

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kün) To mend, repair, and transform the world. JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

OUR NEW
PRESIDENT

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MEMOS TO OBAMA

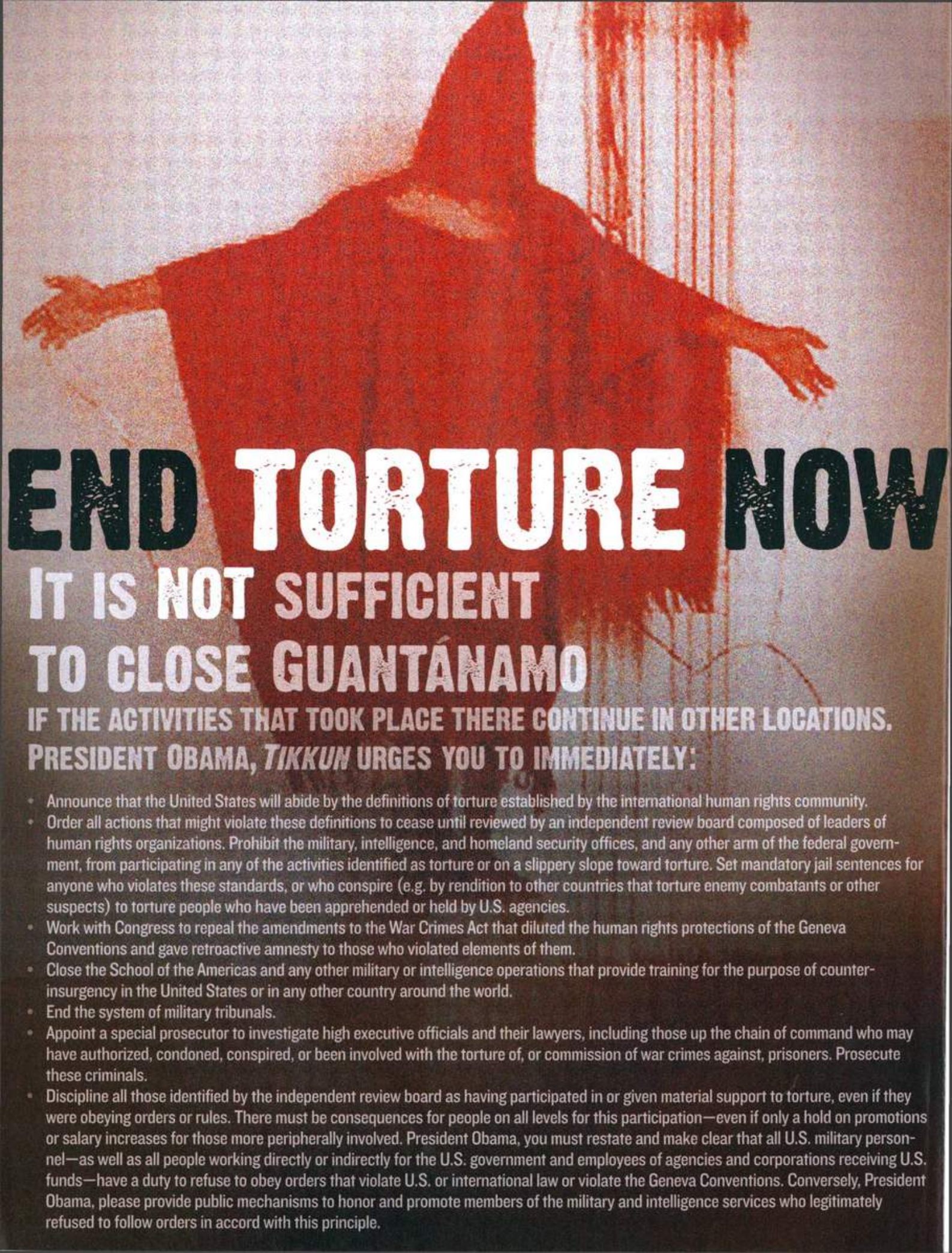
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END TORTURE NOW

IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO CLOSE GUANTÁNAMO

IF THE ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE THERE CONTINUE IN OTHER LOCATIONS.
PRESIDENT OBAMA, *TIKKUN* URGES YOU TO IMMEDIATELY:

- Announce that the United States will abide by the definitions of torture established by the international human rights community.
- Order all actions that might violate these definitions to cease until reviewed by an independent review board composed of leaders of human rights organizations. Prohibit the military, intelligence, and homeland security offices, and any other arm of the federal government, from participating in any of the activities identified as torture or on a slippery slope toward torture. Set mandatory jail sentences for anyone who violates these standards, or who conspire (e.g. by rendition to other countries that torture enemy combatants or other suspects) to torture people who have been apprehended or held by U.S. agencies.
- Work with Congress to repeal the amendments to the War Crimes Act that diluted the human rights protections of the Geneva Conventions and gave retroactive amnesty to those who violated elements of them.
- Close the School of the Americas and any other military or intelligence operations that provide training for the purpose of counter-insurgency in the United States or in any other country around the world.
- End the system of military tribunals.
- Appoint a special prosecutor to investigate high executive officials and their lawyers, including those up the chain of command who may have authorized, condoned, conspired, or been involved with the torture of, or commission of war crimes against, prisoners. Prosecute these criminals.
- Discipline all those identified by the independent review board as having participated in or given material support to torture, even if they were obeying orders or rules. There must be consequences for people on all levels for this participation—even if only a hold on promotions or salary increases for those more peripherally involved. President Obama, you must restate and make clear that all U.S. military personnel—as well as all people working directly or indirectly for the U.S. government and employees of agencies and corporations receiving U.S. funds—have a duty to refuse to obey orders that violate U.S. or international law or violate the Geneva Conventions. Conversely, President Obama, please provide public mechanisms to honor and promote members of the military and intelligence services who legitimately refused to follow orders in accord with this principle.

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Readers Respond

ON THOMAS FRIEDMAN

JEROME SLATER'S ANALYSIS OF Tom Friedman's columns on Israel/Palestine (November/December 2008) constitutes one of the few places in the American media where one can find a concise, fact-based debunking of the myth of Israel's "perfect offer" at Camp David in 2000, and the alleged Palestinian refusal to "take yes for an answer." There may be nothing more hidden from view than the fact that what Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Yasir Arafat was between 85 percent and 90 percent of the occupied territories—minus most of Jerusalem, minus the large Israeli settlements on the most fertile land, minus the major water aquifers, and minus the roads and the Jordan River Valley from which Israel could exercise continued military control over the "Palestinian state."

If, as expected, the Obama administration makes some effort to restart the peace process, Slater's piece will provide a timely and absolutely essential clearing-away of old myths and falsehoods. For once a peace process starts, we can expect a hundred op-ed columnists, including most probably Friedman himself, rushing forward to proclaim that the Palestinians haven't yet accepted the need to make peace with Israel. But this time the two-state-solution constituency, the place where progressives and conservative realists find common ground, had better be larger, better informed, and much louder. America's success in reframing its relations with the entire Muslim world depends on it.

SCOTT MCCONNELL
(EDITOR AT LARGE,
THE AMERICAN CONSERVATIVE)

via email

JEROME SLATER WRITES THAT IN 1948 the "Israeli armies outnumbered

and outgunned a small coalition of half-hearted Arab armies." But, in fact, the Arab armies started the war with an overwhelming advantage in equipment and firepower. The Arabs had seventy combat aircraft, while the Israeli army had none. The Arabs had about 200 armored fighting vehicles, many with cannons. They had dozens of tanks and heavy artillery pieces. The Israelis had two tanks and two batteries of pre-WWI artillery. In short, the advantage of the Arab side was enormous. The Arab edge in heavy weaponry gradually decreased because of Israel's arms purchases in Czechoslovakia and the West, but at the end of the war, the Arabs still had more fighter planes, tanks, and artillery. Reputable Israeli historians such as Benny Morris have published all these numbers.

Slater should keep in mind that the population of the confrontation states, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq was at least 50 times larger than Israel's. In view of that, the allusion to David and Goliath should be obvious. The fact that Israel lost 6,000 people in the 1947-48 war—a whole 1 percent of the total Jewish population at that time—demonstrates how difficult that war was. One wonders why Slater would ignore those irrefutable facts?

Slater writes about the "massacre" at Deir Yassin. He ignores the BBC TV program from April 2, 1998, in which Hazem Nusseibeh, an editor of the Palestine Broadcasting Service's Arabic news in 1948, admits that he was told by Dr. Hussein Khalidi, a prominent Palestinian Arab leader, to fabricate claims of Jewish atrocities at Deir Yassin in order to encourage Arab regimes to invade the expected Jewish state. It was Khalidi's claims that were the basis for an April 12, 1948, *New York Times* article claiming a massacre took place. The *Times* article has been

widely reprinted and cited as "proof" of the massacre throughout the past 60 years. But we now all know that there was a fierce battle at Deir Yassin with civilians, but there was no massacre.

Yes, Israel made big mistakes after the Six Day War. It is legitimate to severely criticize Israel's policies in the territories, but it is not legitimate to re-write history.

JACOB AMIR, M.D.
Jerusalem, Israel

Jerome Slater Replies:

DR. AMIR CHALLENGES TWO sentences in my article, part of the historical background, but having nothing to do with my central argument. In both cases, I was relying on what Israel's best historians consider to be the overwhelming weight of the evidence—including Benny Morris, despite his recent ideological back flip.

With regard to Amir's first argument, the historical consensus is as I stated: the Arab armies *in the field*, as opposed to the total population of the Arab countries, or even the total size of their armed forces, were outnumbered, and toward the end of the war outgunned, by the total Israeli forces. As I stated, the primary purpose of the Arab interventions was "to prevent each other from grabbing off pieces of Palestine," rather than to annihilate the Israelis.

Likewise, Amir's second argument—that there was no massacre at Deir Yassin—is contradicted by the overwhelming weight of evidence to the contrary. There is no serious doubt that Israelis killed a number of other unthreatening Palestinian civilians, as part of what was an obvious policy to drive many Palestinians out of what was to become Israel. Today we would call this ethnic cleansing. ■

Each Moment is a Lifetime

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

WHEN MICHAEL LERNER'S FATHER, JUDGE Joseph Lerner, passed away, I lost a father as well. Judge Lerner (as I referred to him most of my life) was my father-in-law (my wife is Michael's sister).

My first encounter with Judge Lerner was not auspicious. Indeed, it was a downright disaster. I was dating his daughter, Trish, when she was attending Boston University and I was attending Harvard Law School. Judge Lerner and his wife, Bea, came up to visit this suspicious character who had just begun seeing their daughter.

Judge Lerner had a determined chin and an imposing bearing. He was a former judge in New Jersey and a prominent Zionist who had been active in 1947 as Israel was being created. He had strong opinions and was not shy about expressing them. Bea was a prominent figure in her own right. She was, with her husband, a visible and influential figure in Democratic New Jersey politics; the first woman president of any state chapter of the Zionist Organization of America; and a civic champion of the New Jersey Ballet, the March of Dimes, and numerous other causes. She, too, had strong opinions and was not shy in expressing them.

As they probed during dinner, they discovered some very unsettling facts about the young man who had the hubris to be dating their daughter. First, I was from Colorado, a state they had heard of (somewhere between Pennsylvania and California) but knew little of and cared little about, other than that they had not known anyone from Colorado who had made much of his life. Second, they confirmed that I was not Jewish (their daughter had been a little vague on that point). And, third, they learned I was a Republican, a Goldwater supporter, and a believer that U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine should be more "evenhanded." The dinner did not go well. The next morning, Judge Lerner called his daughter and said: "Your mother cried all night. You're killing her. Her head is in the oven under 'keep warm.' I hope you're happy." I was later to learn that Judge and Bea Lerner had three criteria for a son-in-law: that he be from the East, that he be Jewish, and that he be a Democrat.

As it turned out, I moved to the East and converted to Judaism (driving my parents to near-suicidal thoughts, but that's another story), but, for me, becoming a Democrat was not on the table. For their part, Judge and Bea Lerner learned to respect my decision to remain a Republican.

Over the next forty years of Shabbat meals, Temple attendance, weekly political conversations, bringing their grandchildren up Jewish, and loving their daughter, Judge Lerner and I fell in love. I gained a second father, he a second son (in each case, second place was an honored position). We were traditional guys, so the sharing of deep personal feelings was still not in our daily vocabulary. I still called him Judge; he still called me George.

Over the last five years of his life, his body slowly deteriorated. His legs became fragile and he was confined to a wheelchair; his eyes, never strong, became weaker and weaker, and he became blind; his hearing in one ear was lost, and his hearing in the other ear was failing. Yet his mind remained strong; his awareness of current events was immediate; his interest in politics never diminished. He was always present; his will to live never waned. On several occasions, when he was in his nineties, Judge was taken to the Intensive Care Unit of his local hospital with pneumonia ("the old man's friend"), only to stun



his doctors by recovering, returning home, and announcing that he had "decided" to live because, as he said, his daughter and son-in-law would call the next day to express their love for him. In those calls, it was no longer "Judge" and "George," it was "Judgie" and "Georgie." We were still two guys, but somehow we had learned to express our deepest feelings for each other.

Joe Lerner ("Judgie") taught me something so very important: every moment of consciousness is precious. Live in the moment; live for those moments when someone you love loves you deeply in return and you can express it. Each of those moments is as valuable as a lifetime—those moments are what life is all about.

As Trish puts it, "Today, my father of 94 died prematurely." ■

George and Trish Vradenburg are the publishers of Tikkun.

My Father

BY MICHAEL LERNER

MY FATHER WAS AN AMAZING MAN. THROUGHOUT my childhood, I felt drawn to him because of his intense warmth and his exuberant sense of humor. I was simultaneously somewhat in awe of him because of his many accomplishments in the world, scared of him because of his temper, which would sometimes flare out of control, and hungry for his attention to the person I was becoming.

The warmth was palpable. I looked forward to his coming home every day from a work world full of mystery and excitement. He would put me on his lap when I was young, bounce me up and down, and sing the sweet songs of Yiddish and Hebrew that he had heard as a child. No matter how busy, my parents would eat every dinner with us and discuss the world and its challenges, even if afterward they would go to their various public meetings. My father would fill dinnertime with the jokes he had heard that day in downtown Newark where he maintained his law office. Later, when he became a judge, he brought home stories about cases that he had heard and decisions he had made. Dinner was a laugh riot, with my sister and me competing to guess the punch lines of oft-repeated jokes, or to come up with our own one-liners to keep the merriment going. (Surely his influence played a part in my sister becoming such an accomplished humorist in her articles and novel, in her writing for "Designing Women" and other TV shows, and in her powerful Broadway play, "Surviving Grace," about the death of my mother.) And then there was his specialty—my father was a connoisseur of Jewish cakes and breads. He knew exactly which bakery would make the best apple turnover, or cheese danish, or custard éclair, or fruit-filled muffin, or the finest challot, or rye bread, or pumpernickel, and we could hardly wait to see what delicacy he brought home with him. Yummmmm!

The stories he told connected us to his larger life, the life of a courageous boy who had not let his poor eyesight and poverty-ridden childhood break his will. Breaking from his father's rigid Jewish orthodoxy, my father embraced Zionism at a time when it was deemed utopian and "unrealistic." Together with my mother, he became an activist, then a leader in Essex County, New Jersey, then national vice president of the Zionist Organization of America, and then a board member of the World Jewish Congress and Bnai Brith. It was that "Movement" consciousness that I absorbed as a child, bound as it was with a disdain for those Jewish community institutions that chose their leaders on the basis of their fundraising capacities rather than their wisdom or their ethics—leaders who eschewed anything controversial or visionary,

including Zionism itself, until Israel became a reality. To imagine Israel while Jews were being massacred by the millions was to be a dreamer—and my father kept that dream alive. No matter what he was doing—activist in Democratic party politics, judge, Director of Alcoholic Beverage Control for the State of New Jersey, member of the governor's cabinet—my father saw himself as a crusader trying to help the world and help the Jews. It was no surprise to me that in his last months, confined to bed and completely blind, he became a wild enthusiast for Barack Obama, listening to audiotapes that revealed Obama's brilliance and idealism.

Yet, I was also scared of my father. The harsh treatment he received from his father (because he was unable to read the small letters of the Rashi commentaries on Talmud) had left its scars, and my father would sometimes erupt in anger at me or my sister, Trish. And his anger flared at injustice when he saw it in the public arena. He earned a "bad reputation" for being a judge who refused to take bribes when all the others did, and he was later blocked from an appointment to the New Jersey Supreme Court by lawyers who resented his unwillingness to "be realistic" and "play the game the way that it's played."

His mind was sharp until the day he died. Two weeks after 9/11 in an interview we did with him, he pointed out that Bush's war on terror was a travesty because terror is a tactic, not an enemy, and so there would never be a victory against terror—it was just an invitation to endless war. He was quick to see Bush as a dishonest and distorted politician who could only bring America disaster. True, we disagreed about how best to be pro-Israel and had vigorous arguments even when he was in his seventies and eighties. But surpassing all that was his warmth and his understanding that family connection was far more important than political difference. I loved talking to him and being with him. I often begged him to move to California after my mother died. And while I was glad he was so proud of my son Akiba's service in the IDF paratroopers and Akiba's accomplishments teaching Jewish Studies at Stanford University, where he had completed his Ph.D., I always felt sad that he hadn't had more exposure to my son's wonderful children. Every day I spoke to him, he would boast about Akiba, and about Trish and her husband, George Vradenburg, the author of *Tikkun's* "Contrarian" column, as well as the magazine's publisher.

Now, I mourn that my father is gone. And as I say Kaddish for him each day—as he did for his father when I, at age twelve, would accompany him to shul each morning, walking hand in hand—I thank God that I had this father and I miss him deeply. He was a very good and, in many ways, an amazing human being. ■

Current THINKING

Support Obama to Be Obama

The many memos in this issue of *Tikkun* call on Obama to live up to his highest ideals. To strengthen this call, the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) is building a national campaign to support Obama's return to the policies

and principles he articulated during the Democratic Party primaries and urge him not to capitulate to the logic and pressures of inside-the-Beltway politics. The NSP wants to bolster the hope-oriented, social justice-oriented, anti-mili-

tarist, and environmentally concerned version of Obama that won him the nomination. We will bring people to Washington, DC, this spring to strengthen that Obama, and we will also be running an advertising campaign. More de-

tails will be available at www.spiritualprogressives.org and via email. If you have not been receiving our emails, please send your name, address, and email to kay@tikkun.org and ask to be added to the list. ■

Obsession

The 2008 elections had many low points, among them the lies and distortions that the campaigns put out about their opposition. A particularly egregious incident was the mass distribution of millions of copies of a hate-oriented DVD called *Obsession*, which was circulated in "swing states" a few months before the voting began. The film purports to identify the allegedly huge threat to civilization posed by "radical Islam." By interspersing images of Muslims at prayer with pictures of violence, it portrays Islam as a religion of hate

and all Muslims as a danger to Americans.

Praised by Jewish right-wing commentators, who have long thought that generating anger at Islam would strengthen American support for Israel, *Obsession* is a dangerous piece of propaganda that may yet lead to an upsurge of demonization of the sort that produced the war in Iraq. Distorted speech should not be banned, but it needs to be countered, not only in print (see the excellent detailed analysis of the film at www.jewsonfirst.org/obsession provided by Rabbi

Haim Dov Beliak, Eli Clifton, Jane Hunger, and Robin Podolsky), but also by another DVD with an equally high production value. This second DVD should help Americans understand that the greatest dangers we face in the world today come from the triumph of selfishness and materialism. Our global economic and political order—a market fundamentalism backed by militarism and more subtle forms of imperialism—has generated wars, hatred, and irrational forms of resistance, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and

other fundamentalisms.

Instead of fostering hatred, we need to support the many wonderful efforts to build mutual understanding among the world's religious, ethnic, and national groupings, and to encourage the understanding that the security we all deserve will come from generosity rather than through domination. Our Global Marshall Plan is far more likely to increase our well-being than singling out yet another "enemy" to blame for the collapse of our current global economic order. If only we could find a funder to supply the millions of dollars needed to help us produce that kind of mass-distributed DVD! ■

Extremists of Every Stripe

Yes, they're still with us, as the news reminds us every day. On November 26, 2008, teams of heavily armed gunmen stormed hotels, a popular restaurant, a Jewish cultural center, hospitals, and a crowded train station in coordinated attacks across Mumbai, India, killing over 180 people and wounding over 300. Among the dead were family friends of our art director, Sabiha Basrai; this loss brought the attacks home very personally to us here at *Tikkun*. We stand in prayer and

solidarity with the people of Mumbai as they mourn their loved ones and set about the difficult task of returning to normalcy.

The horrible violence in Mumbai has tapped anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistani sentiments in India that might lead to a new India-Pakistan war, with devastating consequences for both sides. Hindu extremists and terrorists have their own history of provocative actions, and the continuing conflict between Pakistan and India

over Kashmir can be counted on to provoke more violence in the future unless both (now) democratic societies seek to arrive at a lasting settlement.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers continue their violence, sometimes against the Israel Defense Forces themselves, and more frequently against Palestinian civilians. Until these settlers are disarmed and removed from the West Bank, Jewish extremism will have its way, and Israeli politicians will continue to appease rather than confront

their own homegrown terrorists. It's always important to remember, however, that the greatest pain is inflicted not by these various haters, but by the structural violence of our global economic system. It's only because the militarists and fear-mongers shape our media and public discourse that we are not confronted daily with the faces and stories of the 20,000 to 30,000 young children who die every day of diseases related to malnutrition and inadequate funding for health care. ■

Clay in the Potter's Hands

Human Evolution in a Self-Creating World

by Bradley Shavit Artson

IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH, SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES intending to attack, corrupted from within by a lack of will, a lack of clarity, and a lack of identity, the prophet Jeremiah addressed the people of Israel time and again, calling us back to who we are meant to be. On one occasion he says:

Then I went down to the potter's house, and found him working at the wheel. And if the vessel he was making was spoiled, as happens to clay in the potter's hands, he would make it into another vessel, such as the potter saw fit to make. Then the word of the Holy One came to me, "O House of Israel, can I not deal with you like this potter?" says the Holy One. "Just like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel."

These famous lines of the prophet Jeremiah make their way as a *piyut* (poem) into the Rosh Hashanah *Mahzor* (prayer book): "As clay in the hand of the potter who thickens or thins it at will, so are we in Your hand, O God of love. Recall Your covenant and show Your mercy."

In the course of this *piyut*, we, the Jewish people, will be compared to clay, to stone, to iron, to glass, to cloth, and to silver. I would argue that this *piyut* has been misunderstood more than almost any other poetic image in the *Mahzor*. The way most commentaries speak about it, we are completely inert and absolutely in God's control. God molds us according to God's absolute will—untrammeled coercive power—and we are simply the passive recipients of God's might, omniscience, total knowledge, and force.

However ubiquitous it may be, this interpretation is wrong: it understates the extent to which we, the clay, contribute to our own shaping.

The Wisdom of Every Thing

ANYBODY WHO HAS WORKED WITH CLAY KNOWS THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH clay, and there are things the clay will not let you do. Anyone who has worked with cloth, or with metal, or with jewelry, knows that each material constrains the results you are able to achieve. The material has, if you will, its own *hokhmah*, its own wisdom, so it creates a partnership with you. We do not like to think of our interactions like that; we like

Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson (www.bradartson.com) is the dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at the American Jewish University, where he is vice president. His most recent book is *The Everyday Torah: Weekly Reflections and Inspirations* (McGraw-Hill).

**ISRAELI
CULTURE
BETWEEN
THE TWO
INTIFADAS**

A BRIEF ROMANCE



YARON PELEG

**ISRAELI
CULTURE
BETWEEN
THE TWO
INTIFADAS**
A BRIEF
ROMANCE

BY YARON PELEG

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to think that when we do something we are in control. How many of you can guarantee that your brisket turns out perfectly every time? Obviously, it has a mind of its own, as does the oven, as does whatever other material you work with. This is even more true when it comes to living beings. If the clay has its own property, which it embodies in the world uniquely, how much more so do human beings, or any of God's creatures?

What this amazing piyut is telling us, then, is that God kneads clay *as clay*, mindful of clay's nature, working through and with that distinctive way of being. And God works with metal appropriately for metal, mindful of its metallic nature. And God needs us, and works with each of us, and all of us, in our uniqueness, as we each are. This poem does not portray oppressive domination. It is not about an all-powerful God and wormlike human beings to be ruthlessly crushed at divine will. We call God in this very poem a "God of love." Love is when you know someone well enough that you know what it is they need highlighted; when you know how to coax them into something truly magnificent. A great potter is not someone who crushes the clay; a great potter intuitively molds the clay into magnificent functional art. And so this poem and the liturgy we recite on this holiest of days are really a song about God's uncanny ability to know us from the inside; to know what we can bear and what we cannot; to know what are our strengths and what are our needs; and to urge us, to invite us, to take the next step into our own becoming, our own greatness: *La-brit habet*, look to the covenant. What is the covenant if not a relationship between two responsive individuals? If one crushes the other, that is not a *brit*, that is a *milchamah*, a war! Life is not about God attempting to conquer us. Life is about God calling us into relationship.

We Are Who We Are

SO THE MESSAGE FOR US IS VERY SIMPLE: WE ARE NOTHING LESS THAN WHO WE ARE! Each one of us—clay in God's hands—is unique and different from each and every other one of us. And it is God's greatness to recognize our uniqueness. And it is our frailty to forget. So we all assume that every one is just like us, and if they are not, that they should be. But it's not true; other people are not simply duplicates of each other. Some are clay, and some are wood, and some are stone, and some are precious jewels. And every one of them is worthy in a unique way.

Everything that comes into the world brings novelty into the world, brings something that has never before been seen.

Let's start with the first great novelty, 14 billion years ago, when the universe exploded into existence at the very moment of the Big Bang. For the first 2 billion years, all there was, as the Torah tells us, was light; all there was, was energy. We are the product of that light. Out of the Big Bang came only two elements, hydrogen and helium. That is all that was created at the beginning! Each element brought its own *hokhmah*, its own way of reacting into the world. As the two elements collided and mixed, collided and mixed and congealed, they formed intense, burning fireball stars. After years of darkness, the entire cosmos turned on, and there was light everywhere. The cosmos was expanding at an unprecedented rate as these stars lit up the night sky for the first time ever.

And then, as if that illumination were not miraculous enough, some of these stars became so overheated, so big, so dense, that they collapsed in on themselves, exploding out into the world material that had never before existed: nitrogen and carbon, and all sorts of elements of complexity that spit out into the

sky and ultimately make possible me and you. We would not exist without carbon; we would not exist without iron. We would not exist without these elements that were not created in the beginning. If God's work had stopped in the first moment, we would not be here. But God's creation is a continuing creation, an unceasing creation. So Round II

is the explosion of the supernovae that donated themselves to life and gave of themselves to the cosmos.

Then, more miraculous yet, billions of years later, in one of these swirling galaxies, on one of its outermost rings, is a star of just the right size, just the right density, just the right heat. And around it, a circle of dust keeps going around and around, and gradually the particles of exploded stardust gather into little balls, those little balls becoming the planets of our solar system.

And on one very lucky planet, the third rock from the sun, there is pervasive thunder and lightning. But not lightning like you and I see today. The lightning of 10 billion years ago is a lightning that is constant and everywhere! The entire earth is nothing but molten heat that spits up to the surface, hardens into rock, and dives back down, so that—unlike elsewhere—the heavier elements do not remain buried in the core but rather ascend to the surface and mix with the air and the planet's crust. And in that frothy mix of lightning and water, life emerges. Do you know what powers our consciousness? We are packets of lightning. Our nervous systems are electrical systems. The flash of lightning that burst into life also bursts inside of you at this moment. I am writing words thanks to bottled lightning. And you understand me for the same reason, because this essay—you can share with others—this essay is electric!

Little packets of channeled lightning start to mingle and mix, and we have been mingling and mixing ever since.

And then, as if that were not miracle enough, these little packets of lightning—without prior organization or planning—they learn how to take other matter in and use it to build their own continuity. Life learns to eat. Life learns to digest life. Life learns to grow by building more life, and the miracles continue as cells learn how to convey information. (We are not the first to do it: there was instant messaging 10 million years ago! That is what genetics is all about—the ability of one cell to tell another cell what to do.) And so cells master the capacity to convey information. We get some backbone in ourselves and then we do something astonishing, unprecedented: we leave our mother, the ocean.

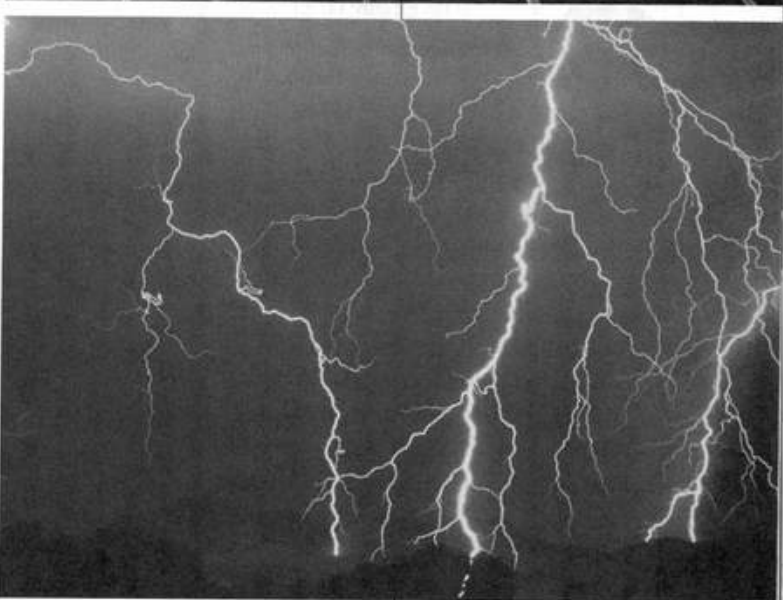
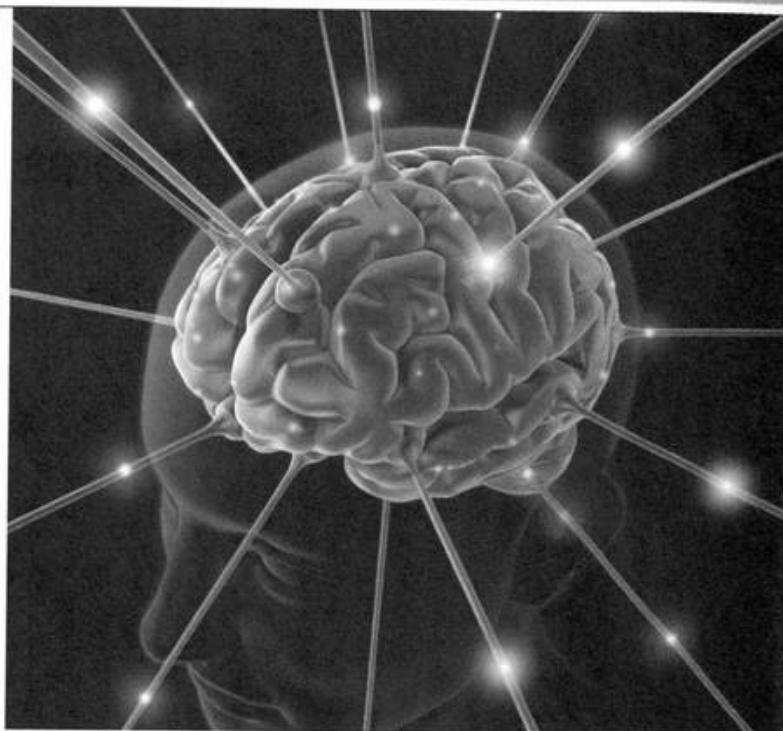
I told you before that you are portable lightning, but that is not the whole story. You are also portable bags of ocean: the saline solution of your blood is closer to the content of ocean water than you might care to know. We are living, walking puddles of ocean, powered by lightning. In our bodies is the entire story of the universe's creation. You yourselves contain the energy of the Big Bang, the primordial lightning out of which life emerged, the salty life-giving mix of the sea, the sociability of primates—all of that millennial history is in you, in each of us. All of creation is in each of us.

Paul Valery says, "The universe is built on a plan, the profound symmetry of which is somehow present in the inner structure of our own intellect." Our minds, our bodies, our emotions, and our way of being in the world are the universe itself organized into consciousness. We are the universe organizing itself and erupting into consciousness.

Prepared for the World from the Beginning

SO HERE IS WHAT I WANT TO REMIND US: WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR THE journey. We are already packed. In fact, the packing has been done for us!

Picture, if you will, our cousin the bear. Picture specifically a *(continued on page 95)*



CARING FOR ANIMALS

(continued from page 14)

ethical response. Indeed, we use the same mental and emotional operations in reading an animal as we do a human. Body language, eye movement, facial expression, and tone of voice all are important signs. One might in fact argue that non-human animals' emotional responses are more clear and direct than humans' and thus are easier to read. In reading animals it is sometimes helpful to know about species' habits and culture. And as with humans, repeated experiences with one individual help one to understand that individual's unique needs and wishes.

One of the principal ways by which one understands animal "language" sympathetically is by analogy to one's own experience. Say I saw a dog yelping, whining, leaping about, and licking an open cut. Because under similar circumstances I know I would likewise feel like crying and moving about anxiously because of the pain, I therefore conclude that the animal is experiencing the same kind of pain as I would. Knowing that one would wish one's own pain to be alleviated, one is moved to do the same for the animal. Of course, the animal's expressed feelings or wishes cannot always be determinative. At times humans may have to override them for their own good (as when one vaccinates one's companion animal). And to be sure the more different the creature is from oneself the more difficult the communication. But even insects, fish, reptiles, and birds react in ways we can relate to: avoiding pain and threats of death, and seeking that which enhances their life.

If, in short, we really begin to pay attention to what other creatures are telling us, we will hear that they do not want to be slaughtered, eaten, subjected to pain, or treated instrumentally as unfeeling objects. It behooves us humans as ethical beings to incorporate their wishes when we make decisions—as we inevitably must—about their lives. ■

CLAY IN THE POTTER'S HANDS

(continued from page 9)

mother bear in the dead of winter, asleep in her lair, under a layer of ice and snow. And inside the warmth of her body, picture little bear twins waiting to be born. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry remind us in *The Universe Story* that inside the bear mother's womb, those cubs have paws that already know how salmon swim. Those paws have been shaped, sculpted, and caressed by millions of years of development, so that when that cub is born, he already has the feel of salmon at the end of his paws. His fur already knows the feeling of the first snows and of autumn air turning crisp and cold, signaling the time to sleep. His sister's tongue, never yet in the world, is already a tongue that tastes the sweetness of berries. She already knows what it is like to have fruit juice dripping down her chin. Those bear cubs have never yet been in the world, and yet they have everything they need for the journey. And so do you.

In our mothers' wombs, we also were equipped with everything we need. God is indeed like a potter but not a tyrant. God is a loving potter who has fashioned us across hundreds of millions of years, so that by the time we reach this world, the moment we come into this world, we already emerge social, curious, interested, connected, outraged by injustice, delighted by joy. We do not teach babies to smile at a smile; they remind us to smile! We carry in our very bodies our cosmic and evolutionary history.

Years and years ago, our ancestors began using their minds so successfully that, over time, human beings began growing unusually large brains. And this swelling of our heads has made all the difference. Creatures with crania the size of ours have to be born early. One cannot carry such babies to term; their heads are too big. But if they are going to be born early, and their heads are going to be that big, then we are going to need the parents to form a more stable family bond to protect the vulnerable newborns.

With those babies in our arms, we stood up so that we could scan the distance. And that standing up made all the difference. Not just backaches, but it developed for us the need and the ability to walk the long distances that we did. We walked out of Eastern Africa; we walked into the Middle East; we walked over to Asia; we hoofed it over to Europe; we even made it by way of Russia into Alaska and down into the New World. We have been walking and wandering ever since—little portable bags of ocean powered by lightning.

So this day, and every day, do not be depressed. This moment is not sad. This is a day for us to remember that we have been given everything we need. We do not have to work on it or *for* it; it is already in us. It is us. We have it.

The prophet Jeremiah, conveying God's words, says to us, "Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you." We have been sanctified by God over billions of years, through miracle upon miracle; by fortuitous and unlikely chance that has led to this moment, right now. Astonishing! I want you this very moment to exult in joy; to celebrate the crescendo of the cosmos that is us, that pulses through us, to celebrate it in each other, in who we have become, in what our promises are.

We have everything we need. This is not a time for mourning. This is not a season for fear. We are in the hands of a potter who seeks to understand us well enough to let us become the glorious pottery we actually are.

I close with the words of the poet Denise Levertov:

A certain day became a presence to me;
there is, was, confronting me — a sky, air, light:
a being. And before it started to descend
from the height of noon, it leaned over
and struck my shoulder as if with
the flat of a sword, granting me
honor and a task. The day's blow
rang out metallic — or was it I, a bell awakened,
and what I heard was my whole self
saying and singing what it knew: I can. ■

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[FILM]

Cherisma

CHE, IFC Films

Review by David Sterritt

CHE COMES FROM THE cameras of Steven Soderbergh, who's a hard filmmaker to pin down. He's best known for romantic comedies like *Out of Sight* and *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* and for caper pictures like *Ocean's Eleven* and its offspring. But in less commercial projects like *Kafka* and *Schizopolis*, he gives a semi-mystical spin to offbeat material, and in topical movies like *Traffic* and *Erin Brockovich* he takes on moral issues. Even a misfire like *The Good German* looks at an unsettling subject (American ties to Nazi war criminals) and his remake of Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, based on Stanislaw Lem's extraordinary novel, investigates the impotence of science when confronted with the transcendent.

Given the split in Soderbergh's artistic personality between moral seriousness and razzle-dazzle fun, I wasn't sure what to expect from *Che*, a four-hour-plus biopic about Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Argentine-born radical who became a physician as a young man, then spearheaded the Cuban revolution, served at the top of Fidel Castro's government, and ultimately lost his life in a failed crusade to spark Marxist rebellion across Latin America with a handful of guerillas in the Bolivian wild. On one hand, the obvious big-screen possibilities of jungle combat suggested that Soderbergh would go for gut-punching entertainment; on the



Top: Ernesto "Che" Guevara speaks before the United Nations General Assembly as Cuban Industry Minister in New York, December 11, 1964. Guevara charged the U.S. with violating Cuba's territory and attacked U.S. actions in the Congo, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Bottom: Benicio del Toro plays Che Guevara in *Che* directed by Steven Soderbergh.

other hand, pictures like *The Thin Red Line* and Clint Eastwood's recent World War II films remind us that thoughtful directors can explore warfare without exploiting it.

It turns out that *Che* is something I didn't anticipate—an intimate epic, claustrophobic in style and so obsessively fixated on Guevara's sheer physical presence that moral conundrums barely have room to poke their heads above the foliage,

much less be examined and addressed. The first part, subtitled *The Argentine*, leapfrogs among various events in the Cuban revolution, from Guevara's first meeting with Castro to his United Nations speech in 1964; the second part, called *Guerrilla*, is a linear account of the Bolivian campaign. Cinematically, the picture is an experimental marathon that probably won't draw large audiences. Historically and ethically, it's impartial to a fault.

After seeing the film, I talked with Soderbergh and asked why he chose such an ideologically neutral approach. He told me he wanted to steer clear of Hollywood psychologizing: he didn't want a cooked-up scene of some momentous incident that turns idealistic Che into a ferocious warrior and he tried not to sensationalize the atrocious socioeconomic conditions that turned countless *campesinos* into natural revolutionaries. I respect that reasoning, and I respect the movie for its singleness of purpose and low-key creativity.

But people, we're talking about Che Guevara here! Scourge of capitalist oppressors! Or bloodthirsty jungle killer! Or both, or neither! Call him what you will, anybody within thinking distance of him has to take some kind of stand.

Since the movie is based on Guevara's own writings, Soderbergh could have portrayed the poverty and misery of pre-communist Cuba through revolutionary eyes, arguing that violent rebellion was the only plausible cure for such radical injustices. Or he could have taken an anti-Che position, detailing (for instance) Guevara's leading role in the tribunals and executions at Havana's infamous La Cabaña fortress after Castro assumed power. Guevara's idealism and ruthlessness are both acknowledged in the film, but neither is psychologically or sociologically fleshed out, leaving a void at the center of the story.

My own take is that, to start with the most obvious point, the last century's Latin American uprisings sprang far more from the unconscionable actions of imperial, oligarchic, and plutocratic powers (very much including U.S. agents and their wholly owned puppets) than from anything Guevara and company could have stirred up by themselves. Soderbergh knows that "every country in the Caribbean and Latin America was run by a leader in the pocket of the United States," as he put it to me. But he doesn't take the indispensable next step of measuring the revolution's ends and means against that outrageous reality and its appalling implications. Nor does he convey the theoretical dimensions of Guevara's work—his ideas about economic planning,

the task of balancing economic growth with democratic rights, and the development of a socialist "new man and woman" with a new kind of humanitarian and communitarian spirit.

Any account of Guevara's life has to give these dimensions their due. Yet for all the time it hunkers down with him in the jungle, the movie gives little sense of why he's there or what the payoffs were later on: the massive campaign against illiteracy; the moves against racial (although not sexual) bigotry; the advances in health, education, and welfare that soared past those of other developing nations, convincing young idealists around the world that revolution, carried out when conditions are right, can produce lasting improvements in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

It's also undeniable that Castro and Guevara fomented abuses and excesses, and these should be in the mix as well, along with the large historical questions surrounding Guevara's legacy as a whole. Weighed against post-revolution declines in poverty, disease, dysfunction, and death, does the Cuban revolution qualify as a just war? How extensive were executions and torture as the Castro regime consolidated its power? How many of the victims were wrongly persecuted innocents and how many were reactionary foes of any mechanism for elevating the fortunes of rural and urban workers? For those who condemn Marxist revolution in any form, why has it been such an effective stage in the socioeconomic growth of so many poor and exploited countries?

And let's think about today. How does the degree of Cuban revolutionary violence compare with the killing and maiming of nonaligned civilians in, say, the American invasions of Iraq in 2003 and Panama in 1989? How did Castro's prisons stack up against Guantánamo? Abu Ghraib? Bagram? How many suicides took place in them? And if the broad outlines of Guevara's legacy are as superseded and unsupported as detractors claim, what are the naysayers' suggestions for correcting, here and now, a global-capitalist order that sacrifices tens of thousands of children's lives *every day* to malnutrition, bad

sanitation, preventable disease, and substandard medical care? Perhaps more violent interventions in oil-rich territories are in order?

I'm a film critic, and it's not my business to have ready answers for all these questions, although my opinions should be clear from the questions I've just listed. It is my business to put Soderbergh's movie under the microscope, and to lament the opportunity he's missed for coming up with his own responses for discussion and debate. To be fair, many scenes in the movie give substantial food for thought, especially when they touch on the enduring mystery of what drives a Che Guevara to put comfort, well-being, and life itself on the line in service to down-trodden strangers. My qualms about Soderbergh's political agnosticism didn't become particularly strong until I'd mulled it over for a few days, and even now the picture has me thinking. It benefits from some very interesting choices on Soderbergh's part, such as having the title role played by Benicio Del Toro, one of the most charismatic actors in the history of the cosmos, and then constantly photographing him in groups of people at a distance from the camera, countering the star's individualistic allure with the character's lifelong investment in collective action and communal values. This is solid, imaginative filmmaking.

All of which explains why my personal jury is still out. *Che* is often chilly and perplexing, yet it contains elements that are original, provocative, and relevant today, when U.S. power again faces insurgents spawned by its own belligerence and paranoia. The film's unsparing depiction of Guevara's downfall (in which the CIA was up to its knees, if not its neck) can also be taken as a cautionary tale about how violence begets violence. So now it's time for audiences to make the moral judgments that Soderbergh passes by. ■

David Sterritt, chairman of the National Society of Film Critics and professor emeritus at Long Island University, was film critic of the Christian Science Monitor for decades. His latest book is The B List.

Yud: The Hand of God

Handiwork

At dawn God opens one hand
to let cramped darkness flee.

All night clouds of glory
float beyond reach of dreams,

beyond a prayer book and a clock
which wait with you until dawn

to help you wrestle the dark
back into God's other hand.

Hand of God

They scratched Your Names on wooden slats, in soot,
on paper scraps in Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz, Babi Yar.

In Warsaw they buried Torahs in rusty milk cans
with keepsake diamonds, eyeglasses, fountain pens.

No rescue arrived, no maps with dotted lines,
no gruel, no clothing, no sheltering dust.

What they possessed were Your Names,
the little that is much, the point of a yud,

a speck of hope that someone would hear
what they had seconds to say

before firing squads whipped wind
toppled them broken dolls into graves.

First one spoke, then ten, then ten times ten
until a murmuring arose Elokim Havayah

Adonai El Shaddai Hashem
Havayah Shechinah Asherah

chanting all the Names to create the place
where You are not until all that was or will be

became Elokim, Havayah, Shechinah
gathering outstretched hands to heaven.

The Vanishing Point

You slow down to watch cumulus clouds stream across
the sky. You choose a more circuitous route home and
pass a tree with white bags tied around random apples.
The apples remind you of clouds, how each hangs in the
sky, singular yet part of a flock. Each item in the flock is a
coordinate of earth and sky, enumerating space. The
flocks of apples and clouds are actual infinities, an end-
less collection of discrete items that one can conceivably
count to the end. This is different from potential infinity,
which is the entirety of infinity, an immeasurable continu-
um that is greater than the sum of its parts. After your first
glimpse, you are lonely for more contraction of space
around the light of your mind contemplating what cannot
be conceived. What cannot be conceived this morning?
The Army has found the larynx of an Iraqi man that Ameri-
can soldiers slowly strangled to death. His ribs, additional
evidence for the trial, are still missing. They are in a refrig-
erator in Washington, D.C. These are discrete items;
whereas how the passage of time felt as the soldiers
strangled him is a continuum of infinite pain. And his
words and songs and prayers and curses he will never
speak are an empty set.

My groaning serves as my bread;
My roaring pours forth as water.
- Job 3:24

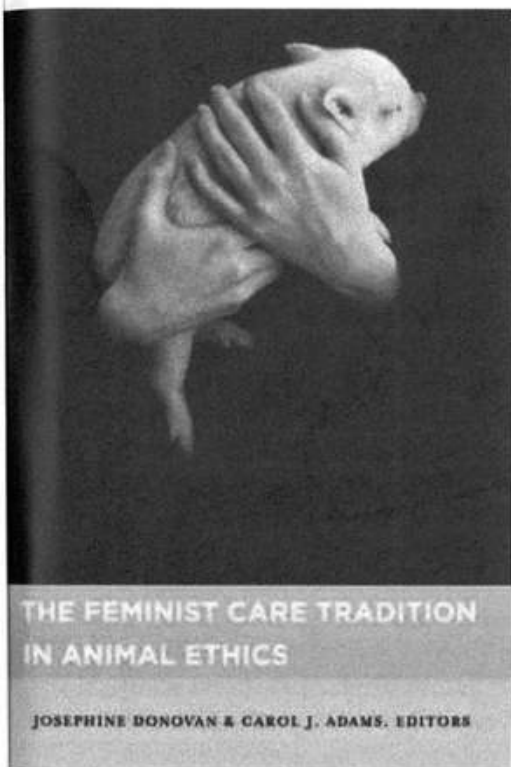
Before the creation of the world, He and His Name
were Alone.
- *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezar*, a Midrash

He hid me in the shadow of his hand.
- Isaiah 49:2

— Emily Warn

Caring for Animals: A Feminist Approach

by Josephine Donovan



THE FEMINIST CARE TRADITION
IN ANIMAL ETHICS

JOSEPHINE DONOVAN & CAROL J. ADAMS, EDITORS

PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE MORAL STATUS OF ANIMALS INTENSIFIED in sophistication and scope in the later decades of the twentieth century, thanks in part to groundbreaking works like Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). The latter book especially helped to formulate the idea that aspects of the liberal "natural rights" doctrine, usually reserved for humans, should be applied to animals—hence the concept "animal rights," which is now broadly used to characterize the current animal defense movement.

Beginning in the 1980s, feminist theorists developed a feminist approach to the issue of the moral status of animals, or what is now termed "animal ethics." The feminist approach, which was crafted partly in reaction to Singer's and Regan's theories, was rooted in feminist "ethic-of-care" theory, as articulated primarily in Carol Gilligan's celebrated *In A Different Voice* (1982). Gilligan identified a women's "conception of morality" as one that is "concerned with the activity of care ... responsibility and relationships," which she contrasted to a men's "conception of morality as fairness," one that is more concerned with "rights and rules." Where the masculine concern with rights, rules, and an abstract ideal of justice tends often to seem like "a math problem with humans," the feminine approach offers a more flexible, situational, and particularized ethic. Gilligan called the feminine conception "a morality of responsibility," as opposed to the masculine "morality of rights," which emphasizes "separation rather than connection" and focuses more on the autonomy of the individual than on the context and on interdependent relationships. In analyzing one woman subject's response to a hypothetical scenario, Gilligan notes that the reasoning reveals a morality concerned with "sustaining connection ... keeping the web of relationships intact."

The feminist care approach to animal ethics thus rejects abstract rule-based approaches in favor of one that is more situational and focused on the context, allowing for a narrative understanding of the particulars of a situation or issue. As with feminism in general, care theory resists hierarchical dominative dualisms, which establish the powerful (humans, males, whites) over the subordinate (animals, women, people of color). Instead, care theorists see all living creatures as having value and as embedded in an interdependent matrix. At the same time, care theorists have resisted the claims of "deep ecology"—another major contemporary approach to animal issues. Deep ecology—initiated by Aldo Leopold in the 1940s—holds that the ecosystem supercedes the individual. Tom Regan termed this view "environmental fascism" in that the totality counts for more than the individual. Care theorists agree with Regan in this, counting each "subject of a life" (Regan's term) to be precious, sacred, valuable, and not expendable.

In applying the feminist care ethic to animals, theorists argued that while natural rights theory makes important contributions to theorizing about animals, it nevertheless is in many ways inadequate and unworkable when applied to animals. One problem we noted with rights theory is its rationalist bias. Developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the so-called Age of Reason, rights theory relies on what Carol Adams has termed "a mechanistic ontology of territorial atomism." It envisages a society of rational, autonomous, independent agents ("persons") whose territory or property is entitled to protection from external agents (other people and the government). Animal rights theorists have argued, in effect, that animals are entitled to be considered "persons" before the law

*Josephine Donovan, Professor Emerita at the University of Maine, has written widely on literature and animal ethics. With Carol J. Adams, she edited *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (Columbia University Press, 2007), from which parts of this article derive.*

and to have rights similar to those held by citizens—that is, the basic right to have their territory (their selves, their bodies, their space) held inviolate from unwarranted human intrusions and abuse. To sustain their claim, they have had to argue that animals are in many respects similar to humans: Regan argues that animals are autonomous individuals with an intelligence that is similar to human reason, whereas Singer argues that sentience rather than rationality should be the basis upon which “rights” and moral status are granted. Rights theory thus requires an assumption of similarity between humans and animals, eliding the differences. But, in reality, animals are only with considerable strain analogous to rational, property-owning men.

We therefore need an ethic that acknowledges that nonhuman animals are different, are not in fact human, but are nevertheless entitled to moral respect. Care theory argues that we have a moral responsibility to care for all creatures with whom we can communicate, regardless of how different they may be from us. Of course, the degree to which active caring is possible will vary according to circumstances. For example, our responsibilities for domestic animals vary greatly from our duties to wild animals.

Rights theory also presumes a society of equal autonomous agents who require little support from others and need only that their space be protected from others’ intrusions. But, in reality, animals are not equal to humans; domestic animals, in particular, are for the most part dependent for survival upon humans. We therefore have a situation of unequals and need an ethic that recognizes this fact. Rights theory has in fact been criticized by feminists when applied to humans because its vision of the equal, autonomous individual (male) ignores the network of supporting persons (usually female) who enable his autonomy—that is, the persons who raise him, feed him, clothe him, and so forth. In short, rights theory ignores the fact that most humans and animals operate within an interdependent network, and it provides no obligation to care for those who are unable to operate autonomously.

Another problem feminists have had with the rights approach is that it devalues, suppresses, or denies emotions. This means that a major basis for the human-animal connection—love—is not encompassed. Since the exclusion of the emotional response is a major reason why animal abuse and exploitation continue, it seems contradictory for animal defense advocates to also claim (as Regan and Singer have done) that feelings are inappropriate guides to ethical treatment.

Finally, the rights approach tends to be abstract and formalistic, favoring rules that can be universalized or judgments that can be quantified. Many ethical situations, however, including those involving animals, require a particularized, situational response—one that considers context and history (the relational web Gilligan described)—a response that may not be universalizable or quantifiable.

The feminist ethic of care sees animals as individuals who do have feelings, who can communicate those feelings, and to whom therefore humans have moral obligations. An ethic of care also recognizes the diversity of animals—one size doesn’t fit all; each has a particular history. Insofar as possible, attention needs to be paid to these particularities in any ethical determination regarding them.

One of the primary theories that continues to legitimize animal abuse is Cartesian dualism—the division of the world into mind and matter. In the Cartesian view, matter is assumed to be lifeless and without energizing spirit (unlike in much premodern thinking, which is animist), and is held therefore to be of lesser value than mind, spirit, or reason. From this viewpoint, which undergirds much modern thinking about animals, which is instrumental, animals are reduced to mere things, machine-like automatons lacking inner spirit, sensitivity, or feelings. Thomas Kelch has pointed out that it is this view that supports the current common-law conception of animals as property. Kelch argues that reconceptualizing the moral status of animals as feeling subjects will require changing the legal status of animals.

Like feminism in general, feminist care theory is a political theory and is therefore unlike traditional welfare approaches to animal issues, which deal with one animal at a time and fail to critique or oppose the system responsible. Ethic-of-care theory insists that these causal systems be addressed. As Catharine MacKinnon has noted, we’re for “caring and empathy while never letting power off the hook.”

The feminist care approach therefore pays *attention* (a key word in feminist ethic-of-care theorizing) not only to the individual suffering animal but also to the political and economic systems that are causing the suffering. The feminist care approach in short recognizes the importance of each individual animal while also developing a more comprehensive analysis of why the animal is being abused in the first place.

Care theory recognizes that ideological systems often screen humans from animal harm and suffering by offering legitimizing rationalization for those harms, as a number of theorists, notably Brian Luke, Kenneth Shapiro, and Carol J. Adams have emphasized. Men especially, Luke and Shapiro note, are socialized from an early age under our “sex-species system” (Adams’s term) to consider sympathy and compassion for animals as unmanly and feminine, which Adams sees as one aspect of a more general derision of compassion in society at large. Animal harm is moreover rendered invisible for most people, as Luke notes, by massive ideological screening that allows people *not to see* the suffering animal in the laboratory or slaughterhouse.

Recently, some ethic-of-care theorists have proposed that our attention should be directed as well to what the animals are telling us about themselves, rather than what other humans are telling us about them. In my article “Caring to Dialogue,” I have called for a renewed emphasis on dialogue with animals, learning their communication systems, reading their body language phenomenologically, and taking these communications seriously in our ethical decisions.

Such communication may be imperfect. It may indeed be impossible to really know, as Thomas Nagel famously put it, “what it is like to be a bat” (1974). But we can nevertheless decipher animal communications sufficiently to formulate an appropriate (continued on page 95)

Historic Election: Obama and Prop. 8

by Lynice Pinkard

WOW! WHAT A NIGHT WE WITNESSED ON ELECTION NIGHT! My phone was ringing about every fifteen seconds with people wanting to share the celebration. Meanwhile, people were out in the streets of my neighborhood in West Oakland, or leaning out their windows, or lighting firecrackers, glorying in the news that we'd elected a black president.

There is no doubt that this is a historic moment. Obama stands in a long line of African American people engaged in the tradition of struggle for freedom, democracy, dignity, and equality. He joins them in asking, "What are we going to do about suffering and despair in America and around the world?" He joins them in demanding that we do something about it. He joins them in declaring that the time is now, that "we are the leaders we've been looking for." This is worth celebrating. Celebration is itself a revolutionary act with the potential to catalyze more life, more capacity for resistance.

At the same time, Obama's acceptance speech showed his understanding that he is not a messiah, that he cannot, on his own, turn the tide of suffering.

We all understand that the litmus test for the eradication of racism in this country is not the election of an African American president. The real measure of racial equity in this country is defined by the conditions of those living at the bottom of the system. We can't say that we've overcome racism because we have a black president. We'll have overcome racism when we no longer have public schools in crisis, when people aren't losing their homes at massive rates to foreclosure, when black people aren't losing their lives in disproportionate numbers in state-sponsored wars. Those are some of the real measures of racial equality.

One of the indicators that racism is still at work in our culture is the way in which some mainstream media reports have insinuated that black voters were somehow centrally responsible for the passage of California's Proposition 8 to ban gay marriage. This is a classic case of scapegoating, in which disproportionate attention is being paid to the black voters targeted by a massive homophobic outreach program, rather than to the mostly white institutions and funders behind that outreach program. Thankfully the *New Yorker* helped to clarify the situation in a December 1 article: "If exit polling is to be believed, seventy percent of California's African American voters did indeed vote yes on Prop. 8, as did upward of eighty percent of Republicans, conservatives, white evangelicals, and weekly churchgoers. But the initiative would have passed, barely, even if not a single African American had shown up at the polls."

Nevertheless, it was sobering to see how many African American voters cast ballots in favor of the measure. The "Yes on 8" campaign targeted African American communities very successfully in large part because of the effects of a racist society on sexuality and gender roles in those communities. Talking about sexuality at all in African American contexts, and especially African American church contexts, is deeply problematic because of the history of the denigration of black bodies in this country through enslavement, rape and accusations of rape, lynchings, and on and on. This discussion becomes even more loaded because of the ways that traditional gender roles have been inscribed in the empowerment of black families. The emasculation of black men in a racist society—their inability to really protect their families, to provide for their families—has resulted in strict gender roles that often play out as male dominance and female subordination. Anything that seems to interrogate these gender norms—the feminization of men, the masculinization of women—is



Repeal Prop. 8 Rally in Oakland, California, November 15, 2008.

Rev. Lynice Pinkard is the senior pastor at First Congregational Church of Oakland in California. She is also a therapist whose work is dedicated to decolonizing the human spirit and to freeing people from what she calls "empire affective disorder."

threatening. In this way, African American homophobia is in part the effect of racism.

Homophobia among white working-class people is similarly an effect of class oppression, although it is important to note that oppression plays out differently among different groups. African American people have borne the full weight of the imperialist system in a way that people of the dominant culture have not. Because of that, it is revolutionary for African American people to fight homophobia and heterosexism in ways that it isn't for people in the dominant culture.

This is not to deny the suffering of white people who struggle to provide for their own families and may use homophobia and heterosexism as a way of defining themselves as strong and worthy in opposition to a demonized "other." Although oppression plays out differently for different groups, oppression tends to replicate itself as oppressed people oppress others. The only answer to the endless pecking order of isms is for all suffering people to enter into solidarity with each other to fight for the liberation of *all* and the flourishing of *all* life.

That means LGBTQ activists would get into solidarity with other suffering people to address not only the denial of the right of all to marry, but also the myriad other forms that domination takes. This means transcending self-interests to create authentic bonds of solidarity across lines of difference.

What does this look like? Here I think we can take some cues from what Obama did in his campaign. He used his deep exposure across many lines of difference to connect with the suffering of many different communities. Likewise, at First Congregational Church of Oakland, where I serve as senior pastor, we are engaging in intercultural work in an attempt to connect our own suffering with the suffering of all people everywhere. In this way we are struggling to recognize that the source of that suffering is an interconnected system or network of systems that create overarching structures of domination. When we address single issues that emerge from our own narrow self-interest, we are in essence pulling at the individual straps of the boot of domination, without recognizing the entirety of the boot that is holding us all down.

What are you to do if you are a white LGBTQ activist who genuinely wants to work against "the whole boot" in this way? If you want to build bridges to the African American community, start with your genuine care for the suffering of African American people. Let that compassion lead you into genuine relationships with African American LGBTQ activists who have been disenfranchised in the same ways as other members of the African American community. African American LGBTQs can traverse the full length of the bridge between LGBTQ concerns and African American concerns and can introduce you to other African Americans who are not gay. Work with this larger community of African Americans on the issues that directly affect their lives as a way to build real, authentic relationships. Through these relationships, everyone involved is transformed and made capable of entering into solidarity, even when their self-interest is not immediately served. This process leads to a broadened understanding of what liberation means—it is universal or it's nothing. This is the only way to create broad-based capacity for sustainable change.

This is what we are seeking to model by building our own alternative, intercultural community here at First Congregational Church of Oakland. We are allowing genuine bonds of commitment to transform all of us and build our capacity to work against all forms of domination and oppression. Then we are using what we learn here to do the same thing in the various communities in which we live and work.

So what's next on the Prop. 8 front?

We certainly continue fighting for the right of all to marry, but we must also continue to interrogate what marriage means in light of other forms of suffering. For me, the question of the freedom to marry has always raised another question: What do we want to marry for? Do we want freedom to marry so that we can preserve the nuclear family and move to a gated community? Live behind a picket fence that separates us from anyone different from us? Get a tax deduction so that we can consume more oil, further degrading the planet? Or are we going to use our partnerships to transgress and transform lifeless ways of being? Are we going to remake what it means to be married, to do family?

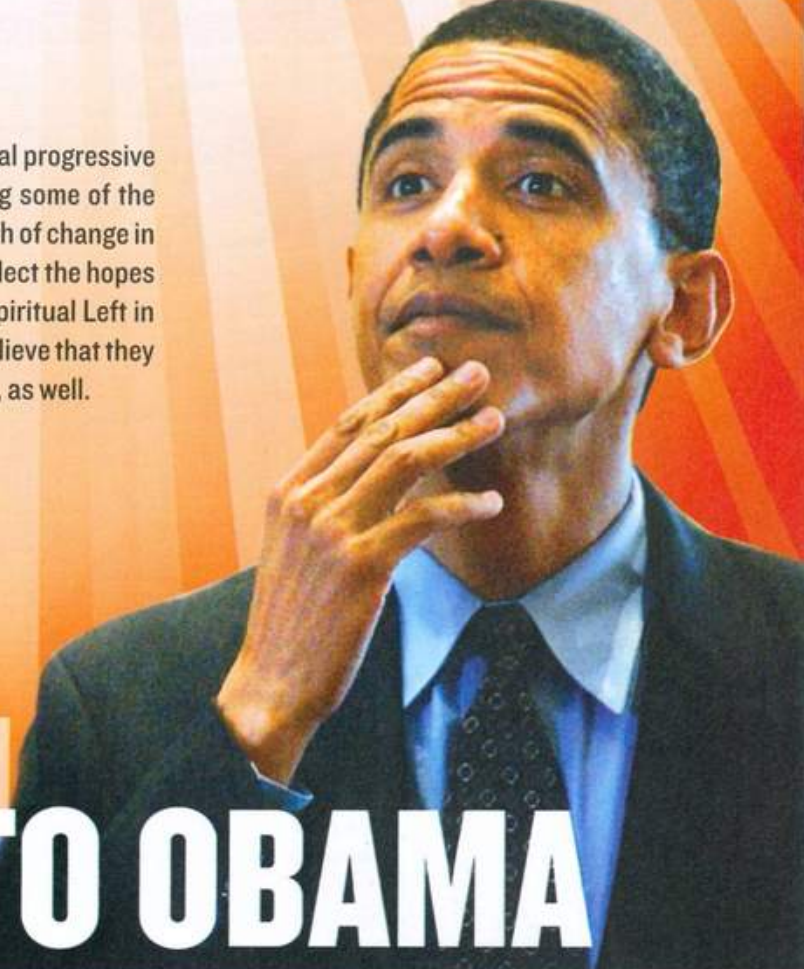
The denial of the right to marry does not mean we can't create queer families—families that transgress from a point of dislocation. That is what queerness is. Not only can we do it, but we can teach our children to do it. We can teach our communities to do it. And in this way we continue the struggle to "queer the world."

That struggle—the struggle to be alternative in conventional contexts—is exactly the struggle that we are engaged in at First Congregational Church of Oakland. Our success in doing that is not ultimately about which identity categories we occupy, but about our relationship to systems of domination and oppression. In the same way, electing a black man to the highest office in the land is not, in itself, a radical alternative act. Whether or not the election of Barack Obama is alternative is dependent in part on where he positions himself in relationship to imperial aims and ends, and also in part on what we do from here. If this lulls us to sleep, the empire will be served, but if this serves as an impetus for transformative change, starting in our own lives, we are at the beginning of something very new and life-giving.

Transformative change will come not from rushing "out there" to work, work, work, but from attending to the deadness in ourselves and in our left-leaning communities, deadness that comes from letting our own protective self-interest cut us off from caring relationships with others across perceived lines of difference.

What we need, in order to address that deadness, is the Spirit of Life, the same Spirit that moved across this country and made this historic election possible. ■

Tikkun asked writers representing the breadth of the spiritual progressive movement to write memos to our new president addressing some of the concerns that we believe should be central as he forges a path of change in accord with his message of hope. Together, these memos reflect the hopes and aspirations of what might be called the Religious and Spiritual Left in the U.S. at the beginning of 2009. We have good reason to believe that they will be read by Barack Obama. We hope that you'll read them, as well.



SPECIAL SECTION MEMOS TO OBAMA

Memo from the Editor

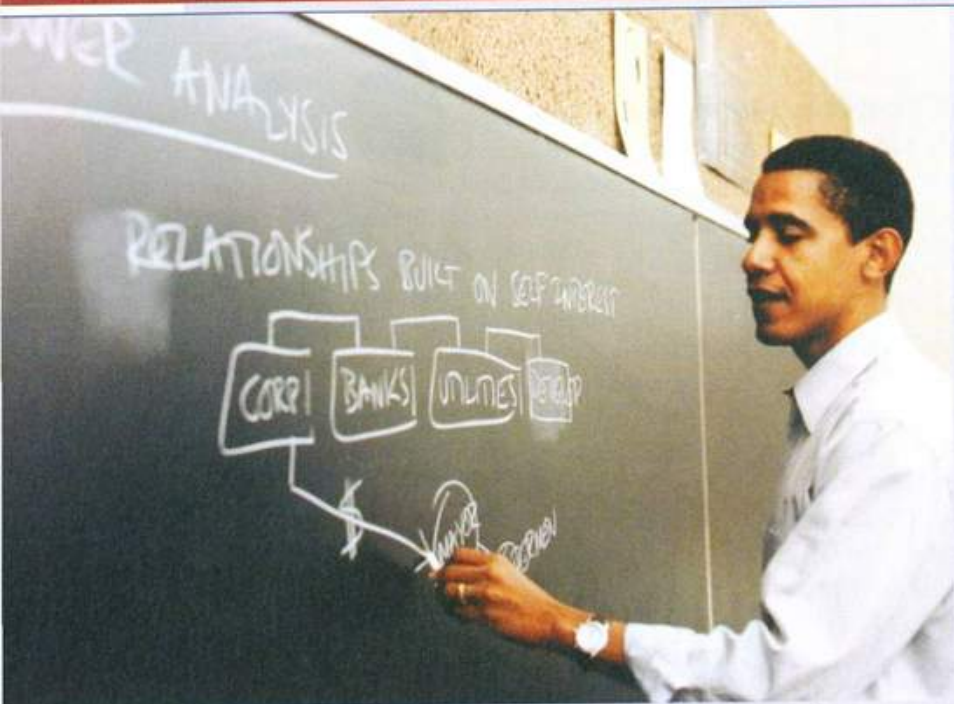
Michael Lerner: Trusting Obama

DEAR BARACK,

I have faith that you are going to advance the cause of human liberation and act as a faithful servant of God during your presidency. And to do that, I think you are going to need the support of spiritual progressives who can counter all the inside-the-Beltway realists who will be surrounding you in the coming years and who will do their best to drown out the voices of those who actually made your presidency possible: the tens of millions of Americans who seek not just a competent president (almost anyone would appear competent in comparison with our national leadership of the past eight years), but also a transformative presidency.

I developed this faith in you after you spoke at the *Tikkun* conference in Chicago in 1996, when we first met. And I was strengthened in that faith after hearing from our local Chicago chapter activists between 1996 and 2006 that you strongly endorsed our progressive middle path on Middle East peace, and our call to be both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine, recognizing that the best interests of the Jewish people lie with peace and reconciliation with the Arab and Muslim states that surround Israel rather than a continued state of hostilities and quasi-war. During the 2008 election, when some sought to portray you as "pro-Arab" and "anti-Israel," I was confident that the reason you surrounded yourself with the center-right figures of the foreign policy establishment was to reassure the Jewish world and the American public that you have always been a strong supporter of Israel, but not to abandon your *tikkun*-ish perspective that real support for Israel means strong support for the peace forces in Israel and a recognition that both sides have a legitimate story and that both sides have been unnecessarily provocative and hurtful to the other.

My faith in you was strengthened when you told me that you had read some of my books and that you were reading *The Left Hand of God*, but even more by our meeting in 2006 when we discussed the Global Marshall



What will Obama, a former community organizer, teach the nation? That communities and interest groups must lobby his administration to meet their specific needs? Or that we must change our consciousness to reshape all our institutions to serve the common good, as called for by the campaign for a New Bottom Line?

Plan. You suggested to me that we reduce the percentage of GMP proposed from 5 percent to 1 percent or 2 percent (we did so). You suggested to me that even with that lower figure, it would take a major transformation of consciousness in Washington, D.C., to get people inside the Beltway to recognize that homeland security could be achieved more effectively by a strategy of generosity and demonstrating real caring for the peoples of the world than through militarism and domination as the sole aspect of our foreign policy—unless we could mount a massive grassroots campaign on behalf of that perspective. You made it clear that you would not lead such a campaign but would respond to it positively if we could mobilize people in every congressional district sufficient to build a strong congressional base for the Network of Spiritual Progressives' version of the Global Marshall Plan.

OK, that's the "community organizer" element in you, and I respect that, and we at the Network of Spiritual Progressives are committed to using the next four years to build that kind of local support.

There are lots of policy ideas that we've developed in *Tikkun* magazine, in the Network of Spiritual Progressives' "Spiritual Covenant with America" (see: spiritualprogressives.org), and in the memos that we've assembled in this issue of *Tikkun*. Some of these ideas you may want to run with, others you may want to distance from, depending on your assessment of the political possibilities.

But political possibilities are shaped in part by the public discourse of the president and the administration, and it is here that you can have a huge impact.

Your presidency will have lasting significance if you dedicate your energy to legitimizing a new set of values for our society, or what the Network of Spiritual Progressives calls a New Bottom Line for American society. Instead of judging institutions, social policies, corporations, legislation, a presidency, an economic plan, or even personal behavior as "rational," "productive," or "efficient" primarily in terms of how much money or power has been accumulated, we need to also focus our attention on how much love and kindness, generosity and caring for others, and ethical and ecological sensitivity have been generated. We should measure our progress by how much we've increased our capacities to recognize others as embodiments of the sacred, by how much we've increased our capacities to respond to the grandeur and mystery of the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement. If you can help Americans recognize that our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet and the well-being of the planet itself, and that well-being has to be judged in terms of a New Bottom Line that includes material well-being but goes far beyond that, you will earn a significant place in the history of the human race.

On the other hand, if you choose to follow the advice of community organizers such as Saul Alinsky, eschewing larger changes in consciousness and focusing solely on concrete achievements like passing legislation, your legislative victories will have little lasting impact. People who have bought into the dominant worldviews in American society think of success in primarily material terms. They believe that "progress" means the accumulation of more and more things, and that a society is "rich" to the extent that it has maximized consumer goods for growing numbers of people. These worldviews encourage people to think of themselves as isolated monads seeking their own well-being even at the expense of everyone around them, or at least without regard to how others are doing. They encourage us to believe that our security depends primarily on our ability to dominate and control others lest they dominate and control us first. If these remain the predominant ideas, it doesn't



No conservative today argues against women having the right to vote. That's what happens when a social movement changes mass consciousness.

matter how many "liberal" or "progressive" pieces of legislation you will have managed to get passed by Congress.

We saw the failure of the "non-ideological" approach in the Clinton years. President Clinton passed many valuable pieces of legislation, but most of what he had achieved was quickly wiped out by the Bush/Cheney administration because he had won his victories by playing within the old framework of politics, a framework that could be and was as easily mobilized to dismantle his accomplishments as to sustain them. Legislative victories won through clever manipulation of Congress and the media amount to very little in the long run, unless they are based on a successful change in mass consciousness.

Contrast that, please, with the victories of the Civil Rights, women's, and environmental movements. By changing mass consciousness, they created a reality in which even the most conservative elements in the society eventually had to give not only lip service but even policy nods to equality and to environmental sanity.

Well, you may protest, you can't be a social change movement—you are "only" a president. That's about where I got to in the days when Hillary Clinton endorsed an earlier version of the New Bottom Line, which in those days I called the "politics of meaning." Hillary told me she couldn't convince Bill to implement the politics of meaning in evaluating their own legislative agenda, but what she could do was use "the bully pulpit" to put forward those ideas.

What she quickly learned was that the inside-the-Beltway representatives of America's economic and political elites were even more reactive to a new ideological formulation than to any specific political program. Those elites understand as well as we at *Tikkun* do that the current system



Who was the "realist" in the primaries? The one who spoke "realistically" or the one who inspired the most people?



Is the world a bottomless cookie jar, or an embodiment of the sacred (opposite)?

that America “works” once again in terms of what made America think of itself as a success in the twentieth century. These may seem like great accomplishments, Mr. President, but in fact they are insufficient in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In the twenty-first century, we need a whole new way of thinking. If we are to mobilize the creativity of the human race to solve the environmental challenges we ourselves created by looking at the world as a bottomless cookie jar—as a resource we could exploit for our own satisfaction without regard to the well-being of the planet itself—we will need a whole different consciousness. We are not going to get other nations to act as though “we are all in it together” and get them to care about what is in our best environmental interests if we are not just as caring about whether their children are well nourished and have as much hope for economic security as our own children. In short, Mr. President, it can’t be a world in which we only say, “God bless the United States of America,” unless we quickly add, “and God bless everyone else on this planet, as well.”

Nor can we think of blessings only in material terms. The dynamics of “me-firstism” have led to an economic collapse of monumental proportions, and it is a huge mistake to try to rebuild the economic system without challenging that way of thinking which allows each corporation and each individual to judge success in purely personal, material terms. But the collapse of our economy is only one part of the larger moral and spiritual collapse that has been eating at our spiritual and psychological well-being for several decades and which manifests at least as much as economic decline in the insecurity of family life, the growing levels of isolation and fear, and the decline in friendships and communities that connect us to higher meaning and purpose beyond personal material success. Human beings need meaning and love and mutual recognition as much as they need a job and a good health care program.

To speak to these needs, you have to move far beyond the language of individual rights and economic entitlements, the heartland of the old liberalism, to address a progressive spiritual politics. You have to insist that our goal is to create a world that is safe for love and caring, a world that educates its youth to recognize that their success as individuals is in part reflected in how much love and caring they can show to others and to the planet Earth, a world in which we overcome the tendency to look at others or the planet merely as instrumentally valuable for what they can give us as individuals. We need to look at the world and at other human beings as embodiments of the sacred, as fundamentally valuable not for what they can do for us but simply as ends in themselves.

President Obama, that may seem a huge task, but it is the task facing us if we intend to survive the twenty-first century. And you will either embrace the challenge and educate Americans to this new consciousness, or

depends on ideological obeisance at the altar of individualism, materialism, and competitiveness. The current system depends on the goal of “progress” understood as the accumulation of goods, rather than as the improvement of our quality of life or the development of our soul and our capacities to be loving and generous. It depends on security understood in terms of power over others rather than generosity and caring for others. So when Hillary dared to challenge those basic principles, she was portrayed as naïve, unrealistic, utopian, or adolescent in her vision.

President Obama, the most important challenge you face is to reverse that notion of what it is to be rational in the contemporary world. You must reject the current vision of “being realistic” and explain to Americans why that notion is based on a mistaken calculation of our interests as Americans and as members of the human race. You must help people understand that the old way of looking at the world, the Old Bottom Line, is dysfunctional and leads to the dissolution of American society and to the destruction of the planet.

I know that your temptation will be to try to articulate your ideals within the context of the American discourse of the past. That discourse is about individual freedom and opportunity—and your presidency will be able to demonstrate that some women and some Blacks have in fact been able to achieve great success, beyond the wildest dreams of previous generations. And if your economic programs succeed, you will be able to show



you will be another flash-in-the-pan hero who will always be honored as the first Black president, but not as one who actually made that big a difference in the long run. And to the extent that you don't contribute to the needed new consciousness, and instead become the darling of the establishment media by showing how savvy you are at working within the "realistic" confines set by ruling elites, you will actually be an obstacle to what the human race needs, even if in the process you manage to bring America into the modern world by establishing for us the same kind of health care and other benefits for working people and the poor that already exist in the other advanced industrial countries of the world.

Sound like a daunting task? It doesn't have to be if you turn to the American people, articulate this agenda explicitly, and call upon people to organize a social movement for this New Bottom Line and this new way of thinking. There are already tens of millions of people who share this consciousness, but they have no way of recognizing each other and moving together as a political entity. You could provide that for them if you were to use your presidency to urge them to form a unified movement around this goal of articulating and popularizing a new way of thinking.

This is very different from getting people organized to back your particular legislative goals, many of which will necessarily be compromises that do not fully reflect this new way of thinking. If people are organized solely to back those compromised goals, the tendency will be to steer away from ideological clarity and toward the goal

of “supporting Obama’s legislation.” You may win some legislative victories, but you will not have made a lasting difference in American thinking if that is what you use your popularity to achieve.

Instead, you could create a democratic framework in which people are encouraged to champion these larger goals of a New Bottom Line—and even to challenge your legislative compromises in terms of those goals. If you empower people to do that, you will find that they are able to push the public discourse beyond the frame provided by the powerful, and that your own compromises in office will be less distasteful to yourself because your program will have benefited from the political action of Americans who are less “realistic” in the old terms and more utopian, which is to say, closer to the values that you actually hold. Tell people you want such a movement, and then create a time once every few months in which you meet with the elected representatives of such a movement and simply listen to their ideas, including their criticisms of the compromises you have already made as president.

The inside-the-Beltway crowd is positively ecstatic about the way you’ve “reached out” to people who were not part of your campaign originally—to the right-of-center crowd in the Democratic Party and to Republicans and to the old-time Washington establishment. They are overjoyed that all your talk of “change” has produced a cabinet whose most important positions are being filled with people who served with Clinton, Bush, or Reagan, or with the corporate power elite. I’m sure by the time you read this, you will have given a few positions to the Democratic Party’s center-left and the John Podesta crowd, as well. But I’m not asking you to give more voice to the lefties, though you should certainly do that also. Nor am I talking about taking your existing list of millions of volunteers



The inside-the-Beltway crowd is ecstatic about Obama’s proposed security team, which includes George W. Bush’s secretary of defense, Robert Gates (third from left); Hillary Clinton as secretary of state (fifth from left); and Retired Marine General James Jones as national security adviser (sixth from left). Obama introduced the team at this news conference on December 1, 2008, in Chicago. The Times of London headline read “Barack Obama’s security team delights the hawks.”

and turning them into an effective grassroots campaign for your legislation, though you should certainly do that also. I'm talking about creating a space for people to go for a higher set of values and then be able to challenge you on the basis of those values—values that you yourself have assured me and others that you really do hold.

If doing that seems too bold a step at this time, then at least do the following: create a quarterly meeting of two days' duration in which you meet with spiritual progressives who share the vision of a New Bottom Line and who will talk to you about how you could take steps to support that vision. Here, again, the idea could be quickly compromised into shallow meaninglessness, if you repeat what happened at the Democratic National Convention when its "Faith Caucus" devolved into a group of cheerleaders telling each other how wonderful you are and what a great job the Democratic Party is doing. These kinds of "people of faith" may help you win elections, but they won't give you the guidance and challenge you need.

Since you've packed your cabinet with traditional insiders, you actually need a gathering of prophetic figures who are not afraid to talk to you in a language that is both more visionary and more confrontational than the insiders have any inclination to be. Remember the story of the biblical King David, confronted and challenged by the Prophet Nathan after David had gone astray? The key there was that Nathan had enough access to be able to deliver that message. At a historical moment when the media rarely gives voice to those who hold "unrealistic" messages (i.e. messages that do not conform to the current distribution of wealth and power), and when the official Left has accepted a narrow framework that calls for more rights and more entitlements but does not speak about a world of love and generosity, of awe and wonder and radical amazement, of a New Bottom Line and a rejection of materialist conceptions of progress and success, you need to create a space into which the prophetic figures of our time can encounter you and challenge you. To do so would be to make a contribution to American political life that only you can deliver.

President Obama, I trust you and have faith that this is the kind of presidency you would like to have. I base that not only on what you've said to me and what you've said to the Tikkun Community in the past, not only on your writings and on the moving talks you've given to the American people, but also on my own sense of you as a deep and spiritually alive human being. I understand that you think what you have to do is work within existing reality and do as much as you can. What I'm saying is that you can do far more, and still be successful as a president, if you take the path that I've outlined here. Your achievements will last longer and be more significant, and you will have used the gifts God has given you more fully, if you choose this path.

Whichever path you choose, you can count on the Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives to be here as your supporters, providing support through prophetic critique. We will remain the voice of your highest vision. We will call you to be true to the deepest teachings of the spiritual and religious communities that we represent. We will be loyal to you by challenging you and your Administration to be loyal to the vision of love and generosity, peace and social justice, and nonviolence and ecological sanity that has momentarily asserted itself through the democratic process of American society choosing you as president. To the extent that you reflect that voice and that vision, others will step forward to support you and to push you forward. To the extent that you become "more realistic," others will drop away, disappointed and despairing, and cynicism will again prevail. In either case, *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives will keep alive that voice and pray that you hear us and respond. In any event, we celebrate this incredible moment in human history, thankful to the Force of Healing and Transformation in the universe that makes possible the transformation from that which is to that which ought to be. Recognizing the great possibilities that have been opened, and the great responsibilities that we all have to push you, President Obama, toward your own most visionary and hopeful self, we affirm the ancient statement of the Psalms: This is the day that the Transformative Power of the universe has created; we will rejoice and be happy within it.

On behalf of all the *Tikkun* staff, authors, members of the Tikkun Community and Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP), and members of our advisory board and clergy advisory board, and on behalf of the donors who have generously kept us alive these past twenty-three years, we wish you Godspeed and great success as president of the United States. ■

Memo from the Associate Editor

Peter Gabel on How to Avoid Being Co-opted

DEAR BARACK, The outburst of tears, joy, hope, and worldwide celebration that we have all witnessed and been part of in the days following your election is a beautiful expression of what you and we have accomplished at this historical moment—namely, a breaking through of the years of sedimented fear, doubt, and authoritarian control that have separated us from each other and from our most idealistic aspirations for humankind. The integrity and authenticity of your human presence spontaneously called forth a desire in all of us to reciprocate by emerging from decades of doubt-filled isolation and social separation to create a circuit of energy sufficient to ricochet one another into a sweeping electoral majority in support of the possibility of creating a more loving, humane, socially connected, and spiritually elevated world.

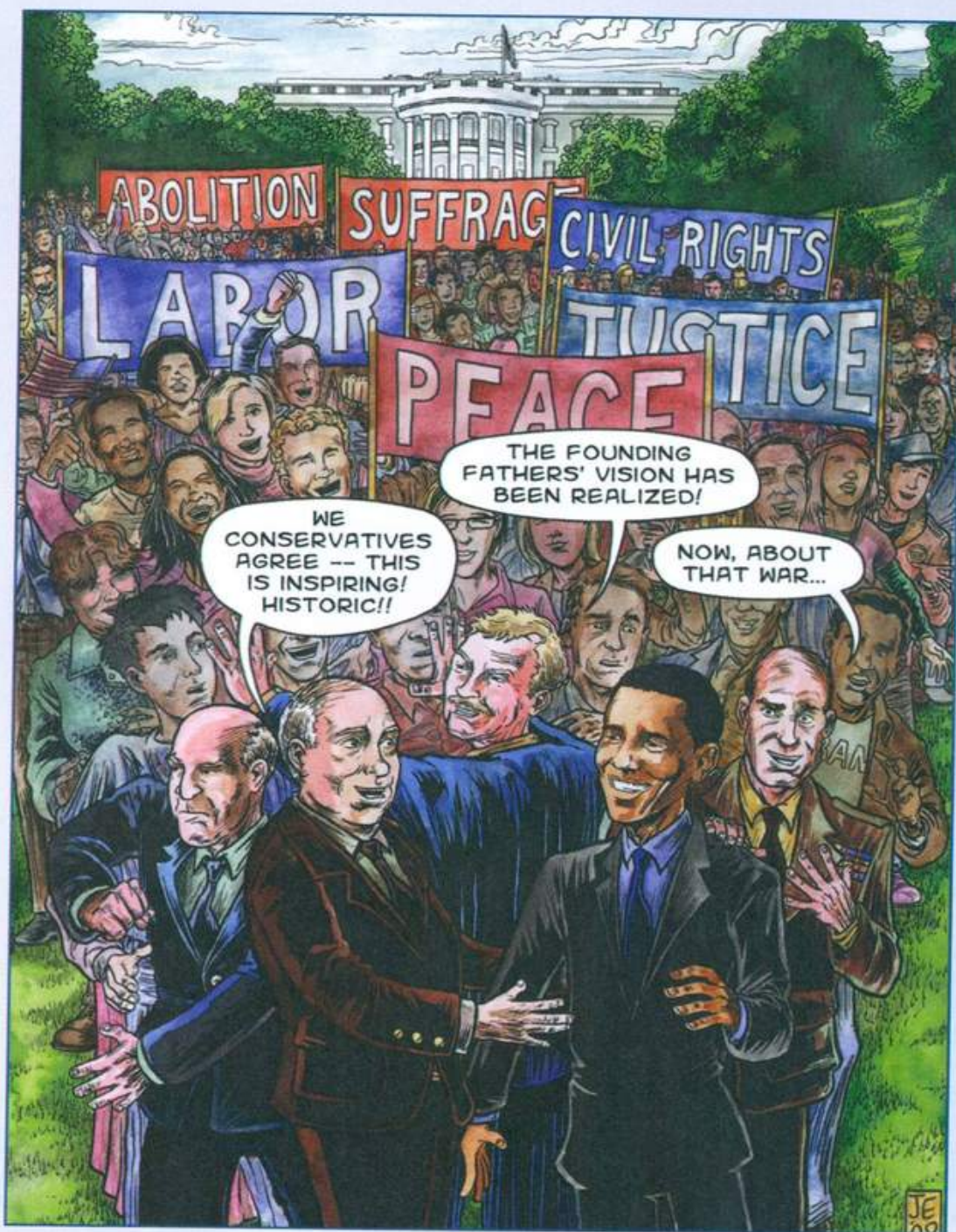
Because you so consistently expressed this elevating possibility through an even-tempered steady confidence, you were able to pierce the veil of media distortions that sought to deflect and falsify your idealistic vision. You did so with enough force to successfully reach all of us out here in our disparate locations, and to touch and mobilize our own longing for a better world. Spurred by a vast circle of affirmation mediated through you, we each became a force vector for each other, leveraging us to volunteer in large numbers to make manifest our own collective presence and lay claim to a new idealistic future.

But watch out! No sooner had we begun to catch our breath following the euphoric moment of seeing “Barack Obama Elected President of the United States” flash across our television screens, than the force of fear, which rotates through our collective consciousness with lightning speed, had begun to take up its fall-back position, seeking to assimilate your victory to the status quo. Its method is to subtly rob that victory of its potentially transformative meaning and replace it with a safe meaning, in order to insure that the socially separated world—the fearful world of detached and withdrawn isolated individuals—does not in fact change.

The ideological technique that the force of fear has begun to adopt to try to assimilate and co-opt (y)our victory is to declare that what happened on November 4 was the demonstration that an African American can now win the presidency of the United States. This casts the meaning of the election as a victory for nondiscrimination, as if what we were all celebrating was merely that anyone can now compete for and win the presidency without regard to race. The corollary of this interpretation will be to test how well you are doing as president by analyzing not how transformative your leadership is but rather how conventional it is—by how well you manage the government, how well you manage foreign affairs, how well you manage the economy, or in other words, by how well you “play the role” of president within a system that is otherwise supposed to go on functioning the same as it ever was. It is in accordance with this very narrow interpretation of the meaning of your victory that so many conservatives (from George Bush, to Condoleezza Rice, to Brent Scowcroft) have hailed November 4 as a historic moment; that CNN asked as its first call-in question to its listeners after the election whether your victory should signal the end of affirmative action; and that so much early coverage of your presidency has addressed such conventional role-based matters as what new styles Michelle will bring to the White House or what kind of puppy you will get for the kids.

While the fact that racial discrimination did not keep you from being elected is of course a very good thing, that fact in itself is not the reason why so many of us cried at the moment of your victory, or why Kenyans spontaneously danced in the streets and declared a national holiday, or why young people all across the country are wanting for the first time to get involved in politics and change the world. The transformative meaning of your election is rather that you are the carrier of the great egalitarian social movements that have preceded you, movements that aspire to a world in which we can recognize each other’s whole humanity and love each other across our racial differences, in which a new ethos of social justice and beloved community can replace the selfish world of individualism and fear of the Other that has led to the proliferation of wars and the death by starvation or malnutrition of 20,000 children per day, and that in some measure consigns us all to a lifetime of spiritual isolation and passive social meaninglessness.

A confluence of forces came together to make your victory possible—from the surprise collapse of the economy that trapped your opponent into identifying with the policies that created the collapse while opening up



The Washington establishment surrounds Obama, cutting him off from the movements that made it possible for him to be elected. In this article, Peter Gabel urges Obama to "resist the attempts to normalize your presidency by putting you on a pedestal of nondiscrimination, isolating you as 'the leader,' and then gradually tearing you down after your absorption into isolation has demobilized your base." Instead Gabel offers four principles to help Obama strengthen his base and deepen the meaning of his presidency:

- Define "change" as seeking connection and affirmation, rather than individuality and competition.
- Frame specific policy proposals in a spiritually deep and elevating way, emphasizing our highest ideals.
- Demonstrate idealism and vision in public appearances by including spiritual and labor leaders as well as policy wonks.
- Maintain grounded meditative leadership, showing that we can sustain our idealism as a community, evenly and confidently, over time.

a new space for you as the youthful and spirited agent positioned to change these policies, to the weakening, after three decades, of the reaction against the sixties that had fueled the rise of the new Right's traditional God/family/country-based worldview and rendered unsupportable liberal openness, compassion for the other, and the very existence of a public sphere animated by a moral vision for a more just and connected world. This confluence created the political conditions for you to grab on tight to your own hope and idealism—expressive of the social movements that preceded and helped shape you—and to then “thread the eye of the needle” on election day by successfully carrying forward your own grounded ethical presence right through the web of false statements, doubt-mongering, and potentially compelling false images of who you actually are that were deployed in the effort to use the inertia of the long conservative hegemony to derail and undermine the expansive life force that was your momentum.

My message to you is this: resist the attempts to normalize your presidency by putting you on a pedestal of nondiscrimination, isolating you as “the leader,” and then gradually tearing you down after your absorption into isolation has demobilized your base. Instead, follow these four principles to help strengthen your base and deepen the meaning of your presidency:

1. Recognize that your election represents a collective effort to transcend selfishness and individualism. Take every opportunity to give voice to what you have already called “this new defining moment” as a moment of love and care for one another. Reject the Republicans’ “ownership society,” which you have already made fun of as meaning “you’re on your own,” and make clear your own conviction that “we’re in it together.” Express the meaning of your decisions and policy commitments in exactly these idealistic terms. Even more, indicate that this turn toward each other represents an evolutionary moment in American history, away from the exclusive preoccupation with individual rights that characterized the beginning of the republic and toward a new ethos of empathy, compassion, and connection between self and other.

The brilliance of your early speeches after your initial victories in the primaries was precisely that they linked the meaning of your campaign to the upsurge of social concern that was manifested in the abolitionist movement and then as an upward tendency in all the great social movements throughout American history—upward movements which taken as a whole have produced you yourself as an ethical manifestation



of their aspirations and convictions. Now that you have won, give voice to this higher meaning by explicitly linking what you do in our name to going beyond individualism toward community.

2. In order to make manifest this idealism and upward movement in the context of specific issues, always give expression to the spiritually deep intention and purpose of each specific policy proposal. For example:
 - When advocating for Social Security, make it clear that you are standing up for one of history's greatest manifestations of intergenerational care and concern, rather than letting yourself be pulled into "how will we fund it" debates that fail to evoke its high moral purpose.
 - When explaining the selection of new Supreme Court justices, make it clear in what way the person you have appointed is a practitioner of justice concerned with the well-being of all of us as embodiments of a common humanity. Choose an appointee who will interpret the law in accordance with the wisdom, compassion, and social concern expressive of the moral bond that unites us.
 - When recommending new legislation to pull the economy out of its current crisis, make it clear how the reforms you propose represent a new governmental ethos that understands "we the people" as a mutually supportive community, rather than as a scattered collection of self-interested, competitive individuals.
 - When advocating for educational reforms, indicate how these reforms will advance the spiritual and moral well-being of the next generation as caring and compassionate citizens, rather than simply allowing education to be defined as the mastery of skills needed to compete in the world economy.
 - When proposing environmental reforms like limiting carbon emissions or defending the Alaskan wilderness, give voice to the sacredness of the earth and the beauty of the natural world and our stewardship of it for future generations, rather than simply referring to the importance of reversing global warming as scientific phenomenon.
3. When appearing in public at news conferences or in giving speeches, pay attention to the symbolic elements in your self-representation by consciously signaling your continuing commitment to idealistic and transcendent meanings. For example, when giving a news conference on the economy, don't only have financial experts like the Secretary of the Treasury or the head of the Federal Reserve present with you on the stage—also have representatives of labor, the environment, and the community as a whole to signal that interventions you will support will be taking account of our collective human and ecological well-being ... and that care for the Other remains at the center of your consciousness, no matter how apparently "technical" a proposed intervention (like a "bailout" or a stimulus package) may appear.
4. Maintain the meditative quality that has been perhaps the most distinctive aspect of your public presence throughout your campaign. Captured in the slogan "no drama with Obama," this quality of remaining underneath the hype of the moment has been immensely significant in transmitting to us the confidence that you are actually here with us on the planet rather than being elevated into an artificial, puffed-up, narcissistic role that customarily captures politicians and removes them from the realm of the real. By retaining this meditative presence, or groundedness, you convey that we really do exist as a "we," and that the publicity enveloping you has not stolen you from the realm of authentic being and the spontaneous social concern that authentic being inherently carries within it. The more successful you are at retaining this authenticity, the less successful will be the attempts to separate and pedestalize you as The President and to isolate you from the authentic community of hope that actually elected you.

I sincerely believe that if you follow these four principles and think through all your actions with them in mind, your efforts will be successful no matter what events and circumstances befall you. I believe this because at the deepest level your task is to build upon the communal confidence, love, and hope that has elected you. What you actually are is the unity of this confidence as it rises up to throw off the fear of the Other that has been inherited from prior generations—or more precisely you are the democratically elected leader of this confidence. And you and we together are its unity as it tries to rise up and throw off the fear of the Other that has thus far undermined its full manifestation. Half the responsibility for that future embodiment of love is yours and the other half is ours, is mine. I hope we are beginning a new chapter in seeking to move each other toward that good end. ■

Peter Gabel is the director of the Institute for Spirituality and Politics, as well as associate editor of Tikkun.

Memos in Alphabetical Order

Rebecca Adams on a Psychological New Deal

THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE FOR THE WORLD ALREADY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR brave and beautiful words, which, like all the best poetry or preaching, have revitalized our formerly despairing and paralyzed political hearts. Thank you—it is wonderful to be waking up and to begin to believe again that *we can*.

Washington and Perth, Australia, are geographically far apart. But every day since I discovered your speeches and books a few years ago, you have been very near, in my psychiatric consulting office, as I'm sure you've been to millions of other non-Americans who love America.

We love America for her energy, her creativity, her yet-unrealized possibilities, her contradictions and complexity. We love America for the dreams of equality and justice and happiness in the United States Constitution, and the glorious cacophonous jazz of American culture, improvising into the future. We far-flung lovers of America have been heartsore during the past eight years, impotent in our pain and rage as the neoconservative cabal set about to systematically destroy so much of American politics and

society that is inspirational, decent, and compassionate. And then you came along and spoke to us all about renewing hope in our own action, in our own ability to re-make the world.

I'm sure you will understand that if I address you as psychotherapist-in-chief to the world, it is not at all belittling; psychological and political maturity require each other. There is a body politic, and that body has a mind—a mind and a heart and a spirit that need healing. I know you know that if you can help move America and the world toward creating more peace and justice, toward ecological sanity and reducing poverty, there will be less psychological pain—less madness and rage and despair in all of us. Your version of the political narrative is psychotherapy on a grand scale; and it is also the continuation of the ancient work of the prophets, of sages, and of spiritual leaders, some of them not long gone.

Please keep speaking to us of

our better angels. Remind us, again and again, as you have done in all your speeches—and as all good therapists do—that we ourselves contain untapped potential and creativity, that *we the people* can collectively change reality. That we can be actors again in our own lives, not merely passively suffering in social, economic, and political situations that we are taught are the unchangeable structure of reality, but are actually formations to keep power and wealth in the hands of the few. The people who have flocked to your rallies have been deeply nourished by your reminding them that this political campaign is *their* hope,



Crowds in Australia celebrate Obama's victory.

creativity, and courage made manifest, as well as yours. For decades, passivity and cynicism have acted as psychological defenses to protect us from the political responsibility that belongs to us, and from the pain of anticipated defeat. We will need to be reminded to be politically active over and over again, because for so long the idea of collective action has been made to seem naïve and idealistic foolishness. Tell us to be idealistic, and to live those ideals.

But don't allow us to make you a messiah or a father. You have resisted that valiantly so far, but there is a primal longing in us all to find in you the infinitely wise parent to whom we can look to simplify this difficult world, and to take the often-painful struggle to exercise responsibility away from us. We all have dreams of a father who will save us, even as we know somewhere in our hearts that we have to do it for ourselves. (You did, and I salute you for those inner battles and triumphs.) Yes, let us talk to you, let us feel listened to and understood. Yes, lead us toward where you hear the beating wings of our best angels, but don't let us do violence to ourselves and to your humanity by seeking in you a savior.

What has been perhaps the most deeply healing about your presence in the political and psychological world so far is your insistence that we can do it—that we can change, individually and collectively. You have given us back some of our power. Somehow you have shown Americans that collectively they are more powerful than they imagined. The energy released from this psychological New Deal will be powerful, wonderful, and yet messy—but alive and full of new expressions of the deepest and most noble aspirations of the human spirit. You have revitalized democracy. But don't let us off the hook for a second. Americans and the people of the entire world have much work to do to change the world—using the energies you have liberated in our hearts and minds by your audacious hopes. ■

Rebecca Adams is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist working in Perth, Australia.

Uri Avnery on How to Create Israeli-Palestinian Peace

THE FOLLOWING HUMBLE SUGGESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ARE BASED ON MY SEVENTY years of experience as an underground fighter, Special Forces soldier in the 1948 war, editor-in-chief of a newsmagazine, member of the Knesset, and founding member of a peace movement:

1. As far as Israeli-Arab peace is concerned, you should act from *Day One*.
2. Israeli elections are due to take place in February 2009. You can have an indirect but important and constructive impact on the outcome by announcing your unequivocal determination to achieve Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Syrian, and Israeli-all-Arab peace in 2009.
3. Unfortunately, *all your predecessors since 1967 have played a double game*. While paying lip service to peace, and sometimes going through the motions of making some effort for peace, they have in practice supported our governments in moving in the very opposite direction. In particular, they have given tacit approval to the building and enlargement of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories, each of which is a land mine on the road to peace.
4. *All the settlements are illegal* under international law. The distinction sometimes made between “illegal” outposts and the other settlements is a propaganda ploy designed to obscure this simple truth.
5. All the settlements since 1967 have been built with the express purpose of making a Palestinian state—and hence peace—impossible by cutting the territory of the prospective State of Palestine into ribbons. Practically all our government departments and the army have openly or secretly helped to build, consolidate, and enlarge the settlements—as confirmed by the 2005 report prepared for the government by lawyer Talia Sasson.
6. By now, the number of settlers in the West Bank has reached some 250,000 (apart from the 200,000 settlers in the Greater Jerusalem area, whose status is somewhat different). They are politically isolated and sometimes detested by the majority of the Israeli public, but they enjoy significant support in the army and government ministries.



Israeli left-wing activist Amit Leshem, center, argues with Israeli soldiers while trying with others to stage a protest against the Jewish settlers and Israeli military presence in several Jewish enclaves in the West Bank town of Hebron.

fore imperative to prevent members of these administrations from diverting your Middle Eastern policy into the old channels.

10. It is important for you to make a *complete new start*, and to state this publicly. Discredited ideas and failed initiatives—such as the Bush “vision,” the Road Map, Annapolis, and the like—should be thrown into the junkyard of history.
11. To make a new start, the aim of American policy should be stated clearly and succinctly: the United States should aim to achieve a peace based on the two-state solution within a defined time span (say by the end of 2009).
12. It should be pointed out that this aim is based on a reassessment of the American national interest, in order to extract the poison from American-Arab and American-Muslim relations, strengthen peace-oriented regimes, defeat al Qaeda-type terrorism, end the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and achieve a viable accommodation with Iran.
13. *The terms of Israeli-Palestinian peace are clear.* They have been crystallized in thousands of hours of negotiations, conferences, meetings, and conversations. Here are the terms:
 - A sovereign and viable State of Palestine will be established side-by-side with the State of Israel.
 - The border between the two states will be based on the pre-1967 Armistice Line (the “Green Line”). Insubstantial alterations can be arrived at by mutual agreement on an exchange of territories on a 1:1 basis.
 - East Jerusalem, including the Haram-al-Sharif (“Temple Mount”) and all Arab neighborhoods, will serve as the capital of Palestine. West Jerusalem, including the Western Wall and all Jewish neighborhoods, will serve as the capital of Israel. A joint municipal authority, based on equality, may be established by mutual consent to administer the city as one territorial unit.
 - All Israeli settlements—except any which might be joined to Israel in the framework of a mutually agreed-upon exchange of territories—will be evacuated (see my fifteenth suggestion on page 31).

7. No Israeli government would dare to confront the concentrated political and material might of the settlers. Such a confrontation would need very strong leadership and the unstinting support of the president of the United States to have any chance of success.

8. *Without this support, all “peace negotiations” are a sham.* The Israeli government and its United States backers have done everything possible to prevent the negotiations with both the Palestinians and the Syrians from reaching any conclusion, for fear of provoking a confrontation with the settlers and their supporters. The present Annapolis negotiations are as hollow as all the preceding ones, each side keeping up the pretense for its own political interests.

9. The Clinton administration, and even more so the Bush administration, allowed the Israeli government to keep up this pretense. *It is there-*

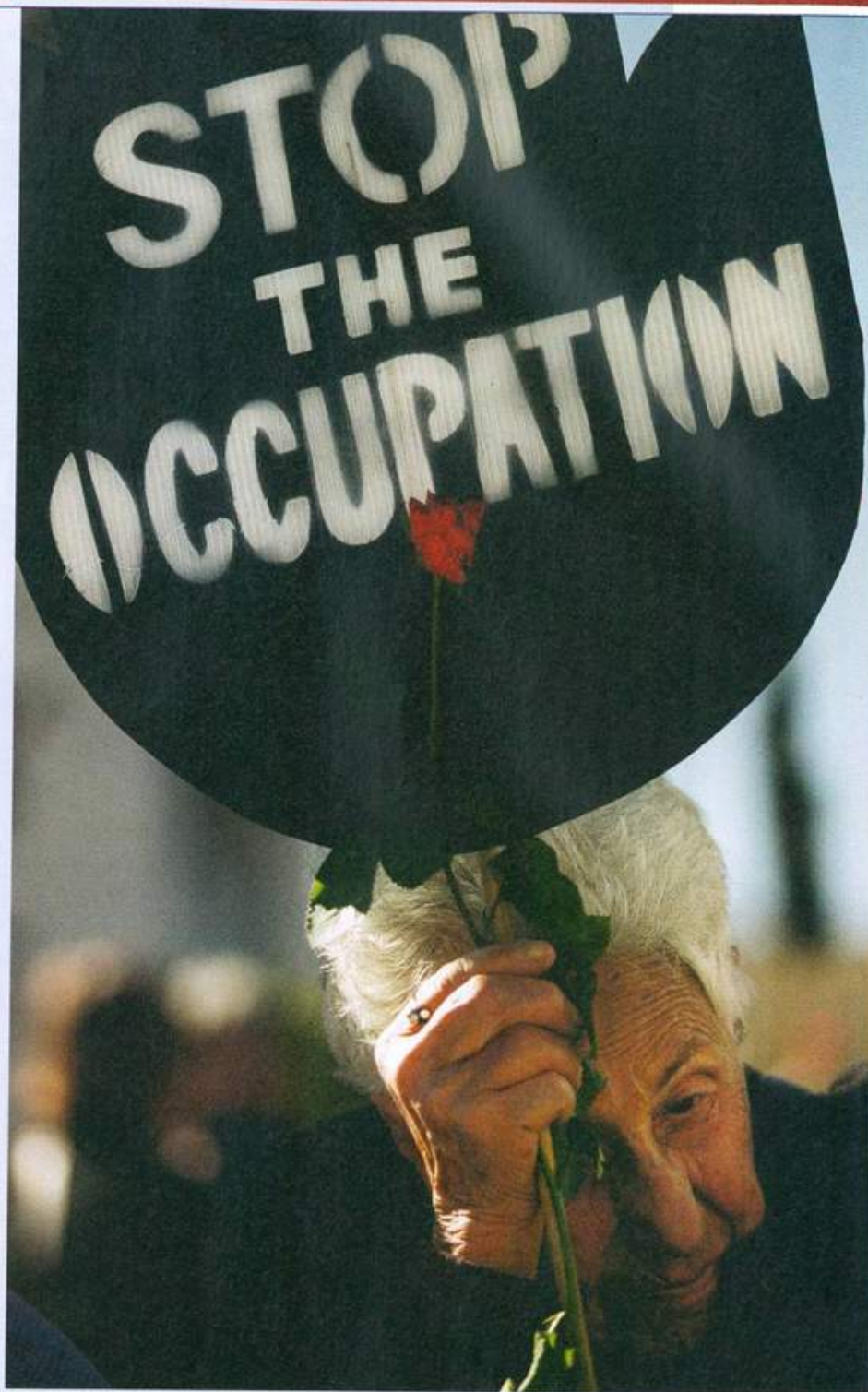
- Israel will recognize in principle the right of the refugees to return. A Joint Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, composed of Palestinian, Israeli, and international historians, will examine the events of 1948 and 1967 and determine who was responsible for what. Each individual refugee will be given the choice between (1) repatriation to the State of Palestine, (2) remaining where he or she is living now and receiving generous compensation, (3) returning to Israel and being resettled, (4) emigrating to any other country, with generous compensation. The number of refugees who will return to Israeli territory will be set by mutual agreement, it being understood that nothing will be done that materially alters the demographic composition of the Israeli population. The large funds needed for the implementation of this solution must be provided by the international community in the interest of world peace. This will save much of the money spent today on military expenditure and direct grants from the United States.

- The West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip *constitute one national unit*. An extraterritorial connection (road, railway, tunnel, or bridge) will connect the West Bank with the Gaza Strip.

- Israel and Syria will sign a peace agreement. Israel will withdraw to the pre-1967 line and all settlements on the Golan Heights will be dismantled. Syria will cease all anti-Israeli activities conducted directly or by proxy. The two parties will establish normal relations between them.

- In accordance with the Saudi Peace Initiative, all member states of the Arab League will recognize Israel and establish normal relations with it. Talks about a future Middle Eastern Union, on the model of the EU, possibly to include Turkey and Iran, may be considered.

14. Palestinian unity is essential for peace. Peace made with only one section of the people is worthless. The United States will facilitate Palestinian reconciliation and the unification of Palestinian structures. To this end, the United States will end its boycott of Hamas, which won the last elections, start a political dialogue with the movement, and encourage Israel to do the same. The United States will respect any result of democratic Palestinian elections.



15. The United States will aid the government of Israel in confronting the settlement problem. As from now, settlers will be given one year to leave the occupied territories voluntarily in return for compensation that will allow them to build their homes in Israel proper. After that, all settlements—except those within any areas to be joined to Israel under the peace agreement—will be evacuated.
16. I suggest that you, as president of the United States, come to Israel and address the Israeli people personally, not only from the rostrum of the Knesset but also at a mass rally in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt came to Israel in 1977, and, by addressing the Israeli people directly, completely changed their attitude toward peace with Egypt. At present, most Israelis feel insecure, uncertain, and afraid of any daring peace initiative, partly because of a deep distrust of anything coming from the Arab side. Your personal intervention, at the critical moment, could literally do wonders in creating the psychological basis for peace. ■

Uri Avnery is chair of Gush Shalom, the pre-eminent peace activist organization in Israel.

Peter Barnes on How to Solve the Climate Crisis

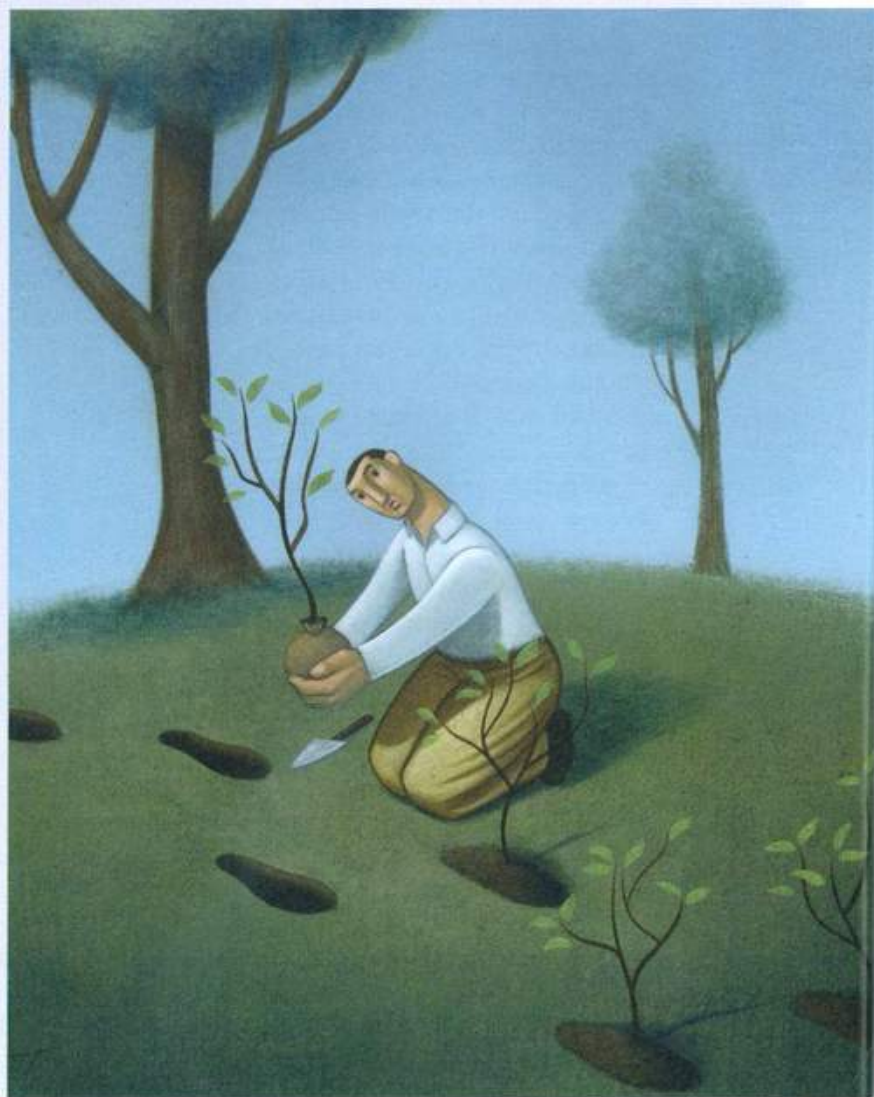
IN 1934, PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT ASKED HIS LABOR SECRETARY, FRANCES PERKINS, TO DRAFT A plan to sustain Americans in old age. "Keep it simple," he told her, "so simple everybody will understand it." The Social Security Act adopted a year later created a brilliant old-age pension system that has kept millions out of poverty and—because of its simplicity, fairness, and universality—withstood every attempt to scuttle it.

In 2009, you must do the same for climate change. You must create a simple, transformative, and unsinkable climate protection system that, over thirty to forty years, squeezes carbon out of our economy and replaces it with clean alternatives.

The essence of such a system isn't complicated. In your campaign, you pledged to install a descending cap on carbon emissions with a goal of 80 percent reductions by 2050. Unlike John McCain, you insisted that polluters pay for all the permits they'll be required to obtain. And you said most of the money that polluters pay should be returned to families to offset the inevitable increase in energy prices.

Those are exactly the right core principles: cap carbon, make polluters pay, and return the money to the people. But here are the fine points that will ensure your climate system is as effective, popular, and enduring as Social Security:

- Cap carbon upstream as it enters the economy, not downstream as it escapes from millions of pipes.



That will assure that the cap actually works.

- Return *all* the polluters' payments equally and automatically to everyone. That way the system will be transparent, and special interests won't game it.
- Return the polluters' money monthly, not annually, because people have monthly bills to pay. To keep administrative costs down, wire these "climate dividends" electronically to people's bank accounts or debit cards.
- Tax the monthly dividends at ordinary rates, just as Social Security benefits are taxed. Rich folks will pay at the highest rate, while poor folks won't pay at all. The government will then get a share of the polluters' money that it can use for clean energy programs. But the people will get their share first.

Yes, Americans will scream when energy prices go up, and there will be frenzied cries of "drill, baby, drill!" But by returning polluters' money equally to everyone, your carbon capping system will retain public support for its duration.

In addition to solving the climate crisis, the cap and dividend system will protect household buying power during (and beyond) the recession, as well as rebut any charges that you're raising taxes. More importantly, *it fits your vision of how government should work*. It's simple, market-friendly, and pro-middle class. And by treating all Americans as co-owners of the air, it unites us for the common good.

"Cap and dividend" is good politics, good economics, and essential for healing the planet. If you enact it, it will be a signature achievement and remain as memorably linked to you as Social Security is to Roosevelt. ■

Peter Barnes is an entrepreneur and writer who has founded and run several successful businesses. His books include Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons and Climate Solutions: A Citizen's Guide.

Zygmunt Bauman on Breaking Our Addiction to Credit

WE IN EUROPE LOVE AMERICA AND ALL IT HAS STOOD FOR THROUGH MOST OF OUR HISTORY, and that is why we suffered watching helplessly as your predecessor, with the support and occasional applause of his electors, trampled on almost everything that America embodied and for which we loved and respected it so deeply. Nothing hurts more than iniquity and disingenuousness in a good friend. And when the friend happens to be also a most respected authority, example, and guide, his wickedness also confuses and frightens. If we could have voted, we in Europe would have given you a landslide victory because we believe that you will restore to America the trust, moral authority, and planet-wide authority that your predecessor recklessly squandered.

I would raise with you just one problem, selected because of the danger that it may sink and drown in the flood of advice you receive from your country and the world at large. This concerns the frequently overlooked, or played down, root of the worldwide economic crisis in which, alas, America was as much culprit as victim.

The reaction to the "credit crunch" so far, impressive and even revolutionary as it may appear as it is processed in the media headlines and through politicians' sound-bites, has been an effort or promise to return to the status quo ante: an effort to *recapitalize the money lenders and to make their debtors credit-worthy once more*, so the business of lending and borrowing, of falling in debt and staying there, could return to "usual," and the economy be made to run again on consumers' willingness to spend money they haven't earned. It is with that purpose in mind that "the welfare state for the rich" (which unlike its name-sake for the poor has never had its rationality questioned, let alone put out of operation) has been brought back to the showrooms from the service quarters to which its offices were temporarily relegated to avoid invidious comparisons.

What is joyously (and foolishly) forgotten on such occasions is that the nature of human suffering is determined by the way humans live. Indeed, the roots of the currently lamented pains, like the roots of all social evils, are sunk deep in our trained mode of life and in our carefully cultivated and by now deeply seated habit of running for consumer credit whenever there is a problem to face, or difficulty to bypass. In



Obama may be more popular in Europe than he is in the United States. Tens of thousands of Germans expressed their enthusiasm for Obama at the Victory Column in Berlin, July 24, 2008.

that human weakness, the banks spotted a chance to *transform debts into permanent money-earning assets*. So, breaking with the philosophy of the old-style money lenders, they moved to treat prompt repayment of credits as a liability, not an asset—unless more and larger debts were incurred for that purpose. Clients with no debts to pay interest on augur no profits. In unison with the now departing administration, banks reckoned that—like other drugs meant to provide temporary escape from troublesome realities—life on credit is addictive to all its victims: to governments and to the men and women they govern. In line with the strategy that led to the present catastrophe, the bankers and their cronies proposed the apparently easy way out of the shock that afflicted both the drug addicts and the drug pushers once the supply of drugs ran thin: resumption of the (hopefully regular) supply of drugs from other sources and by other means.

We have not started as yet to give serious thought to the sustainability of our consumption-and-credit-propelled society. “Return to normality” portends return to bad, and always potentially dangerous, ways. Intention to do so worries: it signals that neither the people who run the financial institutions,

nor our governments, have reached to the roots of the trouble in their diagnoses—let alone in their deeds. Quoting Hector Sants, the head of the Finances Services Authority, who a few days ago confessed to “business models ill-equipped to survive the stress ... a fact that we regret,” Simon Jenkins, a uniquely insightful analyst of *The Guardian*, observed, “It was like a pilot protesting that his plane was flying just fine except for the engines.” But Jenkins does not lose hope: he still reckons that once the culture of “greed is good” has been “tested to destruction by the recent hysteria of city incomes,” the “noneconomic components of what we vaguely refer to as the good life will take more prominence,” both in our life philosophy and our governments’ political strategy. Let us hope with him: we haven’t yet reached the point of no return, there is still time (however short) to reflect and change the track, we may yet turn the present shock and trauma to our and our children’s advantage ...

Which I wish you with all my heart, Mr. President, to succeed in doing. God bless you—and through you all the rest of us, the residents of the planet we share. ■

Zygmunt Bauman is emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Leeds. His latest publications are Has Ethics a Chance in the World of Consumers? (Harvard University Press 2008) and The Art of Life (Polity Press 2008).

Michael Beckwith: Be Strong in Your Humility

YOUR ELECTION REPRESENTS A PARADIGM SHIFT SOME SAID WAS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN YOUR campaign began. But the fact that America has elected an African American candidate with a Semitic name represents the next stage of human evolution. For as Dr. Howard Thurman said, it is impossible to love humanity in general; it is only possible to love humanity in particular. And for the next four to eight years, Americans will be introduced to an African American family that will shatter the media’s stereotypes of black people. This is indeed a powerful moment in history, not just for Americans, but for the entire world.

In addition to informing readers that you, like Abraham Lincoln, are a genius at stagecraft and write your own speeches, the November 24 issue of *Newsweek* drew attention to a rare quality you also share with Lincoln: humility.

It is this humility that is the most trustworthy informant to your decision-making and subsequent actions. An attitude of humility is a powerful disarmament that neutralizes past grievances, that graces dialogue with the energy of possibilities, that grants space for negotiation to emerge. It is impossible for any world leader to ignore the political potency of a Gandhi, a King, a Mandela, a Chavez, a Tutu—all of whom were guided by the strength of their humility, which eventually disarmed their seeming enemies. As we read in Proverbs 15:33, “humility goes before honor.” To that I would add that humility goes before the attitudes of arrogance that have been attributed to our nation’s leaders of late.

Your self-revealing books and speeches show that you realize that you are not only here to serve a particular nation—you are also here to serve an emerging paradigm of unity, a worldview of global citizenry. At no other time in history has the world been more prepared to embrace such a notion. The insular, myopic view of the past has proven that the slogan “America, right or wrong!” does not serve us or our global family.

Within your term of presidency, you have the opportunity to shift the image of America and Americans to one of wisdom, compassion, and generosity, to heal some of the world’s wounds which we have caused. Isn’t it time we proffered the hand of apology to the Iraqi people for the senseless loss of their loved ones? And perhaps an apology should be offered to all of the countries in which our CIA was instrumental in destroying democratically elected leaders and thus fomenting some of the hatred that is being aimed at us from around the world. I realize that we must have the capacity to defend ourselves from those who consider us their enemy. However, America has been known for its tremendous military might, and now is the time for us to be known for our humanitarian commitment.

As I write this letter, news about the auto industry bailout is flooding the airwaves. It is good when the light of truth is shone on hypocrisy. You have inherited a mandate to move in the direction of green-powered energy sources and fulfill the goals initiated by Jimmy Carter during his presidency. The auto industry may be an ideal place to begin. After all, it was the auto industry that killed the electric car. Some

American car manufacturers build cars in other countries with higher fuel efficiency, while their American counterparts are gas guzzlers. If there is a financial bailout for the Big Three, it is reasonable that they should restructure and provide Americans with fuel-efficient vehicles, and that the people should be given equity in the bailout so that it is not simply a handout, a reverse reward for poor organizational leadership and no social conscience.

Perhaps a portion of the taxes that you want to impose upon the oil companies can be used to assist the auto industry restructure, since those oil firms have been the beneficiaries of this gas-guzzling mentality for a long time. A real shake-up, however, would require more than restructuring, which is a cosmetic approach, or the creation of green jobs: it would require us to realize that because Wall Street, our financial institutions, and the auto industry are so obviously broken, a new system may finally emerge. (We wouldn't bail out the typewriter industry and prevent the emergence of the computer, would we?) Now is the time for what Van Jones described in his book as a "green-collar economy."

You have said that you want to use American resources to track down bin Laden. It is my considered opinion that our resources could instead be allocated to create a world in which everyone—including Americans—have access to food, clean water, education, and health care, for as the Rand Institute's recent research revealed, there is no military solution to terrorism and, when individuals have their fundamental needs provided for, the climate of terrorism is diminished.

Evidence of your impact was clearly exhibited on television news when the faces of people at all socioeconomic levels throughout the world were lighted with expressions of hope while symbolically holding your photo. Of course this also carries with it a tremendous responsibility, and I want you to know that you are both humanly and divinely supported, guided, guarded, and protected. I bless you, your dear family, and all that concerns you.

Peace and blessings. ■

Michael Bernard Beckwith is the founder and spiritual director of the Agape International Spiritual Center and author of Spiritual Liberation: Fulfilling Your Soul's Potential. He has appeared on Larry King Live and the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Bradley Burston on Prospects for Israeli-Arab Peace

SOON YOU WILL TAKE THE MEASURE OF THE NEW PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL. YOU WILL SURELY HEAR how the premier views the present and the future. But what you will need to know, at bottom, is how the new leader of Israel looks at history and specifically his or her place in it.

You will know. If, when you meet the new premier, you do not sense an all-consuming fire in the gut, a willingness to give everything—literally, if need be, life itself—to the cause of peacemaking and a shift in the very core of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, you will know that the supremely hazardous steps vital for a true peace will not be taken during the term of this premiership.

It is this fire of prophecy—the compulsion to bend (in fact, to render straight) the course of history—that transformed Menachem Begin, Anwar Sadat, Ariel Sharon, and Yitzhak Rabin, all of whom were once viewed as implacable hawks and immutable hardliners. In each case, the personal price of changing a worldview for the sake of peace was horrible. But, in each case, they willingly and with sweeping leadership took on the mission, along with the risk.

Oddly, the crucial question is not whether it will be Tzipi Livni or Benjamin Netanyahu, Kadima or Likud. The Likud Party, founded on the right-wing revisionist principles on which both Netanyahu and Livni were raised from infancy, has been home to the most dramatic, the most unforeseen transformations in Israeli political history. It remains the only party to have uprooted established settlements (scores of them) in Sinai, Gaza, and the West Bank. Having once ruled out any concessions of land for peace, it is Likud alone that has pulled Israel out of more than 90 percent of the land captured in the 1967 war.

This is not to suggest that either Israelis or Palestinians still believe in the straightforward equation of land for peace. The heritage of the 2005 disengagement for Gaza is a sad one. Israelis have come to sense that

if they cede land, they will be rewarded by rocket attacks. Palestinians have come to conclude that even if Israel pulls settlements and troops from occupied land, the travails of occupation will not abate.

At the same time, upheavals over the last decade, while setting back peace efforts in the short run, have also broken down long-established impediments to peace moves and may pave the way to a future solution.

Intifada, the disengagement, the Hamas-Fatah street civil war, and the death of Yasir Arafat have all contributed to a profound realignment of the political structure both in Israel and the Palestinian territories. The challenge of your administration is to look at both sides with fresh eyes; to avoid the inevitable sinkholes; to seize and expand on unforeseen events as new openings; and to recognize when a particular conjunction of cynical pragmatism, out-of-the-box imagination and determined leadership can be leveraged into progress toward a solution.

Israelis and Palestinians will be closely monitoring your work toward resolving the wars in Iran and Afghanistan, managing the confrontation with Tehran, and defining relations with Damascus.

You will know soon enough if Israel's new leader has the stuff to value a place in history over position in opinion polls. If the answer is yes, your administration will have resources unavailable to your predecessors.

Thanks to the flawed but nonetheless astonishing precedent of the disengagement, and to George W. Bush's explicit endorsement of two states for two peoples, there is bipartisan support for the core concepts of a future peace deal based on the removal of settlers to Green Line-hugging settlement blocs and exchange of territory.

In the wake of the failure of terrorism and rocket attacks, and widespread Palestinian horror at the excesses of Hamas fighters in their 2006 campaign to oust Fatah from Gaza, recent polls have shown new openness by Palestinians to accommodation with Israel. Hamas, as well, has inched toward support for an arrangement that could allow it to accept a Palestine along 1967 borders.

Israel, meanwhile, has said officially that it was prepared to treat seriously—albeit with alterations—the Arab League initiative for a comprehensive peace based on full recognition of Israel in return for a full withdrawal to pre-1967 war borders.

One more thing.



Israelis hold signs referring to U.S. President Barack Obama during a memorial rally marking the 13th anniversary of the assassination of late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in Rabin's square in Tel Aviv, Israel, Saturday, November 8, 2008.

As a calamitous decade in Mideast peacemaking comes to an end, it remains the case that most people on both sides still favor peace, though few on either side still believe in it.

Speak to them. Speak to them directly. Rely less on White House formalities and airport ceremonies and the entire shopworn summer stock repertoire of visits here and there.

You've shown you know how to run a campaign. Run one here in the Middle East. By satellite, by cable, online. Speak to people in their homes. Bring them a message of real hope.

They'll listen to you. Both sides.

They want to hear what you have to say. ■

Bradley Burston is a columnist for Haaretz newspaper and Senior Editor of Haaretz.com. He is a recipient of the Eliav-Sartawi Award for Mideast Journalism, presented at the United Nations in 2006.

Tony Campolo on Fighting Poverty and Welcoming Immigrants

DURING THESE HARD TIMES, WE AMERICANS ARE TEMPTED TO THINK ONLY OF OUR OWN economic interests and to lay aside concerns for people in the Third World. But we are all well aware that the troubles our people are enduring are not to be compared with the sufferings of people in the poorest countries of the world. We Americans must remember that ours is still the richest country on the face of the earth, and that the Bible declares that from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded (Luke 12:48).

Only four-tenths of 1 percent of our federal budget is presently allotted to address the poverty needs of the poorest nations, and you know that America should be doing better than that. As part of the ONE Campaign, designed to *make poverty history*, there has been a plea for our country to double its fiscal commitment to this end. We ought to be following the examples set by Australia and the United Kingdom by doubling what we give to the poor of the world. A spiritually generated sense of obligation to the poor lies in the hearts and minds of all Americans, whether they are religious or secular humanists. In responding to the cries for help from those whom Jesus called "the least of these," you will be challenging all Americans to give expression to their noblest qualities.

Helping the poorer nations of the world is not only a spiritual calling; it is also in our own self-interest. As an expression of the pragmatism that you have said will be a hallmark of your administration, you can help all of us to realize that our security as a nation is more dependent on the friends we make than on the armies we deploy.

Another concern that warrants your attention is what to do about illegal immigrants. There are legitimate concerns voiced by those who want to prevent criminals, drug pushers, and terrorists from sneaking into the United States, and who are calling for a "high wall" to keep them out of our country. *But I believe that a high wall should have a wide gate.* Ours should be a nation that more readily receives those who want to share in the American dream. When it takes up to two years for immigrants to secure the green card so essential for gaining legal employment, poor people, who lack the means to sustain themselves and their families that long, give up on waiting. It's no wonder that they come across our borders illegally. We should make it possible to secure green cards as soon as background checks have been made on those who want to be good neighbors and fellow workers.

As for the 12 million illegal immigrants who are already here, you should consider requiring them to immediately register. Because they are lawbreakers, they should be required to pay a significant fine. They should also pay back taxes with interest, if any are due on their past earnings (many people don't know that two-thirds of undocumented immigrants already pay their Medicare, Social Security, and personal income taxes). However, instead of paying all at once, arrangements should be made for them to have an additional 8 percent of their annual income deducted as they pay their federal income tax. For the majority of them, this would not prove to be an additional hardship since so many of them presently are working below the



Mireya Leal shares a picnic lunch through the U.S.-Mexico border fence with her husband Raymundo Orozco on October 28, 2006. This section is the western end of a 14-mile primary wall separating Tijuana from San Diego and runs through the beach before ending in the Pacific Ocean. The couple, who have been married for six years, have been meeting every weekend for seven months, while they are working on immigration papers. Neither can currently cross the border.

minimum wage: being legal would likely lead to a significant increase in their incomes because minimum wage standards would then apply to them.

As a Christian man yourself, surely you remember that Jesus taught us to treat aliens as sacred (Matthew 25:34-40) and that when celebrating the Passover as part of His Jewish heritage, He was regularly reminded to be kind to aliens. His people had once been aliens in a strange and distant land.

Finally, I want to remind you that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters regularly suffer from the denial of basic rights that the rest of us enjoy. Do not be intimidated by the Religious Right, and do not go along with those in your own African American community who would deny gays and lesbians equality under the law that they have fought so hard to gain for themselves.

The expectations for your presidency are very high and it will be nearly impossible for you to meet all of them, but remember that Jesus taught, "with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). You can count on people of various faith commitments to pray for you as you press to live out your high calling (Philippians 3:13-14). Each day seek God's leading by reading scripture and yielding to God in prayer. ■

Anthony Campolo, Ph.D., professor emeritus at Eastern University, founded the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education. His most recent books are The God of Intimacy and Action and Red Letter Christians.

Deepak Chopra on How to Convert to a Peace Economy

YOU HAVE BEEN ELECTED BY THE FIRST ANTI-WAR CONSTITUENCY SINCE 1952, WHEN EISENHOWER was elected after promising to end the Korean War. But ending a war isn't the same as bringing peace. America has been on a war footing since the day after Pearl Harbor, sixty-seven years ago. We spend more on our military than the next sixteen countries combined. If you have a vision of change that goes to the heart of this country's deep problems, ending our dependence on war is far more important than ending our dependency on foreign oil.

The most immediate changes are economic. Unless it can make as much money as war, peace doesn't stand a chance. Since aerospace and military technologies remain the United States' most destructive export, fostering wars around the world, what steps can we take to reverse that trend and build a peace-based economy?

1. Scale out arms dealing and make it illegal by the year 2020.
2. Write into every defense contract a requirement for a peacetime project.
3. Subsidize conversion of military companies to peaceful uses with tax incentives and direct funding.
4. Convert military bases to housing for the poor.
5. Phase out all foreign military bases.
6. Require military personnel to devote part of their time to rebuilding infrastructure.
7. Call a moratorium on future weapons technologies.
8. Reduce armaments like destroyers and submarines that have no use against terrorism and were intended to defend against a superpower enemy that no longer exists.
9. Fully fund social services and take the balance out of the defense and homeland security budgets.

These are just the beginning. We don't lack creativity in coping with change. Without a conversion of our present war economy to a peace economy, the high profits of the military-industrial complex ensures that it will never end.

Do these nine steps seem unrealistic or fanciful? In various ways other countries have adopted similar measures. The former Soviet army is occupied with farming and other peaceful work, for example. But comparisons are rather pointless, since only the United States is burdened with such a massive reliance on defense spending. Ultimately, empire follows the dollar. As a society we want peace, and we want to be seen as a nation that promotes peace. For either ideal to come true, you as president must back up your vision of change with economic reality. So far, that hasn't happened under any of your predecessors. All hopes are pinned on you. ■

Deepak Chopra is acknowledged as one of the world's greatest leaders in the field of mind-body medicine. He is the author of over 50 books, including Buddha: A Story of Enlightenment and Ageless Body, Timeless Mind.



Andrew Cohen on Conscious Evolution

I'M HONORED TO BE WRITING TO YOU. FIRST OF ALL, I WANT TO SAY THAT I FEEL THAT YOUR BEING ELECTED TO our highest office probably is the single most important event that's happened in our great but often misguided land since the assassination of John F. Kennedy stole the hope of a generation. And that's because you so unapologetically stand for hope, for reason, and for the possibility of what feels like a completely different order of governance—one that is just and fair, one that seeks to earnestly find real and immediate ways to come to terms with the overwhelming national and global crises that we face at this time. I humbly want to offer a simple thought to keep in mind as you define your role as leader of the free world: we human beings have regularly been faced with overwhelming crises ever since we first stood up on two legs. Whether it was attacks from tigers, bears, wild elephants, or poisonous snakes; the enormous challenge of the Ice Age; or the countless earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, droughts, decimating plagues, bloody revolutions, insurrections, tribal wars, power struggles, foreign invasions, mass genocides, two world wars, terrorism, and even the threat of nuclear war, we have been surviving in one way or another for 200,000 years. And we're good at it. The fact that we're still here, and actually thriving, in spite of the infinite number of overwhelming and life-threatening crises we've faced, proves just how good at survival we are.

Survival—as an attitude, as an inner posture, as a natural reflex—is a highly developed capacity within our species. Thinking about and being emotionally concerned with survival is the most natural orientation to life for us. Why? Because we've been completely consumed by the necessity to survive for a very long time, since the very first single-celled life form emerged around 3 billion years ago.

Slowly but surely, however, something new is beginning to emerge at the leading edge of the development of human consciousness—a new posture, a new attitude, a new reflex, and a new instinct. And that is the instinct to *evolve*, to *consciously* evolve. That means an entirely new perspective is emerging: a new orientation to life itself, based upon not merely the instinct to survive but an instinct that compels us toward higher, as yet unmanifest human potentials and possibilities. It's a powerful compulsion that, when we awaken to it, lights up our heavy hearts and clears our clouded minds. The experience of this evolutionary impulse, as I often call it, is inspiration, passion, and confidence—a deep *spiritual* confidence in the inherent goodness of life itself.

As we awaken to this evolutionary impulse, we begin to understand that Life is, in its essence, the will to exist, the urge to become, the creative spark behind the unfolding cosmos. We recognize that merely surviving is not what we are here for. Consciously and intentionally striving to evolve, individually and collectively, for the sake of the evolution of the entire creative process, is what imbues human life with a higher meaning and purpose. And what an extraordinary world we can create when we are in touch with this very best part of ourselves!

Needless to say, if we don't find a way to overcome our collective crises and survive, then the evolution of consciousness will be a moot point. So we must survive—but not for the sake of survival alone. We must survive for the sake of our



collective evolution, for the emergence of our as yet unmanifest higher potentials—those hidden treasures that we have yet to contribute to the larger life process in so many ways.

I cannot imagine what it would be like to shoulder the burden that you have chosen to carry for us all. But I offer this simple thought: this newly emerging instinct—the impulse to evolve—is a passion that comes from the depths of the human soul and the heart of Life itself. And when it is awakened, it brings with it a kind of strength that will enable us to weather any storm. ■

Andrew Cohen has been a spiritual teacher since 1986. He is founder of the award-winning magazine EnlightenNext, author of the forthcoming Evolutionary Enlightenment, and mentor to thousands of "evolutionaries" around the world. More information: www.andrewcohen.org.

Aryeh Cohen on Waging Peace

I LIKE MILLIONS OF OTHER AMERICANS, WAS INITIALLY ATTRACTED TO YOUR CANDIDACY BY YOUR opposition to the war in Iraq and, more broadly, by your way of seeing the role of the United States in the world. Ultimately this was only one of the many reasons that we volunteered for you, donated money to your campaign, voted for you, and believe that you can transform politics and leadership in this country.

I write in the fervent desire that you will stick with that vision.

You are inheriting the leadership of a country engaged in two wars. You have promised to quickly end our engagement in Iraq and bring our soldiers home. However, you have also promised to increase troop levels in Afghanistan and fight al Qaeda along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. You did not get us into this war, but I am hoping that even here you will place a premium on the role of diplomacy.

I do not intend to give you advice about how to wage war. I want to urge you to spend a lot more time thinking about waging peace. The so-called "war on terror" is a futile and disastrous affair. A recent Rand Corporation study has suggested that the term "war on terror" not be used anymore. According to the study, of the 648 cases of terrorist groups that existed between 1968 and 2006 and "ended," only 7 percent were terminated by military force. On the other hand, 40 percent of the groups stopped functioning as terrorist groups because they were incorporated into the political process.

It is important to reorient our thinking away from the tried and truculent truisms of the Pentagon and Capitol Hill. While the U.S. armed forces are pushing for billions for new weapons, more than 1,000 diplomatic and foreign service positions remain unfilled. We must stop our participation in the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and begin to think anew about the role of war in global affairs.

Jewish tradition is not essentially pacifist. However, the fact that nations wage war does not cause the tradition to celebrate that fact. The opposite is the truth. The middle third of the *Tanakh*, the Jewish Bible, is called *Nevi'im*, or Prophets. It can be divided in two. The first part of the prophetic books, traditionally referred to as the First Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), is part of the mythic history of the Jewish people. In these sometimes very bloody books, war is waged and territory captured.

The second part, the Later Prophets, is a critique of the power politics and the associated injustices and waging of war of the first part. Joshua kills and burns his way into and across Canaan, and the book of Judges recounts the cycles of sin, occupation, violence, and military salvation of the decentralized tribal Israel. But the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah put the poor and the widow at the center of their concerns, and exhort Israel to justice and peace, to turn swords into plowshares.

Israel, like all nations, has a mythical history that explains how it became a nation. That myth put the possibility of freedom from oppression into the world, but it was also bloody and martial. The genius of Rabbinic Judaism was to sequester the ability to make war in the mythic past. On the one hand, the midrash (rabbinic commentary) adds to Joshua another narrative layer in which the Israelites consistently sue for peace before laying siege, while the Babylonian Talmud transposes David from a warrior king into a sage and a scholar who spent his days engrossed in the study of Torah. On the other hand, the halachic or Jewish legal tradition places the bar for waging war so high—there is a need for a king and the acquiescence of the Great Sanhedrin—that it is impossible to legally wage war according to Jewish law.

The inevitable conclusion that one must reach from a comprehensive reading of the Jewish tradition is that



Iraqi women line up at a Baghdad retirement office window to wait for their monthly pensions September 9, 2003. The office distributes monthly pensions of 60 U.S. dollars per month to former government employees, widows of former employees, and family members of those killed in Iraqi wars.

war is a theological problem for Judaism; that the world was not created so that nations should war against each other, as one early-twentieth-century rabbi puts it.

As we go forward in an Obama administration, I hope that you will conduct your foreign policy from within a framework in which the unleashing of the uncontrolled and uncontrollable violence that is modern warfare is taken off the table. I urge you to fill all the diplomatic posts and put even a very small percentage of the budget of the Department of Defense toward research into peacemaking.

We have never tried this way, the way of waging peace. We do not know what solutions will be found on that path. It is sure, however, that in that direction is found change and hope. "Then shall your light burst through like the dawn." ■

Aryeh Cohen teaches Talmud at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies of the American Jewish University. He is one of the founders of Jews Against the War (jewsagainstthewar.org).

Thomas R. Cole on How to Think about Aging and Policy

MR. PRESIDENT, ALMOST NOBODY WANTS TO THINK CLEARLY ABOUT AGING IN OUR SOCIETY. IT is much easier to push some single idea: an aging society will bankrupt the federal budget and leave our children an unsupportable debt; aging baby boomers will work long into old age and will volunteer their time and expertise on behalf of the common good; aging brings disease, dependency, and dementia; aging is a curable condition; old people are a burden; old people are wise. And so on.

The new longevity is a stunning achievement. The key question is this: what do we do with it? Today almost 15 percent of our population is 65 and over; one-third of Americans will live to 85 or above—and that percentage will continue to increase. And the epidemiology is unprecedented. As the President's Council on Bioethics puts it: "The defining situation of our time seems to be that we are both younger longer and older

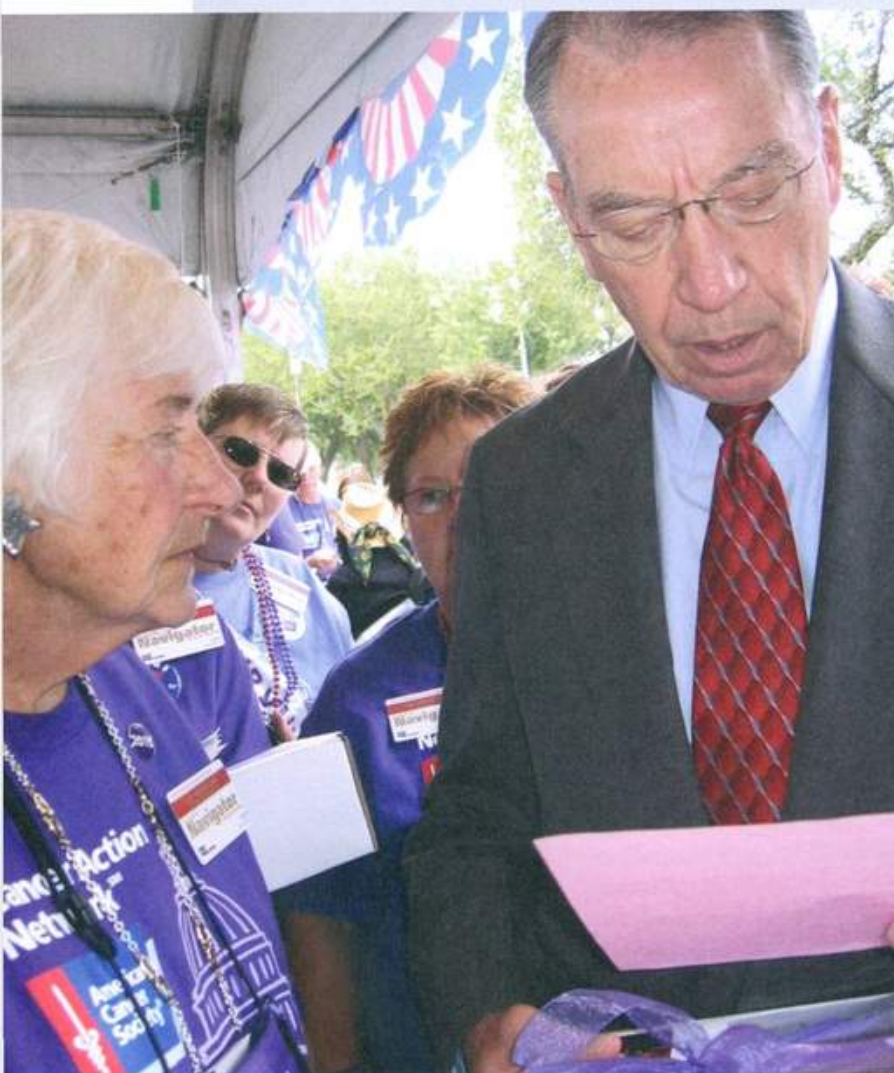
longer. We are more likely to be vigorous at ages that once seemed very old and we are far more likely to suffer protracted periods of age-related disability and dependency because we live to ages few people reached in the past."

But demography is not destiny. The first thing to recognize is that we are aged by culture, as Margaret Gullette puts it. Hatred of dependency and fear of impotence, wrinkles, weakness, disease, frailty, and dementia become transformed into negative stereotypes and prejudice toward "them" (as Bernard Berenson once said, old age is always ten years older than I am). These internalized stereotypes create spoiled identities and encourage us to live out cultural scripts of decline.

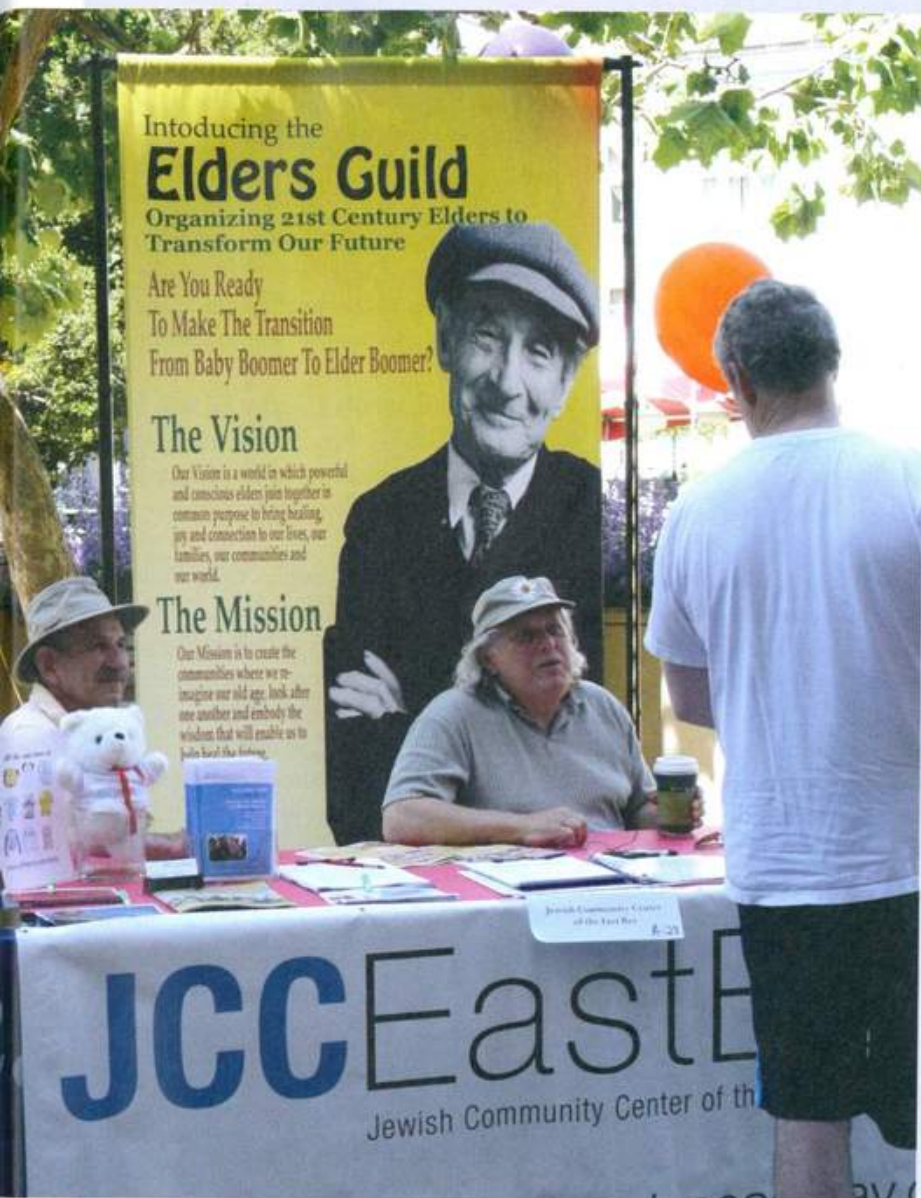
But living long and good lives is the great promise and goal of our era.

Social policies should aim at protecting the vulnerable, providing basic health care coverage, and strengthening the capacity of all elders to grow and contribute to solving our common problems.

In the current crisis, alarmist demographers and fiscal conservatives will reiterate their gloomy scenarios and argue that we cannot afford the cost of current Social Security and Medicare programs, which must be slashed to avoid mortgaging our children's future. It is true that elders, like all of us, will have to make sacrifices, but we must protect the poor and the vulnerable. Social Security is the cornerstone of our welfare state and clearly its most successful program. Fully half of all older people would be impoverished without it. It is essentially an intergenerational compact in which each working generation



Don't underestimate elders' ability to lead social change! Here, an elder urges Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa to allocate more money for cancer research and diagnostic screenings. An estimated 10,000 cancer survivors and volunteers from all 50 states gathered on September 20, 2006, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for a daylong lobbying event.



The Elders Guild describes its vision as "a world in which powerful and conscious elders join together in common purpose to bring healing, joy and connection to our lives, our families, our communities and our world." In May 2008 Barry Barkan (right) and Bob Berke (left) share a booth with JCC East Bay at Oakland, California's Honoring Seniors Day. See eldersguild.org.

Older people are a rapidly growing natural resource. Promoting the civic engagement and spiritual growth of elders should be a primary goal of aging policy. Those older voters in Florida don't just need welfare state benefits. Just like younger voters, they need publicly sanctioned avenues of engagement and contribution, best done in public/private collaboration. This could be accomplished, for example, by revisioning the vast aging services network funded and organized by the Administration on Aging. Elders are not primarily a burden and a problem—they should be part of the solution. ■

*Thomas R. Cole is a historian and medical humanist who specializes in the ethics and cultures of aging. His books include *The Journey of Life*, *No Color Is My Kind*, and the forthcoming *Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging*.*

supports its parent's generation, with the understanding that it in turn will be supported by the next working generation.

Your advisors know that there is no real crisis in Social Security and that relatively minor adjustments, such as those made in 1983, will keep the system solvent throughout the most difficult years of baby boomers' retirement. Medicare, on the other hand, is more difficult because of the rising cost of health care and the rapidly increasing use of high-tech interventions among 80- and 90-year-olds. You will have to resist discriminatory calls to ration expensive life-saving technology by age yet not allow support for hospital and long-term care to crowd out priorities of education and job creation. One significant way of reducing costs is to require people above a certain income threshold to purchase long-term care, though this would obviously be politically difficult. Investing in health promotion, disease prevention, and biomedical research to delay the onset of frailty and dementia is also a way to reduce costs.

But equally important is the need to transform how we view our elders and our aging selves. Aging is not a problem to be solved but an experience to be lived in community. We want to promote health. But what is health for? The issue here is to recognize lifelong needs for learning, creativity, spiritual growth, and civic engagement.

John Dear on the Audacity of Peace

THANK YOU, PRESIDENT OBAMA, FOR WRITING OF THE AUDACITY OF HOPE. NOW I URGE YOU TO have the audacity to pursue peace. The world looks to you to end the evil war in Iraq, on Inauguration Day. You need not obey the war-makers, the military, the generals, and the Pentagon. This need not drag on one day more. You can order the troops home now. For the love of peace, please do so.

But it's just the beginning. The vision of Martin Luther King Jr. demanded the abolition of war itself. We must end starvation, poverty, nuclear weaponry, and global warming. We urge you, therefore, to dismantle every nuclear weapon and weapon of mass destruction, close our hundreds of military bases around the world, sign disarmament treaties with the nations, and deploy the billions of dollars spent on war to rebuild our economy and feed the world's starving masses.

It's doable; it's not a dream. When Nelson Mandela became president, he unilaterally dismantled South Africa's nuclear weapons, as well as abolished the death penalty. Nuclear weapons do not protect us. They steal our resources and incite other nations to build similar weapons. And threat descends on us all. We need our scientists to pursue life-giving research instead. We need to set them free to study alternative sources of energy that can reverse global warming and heal the earth.

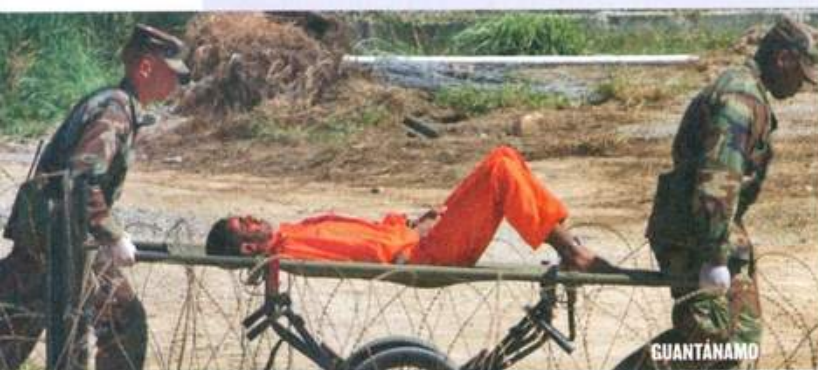
But even more—as we dismantle the imperial war machine and close places like Guantanamo, the School of the Americas (SOA), Los Alamos, and Livermore Labs—we need to start funding and institutionalizing nonviolent ways to resolve global conflict. We need to teach nonviolent methods in every United States school. We need to win the world over with our nonviolent love by becoming a force for peace in our world.

The days of war are coming to an end. War is obsolete. It doesn't work. Peace and active nonviolence do. Millions of Americans, especially in the communities of faith and conscience, as well as billions of sisters and brothers around the world, are hoping and praying for a new dawn of peace, the day when the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more," as the prophet Isaiah wrote long ago.

Be a true hope-maker, Mr. President. Become a peacemaker. If you do, we will all be blessed. ■

Rev. John Dear, a Jesuit priest, just published his autobiography, A Persistent Peace (Loyola Press, with a foreword by Martin Sheen), and was recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. See www.johndear.org.

AP PHOTO/YNHE SLADKY (TOP LEFT) AP PHOTO/JEFF GUESSER (BOTTOM LEFT),
FLICKR/CRAZEBATEZ (RIGHT)



Drew Dellinger: Planetize the Movement

we are standing on a planet
that is shooting through space,
and it's time we started acting like it

imagine nations with freed imaginations

it's time for s/he who
sees the way
to seize the day,
seize the hour,
seize the levers of power
and
be the change

a new page,
a new stage of drama
we need a movement of movements
in the age of Obama,
'cause not even a messiah could cure this empire

we need all of us
to face all of the past,
and move past it
I ain't gonna study war no more,
except in history classes

globalize liberation,
planetize the movement—

you can't stop
the Earth's revolution.

The snafu was the half who
would settle for half-truth
so I'm at it again with a pad and a pen
some things deserve to dissolve
and the last shall be first and vice-versa

(you are floating
on a planet;
act accordingly)

cryosphere melting,
ten trillion tears
to a vanishing planet

Earth—dream blossom
of the cosmos:
silent universe,
speaking in species

every cell is intelligent
cultivate bioluminescence

the breath is the bridge

imagine nations with freed imaginations

we are standing on a planet
that is shooting through space,
and it's time we started acting like it

globalize liberation,
planetize the movement—

you can't stop
the Earth's revolution.



Drew Dellinger is a spoken-word artist, as well as a writer, professor, and activist. He is founder of Poets for Global Justice and author of love letter to the milky way. See www.drewdellinger.org.

Peter T. Dunlap on Awakening the Left's Moral Authority and Psychological Citizenship

THE ARC OF HISTORY IS IN YOUR HANDS, IT IS YOURS TO BEND. WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH IT? WHAT WILL your political agenda be? Will you have an overt moral, religious, or spiritual agenda? Will you go so far as to have a psychological agenda? In my somewhat dumbfounded reverie, I wonder. These questions are my expression of hope, my own determined reach for a new American destiny.

Each human being has a destiny, the top end of fate, which is our greatest potential. While individual, each person's destiny is part of a national destiny and hopefully an even broader human destiny. Whether in our private-lives or as citizens, our destinies are unique, yet tightly woven together. While independence and freedom are marks of our genius, interdependence and mutual responsibility are expressions of our soul. Our genius and soul are now partly yours to weave. The crises of our time seem unparalleled. Will you fire us to transform our troubled individualized experience into a shared destiny?

We are already talking about whether your political agenda will renew liberalism or drive in the middle lane. Because of how far the Left stretches, many will expect you to champion justice in the face of *every* form of human suffering. Many will expect you to reform health care and education, address the inequities of the working poor, and end American warfare. They will expect you to finally respond to global warming while



The Left needs to awaken to its own moral and spiritual authority. One example to follow is that of Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of a campaign to close the School of the Americas, who faces possible excommunication from the Catholic Church due to his support for women's ordination as priests.

and demeanor seem wholly capable of guiding us across this edge and leading us back toward the necessity of asserting our American values at a new moral pitch. As you assert your own moral authority, we will learn how to do the same. Expect us to follow you into the future.

Will you have a religious or spiritual agenda? There may be, perhaps, no more troubling quagmire on the Left than its relationship to religion. Despite the stunningly obvious commitment to equality and justice exhibited by countless religious institutions—and despite the role played by religious leaders and congregations in the fight for human freedom—too many people on the Left ignore the potency of religious experience to bring people together. For too long we have relinquished this power to the Right. Many on the Left seem to be afraid to face the intrinsic mystery of religiosity. You seem to embody and articulate a new liberal wisdom that is at least open to the positive power of a religious community, if not to the full potency of the human being's capacity to be religious. Please help the new religious Left to *bind together again* (the true meaning of “religio”) our people so that the unifying power of religion is not only expressed through the integrity or manipulations of the Right. Here too, expect us to follow you into the future.

Do you imagine having a psychological agenda? Unless I am mistaken you are a man who has faced inner demons and worked out some personal relationship to the unconscious, which I imagine is part of your obvious emotional intelligence, which clearly offers calmness, reassurance, and a model of humility and maturity. Like our relationship to morality and religiosity, many on the Left have some aversion to the psychological. I wonder how aware you are of your accomplishment in this area. Will you lead us into a psychological future, which may be the greatest taboo of all? Yet, psychology has long helped millions of Americans, especially in their private lives. Your emotional intelligence makes that success public. We too can follow you into the future of this public psychological-ness.

The American people are waiting for your direction, the world is holding its breath to see if Americans can activate their political ideals within a renewed moral vision. Recognizing the limitations and value of our religious experience and of the institutions of religion will be essential. Recognizing the psychological possibility of human development may help create the language that allows the Left to face its limitations and help you bend history. ■

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establishing sustainable energy practices without indulging in risky drilling, nuclear power, or coal. We on the Left have no end of urgent issues we will simply expect you to address. Please do not succumb to this “ever-fracturing-into-new-issues” liberalism. I trust that you will do what is possible to broaden and deepen human political and economic freedom. Instead of indulging the hubris of the Left to divide our attention into a cacophony of issues, be fierce with us. Do not allow us to fragment around the “reasonableness” of each of our favorite political issues. Expect us to follow you into the future.

The fact that a conversation about how far left you will go is even taking place reflects the Left's inclination to displace a much-needed conversation about morality and religion. Having an overt moral agenda would help redirect this displacement.

The Left is slowly reawakening to its own moral authority. For too long we have confused asserting moral authority with moralizing. The 1960s problematically led us to this confusion. Or, perhaps we have always been shy, constantly *questioning authority* rather than *creating authority*. Yes, there is a knife's edge between moral integrity and destructive righteousness; your character

Diana L. Eck on Becoming a More Complex “We”

MR. PRESIDENT, YOU ARE THE FIRST-EVER AMERICAN PRESIDENT FULLY AWARE OF THE GREAT diversity of America's faiths. We are a nation of Christians and Jews—and Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists. You understand this and rightly see that this diversity is a source of our strength. Yet, this reality is a great challenge—especially for those who still advocate for a “Christian America.”

As president, your every word and gesture of recognition and respect sets a new tone for people of all faiths in America. How you speak the names of America's people of faith—Buddhist, Baptist, Muslim, Methodist—and touch the chords of our diversity will change the way in which “we the people” see ourselves. And it will change the way in which people all over the world see America.

Your October letter to Hindus wishing them a “joyous Diwali” as the festival approached gave recognition to a whole community. This was not only a formal gesture—it also conveyed both warmth and understanding. The Sikhs heard from you too. Your response to the questions of the Sikh Coalition for their voter's guide made it clear that you know your Sikh constituents and have a real concern for the issues of discrimination, hate crimes, and profiling they have faced. Your thoughtful response to the Sikhs stood in stark contrast to that of your opponent: “No Response.”

It was perhaps a missed opportunity, when responding to those who wondered whether you were a Muslim, not to have said something along these lines: “While I am a Christian and my faith is profoundly important to me, for much of my life I have known, admired, and worked with Muslims. And I look forward to continuing this as president. I have noticed how people's mutual stereotypes fall apart as they work together. America is, after all, a multi-religious nation. The religious freedom we cherish is also a recipe for religious diversity. As we become more diverse, all of us need to know more about our neighbors and their faith. We are often afraid of neighbors whom we do not know, and our democracy does not function well when we are afraid of one another. No, I am not a Muslim. But many good and patriotic Americans are Muslims, in virtually every part of this great country. Faithful people throughout the world are Muslims too, and the world we leave to our children will have to be shaped by all of us, working together.”



May Day immigration march, Chicago, 2006.

Of course, Muslims in the United States understood your reticence to speak directly to them or about them during the campaign. They know today's fears and prejudices first-hand. Their mosques and Islamic centers have been the targets of vandalism and arson. Women have been harassed for wearing the headscarf and told to "go back to where you came from." They have slogged through battles over zoning and parking that were really about anxiety and fear.

Despite it all, think of how many American Muslims have put themselves out there as participants in the great American project. They held open houses in mosques across the country just a week after 9/11. They not only spoke out against terrorism, they worked hard to educate the rest of us about Islam. They developed advocacy groups to make their voices heard in Washington. And this year, they held countless voter registration drives and the Muslim "Rock the Vote" campaign in cities across the country. They registered to vote, and they voted—for you.

Our "we" in America has become more complex over the past four decades, with all the new immigration. We are people of every faith, and none. And you are president of all of us now. You clearly understand what this means.

Today, all of us are challenged to claim for our time the principles of religious freedom that have shaped our nation. We need to find ways to articulate the "we" of our nation anew—whether we are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or secular Americans. This will mean finding ways to bridge the deep differences that have divided people the world over. Those bridges where the traffic of dialogue moves back and forth will be our strength. For all of us, this will require an effort to understand the religions of our neighbors, old and new. It will require the engagement of our religious communities in the common work of our civil society. It will require your moral leadership as our educator-in-chief. Through speech, word, gesture, and action, the president of our nation must always remind us who "we" are.

I believe that here in the United States we have an opportunity to create a vibrant and hopeful pluralism. In a world of increasing fragmentation where there are few good models for a truly democratic multi-religious society, we can be such a place. Yes, we can. ■

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Riane Eisler on the New Economy, Democracy, and Spiritual Values

HERE ARE MY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION, AS WELL AS SOME OF THE RESEARCH and reasoning behind them—along with my warmest good wishes!

The ground has shifted, and we all know it: the issue is breakdown or breakthrough. Through decades of research, I've identified strategies that will move us from unbridled consumption and accumulation of "stuff" to produce what really counts for human beings: health, relationships, meaning, creativity, service.

We must redefine "productive work." Not long ago, shifting to industrial technology radically changed "productive" work, when employment dropped from over 80 percent agriculture-based to just 3 percent. Robotics and other forms of automation will continue to radically cut present manufacturing, service, and middle management jobs as we shift from the industrial to the post-industrial era. The truth is that millions of the jobs currently disappearing are gone for good. Bailing out dinosaurs like the auto industry so it can continue making unwanted cars that aren't good for the planet makes no sense.

The ingenuity of our citizens and the natural environment are our most valuable assets—we need realistic economic measurements that include them. Current measures of "productivity" such as GDP put activities that *harm* life (like selling cigarettes and the health and funeral costs from smoking) on the plus side but ignore the life-sustaining activities of both the household economy and the natural economy. A Swiss government report showed that if the unpaid "caring" household work were included, it would comprise 70 percent of the reported Swiss GDP! We must give visibility and value to the work of parents and others caring for children—*neuroscience shows that the quality of child care directly affects human capacity development.* Human capacity cannot

develop properly without such care. Without human capacity, there are no advances.

We need a new economic road map. I expand on these ideas in my book *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, which is a road map for long-term change. Call it the “new economy.” It takes us beyond the old dying economic systems—and the old capitalist vs. socialist thinking—to a practical new “partnerist” economic paradigm.

We need education and training to meet real needs. Millions of Americans are going uncared and undercared for. Elder care is expensive, and too often inadequate.

Our children are woefully under-cared for as both parents work and education budgets are cut. Environmental issues need urgent attention. Education and retraining must focus on meeting these long-term needs. As long as education teaches people to navigate through an outmoded system of short-term paper profits, these “bubbles” will continue to burst.

Caring for others is a core spiritual value. We’ve been told it’s OK for our taxes to fund big government and huge deficits for weapons, war, and now corporate bailouts—but not for health care, child care, early education, or maintaining a clean environment. This disconnect reflects a culture that devalues the “soft” or stereotypically feminine—whether in women or men. Caring for others is a core spiritual value. *But as long as anything associated with women and the stereotypically feminine is devalued, it’s not realistic to expect more caring government and business policies.*

Replacing uncaring practices with caring policies brings enormous economic gains. Companies that care for employees have more productive workers and higher shareholder returns. Government policies that invest in our most important assets—high-quality human capital, beginning in childhood—would save billions that America now spends on prisons and other “back-end” costs. Highly successful nations such as Sweden, Finland, and Norway invested in their *human capital*. These models are not perfect. But they have much lower crime rates *and* far lower tax expenditures for prisons; lower health care costs *and* longer life spans; very low poverty rates *and* less wasted human potential. How? By investing in universal health care, high quality child care, stipends for families with children, elder care with dignity, generous paid parental leave, and even social security credit for the first *seven years* of caring for a child at home. The citizens of these nations come out ahead, *because* they pay a lot in taxes, not in spite of it. And they are not socialist, but a mix of market and central planning—often referring to themselves as “caring nations.” While they were so poor in the early twentieth century that thousands fled famines, they’re now on the top ranks of UN Human Development Reports and the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Reports, *because they invested in high-quality human capital.*

Who cares? Women do. We need Real Representative Democracy. Perhaps most striking is that women make up 40 percent of national legislators in these “caring nations.” Obama won a decisive majority among women but lost among men. We need substantial numbers of women bringing their social perspective for caring and care-giving to governance—not just the occasional woman making it by proving she’s not too “soft” or “feminine.” Women make up 52 percent of our population, yet only 17 percent of our legislature. The executive



Investing in human capital—for example, by providing quality child care for all—pays huge social and economic dividends.

branch should model true representative democracy.

"Intractable" problems such as poverty can be tractable—once we recognize that the mass of the world's poor are women and children. Using statistical data from eighty-nine nations, the Center for Partnership Studies research shows that women's status is a better predictor of *everyone's* quality of life than GDP.

Together, we can build a partnership society. The Real Wealth of Nations is waiting to be tapped! ■

Riane Eisler is a systems scientist and cultural historian, president of the Center for Partnership Studies, and author of the international bestsellers The Chalice and The Blade and The Real Wealth of Nations. See www.rianeeisler.com.

Jodie Evans on Ending War Altogether

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA ... TEARS CAME TO MY EYES AS I WROTE THIS SALUTATION. It is amazing that the United States will soon have a president who has the breadth of lived experience and knowledge that you do—from the streets of Jakarta to the villages of Kenya to the projects of Chicago and the halls of America's elite institutions. It would be truly amazing if you would bring your wisdom and depth of knowledge onto the world stage as an agent for peace.

From where CODEPINK sits, we see a politician who had the courage to say no to the war in Iraq at a time when others longing to be president did the opposite out of fear of losing votes. That stance, along with the verdant grassroots communities and youth who stood with you, became a force that broke through the expectations of how elections should go, bringing about the first taste of change. Now we're ready for an even greater, deeper change. We've been working tirelessly to end the war in Iraq and stop the next war before it begins, but today, we're inspired to take an even stronger stand and declare "War is SO over."

We invite you to join us in taking this stand. You know the inspiring results of your stance against the war in Iraq; imagine the results of saying that war is obsolete and should be relegated to the dustbin of the twentieth century!



CODEPINK marches in San Francisco.

We have already gone to work. As you often said in your campaign, sitting down to talk can be a first step. We have launched a new project called Let's Talk, and we understand that dialogue, listening, sharing stories, and compassion are all important tools. We began last week by delivering apple pies and doves of peace to the Embassies of Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, and Bolivia—all countries with which the Bush administration has had an antagonistic relationship—to say “yes, we can live in peace.” This week, we are traveling to Iran to meet with women in the Iranian Parliament and the government to create more bridges for citizen diplomacy and cultural sharing.

When we return, we'd love to bring together leaders from a broad spectrum of groups—among them Win Without War, ANSWER, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Tikkun Community, CODEPINK Women for Peace, WAND, and United for Peace & Justice—for an open dialogue with you about the future of our country and its role in the world. We have been watching with some trepidation as you select the members of your foreign policy team, many of whom were enablers if not architects of the invasion of Iraq. We hope that in this process, you will take the time to listen to peace activists who have been working daily to end the occupation of Iraq, to find a negotiated solution to the war in Afghanistan, and to prevent future wars.

We will be at your inauguration with pink ribbons tied around our index fingers to support you in remembering your promises of ending the war in Iraq, closing Guantanamo, ending the use of torture, and respecting treaties and international law. We know that change takes action and diligence. It takes patience and perseverance. CODEPINK will continue to be visible, vocal, consistent, and persistent in supporting the message of your campaign. You can count on us! ■

Jodie Evans has dedicated her life to working for peace. Her work has taken her across the globe—most recently to Iran on a citizen diplomacy trip with CODEPINK, the grassroots, women-initiated peace organization she co-founded.

Nancy Folbre on Economic Policies to Benefit Women

I'M GIVING YOU STRAIGHT A'S ON MOST OF YOUR TRANSITION EFFORTS SO FAR. BUT I'M A MEMBER OF THE Economists' Policy Group on Women's Issues that gave you a mere B in the last month of your campaign (see <http://epgwi.org>). Sadly, I'm continuing to deduct points for your economic policies regarding women.

Sure, you've asked Hillary Clinton to join your cabinet. Your impressive wife has expressed a particular interest in improving work/family policies. Your chief economic advisor, Larry Summers, says he didn't mean to imply, years ago, that women are not quite as good at math as men. Women, like men, need the universal health insurance that you've promised.

But many of your economic policies seem gender blind—even gender biased. Your biggest fiscal stimulus plans call for investments in green energy and infrastructure that will create new jobs, as well as long-term benefits to sustainable growth. You don't point out that most of these jobs will go to men who predominate in construction and related trades. Women who try to enter such traditionally male occupations face problems of discrimination and sexual harassment, not to mention work schedules that are anything but family-friendly. Please commit to explicit federal efforts to improve women's access to such jobs.

In your last debate with Senator John McCain, you supported the Lily Ledbetter Act, which would overturn the Supreme Court's ruling that an employee only has 180 days to file a lawsuit alleging discrimination, whether or not they have access to the necessary information. Please get this legislation moving right away. And while you're at it, please do something to remedy the deplorable pay and working conditions of home care workers such as Evelyn Coke, who was recently denied coverage under the Fair Labor Standards Act to overtime pay, on the grounds that what she provides is really just “domestic service.”

Better yet, why not direct part of your fiscal stimulus plan to improve the care sector of our economy? Economist James Heckman, among others, shows that investments in early childhood education deliver an extraordinarily high social rate of return—yet many states lack the funding they need to move forward in this area. Countless studies reveal painful shortfalls in long-term care, shortfalls that could be met by expansion of

public support for paid home care workers and tax credits for family members providing for their own disabled, elderly, and infirm. Like “green” investment, such “pink” investment would increase employment opportunities as well as long-term benefits—in this case, improvements in human capabilities and quality of life.

Everyone in America wants to be middle class, except of course, the super-rich, who have enough money to ride out the recession in high style. Please don’t postpone the small tax increases for families with income over \$250,000 that you proposed during your campaign. We need that money to mend our tattered safety net, which often fails low-income mothers and their children. Our major anti-poverty program for these families—the Earned Income Tax Credit—provides no benefits for the unemployed. Working women—disproportionately concentrated in low-paying and part-time jobs—have less access to unemployment insurance than men do. Our child poverty rates are already among the highest in the world. Please come up with a plan to provide income supports for families in dire need, including the bankrupt, the homeless, and the hungry.

You could make many family-friendly improvements to our tax system that would provide special benefits to women. Adults who take time out of paid employment to care for family members should not see their Social Security benefits reduced as a result. A big increase in the child credit—and making it fully refundable—would provide tax relief to those who need it most. Parents devote enormous time, energy, and money to raising the next generation of taxpayers—the ones who we expect to pay off our debts. We owe them more support.

A majority of women in this country—but not of men—voted for you in November. We have the audacity to hope that you will not just remember us, but respond to our specific economic needs. ■

Nancy Folbre is a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and associate editor of the journal Feminist Economics. Her most recent book is Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family (Harvard University Press, 2008).

James Forbes on Not Losing the Prophetic Perspective

AS THE WORLD WATCHED YOU STRIDE CENTER STAGE FOR YOUR VICTORY SPEECH ON THE EVENING OF November 4, it was ecstatically clear that we had entered a new age of possibility. I could not help but think back to that night in Boston at the 2004 Democratic National Convention when you were catapulted into national prominence as a rising star on the political scene. I had stood at the same podium just hours earlier, called to share some prophetic justice principles to serve as a plumb line to test the moral integrity of the policies of our nation. When I heard your speech later that evening, I experienced you as standing in the prophetic stream of biblical prophets, and of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. You spoke as a drum major for justice, a critic of oppressive systems, a passionate advocate for peace, and a champion for the cause of the poor and vulnerable. I thought, “At last a principled pragmatist with courage and hope that our nation can be true in its promise of becoming a more perfect union.”

During the years since Boston, we have followed your leadership in the Senate, marveled at your brilliant campaigning, and been thrilled by your spectacular triumph on the evening of the election. The campaign is over and the victory has been won and even those who did not vote for you seem to be joining with us in hope and great expectations. Now we await your inauguration as the forty-fourth president of the United States. What will happen to the prophetic spirit as you assume duties in the most powerful office in the world?

To be more specific, I share with you the thinking of some of my colleagues that your victory is a part of heaven’s fortieth-year commemoration of the martyrdom of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. To show them that their blood was not shed in vain, special manifestations had to be arranged on the earth for all to see. Bobby Kennedy had predicted that in forty years there might be an African American president. And right on time you are the one. Dr. King was killed while planning the Poor People’s Campaign and assisting exploited sanitation workers. This was a part of his effort to call our nation to a radical revolution of values. In general terms he was urging us to move from a “thing-oriented society” to a “people-oriented society.” In his speeches he identified three giant problems that needed to be conquered: racism, materialism, and militarism.



Bishops of the A.M.E. Church pray over Barack Obama on the campaign trail, July 5, 2008, in St. Louis, Missouri.

In regard to racism, what will your administration do to face and address the persisting inequities that reflect the history of racist policies and practices in our country? Your DNA, as well as my own, cries out for overcoming the intra-psychic tension and the debilitating antipathies occasioned by the delusions of race. Beyond studies of how all ethnic groups are diminished by the continuing impact of racism, what will you propose to help deliver us from this original sin of our beloved U.S.A.? The question is not what you plan to do for minorities, but what should all of us as a nation do in terms of ridding ourselves of this affliction we can no longer afford in light of the toxicity it spreads in all areas of national life?

In regard to materialism, it is safe to say that in the contest between God and money, it seems that money is winning by a landslide. Money is the determinative factor in most of the areas affecting our quality of life. Money was a prime asset in our electoral success. The lust for profits was a major causative agent in producing the current fiscal crisis. We know that poverty is a weapon of mass destruction. The erosion of our middle class is a symptom of a nation in decline. We also know that the lack of money imperils the life's opportunities for millions of our fellow citizens. You have already advanced plans for achieving a fairer tax policy and restoring appropriate regulatory guidelines in regards to corporations and financial institutions. As teacher-in-chief, what spiritual and communal values will you promote to liberate us from our idolatrous addiction to things? How will you help us to see the enlightened self-interest in achieving a reduced gap between the rich, middle class, and chronically poor? Will you lead us into serious in-depth discussion of the peril and promise of free-market values? Will it be possible to update and refine our understanding of how our capitalist system can reduce dehumanizing and impoverishing collateral damage as we press our way toward increased productivity? Will you be able to help us see that basic subsistence necessities are a part of fundamental citizenship rights in a truly democratic society? Who will be your partners in the promotion of renewed commitment to the higher consciousness regarding things that money cannot buy?

In regard to militarism, lead us, if you will, to a better understanding of why ours is such a violent society. Does it have to do with the violence against the inhabitants we found when we first came to this land? Did the early European settlers bring to these shores seeds of belligerence? Was it because slavery was such an

inhumane arrangement that it necessitated heightened physical and emotional protective armaments? Is it because widespread inequities generate both defensive and aggressive behavior? Or is it simply the case that extraordinary blessedness invites envy and eventual assault? Whatever the cause, there is too much violence and our future well-being and global leadership will require us to cultivate a less combative spirit. How might your office provide encouragement and offer assistance in regard to this urgently needed initiative?

We know that we must maintain an effective defense against adversaries, foreign and domestic, but are we ready to acknowledge the role we play in creating global conflict and warfare, influenced by the profit-making demands of the military industrial complex? Can these powerful manufacturing engines be converted to enterprises other than making and exporting armaments for the wars of the world? Don't we need that technological expertise to help us in our pursuit of new energy efficiencies, the repair of our infrastructure, and our mobilization to reverse environmental degradation? Can we accept the challenge of redefining greatness from military might alone to the power of high and enabling ideals and the capacity to help the world see the extraordinary benefit of shared prosperity toward global peace and justice? So even if we will not be able to end all wars, might we at least be delivered from the warring spirit that may determine when and how the world will end?

President Obama, I share the words of this letter with you in a spirit of hopefulness. I do not expect that you will be able to turn the ship of state around on a dime and in just a few years. But I am confident that you have been chosen for this pivotal point in our nation's history and your commitments are deep, determined, and Spirit-inspired. I hope my comments may have identified some of the standards by which you will measure your own faithfulness and fruitfulness. In the years ahead, I pray that the policies of your administration will reflect that you never lost sight of the prophetic spirit. ■

James Forbes Jr. is the president and founder of the Healing of the Nations Foundation. He was the first African American senior minister of The Riverside Church of New York (1989-2007) and is a former professor of preaching at Union Theological Seminary of New York City.

Matthew Fox on Education



Ms. Anne Roberts, principal of the Mildred Monroe Elementary school in Baltimore, meets with third-grade students.

FIRST, OF COURSE, I WANT TO CONGRATULATE you for your courage and success in daring to reinvent our political process from the grassroots up. Many of us who worked and spoke on your behalf feel part of the process of participation that you are bringing to a renewed democracy.

I want to speak to you about *education*. I do not speak from an armchair. I have been involved in successful alternative education for adults and now with teenagers for over thirty years. For the past two years, I have been involved in bringing a fresh pedagogy to inner city teenagers in the Oakland, California, school system, believing it is time to reinvent education from the inner city out. As you know, 72 percent of black boys do not graduate from high school today. I don't think this says much about the intelligence of the kids, but it does shout something about the failure of our models of pedagogy at this time in history.

No Child Left Behind is such a disaster that we are leaving behind not only the kids but also the best teachers! When I was speaking in Napa a year ago, a woman came up to me and said: "I am a teacher. A great teacher. I love teaching. And I am quitting. All the good teachers in

my district are quitting because we did not become teachers in order to give kids constant exams. We became teachers to do what you are talking about—bring out the wisdom that is in the kids and turn them on to learning the rest of their lives.”

The key to education is getting kids excited about learning. We are failing at that. Many parents are failing at that. Excitement about learning does not come from piling exams on top of exams. It comes from kids being motivated and excited about their capacity to learn new things. It comes from the experience of awe that kids can have when they learn about the new cosmology and our place in the universe and when they are encouraged to put that learning into their own, unique, creative expression. Let them rap and make DVDs about such things. First you get them excited about their capacity to learn. Then you can guide them to the three Rs.

In my recent book, *The A.W.E. Project: Reinventing Education, Reinventing the Human*, I set out my philosophy of education. “A.W.E.” stands for “Ancestral Wisdom Education.” We find kids are genuinely interested in this approach to education. Facts and knowledge are readily available on the Internet, YouTube, and other media that young people have access to today. But wisdom? That is in short supply.

The key ingredient missing in No Child Left Behind and the countless exams it espouses is creativity. Kids are creative, but their creativity is rarely being educated at school. One senior in our program last year said, “This is the first time in four years of high school that anyone has asked for my creative side to come out.” This is why kids are so “bored” at school. Where is the place for their creativity to flourish? Creativity is the door to awe and therefore to wisdom.

The Dalai Lama points out, “Education is in crisis the world over.” I think this is a very important observation. Education is not just an American issue but also a global issue because today’s young people, members of this first postmodern generation, are growing up in a very different world. We elders have not yet refashioned our thinking and structures of education and adapted them properly to the needs of this generation.

I speak of the ten Cs of education that are needed to balance the three Rs. These ten Cs are as follows:

- **Cosmology.** Where do we come from? How special are we as a species? Our place in the universe is key to getting young people interested in learning and today we have a whole new cosmology from science that holds awesome stories about our bodies, our history, our expanding universe, and our ecological struggle.
- **Chaos.** Inner city kids have Ph.D.’s in chaos. But rarely are they instructed in today’s science, which rediscovers the role of chaos in all of nature’s creative unfolding—including human imagination and creativity.
- **Creativity.** This is what most distinguishes us as a species—it is our strongest suit and can get us out of the dead ends such as global warming that we paint ourselves into—but it is also what makes us the most dangerous species on the planet. It needs attention at *all* levels of education.
- **Contemplation/Meditation.** Our capacity to *be still* is required for our survival as a species. We must move beyond the reptilian brain of action/reaction to the mammal brain of bonding and compassion—and meditation does that for us.
- **Compassion.** Who is the spiritual teacher East or West, North or South, who does not teach us to bring alive our mammal and compassionate brains?
- **Critical Thinking and Consciousness.**
- **Community.**
- **Ceremony and Celebration.**
- **Courage.**
- **Character and Chakra Development.**

With these ten Cs, we have a curriculum that gets kids excited and involved in learning again. We encourage the students to create DVDs, rap, poetry, theater, and music around these themes and in the process they learn skills that can serve them for years to come. Once teachers have awakened this excitement, children will be motivated to learn the three Rs and all that follows. I hope you consider our work when your administration tackles the Reinventing of Education.

Thank you for your attention. ■

Dr. Matthew Fox is director of the YELLAWE project in Oakland, California and author of twenty-nine books including Creativity: Where the Divine and the Human Meet and The Hidden Spirituality of Men.

John Geyman on Seizing the Moment for National Health Insurance

FIRST OFF, CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND YOUR PARTY ON YOUR SWEEPING ELECTION RESULTS! Together with a sizable majority of Americans, I am again hopeful for the future of our country. My special concern, however, is for our failing health care system and how it is pricing health care beyond the reach of ordinary Americans. Our system has come to the point where none of the many incremental reforms being proposed will work. The business model of insurance has failed, and we need to rebuild the system on a social insurance model.

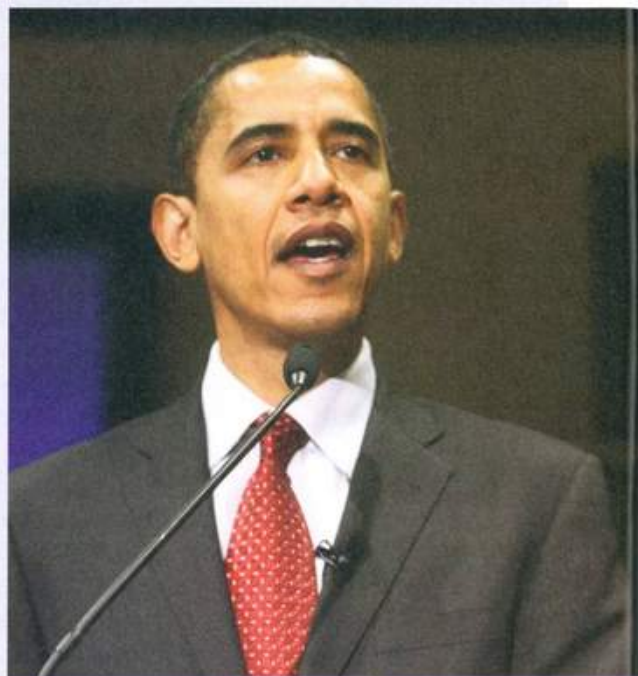
Let me be direct. Although we have many dedicated health professionals, an abundance of the latest technologies, and many fine hospitals, health care has become just another commodity to be bought and sold in a deregulated market based on ability to pay, not medical need. As you well know, industry profits handsomely from the status quo, raking in money through insurance, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and so on. Industry has a war chest to defend itself and demonstrates its political power each time any new reform is brought up.

But the situation has become dire. There is no end in sight in controlling health care costs as they soar upwards at three or four times the cost of living and family incomes. We have had three decades of incremental attempts to rein in costs, including managed care and consumer-directed health care. None have worked. We have a solution in plain sight—single-payer National Health Insurance (NHI). Market stakeholders are fighting it fiercely, but it's the only real reform that has a chance to work.

Most of your advisers will likely caution you that NHI is too radical for Americans to accept, that you need to be more centrist, and that it is not politically feasible. But therein lies your trap. You will be persuaded to add one more incremental attempt to fix things, which will not work, will cost more than ever, will delay real reform, and will add to the pain of so many along the way. Your moment of opportunity will have been lost.

Beyond ideology, these facts support NHI as the treatment of choice in 2009.

- Premiums alone for private health insurance have grown by more than 100 percent since 2000, and are projected to consume *all* of average household income by 2025, clearly an impossibility way before then.
- According to the Milliman Medical Index, the typical American family of four spent \$15,600 on total health care costs in 2008, fully one-quarter of the typical combined family income of \$60,000; most consider 10 percent of family income to be the threshold of underinsurance.
- The administrative overhead of private insurers is five to nine times higher than not-for-profit Medicare (average for commercial carriers 19.9 percent, investor-owned Blues 26.5 percent, Medicare 3 percent).
- The inefficiency and bureaucracy of our 1,300 private insurers are not sustainable (e.g., according to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, there are 17,000 different health plans in Chicago).
- Private insurers offer much less choice than traditional Medicare; there are near-monopolies in 95 percent of HMO/PPO metropolitan markets, enough to trigger anti-trust concerns by the United States Department of Justice.




**AFFORDABLE
HEALTH CARE
FOR ALL**

- Because of costs, about 75 million Americans are either uninsured or underinsured, with large segments of the population foregoing necessary care and having worse health care outcomes; the United States now ranks nineteenth among nineteen industrialized countries in reducing preventable deaths from amenable causes.
- Wall Street is already questioning the future prospects of the private insurance industry; as of November 18, 2008, the average share prices of the top five private insurers were down by between 60 percent and 77 percent, compared to the Standard and Poor's 42 percent.

I expect that none of this is news to you, but what is neglected by almost all economists, "experts," and pundits is that there is already plenty of money in the system, that we waste about one-third of the health care dollar on our inefficient multipayer financing system and on unnecessary care, and that *NHI will save money, not cost more*. NHI is the most fiscally responsible thing we can do now about health care. The Conyers bill in the House (HR 676) will be financed by payroll and progressive income taxes that will be less than what individuals and employers now pay. The health insurance industry is being propped up by government subsidies to the employer-based system and to privatized public programs. NHI can save some \$350 billion through administrative simplification, while offering coverage for all necessary care, full choice of provider and hospital, and mechanisms for cost containment through bulk purchasing, negotiated fees, and global budgets.

NHI by itself will not solve all of our health care problems, but it will provide a structure (as no incremental approach can) to enable other necessary steps. These include acceptance of health care as a right, transition to a not-for-profit system, reimbursement reform, rebuilding of primary care, evidence-based technology assessment, and quality improvement. None of this will be possible by using reforms that leave an obsolete private insurance industry in place, as is more fully discussed in my most recent book *Do Not Resuscitate: Why the Health Insurance Industry Is Dying, and How We Must Replace It*.

FDR almost went for NHI in the mid-1930s, but he backed off, mainly due to the AMA's opposition. Today, the AMA is marginalized with membership of no more than 30 percent of physicians, and a majority of American physicians now support NHI. Implementing NHI in your presidency can be your FDR-size legacy. It has become an economic, moral, and social imperative. Overnight NHI can bind us together as one society, all of us in the same boat. We need it. We can afford it. *Yes, we can!* ■

John P. Geyman, MD, is professor emeritus of family medicine at the University of Washington, and past president of Physicians for a National Health Program. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine.

Jonathan Granoff on Nuclear Weapons

A TWO-CLASS WORLD, WITH NUCLEAR WEAPON "HAVES" AND "HAVE NOTS," IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE cooperation needed to effectively protect the global commons, address crushing poverty, and ensure sustainable development.

We all depend upon the same climate, oceans, and rainforests for sustenance. To protect these living systems, as well as address systemic poverty, legally verifiable and enforceable cooperative regimes are necessary. If one country can dump toxins in the ocean, all can register ships under that country's jurisdiction and similarly pollute. If one country has nuclear weapons, others will want and eventually get them. Global norms must be established to effectively address global challenges.

Bridges of cooperation are needed more than ever, and nuclear weapons build walls. To expect countries to forsake short-term economic opportunities for long-term environmental responsibility while being second-class security citizens is unrealistic.

Nuclear weapons are more hazardous than any problem they seek to solve. To use them against another nuclear weapon state is suicidal, to use them against a state without them is patently immoral, and they have no utility against terrorists. Their possession by a handful of states is the greatest stimulant to their proliferation. The proposition that they can be retained in perpetuity and not be used by accident or design defies reason. Any use would be unacceptably catastrophic. There is no room for error.

By now 182 countries have forsworn nuclear weapons, and the entire southern hemisphere is covered by nuclear

weapons-free zones. It is time that the entire world be freed from the risk these weapons pose.

The practical and moral imperatives for their elimination converge in this historic moment. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon set forth a consensus agenda in his October 24, 2008, presentation, *Contagious Doctrine of Deterrence Has Made Non-Proliferation More Difficult*; we urge your leadership to help its realization. The Secretary General's proposals include the following:

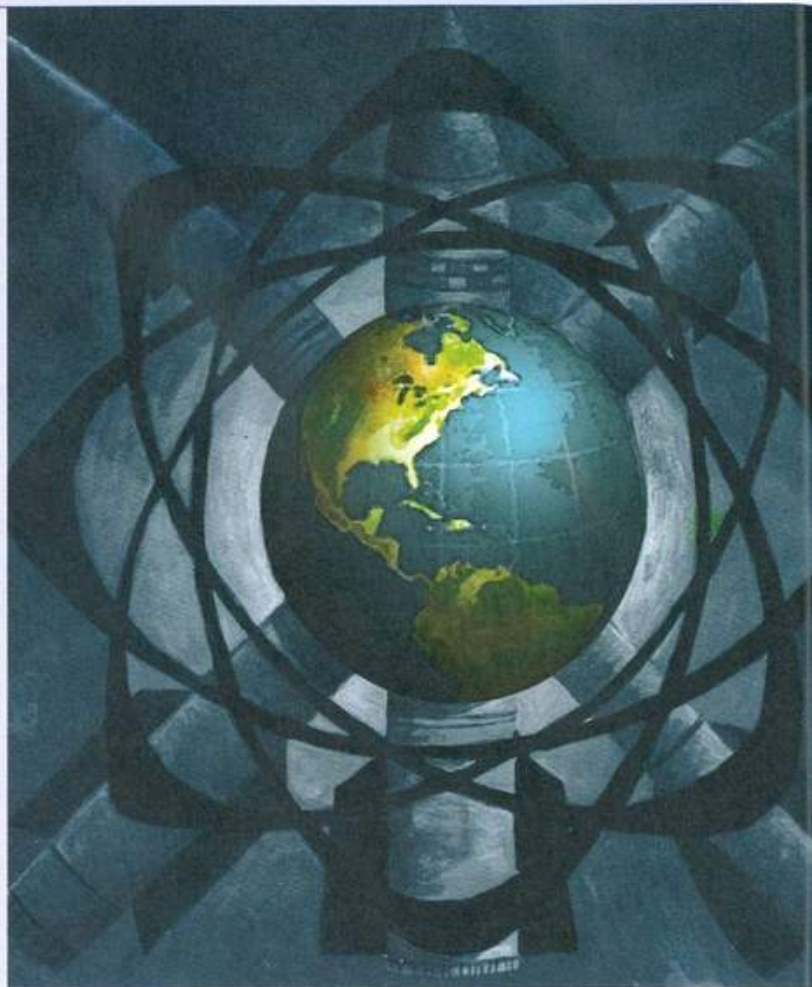
1. All states party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty should fulfill nuclear disarmament obligations through either multiple instruments or a nuclear weapons convention.
2. Nuclear weapon states should unambiguously assure nonnuclear weapon states they will not be subject to threat or use of nuclear weapons.
3. Nuclear weapon states should strengthen the "rule of law" by bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force and start negotiations on a fissile material treaty immediately, expand nuclear weapons-free zones, and adopt the International Atomic Energy Agency's strengthened safeguards and additional protocols.
4. Nuclear weapons states should improve the transparency and accountability of their nuclear arsenals.
5. Establish a ban on weaponization of space and convening by the UN General Assembly of a World Summit on disarmament, nonproliferation, and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction.

Progress could be enhanced if the Joint Chiefs of Staff were affirmatively tasked to work with three security alliance counterparts—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; ANZUS, which involves Australia, New Zealand, and the United States; and JASA, the Japan-America Security Alliance. The Joint Chiefs of Staff should develop a technical plan to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world. The Department of State should also be unambiguously instructed to advance diplomatic efforts to this end, and the president should promptly announce that the United States will never use a nuclear weapon first.

Clearly, accomplishing ratification of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would bring positive change internationally and lend credibility to disarmament efforts. These positive effects would be fully undermined if new nuclear weapons warheads or new methods of testing were authorized. Moreover, United States leadership in advancing cooperative security must be extended into outer space to prevent its weaponization, which would stimulate another arms race.

These modest efforts will enhance the rule of law, make us all safer, and bring about the cooperative security system that the world requires. These bridges among us and to a safer future will be America's gift. ■

Jonathan Granoff, president of the Global Security Institute, is an award-winning screenwriter and author who speaks worldwide about the legal, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of human development and security, with a focus on the threat posed by nuclear weapons. www.gsinstitute.org.



Arthur Green on National Repentance

AMERICA NEEDS A REVOLUTION IN VALUES. THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN PROVIDES A TERRIBLE burden for your administration; we wish you Godspeed in response to this challenge. But the downturn also provides a moment of extraordinary opportunity for a nation to examine itself, to question where its values have gone astray, and to bring about an event of collective national repentance, a term from the religious vocabulary that I am suggesting you use in a political/social context. In what areas does America need to repent? You know them well, but let me highlight a few:

- The pollution of the term “democracy.” We have made it less about government by the people’s will and more about laissez-faire capitalism and the unfettered free-market economy. We need to redeem “democracy” from meaning “anything that is good for American interests.” Help us to repent of this perversion of our most precious legacy. The exporting of democracy has to be undertaken carefully and responsibly, and always with a sense of its true meaning in mind.
- The fear of the “other.” Thank God, we live in a world of rich diversity, culturally and spiritually, as well as biologically. America is the world’s most diverse nation-state; your presidency must be used as an ongoing celebration and underscoring of that fact. Ending “the politics of fear” means teaching white Americans (including those who did not vote for you) not to fear blacks; Christian and Jewish Americans not to be afraid of Muslims; heterosexual Americans not to fear gays or gay marriage; Anglo-Americans not to fear the sound of Spanish, etc. You can do much of this by personal example. Please do. But policy in many areas will encourage this repentance as well.
- Self-indulgence and comfort-seeking. The amassing of wealth and the comforts it brings have become our society’s obsession. They are now perversely described as “the American dream.” I urge you to set a tone of modesty in the way you live, even in the White House, especially in these difficult times for so many. You will be greatly admired for it. But turn it into an opportunity for moral education, as well. We can do with less, and we will all need to do with less if our planet and species are to survive. Help us—by policy and example—to repent of our overconsumption and our dangerous assumption of comfort as a “right.”
- The denigration of “service.” This period of high unemployment is a moment to be seized, a time to create an array of nonmilitary options for serving our society and helping to re-establish a sense of the American Community, one that reaches across lines of class, faith, and ethnicity. There has to be a value in life to compete with making money or “getting ahead” in society. The ideal of serving others needs to be brought to the fore as a core value of American life.
- Our harried lifestyle. We need to make time for rest, reflection, and cultivating the inner life. We Jews have a great religious institution in our Sabbath. One day each week the truly pious turn off their cell phones, computers, and TV screens, and they retreat wholly from the commercial culture that so overwhelms us. Time is spent alone, with family, and in community. This cannot be directly copied or legislated; we have rightly rejected the “Blue Laws” approach to an American Sabbath. But there is something important to be learned and taught here: the importance of preserving and restoring our sacred sense of self and our basic human relations as they were in pre-electronic age times. Conservatives and religious progressives will have differing visions as to what those truths are, but they will need to hear and learn from one another. You might do well to create and actively head a national commission, made up of religious figures and social scientists, on how to preserve essential human values in our high-speed era. ■

Arthur Green is Irving Brudnick Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Religion and Rector of the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College. His newest book, Radical Judaism: Hasidism for a New Era, is soon to appear from Yale University Press.

Robert Inchausti on Gitmo and Presidential Discourse

HERE ARE TWO SMALL PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW YOU MIGHT PROCEED:

1. Send John McCain to close down Gitmo, and let him give a fiery, historical speech as to why Americans don't torture.
2. Appear on television from time to time with real cultural figures—people like Richard Rodriguez, Cornel West, Michael Lerner, Robert Bly, or Camille Paglia—and talk with them about ideas, not just political issues. Let the country see what an educated leader looks like, so that intellectual frauds will never again be taken seriously—setting a new standard for presidential discourse that will give the Sarah Palins of the world second thoughts before they presume to run for national office. ■

Robert Inchausti is the author of The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People, Subversive Orthodoxy, Thomas Merton's American Prophecy, and Spitwad Sutras: Classroom Teaching as Sublime Vocation.

Catherine Keller on the Green Shift

WHAT AN UNBEARABLE, INHUMAN WEIGHT—THE WEIGHT OF A PLANET IN PERIL—HAS FALLEN UPON your shoulders. Please keep working out! Also please know that we know you are not the messiah. You are neither the first nor the second coming. We get this; we are managing our expectations. I hear your favorite theologian is Niebuhr, the great realist, who will help steer you away from the messianic pretensions, the imperial self-righteousness, to which our nation, born in revolt against empire, is ironically prone.

However, here is the mystery, the wonder: you have actually stimulated a messianic force field. The wave of joy that spread across the world on November 4 has the character of messianic hope: not for (another) savior but for a world of just and peaceable relations in harmony with the earth. "And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." The sort of people who read *Tikkun* had never given up on that hope but had pretty much divorced it from the United States government! The messianic moment is what another theologian, Tillich, called the *kairos* time—different from mere *chronos* time. New possibilities break into history, not to end history but to change it.

That world-wave of hope has not dissipated but is deepening. It has the power that secularism alone does not—to *shift* the messianic imperialism, like an electric field. Not because the religious Right will convert, but because at its fringes the youth are already shifting to creation care. Because the religious majorities of the world desire what you desire for the planet. And especially because a new, complex network of alliances—a multitude of multitudes spilling across all the traditional boundaries of class, race, gender, sex, religion, and species—has in you come to power. You are yourself a multitude, a manifold; as Walt Whitman, wild for democracy, wrote, "I am large, I contain multitudes."

Even as we watch you reach out toward politicians wary of those multitudes, we trust you—is it the "team of rivals" or "turn the other cheek"? We trust that the pragmatic satisfaction of these synergies will not exhaust but rather energize your cosmopolitan vision. Kennedy took us to the moon—which has above all given us a new and cosmic perspective on *the earth*. The *kairos* of your presidency is that of the earth: we stand at the moment when it is *not yet too late* to save ourselves from its radical degradation.

The moment will pass. *Either* you will have yielded (all too humanly, tragically, not intending) to the economic pressure to defer, deny, and downplay. Short-term realism will have triumphed over the reality of the shared future. For most people the International Panel on Climate Change science remains too abstract, too distant. Every other emergency feels more urgent. Against the current momentum of destruction, a wimpy effort will be as good as none. *Or* you will have grasped the opportunity in this crisis. Your staff will memorize Gore's gem, "The Climate for Change," an op-ed published on November 9 in the *New York Times*. You will lead this nation in leading the world to replace fossil fuels with carbon-free energy sources within this crucial decade. You will unleash entrepreneurial American know-how to bring on the Green New Deal. Corporations will get no more bailouts or tax breaks without committing to rigorous standards of worker rights and environmental protection. Little centers committed to building a green United States will appear in every neighborhood, largely staffed by volunteers, sharing concrete guidelines, tax breaks, and tips for conservation and *tikkun*. Fair trade coffee will be served;

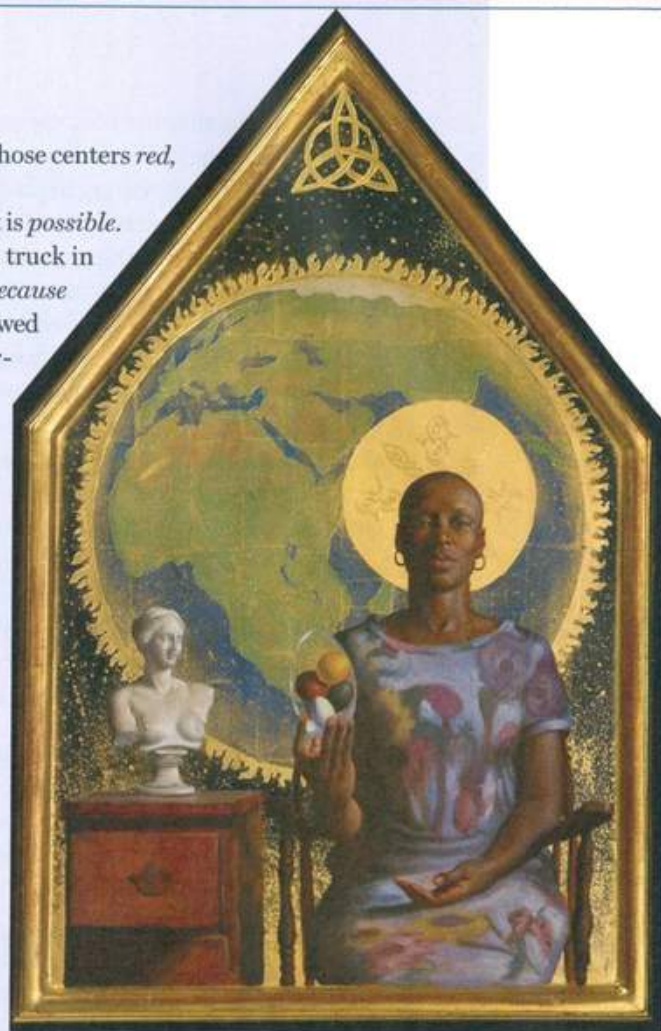
economic, social, and festive collaborations will be hatched. Paint those centers *red, white, blue—and green*. Fire, air, water, earth—the four elements!

At the tipping point of this *kairos*, we know that the Green Shift is *possible*. After all, your election had seemed to be the Impossible. You, sir, truck in the improbable! Indeed the change you will bring is possible only *because* we face the abyss. Perhaps every moment of new creation comes shadowed by apocalypse. Strangely, like the urge to jump off the cliff, Armageddon becomes a temptation. For instance, President Johnson's great civil rights legacy is tragically tainted by his escalation of the war in Vietnam. Having to demonstrate your "tough-mindedness," your "realism," you face a similar temptation with Afghanistan. We believe ("help thou my unbelief") that you can pull back from this brink. Yes, you can. Otherwise there will be no Green Shift. As Niebuhr knew too well, "love of the enemy" does not move straightforwardly into politics. We have to do with "the insights of a religion which knows that the law of love is an impossible possibility."

The biblical language of the new creation, the renewal of the heaven (which by the way meant "atmosphere") and the earth, of Shalom, or the common/wealth of God, justice for the vulnerable, love of the alien, is fraught with hope for a messianic age. Such ancient ideals are possibilities seeking partial—and realistic—realization. In process theology, we know that God will not realize them for us. She "lures" us to actualize the unprecedented. Yes, we can. Having been elected without exploiting Judeo-Christian symbols, you surely have earned the right to summon their mobilizing force. Of course, as Jefferson put it, "It is in our lives and not our words that our religion must be read."

Forgive me, dear president, if I have preached. I mean only to clap with the trees. ■

Catherine Keller is Professor of Constructive Theology at Drew University. Her books include *Apocalypse Now & Then*, *Face of the Deep*, *God and Power*, and *On the Mystery*.



The mother of the human multitude, and the earth as sacred. "Black Madonna—Mitochondrial Eve" by David Hewson. Mitochondrial Eve is the most recent common ancestor of all humans via the mitochondrial DNA pathway. She is believed to have lived about 140,000 years ago in East Africa.

23 kt. gold water gilding/oil on wood, 29 x 20 in., courtesy of www.galleryminerva.com.

George Lakoff: A Presidential Commission on Parenting and Its Effects

YOUR FATHER'S DAY SPEECH WAS, TO ME, AS IMPORTANT AS ANY YOU'VE GIVEN. YOU OUTLINED THE duties of a parent: *Responsibility*—starting with yourself and extending to your family, your community, and your country. *Aspiration*—doing your best and teaching your children to do their best. And perhaps most important, *empathy*—caring about and for your spouse, children, neighbors, and countrymen. If we don't teach our children empathy, we will have a generation of people who don't care about anybody else.

That message seemed to be at the heart of your campaign: empathy, responsibility for oneself and others, and aspiration. Those were the values, spoken or implicit, behind every speech, and I assume they will be the values that inspire your administration, because they are the values on which American democracy rests.

From my knowledge of child development, I think you got it just right. But that is not what is presently taught about parenting in America. Hundreds of millions of dollars are now spent on parenting movements of the opposite sort. The James Dobsons and Dr. Luras and right-wing fatherhood movements teach a very

different, and ultimately harmful, approach to parenting: one based on absolute authority and obedience, painful physical punishment, individual (not social) responsibility, and a lack of empathy for those unlike you. Studies have shown that such parenting has harmful effects in many arenas, starting with spousal and child abuse, and various other forms of violence, as well as the association of masculinity with the use of force.

It would cost hardly anything at all to set up a Presidential Commission on Parenting and its Effects, charged with reviewing the research on forms of parenting, their effects on children and others, bringing together parenting groups that are beneficial to children, planning a White House conference, and producing educational materials. An additional possibility would be to have a parenting section in Health and Human Services, with a relatively small but high-quality staff, coordinating with the commission and implementing its recommendations.

It would seem that these would fall under what you have called “no-brainers”—very inexpensive initiatives in the public interest with broad effects that can be done with a stroke of the pen, with as little or as much fanfare as you think is prudent.

Ultimately, there could be major political and economic effects. My own research suggests that the ideas behind strict, authoritarian parenting map directly onto the ideology that governed the Bush administration—religious fundamentalism, market fundamentalism, militarism, and authoritarianism in government (the unitary executive)—just as your parenting vision of responsibility, aspiration, and empathy govern your own view of what American democracy should, and can, be.

You have the opportunity to achieve a lot at very little expense. ■

George Lakoff is the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Distinguished Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley.

Jonathan Lear on Abolishing Torture

AS I LEFT YOM KIPPUR SERVICES THIS YEAR, standing on the steps of my temple, I looked across the street at your home, and thought: perhaps *you* will finally get us out of the torture business.

There is no more pressing moral issue facing the United States. Torture is a crime against humanity and it is a blatant violation of the most fundamental American ideal: that all humans are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights. In the previous administration, as is now well known, it became U.S. policy to trample on those rights—to destroy the dignity of prisoners of war, destroy their will, turn them into helpless animals, drive them to the edge of insanity, and torture them. Your administration is admirably committed to abolishing torture. But given the ambiguities, loopholes, secrets, and evasions that have obscured U.S. policy, we need a public accounting of the rules by which we will comport and constrain ourselves with prisoners of war. This has become necessary due to the obscene double-bookkeeping—by lawmakers and lawyers at their worst—by which we have laws that officially forbid torture but let it in through a back door by means of preposterous definitions and semantic wordplay. Torture is not allowed, but “enhanced interrogation techniques” are a different matter. These



“enhanced techniques” have included torture by simulated drowning. Even to call it “waterboarding” is to contribute to an atmosphere in which it is permitted. It sounds like an activity at Club Med. Perhaps the name helps explain why top Democratic members of Congress who were briefed on this technique went along with it. It’s as though the activity were OK, just so long as no one used the T-word. This is what moral depravity looks like: treating evil as something you can get around if you’ve got a good dictionary.

As I write, it has just been reported that John Brennan, a former top aide to George Tenet and one of your advisors on national security issues, has withdrawn himself from consideration for head of the CIA or National Intelligence. But look at the language the *New York Times* used to float this possibility. It says Mr. Brennan was “present at the creation” of the “controversial detention and interrogation program,” but now he has “distanced himself” from that program. What do these mushy phrases mean? As if one needed one more sign of the decline of the *Times*, these phrases blur the most elementary moral distinctions. By reading them one cannot tell whether Mr. Brennan is a behind-the-scenes hero, whether he is trying to stop this moral outrage, or whether he is responsible for torture and crimes against humanity. Does “distance himself” mean follow Tenet’s example and flatter whoever happens to be president? What exactly does one do when one “distances” oneself? Is that what Hitler is doing in hell—“distancing” himself from his attempt to exterminate the Jews?

Symbolic gestures—notably, closing Guantánamo Bay—are important, but they are not enough. We need to know what it means to be against torture. In effect, the policies of the past administration have placed two groups outside the rule of law: our torturers and their victims. It will be a huge challenge for your administration to bring these groups back into civil society. At the moment, the public knows there are “black sites”—another euphemism—but has no idea how many people are in them, how they got there, or what has been and is being done to the people in them. The overwhelming incentive for those who run these sites is not to let the prisoners out. Will the prisoners ever be accounted for? How? Will there ever be any fair evaluation of their guilt or innocence?

When it comes to torture, the country as a whole is in need of moral leadership. In the two-year period between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of the U.S. population favoring torture of suspected terrorists has jumped from 36 percent to 44 percent (according to the University of Maryland’s Program on International Attitudes). Only 53 percent of our citizens support a ban on torture. That statistic probably influenced some members of Congress to turn a blind eye or implicitly condone the use of torture. The lesson should be the opposite. The statistic is evidence that, when it comes to the treatment of prisoners of war, we have lost our moral compass. One of the most important jobs of the president of the United States is to educate the American people, to help restore a sense of moral direction.

If you drive sixteen blocks due south from your home, you will come to the Oak Woods Cemetery. There you will find a mound—a monument to the approximately 5,000 Confederate soldiers who died as prisoners of war at Camp Douglas, which existed nearby on the south side of Chicago. They died not fighting the Union Army, but while in its custody. They died in appalling conditions of cholera, dysentery, gangrene, and starvation. Their names are listed along with their regiments. Here lie the remnants of bodies of men who died for ideals inimical to those of human equality and dignity that you and I share. Yet standing at the grave it is abundantly clear that they should not have died as they did. It seems to me that you have President Lincoln in your sights: that is the kind of historical stature to which you aspire. I suggest you take the family on a trip to that mound. In the treatment of our prisoners of war, there is one way you can outstrip Lincoln more or less immediately. ■

Jonathan Lear is the John U. Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought and in the philosophy department at the University of Chicago.



Robert W. McChesney and Ben Scott on the Centrality of Media Reform

WHATEVER ISSUE TOPS YOUR LIST OF PRIORITIES, REAL PROGRESS WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE UNLESS we first change our media system. Currently, access to communications and control over media content are vested in the hands of corporate titans. Commercial imperatives direct the system to the exclusion of all civic values. Even as technology promises to revitalize the media, the country is poorly informed, polarized, and marinated in lowest-common-denominator fluff and junk. Without a new direction in media policy, progressive and peaceful resolution of the many other serious problems before the American people will be considerably more difficult.

To improve the media, we need to fix the laws and policies that shape communications. That won't happen without widespread public involvement. In this letter, we present a set of guiding principles and specific recommendations that would truly reform our media and, in turn, transform our democracy.

1. Our media/communication systems are profit-driven, but they are not free-market. Today's media system is the result of extraordinary direct and indirect public subsidies. These include copyright protection; licenses to use the public airwaves for radio, TV, satellite, and cell phone companies; permission to use the public rights-of-way for the cable and telephone industries; and direct cash subsidies for telecommunications—just to name a few. The problem is not that these subsidies exist, but that the policies that produce them are made by powerful corporate interests with minimal public involvement or consent. The balance of public service and private interests must be restored.

Recommendation: Restore the original mission of the Federal Communications Commission as a guardian of the public interest. The FCC must become a twenty-first-century agency focused on the digital media marketplace of ideas and commerce, with a commitment to public engagement, transparency, and accountability.

2. Our democracy is premised upon the notion of a well-informed electorate with a diverse marketplace of ideas. Yet the current media system is failing to provide the news and information we need to hold our government and corporate leaders accountable. Consolidation of media ownership has centralized control over production; to boost the bottom line, media giants have gutted newsrooms. Local, international, and investigative journalism no longer makes good business sense. Professional standards have weakened under commercial pressure. Too much of what passes for political journalism is simply analysis, spin, and pointless prognostication. We must recommit ourselves to a healthy news business through public policies that promote a diversity of ownership and content distribution.

Recommendations:

- Support ownership limits and public oversight to foster more diverse, competitive, and local ownership of radio, TV, and cable channels.
- Open antitrust investigations into vertically integrated media companies that control production and distribution through anti-competitive practices.
- Authorize the license of more noncommercial, low-power FM radio stations in communities nationwide.
- Guarantee channel space and sufficient funding for public access TV stations in every community.
- Reduce postal rates on public affairs magazines, the seedbeds of investigative journalism and serious political thought.

3. Our democracy requires both a diverse commercial media and a vibrant noncommercial alternative. The advertiser, not the content creator, is king in today's media. The civic commitment to media designed for children and for unbiased public information has withered. The hyper-commercialism of our times, which extends now to the earliest years of childhood, is a dangerous trend that requires checks and balances.

Recommendations:

- At a minimum, *quintuple* the federal funding for public and community broadcasting, to at least \$3 billion annually—earmarking money for children's and public affairs programming. Funding should come from fees paid by commercial licensees to the public airwaves.

- Ban all advertising on broadcast and cable TV programs where over 33 percent of the viewership is under the age of twelve. This is similar to the rules in many European nations.

4. *The Internet and the digital communication revolution hold tremendous democratic promise, but they won't reach it without the right policies.* The Internet is the most transformative engine of free speech and free market commerce since the printing press. It is the first media form that is decentralized, owned by no one, and entirely driven by the collective desires of consumers and citizens. Yet control over access to the Internet is almost exclusively the domain of a handful of giant cable and telephone companies. These companies operate in highly profitable, barely competitive markets with extraordinary control over the flow of information in this country.

As a result, our broadband networks are slower and more expensive than most of the developed world. But fast, affordable, universal internet access is mandatory for the United States to advance politically, culturally, and economically. Protecting freedom of commerce online goes hand in hand with protecting the free market of digital ideas—a central countermeasure to the ossification of traditional media. Consumer choice, free speech, innovation, privacy, and the closing of the “digital divide” must be the hallmarks of technology policy.

Recommendations

- Establish “Network Neutrality” rules that guarantee free speech and a free market on the Internet by prohibiting discrimination, manipulation, and interference by network owners like Comcast or AT&T.
- Restore competition to the market in high-speed internet access to break the hold of the cable-telephone duopoly on the nation’s “broadband” infrastructure.
- Transition all public subsidies for telephone networks to fund infrastructure to bring the benefits of broadband to all Americans.

Some of these recommendations can be implemented immediately. Others would require study and further debate. In combination, they would provide for an affordable, universal, high-speed Internet, as well as a far richer and deeper democratic media culture without censorship.

These policies would contribute to fostering economic growth, informing public debate about the crucial decisions that confront us, rebalancing commercial and civic priorities in media, and enriching American democracy with the currency of new ideas. ■

Robert W. McChesney is the Gutsell Endowed Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has written over a dozen books on media. Ben Scott is Policy Director at Free Press.



Bill McKibben on the One Crucial Number: 350

IT'S A PLEASURE—A DEEP COMFORT—TO HAVE A PRESIDENT WHO IS SMARTER THAN MOST OF THE REST OF us, a president who will be able to deal with complexity. But I have to tell you that, in one sense, there's never been a president who's taken office with a simpler job. I can knock it down to a single number—a number that will set the boundaries for many of the major decisions you must make in what is clearly a perilous time.

That number is 350, and a year ago no one knew it. Shaken by the rapid melt of Arctic sea ice and spurred by mounds of new paleo-climatic data, our leading climatologist at that time, James Hansen at NASA (now one of your employees!), calculated that 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was the absolute maximum "if humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on earth is adapted." Which, one assumes, you would.

If so, you have your work cut out for you. Because we're already past that number. Two centuries of burning coal and gas and oil have filled the atmosphere with 387 parts per million of carbon dioxide—that's why the Arctic is

melting. It's why we're seeing huge increases in storms, why mosquitoes are spreading across Asia and South America, why Greenland is beginning to disintegrate. Forget, say, terrorism—climate change is the one civilization-shaking challenge we face.

The policy implications are large. Essentially, we must get off fossil fuel very, very soon—Hansen said that if humans are still burning coal by 2030, we'll never get back to 350 because we'll have triggered so many feedback loops. That's the biggest job humans have ever undertaken, probably by an order of magnitude: it means every other decision will need to be made in its light. Economy cratering? The way out must be through a radical attempt to create green jobs. Not necessarily because it's the best way to save the economy (though it may well be), but because any other tactic will use up time we can't squander. Foreign policy? Jobs one, two, and three must all be reaching an international agreement that cajoles and bribes China and India into slowing their consumption of coal. Budget policy? If you can't figure out a way to make the U.S. military a climate-fighting force, there's probably not going to be enough cash to get the job done.

There's no question that this new number complicates your life. It sets profound boundaries—boundaries that truly won't yield to rhetoric. (Rhetoric is good stuff—it can change human hearts and minds, so by all means keep it up. It's made it a happy year for me. But it can't change the laws of physics). On the other hand, this number simplifies your job as well. Taken seriously, it immediately closes off a number of paths down which you might otherwise wander.

But it will also require an almost incredible level of nobility.

The die will finally be cast during your presidency: the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Rajendra Pachauri, said recently that if we haven't begun to make fundamental change by 2012, it will be too late to reverse trends (2012—there's a number!). But the worst effects won't be felt until much later, in someone else's reign. It's a moral test of incredible dimension—will you take political pain without much hope of reaping the political reward? It's almost too much to ask, but only almost. ■

Bill McKibben is cofounder of 350.org, an international grassroots campaign organizing people everywhere to spread the 350 number. He is also a scholar in residence at Middlebury College, and author of Deep Economy.



Brian McLaren: Go Deeper

I AM SO THRILLED—AND RELIEVED—TO HAVE YOU AS PRESIDENT. THANKS FOR TAKING THE RISK AND running a great campaign, because we need your leadership at this moment in history.

As you take office, please remember that it's not always easy to tell the difference between a symptom and a disease.

That fact became clear to me a few years ago when I left the pastorate where I had served for twenty-four years. My first project was to research a book I had wanted to write for decades. I wanted to understand global crises—what's wrong with the world—so I could have some sense of the best, highest-leverage ways to make a positive difference. I grappled with any number of lists—from the eight Millennium Development Goals, to the UN's fifteen global challenges, to Rischard's twenty global problems, to the top ten problems of the Copenhagen Consensus.

One thing soon became clear: it's hard to distinguish between a cause and an effect, between a surface issue and a deeper problem.

That's why, if I could encourage you with one piece of counsel to maximize your impact, it would be this: *go deeper*. Seek to understand and deal not just with surface effects and symptoms but with deeper systemic causes and sociopolitical diseases. Our mutual friend Jim Wallis likes to say: "Don't go left. Don't go right. Go deeper." And that says it perfectly.

That leads to the question, "What are those deeper problems?" I believe that four deep, systemic dysfunctions are festering like an undiagnosed disease, creating the symptoms we keep treating without curing.

First is the crisis of the planet. Our affluent lifestyle, combined with a growing global population, makes us suck in more resources than the planet can provide, and we're pumping out more waste than the environment can neutralize. Global climate change, water pollution, the rush toward peak oil, the extinction of species, and the food crisis are all symptoms of this deeper disease. We need to imagine not just a new policy but also a new way of life, a new kind of economy. To begin with, we must move beyond a consumptive, extractive economy to a sustainable economy. But even better: we must go beyond sustainability to envision a *regenerative economy*—a way of life that leaves an even more beautiful, healthy, and productive planet for our children and grandchildren than the one we inherited.

Second is the crisis of poverty. Only about one-third of our planet shares in the remarkable (and unsustainable) affluence that we take for granted. The gap between the richest third and the poorest third is growing greater and greater. We who have been given much know that much is expected from us ... so we must focus on ways to help the poorest third of humanity. Aid and debt relief are key to helping them, but most important is fair trade—helping the poor of our inner cities and rust belt regions become part of



thriving regenerative economies. We must do the same for our brothers and sisters in Africa, Latin America, and Asia as well. Selfish prosperity is short-lived and insecure; deep prosperity demands that we show concern for our neighbors in need.

Third is the crisis of peace. When the gap between rich and poor grows too great, both rich and poor arm themselves with increasingly catastrophic weapons. That's why we need a three-dimensional security strategy. Yes, we need *defense*, but we also need *diplomacy* and *development* in at least equal measures. Our faith tells us that it's the peacemakers who are blessed, not the war-makers and weapons-manufacturers.

Finally is the crisis of purpose. We need a spiritual story to live by that gives direction and meaning to our lives. Our consumerist society offers only a hollow story of affluence and comfort and hedonism. Our political parties too often offer only narratives of conflict and fear. Tragically, our religions too often only baptize the hollow stories provided by our culture or seek to add spiritual products and services to a consumerist mindset. But at the heart of our faiths, this deep story runs: that our good Creator is up to good in our world and invites us to be co-creators and co-laborers who seek peace through reconciliation, justice, and generosity. You won the election by articulating this deep story of hope and collaboration over a competing story of fear and fighting, and I hope you will keep articulating this better story from your bully pulpit.

You won as a thinking and caring president, not just a fighting or ideological president. So my counsel to you is to keep going deep. Keep focusing on the systemic diseases that need to be healed. Government can't solve all those problems, but a leader like you can lead people everywhere to engage them courageously and creatively, with faith, hope, and love. ■

Brian McLaren is the author of Everything Must Change. See brianmclaren.net.

Khalid Latif and Haroon Moghul on Muslims in America

AS MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN MUSLIM community, one of your strongest pillars of support, we congratulate you on the historic occasion of your election. It has long been a Muslim tradition for the ruler to hear advice from well-intentioned persons of faith. Permit us then to remind the president that the state of our community's participation in the democratic process will reflect the full promise of your campaign and have profound effects on America's relationship with the Muslim world.

After the tragic events of September 11, the Bush administration neither seized nor created opportunities for cooperation with the Muslim world in the fight against extremism and its causes. Instead, the idea of a "clash of civilizations" was allowed to enter the mainstream without rebuttal, persuading far too many to believe that irreconcilable differences separated Muslims and Westerners—never mind that millions of Westerners are Muslims. Repeatedly, our community denounced those radical elements that claimed to speak and act in the name of our tradition. But such denunciations were rarely noticed by either our politicians or our media; indeed, the latter often only reproduced a narrative of civilizational conflict, offending peaceable Muslims abroad while leaving American Muslims feeling unwelcome in their own country.

The facts of this election belie any talk of essential and



eternal difference, whether promoted by intemperate voices on Western or Muslim fringes. Despite repeated attempts to marginalize our community and misrepresent our beliefs, we did not lose hope in American democracy. Nor have we been moved by a supposedly Islamic position claiming, with little substance or scholarship in its support, that popular governance is fundamentally irreligious. On November 7, 2008, the *New York Times* interviewed a cross-section of our student population and found that our membership passionately and overwhelmingly stood behind your candidacy. Nationally, the results were the same. On November 4, a record 95 percent of registered Muslim voters exercised their right and responsibility; 89 percent of us voted for you.

But our passion was not unqualified. American Muslims have waited to hear from you a direct repudiation of the hurtful language of recent years. As we have rejected violent misinterpretations of our faith, we hope that our commitment to democratic principles and ideals will be appropriately recognized. Our community asks for a clear sign that we are welcome to participate as equals in the great conversations of our time. Such an acknowledgement from your office, that our faith and values are of abiding benefit to this country and the world, will serve as a powerful first step towards strengthening America at home and meeting our goals and objectives abroad. The American Muslim community is a far more powerful asset than is given credit, a model of meaningful integration, hard work, and outstanding achievement.

We, as American Muslims, are eager to serve our country. You need only call on us.

May Allah bless you, and may Allah bless America. ■

Imam Latif is the executive director and chaplain of the Islamic Center at New York University. He has served as Muslim chaplain at both NYU and Princeton. In 2007, Mayor Bloomberg appointed Latif, then 24, the first Muslim chaplain of the NYPD. Haroon Moghul is a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University, focusing on Muslim India. His first novel, The Order of Light, was released by Penguin in 2006. He serves as director of public relations at the Islamic Center.

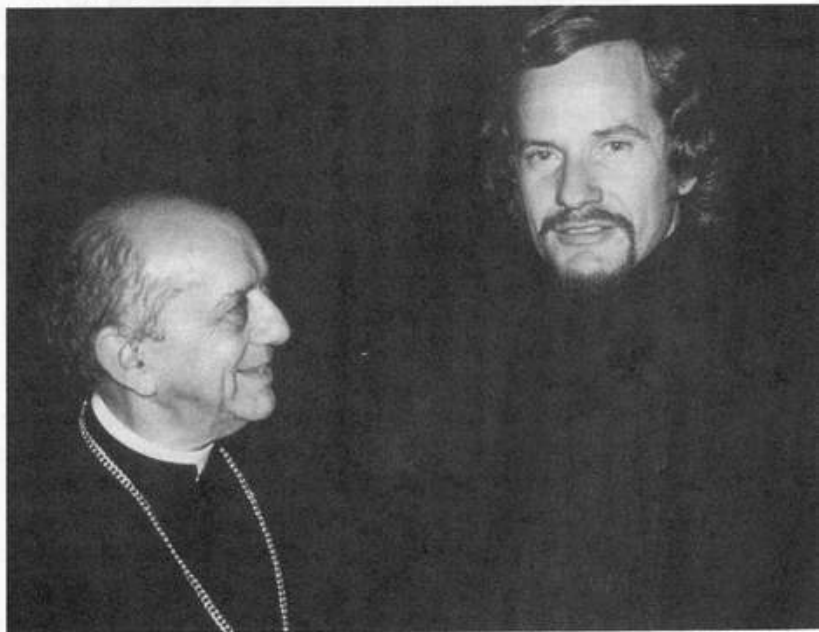
Fred Morris on Compensating Victims of American Torture

PLEASE APOLOGIZE TO AND COMPENSATE EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS BEEN TORTURED BY THE United States government, even those found guilty of illegal acts.

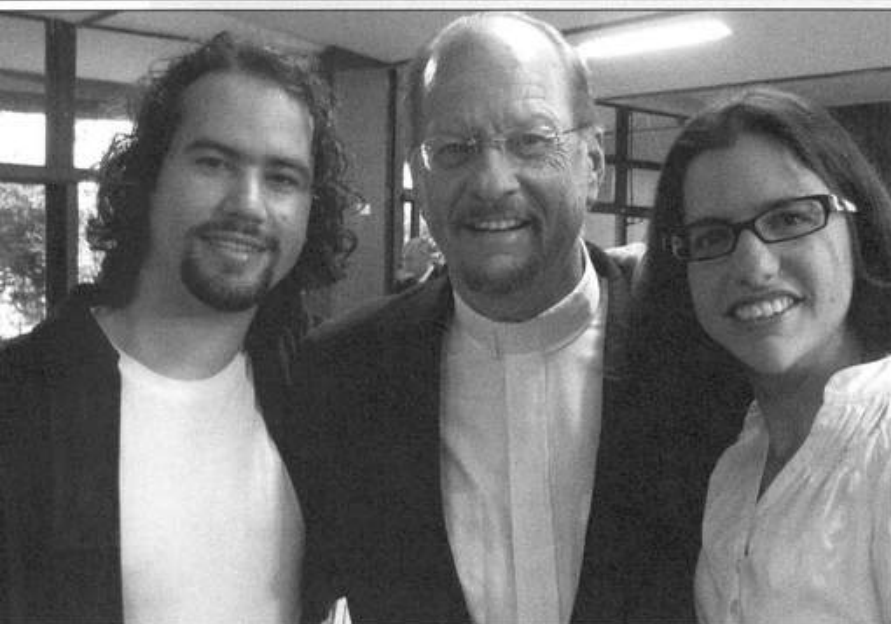
My own experience has proved that such an apology is possible and will be of incalculable value to the tortured, to their families and communities, and also to people in the United States who watched their government go so painfully astray. You will need to establish a commission to do this, and perhaps my story may help. This is what happened to me:

I went to Brazil in 1964 as a missionary of the United Methodist Church. On April 1, 1964, the Brazilian army overthrew the elected government, with the well-documented participation of the United States, and established a brutal military dictatorship that lasted until 1985. During that period, thousands of Brazilians were tortured and hundreds were murdered.

On September 30, 1974, I was kidnapped and held in the torture chambers of the Brazilian army in Recife, where I was working closely with the Catholic Archbishop, Dom Helder Camara. I was never charged with any crimes, but the Archbishop was considered by the army to be their enemy because of his frequent international denunciations of their use of



Dom Helder Camara, left, and Fred Morris, October 30, 1974, after Morris was tortured by the Brazilian army.



Fred Morris, flanked by his son Erick and daughter Jessica, in Brasilia on September 26, 2008, the 100th anniversary of Dom Helder Camara's birth, when the Brazilian government's Amnesty Commission formally apologized to him for the torture.

Brazil, John Crimmins, and the consul in Recife, Richard Brown, I was expelled from Brazil by presidential decree and forbidden ever to return. In 1988, a later president of Brazil, Ulysses Guimarães, revoked the expulsion decree, permitting me to return to Brazil. And on September 26, 2008, the hundredth anniversary of Dom Helder's birth, I went to Brasilia at the request of the Ministry of Justice of the Brazilian government, where they formally apologized to me and to twelve other persons who had similar experiences, for what was done by their predecessors and asked for my (our) *forgiveness!* And then they awarded each of us a lump sum amount of money and a lifetime pension as a gesture of compensation.

I cannot express what this meant to all of us after thirty-four years. The acknowledgement of the injustice and barbarity imposed on us and the request for forgiveness was nearly overwhelming to all of us and served to heal the open wounds we had been carrying all these years. The government's Amnesty Commission has been taking this action once or twice a week for the past twenty months and has asked forgiveness of several hundred persons to date.

I have no doubt that actions such as these by your administration would go far toward restoring some dignity and honor to the United States, which today is held in contempt by the whole world for the actions of its government in its now-infamous "war on terror," and the use of torture and "rendering" against persons suspected of actions or attitudes against our country. Even persons who have actually been involved in actions against our country do not deserve to be tortured. A civilized society cannot use such a practice for any reason, not even the specious one of gathering information to avoid terrorist actions. Experts from the CIA and the FBI have testified to the fact that torture does not produce reliable information.

The efforts of the Amnesty Commission of the Brazilian government are not only healing the victims of the military regime's old wounds—they are also helping the entire nation of Brazil to regain its dignity after the horrors of the military regime. I beg you to do the same for our nation as you begin the process of change in and for the United States.

On December 11, 1974, I was invited to testify before a congressional committee (Congressman Don Fraser's Committee on International Organizations and Movements within the House Committee on Foreign Affairs) about my experiences in Brazil. In that testimony I said the following: "Torture brutalizes and dehumanizes not only those who are tortured but also those who torture, those who are intimidated by the torture of others, and those who try to ignore the fact that torture exists."

You have the chance to make a real change. Please establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and begin the process of asking for forgiveness from our victims. ■

The Rev. Fred Morris served in Brazil for a decade as a missionary of the United Methodist church. In 1974 he was kidnapped, tortured, and expelled by the Brazilian army. In September the Brazilian government apologized to him and asked his forgiveness—and awarded him a lifetime pension. He now directs Faith Partners of the Americas.

torture and murder; between 1969 and 1974, the army kidnapped more than a dozen people who worked closely with Dom Helder in an effort to intimidate him and silence his criticism.

During my imprisonment, I was subjected to the same kinds of torture we have since seen at Abu Ghraib, principally beatings and electric shocks. This is not surprising, as my torturers bragged to me that they were graduates of the School of the Americas, then located in Panama, and now at Ft. Benning, Georgia, with a new name. The torturers claimed they had to torture us in order to save "Christian civilization" from "godless Communism."

After seventeen days, largely because of the international outcry at the kidnapping and torture of a United Methodist missionary from the United States (see *Time*, November 18, 1974), and the heroic efforts of the U.S. ambassador to

Joseph Nangle on Ending U.S. Imperialism

A PRELIMINARY MOMENT BEFORE THE RECENT G-20 MEETING IN WASHINGTON STRUCK ME AS enormously symbolic. President Bush stood alone on the portico of the White House as each of the delegates from around the world approached on a red carpet to greet him. It put me in mind of how centuries ago a Roman Caesar must have received representatives from far-flung areas of that empire.

The United States is the latest in a long line of imperial powers. The evidence for this is all around us: from our insistence on nuclear ascendancy, to our declared "right" to pre-emptive war, to our justification of torture, to the exaggerated efforts we make to be number one in the world economically, militarily, politically—we are clearly the Romans of this historical moment.

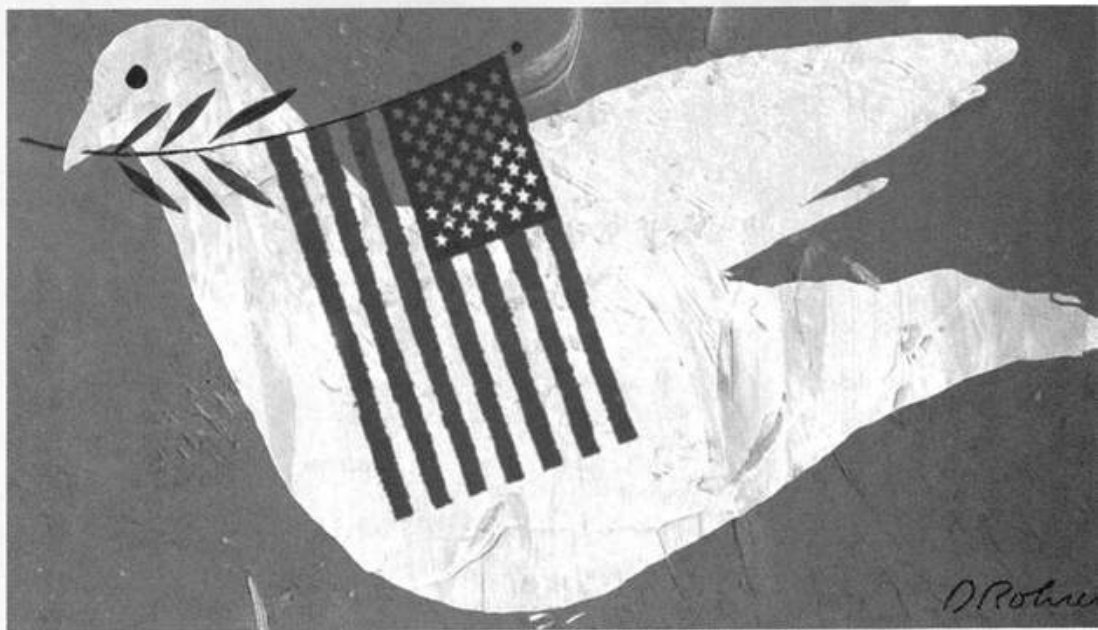
In light of this, I cannot help but wonder if your campaign promises of change, for which so many of your fellow Americans voted, will extend to the contradiction between our stated democratic system and this overlay of imperial global reach. Or will your vision of change limit itself to some tinkering with our situation as it is and result only in U.S. business-as-usual for the rest of the world?

Your initial appointments, particularly that of Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense, cause significant concern. It would seem that this man who carried on President Bush's failed policies toward Iraq and Afghanistan does not represent the views you so skillfully articulated during your campaign for the presidency and which in large measure assured your election.

You cannot fail to realize that yours is a rare and precious moment of opportunity as you become president of the United States. The goodwill you have engendered in our country and the high hopes you have created in virtually every country on the planet could converge to make you not only a great president, but also a historic figure along the lines of a Nelson Mandela. Under your leadership this great experiment that is America could once again become a sister nation, a partner, a beacon of justice and service to a world of violence, impoverishment, and danger, much of it generated by U.S. foreign policy.

Please know, Mr. President, that many of us in the faith communities of this country are praying that this will be the case. We pray for you and your family; we pray that your years as our leader will prove a *kairos* moment in history—a moment of divine grace not only for Americans but for all humanity. May God grant that you not be a Caesar but a true brother to the world. ■

Joseph Nangle OFM is a Franciscan priest who lives in the Assisi Community, a household of social activists. He spent fifteen years in Latin America and now serves the Spanish-speaking community in a Catholic parish near Washington, D.C.



Eboo Patel on Interfaith Youth Cooperation

WE BELIEVE THERE WILL BE NO PEACE IN THE WORLD WITHOUT RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, AND NO religious pluralism without the leadership of young people.

In an era of global religious conflict, idealism has a new face: interfaith youth cooperation. The evening news features stories of young people killing each other to the soundtrack of prayer. Yet across the country and the world, young people of many faiths are coming together around the shared value of service. They are changing the toxic conversation about religion and building the American dream of a place in which freedom for one relies on freedom for all. The watershed moment for their idealism has come: today's young people will grow up under the leadership of your administration, in which civic engagement is supported in an unprecedented way. Their idealism has the potential to be realized as never before.



From left to right: Mai E'leimat of Jordan, and Chicagoans Hafsa Arain and Nathan Render build a planter together during a service event at Chicago's Crib Collective during the InterACTION Youth Exchange in Summer 2007.

This is our time.

Your election demonstrates the revitalized participation and trust among the diverse communities in America—we must leverage this groundswell. We must recognize the power in young leadership to mobilize a generation of socially active citizens, as you have. America is the most religiously devout country in the West and the most religiously diverse country in the world, but we have yet to build Reverend King's beloved community.

President Obama, we need you to take charge of translating America's religious diversity into religious pluralism. Pluralism has three components: respect for religious identity, mutually inspiring relationships between people of diverse faith traditions, and common action for the common good. This kind of pluralism strengthens the fabric of civil society through a commitment to service.

We must bridge America's religious communities to maximize their wealth of social capital. We only understand a fraction of the power of faith communities, because we only know what they can do alone. Partnered with one another, creating common action together, religious communities will advance an ethic of volunteerism that is badly needed in America.

And the young people of these communities will lead the way.

Beyond civil society, religious pluralism has the potential to transform American diplomacy. The global perception of America has already improved—but as you yourself told us on election night, this moment requires all of us to do more. We must strive to be a global leader in interfaith cooperation. The world is inspired by the American ideal of diverse communities living together. We must live up to this ideal and invite others to do so as well.

A culture of religious pluralism breeds a culture of peace. The United Nations interfaith meeting in November revealed that leaders around the world are seeking this culture of peace. They recognize that constructive interreligious interaction is the way to achieve it.

This is not about selecting wedge issues and imbuing the public square with God talk.

This is about identifying shared values and bringing diverse communities together to act upon them.

I challenge you to hold up the value of religious pluralism. Help the young leaders of today make it a reality. ■

Eboo Patel is the founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core. He writes "The Faith Divide" blog for the Washington Post, and his book Acts of Faith was recently published in paperback.

Robert Pollin on Full Employment

AS YOU ARE ACUTELY AWARE, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS TODAY IS THE MOST SEVERE SINCE THE GREAT Depression of the 1930s. It has been heartening to see you organize a full-scale attack to stabilize financial markets and fight the recession.

By necessity, the program you have advanced thus far focuses on the short run. Lots of questions remain open, including a most basic one: what are the principles on which we should rebuild the economy after the recession ends?

As one starting point, I believe your administration should commit to the goal of full employment at decent wages. This would return us to an idea that, for a generation coming out of the 1930s depression, was a moral centerpiece of economic policy around the world. In this current historical juncture, the most effective path to long-term full employment will be to transfer substantial amounts of spending out of the military and the fossil fuel energy sector—oil, natural gas, and coal—and move these funds into health care, education, public infrastructure, and, most urgently, constructing a clean-energy economy.

Since full employment has been off the radar screen for a generation, it is easy to forget its transformative power as a policy goal. When we want to get a sense of the living standard of a person or family, we would almost always begin with a simple question: does somebody in the family have a job and, if so, how much does it pay? Whether you can get a job—and if so, whether the job offers decent pay, a clean and safe environment, and fair treatment for you and your coworkers—matters a lot to almost everyone. Correspondingly, unemployment



In declining our invitation to write to Obama, one person perfectly expressed what many feel. We asked if we could quote him, and he kindly agreed.

Thanks ... Y'know, I'm sure things will, uh, change (and maybe even by Tikkun's deadline), but for the moment, and for the first time in my life, I'm content to not kibbitz my president. I'm simply grateful that he seems to be way better at his job than I am at mine, let alone his. Every time I shouted advice at my TV during his campaign, he was wise to ignore me. I'd pray, if I were the praying kind, that he doesn't drag us into a morass in Afghanistan and that a giant public works program is rammed into place, but I'll happily sip my Kool-Aid until he royally screws up.

*All the best,
Art Spiegelman*

Comics artist and author Art Spiegelman is best known for *Maus*, his Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel memoir.

can have a devastating impact on families, even if they include two wage earners.

When an economy operates at or near full employment, overall spending expands. This means more buoyant markets, greater business opportunities for both small and large firms, and strong incentives for private businesses to increase their level of investment. A high-employment economy is also the best single tool for fighting poverty.

Let's recall the experience of the late 1960s. The stimulus then came from both the Kennedy-Johnson tax cut and the buildup of Vietnam-related government spending. Unemployment fell below 4 percent in 1966 and remained there until 1970. This brought rising wages, better working conditions, and less job discrimination against women, African Americans, and other minorities, even while these gains were underwritten by an immoral war.

Of course, the world has changed dramatically since the 1960s. Among other things, some analysts argue that globalization has undermined the viability of full employment as a goal. But recall the U.S. economy in the late 1990s, the end of the Clinton presidency, when unemployment fell below 4 percent for the first time since 1969. Once that happened, the same patterns found in the late 1960s re-emerged—i.e. improved wages and working conditions, along with declining poverty.

The problem with the late 1990s was that the rapid economic growth that forced unemployment down was financed by an unsustainable stock market bubble. But this experience demonstrates that, even in the face of globalization, full employment is still attainable. The challenge is to make it sustainable through policies that offer long-term benefits.

Right now, we spend about \$600 billion per year on the military and another \$600 billion within the coal, natural gas and coal sectors, totaling \$1.2 trillion, or about 8 percent of GDP. Your administration could plan on redirecting something like 25 percent of that spending, \$300 billion, toward public infrastructure, health care, education, and green investments, including building retrofits, expanding public transportation, and supporting innovation in solar and wind power. Compared with spending on the military and fossil fuel sector, a package of public infrastructure, green investments, health, and education will also generate roughly 3 million more jobs with that same \$300 billion.

There are two major reasons for this job advantage. The first is "labor intensity" of spending—more money is being spent on hiring people and less on machines, supplies, and consuming energy. The second is "domestic content"—more money is staying within the U.S. economy as opposed to buying imports or spending abroad.

In a post-recession world, a restructuring based on expanded support for health, education, infrastructure, and green investments could push the unemployment rate down to about 3.5 percent. We would then see the same benefits of a near full-employment economy as in late 1960s and 1990s. But this time, we would have accomplished full employment not through war spending, a financial bubble, or "drill, baby, drill," but rather through expanding high-quality social services, rebuilding our infrastructure and taking major steps toward creating the clean energy economy of the future. ■

Robert Pollin is codirector of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. His books include Contours of Descent: U.S. Economic Fractures and the Landscape of Global Austerity.

Omid Safi on Your Approach to the Muslim World

THERE HAS BEEN SO MUCH DISCUSSION IN THIS COUNTRY ABOUT WHAT THIS ELECTION, YOUR election, our election, signifies for the healing of America's racial wounds. Yet this is not just about us. It is also about the world, our place in the world community, and a return to an ethic of sharing and generosity. I will focus my comments on the area that I know best, the Muslim world.

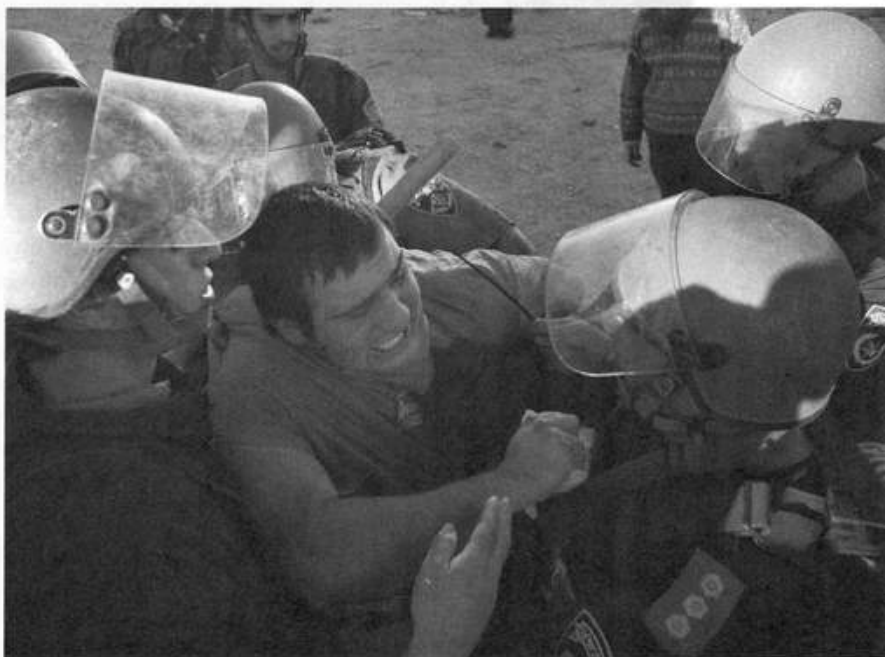
Iraq: We have inflicted a great violence upon Iraq, and as you have recognized, this was an unnecessary war. Getting Iraq right will be key. You are familiar with Martin Luther King Jr.'s famed April 4, 1967, speech at Riverside Church. You can look at virtually everything that King said about Vietnam and apply it to Iraq. The first step in getting Iraq right is to begin by publicly admitting to ourselves—and more importantly, to Iraqis, and the world community—that we made a horrible mistake, that our error resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and the wasting of untold hundreds of billions of dollars.

Iran: Iran is a complicated society, and it is not 1978 anymore. Since the revolution, Iran has been home to the most sophisticated Islamic reform movement in the world. Today, 70 percent of the Iranian population is under 30, and the overwhelming majority of Iranians want to normalize relations with the United States. President Bush alienated most Iranians by labeling Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil." Instead, engage and acknowledge the subtlety and nuance of this ancient civilization.

Palestine/Israel: For Muslims worldwide and Muslims in the United States, this is and has always been foreign policy issue number one. The creation of Israel is seen by hundreds of millions of Muslims as the result of colonial interventions in the Middle East, going back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Israel has remained the single largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid over the last thirty years. Every scholar knows that the current situation in Israel/Palestine is not tenable. No group of people on Earth would voluntarily agree to live in the situation of occupation and second-class citizenship that the Palestinians have had to endure for over forty years.

There are no easy solutions for there is such a discrepancy of power between the two sides. Yet if we move from being an ardent supporter of Israel at all costs to stating that the dignity and well-being of both Palestinians and Israelis and the security of both communities will be equal priorities for us, that will be the beginning of the road toward healing. A two-state solution presents serious challenges, none more important than the dozens of illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied West Bank. A one-state solution (one person, one vote) is ultimately the fairest solution, maybe the only fair solution, but it would mean giving up on the notion of a Jewish state, for that of a secular democracy. Either way, dealing with significant issues like the fate of Jerusalem as the symbolic capital of both peoples, the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and the guarantee of exactly and identically the same set of rights and responsibilities for both Jews and Arabs will be mandatory.

Afghanistan: The attention of much of the world community is focused on Iraq, but Afghanistan might present the more serious long-term problem. The re-Talibanization of Afghanistan is already underway, and it is vital to confront that. The last bits of al Qaeda will have to be uprooted.



Israeli border police officers scuffle with a Jewish settler during the evacuation of a disputed house in the West Bank city of Hebron, December 4, 2008. Israeli security forces stormed a disputed house in the biblical city of Hebron, dragging out some 250 settlers who barricaded themselves inside and hurled rocks, eggs, and chemicals at their evictors. It was the first major West Bank evacuation since a violent 2006 confrontation that injured hundreds.

Solutions: The solution begins when we realize that we need to change not just the impression of the United States, but also the reality of our presence in the world community. This was one of the great errors of the Bush administration. Immediately after 9/11, they hired a Madison Avenue advertising executive (Charlotte Beers) to serve as an undersecretary for public diplomacy. They simply do not understand that the reason much of the world came to hate our government is because of the policies of our government. They do not hate us (*pace* the pundits post-9/11) because we are “free,” “civilized,” and “democratic.” No, they hate our policies, because we have become synonymous with aggression, privilege, militarism, support of dictators, unilateral action, disregard for civilian life, and ultimately, empire.

How to fix it? Change the impression of the United States by changing the policies of the United States. Take between 10 percent and 20 percent of the military budget, and redirect it toward building schools and hospitals worldwide, fighting poverty, training people in skills for a new globalized world, and providing relief from HIV/AIDS. Every penny of that money will give back dividends hundredfold. Unlike in Iraq, where billions of dollars went to no-bid contracts for Halliburton and other companies, invest the money in local businesses. Follow that up with the largest deployment of American peace activists in history. Come up with a revamped version of the Peace Corps, where our best and brightest will devote two years of their life in going for paid internships to places around the world where our help is needed.

President Obama, now is the time. Now is the time to build on the goodwill of the world community. The “fierce urgency of the now” that you spoke about so eloquently indeed is now. Lead us, and we will follow. ■

A leading Muslim intellectual, Omid Safi is a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of North Carolina. Passionately opposed to America as an empire, Omid imagines a just role for America in the world community.

Alan Shapiro on the Poetry You Will Need

MY BROTHER DIED OF BRAIN CANCER IN 1999. IN THE LAST DAYS OF HIS LIFE HE WAS OFTEN RESTLESS and terrified. Although he had never been a reader of poetry, or anything else for that matter, in his last days he turned to poetry for spiritual comfort. And not the kind of poetry or spiritual comfort you would think. He had no patience for poetry of “uplift,” or cheap forms of reassurance. What he craved—what gave him solace—were poems that named his situation realistically, that accurately portrayed his fears, anxieties, and his physical and emotional pain. My brother needed poems that spoke the truth. And that in my view is the principle job of poetry—to speak the truth. By truth I mean a devotion to the fine particulars of human experience, to ourselves in all our frailty and evanescence, in all our irreducibly unique complexity. Truth in this sense is the opposite of Group Think, or the abstractions and formulas that dominate public policy and that so easily trample over the textures of the human heart.

For the past eight years, our government has engaged in policies designed to cut the individual down to manageable size. While all bureaucracies and governments engage in substituting neat lies for messy truths, the Bush administration has refined this practice to a pernicious art. What has offended me more than all the secret programs that have damaged so many lives around the planet is the sentimental public face of these secret programs, the arid heart behind the wet eyes of the “compassionate conservative.” As James Baldwin once remarked, the palatable lies of the sentimentalist betray an aversion to experience, an inability to feel; they are “therefore always the sign of secret and violent inhumanity.”

Political discourse in our country has become sloganeering; both sides of the aisle have engaged in an optimistic hatred of reality that has fostered a debilitating cynicism. In the public square, an addiction to categorical thinking and political expediency has violated the richness and diversity of human life and in so doing has undermined the very institutions they would ostensibly protect.

What can you do about this? You can read poetry. You can read a poem every day. At no cost to the public, poets such as Robert Hayden, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, and Lucille Clifton will lower the deficit of meaning that lately has been part and parcel of public office. These poets won’t immunize you from the liabilities of power, but their best work will make it harder for power to deceive you. As our oldest technology of truthful human feeling, poetry will remind you of the supreme value of each and every human being; it will remind you of your frailties and imperfections. The fish bone in the throat of all devouring abstractions, it will preserve your love of particulars and make it harder for you to sacrifice any single life in the name of anything. ■

Alan Shapiro’s most recent book, Old War, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 2008.

Rami Shapiro on Making Happiness Our Compass

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

OF THE MANY SACRED TEXTS THAT DEFINE US AS A PEOPLE AND A NATION, THESE WORDS BY THOMAS Jefferson are among the most precious. I wish to speak with you for a moment about happiness and its pursuit.

Aristotle understood happiness, what he called *eudemonia*, as a flourishing of life, a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. The key to *eudemonia* as I understand it is cultivating love, purpose, and meaning.

Happiness is a national concern calling us to establish laws, institutions, and communities honoring life's diversity, individual liberty, and the pursuit of love, purpose, and meaning.

Happiness is a moral concern and its pursuit fosters creativity, justice, compassion, generosity, fearlessness, and a desire to uplift both self and others.

Happiness is an economic concern liberating us from both poverty and enslavement to endless consumption. Happiness calls us to seek just enough wealth to be happy, and frees us from the lie that to be more we must have more.

Happiness is an international concern challenging us to lead the world not in how much stuff we consume or garbage we produce, but in our capacity to free our citizens to pursue love, purpose, and meaning.

Happiness is a civic concern, for people pursuing love, purpose, and meaning are unmoved by propaganda—commercial, political, and religious—designed to poison them and their communities with fear, self-loathing, lack, conformity, bigotry, and intolerance.

Happiness is a spiritual concern, for people steeped in love, purpose, and meaning reject exclusivism, fear, exploitation, and hate, and resist religiously sanctioned violence, religiously sponsored ignorance, and the rants of clergy and pundits whose sense of compassion and justice is restricted to those who believe as they do.

Mr. President, I believe we are entering a time of global apocalypse, literally an “unveiling” of the ignorance and hubris behind which we have hidden so long from our interdependence with and responsibility toward all life.

This unveiling will take many forms: economic collapse, environmental chaos, greater religious and ethnic violence, rising crime, and increased suicide and substance abuse. We will be knocked back on our heels, and then knocked down to our knees. The question is not if this will happen or even when—it is already happening. Our challenge is not how to avoid the apocalypse but how to navigate it with our humanity intact.

When last confronted with apocalyptic violence, your predecessor urged us to go shopping—to stuff ourselves with goods that we might not notice that our goodness was being stolen from us by the very people we elected to protect it. This time you can offer us something else. Not a time to consume, but a time to consider. Not a rush to get more, but a chance to reimagine what is enough. Not a fearful scramble to settle matters, but a thoughtful rethinking of what really matters. And in navigating this horror, happiness can be your compass.

We are happiest when we are free from fear. We are happiest when we are free from usury and deceptive business practices. We are happiest when we are free from church and state meddling in our private lives. We are happiest when our scientists, scholars, and educators can pursue truth unfettered by theology. We are happiest when our concern for the unborn challenges us to think not only of the next nine months but the next nine generations. We are happiest when we have clean air to breathe, and clean water to drink. We are happiest when we have a solid roof over our heads and safe food on our table. We are happiest when we have the opportunity for lifelong learning. We are happiest



when we take care of the least among us. We are happiest when our relationship with other species and the planet is based on respect, mutuality, and interdependence. We are happiest when we measure success by the quality of our lives, rather than the quantity of stuff that clutters them. We are happiest when we, as individuals and as a nation, make a positive difference in the world.

While no government can or should provide us with happiness, our government can and should free us to pursue it.

What I suggest, sir, is this: When weighing policy decisions ask yourself, "Will this enhance our capacity to cultivate love, purpose, and meaning? Is it in service to Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness?" If the answer is yes, then promote it. But if the answer is no, please, sir, resist it at all costs. This is the change we need. ■

Rabbi Rami Shapiro is an award-winning author and educator. Rami writes a regular column for Spirituality and Health magazine. His most recent books are The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness and Ethics of the Sages.

Svi Shapiro on Education for Citizenship

YOUR CALL TO CHANGE HAS BEEN A POWERFUL AND DESPERATELY NEEDED CHALLENGE TO THE ENTRENCHED interests and assumptions that have dominated this nation for many years.

I, like so many others, have been deeply moved and inspired by your words and plans.

Yet in one area I have felt a disappointing dissonance between your challenge and your proposals. As an educator it seems to me that this is a time like no other when we need to rethink and re-envision how, and for what purpose, we seek to educate the children and youth of this nation.

I will leave aside here my criticisms of the disastrous and deadening No Child Left Behind, and instead urge you to help us re-envision education so that it can truly speak to the lives of human beings in the twenty-first century. In doing this, it may be helpful to reach back to some of those who, at an earlier time, understood that education and democracy were inextricably connected. Civic literacy must be a central concern in the educational goals of our schools. If your concern is a knowledgeable, concerned, and engaged citizenry, then education must be a process that teaches young people to think critically about their lives, their culture, and the broader world in which they live. We need thoughtful and aware human beings who are encouraged to question—and where appropriate challenge the dominant or conventional assumptions about how we live our lives.

Civic literacy is more than a matter of information and knowledge, however. It means teaching our young the importance of social responsibility, deep concern for our nation and our global community, an ethic of caring and compassion, the imperative of social justice to a humane and peaceful world and, not least, a sense of agency and hope. We must teach young people to be "border crossers"—comfortable with human difference and capable of seeing the world from the experience and perspective of others. We need young people who are taught to be courageous and confident in their readiness to hold and express a belief or opinion. And today, civic literacy means teaching the young that they are more than citizens of the United States. They are global citizens who are part of a complex weave of interconnected communities. Poverty, disease, war, and ecological destruction, wherever they occur, are all of our responsibility, and they affect all of our lives. To transform education in this way will, of course, require the serious commitment of your administration to reform around issues of educational leadership and teacher preparation—at least as energetic as the efforts that have been put into the testing and skills focus of these past years.

Conservatives have been right in arguing that education is always a morally infused enterprise. Neither as parents nor as teachers do we offer our children an ethically neutral vision of what ought to be most meaningful or valuable in their lives. Today, our schools are institutions that teach children, above all else, the importance of individual success and competition. It is surely time for them to emphasize something else as the key to a meaningful and fulfilling life. The enormous challenges that we face as a planet demand a different kind of focus for what we do with our lives—one in which community, connection, caring, the ending of violence, and the well-being of every life become central to a purposeful existence. You have spoken powerfully of this when you have challenged us to move beyond greed and self-interest and put the well-being of the community first. With your support and vision, we can begin to educate our young so that what becomes most important to their lives is how they may help to heal and repair our torn and damaged world.

My heartfelt best wishes for all your efforts to create a more just, peaceful, and generous world. ■

Svi Shapiro teaches in the Education and Cultural Studies program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His most recent book is Losing Heart: The Moral and Spiritual Miseducation of America's Children (Lawrence Erlbaum).

William G. Sinkford on Gay Marriage

I LEARNED OF YOUR ELECTION ON A LATE-NIGHT FLIGHT TO AFRICA. WHEN THE PILOT ANNOUNCED THAT YOU would be the 44th president of the United States, many of us wept with joy. The hopes Americans have placed in you are so high, and the challenges are so daunting. You will lead us during a critical period of war, recession, and mounting ecological threats. Some might say you have taken on a thankless job; I am deeply grateful for a president who seems equal to these challenges.

And I am hopeful that your vision will encompass all of us. During the campaign, the rights of same-sex couples were downplayed even among progressives. While I understand the strategic reasons for this, I feel called to witness on behalf of those Americans whose rights were trampled and whose dignity was assaulted by state ballot initiatives preventing marriage or adoption.

Before the presidential campaign began in earnest, back in the summer of 2007, you said something that gave me great hope: "Too often, the issue of gay rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect."

I rejoiced at those words then, and I want to lift them up now. Some people—including some wise and experienced leaders—are still seeking to divide us. They are cautioning you not to overreach as you set new policies. These people may advise you that legal equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people is a luxury, and they may urge you to put civil rights on the back burner for now. "Wait," they are saying. "Wait for a better time."

But we know there's never a better time to end discrimination. It wasn't the right time in 1954 when *Brown v. Board* ended segregation in public schools—the critics then said that too many states and cities weren't ready for a change as big as racial integration. And yet change came, not because we were ready but because—in the words of abolitionist Unitarian minister Theodore Parker that were echoed by Dr. King—"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Progress may be delayed, but its course is unstoppable.

In 1967, if the United States Supreme Court had waited for "the right time," *Loving v. Virginia* would not have been decided in favor of committed couples who wished to marry but happened to be of different races. Before this decision, in many states I would not have been allowed to marry my wife. Today, just a generation later, it is unthinkable that we would ever again adopt such laws that keep loving people apart. And yet that's exactly what happened in California and in several other states last November. You have the opportunity to correct this injustice and to put us back on course.

Yes, America is facing big problems, but I urge you not to view our country as a hierarchy of competing needs, with minority rights taking a backseat to issues like the economy. Instead, I pray that you will see our society as a diverse, interconnected web, where the health of our nation depends upon the well-being of each of its citizens. It will take an act of deep faith to believe that protecting individual rights and strengthening a small percentage of families will benefit the entire country. But it will.

During my visit to Africa, I learned much from Unitarian Universalist congregations and other religious communities in Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. I was humbled by their commitment to addressing dire social problems—extreme poverty, gender inequity, epidemic diseases, and profound racial and ethnic discrimination. They understand that social problems and health problems are also economic problems, and that addressing one issue means tackling them all.

Against tremendous odds, and within just a few short years, South Africans dismantled apartheid, legalized same-sex marriages, and rebuilt their entire society, and they did so by radically reimagining every economic, political, legal, and moral component. Surely we Americans can confront an economic recession, end an unjust war abroad, and advance civil rights at home. We don't have to choose peace and prosperity for the many at the expense of justice for the few. Instead, we have to understand that peace, prosperity, and justice are vitally interconnected.



Derrick Kikuchi and Craig Wiesner, were the first gay couple to get a marriage license in San Mateo County, California. Their company, Reach and Teach, provides Tikkun's web services.

You have my support and that of millions of justice-seeking Americans. With your leadership, we can be the country that finally lives up to its founding promise of equality for all.

In faith. ■

Rev. William G. Sinkford has served as president of the Unitarian Universalist Association since 2001. He is principal spokesperson and minister-at-large for this liberal denomination with over 1,000 congregations.

Mark Lewis Taylor on Bringing Change amid Mass Incarceration

DURING TWO YEARS OF SUPPORTING YOUR PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, I OFTEN CLICKED THROUGH YOUR online *Blueprint for Change*, seeking your views on the proliferation of U.S. prisons. I found them, usually in comments about assisting prisoners re-entering society and altering sentencing and drug laws. Such comments were lodged under "Civil Rights" and "Crime and Law Enforcement."

It is time for national leaders to address the problem of mass incarceration within another paradigm, that of social reconstruction. There are 2.3 million people in our prisons, quadruple the number in 1980, now making the U.S. the most imprisoning nation on earth. The brutal culture within prisons is also of special concern, since incarceration practices tolerate and often promote the degradation, rape, torture, and brutalization of prisoners by both guards and other prisoners. In his book *Harsh Justice*, Yale comparative law professor James Whitman contrasts U.S. prisons with Europe's, showing how U.S. systems transpose "doing time" into a soul-killing bludgeon, dehumanizing prisoners in almost every part of their being.



Crowded conditions at California State Prison, Los Angeles. On July 23, 2007, two federal judges ordered the creation of a special panel to examine ways to relieve California's overcrowded prisons, a move that could lead to the capping of the inmate population or the early release of some prisoners.

Spiritual and secular voices of conscience decry U.S. prisons as violating the sacrality of human life by treating the confined almost like slaves. Early in the present era of mass incarceration, U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens lamented that a 1984 ruling suspending prisoner rights "declares prisoners to be little more than chattels."

Growing populations and brutality in prisons are not just problems for those "behind walls." Millions of children of the incarcerated live in our midst with their hearts creased by the bars that confine their parents. Their families must move to the rhythms of the imprisoned. Prisons release every year some 700,000 people into our communities, and they are a festering wound for our whole body politic, circulating social neglect, brutality, and failing lives—from prison to society and back again. American Indian, Black, Hispanic, and immigrant communities suffer especially from these circuits of neglect. In 1996, the National Criminal Justice Commission already described prisons as "social catastrophe" for black communities.

We have become a "carceral" society, a society with an imprisonment habit that incarcerates also our own most cherished values. Citizenship's ranks are reduced. Equality, justice, peace, as well as environment and healthy families, all suffer. The travails of a carceral

society are now clearly documented by scholars like sociologist Bruce Western in his *Punishment and Equality in America*, and by geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore in *Golden Gulag*.

I urge you and U.S. Attorney General Holder to be proactive on two fronts. First, increase support for re-entering prisoners, as part of the comprehensive employment and public works project that our entire nation now needs. This

entails mobilizing teachers for job training and education inside prisons, as well as outside in communities to which prisoners return.

Second, thin the numbers of prison populations. Perhaps we cannot yet implement the calls for "prison abolition" that activist-scholars like Angela Davis issue. But you and your policymakers can recognize that filling prisons does not correlate with substantively reducing crime, and that in fact unchecked prison habits tend to foster crime and fuel carceral blight. Following advice from sociologist Bruce Western and others, you could reduce prison populations by (1) decriminalizing drug offenses and other "victimless" crimes, (2) reworking sentencing laws so that life sentences and draconian decades-long terms are kept to a minimum, (3) reducing time spent on probation and parole that generates new prisoners, often for only technical violations, and (4) ceasing to re-imprison people for technical violations.

Other efforts in social reconstruction are important. Racial disparities and bias, for example, are more evident in imprisonment practices than in almost any other social sector of suffering, with catastrophic effect for communities of color. Youth of color experience both harsher and more frequent confinement for drug-related offenses than do white youth. Proactive pursuit of racial justice must be integral to social reconstruction.

Health care, too, is essential. Truly "universal" plans should address the burgeoning health needs of the carceral class. Remembering the imprisoned and their families in new health care programs benefits all of society. Beyond health care, other economic planning is crucial, especially for empowering city neighborhoods.

In short, one of your administration's challenges is to ask at every stage in developing new projects, "How do these policies redress our nation's imprisoned and those affected by them?"

Many a seasoned prison activist warns that your promises are at best illusory. We don't ask you as president to do what must be mobilized by the power of the people, by their local community organizing. But with your office and leadership skills, we invite you to summon strength to reverse decades of the fear-based incarceration habit indulged by both Republicans and Democrats, and so lend the power of your presidency to bringing real change for a land now burdened by its prisons. ■

Mark Lewis Taylor, a professor of theology and culture at Princeton Seminary, has been involved with prison reform for over twenty-five years. His books include The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America.

Robert Thurman: Eleven Pieces of Advice

PLEASE INDULGE ME AT THIS WORLD- CRUCIAL TIME TO SPEAK TO YOU VERY BLUNTLY AND URGENTLY, WITH fierce compassion.

Listen to but don't follow the "experts" who got us into these messes. You are employing a lot of them in your noble and skillful "team of rivals" administration, but they must quickly see your light and turn around to use their skills for your no-nonsense realistic agenda, not be allowed to co-opt you into business as usual. Your strength comes from the millions of previously disaffected but intelligent and now enthusiastically engaged people, and you must not lose them by conceding to wrongly framed notions of "pragmatism." I am offering eleven pieces of advice for you to consider at this moment. They are not all in a particular order of priority, since I am urging you to present them as objectives and make steps toward them right away, all at once.

1. Restore the media to its essential role, which it must fulfill to enable you to get your job done. To do this, you can revive the FCC to reinforce rules and break up monopolistic ownership of media outlets, restore the fairness doctrine (making licenses contingent on presenting opposing viewpoints), and energetically expand funding for PBS and world news.
2. Get out of Iraq ASAP. That is not "surrender" but "victory." It is the victory of honesty and courage over stupidity and criminality. The point to be made is that this was an illegal invasion, and the doctrine of preemptive war is an illegal doctrine on the face of it. Encourage prosecution of Cheney and his neocon cronies who lied us into the war if they start to make too much noise.
3. Close the Guantánamo prison and make all forms of torture illegal once again, re-affirming the Geneva Conventions. Save the facility to be made over into a rehabilitation center for ex-dictators, like a high-end resort with serious therapy and sensitivity training. Be ready to give it back to Cuba if its leaders decide to behave in a more friendly way in the near future—this will involve them making reparations to the formerly wealthy Cuban families they expropriated long ago.

4. In Afghanistan, immediately call a regional conference of all parties. Shift some troops over from Iraq, but don't send a lot of troops there. The big problem lies in Pakistan. Its Inter-Services Intelligence agency endangers everyone and fools no one except our previous leaders and some of our military. Buy all the Afghan farmers' and warlords' opium crops, and sell them to producers of anesthetics.
5. Make a new environmental treaty and put Al Gore in charge of making "no more carbon dioxide emissions within ten years" into a national goal, like putting a man on the moon. He can also be in charge of heading up a technocratic team of designers, engineers, and green researchers to forge a plan and get to work converting Detroit—with companies and unions working together as they do in Germany—into the world Mecca for electric cars. We should also produce our own high-speed rail cars and equipment, inviting foreign manufacturers to participate.
6. Go Keynesian! FDR-ian, if you prefer. Don't let the shamelessly wasteful and mendacious big-government Republicans fool you into forced economic austerity when the people need their share of the money now. They have printed it madly for war and socialist bailouts for the rich—you must now print it yourself for the people: to rebuild the infrastructure and the middle class, health, education, and welfare. This is beyond liberal and conservative. As in the time of FDR, this is to forestall violent revolution and/or fascism. You need to match China's \$600 billion domestic infrastructure package with a package twice that size here in the United States. Do not give a single bank or financial company another single dollar without taking ownership, so the treasury makes back the money on the deals. If Summers and Geithner won't agree with that, let them go quickly. (Call on Robert Reich, Van Jones, Amory Lovins, George Soros, and Hazel Henderson.)
7. Get the Israelis *really* to withdraw the settlements in the West Bank and dismantle their apartheid structures there. This will be *really* difficult and might require heavy missile subsidies and other forms of assistance to make them feel safe. Call in AIPAC along with all sorts of liberal Jews to an under-the-radar but substantial conference to change the futile aggressive policy of Likud etc. This is a great high-priority job for Hillary Clinton.
8. Don't let the insurance companies buy small banks to get at the treasury moneys. Let Daschle move health care toward a single-payer system to make us cost-effective and globally competitive. Sell it to the business community as enabling them to create jobs without prohibitive health care costs.
9. Help Hillary make a powerful effort to befriend Putin and the Russians in order to work on all these problems: Iran, Afghanistan, Israel, and so on. Do not install any missiles in Poland, and restart the nuclear disarmament process. Empower the UN with full funding and make a huge international effort to heal the genocide in Congo, meanwhile getting Mugabe out of Zimbabwe and into the Gitmo therapy center (see #3). Take steps to moderate the ongoing strip-mining of African resources by China. Once we have a good reputation again, a friendship with Russia, and are no longer bleeding in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can persuade China to stop supporting the genocides in Tibet, Xinjiang, North Korea, Burma, and Darfur.
10. As a first step toward bridging our continental political divides, invite South American leaders to a special session of the Organization of American States (OAS). Make a special effort to meet with not just leaders friendly toward us, but also Chavez, Castro, Ortega, Morales, and Correa Delgado.
11. Stop the "War on Drugs" immediately (give the DEA Homeland Security work); medicalize the more dangerous drugs, such as heroin and amphetamines; and empty the prisons of nonviolent users by giving amnesty to all of them. This will result in huge financial savings and the termination of a huge hypocrisy from an alcoholic nation, all with the stroke of a pen, like FDR's abolishment of prohibition. ■



"Put Al Gore in charge of making 'no more carbon dioxide emissions within ten years' into a national goal."

Robert Thurman is the Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, president of Tibet House U.S., and author of Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Real Happiness.

George Vradenburg: We are Ready for Your Leadership

I HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT YOU ARE GOING TO LEAD US TO A NEW ERA OF AMERICAN GREATNESS BY REFRESHING OUR values of service, generosity, and creativity. Quite frankly, we have had enough of calls to moral rectitude. We are ready to roll up our sleeves, like the "greatest generation" of the past, and respond to a call to service and sacrifice to make our nation, once again, the "shining city on the hill." We have been down before, and yet we have always pulled ourselves up, brushed ourselves off, and worked through rough times to a better place.

We are not a nation suffering from some social or moral pathology; we are not just a nation of consumers, bereft of values; we are not pawns in a large corporate-politico game. We are a people with a vision of equal opportunity and justice; we are a people with a large (and unique) spirit of generosity and caring for our neighbors; we are a people ready to serve our fellow (wo)man and our nation. We do not need our consciousness changed. What we need is leadership. We need you to give us a vision and direction and we will each do what we need to do to work our way through this challenging time. And we are, in our different ways, ready to respond to your lead.

We are encouraged that you are drawing centrist problem solvers into your administration, eschewing an ideological litmus test for your cabinet. We have problems in this country; we need solutions. We do not need those with a fixed vision of what America is or should be, other than to allow the American people the freedom and capacity to decide what America is and should be. What we need are experienced professionals, ready to listen to all proposals, and capable of acting to restore American leadership in the world and enabling us to put ourselves on the path to prosperity.

You and your campaign demonstrated a capability to reconcile contradictions, to harmonize dissonance, and to bridge divides. Listening to a full range of American perspectives as you shape the solutions to American problems is more likely to lead to a shared path all Americans can embrace than adopting the particular perspective of one ideological wing of your party. Solutions driven by ideological rigidity aimed at reshaping our consciousness will lead to partisanship, divisiveness, and failure.

Your decision to bring in your former rivals into your cabinet demonstrates a confidence in your ability to listen to, yet not be gridlocked by, disparate viewpoints. Do not fear to act in the face of dissonance and uncertainty.

America is ready for "change" leadership that is hopeful and optimistic, even as it is pragmatic and realistic. In the face of our most recent national challenge, our president told us to "go shopping." What a missed opportunity! There was no call to service, no call to sacrifice. That was not the leadership we needed or deserved. We need leadership that will call us to our highest values, not our lowest.

I was a child of parents from the "greatest generation." My parents, like most in their generation, endured the Great Depression and responded to the call to fight in World War II. For them, endurance, resilience, and service were the values that drove their response to the circumstances in which they found themselves. And when the depression had passed and the war had ended, my father started a small business and my mother volunteered for service to her community by managing the local symphony orchestra. My father struggled, sometimes failing and sometimes succeeding, but always striving. My mother's efforts sustained a civic organization that lasts to this day. These values of entrepreneurialism and resilience, generosity and community service are the backbone of America and what makes America great.

When I was of age and my nation was at war in the late 1960s, I felt the same impulse as my father to serve my country through military service. And after a career in law and business, I have committed to give back to others less fortunate. This is the spirit of America.

Today, Americans are waiting for a call to service and sacrifice. JFK did so in January 1961, inspiring us to serve our neighbors here and abroad. I believe you can and will do so in January 2009. Again, Americans are ready to respond. ■

George Vradenburg, who writes the Contrarian column to present a voice that consistently argues against Tikkun's editorial perspective, is, with his wife Trish Vradenburg, the co-publisher of Tikkun and chairman of the board of The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.

Paul Wapner on an Empathetic Climate Policy

ROUGHLY A YEAR AGO, THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC) ISSUED ITS SYNTHESIS Report, and the news was unambiguously grim. The report revealed that temperatures are rising faster than was thought and the consequences—sea level rise, reduced crop yields, more intense storms, melting glaciers, and freshwater scarcity—are already appearing and will accelerate over the next few decades rather than millennia. One hundred and thirty nations reviewed and approved of the report. Its conclusions should send shudders down our necks.

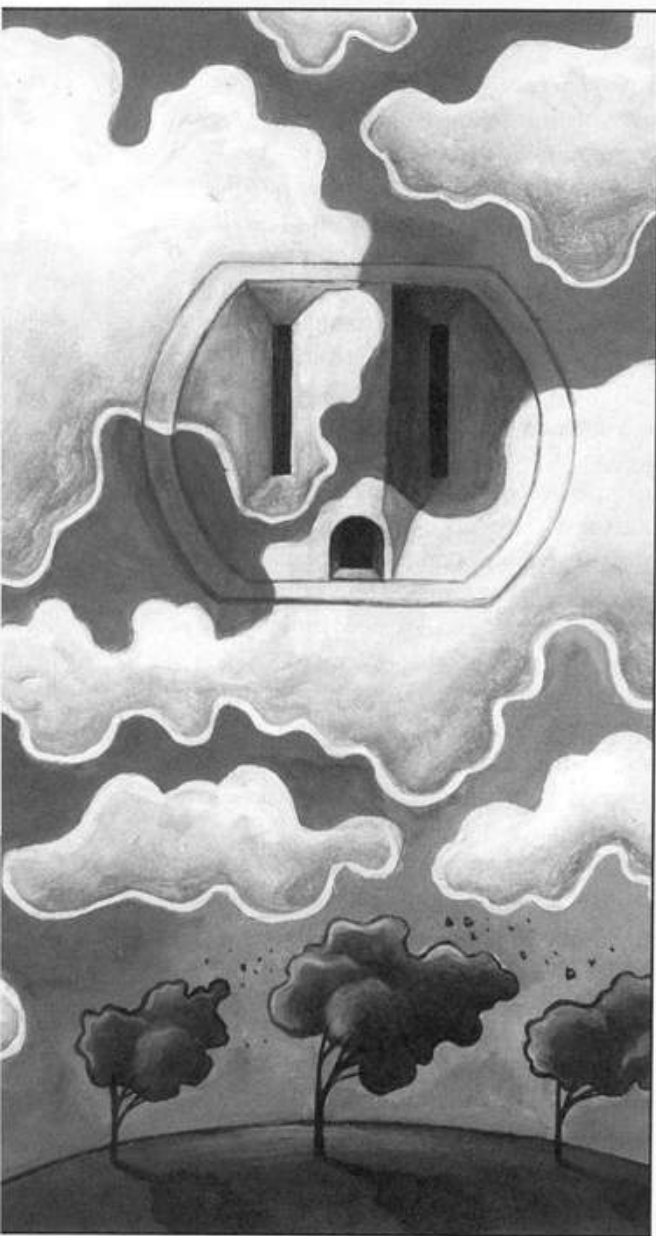
The report's main point is that we have no time to lose. It warns that, unless reductions in greenhouse gases start immediately, we face climate catastrophe. Rajendra Pachauri, head of the IPCC and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, was unequivocal: "What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment."

Sadly, the Bush Administration ignored the report. It continued its game of advancing the interests of the fossil fuel industry, claiming that mandatory actions would hurt the economy and saying that the United States would not act until all others—including those countries that have historically had the least impact on climate—do so. In other words, the Bush Administration pretended that, as Churchill once said, a "problem postponed is a problem solved." As Pachauri makes clear, in this case, a problem postponed is the making of a catastrophe.

Mr. President, you are cursed and blessed with taking the reins of United States power on the eve of a catastrophe. The challenge is daunting. We have lost much time. Moreover, the roots of climate change are deep and not easily reversible. Almost everything we do generates carbon dioxide, the main anthropogenic greenhouse gas. Turning the corner on climate thus requires fundamentally redesigning our homes, cars and factories, and finding new ways to relate to food, forests and, most importantly, each other. It consists of nothing less than weaning ourselves off of fossil fuels and transitioning to a clean energy economy, and treating each other and the more-than-human world with greater respect and dignity. You'll need much luck.

The key to attracting such luck is to capitalize on the promise of climate change. Climate change is not simply a problem but an invitation. The United States is at the center of an unraveling global economy and in the midst of two wars. Climate change offers the opportunity to build a new kind of world economy, and base security not simply on military might. Economically, instead of bailing out insurance companies, banks and particular industries, you should undertake a huge public works program, akin to the Apollo Project, which would invest government funds into hybrid and electric cars; better mass transit; solar, wind, and tidal energy; and a more reliable electrical grid. Such investment will generate millions of green collar jobs, reinvigorate former manufacturing sectors, drive significant capital investment, stabilize energy prices, and open up whole new professional enterprises associated with carbon accounting, policy analysis, and so forth.

Where might you find the funds for such an endeavor? The good news is that the government has already appropriated them; they are simply deployed in the wrong arena. Today, we are spending \$314.4 million per day to fight an immoral war in Iraq. By any measure, we are not winning (indeed, it is hard to imagine what "winning" might mean). More importantly, our efforts in Iraq are not reducing international terrorism but increasing it as the occupation continues to sow anti-Americanism. It is time to recognize that, whatever national security dangers Iraq may pose, they are eclipsed by a more significant global threat that demands U.S. attention and leadership. Raising the issue of



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climate change in the context of the Iraq War would enable you to devise an exit strategy that is not simply a matter of "cutting and running" but involves meaningfully engaging the most significant of the world's security challenges. People around the world will have a harder time criticizing the United States if we are at the forefront of a global climate change and energy security plan rather than deploying soldiers around the world. Such a plan would certainly get us out of the arrogant unilateralism of the past eight years that has made our country and the world more insecure.

Key to such an effort is a commitment to attend the next, crucial meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This meeting, scheduled to take place in Copenhagen in late November 2009, will set the stage for a post-Kyoto climate regime. Your presence will signal to the world that the United States will no longer sit on the sidelines of global climate commitments or, worse, seek to undermine them. Rather, it will underscore the urgency and significance of crafting a meaningful treaty and, informed by America's new Apollo Project, demonstrate that world leadership starts at home.

These are the types of policy responses required of you. Your administration must also cultivate moral and spiritual ones as well. Climate change is not only an environmental problem and an invitation for policy adjustment but also a diagnosis. It signals that we have been living beyond our ecological means and insensitive to the plight of others with whom we share the planet and of future generations. It also indicates that we have lost our bearings as to how we fit into the universe and how we can relate to the more-than-human world. As the economic crisis makes clear, many of us have been focused on making a fast buck and letting the consequences fall where they will. Pushed to post quarterly profits, corporations have been shedding worker safety protections, trimming benefits, lying about their earnings and, more recently, firing workers to remain at all profitable. Likewise, tickled by easy credit and enamored with seemingly limitless material choices, many of us have chosen the path of consumerism for our spiritual succor. We find some of our deepest pleasures in shopping and accumulating things. In such a commercially saturated world, it is hard to reflect on the existential meanings of our lives and our obligations to others. There is simply too much going on in front of our eyes, tongues, fingers, and ears to think about the immaterial questions of our larger relations.

Climate change is calling on us to remember the significance of our larger relations. It is doing this by reminding us that we are not the center of the universe. We are not the only beings on earth. There is a wider human and more-than-human world surrounding and cradling us, and if we continue to play tone-deaf to this, we will lose not simply our material comforts but our sense of being human. We have brought about climate change by trying to play God. We have assumed that the earth is here for our taking and that we can impose our will upon the earth rather than harmonize our lives with it. To put it differently, we have been living as if we are masters of the world who need not be bothered with the plight of that which we master.

Mr. President, during the campaign, many accused you of inexperience. What your critics failed to appreciate is your longstanding practice in cultivating empathy. You have chosen to make sense of your background by seeing how others helped you and how important assisting others is so crucial to our lives. Responding to climate change is about seeing each other and the earth as deserving of our care, and practicing the virtue of generosity. As you move us toward a clean energy economy, may you pave the way with an empathetic sensibility focused on helping us to assume our role as fellow creatures on an increasingly hotter but still beautiful earth. ■

Paul Wapner directs the Global Environmental Politics Program at American University. His books include Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics and Principled World Politics. His forthcoming book is titled The Future of Environmentalism.

Tom Weisskopf on Spreading the Wealth

YOUR CAMPAIGN FOR THE PRESIDENCY WAS INSPIRATIONAL TO MILLIONS OF AMERICANS BECAUSE YOU PROMISED to bring us back together again, after eight years of polarization under President Bush and his Republican juggernaut. We yearn to believe that we are really one nation, committed to each other, rather than a collection of individuals each seeking to feather his or her own nest and to prevent others from encroaching on it.

Nothing you can do as president will be as important as enabling Americans to restore our collective sense of community—our understanding that we are really all in it together.

To accomplish this, however, you will have to recognize and address a huge obstacle to rebuilding this sense of community: the enormous economic inequality that now characterizes the United States—greater than at any time since the late 1920s, and far greater than in any other wealthy industrialized nation.

During the past thirty years the share of income going to the richest 1 percent of U.S. households has more than doubled—

to almost 25 percent. And household wealth is far more unequally distributed than household income: the wealthiest 1 percent enjoy an average level of wealth almost 200 times as great as the median U.S. household—a rise of roughly 50 percent since the 1970s. These sharp increases in inequalities of income and wealth have not been mitigated by increased social or income mobility. On the contrary, U.S. intergenerational mobility decreased significantly over the last 25 years; our society now offers less social mobility than in any comparable nation.

Up to a point, economic inequality can be economically beneficial. But we are way beyond the point where the beneficial effects of inequality outweigh its adverse effects, which become increasingly significant as the degree of inequality rises.

It is no accident that the Great Depression followed the spike in inequality of the 1920s, and it is no accident that the current economic crisis has come on the heels of huge increases in economic inequality over the past quarter-century. Sharply rising inequality leads to speculative excess and a variety of economic distortions, which will sooner or later undermine the vitality of the economy. Huge inequalities foster hugely unequal opportunities, thereby preventing society from tapping the latent potential of the less well-off; undermining the cooperation and trust essential to a well-functioning market economy; and increasing the costs of maintaining law, order, and public health.

Huge inequalities are not only economically counterproductive. As I am sure you are well aware, they also undermine democracy by over-empowering the wealthy, and they erode community by distancing the rich from the poor.

Last October, in response to a question from “Joe the Plumber,” you remarked that “I think when you spread the wealth around, it’s good for everybody.” For this you were roundly excoriated by the John McCain campaign. But you had made an excellent point—one that was arguably endorsed by the American electorate on November 4. A significant reduction of the enormous inequalities now characterizing our economy can indeed be good for everybody, just as it was in the New Deal era of the 1930s.

The best way to reduce economic inequality and to increase equality of opportunity is precisely to redistribute some of the *wealth* of the very rich—especially that portion of it that they pass on to their heirs—so that it enhances opportunities for the poor. Instead of providing additional advantages to the children of the rich, some of their wealth should be used to help level the playing terrain for the poor. This can best be done by investing it in public institutions that provide health and educational services for children—especially very young children—in relatively low-income neighborhoods.

I urge you therefore to take immediate action in order to:

- Bring the estate tax exclusion amount back down to \$1 million (its level before the Bush tax cut bill of 2001).
- Institute a new national property tax—along the lines of the French “solidarity tax on wealth.”
- Establish a “solidarity investment fund,” financed by the aforementioned wealth taxes, to be devoted to providing new and/or better health and educational services in low-income communities.

“Spreading the wealth” along the above lines would redistribute assets in ways that promise more economic growth, as well as more equal opportunity, helping to overcome the current economic crisis, to revitalize democracy, and to restore community in our society. ■

Tom Weisskopf is a professor of economics at the University of Michigan; his books include After the Waste Land: A Democratic Economics for the Year 2000 and Affirmative Action in the United States and India.

Sharon D. Welch on the Path to Sustainable Peace

AS YOU DEMONSTRATED THROUGHOUT YOUR CAMPAIGN, YOU ARE WELL AWARE THAT WE ARE AT A FRUITFUL moment politically, a time to fundamentally reconsider the nature of national and international security, and the best means to attain that security. We are in the midst of a momentous paradigm shift in making peace and waging war. While there is widespread international support for multilateral armed intervention to protect peoples from genocide and crimes against humanity, there is equally widespread dissatisfaction with the legitimacy, morality, and even efficacy of traditional military intervention.

Lest we think contemporary critiques of traditional military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan are limited to “the anti-war Left,” ponder the implications of three of the nine “representative paradoxes of counterinsurgency” as described in the 2007 U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual:

- “The more force is used, the less effective it is.”
- “The best weapons for counterinsurgency do not shoot.”
- “Tactical success guarantees nothing.”

The writers of the *Field Manual* pose a stark question of immense political and ethical importance: *they ask us to re-evaluate the power of violence*. They challenge us to take seriously the limits of force to either maintain security or insure compliance with cherished values, ideals, and institutions.

Given the limits of military force in establishing enduring security in either Iraq or Afghanistan, many governmental leaders and military officers are exploring the concepts of integrated power and global citizenship. Refugees fleeing civil war and people dying at the hands of repressive governmental forces compel us to act collectively. This collective action is most effective when it is multinational and multifaceted. We can respond to ongoing unrest with three interrelated initiatives:

1. Peacekeeping—early intervention to stop genocide and prevent large-scale war.
2. Peacemaking—bringing hostile parties to agreement, negotiating equitable and sustainable peace agreements that include attention to the pressing need for post-conflict restoration and reconciliation.
3. Peacebuilding—the creation of long-term structures for redressing injustice and resolving ongoing conflict, as well as addressing the root causes of armed conflict, economic exploitation, and political marginalization.

These are ways of responding that allow us to act decisively to protect civilians from genocide and crimes against humanity but do not take us into the spiral of all-out war, with its devastating toll on civilians and military forces alike.

These alternative responses to violence recast the longstanding debate between advocates of just war and advocates of nonviolent struggle. All our efforts may now be transformed and augmented by a third way: joint efforts to prevent war, stop genocide, and repair the damage caused by armed conflict.

It may be as startling to find advocates of nonviolence accepting the use of armed force in cases like Darfur as it is to find substantial numbers of people within the military questioning the ability of military force to stop violence and establish civil order in Afghanistan and Iraq. Does acceptance of the judicious use of force in the case of humanitarian intervention—and the need for establishing security systems in the wake of armed conflict—mean that criticism of violence (and its grave cost to perpetrators and victims) is irrelevant or invalid? Not at all. In the case of the emerging global security system, while the use of some forms of force is accepted as necessary, this reliance on limited violence does not have the valence and power that it does in either holy war or even just war, where force is seen as the apotheosis of strength and power. In the case of multifaceted, strategic peacebuilding, while force may at times be necessary, *it is never sufficient*. The value of peacekeeping is not in resolving a conflict, but in providing the space in which enduring security and sustainable peace may be created through the long-term nonviolent work of obtaining comprehensive political assent and participation.

To find an effective third way between waging war and nonviolent resistance is not easy. There is no doubt that it requires the best of us—audacity, openness to new ideas and new coalitions, astute planning, and creative institution-building. The opportunities, however, are real, the partners diverse, and the challenges inescapable. May we have the courage to embrace this moment. ■

Dr. Sharon D. Welch is Provost of Meadville Lombard Theological School (Unitarian Universalist), member of Global Action to Prevent War, and author of Real Peace, Real Security: the Challenges of Global Citizenship (Fortress Press, 2008).

Jim Winkler on Generosity, Love, and Trust

THERE IS A FEELING AMONG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD THAT YOU POSSESS THE INTELLECT AND TEMPERAMENT necessary to be a great, indeed, a transformative president. I know that many in my own denomination, The United Methodist Church, pray for your success, particularly after eight long years of failed leadership from two of our own.

The world desperately requires visionary and collaborative leadership from the United States. Of course, you will not possibly be able to please everyone. Even among your advisers there are those who will urge caution from you so that you operate only in the limited range of conventional wisdom. Please do not always heed them.

There are those who will insist you make use of your military forces to prove your willingness to shed blood on behalf of the real or perceived interests of the United States. Do not succumb to the temptation.

Generosity, love, healing, friendship, and trust must be the guideposts for your administration. Care for the impoverished among us and for the Creation is the only way we can all move forward as a world community.

Seven years ago, in the wake of 9/11, the world rallied to the United States. Those good wishes were squandered.

Yet again, the world desires to work alongside, not for, the United States as collectively we face environmental degradation, pandemic poverty, and a world awash in weapons. Those three crises, William Sloane Coffin pointed out, are the real axis of evil.

I encourage you to meet regularly, perhaps quarterly, with religious leaders because they can help keep you connected to fundamental spiritual values and they are not seeking special favor or legislation for their faith group (if any of them do so, I

recommend you cease inviting them to serve as advisors to you, for they have become lobbyists).

Please consider making use of a wide array of religious leaders rather than a small group. There are many capable people who represent the vast array of American religion. Those who make use of the privilege of meeting with you to promote themselves should not be invited to continue.

You will be in our thoughts and prayers as you carry out your work. We do not have time to waste. ■

Jim Winkler is the general secretary (chief executive) of the international public policy and social justice agency of The United Methodist Church.

Hamza Yusuf on a Presidency of Descending Grace

IT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY AND MOMENTOUS EVENT TO CALL YOU PRESIDENT. YOUR FATHER WAS OF THE LUO CLAN AND, as you know, it would be difficult for a Luo to be elected president in Kenya. In our country, while tribe is not an issue, color often is, but you have succeeded in overcoming both clan and complexion, and in doing so inspired millions of people around the world.

Though you preside over a nation that has drifted away from its foundational principles, you possess the qualities that can begin to change that. Winston Churchill said: "Of all the talents bestowed upon men, none is so precious as the gift of oratory. He who enjoys it wields a power more durable than that of a great king." Your words have moved a nation—in the right direction, toward a more just, more equal, and more perfect union. Now you must call on Americans to live up to the promise of America. You must challenge them, demand of them great sacrifices, appeal to the better angels of their nature. Remind them that we are a nation founded upon the idea of liberty and justice for all, not just for Americans but for citizens everywhere.

You must restore America's standing in the world. Resurrect the art of diplomacy that previous administrations have abandoned. Meet with world leaders who pose a challenge—in Afghanistan, in Iran, and elsewhere—and gently but firmly wage peace. Redefine the "war on terror," so it becomes a pursuit of criminals who must be prosecuted and not nations that must be attacked.

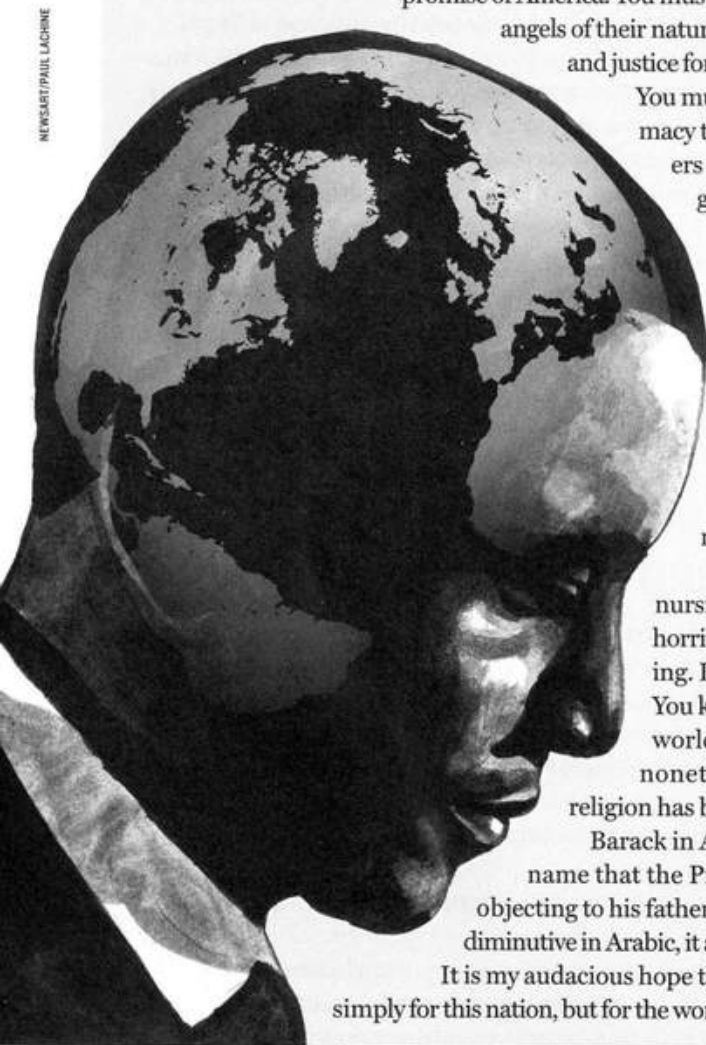
But one of the most consequential things you can do is to call on the Muslims. Challenge them to live up to the ideals of their faith that are rooted in self-sacrifice, charity, and most importantly, the single attribute that every Muslim knows characterizes our Prophet: mercy. Your grandfather converted to Islam because he saw something good in it. But Islam is a religion currently under assault. Like many Muslims who have lost sight of the good of America, far too many Americans fail to see the good of Islam.

But Islam stands alongside its sister religions, feeding the poor, nursing the sick, and teaching the ignorant. Far too many people live in horrific conditions, without potable water, enough food, or adequate housing. Islam challenges us to address the problems of the disenfranchised. You know that faith can be a powerful force for the change we need in the world. While you are not a religious leader but a political one, you are nonetheless one whose family extends to both "them" and "us," and religion has been central in your life.

Barack in Arabic means "descending grace." Your middle name, Hussein, is a name that the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, gave his grandson after objecting to his father's desire to name him "Harb," which means war. While Hussein is a diminutive in Arabic, it actually denotes in this case a superlative and means "great good."

It is my audacious hope that your presidency is one of descending grace and great good, not simply for this nation, but for the world. ■

Hamza Yusuf is a Muslim scholar, lecturer, and author of Purification of the Heart as well as other works. He is the cofounder of the Zaytuna Institute in California, which is dedicated to reviving the traditions of classical Islamic scholarship.



NEWSART/PAUL LACHINE

Andrew Zimbalist on Women's Sports

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS CONSTITUTE A PECULIAR ECONOMIC SYSTEM WHERE, IN THE NAME OF AMATEURISM, the producers (players) do not get paid, but their coaches are routinely paid five to ten times the university president's salary. The playing fields are covered with commercial signage, uniforms boast swooshes, players' likenesses are used in fantasy football and basketball games, and beer companies are allowed to peddle their wares despite the serious problem of binge alcoholism on most campuses.

Meanwhile, Division IA football teams give out eighty-five full scholarships (at roughly \$30,000 each) and typically carry an additional thirty non-scholarship players. Yet athletic directors complain that they don't have enough money to support women's sports.

Women's sports have languished during the two terms of President Bush, as they have under all Republican administrations since the passage of Title IX in 1972. Today, women are 56 percent of college students but only 43 percent of college athletes. Sports participation has been shown to produce a number of salutary developmental outcomes for young

women: improved emotional and physical health; better academic performance; and the learning of discipline, teamwork, goal-setting, and leadership skills. If college sports are indeed meant to be subordinate to the central academic mission of the university (as article one of the NCAA Constitution stipulates) and to promote the balanced and healthy development of the student body, then the opportunity to participate in them needs to be equally available to each gender.

College sports, because they are construed to be part of the education mission, experience a variety of society-supported benefits. They are played in facilities supported by public financing or by bonds granted tax-exempt status. They receive donations from boosters who are allocated choice seats on the 50-yard line and then allowed to deduct 80 percent of their "donation" from their taxable income. They receive advertising and sponsorship money that goes untaxed. And they do not have to pay their athletes a salary or cover them with workmen's compensation. If they choose to continue to benefit from the umbrella of academia and the branding of amateurism, they should adhere to its educational values.

President Obama, you have stated that you will actively support Title IX. But the resources to support gender equity are often squandered in athletics departments on multimillion-dollar salaries for coaches, hundreds of millions of dollars on stadiums and arenas, tens of millions of dollars on fitness centers and tutoring facilities, first-class hotel travel and restaurants for men's teams and their entourages, and so on. Your brother-in-law, Craig Robinson, is the men's basketball coach at Oregon State. If you can rise above your family ties in this area, it will send a powerful symbolic message about your administration's commitment to gender equity, to fairness, and to education. ■



Connecticut's Renee Montgomery (20) attempts a layup in front of Rutgers' Myia McCurdy (24) during the first half of a women's college basketball game at the Rutgers Athletic Center in Piscataway, New Jersey, on February 5, 2007.

Andrew Zimbalist is the Robert A. Woods Professor of Economics at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. He has published eighteen books and has consulted extensively in the sports industry and in economic development.

To Kvetch is Human, to Act ... Divine

by Rachel Biale



Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA) activists march at a rally for immigrant workers' rights in Los Angeles on September 28, 2006.

THE TEENAGER WITH THE HUGE "JEWFRO" approached me trembling. "How did you know to put me into this group?" he asked. "What group?" I responded, trying to understand. "The one about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire," he said. I had not known to put him into that group: it happened by accident, even though it did not feel that way to him.

I was surrounded by nearly one hundred sixteen- and seventeen-year-old teens at Camp Newman outside Santa Rosa. It was the first day after a brutal two-week heat wave, so, needless to say, it was a challenge to keep them riveted. I was speaking about sweatshops and the Progressive Jewish Alliance's work on the issue.

To make things lively, I divided them into five groups, with each group assigned an interactive task. Some were to look at the tags on everyone's T-shirts and list where they were made, then contextualize their findings with a map I distributed of average wages around the globe (twenty-three cents per hour in China, and between four and twenty cents per hour in Bangladesh, according to statistics from 2002) and calculate how many shirts you'd have to make per day to feed a family of five. Another group checked the manufacturers of their sneakers and read about harsh employment conditions at a factory in Mexico producing footwear for Adidas.

The boy with the big hair ended up in a group that read short articles about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and a fire in a garment workshop in Bangladesh in 2003. In both cases, the owners locked the doors and fled. Workers were trapped in the building and burned to death.

*Rachel Biale is the Bay Area Regional Director and Interim Executive Director, Progressive Jewish Alliance (www.pjalliance.org). She is the author of *Women and Jewish Law* (New York: Schocken, 1984) and has worked in the Bay Area Jewish Community for over 20 years.*

"My great-aunt died in that fire!" he told me. "She jumped out of the second-story window and was killed."

I got the shivers. "And," he continued, "my other great-aunt survived because she was sick that day and didn't go to work."

My work here is done, I felt, if I could just get him to stand up and tell that to his friends. He did, and I could feel something like an electric current run through the group. Point made: we were once in the sweatshops, as we were in Egypt. This is *our* story and now it's happening to other people around the globe.

This is emblematic of the work of the Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA), where I have been the Bay Area Regional Director for nearly three years. PJA was founded in Los Angeles in 1999 by a group of ex-American Jewish Congress members who left an organization they perceived as steadily drifting to the right. With founding director Daniel Sokatch, now the chief executive officer of the Jewish Community Federation of the greater San Francisco region, PJA set out to create a new model of Jewish social justice activism. PJA hopes to be a new kind of Jewish organization by connecting Jews to the critical social justice issues of the day in the midst of the cities in which they live. It defines itself as bridging two worlds, as "a Jewish voice in the Progressive community and a progressive voice in the Jewish community." Thus it works simultaneously in coalition with non-Jewish social justice and equality organizations and with organizations within the "establishment" Jewish community.

PJA's choice of issues and allies is guided by a number of considerations:

1. Is the issue local or is there a local point of leverage to work on the issue?
2. Is the issue in some way part of our Jewish story, resonating with Jewish ethical teaching or history?
3. Is the issue one that no one else is focusing on in the Jewish community?
4. Are there productive alliances outside the Jewish community for the work and will the collaboration offer opportunities to change the perception of the Jewish community in marginalized groups and communities?
5. Are there concrete steps toward success, even if only in a limited arena?

PJA's work is also guided by a healthy understanding of its limitations. With a staff of eleven and two offices in California (though national expansion is planned for 2009), we know we are a drop in the bucket. The organization tries to stay humble, with a good dose of self-critical irony, in order to keep from drifting into self-righteousness.

Early in PJA's history, we were deeply engaged in the struggle to expose sweatshops in Los Angeles and pressure their owners to improve labor conditions. Some workers, mostly Latinas, were organizing a boycott of several workshops, including those producing for the popular "Forever 21" stores. Sokatch went to their meeting to learn about their plans and work on collaboration. When he entered the room and was introduced, cheers and multiple conversations erupted. "What are they saying?" asked Daniel, whose Spanish is rudimentary. His host explained that the organizers were saying, "The Jews are here—they know how to organize!"

PJA's goal is to live up to that reputation by supporting sweatshop workers, hotel workers in the Bay Area and Los Angeles, food service workers, car washers (especially in Los Angeles), janitors, and security workers. Our group also works on campaigns for marriage equality and immigrants' rights, as well as on a Jewish-Muslim Community Partnership, which is presently in Los Angeles. PJA is striving to develop the next generation of Jewish social justice leaders and trouble-makers through a fellowship for young adult Jews. ■



Sarah Lieber Church, a PJA staff member, was arrested by the Los Angeles Police Department at the rally. Charges were later dropped. Sarah is presently PJA's program director at the organization's Bay Area office.

Energy Independence and America's Covenant with the Future

by Jonathan Sacks

THE FIRST I HEARD OF BARACK OBAMA WAS IN 2006. SURFING AMAZON.COM ONE NIGHT, I CAME ACROSS A book on politics entitled, *The Audacity of Hope*, by a writer whose name I did not recognize. Since I had published a book, nine years earlier, called *The Politics of Hope*, I sensed a kindred spirit. I ordered the book, read it, and recognized the emergence of a new and powerful voice in American politics. When I heard that he was a presidential candidate, I knew he would win if the American electorate sensed it needed a fresh start, a new birth of freedom.

America does this more than any other nation on earth. It does so because its political culture is rooted in the concept of covenant. It has—again, more profoundly than any other Western power—a national narrative, rehearsed in every presidential inaugural since Washington's first in 1789. That narrative reads like an ongoing commentary to the biblical books of She-

mot and Devarim. It means that Americans can be periodically recalled, not to some mythical past or golden age, but to their founding vision, their covenant with the future. In general, but especially in America, honor goes to the politician who can best speak to the anxieties of the age and out of them weave a compelling narrative of hope. That is what Obama did, and why he won.

The United States needs renewal now. In the course of the next twenty years its supremacy as the world's sole superpower will increasingly be challenged, not least by four ancient civilizations, each of which was once an empire: Russia, China, India, and the nations of Islam. America no longer appears to the world economically, politically, or militarily invulnerable. That is a major factor in our current global instability.

My concern is not with the immediate tasks facing the president: stabilizing the financial system, regenerating the economy, closing Guantánamo, and signaling American commitment to international programs on global warming and the Millennium Development Goals. Nor is my concern with recovering a multilateral approach to rogue, failed, and failing states. The United States needs a project, an equivalent in our time to the task of a moon landing by which JFK energized and captured the imagination of a generation.

There can be little doubt what that project must be: find an alternative to oil. It is American (and global) dependence on oil that has shaped the geopolitical environment, placing power and wealth in the hands of states, some of whom could be accused of using it to spread religious extremism and political militancy, pursue nuclear weapons, and threaten genocide. The search for new, effective, and environmentally safe sources of power has the potential to re-energize the American economy, focus new technology, protect the earth's ecology, and shift the global balance of power. The greatest statement of American values was the Declaration of Independence. Currently America is dependent. Its habits of consumption have made it so.

In my book on national identities, *The Home We Build Together*, I point out that Moses was able to forge a new nation from a group of escaping slaves by getting them to build something collectively. In that case it was a Sanctuary. But when it comes to nation-building generally, process matters more than product. A shared task does more to renew a people than any fiscal policy, legislative program, or political rhetoric. Barack Obama has found the words to summon a nation to greatness. Now he must find the work. ■

Sir Jonathan Sacks is Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth.



Steve Bhaerman on a Marshall Plan to Eclipse the “Martial Plan”

WELL, THE RESULTS ARE IN. THE AMERICAN PUBLIC CAST A DEFINITIVE VOTE FOR “POLITICAL CLIMATE change.” Thanks to a massive “up-wising,” a critical mass of Americans chose to wise up and vote for a world where “we’re all in it together.”

I was heartened to hear you utter those very words during your campaign. Now it’s time for some action on behalf of this evolutionary idea. You’ve positioned yourself as a twenty-first-century leader, so you might be interested in what the latest science is telling us about human evolution. Thanks to the work of cellular biologist Bruce Lipton (my co-author in an upcoming book, *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and How to Get There From Here*), the next phase of human evolution will not be to grow a bigger brain, but to grow a bigger community.

Just as surely as each of us is a thriving community of some 50 trillion cells, we are evolving to realize that we are each and all cells in the body of a new organism called Humanity. Interestingly, this new scientific understanding is totally consistent with the spiritual understanding at the root of every religious, spiritual, and ethical path: some version of the Golden Rule. In this shrinking world that could use a good shrink, the survival of our species now depends upon our shifting from “survival of the fittest” to “thrival of the fittingest.”

At a time when our planet’s physical resources are diminishing, we must call on the underutilized human resources of love and imagination to magnify the sun’s energy and grow enough food for all. If we do that, we won’t be spending our irreplaceable resources on humanity’s “auto-immune dysfunction,” warfare. And by committing to insure the health of every human soul on the planet, we grow health and functionality from the grassroots up, and prevent problems before we need to intervene with expensive cures.

Biology—and common sense—tells us that the preventive cure for the ailments of humanity is local food and energy self-sufficiency, in the context of valuing each human being. This may sound like pie-in-the-sky idealism, but unless it becomes feet-on-the-ground real-dealism, we may find ourselves at the top of the endangered species list. It matters not how “fit” the individual: if the ecosystem doesn’t make it, the “ego system” isn’t much use.

The first step in removing ourselves from the Endangered Species list is removing ourselves from the Endangering Species list. And it’s not just global warming that is impacting the planet, but global warring. For the past half-century, we have been suffering from a military industrial complex that has brought us to the verge of economic (and moral) bankruptcy. When Americans voted for “change,” that was the change they were seeking—from a “martial plan” where self-determination is suppressed from the top down, to a Marshall Plan where healthy communities worldwide are empowered from the bottom up.

We cannot help but notice that among your early appointees are some ... well, some disappointees. We see some of the neoliberal “kinder and gentler” faces of a neither kind nor gentle empire. Perhaps you see this as a strategic necessity at a time when the powerful force of “we the people” has not yet been mobilized into a power powerful enough to support real change.

Well, we have good news for you. The audacious movement you’ve given voice to will move forward regardless of how much or how little you are able to do in four years. The awakening that occurred in the wake of an eight-year neo-con con job will only continue. Already, groups of individuals are reaching beyond ideological lines to empower a “healthy central voice” for the American people, and for humanity. In February, there will be a Citizens Summit in Denver commemorating the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth. The event, sponsored by the Transpartisan Alliance is designed to help us overcome our partisan trance and establish a broad moral and political authority that reflects the values of a vast majority of Americans: government of the people, by the people, and for the people, where the government does our bidding, not the bidding of the highest bidder.

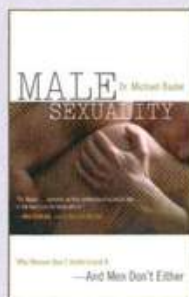
May you lead knowing that we voted for “us” by voting for you, and may you follow the emerging evolutionary awareness that we humans are here to re-grow the Garden ... and have a heaven of a time doing it. ■

Steve Bhaerman and his comic alter ego Swami Beyondananda can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com. For the Transpartisan Citizens Summit, see www.transpartisanalliance.net.

MALE SEXUALITY

Michael Bader
Rowman & Littlefield, 2008

WHEN IT COMES TO SEX, THERE IS ALWAYS A method to our madness, teaches San Francisco psychoanalyst Michael Bader, and in this sophisticated and gripping analysis, he shows us why male sexual behavior is often shaped by needs for love and safety that are frequently misunderstood. If men are encouraged to explore the emotional sources of their sexual desires, and if women can distinguish between men's motivation and their behavior, a deep empathy can emerge that can heal many of the tensions that cause relationships to fail and sexuality to be less pleasurable and more guilt-ridden. Bader, like Freud in his early crusading days, does not promise miracle cures for sexual or relationship problems, but rather the possibility for people to recognize each other as "struggling to make sense of the world in the best way they can, motivated primarily by needs for safety, security, love, and pleasure, rather than wishes to hurt or demean." And Bader, who has participated in *Tikkun's* campaign for a politics of meaning since we began this magazine, tells his readers that the solution to the problem of alienation is to recognize that both men and women need lives that are more engaged with other people; they "need to feel connected, need communities in which they feel recognized and safe, and need to have work in which they feel they're making a contribution to something bigger than themselves."

**POSTZIONISM: A READER**

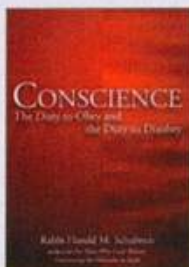
ed. Laurence J. Silberstein
Rutgers University Press, 2008

WHILE JEWS IN AMERICA ARE FREQUENTLY dismissed as "self-hating" or anti-Israel if they question the sanctity of Zionist ideas and assumptions, Israelis have long moved beyond that diaspora-shaped religion. The Israeli authors in this anthology will be familiar to *Tikkun* readers: Benny Morris, Adi Ophir, Baruch Kimmerling, Oren Yiftachel, Hannan Hever, Azmi Bishara, and others who have helped us shape our understanding of the conflict. By putting them together in a single anthology, Laurence Silberstein has provided American Jews and their philo-Semitic allies a huge service, if they now take the time to actually read these articles and rethink their notion of what it means to be pro-Israel in the twenty-first century.

**CONSCIENCE**

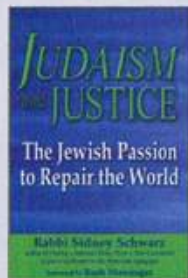
Harold M. Schulweis
Jewish Lights, 2008

CRITICS OF RELIGION SOMETIMES SEE IT AS AN inherently conservatizing institution that will always support the status quo, but Rabbi Harold Schulweis's careful examination of Jewish texts shows that despite their push toward obedience to God, the texts have a strong and explicit tendency to affirm a duty to disobey constituted political and religious authority. From the moment Abraham challenges God to act according to a universal standard of justice, the Jewish tradition has been filled with holy disobedience. Schulweis looks at the contemporary world, acknowledges the vast evils that have been perpetrated by people who thought that following orders and doing their duty required that they cut off their own conscience, and recognizes the need for a new ethos. "The urgent challenge for religion is to provide religious groups with the resources needed to resist immoral authority."

**JUDAISM AND JUSTICE**

Sidney Schwarz
Jewish Lights, 2008

IN THIS THOUGHTFUL VOLUME, WHICH IS NOW available in paperback, Rabbi Sidney Schwarz—founder and president of PANIM: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values—explores the tension between Jewish particularism and universalism, between its instinct for self-preservation and its desire to participate in the work of global transformation. Drawing on classical texts and modern Jewish experience, Schwarz calls on his community to engage in both projects with pride and passion, recognizing the need for an integrated approach to the task of *tikkun*.

**WITNESS TO DISPOSSESSION**

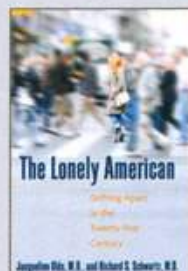
Tom Beaudoin
Orbis Books, 2008

TOM BEAUDOIN IS A PROFESSOR OF "PRACTICAL theology" at Fordham University. His essays on the vocation of a postmodern theologian reflect a creative tension between his deep love of Catholicism and his immersion in the work of postmodernist philosopher Michel Foucault. Letting go of the Christian tradition and handing it over to the entire human race is, for Beaudoin, the archetypal act of dispossession—an act which is at the heart of the Christian tradition. By eschewing Christian "essence" and affirming a religious pluralism, Beaudoin moves away from the foundational security so many people continue to seek in the church.

**THE LONELY AMERICAN**

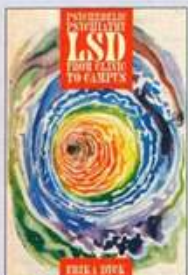
Jacqueline Olds and Richard Schwartz
Beacon Press, 2009

AMERICANS DRIFT AWAY FROM SOCIAL connections both because of the frenetic, overscheduled, hyper-networked intensity of modern life, and because of the cultural romanticization of the self-reliant heroes who stand apart from the crowd. Yet, as individuals, each of us hates feeling left out. This insightful book shows that American competitiveness is more likely to be focused on who eats the healthiest food or who spends the most time at the gym, instead of on who does the most good for others. In the process much of the impetus toward charity, friendliness, and sharing is lost. And while loneliness in America may be very painful for individuals, it is surprisingly functional for the marketplace: people living alone are far more likely to spend money on themselves than people living with others. Social isolation leads people to use consumer goods as a source of comfort and satisfaction.

**PSYCHEDELIC PSYCHIATRY**

Erika Dyck
Johns Hopkins U. Press, 2008

THIS HISTORICAL STUDY TELLS HOW LSD WENT from being a carefully studied psychopharmacological miracle drug, to a university campus rage, to a feared "street drug." Popularized by Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary, and Ken Kesey, the drug became identified with the notion of an alternative experience of reality that could expose the contradictions and distortions built into daily life in advanced capitalist societies. Many saw LSD use as encouraging a rejection of authority, patriotism, and postwar middle-class values. Fearful of losing their youth to a subversive counterculture, adults of the 1960s responded by criminalizing the use and distribution of LSD, thereby cutting off the important medical experimentation that had begun.



SUPPORT OBAMA TO *Be* OBAMA

The Network of Spiritual Progressives' National Conference Washington, D.C., May 1-4, 2009

President Obama has surrounded himself with practitioners of the "old politics" that he promised to replace. The pressure on him to be "realistic" as defined by the pundits, America's corporate and political elites, and their inside-the-Beltway minions is enormous. Obama needs our help.

We are the people who were excited by Barack Obama because he promised fundamental change in our foreign policy, economic policy, and in the way we have constructed our legal, electoral, educational, and health care systems. Over and over again, Obama told us that the changes could not happen without massive support from all of us Americans who really want a new reality. So we are showing up for Obama.

But showing up means more than backing particular legislative programs proposed by the Obama administration. Real support requires us to raise the fundamental issue of what values must guide our society. We need to overcome the narrow utilitarian view of the physical world as a resource—a view which defines progress in terms of maximizing wealth and accumulating consumer goods. We need to build a world in which people learn to see each other as fundamentally valuable for who we are as embodiments of the sacred, and not merely in instrumental terms.

As a first step toward these goals, we seek to support Obama by urging him to articulate a New Bottom Line for our society. We want our corporations, our governmental policies, our schools, our legal system, our health care system, and even our personal lives to be judged on the extent to which they increase love and caring, kindness and generosity, ethical and ecological behavior, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of all that is.

We've articulated how this plays out politically in our Spiritual Covenant with America (www.spiritualprogressives.org). A central focus of our conference will be our campaign for a Global Marshall Plan, challenging the notion that Homeland Security will be strengthened by war or domination (e.g. an escalation in Afghanistan) and insisting instead that it is generosity and genuine caring about the fate of the planet and all 6.7 billion of its inhabitants that will bring safety and increase our spiritual well-being. Our campaign will speak in the name of values that are rooted in our religious and spiritual traditions, but you don't have to be part of those traditions to articulate those values. JOIN US!



The **YES, WE CAN!** project of The Spiritual Progressive Fund.
More info: www.spiritualprogressives.org or write to us: info@spiritualprogressives.org