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TIKKUN

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A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1997 $6.00



Conversion and Intermarriage

Welcoming the Stranger?

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Character Education
Thomas Lickona

Animal Sacrifice
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Current Debates on:
Child Care and Abortion

MEMOS TO CLINTON

JONATHAN KOZOL ▫ JEAN HOUSTON ▫ MARIE C. WILSON
TOM HAYDEN ▫ ZALMAN SCHACHTER-SHALOMI
ARYEH COHEN AND DAVID WASKOW

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Wedding at Kibbutz Ginosar

I sit with my two children in the Sea of Galilee; we are sifting
the smooth bottom gravel for snails.
Banana fields cover the hill flanks
with a green haze-like flame. When we find a tiny shell
we peer in—the mud of life is there,
pulsing. It retreats when we touch, hesitates
at the bottom of the shell.
Everything in this valley is almost dead
or almost ripe. Five ants crawl through
the green-yellow high grass
between banana fields, leaving a trail of eggs.
They march through villages abandoned
in the war, past dark glades in the swamps
drained by the founders. Our togs hang

in the changing room where the founders
once washed off their sweat, where they folded
coarse towels, laughing heroically, urinated
against the tile wall. Wind lifts the white tablecloths
on the lawn and tosses the eucalyptus leaves.
I hear the clink of glasses, as if the great wedding party
were about to begin. Two lifeguards stagger out
onto the pier beneath a large sign
woven from bulrushes. At dusk they will set
it afire, shout congratulations.
Behind them in the cove
a network of bulrushes shifts its weight.
From hand to hand my children continue to sift out
whatever is hollow or damaged. My shoulders ache
from looking at them. I float on my back
with arms stretched out, watch the air sac
rise in my bathing suit, the sun bore down

through the eucalyptus leaves.
There is talk again of refilling the swamps,
of undoing all that labor. Imported serfs smile
from their tractors in the banana fields.
I can smell the manure fires from here, harsh and dry.
The wedding musicians take their seats beneath
the festive sailcloth. They lift their instruments.
My children spread the live shells
on a beach towel then run off
to play in the eucalyptus grove.
The founders' sons, indoors, surfing the Internet,
lift their hands above the keyboard.
The fire ants continue marching;
they love this heat, this manure.
They will eat through the leftover
fruit rinds. They are not turning back.

—Steven Tarlow

TIKKUN

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Letters

LABOR AND MEANING

To the Editor:

Joe Uehlein's "Reflections of a Trade Unionist" (November/December 1996) is the most exciting news yet from the labor movement. I was once an activist in AFSCME, and was very disappointed by my experience. Union meetings were dominated by boring business that almost nobody cared about. The men who dominated each meeting loved to maneuver with parliamentary procedure. They never cared about what we were experiencing at work. And they never paid any attention to any issues that arose for us that were not covered by the contract (i.e., if they couldn't find a way to "grieve" it as a violation of the contract we had with management, the problem simply didn't exist as far as our business agents were concerned). The union was totally tone deaf when it came to issues like the instability lots of us were feeling in our family lives, the frustration we were experiencing with meaningless work, and even the frustration we were experiencing because, although we were working for the pubic sector, our work rules really prevented us from being creative in finding ways to serve the public.

People sometimes talk about unions as being "corrupt," as though the problem is that the leaders are getting cutbacks from management. I don't think that is it at all. Rather, labor and management have been in bed together in a different way—they both think the same way about things, they both are insensitive to the feeling level of our lives, they both think that all we (employees and union members) care about is money and benefits.

Eventually I stopped caring about the union, and when I went on to another workplace that wasn't unionized, I refused to give much support to people who came around singing the prais-

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es of unions and trying to organize us. I had had it.

What a surprise for me to read Joe Uehlein and see that someone in the top levels of the new AFL-CIO is really taking meaning issues seriously! I could hardly believe my eyes when Uehlein talked about the importance of "a compassionate union culture," said unions must address "the poetry of work," talked about expanding the goals of the labor movement to include "creating a society based on love and caring," and said that there are labor leaders who "share the vision and values of the politics of meaning movement." I had heard about the Labor movement's involvement with intellectuals at its recent conference at Columbia, but frankly wasn't very impressed, since it seemed to be just Labor reaching out around its old agenda to get more allies. But this sounds like something very new, and if this new orientation really catches on in the Labor movement, you can count me in the next time labor tries to organize a place where I am working.

Sally Diaz
San Francisco, California

CLINTON

To the Editor:

It's interesting that your list of shortcomings and accomplishments of the Clinton administration did not include among the disasters the gross destruction of the Bill of Rights perpetrated by Clinton's introduction, pushing and signing of the so-called Anti-terrorism legislation. What could a Dole Supreme Court appointee have done to top that? Does your concern about terrorism in Israel distort your vision so that you are willing to close your eyes to the dangers to our civil liberties that this legislation creates?

Jean Glasser
Van Nuys, California

Editor responds:

We would never have supported that legislation. It was an oversight not to mention it.

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Israel

To the Editor:

A recent news report stated that the Israeli High Court has just officially sanctioned the use of "force" in interrogating Palestinian prisoners. What this means is that U.S. taxpayers send approximately $3 billion a year in foreign aid to a government that routinely and now openly tortures political prisoners. Is this what you want your tax dollars to be spent on?

As demanded by the UN General Assembly every year, Israel should withdraw all forces to their pre-1967 borders immediately. The Israelis should refrain from blocking the establishment of a Palestinian state on the entire West Bank and Gaza. If this happened, the more militant factions of Palestinian society would have little popular support and peace would finally come to this troubled region.

Leonard Baum
Sausalito, California

To the Editor:

In your writing you suggest that it is only when we who oppose the current Israeli policies demand an end to occupation in ways that cannot be ignored by our own government or Israel will Netanyahu be forced to reconsider the wisdom of occupation.

But what are these ways that cannot be ignored? Would you suggest withdrawing financial, military or political support? As long as Netanyahu knows that the U.S. will not exercise this leverage, what has he to fear? I have yet to hear a single American Jew suggest publicly that the President so much as consider this option. Clinton's backbone may not be made of the toughest material, but given the total failure of American Jews as a group or individually to speak in favor of this option, it is unfair to place all of the blame on the President.

Nancy S. Dorfman
Belmont, Massachusetts

Editor Responds:

Clinton and Congress would never go along with such a threat to withdraw support, and Israel could survive without it. The only serious pressure on Israel would come if the U.S. were to take action to limit American investment, or in some other way challenge Israel's ability to do business in the West. This is not a step that I advocate or that would have a chance to be implemented until the vast majority of Americans come to believe that ending the occupation is in America's best interest. That perception would only happen with a much larger shift in American consciousness in which we came to understand that our self-interest was served best by living in a world governed not by self-interest but by commitment to a morally and spiritually centered world (what we call the politics of meaning). The only thing that could happen short of that would be the election of a strong-willed, independent, and morally-centered President who was determined to use every mechanism at his disposal to pressure Israel to grant Palestinians self-determination (a position we would only support if it was accomplished in ways that guaranteed Israeli security). Don't hold your breath.

Secular Meaning

To the Editor:

Please add a secular humanist dimension to your politics of meaning work. The International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews has been coping with the question of "secular spirituality" for a number of years. Yehuda Bauer, co-chair of the International, in his introduction to *Judaism in the Secular Age* affirms the importance of spirituality "as a way to grapple with the many unsolved problems of human existence without referring to a supreme being upon whose shoulders such problems can be unloaded." As secular humanists, we have come to recognize that we have a common bond with religious humanists: a shared desire to build a better world. We also have a common enemy, namely religious and political fundamentalists.

Max Cohen
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Editor Responds: While we have tried to emphasize the connection of the politics of meaning to long-standing religious themes in the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu worlds, in part to counter the anti-religious biases that are rampant in the progressive and pseudo-sophisticate

Nationalism & Identity

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culture, we are equally open to those secularists who understand the importance of an ethical, spiritual and ecological consciousness. If we have understated the welcome to secularists, we apologize.

Democracy & American Jews

To the Editor:

Irving Litvag, in his screed attacking American Jewish institutions ("Democracy in the American Jewish Community," November/December, 1996) acts shocked that such institutions are not democratically constructed. But, we might ask, compared to what? We live in a society in which the major economic institutions shape, as you repeatedly tell us, every aspect of our public and private lives. Yet those institutions have far less democratic form than the American Jewish community. Or consider the universities, packed full of tired and boring professors who rarely have anything to say that has relevance to the major ethical and spiritual and ecological problems facing our world. Yet what democratic processes exist to control these tenure-laden monuments to selfishness and privilege? Or consider the recent campaign of Ralph Nader. How much democratic control or influence did we have over the way that campaign was conducted (or, more precisely, aborted) by Nader?

So, wake up, Mr. Litvag. You live in a society where democracy is a pretty word covering up a reality of powerlessness. In that context, and compared to the mainstream of American life, the Jewish institutions you critique are more responsive, at least to that (admittedly conservative, possibly even conformist according to Tikkun standards) section of the American Jewish population that tends to give them the money to exist.

Warren Hausman
Los Angeles, California

To the Editor:

Irving Litvag captures perfectly my experience in American Jewish communal life. After twenty years of giving my heart and soul to those institutions, I realized that unless I was super-rich, nobody was going to take what I had to say seriously, unless I learned the skills of getting people who have money to donate it to the Jewish institutions. I had given so much of myself, yet came to understand that there was no real democratic process in the community and that people in that world only care about each other

(Continued on p. 73)

THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF HERMANN COHEN
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Free Associations

"Still Struggling with Chanukah"

Those are the words from a Texaco official recently quoted in the media. The sentence goes on, "...and now we have Kwanzaa." The poor thing! It was bad enough that he had to accommodate to Jews (though its unclear exactly what Texaco officials did to struggle with Chanukah—anyone remember any Chanukah decorations being displayed at your local gas station?); now he has to deal with Blacks! Many American Jews may think that we can make it in America while Blacks are being screwed. But in corporate boardrooms, the fate of all minorities is inextricably linked.

Count on the cynical The *New Republic* to use the occasion to bash Blacks. Commenting on New York Times columnist Bob Herbert's sensible comments on what the Texaco incident reveals about affirmative action (as opposed to counting on the "good will" of corporate leaders), The *New Republic* "Notebook" of December 2, 1996, reminds its readers of the argument (sic) that "affirmative action is another kind of racism, and can even exacerbate the sort of interracial ugliness that Texaco employees say they experienced." If only "those people" wouldn't act up, they'd be better liked!

Race Doesn't Matter in the South?

That's the impression you'd get if you read another of The *New Republic*'s favorite liberal bashers, Jim Sleeper. In the December 2nd issue, Sleeper reminds his readers that The *New York Times*, among others, had warned of the destructive effect of congressional redistricting that had turned previously Black majority districts into white majority districts, then went on to point out that in the elections many Black incumbents actually won re-election in white majority districts. But the power of incumbency has never been questioned by those seeking to create some districts in the South where African Americans would have a chance. But what made possible the incumbency in the first place is that those incumbents were originally part of Black majority districts.

Ask any politically savvy Southern politician who wants to win an election today how likely it would be for him to raise money and resources behind an African-American candidate who is *not* an incumbent in a white-majority Southern district. Apparently, Sleeper and The *New Republic* crowd have a lot of trouble understanding that while race doesn't trump incumbency, it matters.

Welfare for Bloomingdale's

The one-two punch of eliminating federal responsibility for welfare and simultaneously spending tens of billions of dollars on new prisons to house those who will be driven to crime to feed their families was never sufficient for America's elites of wealth and power. They have simultaneously increased their demands for escalation of corporate welfare to ensure that they don't actually take too much of a risk in their investments.

Neither political party has seriously questioned the latest phase of this process: cities or states competing with each other for the highest amount of tax dollars to a given company to influence where it will locate its operation.

So it should be no surprise that according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Bloomingdale's and its parent company, Federated Department Stores, "have let it be known" that they want the city of San Francisco to kick in $30 million worth of tax sweeteners ("tax credits, redevelopment money, or the like") to get them to remodel a store they would use in downtown San Francisco.

When are theses freeloaders going to be challenged? Not too soon, it appears. Faced with no serious national move to restrict corporate power, liberal or even progressive locally elected officials feel that they have no choice but to compete for the jobs that corporate ventures might bring, even at the cost of increasing the tax burden of the cities (which, in any event, fall dispro-

portionately on poor people who will never be able to shop at Bloomingdale's).

Torture Again in Israel

A recent Israeli Supreme Court decision to allow "physical pressure" on Palestinian terrorist suspects gives judicial sanction to the Netanyahu government's use of torture.

In the past Tikkun has documented the use of torture in Israel by the GSS (Mossad) against young Palestinians. Reports from B'Tselem, the Israeli human-rights organization, indicate that most of those tortured are never changed with any crime. Eventually, after months of detention and physical abuse, they are released for lack of evidence that they have been engaged in any misdeed. The torturers do not have to show "probable cause" to anyone.

Does the need to avert terror warrant torture? Certainly we at Tikkun have no sympathy for Palestinian acts of terror. The bombing of the buses last spring were morally outrageous acts—and they, together with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, ensured the victory of a right-wing government. But torture doesn't stop terror; it creates potential terrorists. Imagine your reaction if a right-wing government in the United States had instituted torture against the anti-war movement in reaction to violent acts of antiwar protesters.

We can't help but notice the near-racist dimension to the use of torture in Israel. The murder of the Prime Minister of Israel might reasonably have led the advocates of torture to use it against the Israeli Right in order to forestall future acts of violence. Yet most Israelis would never dream of using torture against Jews, even when they pose a clear and present danger. We may not be able to stop Israel from engaging in torture. At the very least, however, we can challenge the hypocritical claim that the Netanyahu government's behavior is on a higher moral plane than that of its Arab neighbors.

New York Summit on Ethics and Meaning

If you couldn't get to the National Summit on Ethics and Meaning in Washington, D.C., last April, try to come to this one. It will be much smaller and more focused on how to bring the politics of meaning into your world of work. February 16-17, Riverside Church, New York City. For registration information see ad on page 3 of this issue.

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Editorials

Born to Shop: America's Growing Emotional Depression

When hope decreases and depression sets in, America's corporate elite has the medicine in hand: BUY, BUY, BUY.

During the presidential campaign, many progressives tried to reassure themselves that once Clinton had passed his last election hurdle, "the real—and supposedly more moral and liberal—Clinton" would surface in his second term. Well, things are not looking so good. We're likely to hear some very inspiring rhetoric in his second inaugural address and in his State of the Union message. But just a few weeks after the election, Clinton used his weekly radio address to the nation to make it clear that he was proud of the most reprehensible act of his first term—the signing of a welfare bill that will cause untold suffering for the poor. Clinton boasted that with this welfare plan he was honoring a moral obligation to help poor people help themselves! This was no longer campaign rhetoric; the President apparently was stating what he believes.

By mid-December, Clinton was proudly inviting Republicans to join him in forming a governing coalition which he calls "the vital center." Its primary theme involves the further erosion of the public sphere.

Why?

As Charles Derber has argued in these pages, we are witnessing the implementation of a triage strategy in which America's ruling elites have essentially decided that they can no longer take care of the poor, and instead have embarked on a massive program to build new prisons to house those who will not passively submit to further impoverishment. If this were being implemented under a right-wing administration, it is likely that there would be widespread public protest and outrage. But implemented by a Democrat who has just received the endorsement of the majority of those who chose to vote, and wrapped in the earnest rhetoric of "moral obligation" and "helping poor people" overcome the supposed dependence they face as a result of the federal government's subsistence-level support, the new assaults on the poor confuse enough people to render most of us incapable of acting on our perceptions of their dreadful implications.

Disturbed by Clinton's failures on the social welfare front, we might seek solace in his record on gender-balance and diversity issues. And for this he does indeed deserve some praise. Yet, as we've pointed out in these pages, narrowly construed affirmative action programs, while better than the alternative, have generated justified resentment because they have come to be perceived by the American majority as little more than an attempt by yet another group to get their snouts in the public trough.

We at TIKKUN continue to support affirmative action, but we believe that until it is reformulated to reclaim its original meaning as part of a struggle to build a just world for everyone, it will generate ever greater opposition. The Clinton administration has perpetuated the inadequacies of the prevailing notions of "political correctness": They demand equal opportunity for everyone to get a cut of the pie regardless of racial, gender, or sexual-orientation background, but they don't demand that the pie be expanded so everyone can have a part, they don't challenge the current distribution of the pie, and they assume that all that people want is a part of the pie.

That materialistic, reductionist account of human needs is shared by the Clinton administration and is reflected in the corporatist ideology that has dominated twentieth-century American society. America, by those standards, is the greatest country on earth, because it allows so many people some part of the materialistic pie.

Absent from this account, of course, are the meaning needs—our hunger for connection, mutual recognition, solidarity; our longing for a world that has an ethical and spiritual foundation; our desire to connect our lives to a higher purpose than "making it." What Clinton feeds us is a vision of a world in which everyone will have a better chance to get more money and more power—and this is a vision that subverts our hopes and reduces us to inner tears. Where is the vision of social justice that once inspired the hearts and minds of tens of millions of Americans? Where is the understanding that human beings cannot live by bread alone?

Sure, Clinton may lapse into prophetic rhetoric when the occasion seems to call for a transcendent moment. But when his programs are articulated in detail, they are not justified in terms of any higher values, but in terms of their

ability to meet "the bottom line" realities of American society.

This way of thinking has been in the ascendancy at least since Nixon, and after twenty-eight years of top-down indoctrination, few Americans feel the inner strength to advocate for an alternative. All around us, we see a resigned acceptance of the status quo. The result is a decrease in our national life energy, and a corresponding narrowing of the circles of caring to smaller and smaller foci, so that today most people are barely able to care about anyone outside their immediate family and friends. More and more, people see themselves as alone, or at best able to count on a very small circle of friends and family members.

HARVEY FINKLE/IMPACT VISUALS



Not surprisingly, the result is growing despair and social/psychological depression. Just as depression on the individual level often manifests in the form of people's inability to muster the energy to do much besides sitting in front of the T.V. seeking solace in alcohol or drugs or food, so the societal depression manifests in a decreasing energy for any social task that reaches beyond one's narrowest and most immediate circumstances.

Perhaps the most striking manifestation of that societal depression is in the continuing and deepening inability of most Americans to take decisive action to save the planet from ecological destruction. In their powerful new book *Betrayal of Science and Reason*, environmentalists Paul and Anne Ehrlich decry the efforts to minimize the seriousness of environmental problems such as overpopulation, global climate change, ozone depletions, and losses of bio-diversity. "Despite a vastly enhanced understanding of our planet's life-support systems," the Ehrlichs remind us, "humanity is emotionally assaulting them—degrading and destroying within a few generations the ecosystems that provide the very basis of civilization." The support systems of human life are in danger of being damaged beyond repair.

It is not that Americans don't care. Many people understand that too many American corporations are focused on their "bottom line" without regard to the future survivability of the planet. It is rather that the social-psychological depression permeating our society has produced a populace that can no longer imagine itself part of some larger community, a "we" that could be the subject and transformer of history. And it would take that sense of power to begin the process of envisioning the concrete steps necessary to restrain corporate irresponsibility. Instead, overwhelmed by what I call "surplus powerlessness," most Americans watch in disbelief and grief, but without the slightest thought that they personally could change things.

The more this depression permeates our society, the less people are willing to risk being part of any community of meaning outside their local church or synagogue. And a significant number of communities have moved toward a right-wing politics that demonizes those who are non-members. Seeing no possibility to change the larger world, people narrow their focus to the smallest possible frame, and concentrate their energies on their material well-being. So the hours of work expand, with people frenetically pursuing the next contact, client, or sale, imagining that they will protect themselves against what they fear is a coming economic cataclysm which they feel powerless to forestall.

In this climate of despair, the very corporate elite that helped generate this mess comes forward with its solution: "You were born to shop—so shop."

And so the buying frenzy ensues. Not only in the supermarket, but in the stock market. When Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan recently questioned the sanity of the stock market, he was pointing to the fact that investors were buying stocks even in the face of bad economic news. Stock prices continue to rise, because buying has become the imagined antidote to Americans' private despair.

There are many creative local and national political initiatives on the part of people who understand that there is something deeply wrong with our current political situation. But most of them imagine that they can reconstitute some kind of left-liberal or economistic-populist solution to America's woes. They are deeply mistaken. Progressive politics must begin by addressing the societal social/psychological depression, which won't be cured by fancy inauguration parties, clever inaugural speeches, or hopeful noises about the millennium.

But absent a fundamentally new vision of human life and possibilities, the Left and liberalism have zero appeal. In the November elections, with Clinton an easy ten to

twelve points ahead in the polls, few people responded to the Green Party or any other progressive alternative. As their openness to "vital center" language indicates, Americans want something new. But they will not ultimately be satisfied with either centrist or leftist solutions, or recycled liberalism, populism, or anything else that doesn't speak to the deeper psychological, spiritual, and ethical crisis that we face in daily life. In that sense, our collective depression has a hopeful side—it bespeaks the inability of most Americans to reconcile our deepest beings to a materialistic, cynical, and spiritually deadening world, no matter how much we buy. The human spirit can be pushed down, but it will never be ultimately and decisively repressed.

Why Aren't Blacks Getting Jobs?

The neoconservatives have a simple answer: Inner-city Blacks have developed a pathological relationship to the healthy values in our society and are unable to develop the skills needed for a changing economy. The more extreme racists add the explanation that Blacks suffer from a basic genetic inferiority.

Harvard sociologist William Julius Wilson argues that the manufacturing jobs that used to provide the support for poorly educated Blacks have been disappearing, and that this is the problem. There is no work for inner-city Blacks.

Not so, his Harvard colleague Nathan Glazer tells us. In the December 16 issue of The *New Republic*, Glazer, a neoconservative sociologist, reminds us that there are many immigrants finding work, so the "no jobs" hypothesis doesn't test out. Uneducated immigrants, after all, are less skilled than many Blacks, so why do *they* get jobs?

The answer, according to Glazer, is that there is a mismatch between "Black expectations regarding what constituted suitable work and suitable wages and what was available. These expectations may well have been fully understandable in the wake of three centuries of slavery and Jim Crow and at a time when powerful civil rights laws were passed and agencies to enforce them were created. But this past did not change the calculations of employers as they came across applicants who expected more than they could offer and were resentful at what was provided." Glazer thus argues that Blacks should have been happy to get the crumbs from the table, and if they aren't, then what right do they have to complain when others come and gladly grab at those crumbs? Glazer reassures us that Black underemployment doesn't stem from racism, but merely from the rational workings of the marketplace. "In today's more tolerant America, employers, blacks as well as white," Glazer concludes, "believe they have good reason to be wary of black males from the ghetto, whom they find undependable, irresponsible and angry. And once again, willing immigrants are available."

So, it's simple: If Black men were not angry, and if they were willing to take the most demeaning and lowly jobs, then the problem would disappear.

But there's another possible interpretation. It might be that the current economic realities give inner-city Blacks good reason to be angry. And if, faced with this situation, a small minority of young Black males find themselves being undependable and irresponsible, they may well be working out their resentments.

Though most inner-city Black males have been unfairly stigmatized by the larger society, there *is* a pathology of inner-city Black life for a visible and troubling minority of Blacks. It is not the anger, but the way the anger gets manifested. Too many inner-city Blacks have been so successfully colonized by the dominant culture that they take out their anger on each other, in the form of violence and crime, or on themselves in the form of drug abuse, alcoholism, and mental and physical illness. Or, equally irrationally, they commit individual acts of hostility or aggression against the larger white society that serve only to terrify other city dwellers who might otherwise be allies.

It would be quite different if Blacks were able to build a political organization that effectively channeled their anger, either within or outside of the Democratic Party. The appeal of Louis Farrakhan is precisely his ability to express that anger, and yet his anti-Semitism, sexism, and anti-white racism severely limit both his moral legitimacy and his political effectiveness.

Why haven't Blacks been able to build a movement that would coherently and effectively articulate their anger and make alliances with those who wish to challenge the triage strategy described in the preceding editorial on America's collective depression?

Part of the answer, of course, lies with the success of the dominant culture in convincing middle-class Blacks, who might take the lead in this process, that they should be looking out only for themselves. So instead of dividing their energies between building their own fortunes and building a powerful political movement, too many of the new Black middle class have focused their energies on "making it." Yet before one gets judgmental about this, let's recognize that this is a period in which the "looking out for number one" ideology is so pervasive that it dominates *everyone*, not just Blacks.

So, this is why Blacks so badly need a politics of meaning strategy in their own community. Unless the ethos of selfishness and cynicism can be combated, there is little chance that they will build the kind of social movement



MARC POKEMPMER/IMPACT VISUALS

that might effectively give expression to their justifiable anger. And without such a movement, they will continue to act in ways that will give white society the set of excuses that it needs to imagine that it is Blacks' own fault that they don't have jobs. Until that perception is undermined, there will never be the solidarity necessary to create the kind of powerful social movement that could question the market forces that press upon people the ugly choice of demeaning work or no work.

Even the most socially aware Black leaders don't quite get this. They imagine that "first" they need to address the problems that the assault on Black inner-city poor has generated. But they are unsuccessful, because there is no way to address those problems without having a cross-class, cross-race alliance. And that can only be built if people come to believe that there is some possibility of people worrying about something besides themselves. When the civil rights movement was strongest, its strength came precisely from its ability to portray its own particular demands as part of a struggle to build a world that would be just and caring for everyone. When that movement, joining the general trend in the society, began to reconstitute itself as a movement that just seemed to care about itself, it created the psychic space for others to feel free to pursue *their* own self-interest without regard to the problems of inner-city Blacks.

Precisely because inner-city Blacks need allies, they must be in the forefront of challenging the ethos of selfishness and materialism. In that sense, challenging the pathology of ghetto life is a sine qua non for a successful Black movement. But that pathology is not a Black pathology. It is, rather, the playing out in those particular ghetto circumstances of the dominant pathology of American society: the narcissism and materialism of the competitive market. Rather than point a finger of accusation at inner-city Blacks, it makes much more sense for us all to begin the process of creating a movement that fights for a new bottom line in America, one that values love and caring and not just money and power. It is precisely these themes that emerged from the Black churches and in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s insistence that the basis of political struggle involved linking social action with a transcendent spiritual vision. Our politics of meaning has emerged in part from the inspiration of this wisdom from the Black community. The tragedy for us was that we had no commensurate institutions to which we felt connected that had a similar spiritual/political integration.

The politics of meaning will rectify this error. Its call for

a society based on love is precisely in the service of transforming the dominant form of oppression—the way that our market society encourages each person to value money and power at the expense of treating each human being as created in the image of God. If treating people as created in God's image were our bottom line, we wouldn't have neocons running around telling Blacks that their mistake is that they aren't willing to take low-paying and oppressive jobs, and that they should learn from those immigrants whose desperation is so great that they'll take anything. Instead, we'd ask corporations to treat people with dignity, and if they can't make a living doing so, then let's find others who can figure out how to use those resources in ways that *do* treat people as though they are infinitely precious and deserve to be cared for.

Yaron Ezrahi Helps Israel Enter the Eighteenth Century

None of us at TIKKUN who critique the ultra-individualism and breakdown of community in the contemporary world seek to return to feudal notions of community. We are critical even of some forms of communitarianism, such as that espoused in this issue by Amitai Etzioni, because we think his vision of community universalizes aspirations of middle-class intellectuals and professionals and doesn't capture enough the need for some private space separate from community. Yet we can no longer see the "doing your own thing" individualism that was the flip side of the cry for "freedom now" as an adequate path to liberation and human fulfillment.

But there are other societies which have not yet fully experienced their emancipation from feudal forms of community domination. Israel is one of these. And the particular way that Judaism has been appropriated by the forces of nationalistic reaction and racist intolerance has generated a powerful revulsion against Judaism among many secular Israelis.

Yaron Ezrahi, one of the most brilliant of Israel's contemporary secular intellectuals, has taken this revulsion one step further by writing a general assault on any meaning-oriented belief system. In his new book, titled *Rubber Bullets*, Ezrahi tries to identify Israelis' attachment to communities of meaning as the fundamental culprit distorting every aspect of Israeli society. Ezrahi is a powerful and articulate writer. His book is important and should be widely read in Israel.

Ezrahi warns us of the way that powerful societal narratives can subvert the ability of the individual to recognize his or her own life experience, think his or her own thoughts, and choose his or her own path. He warns equally against the socialist Zionist ideology that dominated Israel in the years he was growing up and the religious nationalist ideology that now influences significant sections of the population.

Everywhere, Ezrahi finds the mechanisms of conformism. The Hebrew language was shaped to accord with the national ideal and gives too little space to "cultivating the solitary self, the lyrical personal voice of the individual....It is as if one had to stand aside from, or even defy, the Zionist epic of return in order to carve out a Hebrew idiom that could express the inner self relatively free of the life of the tribe." Though acknowledging that lack of financial resources and limited geographical space has something to do the constricted texture of life in Israeli cities, Ezrahi argues that it is also the collective-oriented culture that undermines private space and "the patronizing attitude of the state, a primary agent of mass housing projects."

In such a society, there is a constant battle "to protect the integrity of autobiographical time against the temporal claims of religion and ideology, which for many years collaborated in sanctifying the sacrifice of the individual for the land." Ezrahi sees in autobiographical time, when "the individual can resist the call of immortality to make his or her life shorter in return for making it loftier and more meaningful," the birth of the democratic citizen.

Time in America, on the other hand, seems to Ezrahi "particularly malleable and flexible, something plastic to be molded and shaped to meet diverse institutional and individual needs."

Somebody needs to break the bad news to Ezrahi about the true nature of American society when the bounds of collective responsibility have been broken, as they will be in Israel should Ezrahi's path be taken seriously. Ezrahi apparently hasn't heard about the ethos of selfishness and materialism generated by the competitive market. Some call it capitalism, but that is only one part of a picture of a society in which there is a diminished sense of connection to and mutual recognition by others. It would obviously be a surprise to Ezrahi, but many Americans do not feel that they have greater control over their own time in American society. On the contrary, time is one of the many aspects of daily life that have been imperialized by the market at least as powerfully as they might have been dominated in a previous society by communally imposed norms and intrusions. As Letty Cottin Pogrebin showed us in "Time Is All There Is," (TIKKUN, May/June 1996) the sacred time of Judaism may provide a badly needed alternative to the mindlessness and frenetic use of time to which we have become accustomed through the internalization of the rhythms of our economic system.

Within its own terms, Ezrahi's analysis is a tour de force

of insight into Israeli culture. In every corner he unveils the ways that Israeli society has inhibited the growth of individualism and the culture of the self which, Ezrahi tells us, have been essential in Western societies "for the formation of assertive, competent, critical, and largely independent democratic citizens."

But anyone who has lived through the 1994 and 1996 elections in the United States is going to be a little underwhelmed by the extent to which this nation is composed of competent, critical and largely independent democratic citizens. Ezrahi's sophistication suddenly vanishes as he views American individualism with all the naiveté of those Eastern European refuseniks who imagined that America's streets were paved with freedom and intellectual creativity.

Ezrahi is trying to bring Israel into the eighteenth century, but he evinces little understanding of what has happened in the West since that time. He knows the facts, but he doesn't get their significance, or the lived experience of being in a society in which the prescriptions he has for Israel were actually followed.

The point, of course, is that there are millions of Americans who have become weary of the liberal society, not because they wish a return to feudal constraints, but because they wish to transcend *both* the totalitarian aspects of older forms of communalism *and* the morally corrupting and psychologically debilitating aspects of an ultra-individualist society.

The failures of ultra-individualism are well known to many of Ezrahi's contemporaries as well. What they recognize, and he does not, is that the primary alternative being presented to Israelis apart from the reactionary communities of meaning of the Right, is a full immersion in the international capitalist marketplace.

That may seem attractive to many upper-middle-class Israelis who can imagine themselves providing their brains and their skills to making Israel the Hong Kong of the Middle East. Yet for many other Israelis, the market is already providing them with little more than oppressive work and no meaning. Faced with the question of why they are in Israel, rather than trying to build a new falafel stand in Los Angeles, many of these working-class Israelis will gravitate to *some* framework that can give them a sense that their life has some meaning besides the struggle to "make it" as an individual. First of all, they know that they are not going to make it in any significant way, even if their university-trained peacenik neighbors do. Second, they legitimately wonder if there isn't some way to build a life around higher values than finding space for the isolated individual.

Ezrahi presents in its purest form the impoverished picture of life that the Israeli peace movement and the cultural/political Left has to offer. It is freedom *from* rather than freedom *to*. It is the cult of doing your own thing dressed up in the liberatory language of eighteenth-century *philosophes* and twentieth-century existential romantics.

No wonder, then, that so many Israelis end up choosing the Right. It never occurs to the Israeli Left that it might be possible to construct a narrative that incorporates the wisdom of the Jewish religious and national heritage and the best that has emerged from liberal, democratic societies. Yet that is precisely what we have been doing in the Jewish Renewal movement, and what many people in the religious peace movement in Israel are doing as well.

Ezrahi never mentions the politics-of-meaning critique of his position, though on many occasions I've sat in his kitchen and argued these points with him. Nor does he mention the many Israelis who do respond to the religious peace movement. Like the Left in this country, the Israeli Left systematically marginalizes or ignores those who are trying to build a progressive framework of meaning. Its easier to make your case, after all, if the only people championing meaning are those whose vision of freedom is insensitive to the nuances that we can learn from feminism, from psychoanalysis, and from the powerful critiques of cultural totalitarianism.

These are criticisms said with love. It is easy to understand why Judaism has become identified with violence in the minds of many Israelis. In a recent poll of students in religious high schools, 25 percent indicated support for Yigal Amir, the religious assassin of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Keeping meaning systems away from the use of state power and from association with violence is an extremely important task, given the ways that Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, communism, and now in Israel, Judaism as well, have misused power.

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Farewell to Alice Chasan

We are deeply sorry to announce that Alice Chasan will no longer be serving as executive editor of TIKKUN. Alice has been an outstanding editor. Her tireless work and careful editing have been widely noted and appreciated. She is a master craftsperson and a top-notch professional. Her four years of service to this magazine helped make it one of the most widely respected intellectual journals in the United States.

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SPECIAL FOCUS I: MEMOS TO CLINTON

Two Nations, Eternally Unequal?

Jonathan Kozol

Not long ago in the South Bronx, I was speaking with a woman who has lived there for a quarter-century and has seen the changes in the racial make-up of her neighborhood. "Twenty-five years ago," she said, "there were still a few white families on this street. Now there are none. Our children grow up here and never know white people anymore, except police or priests or maybe teachers."

I asked her if she felt that Dr. King's dream of a nation in which Black children and white children would sit together "at the table of brotherhood" could ever be reborn. She shook her head and answered, "I don't know. It's gone for now. There's no Caucasians in the South Bronx anymore."

She thought for a while and then wondered, "Maybe if the politicians spoke of it sometimes...." But, she added, "It don't seem as if they really care. It feels like we've been put on the back burner."

There are many things that you could do, President Clinton, to win a lasting place in history during the next four years. You could fight back against the xenophobic ugliness that poisons most discussion of the foreign-born. You could, and should, reverse the recent welfare legislation that will soon cause havoc among children in impoverished places like the Bronx, in which so many children of Hispanic origin will soon be facing savage cuts in health provision, food, and housing. You could speak with less selective edginess of the presumed "responsibility" of mothers of poor children to find jobs and speak instead of the "responsibility" of business CEOs to bring back all those jobs that they have stolen from poor people and exported to the captive-labor markets of the Third World.

But the most courageous act of an enlightened President, and the one that might ennoble your last term in office as the leader of our bitterly divided land, would be to resurrect the dream for which not only Dr. King but many other martyred leaders of a more enlightened age laid down their lives.

Nothing could be less fashionable or politically convenient than to force a nation to look into its own soul and to ask the population, in particular of our divided Northern cities, whether we have quietly accepted the reality of two distinct and two eternally unequal nations, separated both by economic caste and by skin color. It is relatively easy for a leader to appropriate the rhetoric of Dr. King, to speak of "The Dream" in abstract, often sentimental terms, as if those words had no specific meaning and implied no moral mandate for society. It is much harder for a leader to unpack the content of that dream and to remind a nation that we have betrayed and trampled on its meaning.

You have spoken at times of the need to put computers into ghetto schools, to set up zones of enterprise in ghetto neighborhoods, and to crack down more aggressively on crime in ghetto streets. Yet you have never asked the nation to consider whether ghetto schools and the ghetto itself represent abhorrent, morally offensive institutions. Is the ghetto to remain our nation's dirty little secret for eternity? Is it to be accepted as a permanent cancer on the body of American democracy? Is its existence never to be challenged? Is its persistence never to be questioned? Is it the moral agenda of our President to do no more than speak about more comely versions of apartheid, of entrepreneurial segregation, and of ghettoes populated by two-parent families who appreciate the virtues of old-fashioned values? Are these the limits of the dream? Is this what it comes down to? President Clinton, can you remember still the visionary longings of a time when you were young and dreams were more expansive and great leaders stirred the soul of a society? Millions of children in sequestered neighborhoods like the South Bronx do not know what they have the right to hope for. Their eyes ask questions that you and I—and all of us—have yet to answer.□

Jonathan Kozol's most recent books are Savage Inequalities *and* Amazing Grace.

Ending Access as We Know It

Tom Hayden

Dear Mr. President,

Attached is a letter I have sent to the readers of Tikkun magazine. They believe in healing and transforming the pain they feel in the world. Since I am sure you feel their pain, I thought you might be interested…

Dear Tikkun Reader,

I was asked to join this symposium in your pages with the assurance that very important people in the White House, even the President, would be reading along.

That's very inviting, but I almost chose not to participate. We are at a point where access alone is not enough, even to the White House. We've had access for four years, and it has not stemmed the administration's retreat from many of its early promises.

Consider just three examples of the limits of access:

•"Welfare Reform"—First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, a champion of children's issues, is closer to the President than anyone. She formerly chaired the Children's Defense Fund, and she and her husband are close friends of that organization's founder and leader, Marian Wright Edelman. Yet before the election, the President signed a "welfare reform" bill that has already begun to have disastrous consequences for poor children.

•*Earth in the Balance*—In his excellent book, *Earth in the Balance*, Vice President Al Gore advocated a bold environmental program. The book has been sitting somewhere on the White House shelf for the past four years, while President Clinton emulated George Bush in accommodating the priorities of large corporations instead of those of the planet. In 1996, the President campaigned on "soft" green issues like expanding the nation's parks, because polls showed the environment to be a "wedge issue" against the Republicans, not because he now intends to take on the hard ones like strengthening the Endangered Species Act.

•NAFTA and Downsizing—The AFL-CIO Democrats gave far more money and ground troops to 1996 Democratic campaigns than any other interest group. Yet the President went to extreme measures to implement the North American Free Trade Agreement, which most Democrats had previously opposed, and has done little, if anything, to reverse the corporate downsizing of the economy.

As these examples illustrate, access means little in a system designed to co-opt reform groups while subverting serious reform.

When Republicans are in power, progressives are right to fight for access. But when Democrats are in power, access must lead to real change.

Thus, the most important question for the next four years is: Do progressives settle for more of the same access, believing that, with no more campaigns to wage, President Clinton will make our agenda that of the White House and the Democratic Party? Or should we prepare to challenge the status quo on the issues that the two major parties continue to regard as untouchable?

I believe that progressives have no choice but to place independent activism over access-as-usual. The issues are clear:

•ending the corruption of democracy by the present campaign finance system

•creating new standards of corporate responsibility

•creating a peace process in place of the endless cycle of violence in the inner cities

•restoring natural environments as primary to a sustainable quality of life, instead of perpetuating destructive growth

•a foreign policy giving equal weight to human rights and environmental factors along with commercial ones

•overall, a new spiritual and ethical meaning to politics in place of the Machiavellianism of both parties.

It is not enough to restore the existing Democratic Party to power, then seek access. The Democrats must be challenged anew by a progressive movement, and we should support only those candidates who move the progressive agenda forward. □

Tom Hayden is a Democratic state senator from Los Angeles. He chairs the California Senate's environmental committee and is the author of the recent Lost Gospel of the Earth.

Ask the Great Questions

Jean Houston

In late June of 1996, my porch and lawn were covered for days on end with reporters and cameramen looking for news of something that never happened. A White House leak of a tape of Mrs. Clinton and me doing an imaginative exercise in which we reflected on what Eleanor Roosevelt might have said about building a better society for our children sent the media scrambling for the most sensational label. "Seance!" the newspapers' front pages shouted. "Witchcraft!" And even that most dreaded of all maledicta: "Guru!" Needless to say, the distortions of the media not only embarrassed the First Lady but played havoc with my life and career.

Unexpected and unsolicited notoriety has led me to ask what was going on here. Why is it that when a couple of intelligent women get together to discuss critical issues and even employ a rather ordinary inward-turning exercise to help focus their ideas, the media pundits do the equivalent of holding up a cross and hanging garlic around their necks? Have they regressed intellectually to the Middle Ages? Or are their minds so constricted by the Beltway that they draw a blank when it comes to processes in the discovery of meaning beyond the political horse race?

I suspect that two great phobias were at work—the fear of the rising feminine and the fear of the imagination. Put them together and you have the Shadow of our age, with its dread before that which is not materialistic, manipulatable, and ripe with open greed. When the emphasis is seen to be on process rather than on product, on making things cohere, develop, and grow from within rather than from without, then old minds get frightened and rush to make bad news out of what is really the righting of an ecological wrong. For we are suffering from an ecological catastrophe that comes from a gross overuse of the outward world and a terrible underuse of the inner world. Or, as Jesus says in the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."

Thus, whenever psychological and spiritual energy no longer bonds to outward social forms, then people and institutions, even, *mirabile dictu*, heads of state, embark on quests for the green world within to help reseed the wasteland without. They realize that when so much political discourse is about the economy, then "stupid" is the apt word to describe those priorities. They realize, too, that answers lie not with economic or political initiatives but with a deepened citizenry. We can no longer afford to live out of the ethos and edicts of a psychologically and ethically deficient age.

The mainstream must tap into the deep stream in order to renew itself. To do that, we must humbly but tenaciously acquire the inner capacities along with the deepened moral and spiritual life to match our outer powers. How is this to be done?

On her death bed, Margaret Mead had a vision which she shared with me. She said that the way we were going to survive and "green our world" was by establishing teaching-learning communities in which people would gather regularly in their homes, churches, business, and schools. Together they would engage in processes to improve their minds and bodies, while seeking to deepen their values, recover their spiritual life, and take the capacities they had gained into the world of social action. A day before dying she said to me, "Go out in the world and help set up those communities, Jean!"

"Yes, Margaret," I replied. "I'll try and do that."

Subsequently, a large part of my work has been to set up teaching-learning communities that help people and organizations on their quest to recover their unique earth- and soul-saving wisdom, as well as finding ways of implementing that wisdom in the fields of business, education, health, and governance.

In cutting-edge corporate life, these communities quest for new paradigms based on moral and spiritual principles in business as well as life, pursuing innovative and internal ways of enhancing creativity, informed

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Jean Houston is a philosopher, teacher, and researcher into human capacities. Her most recent book is A Mythic Life: Learning to Live Our Greater Story *(Harper San Francisco, 1996).*

by values, vision, and higher purpose. Role-playing, community-building, and vision-sharing from the inside out, discovering a better story or myth to guide one's decisions need to become common coin in commerce, as they are in counseling. "Give a Shift," the employees of Xerox wear on their t-shirts—a sentiment that government would be well-advised to employ, lest the Macarena become the metaphor of political life, with most of the movement taking place while your feet stay in the same spot.

Working with hospitals and medical groups, we try to create teaching-learning communities that engage all hospital employees—from top administrators and physicians to those who scrub the floors and empty bedpans—in ongoing learning experiences that provide for continuous personal growth and professional development. Inevitably, they come to discover ways of making health care proactive rather than reactive, patient-centered rather than doctor- or nurse-centered, restoring compassion to the medical professional, and engaging the patient in his own healing process. They become entrepreneurs of a new era of health care, one that liberates while it heals, breaks boundaries while it creates bridges, and above all, empowers the patient with privacy, autonomy, information, and support to make appropriate decisions.

Teaching-learning communities lend themselves well to our educational institutions, engaging parents, teachers, students, and yes, even school boards, in the marvelous and mysterious process of learning how to learn. In an age as complex as ours, life-long learning is essential to our survival. Schools can become intergenerational, with elders becoming educators as well as students.

We now know a great deal about the many kinds of human intelligence. I have never known a stupid child, only debilitating and brain-damaging systems of education. As we have discovered, a child can learn almost anything and pass the standard tests if she is touching, hearing, seeing, and feeling information. And she can delight in doing so because she is using much more of her mind-brain-body system than conventional teaching generally permits. So much of the failure in school and home stems directly from boredom, which itself stems from the larger failure to stimulate all those wonder areas in the child's brain and soul that could give her many more ways of responding to her world and therefore becoming capable of envisioning a different future for herself and others.

Schools can also model a civilized society: realistic training for employment and community involvement, combined with zero tolerance for racism, sexism, violence, and psychological abuse. Civics should begin in the classroom, as early as the first grade, and be carried into projects in the community.

What a wonderful thing it would be if during your second term, our government workers joined in teaching-learning communities, encouraging each other to develop their capacities but also to take time each day to reflect on the eternal values that need to be brought to light in a changing world. How different things would be if Congress could begin to ask the great questions. These are not to be confused with the questions that the pollsters ask, which tend to give a reading of only the most superficial and ephemeral attitudes. They rarely supply the X-factor—the deep, evolving sensibilities coming through the back door of history, which signal the coming of change and regeneration. These sensibilities are elicited by the great questions: What is the purpose of our lives? What is the good? How can we make a better world? How do we serve a higher purpose? Throughout history, true leaders have known how to ask these questions, thereby clarifying and defining, conceiving and articulating goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts. The leader thus becomes the evocator, the envisioner, the transformer, engaging the full person of those who follow or work for him, converting followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents.

Mr. President, in your acceptance speech, you spoke of building a bridge to the world of the new millennium. Those were visionary words, and America is hungry for vision. At a time when all systems are in transition and global forces challenge the function and importance of heads of state, the role of the President becomes that of visionary and social artist, the one who both sees and evokes patterns of possibility within the rough clay of changing social structure. To do this means relinquishing the winning strategies that got you elected and taking on the transcendent function of inspiring a vision of what we may be as individuals, communities, and members of our fragile planet.

It is possible that after a long period of de-mythologizing, the office of the presidency can be restored to its role of moral stewardship. This requires a lot of personal work on the part of the President, a lot of deepening into his own deepest beliefs. I know you, Bill Clinton. And I think you can do it.□

The Real "Gender Thing"

Marie C. Wilson



KUNI TAKAHASHI/BOSTON HERALD/IMPACT VISUALS

In November, women went to the polls and their votes put you over the top and back in the White House, President Clinton.

Any other constituency who delivered this kind of victory would have been thanked by now, or at least sent clear signals about the power and presence they would have in future cabinet and court appointments. So far there's more courting of the Republicans who got defeated than the women who did the job. On a Sunday morning, post-election news show, you smiled as you contemplated putting a Republican in the Cabinet, "even one who didn't vote for me." But what about the women who did?

In the next segment of the same show, four journalists discussed the inevitable question: "Is Colin Powell going to be Secretary of State?" No one said, "Don't you think that there's an expectation that Madeleine Albright would be a natural choice after that eleven-point gender gap?" No. The only reference to our able United Nations Ambassador was that she had probably compromised her chances for the job by lobbying for it. Cokie Roberts noted that lobbying for a job would have been fine for a man, whereupon she was immediately silenced with a verbal slap for invoking the "gender thing." Not only are we unrewarded for delivering the presidency in a year where we were sob-storied, soccer-mommed and welfare-queened, but if you speak our name or begins to name us to positions of influence, you will get the Cokie treatment, followed by an accusation of pandering.

The real "gender thing" is not partisan or radical and it's not to be dismissed. Today women have become a growing "government in exile" within our own country. We are called upon to provide essential services abandoned by the government such as: taking care of the elderly, friends, and relatives whose hospital stays have been cut short and assuming additional child care responsibilities. These are just a few of the services that fall to women as government budgets are balanced off our backs.

If we are increasingly called upon to be our own government when the federal government falls short, we expect our issues to be heard and taken seriously. So, here's the short list, President Clinton:

1. Change the welfare bill so that states like New York will not be able to create new punitive legislation.
2. Protect and stabilize Medicare and don't sacrifice it in any compromise for a balanced budget.
3. Offer fewer cosmetic changes in education with more real and radical educational reforms, including more clout for the Department of Education.
4. Encourage the growth of the philanthropic and not-for-profit sectors through tax incentives and protection from harassing legislation that would stifle our freedom and voices.
5. Continue legislative and judicial support for the reproductive health and family planning needs of women here and abroad.
6. And finally, thank us for our support with solid women appointees to the Cabinet and the judiciary.

There is still the expectation in our own houses and in the White House that we will show up, do our part, and retreat into silence. But remember that in 1996, while we were putting dinner on the table, we put a man in the White House, and it's time for the politicians to stop coming to dinner unless they're also willing to bring dessert.□

Marie C. Wilson is the president of the Ms. Foundation for Women.

The New Sodomites

Aryeh Cohen and David Waskow

The virtual conventions and sound-bite rhetoric of the presidential campaign are behind us, President Clinton, but the consequences of the welfare bill that you signed to ensure your re-election will be with us for a long time to come. And with a Republican-controlled Congress in place for at least the next two years, your promised repair of the worst parts of the legislation has receded to the realm of improbability.

As the states start to grapple with the fiscal realities wrought by this disastrous new law, we might pause to ask how one might think as Jews about the politics of welfare. For much of Jewish history, addressing this question has meant turning to the meaning of politics in its original sense—the affairs and responsibilities of the city, the polis.

Maimonides, arguably the most important Jewish political thinker, argued that the primary responsibility of a city is to establish social-welfare programs. We find the following in Maimonides' code of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, in the section titled, "Laws of That Which Is Given to the Poor":

> Any city in which Jews reside is obligated to appoint charity collectors—known and trusted people who would approach the people of the community weekly and collect from each one that which they should, and that which had been assessed for them. They divide the money weekly and give each poor person sustenance for seven days. This is what is referred to as *kupah* [the alms box].

But lest the community think that the collection is somehow a voluntary act of charity, Maimonides adds:

> One who resides in a place thirty days is forced to give charity to the *kupah* with the citizens of the place. (Chapter 9)

The funds for these programs, it needs to be stressed, are collected as taxes-—involuntary assessments on citizens.

In rabbinic thinking, the biblical Sodom epitomized political immorality. What is it that the rabbis found objectionable there? It is the Sodomites' rejection of strangers and the poor, their utter lack of hospitality, that the rabbis believe is at the heart of the city's corruption. In *Pirkei Avot*, *The Sayings of the Fathers*, 5:10, we are told:

> There are four [character] types:
> One who says "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours"—this is the character of Sodom.
> "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine," this is an ignorant person.
> "What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours," this is a righteous person
> "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is mine," this is an evil person.

Why is the one who says "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours" a Sodomite? The Bible supplies the answer. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 16:49) describes Sodom: "Only this was the sin of your sister Sodom: arrogance! She and her daughters had plenty of bread and untroubled tranquillity, yet she did not support the poor and the needy." God punished Sodom for hoarding rather than distributing her resources.

The rabbis rejected the legalistic justification that ownership is the ultimate basis for the distribution of resources, arguing that there is more to collective life than asserting that what is mine is mine. This view is exemplified in a midrash on Genesis 18:21 (Midrash *Bereishit Rabbah* 49:6). In the story, God decides to investigate the happenings in Sodom. "I will go down to see whether they have acted according to the outcry that has reached me." God discovers that the destruction of the city was indeed justified, that the outcry, which came from a young woman who refused to assume that "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours," had moral value. The woman had tried to share her food with a starving woman, but the powers that be

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in Sodom were horrified by this undermining of the principle of private ownership and they burned the culprit.

A very instructive description of Sodom and Sodomites appears in another midrashic collection *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (Tractate Shirata:2):

> In the case of the people of Sodom, God punished them by means of the very thing with which they prided themselves before God, … The people of Sodom said: "We do not need any man to come to [visit] us. Behold, food is taken from us [by strangers] and silver and gold and precious stones are taken away from us. We will let no strangers travel among us anymore."
>
> The Holy One of Blessing said to them: "Fools that you are! You act so proudly with the good things which I lavished upon you, and you say, 'We will let no strangers travel among us anymore.' I will cause you to be forgotten from the world .... So what is it that brought this [destruction] upon them? "She did not support the poor and the needy."

The Sodomites, according to this midrash, are those who voice a very familiar refrain: The resources that are within our boundaries are ours by right. Why would we share them with others? Let us seal our borders so that "no strangers will travel among us anymore." The Sodomites' mistake was to see the blessing of abundant resources as an ultimate and exclusive right to those resources. The Holy One points out their mistake: Their exclusive right to the resources is no more absolute than the fact of those resources being in their territory in the first place—a fact determined only by God or by fate. And if this message wasn't clear enough, the midrash reinforces it: So what is it that brought this [destruction] upon them? "She did not support the poor and the needy."

Within these guidelines—the obligations of the city as codified by Maimonides vs. the actions of the Sodomites as understood by the rabbis—we can evaluate the policies proposed in the contemporary political debate. The welfare bill that the Congress passed and you signed seems to be exactly what the rabbis had in mind in describing Sodom. Indeed, how would the Rabbis have responded to a law that will push an additional 1.1 million children into poverty, increasing child poverty nationwide by 12 percent? Where would they have stood on the question of denying assistance to more than 300,000 children with disabilities, including autism, mental retardation, and tuberculosis? And what would they have said about cutting off food stamps to more than 250,000 families in Los Angeles County alone? There is no doubt that the rabbis would have been enraged by the brute facts of the welfare legislation that has become law in our land.

As for the newcomers among us: How would the rabbis have understood our refusal to assist even the neediest legal immigrants? Where would they stand on cutting off disability benefits and Medicaid to disabled and elderly immigrants, including refugees? What would they have said about the government working to free immigrants from repressive conditions in their native countries—including Iran and the former Soviet Union—only to abandon them once they are within our borders? How would they have responded to a prohibition that prevents local governments from providing even job training and business licenses to those very same legal immigrants? Or to one that denies support to immigrant children who are here through no choice of their own? We can assume that they would have pointed and said: "Indeed, these are politics of Sodom!"

Some will argue that newcomers and old-timers alike should provide for themselves. But that ignores the crucial lesson the rabbis have given us: It is our first responsibility to ensure that we take care of those within our midst, including strangers to the community, before we cast them out to fend for themselves.

The rabbinic paradigm did not, of course, anticipate the bureaucratic complexity of the modern welfare system, nor did the rabbis foresee that system's tendency to create distant, disconnected relationships among givers and receivers of *tzedakah*. Indeed, we may need to develop new models for welfare that reflect the truly civic nature of *tzedakah* as it was understood by the rabbis—for whom a sense of connection among a city's dwellers was more palpable than it is for us. Perhaps in our era—when writing checks is so easy and giving to the homeless on the street often so difficult—we need a model of mutual responsibility that demands direct encounters between giver and recipient. This would be a model in which the *kupah* would be a place for human interaction rather than for bureaucratic indifference.

The rabbinic ideal stems from a society built on direct human contact and connection. For Maimonides, it is "known and trusted people" who collect money and clothing for the communal welfare tax, and it is they who then distribute it to the needy who come personally to the *kupah*. According to this model, welfare is provided through a network of community members. If this were taken seriously in our own society, citizens

(Continued on p. 79)

To: President@whitehouse.gov

Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi

Dear Mr. President:

If I were to meet you in person, I would begin with the traditional Jewish blessing upon meeting the governing head of state: "I worship You, Breath of Life, our God, Sustainer of the Universe, for having apportioned of Your Glory to a human being."

From the perspective of the highest inner teachings of Jewish mysticism, you are again the bearer of the destiny of this country and by extension, since we are the remaining superpower, the destiny of the planet. You are this country's conduit of the flow of energy and mind. In rare moments of solitude, you must feel the power and the burden of your office. As I contemplate this, I can barely imagine how awesome it must be for you.

Since this is the last time that you will fill this office, you have an opportunity to shape the template of the presidency in totally unprecedented ways. I won't arrogate to advise you on matters of state. But on matters of the soul, things that touch your spirit, I feel I may offer you the following suggestions:

Be deliberate. Let people notice how you take time for yourself to consider an issue, to consult your values, to communicate with your soul. When you make a solitary retreat before you announce a new initiative, people will respect your deliberation.

If you can move away from your old political patterns, the public's perception of you as a leader who drifts with the wind will shift. The old problems trailing you need not be the anchors of your now-emerging, mature style of leadership. If you can give up your habit of perpetually running for office and instead honor the power that flows through you by virtue of your office, as the conduit of America's soul, you will be able to do much more than be a lame-duck president.

Guiding our country in the next four years, you must not only harmonize both houses of Congress to serve with a bipartisan awareness, you must be concerned with the country beyond political parties and special interests. We need you to be a president who is mindful of the next seven generations. By creating programs that not only balance the budget, but reduce the national debt, you can gift the generations yet to be born with a reduced burden of servicing that debt.

Utilize the precious national resource we have in our seasoned elders. Make it possible for them to use their wisdom, by serving as peace-keepers, conflict-mediators, whistle-blowers.

Encourage a guild of public servants who will see their work as a vocation to maintain this country as a humane and caring entity.

Initiate a presidential commission of transpersonal sociology which would utilize the state-of the-art methods available to us to re-inspire and re-mythologize the American Dream, to find ways to strengthen family and inter-generational cohesion and co-operation.

Study and design a renewal of the political body. This is nothing less than a re-designing of the constitutional system software, the Governmental Operating System, as well as the specific social software of the specific agencies.

Most important at this time is to redesign the judicial and penal systems, which do not function for justice and rehabilitation. Stiffer penalties have not worked to deter crime, and justice is routinely subverted. You need to gather the best moral minds in the land to remake the legislative and judicial branches of government. How you refashion these two systems will determine how the executive branch of government will be perceived in the future. In this way, the intent of the Founding Fathers may be served in our time and space and with our technology.

I pray for a great and historic second term for your work and for gentle delight with your family.□

Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi is the founder of the Spiritual Eldering Institute and professor emeritus at Temple University. He holds the World Wisdom Chair at the Naropa Institute.

The Case for Character Education

Thomas Lickona

Two centuries ago, the public philosopher William Barr reminds us, the American founders saw us as embarking on a great experiment: Could a free people maintain a moral culture? Or would moral restraint and concern for the common good give way to "licentiousness"—the unbridled pursuit of personal appetites and self-gratification? While not all the evidence from that experiment is in, the founders would surely be discouraged by the lead article in a recent *Philadelphia Inquirer* series on the need to teach values in our schools.

The story told of eight students, ages twelve and thirteen, who had been caught in their New Jersey suburban middle school having sex in a locker room and a stairwell. When school administrators suspended the students for ten days, their parents protested that the punishment was unfair and threatened to sue the district for having failed to "ensure the safety and well-being" of the students.

That incident sums up much of what's wrong with contemporary society. Millions of young people, perhaps a majority, think the pursuit of happiness means the pursuit of pleasure, especially sexual pleasure. They absorb this notion daily from a mass media culture that often supplants parents, schoolteachers, and religious educators as the primary moral teachers. And their parents engage in denial, externalize blame, and try to prevent their children from suffering the corrective consequences of their wayward actions. The school, for its part, frequently finds itself in a narrow, reactive mode rather than a proactive, preventive mode—having failed to define, build consensus around, thoughtfully teach, and consistently enforce standards of respect, responsibility, and basic human decency of the sort that would reduce student misconduct and enable schools and families to deal more effectively with breaches of virtue when they occur.

Thomas Lickona is professor of education at the State University of New York at Cortland, where he directs the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility). He serves on the Board of the national Character Education Partnership and is author of Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility *(Bantam Books, 1991).*



CAROLINA KROON/IMPACT VISUALS

There is, however, hope on the horizon. Increasing numbers of schools, with community support, have reached the conclusion that it's time for adults to get their ethical act together and teach kids right from wrong. The deliberate effort to teach right and wrong—through good example, the curriculum, and the total school ethos—is called "character education," arguably the fastest-growing education reform movement in America today.

The last five years have produced a spate of books on character education; the emergence of several national organizations (the Character Education Partnership, the Character Counts Coalition, and the Communitarian Network among them) dedicated to putting character development at the top of the nation's educational agenda; congressional action to fund character education initiatives (million-dollar grants have been awarded to each of twelve states in the past three years); three White House Conferences on Character-Building for a Democratic, Civil Society; state mandates requiring that schools spend some time every day on character education; the creation of university-based centers and summer institutes to help school districts start character programs; and a flurry of media attention to the movement, including two *New York Times* cover stories (one in the Sunday *Magazine*, another in the "Education Life" section) in 1995.

Not everybody is on board, of course. Some liberals still worry that character education is a smoke screen for the "religious Right," although that fear has faded

somewhat as public figures of all stripes, including liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, have embraced the effort. Some parents, especially those of traditional religious conscience, worry that values like "tolerance" will be used to teach acceptance of homosexuality and other ideological views that may violate deeply held family beliefs. But this wariness, too, has been largely dissipated by making it clear that character education teaches non-controversial virtues (such as respect, caring, honesty, and self-discipline) in non-controversial ways (such as role modeling, developing a caring school community, and service learning), and by pointing out that many successful character initiatives have been spearheaded by evangelical Christians and other religious conservatives.

Some school administrators still suffer from the moral paralysis induced by the old question, "Whose values do we teach?" In addition to fearing community conflict over values, some educators are deterred by the moral relativism that continues to run deep in much of our culture—the idea that nothing is objectively right or wrong, that morality is an individual matter, relative to one's point of view or desires. A new contributor to societal moral relativism is the brand of multiculturalism that is taken to mean "multi-morality"—the belief that there are no moral universals, that we should eschew moral judgment and give equal "respect" to the values, beliefs, and lifestyles of all cultures and groups.

Given that many people in our society remain confused and ambivalent about morality, the first task facing character educators is to explain clearly what character education is and why we need it—why, in fact, educating for character should be at the center of all schooling, public or private, secular or religious. Character education can be defined as the intentional, proactive effort to develop good character. Qualities of good character are called virtues. Virtues—such as the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude advanced by the ancient Greeks—are objectively good human qualities. They are good for the individual (they help a person lead a fulfilling life) and they are good for the whole human community (they enable us to live together harmoniously and productively).

Every virtue has three parts: moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral behavior. To possess the virtue of justice, for example, I must first understand what justice is and what justice requires of me in human relations (moral knowledge). I must also care about justice—be emotionally committed to it, have the capacity for appropriate guilt when I behave unjustly, and be capable of moral indignation when I see others suffer unjustly (moral feeling). Finally, I must practice justice—acting fairly in my personal relations and carrying out my obligation as a citizen to help advance social justice (moral behavior). Thus, in order to develop virtuous character, the young must come to know what the virtues are, appreciate their importance and want to possess them, and practice them in their day-to-day conduct. Character education thus conceived seeks to develop a morality of the head, the heart, and the hand.

In its underlying philosophy, character education reasserts the idea of objective morality. The idea that there are objective moral truths is a proposition denied by the doctrine of subjectivism. About subjectivism, Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft writes: "Of all the symptoms of decay in our decadent civilization, subjectivism is the most disastrous of all. A mistake—be it a moral mistake or an intellectual mistake—can be discovered and corrected only if truth exists and can be known."

Objective truth is independent of the knower. That Lincoln was president during the Civil War is objectively true, even if someone doesn't know it. That adultery, infanticide, torture, date rape, and cheating are morally wrong is objectively true—even if many people don't realize it. Objective moral truths have a claim on our conscience and behavior.

How does this moral philosophy of objective truth translate into educational practice? It sometimes takes the form of an adult directly explaining to a child why one behavior is right and another wrong. But direct teaching is only part of a much larger effort to create a schoolwide moral environment—to surround kids with high expectations that call forth their capacity for goodness. Consider one of character education's success stories: At Washington, D.C.'s Jefferson Junior High School, 90 percent of the students come from single-parent families. "When I arrived," says principal Vera White, "parents and the community felt they were losing the children." Theft and fighting were common, and twelve to fifteen girls got pregnant each year.

Principal White met with faculty, parents, students, and members of the community. They decided they needed a multi-year plan. Year One would focus on setting objectives and strategies; developing students' "sense of responsibility for their own behavior" became the primary goal. Year Two would have the theme "attitude counts wherever you go." Year Three would focus on conflict resolution training, Year Four on community service.

Personal responsibility is now the theme of daily morning meetings in homerooms and weekly grade-level assemblies. Students are expected to have assignment notebooks, to use them in every class, and to take

their schoolbooks home with them each day. Strengthening Jefferson's academic curriculum has been aided by a partnership with a nearby business, the COMSAT Corporation, which has helped to develop a strong, state-of-the-art program in math, science, and technology. Jefferson's character-building effort has also incorporated three sexuality education programs, including Elayne Bennett's Best Friends curriculum, all of which teach students the value of abstaining from sexual activity.

The school has also sharply raised expectations for parents. "Our parents," Vera White says, "must come to school for Back to School Night and for teacher-parent conferences during the year. Every parent is also asked to volunteer twenty hours of service to the school each year."

Since implementing these changes, Jefferson experienced a marked decline in thefts and fighting. In the city of Washington, D.C., it has been recognized for having the highest student academic achievement, the greatest academic improvement, and the highest attendance rate. It has won two U.S. Department of Education awards and now has a waiting list of 400 to 500 students. Between 1993 and 1995, according to White, it had only two known student pregnancies.

Jefferson Junior High looked to schoolwide character education as a way to turn around a bad situation. But all schools, whatever their starting point, have an inescapable obligation to educate for character. (See, for example, Ruth Shlossman's article, "Can You Teach Empathy?", TIKKUN, March/April 1996, for an excellent description of how a private K-5 Jewish day school carries out its responsibility to develop students who are caring as well as competent.) Here are ten reasons why that is so.

1. We need good character to be fully human. We need strengths of mind, heart, and will—qualities like good judgment, honesty, empathy, caring, perseverance, and self-discipline—to be capable of love and work, two of the hallmarks of human maturity. As Aristotle pointed out, we can't be happy unless we're good. When we lie, cheat, steal, break our commitments, or have sex with whomever we desire, we create problems for ourselves and for others.

The psychiatrist Frank Pittman, reflecting on the sources of unhappiness that his patients disclose in psychotherapy, writes: "The stability of our lives depends upon our character. It is character, not passion, that keeps marriages together long enough to do their work of raising children into mature, responsible, productive citizens. In this imperfect world, it is character that enables people to survive, to endure, and to transcend their misfortunes."

2. Schools are better places when they are communities of character. As the Jefferson Junior High story demonstrates, schools are better able to carry out their mission of teaching and learning when character qualities such as diligence, honesty, respect, and kindness are modeled, expected, taught, celebrated, and continually practiced. When schools are not making a concerted effort to define and teach virtue, there is often a negative moral culture in which disrespect and irresponsibility become normative, disrupt the instructional process, and deform human relationships.

3. Character education is essential to the task of building a moral society. It is painfully clear that our society suffers severe social and moral problems: the breakdown of the family; an epidemic of violence; the deterioration of civility; rampant greed at a time when one of four children is poor, dishonesty at all levels of society; a rising tide of sleaze in the media; a plague of problems stemming from the breakdown of sexual morality; widespread drug and alcohol abuse; the physical and sexual abuse of children; and declining respect for human life at every stage of development. These societal problems have deep roots and require systemic solutions, but it is not possible to build a virtuous society if virtue does not first exist in the minds, hearts, and souls of individual human beings. The school, like the family, is one of the primary seedbeds of this virtue.

4. Democratic societies have a special need for character education. The nation's founders believed that educating for character was essential to the success of our democracy. Democracy, they reasoned, is government by the people; the people themselves are responsible for ensuring a free and just society. That means the people must understand, and be committed to, the moral foundations of democracy: respect for the rights of individuals, regard for law, voluntary participation in public life, and concern for the common good. Loyalty to these democratic virtues, Jefferson argued, must be instilled at any early age.

5. The school's traditional allies in character formation—the family and religion—are weak or absent influences in many children's lives. Historically, families have been the first and primary moral teachers of children. Families also brought children to church, synagogue, or other places of worship—and thereby into a larger moral and spiritual culture that supported the work of parents and offered ultimate reasons for leading a moral life. Religious faith grounded morality in a standard that is absolute and unchanging.

Today, observes physician Charles Whitfield, a founder of the Association for Children of Alcoholics, "more than 50 percent of families are dysfunctional."

Our divorce rate—the highest in the world—has meant that ever-larger numbers of children grow up without both a mother and a father in the home. There is now a vast body of research on divorce and parental absence, and it all points in the same direction: Children from single-parent homes are more at risk than other children for drug use, delinquency, emotional problems, and unmarried pregnancies.

Children in two-parent families, of course, have no assurance they will receive the time, love, teaching, and discipline necessary for healthy moral development. Any number of surveys have found that American parents typically spend only a few minutes a day in face-to-face conversation with their children. In her book, *When the Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children*, the economist Sylvia Hewlett documents that American children, rich and poor, suffer a level of neglect unique among developed nations, and that for the first time in our history, we have a generation of children who are less well cared for than their parents were. Staggering numbers of children also suffer direct abuse: Based on extensive studies, David Finkelhor of the University of New Hampshire estimates conservatively that one in four girls, and at least one in seven boys, is sexually abused at least once before they reach age eighteen.

6. Because we are failing as a society to transmit positive moral values to our children, character problems among the young are on the rise. Although many young persons demonstrate a higher moral consciousness—greater commitment to human rights, concern about the environment, and global awareness—than previous generations, the general youth trends present a darker picture. Ten troubling character trends reveal the magnitude of the problem: rising youth violence (juvenile violent crime increased six fold from 1960 to 1992); increasing dishonesty (lying, cheating, and stealing; the California-based Josephson Institute of Ethics cites studies showing increased cheating in school over the past thirty years); growing disrespect for legitimate authority (a problem experienced by teachers almost everywhere); growing peer cruelty (also reported by teachers all across the country); a rise in prejudice and hate crime (more than 300 U.S. colleges and universities have in recent years reported serious incidents of racial violence or hostility); the deterioration of language (teachers comment on the foul language that increasingly tumbles out of the youngest mouths); a decline in the work ethic (there now exists a widespread student norm against doing more than what's needed to get by); declining personal and civic responsibility (for the past two decades, U.C.L.A.'s annual American Freshman survey has found steadily rising numbers—now over 70 percent—of college freshmen who say that "becoming very well off financially" is an "essential" or "very important" life goal, and shrinking numbers—now a minority—who say that "contributing to the improvement of society" is an essential or important life goal; increasing self-destructive behavior (U.S. teens have one of the highest unmarried pregnancy rates and the highest abortion rate in the developed world, according to a 1989 U.N. study; U.S. youth still show the highest level of drug use of young people anywhere in the industrialized world; teen marijuana use has nearly doubled since 1992, according to a federal government report last year); and growing ethical illiteracy (including ignorance of moral knowledge as basic as the Golden Rule and the tendency to engage in behavior hurtful to self or others without thinking it wrong).

7. There is common ethical ground even in our value-conflicted society. True, Americans have deep, seemingly unbridgeable differences over fundamental moral issues. What could be more fundamental, for example, than the question, "Who is a human being?", or "When does our right to life begin and deserve protection under the law?" But despite differences over issues such as abortion, we can identify core ethical values that give us the common moral ground needed to go forward with the task of character education in a pluralistic society. Indeed, pluralism itself is not possible without agreement on basic values such as justice, honesty, civility, democratic process, and respect for truth. When it comes to school-age children, we can readily agree on the basics: We don't want our kids to lie, cheat on tests, take what isn't theirs, fight, or call names; we do want them tell the truth, play fair, be polite, respect their parents and teachers, be kind to animals, and care about each other.

8. School is a good place to learn about being a good person. The school is a human community filled with human relationships. As such, it is a natural place to learn values like respect and responsibility that should govern how people treat each other and carry out their responsibilities. Indeed, everything a school does teaches good or bad values—including the way teachers and other adults treat students, the way the principal treats staff, the way the school treats parents, and the way students are allowed to treat school staff and each other. Whether teachers teach well and expect students to do their best work and whether questions of right and wrong are discussed in classrooms also teach moral lessons. So the relevant issue is never, "Should schools teach values?" but rather, "Which values will they teach?" and "How well will they teach them?"

9. There is broad-based, growing support for character education. It comes from government, which at the

federal and state level is now funding and promoting character education. It comes from business, which recognizes that a responsible labor force requires workers who have character traits of honesty, dependability, pride in work, and the capacity to work with others. It comes from teachers' unions; both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, for example, have joined national coalitions advancing character education. It comes from reform-minded groups like Educators for Social Responsibility, which know that progress toward social and economic justice and global peace requires morally principled citizens. It comes from previously skeptical groups such as the American Jewish Committee, which a few years ago reversed its long-standing caution against public school values education and issued a report urging schools to teach "civic virtues" such as "honesty, civility, responsibility, tolerance, and loyalty." Perhaps most important, support for character education comes from the grass roots, especially from parents who are looking for help in a world where it's harder than ever to raise good children. For more than a decade, every Gallup poll that has asked parents whether schools should teach morals has come up with an unequivocal yes.

10. Character education is doable, and it works. Given the enormous moral problems facing the country, their deep social roots, and the ever-increasing responsibilities that schools already shoulder, the prospect of taking on character education may at first seem overwhelming. But as the Jefferson Junior High story illustrates, character education doesn't have to be added to the curriculum; rather, it can be done within the school day as part of every phase of classroom and school life. For example, at the State University of New York, our Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (Respect and Responsibility) promotes a "comprehensive approach" to character education that includes the teacher as moral model and mentor, creating a caring classroom community, using discipline as a tool for moral growth, teaching virtues through the curriculum, cooperative learning, ethical reflection, conflict resolution, school and community service, creating a school-wide moral culture, and recruiting parents and communities as full partners in promoting good character.

The Child Development Project (CDP), first piloted in San Ramon, California, and then replicated around the country, offers what is perhaps the best research evidence that comprehensive character education makes a positive difference. Its elementary-level character program has five interlocking components: (1) a reading and language arts curriculum that uses children's literature to reflect on core values; (2) cooperative learning, giving students regular practice in learning to work with others; (3) discipline that involves students actively in creating a classroom that respects others and supports learning; (4) school service programs, such as cross-age tutoring and "buddy classes" that enable older kids to help younger ones; and (5) home-based family activities that provide parents with ways to foster their children's character development.

In a longitudinal research evaluation, students in three CDP elementary schools, compared to students in matched control schools, were found to be more considerate and cooperative in their classrooms; more likely to feel accepted by their peers; more skilled at solving interpersonal problems; and more strongly committed to democratic values such as including all members of a group in a decision. In a follow-up study in eighth grade, students who had had the CDP program showed stronger conflict resolution skills, had greater self-esteem, were involved in more extracurricular activities, and were less likely to use marijuana or alcohol.

What about older, more sophisticated students? Will character education work in high schools? The need is clearly greatest at that level: Character-related behavior problems—especially sex, drugs, drinking, and violence—typically become most severe during the high school years, at the very time that institutional supports for teaching character and creating a cohesive moral community become weakest.

For this reason, it's welcome news for the character movement that Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) is preparing to establish a League of Value-Driven Schools, consisting initially of fifty to one hundred secondary schools and eventually, PDK hopes, of hundreds. PDK is one of the country's major educational organizations; it publishes *Kappan* magazine and the annual Gallup poll on education. Last October, it issued "A Study of Core Values and the Schools," reporting its findings, from a survey of more than 10,000 educators and non-educators, that most people think there are values on which we agree, that schools should teach them, and that schools aren't doing enough to teach them now.

Some high schools have already moved forward with character education. One is Brentwood High School in St. Louis County, Missouri. In 1993-94, Brentwood formed a committee of students and parents that came up with the following goals for its character program: (a) personal goals: accountability, honesty, perseverance, and respect for self; (b) social goals: abstinence from drugs, alcohol, and sex; caring about others;

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Remembering Mario Savio

Although I was a member of the Executive Committee of the Free Speech Movement in 1964, I wasn't sure about going into Berkeley's Sproul Hall to risk arrest until Mario Savio gave his now-famous speech telling us that there comes a time when the ruling power becomes so oppressive that we have to throw ourselves on the gears and wheels of the machine. He exhorted us to take a risk and stand up for our beliefs, to give witness against oppression. Mario taught us that it was not enough to have moral consciousness in our heads and hearts and living-room conversations—we had to put our bodies on the line. He changed my life. And as the following selection of reminiscences from his FSM compatriots attests, Mario changed the lives of everyone else who was fortunate enough to know him.

—Michael Lerner

Mark Shechner

First we lost Jerry Garcia, and now Mario Savio is gone too, at the age of fifty-three, and I'm sitting here on the floor of my study, a graying man surrounded by boxes of yellowing Berkeley memorabilia, wondering what to think about all this. The first item to catch my eye is the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* of December 7, 1964, with its ninety-point banner in flaming red: "Rebels Yell 'No' to UC Peace Plan," and its panoramic photo of some 18,000 members of the U.C. Berkeley community gathered at the Greek Theater to hear President Clark Kerr's offer of "peace." A measly offer it was, all law and order, no concessions. Buried in column three is the account of Mario Savio's mounting the podium to address the crowd and being wrestled to the ground by police. Here is a stack of old *Daily Californian*s and there issues of the scurrilous *Berkeley Barb*, the anarchist tabloid with its apocalyptic politics, electroshock humor, and acid-trip artwork. And here is the photo book, *The Trouble in Berkeley*, with its totemic pictures of that insane fall semester when the world turned upside down: Mario in his sheepskin coat, looking younger than his twenty-one years, addressing the crowd in Sproul Plaza; Mario atop the trapped police car where Jack Weinberg, arrested for handing out political literature, sat on for thirty-six hours; folksinger Joan Baez priming the crowd with "We Shall Overcome"; columns of students streaming into that building on December 2 to place their bodies "upon the gears and upon the wheels" of the university, as Mario had exhorted them to do. Wasn't anyone going to class?



PHOTO AP/WIDEWORLD

I was one of those who put his body upon the gears and the wheels of the University of California on December 2, 1964, following Mario Savio and Joan Baez into Sproul Hall in protest against the university's refusal to allow students to organize politically on university property. Many more entered than the 773 who were arrested, but some had exams to take or papers to hand in and left before the arrests. I'm not prepared to say that I'd have followed Mario anywhere, but I don't think that many of us would taken those weeks off from classes and risked blowing finals, grades, and even careers had he not been there to ignite the fire in us. Mario was the most charismatic public speaker I ever heard in person, and it was charisma based on the two things that could move a crowd like that in the 1960s: ethical energy and intelligence.

Mario was among the many young Americans who

Mark Shechner was a graduate student in English at the University of California, Berkeley, in the fall of 1964. Currently he is professor of English at SUNY, Buffalo.

had left their homes and colleges to register voters in Mississippi the previous summer, when three of their number, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Mitchell Goodman, were murdered. They had learned to live with fear, and fear became the rock on which they founded their moral stamina, their tactical savvy, their commitment, and their analysis. They had seen first-hand how entrenched power perpetuates injustice and came home prepared to wage war against it.

That fall, the Republican Convention that nominated Barry Goldwater was held in San Francisco's Cow Palace. Students around the Bay Area organized demonstrations against Goldwater, who had threatened to make a parking lot of Vietnam and was hostile to civil rights. Among Goldwater's staunch supporters was *Oakland Tribune* publisher and former senator from California William Knowland, upon whose orders, it was widely believed, campus administrators outlawed all political organizing on the campus, thus catalyzing the storm of protest that brought Mario Savio to prominence and set the stage for the occupation of Sproul Hall and mass arrests in December.

The Free Speech Movement, or FSM, was a coalition of campus political clubs, including several Republican groups—even Students for Goldwater—who were brought together by the only force that could do such a thing: a major administrative blunder. At the outset Mario Savio, a junior philosophy major and campus president of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, was just one of many representatives on the FSM steering committee. But Mario had a gift: the ability to transform himself on the instant from the shy, stammering person he was in private into a mesmerizing orator.

It wasn't his voice, which had no special resonance; it was the lucidity of mind. People close to him in the movement would complain that Mario could be confused behind the scenes and spoke in sentences so intricate that nobody could unravel them, but before a crowd he was electric. Speaking without notes, he could think circles around sluggish university administrators, who, bred for compliance and managerial prudence, countered reason with edicts and coercion and demonstrated no grasp of the issues before them. Indeed, Chancellor Edward Strong, who badly mishandled the university's response to the insurrection, would be relieved of his post by the end of the academic year.

Mario could recall virtually verbatim the last meeting with the administration and could foretell the next moves, and behind him was the FSM brain trust: Suzanne Goldberg, Art and Jackie Goldberg, Bettina Aptheker, Jack Weinberg, Brian Turner, and so many others, a seminar of minds far too swift for their outflanked administrative counterparts. But Mario was the front man, the voice. They might be earth or air or water, but he was fire. Seizing upon University President Clark Kerr's description of the modern multiversity as a vast machine, Mario extemporized a call to arms that was instant folklore.

"There is a time," he said, "when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even tacitly take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all."

There it was: the intellectual energy, the moral fervor, the poetic touch. Visually, too, there were the curly-haired, square-jawed good looks. Together, they could galvanize a crowd and yet keep it focused and in good humor. I never heard him incite to violence or speak meanly of the opposition—not even of Alameda District Assistant Attorney Edwin Meese III, who tried the case against us and was catapulted by that success to Sacramento and then to the White House with Ronald Reagan. Mario would take off his shoes before climbing on the trapped police car because, simply, it was the right thing to do.

Mario paid a price for his commitments: a four-month prison sentence, expulsion from the university, an education delayed for some twenty years. He did not get his bachelor's degree until 1984, when he graduated summa cum laude from San Francisco State. Nor did he remain in public life. When the Free Speech Movement had run its course, he married Suzanne Goldberg, went into seclusion, and worked around the Bay Area as a bartender and bookstore clerk. He took no part in the anti-war movement and was absent from the more complicated and treacherous racial politics that followed the breakup of the civil rights movement.

I've heard him spoken of as a victim of the revolution—one of those consumed and damaged by the addictive drugs of political life: fame, ego, and power. No doubt he was burned out, but it is just as likely that the moral conviction that had led him into his position of leadership allowed him to walk away into private life when his moment was over. He was married twice, the father of three sons. In a 1984 interview he alluded to "people whose lives were touched by tragedy, who emerged from the shadows of it chastened, and maybe

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Stew Albert

Mario Savio was a little like Moses. His "Exodus" was the Free Speech Movement (FSM), which in its scope, rhetoric, and spectacular activity became the archetypical epic of the New Left generation. And Mario was its brilliant, eloquent, charismatic, brave, and very vulnerable leader. Like Moses, he stuttered, was painfully shy, and extraordinarily modest. Of course, like the rest of us, he never got to the revolutionary promised land.

Mario was moral to the core and this created an agonizing and irresolvable double bind. How could he practice the requirements and compromises of leadership without sacrificing his moral essence?

Mario, like Moses, did, on occasion, surprise and shock his followers by rebelling against the power of his own charisma. He would periodically exile himself from the very student movement he helped so mightily to birth.

Many of us were frustrated by his self-doubts. We felt angry and let down by his political absence. But instant forgiveness was always his for the asking. We admired him greatly. Alone among our New Left ranks he inspired awe and reverence even in his closest friends. His Sicilian soul was our golden sun.□

Stew Albert, a founding Yippie and former leader of the Black Panther Party Defense Committees, is a member of Havurah Shalom Congregation in Portland, Oregon.

Jack Weinberg

I mourn Mario Savio, although I find it hard to acknowledge or accept the fact of his death. Mario was the first of the 1960s New Left media personalities. He leapt full force onto the stage of history, apparently from nowhere, as leader and voice of a massive student free-speech battle at the University of California, Berkeley, between October and December of 1964. The television and newspaper images of Mario's charismatic persona signaled to the world the start of a massive student and youth protest movement: a movement that continued, evolved, and ultimately helped define a decade. To know Mario only as his media persona, however, is to comprehend just a small part of who he was. Most public leaders learn to construct a media persona and then use it as a tool to deliver a message or to advance a cause. For Mario, media attention was troubling; it was an unintended consequence. The media were able to capture a slice of his reality, but Mario himself never sought to create nor to project any self-conscious media image.

Mario had been inspired to his activism by the courage and commitment of young African Americans, in the deep South and elsewhere, who were struggling for basic human, civil, and economic rights with little or no broad public recognition, often in the face of extreme violence and brutality. Mario's personal identification with the Black struggle was an important reality that the mass media could never satisfactorily capture. Nor did Mario seek to display that side of himself.

At Berkeley, student activists gravitated to Mario as a moral force who was also their peer. Mario's power flowed from his ability to sum up and express the goals and dreams of a community in struggle; to express these in an original, authentic, ethical voice; and at the same time, to relate this vision to a dynamic plan of action that made good, practical and strategic sense. Mario's audience was his community.

The celebrity, Mario Savio, has died. Mario the beacon and moral leader remains a part of all the lives he touched. □

Jack Weinberg was closely associated with Mario Savio in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. Since 1989, he has been with Greenpeace, where he currently works as a Senior Toxics Campaigner.

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Steve Weissman

Mario was a pain in the tush—and that's what we, the radical grad students, needed to keep our people moving.

He wouldn't shut up or go away. He kept shoving. He created crises. He refused to let us play it safe.

In his heart, he never believed we would get the teaching assistants out on strike. But he wouldn't let his doubt stop us from trying. He kept telling the truth, making us squirm, forcing us to face the awkward need to act.

Why couldn't he compromise, our mushy moderates asked, go along with a few reasonable restrictions on what students would be allowed to say?

No restrictions on the content of speech, he taught a generation that later lost its way in the swamp of campus speech codes and the silliness of the politically correct. Free speech is absolute.

On civil disobedience, he had the gall to refuse the hemlock of Socrates, the gracious acceptance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Why should we be punished for breaking the law, he demanded? We should all get medals for being right.

Mario died waiting for his.

Small consolation that the Free Speech Movement won. Some of us found that important. I was never sure Mario did. Like Sisyphus, he lived to push the rock forever up the hill.

Once we'd won, Mario led the way to disband the FSM. No carcass for sectarians to squabble over. No bureaucratic shell to slow down the rising anti-war protests.

Then he—the most famous student radical in America—left the country for a time.

How Mario!

He was here, then he was gone.□

Steve Weissman chaired the Graduate Coordinating Committee and served with Mario on the FSM Steering Committee. He now lives on Florida's Gulf beaches, where he writes and publishes books on boating and fishing.

Bettina Aptheker

When I picture Mario now, I see him first as he was thirty-two years ago: the distinctive mop of curls, the ocean-blue eyes, tall and gangly, earnest, intense, his voice crackling, his energy electrifying. Then I see him as he was at fifty, with his hair white and tied back into a long pony tail, the same ocean-blue eyes, and the same intensity and voice.

Mario's great strength as a student leader was his absolute and transparent integrity. He never wavered from the bedrock of his principles: freedom of speech, justice, and equality. He was never beholden to any political party or ideology. He spoke only from his own conscience. He believed in the intelligence and good will of his fellow students. He was not interested in personal power. He told everyone everything that went on in administrative and faculty meetings.

In thirty-two years, none of these qualities changed. As a friend, Mario was sympathetic, emotionally available, passionately intelligent, insatiably curious. He was not sexually exploitative. He treated me as an equal because he valued me as a human being. Mario was appalled by injustice, incredulous when he encountered meanness, selfishness, or jealousy. He loved the wind, water, trees, mountains, and the night sky. He was a brilliant thinker, interested in physics and astronomy, a magician in formal logic. He had a delicious sense of humor.

Above all else, Mario had vast personal courage. Life was not easy for him. There were economic hardships and complicated moral judgments, serious internal conflicts and emotional upheavals. In the midst of these realities he walked through the world committed to changing it. For all of these reasons, and for others somewhere beyond words, in the ache of the heart, I loved Mario and always will.□

Bettina Aptheker is an associate professor of Women's Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She was a member of the FSM Steering Committee, 1964-65, at the University of California at Berkeley.

Stranger in the Midst

A Memoir of Spiritual Discovery

Nan Fink

ART BY CYN MAURICE



When I converted, I did not anticipate the struggle to be accepted as a Jew. The Jewish community, as I know it, is ambivalent toward its converts and suspicious of our motives. It often treats us as unwanted visitors. To protect myself against this rejection, I sometimes concealed my Gentile background.

I have learned from my conversations with dozens of converts that this deception is not unusual. Many of us make ourselves invisible, like the salt religious Jews sprinkle on challah on Shabbat. But this attempt to fit in separates us from our life's experience, and we bear the burden of dishonesty.

The Jewish community often questions the legitimacy of converts, but we are not alone. Jews in interfaith relationships, unaffiliated Jews, gay and lesbian Jews, African-American and Asian Jews, and even unmarried Jews are treated similarly. We are pushed to the margins of the community because we threaten its cohesiveness.

Conversion raises the issue of identity. When I crossed the ethnic divide, I was forced to examine myself in ways I had avoided. Sometimes I did not know who I was. No longer a Christian but insecure as a Jew, I felt disoriented and confused.

Even my vision changed after conversion. Experiencing anti-Semitism, I began to see the world through a Jewish lens. But my grown children are not Jewish, nor is my family of origin, and I feared that this change in me would hurt our connection. My loyalty was split between the people I was joining, and those closest to me. At times I felt I was being pulled apart.

I also struggled with Judaism itself. When I converted, I thought I had found a spiritual home, but I soon realized that I could not accept the religion in its most traditional form. As a woman, I felt excluded. My search for a more meaningful spirituality within Judaism took me through periods of frustration and discouragement, until I reached a deeper understanding.

The past decade since my conversion has been filled with upheaval. I've experienced the making and breaking of a marriage and a partnership, the creation of Tikkun magazine, the involvement in Jewish politics, the reworking of relationships in my family, the drawing into the self, and my spiritual re-emergence.

I'd like to believe that the most wrenching part of becoming a Jew is over. Certainly, I am more secure in my identity. I've deepened spiritually, finding a way to observe Judaism that fulfills me. But the crowd milling in the street below reminds me that nothing stays put. Permanence is an illusion.

A white dove flies close by my apartment window, circling and returning. I watch as it settles on the railing of my balcony, gently fluffing its wings. The sight is so perfect it hardly seems real. An omen, I decide. Even though my life will continue to change, the dove gives me hope that it will be accompanied by a greater feeling of integration.

From Stranger in the Midst: A Memoir of Spiritual Discovery, *by Nan Fink. Copyright (c) 1997 by Nan Fink. Reprinted by arrangement with Basic Books, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.* Nan Fink, *co-founder of* TIKKUN, *was the magazine's publisher from 1985 to 1990. She divides her time between writing and co-directing Chochmat HaLev, a center of Jewish spirituality in the Bay Area.*

In the end, my journey has been one of self-realization. Like others who make great life changes, I have come to know and live by my own truth. Despite the many mistakes made along the way, despite the doubt, despite the difficulty, I have arrived where I want to be.

*****

As one of the 200,000 strangers in the midst of the American Jewish community, I am the object of great curiosity. Since I am publicly identified as a convert, people sometimes overcome their reticence and ask me about my life.

"Why did you become Jewish?" they usually begin, just as they might ask why I signed up for a course in Yiddish or joined a choral group. I appreciate their interest and respect their desire to learn about my experience, but I often falter as I answer.

I am not comfortable summarizing my experience. The truth is so deeply embedded in my life that I cannot separate it without distortion. When I open my imagination, colors and shapes and sounds swirl together as part of the vortex through which I passed on my way to conversion. And when I add snippets of memories, moments that go with words like "creek" and "grandmother" and "darkness," the vortex becomes larger. And when I think of Baptist Sunday school, and when I remember my parents' home, and my mother's illness, and the way we said grace around the dinner table, and the first time I heard about the Holocaust, I understand even more; and it goes on from there, so that everything I've experienced is significant in the same way that a drop of iodine poured into water is diffused throughout.

All my life experience is connected to my conversion. Although this is my truth, a question remains. How, then, do I explain myself to people who are sincerely interested in knowing more about me? If I brush them off, I am not allowing an intimacy that can come through shared stories.

I sometimes tell people I converted after a long spiritual journey. This is an important part of my story. My experience of spirituality as a child. My disillusionment with Christianity as an adult. The years as an atheist. My awakening to a consciousness of the divine. The move toward Judaism.

If I rush through this life experience, it sounds trite and predictable, diminished in my own eyes. But if I condense it under the category of spiritual journey, people look at me blankly. The idea of a spiritual journey is so vague that I've not really told them anything.

I can always say that I converted because of my relationship with Michael. Most people assume that this was so, anyhow. An act of love, a renunciation of self to please the beloved. Hasn't it been this way throughout history? Woman, passive and pliant, taking on the religion of her lover, her husband.

When I hear this assumption about my past, I have an immediate reaction. "No, that's not what happened," I state loudly. "My conversion was for me." I want to say: Who do you think I am? Don't you know that I take my commitment to Judaism very seriously? Don't you understand that I became a Jew after decades of consideration and preparation, and I did it for myself, as it had to be?

Yet the truth is that I converted partly because of Michael. Although I had been moving in that direction for years, he was the impetus for my completion of the process. He opened his home to me, shared his understanding of Judaism, introduced me to the beauty of Shabbat. His support and guidance during the process made it all the easier. Although I believe I would have converted eventually, the issue of conversion was brought more to the foreground by our relationship and by his desire that I be a Jew.

Through the years, I have spoken with many converts. Wherever I go, they seek me out, tell me their stories, talk about their problems. Often, I lead workshops for them in an effort to clarify our struggle. Several years ago I interviewed two dozen of my fellow converts in depth in an attempt to better understand my own experience.

I have met many women who, at first glance, appear to have converted for marriage. Their story seems uncomplicated: They met a Jewish man, fell in love, and converted because he wanted it. But always, as with me, there is more: a hunger for connectedness, a disenchantment with the religion of their birth, a desire for spiritual meaning, an interest in creating a close-knit family within a supportive community, an intellectual fascination. These reasons, and others, existed well before the woman met the man, so that the choice of a Jewish mate was part of the resolution of these issues.

The roots of conversion go back into childhood. For some, there is an identification with a Jewish relative, perhaps a grandfather who married a Gentile woman, or an aunt by marriage who was Jewish. These converts often feel that they are claiming their true identity by becoming Jews, correcting a matter that has been too long ignored.

Other converts attribute their first interest in Judaism to someone they knew as a child, a Jewish best friend or the Jewish family down the street where they felt welcomed. But many, like myself, did not have close connections with Jews. Although a few Jewish children lived in my Northern California suburban town, they



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were not my friends. I was fascinated by the thick, long braid of Abigail, whose father was a rabbi, but I saw her only on the school bus. After learning about the Holocaust as a teenager, I wanted to talk with her and the other Jewish students in my high school about that unfathomable event, but I did not have the nerve. The gulf between us was too wide. I was the one creating it: I had been taught by my Christian culture that Jews were different, and that the Jewish religion was honorable but somehow inferior.

My links to Judaism were hardly existent. But even people like me have a link with their past: a relationship that was instrumental, or an experience of pain, or something that touched us or gave us meaning, so that when we later make the decision to convert, the connection exists between our earliest days and this new identity.

Many converts tell me that they have been aware of the spiritual dimension of life from the time they were very young. They experienced it sitting in a tree, or gazing at the stars, or floating in water. This early awareness in nature, though it had nothing to do with Judaism, shaped their spiritual search and eventually led them to convert.

Such was my experience. As a child, I had a secret place I used to visit every day, a creek that ran close by my family's house. This was where I went to be alone. After school I left my shoes by the side of the road and slid down the narrow, muddy path to this creek. Sometimes the spring rains filled the creek bed with rushing water, but more often there was just a trickle, and little pools formed by rocks.

I was surrounded there by fecundity: Ferns, rotting leaves, undergrowth. Slimy rocks and mud. Everything was a part of everything else, and boundaries did not exist. I explored this creek, moving quietly so as to not disturb the stillness. My body became one with my surroundings, large in the narrow straits and small next to the high creek bed wall.

Sometimes I stared into the water, merging into its depths. I watched the little tadpoles dart from rock to rock. Happy there, and filled with a sense of peace, I closed my eyes and let myself be part of the sounds around me.

The image of the creek is often with me in Jewish services. When I say the *Sh'ma*, I remember the smell of the clay, the color of the vegetation, the cool of the water. "*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad*." These Hebrew words speak of the connectedness of all life that I first came to know at the creek. When I was a child, I did not have a name for this experience of oneness. "I'm going exploring," I'd tell my mother, rushing out the door to the creek. "Don't get dirty; be back for dinner," she'd reply, always concerned about tidiness and punctuality. She did not know that I was on my way to an experience of wonder, and that the creek today would be different from the day before and the day after.

In later years I came to recognize that what I felt at the creek was spiritual in nature. The understanding of the union of all life never left me, although at times it grew distant. Then I yearned for it without knowing.

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In the crucial time before conversion, when everything is so unsure, the teachers and rabbis of converts take on great importance. We look to them for signs of approval and acceptance, but too often don't find it. Instead we sense ambivalence in the very people who are helping us become Jews.

The reasons for this are complex. Rabbis who work with converts are under pressure to be discerning. They have the responsibility of deciding who gets in and who doesn't, a serious matter for a people who has been so deeply traumatized by outsiders. These rabbis' critical faculties must be operating to make sure that they are not being deceived or missing an important point of information.

This requires a certain vigilance. Converts, after all, are the *goyim*. Even if we appear to be acceptable, we must be watched, because, as one recently published Orthodox guide warns, "much damage has been done to the Jewish people by insincere converts." The guide's author does not elucidate, and I have never found any description that supports this statement. Instead, I take this admonition as an example of the fear of converts that exists within the Jewish community.

This fear is also evident in the Orthodox practice of being careful not to teach the convert too much. "Instruct (him) about a few of the *mitzvot*, but do not teach him Torah," one of the newer Orthodox books about conversion says. The dividing line between Jew and non-Jew must be kept, because it is dangerous to impart precious secrets to these questionable people. If they decide not to convert at the last minute, then, nothing will have been lost.

Reform and Conservative rabbis are less guarded about sharing knowledge. Typically, their converts attend classes and read voluminously, so that they end up knowing more than most people who are born Jewish. This process can take a few months for the already educated to several years for the novice. Still, there is the watchful eye, the discerning question, the edginess under the surface.

The fear of accepting undesirable converts shows itself most strongly when it comes to marriage. Many people who want to convert plan on marrying a Jew, or are already married to one. The suspicion, then, is that they are going through the motions of conversion to catch a husband or wife, or to placate a Jewish partner.

This suspicion of insincerity filters down to gay and lesbian converts who have Jewish partners. They are already censured in many parts of the Jewish community for their sexual orientation, and their partnership with a Jew only increases the distrust.

Not surprisingly, the Orthodox community is the most concerned about converts in love relationships with Jews. In Israel, any hint of such a before conversion is grounds for dismissal by the Rabbinic Court. As a result, converts in these relationships must cover their tracks with lies. Those who are already married to Jews face special difficulty. I know of a married woman who was forced to live away from her husband and young child for almost a year in order to convert, until a sympathetic rabbi finally intervened.

Orthodox conversion in the United States is more lenient, but prospective converts in relationships are often looked upon unkindly. I've heard tales about engagements that had to be broken and lovers who were not allowed to see each other before conversion was complete. Many converts are willing to do this because their conversions are so important to them, but others are offended by the suspicion cast upon their motives.

A more tolerant attitude toward converts in relationships exists in the other branches of Judaism. But it often comes from the interest in keeping the married couple Jewish, not the desire to have more converts. When an intermarriage takes place, there is at least a chance that the children will be raised as Jews if the non-Jewish partner converts.

In recent years, a startling fact has begun to surface in the Jewish press: Converts frequently bring their Jewish partners along with them into Judaism. Because they have chosen this tradition as adults, they make it central in their lives and become leaders in their communities. Their Jewish husbands or wives, who never paid attention to Judaism before, now find themselves going to more classes or services than they ever imagined.

The joke is on the man who wants his *shiksa* lover, the symbol of his freedom, to convert for his parents' sake, but not to change. Or the Jewish woman whose non-religious husband has converted and now insists on observing Shabbat, while she'd rather not. Not surprisingly, difficulties arise between partners. But over time many Jews find that their lives have been enormously enriched, led, as they were, by their convert partner into a deeper relationship to their own tradition.

I am pleased when I hear reports about this happening, because it points to the contributions converts make. If these stories were more widely known, we would be more highly valued. It would help to remove the onus from conversion.

Converts almost always take the commitment of conversion very seriously. I haven't met one yet who doesn't go far beyond the rabbinic category of sincerity, even if a relationship with a Jew exists. To convert solely for the sake of a mate or partner is hardly imaginable. Who would go through the trouble?

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After my conversion ceremony, I could have celebrated at one of the restaurants or taken the rest of the afternoon off. But I was soon back at work at the *Tikkun* office.

This was a monumental day, but I did not mark it with festivities. The ritual at the *mikveh* had been private, an event unto itself. Although I felt deeply joyful, it had been a quiet joy, one that did not spread out to the world beyond the synagogue walls. The moments of connection with Rabbi Burt and the others on the Beit Din, the cool waters covering me, and Michael's appearance at the end of the conversion had been enough. Or so I thought.

But now I wonder. I intensely missed my children that day, wishing they were with me, wanting them to understand and accept what I was doing. And where was the community? Before the conversion, Burt had said I could invite a few friends or family to come to the synagogue and welcome me as a Jew after I finished with the *mikveh*, but I had declined. It seemed too complicated, given the awkwardness in my life at that time.

Afterward, back in the office, I felt lonely. The day was anticlimactic. Although I didn't realize it then, the thrill of becoming Jewish demanded an outlet. Going to the *mikveh* had been like one hand clapping: To make the full sound I needed to celebrate with family and community. But I had cut them out.

I couldn't accept that becoming Jewish would cause me to be different from my children. When I spoke to my daughter early on the morning of my conversion, I mentioned that I was going to the *mikveh* later that day. "It's just a little ceremony," I said. "No big deal."

I told her this, knowing that I was headed for one of the most profound experiences of my life and that it would have reverberations for her, too. In denying its importance, I was trying to reassure her, and myself, that I was still her mother, the one who loved her no matter what.

"You shall diligently teach [these words] to your children," the Torah instructs. The admonition to pass

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Lovers and Other Strangers

A TIKKUN Roundtable on Intermarriage

TIKKUN: In recent surveys about American Jewish life there is indication of a large increase in intermarriage. Many Jews worry that the Jews who intermarry are leaving the Jewish community. Tikkun asks you two questions: Why is there so much intermarriage? And how should we evaluate it—is it a threat or an opportunity? Should the Jewish world welcome intermarriage into the synagogue and institutions of Jewish life, or as some have argued, does a friendly welcome simply encourage more intermarriage? Does intermarriage occur primarily because of the normal social interactions that occur in America, or is it in some way a reflection of something that is lacking in the Jewish world and if so, what is it reflecting?

Egon Mayer: Why the increases in intermarriage? There is a complex series of reasons, most of them demographic, very few of them purely psychological. The tremendous dispersion of Jews from areas of dense concentration, the enormous increases in opportunity for Jews in workplaces where previously they didn't have opportunity, so they're encountering many more peers in environments where they are a very small minority away from parental control, away from community control. All the market forces that determine mate selection favor interfaith marriage, which means that one would have to have an enormous amount of self-restraint in the face of that not to enter intermarriages with attractive available others.

As to how to evaluate it, it's not only intermarrieds who are leaving Jewish involvement: Vast numbers of American Jews, independent of intermarriage, for generations have been leaving Jewish communal life and opting for more attractive alternatives. So I'm not sure that intermarriage per se is leading people to depart from the Jewish community.

Whether intermarrieds can be attracted back, that depends on whether anybody could be attracted back, whether you could have an engaging, exciting community. I don't think that intermarrieds are unique in this respect—whatever is going to be exciting and attractive to Jews in general would be attractive to intermarrieds in general. I don't see the intermarriage population as being particularly distinctive or unusual in this respect. I think we've tended to make them distinctive because it's a way of externalizing fundamental problems in the Jewish community.

Ellen Jaffe McClain: Egon is correct. However, for some individuals, psychosexual factors, such as relationships with parents and gender stereotypes, can contribute to the decision not to filter out non-Jews as partners, or sometimes to seek out non-Jews as partners. There are certainly people I interviewed for my own work who specifically mentioned that they were looking for partners who weren't like their parents. Gender stereotypes like the Jewish prince and princess are well known to all of us.

More important than these, though, is an element of religious alienation, which I have come to believe probably follows demographics as the most important subfactor pushing intermarriage. There are plenty of people who are not unhappy about being Jewish, but who are also not religiously Jewish, who did not have dynamic religious experiences growing up, who when faced with the possibility of marrying a non-Jew, say, well, O.K., being Jewish is important to me, but it's not that much a religious thing with me, so why shouldn't I marry someone raised in another faith?

Egon Mayer, Ph.D., is professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and director of the Jewish Outreach Institute.
Ellen Jaffe McClain is a teacher in the Los Angeles public schools and the author of Embracing the Stranger: Intermarriage and the Future of the American Jewish Community *(Basic Books, 1995).*
Lawrence Kushner is the rabbi at Congregation Beth-El in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and the author of Invisible Lines of Connection: Sacred Stories of the Ordinary *(Jewish Lights, 1996).*
Blu Greenberg is the author of books on women and Judaism and how to run a traditional Jewish household.
Tirzah Firestone is the rabbi of the Jewish Renewal Congregation of Boulder, Colorado, and a Jungian therapist in private practice. She is currently writing a book about her intermarriage, to be published by Dutton in 1998.

Intermarriage is a threat because many marginal Jews are marrying either people who do have a religious agenda of their own, or more often, people who are brought up marginally in some other faith. So, you have what Rabbi Harold Schulweis calls "interfaithless" couples, who I think probably comprise the largest single group among all intermarriers. They tend not to raise their kids with very much religion, and so their children certainly don't identify as Jews and don't go on to marry Jews. On the other hand, demographer Steve Cohen says that a lot more strongly identified Jews are marrying non-Jews as well. So you have a cohort of Jews who don't filter out all Gentiles as marriage partners but who are likely to screen out non-Jews who bring a competing religious agenda, or who are antagonistic to Judaism.

Lawrence Kushner: For me, as a congregational rabbi, the most important question is why the non-Jew in the intermarried couple doesn't convert. Obviously, the ones I meet are already close to the synagogue in one way or another, but even among them, there are many different answers. Sometimes the non-Jew in the couple seems to be still too tied to his or her old family. Some decline conversion saying that it would kill their parents. A few say that they just had to make sure that their Jewish spouses would really marry them just the way they were *without* changing their religion, but now conversion is an option. Others seem a little frightened about picking a new religion, not understanding how someone could really "take on" a new people. A few, of course, are devout, practicing Christians. I'm not sure I can help someone like that to make a Jewish home and raise Jewish kids, but I'm still prepared to try. Still others sadly have not converted because they have been insulted or injured by Jews. And a surprising number are not Jews simply because they have never been invited to become members of the Jewish people. In our congregation of 450 households, I frequently convert a half a dozen of them a year, most of the time simply by asking. Many of these intermarrieds have lived for decades as de facto Jews and only decide to convert prior to a child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Mayer: One category that I've encountered, which has not yet been mentioned and statistically, it's a substantial one, is second marriages. Here the non-Jews are saying, I can't convert not because of my parents but because of my non-Jewish children from the previous marriage.

Blu Greenberg: A third factor —beyond living in an open society, the law of propinquity—is the weakened link to Halakha, to a normative system. The extent to which Halakha operates in one's life is inversely related to intermarriage. Of course there are no guarantees. Orthodox Jews also study at Harvard and Yale and encounter attractive and principled non-Jews in Chemistry 101 or on a surgery rotation. But a halakhic mind set kicks in and says, "out of bounds, out of bounds, don't even think about it!"

But it does happen here, too. Besides we're a whole family. Given the numbers, the traditional response of sitting shiva and cutting them off completely doesn't work except for a small segment of the community. That response is just as likely to result in forever losing the 50 percent who marry out as it is to succeed in discouraging a few from doing so.

Still, when I look at the larger picture, it's a very fearful phenomenon, especially in light of Egon's statistics about the low prospects for children of an intermarriage identifying themselves as Jews when they reach adulthood.

Mayer: In non-conversionary families, about 20 percent of the kids end up identifying as Jewish in adulthood. But we don't know much about their decision-making process.

Greenberg: Given the pull and power of the majority culture, you could say it's remarkable that 20 percent do identify as Jews. Interestingly, a contemporary twist to intermarriage is the cachet Jews now have. Some years ago a poll showed that 57 percent of non-Jewish Americans would not be opposed to their child marrying a Jew, probably the first time in Diaspora history that this has happened. It's also a bit sobering to consider that this is roughly the same rate as intermarriage, i.e., as much as the host society will allow, that's how much Jews will choose to marry out. We're such a small number to begin with. I agree that conversion is the key. We have to divide up the waterfront in terms of our tasks. It's appropriate for there to be such a strong stance against intermarriage from Orthodoxy, but there's also a place for greater outreach. We need multiple responses, the whole range; and our denominational structure allows for that.

Tirzah Firestone: I am not as concerned with the numbers as I am about what is happening to the soul of our people. The intermarriage trend could ultimately challenge and catalyze the Jewish community toward more depth. In most cases, that's not a bad thing.

I was intermarried for over a decade and I can attest to the fact that interfaith marriages can, indeed, produce a rich germination between Jews and non-Jews. I

came from an Orthodox background. When I married a Gentile, I was disowned by my family. But at the time that I got involved with my husband, who is a devout Christian, I was a disaffected Jew, very turned off, even anti-Jewish. It was actually through my intermarriage that the conversation about Judaism was reopened for me. Now I understand this is not the case for every Jew who intermarries. But for me, by virtue of living with a non-Jew, a person so diametrically opposite to me in temperament, cultural, and ethnic background, I suddenly felt liberated. I began to study and discuss my own texts again, to *davven*, to call upon my own Jewish education and resources. Ultimately, I went back to study to become a rabbi.

In my long journey from there to here, I have met scores of couples, probably hundreds by this point, who have been, as I was, catalyzed back into their Yiddishkeyt, into their Judaism, by virtue of loving someone who sees the world through a different lens. This other-ness can also serve us Jews, to grapple with and take a fresh view of Judaism.

I am convinced that we must not only look at intermarriage formulas and statistics that are so scary. We've also got to honor the fact that there is an alchemical process that goes on within each intermarried couple. This, too, is God at work.

Greenberg: When we look at the individual stories, case by case, these are stories that have great resonance for us in terms of our own values. We all know stories of Jews by choice who have enriched the community immeasurably, stories of intermarrieds who contribute to Jewish life, bring new energy, enlarge the gene pool, etc; we all have intermarried friends whom we love. But it's the stories that we don't hear that are worrisome because these are the people who are lost to the future generations.

Larry, you've said that a surprising number of non-Jewish spouses have never been invited to become part of the Jewish people. One would imagine that those who show up in the synagogue with their Jewish spouses would be the best potential converts. What happens there?

Kushner: A common scenario occurs during a new member orientation evening. An intermarried couple will introduce themselves. I'll go up to them over coffee later and suggest we get together at their convenience. I say that we Jews need all the help we can get, so I'm delighted that you've chosen to make a Jewish home and hope that you'll take an active role in our community. I also say to the non-Jew that, while I'm glad to take you as you are, I'd be honored to explore ways you might come even closer to the Jewish people.

And then something beautiful happens. They smile, and a relationship begins. Often, they relate horror stories about the Jews who have pushed them away and express their gratitude for simply being welcomed.

McClain: A lot of people who have tried to dip their toes in the organized Jewish community get this rejection because they don't know where to look. It's amazing to me how many people have said, "Well, I went into a synagogue, and people looked at me as if *I* had horns coming out of my head!" Or, "My father-in-law said there was no point in my trying to become truly Jewish because I could never become Jewish." There's an amazing amount of ignorance on the part of ethnic Jews, and people who get slapped down once are very reluctant to come back. And sometimes the Jewish partner, if he or she has been disaffected, is not about to push the non-Jewish partner to convert. They may have joined a temple for the sake of their kids. The Jewish partner says, "Well, you know, I didn't have such great experiences myself, but something's telling me this is important, and so we're going to raise the kids as Jewish, and we need to join the temple." Larry, I think that's why they're so surprised when they get the warm welcome from you.

Firestone: Aren't we skipping something? For many couples, before even thinking about joining a temple, the big hurdle is the wedding itself. For example, in the Rocky Mountain region, there is currently a cross-denominational ban on any rabbi performing an interfaith marriage.

Kushner: The Jewish community's attitude is shamefully ambivalent, even downright hostile toward people who want to join us. It is based on a narrow, ethnic definition of what it means to be a Jew, and has no basis in present social reality. We have to get serious about welcoming people who want to marry Jews! Rabbi Ed Feld has taught us that "converts are God's gift to the Jewish people, to keep us from becoming too ethnocentric after the Holocaust."

Greenberg: Perhaps the Orthodox community needs to make a mid-course correction toward conversion. But to say that we should drop the ban on intermarriage, as some have said, is to jump over two thousand years of Jewish history and tradition. Intermarriage is a violation of Jewish law. It's an abrogation of the covenantal concept of how one enters the Jewish community and peoplehood. There's a big difference between extending a welcome to potential converts after the fact and scrap-

ping the ban *a priori* or giving rabbinic sanction at an interfaith wedding. There is a good rabbinic distinction: *lehat'hila*, how you respond before the fact, and *bedee'eved*, how you respond after it has happened even though it is exactly the opposite of what you had hoped would happen. We shouldn't blur those lines.

Kushner: I'm simply saying that we must confront social reality: Hundreds of rabbis perform intermarriages; tens of thousands of Jews get intermarried. Those are simply facts on the ground, and we've got to deal with them.

Mayer: There is another side to this discussion that is being overlooked. I think that the argument about our traditions assumes that if you abrogate a tradition, therefore, this would somehow be a curative, or a panacea, for troubles of the Jewish people with intermarriage. That if rabbis performed them, if synagogues were welcoming, if we all invited people to convert, this would be wonderful. Well, from what we're seeing from our surveys, it would have very little effect on most people, who couldn't care less.

The average intermarried couple doesn't care whether a rabbi does or does not perform an intermarriage because they never seek him out. They don't care if a synagogue is welcoming or not, because they don't care to be in any of them. And they don't particularly care whether you invite them to convert or not—conversion is the furthest thing from their mind.

The fact is that as far as conversion is concerned, even as we've become more welcoming over the last twenty years, the rate of conversion has gone down. This is an inexplicable fact from the vantage point of our emphasis on our welcoming. You have to look at the social context and realize that people are simply marrying in a different social climate, where religion is not that relevant to their lives. We are living in an age that is highly secularized, and becoming more so for those who are educated, and those are the people we're dealing with. These are societal forces not of Jewish making. So, if we focus only on what we as Jews do or do not do, we totally ignore the larger society in which these people live.

Firestone: I second what Egon is saying. By far the majority of the people who seek me out are completely unaffiliated. They're not coming from temples, and they don't always come to me because they know I'm a Renewal rabbi. They come because I have been there myself and figure I won't shame them. So many of them have been brought together by a spiritual link. They met at a twelve-step group or in a Buddhist meditation training or at a social action group, and their connection is deeply spiritual. When I ask them about their Jewish background, they say: "We don't know about Judaism, but we do know about spirituality. Our lives are built on it and we want a spiritual marriage. It would be wonderful if a rabbi could do that for us."

McClain: When a mixed couple seeks out a rabbi, and their argument for wanting a Jewish ceremony is, "We are committed to making a Jewish home and raising our kids as Jews," that is very different from the couple who sits in the rabbi's study, and is asked, "Why do you want a rabbi to officiate?" and the Jewish partner says, "Well, I don't care, but that's what my parents want."

Kushner: It's also possible for a rabbi to say to such a couple that, while I may not be able to marry you, I would be glad to help you find someone who would. I'm so glad that you've come to see a rabbi. I'm so glad that you want to come back to a temple, and if you want to try to raise your children as Jews, even though I believe it would be a lot easier to raise Jewish children if you were both Jewish when you got married, I'll still do everything in my power to help you.

McClain: A lot of rabbis don't bother to say that, or they don't bother to say it in that caring a way. There are a lot of couples who get brushed off by the rabbi or even the rabbi's secretary, who says, "I'm sorry, the rabbi doesn't do mixed marriages."

Greenberg: Yes, there are ways of saying the same thing kindly or insensitively. But I apologize, Larry, in that I misunderstood you about dropping the ban. What you are saying to this nice young couple is that intermarriage is not permissible and I as someone who follows Jewish law cannot participate in your marriage or sanctify your vows. But I would like to help you as individuals who are coming closer to Judaism. I want to bring you closer, enable the connection.

TIKKUN: Is it completely a halakhic issue here? Because, let's imagine, and Larry, you can explain whether this is a plausible stance for you, that somebody came to you and said, "We want to do an intermarriage here, and we want a rabbi to be part of it. And the rabbi's response was, "I cannot do that as a halakhic matter. There is no Halakhah that I know of," says the rabbi, "that bans me from participating in a ceremony in which I don't say, "*harei At mekudeshet lee*" and that does not have the *sheva brachot*. So if I could find some halakhic trick that would allow it, would you, Blu, then feel comfortable about intermarriage, or is there, in addition to Ha-

lakhah, some other reason for your concern?

Greenberg: Well, on the one hand, legal fictions are fine, and Halakha is full of them. On the other, Halakha is not gimmicky; it's anchored in reality. Intermarriage is not good for the Jewish people. Something deep in my gut tells me that intermarriage and the Jewish future just don't fit.

McClain: Well, my intermarriage resulted in the addition of another Jew to the Jewish people through my husband's conversion, and many thousands of intermarriages have resulted in the addition of Jews to the Jewish people.

The decision to convert is often made many years after the marriage, when conversion is catalyzed by a relationship with a Jew.

I never intermarried to break away from Judaism, or to repudiate Judaism. I did it even though I had strong ties to Judaism. I married men not born Jewish twice, and the second time was right after the 1990 survey came out, and all of a sudden, there were these rabbis waving around newspaper clippings about the survey, saying that all intermarriers were pounding nails into the coffin of American Jewry. Well, at the time I was vice-president of my synagogue, and my husband and I had been married under a *chuppah*, and by a rabbi, and with the *sheva brachot*. We had already established a Jewish home; I didn't surrender one iota of my Jewish identity. Eventually my husband saw that Judaism was for him, and made a formal conversion.

Firestone: I have more of a concern, not for people like you, Ellen, who already obviously had a strong Jewish identity, but for the people who are coming out of a sense of nostalgia, and they're deeply shamed by the rabbi and they're deeply affronted.

McClain: Some rabbis are not approaching these couples in a loving spirit, they're not saying how can I bring you in, how can I show you that I care about you and the future of your relationship without actually officiating at your wedding.

Firestone: Right, and so that little ember that is barely alive gets ice thrown on it, and the couple really just wants to spit at any remnant of their Judaism.

McClain: Right, and what a lot of people don't realize is that there may be no statistical link between rabbinic officiation at intermarriage and commitment to Jewish life subsequently, but there are many individual couples who have felt betrayed and put off and completely alienated because a rabbi whom the Jewish partner knew, or whom both of them knew or respected, threw cold water on them at the time they needed the rabbi most. At the same time, I think a lot of these couples need to be educated up front. They need to grow up a little, they need to know that they can't always get what they want. They need to understand that a civil ceremony is just as much an expression of your love and perhaps that rabbi that you respect so much would even come and say a blessing.

Kushner: Our attitude in 1996 toward conversion is out of step with social reality. Instead of hitting ourselves on the head all the time about intermarriage, we need to remember that for centuries, we Jews reached out to non-Jews who came close to our community. And that's where the work has to be done now.

McClain: Every non-Jew who steps into the Jewish community in any way—and it usually happens through a relationship with a Jew—has to be regarded as a potential Jew, and to be treated as a potential Jew, because if that person is treated respectfully as a potential Jew, and it is made clear to that person, when you are ready, the doors are open, the classes are available, the resources are here for you, and we are waiting for you with open arms—when that person is ready, the potential Jew becomes a prospective Jew.

Greenberg: I think it's a wonderful stance, an opening of the lines, to look at every non-Jewish partner in an intermarriage as a potential Jew. But it's difficult to do when the facts on the ground are quite the opposite, when the likelihood is great that this person will not become Jewish, nor will his or her children become Jewish.

McClain: Even if that's true, you can't use it as an excuse to push people away.

Greenberg: I can see arguing for greater outreach and greater sensitivity, but I can't see denying the fact that large-scale intermarriage trends do not bode well for Jewish continuity. And therefore, we should not be generalizing the benefits of one or even a hundred intermarriages as a general panacea for revitalizing Judaism.

McClain: I'm not going to deny anything. We may well have a smaller American Jewish community a hundred years from now. We may not be five million people a hundred years from now, we may be three million or four million people. We'll probably continue to shrink little by little as a proportion of the American people,

and a lot of that is going to be due to intermarriage, but a lot of that is also going to be due to endogamous marriages where nobody did anything Jewish in the home, and didn't raise the kids as Jews, and the kids grow up basically as nothing. I've met a zillion of those people. You know, no one wants to talk about what's not going on in endogamous Jewish households.

Greenberg: I wouldn't be so cavalier about the losses. I think those prospects are pretty scary. It takes a certain critical mass to make a community successful. Now, you could argue that 100,000 Jews is a sufficient critical mass and I know that in our history we've held on with even fewer numbers. But if you look at the factors in the creation and vitality of institutions, if you look at declining percentages relative to the overall U.S. population, if you look at support for Israel—in all these cases a shrinking population spells growing weakness and does not bode well for the future.

Kushner: We ought to be talking about sharing a Judaism that Jews (and non-Jews) out there would want to come toward instead of worrying about Jews on the edges and being gatekeepers.

TIKKUN: Isn't it upsetting that the main thing that Jews are so worried about regarding their fellow Jews is who they're marrying but not, for example, how they're treating other people. Maybe it's indicative of that insensitivity that there probably hasn't been a serious statistical study of what the correlation is between Jews who become involved in the dominant American ethos of selfishness and materialism and how that's predictive of the degree to which their children will remain Jewish.

What if it turned out that you could predict from selfishness and materialism that the higher the quotient of selfishness and materialism in a parent's life, the greater likelihood that the child is not going to end up being Jewishly identified?

Kushner: Well, one of the things that we rarely talk about when we talk about intermarriage, is, do people perceive the practice of Judaism in their home as being something that makes their parents beautiful, as something that they, now, would like to replicate themselves, as a Jew?

McClain: I think what Larry just said is very germane. I care if people are Jewish because I find liberal Judaism to be a wonderful belief system that combines spiritual transcendence with a consciousness of the reality of contemporary life.

Kushner: I believe—and I guess you'd have to say that I've devoted my professional life to it—that we Jews have a unique and indispensable take on the meaning of life and the way life ought to be lived and taught.

McClain: Right. When someone becomes Jewish, what you always hear is, "This feels like a spiritual homecoming to me," that "Judaism is the spiritual system that made sense to me." When they find out that there are Jews who are selfish and materialistic, they're surprised, because what they learn about is the spirit of *tikkun olam*. And what they're taught in intro class, and probably experienced through the Jewish partner who brought them into Jewish life and religious Judaism in the first place, is that Judaism expresses really positive and transcendent values.

Mayer: I think that there is a vast difference between projecting a spirit of welcome to something that I personally treasure—and I treasure it so much that I'm willing to share it with you if you care to share in it, as opposed to, "it is so precious that I think you ought to have it. I don't want people to feel that they *have* to share in my treasure. I also don't want them to feel that they are blocked from sharing in it. I want them to feel welcome to it, on their terms, and I believe that when people are exposed to the treasures of the Jewish experience, it is attractive enough that they will make that choice.

My feeling is that as a community, we do better projecting a very positive, welcoming attitude, without necessarily emphasizing the importance of conversion. Let conversion happen where it will. And it will happen if we are welcoming, but if we make conversion the central message we want to project, then essentially we are not welcoming at all. It sounds oxymoronic, but in fact, you're not welcoming if what you're saying is "you're welcome to convert."

McClain: One of the stereotypes about intermarriage is that a non-Jewish parent cannot possibly be an active partner in raising a child as a Jew. And Larry, I'm sure you know that this is not true. There are non-Jews who operate in Jewish life, who for whatever reason, aren't converting, don't want to convert, aren't ready, don't think they can. But they know a lot about Judaism and are able to articulate their knowledge, and are able to perform rituals, and who act as the second, de facto Jewish parent.

Mayer: If I may add a wrinkle to this—which is sort of tangential, but relevant to intermarriage—about 40 percent of marriages today are second marriages. That's in

sharp contrast to roughly thirty years ago, when less than 10 percent of marriages were second marriages. It means that you have huge numbers of Jewish kids of two Jewish parents, who end up being in interfaith households, because in the second marriage, one or both of their parents married somebody who is not Jewish. So the issue there isn't simply what do you do with the birth parents, but what do you do with the custodial parents.

Kushner: To put it in a crude way, the Jewish community is not in a position to be picky. We'll take anybody we can get, we'll help them any way we can.

Greenberg: After a Shabbaton in Albany last year, I was driving to the airport with a woman who was chair of adult education for the congregation. Her husband sat in the back of the car reading to their four-year-old *What Jewish Children Believe About God.* He had spent the morning with her, as he does every Sunday, in the synagogue children's program. He hasn't converted, and probably never will. We have to appreciate the integrity—a promise was made—and the generosity of spirit coming our way.

Kushner: There are a lot more of them out there than we realize.

Greenberg: There has to be a whole range of responses that express the tension between welcome and shunning, between the personal and the political. There's an appropriate response that says we welcome you and hope that you will join us, and a legitimate response that says no. Because for every non-convert whose daughter will be Jewish in Albany, there are a dozen like my neighbors, whose son has voluntarily cut the line though he is halakhically Jewish. The chance of recovering that link in the future generation is nil, and this should drive us relentlessly.

McClain: We are all fearful about what intermarriage is going to do to American Jewry. I'm fearful about it.

Kushner: But we can't make it go away.

McClain: We have to deal with it proactively in order to make the saving remnant as large as possible. We have to figure out what's working and what's not, and change our institutions in ways that will make people, the thousands of Jews who are disaffected in contemporary life think about coming back and publicize those changes so that people know about them.

Mayer: But we shouldn't use our personal preferences to set the standard of what should be a communal stance. I mean, if I used myself as the standard for what should be the communal stance, I don't want to tell you where my position would be, I don't want to say...I think that we have a responsibility to speak to a whole community in all of its diversity and that it's not helpful to set what appear to be hard and fast rules.

McClain: No, but there are certainly rabbis who are setting down hard and fast rules.

Mayer: I think there ought to be rabbis who set their own hard and fast rules, and there ought to be rabbis who set counter-rules, and I love the diversity.

McClain: In my book, I listed some guidelines for mixed couples who are looking for an officiant, and one of my first bits of advice was take no for an answer: You are not going to change an individual rabbi's mind about his or her stance on intermarriage. And I told them not to take a rabbi's decision not to officiate personally. It's not an ad hominem attack on you and your partner and the quality of the Jewish home you're going to have. And another one was get everything about religion settled before you even think about getting married. I'm well aware of the problems and the pitfalls, I wouldn't have had the temerity to write my book if I weren't.□

1936, Upstate New York

In rural America, or the country
as we called it, we rented a room
for the summer in the Schmidt's farmhouse
with flowered curtains at the shiny windows
and spotless, tilting wooden floors.
And the smell of cow drifted through
our room like sweet smoke,
and every morning I helped
to gather eggs, pale as seashells
from their nests in the barn.
At night through the walls

the muffled sounds of German
came from a staticky radio,
and each noon the tin mailbox waited
to be filled—a hungry mouth,
its red flag upright in stiff salute.
I drank milk straight from the pail,
my top lip mustached in creamy white,
and when my mother saw the swastika
on an envelope on the kitchen table,
she packed up fast, and we returned
to the steamy city.

—Linda Pastan

If You're So Smart, How Come You're Intermarried?

Nancy Kalikow Maxwell

There is a good chance that, like me, many of you reading this article were married to a Jew the first time, then divorced, and married a non-Jew in your second marriage. Recent studies have revealed that this marriage pattern of initial in-marrying, then divorcing and out-marrying is especially prevalent among highly educated Jews. Less-educated Jews who divorce are just as likely to re-marry a Jew as a non-Jew. This marriage pattern is so common that some intermarriage experts have wondered, only somewhat in jest, if divorce is not one of the leading causes of intermarriage today.

Previous generations used to fear that intermarriage would lead to divorce; now divorce leads to intermarriage. The exact cause of these trends has yet to be agreed upon, though a number of explanations have been proposed. Some demographers have hypothesized that highly educated Jews intermarry more than less-educated Jews because they come into contact with non-Jews more often and these interactions are on a more equal level. Psychotherapist Esther Perel, in an article in these pages ("A More Perfect Union: Intermarriage and the Jewish World," TIKKUN, May/June 1992) called intermarriage "a symptom of success and integration." As Jew meets non-Jew in the office or the graduate seminar, attractions are bound to follow, even among the most die-hard, I-will-only-marry-another-Jew type of Jews.

Paradoxically, sometimes these attractions are fostered by personality qualities deemed "typically Jewish" or "typically non-Jewish." Perel noted that some non-Jewish men find powerful Jewish women to be attractive. Likewise, traits frequently ascribed to Jewish men—"softness and sensitivity...not just strength and physical prowess"—have become attractive across ethnic, racial, and religious lines. One of the traits I originally found most attractive in my non-Jewish husband was what I dubbed his "*goyishe* manners." Though such attractions may be fueled by internalized anti-Semitism, they nonetheless can result in healthy, positive attractions to loving, caring individuals.

It has also been posited that intermarriage occurs among highly educated Jews because their long years of education have distanced them from the family influences that originally discouraged intermarriage. This explanation seems unlikely, however, given the fact that the intermarriage pattern has not been correlated with age. In addition, according to the 1990 Jewish population survey, only 22 percent of Jews said they would oppose their child marrying a non-Jew.

Another explanation for the intermarriage pattern speculates that the Jew may feel "excused" from marrying another Jew the second time because of the failed first Jewish marriage. I know this was true of me after my first—Jewish, but ultimately loveless—marriage. In my case, only when it was too late did I realize that I had placed too much emphasis on religion and cultural background and too little on that amorphous, but equally essential, quality called love. Perhaps other highly educated, cerebral types also valued cold, concrete factors such as similar religious backgrounds in selecting their first mate. Then, as they grow older and wiser, and their first Jewish marriage fails, they realize that being in love can be equally, if not more, important than being Jewish.

Finally, there is the flip side of the "opposites attract" theory. It has been suggested that Jews and non-Jews freely intermarry today precisely because there is no real difference between them. Though many in the Jewish community view intermarriage as the *cause* of Judaism's disintegration, in reality it may be a *result* of Judaism's demise.

Although tradition has taught that Jews are somehow inherently different from non-Jews, American Jews have eliminated so many rituals, observances, and practices from their lives that for many there is no longer any real difference between "them"

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and "us." In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye objected to his daughter's proposed intermarriage by asking where a fish and a bird could find a common home? But unlike Tevye's shtetl Jews, American Jews and non-Jews are hardly different animals. Jews no longer dress differently, they no longer eat different foods (only 13 percent of American Jews observe the dietary laws of *kashrut*), and they no longer even act like Jews (only 17 percent light Shabbat candles). Even that emotionally charged symbol of a Christian home—the Christmas tree—is now present in 38 percent of American Jewish homes.

For many Jews, contemporary Judaism has come to mean simply: a non-belief in the divinity of Christ, a vaguely defined ethnic identity, and a predilection for matzah ball soup. Perhaps it is the highly educated Jews who are most cognizant of this denuding of Judaism and therefore question what within Judaism can legitimately claim their loyalty.

Facing the ramifications of this trend is crucial for the Jewish community. Either we must accept that there is inherently no difference between Jews and non-Jews and allow Judaism to dissolve into the existing culture or we must reconstruct a Judaism that means more than just having a Jewish mother or liking bagels. But for most intermarried Jews, simply resurrecting meaningless observances will not suffice. And, because many Jews have married warm, wonderful, caring, loving individuals whom we refuse to exclude, this Judaism cannot be defined solely by genetic inheritance. These Jews—indeed all Jews—yearn for a meaningful, relevant Judaism.

Fortunately for American Judaism's future, exactly such a redefinition is now underway, and many intermarried Jews are in the forefront of this religious reclamation effort. Within the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Jewish Renewal movements, and other enclaves within the community that welcome them, intermarried Jews are enthusiastically leading this challenge to re-invent a vital, tradition-based Judaism. Perhaps because they have squarely faced and rejected the notion that "there is no difference," these intermarried Jews now want to rediscover the essence of Jewish distinctiveness. Many intermarried Jews believe this re-constituted religion will include and eventually even welcome the wonderful people we married who, at birth, were not Jews. And, perhaps precisely because of the efforts of this highly educated intermarried population, intermarriage may turn out to have been very "good for the Jews" after all.□

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Carrying on the Legacy: An Interview with Yuval Rabin

Martin J. Gidron

It's easy to be cynical about those in public life. And when we're told that someone entered politics against his or her inclinations, we tend to be skeptical. Yet in the case of Yuval Rabin, the son of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, it is undoubtedly the truth.

Yuval Rabin, forty-one, spent his childhood in the Tel Aviv neighborhood of Tzahala, moving to Washington, D.C. for a few years when his father was appointed Israel's ambassador to the United States in 1968. During his mandatory period of army duty, Rabin served in a tank unit. He now works for the Israeli computer firm Sapiens, and has represented the company in North Carolina and Munich, Germany.

After the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, Yuval Rabin became one of the leaders of a new movement called *Dor Shalem Doresh Shalom*—"An entire generation demands peace." The organization lists as its goals the advancement of the Israeli-Arab peace process, along with the promotion of tolerance, democracy, and social justice within Israeli society.

Gidron: Dor Shalom prides itself on its many younger members. What special connection is there between the younger generation and the subject of peace?

Rabin: The connection isn't specific to the subject of peace. The subject that unites the major portion of the members of Dor Shalom—young or not—is the feeling that one can no longer sit back and do nothing. One mustn't remain uninvolved in what's going on, in the atmosphere, in the [political] climate, in all these things that are going on in the country.

Gidron: What should Israeli society do to preserve the memory of your father and ensure, insofar as it is possible, that political assassinations like his will not recur?

Rabin: These are questions that must be dealt with on the public level and the governmental level. My answer is that the society must deal with the problem instead of running away from it. Society has to deal with the memory, not deny it. But what exactly should be done.... In a nutshell, we have to get across to ourselves what democracy is, go back and educate for democracy and tolerance, and be more aware of negative phenomena.

Gidron: In your view, why did the Labor Party lose the elections, after everything that had happened? What was lacking in its message, and what should be done to correct this next time around?

Rabin: I don't know about the tactical level. I think the Labor Party, like other ruling parties—not all, but many—didn't take enough care to stay in touch with the people. At the Labor Party's ceremony on the anniversary of my father's assassination, I read a quote from a speech he made eight months after he became prime minister. He spoke about the party's connection with the people. In a very clear and sharp way, he warned then.... and it came true—that if the party lost touch with the people, if it wasn't out among the people, it would lose.

Speaking for Dor Shalom—I think it defines itself today as a social movement, not a peace movement. We are speaking today about protecting the peace process, and democracy, and advancing social issues—equality of opportunity and so forth. The emphasis isn't only on social issues, but there is an awareness that it isn't possible to keep things separate. We can't just work on the peace process, and that certainly might be the mistake that the parties of the Left made, focusing only on that. That may be why they didn't succeed, why there was a gap between them and entire groups of the population.

We speak today of a 50-50 split in the people, but I'm not sure it's really 50-50. The peace camp isn't just the 50 percent who voted for Peres. You have to take more than that into account. If you look at Netanyahu, you can see that he didn't really start to gain strength until after he began speaking about adopting the Oslo Accords, and started talking about a "secure peace." Then it was a question of who people believed in, more than a question of supporting or not supporting peace. Much more than 50 percent of the population.... it's 70 percent, or even 80 percent in some recent polls—support the Oslo Accords. So maybe there's a lot more to talk about, among ourselves, than it might appear at

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first glance. So we have to find the common denominators, look for people to talk to, and free ourselves of the negative tendency of being anti-this or that—both we [the peace camp] and they [the political Right] have to do this.

You know that we are making every effort to hold a dialogue, including with people who are not apparently our automatic partners. Bnei Akiva and other religious movements—anyone who is willing to talk. There was a recent meeting between fifty Bnei Akiva members and thirty members of Dor Shalom, and I heard that as a result, some Bnei Akiva members even joined our group.

Gidron: There is a lot of talk today about the urgent need for "unity among the people." As it is defined today, is this a worthwhile goal, and what should be done to bring it about? Can the peace camp reach an understanding with the settlers and their supporters?

Rabin: The question isn't if it's a worthwhile goal. Of course it is. We have no other choice but to keep trying to hold a dialogue. We must find the common denominators. And the way to do it is only through dialogue, through talking. As they say in the political negotiations, without preconditions.... If each side thinks the truth lies only with it, there's no chance. You have to come without preconditions.

The great majority [of the settlers] still don't support violence or murder. We must hold a dialogue; there is no other alternative. What the chances are, I don't know.

Gidron: People frequently talk about your father's political legacy. Ever since his assassination, we have heard such slogans as, "In his death, he willed us peace." How do you see your father's political legacy?

Rabin: It should be noted that in 1992, when my father won the elections, he ran under the slogan of changing the national priorities. He didn't mean by "changing the national priorities" what was usually meant, transferring a few shekels or dollars from the settlements to some road junction or interchange or highway in the center of the country. He meant taking the country's resources and building a national infrastructure that would adapt it to the end of the twentieth century, that would bring Israeli society into another era. The country would support education—in the three years [when my father was prime minister], the education budget rose 60 or 70 percent.

The conditions were created for investors to be able to come to Israel, to use the human potential here, in conditions of political stability that would make it possible for them to invest billions. It takes a huge government effort, but I could give a thousand similar examples from the United States—Mercedes in Alabama, or BMW in South Carolina. The idea was to create the infrastructure so the society could produce, and develop, and provide education, so that it could deal with the difficult social problems, the large gaps. And that's not even mentioning the possibilities of exploiting a favorable international situation, which made the peace process possible in the first place.

The legacy is clear. We have to continue in this direction, because it's the only way there is, so that we can continue to exist without ending up in another total war. We have to invest in ourselves, to deal with the huge social problems that exist here. In other words, the peace process is not an end in itself. It is a means first of all to our own wholeness, health, and prosperity.

Gidron: How can the peace movement draw on Jewish tradition and Jewish heritage as an integral part of its platform in order to attract the many people who vote for the right because of the Jewish values it claims to represent?

Rabin: The issue here isn't the relationship between religion and the state. We aren't an anti-religious movement. We aren't "against" Jewish values, although there can always be an argument over what exactly they are. I think that part of the reason for a political solution [to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] is to preserve the Jewish character of the state of Israel. If there isn't such a solution, a large non-Jewish population will be incorporated into Israel.

The Israeli Declaration of Independence talks about a democratic Jewish state. We want to ensure our continued existence as Jews in Israel. The state of Israel was founded as a democratic and Jewish state, with a Jewish character. Education in Israel is Jewish, unlike in the United States, where you can't even discuss the Bible in school and Jewish holidays aren't celebrated. Whoever wants to can discuss Jewish values. I don't see this issue as a legitimate claim against the peace movement. □

Jewish History Museum Seeks Civil Rights Memorabilia

For an upcoming exhibit, the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia would like to hear from Jewish participants in the 1960s Civil Rights movement. Curators particularly seek persons involved in Southern organizing campaigns, whose testimony and memorabilia may be included in the exhibit. If you have stories and/or photos and other original artifacts to share, please contact Collections Curator Stephen Frank at (215) 923-5975; fax (215) 923-0763; NMAJH, 55 North Fifth St., Philadelphia, PA 19106; e-mail <Sfrank1654@aol.com>.

Giving It Up to God

Andrea Cohen-Kiener

What does it take to make a human being? Genesis records the recipe of two simple ingredients: soil and "breath of God." Not that it's easy to be made of heaven and earth; human nature is inherently conflicted. The voices within us swing from arrogant pride to deadening shame. How do we integrate and balance these disparate sides of ourselves?

The central Torah metaphor for heaven and earth in contact is the encounter of God and man at Mount Sinai. Precisely at that moment, Moses receives the floor plan for the *mishkan*, the divine dwelling place, and a description of the transformational work that will go on there. "Create a space for me, and I will dwell among them." That space is called, variously, the Tent of Witnessing, The Dwelling, The Holy Place. By any name, it is an echo and replica of the human/divine contact point, Mount Sinai.

The Tent was physically central to the Hebrew camp, and the teachings about its construction and use are, literally, central to Torah. The entire book of Leviticus, much of Exodus, much of Numbers, smatterings of Genesis and Deuteronomy describe the sacrificial work. In the time of King Solomon, the Tent was replaced by the Temple in Jerusalem. In spite of the corruption of not a few of its priests, the Temple was the core metaphor of Jewish life for 1,500 years, until the Roman conquest in 70 C.E.

The mechanics and the metaphor of the sacrificial system are poorly understood in our times. There are a number of reasons why this is so. Jews have not practiced ritual offerings for two millennia. The potency of any practice is diffused over such a time span. Much of Jewish ritual, especially the prayer cycle, is a vestige of and replacement for the sanctuary service, but the emotional content is largely untapped. We all pity the poor Bar Mitzvah boy who needs to make a speech about bloody bullocks or the recipe for incense. In spite of the frequent literary references to the cult in scripture and prayer, most Jews have, at best, a hazy sense of what the rituals looked like.

Second, the whole idea of animal sacrifice strikes Westerners as gross and cruel. Even those of us who eat meat do not want to imagine the act of slaughtering. That it could be holy is nearly unthinkable—symbolic, perhaps, but we'd have to hold our attention on some distinctly uncomfortable images in order to see how the metaphor might work. And the staffing of the Temple workings was inherently hierarchical and undemocratic. This is not an idea that translates well into twentieth-century sensibilities.

There is, I suspect a third reason that Jews have been slow to grasp what the emotional power of the sacrificial cult might be. Our younger sibling, Christianity, speaks long and often about offerings. It is the central metaphor of the Christian system. When the Temple in Jerusalem fell to Rome, when prayer and other cultural practices replaced the Temple cult, Jews ceded that language to "them." It sounds distinctly alien to most Jews today to speak of "giving it up to God."

Yet the *mishkan* was central to Jewish life and imagination from the moment Moses came down from Sinai with the floor plan. The sanctuary was understood to be the place where heaven touched down. What happened there facilitated the relationship that began at Sinai.

The materials required for the construction of the *mishkan* came from virtually every corner of the plant and animal kingdom. Its shape and its subsections describe basic mathematical ratios. The Levitical clan, which served in the Temple, their clothing, their tasks, and the instruments they used are all described at length, with tantalizing allusions to deeper symbolism.

No area of Israelite life was untouched by the cult. Every first fruit and every first-born animal was given to the Temple. Every season was greeted by a trip to the "chosen place." Ten to 20 percent of the Israelite Gross National Product flowed through the Temple in some way. Every deviation from social and ritual bounds was relieved, in part, by a process which brought the indi-

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vidual into contact with a priest and an offering. The range of activity needed to construct the sanctuary became the very same activities which were forbidden on the day of rest, the Sabbath. The Temple is a detailed microcosm of the parameters of human activity.

Every Israelite was in relationship with the work of the Temple; gifts from non-Jews were also accepted. A simple Jew standing in his field, contemplating his grain crop, had to designate the tithe before the food was kosher for him. A tax? Obviously! But it was an opportunity for spiritual orientation as well. Ten percent of his every productive act was God's. Today, we practice charitable contributions in lieu of this tax. We practice prayer and meditation as our way of offering time and consciousness to sustain God's presence in our midst. But it is still true that our every moment and every deed can be connected to divine service.

I do not advocate that we rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, nor do I suggest that we begin to kill animals as a form of spiritual practice! But the processes of the temple ritual offer us a basis for guided meditation, a language for the alchemy of spiritual transformation. The many details of the specific offerings make very rich fodder for contemplation and meditation. I "offer" two specific examples.

The Passover offering is the Israelites' first communal offering, at the verge of their freedom. Something was going to die in every home in Egypt that night. In homes where the word of God was not heeded, it was going to be the first-born son. Where people strove to hear the Word, an animal would be chosen to die. This was the Israelites' last night in bondage.

The Passover offering had to be a yearling, a small kosher animal, free of blemishes. The animal was selected four days before the offering. It was to be wholly consumed by a predetermined group of people, prepared by direct contact with fire, and any undigested portion was then fed back into the fire. The instructions for the offering (Exodus 12:1 and following) are preceded by the promise: "This is the beginning of your renewal; this is the first step for you in renewing your whole pattern." I am translating the word "*hodesh*" in its root sense of newness. Most translations use the sense of month, i.e., "This is the new moon, the first of the year..." Both understandings are correct.

What "animal" in you have you been aware of for around a year now? What part of your nature can you identify as an obstacle on your path? It must be a "whole" animal. You have to have some sense of where this dimension of yourself came from, how it served you, what fuels it and what evokes it. You want to be working to see "the whole animal" in the days preceding Passover. Torah records the possibility of giving this offering at other times, if you were "not in your place" at the specified season. It is desirable, however, to practice this meditation in the Passover season; the renewal of planetary life supports us in our inspiration to align with the flow of life.

So we have identified what it is we need to give up in order to leave our slavery. On the fourteenth of the spring month of Nisan, "*beyn ha-arbayim*" (literally, "between changes"), give it up. In your mind's eye, open its throat with a knife and drain the power and energy out of it. It has no hold over you now. Hold it in the fire and light of pure consciousness. Whatever is in that animal that can help you continue your spiritual journey, "eat" that, take it into yourself. The rest is a gift to God, to the Universe. Ask for and envision its transformation. Any part which you cannot take in must be thoroughly fed to the flame.

Now the blood. Our ancestors marked their passage to freedom by taking the blood of that lamb and smearing it on their doors. It was a visible change. Their transformation showed. You have now totally changed your relationship with that beast that was in you. How will it show?

In Leviticus 23, the cycle of holiday offerings is repeated. The holiday of Shavuot falls seven whole weeks after the Passover offering. Its offering is described in these words: "You will come near to the living God with a new gift..." After the personal transformation of Passover, after incorporating the change for seven weeks, you will indeed be nearer to the living God. You will certainly have a new gift. What that will be is not clear to us until we give up what we need to give up on Passover. As Moses explained to Pharaoh: "We can't really do our spiritual work while we're stuck here." (Exodus 8:21) Passover gives us the chance to make that new beginning.

There were daily offerings in addition to the more dramatic seasonal processes. First light and dusk brought a series of activities at the Temple. Three fires were tended daily. Undigested, charred oil was removed from the menorah in the inner court. The incense table was cleared and the new offering was made. The daily animal offering, the "*tamid*," (literally, constant) was slaughtered, sectioned and burnt on the altar. These three fires parallel our mental, affective, and physical functioning, respectively.

Each day, we can rededicate our consciousness, intentions, and actions to the holy service. Review the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the previous day. Was anything out of place? unassimilated? incomplete?

(Continued on p. 80)

CURRENT DEBATE

Waiting to Grow

Eleanor Reynolds

The other day I took my grandson with me to the printer's shop. The entrance is up a short flight of steps and on the wall above the steps are raised letters that spell "Copy Center." Trey, who just turned three, likes to reach up and try to touch the letters, but so far can only reach the last "R." This time he asked, "Why can't I reach the other letters?"

"Because you have to grow some more. Maybe when you're four you'll be able to reach them."

He looked at me, then walked down two more steps and stood there, expectantly.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm waiting to grow."

His answer left me speechless. I gave him an enormous hug and we giggled together, but his words kept playing over and over in my mind.

Since that day, I've thought of numerous ways to apply this notion of waiting to grow. Along with introspection, however, my grandson's innocent declaration made me think about all the little ones in our country who say wise, profound, funny, and just plain adorable things every day that no one notices or appreciates. I began to think, sadly, of the missed opportunities to recognize and nurture the creative spark that ignites early in life and is so critical to transformation and transcendence.

I thought of all the kids I've seen in day-care centers over the last twenty years. Most of them spend their days with adults who are untrained, overworked, and underpaid. The majority of these adults mean well, have honorable intentions, and sincerely want to love and nurture children. Unfortunately, these caregivers are required to watch far too many children to allow for much recognition of an individual child. Most children in such day care must struggle to grow; they're lucky if they get their diapers changed as often as needed.

As a country, we're waiting to grow, but are we just standing on the bottom step, expecting something magical, or are we moving forward? Can we possibly move forward without the next generation following behind, growing? If the next generation is raised in assembly-line warehouses or barren homes where T.V. is the caregiver, who will be the creative and critical thinkers, the problem solvers, and the communicators? Do children get empathy, self-respect, and assertiveness from a steady diet of "time out," "get in line," "quiet down," and "keep your hands to yourself?"

Day care appears routinely on the list of liberal goals and demands. It seems to me that it's kind of tossed into the mix without equal consideration given to quality, alternatives, and its effect on children. It's on our list because we know that we need to provide for the kids of working parents, but we don't know exactly what.

I approach this dilemma as the author of a college textbook used for training teachers to work in children's programs. I owned and operated a day-care center and worked in other child-care programs over a period of twenty years. During those years, I trained teachers and saw the inside of many centers. I still teach preschool and write a monthly newsletter for children's programs. I haven't been entrenched in an academic ivory tower with a well-funded, well-equipped, well-staffed lab school. I've been on the front lines of this field.

Through my writing, speaking, and training, I work every day to raise the quality of children's programs, including day care, and make them a source of enrichment for children and their families. On the other hand, I believe that children should be in the loving, nurturing care of at least one parent (mother or father) and that even the best program cannot replace parenting.

In an ideal world, parents would plan for children, choose when to give birth, and parent their own children. Day-care centers would actually be free part-time preschools where children over age three would go voluntarily for play and education. Some day-care providers and some parents may feel threatened by this idea, but what about the kids? What is really best for them?

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The most fundamental event in our life is that of bonding, making an attachment to another human being. It is the basis for love, mental health, self-esteem, and all other human interaction. Failure to bond is a precursor to lifelong problems, including mental illness. To the best of our knowledge, bonding begins in the first seconds of a child's life, and many believe it begins even before birth.

Bonding is a two-way process. Not only does the child bond to the mother (and subsequently the father), but the parents also bond with the child. It's a matter of survival; an infant is helpless to protect and defend itself and must rely entirely on the instincts of the parent. The parent's role, indeed duty, is to be fiercely protective, even overprotective during the child's early, vulnerable years.

I have seen mothers cry as they leave their infant at day care for the first time, even after extensive preparation. This is sad, but absolutely normal, and demonstrates the intensity of their bonding. What is even sadder is to watch a mother "adjust," that is accept that she will leave her baby with virtual strangers and hand over the raising of her child to people who may not put the child's needs first. Soon she is so "adjusted" that she stops to do her shopping before picking up her child at the end of the day.

Infants respond to this in various ways; babies with independent, outgoing temperaments may tolerate almost any arrangement. Babies who are introverts or insecure may spend hours every day crying. At this age, the quality of care (ratio of infants to caregivers, training of caregivers, enrichment or the environment) are crucial in determining whether the infant will be damaged by this experience. This is what we mean by quality, yet even quality cannot replace what is lost between parent and child.

Let's go back to the mother (or less frequently, the father). How does the parent make this adjustment? Through rationalization. "My baby seems fine; he hardly notices when I leave; she doesn't need me all the time; he really loves his new caregivers; they know what's best for her, after all they're professionals; I'd go crazy if I had to stay home and so would my baby; I can't afford this many toys; he really has fun with the other kids." A parent must convince him or herself that this is really best for the child. If not, the parent feels guilty.

Imagine that you are a toddler. Would you prefer to be taken from your bed every morning, rushed to wake up, dress, eat, barely see your parents, hurried into a car, train or bus, hastily dropped off in the midst of a group of virtual strangers, many of whom are sad, angry, and stressed out, then feel abandoned by your parents for the next ten hours? Or would you prefer to wake up gently and slowly, greet your parent and spend some time snuggling, maybe read a book or watch "Mr. Rogers" together, then both of you plan your day. Perhaps you'll "help" around the house, go shopping, play with your siblings and your toys, go to the park, or with your parent join a morning playgroup. When you need someone who loves you, your parent is always there. Which life would you, a toddler, choose? Would you give your toddler this choice?

Every child needs and deserves someone who thinks he's the greatest kid in the world. It's best if this admirer is a parent, a person who will remain a constant during his entire lifetime. Other relatives can help fill this need, but they are the frosting on the cake. Above all else, kids need parents who treasure, respect, and admire them and care enough to share with the child their values and hopes for the future. This includes guiding the child's behavior and making tough decisions about what is best for the child. Even an imperfect but loving parent can do this better than the most professional teacher or caregiver.

In the best day-care programs, children are listened to, hugged, kept safe, taught social skills, given choices, encouraged to take risks, be creative and solve problems, and allowed to voice their opinions. These are standards promoted and taught by all established early childhood educators and child development organizations. As a student, I learned this and much more, and in my idealism expected to find these standards being met throughout the industry. I was, therefore, shocked and sickened by what I actually saw in too many child-care centers and homes.

The point here is not to get bogged down in details, but to consider day care in general—its effect on children, the possibilities for improvement, and viable alternatives for children and parents. This is not an ideal world. Parents as well as children have needs, sometimes so desperate that we cannot hope to meet the needs of their children. But as a new movement, one that puts meaning in its name, we have the responsibility to try.

I find that my knowledge of children and day care often conflicts with my liberal beliefs. I believe deeply in the right of every woman to fill all her needs; education, career, and mothering. Sometimes I wish I didn't know all the negatives of day care and could say wholeheartedly to women, "Go ahead, follow your dreams. Put little Suzy or Billy in day care and the kid will be fine. Don't feel guilty and don't worry about it." I could probably even dig up a study to support that point of view.

The problem is that I find myself saying "Put your child first." To me, this means doing whatever it takes to meet a child's emotional and intellectual needs. If you trust enough in your potential as a parent to give birth to a baby, why not also trust yourself to be a good full-time parent to that child? One thing I hear all the time from day-care workers is, "Why did they ever have a child if they're going to give it to me to raise?"

Although I mention mothers, we humans have evolved enough to recognize the validity and worth of full-time fathering. Aside from breast-feeding, men are just as capable of raising and nurturing children as are women. In fact, whoever is best at parenting should stay home and raise the kids (and maybe work very part-time) and let the other partner do the major "breadwinning." Yes, this can be tough financially, but probably a lot less tough than is widely believed. Many dual working couples spend everything that one parent earns just to maintain the second job.

The majority of couples would choose to have one parent stay home with the kids if they could manage it financially. The difference is often just a matter of several hundred dollars a month. We could solve this problem by providing a government subsidy for families with children to allow one parent to stay at home until the child is three. This would represent a major investment in the future of our country and certainly save us money in the long term.

Of course, there are still single parents and the working poor who will need day care for their children. Here is where government can come in. Other countries include day care in their educational system or subsidize it in other ways. We can, too. For those who must or choose to use day care, we should invest in that as well and make it the best we can, for our kids.

Children are not empty vessels into which we pour "stuff." Nor are they willful little creatures whom we must shape and mold. A child is more like the proverbial flower, born with its own genetic material but in need of sun, water and rich soil in order to grow. A flower can only grow up to be a flower, no matter what we do, but what we can do is provide the environment that allows the flower to blossom gloriously.

Millions of children in day care have less opportunity to blossom gloriously. They are forced to conform at a very early age for the convenience of overburdened caregivers. Due to the large numbers of kids per teacher, children's physical, emotional, and psychological needs are often neglected. The environment may be barren of mental stimulation. Many "teachers" are barely out of high school and may ridicule and squelch any expression of creativity. Yelling, threatening, shaming, and using "time out" and other punishment is rampant in day care because untrained workers have no skills for dealing with the normal, active behavior of young children. I blame bad day care for teaching children to be violent.

Despite all the shortcomings of the current system, it is possible to transform day care into a positive force in the lives of children and their families. It takes dedication, hard work, and money, but it can be done. There are three main components of a good children's program: the teacher, the environment, and the philosophy.

The Teacher: An early childhood educator is not the same as a parent or a baby-sitter. She (or he) is responsible for the safety, nurturing, socialization, and education of a group of other people's children who are usually about the same age. She must interact with those children as both individuals and a group and treat them with affection, respect, patience, equality, and provide guidance. She must understand the basic tenets of child psychology and child development. She must keep records, maintain order, stay organized, counsel parents, clean up messes, plan activities, change diapers, give bottles, supervise play, routines and transitions, treat injuries and illnesses, teach basic skills, facilitate the negotiation of conflicts, listen to and soothe hurt feelings, and raise children's self-esteem.

All of this and much more must be done every day. Many of the teachers performing these duties are highly trained, well educated, and dedicated to children. But too many are teenagers or high school drop-outs who are untrained and unqualified for any other job so work in day care until they can find something better. This accounts for the tremendous turnover in day-care workers. Depending on the state, these teachers earn about the same wages as fast-food servers. Above all, we need national standards and requirements for early childhood teachers and financial rewards for those who enter this profession and stay.

The Environment: After decades of experience with preschool education (ages three-five), most centers know how to set up an appropriate environment for preschoolers. There are now millions of infants and toddlers in day care, however, and I have rarely come across a developmentally appropriate, enriched environment for these younger children. Educational toys can be expensive (although many can be homemade) and require greater supervision by teachers. Toys and activities that stimulate cognitive and creative growth are open-ended, multi-purpose, challenging and encourage socialization. They may include numerous pieces, such as puzzles, or be messy, such as painting, so many infant and toddler teachers exclude them from

their classroom. Instead, young children are left with one-piece, plastic, unimaginative toys, some of which are missing parts or broken.

Another major problem with day-care environments is that they are not set up for active play. This may seem odd, considering that young children are extremely active, but many centers rely on teachers to "control" children's behavior through punishment rather than take the obvious steps to provide for normal, active play, both indoors and outdoors. Much of this equipment can also be homemade, but many centers prefer to reprimand kids for behaving like children. This is a far cry from "letting kids do what kids do!"

The Philosophy: The philosophy is the framework for the daily operation of a day-care center or home. It should be in writing and encompass the goals and policies of the center and the methods for reaching those goals and policies. The program's philosophy is a guide, a standard against which every staff member can measure his or her performance. It also allows parents to evaluate the program and decide if it is what is best for each child.

While the politics of meaning is still in the growing stage and we're learning from each other, we should give time and thought to the kind of impact we want to make on society. Instead of automatically including the words day care on a list of desires, let's examine this crucial issue from all points of view, especially from the point of view of what is best for children. We can't claim to be part of a healing and transforming process if we forget the fundamental needs of out youngest, most vulnerable citizens.

For many sincere people, the demand for day care is seen as doing what's right for children. Anyone who is against day care or suggests that children should be raised by their parents may be classified as a right-wing radical or a sexist. But the fact that many conservatives believe in parents raising their own children, is not reason enough to take the opposite, reactionary view. Our movement should be open, balanced, and inspire trust. Let's approach issues with candor, objectivity and integrity. If we want to keep growing, we can't just stand on the step and wait. We can start with a grass-roots effort to push for these national child-care policies:

1. A children's subsidy for the first three years of life to enable one parent in each family to stay home with their child(ren). This could be a tax credit or monthly payment. It could be a sliding scale with means testing or an equal amount for each child.

2. A national system similar to the school system for day care, including infant and toddler care for those who need it.

3. National standards for licensing day-care facilities. These standards should follow and exceed those set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Qualified inspectors should monitor all facilities.

4. National requirements for everyone working in a day-care facility. Teachers should hold at least a two-year A.A. degree in Early Childhood Education; directors should hold at least a B.A., in Early Childhood or equivalent. Assistants should be at least eighteen years of age and high school graduates.

5. Every teacher should spend a prescribed number of hours in additional training every year, both on-site and off-site.

What can each of us as individuals do to recreate the nation's child-care system? I have some suggestions:

1. Take parenting seriously. Wait until you're prepared to take on the responsibility of a child and until you have a safe, secure home. Plan ahead financially, so that one parent can stay at home and raise the child. Be willing to make temporary sacrifices to benefit your child.

2. If you feel inadequate to parent your child, seek out classes or groups where you can learn parenting skills. It's worth the effort.

3. If you need to use day care, be extremely cautious in choosing a facility. Visit when you're not expected. Listen to the way adults talk to children. Examine the environment closely, looking for areas of active play, expressive materials, stimulating toys, freedom of choice.

4. Demand a written statement of the facility's philosophy and approach to play and learning, discipline policies (rule out any kind of punishment, including "time out"), how it promotes individual responsibility, and how conflicts are resolved.

5. Join a movement that puts children first. Question whether day care is best for children and help our country find alternatives to warehousing our future.□

Media Cynicism Watch

We are going to monitor the cynical media. We'd like you to send Tikkun copies of newspaper and magazine articles, or summaries of television news reports, sit-coms, and other TV shows that subtly but powerfully reinforce the ethos of cynicism, materialism, and me-firstism in American society. Send to: Tikkun, 951 Cragmont Ave., Berkeley, CA, 94708.

It Takes a Day-Care Center

A Response to Eleanor Reynolds

Linda Nicholson

While Eleanor Reynolds deserves praise for her attempts to get fellow feminists to begin to think more seriously about the American day-care system's weaknesses, I see in her essay a tendency to portray day care as a type of "necessary evil," a needed accommodation to unfortunate circumstances. At one point she states: "In an ideal world, parents would plan for children, choose when to give birth, and parent their own children." The implication is that we should work to make it more possible for people to parent their own children while also working to improve day care, given the very imperfect conditions of contemporary society. In her view, day care becomes the problem that needs to be addressed, while at-home parenting represents the ideal to which we should strive.

Although Eleanor Reynolds is not a conservative, I think she operates with certain conservative assumptions that idealize parent-centered child care. Observing how wonderful it is to share kids' wise, profound, and funny comments, she imagines that when children spend their days in child care, these precious moments are lost. But when I read those remarks, I thought about all the scenes I have observed in supermarkets and shopping malls, when overworked or just plain insensitive mothers and fathers dealt with their children in much less than attentive ways. In her account, parents are always warm, loving, and attentive, able to shape their days around their child's needs. In contrast, she portrays day-care centers as filled with cold, inattentive strangers.

Is this really the way it is? If parents are like most other adults I know, they are as often bored, irritated, self-absorbed, and overwrought as they are playful, loving and attentive. And many day-care workers I have met love children and enjoy being with them. True, parents usually have special affection for their own children; but day-care workers are selected and monitored by others for their child-rearing abilities.

In *my* ideal world, children would grow up in set-



AP/WIDEWORLD

tings with lots of adults and other children around. A setting of one adult per child or one adult per several children (the case in most homes, most of the day, when children are reared under the guidance of a parent) with either no, or few other, children around is not ideal for children. It is very isolating, for both parent and child. The most loving parent gets bored without other adults to talk to, and children need to be with other children to develop their social skills. Exclusively at-home parenting can make the child's every action too *much* the object of scrutiny or adulation. And the physical and emotional vulnerabilities of children make dependence upon just one adult for wise and emotionally mature caretaking a risky proposition. Prior to mid-century these concerns mattered less because so few families lived in isolated, nuclear family groupings. We have held onto the belief in at-home parenting while eliminating many of the circumstances that made it work.

In many respects, today's day care provides what extended families and more close-knit living arrangements offered in the past. And as the child in earlier generations was able to distinguish between the neighbor or uncle who was around a lot of the time from the parent they assumed would be there forever, contemporary children are able to distinguish the day-care worker who is around a lot of the time from the

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parent they also assume will be there forever.

To be sure, contemporary day-care centers are in many respects different from extended families or neighborhoods of former times—the source of some of their advantages as well as their weaknesses. An extended family or close-knit neighborhood tends to expose children only to those who look or live a lot as they do. Day-care centers, drawing children from diverse environments, introduce children to others who look, speak, and act a lot different from themselves. While it is true that children—particularly very young ones—don't necessarily want big separations from what is comforting and familiar, day-care centers provide spaces for children to assert their autonomy from the norms and sanctions of their immediate kin and community.

The answer to the shortcomings of the current American child-care system is not to fall back on single-parent, at-home child-rearing as the only or best possible alternative. Instead, I would propose that we think of ways that children's relationships with parents and siblings could be more readily integrated with their extra-familial relationships. This may mean day-care centers closer to parents' workplaces. It also may mean allowing parents of very young children to spend time away from work with their children in day-care settings. The advantage of this latter solution is that it allows young children to be with parents in settings which are not isolating. It also may mean more government funding of public parks or nursery-type settings where parents can be with their children in the company of others.

In short, instead of thinking of either present day care or at-home parenting as ideal, let us recognize the problems with both. What I like about Eleanor Reynolds's essay is that it offers a complex assessment of day care, pointing to many of its weaknesses without arguing for its elimination. But it seems that we need to adopt a similar view toward at-home parenting—recognizing its limitations along with its strengths. From this kind of balanced perspective we can come up with creative solutions to the problems of child care that both Eleanor Reynolds and I would wish to endorse.□

Moebius

I twist
the strip
of paper
into
a Curve
that
never closes
Never opens
Never opens
Never opens
O!pens
Winding, curling
through eternity
(or maybe just infinity)
before my merry eyes.

My mouth falls open
open open,
curls and curves
my tongue and lips
to follow how my fingertips
curl through revolving space
Ohhh
ho!

Was God astounded
when the curve of time
urolled this loopy way
around the universe?
Or did eternity
come rolling out
from that astounding Mouth,
that turning Tongue?

—Arthur Waskow

CURRENT DEBATE

Abortion: Whose Values? Whose Rights?

Helen Alvaré, Marie C. Wilson, Naomi Wolf

Marie Wilson: I'm president of the Ms. Foundation for Women, where I've been for the last eleven years. I've worked on the issue of abortion for the foundation, but the views I express today are my own. I am a mother of five children who are now grown. I am an activist and writer; I recently wrote a book, with two other women, called *The Mother/Daughter Revolution: From Good Girls to Great Women*. I'm here because I really believe that the women's movement has a great deal to look at in terms of how we reach out to more people, and how we talk about values and meaning, and because recently we are looking at the Right, and asking questions about what are they offering that is not being offered by our movement.

Naomi Wolf: I'm here, because last October I wrote an article in The *New Republic* in which I don't think I said anything particularly new to any of us, but I made public a private conversation about what it does to the pro-choice movement to fall back sometimes on an abortion rhetoric that seems to me to dehumanize and trivialize the death of the fetus as a way to humanize and make important the reproductive rights of women. And I suggested that this is a false dichotomy, and that it is morally foolish as well as strategically foolish, because we lose the middle when we talk about reproductive rights without reference to a larger moral and spiritual dimension, and when we're unwilling to use language like transgression and redemption, or right and wrong. This discussion should not be played out in the legislative arena, since Americans tend to legislate as an excuse for not looking into themselves and changing their behavior. But I was tired of traveling around the country and hearing strong pro-choice women confide in me privately with great grief that they light a candle every year for the fetus that they aborted, and that they felt like there was no room within the organized reproductive rights institutions or within mainstream feminism to articulate that grief and make it meaningful.

Helen Alvaré: I work with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops as the secretary for pro-life activities. When I was asked to come here today, it was mentioned that I have a reputation for being civil, and that that was really why I was asked to be on the panel. My work in the Pro-Life Secretariat is mostly on issues of abortion. I also speak out on questions of euthanasia, against capital punishment, and other life or death arenas. My writing has mostly been in the nature of what I call in shorthand "pro-life feminism," sometimes in the religious arena, sometimes in the secular arena. I think that there will be a lot of sympathy on issues of feminism here, but that we will diverge perhaps, from my perspective, on where abortion fits in that framework.

Not only personally, but that part of the pro-life movement that I represent tends very much to embrace a consistent ethic of life, which means that one philosophically cannot fully appreciate and cannot fully be consistent about respect for one kind of life unless one is respectful of all life, from the very beginning to the very end.

I've came to this movement from the disability-rights movement. And one of the things I realize about both of these movements is that they are always about more than themselves. Abortion is never about just abortion. It is about questions like whether the society at large, or individual pieces of it, regards the fact of women's fertility as burden or gift, and how they treat it, and what are the incentives and disincentives they provide? How the rearing of children is regarded—benefit or burden, or some balance of those, and who is responsible for that? And then one of the deepest things, at the core of what abortion is about, is what is our understanding of freedom? Is freedom something like will: the ability to choose something in any way you choose, freedom without regard to truth, to what some would call natural law? Freedom without regard to the common good?

After publicly encountering, debating, writing about the abortion debate for the last five years, I find that there

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is, among those I debate—the supporters of abortion—almost never a reference to anyone involved in this except the individual woman. I do not find an understanding of the relationship between the mother and the child, or even the relationship between the mother and the community's interests, and what becomes of that family. In fact, as Catharine MacKinnon once wrote that the privacy right is actually the right to leave women alone to suffer, to abuse them one at a time. In some ways, by denominating abortion as a "privacy right," it's almost given a license to society to say you have no right to enter in here. And the constant references made in the slogans of abortion advocacy organizations to an individual's right to choose. Not the state, but the individual it's not some abstract state we're talking about. The state includes mothers, fathers, grand-parents, etc.

The pro-life movement, and particularly the parts that I most encounter—those who are Catholic and pro-life, those who are religious from all faiths and pro-life—have a different take on this. One of the best expressions that I've seen was when the Catholic bishops put together a statement called "Faithful for Life," which said here's our take on abortion: They couch their discussion in terms of fidelity. They pose the Good Samaritan story at the beginning of the document, and then they say, "We're all on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and the Good Samaritan story haunts us. For it so contradicts the widely held persuasion today that our loyalties and obligations are held only to those we choose. In fact, we owe our loyalties even to those we do not choose, even to those we don't want to choose. But we have been chosen to go out of our way for others."

The Catholic Bishops' take is a radical breaching of the fidelity gap, of the language of individualism. They feel obligated by that stance to take the consistent ethic of life. The caricature of the pro-lifer is that they care nothing about life after birth. In fact, the group that I represent, the Catholic Church in the United States, is the largest provider of social services for born Americans. So I radically reject that caricature. It is not always the case politically either. Not only do you have Democrats who are characterized as pro-choice voting for certain measures that are pro-life, but you have Republicans who are labeled pro-life voting for things like the ban on assault weapons or reductions in military spending, the ban on landmines. In fact, in the capital punishment debate, it is the case that things sort of switch around—those who hold the no-exceptions pro-life position are the greatest opponents of capital punishment. And those who are the strongest supporters of legal abortion are the greatest supporters. The caricatures do not hold on either side.

Naomi Wolf: Whenever I hear Helen Alvaré speak I am struck by how many of us who have spent a lifetime in feminist-land come to demonize those in the pro-life camp. When I actually heard pro-life women, to my astonishment I found that many were articulate, loving individuals who care about social justice and raising the status of women—that in fact the term "pro-life feminist" is not an oxymoron. I heard from sensitive, conscientious, and highly evolved people from both the pro-choice and the pro-life movement, who have contacted me trying to find a way to say how can we find common ground. There's actually a great deal of confluence that I never knew existed in the positions of some conscientious pro-lifers and some conscientious pro-choicers. For twenty-odd years, we've been in a kind of paralysis of rhetoric. We all know these rigid positions; they do not shift. But we're at a moment when I think we're due for a destabilization of categories. The paradigm shift that I urge us to be ready for is the breakdown of the old, static pro-choice, pro-life caricature. I hope the dialogue continues, and I hope we make a space where those who are willing on both sides to find common ground can meet.

Let me tell you where I stand. I want us to recognize that being the industrialized country with the highest abortion rate does not necessarily say anything good about women's status and autonomy; it's not necessarily a manifestation of women's freedom. I want passionately to defend reproductive rights for women, because I think there is no way to argue persuasively against Ruth Bader Ginsberg's explication of the need for some level of control over one's biological life if a woman is to engage in a position of equality within society. But the way the pro-choice movement too often talks about what abortion is and does has to be transformed.

We must be very careful about language. It's always the minority of pro-choice activists who are guilty of this kind of lapse in consciousness, but I was very disturbed by reading feminist or pro-choice texts that would talk about the euphoria that an underground abortion movement would experience when they figured out how to do the procedure without medical intervention, or those who would refer to the embryo as "uterine material" up to the fourth or fifth month, or when doctors would say to pro-choice women, "In a few days, you will not hear what we call the heartbeat."

For me, part of this transformation came about when I had a child. When the fetus is wanted, we're encouraged to bond with this fetus. There's a whole industry, ranging from fetal stethoscopes to the pictures from the sonogram—they even give you a little frame—dedicated to that bonding. So my abstraction of choice as a pro-choice feminist was radically compromised by this realization.

The first thing I think that we need to do is to stop using euphemisms—to be adults and be willing to face the fact

that when you choose to end the beginning of life that is within your life, there's a real death involved. That doesn't mean that I'm going to fall into the program of what pro-lifers say personhood and death mean, which leads them to describe abortion as murder. Not at all. I'm going to ask you to move into a very different paradigm.

One of the things that was most difficult for a lot of pro-choice activists to hear was that we've got to recognize that some abortions are less moral than others—not all abortions are equal. I think that, from a spiritual perspective, it is more contemptible if you impregnate a woman so she has to have an abortion because you're too damn lazy to roll over and get a condom out of the bedside table, than if you have honored your partner's sexuality enough to use contraception and to take responsibility for not beginning another life. We have to have this discussion about better and worse. But legislation is not the answer to that question. One of the things I think is so corrupt about the pro-life movement is that they so often use legislation as a kind of shortcut to a clear conscience, rather than do the hard work in our communities of asking the question, have I taken in a child? Do I give money to the poor? Do I make sure that pregnant women in this community have citrus fruit and milk?

One of the sticking points for so many pro-choice activists—not the pro-choice women in the streets, from whom I received nothing but support—about my article was that I used the language of transgression and redemption to talk about abortion. And I said, if you have had an abortion and you feel a sense of grief or loss about this, then I encouraged acts of redemption in line with the tradition of *tikkun olam*, the healing of the world. You can give to charities that disseminate contraceptive information; you can give to educational programs that teach girls how to avoid abortion; you can love the children you bear all the more dearly in remembrance of the lost fetus, next time you want to short-change your kid or yell at her.

Catholicism, in which you can't choose to do wrong, constructs much of our discussion on abortion. But think of it from a Buddhist perspective, where you must choose the lesser of two evils. Think about it from a Jewish perspective, where it is, some argue, ethical to terminate a pregnancy in the first forty days. Think that transgression and redemption are not terms that the religious Right owns, and think not just morally but strategically that when we reify this struggle into a simplistic one of choice, they are always going to win. Because, when as the pro-life movement does, you hold up a picture of a six-month fetus being stabbed in the neck, and all you're saying is "Choice, choice, choice," you're going to lose. And this is a greater threat to reproductive rights in the long term than an honest discussion about the grief and loss and moral gravity involved in terminating a pregnancy.

I just want you to think that when you put the question, "Do you support abortion?" to Americans, only 35 percent say they do. But when you say, "Do you think the decision to have an abortion should be between a woman, her God, and her conscience?" the number rises to 70 percent. So, bringing in the dimension of a woman's and a man's responsibility to a larger social ethic is in the long run not only going to make the discussion much more honest and much more meaningful—I think it will also defend the level of reproductive rights and autonomy that women deserve.

Marie Wilson: I do agree a great deal with the women who are up here, and I do believe that this is a difficult question. But I'd like to say right away that I'm a feminist, but I've never thought about this as a rights debate. I've always thought about it as about responsibility.

I grew up wanting to be a minister, but a woman couldn't be a minister at the time, so I ended up being a "minister" for women. I want to talk about how we reframe who the women are that this debate has talked about. Because until we reframe who we think they are, we will not be able to choose to act differently, to think differently, to behave differently as a society. And we've let other people frame that debate, and where we put our focus.

My favorite passage in the Bible is "Choose life." What does it mean to choose life? Who chooses life? Where should the focus be on choosing life? I don't see the thing about selfishness and greed of individual women, or even the power and control of individual men. I think it is about the greed that's grown into our society, it's not about women's bodies; it's about the sickness of the body politic.

I was working in the civil rights movement after college, and that social justice work doesn't pay very well. My former husband and I kept having children, one after another—I had five children under six at one time. After the third child, when we had moved to Pittsburgh and I became pregnant for the fourth time in four years, I realized that if I had another child, I didn't feel like I could take care of my children. I'm married to a man who makes $7,000 a year, I'm a part of the movement, and I'm trying to take care of these kids. If I go to get an abortion, there's a good chance that I could die. And what would happen to my children? At that point, I chose to have the child. As a matter of fact, what happened was that I did not have a strong body at the time, and that child, who is an adult now, is still paying for that, because he doesn't have the full life that I wish he had, as a premature child who wasn't nourished correctly. But I did decide, in a few years, because I'm crazy, to adopt a child. Because I really like children, you see. And that child's mother hadn't had prenatal care, but I didn't know that. And that child had cerebral palsy.

And so, I learned a lot about this whole issue in my life,

and by watching what happened with those children. I feel like I am very representative of the women in this country who are making choices about their bodies under difficult situations. They are not greedy, white, middle-class feminists as a rule, or greedy, poor African Americans or Latinos. They are women trying to be responsible most of the time for their families. And that is a different ethic of care and compassion and responsibility, which does not mean that they are not sorry about this, that they don't regret this. But it does mean that they are being responsible.

The second thing I'd like to say is that I do believe we have to look individually at what was said up here earlier: When it comes to abortion, we are dealing with the notion that our country is in major fear about the politics of motherhood. This is not about abortion, as far as I'm concerned. This is about a country that is absolutely terrified that women are not going to be mothers.

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As long as our society continues to be greedy, as corporations continue to mistreat their workers, as health care is unavailable to people, as people can't raise their families like they want to—I can assure you that should a method of abortion become legal tomorrow that allowed you to have an abortion in your home without anyone knowing it, some element of our social system would rise up with a message for us, to choose life. A system has to be balanced, and some element of our society must keep saying, "You must stop this greed."

If we were choosing life in the larger, societal sense, we wouldn't be here debating abortion in this way.

Naomi Wolf: I would like to live in a world in which all abortions are as early as possible, all abortions are abortions in which there is no other choice. There was an abortion clinic in Missouri that had an adoption program, so that women had a real choice. To me, as a feminist, that sounds like real choice. There's a reproductive rights activist named Charlotte Taft in Texas who sensed, after twenty years of providing abortions, when she heard women say, "I'm having an abortion because I have no other choice," she said, that is what I went into reproductive rights to hear and to do. So she started counseling women about the spiritual dimension and morals.

No feminist organization has wanted to talk about this. No reproductive rights organization has wanted to discuss this with me, even to tell me I'm wrong. Now what does that say to the women and men who are supposed to be our constituents in America? It says that the discussions we're now having behind closed doors with one another are not discussions that the leaders of the feminist and the reproductive rights movement are willing to have in public. It's not healthy for us.

Marie Wilson: I did read Naomi's article, and I think she's right that people in the feminist community have not come forward to talk to her. I think that there are a couple of reasons why this is the case. First, as a group, feminist women feel under enormous assault. That's neither good nor bad; but when you're always under assault, you don't have the luxury to address all the things you want to address in your movement, and that's a real problem. Most of us have been activists for a long time—we get up every day and we act, and we've not taken the time among ourselves to talk. We need to slow down and take the time to do that; that's a problem with our movement.

Second, you and I come out of religious backgrounds. And let's get real: Religion has not always been kind to women. Religion is a system of female values that men have headed up. And other men have not liked the men in robes and skirts who serve people, and they've been hard on women too in that system. So, when you started to use the words of sin and redemption, I think that you stepped into the restimulation of the repression of religion. We have some healing to do about religion in the women's movement.

The more that our focus is here, though, and not on the broader questions of how do we do health care—it is easier to talk about my womb than about health care reform—the less we concentrate on the debate about how we will have a city where homeless are not on the streets. Because that is a harder debate, and this is a debate that has captured the attention.

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Helen Alvaré: When I gave birth to my first child, I suffered extreme postpartum depression. As a lifelong feminist, I now wondered where my life had gone—it felt like it had been taken away, and I loved my life. And I didn't have to ask long why God would bring that into my life. I understood at that time those women who are terrorized at what a child will mean in their lives. My feeling, coming out of that, is that I know my position is radical, I know what I'm asking women for, which is really nothing short of heroism.

Yet I know that if I descend into a situation in which the woman is the only consideration, then I have lost touch with a vital human-rights principle, and I don't want to be in that place, nor do I want the society in which I live to be in that place where only one is at the center, never a community of persons.

I see no other way to stand for the principles of feminism and human rights, even having had the experience of incredible grief and bewilderment at what it meant to give over one's life for a long period to another.□

Not Far Enough

A Response to the Panel on Abortion

Ellen Judith Reich

The panel members appropriately eschewed the hostility that can ooze from the radical Right. They spoke directly to the issues, rather than to the players. Unfortunately, Naomi Wolf and Marie Wilson only hinted at the place we must go. Helen Alvaré defined that place more precisely, speaking as a Catholic. A liberal Jewish position must be carved out which reflects the sanctity of all life, from beginning to end. This movement must also simultaneously create a community that reflects loving respect for all. "Pro-life feminism" is indeed *not* an oxymoron, but a radical vision for a community that holds each member as fundamentally sacred. This "Community of We" must support pregnant women and their children regardless of how they became pregnant, and support them before, during, and after the pregnancy.

While Wolf recognizes that abortion, whether elective or spontaneous, results in "a real death," followed by real grief, Alvaré better articulates a "consistent ethic of life." Wolf proposes that "some abortions are less moral than others," but Alvaré recognizes that, difficult as it is, human life is human life. And abortion ends a human life.

Theologically, the Catholic point of view put forth by Alvaré can be fully supported by Torah. It requires a reinterpretation of the Exodus 21:22 text, and a rejection of the subsequent interpretations of this text by the sages. But as polygamy, slavery, and animal sacrifice have been outgrown, so too must the Jewish interpretation of "what is life?" Over time, our moral development, combined with our increasing medical and technological skill, will render elective abortion as unthinkable to us as infanticide is now.

My argument does not rest on the premise that there will come a time when technology can support gestation from petri dish to conception to full term. Rather, it rests on certain currently verifiable data and the logical and ethical questions that arise from them.

The first relevant datum is that a fetus's heart starts beating twenty-one days after conception, about one week after a missed menstrual period. The fetus has measurable brain waves forty days after conception. Medically, the absence of a heart beat and/or measurable brain waves are the standard criteria for defining death. Conversely, if those functions are present, the person in whom they are discernible is considered to be alive.

One of the more persuasive pro-choice arguments—in fact, the one that allowed me to be pro-choice for most of my life—is that *if the fetus cannot live outside of the mother, it is part of the mother*. And, this argument continues, since she controls her own body, she is free to do as she wishes. In fact, the scientific data reveal that the embryo is *not* a part of the mother. From conception, this being has a different genetic code from the mother. Every part of the mother's body carries her own genetic code. Although the embryo may look indistinguishable from that of pigs, monkeys, and chickens, genetically it will never be anything other than what it is—human.

Moreover, while embryonic brain activity is, no doubt, pre-cognitive, neonatal mental processes are radically distinct from average adult cognition. Intelligence level has never been a legitimate criterion for defining human life.

Finally, although the fetus is completely dependent on the mother's body for survival, total dependence occurs among those whose humanness we do not question—for example, neonates, and some elderly and handicapped people. A person on a ventilator cannot breathe without artificial support, but we do not consider such an individual anything other than human.

The crucial issue for the pro-choice movement has been, what are we to do with the fact that the mother's

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body is the only support system available to the in-utero being? But the way that the pro-choice movement has responded to this question has shed no light on when life begins, or how, as a society, we will value human life. The debate takes on a different and more focused tack when we shift to these core questions of human life.

The vast majority of the pro-life movement supports the position of the Jewish sages, who require abortion if the mother's life is in danger. Judaism always has and will continue to wrestle with the ethical response to tragedy. Choosing the life of the woman over the life of the child reflects doing the best we can when forced to "chose between the lesser of two evils," as Wolf suggests. We might say the woman is "of the world" while the baby is "not yet of the world."

Wolf proposes a change in the language of the abortion debate, noting the inflammatory and unjust characterization of those providing or having an abortion as "murderers." This must be examined in more detail, because it is a bridge between the two sides of the debate, introducing compassion on one side and reducing guilt for past action on the other. How can anyone realistically expect others to reconsider their beliefs and perceptions when to do so means accepting the label "murderer?"

Murder, in our justice system, requires intent plus knowledge. Those who genuinely do not believe that the embryo and fetus are human beings are not committing murder in choosing to abort. Wilson appropriately characterizes women choosing abortion as women doing the best they can to act responsibly. I would point out, however, that *acting responsibly is based on the facts as we know them*. Responsibility is based on acting in accordance with truth, as best as we or our culture can define it. One cannot willfully disregard readily available information and continue to claim responsible action. Elective abortion stops a beating human heart.

Pro-choice advocates cry foul and become furious when pro-life forces display photos of aborted babies. They call these photos incendiary and unfair. Such a reaction leaves a searcher for truth and justice confused. Why are these facts (for the photos are real) too emotional to show? It becomes hard to avoid the sneaking suspicion that this is because our hearts know what our heads are fighting so valiantly against. But our genuine desire for responsible action must not be derailed by fear of what this truth could do to our lives.

We must take whatever truths we find and use them to our advantage. We cannot let the Right take the truth and mix it with quiet lies about women. If these few cells are human life we must not let the Right tip the scales so that the sacred humanity of women is suddenly ignored or distorted. We must take our energy and create a vision of the kind of caring and supportive society we need.

I believe the pro-life movement speaks the truth about the sanctity of all human life, but the pro-choice movement speaks the truth about the sanctity of women. When these truths can mingle together, a great power exists. Pro-choice does not "lose" if pro-life "wins." Our unifying vision is to create meaning in our lives, reflected in a society that is compassionate, supportive, and respectful of each individual. Honoring womb life at the expense of women is just as unacceptable as honoring the "rights" of women over other life.

Our biggest fear when facing a ban on elective abortion is that we will lose our freedom and our power, that biology will once again return as destiny. Today, a woman's life can crumble quickly and radically when faced with an unwanted pregnancy. Society abandons her. We need to create a world where such a woman's options stay wide open—whether she keeps the baby or faces the personal tragedy of giving the baby up for adoption.

Helen Alvaré said she was asking women for "nothing short of heroism." This is an apt description, and it applies to all of us—whether carrying a baby or committing our efforts to creating that world of love, caring, and respect that we desire. The fire, intelligence, and compassion of those in the pro-choice movement can be better harnessed for profound healing and change, by creating this Community of We. □

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Men, Prison, and the American Dream

Terry A. Kupers

According to the prison code, "snitching" is a capital offense. If an inmate protests that the weapon or contraband the guards find during an unannounced cell search belongs to his cell mate, he is subject to violent reprisals by other inmates; if he refuses to snitch he is subject to a long stint in solitary confinement and loss of his prison job.

There are prison toughs, and there are punks. While I was touring a high-security prison in preparation for testimony in a class-action suit about prison conditions, an inmate told me that, being deeply depressed for a long time with no access to a sympathetic "shrink," he attempted suicide by slashing his wrists. He was unsuccessful, and from then on the other prisoners considered him weak. His cell mate, with whom he had been getting along just fine, was now pressured by others to beat him up and rape him. They would pass by the cell and taunt the cell mate, "You better get that punk, or maybe you're a punk too, and we'll have to get you."

A punk is a man who is sodomized, usually after losing a fight, or one who voluntarily becomes another inmate's passive sexual partner. Loners are especially vulnerable to rape. Young male inmates who fear they cannot protect themselves might hook up with a tougher inmate who will protect them in exchange for sexual favors. Many men choose to remain in their cells all day, risking depression; but as long as they do not draw a predatory cell mate there is less risk of rape.

Even though the situation behind bars today is grim, there are instances where the human spirit prevails. Consensual, mutually satisfying sex does occur, but is not mentioned to other prisoners. And while friendship is very difficult, many prisoners report that the only way they are able to survive and do their time is that a buddy or sympathetic cell mate is in their corner. But these affectionate moments occur on the margins of the everyday battle for dominance.

For the rape victim, reporting the assault to security staff is not a simple matter. The staff is likely to demand that the victim identify the perpetrator before they will do anything. But the perpetrator might retaliate by killing the "snitch," or by arranging for another inmate to kill him even if the victim asks to "lock up" (i.e., be transferred to protective custody.) So prisoners lift weights compulsively, adopt the meanest stare they can muster, and keep their fears and their pain carefully hidden beneath a well-rehearsed tough-guy posture.

Prison provides a dark mirror, a parody really, of gender relations in society-at-large. Outside prison, men battle for dominance and abuse women. With no women available, the same sensibility, intensified the way every form of meanness is intensified in overcrowded prisons, plays out in acts of male-on-male sexualized violence. But the inmate rape victim, the "punk," is no longer a man in the eyes of the toughs; he has been turned into a woman. He is at the very bottom of the heap, precisely where men in and out of prison are trying their best to keep from falling.

For men, the lifelong obsession with hierarchies and domination goes all the way back to that school-yard fight scenario. There was the winner, perhaps a bully, and the loser—the ninety-eight-pound weakling, the sissy, the chicken. Before long, the guy at the bottom is called a "faggot" or a "girl." In a particularly vicious version, the loser's pants are pulled down and his genitals are mocked. There is an implicit threat of violence, even rape.

For a certain number of men, it's not all fantasy; we are only beginning to discover how many men were sexually abused as boys.

Not all men give much conscious thought to rape, but the male imagination reserves a place for the notion. It is built into the American Dream. As Michael Lerner points out, the flip-side of the dream that any man can climb to the top is that the guy who fails to realize his dreams has only himself to blame. The unconscious dread of falling to the bottom and being raped has its signifiers in everyday speech: Men "cover their asses" so they won't "get shafted," and they think of a

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good friend as someone who's "got their back." And men posture as if they were warding off the threat of attack: Don't get too close to other guys, especially in a physical sense; don't show the other guys you're hurting; stay in control; don't appear too dependent; watch your back.

Free men are less likely than prisoners to fight with their hands and rape each other, but they do compete fiercely to demonstrate their greater toughness to superiors. At work, if you're not hard-hearted enough, then you're not considered "man" enough for the higher level job. Everyone is conscious of the hierarchy and disdains the guy at the bottom. Men who refuse to fight their way toward the top are pitied or scorned. The guy who opts to spend as much time as he can with his family is derided for not being sufficiently invested in his work. Just as in prison, when a man in the work world is viewed as a loser his former friends cut their ties with him. Thus, middle managers who have been fired from corporations as a result of downsizing report that their former co-workers never call to see how they are getting along.

Workaholism emanates from a fear of falling. I ask a male psychotherapy client why he keeps working twelve-hour days despite pleas from his wife and children that he spend more time at home, and he responds: "If I don't keep outworking the other guys at the office I'll be passed over at promotion time, and then it's just a matter of time until they let me go and I'm too old to find another job." This very successful and prosperous businessman keeps driving himself and ignoring his personal needs out of the fear that otherwise he would fall to the bottom of the heap.

Once a man believes he is beginning to fall, he tends to exaggerate some of the worst male traits. There is a tendency to take out one's misery on those who seem even less powerful. For instance, we know that there is an increased incidence of domestic violence among men who have been fired or laid off. There is also a higher incidence of alcoholism and suicide. Historically, whenever the economy declines and men feel uncertain about their manly capacity to provide, there is heightened backlash against women, minorities, immigrants, and gays. A man might be down and out, but at least he's nobody's punk.

In other words, when a certain number of men begin to believe they are in a free-fall, they become meaner, rougher, and more insensitive and abusive toward others. Perhaps, in some unconscious way, they are preparing themselves to become the gladiators they believe they will need to be to survive in the hell (modeled on prison) they imagine awaits them at the very bottom of the heap.

The population of American prisons has tripled since 1980 and, at the rate things are going, will double again by 2005. The majority of prisoners are people of color, and their proportion of the prison population is growing. New facilities cannot be built fast enough, resulting in massive overcrowding. Small cells, built for one, become home to two. Gymnasiums become impromptu dorms, crammed with hundreds of bunk beds. The prisoners become irritable, tempers flare; fights break out, especially in lines. Racial tensions mount.

As the crowding intensifies, the fights become worse, there are more rapes, more men are sent to solitary confinement, and the rage keeps building. The incidences of AIDS, TB, suicide, and serious psychiatric disorders rise precipitously. Abuse of the weak intensifies.

The contemporary imprisonment binge does not make sense. More overcrowding and worse brutalization in the prisons will not lead to safer streets, no matter what transient changes occur in the official statistics on crime. The statistics have varied only a few points up or down over the last fifteen years, yet the prison population has tripled.

Of course, there are people who repeatedly commit violent crimes and deserve to be in prison, and the public's understandable fears about these hard-core criminals should not be ignored. In fact, it is often these men who become predators in the prison domination hierarchy. But, contrary to the fears generated by media concentration on the most depraved and violent felons, 77 percent of prison inmates are serving time for nonviolent crimes, mostly drug-related. The average prisoner will be released in less than five years, despite the prevalence of "three-strike" statutes.

Prison constitutes meanness training; the meaner a man becomes, the greater the chance he will survive. With the overcrowding of prisons and the removal of rehabilitation programs—because politicians believe such programs "coddle" criminals—this phenomenon intensifies. Placing men in a hellish environment for several years will only make them angrier, meaner, and less caring toward others upon release. Andrew Young was absolutely right when he said during a visit to South Central Los Angeles following the verdicts on the police who beat Rodney King: "You cannot lock up enough men to have peace."

Why, if it is obvious that our imprisonment binge will not lead to safer streets, do so many people, including President Clinton and other "centrist" Democrats, push for even harsher sentences and more prisons? Responding to the tremendous fear afloat in this age of downsizing, globalization, and high unemployment,

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From Apathy to Activism

Challenging America's Disempowered Youth

Sasha Polakow-Suransky

The despair and cynicism so prevalent in contemporary American society by no means afflicts only adults. In fact, this phenomenon may be most pervasive among today's youth.

Young men and women, perhaps more than any other group, are assailed every day by the negative images and materialistic consumerism of the mainstream media. Furthermore, in their school life, they are often fed a curriculum devoid of meaning. In this scholastic world of worksheets, the objective is neither to challenge students to transform the world, nor to nurture students' creativity, but merely to prepare them for the job market and "today's economy." Such curricula also serve to divide students into various groups based on the hallowed notion of "academic achievement"; this policy, known as academic tracking, is, in effect, no more than a rationalization for a subtle form of segregation along race and class lines. Hence, we can see how the societal conditions that have bred the very ills the politics-of-meaning approach attempts to confront are replicated in schools, shaping children's outlooks.

This structure of institutional control leads students to believe that they cannot effect change in their schools and communities. It is an atmosphere that breeds cynicism, distrust, and apathy and precludes any sense of agency among students.

Yet there is hope: It rests in the possibility of transforming education in America so that it becomes a meaningful and positive experience in the lives of students rather than a cold, standardized daily routine. It will take a concerted effort on the part of students, teachers, parents, and perhaps most important, those administrators who control our schools. The primary goal of such an undertaking must be to transform our notion of education from one of methodical consciousness to one of critical consciousness.

The role of the teacher must undergo a complete metamorphosis so that, as the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire describes it, the teacher is no longer a narrator "[whose] task is to fill the students with the contents of his narration..." but rather an interested, empathic individual who recognizes the students' untapped creative potential. The present system, according to Freire, takes students and

> ...turns them into 'containers,' into 'receptacles,' to be filled by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacle, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teachers are the depositors...

Our society needs to reject this "banking" approach to education. As Freire argues, the new model of learning should be based on the realization that, "...knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."

Examples of such creative inquiry and student activism already exist. Last year, students in the Ann Arbor school district conducted a survey on discrimination, violence, and school atmosphere. One of the survey's most noteworthy findings was the prevalent opinion that school curricula are discriminatory and fail to represent the perspectives of all groups. When asked why such a wide achievement gap exists between white and Black students, many students blamed curriculum bias. When given the chance to elaborate, many written responses addressed the alienation and sense of worthlessness felt by those who do not see themselves or their heritage represented in the prescribed curriculum.

Many of the students who worked on the survey belong to a group called Students Educating Each other about Discrimination (S.E.E.D.), created eight years ago to reach students in the sixth grade in an effort to stop discriminatory attitudes from developing. The central philosophy of S.E.E.D. is to raise the consciousness of the students so that they begin to look critically at

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their own realities and, at the same time, come to realize that they have the power to shape and change the environment around them. As Michael Lerner has written "...unless we can imagine ourselves as potentially powerful, we will resist the temptation to expand our circle of caring...If we ever want to be serious about overcoming racism in this society, it is precisely this sense of powerlessness that must be overcome." I believe that in several ways S.E.E.D. embodies Lerner's vision, but it is a small and isolated group and neither reflects the community nor society as a whole. Nevertheless, it is one example of transformative activism and can perhaps set an example for others.

By approaching education from a meaning-oriented perspective, we can work toward dismantling the harmful structures of inequality that have come to dominate American schools and replacing them with meaningful student-teacher and student-administrator relationships. We must also direct our energy toward redefining the curriculum so that it will serve the needs and interests of a diverse student population.

It is clear that the crisis we face in our schools is merely a reflection of the crisis we face as a society. While the necessity of addressing the spiritual and ethical needs of the middle class is central to the politics of meaning project, we must not forget the plight of the "most oppressed." It is true that the Left's failure to address Americans' meaning needs is detrimental to the overarching cause of social justice, but it is my belief that the Left's lack of appeal is also due to its failure to address the alarming rates of child poverty, destitution, and homelessness that make America the shame of the developed, democratic world. Much of the predominant "liberal" discourse in American politics blatantly ignores the systemic perpetuation of poverty and has even condoned the legislative onslaught on the poor under the guise of "welfare reform."

Furthermore, issues of readily available birth control, abortion, sex education, and child care for working or studying single mothers have been brushed aside by politicians across the political spectrum. Instead of addressing such important issues directly, elected officials of both major parties offer paltry solutions, the most recent example being a presidentially endorsed initiative to impose nationwide curfews. Meanwhile, vital issues that demand attention and directly affect the present generation of young mothers and will continue to affect my generation in the years to come are deliberately ignored. This lack of a comprehensive social vision is in large part responsible for Americans' spiritual and ethical crisis.

In the meantime, a disturbing trend is emerging. As I walked to school earlier this week I was handed a flier by a member of NWROC (National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition—a militant, working-class youth group.) It read "Smash the KKK at Ann Arbor Rally." The flier proceeded to denounce the non-violent resistance tactics of other groups and urged supporters to attend a counter-rally and to build a militant mass movement to counter the racism of the Klan and neo-Nazis. This demonstration and counter-demonstration is an annual event.

Sadly, the group most successful in mobilizing resistance to the bigotry of the KKK and Neo-Nazis has been NWROC, whose appeal lies precisely in its simplistic approach to complex problems. New members are fed a steady diet of organizational dogma from which they may not stray. They then disseminate their newly acquired message throughout the community and succeed in attracting many angry young people. The people drawn to NWROC, like those drawn to the KKK, Neo-Nazi, and skinhead groups, are angry youths experiencing an identity crisis caused by school and family lives devoid of meaning.

The simple solutions offered by this and other supposedly "radical Left" organizations provide a quick-fix for their identity problems as well as an outlet for their anger and aggression. The success of these organizations is the distressing result of the Left's failure to build an effective alternative to the hateful and victim-blaming ideology of the Right. If the politics of meaning could reach this constituency, I sincerely believe that it could provide a viable alternative. The failure to fill the political, educational, and social void of America's angry and leaderless youth could have disastrous consequences for the country's future. □

Artists Needed

TIKKUN seeks freelance artists. Please send non-returnable samples of your work to: TIKKUN Art, 951 Cragmont Ave., Berkeley, CA, 94708.

The Poetry of Robert Friend

A Tribute

Gabriel Levin

Robert Friend is fond of quoting A. E. Housman's remark that fame was a mattress between himself and the hard ground, and in recent years, the line even crops up in his poems, although altered, so that what stands, or rather lies, between the poet and the hard ground is not necessarily fame, but any form of intellectual pursuit, and, by implication, the very act of writing.

Now it seems especially appropriate to borrow and expand upon Housman's metaphor when speaking of Friend's verse, for Friend is preeminently a poet of desire, a "peeker through a bedroom shutter," who has become increasingly bold in portraying, not without humor, the darker, lustful side of love. But what I'd like to demonstrate briefly is how, in *The Next Room*, Friend repeatedly explores the possibility and desirability of bedding down alone in the narrowest of beds:

> Sleeping alone
> for many years
> I dreamed of two
> in a big wide bed,
> but now that you
> lie warm by my side
> I dream of a single
> narrow bed
> cool and white
> where I can lie alone
> all night. ("Sleeping Alone")

Wit, brevity, and unadorned natural speech rhythms keep this little poem afloat. Its abbreviated form—recalling Sappho's "I Sleep Alone"—belies the quality, the honesty, of its emotion.

Of course, wit has been Friend's trademark all along—wit, elegance, and a lambent iambic line. Take, for example, "The Hunchback," first published in *Somewhere Lower Down*:

> Within the house of mirrors
> amazedly he sits
> and studies in the mirrors
> how well his hunchback fits.
>
> He picks up his book of riddles
> and tumbles his game of blocks.
> How many tears in an onion?
> How many springs in clocks?
>
> Flies turn to bones of amber
> when the spider spins itself,
> and he sighs into the cobwebs
> and the clock signs on the shelf.
>
> He reads his growing shadow,
> and walks the endless round
> along the edge of the mirror sea
> where a hunchless ghost lies drowned.

The poem enchants, with its mirrors and riddles and its careful knit of masculine and feminine rhymes. Its wistful tone hints at larger truths which remain enigmatic, just beyond reach. And as with many of Friend's poems leading up to *The Next Room*, "The Hunchback" displays an essential division, or doubleness: of self and shadow, essence and appearance, "a mirror brimming/with my emptiness/a body falling/through the bodiless dark," as Friend writes in "The Practice of Absence."

Some thirty years down the road (the "Practice of Absence" was published in 1971 in a book that takes its title from the poem) still "living toward emptiness," Friend at last becomes, in his own words, "an epicure of essence." He has bided his time to write "the poem" (the *poems*, I would add) "I never could write before." The poetry no longer beguiles; it pierces, and is, at times, unexpectedly raw for a poet who has al-

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Robert Friend, born in New York in 1913 and living in Israel since 1950, has published eight books of original poetry, most recently, The Next Room *(1995) and four books of poetry translations from the Hebrew, including* Flowers of Perhaps: Selected Poems of Ra'hel *(1995). Gabriel Levin lives in Jerusalem. His collection of poems,* Sleepers of Beulah, *was published in 1992.*

ways favored the cooked, i.e., rhyme and meter. It is raw, exposed, and perhaps most important, it is not double but single-minded: Friend's hunchback needs "no doubled looking-glass," he now accepts "pure singleness as his dark double dies."

Having shed doubleness, having healed the self's discords, in these poems of "first and last things," Friend now writes as a "complicated lover" who has of late opted for the ascetic life—for the narrow bed. Opted, that is, out of necessity, for "pure singleness" seen primarily in the sober light of loss, old age, disease, and death, all of which force the poet to withdraw into himself, a position that he accepts with a mixture of resignation and defiance, as in "Dancing with a Tiger":

> A crowded floor of couples at a dance
> and only I,
> his tail wrapped round us both,
> dancing with a tiger.
> Soft lights, music,
> social happiness,
> but suddenly
> —what had I said to him?—
> the strong grip loosened,
> the tongue at my ear
> stopped licking,
> and he growled.
>
> "Don't go,"
> I pleaded,
> yet even as he went
> strangely relieved
> to find myself alone
> upon the dancing floor.

Undoubtedly, Friend's sense of relief, tinged as it is with grief, has something to do with the task of writing, with taking comfort in a stark, pared-down poetics. Now, Friend will write to the solitary sound—the "tak-tak-tak" of the woodpecker outside his window:

> Concentrated, industrious
> as he works away at the dark,
> his hunger becomes his song.

--Gabriel Levin

The Crime

Was the body found in the park or in the parlor,
or maybe packaged neatly in the shed?
Was there in fact a body after all,
or is it only a rumor in my head?

Is there some corpse *I'm* hiding in the closet?
I must admit there is no dearth of clues:
those sudden bouts of nerves, those headaches out of
nowhere,
that nightly and obsessive arrangement of my shoes?

Why am I sitting here? Why don't I send the hounds
out,
instead of cogitating every who or if?
Why don't I bring them what I noticed in the garden,
that piece of bra, or was it an old sock, to sniff?

Somewhere there is a trail that must be followed—
footprints, a strand of hair entangled in a tree—
whether it end at a brook that will not babble,
or lead at last inexorably—to me.

Eye Examination

The eye doctor tells me
my eye-ducts do not supply
tears enough to wash away
what eyes take in.
He cannot know
I have shed my tears dryly
too many years,
If only I had let them flow,
I would have shed tears enough
to drown a world
they have borne witness to
long enough.

Undershirt

yellowing with time and wear—
and shorts,
stained with semen, piss, and sweat,
you faithfully absorb into your white
foul exudations of the human animal
(but not foul to me who breathe
your odors gratefully into my lungs),

reminding us,
before the laundry sends you back
fresh-smelling and renewed,
we are no angels—
not even teachers stuffed with straw,
but the raw, unfinished creature
we are often glad to be.□

Balancing Individual Rights and the Common Good

Amitai Etzioni

Some people have thought that communitarianism resembles conservativism in its focus on the need for greater individual responsibility toward the community, and in its critique of the excesses of a rights-oriented society. In fact, communitarians really seek to establish a New Golden Rule, one that seeks a balance between the still-valued needs of individuals and the larger society. If we were living in a totalitarian society, that golden rule would lead us, as dissenters, to challenge the misuse of communitarian language and to insist on greater individual liberty. In Western democratic societies, where the pendulum has shifted toward extremes of individual self-indulgence and a lack of community responsibility, communitarianism often takes the form of a critique of this excess. Yet what we seek is actually a new kind of balance.

To illustrate communitarianism's approach to balancing the rights of the individual with the needs of the community, I have selected the issue of privacy as an example of the New Golden Rule's applicability to public policy.

On first glance, it appears that our society has undergone a steady erosion of individual privacy. Neighbors listen in on your cellular phone. The boss taps into employees' E-mail and medical records. A reporter at his home computer accesses a record of the videos you've rented, your credit card purchases, and personal information about your companion on your trip to Acapulco. No wonder increasing numbers of Americans demand new laws to protect themselves from data rape.

But, from a communitarian point of view, giving up some measure of this kind of privacy serves the common good. Keeping computerized data on physicians who have had their hospital privileges revoked shadows them long after they have paid their dues for the original infractions. But would you rather return to the world in which doctors who killed several patients in New Jersey could cross state lines and repeat their performance?

Child-care centers can now find out if prospective employees have been convicted of child abuse. While that may seem like a civil libertarian's nightmare, would you rather have your child in a facility like the one in Orlando, Florida, whose management learned only after a guard made sexual advances on boys that he had previously been convicted of raping a fourteen-year-old?

Would you prefer to maintain banks' discretion to hide the movements of large amounts of cash, or institute monitoring mechanisms that would allow authorities to curb drug lords' transactions? Would you rather receive an antibiotic to which you are allergic as you are wheeled into an emergency room, or submit your personal medical history to a universally accessible computerized health registry that would ensure you'd get the right treatment?

Take a tough case: Should we fingerprint welfare recipients? Such a practice makes the poor feel like criminals, civil libertarians complain. But would you rather continue to have a small group of sociopaths give legitimate welfare beneficiaries a bad name by double-dipping and otherwise ripping off the system?

Will these new knowledge technologies lead to a police state, as civil libertarians warn us? As I see it, the shortest way to tyranny runs the other way: If we do not significantly improve our ability to reduce violent crime, sexual abuse, and stem epidemics, an ever-larger number of Americans will demand strong-armed authorities to restore law and order. Let us allow the new capabilities of cyberspace to help restore civil order, which is at the foundation of liberty.

Once we accept that privacy is not an absolute value, we must look for the criteria that will guide us in making trade-offs in the name of the common good. These include the following: tolerate new limitations on privacy only when there is a compelling need (e.g., to reduce the spread of contagious disease); minimize the entailed intrusion (e.g., measure the temperature of a urine sample for drug tests, rather than observe as it is being produced); double-check that there is no other way of serving the same purpose; and, minimize the side effects

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Amitai Etzioni is author, most recently, of The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society *(Basic Books, January 1997).*


HARVEY FINKLE/IMPACT VISUALS

(e.g., insist that we be allowed to refuse junk mail).

The last thing a communitarian calls for is to abolish any right, let alone privacy. But no right is absolute, and all must be balanced against the common good.

Applying these communitarian principles to other policy areas, we can envision these reforms according to the New Golden Rule:

•Marriage—Several states, spurred by conservative initiatives, seek to restore "fault" divorce. In contrast, the New Golden Rule approach to strengthening marriage would be to provide couples with *premarital* counseling; the remaining elements of a tax penalty on those who are married should be removed; give new parents a year's paid leave. Those who wish to foster marriage should provide incentives that enable couples to have stronger bonds, rather than to employ legal coercion. And above all, we should celebrate those who have a peer marriage, in which both partners have the same rights and the same responsibilities.

•H.I.V.—Conservatives have called for quarantining all H.I.V. carriers (as they do in Cuba), mandatory testing of all people in high-risk areas, and outlawing of homosexual activities. Some libertarians argue against any campaigns to require H.I.V. testing that would entail identifying sexual partners or intravenous drug users, even if the objective is to stem the spread of the disease. They argue that requirements for disclosure to former and prospective contacts will discourage people from being tested, are unnecessary because everybody should engage in safer sex anyhow, and that the tests are useless, because by the time the results are in, the person may have acquired the illness.

The New Golden Rule suggests that individuals whose blood is tested for other purposes should be asked to agree to have their blood screened for H.I.V., and that they should be expected, as an act of moral commitment to others and the community, to inform prior and prospective contacts. The information would spur individuals to be more cautious than they would be otherwise, and people can and do refrain from new contacts until test results are in. Above all, doing all one can to stem the spread of this horrible plague is a communal obligation. Penalties on those who use information about individuals who have H.I.V. or AIDS in a discriminatory way in housing, work, or otherwise should be increased.

•Identity politics—All groups, including feminists, labor unions, and minorities, should continue to fight for their interests and viewpoints, but with one hand tied behind their back. Like partners who seek both to gain their due share but keep the partnership going, each group should be mindful of its place in the larger progressive community and not only of its share.

•Environmentalism—Recognizing our commitment to the environment as a common good, rather than basing environmental policies only or mainly on the benefits they generate (e.g., by allowing each of us to breathe cleaner air) or because they generate jobs, is a major communitarian argument.

•Organ donation—Thousands of lives could be saved each year if we assumed that most people wish to do their moral duty and donate organs. Those who for religious or other reasons cannot do so could receive an exemption form, but medical authorities would not have to wait for forgetful and neglectful individuals to mark their drivers' licenses or carry donor cards.

•Meanings and values—The New Golden Rule shares with the politics of meaning the recognition that while economic and political factors are important, so are patterns of meaning, shared understanding, and moral commitments. These arise and are nourished in what I call "moral dialogues," in which people resolve value differences, not through rationalistic deliberations that try to keep values at bay, or through culture wars, in which those of different moral position confront each other, often leading to violence.

This is the New Golden Rule—on one foot.□

BOOK REVIEWS

Courting Racial Justice

John Atlas and Peter Dreier

Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia, by David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal. Rutgers University Press, 1996. 267 pp. $29.95.
Suburbs Under Siege, by Charles M. Haar. Princeton University Press, 1996. 256 pp. $29.95.

Since the 1960s, how Americans talk, write, and think about race relations has changed immensely. At a 1957 press conference, for example, President Eisenhower expressed his sympathy for the fears of Southern whites whom, he said, "see a picture of the mongrelization of the race." Today, no president would dare utter such sentiments in public.

Thanks to the civil rights revolution, we've witnessed the growth of the African-American middle class, the emergence of Black political leadership supported by both whites and Blacks, and a dramatic decline in the overt daily terror imposed on Black Americans. Several large, predominantly white cities—Minneapolis, Seattle, and Los Angeles among them—have elected Black mayors.

Nevertheless, race remains a divisive issue. And perhaps nothing better reflects the unresolved American dilemma than the persistence of residential segregation. Recent studies document that minorities experience discrimination regardless of income. Poor Blacks, but not poor whites, tend to live in ghettoes or barrios with high concentrations of the poor. Middle-class Blacks tend to live in mostly Black neighborhoods. Even when they move to the suburbs, they find themselves living in segregated areas. Only a small fraction of this reality can be attributed to voluntary self-segregation.

Faced with such realities, activists have often resorted to litigation to achieve their goals. One of the key cases involved a group of low-income Black residents in Mount Laurel, New Jersey, a fast-growing suburb located ten miles from Camden, one of the nation's poorest cities. In 1970, they successfully sued the township for its failure to provide affordable housing to residents like themselves.

Two new books about these efforts and their legacy, *Our Town* and *Suburbs Under Siege*, demonstrate the limits and opportunities of using the courts as a tool for social reform. Both books describe how housing activists and their lawyers relied almost exclusively on the New Jersey Supreme Court to force the construction of low-income housing in the suburbs. Both books do a good job of describing the litigation process, the personalities, the legal strategies, and the modest outcome of the *Mount Laurel* cases. Did the litigation strategy work? Charles M. Haar in *Suburbs Under Siege* says it did. David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal in *Our Town* are not so sure.

Our Town is a moving and dramatic account of the events featuring several resourceful and tenacious lawyers, judges, and local Black leaders. The authors tell of Ethel Lawrence, who lent her name to the case and faithfully stayed the course for more than twenty years of victory and disappointment. And they describe public interest attorneys Peter O'Connor and Carl Biscaier, who combined a creative commitment to justice with the expertise of real estate entrepreneurs. *Suburbs Under Siege* argues that only the courts can overcome the prejudices of the nation's white majority toward poor and Black Americans.

The goal of the attorneys was not simply to end "snob zoning." They wanted to end New Jersey's housing crisis and stop de facto racial segregation. The *Mount Laurel* decision didn't come close to solving these problems. There is still a huge gap between the number of housing units needed and the number provided by the court order. In particular, few *Mount Laurel*-sponsored housing units have been built in affluent suburban communities. And most of the housing that *has* been built has been targeted for lower-middle-class families and the elderly, not the poor.

The authors of these two books try to explain why *Mount Laurel*'s legacy is so limited, but their conclusions reflect the political myopia of activists who rely on the courts.

Repeatedly frustrated in their efforts to secure better quality housing, a group led by Ethel Lawrence sued the township in 1970. Four years later, the New Jersey Supreme Court struck down the use of zoning to exclude low-income housing. It ruled that it was illegal for towns to use their zoning powers in a way that inflated residential prices and thus excluded the poor and the Black. Mount Laurel and virtually all other New Jersey suburbs evaded the court's ruling; so, in 1983, the state Supreme Court decided the second *Mount Laurel* case. In his ruling, Chief Justice Robert Wilentz made clear that, "This court is more firmly committed to the original *Mount Laurel* doctrine than ever, and we are determined… to make it work." Wilentz's brilliantly crafted decision went beyond outlawing exclusionary zoning. It mandated the construction of affordable housing in suburbs that lacked their "fair share" of low-income people.

Once it became clear that "*Mount Laurel* 2" was beginning to work, political opportunists seized the chance to inflame racial fears. Some New Jersey politicians imitated George Wallace's defiant stand against school integration in the 1960s. Politicians complained that their constituents worked hard to get their suburban homes and now the government was going to destroy their communities and property values. (Of course, they ignored the government tax breaks, in-

John Atlas is a New Jersey public-interest lawyer and president of the National Housing Institute. Peter Dreier, professor of politics and director of the Public Policy Program at Occidental College in Los Angeles, served as Boston's housing director during the 1980s.

sured mortgage loans, and grants for sewers, roads, and highways that subsidized suburban homeowners.) In response to the growing resistance, the state legislature passed a law that undercut the Supreme Court's decision.

New Jersey's judicial activism did lead to the building of about 15,000 units of affordable housing. But most of these units were produced without any direct public subsidy. *Mount Laurel* helped dramatize the state's housing crisis and demonstrated how cities and towns can use government regulation—such as inclusionary zoning and the use of resale controls (which limit rising costs)—to build low- and moderate-income housing.

But the advocates and judges overestimated the power and reach of any court's ability to bring about change. Most people moving into the new *Mount Laurel* housing are young, working class, and white—or they are elderly. This has suited developers, politicians, and most suburban residents themselves. But New Jersey's Department of Community Affairs estimates that more than 600,000 families need affordable places to live.

Why didn't the *Mount Laurel* cases accomplish more? Clearly, both institutional and individual racism have played a role. Lenders, landlords, and realtors still discriminate based on race, steering homebuyers into segregated neighborhoods. Blaming racism, however, is insufficient. Racists do not always act on their beliefs. Economic and social conditions often influence their behavior. We know, for example, that during the half-century after the Civil War, lynchings increased whenever the price of cotton (and thus the health of the Southern economy) declined. And contemporary Americans are more accepting of immigrants when there is close to full employment.

Political leadership and social movements can also encourage racial competition or cooperation. Republicans have sought to exploit issues such as school busing and affirmative action to drive a wedge between white ethnic voters and Blacks. Simultaneously, Democratic leaders became vulnerable by focusing on social issues rather than progressive economic concerns. *Mount Laurel* was New Jersey's Willie Horton. Moreover, as the civil rights movement waned, a number of urban African-American leaders viewed racial integration of suburbia as a threat to their political base.

New Jersey's interracial housing activists were also at fault. Relying almost solely on lawsuits, they struggled with a tiny political base. They were unable to connect their noble purposes to the concerns of average white citizens who, as New Jersey's economy began to suffer from declining wages, job losses, and deindustrialization, tried to hold onto whatever social and economic security they could. These were not closet Klan members, but working-class Americans worried about their kids' schools, rising crime, and stagnating property values. So when vote-hungry politicians warned them that *Mount Laurel*'s "forced integration" would threaten their hold on the American Dream, they understood the code words.

The authors of *Our Town* mistakenly compare Ethel Lawrence with Rosa Parks. Parks had spent time at the Highlander Folk Center's training sessions for civil rights and labor activists. She was actively involved with her church and was part of a tightly knit Black community. When she refused to move from the front of the bus in Montgomery, the incident mobilized tens of thousands of Black citizens to participate in the bus boycott and other activities designed to win concessions from the white business and political establishment. When they won, the victory belonged to the people, not the lawyers, and became a stepping stone to other stages of the civil rights struggle. At its peak, the civil rights movement viewed litigation as just one of many tools in its strategic arsenal. "Whenever possible," King told reporters in early 1957,"we want to avoid court cases in this integration struggle."

Unlike Parks, Lawrence was not part of an organized movement. She came to rely on housing lawyers, self-perpetuating non-profit advocates who were remote from the average citizen. Nothing dramatized this more than the ease with which New Jersey's current Governor, Christine Todd Whitman, dismantled the Office of the Public Advocate, a government agency set up in the 1970s, which championed the *Mount Laurel* cause.

It should be obvious, especially to non-lawyers, that a top-down strategy like litigation cannot extend economic rights when it undermines local community institutions, fails to empower the poor, or to build coalitions with the middle class.

The *Mount Laurel* lawyers did not realize that it is impossible for courts to produce basic changes when they lack strong political support and face serious resistance to their decisions. Courts lack implementation powers. As Gerald N. Rosenberg documents in his recent book, *The Hollow Hope*, segregation declined only when the Congress and President were pushed to act by the civil rights movement.

Like many liberals confronting white prejudice, the *Mount Laurel* advocates had little patience for, or skill in, grass-roots organizing. Instead, they resorted to the quick fix of litigation, hoping that if the courts mandated a change in white Americans' behavior, their hearts would (someday) follow. Neither book about *Mount Laurel* addresses the question of resources. In the real world of limited resources, strategic decisions have costs as well as benefits. Exaggerating the importance of litigation leads activists to overemphasize the leadership role of lawyers, to translate their goals into legalistic formulas, and to ignore the need to build widespread political support. It's as if a committee of concerned citizens raised millions of dollars of government and foundation money to help the poor gain opportunities and power and then hired only lawyers. Why not invest in people —organizers, researchers, public relations specialists, and others—who work to empower the poor by building on their church and community organizations?

Using the courts to go over the heads of the public ignores Americans' great capacity to rise to the challenges of their time. Fair-housing struggles can succeed, but only in the context of a grass-roots movement that brings the poor and middle class together.

Efforts to open up the suburbs are most likely to succeed when housing is part of a broader political organizing agenda to build urban-suburban bridges. For example, Myron Orfield, a Minnesota state legislator, has spearheaded a formidable effort to build a progressive metropolitan coalition. He has sponsored a plan to reduce property-tax disparities among municipalities in his region so that inner-ring suburbs and the two major cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) have a stake in regional cooperation plans. His legislation also created an elected metropolitan council with the authority to establish "fair share" housing goals for each municipality. Orfield recognizes that race relations cannot be improved simply by the stroke of a judge's pen.□

On Beyond Shylock

Bradley S. Berens

Shakespeare and the Jews, by James Shapiro. Columbia University Press, 1996. 317 pp. $29.95.

I am a Jew, and I teach Shakespeare. Ordinarily, these two parts of my identity do not have much to do with each other. But they eerily collide during a moment in the film *Schindler's List*—when Amon Goeth, the fanatical concentration camp commandant, quotes *The Merchant of Venice*.

Goeth has intruded on Helen Hirsch, his Jewish maid, as she—standing vulnerably over a bucket in her wet blouse—prepares to bathe. His desire angers him because Nazi ideology maintains that sexual contact with a Jew is a kind of bestiality. Goeth launches into a mock dialogue in which he ventriloquizes the silent Helen's responses. "Is this the face of a rat?" he asks. "Are these the eyes of a rat? *Hath not a Jew eyes?* I feel for you, Helen." He moves to kiss her. Immobile, Helen says nothing. Goeth realizes what he has almost done. "No, I don't think so," he says, stopping himself. "You're a Jewish bitch. You nearly talked me into it, didn't you?" Then, having blamed Helen for his lust, he savagely beats her.

"Hath not a Jew eyes?" It's the most famous line from Shylock's most famous and most troubling speech. Jews, he continues, are "fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer" as Christians are. It is hard to know what to think about this speech. On one hand, Shylock's argument fits nicely with our cherished ideas about all men and women being created equal; on the other hand—and looking at these lines out of their original context it can be easy to forget this—the speech forms part of Shylock's justification for murderously seeking a pound of flesh from Antonio, Shylock's enemy and the merchant of the play's title, after he defaults on a loan: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that."

Shylock's speech and audiences' responses to it compose just the kind of puzzle that students of Shakespeare enjoy chewing over. Nevertheless, what is "Hath not a Jew eyes?" doing in *Schindler's List*? It seems crazily out of place—an anachronism, absent from Thomas Keneally's novel and inserted into the film for dramatic effect. But that does not make it inaccurate. The Nazis loved Shakespeare, even though he was the national poet of their English enemies, and maintained that they alone understood his plays. In particular, they loved *The Merchant of Venice*; as many as fifty different productions of the play were staged in Germany between 1933 and 1944. The real Amon Goeth, like his movie analog, might easily have seen the play performed, even if he never quoted it to one of his Jewish victims. But the cinematic moment still prompts the question: What did Shakespeare think about the Jews?

It is hardly a new inquiry. Since the *Shoah*, suspicions that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite have lurked in the margins of essays about *The Merchant of Venice*. Some Jewish communities have protested productions of the play (most recently in Santa Cruz, California), trying to salvage their vision of a politically progressive Shakespeare rather than an infinitely malleable one. Academics, likewise, avoid the troubling possibility of Shakespeare's anti-Semitism when they tell their readers that there were no Jews in England from the time that King Edward I banished them in 1290 until Oliver Cromwell readmitted them in 1656. Since no Jew's foot touched English soil during Shakespeare's lifetime, goes the argument, we must absolve the bard of prejudice. To arraign him on charges of anti-Semitism would be like condemning Dr. Seuss for being bigoted toward grinches. One easy answer to our question, then, is that Shakespeare did not think about the Jews at all.

But this argument depends on a myth: there was, in fact, a tiny clandestine community of Elizabethan Jews in Shakespeare's England. The tale of total Jewish absence, however, has proved strangely tenacious, perhaps in part because Shakespeare's absolution depends upon it.

In *Shakespeare and the Jews*, James Shapiro not only explodes the myth of the absent Jew but, more significantly, explores how literature conveys such notions. For Shapiro, who teaches English at Columbia University, this book is a deeply personal attempt to reconcile his professional identity with his Judaism. Yet it is not a memoir. Shapiro draws on a rich collection of unpublished manuscripts and little-known books from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to turn the standard story about Jews in Shakespeare's England inside out:

> Ultimately it is not the raw number of Jews in early modern England that is of interest as much as the kind of cultural preoccupation they became, that is, the way that Jews came to complicate a great range of social, economic, legal, political, and religious discourses, and turned other questions into Jewish questions as well.

Jews, Shapiro contends, were an English obsession. The immensity of this claim does a disservice to Shapiro's formidable scholarship: He overemphasizes the stability of English Christian identity in order to portray the

Bradley S. Berens is finishing a doctorate at U.C. Berkeley, where he teaches in the English department.

Jews as a threat to it. And he ignores the other kinds of people whom the English perceived as imperiling "Englishness" as much as, if not more than, the Jews. For example, in both 1596 and 1601, Queen Elizabeth signed proclamations authorizing the immediate deportation of all Africans living in England to Spain.

Other threats to English identity were internal: During the last thirty years of her reign, Elizabeth's government executed almost 200 people for secretly practicing Catholicism. The English were not obsessed merely with Jews. They were xenophobes, determined to control or banish all aliens and dissenters from the state-controlled Church.

Despite some historical myopia, *Shakespeare and the Jews* says important things about the representation of Jews in Shakespeare's England. The author poses a fascinating and original question: Where other scholars were content to look for the presence of Jews in Shakespeare's England, Shapiro asks who did and who did not count as a Jew. Take the issue of Jewish conversion to Christianity. Shapiro retells the controversial story of Dr. Roderigo Lopez—a Portuguese-born convert who was accused, tried, convicted, and executed in 1594 for plotting to poison his patient, Queen Elizabeth. It has long been speculated that Lopez was Shakespeare's model for Shylock; perhaps because of this, among some historians and literary critics the guilt or innocence of Dr. Lopez is as much a test of faith as, in other circles, an opinion regarding whether or not Oswald acted alone.

For Shapiro, the Lopez story gets particularly interesting at the doctor's execution. On the scaffold—before he was hanged, drawn, and quartered—Lopez proclaimed, according to a contemporary account, "that he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ; which, coming from a man of the Jewish profession moved no small laughter to the standers-by." Lopez had not, in fact, professed Judaism for many years, at least not in public. He had converted to Protestantism, but was still "suspected to be...secretly a Jew."

Shapiro argues that Jewish conversion was a philosophical headache for the English far beyond the Lopez case. Rumors circulated throughout Europe that alleged Jewish converts continued to practice Judaism quietly at home while hypocritically attending Church on Sunday. It was impossible, therefore, to tell whether or not a Jew had sincerely converted to Christianity. Moreover, if Jews were racially different (and our own era's volatile definitions of race were just forming in Shakespeare's day), then a further question concerned whether or not it was physically possible for Jews to become Christian. Some English writers still believed in the *foetor judaicus*—a medieval legend concerning distinctive Jewish body odor—and argued "that Jewish converts were newly 'aromatized by their conversion' having 'lost their scent with their religion.'" The debate about who counted as a Jew was not limited to the theological realm. In Shakespeare's day, the medieval confidence in a recognizable physical difference between Jew and Gentile had largely evaporated, replaced by a fear that it was impossible to know who might be a Jew. This fear had urgency, since many of the English believed that Jews habitually poisoned wells, when not busy abducting and crucifying Christian children to make matzoh from their blood. In twentieth-century productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, it makes no sense when Portia, the heroine, walks into a courtroom where Shylock and Antonio are standing next to each other and asks, "Which is the merchant here and which the Jew?" Shylock is wearing a distinctive costume that sets him apart from the other characters.

No one knows what costume the actor who first played Shylock wore on Shakespeare's stage. But for Portia's line to work, there must have been a disturbing confusion between the true identity of Jews and Gentiles.

Shapiro's most vivid case studies concern people who crossed the boundaries between the two races, among them "false Jews" and "Judaizing" English Protestants. "False Jews"—con artists often in the pay of Jesuits trying to reclaim Protestant England for the Pope—would travel from town to town, converting to Christianity in public displays similar to the hoopla that surrounds the tent shows of itinerant faith healers. One such false Jew was "Ramsey the Scot" who—having been circumcised and knowing a bit of Hebrew—successfully convinced the Baptist pastor of the town of Hexham that he was an Italian Jew named Joseph ben Israel and that he wanted to convert. He was promptly baptized in the River Tyne, only to be exposed as London-born Thomas Ramsey and a Jesuit agent in the next (less gullible) town he visited. Shapiro points out that Ramsey's story is

> ...valuable for what it tells us about the criteria that the congregants in Hexham ... seized upon in identifying someone as Jewish. It was not Ramsey's physical appearance (other than the mark of circumcision) that compelled belief, but his knowledge of Hebrew and of the Scriptures....

For the xenophobes of Shakespeare's England, false Jews personified their worst nightmares of covert invasion by hypocritical Jesuits.

Judaizers, in contrast, were devout Protestants who embraced Old Testament teachings. The unfortunate John Traske wanted the English to follow Jewish dietary laws. Traske unwittingly spread the dangerous idea that Christians could convert to Judaism. Traske, in other words, blurred the lines between Jew and Gentile. Shapiro's account of the overreaction to Traske's teachings shows how seriously the English authorities took such blurring:

> Traske was accused of 'having a fantastical opinion of himself with ambition to be the father of a Jewish faction.' The Star Chamber also found him guilty of 'teach[ing] that the law of Moses concerning the differences of meats forbidding the eating of hog's flesh...is to be observed and kept.' Traske was summarily expelled from the ministry, fined, and sent to prison in the Fleet for the rest of his life. The punishment did not stop there, however, for he was also sentenced 'to be whipped from the prison of the Fleet to the Palace of Westminster with a paper on his head,' and 'then to be set on the pillory and to have one of his ears nailed to the pillory, and after he hath stood there some convenient time, to be burnt in the forehead with the letter "J" in token that he broaches Jewish opinions.' Twelve days later [it was] reported that 'the sentence against the Jew hath been put into execution.' And if this were not enough, insult was added to injury; while in prison Traske was 'only allowed [to eat]

the...meats in his opinion supposed to be forbidden.'

Traske's punishment left the line between Jews and Gentiles just as murky as it was before he was sentenced to the Fleet: the authorities made Traske's invisibly abstract "Jewishness" painfully concrete and visible by branding him with the "J." Yet his pork-only prison diet violated the very Jewishness the "J" was meant to convey. It would be comforting to believe that Traske's punishment could only have taken place during the distant, less civilized past, and that the anxieties the English felt about Jews were particular to Shakespeare and his era. Unfortunately, as Shapiro shows, *The Merchant of Venice* marked a fateful transition from a medieval idea of Jews as homicidal bogeymen to a conviction that Jews are wholly different than Gentiles—but defining that difference was a challenging and vital matter for guardians of the Christian order. Shakespeare gave voice to this new understanding. In such unlikely places as *Schindler's List*, we continue to hear its ominous echoes.□

Beggar's Banquet

Michael Galchinsky

Arrogant Beggar, by Anzia Yezierska, Introduction by Katherine Stubbs. Duke University Press, 1996. 153 pp. Cloth: $35.00. Paper: $12.95.

Since Republicans and Democrats alike expressed their intention in the Welfare Reform Bill to "end welfare as we know it," Americans might do well to begin planning ethical and effective alternatives. The reissue of Anzia Yezierska's 1927 novel, *Arrogant Beggar*, seems a timely warning against the limitations of private charities and a call for a different system of giving based on the Jewish notion of *tzedakah*, or social justice.

Yezierska, a Yiddish immigrant writer, briefly won a national following for her Lower East Side fiction in the 1920s. Having benefited from Americans' growing taste for immigrant and local color fiction in the late teens and early twenties, she was acclaimed in The *New York Times* as the "sweatshop Cinderella," had a highly visible and complicated romance with the philosopher John Dewey, and was hired as a Hollywood screenwriter in 1921, only to return to New York in disgust with the artificiality of Hollywood life. Preferring to remain physically and imaginatively in the world of the tenements, she published her most enduring novel, *Bread Givers*, in 1925, in which Sara Smolinsky struggles in Yiddish- inflected English to escape her father's Old World sexism and to find economic and social success amid a world of cold but appealing Gentiles. Yet even before the stock market crash in 1929 had produced a wave of xenophobia in America, the public had begun to lose its taste for immigrant fiction.

Controversial in its denunciation of wealthy philanthropists, *Arrogant Beggar* contributed to Yezierska's decline. Yet today these denunciations might seem a welcome response to conservatives' extravagant claims for the effectiveness of private charities. On the other hand, some progressives may dislike this novel's vision, for like anti-welfare Republicans, Yezierska seems to endorse individual entrepreneurialism as the answer to social inequality. Yet her complicated social vision, articulated before the welfare programs of the New Deal and the Great Society came into existence, tempers individualism with a drive for equity.

Unlike the main character in *Bread Givers*, *Arrogant Beggar*'s Adele Lindner is a second-generation American who speaks and thinks an English uninflected by Yiddish. Adele answers an advertisement for a room in a Home for Working Girls funded by the wealthy philanthropist, Mrs. Hellman. Expecting the Home to be a refuge from tenement life, a clean place of community, nurturance, and warmth, Adele idealizes the picture of Mrs. Hellman. One by one, each of her illusions confronts a disheartening reality: Mrs. Hellman thinks of her as a poor girl to be helped but kept at a distance, pays her less than she deserves for her work, and manipulates a letter she has written to gain publicity for the Home. Mrs. Hellman's son, Arthur, becomes the object of Adele's dreams, but she is invisible to him. The Home is run by a strict set of rules according to the laws of "domestic science" and "efficiency," and the tenants, continually threatened with eviction for breaches of the rules, are made to feel the debt they owe Mrs. Hellman.

After being immersed in this system for several months, Adele berates herself for having become a "Hanger-on! You've ceased to believe in yourself. Glad to get even the crumbs that fall from the master's table." And she castigates Mrs. Hellman for shaming her. She would rather return to the run-down, filthy tenements, would rather do any kind of work, than lose her integrity to the handouts of private philanthropists.

Yet Yezierska has not rejected philanthropic institutions merely for a vision of self-help. Unlike a Horatio Alger hero, Adele is not, at first, able to "make it" using her own persistence and enterprise. On the verge of starvation and illness, she is taken in by an old Jewish immigrant woman named Muhmenkeh. Muhmenkeh lives in utter poverty, but refuses to take charity from the Hellmans. She helps Adele through self-sacrifice and love rather than through self-promotion and pity.

Michael Galchinsky is the author of The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer *(Wayne State University Press, 1996) and the co-editor of the forthcoming* Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism.

As Katherine Stubbs, the editor of *Arrogant Beggar*, points out in her useful introduction, Muhmenkeh's model of philanthropy is different from Mrs. Hellman's. Attempting to transplant the shtetl's notion of *tzedakah* to the Lower East Side, Muhmenkeh practices a communitarian form of giving that, rather than shaming the recipient, even enables the beggar to be "arrogant," demanding the aid as his or her right. Because Muhmenkeh is herself poor, she is able to identify with Adele's plight rather than vilifying her. By contrast, Mrs. Hellman demoralizes her recipients, assumes they are incompetent and merely want handouts, and leaves them unfit for the task of upward mobility. Muhmenkeh's identification with Adele sharply contrasts with the distanced Gingrichian representation of the poor as lazy and unwilling to make use of their opportunities.

Adele, at least, does take advantage of her second chance. Inspired by Muhmenkeh's giving spirit, she transforms her tenement flat into "Muhmenkeh's Coffee Shop." The restaurant charges its poor customers, but permits them to pay according to what they have. Adele also encourages customers to contribute non-monetarily, with their artwork and musical talents. Becoming both a cultural arts center and an economic success, this institution seems to combine individualism with a commitment to social justice and service to the local community. Like Muhmenkeh, Adele has herself experienced homelessness, starvation, and poverty. Her experience provides her with the drive and compassion she needs to galvanize the energies of the neighborhood, and to provide for herself and others.

This vision of *tzedakah* may dissatisfy some readers by appearing merely to acknowledge the value of the Republican entrepreneurial dream. But such an evaluation would be hasty, for if federal social welfare programs are successfully dismantled, we may be returning to conditions similar to Yezierska's. It will behoove us to prepare and advocate an alternative social vision that will include local safety nets such as neighborhood development programs, religious institutions, private charities, and, perhaps, businesses willing to charge fees on a sliding scale. Above all, Yezierska's model of *tzedakah* is valuable because it insists that givers do not objectify "the poor," bsut identify with their misery, acknowledge their right to demand aid, and rely on their experience.

After being neglected for half a century, Yezierska's writing was rediscovered by feminist historian Alice Harris. Harris's reissue of *Bread Givers* in 1975 made it possible to imagine "the world of our mothers." Now, with the reissue of *Arrogant Beggar*, Yezierska may make it possible for us to imagine the future of American social welfare.□

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

to the extent that they find each other "useful" for advancing their own personal agenda.

What Litvag and Tikkun don't adequately acknowledge is that that is not the way it is in the world of Orthodox synagogues. A very different set of values hold sway there, and probably also in your Jewish renewal movement. Why don't you recognize that this is true?

In any event, Litvag's article is very powerful, and I really hope that every Tikkun reader will make copies and send it to every rabbi and every member of the board of the local Federation, synagogue, Holocaust institution, and some of the bigshot Jewish organizations that claim to speak for us but never listen to what we have to say.

Minnie Friedman
New York, New York

MOYERS

To the Editor:

I often agree with your positions, but your editorial "Bill Moyers's Genesis" (November/December, 1996) really misses the mark. I've been watching this program and it feels like the worst of boring talking heads. There are very few ideas proposed that are original, exciting, or provocative.

The whole thing seems like an incredible manipulation of biblical texts for the sake of the self-promotion first of Rabbi Burt Visotsky of the Jewish Theological Seminary, second of a group of self-important intellectuals, and third of Bill Moyers himself. The marketing strategy has been brilliant, and I'm sure that being on the cover of Time magazine and having huge displays in book stores has managed to sell all those books that Moyers and his biblical freeloaders have put on the market. But reading through the various translations of Genesis, for example, I wasn't overwhelmed by the deep significance of the differences between, say, Robert Alter's translation and that of Stephen Mitchell. Nor has anyone put forward new commentaries that go very deep. Frankly, it looks like hype to me.

Regina Frankowitz
Washington, D.C.

BEYT TIKKUN PASSSOVER SEDER

You don't have to live in the Bay Area to come to the Beyt Tikkun Seder (Second night of Passover, Tuesday, April 22). Beyt Tikkun is the new Jewish Renewal synagogue in San Francisco where Rabbi Michael Lerner leads services. Reservations: $65. Space may be limited, so send your check now! Beyt Tikkun, 26 Fell St., San Francisco, CA, 94102.

Sounds of Renewal

Ya'akov Gabriel

Shefa Gold is cool. Her music is skeleton simple and seductively repetitive. Her choice of phrases, either her own or from Psalms or Hebrew liturgy, make little tape loops in your head. They go round and round in nice ways, and are not brain-damaging like the "I love you, I need you, you hurt me" of pop music. Unlike the pretentious mush of some New Age music, her songs are accessibly spiritual.

Gold sings about knowing God's strength, about mystery and silence, with authenticity. Like Van Morrison, she is good at going into the mystic. I have friends who use her tapes, especially *Tzuri-My Rock,* and *Chants Encounter* (B'emet Productions, P.O. Box 355, Las Vegas, NM 87701), as porto-prayer books. They sing along with her in their cars during morning rush hour, as she creates their *Schacharit* (morning service). Her chants are to Jewish Renewal what the late Shlomo Carlebach's Hasidic *niggunim* (melodies) were to the post-Holocaust Jewish folk music revival. They add a dimension of American feminist theology in a non-preaching, musically integrated way. Check her out. She'll get to you.

In this issue, we begin a new column on the music of Jewish Renewal. Ya'acov Gabriel, a rabbi, leads the Jewish Renewal Congregation Har Shalom in Fort Collins, CO. He won a Canadian Grammy for producing and arranging and has recorded six albums of his own songs for CBS and smaller labels.

The Klezmatics are a kick-ass, tongue-somewhat-in-cheek klezmer band from New York's Lower East Side. Describing themselves as "the planet's only radical Jewish roots band," they approach their venerable, interactive Yiddish Dixieland in subtly subversive ways. They don't slavishly reproduce nostalgic hits, note for note. Instead, they alter tempos, stretch out jams, and show the jazz/blues connections in their music. They also put out some politics, in between the lines.

On their most recent release, the sensationally named *Jews With Horns* (Xenophile/Green Linnet Records), they do a kind of funk breakdown in a Hasidic dance and aurally merge the music of Eastern European and African-American ghettoes in one startling instant. Their second recording also acknowledges this connection in its title, *Rhythm and Jews* (Flying Fish Records).

I recently saw the Klezmatics live in Denver; their sneaky anarchism plays well to middlebrow audiences. At first, the folks around me were scratching their heads, wondering why this group didn't do more conventional get-up-and-hora music. They eventually won the crowd over with their sheer musicianship and high energy, and that's a hip way to get a political/musical message across. And they are political. On *Jews With Horns*, between the Romanian and Polish melodies, they reprise a Yiddish labor song from 1889 that talks of the persecution workers felt in a harsh American climate. Another song was inspired by a kiss-in of ACT-UP, a radical AIDS activist group.

The group has worked with Broadway's Tony Kushner, with off-off Broadway's Cafe La Mama, with Allen Ginsberg, and has toured with Itzhak Perlman. They truly bridge worlds. If more klezmer groups had, in Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's inspired phrase, the Klezmatics' holy chutzpah, the form would not need much further resuscitation or renewal. □

Men and Prison

(Continued from p. 61)

politicians proffer prisons as the solution for otherwise seemingly intractable social problems. For instance, more and more homeless people are being arrested on a variety of charges. And focusing on "the crime problem" provides a convenient diversion from the larger issues, such as how the few are enhancing their fortunes by impoverishing the many.

But there must be something more to the mass psychology of law and order—a deeper reason why people who are intelligent enough to see through irrational fears and convenient diversions still buy the lock-'em-up-and-throw-away-the-key approach. We may find a clue in the public's fascination with prison life, as evidenced by the popularity of prison films, television documentaries, and prison writings. In the films *An Innocent Man* and *Shawshank Redemption*, a successful middle-class man—who might be any viewer—is falsely convicted and thrown into prison, where he suffers rape or the threat of rape at the hands of a prison bull. These films, as well as the recent spate of television documentaries focused on solitary-confinement units and prison rape, evoke strong emotional reactions in men.

Michel Foucault claimed that, after locking up the beggars, robbers, and lunatics in asylums so the roads would be safe for commerce in seventeenth- and

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The Case For Character Education

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commitment to family; positive work ethic; respect for others; and service; and (c) civic goals: equality, freedom, justice, respect for authority, and respect for property.

Brentwood teachers formed a curriculum committee to decide how to integrate character traits and themes into daily lesson plans for language arts, mathematics, social studies, and fine arts curricula. A district-wide kickoff event had all students, preschool through high school, assemble on the football field with teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders. Students were called class by class to assemble in formation in the middle of the field to spell out the word "RESPECT." The superintendent addressed the gathering on the importance of respect, and the event was featured on local television.

Each quarter of the school year, a different class is responsible for a project promoting respect and responsibility and shares this with the entire student body. A student task force has organized a Corridor of Respect showcasing students, staff, and community members who have displayed respect and responsibility in exemplary ways. The student task force has also hosted a Respect and Responsibility Conference to which they have invited students from other area high schools to discuss how character education can be carried out in their schools as well. At Brentwood, faculty and students alike report more respectful attitudes and responsible behavior on the part of students.

How does character education handle a controversial area like sex education? Sex is the area of young people's lives where they often display the poorest character—the lowest levels of respect, responsibility, and self-control. If you doubt this, spend a day following around adolescents in any American high school and observe the language and conduct that define the relations between the sexes. Says an Indiana high school teacher: "The air is thick with sex talk. As kids pass in the halls, they say to one another—boy to girl, girl to boy—'I want to f—- you.'"

As adults, we are gradually emerging from the sexual revolution to recover the wisdom that chastity, which enables us to govern our sexual desires, is part of the constellation of virtues that serve human dignity and the individual and common good. When it comes to sex education, however, many schools still practice a kind of educational schizophrenia. In most areas of school life, they are appropriately directive, guiding students to morally correct conclusions (it's wrong to lie, cheat, steal, be racist, etc.), as character education recommends. But in the sex education curriculum they send a mixed moral message ("Don't have sex, but here's a way to do it fairly safely"), use relativistic values-clarification methodology (where students simply clarify their personal values), and end up being non-directive ("you have to decide what's right for you").

Two groups, the Character Education Partnership and the Medical Institute for Sexual Health (MISH), have each recently issued documents designed to help schools apply character education principles to the sexual domain. The MISH publication, *National Guidelines for Sexuality and Character Education*, states: "Premature sexual activity is destructive toward self and others....The destructive effects of premature sexual activity include pregnancy and its consequences (including children having children and more than 400,000 teen abortions annually), sexually transmitted diseases, emotional hurt, potential difficulty in future relationships, and the development of disrespectful and irresponsible behavior patterns that are antithetical to good character." "Character-Based Sex Education in Public Schools," the position paper of the Character Education Partnership, states: "Sex education should teach students to see sexuality as an area of their lives that calls for the presence of virtues. They should be taught that their sexuality must be supported by self-control, a strong sense of responsibility, prudence, and often courage to withstand strong sexual desires....Students should also realize that learning to bring self-discipline to their sexuality is a means of developing character and preparing themselves for a deep, loving relationship as an adult." If character education can help to shape a new moral consensus about sex, especially concerning the sexual moral education of our children, it will have made one of its greatest contributions to the rehabilitation of our nation's moral culture.

When democracies replaced the old aristocracies, notes historian John Agresto, they promised not only freedom but also a richer, fuller, more rewarding life than any lived before. But now, all over the world, free societies are being accused of self-indulgence, materialism, and an extreme individualism that erodes the human bonds that are needed for a healthy community and a full personal life. "That we can deliver freedom has never been in doubt," Agresto writes. The question is whether, "in the midst of our freedoms, we can cultivate human beings of good character."

Until recently, calls for school reform have focused narrowly on academic achievement. The larger task of helping our children develop good character is now squarely before us. Schools obviously can't do it alone—they need the help of families, religious institu-

tions, youth groups, government, the media—in short, all groups that touch the lives of the young. But schools are uniquely positioned to provide moral leadership for this effort: By law, unless they are home-schooled, all children must go there. As we prepare for and enter the next century, how well we educate for character, more than anything else we do in our schools, will affect the kind of people we are and the kind of society and democracy we will live in.□

Remembering Mario Savio

(Continued from p. 28)

stronger for it. I consider myself one of those people." He added, "But we didn't get emotionally crushed."

Nor did he completely disappear. When he died, Mario Savio was teaching math and physics at Sonoma State College and was active in the battle against Proposition 209, which bans state-sponsored affirmative action in California. He went out as he had come in, battling for minority rights. His values hadn't changed; he was just no longer thrusting himself into the center of the action, and in his few public statements over the years he deplored the cult of personality that had grown up around him, insisting that the FSM had always been a collective.

The Berkeley Free Speech Movement is commonly credited with having ushered in the protest culture of the 1960s, though that culture would have emerged anyway, with so many grievances to coalesce around. The road to intellectual hell is paved with blurred distinctions, and I prefer to remember the FSM for what was unique about it: its democracy, its non-violence, its moral clarity, the Niagara of reports and position papers it generated and the creative thinking about politics and education it mobilized, and its innocence, its elevation reason over force and careful distinction between force and violence. It took its ethics and tactics from the civil rights movement, and on its own terms was an unambiguous success. It did transform the ground rules of the University of California, not to say the entire political culture of the place. It took place in a rare moment when a true citizen's insurrection was possible, before the trained cadres moved in, before violence flared, before bureaucrats and ideologues banded together to poison the language and the Vietnam War poisoned the nation.

Two years ago, a number of the FSM veterans had a thirty-year reunion in Berkeley, which I couldn't attend. Reports have it that Mario Savio was there, showing the old political fire. It is heartening to know that. You don't see that combination of fire, guilelessness, rectitude—and, yes, modesty—very often, and I'm sorry I missed the opportunity to feel renewed by it. Mario Savio, December 8, 1942 - November 6, 1996.□

Stranger in the Midst

(Continued from p. 34)

on knowledge about Judaism to the next generation is important enough to be repeated twice daily in prayer. But what about non-Jewish children? At the dinner table in Michael's and my house every night, Michael taught his Jewish son about the tradition. I at least could have told my daughter about the meaning of conversion or the reasons for the *mikveh*, but I was too afraid of us losing each other.

When something is denied, it casts a shadow. Perhaps it was appropriate for me to minimize my feelings about my conversion with my daughter, given the tenuousness in our relationship. But to do that I had to split myself off from her. And I had to split myself off from myself. Although I was emotionally present at the conversion, afterward, as I went about my work, this denial resulted in a feeling of unreality.

I also experienced an element of shame within me that day. When Rabbi Burt suggested I invite others in the community to celebrate after the conversion, I could not think of anyone to ask. It wasn't that I didn't know people. There were several friends I could have invited.

Shame kept me from doing it. These friendships were based on my downplaying of the fact that I wasn't yet a Jew. I had formed the relationships on Jewish ground, so to speak, and these friends knew me as a woman who led a Jewish life. If they came to my conversion, my Gentile background would pop into the center of their consciousness, and I was afraid that it would never recede.

That day, which even now I have trouble remembering, I took the easiest way out: I had a private conversion. I was righting something that was wrong, taking care of something that had gone undone too long. Herein lay the shame. Despite the joy of the occasion, despite the feeling of satisfaction, I was casting off a problematic identity. Like sneaking away for cosmetic surgery or going out of town to a drug treatment program, I was fixing myself,

and I didn't want anyone to witness this.

Shame. Each of us carries his or her own special variety, shaped in childhood. Mine had its roots in my earliest years. When I was very young, I was an exuberant, uninhibited child, noisy and playful. I used to run, not walk, or so the family legend goes. But this life energy seemed to overwhelm my parents.

Calm down," my mother said sternly.

"You should be ashamed of yourself," my father chastised.

Even though I was small, I came to believe that I was too much for them, too strong, too expressive, too wild. In an effort to appear otherwise, I learned to be secretive and careful, hiding my vitality, minimizing myself. I tried to be good. Taking my father's admonition to heart, I became ashamed when I wasn't.

As I grew older, I covered this feeling of shame with a certain righteous indignation. This was the only acceptable outlet I found for my anger.

"No, I'm not going to drive your fancy car," I'd say to my father as a teenager. "That's not who I am." The insistence on my own identity gave me pride and helped soothe the unresolved shame. I might not be acceptable to these parents, but I had my own integrity.

When I was in high school, in my church-going days, I developed a strong counterculture identity. This helped with the shame. Seeing myself as different from most other students, judging them to be superficial and materialistic, I didn't even try to fit in. I was committed to creating a better, more loving world, and conventional popularity wasn't my concern. Instead of making decorations for the school dance, I'd take the bus into San Francisco on Saturdays and head for the City Lights bookstore, where I'd buy poetry chapbooks and dream of a life away from the suburbs.

The seeds of shame had been implanted in me, but my sense of identity became a countervailing power. Growing into adulthood, I'd sometimes feel the old shame, but I'd remind myself of who I was and feel whole once again. A mother, a wife, a professional woman, a contributor to society, I was generally satisfied with the social space I occupied.

Thus, it was surprising to me that shame became an issue when I converted to Judaism. In the past, I had found solace from shame in my identity, but now my identity was causing me shame. How had this happened? On the day of my conversion, at a time when I should have felt proud of myself, I was glad to get it over with, so that I no longer was a Gentile. My lack of celebration on that day revealed a certain grimness that accompanies an act of reparation.

We make choices to heal our wounds, I've discovered. In deciding to convert, I put myself in the position of having to confront my shame. Even though I had covered it up through the years, it had been there, haunting me, causing me to devalue myself. Once I was on my way to conversion, it flared up, unbidden.

That day of my conversion, when I hoped my Gentile background would fade into the distance, I had no idea I would take so long to make peace with my shame. Even now, I am still doing this work. Perhaps this feeling is stronger in me than in most other people, but I am not unique. We are all wounded in one way or another. Who among us doesn't carry shame? The questions we ask ourselves reveal it: Am I acceptable? Will I be loved if I am known in my fullness? Will my past be held against me?

Imagine joining a people who doesn't want converts. This is like pushing your way into the center of a gathering when you aren't even invited. It takes courage. I exaggerate here about the Jewish reception of converts, because the feeling is more layered and complex than pure disdain. But enough of this attitude exists so that it creates the possibility for converts to feel ashamed of themselves.

This was my experience, and I know I am not alone. The proof is that the act of conversion is so often done without involvement from the community. An arrangement has been made: The convert is expected to be silent about the event, and the community turns the other way so as to not embarrass the new Jew by noticing. Subtle as it may be, shame is inherent in the process.

Another facet of conversion reveals this shame. In traditional Judaism, converts are considered to be born anew at the moment of conversion, the *tabula* made *rasa* by immersion in the *mikveh*. What happened in the past no longer counts. All sins are forgiven.

The interpretation does not stop there. Gentile relatives are no longer considered related—mothers, fathers, children wiped off the slate like so much unwanted handwriting. Years of learning, years of growth, gone. In the place of our natural parents, we are given *Avraham Avinu*, father of all, and *Sarah Imeinu*, mother of all. In the place of the lost past, we are allowed the opportunity to make a Jewish life.

Nobody really thinks that converts are completely new people. Nor is it expected that we will completely reject our Gentile relatives. The Talmud instructs us to treat them kindly and respectfully. But we are encouraged to create a different, more distant relationship with these remnants from the non-Jewish past, taking care that we do not become re-ensnared in their ways.

Conversion requires becoming part of another culture and religion, so the argument goes. The psyche must be free to make the necessary new attachment. The possibility of seduction by non-Jews is so great that radical

separation is necessary. If converts have other allegiances, the stability of the community is threatened.

For some converts, this break with the past is a great relief. I recently met a man who never got along with his parents. Still bitter, he wanted nothing more to do with them, and conversion was a good excuse. I do not feel comfortable with this construction of reality. How could I not claim my family as my own?

In recent years, as more people convert, the born-anew idea has come under question in the liberal branches of Judaism. I spoke recently with a reform rabbi who insists that converts reassure their non-Jewish families immediately after conversion that their relationship remains the same. And in Jewish Renewal congregations, Gentile family members are often included in celebrations of conversions.

In the spirit of greater openness to converts' ties to the past, then, the idea of being born anew is occasionally revamped. It becomes a beautiful metaphor for the feeling of spiritual rebirth, rather than an expression of shamefulness or the creation of an immediate conflict of loyalties. In this way, the conversion experience is honored.

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A great deal of work in the Jewish community remains to be done for converts to feel safe and to thrive. Certainly this must take place on the structural level, with conversion proceedings made clearer, and the denominations coming to some accord about what makes a person a Jew. Temples, synagogues, and shuls must find ways to bring converts lovingly and respectfully into the community.

On a more subtle level, the attitude toward converts needs to change. Jewish hostility toward non-Jews is too easily deflected onto us, giving us pain. We should not have to struggle so hard to be accepted or to be considered legitimate. According to Jewish law, we are fully Jewish once we've converted. Although we do not share the same childhood ethnic experience, we share a deep commitment to the Jewish people.

I recently received a call from Richard, a Jewish friend. "I'm afraid something's wrong with me," he said. "The only women I'm interested in are converts, or in the process of converting."

"*Nu*? So?" I answered, mildly offended. "What's the problem with that?"

"I must be *mishugah*, crazy," he continued. "I'm a committed Jew."

"So what?" I replied. "It's not shameful to fall in love with a convert. We're Jews, as much as anyone who's been born Jewish."

"Yes, but. . . ."

I filled in the spaces. I knew he was thinking about Jewish lineage, Jewish blood, Jewish experience. Even though I was ready to defend converts, I had some sympathy for him. I remembered how the cultural differences between Michael and me caused so much misunderstanding. It isn't easy to navigate these issues in a relationship.

But I was tired of his chauvinism. "Give it up, Richard," I said. "Stop feeling sorry for yourself. You should feel grateful that a convert wants you, because most of us are very high souls."

He thought about that for a minute before he answered, "You're probably right."

In my talks with converts, I've heard too many sad stories. One of the worst was told to me recently by a single mother, a doctor, who has an eight-year-old son. This boy doesn't know his mother is a convert, although he knows his father was an anonymous sperm donor. She has carefully cut the pictures of her first Catholic communion out of her scrapbook and diminished contact with her Christian relatives, so that he will not question that she was born Jewish.

"Every night I think I should tell him the truth," she confided sadly. "I want to, but I'm scared."

When I asked about her fear, she answered: "This knowledge will affect his life. He goes to a Jewish day school, and the other kids will treat him differently, once they know. It will never again be the same for him."

"But maybe he won't tell," I said, falling momentarily into the delusion that concealment helps.

"It will get out."

This woman went on to describe her plan. One night, after she reads her son a bedtime story, if he's in a good mood and they are feeling close, she will tenderly say, "I have something to tell you."

I am angry that this woman has to scheme so carefully and so painfully to find a way to share with her son a fact that should bring both of them pride. The world I envisage would have converts and born-Jews side by side, different but nonetheless equal in our connection to this heritage that roots us all.

Throughout history Judaism has lost Jews and gained Jews. Many have left because of assimilation and conversion to other religions. Others died prematurely through persecution. This loss in numbers, a tragedy in many eyes, has been balanced partly by conversion.

I think now of the converts I know, their level of commitment and their understanding, their passion for this religion of their choice. They have great vigor, and they help to keep the religion and culture alive. Is this not at least some consolation for a Jewish people still reeling from the Holocaust and concerned about continuity?□

THE NEW SODOMITES

(Continued from p. 20)

might participate in the distribution of welfare benefits as a component of our contribution to the welfare system. Perhaps, as Jeremy Rifkin has suggested in these pages, tax deductions should be available to those who provide services and goods to real people. This would encourage the face-to-face encounters we so desperately need.

Without such changes in American society, we will continue to suffer from the substantial gap between givers and receivers, who will each remain suspicious of a welfare system that deprives them of human connection. And that gap will be precisely the political opening needed by those who benefit economically from an eviscerated welfare system and the subsequent expanding disparity in income between the rich and poor. They will use the need for reshaped welfare paradigms as an excuse for what has become the central political practice of today—the demand that we keep what is ours and force others to get what is theirs.

Those who practice this brand of politics (in whole or part) are neither "Republican revolutionaries" nor "neo-conservatives" (nor even "new Democracts"). They are merely new Sodomites. This is no revolution. It is a recurring nightmare.□

MEN AND PRISON

(Continued from p. 74)

eighteenth-century France, a bored populace went and peered through the asylum bars to be entertained by inmates' antics. *Marat/Sade* is a film about a play about the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat that was acted by the inmates and directed by the Marquis de Sade while he was confined in the madhouse at Charenton.

Today's prison drama is officially closed to the public's gaze—in California and several other states there are even gag rules precluding the press from interviewing high-profile prisoners—but a curious public makes use of films, documentaries, and prison writings to get a glimpse of what goes on inside. It is obvious why people are agreeable to the closing of prisons to public view: We cannot bear to see an exaggerated version of the top dog/bottom-of-the-heap scenario that is painfully familiar from memories of the school yard fight scenario and from the daily reality of the rat race. We cannot bear to see what happens to the guy who has really fallen to the bottom of the heap, the prison punk. The reason for the fascination is more difficult to fathom. Perhaps there is a need to take a good look at the fate of the prison punk in order to be reminded why one should keep working so hard to get ahead, and a need to be reassured that even though life is getting harder, at least this is not the very bottom.

Meanwhile, since the 1980s, the American Dream has been rewritten. The anyone-can-do-it/rags-to-riches narrative has been removed (too many people have given up on that illusion). As the gap widens between the rich and poor, the rich and powerful offer a different deal to the middle class: "Join us, at least in terms of identifying with our needs, and you will not fall beneath the level of creature comforts to which you've grown accustomed. But you must distance yourself from the poor—as we do—ignore their needs, refuse to pay higher taxes that would provide them social services, a decent education, and a safety net, and demand that the bad apples among them be locked up for long stretches and treated harshly."

For this deal to seem credible, the poor and their advocates must be "disappeared." Homelessness is not a crime unless the homeless make themselves too visible (e.g., at ATMs) and make affluent people too uncomfortable; then they are locked up. And for people who still give lip service to squaring their lifestyle with their espoused principles, there is less visible evidence of the obvious injustice. So the jails and prisons fill up while our leaders build new ones.

The common thread running through the prison code, the school-yard fight scenario, and the revised American Dream involves complicity. A prisoner who attempts to halt the brutalization of a punk is quickly made the brunt of even greater brutality, so prisoners learn not to interfere. In the school yard, all the guys were forced to join in the fight, at least in jeering the guy who was getting his ass kicked, or castigating the chicken who refused to fight. The guy who didn't join in enthusiastically enough risked becoming the next object of derision. And, according to the law-and-order buffs who are calling for even harsher sentences and more executions, the only way decent middle-class Americans can protect their precarious station is to join in the process of further disenfranchising those less fortunate than themselves. In each case, the complicity of all in abusing those at the bottom is compelled and compelling. The image of the prison punk at the very bottom of the heap motivates many men to buy the whole deal.□

Giving It Up to God

(Continued from p. 47)

Remove that debris, be it mental, emotional or physical. It will be deposited in a designated place outside the camp. Now offer the fuel for today's fire. What do you want to hold in your consciousness? What feelings do you want to bring to your day? What actions, what strengths do you offer as holy service today?

The Hebrew word for offering is *karban*; a better translation is "nearing, coming closer." The Holy One does not dwell in our midst unless we create the space and do the work. At Sinai, *God* approached *us* in smoke and fire. In the sanctuary, we reciprocated; our gifts became fuel for the smoke and light which we gave back. Today, our willingness to be of service is the fuel of transformation. The beast in us can be put to good use, if we keep drawing it closer to the light.□

I Think of Her in a Pleated Skirt Held Up Like a Fan

on bleachers, dark curls glitter
from under a turban or a toque, humming
"you'd be so easy to love," as the
leaves go blood thru burnt sienna in

Maryland and rumors are whispered as
lights are out in the dorm the dark
men stand at the gate of until morning.
"Yellow stars" stun. Younger than I am

now, she gets more phone calls than
the blond debutantes who say "Hitler's right,
but Frieda, you're different." The
blisters from her shoes flake off,

hardened skin covers her sole. Her mind is
not on Germany or politics but what
dress she'll wear for the man from Cambridge,
his pale eyes crinkle as he calls her Angel.

And she is humming, wishing she knew all
the words to, "so easy to love, you'd be,"as
the silver mirror darkens around the edges and
she turns a corner, holds herself where

if she wasn't braided to Baltimore, 1937
as she clutched the man she couldn't marry, she
might imagine me howling when she stopped, "you'd
be so easy to," checking to see no demon with a part

in the middle of his hair and mustache snatched me,
shrieking as I held the bars of a crib she'd
lean into nights, "to love, to love, to love. . ."

—Lyn Lifshin

What is the Politics of Meaning?

The politics of meaning is both a new theoretical orientation and a strategy to change American society.

Theoretical Orientation

Liberals and progressives have focused on economic needs and individual rights—and have fought against corporate or governmental forces that deny each. A progressive politics of meaning supports the liberal agenda on these issues (including civil liberties, women's liberation, economic justice, choice, ecological sanity, etc.). Yet liberals have too narrow an understanding of human needs. They often see our primary interest as economic survival or individual freedom. But they've been unable to recognize the ethical, spiritual, and psychological needs that are equally central.

We see human beings as fundamentally in relationship to each other and needing each other's recognition and love. The healthy human being is not the one who can stand alone, but the one who can acknowledge his/her need for others and can recognize in every other the sanctity that makes them worthy of respect and caring.

Human beings have a need to transcend the materialism and selfishness and the manipulative consciousness that teaches them to see others primarily in terms of what they can get out of others. Most people have a hunger to move beyond the "looking out for number one" common sense of this society and to see their lives as connected to some higher ethical and spiritual meaning. Yet most people believe that this is unrealistic, that ethical and spiritual life can only be ideals for some future eras, and that in the meantime they must be "realistic" and live according to the dominant ethos.

But a world based on selfishness and cynicism produces a huge amount of psychic pain. The ethos of selfishness and cynicism plays itself out in a weakening of families, loving relationships, and friendships—because the more people internalize the cynical view that everyone is only out for themselves, the harder it becomes to trust anyone or to believe that they will really be there for you when you most need them, when you don't have so much to give back and can't make the relationship an "equal exchange" (in market terms). Nor can you trust corporations not to pollute the environment or others not to rob you on the streets or at home. As trust dissolves, fear increases.

Because liberals and the Left never really address this crisis of meaning, the Right has been able to position itself as the meaning-oriented political force in the society, bemoaning the ethical and spiritual decline and the crisis in families.

That's why we need a progressive politics of meaning.

Sound-Bite Version

The goal of a politics of meaning is to change the bottom line in American society, so that productivity or efficiency of corporations, legislation, or social practices is no longer measured solely by the degree to which they maximize wealth and power—but rather also by the degree to which they tend to maximize our capacities to sustain loving and caring relationships and to be ethically, spiritually, and ecologically sensitive.

Strategy

Some people think that all of these meaning issues only have an impact on middle-income people, and that liberals and progressives should first solve the economic problems of the society and stop the cutbacks of the conservatives. We wish them luck. But we believe that they will be unable to do that until they've addressed the meaning crisis. The alliance needed between poor people and middle-income people is given equal attention to the pain faced by poor people. Up until now, the Left has tended to give the message to the American majority that they are being selfish and bad to worry about the collapse of their families, crime, etc., when the poor are suffering so much more. This has not been an effective strategy. We think the best way to serve the interests of the most oppressed is to take seriously the meaning crisis, and build a cross-class alliance on that basis.

Some New Age people talk about meaning issues, too—but they tend to focus on changing their own heads. That's an important element—but it is unlikely to work for most people unless we build economic and political institutions that foster caring rather than selfishness and cynicism. In TIKKUN magazine, we put forward specific programmatic ideas to show what this might look like concretely.

The Plan

We've created the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning as the vehicle to build a movement to "change the bottom line" in American society from selfishness and cynicism o caring and solidarity. We've built local chapters around the country, and in 1998 we are considering creating a national teach-in modeled on Earth Day with the focus on Social Responsibility and Spiritual Renewal. Some local chapters are exploring ballot initiatives to require state and local governments to consider a corporation's history of social responsibility before awarding government contracts—or even requiring corporations to reapply for their charters every twenty years, at which point their social responsibility records would be a factor for reincorporation. Other people are beginning to organize in their professions—and to get people to re-envision what their work world would look like with a politics of meaning bottom line. To be part of this effort, join the Foundation ($50 membership) and subscribe to TIKKUN ($31/yr). Send check or credit card info to TIKKUN, 26 Fell Street, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Tikkun (te-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary

תיקון

If you missed the politics of meaning Summit in Washington, D.C. last April, don't miss this! You don't have to live in New York to attend the **New York Regional**

SUMMIT ON ETHICS AND MEANING

Sunday, February 16 - Monday, February 17, 1997 (President's Day Weekend)

Riverside Church • 490 Riverside Drive (at 122nd) • New York City

Speakers Include:

Peter Gabel
president,
New College of California

The Rev. Jim Wallis
editor, *Sojourners*
founder, Call to Renewal

Jean Houston
author , *A Mystic Life* and
A Feminine Myth of Creation

The Rev. James Forbes
pastor, Riverside Church

Rabbi Michael Lerner
editor, TIKKUN

Sister Miriam Winter
Liturgy professor,
Hartford Seminary

Rabbi Michael Paley
Jewish Studies, Bard College

Torie Osborn
former chair, National
Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard
Jewish educator, CLAL

Jay Rosen
Public Journalism theorist

The Rev. Arleon Kelley
chair, New York State
Council of Churches

David Korten
author, *When Corporations Rule the World*

The goal of the New York Summit is to provide an introduction to the politics of meaning and a discussion of some of our latest ideas: a) the possibility of creating a national "Earth Day"- style teach-in on social responsibility and spiritual renewal. b) seeking ways to have corporations issue an annual "Ethical Impact Report" and to have state and local government, when awarding contracts to private corporations, take into account the degree to which those corporations can show a history of social responsibility (and we will explore the criteria for social responsibility and what kinds of issues ought to be a part of the Ethical Impact Report).

At the New York Summit, we will also focus on the world of work: how to change our professions and workplaces to be more consistent with our highest ethical and spiritual vision.

Registration: $70 for incomes over $35,000/yr.; $45 if your annual income is less than $35,000; $32 for students and incomes under $14,000/yr. Add $15 to your registration fee if you register after February 5, 1997. Box dinner Sunday: $10; Box lunch Monday $8. To register by credit card, call the New York Open Center, (212) 219-2527 x 110. Or, send a check payable to TIKKUN to: 951 Cragmont, Berkeley, CA 94708.

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