatric patients lined up against the perimeter, with one row in the middle, facing a picture window with a stunning view: a vast panorama opening up to the Hudson River, the Cloisters, the New Jersey Palisades, and the George Washington Bridge. The living corpses seemed oblivious to the spectacular view.

To enter this lounge, at least for the uninitiated, is to enter a grotesque spectacle: wheelchair-bound individuals, many with contorted mouths, protruding tongues, twisted bodies, uttering bizarre sounds. The cries and wailing alternate with an equally eerie silence; sometimes the sounds are angry (protesting some food), sometimes poignant ("get me out of here"), sometimes incoherent.

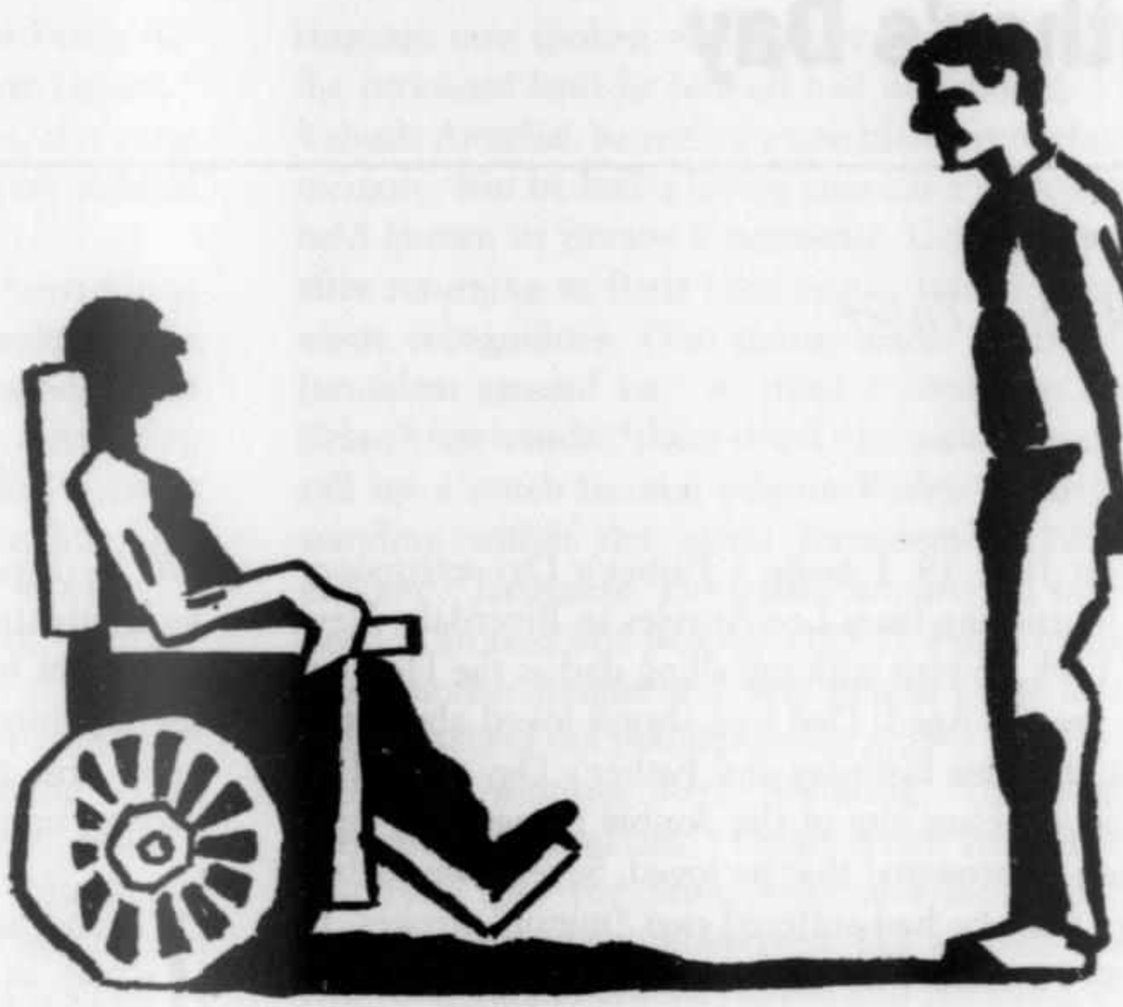
Here, with my father, were strangers slouched over, some sleeping, some inert, staring, being attended to, not being attended to. The aides appear good-natured and professional; perhaps they are on good behavior, for it is Father's Day, after all. I experienced disbelief thinking of my dad sitting in this setting for hours at a time. I wondered how the nurses, assistants, and staff accommodated to such an ambience. I tried to conceive of how much my father suffered with the sights, sounds and implications of this morbid scene. I was struck by how little interaction there was between patients—the

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absence of conversation, even trivial exchanges. The wheelchair brigade was predominantly a spectacle of silence, waiting, of existential inertia.

I was appalled by my father sitting there, even more disconcerted by his vacant look. He, who had been so extraordinarily vital, so energetic, so expansive about life, now appeared absent. He, who had practiced medicine for more than fifty years, who had published thirty-five papers in the clinical literature, who had a zest for travel, art, music, and literature, a wide-ranging curiosity about people and the world, a man who was cheerful, exuberant, and deeply engaged with life—now he had vanished. Yet he was physically present, and recognizable, at least externally. His posture typified his mental state: hunched over in his wheelchair, head perched on his chest, eyes closed, Dad was poised in a state of semi-sleep, semi-consciousness. Maybe this somnambulistic state was adaptive, shielding him from the grotesqueries of his daily situation, from an all too painful awareness of his deterioration.



SETH TOBOCMAN

In our time together, he never initiated a conversation. He responded tersely to questions, a one-sentence answer at most, sometimes only a few words. He rarely made any requests. That troubled me—it was strangely out of character for him. Only activities that affected his physical needs bothered him. Prior to the stroke, he could get around with a walker. He now needed help to stand up, and he could barely walk a few steps. Those with walkers on his floor were the exceptions. To watch him walk so tentatively was profoundly sad for me; it recalled his former gait, his quickness of step and his determination to get things done, to arrive at his destination. He required help to use the bathroom, to have his clothes changed. Chronic incontinence has necessitated diapers, but he resists.

I imagined the potential shame of his situation. As he sat lifeless and disabled, he seemed to have emigrated. His blue eyes, once so sharp and animated, were dull. This once-emotional and flamboyant man was deflated. He emitted no emotions.

His life at eighty-three had been reduced to the satisfaction of physical needs: sleeping, eating, defecating. His full and complex life was compressed: all of his essential belongings fit in one room, in fact, reduced to one small closet, one chest of drawers. He showed no interest in people, utter indifference to financial affairs. A person who was characteristically fascinated by social and political events nationally and internationally, he has stopped reading The *New York Times*; and though he watches television, he appears not to register what he sees. An avid sports fan, he seems barely interested in watching a baseball game. I asked him if he was following the O.J. Simpson case, and he answered no, slightly disoriented.

He had lost all sense of time and of events and probably of place as well. He did not know that it was Father's Day. He could not remember his age, but vaguely recalled that he had just had a birthday. He still ate with a certain relish, but post-stroke food is not very appetizing, mostly pureed. He needed to be fed, even though he has some strength in his arms and hands.

I could not distinguish his regressive behavior from his physical disability. When I asked him less than an hour after lunch what he had eaten, he fumbled. He could not remember. He was resigned to this short-term memory loss by now, but was still confused by it. He good-naturedly said that the meals were good.

Depression is not easily differentiated from dementia in the elderly. I was unable to discern which was predominant in my father's case. He had crossed over into a zone of mental deadness, emotional detachment, devitalization, and indifference. He seemed unable to associate mentally or verbally. He appeared permanently exhausted, disconnected. I could not distinguish if he was truly sad, or simply not there. I certainly was a terribly sad observer, wishing I did not

have to observe and experience his state.

Yet, he was alive and physically present, albeit disabled and diminished, but with no complaints, no requests, no demands, no desires, no sense of the future. With memory, interpersonal contact, and cognitive capacity impaired and probably irreparable, I wondered what human qualities remained. Then, he became momentarily alert: He smiled his winning and charming smile; his blue eyes twinkled; his emotional isolation suddenly ruptured. But, it was transient, immediately followed by idlessness, vacuity, and that numbing silence.

He even ventured a few sentences, the most resonant for me being his affirmation of love for me and my family. Perhaps this simple "I love you" articulated all that needed to be said; perhaps it hadn't been spoken enough and spontaneously when he and I were younger. He suddenly said, "you've got to fix me," implying an awareness of being broken, or deeply damaged. When asked how or where he needed fixing, he faltered, retreating into silence, unable to complete his thought.

Strokes, of course, do great and permanent damage to the brain. Those recovering from strokes often express anger and extreme emotional and depressive reactions, often displayed as reflexes. Although I did not witness this on Father's Day, my father was resisting touch on the part of the nursing staff, refusing help on the part of a devoted and deeply trusted loved one. Sometimes, he would bite. Sometimes his anger escalated into rage and his stubbornness became transformed into an out-of-control state, where four aides were required to restrain him in order to change his clothes. If I was impressed by this residue of physical strength in him, I was terribly saddened by his lack of conscious awareness of his aggressivity, or of what motivated his rage.

In the face of this awful extinction of my father's self, and my own sense of helplessness and inadequacy as a bystander, exacerbated by the distance from L.A. to New York, my father's family reacted with an extreme degree of emotion, often impairing their perceptions and judgment. All of us knew that he wouldn't improve, that he wouldn't regain his previous competence, even recapture his former impairment prior to his stroke. None of us knew how long he would live. My knowledge about his condition was inadequate, nor did I know what to do with this abundance of guilt about my father, how to manage my despair about his loss of function and intellect, how to channel my sense of waste about the utter extinction of his personality, my grief at the loss of his vitality. I became incompetent and sad; I was numb to my own feelings. I sensed this in others, too.

One outlet for my family's helplessness and distress was to pressure and vilify one another; my youngest brother became inadvertently the target for much of the venting. He was burdened with many key decisions and responsibility for my father's care. Accusations flew, blame escalated, vituperation replaced empathic understanding, emotional outbursts overwhelmed compassion for one another, and for my father.

Family members, anguished over my father's state, exaggerated an already horrific situation. They lobbied for him to receive even more assistance and attention; they demanded a full-time companion. They vehemently insisted that he be made to feel more comfortable and argued that he needed to be spared the horrors of the lounge, although it was unclear that he registered any of these sensations. Although these recommendations were unsolicited, they demoralized and depleted the energy and self-confidence of the immediate family.

The nursing home, with its well-trained administrative staff and "inter-disciplinary" approach, reassured us appropriately that my father was currently obtaining optimal care and that any changes would be wasteful of resources, non-therapeutic, and a huge expenditure of money. Money, of course, was on everyone's mind (except my father's) and yet remained unspoken. My father anticipated his fate and put sufficient money in trust to finance these expenditures. The Hebrew Home for the Aged is one of the country's more expensive nursing homes; entry is difficult, waiting lists are long, sometimes influential connections have to be used to secure a bed. It is extremely costly—$8,500 per month—and none of the expenses are tax-deductible or reimbursed by third parties. Yet another irony: $102,000 annually to sustain my dad whose quality of life was minimal and whose inner world had apparently vanished. I was skeptical about the use of this considerable sum of money to sustain his care for an indefinite period of time. I reproached myself for asking the question, even thinking the idea seemed shameful.

While I was a bit relieved that my father probably did not realize his plight, I was puzzled by the ethical, social, and medical indications of pondering when enough care and attention is enough. These issues admit of no facile answers. My father left written instructions about his wishes for no heroic measure to maintain life when he was lucid and when he signed his living will. But his current status had become ambiguous. I was unable to strike a balance between a forbidden desire to hasten his death and a dread of perpetuating his tragic and empty life.

Father's Day 1994: a day to be present, to bear witness, to love, to be loved, to think thoughts about sickness, health, death, mortality; in short, a day to reflect, a day for self-examination. With my father there but gone, with him appearing not to care or to know anything (he frequently replies to a direct question by saying that he does not know), with symptoms of dementia mingling with depression, I speculated about what would happen, what ought to be done. Maybe things would get worse. Maybe he would hang on to life (to life?) longer.

And what, if anything, is the meaning of this Father's Day with its no exit ugliness and geriatric grotesqueries? I am not sure. Normal mourning clearly begins before the death of a loved one; linear thinking about the terminal stage of the life cycle no longer makes any sense, especially as one's parents age and cling to life. Grief for the other precedes the organic end of life.

In my middle forties, I became a dad. I value being remembered and affirmed on Father's Day; the day now has a resonance to me that it previously never had. But I still see my dad there slouched over, and I can't extrapolate any significance from his situation. Dad has consistently expressed his desire not to burden or disappoint me. Perhaps my father's final legacy to me is one last piece of provision: He confronted unbelievable decline and disability without overly burdening or disappointing me. He would exit from life without oppressing his sons. A negative freedom is still freedom, even if one's options have been exhausted. To reflect on him enduring his last days with at least that degree of dignity intact may be salutary in at least one way. Remembering him will strengthen me when I am faced with a similar context and choice.

My father died quietly eleven weeks after Father's Day. His body gave out, unable to resist a "minor" infection. □

Gone Fishing

Sara B. Ivry

Consider fishing. Think hooks, bait, lures, rods. Dream of young men who grew up in Montana or Wyoming and reminisced about rising before dawn, creeping through fog and mist, piercing fleshy worms with eager steel, searching their fathers' eyes for approval and connection. These are the rites of manhood, American-style.

Men throughout history have sung and sung again that common refrain: Praise the glory of fishing with Dad. It matters little if the father described is an actual figure, à la Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, or a paternal stand-in, in the best tradition of *Huckleberry Finn*. Just last summer The *New York Times Magazine*'s "About Men" column offered up another Kodak-quality depiction of father-and-son fishing, traversing familiar territory for oh-so-bittersweet memory.

All of which forces me to wonder: where does that leave the likes of young women? I certainly don't have any quaint countervailing recollections of life with Mother.

We did not exchange loving smiles as she walked me through childhood. There were no knowing glances that might have communicated all the mysteries of life as she taught me to cook or sew, all the while understanding that one day such an intimate moment might be captured and printed on a Hallmark card to be found shortly thereafter on a shelf under the heading, "Missing You."

Hey, wait, listen here: My memories are like Mr. Maclean's too. My Pops used to take me out fishing. Not often, mind you, since Boston's Charles River was known to be polluted, and we weren't quite devoted enough to search out the gullies and brooks and ponds whispering throughout New England, where I feel certain still that bass and trout were waiting for me.

In my family, fishing was part of our annual camping trip. All year we played kickball and tennis on our suburban streets, cracks in the asphalt serving as nets, trees near the sidewalks as bases. Summer was the time when my parents wanted to get us back to Nature.

"Children, meet Mother Earth," they said. Camping was our opportunity to experience Nature as real and as raw as my parents could conceive of it, given the limits of four children and vacation time. And so every summer, we piled into the car and drove to Maine, or perhaps Cape Cod, where we would set up our big canvas tent and the tarpaulin my folks won at a mall when they first

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started dating. My father and I would go fishing once the next morning, twice over the course of a few days if we were particularly ambitious, after which the thrill of waking early to throw a line grew thin and frayed.

To be sure, my dad has never been a lumber-jackin' kind of fella. We had no ax in the garage, no bear skin rugs on the floor, no shotgun over the mantle. He grew strictly out of the "I'm originally from Brooklyn" school. He fears cigars for potential lip cancer, feels betrayed still by the Dodgers' emigration to California, and shed tears at my sister's seventh-grade performance of Thornton Wilder.

My father is the man who has been stopped by the police in the middle of a lake in a corner of Connecticut for not having enough life preservers in the canoe. Twice.

Out there in Nature, though, for a few brief moments each year, he and I have fancied ourselves invincible. On these outings, my sisters and brother never rose early from the tent. The lure of the early morning outdoors perhaps seemed to them too banal, not quite promising. But persistent images of a triumphant hunter homing in on her prey crept into my head and easily coaxed me to the water's edge. There next to me would be Dad, lathering sun-block and smearing bug repellent over his forehead and brow, insisting that I would later regret my resistance to these ointments. Some say that Father knows best.

Once, when I was nine or ten, Dad and I stood at the fringe of Duck Pond, clear water ahead, blue sky above. I felt a tug at my rod. Another tug and a yank and a pull and wildly, desperately I began reeling in my line. My father abandoned his to coach and direct.

At the end of the hook was a fish, a mighty fish that must have measured at least a foot and a half in length. It was gray and slippery and flapping from side to side, and my father insisted that he should take charge, that he could bring it in and finish it off, since I was still too small to conquer the great beast.

I promptly did as he commanded and relinquished control, because I believed that my father must know what to do. After all, was he not the man who ran beside me and guided the seat as I learned how to ride a bike? Didn't he help me into the apple tree where we climbed together and harvested fruit, laughing as we hurled it into paper bags marked A, B, and Reject? When, in the silence of deep childhood night, I obsessed over the prospect of dying alone, wasn't it he who taught me a comforting prayer?

As a man, I reasoned, as my father, there was no question that he would now know how to dislodge the fish cleanly and swiftly so that I could bring it back as my trophy. I looked on helplessly, holding out my arms to a victory I felt so near, as the fish jumped and my father's arms jerked—man and monster dueling it out until the final breath.

In the end, though, there was no heroic death. The battle finished with a whimper. Flustered, Dad let go of the line, and my fish splashed into the shallow water and swam away.

My father's defeat that day was one of his very few I've chanced to witness. He still brushes off our old fishing rods, trying to tempt me to cast a line before the crickets finish up their morning chatter. We joke about "the one that got away," and I suppose, in his fashion, my father is seeking absolution. He wants a touch of forgiveness for letting slip to his child the disappointing truth that fallibility, after all, falls more easily than heroics within the human sphere. □

JOB OPENING: ORGANIZER/EDUCATOR AT TIKKUN

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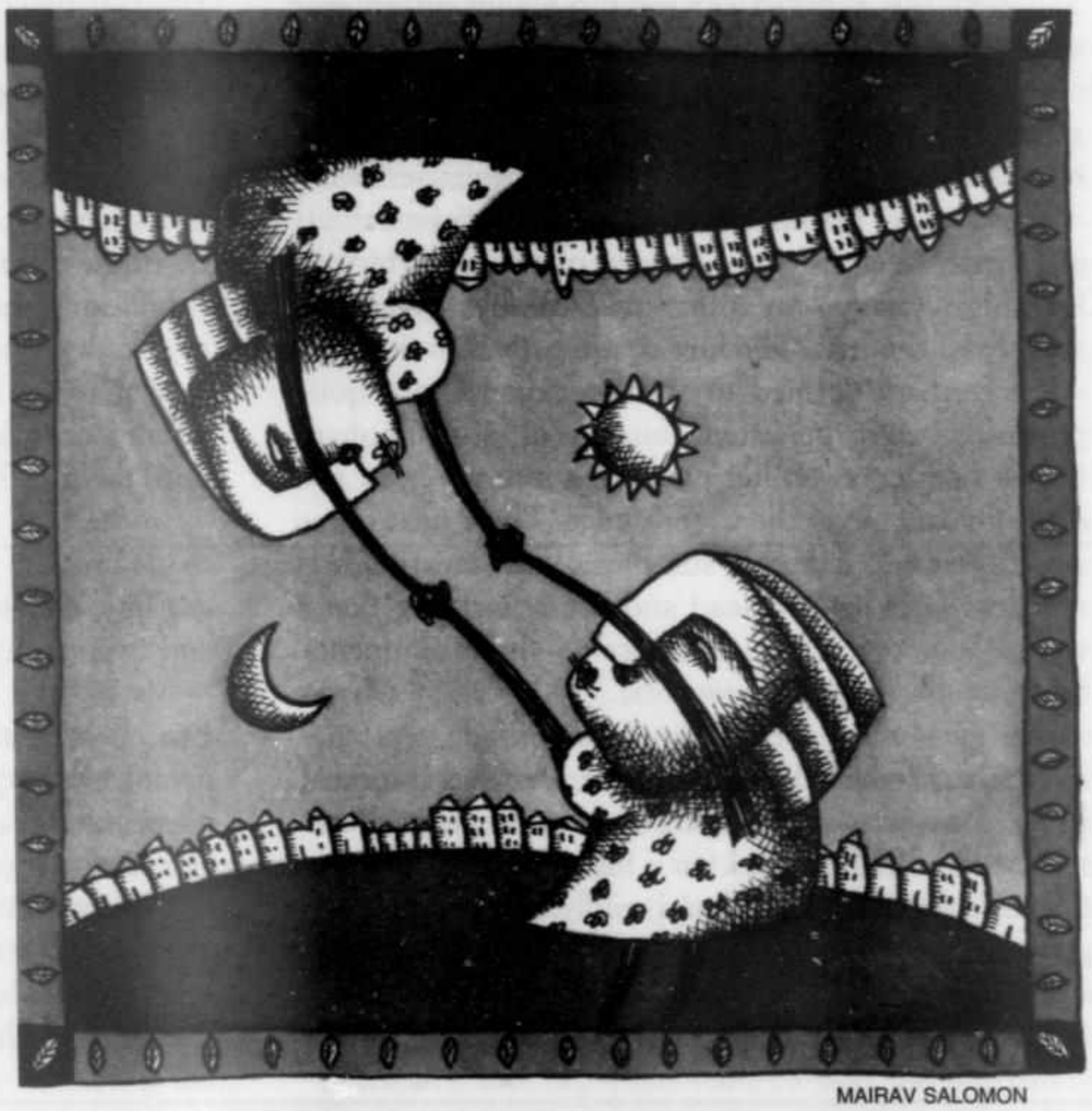
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BOOK REVIEWS

Reading and Reading Ruth

Laurie Zoloth-Dorfman

Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story, edited by Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, Ballantine, 1994, 386 pp. Cloth, $23.



MAIRAV SALOMON

Of all the acts one might perform with a text, rereading it might be the most Jewish, unless I could argue that arguing about it is more Jewish, and we could then dispute this and prove it with rereads of texts, which would be the most Jewish of all. Hence, the book about the book about Ruth comes into my hands easily; I know its place. It is a reconsideration of the canonized text of my favorite prophet of all, the woman prophet of the daily act, Ruth, the book that distinguishes the prophecy of encounter and friendship and community as sacred, and as central, to Jewish continuity.

I used to consider the book of Ruth my private refuge. In a Torah that placed women at the periphery, in a tradition that does not exactly enshrine women's voices, in a literature that freights even heroines with such powerlessness, I found tough, sexual Ruth and scrappy, ironic Naomi, surrounded by a lilting, analytic chorus of women. My kind of story. I have read this story with such gladness, learned Hebrew by parsing its verbs, participated in my first women's Torah service on Shavuot when the book is traditionally read, bore my first daughter into the warm spring air of that holiday. When I looked for a primary text to describe a Jewish theory of distributive justice, it was to Ruth and Naomi and their moment of encounter and radical recognition that I turned.

In the Book of Ruth, the centerpiece event is a (rare) inside look at an intimate relationship between women. In contrast to some of the problematic female interior relationships in Torah (e.g., Sarah and Hagar, Rachel and Leah) where women are seen competing for the scarce prize of a relationship with a man, the decisive ethical gesture in Ruth actually has little to do with a male figure. It speaks instead of a responsibility to a larger community. In the book of Ruth, the story of women is central; Elimelech, Mahlon, Chilion, and even Boaz are either dead or nearly silent to the central passion of the story about loyalty to each other outside the safety of a relationship to a man. The details, the verbal action of the story, come from women's work of the time. It is this work—eating, gleaning, fecundity, homemaking, and nursing babies; not war-making, sacrificing, marching, or destruction—that is honored.

We are to imagine it: two women alone in the desert, shawls in the wind, thirsty, mourning, and walking in silence to Bethlehem. The City of Bread is "all astir" when they enter. They are at the point of utter despair, having nothing: without men, without children, without land, without community. Yet their coming is a public event, not simply some private tragedy, which will be taken account of by the public community, for which the community will bear responsibility.

In an ethical gesture, the gesture that makes all that follows possible, Ruth embraces the angry old woman, not out of love or compassion—it is certainly not that simple—but out of a sense of recognition that she and Naomi are fundamentally bound. Ruth recognizes

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the self in the other and, as such, recognizes her responsibility not to turn from the vulnerable face of her former mother-in-law. She is not compelled to stay: The death of her husband has unbound her as it has unbound Orpah. And yet she sees herself as Naomi, paired as surely as Adam and Eve were paired, a coupling of similar selves in the darkness of the world.

Here we confront the depths of Ruth's choice to commit to a relationship with the old woman, the Rutharian alternative of relation over self-actualization, the recognition that self-becoming is not possible in isolation from obligation. My life, says this Rutharian gesture, cannot continue with you, other, lost in the darkness of the desert of Moab. The rain would not fall and the grain would not grow if it were so. It is proven by our text, by the bursting fecundity of the barley harvest, and by the fecundity of the widow Ruth in the next year.

The language of the story is critical. It is about going from isolation—no family and no community—to a specific place, to a specific listening to the voice of the most vulnerable, in the context of an actual relationship. The halakhic details that follow, the details of harvest and widowhood, and the exchanges of commodity for commodity, are the recognition by the larger community of the profundity of such a choice. The ritual act of the release of obligation (the shoe ritual) makes the connections public and face to face.

After the birth of her son, who is linked to the future and to the largest vision of community, Ruth maintains the strongest possible relationship to Naomi: The younger woman gives her child to the older woman. Naomi thus becomes parent in relationship to the child via the female rather than through the male kinship bonds. These female bonds are spiritual rather than hereditary.

The Rutharian choice means understanding that one's personal story is part of a collective story of a people in history. It requires choice at every moment about gestures as intimate, as fragile, and as ordinary as a child passed between women. It is a prophetic act that suggests, "Look, the world can be like this." But it is a prophetic act wrapped in the context of the daily, difficult world—as if to say, "The prophetic act is obtainable, it can be yours."

In large measure, Kates's and Reimer's book, a collection of the work of thirty Jewish women writers, derives its power from the use of the oral encounter and the non-linear, non-"textual" form of the work. It contains essays, many of them from our most powerful feminist thinkers, but also transcriptions of women's study groups and private, reflexive struggle with the text, and recollections, such as Cynthia Ozick's deeply felt recounting of her grandfather's relationship to the story of Ruth. My current favorite (but it is very hard to choose—you'll see) is a transcript of a brilliant oral *shiur* (teaching session) by the noted Israeli scholar Aviva Zornberg. This piece easily captures the interactive and conversational nature of Torah study. That oral and collective tradition is central to the traditional method of Jewish textual study. The Talmud is the transcription of this methodology, and *Reading Ruth* captures the "he-said but, he-said, but, he-said" quality of the Talmudic discourse. But of course, it is "she-said, but she-said" in this work.

Which brings us to a central irony of the book. Interesting, isn't it, that we read this reading of Ruth as a women's reading as opposed to a Jew's reading? This is because only women's writing is anthologized in this book, fair enough, and because we are told that the aim of the editors was to "speak particularly to the connection between women and traditional Jewish texts." Yet when the authors of other texts are all men (and I do not mean collections of work in the thirteenth century, where to expect inclusion of women would be ahistorical and silly) we never give gendered attention to this fact. Imagine it if we did! *A Treasury of Jewish Humor* could be called *142 Jewish Men (and Dorothy Parker) Reclaim the Funny in Jewish Life*; *Great Yiddish Writers of the Twentieth Century* could be called *109 Jewish Men (and Lili Berger) Reclaim the Yiddish Tradition*; *The Judaic Tradition* could be called *809 Pages of Men's Writing (and one page for Anne Frank) Reclaims Judaism from Antiquity to the Modern Age*; *Modern Jewish Ethics* could be called *Thirteen Men Reflect on Jewish Ethics*; and *Contemporary Jewish Thought* could be called *Ninety-Eight Men (and Six Women) Write Original Essays on Critical Concepts*. But this is an aside. Think about why this book is not called *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Jews Reclaim a Sacred Story*, and you'll head off into the very heart of the essentialist versus non-essentialist debate in feminism.

Jews and the New American Scene

Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab



Raphael Soyer, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

Will American Jews survive their success? Or will the United States' uniquely hospitable environment lead to their loss of cultural identity? This is the conundrum that Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab explore in what is the clearest, most current account available of the dilemma facing American Jews in their third century of citizenship.

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The achievement of the editors and contributors of *Reading Ruth* is extraordinary. The act of reading the text so carefully, of "reclaiming," rests at the heart of the feminist promise: that radical engagement from the vantage of the lived experience of women (re)reads and hence (re)writes the story in ways infinitely more profound than can be gotten from the male voice alone. Nowhere is this more deeply experienced than in this particular story, yet I look forward to the close textual rereading of our entire tradition by women scholars: every text, every midrash, every prayer.

Buy, give—most important, go find a group of friends and study—this collective discourse on Ruth. □

Nadine Gordimer and the Perils of Political Fiction

Politics and fiction have not often made a happy marriage. At least since Dickens created such grim characters as Mr. Gradgrind to expose the inhumanities of early Victorian England, critics have scorned political novels as crude and agitational, if passionately earnest. Henry James wrote of Emile Zola, "If he had as much light as energy, his results would be of the highest value."

Thus, the international renown that has graced Nadine Gordimer, her fiction seared with hatred of apartheid, requires some explanation. Has this white South African of Jewish ancestry succeeded in crafting narratives and characters whose uniqueness defies ideological conventions? Or is she the Zola of our age, inspiring and educating millions of readers but not, in truth, illuminating the caverns of the soul?

The two pieces below were written independent of each other. Each author views Gordimer's work and life through a specific interpretive lens. And their conclusions differ sharply. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz focuses on Gordimer's most recent novel, None to Accompany Me (1994); Todd Pitock discusses several of her works and is indebted to Kathrin Wagner's Rereading Nadine Gordimer (1994).

—*Michael Kazin*

Unloved Back Home

Todd Pitock

Nadine Gordimer, who grew up in a South African backwater and dropped out of school at the age of fifteen, has won a catalogue of literary awards, including the Nobel Prize and the British Booker Prize. She has been compared to Turgenev, Graham Greene, and V.S. Naipaul. She has received numerous honorary doctorates and memberships.

So it may be surprising to hear that few South Africans share the rest of the world's enthusiasm for Gordimer or her work. When she won the Nobel Prize, for example, one columnist suggested that Wilbur Smith, the author of best-selling mysteries, would have been a better choice. Another "defended" Gordimer by arguing that she was poetic, not "boring." Other supporters, such as the writer Lionel Abrahams, argue that South Africa's coldness to Gordimer is evidence of its own intellectual malaise. "No serious 'art' writer sells (here)," explained Marcia Leveson, an associate professor of English at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Wherever the blame lies, one thing is certain: Hardly any South Africans actually read Gordimer. As of 1991, according to Kathrin Wagner's *Rereading Nadine Gordimer* (University of Indiana Press, 1994), the ten Gordimer books available in the country sold only a thousand copies a year.

That doesn't mean Gordimer lacks for supporters, at least in public, where many offer bland approval with a close-lipped smile. In private, some of the same people groan in disgust. "If you want to know what I think," an African literature professor at Wits and a former exile told me, "turn that tape recorder off." Gossip, scorn, and vituperation follow. Gordimer, they say, is cold, clinical, and turgid, a creator of caricatures, arrogant, a bully, a

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Todd Pitock lived in South Africa from 1990-1993. He has written for numerous publications, among them The Reporter, *The* Jerusalem Report, Penthouse, *and The* Forward.

hypocrite. A Johannesburg-based publisher described to me attending dinner at Gordimer's home and being served by liveried servants—a bizarre scene for a professed Marxist. Es'kia Mphahlele, whose personal relationship with Gordimer dates to the 1950s and whom many regard as the dean of Black South African writers, called Gordimer's novels "tedious" —but at least he limited his remarks to her work and not the woman herself.

"During apartheid, we didn't say anything because we felt that at least she was on our side," one writer told me. "But after *The Lying Days* [Gordimer's first novel, published in 1953], which was the kind of novel that really interpreted our world in a lot of ways, her work got duller and duller. I remember my husband throwing one book aside and saying, 'This is unreadable.' I think non-South Africans were interested by the politics, which weren't interesting to we who lived it."

"From the very beginning, she represented in the dark days [of apartheid] the correct political viewpoint to hold," observed Joseph Sherman, a senior lecturer at Wits. "Inevitably, it came to be seen that to criticize her work was equal to criticizing the struggle and siding with the oppressors." Others hold their criticism, Sherman wrote in an E-mail interview, because they share the party line, or because "if you say you don't like or understand or enjoy Gordimer you expose yourself to the sneering contempt of the intellectuals—you get trashed as a reader of Danielle Steele or worse."

"It is true that in South Africa people don't criticize her," said Rita Barnard, an Afrikaner who is an assistant professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. "Once they get out of South Africa, they tend to open up more."

That swallowed discontent reveals something not only about Gordimer, but about South Africa and its intellectual community. As a society, South Africans are not anti-intellectual as much as simply uninterested. Among whites, there is widespread contempt for anything that is locally made, whether it's merchandise or literature. Among Blacks, the illiteracy rate is high, and as a rule, Blacks who are involved are politicized. Indeed, the idea of apolitical art is anathema in certain circles, particularly in Gordimer's largely Marxist milieu, organized in the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW), which is linked to the governing African National Congress. COSAW has a publishing house and a core of committed ideologues who call themselves "cultural workers." Gordimer is COSAW's most famous and most generous member—she pledged her Nobel Prize cash award to the organization.

Despite or because of its prominence, COSAW rarely gets criticized.



JULIE DELTON

In the small pond of the Johannesburg literary scene, a person who wants to swim doesn't make waves. For whites, the fear is of appearing colonialist or reactionary. Blacks, too, are ruled by an emergent politico-literary doctrine. "Every so often, you hear someone saying, 'I've spoken to the ANC and they say it's all right,'" Mphahlele told me. "But we've just come through a period of such wrong-headed surveillance … and (now) we come to an era where there is a cultural desk that must give the okay, or we have to be assured that we are on the right side of that desk."

Gordimer herself has noted the danger of orthodoxy. In "A Writer's Freedom," a 1975 lecture published in the collection *The Essential Gesture* (1991), she spoke of the "insidious" threat to a writer "by the very awareness of *what is expected of him*. And often what is expected of him is conformity to an orthodoxy of opposition." Yet, Gordimer is also committed to Camus' position that a writer must be involved with the issues of the day. In her writing she cannot resolve the paradox, and her political vision closely follows the ANC's party line. In her latest novel, *None to Accompany Me*, one character, Didymus, refers to the torture of spies in the ANC training camps in exile. The violence repulsed him, and so he "refused to carry on there. Refused, yet understood why others" continued to torture. Although later it transpires that he is to be "sacrificed"—to the media, Gordimer suggests coyly—there is no explicit recognition that some of the tortured were not suspected spies. A former ANC-exile described to me a friend who was locked up because a superior wanted time with the man's girlfriend. Even Chris Hani, the slain Communist Party leader and former leader of the ANC's military wing, Umkonto we Sizwe, acknowledged such abuse.

Gordimer is aware that South African readers question her authenticity. Her defense is that the non-literary lack a writer's higher consciousness. "A writer sees in your life what you do not," she writes in the introduction to *Selected Stories*.

"That is why people who think they recognize themselves as 'models' for this character or that … will protest triumphantly, 'it wasn't that way at all'. They think they know better; but perhaps it is (the writer) who does?" It's a strange stance for one who elsewhere preaches the writer's responsibility to stand shoulder to shoulder with the masses.

Other contradictions find their way into the fiction, too. For example, Gordimer told Natan Scharansky in a 1991 *Jerusalem Report* interview that Israel's relationship with the apartheid government could not be excused as realpolitik because Jews should have learned from their history. Yet she defended the ANC's relationship with Yassir Arafat and Qadhafi, because circumstances caused Mandela to have "strange bedfellows." In other words,

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IN BOOKSTORES NOW FROM VIKING

the argument went, suffering should enlighten the Jews; it excuses Blacks.

Gordimer, who told Scharansky that she is "a white African," rejects her Jewishness, and in her fiction, she is often hostile to Jews. Helen's mother in *The Lying Days*, for instance, is a scathing caricature of a South African Jewish mother. And in *None to Accompany Me*, the only Jewish character, Lazar Feldman, is a posturing liberal: After volunteering to accompany Vera Stark, the protagonist, to the funeral of a Black activist, he comes up with "the perfect alibi... the flu virus." In contrast, Vera's virile lover is literally the son of a Nazi.

A couple of years ago at the Art Foundation in Johannesburg, Gordimer fielded questions from a small gathering. One person asked whether the imminent death of apartheid would leave her without her subject. Bristling, Gordimer replied with the cliché of all political novelists—that she didn't write about politics, but about how politics affected people.

But writing out of a political motivation has increasingly made her fiction predictable. After all, attacking the immorality of apartheid was like hitting a balloon with a spiked bat. It raised such instant and justifiable indignation that a writer didn't have to concentrate on nuances—in fact, one almost couldn't. How could you portray the tragedy of, say, a family of decent, politically uncommitted Afrikaners victimized by ordinary Black criminals without risking your constituency of readers? Stereotypes would do, as Wagner takes pains to show in *Rereading*: wavering English liberals (Antonia in *The Conservationist*; Maureen and Bam in *July's People*); stern, stupid, and violent Afrikaners (Odendaal in *None to Accompany Me*); noble and highly sexual Black revolutionaries (Luke Fokase in *The Late Bourgeois World*). Relationships are also stereotypical. White couples, who are all accustomed to wealth, are devoid of energy (Maureen and Bam; Elizabeth and Graham in *The Late Bourgeois World*; Vera and Bennett Stark in *None to Accompany Me*). On the other hand, sex across the color bar—always white women with Black men—is so passionate that it becomes a means toward political enlightenment. "Here [is] the popular racist stereotype of the superior sexual potency of the black man," Wagner writes.

Wagner maintains that Gordimer's

novels exemplify her weaknesses as a writer more than do her short stories. Even some of Gordimer's warmest supporters agree that she is far superior in the briefer form. When readers outside South Africa discovered her in publications like The *New Yorker* and The *Atlantic Monthly*, her reputation was made. In stories, her focus is more exact, and her observations are lucid and emotionally precise. She satirizes without mirth or mercy, and one familiar with the scenes and the people can nod as her knife goes in and twists a few times. But in Gordimer's novels, particularly the recent ones, her sentences become flaccid and convoluted. The outrage turns to self-righteousness, and her satirical jabs lack wit.

Why is Gordimer received so tepidly at home but so enthusiastically by readers everywhere else? Wagner, a native South African who is a senior lecturer in post-colonial literature at the University of Natal, proposes that she "appeals to a shared set of Western values opposed to apartheid...The very familiarity of her values and the solid predictability of her moral vision have ensured her a much wider audience overseas than the merely 'exotic' characters of her subject-matter could have attracted alone."

Gordimer's huge audience abroad understands South Africa only superficially, often as a projection of race relations in the West. Her accuracy can only be intuited. Of course, that doesn't invalidate all foreign literatures. But a Dickens, an Eliot, or a Tolstoy is read primarily as a novelist, not a political commentator. Yet, "Gordimer is seen as a cause, not an artist," concluded the critic Joseph Sherman.

George Orwell once wrote that a national literature is like a family's private language. So what does it say when the "family" can't endorse it? Gordimer's family is composed of Western humanists outside her country. And like a colonial writer, she reports "back home." As a practical matter, Gordimer's fiction certainly served the struggle. The ANC's biggest givers were the Scandinavians, which may help explain how such an overrated novelist won the ultimate literary prize: It came from Stockholm. □

On the Edge of Change

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

None to Accompany Me, by Nadine Gordimer. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1994. 324 pp. $22.

For more than forty years, Nadine Gordimer has explored the edge of change, the leap or slide by which uncommitted people commit themselves. While most contemporary American fiction focuses on the nugget of self, the individual connected only to family or one other person, Gordimer is tenaciously political and historical. While post modern novelists pride themselves on their liberation from realism, Gordimer's stern insistence on artistic truth is bracing:

> As a writer I feel that my first duty is integrity as an artist. I have a superstitious notion that if I lie, my characters will be damaged.... [this] has become a minor obsession with me because in a society like that of South Africa ...there are people whom one trusts absolutely who turn out to be police agents .... I often say that the best way to write would be as if you were already dead.

I can think of no better advice for a writer: *Write as if you were already dead.*

But Gordimer is no mere dutiful reporter. Her sharp intelligence manifests itself as extraordinary nosiness, poking around the corners of bedrooms, kitchens, meeting rooms, cars, cafés. This most filmic of writers, a master of structure, is also among the most original of our century. Naturalistic like the early Joyce or Lawrence, she depicts people immersed in history but also bounded by skin—the border between us, crossed in sexual intimacy, and the slate marked indelibly by color. Though she claims to write "[not] about apartheid [but] about people who happen to live under that system," even her faintly futuristic works (*July's People, A Guest of Honor, A Sport of Nature*) project some version of the regime's demise.

Apartheid, according to Gordimer, "is above all a habit." In *None to Accompany Me*, her first post-apartheid novel, she writes about people breaking the habit. A sense of strangeness permeates the novel, as people return from prison and exile. Questions—*and who was that? you don't know who this is?*—echo eerily, and characters swim or sink in the gulf between decades of struggle and hope, and the gritty reality of creating a new South Africa.

The main character, Vera Stark, is a white public-interest attorney with grown children and a burdensomely devoted husband, Ben. Juxtaposed against them are their friends, the Maqomas, Black revolutionaries who are just returning from exile: Didymus, a morally ambiguous figure; his wife Sibongile, a rising political star; and Mpho, their Europe-raised teenage daughter. Attention focuses asymmetrically on the white folk—Vera, not Sibongile or Didymus, has a history. But it is through the Maqomas that we observe political transformation. With Sibongile's eyes we see:

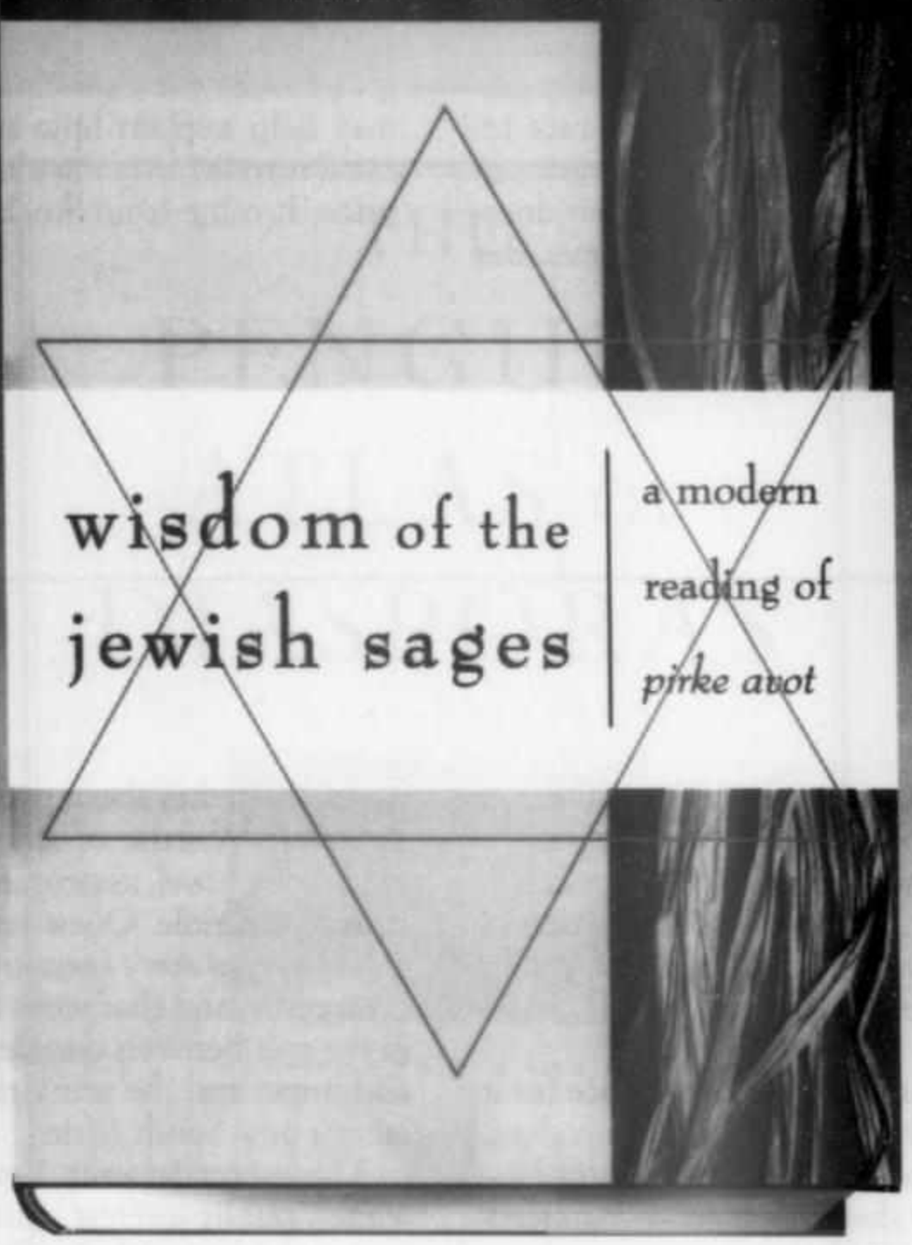
> ... a woman sweeping the gutter-muck into a drain. She didn't know that women did this work, now. Well, any job was better than nothing, these times. It

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz is the author of several books, including The Issue is Power: Essays on Women, Jews, Violence, and Resistance, *and* My Jewish Face & Other Stories. *She is executive director of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice in New York City.*

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could be that some of those she had known in exile, the fighters in the training camps, might end up sweeping streets; the probability gave her an internal cringe, the drawing in of her stomach muscles that was involuntary when she comforted herself .... As she locked the car (forewarned since the day of arrival of those for whom theft was better than nothing) she saw that the cleaner had not moved on, was leaning on her broom and looking at her, a woman dressed ridiculously in the handout of bright protective overalls, football stockings rolled round her calves, flat-footed in men's shoes, a fisherman's hat complete with slots for flies crammed on her head. Begging? She would give her a greeting, anyway: *Sawubona, sisi.*

The woman did not approach but spoke excitedly.

Sibongile when did you come? I'm Sela's child, your mother's cousin, you remember?

Against the dazzling yet creeping transformation looms Europe, the now-irrelevant catalyst and cause. During a visit to a now-Black suburb attacked by white racist militants, Vera reads a letter from her son, a banker in London, announcing the breakup of his marriage, and muses:

> But where is Europe, what place has the divorce of a banker in the mind of anyone picking a way over rubble and weeds to the neat hallucination of small houses with their fancy burglar grilles, and flowered bedsheets hung out to dry, someone speaking to families living in garages ... So what is normality? ... A carriage lamp is the blazon of aspiration, fixed to the wall where a mob smashes a man's head in.

The book's title, and those of its three parts — *Baggage, Transit, Arrivals*—establish the metaphor as "journey," and its implied partner, "home"—hardly alien themes to Gordimer. People in her novels are always taking journeys: They leave home

to escape prison or stifling provincialism (as Gordimer did herself), to forge new loyalties or create new homes. But her characters never elude history. In *Burger's Daughter* (1979), arguably Gordimer's greatest work, Rosa Burger leaves South Africa to escape her martyred father's political legacy, but the novel ends with Rosa ironically home and free—in a South African prison.

Images of home permeate *None to Accompany Me*. Home is *homeland*, as the exiled return. Home is land in a country where Black Africans seek to reclaim at least some of what they lost. The new society is partly defined by new housing, squatters, the breakdown of segregated neighborhoods, the bizarre half-built homes of the new suburbs. Vera's work consists of fighting legal battles so Blacks can create or retain their homes. For whites, home means normality: marriage, family, and controlled sexuality; for Blacks, home with family is a luxury. Even post-apartheid, most men still work in the cities, while most women raise children in the villages. But even white families are breaking apart; the most intact home by the novel's end is that created by Vera's lesbian daughter and her partner, with their adopted (Black) baby girl.


JULIE DELTON

One of Gordimer's specialties is the symbol emerging seamlessly from a naturalistic texture. Vera helps her coworker Oupa prepare for a housewarming in his new apartment in what was once a white neighborhood (the same apartment, by chance, in which, years ago, Vera had a scathing affair with a self-hating German). Oupa's joy over his new home is deflated by an eviction notice, the landlord's response to the new (Black) tenants' use of the roof-rooms, designed to accommodate servants, but now rented out to ever-increasing numbers of tenants. Directly following this scene comes a grotesquely normal dinner with Ben's business partners—wealthy whites launching a luggage company—at Drommedaris, a restaurant named for the first ship to bring Europeans to South Africa. Here the luggage partners lament impending legislation against possession of a second home:

"So bang goes my trout farm, no more invitations for you boys to come down and fish...."

And Vera:

> sees them laugh it off, their confidence in themselves makes a joke of their fears, they will always find a way to dine on board the Drommedaris no matter what government comes, the power of being white has been extrasensory so long, they feel it within them like a secret ability ....

Ironic, too, because the luggage business, designed to shore up Vera and Ben's retirement, fails; and because Ben himself becomes excess baggage Vera will leave behind.

This is a hard novel to describe. If I say: (*main plot*) a middle-aged career woman with an empty nest grows away from her husband and toward a less constricting definition of self; (*subplot*) the wife of a revolutionary becomes a leader of the post-revolution, it sounds like a feminist polemic, the last thing Gordimer would write. As she's said repeatedly, under apartheid race is everything, gender, not much, and, besides, she's anti-polemic.

On the other hand, her eye is so good that, whatever she depicts, her savage accuracy reveals more than do most political analyses. And a feminist activist in the market for role models could do worse than *None To Accompany Me*, from one angle an off-centered bildungsroman, with a protagonist of an age usually considered too old to learn and too boring to teach. Novels about aging males are not common; about aging women, we could practically count them on one hand (*Mrs. Dalloway, The Stone Angel, The Summer Before the Dark*). Most wonderfully, Vera is not spunky, perky, or cute. She is simply the novel's center, its existential questions of aloneness and social responsibility filter through her.

There is something odd, however, in the way sex, such a life force for Gordimer, suddenly dwindles. Gordimer recently characterized sexual relations as a vehicle through which the burden of self can be transferred to another; as Vera moves unaccompanied into her life's next stage, Gordimer allows her no such relief. Vera has known her body's full speech; her first marriage came apart because of the powerful sexuality she had experienced with another man (Ben). The heterosexual egg cracks for the first time in Gordimer's work, as Vera finds Ben's devotion cloying and pathetic (the least erotic of responses), while her growth beyond the marriage couples with her age (sixtyish) to set her outside the sexual arena. At the same time, Didymus stops desiring Sibongile as she puts on the family pants of political leadership. Sibongile complains, but Vera seems entirely sanguine about her own limited choices.

Yet, Gordimer finesses the erotic question with Zeph Rapulana, Vera's Black African post-apartheid (and post-sexual) friend. With this wise, dignified, near-perfect character, Gordimer treads the edge of essentialism. Zeph and Vera bond across lines of color and gender, but he's not doing without sex. In the novel's final scene, Vera, wandering in Zeph's house, collides with the almost naked body of a woman he's sleeping with: "For a few seconds, maybe, she and the girl were tenderly fused in the sap-scent of semen that came from her. Then Vera backed away...."

Vera, with no conflict, abandons sex. Meanwhile, she reacts to her lesbian daughter with polite, naive

(Continued on p. 85)

THE OTHER HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

(Continued from p. 23)

experience "piercing," I found the "Whisper Gallery" to be a dismal failure. The teenage Chicano boys in the tunnel with me were enjoying it immensely, cracking up at each epithet, especially "dumb polack," which they've never heard before; they tried it out on each other. They reacted to "crazy dago" and "goddamn beaner" with much mirth and mutual poking.

Perhaps the most successful part of the Tolerancenter is a brief film, "It Is Called Genocide," which says the Holocaust was neither the first nor the last example of genocide in our century. It briefly describes three other genocides, starting with "the first wide-scale modern genocide," that of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Second is the Khmer Rouge's murder of one-sixth of Cambodia's population in the 1970s; and the third genocide is that of the "native people who are dying all over Latin America" as a result of "massacres, government indifference, starvation, and disease." In fact, it's difficult to find scholars who agree that this last example is a case of "genocide"—especially in comparison to the death toll of Native Americans in the European settlement of North America, or that of Africans in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, neither of which is mentioned in the film.

Visitors, who have dispersed around the Tolerancenter, are brought back together for the finale of the Tolerancenter, a dazzling sixteen-screen video about the civil rights movement. An elderly white male guide introducing the video said to the kids, "pay attention to Martin Luther King's words—they were very profound. He had a great speech-writer." The guide's snide comment is also untrue—King wrote his own speeches. The guide tells the group that civil rights have advanced to the point where "today even the criminal has his rights, more than the victim. Any questions about civil rights?" The kids on my tour were silent; after that introduction, I couldn't blame them.

The ten-minute video program cuts quickly among the most powerful—and most clichéd—images: George Wallace declaring "segregation forever," Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream," speech; Black people singing "Go Tell It on the Mountain." There's no explanation, no analysis, just a superficial multi-screen celebration of the triumph of good over evil. And since none of us resembles George Wallace very much, the Tolerancenter's premise—that we are all prejudiced—has been forgotten by this point in our journey through the museum.

When we left the civil rights video area, we found ourselves before two giant closed doors that separate the Tolerancenter from the Holocaust Museum. The doors open at ten-minute intervals to let the next group in. While waiting our turn, we were told to watch yet another video, this one about life in Berlin during the optimistic "Golden Age" of the 1920s—the period "before our story begins." That phrase suggested that what the museum had presented up to now—in the Tolerancenter—is not "our story." Suddenly the museum has abandoned the idea that Jewish suffering should be understood in relation to the sufferings of others, reverting to the other conception of the Holocaust and its meaning: our story is not theirs.

As "our story begins," the doors swing open to the Holocaust exhibits, shrouded in a darkness that must make almost everyone feel the same way: Will this be too terrible for me? Can I turn back now?

Here we were neither perpetrators nor victims; instead, we were cast as "witnesses" to the rise of Hitler. We next moved as a group from display to display, made up not of artifacts, but of life-size George Segal-like plaster figures in dioramas, explained by an unseen narrator, depicting Jewish life in prewar Europe; the rise of Hitler; anti-Semitic propaganda; the plans for the Final Solution; the Warsaw Ghetto; then we had to walk through a replica of "the actual gates of Auschwitz." The narrator says: "millions passed through gates like these, never to return," in case we didn't get it. In this shadowy space a floodlight swept across us, and smoke rose from what we recognized as the "crematoria."

We next entered what seemed to be a gas chamber at Auschwitz: an ominous, shadowy brick exterior, with two tunnels, marked "Able-Bodied" and "Children and Others." But both doors lead to the same place: a dark, bunker-like concrete room with what looked like shower heads on the ceiling. It was hard not to feel a twinge of fear, especially when the last of our group entered: what were they going to do to us?

The video screens again clicked on, and we were told the story of how the gas chambers worked, quoting eyewitnesses among both Nazis and Jews: the slaughter of particular children was recounted. Somehow a cold wind blew. A couple of the older people, most of whom were Jewish, were by then sobbing. The museum had at last put us in the position of the victims, using techniques that seem to me excessive. Why stop at this point? If you really want people to get a sense of "what it was like," why not have "gas" come out of the shower heads?

When the video screens went black, the people in my group didn't get up to leave, they just sat on their benches, stunned and silent. Apparently this is a frequent reaction, because a guide appeared at the far end of the room and announced that we had to exit so that another group could come in.

At the very end of the tour, while somber music played and video screens flashed photos of children who died in camps, the high school kids in my tour group stood in line, patiently, soberly, silently, waiting for a chance to write in the comment books. Their spelling wasn't so great, but their comments were heartfelt:

"People shouldn't be treated cruely because their different."

"Thank you immesily for this museum."

"I wish it never happened."

"How can people be so cruel?"

"That sucked—what happened."

"It totally crushed my heart."

The comments contained nothing about the Tolerancenter, with one exception: the shaky handwriting of an older woman declared coldly, "whole building needs to reflect the Holocaust not tolerance."

Outside afterwards, it was clear that the museum had had a strong effect on the kids. When they arrived, they were rambunctious and high spirited, the boys punching and teasing each other and the girls laughing and whispering. When they emerged from the Holocaust Museum they were all quiet, somber, and obviously moved—even the Chicano guys I met in the Whisper Gallery.

The history of the L.A. Holocaust museum helps explain its weaknesses. It was conceived and built by Rabbi Marvin Hier, now dean of the Museum of Tolerance. Hier was a little-known Orthodox rabbi with a congregation in Vancouver prior to his arrival in Los Angeles to establish the city's only yeshiva in 1977—the same year the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles opened a Holocaust Museum, the first in the United States. Before the year was out, Hier had not only launched his school, but, to the chagrin of the organized Jewish community in Los Angeles, he had attached the yeshiva to his *own* Holocaust museum and enlisted Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal to give his name to it.

Hier turned out to be a wizard at using the Holocaust for fund-raising, sponsoring Beverly Hills banquets honoring, among others, Arnold Schwarzenegger and George Bush. The results were spectacular: in addition to raising $50 million, the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance now claims to be the largest Jewish organization in the world—larger than Hadassah, larger than the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League—reaching a peak of 402,000 members early in 1994 (although the most recent issue of the Wiesenthal Center magazine, *Response*, claims a mere 320,000 members).

Funds for the museum came not only from private contributions, but also from taxpayers—the California legislature appropriated $5 million for the museum in 1985, setting off an intense controversy. The ACLU sued the state to block the government appropriation, claiming it violated the separation of church and state, since the planned museum was part of Yeshiva University of Los Angeles—which, the *Los Angeles Times* pointed out, was "a sectarian school run by Orthodox rabbis."

Although there was virtually no opposition in the legislature to state funding for the museum, several prominent Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, four California chapters of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the Pacific Southwest Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, objected. "We hope that it does not become a precedent for people like ... the Rev. (Jerry) Falwell applying to the Legislature for funds to construct a Museum of Morality or anything of that nature," Doug Mirell, regional vice president of the American Jewish Congress, told the *L.A. Times*. And a leader of the 1939 Club, the city's largest group of Holocaust survivors, told the *Times*, "My parents and brothers and sisters didn't die to be used for a vehicle to raise funds for a yeshiva."

State financing of the museum gained the support of then-California Governor George Dukmejian, who is of Armenian heritage, after planners announced that the museum would include an exhibit on the genocide of the Armenians. "This sweetener was added solely for the purpose of getting the expenditure approved by Dukmejian," the *L.A. Times* declared in an editorial. "The politics is obvious, and crass."

The courts rejected the ACLU's challenge, after the Wiesenthal Center, which operates the museum, formally separated from the yeshiva. Nevertheless, as th. ACLU suit pointed out, the museum—built on land owned by the yeshiva—and the yeshiva continued to share a board of trustees, and a director—Rabbi Hier.

Defenders of state funding argued that the museum would not just tell the Jews' story, but would, in the words of Rabbi Hier, work on "preventing the spread of hatred and bigotry." According to the Democratic leader of the state senate, David A. Roberti, the state's $5 million was intended "to educate the public about genocides throughout history." Another defender claimed that the taxpayers ought to finance "a unique museum designed to help visitors discover their hidden biases." Thus, the decision to include the Tolerancenter in the museum grew not out of a commitment to a philosophy of inclusion but from the calculation that it would ensure state financing.

What have L.A.'s high school kids, the target audience for the Museum of Tolerance, learned from its MTV-style multimedia displays? Although the Tolerancenter emphasizes the problems and sufferings of other minorities, visitors come away from the Holocaust Museum with a sense that this discrimination

is trivial. The message to non-Jewish, minority visitors is, you may face whispering and epithets, but we faced genocide. By the end of a visit to the museum, the initial message of universalism is superseded by the message of the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, the separateness of the Jews, the threatening nature of the non-Jewish world. Thus, the Museum of Tolerance ends up by contradicting its promising premise.

A more effective Holocaust museum should start from the same premise: Jewish suffering is not unique; other peoples have been victimized, and still are, in ways that have much in common with the Jewish experience. It would portray the different faces of racism and ethnic hatred as vividly as it portrays anti-Semitism. It would avoid the trivial and the cute; instead of warning against stereotypes such as "fat men are jolly," it would confront the most prevalent and most damaging stereotypes.

In telling the story of the "Final Solution," a museum should do more to answer the unavoidable question: why? That requires explaining that the Nazis' supporters weren't simply inhuman monsters; the problem is to understand the circumstances that led ordinary German people to become supporters of a movement that glorified violence, irrationality, and ethnic hatred. It should explain how fascism drew on and manipulated people's legitimate desires for community and their understandable wish for a more meaningful life than the one offered by the "free" market of a decaying capitalist economy. It should explore what Peter Gabel has called the pseudo-community that fascism promised, and how that required the stigmatization of outsiders, of "the Other."

The overarching lesson of a Holocaust museum should be the one promised, but not proffered, by the L.A. museum: the Holocaust imposes an obligation on us to fight against all forms of racism and ethnic hatred. As Michael Lerner put it in his book, *Jewish Renewal*: "Never Again means not only never again to the Jews, but never again to anyone, to any people, to any culture." □

Midnight Smelting

I swerve like a recovering Communist
through New York's Southern Tier,
a paradise of Croatian sausages and supercomputers,
of flight simulators and sensible shoes,
a topography
of floodplain and forest,
of dreary cities intersected
by the Chenango and the Susquehanna,
whose shores Coleridge dreamt of in his sleep
when he wasn't dreaming of Xanadu.

He never reached the Southern Tier
or broke his bondage to incapacity,
never mustered his forces
for the grand coherent enterprises:
my hero, my comrade in dejection,
the apotheosis of underachievement,
the deepest failure of his age,
the electrifying conversationalist
who bored his friends with talk
of pantisocracy on the Susquehanna.

When I hear thunderstorms in the making
over this failed society of equals,
I pray for a new life: my one true job,
I've never left it, never been paid,
never been passed over. When the boys
cajole me into midnight smelting
I keep my phylacteries in the tacklebox
and my talk of Coleridge out of earshot.
I lose myself to the heavy water,
to the strangeness of the working class.

On good days I am a walking Talmud of voices
excoriating materialism, taking pains to avoid
the skunk cabbages and the pinkveined orchids.
On bad days I am at least four decades shabbier
than Eastern Europe, a gray flower of a man
who should have withered away like the state,
a true believer who should have jumped ship
while he had the chance, a stargazing insomniac
habituated to the Vast, exchanging anonymity
for the higher loneliness of dwarfs and giants.

History jars my confidence in God.
I drive without hope through the Southern Tier,
Thucydides on the dashboard,
the Jew of Malta in the glove compartment.
I bear witness to economic forces consummating
their hatred in the sky; I see that rain
is unavoidable, that the negotiations
have disintegrated into darkness and thunder,
that the lights are going on all over America,
scoundrels having tripped the alarm.

S.G. Coffel

Spirituality and Politics

(Continued from p. 32)

therefore, critical of those elements in Judaism and other traditions that depict women as other, that call for the annihilation of idolaters and unbelievers, or even that counsel individual compassion for widows and orphans while reinforcing the structures that contribute to their marginality. It is equally critical of the profound inequality in the global distribution of resources that marginalizes and impoverishes much of the world's population, of the power of multi-national corporations to pursue profits at the expense of people, of the rise in the number of homeless or the punitive attitude toward those on welfare. In these and other arenas, a progressive spirituality seeks to resist and challenge the continual reinforcement and recreation of unequal access to power.

• *Tikkun olam* (repair of the world).

Insofar as a progressive spirituality is committed to a politics that makes the world safe for itself, such a spirituality realizes itself in action. It strives in large and small ways to provide the fundamental preconditions for human dignity and planetary survival: food, shelter, a fair share of the Earth's resources in the context of respect for the Earth; but also the right to name one's own situation and desires, and to define and participate in the shaping and healing of history and creation. Such a struggle is not separate from awareness of God or the affirmation of human dignity, but is its complement and expression. Through politics, we become responsible members of a human community rooted in a far larger community and purpose. Through spirituality, we cultivate awareness of the sacred pervading the world, a presence that continually compels us to honor it through action. □

On the Edge of Change

(Continued from p.81)

homophobia. The divorced banker son and the lesbian (doctor) daughter seem to underscore failure. Indeed, Vera comes to understand her daughter's sexual orientation as a result of her past excessive sexuality. She can't fathom how her daughter makes do without a penis (the mother-daughter conversation is excruciating, though apparently not to the speakers).

Gordimer's lack of explicit distance from Vera is puzzling; ordinarily she takes so little for granted that it's shocking, even embarrassing, to see her blithely valorize heterosexuality. *She's smarter than this*, I keep thinking. Throughout her writing career, Gordimer has entered boldly into a huge range of characters, defending her artistic right to depict characters different from herself (the criticism of course has centered on her creation of Black Africans). As a lesbian reading her clumsy attempt at lesbians, I can't help but frame the heretical question: *Are her Black African characters similarly off?*

Gordimer is no feminist, but gender certainly interests her. Jewishness, mostly, does not. A Jew born of immigrant parents, she responded recently—and flatly—to a question from PBS's Charlie Rose about the impact of her Jewishness: "I wasn't given a religious or clannish upbringing at all." Those are the options? Still, her novel before last (*A Sport of Nature*, 1987) had a range of Jewish characters, including a heroine who names herself Hillela, presumably after the great Jewish moralist Hillel. And a story in her last collection (*Jump*, 1991) draws clear parallels between the anti-Semitism of Europe and the racism of her parents' chosen home—a racism in which Jews participate. In *None To Accompany Me*, the only "Jew" is Vera's ex-lover from Oupa's apartment, assumed by Vera to be Jewish until he, with great shame, confesses: He is a "Hitler baby," born of Third Reich Aryan-breeding (and his confession elicits from Vera the single most erotically charged moment in the novel). Gordimer's lack of interest about Jewish themes is curious, given not only her own Jewishness but the disproportionate number of Jews among white anti-apartheid activists in South Africa, perhaps even higher than the proportion of Jews among white progressives in the United States.

But Gordimer is a hard act even for herself to follow. She is extremely ambitious as a writer, and her attempts do not equally succeed. Measured against *Burger's Daughter* or *My Son's Story*, *None To Accompany Me* is something of a disappointment. The untangling of Didymus's political career, and the sub-sub-plot of Oupa the law-clerk-former-political-prisoner, with his beloved apartment, and his attraction to the sophisticated teenager Mpho, are brilliantly done. But the book seems to wind down rather than conclude. Perhaps this is life in a post-apartheid world—anti-climactic, its evil not so austere, more like the world we Americans inhabit.

Yet Gordimer's flawed work is anyone else's best shot. This unabashedly political novel still nourishes. I for one love reading a novel replete with intellectual debate, in which God, sin, and salvation do not figure. God does not interest Gordimer. Arguments, conversations, musings—unfinished, hauntingly authentic—probe the meaning of freedom, truth, means vs. ends, even the possibilities of modified capitalism vs. communism. They unfold in an atmosphere recognizable to activists. The novel offers no more conclusions than do most real conversations. But her characters think about and work toward something larger than their individual selves. The shape of the future is connected to human attempts and human failure. Reading Gordimer reminds me how rare this is in English-language fiction today; how hungry for it I am. □

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THE POLITICS OF TRIAGE

(Continued from p. 43)

Germany, a prelude to the Holocaust, was itself a legacy of earlier intellectual movements that had used biological or biblical arguments to legitimate triage.

From its earliest days, capitalism has created surplus populations, among them the English peasants thrown off the land during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enclosure movements. Like today's inner-city poor, these "extra" people stood in the way of progress and needed to be removed. Historically, intellectuals and their cultural movements have helped rationalize the segregation or elimination of such surplus populations.

In the nineteenth century, for example, when British politicians debated how to dispose of the London poor, intellectual disciples of Thomas Malthus and Charles Darwin suggested that the dangers of overpopulation could only be resolved by a competition for survival in which the genetically talented would rise and the unfit sink. Malthus himself opposed any public funds to help the London poor during the Poor Law debates in the 1830s, based on his theory of a divinely based natural selection of populations. Later in the nineteenth century, noted physician and philosopher Francis Galton helped promote the medical eugenics movement, which advocated that doctors kill their terminal patients and other biologically and socially unfit people.

Herbert Spencer, a leading American social Darwinist in the late nineteenth century, explicitly opposed welfare on Malthusian and Darwinian grounds. "The whole effort of nature," Spencer wrote, "is to get rid of such [the poor] to clear the world of them, and make room for better ... It is best that they should die." William Graham Sumner, a fellow champion of free-enterprise capitalism, offered biological explanations not only of the poor's failure but the rich's success: "The millionaires are a product of natural selection, acting on a whole body of men to pick out those who can meet the requirements of certain work to be done." Such sentiments eerily foreshadow the arguments of today's neo-conservative intellectuals, who have created a new punitive discourse of responsibility and explain poverty as shiftlessness grounded in genetic defect.

The American public's receptivity to Murray and other creators of triage culture reflects both new economic stresses, continuing racist and sexist prejudices, and the virtually unbridgeable gaps which already separate the white rich and upper-middle classes from the new underclasses. The economic squeeze on the middle classes saps their generosity and encourages Scrooge-like sentiments toward the poor. A *Time* Magazine poll at the end of 1994, a month after the election of the Gingrichites, showed over 60 percent of Americans agreeing that people had to worry more about themselves and "less about helping others." Other polls showed Americans were donating less time and money to charity because they were so "insecure about their financial well being."

National empathy is also dwindling because of the growing economic gulf between the very poor and everyone else. Economic triage has so marginalized the new underclasses that they seem more a part of the Third World than of the United States. Middle- and upper-class Americans have lost their sense of common destiny with the new poor, and, according to both the late Christopher Lasch and Robert B. Reich, are happily reducing their own sense of obligation.

Hard triage is the legacy not only of economics but a rampaging sociopathic individualism undermining any cohesive feeling of community across classes. Fifteen years of Reaganesque discourse about the virtues of self-interest, privatization, entrepreneurship, and wealth, embraced by both Republican neoconservatives and Democratic neoliberals, has taken its toll, reducing our sense of commonality. Minimal public obligations binding different segments of the community are fading away, and triage is an extreme expression of the Hobbesian politics of each for himself or herself. The elderly and childless couples vote against raising taxes for schools. The young seek to ration health care for the elderly.

Fear is the core cultural sensibility signaling the rise of hard triage and of the kind of triage that could lead to an American apartheid. Triage inevitably creates desperation, rage, and violence among the abandoned populations and intense fear among everyone else. Hard triage draws a line in the sand between worthy members of society and those to be cut off. After the Los Angeles riots, many Californians who were already living in gated suburbs lined up at gun shops. Almost crazed with fear, they wanted to beef up their home security systems and arm themselves on the street.

Nationally, fear of crime has become so inflamed that both political parties compete to see which will spend more money on police and be tougher toward criminal offenders from the underclasses. Polls repeatedly show crime near or at the top of public concern, with a growing thirst for retribution. A growing number of states have passed legislation permitting citizens to carry concealed handguns, evoking images of Dodge City and vigilantes taking the law in their own hands. Hard triage leads inevitably toward a militarized social order in

which undesirable populations are physically segregated and confined. Even under soft triage, in the 1980s, urban geographers William Goldsmith and Edward Blakely concluded from their analysis of census tracts that the American urban underclass is more geographically concentrated in isolated or barricaded ghettos than any prior generation of American poor, and that "American society is like water just above the freezing point, dangerously close to disassociating into separate parts."

As the Cold War faded in the 1990s, Americans turned to fight and control the new enemy at home. By 1995, for the first time more than one million Americans were in prison, the greatest number incarcerated in any society other than Russia, which is suffering its own dire crisis, marked by economic collapse and the rule of its new Mafia. As prisons become the hottest growth industry in America, with more than $10 billion in 1995 allocated to build new jails, Republicans are fighting to put assault weapons back into the gun stores, while President Clinton has approved extending the death penalty for multiple new offenses. Hard triage ends in civil war. The blasts of gunfire on the streets of urban America may mark the first stage of that inevitably bloody conflict. We must create the communitarian politics that would reunite us in a sense of common destiny and stop the politics of triage before it is too late.

Getting to No: Anti-Triage Politics

Despite the despair paralyzing many progressives since the 1994 elections, there are reasons for hope. The economic changes which are marginalizing the poor do not automatically translate into hard triage, since there are numerous potential strategies for creating full employment and rebuilding our impoverished cities. What is necessary is a change of heart, a political response that reaffirms our interdependency and shared humanity. We must show that political triage will only further polarize and destabilize society, weaken the middle classes, and destroy our collective conscience.

Democrats have begun to discover that the crude class dimensions of hard triage can be used as a wedge to halt the Gingrich juggernaut. Despite his support of some triage initiatives, President Clinton has repeatedly characterized the most extreme Republican welfare cuts—and draconian budget proposals—as robbing poor women and children to finance tax cuts for the super-wealthy. Secretary of Labor Reich has observed that the same Gingrichites who are slashing welfare for the poor keep pouring billions more into "corporate welfare"— the huge giveaways to big business through agricultural subsidies, oil depletion tax breaks, depreciation and offshore investment tax loopholes, and numerous other handouts to the rich.

To counter economic triage, progressives need to educate the population about the horrifying new dimensions of inequality in American society. Progressives have the possibility of building a new alliance between the middle classes and the poor—and demolishing the uneasy coalition between the middle classes and the rich that Gingrich has built. Deindustrialized blue-collar workers, downsized middle managers, and other "middle" sectors increasingly share the vulnerability of the poor to catastrophic economic and social dislocation. As the least privileged are abandoned, those higher on the ladder face their own triage, a major source of anxiety now plaguing the middle classes.

But the declining middle classes, while they would benefit from a new class coalition with the poor that shifts tax burdens on to the rich and supports education and jobs for all, increasingly embrace triage of the poor. Supporting the poor, whether through welfare or public investment, means more short-term economic costs for an already strapped middle class. Opposing the rich, moreover, is psychologically difficult for a middle class that desperately wants to be rich itself. The progressive class politics that we urgently need thus has to be part of a deeper social and political transformation that speaks to questions of values and meaning as well as economic interest.

Progressives need to help script a new American Dream which challenges the reigning ideology of individualism and greed. Stopping political triage requires responding to both the economic and moral anguish of middle-class Americans trapped in an increasingly perverse individualistic rat race. Those under forty, now faced with the prospect of living less well than their parents, unload their frustrations on the poor as they fail to gain the high life they seek; the same is true of the declining number of winners who find that their "success" does not bring them happiness. A culture offering unattainable or superficial aspirations is primed for triage, offering the troubled majority scapegoats to vent collective frustration at the absence of personal and collective meaning. Communitarian politics can undermine these cultural foundations of triage by offering people a more meaningful set of values, rooted in a richer public life and deeper and more fulfilling work and communities.

To stop triage, the Left needs both a class politics and a politics of meaning. Historically, the Left has veered toward economism which cannot move the

soul; such a soulless class politics based on self-interest alone assuredly will fail to mobilize the pivotal middle classes against the moral catastrophe that triage represents. But appeals to idealism and a new moral vision are equally sterile without speaking to the economic needs of a middle class squeezed to the limits and still falling. Downward economic mobility, as we saw among the lower-middle classes in Germany who gravitated toward Nazism in the 1930s, is fertile soil for triage and hardly promising terrain for a progressive politics of the spirit.

Triage, like war, perversely offers the promise of solidarity based on mobilizing against a common enemy, in this case the enemy within. The politics of triage is thus the twisted communitarianism of a pathologically individualistic culture in economic decline, unable to bring people together except through shared hatreds and sacrifice of the weak. Until we respond to our needs for both economic security and moral awakening with a positive vision of community, the politics of triage will loom as a barbaric surrogate. □

RADWAN

(Continued from p. 58)

I could not fathom. But like the memorial on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway to the dead from EGGED number 405, I could not deny that it was very real.

Today Radwan helps run a wheelchair basketball league in Gaza. There are five teams and they travel through the Middle East to compete. They won a tournament in Iran in 1994. Today it is Radwan who regularly visits Abdel Hadi. He is serving a life sentence for murder in Gaza Central Prison. When I last spoke to him, he told me that the prison was accessible, and that Israelis made sure it was easy for him to move about there. "The Israelis are very respectful of the disabled people," he said. I asked him about Yasir Arafat's historic return to Gaza and he said, "It is not important, it is just politics. We are struggling for freedom everywhere, not just in Gaza." I started to ask him about the peace process and he interrupted me. "I am not thinking about Palestinians. We are only disabled people fighting for freedom." Before he said good-bye, Radwan thanked me for coming to meet him in Mokassad Hospital in Jerusalem in 1988, and he thanked me for the wheelchair. He has a new one now. The old one is in use today at a rehab facility on the West Bank in the town of Rammallah.

"Those little wheels were so very bad in Nusirat camp, so I changed them. It is better now, John," Radwan told me. "There is a lot of sand in Gaza. Do you remember all of the sand?"

I told him I remembered. □

LOST OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE

(Continued from p. 64)

Rabin still has not agreed to withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza or to the dissolution of the settlements, let alone to the principle of an eventual independent Palestinian state and shared sovereignty over Jerusalem. In part for these reasons, as well as the desperate overall economic plight of the Palestinians, the PLO is rapidly losing power in the Palestinian community to the true rejectionism and fanaticism of the Islamic fundamentalists.

The new Israeli historiography has demythologized the story of Israeli innocence and fanatical, monolithic Arab/Palestinian determination to destroy Israel. Although it continues to grip most Israelis and American Jews, this version of Israeli history is no longer intellectually respectable. However legitimate and indeed imperative the Zionist goal of creation of a Jewish state was—and still is—a tragic conflict with the Arab inhabitants of Palestine has been its consequence. As a result, the Palestinians suffered grievous injustices, and a chain of events was set in motion leading to the larger Arab-Israeli conflict.

Nonetheless, throughout the history of the conflict there have been a number of opportunities in which it could have been settled if Israel had been willing to accept reasonable compromises on the three crucial issues: a permanent partition of the historical land of Palestine, Palestinian independence and sovereignty in their allotted land, including East Jerusalem, and the return of most of the territory captured from the Arab states in the various wars, in the context of genuine peace with strong international and American security guarantees.

The tentative Israeli-PLO Oslo accord is now unraveling. The psychological prerequisite for a true Israeli-Palestinian settlement is an Israeli national effort to free itself of the myths, distortions, and blind spots of the past fifty years, so that it can finally acknowledge its role in the origins and dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict and openly accept its share of moral responsibility for the plight of the Palestinians. Facing their past will help the Israelis face their future. □

EDITORIAL

(Continued from p. 13)

consciousness in a capitalist society, many Europeans began to romanticize a past in which institutions such as the church and the old national community seemed to offer them the kind of caring that was nowhere to be found in their current experience. To many Europeans, the Jews represented the quintessential modernizing force that disdained all the traditional values that they were beginning to miss. To the extent that the Left and the Jews seemed identified with the bourgeois order (because leftist criticisms seemed aimed at taking the modernizing dynamics further rather than returning to a more nurturing earlier period), they became the target of the rage that would more reasonably have been justified at the market and its ethos of materialism and selfishness.

Those with greatest power in the Jewish world continue today to believe that the market system with its supposed unlimited mobility would be our salvation and the answer to all our problems as Jews. Because we could seemingly "make it" under conditions of capitalist expansion, those Jews who *did* make it adopted the belief in the market system as the ultimate redemption, and questioning it became sacrilege. Some of the hostility among Jews to affirmative action is rooted in this fantasy. "We made it in this society on our own, so why can't the Blacks?" is closely aligned with "And quotas were used against us, so anything that reminds us of quotas is likely to be used against us, because the market itself works fine—look at us, after all, and how well we did in it!" By not allowing ourselves to understand that the market system does not have room for everybody at the top, that in any event most Jews are *not* at the top but in an intermediate position in which real power does not lie with us but with an American ruling elite, the wealthiest elements in the Jewish world are able to make invisible the class divisions within our own community and thus to present themselves as our leaders whose policies really are in our best interests.

But the reality in the decades before the Holocaust is that the class system we were part of was not really so good for the Jews, and neither was the economistic socialist system that was being offered as its replacement by the Left. What *was* in our interest then, and remains in our interest now, is to live in a world in which all people are able to receive real recognition from others by virtue of the fact that they are human beings (created in the image of God and precious to Her/Him) and are treated with caring, love, and respect by the people around them. Achieving such a world may be difficult. But *not* achieving it, as the Holocaust and the rise of the Right at the end of the twentieth century demonstrate, is even more precarious and "unrealistic" for the Jews.

One reason why Jews have so studiously avoided focusing on this earlier period of the 1920s and 1930s in remembering the Holocaust is because unconsciously we, as a people, have never really rid ourselves of the self-blame imposed by the culture of our oppressors. Underlying our insistence that the non-Jews are just a bunch of irrational haters lies an unconscious fear that we actually did do something to deserve their wrath. But the truth is, the Jews *as Jews* are completely innocent and do not deserve blame. As participants in the larger society, we share the blame of everyone else who lived in a painful society and did not fight against it. But this was not because we were Jews. The only way we could ever stop unconsciously blaming ourselves is if we could understand how we too were trapped in a reality that seemed overwhelming and irrational, and how we too deserve compassion for our situation. To the extent that we remain locked in self-blaming, we avoid thinking about the 1920s and early 1930s before the fascists came to power, avoid raising the issue of what responsibility we did have for our the ascension of fascism (answer: some, but not very much), and we avoid dealing with the feelings of vulnerability, shame, and humiliation that accompanied our later oppression.

There may be another difficulty in facing this period of the 1920s and early 1930s and recognizing that not all Germans were born fascists, but that they gradually moved to the Right. On the one hand, we may find it too difficult to face the fact that we, together with others, might have been able to prevent this development and failed to do so. On the other hand, to understand this period and recognize that while the hardcore Nazis were a group of deeply distorted human beings, millions of others who moved to the Right may actually have been decent human beings whose pain became so overwhelming that they could no longer see us Jews as real human beings. To allow ourselves to think in these terms is frightening to many Jews. It may be too painful for us to recognize the humanity of people who end up collaborating with our oppressors. We would have to give up a shallow notion of our victimhood and see others as real people—and we don't feel ready to do that, because we want others to pay attention to *our* pain. We don't want to have to know their hurts when they are not prepared to know ours. Here is the great problem of being a people with a historical memory and a legacy of Torah that teaches us that nothing is inevitable, that the real force governing the universe is a God that is the principle of transformation. Once we get that, and recognize our own roles as God's partner, it becomes harder to only notice our own pain. And yet the pain was so intense

and so outrageous and others were really wrong to do it to us—and because of this we are not ready to give up our status as "better than others because we are more oppressed" and see these others in all the complicated ways we would if we really were to stay true to the highest insights of Torah. So we *do* need more time, and we ought to try to use that time wisely so that healing can come and we can move beyond the pain and back to our role as testifiers to the God of possibility, healing, and transformation.

Cherie Brown ("Beyond Internalized Anti-Semitism," Tikkun, March/April 1995) points the way toward some of the healing that our people need to do to recover from the Holocaust. We need to spend more time allowing ourselves to deal with the emotionally difficult issues, to uncover the remaining elements of self-blame, to reexperience the pain and humiliation and shame too many of us have been carrying around with us (particularly the most right-wing Jews whose macho is often a defensive pose against this internalized self-blaming), and then finally to move beyond it. Yet there is no moving beyond the Holocaust without going into it in an emotionally real way. We owe that to ourselves.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

But the world also needs to confront the Holocaust. It needs to confront its abandonment of the Jews, and its continuing abandonment of others subject to genocide or other forms of physical and cultural annihilation (and not just in Bosnia). It needs to understand why xenophobic nationalism and racism sometimes triumph and what could be done to combat these forces *before* they have come to power. It needs to challenge those like Helmut Kohl in Germany or Bill Clinton in the United States, who think that the best way to counter the Right is to buy into most of their fundamental assumptions and then act in a "moderating" way. And it needs to do real, and not just token, acts of contrition to the Jews and other victims of oppression and mass murder. Ultimately, and most important, it needs to learn the central politics of meaning lesson, which is really a Torah lesson: There is no salvation for some without salvation for all, and no peace or security available in the world unless every human being comes to know and fully experience the truth that we are each infinitely precious and each deserving of love and caring.

One final note. Perhaps the most bizarre element of the way we remember the Holocaust is the tendency to blame God for all the perversions and distortions in human reality that led to the destruction of the Jews. "Where was God in the Holocaust?", and "I can't believe in a God who would let the Holocaust happen!" are the most frequently heard responses among many Jews. In *Jewish Renewal* I try to answer these questions more fully, and to present a conception of God that makes it possible to answer without falling into non-answers that preach God as a mystery that we cannot fathom or some equally evasive response. The short answer is twofold: 1. The God you expected to intervene isn't the God that exists, so after you get over your anger at that God not being there, and hence let go of the conception of God as a Big Daddy in heaven, then let's get back to understanding the God that does exist. 2. The use of God as the subject of your anger has its advantages, because it may feel safe to rage against this God, less safe to rage against the factors that actually contributed to the Holocaust. But there is a danger in this use of God—it too quickly exonerates human beings and our role in creating evil. While it would be equally destructive to ontologize evil in human beings—doing so provides yet another way of avoiding responsibility for the choices we make and the actual possibilities for changing the world—it certainly makes more sense to begin our inquiry about the Holocaust by asking what human beings can do to ensure that the world's pain gets reduced than to ask what we can do to show our anger at the God that we imagine failed us.

For our part as the TIKKUN community, we will use this fiftieth anniversary to mourn the loss of our sisters and brothers who died at the hands of the Nazis. And we will also mourn the tens of millions of others, regardless of their political or national affiliation, who died in that conflagration. We will mourn, too, a world that could have allowed this to take place, and a world that continues to simmer with pain and all of the irrational possibilities that that pain generates, either through active participation in demeaning or oppressing others, or through passive acceptance of the destruction of our cultural and ecological life-support systems. But beyond mourning, we will use this occasion to rededicate ourselves collectively to putting more of our life energies into the ongoing struggle for *tikkun*, the healing, repairing, and transforming of a badly shattered and wounded world. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

people's disillusionment could not have been about economics). Jobs are disappearing because of technological displacement exacerbated by globalization. Clinton never moved the national debate to the politically hottest, but most important, issue of what structural changes in our economic system are necessary to ensure that technological progress translates into a blessing and not a curse. This is the real meaningful political issue of our time, and, by not taking it up, Clinton betrayed the people who voted for him on the basis of his promised "people oriented economics." It was this betrayal, along with those mentioned in your article, that convinced many of us that the Democrats weren't worth voting for.

Joe Zlotnick
San Francisco, California

TIKKUN

To the Editor:

Whenever I am feeling discouraged about the terrible shape our country is in, or about the lack of spiritual fulfillment in my own life, well, I just pick up your articles and I start to laugh so hard—with a kind of Homeric, cosmic laughter—that all my blues just fly away. So thank you, thank you! TIKKUN meets my therapeutic needs in ways you cannot imagine.

Lawrence Auster
New York, New York

To the Editor:

I got TIKKUN as a present—a great present—from a friend and I am very excited about it. I find the magazine extremely stimulating and hope-inspiring in that it opens the perspective of a new, deep human value-rooted form of utopia.

One issue I have with the politics of meaning: How can it be done if it is not on an international level? Isn't there a risk that thinking in terms of the United States only would leave the rest of the countries, particularly in the Third World, as suppliers of goods that were then being shared communally in privileged societies?

Thank you again for the renewal of hope you are voicing and promoting.

Adrianna Menasse
Veracruz, Mexico

Editor responds:

Caring is a dynamic process. It is either flowing outward encompassing more and more people, or it is flowing inward, narrowing its focus until we are able to care only about ourselves. For that reason, a politics of meaning can never stop at the shores of our own country, but must necessarily lead us to struggle for a whole new international order, based on our own understanding that the kind of loving and caring we seek for ourselves is in the long run impossible unless it is available to everyone on the planet. With that kind of orientation, we would be supporting efforts in every part of the world to empower workers' movements, ecological movements, women's movements, and other human rights efforts, and we would be seeking to build an ethos of solidarity that extended to every person on the planet. It's only when people are so empowered throughout the world that America's middle class will no longer have to fear that capital will close down work in the United States to find less stringent ecological laws and workers who will work for less in Third World countries. Here, as in so many other matters, our real long-term self-interest lies in living in a society in which people do not act solely according to their perceived short-term material self-interest.

Cosmology and Kabbalah

To the Editor:

I could hardly be more in accord with Vaclav Havel's words (quoted approvingly by Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams, "'In a Beginning'...Quantum Cosmology and Kabbalah," January/February 1995): "[Science] fails to connect with the most intrinsic nature of reality, and with natural human experience...Paradoxically, inspiration for the renewal of [our] lost integrity can once again be found in science...a science producing ideas that in a certain sense allow it to transcend its own limits...Transcendence is the only real alternative to extinction."

We at the Institute of Noetic Sciences are recognizing that what we call modern science is the cultural construct of Western society, hence one science among the many possible. It is based on metaphysical assumptions peculiar to the Western obsession with prediction, control and manipulation of the physical environment. These include the assumption that one need not include consciousness as a causal factor. Yet in all of our practical experience we act as though consciousness (the intentional aspect of it) is indeed causal. That is to say, Western science is a knowledge system with a cultural bias so profound that we have to be cautious about using it (quantum physics and complexity theory included) as the basis for a cosmology to live by.

I believe that a science which transcends its present epistemological assumptions, and thus reconciles its insight with the insight of spirit or mysticism, is "the only real alternative to extinction." But that implies re-examining the positivistic and reductionist assumptions which pervade Western science, even quantum physics (despite the fact that the latter seems also to contradict them, in a way).

The metaphors and equations of quantum physics "work" in physics laboratories, particle accelerators, and many aspects of astrophysics. Even so, one should be both cautious and humble in extrapolating them back 15 billion years to unimaginable conditions, and assuming that our "scientific laws" were equally valid then. Let alone assuming that they held before the Big Bang, as Dr. Primack seems to imply with such a statement as "the blueprint for the large-scale structure of the universe existed before the Big Bang created matter."

There is sufficient and growing ferment over the consciousness issue, such that we can reasonably expect that science will accommodate consciousness, one way or another, and probably very soon. That will bring a radical restructuring of science, allowing for the reconciliation with mysticism (and the Kabbalah as one cultural form).

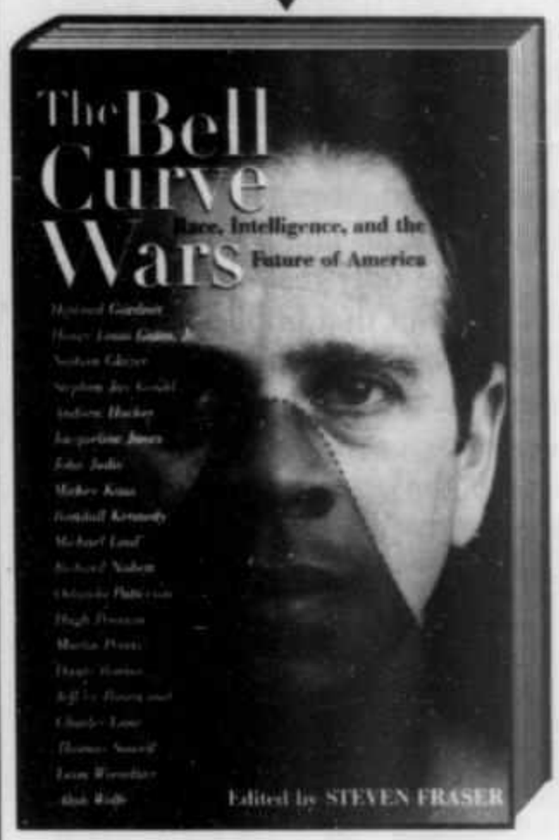
My guess is that the transcendence of science will take place in a different way than Primack and Abrams suggest.

The sequence I envision is something like the following:

1. Growing recognition that the presently dominant epistemology of science is too limited, even to include satisfactorily the most everyday aspects of consciousness—let alone those aspects which underlie our sense

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of the religious.

2. Growing recognition that an epistemology which includes exploration of the subjective, something like William James' concept of "radical empiricism," would better serve science; that this involves not the negation of present science, but its extension.

3. Recognition that this implies having to take into account the explorations of the dedicated inner explorers of all times—the mystics and contemplatives of all traditions; that it implies quantum physics and the rest of "hard science" as a special case, valid in a limited sense; that this further implies creative mind, not as the product of billions of years of evolution culminating in the human organism, but rather, creative mind as a feature of evolution all along. In other words, recognition that with new epistemological assumptions come new ontological assumptions, and features of a cosmology completely different from that which underlies the institutions of modern industrial society.

4. Adaptation to this new cosmology by the intellectual community, the business world, and—perhaps belatedly—the scientific and educational establishments.

Willis Harman
Sausalito, California

Women in Conservative Judaism

To the Editor:

Judith Plaskow ("Women in the Conservative Movement," January/February 1995) grossly mischaracterizes the nature of the minyanim at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. The "Bli" minyan attracted at least 50 percent if not more female attendance. Far from conveying an exclusionary message to women, the Bli minyan provides a meaningful, inviting, and spiritual environment for both boys and girls who are uncomfortable in an "egalitarian" setting.

Camp Ramah in the Berkshires is one of the few remaining places where true religious harmony exists in the Conservative movement, a place where someone from the far right and someone from the far left of the Conservative movement can feel equally at home. In short, a place where a real sense of Shalom Bayit is felt.

David Fine
Milltown, New Jersey

Crossing the Ethnic Divide

To the Editor:

It is hard to believe that Nan Fink (March/April, 1995) could be outraged by a stereotypical statement that she lacked the right kind of nose to be Jewish when her response was, "He had the solid Protestant look of many of my family members." What look is that?

Ronald Gaudia
Hartsdale, New York

To the Editor:

Nan Fink speaks with a quiet courage and wisdom that is rare. I realized in reading her article that I often find myself distrusting converts to Judaism, wondering if "they really understand" our people and what it means to be identified with our destiny. Judaism is not just a set of beliefs and practices, it is also a religion embodied in a people, so converting requires a lot more than converting to some other religious or philosophical worldview. Ms. Fink's obvious sensitivity and nuanced understanding of what that means forces me to realize that my automatic assumption that converts "don't get it" must be abandoned. Thank you.

Hannah Meyer
Queens, New York

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THE POLITICAL PSYCHE

The Politician Within

Andrew Samuels

While politics will always be about getting things done, or stopping things from happening, most citizens know that there is usually a private, even a secret dimension to the ways in which their political beliefs, commitments, and actions have evolved in them. We need a language in which to explore "the politician within," and at present we lack such a language. This exploration has to be conducted with respect and affection for the diversity of the politician within each citizen. I want to avoid creating another monolith, an "I" or "we" that won't survive in politics today.

What happens if we pay the kind of attention we give, in therapy, to the inner life of the individual to what might be called his or her "political selfhood?" We would be entering the realm of "self-awareness" and, because it is scarcely possible to give an objective history of one's politics, we should think instead in terms of the "political myth of the person."

Most often, psychological forays into the realm of politics have focused either on the psychology of the politicians—their character and likely behavior in stressful situations and crises—or have studied the voters to help politicians appeal to or manipulate them. There has not been very much psychological work done in relation to the citizen's experiences of and in politics.

A good deal of political debate boils down to disagreement about what constitutes human nature. After all, people have always spoken about politics and politicians in emotional terms. Why, then, are they so reluctant to turn to psychology and psychotherapy as sources for new political ideas to fill the current vacuum?

From the greed and envy highlighted by Whitewatergate to the sexual confusions of the Clarence Thomas hearings, politics presents us with unmistakably psychological issues. But in analyzing our reactions to these events, the media and the electorate fail to connect the inner, private levels of life with the outer, public levels.

In a new language to link psychology and politics, it will be more and more difficult to make universally true statements. We will want to know more about the hidden, personal agenda of the person who is speaking and acting.

Therapists know that everyone teems with inner people (sub-personalities), something that both therapists and clients find difficult to acknowledge—it is much easier and safer to take personality as something organized and unified. In the same way, we need an approach to politics that understands that no citizen has a single, unified political identity.

This is not only an issue for political strategists and pundits. Many people want to know how they can translate their emotional, imaginative, and bodily responses to Bosnia, to ecological disaster, to homelessness, into action. How can they begin to make use of their private reactions to public events?

Over the past few years, I have been running workshops and conferences in several countries on psychological approaches to politics. In this work, I have discovered that people are much more political than they believed. They know more about the political events of the day than they think they do. Gradually, participants discover that they have long been living in a political world about which they had always been informed. What often emerges is that people have more and stronger political commitments than they knew about. Such commitments need time to emerge; they are not always found by signing petitions, going to demonstrations, or voting.

These buried sources of political wisdom lie in the private reactions everyone has to political events. Yet these reactions have no ready outlet, since they are all too often dismissed as subjective.

For example, at a workshop in New York, shortly after the Los Angeles riots, I asked a largely nonprofessional audience to dig up and record their emotional, fantasy, and physical responses to the riots. Unexpectedly, just doing this in a contained setting had a cathartic effect. The participants said that they had often reacted in a highly personal way to political events. But they feared these responses would not pass

Andrew Samuels is a Jungian analyst in practice in London. Author of The Political Psyche, *he works as a consultant for several mainstream and alternative political groups.*

muster in everyday political discourse. Their conception of politics fit in with how our leaders would like us to define politics—as if it were an objective activity.

Jung told his students that "when you treat the individual you treat the culture." The interpenetration of individual and culture is the essential backdrop to discovering how things that are usually regarded as supremely private may be reframed so that their secret politics is laid bare. People cannot be seen in isolation from the society that played a part in forming them. Both individuals and society would benefit from such a shift in perspective.

Once we see that there is a politician within each of us who has developed over time, we can start to track the political history of a person—the way the political events of his or her lifetime have affected the forming of the individual's personality. So we have to consider the politics a person has, so to speak, inherited from his or her family, class, ethnic, religious, and national background—not forgetting the crucial variables of gender and sexual orientation.

The following exercises can help the reader to sharpen his or her political self-awareness by reflecting on what emerges.

Which of the following do you think has influenced your political views, commitments, and actions over the years? (Score the possibilities on a scale of one to ten, with one equalling "not a lot" and ten equalling "very greatly"):

- your parents
- other family members
- other significant figures (teachers, ministers, national leaders, etc.)
- your gender
- your sexual orientation
- socioeconomic factors
- ethnic factors
- religious factors
- national background
- a particular political event (specify which event as well as scoring it)

But all this is a bit too rational! Maybe there are also accidental, constitutional, fateful, and inexplicable elements in our political makeup. Maybe people are just born with different amounts and kinds of political energy in them. (I discussed this in "Political Energy," TIKKUN, March/April 1995.)

If so, there would be significant implications for individuals and for our approach to politics. What happens if a person with a high level of political energy is born to parents with a low level (or vice versa)? What if the two parents have vastly different levels? What is the fate of a person with a high level of political energy born into an age that does not value such a high level? Did your parents foster or hinder the flowering of your political energy and your political potential? In which direction are your politics moving, and why? The answers to such questions shape not only the political person but the contemporary political scene. Yet I do not think these questions are presently on either a mainstream or an alternative political agenda.

This second exercise explores the reader's political energy level in relation to other levels:

- On a scale of one to ten, score yourself for political energy. (One equals low political energy and ten equals high political energy.)
- Score your father.
- Score your mother.
- Score your present closest person.
- Score the community you grew up in.
- Score the community you live in now.
- Score the epoch in which you grew up.
- Score the level of political energy in our times.

My interest is not in what might be called political maturity. No such universal exists in politics, given its adversarial nature. Ho Chi Minh was a hero for some and a demon for others. Many of Nelson Mandela's admirers once regarded him as a dangerous communist. In the United Kingdom, while government and opposition alike condemn the violent acts of the IRA, other commentators acknowledge that the bombing campaign on the mainland was politically effective. So the creation of a schema or hierarchy of political maturity is a dubious and hopeless task.

Instead, let's make it easier for citizens to assess themselves. My interest is in how people reflect upon where they are politically and, above all, in how they themselves think, feel, explain, and communicate about how they arrived there—this is what I mean by the political myth of the person. From one angle, it may often turn out that someone is not where he or she thought politically. Or they may have gotten there by a route of which they were unaware. As far as the politician within is concerned, this is not relevant, because there is a narrative truth to consider as well as a historical truth, a matter of meaning rather than a matter of fact.

I'll conclude by suggesting there is something else that needs to be addressed—what we could call "political style." For a variety of reasons, some of them to do with their personal backgrounds, some to do with their level of political energy, people will live out their political selves in different ways. Some will be violent terrorists; some pacifists. Some will want to consider ideas and arguments carefully; others will fly by the seat of their pants. Some will definitely enjoy cooperative activity; others will suffer the nightmares of trying to do

things in a group only because they believe in the ends. As we begin to make a start on a psychologically driven transformation of politics, let us not make the mistake of insisting that everyone do it in precisely the same way. There is probably something desirable and creative in a diversity of political styles being equally valued and honored, and we can think of ways of protecting and privileging such diversity.

The final exercise concerns political style.

First, answer the questions according to your current self-assessment. When you have done that, ask yourself what your ideal political style would be and record the answers to that question as well:

- Do you feel more comfortable engaging in political activity, or do you tend to reflect on the great issues of the day?
- When politics is the topic, do you have greater or lesser difficulty in speaking up than usual—or about the same?
- Do you see yourself as good or bad at handling conflict in your life?
- When it comes to political conflict, are you especially ill at ease?
- Which of the following terms most accurately sums up your political style (feel free to choose more than one or to organize all the terms in an order of priority): warrior; terrorist; martyr; exhibitionist; leader; activist; parent; follower; child; victim; trickster; healer; analyst; negotiator; bridge builder; diplomat; philosopher; mystic; ostrich.

In each of these exercises, the goal is to pay the kind of attention to the individual's political selfhood that therapists pay to the individual's inner life. People who have done these exercises often tell me that they end up feeling more fragmented than ever—yet, strangely, more optimistic about today's politics. In other words, the exercises seem to work.

A fragmented society such as ours will no longer respond to an analysis that assumes homogeneity, order, cohesion, and a commonality of interest across the board. The politician within is thus a new kind of political analyst, capable of engaging with a fragmented society by virtue of being politically self-aware of his or her own fragmented political selfhood and evolving political myth. □

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ACTS OF GOD

Crossing the River Vistula

Lawrence Kushner

I am usually the first faculty member to arrive at the college on Thursday mornings, so I am delighted but surprised to find my teacher there also. It is the coldest day of the year so far, and the wind-chill has turned the canyons of Manhattan into tundra. There we are, I in my high-tech down parka and he in an ankle-length fur coat and Russian hat. Since he had always been a sucker for odd outfits, I am not surprised. The last time I invited him to speak to my congregation, he showed up in a green plaid sports jacket. When I gave him a quizzical glance, he explained that when he saw it on the rack it had whispered, "Buy me. Buy me please." So he did.

His outfit this morning reminds me of what remains one of the most beautiful Shabboses I ever spent. It must have been a quarter of a century ago when I was one of his students here at the same academy. He had invited me to join him with some members of his congregation who studied together on Shabbat afternoons out on a Long Island estate overlooking the Sound.

It was a similarly cold and raw day twenty-five years ago when our learning ended an hour or so before sunset and the departure of the Sabbath. I remember the cold yellow light, the driven snow, and his invitation to go for a walk before Havdallah. He was wearing a big fur coat then too, and he looked like a Polish rebbe. We trudged through the driven snow and the vanishing sunlight. I don't remember a single thing that happened, except his teaching presence and a kind of joke he made: "Here we are, Larry, crossing the frozen River Vistula."

His fur coat and the cold brought it all back, and I told him about the River Vistula. But he only smiled and said, "And the only reason I said it then was so that we could share this sweet memory now."

It occurs to me now that we have here a new subcategory of *déjà vu*. It is not that we have the strange sensation of having been here before, but rather the even stranger sensation of, for at least a moment, understanding why we were where we were. □

Lawrence Kushner is the rabbi at Congregation Beth El in Sudbury, Massachusetts. He is the author of several books on spirituality, including Honey from the Rock *and* God Was in This Place and I, i Did Not Know (Jewish Lights Publishing).

HIGH-TECH POPULISM

(Continued from p. 49)

future. These twin demands are powerful lightening rods for a new high-tech populist movement in the coming Information Age.

The nation's schools are already beginning to prepare the next generation for a life split between work in the marketplace and service in the Third Sector. While schools are teaching children how to access the information superhighway and find their way in cyberspace, they are also introducing mandatory community service work in non-profit organizations as a requirement for graduation. Twenty years from now, those same children may find themselves working a few hours each day in the marketplace and spending the remainder of their day engaged in civic and social endeavors in their local neighborhoods and communities.

In the pages of this magazine and elsewhere, there has been much discussion in recent years about the pressing need for a politics of meaning. The transition into a global trading economy and the increasing automation of production and services over the next four to five decades, raises the fundamental question of how millions of people will find meaning in their lives now that the commodity value of their labor is needed less, or not at all, in the capitalist marketplace. Redirecting—even partially—the energies, talents, and resources of millions of people toward meaningful work in the Third Sector provides a clear and achievable vision—one that can give concrete substance to a politics of meaning in the coming century. □

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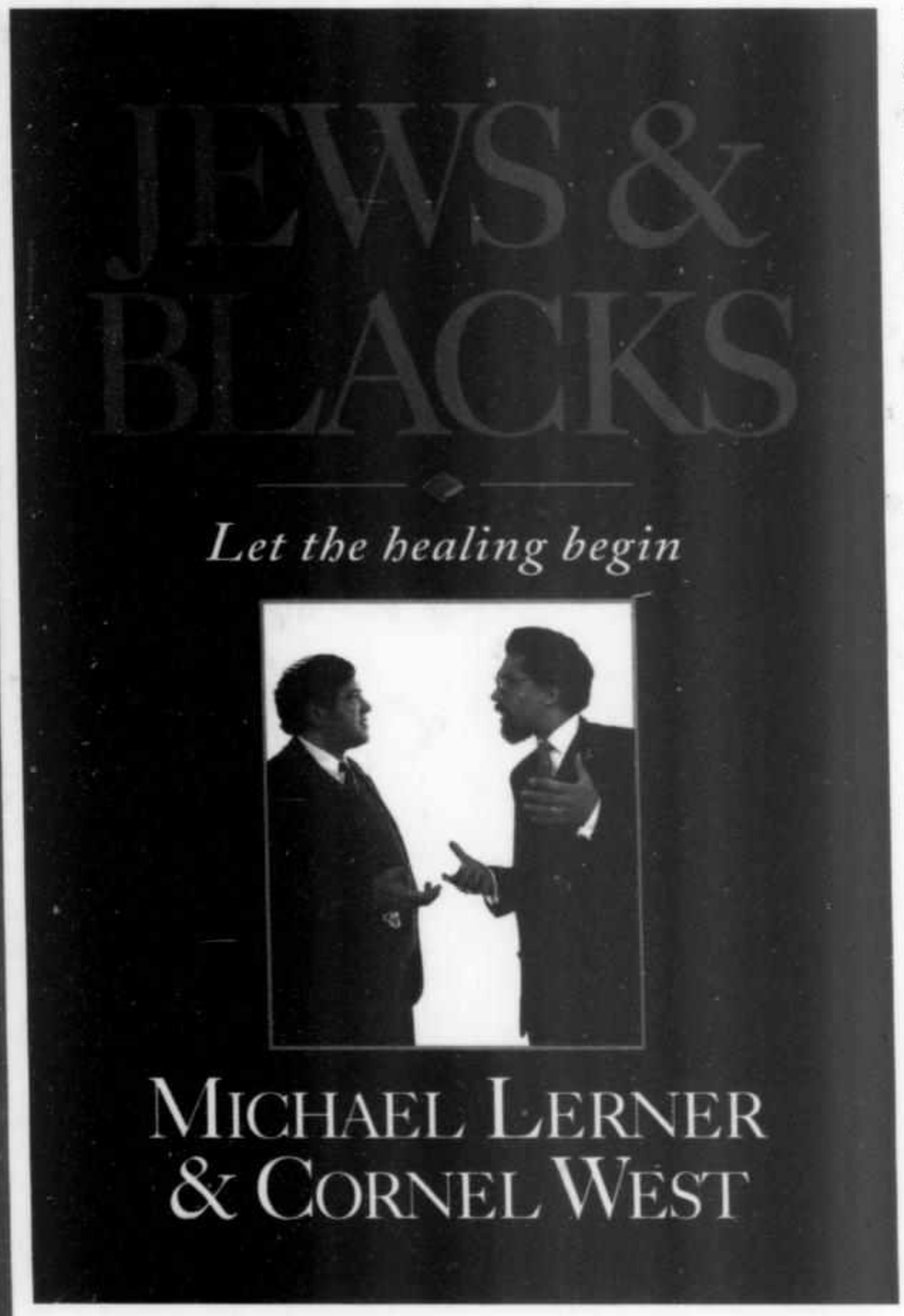
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