# Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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


## ALICE WALKER ON RWANDA AND GAZA



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The error of capitulating to what the media and inside-the-Beltway pols define as "pragmatic" or "realistic"


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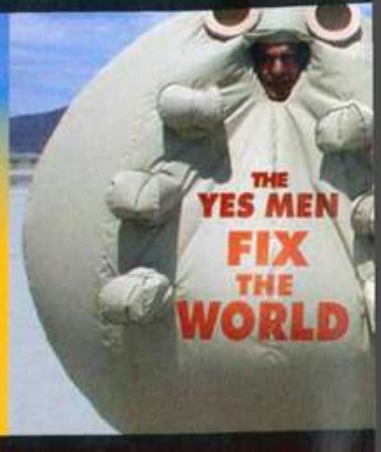





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Tikkun SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

**HIGH HOLIDAY SUPPLEMENT**
*(between pages 48 and 49)*

## WHAT IS *TIKKUN*?

*Tikkun* is a Hebrew word that means "healing and transformation."

*Tikkun* magazine (and our education/action arm, the Network of Spiritual Progressives) seeks to repair and transform our world while also supporting our own inner psycho-spiritual growth and transformation. *Tikkun* is the most frequently quoted voice of liberal and progressive Jews (both secular and religious), but in recent years it has evolved to also be the voice of spiritual progressives of all religions and none (i.e. you don't have to believe in God or be part of some religion to be "a spiritual progressive").

**WHAT'S A SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVE?** Well, the full answer can be found in our "Core Vision" at www.tikkun.org, and this vision is made concrete in our "Spiritual Covenant with America" and our "Campaign for a Global Marshall Plan" essays, which you can read at www.spiritualprogressives.org. But the short definition is this: anyone who shares our call for a "New Bottom Line." Institutions; corporations; government; legislation; our educational, legal, and medical systems; our media; and even our personal behavior should be judged "efficient," "rational," or "productive" not only to the extent that they maximize money or power (the Old Bottom Line) but also to the extent that they maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, and ethically and ecologically sensitive behavior, as well as enhance our capacities to respond to other human beings as embodiments of the sacred and to the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of all that is.

*Tikkun* is the magazine where people who support this prophetic vision of a New Bottom Line connect, and the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) offers an organizational mechanism through which people can work to achieve a world that corresponds to these ideals. Most people on the planet want to live in that kind of a world, but most believe it to be impossible. We are the voice of those who have not given up, and who testify to the incredible changes that can happen (not the least of which is the election of an African American president of the United States) when people decide to make real what others dismissed as impossible. Please help us build this kind of world by joining the NSP (*Tikkun* comes free to all who have joined at www.spiritualprogressives.org) or at least by subscribing to the magazine. Together, we can actually make the kinds of changes that the cynical realists and pragmatists dismiss as utopian. Join the tens of thousands of people who have already become part of this movement! (Fill out the form between pages 32 and 33.)

—Rabbi Michael Lerner, Editor

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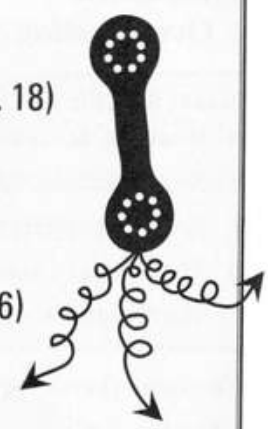
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# Readers Respond

**A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:**

*As* Tikkun *increases its Web presence by posting online exclusives at www.tikkun.org and spiritualprogressives.org, and by sending e-mails to anyone who asks to be placed on our list (send requests to Generosity@Tikkun.org), we are increasingly publishing responses to online as well as print articles in this section of the magazine. We welcome your responses to our articles. Send your letters to the editor to Letters@Tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to* Tikkun *views other than those expressed in our editorials. We e-mail, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements, because that is what makes* Tikkun *a location for a true diversity of ideas.* Tikkun *reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.*

## A NEW STIMULUS

WHILE WE ARE WAITING FOR THE miraculous advent of economic democracy (as described by John Sanbonmatsu and David Schweickart in the May/June 2009 issue of *Tikkun*), perhaps good-hearted people and institutions could advocate a few helpful transitional populist ideas. One such idea: create a decentralized second stimulus. There is a lot of work that could be done and people to be employed on a low-skilled, even no-skilled basis. Unemployed people could be paid a living wage, say $15 per hour, to help make their rent or mortgage, medical bills, or car payments.

Think outside the box of top-down, labor-saving, energy and machinery-using projects like standard highway construction and other typical infrastructure projects. "Shovel-ready" in my sense, refers to technology appropriate for creating labor-intensive "infrastructure micro-works," maximum jobs for stimulus and the general welfare. My "shovel" is the "pick axe and shovel" technology that built the original railroads and was used by the Civilian Conservation Corps. It could be reused nationwide to build a twenty-first-century electrified hi-speed rail line and a smart electricity distribution grid, using thousands of local work crews.

Also nationwide, there's an enormous need for easily trained, small-group child care givers. Evidence in the book *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children* shows that forty-one hours of small-group, out-of-home day care, with an encouraging caregiver who engages the children in talking, from eight months to school entrance, raises the verbal skills of children born in poverty to the same level as those of employable working-class parents. The caregiver doesn't need higher education; he or she just needs to talk with the kids and show them encouraging rather than prohibiting behavior.

Thus I suggest we advocate a program of stimulus—bypassing states and counties—directly to small cities, boroughs, and townships, where councils and managers can create projects and hire unemployed local people to carry them out. This is not "make work." The work is there to be done. It is a "produce jobs" program.

Infrastructure microworks could be done by unemployed people showing up at municipal halls with a social security ID, signing an "assumption of risk" waiver of municipal liability with workers' compensation funded by the federal stimulus program. The manager or mayor would use paid municipal employees to supervise the work. Workers could be paid at the end of each day with hard-to-counterfeit American Recovery Scrip, $15 per note, which they could deposit or redeem for cash at local credit unions, savings and loans institutions, or banks. The institutions could be incentivized by having the Federal Reserve credit their interest-bearing reserve accounts with dollars so they could loan more money.

Jacob Coxey's idea of non-interest-bearing bonds issued by municipal localities, with "higher" governments required to provide proceeds, could be combined with advocacy of state-owned banks to produce a vastly cheaper way of financing state deficits and infrastructure work. Coxey's bill would have required the U.S. Congress to provide proceeds of a bond created by any municipality to employ local unemployed workers to build local infrastructure. The proceeds would be secured by the value of municipal real estate and repaid at 4 percent per year over twenty-five years with zero interest from local real estate taxes. A state bank such as North Dakota already could use the inherent leverage of its fractional reserves to close any temporary budget deficits. Such a bank would receive all state taxes and fees and, keeping 8 percent reserves, would be able to lend the state 12.5 times its reserves.

Given the deafening roar from mainstream media of "no alternatives" to the current policies, our failure to advocate these ideas and get people asking "Why can't we have decentralized stimulus, non-interest-bearing bonds, state banks, etc.?" risks losing even the teachable moment this collapse presents.

ROBERT COGAN
*Edinboro, PA*

## WHY THE LEFT LOST SINGLE-PAYER REFORM

THANK YOU RABBI LERNER FOR the information in your health care editorial (*Tikkun*, July/August 2009). I'm an old-time member of ACT UP, the AIDS activist organization in New York City also pushing for a single-payer system. Obama again recently said he doesn't want to disrupt the present system. Doesn't he know it's been disrupting many people's lives for years now? I

myself have not been able to afford to see a dentist since 1986.

Bill Moyers a few weeks ago called our existing system a "health medical business" or something like that. He had a great show last month on this, starting off with people getting hauled off and arrested at hearings in DC. I think they were the Health Care Now coalition. That's what ACT UP did in response to the AIDS crisis—civil disobedience leading to our arrests. That tactic got people talking and it ought to be used by people today who are upset about the health care system as it is.

Also I hope the impact of your analysis of health care in *Tikkun* encourages more spiritual leaders to address our health care problems. Hopefully they will create town meetings to hear the health care needs of their own communities and to come up with suggestions on making it accessible and affordable to everyone. For me personally, a workable plan now is better than nothing in moving the health care reform issue.

GEORGE PLAGIANOS
*New York, NY*

ONE OF THE REASONS I AM A member of Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) is because of its advocacy of single-payer health care. I am saddened and angry to see Rabbi Lerner throwing in the towel in the July/August 2009 *Tikkun*. Even if many of us have already been doing so over the years and months, it is my belief that this is not the time to give up. It is at precisely this time that we should be flooding our local and DC offices of U.S. representatives and senators with our thanks to those who have signed on to single-payer legislation, and a demand to the others to do likewise. (I'm sure that many readers are aware that a way to find out who is signed on to HR 676, HR 1200, and S 703 is to access http://thomas.loc.gov.) In addition, all Congress folks, whether already signed on or not, should be told to use their power to follow through with this prescription of Dr. Aaron M. Roland's in "The Health Care Battle Lines" in the same issue of *Tikkun*: "There must be a complete, honest, side-by-side comparison of all major proposals, including HR 676, the most prominent single-payer bill, by the Congressional Budget Office. The side-by-side comparison must include projected costs now and into the future, not only to the federal government, but also to state governments, employers, and individuals and households of different income levels."

The Lerner and Roland editorials have much good thought and information. What I object to is the giving-up attitude. Genuinely fixing our health care system is a great challenge, but if not now, when?

PEGGY KACEREK
*Bedford, OH*

SENATOR PATTY MURRAY (D-WA) and Representatives Green (D-TX), Wamp (R-TN), and Smith (D-WA) have introduced S 652 in the Senate and HR 1614 in the House, the Community Coalitions Access and Quality Improvement Bill. This legislation funds community coalitions across the United States to develop integrated health care delivery systems. Empowering twenty to thirty diverse


# Tikkun

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DETACH AND SAVE

# Repentance and Atonement Are NOT Just for Jews

## A Note to Our Non-Jewish Readers on How This High Holiday Workbook Can Be of Use to You

*Tikkun* is not just for Jews—it is interfaith as well as Jewish. This High Holiday Workbook has many elements that could work for you and for all people in the world, though the element of repentance is particularly needed in the United States at this historical moment, given our society's problems. The Hebrew word for sin is *cheyt*, a word that indicates "missing the mark," as though we were arrows heading toward our deepest God-place, and sin is really going off course. Repentance, then, is a getting back on course, and that is precisely what America badly needs, as does each of us. We affirm the fundamental goodness of people created in God's image and the need for a mid-flight *tikkun*, or healing and transformation, of our direction.

We've written the High Holiday workbook to emphasize its universal themes, in the hope that you might consider adopting it in your own life. We invite you to try this process of repentance, either on your own or, even better, with a group of your friends or spiritual soul mates. Allocate a time each day to work on one of the items in the workbook, meditate on one topic each day, and read the "For Our Sins" part, transforming those parts that apply specifically to Jews into concepts and issues that make sense to your own community and its experiences. Let us know how this worked for you. And if you want to try this in a community and don't have one that is available, you're invited to register for High Holiday services with Rabbi Lerner in San Francisco, this year or next (info at www.beyttikkun.org). You've probably tried other spiritual growth weekends in other traditions, so why not try this one, too!

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵבוּן. וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יֵחָתֵמוּן.

## High Holidays 5770 | Tikkun

# America Needs Repentance

An invitation to all people to join with the Jewish people in using the period September 18 (Rosh Hashanah—the Day of Remembering who we have been this last year) through September 28 (Yom Kippur—the Day of At-one-ment) to rethink our personal and communal reality and engage with the process of *teshuva* (returning to our highest selves and away from the ways we've missed the mark in this past year) is outlined in the pages of this workbook.

We approach High Holidays this year hoping that with the election of Barack Obama we might see in our world significant changes. Yet we are painfully aware that eight months after taking office, President Obama has not yet taken the kind of consistent stands for peace, human rights, environmental sanity, social justice, and defense of the weakest and poorest elements of our society that many of his supporters imagined he would. Moreover, when he has taken positive steps, as in his attempt to extend coverage of health care, he has faced massive opposition from the elites of wealth and power and their allies in the media, and this has often led him to compromise on principled issues in ways that have undermined the value of some of his programs.

In the United States, Israel, and most other advanced industrial countries, this year's High Holidays come at a period of massive hypocrisy, nationalist chauvinism, repression of civil liberties, and denial of the most critical issues facing our planet. We continue to ignore the basic problems that plague the global human community, such as starvation, disease, and impending ecological crisis. Instead of attending to these problems, we persist in the "war against terrorism"— now switched in focus to Afghanistan and Pakistan, while tens of thousands of troops remain as "advisors" in Iraq—to justify military aggression against countries whose regimes we abhor. There still is too little attention to the daily suffering of 2.8 billion people on the planet living on less than two dollars a day, or the 850 million people who are hungry, or the 20,000–30,000 children who, according to UN estimates, die every single day of starvation or of preventable diseases related to malnutrition.

Few American leaders will use this period to ask what America can do to rectify the damage done to the social, ecological, and spiritual environments of the world's peoples. A climate bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives turned out to be such a give-away to coal interests and other polluters that many environmentalists are now calling for its defeat.

**Too often we have capitulated to media and politicians' demands that we be "realistic" and thus confirmed ourselves in the idolatry that governs the contemporary world ("don't demand what the planet and the human race need to be healthy; demand only what the politicians and the media tells us is 'realistic'"). Yet in being realistic in this way we abandon the God of the Abrahamic faiths, the Force of Healing and Transformation that will act through us (if we allow that to happen) to build a world of love, compassion, justice, peace, and spiritual connection.**

Too many of our synagogues condoned Israel's behavior toward Palestinians and the killing of more than 1,200 Gazans this past January. Instead of honestly and publicly atoning for the sins that Israel has perpetrated this past year—sins that the country is still perpetrating with its blockade of food, fuel, and medical supplies to Gaza—Jewish spokespeople once again deflect the conversation to the sins of the Palestinian people. When Israeli soldiers risk their futures to openly testify to the human rights abuses committed by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), they are scorned or ignored by American Jewish institutions and American media. Yet even as we atone for the outrageous behavior that is an inevitable part of the Occupation that has been going on since 1967, we also join those who decry the violence of Hamas, the

bombings of Sderot and other southern Israel cities, and the intransigence of many Palestinians in not unequivocally recognizing the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state within the pre-1967 boundaries.

Meanwhile, many Jews interpret righteous indignation at Israeli behavior toward Palestinians as anti-Semitism. Indeed, to the extent that the Jewish people and our institutions worldwide continue to oppose all attempts by governments and human rights groups to push Israel to end the Occupation, and allow Israel to claim to speak in the name of the Jewish people, we as Jews do in fact take on some responsibility for Israeli behavior. We cannot say, "Hey, that's just Israel—it's not us Jews," unless we are actively and publicly involved in organizations such as the Tikkun Community/Network of Spiritual Progressives or others that are saying much more than the rather weak "don't expand existing settlements and get back to negotiations." The suffering of the Palestinian people is in fact our responsibility!

Nor should we be satisfied with some peace-oriented groups in the United States that have made "supporting President Obama" their way of finding legitimacy in Washington, D.C. Sure, Obama's call for a settlement freeze could be seen as a helpful first step. But peace groups should be explaining to the American public that the issue is not the "natural growth" of the settlements, but the Occupation itself and the role of the settlements (even if they were just to stay the same size at 400,000 people) in blocking a two-state solution. Israel will only achieve peace when there is real justice for all Palestinians, including the Palestinian refugees who have lived in refugee camps for decades! Until this happens, we as Jews and we as Americans have much to repent for!

We Jews, stuck in the Holocaust trauma of the past, are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. With compassion and kindness, we need to encourage our people to recover, to recognize that they are no longer powerless but powerful, and then to strive to make Israel a country that becomes internationally famous not for its arbitrary power over others, but for its generosity and caring for the Palestinian people and for all the people of the region in which Jews have chosen to live. Until the rabbis of our communities feel safe in talking this way, expressing both prophetic righteous indignation at the way Israel and the Jewish people have gone astray and compassion for the continued impact of our past suffering, which makes it so hard for Jews to acknowledge our misuse of our present power, the distortions in our people and in Jewish institutions are likely to continue.

Nor will you likely hear many rabbis or speakers in our synagogues challenging the prevalence of the "old bottom line" that equates success with material prosperity. All too often our rabbinic leaders feel too intimidated and too much in need of the financial support of the wealthy in their communities to be willing to challenge the materialism and selfishness in American society and the way that ethos has shaped many of the dynamics in the Jewish world. (This "old bottom line" shapes the inner dynamics of the institutions of other faiths and most secular institutions, as well—this is not just a Jewish problem, but it's also a Jewish problem). That obsession with making money above all else led many Jewish institutions into investing with Bernard Madoff to their eventual ruin. But it also continues as banks and investment firms (such as Goldman Sachs) run by Jews and governmental economic policies devised by Jews are revealed as disproportionately serving the interests of the wealthy and resisting reasonable regulations. These institutions and policies consistently avert their eyes from the pain and suffering of so many Americans who are dealing with the consequences of unemployment, inability to pay their mortgages, extravagant rents, and the loss of their small businesses to the economic meltdown. If in future years these destructive policies generate anti-Semitic right-wing movements, we will oppose that kind of unfair blaming of the entire Jewish people for the sins of some of the most powerful Jews alive today, but we'd be far safer if we were to distance from and critique those policies today, while there is still time to change them.

If you do go to synagogue, you'll hear the Haftorah on Yom Kippur in which Isaiah recounts God's message: "Is not this the fast that I desire: to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and unloose the bonds of oppression?" And yet, you'll find few synagogues organizing their people to help promote the Global Marshall Plan or anything similar. They'll engage in a monthly "feed the poor" or "house the homeless" activity, but few will engage in active campaigns to change the larger economic policies and presuppositions of the capitalist system that have led to increased poverty and homelessness.

We at *Tikkun* want to support you in challenging this hypocrisy. We encourage you to stand up for the vision of the prophets for a world of peace, justice, and love. And yet try to do it with compassion for our fellow human beings, fellow Americans (yes, those in the Red States as well as Blue States), and our fellow Jews (even the ones who demean and slander us) because they, like us, are flawed and yet also beautiful embodiments of the spirit of God. Our righteous indignation, so very necessary, must be mixed with compassion and love.

It's easy to feel righteous indignation about the distortions of the United States or Israel, but don't let that keep you from facing your own personal issues as well. Just as we advocate compassion for the United States and Israel, and celebration of the good parts of them while strongly critiquing what is wrong with them, so also we urge you to use this period from September 18–28 to do your own inner work with compassion for yourself, while still being honest enough to really evaluate and then form plans for how to change those aspects of your own personal being that need transformation. We at *Tikkun* and in the Network of Spiritual Progressives know full well how much we ourselves need to do this work as well.

To acknowledge our own screw-ups is an important first step. But the High Holidays are not about getting ourselves to feel guilty, but rather to engage in a process of change. If we don't make those changes internally and in our communities and in our society, all the "breast-beating" and self-criticism becomes an empty ritual.

This workbook serves as an aid in the process of *teshuvah* (repentance or returning to our highest selves). The great message of these High Holy Days is that change is possible—we are not stuck. That's why the Network of Spiritual Progressives and *Tikkun* celebrate these holidays the way the Hasidic world has done for the past many hundreds of years, **with great joy**, because we recognize that the ultimate power of the universe is YHVH, the force of healing and transformation, the God that makes it possible for us to overcome our own stuck places and come back to our highest selves.

*You are invited to make copies of this and share it with friends, neighbors, and people in your community. You are also invited to bring this workbook to Rosh Hashanah services, use it throughout the intervening days of repentance, and bring it with you to review on Yom Kippur.* In each case, write down what part of a problem you might have contributed to, and how your behavior in each relationship might have been part (not the entirety) of the problem. In many situations and relationships, you are not the only part of the problem—but for the sake of this process, it is your part that you are to focus on, not the part contributed by your partner, spouse, parents, children, friends, etc. Begin to work on your part during these ten days of repentance/teshuvah!

On these days, our focus is not on what others did to us, but on what we ourselves did to lessen our connection to our highest possible selves and to our highest manifestation of the God energy of the universe!

DETACH AND SAVE



## What is spiritually out of alignment in my relationships with...

| PROBLEM | WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TO IT |
|---|---|
| *Parents* | |
| **1.** | |
| **2.** | |
| *Spouse or Partner* | |
| **1.** | |
| **2.** | |
| *Friends* | |
| **1.** | |
| **2.** | |
| *Children* | |
| **1.** | |
| **2.** | |

## How spiritually nourishing is your work?

What have been the problems you've faced here? Have you had good relationships with your coworkers? Have you felt fulfilled in your work? Have you been involved in collective efforts to change the workplace, or the union, or tried to organize—or have you felt powerless and unable to envision changing anything? If you were in a supervisory position, did you treat your supervisees with the respect that they deserve? Did you discharge anger from work by punishing yourself (e.g., through alcohol or drugs) or by dumping on friends or lovers—or did you express that anger at the appropriate targets or through collective action? Have you taken any of the steps to fight for "a new bottom line" at work? See www.spiritualprogressives.org for ideas on how to do this.

- *How are your relationships with coworkers?*
- *How are your relationships with supervisors or supervisees?*
- *How healthy were your coping mechanisms with stress at work?*
- *Did you inappropriately blame yourself, or dump anger inappropriately on others?*
- *What kind of political action did you take in relationship to work?*



# Are You Taking Enough Time to Nourish Your Soul and Body?

Did you care for your soul this past year? If not, what didn't you do that you should have done?

- *Did you care for your soul this past year? Did you care for your body? What kept you from giving each the time and attention they needed?*
- *What specific ways did you care for your soul? What specific steps did you take to care for your body?*
- *Did you take the time to read the books and attend the courses, seminars, or other opportunities to expand your access to spiritual life? If not, what specific books and courses are you now willing to commit to read and/or attend for this next year? In what ways did you explore your connection to God this past year (no matter how you personally conceive of the Transformative Power of the Universe, the Unity of All Being, the Force that Makes Possible the Transformation From that Which Is to that Which Ought to Be)?*
- *Did you take the time to exercise, to pay attention to eating healthily and not excessively, and to pleasure your body in the myriad ways that are possible?*
- *What other pleasures did you give yourself this past year? Remember, from the standpoint of Jewish spirituality, pleasure is good! Did you allow yourself the time to read books for fun, visit art exhibits, watch plays, go to concerts and dance performances, attend poetry readings, listen to exciting lecturers, spend time in nature, or otherwise find fun things to do, even at the expense of not always doing the things you tell yourself you "have to do?" How will you expand pleasure in your life this coming year?*

# Are you giving real energy to *Tikkun Olam*, to healing and repairing the world?

- *Which of our society's political, economic, or social institutions have destructive consequences to the environment, social justice, or our capacity to be loving and compassionate human beings?*
- *What concrete steps have you taken to be involved? What will you personally do to change the status quo?*
- *If you haven't been involved, what were the reasons you gave yourself? Which of those reasons presupposed a "surplus powerlessness" (a way in which you were actually assuming yourself less able to initiate things or take leadership than is "objectively" true)? In what ways did you buy the message that "They will never listen," or "I can never get things to happen," or "I'm not powerful enough to start something so I'll wait for someone else—like President Obama—to do it," or "Other people are not together enough, or too immoral, or too passive, so there's no point in me trying to mobilize them," or other similar messages?*
- *If you tried to be involved, and had hassles or disappointments with other people in the process, what were those and what part did you have in making or sustaining them? What did you do to confront the problems directly? Would you be open to working with the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP), the One Campaign, the School of the Americas Watch, the B'Tselem (Israel Human Rights Organization), or some other national organization doing work with ideals in which you can believe; and which one will you commit to now and stick with the commitment?*

# Did you help build a connection to Judaism and the Jewish world or to whatever spiritual tradition or discipline makes sense to you?

- *How much did you seek to deepen your knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish texts, or the culture of the Jewish people or of Israel, or of whatever other religious tradition or spiritual discipline that speaks to you? What opportunities were there and what were the reasons you gave yourself for why this year wasn't the right time?*
- *Did you allow yourself to take twenty-five hours out of your busy schedule each week to observe Shabbat or some similar weekly spiritual practice in a traditional way? How fulfilling or spiritually deep did you allow it to be? If it wasn't, what explanations did you give yourself for why it wasn't working? What could you personally do to make that spiritual practice or some spiritual practice work for you on at least a weekly basis?*
- *Did you involve yourself in any activity with, or help financially support,* Tikkun, *New Israel Fund, Peace Now, B'Tselem, Rabbis for Human Rights, J Street, or some other Jewish group in which you believed? Or another group in your religious or spiritual world that embodied both spiritual and politically progressive values (e.g. Pax Christi, Evangelicals for Social Action, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Sojourners, etc.)? If not, what held you back?*
- *If you oppose the Occupation, or support the return of the settlers to the pre-1967 borders of Israel, what have you done to make that known to your own government and media or to the Israeli government and media? If you oppose torture, the demolition of Palestinian homes, and the denial of water and medical care, what have you done to make that known to the people who are now seeking your vote for the presidency, Congress, the Senate, your state legislature, etc.? If you want the Palestinian people to shift to nonviolence, while still pursuing their rights, what have you done to make that known to them?*

DETACH AND SAVE

וְעַל כֻּלָּם אֱלוֹהַּ סְלִיחוֹת, סְלַח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֶּר לָנוּ.

## Teshuvah "partner" or support group

We encourage you to get a teshuvah partner—someone who can support you to be serious about the process and someone who doesn't have a personal stake in the decisions you make about how you will live your life this coming year.

The partner's task is not to make concrete suggestions, but to encourage you to explore all the possibilities that you might face as you consider how you might wish to transform your life. After you've done this exploring, switch roles so that you become the facilitator, and you encourage your teshuvah partner to face the possibilities of change.

Do not convey the impression that you know that a particular road is the right one for this person. Instead, keep asking about a wide variety of options, and help the person consider these options through asking, whenever a stumbling block appears, whether that person can think of any ways to get around it. After Yom Kippur, check in with each other once a month to see how you are doing on keeping to your current intentions.

*Partner's name or names of people in the support group:*
(Use a separate piece of paper if necessary)

*Home Phone:*

*Work Phone:*

### CHECKING IN WITH EACH OTHER

*During the week, arrange to talk to your teshuvah partner every day (yes, every day). The phone call can be as short as, "Did you get to work on your teshuvah work today? If not, do you want to do it now on the phone? If not now, is there some time later today we can discuss it?" On Shabbat, arrange for a time to get together (one hour, half of which goes to one person, half to the other, to explore both of your issues and the steps you are taking).*

# For Our Sins

*A Supplement to the High Holiday Prayerbook (not a replacement).*

We invite you to use the following along with the traditional confessional prayer, *Al Cheyt,* recited on Yom Kippur. Bring your own list to Yom Kippur services—don't just go through the rote of reading the traditional "sins" that don't actually speak to our contemporary reality. If you are not Jewish or not going to any High Holiday service, use this at your home or with your friends any time during these ten days of repentance!

### FOR OUR SINS

*On the Jewish High Holidays, or whenever we are doing repentance work,* ***we take collective responsibility for our own lives and for the activities of the community and society of which we are a part. We affirm our fundamental interdependence and inter-connectedness.*** *We have allowed others to be victims of incredible suffering, have turned our backs on others and their well-being, and yet today we acknowledge that this world is co-created by all of us, and so we atone for all of it.*

*While the struggle to change ourselves and our world may be long and painful, it is our struggle; no one else can do it for us. To the extent that we have failed to do all that we could to make ourselves or our community all that we ought to be, we ask God and each other for forgiveness—and we now commit ourselves to transformation this coming year, as we seek to get back on the path to our highest possible selves.*

*Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.*

**For all our sins, may the Force that makes forgiveness possible forgive us, pardon us, and make atonement possible.**

For the sins we have committed before you and in our communities by being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the world in which we live;

And for the sins we have committed by being so directed toward outward realities that we have ignored our spiritual development;

For the sins committed in the name of the American people through our invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and the violence we used to achieve our ends;

And for the sin of not rebuilding what we have destroyed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan;

For failing to prosecute those in our government who enabled the torturing of prisoners around the world and in American detention centers and the denial of Habeas Corpus and other fundamental human rights;

And for the sin of not confronting our elected representatives to demand that they provide affordable health care and prescription drugs for everyone and that they make the dramatic changes that are needed to save the planet;

For the sin of those of us in the West hoarding the world's wealth and not sharing with the 2.5 billion people who live on less than two dollars a day;

And for the sin of supporting forms of globalization that are destructive to nature and to the economic well-being of the powerless;

For the sins of Bernie Madoff and hundreds of other Jews who became so concerned with "making it" and becoming rich that they pursued banking and investment policies that were destructive not only to their investors but to the entire society;

And for the sins of Jewish institutions and communities who have not yet been willing to challenge the American obsession with materialism, selfishness, and me-firstism, or to support the Network of Spiritual Progressives' call for a "New Bottom Line" of love, kindness, caring for others, generosity, ethical/ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur and mystery of the universe;

For the sin of allowing civil liberties to be undermined;

And for the sins of blaming all Muslims for the extremism of a few and ignoring the extremism and violence emanating from our own society;

For the sin of being cynical about the possibility of building a world based on love;

And for the sin of dulling our outrage at the continuation of

poverty, oppression, and violence in this world;

For the sin of not being vigilant stewards of the planet and instead allowing the water resources of the world to be bought up by private companies for private profit;

And for the sin of allowing our media and elected officials to have no problem finding the monies to bail out the banks and the large corporations like General Motors while only raising the question of "where will the money come from?" when addressing health care reform, environmental measures, or aid to the unemployed, the homeless, and those facing crushing debt or impossible-to-pay mortgages;

For the sin of not doing enough to challenge sexist and homophobic institutions and practices;

And for the sin of turning our backs on the world's refugees and on the homeless in our own society;

For the sin of not sharing responsibility for child-rearing;

And for the sin of not taking time to help singles meet each other in a safe and emotionally nurturing way, and instead making them fend for themselves in a marketplace of relationships;

For the sin of being so concerned about our own personal tax benefits that we failed to oppose tax cuts that would bankrupt social services;

And for the sin of not opening the emails of those who tried to inform us of what was going on in the world that required our moral attention;

For the sin of spreading negative stories about people we know;

And for the sin of being passive recipients of negativity or listening and allowing others to spread hurtful stories;

For the sin of being "realistic" when our tradition calls upon us to transform reality;

And for the sin of attachment to our own picture of how our lives should be—and never taking the risks that could bring us a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

**For these sins we ask the Force of Healing and Transformation to give us the strength to forgive ourselves and each other.**

For the sins we have committed by not forgiving our parents for the wrongs they committed against us when we were children;

And for the sin of having too little compassion or too little respect for our parents or for our children;

For the sin of cooperating with self-destructive behavior in others or in ourselves;

And for the sin of not supporting each other as we attempt to change;

For the sin of being jealous and trying to possess and control those we love;

And for the sin of being judgmental;

For the sin of withholding love and support;

And for the sin of doubting our ability to love and get love from others;

For the sin of insisting that everything we do have a payoff;

And for the sin of not allowing ourselves to play;

For the sin of not giving our partners and friends the love and support they need to feel safe and to flourish;

And for the sin of being manipulative or hurting others to protect our own egos.

*Ve-al kulam, Eloha selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.*

For the sins we have committed by not publicly supporting the Jewish people and Israel when they are being criticized or treated unfairly; or for not challenging unfair singling out of Israel for criticism by our allies in the anti-war movement;

And for the sins we have committed by not publicly criticizing Israel or the Jewish people when they are acting in opposition to the highest principles of the Jewish tradition;

For the sin of not taking anti-Semitism seriously when it manifests around the world or among our friends or in our community;

And for the sin of seeing anti-Semitism everywhere, and using the charge of anti-Semitism to silence those who raise legitimate (though painful to hear) criticisms of Israeli policies;

For the sin of allowing the Jewish community to portray itself as the innocent victim and for allowing Holocaust trauma to legitimate oppressive treatment of others;

And for the sin of being so disheartened that we stopped paying attention to the details of what is happening in the West Bank and Gaza—thereby ignoring the massive slaughter of civilians that happened this past year when Israel invaded Gaza;

For the sin of blaming the entire Palestinian people for (inexcusable and murderous) acts of violence by a handful of terrorists—and then cutting off water, food, and access to medical care to over a million people;

And for the sin of bulldozing Palestinian homes, killing Palestinian children, and torturing, assassinating, and oppressing the Palestinian people;

For the sins that Israel committed by creating the checkpoints that make travel an unbearable hassle for many Palestinians and by allowing Israel to create a separation wall that effectively grabs up more portions of Palestinian land;

And for the sins that American Jews have committed by giving blind loyalty to the Israeli far-right lobby and believing that the critics of that lobby must somehow be disloyal or alienated from the Jewish people or from Israel;

For the sin of teaching hatred about Palestinians and Muslims, and then claiming that it is only they who teach hatred;

And for the sin of portraying every Palestinian or Muslim as a hater;

For the sin of condemning their extremists as typical, while "understanding" our own and claiming that they are exceptions to our normal generous and kind attitudes;

For the sin of insisting that there is no "moral equivalence" between the deaths of innocent Israeli civilians and the deaths of innocent Palestinian civilians;

And for the sins of tribalism, chauvinism, and thinking our pain is more important than anyone else's pain;

For the sin of allowing religious and communal institutions, colleges and universities, theaters, museums, legislatures, parliaments, the movie industry, book publishers, television producers, and even the internet to be governed by those with the most money, rather than those with the most spiritual and ethical sensitivity;

And for the sin of not putting our money and our time behind our highest ideals;

For the sin of not learning the Jewish tradition and not studying Jewish history, literature, and holy texts and not learning the depth and wisdom and meaning for our lives that can be found in Jewish spirituality, prayer, and in a Jewish path;

And for the sin of thinking that our path is the only path to spiritual truth;

For the sin of allowing conservative or insensitive leaders to speak on behalf of all American Jews;

For the sin of not providing public support and financial backing to the few Jewish leaders, organizations, and publications that do actually speak our values;

For the sin of not recognizing and celebrating the beauty and grandeur of the universe that surrounds us;

For the sin of not seeing the spirit of God in others;

And for the sin of not recognizing and nurturing the spirit of God within ourselves;

For the sin of not praying, meditating, or giving adequate attention to the needs of our soul;

And for the sin of focusing only on our sins and not on our strengths and beauties;

For the sin of not transcending ego so we could see ourselves as we are: manifestations of God's loving energy on earth.

*Ve'al kulam Elohai Selichot, selach lanu, mechal lanu, kaper lanu.*

**For all these, Lord of Forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.**

*In some congregations the service stops after this is read, and people divide into small groups of four or five to discuss what particular aspects of this prayer make most sense to them, what they are going to do differently in the coming year, what support they need from others to help make changes in their lives, and what they are going to do to secure that support.*

Repentance is not meant only as an exercise to help us feel better, but also as the beginning of organizing our personal and communal lives to begin the process of changing. To join with others in this sacred work, connect with the Network of Spiritual Progressives and *Tikkun*: www.tikkun.org; 510-644-1200; RabbiLerner@tikkun.org. (Composed by Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor, *Tikkun* magazine, for Yom Kippur 5770; September 27–28, 2009.)

DETACH AND SAVE

communities to solve health care problems from the bottom up, while offering the public and states the ability to buy into a robust public option, will create the grassroots movement we need to build national single-payer. Best of all, because this obscure bill has not been associated with single-payer, it has not developed opposition. A little push on our part could send it sailing through.

On our June 6 *Tikkun* conference call [the weekly call for *Tikkun* subscribers and currently paid-up members of the NSP to speak with authors who have written recent articles in *Tikkun* on topics of domestic and foreign policy, social theory, religion, or mass culture—info on the latest one appears on our website, www.tikkun.org, each week], Dr. Roland drew attention to the April 9, 2009, Conyers-Kucinich letter requesting states' ability to buy into a public option. We can shorten the path to single-payer by funding strategically placed community coalitions in states poised to enact single-payer. By integrating care locally, these communities can develop data, grassroots organizing, and media campaigns drawing attention to real problems and solutions. While I also am disappointed that Obama has not done more to enact radical change, I am not ready to give up on him. If he cracks the door open, we can enter.

I have come to believe that it is not enough to walk in the ways of the Lord. We must be persistent and sneaky.

LAUREN REICHELT
*Rio Arriba County, NM*

**Aaron Roland replies:**

LAUREN REICHELT'S LETTER IS AN important and insightful addition to the discussion from one who understands the pace of political change. I am reminded of my grandfather who was fond of repeating the phrase that is said every year at the completion and resumption of the reading of the Torah: *Hazak, hazak, v'nithazek*. We must be strong, be really strong, and strengthen ourselves further, for the battle for justice in health care, as elsewhere, will be difficult, and perhaps even never-ending.

**Michael Lerner replies:**

FAR FROM GIVING UP, WE AT *Tikkun* magazine and the NSP have been extremely active in outreach urging support for single-payer. Within the various health care alliances in the religious world, we've continued to push for a public commitment to a single-payer plan. My editorial was meant to help people understand more fully what mistakes have been made, not just by Obama or congressional Democrats, but *also* by most of the advocates for single-payer reform. Until those are addressed, we are unlikely to gather the mass support needed for a single-payer plan.

## THE RENAISSANCE OF WESTERN POLITICS

MANY THANKS FOR ANDREW Samuels' excursive article in *Tikkun* (July/August 2009). As a British Christian, I want to say "Amen" to many of his insights. At one point, however, I want to shout "NO!"

Andrew raises the challenge of Americans not responding militarily to September 11, and says the alternative was to do nothing. Rubbish. Responding *legally* rather than militarily was, and is, an alternative.

Treat terrorists as criminals rather than an opposing army. They are outlaws who need to be brought under the law. Treating them as enemy soldiers gives them dignity in their own eyes and in the eyes of their local communities. A military response necessarily involves damage to the terrorists' local communities, not least because terrorists ensure such damage by hiding in and behind these communities. This damage strengthens the communities' antagonism to the military power and their ties with their compatriot terrorists. A legal response strengthens the message that terrorists are criminals not to be harbored by their communities and separates out terrorists from their communities through measures like rewards for information.

International terrorists need to be dealt with by international law. It is high time America not only joined the International Court but strengthened the role of the court in combating terrorism. The first objective should be to have international arrest warrants issued for international terrorists. Then work out ways that police forces and communities can enforce these warrants. New developments are needed.

The International Court should be given power to investigate all sources of funding for international terrorists and to cut off their financial support.

The history of the Troubles in Northern Ireland shows the strength of the legal response. The great change in Northern Ireland came not through a military surge but through cutting off funding for terrorists, especially the funding coming from the United States, after September 11. The cooperation of the U.S. administration in stopping IRA funding was crucial. This should be a model for all international cooperation to deal with terrorism.

ROGER HARPER
*Walsall, England*

**Andrew Samuels replies:**

THIS DEEPLY FELT LETTER illustrates the problem of getting out of the Western box absolutely perfectly. From the point of view of a search for fresh ideas, launching the bombers or going to law are just not as different as they seem. Both are time-honored white, male, Western ways to go. My suggestion about "doing nothing" was a metaphor for providing the space for critical reflection.

As to Northern Ireland, you could say that things shifted the moment the Brits and the Unionists stopped saying the constitutional arrangements, sanctified by law, were non-negotiable. They got out of their mental and spiritual prison and moved into uncharted waters yet pregnant with the hope of peace.

## MORE LETTERS

Letters responding to Russell Nieli's "Finally, A New Idea for Israel/Palestine," Mark LeVine's critique of Obama's Cairo speech, and Daniel Brook's piece on the planet-saving consequences of vegetarianism, plus the authors' responses, can be found at www.tikkun.org/sept09letters.

# The Messy Politics of Health Care

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT CONGRESS IS PLANNING to do with the health care system?

The lawmakers' goals seem clear: Extend basic health care insurance to all Americans—a worthy goal. Improve the quality of health care by "personalizing" treatments, focusing on prevention and wellness, and reducing the number of deaths-by-error. Also worthy. And reduce the cost burden of health care on families and on the federal entitlement system of Medicare and Medicaid, 16 percent of the American economy and rising. Again, worthy.

The problem? These goals are inconsistent. Increasing the number of Americans with health care insurance will, presumably, increase the demand for health care, driving up its cost. Increasing health care quality by requiring all hospitals and physicians to shift to information technology and personalized and preventive medicine will cost. Subsidizing the cost of health care premiums for middle class families will cost—a lot. Total cost: $1 trillion over ten years.

From public reports, one can deduce several congressional approaches to "paying" for these costs.

First, cost-shifting: reduce the costs in some parts of the system to pay for increased costs elsewhere. How? By mandating that people who do not need or want health care insurance pay for it anyway so that the profits derived from the younger and healthier will compensate for the losses in treating the older and sicker. Also, by lowering insurance cost reimbursements to hospitals and drug companies, thereby offsetting their revenue from the increased volume of insured (paying) health care customers.

Second, changing incentives: move reimbursements from a "fee-for-service" model (i.e., the more tests you take, the more the physician or hospital is paid) to payments for "outcomes" (i.e., prevention and wellness, and whether the patient got better or lived longer). This involves incentivizing hospitals, physicians, and other health care service providers to adopt new information technology to assure that the right information is in the right hands at the right moment at lower cost.

Third, eliminating expensive tests and treatments: deny insurance reimbursements for diagnoses or treatments that are not proven to be "comparatively effective" (i.e., more expensive but unnecessary).

How to protect against increased prices or reduced benefits from private insurance? Create a government-managed-and-subsidized insurance company (the "public option") to compete with private plans.

(Surprisingly, the proposals for health care reform do not include increased investments in research to prevent the diseases that are driving up Medicare and Medicaid costs, like Alzheimer's and diabetes.)

What's the objection to this approach? Putting aside questions of fairness (is it fair to force those who do not want health care insurance to buy it, shifting the burden to the younger, healthy generation from the older, sicker generation?), will the systems for paying for the increased costs to the health care system work? Will all of the patient, provider, and payer behavioral changes assumed in this massive reworking of the health care system actually produce the goals desired? That's the $64,000 question.

No wonder the American people—who, by large majorities, appear to like their own insurance yet are willing to support universal coverage if it doesn't adversely affect their own situation—are getting nervous about the 1,000 pages of congressional legislation and their highly likely unintended consequences.

Other, seemingly simpler approaches to reform have been rejected.

The Republicans propose moving more slowly, "on a glide path," using expanded health care savings accounts and other consumer-oriented mechanisms to extend coverage incrementally and pay the costs for doing so by taxing employer-provided health care benefits (McCain's proposal), something Democrats have opposed.

Liberal Democrats favor a single-payer system ("Medicare for all"), arguing that comparable or better health outcomes at a lower overall cost to the economy would result, citing the experience of other countries. Moderate and conservative Democrats, as well as Republicans, oppose that route, reflecting the strong belief in America that government owned-and-operated systems are more expensive, perform badly, and are subject to political considerations (see, K-12 education systems, FEMA in New Orleans, and the Defense Department's post-invasion efforts in Iraq).

The case—moral and economic—for health care reform is strong. Millions of Americans are suffering as a result of inadequate access to quality care. One has to accept that there is no perfect solution. But the perfect should not be the enemy of the good, and progress in the face of uncertainty is vital. Congress is likely to legislate a first attempt at health care reform by the end of the year, but one that will require significant mid-course correction in the coming years. Given the agony of this year's effort, one can only hope that Congress will have the will to embrace a process of continuing improvements in the years ahead. ■

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*George Vradenburg is the publisher of* Tikkun, *and he often disagrees with our editorial opinions.*

# Has President Obama Abandoned You and His Own Vision of the Caring Society?

*Support Obama to BE the Obama You Voted For—Not the Inside-the-Beltway Pragmatist and Political Realist Whose Popularity is Steadily Declining*



*On June 22, President Obama announced to senators the pharmaceutical industry's promise to cut $80 billion in drug costs to Medicare over a ten-year period. On August 7, it was revealed that in exchange Obama had agreed to oppose congressional plans to seek reductions in other drug costs, ensuring that the massive profits to pharmaceutical companies and rising costs to Americans needing prescription drugs would not be restrained by the health care plan he would sign. Pragmatic manipulations have disempowered his supporters and decreased Obama's popularity.*

My response to the question "Has Obama abandoned us?" is really "NO, the problem is that we have abandoned him by being too passive and expecting him to be who we want him to be without having created an ongoing movement that can push and support him in that direction."

Implicit in most of Obama's campaign talks about "change," "sweeping out the power of the lobbyists and special interests from Washington, D.C.," and "YES, WE CAN" (and a major factor in most people's support for him) was his vision of a new way of being together: an alternative to the selfishness, materialism, and militarism that had led to a disastrous war in Iraq and the meltdown of the global economy. It was a vision of what we at *Tikkun* will label "the Caring Society." Americans truly hunger for a world in which their lives have a higher meaning and purpose than accumulating money or power. If they thought it possible, they would gladly embrace a world based on love, generosity, peace, and social justice—a world in which people feel a strong responsibility to take care of each other. It is our task now to give President Obama the push he needs to feel that he can carry through and make the Caring Society vision that won him the presidency into a reality that guides his administration at every level. This editorial is in part our contribution to helping generate the kind of movement that could really support him.

I cannot remember a president who has inspired us spiritual progressives more than Barack Obama. (Check out our Core Vision at www.tikkun.org or our Spiritual Covenant with America at www.spiritualprogressives.org to see what we mean when we say we are spiritual progressives. Hint: you can be an atheist and still be a spiritual progressive.) We want to do everything we can to support Obama to have a successful presidency. Sure, we would be cautious anyway to critique the first elected African American president, because we are well aware of the racism that he continues to have to fight. And we're doubly cautious because we see the absolute intransigence of the Republicans in Congress who seem oblivious to any form of rational discourse apart from a determination to make sure that Obama's programs fail. And America's elites are using their control of the media, the "influence" they've gathered through donations to candidates (in other countries they call these bribes), and their powerful array of lobbyists and think tanks to do all they can to stop any progressive aspect of legislation on health care, the environment, or economic recovery. Given all this, the last thing we wish to do is help sabotage the president.

And yet, we've seen President Obama take steps that we believe are sabotaging himself and undermining the huge public enthusiasm with which he started his presidency. We've seen him support policies that are likely to fail or that go against the spirit and sometimes even the substance of what he promised to stand for when elected.

He failed to embrace a single-payer health plan or to fight effectively for the ideas behind a public option for health care reform (see my editorial from the July/August 2009 issue, which you can read at www.tikkun.org/healthcare), and as a result we are likely to see enacted a very watered-down health care plan that will not provide health care for everyone and that will protect insurance companies' profits and hence require additional financial burdens on the rest of us. He embraced a deal with the pharmaceutical companies to not use health care reform to push for dramatically lower prices for drugs beyond those agreed to by the drug companies. He supported a cap-and-trade bill even after it had become so laden with giveaways to polluters that environmental groups such as Greenpeace concluded that our planet would be better off were it totally defeated. In these critical bills, he has embraced an approach articulated by his chief of staff Rahm Emanuel that in effect says, "get something passed through Congress, even if the substance of what is passed is arguably a step in the wrong direction."

Obama was most popular when people thought he stood for a whole new kind of politics and would fight for that in Washington, D.C. He has lost popularity by following the advice of the Rahm Emanuel types and the inside-the-Beltway pundits and power brokers, who have convinced him that it is smart to be seen as a non-ideological pragmatist and centrist. Nobody seems to have warned him that he would face just as much opposition to severely compromised and intellectually incoherent health care bills like the ones that have emerged from the House and Senate as he would to a bill backing a single-payer plan, or that his plans would be labeled "socialized medicine" even when they are not as coherent or likely to be effective as the real versions of socialized medicine that work well in France, Israel, and many other countries.

He has faced just as fierce opposition from the banks for his administration's proposed watered-down banking regulations as he would have faced had he done the more sensible thing: create and fund a national bank (to give interest-free loans for mortgages to expand home-ownership, to support small businesses, to finance college educations, and to promote other socially useful and/or community-enhancing projects). He should have allowed the "free market" to determine the fate of the banks. Instead he used our tax monies to provide them with interest-free trillions. These are the very banks that now oppose "government interference"—except when it's interference to help them make huge multibillion-dollar profits such as those announced by Goldman Sachs investment brokers for the second quarter of 2009.

The sad truth is that he has left the little guys—the unemployed, the people whose mortgage loan rates increased to the point where they couldn't afford them anymore, the people who listened to Bush's calls for consumer spending and hence ran up credit card debt, and the homeless or the soon to be homeless—to fend for themselves in the capitalist marketplace. But the big guys were deemed "too big to fail," so our tax monies got used to support them!

How did this happen? Was he lying to us in the way he presented himself in the 2008 elections? I don't think so. Rather, we need to understand the conflict that rages inside him, because it is so completely understandable and completely like the conflicts that rage inside most of us. Barack Obama, like everyone else (including every one of us) has always had two contending voices inside himself: the one that truly wants a world of love, generosity, nonviolence, environmental sanity, and kindness, and the voice that tells him that this is impossible to achieve right now, so he must be "realistic." This second voice warns him merely to fight for a kinder and gentler version of the current organization of our society, with its slavish subordination to the interests of the elites of wealth and power.

Obama won the Democratic nomination because he became one of the best articulators of the notion of a caring community, or what we have sometimes called a politics of meaning or a spiritual politics. But in the general election he resorted more to the voice of fear that told him he couldn't win unless he reassured the elites of power that he wasn't really going to change things that much and that he'd be loyal to the major assumptions that have dominated American politics in both parties, namely that the interests of the powerful are really in the best interests of everyone else. It was to that voice that Goldman Sachs and other investment firms' and large banking interests' executives resonated and donated.

The problem, of course, is that the old assumptions had brought America to the brink of self-destruction—and it was precisely for that reason that people were ready to have a Black man who talked about "change" and said "yes, we can" as president. But these same people, the American majority, have both

voices in our heads, so it has not been hard for the American elites to win people back to the "no, you can't" perspective that says, "forget about any major change, because everyone just cares about themselves, and so you really can't expect any major changes now." It would only be possible to stay attuned to our most hopeful part, the part that showed up in polls that indicated that 70 percent of Americans would be willing to pay higher taxes to ensure that all Americans are ensured adequate health care coverage, if the president were using his position to unequivocally rally our most hopeful selves.

Unfortunately, Obama is not giving out that message. Surrounded by inside-the-Beltway pragmatists and political realists, Obama has not been the champion of a new way of thinking since he took office, but instead has supported a "gentler" version of the old reality, hoping that he might be able to accomplish some real change if he "works within the system" the way it is.

People who momentarily thought something fundamentally different was possible—and in that context were willing to pay higher taxes—become increasingly disillusioned each time Obama takes that stance. The more pragmatic he becomes, the more his supporters begin to think that we are right back in the world in which self-interest rather than idealism is dominating our leaders' logic, and therefore conclude that they themselves had better attend to their self-interests, lest they humiliate themselves by appearing to be "idealistic" and "utopian" at a time when the very person who inspired them to hope is doing his best to show how very interested he is in being perceived as pragmatic and "realistic." And when that happens, then people ask themselves not "would we as a society be better off with a health care system that cares for everyone?" but rather "how will this new plan affect *me personally*, will it increase my costs or my taxes?"

The media make it seem that self-interest is all that anybody ever cares about, leading those who responded to the Obama vision of the Caring Society to feel foolish and even humiliated that they ever "fell for" the notion that things could be radically different. And then, as Obama's popularity slips, the media rushes in to interpret that not as a sign that his pragmatism is not working, and that he should return to what made him so popular in 2008, but rather as proof that the American people are far more conservative than he thought so he needs to adjust his policies accordingly.

So it's time for friends of Obama to tell him and his Democratic Party collaborators in the Congress that their strategy is like the emperor with no clothes. The pragmatic-realist strategy has been failing. It will continue to fail for two major reasons:

1. The global system of capitalism is in meltdown, and minor reforms cannot solve the problem. We can't go back to the old assumptions that if people just have enough money to consume and consume and consume, everything will work fine—because that approach has led to a destruction of the environment that is bordering on catastrophic. And we can't simply revive the capitalist marketplace, because that system is based on an ideology of selfishness and me-first-ism that at its worst erupts in the greedy deregulation that caused the 2008–2009 financial meltdown, but at its most efficient destroys our ecosystem even faster; undermines solidarity among workers (and hence makes it easier for the wealthy to increase their wealth at the expense of everyone else); and weakens our ability to achieve rational reform of our economy, our educational system, our health care system, and our legal system. Moreover, that same ethos of selfishness and materialism is at the root of the breakdown of human solidarity and caring in personal life—a breakdown which then produces a crisis in family life and an epidemic of loneliness and sense of alienation. This isolation makes people so desperate that they will grab onto anything that seems to offer stability and connection—even if it comes in the form of ultra-nationalistic militarism or right-wing religious fundamentalism.

2. Without the inspiration of believing that something really new can happen, many Obama supporters begin to doubt their own idealism and withdraw their energies from politics, saying to themselves, "OK, maybe I was too idealistic, so I'll let Obama try it his way, and good luck to him." And with that withdrawal, Obama lacks the only weapon he could possibly have to counter the power of the corporations, the insurance companies, the coal and energy companies, the big agro-business interests, the pharmaceuticals, the banks, and the investment firms: namely, a mobilized electorate committed to fighting for a different kind of reality. Without that, he has no way to resist the forces that push even his Democratic Congress to whittle away at the kinder and gentler reforms he wants to get through the Congress, until those reforms are barely worth fighting for. With his own base thus disempowered through his abandonment of the visionary aspects of his 2008 campaign, Congress gets to hear the voices mobilized by the Right even more than the voices of the majority that was originally inspired by Obama's hopeful message.

There's only one way to change this: to build a powerful movement that can give strength to the other voice that remains in Obama as it remains in most Americans—the voice that truly wants the Caring Society. It's clear Obama is not going to go there without such a movement. Obama needs your support, and that's what we at *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives are trying to offer. It's not the support of saying, "Right on, Obama, what you are doing is just what you should be doing." No. Obama needs a different kind of support from us: support to articulate a coherent worldview and then to fight for it.

But please note that we at *Tikkun* don't advocate making the worldview challenge in terms of rich vs. poor, a language that feels tired and boring to many, but instead in terms of love, responsibility to each other, caring for others, generosity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. We set these ideals against the dominant ethos of me-first-ism, individualism, selfishness, and materialism. These are terms that speak across traditional Left-Right divides and potentially offer the most effective challenge to the dominant ideology.

Obama needs to go back to those who support him, visiting 100 major cities in the next hundred days of his presidency, to deliver the following message:

# WHAT OBAMA SHOULD SAY

1. This is a moment in history when we must make the United States into what the American people have always fought to create here—the Caring Society. When Americans spread out across the frontier and built their homes and barns, they didn't do it as "rugged individualists"—they rightly valued their individual liberty, as do we today, but they also knew that they couldn't do it alone. They knew they could count on people stopping their own work and coming from far and near to help them build a home, barn, or fence. America was possible because its people shared a real sense of caring for each other, even caring for strangers.

   It's only in the last thirty years that this kind of caring, which led Americans to sacrifice their lives to free Europe from the grip of Nazism in the 1940s, has been so thoroughly replaced by selfishness, a self-indulgent materialism, and the ethos of me-first-ism that is at the root of the global economic meltdown. As a result family ties have weakened, and the values so clearly articulated in the Bible—which calls upon us to not only "love our neighbor as ourselves" but also to "love the stranger, the Other"—have been undermined.

   We need to get back to this fundamental value of caring for each other. America needs a New Bottom Line so that corporations, government policies, social institutions, and even personal behavior are judged rational, productive, or efficient not only to the extent that they maximize money and power (the Old Bottom Line), but also to the extent that they maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, and ethical and ecological sensitivity, as well as enhance our capacity to go beyond a utilitarian approach to nature so that we can respond with awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe.

   In the twenty-first century, the goal of American policy must be to foster a new sense of responsibility for each other, an ethos of caring, and a commitment to building community to replace the materialism and selfishness that brought on the "Republican Depression," from which we will struggle to recover for many years. But economic recovery cannot be achieved if we do not fundamentally change our bottom line in America and reject the values that have become so pervasive that they have corrupted our economic system, our corporations, our educational institutions, our media, and almost every other aspect of our society.

   Our present-day materialism and selfishness stand in stark contrast to the sense of community that our country was built upon. Our sense of community was what enabled us to recover from the Great Depression; to claim victory in World War II; and to engender the cooperation among scientists that has led to important advances in technology, allowed for our exploration of space, and helped make us a center of creativity in the digital age. That sense of community and responsibility for each other has deep roots in our religious traditions, in the wisdom of humanists and ethicists, and in our sense of awe and wonder at the mystery and grandeur of the universe. It is to these traditional American and universal values that we must now return, and it is in their name that we must rebuild our society and our economy.

   The time for the extremes of individualism and materialism is long past—it is only through this New Bottom Line and this responsibility for each other that America can flourish in the twenty-first century. The responsibility to care for each other is the core value that I, President Obama, will help bring back into the center of American life—but I need your help to do that, and I need you to make clear to your elected representatives that you expect them to stop listening to corporate lobbyists and start listening to the Americans on all sides of the political spectrum who actually want the Caring Society that we can build together.

2. The United States and other G-8 countries need a new approach to foreign policy based on the recognition that in the twenty-first century, our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet, and hence that a strategy of generosity should replace the strategy of domination (such as by launching a domestic and global Marshall Plan to dedicate between 1 percent and 2 percent of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years to once and for all eliminate domestic and global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, as well as repair the global environment).

3. We need a national bank that can provide interest-free loans to help individuals and small businesses, in accordance with the biblical mandate. Just as a powerful public option in our health care system would have the effect of driving down the cost of health care (because more and more Americans would choose that option since it would provide care without handing huge profits to the insurance companies and health care profiteers), so too a national bank would provide competition for the bankers and force them to reduce their demand for obscene levels of profit. Bankers would soon have to lower the amount they charge us in interest rates for borrowing each other's money.

4. We need to take immediate steps to put complete global nuclear disarmament on a fast track as a down payment on building global interdependence and demonstrating our seriousness about caring for others and the planet.

5. We need a complete change in global trade arrangements so that they no longer disadvantage poorer countries.

6. And we need to understand that our homeland security can only be achieved when we can isolate terrorists by showing how much the people of poorer countries are benefiting from our generosity (something that cannot be shown while we are occupying or bombing them). For that reason, we must shift our focus to rebuilding what we helped destroy in the economy of Iraq, and our strategy in Afghanistan must shift from its military focus to economic development in the course of the next three years, by which time we will have removed our forces from those countries completely, recognizing that we do not intend to be the policeman of the world but rather the source of generosity for the world. We will extend this generosity to socially responsible parties who serve the needs of the poor, not to authoritarian regimes, rich money-grabbers, or money-wasters.

7. Underlying all this is a worldview that gives priority to love, generosity, and caring as the central values that must shape domestic and foreign policy. This is what the American people elected me to do, and from now on these will be the criteria I will use in the legislation I support, the appointments I make to positions in the administration, and the budgets I propose. And I will use whatever influence I have with the American people to elect representatives in both parties who share these values. And I do mean both parties—because I intend to support primary challenges not just to Republicans, but also to seated elected Democratic representatives who are unwilling to support budgets and legislation that advance these ideas. I will be calling on ordinary Americans to run for public office whenever their elected representatives (whether city council members or representatives in Congress) do not share and support the programs that can make America the Caring Society that we all need it to be.



*Coal-based energy is a major source of pollution and global warming. Environmentalists argue that the Waxman-Markey bill, which narrowly passed the House with Obama's energetic support, is likely to protect the polluters and coal mine owners more than it restrains them.*

I know from my personal encounters with Obama that he actually shares those values, but until he consistently articulates them as the basis for a new politics and uses them as the criteria by which he encourages others to judge his and all other social policies, he will increasingly find himself falling back on the dominant paradigms of the past.

I don't pretend it'll be easy for Obama to re-energize people and reconnect them to the most hopeful parts of themselves. He has already made so many disheartening compromises that it will take a very large commitment on his part to rekindle people's most hopeful yearnings. Yet the part of us that really wants a world of kindness, generosity, caring, love, nonviolence, social justice, environmental sanity, joy, creativity, increasing consciousness and awareness, and celebration of the universe can never be fully extinguished—it is an essential part of what human beings are. It is always reachable, though sometimes it takes a great deal of effort to overcome the other voice in all of us: the voice of fear, the voice that believes that we are the only ones who want something as idealistic and utopian as the Caring Society.

I know that you can immediately access a whole bunch of reasons why this can't or should not happen; why we should just hope that Obama knows more than we; or why we should just cheer Obama on because he will save us in the end. In the interests of space, I've decided to answer all those objections on our website rather than here—so please go to www.tikkun.org/qa_sept09 to read that discussion. There I'll explain how to deal with the Blue Dog Democrats and the spinelessness of many of Obama's congressional liberals, how to understand why the Republicans who lost the 2008 election act like they won it and have a mandate while the Democrats who won it act as though they lost it and have to compromise on their own values, and why it's not utopian or unrealistic to push Obama to engage in a full-scale campaign for a new way of thinking in American politics. ■

## What Can YOU Do?

- Go to www.spiritualprogressives.org and become a dues-paying member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP). The NSP will lead the forces supporting Obama to move in this direction. To do that, we need your financial support.
- Set up a meeting with your elected representatives to present this perspective. If you become a member of the NSP, we'll help you make contact with other members of the NSP in your geographical vicinity and congressional district so that you can go to congressional meetings with others who share your views.
- Register and come to our Washington, D.C., conference to "Support Obama to BE the Obama We Voted For" June 11–14, 2010, at the Church of the Reformation and St. Mark's Episcopal Church, both on Capitol Hill. Details will appear at www.tikkun.org and in future issues of this magazine.
- Create a monthly discussion group around the ideas in this editorial on "How Best to Support Obama"—on your campus, in your church or synagogue or mosque, with your civic organization, or in your neighborhood. Use articles in this and future issues of *Tikkun* to help stimulate the discussion.
- Volunteer or become an intern (unfortunately unpaid) at *Tikkun*'s office in beautiful Berkeley, California, here in the culturally rich, politically alive San Francisco Bay Area! We welcome not only students and recent grads, but also people who are mid-career and want to take a break from their normal routine, as well as retirees of any age. If you are open to being an intern or volunteer in our Berkeley office, go to www.tikkun.org/interns to learn more about the opportunities available.

ISTOCK PHOTO/BRONSWERK

# J Street ... and the Rest of the Middle East Peace Community

We at *Tikkun* are delighted to welcome J Street into the community of organizations that have been working for peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestine for the past several decades. We endorse its efforts!

J Street plays a particularly important role as a lobbying group, and with its allied PAC it can raise money for candidates who support Middle East peace.

So you can understand why we are deeply disappointed that its leaders rejected our requests to co-sponsor the conference they are planning to hold in Washington, D.C. What they told us was that other groups with which J Street is aligned had nixed my personal participation and the co-sponsorship of *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

Our first response was to reassure them that we are fully aligned with their stated goals—supporting U.S. efforts to bring about a two-state solution, opposing military solutions, and providing a voice for the many Americans who want to change American policy so that it more fully pushes for peace.

But no reassurances were sufficient. One member of our editorial board spoke to J Street leader Jeremy Ben-Ami and reported back to us, "He acknowledged that you would bring some positives but he is convinced that your involvement would signal that this effort is not the fresh and new approach that he wants people to take as the 'brand' of their conference." That editorial board member reminded us of how the liberals who ended the war in Vietnam often distanced themselves from the radicals who opposed the war from the start. What made the earlier anti-war activists appear "radical" is that a) they had opposed the war before the mainstream was ready to hear that message; b) unlike the later liberal opposition leaders, who said the war wasn't in "*the interests* of the United States," the radicals had opposed the war in Vietnam because it was *immoral* for the United States to kill millions of people to achieve American political and economic goals; and c) the radicals had challenged liberals and made them feel uncomfortable by raising these issues, and that discomfort persisted even after the liberals had changed their minds and been forced to acknowledge the strength of many of the radicals' points. The liberals never forgave the radicals for embarrassing them and pointing out the moral inconsistencies in the liberals' previous positions. These same dynamics affected peace activists who opposed the Iraq war (and may account for why none of them were included in the Obama White House or Hillary Clinton's state department). And it was the same dynamic that led many Democrats in the 1940s to remain hostile to and label as "premature anti-fascists" those on the Left who had in the 1930s urged the United States to actively oppose the growth of fascism in Europe when U.S. economic and political elites were still fantasizing that maybe Hitler, if left on his own, would attack and destroy communist Russia, a goal that they would have been seen as far more important than saving the lives of Jews.

*Tikkun* magazine has been the outspoken pro-Israel critic of Israeli policy toward Palestinians since our inception in 1986. And ever since 1986, when we ran our editorial "The Occupation: Immoral and Stupid," we've been actively challenging the American Jewish community, world Jewry, and Israelis to recognize that the oppression of Palestinians is not only pragmatically bad for the future survival of Israel (and for the way that it has generated increasing levels of anger at world Jewry who have refused publicly to actively distance themselves from Israeli policies and behaviors like the recent re-invasion of Gaza), but it is also ethically unacceptable and a perversion of Judaism. In fact, we've even suggested that the Jewish community has replaced God with a fervent worship of the sanctity of Israel and the Holocaust; abandoned Judaism's firm commitment to "love the stranger" and "justice, justice shalt thou pursue," and replaced it with an idealization of an Israeli-style "tough Jews"; and become "realistic" when the task of the Jews was always to proclaim the need to heal and transform rather than accommodate to the powerful. And we've suggested that all this has been responsible for the loss of interest in Judaism by many of the most ethically and spiritually sensitive young Jews in the Western world.

During our first national conference in New York in 1988, we were proud to present the voice of the Palestinian professor of literature and theorist of culture Edward Said. And ever since, in *Tikkun* and in our public events, we've given voice to those Palestinians who have sought peace and reconciliation. We've insisted that the Occupation must end, not only because it weakens Israel's capacity to defend itself and is leading to increased anti-Semitism globally, but also because it is morally wrong and because we genuinely care about the suffering of the Palestinian people (while caring equally about the suffering of Israelis that the continuation of the Occupation makes inevitable).

We are proud that *Tikkun* has become the primary intellectual expression of progressive Jews around the world, and the place where the discussions of Israel's future takes place. It was in *Tikkun* that Benny Morris first published his article about Israel's "New Historians" and provided evidence that the "Arab flight" in 1948 had been caused by Israelis' acts of terror against Palestinian civilians. In that article, he described how the Israeli



*Jeremy Ben-Ami exalts at the growing legitimacy given by the mainstream media to his J Street lobby. J Street's refusal to allow* Tikkun *and the NSP to join the coalition sponsoring their upcoming conference or to allow Rabbi Lerner to speak is the least of many indications that J Street is in danger of narrowing its potential impact by embracing the very kind of political centrism and opportunism that is undermining the Obama administration. Yet the peace forces need a lobby in D.C. so badly that* Tikkun *will support J Street any way we can!*

army forcibly evicted close to 100,000 Palestinians from their homes, force-marching them to the West Bank and Gaza, where they set up what the Palestinians had hoped would be only temporary refugee camps but which have remained there for the past forty-two years. It was *Tikkun* that, according to Hillary Clinton's personal communication with me, first moved Bill and Hillary to understand and support the positions of the Israeli peace movement. It was *Tikkun* that provided the only place you could read in English the full text of Yossi Beilin's "Geneva Accord," which set the framework for peace that will eventually be negotiated.

When more centrist groups, fearful of offending anyone, kept their mouths shut, it was *Tikkun* that bought full-page ads in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, etc. to challenge the recent Gaza war and call not only for an immediate ceasefire but for the Obama administration to present a positive picture of what a peace agreement should look like.

*Tikkun* continues to play a major role in creating the context in which others in the Jewish world and in American politics could feel safe in raising questions about Israeli policy. It was this public identity of *Tikkun* that was part of the reason that a young Barack Obama asked to speak at our 1996 conference in Chicago, and why over the years we have received literally tens of thousands of communications from Jews telling us that they felt they could be proud to be Jewish because of the presence of *Tikkun* in public space.

## *Tikkun*'s Call for a Universally Ethical Approach

Taking these stands ruffles many feathers. We will continue to take such stands because we think it important to frame our discourse not only in terms that will appeal to the inside-the-Beltway centrists, but also to the deepest ethical aspirations of Americans, Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, Christians, Muslims, and secular humanists. Here are two examples:

1. We believe that peace-oriented organizations must not only talk about the "interests" of Jews, Israelis, or Americans, but must really take seriously the humanity of the Palestinian people and of Muslims. Much of the reason why even the more moderate Palestinians involved with the Palestinian Authority continue to insist, as many did at their recent Fatah confab in August, on their "right" to continue the "armed struggle" (even though de facto they have not been actualizing this "right" and are critical of Hamas for doing so) is that they experience themselves as being dehumanized, humiliated, and emasculated by the treatment they receive from Israelis and Americans and the way they are portrayed in a distorted manner in the Israeli and American media. So while *Tikkun* continues to urge them to adopt the strategy of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., we also call for compassion for these people who often tell us that they experience themselves as living in a huge Israeli-policed concentration camp! Similarly, that kind of compassion is also needed toward Israelis, even toward settlers, because without that compassion in our discourse, we drive them toward a suicidal Masada complex more likely to lead to atomic war than to rational compromise. So integrating this concern into public discourse is at least as important as getting a few more members of Congress to sign on to toothless congressional resolutions calling for an end to settlements or a restarting of negotiations.

2. While we support an end to the expansion of West Bank settlements, we think it equally important to remind people that Palestinian suffering can only be alleviated when they get an immediate dismantling of the checkpoints (except for those

separating Israel from the West Bank); a dismantling of the separation wall (except to the extent that it is built on the boundary of the pre-1967 Green Line); an end to the blockade of Gaza (but only in exchange for the ceasefire for twenty years that Hamas has offered over and over again); an end to the Occupation; and the creation of an economically and politically viable Palestinian state living in peace with Israel.

President Obama could play a decisive role in achieving this if—instead of using his power and prestige to obtain a bite-size gain about settlements—he used his considerable persuasive powers to lay out and popularize a vision of a full accord that would bring peace, justice, and reconciliation to both peoples and to the Middle East, replete with details.

At the present moment, the vast majority of people in both Israel and Palestine cannot imagine such an accord that would meet the basic needs of both sides. Without a clear vision of this sort, despair triumphs in both Israel and Palestine. It is changing this consciousness that is critical—and that is what the peace movement should be asking our president to do, and providing him with the guidelines of what ought to be acceptable to the needs of both sides.

Is our call for this kind of focus—not in replacement of what J Street is trying to do, but in addition to it, and not for J Street to do but for what the rest of us in the peace movement should do—a reason to exclude us from the coalition coming together to support J Street? That seems narrow-minded. But then again, the whole exclusion of *Tikkun* and the NSP from the J Street coalition as equal partners with all the other organizations seems, well, small-minded and petty—not appropriate for anyone who recognizes how badly we in the peace movement need a big tent.

## The Kind of Centrist Politics that Does Not Work

THIS KIND OF EXCLUSION BESPEAKS THE KIND OF CENTRIST politics that actually ends up being self-destructive. In my editorial on Obama in this issue of *Tikkun*, I show why it is this moderating of views that has caused Obama to be less, not more, effective, and the same will go for a peace movement that feels scared to include us. The reality is that *Tikkun* and the NSP have—together with Israel's Peace Now; Brit Tzedek; Yesh Gvul; B'Tselem; Jewish Voice for Peace; Rabbis for Human Rights; Uri Avnery and Gush Shalom; Women in Black; the Israeli Refuseniks; *Haaretz* columnists such as Amira Hass and Gideon Levy; M.J. Rosenberg and the Israel Policy Forum; the Washington-based Foundation for Middle East Peace; Gershon Baskin's Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information; and dozens of local organizations in the United States and Israel—created the movement that J Street now is trying to convene in Washington, but without giving its progressive wing adequate voice.

Most of the people who will come to D.C. are people whose ideas were shaped in part by what they read in *Tikkun*, or by learning from others who had written in or read *Tikkun*. Many of the people listed on J Street's website are people who have written in *Tikkun* or are members of *Tikkun*'s editorial board or the NSP's advisory board. Understandably, as people who have invested our lives in this struggle and suffered much abuse for doing so, it hurts our feelings when we are excluded by J Street. This is also *our* movement—*Tikkun* is the movement's most widely read journal and most frequently quoted international voice, and *Tikkun* deserves a place of respect in it, not only because it is the honest and just thing to do, but because the movement for peace and justice in the Middle East must be inclusive of all those who seek a two-state solution based on a spirit of generosity, compassion for both sides, and reconciliation.

So of course, we will be there at the J Street Conference. We will be there because we care too much about the success of J Street to watch it narrow the scope of its potential coalition in ways that will weaken it. We will be there because J Street needs the breadth of our members and our readers. We will be there because the coalition that J Street brings together needs to consider the perspective that *Tikkun* can bring to the table. And we will be inviting J Street to similarly be there with us next June 11–14 when we bring people to D.C. to support the forces of peace and justice—we will invite its members because we intend to do everything possible to gain more attention and support for J Street.

Our publisher made a point that has also been made to us by some members of our editorial board: "a prophetic voice is always viewed as disruptive and outside the mainstream—but prophetic voices turn the long arc of history toward justice, and we are seeing increasing recognition of your prophetic voice in the mainstream and the only way history will continue to bend is by prophets staying in front of the arc."

*Tikkun* has been that prophetic voice for the past twenty-three years, the most frequently quoted voice of a loving and Judaism-based critique of Israeli policy and the moral and spiritual failures of the American Jewish community. Inevitably, in the process, we've ruffled many feathers! We approach that critique with sadness, not with joy, both because we recognize that the Jewish people are suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and because we know that recovery requires not only critique but also a massive dose of compassion. We continue to try our best to both articulate the critique and to emphasize the compassion and the love we have for the Jewish people, Israel, and God. And we are willing to acknowledge that providing space in our magazine for the prophetic critique while trying simultaneously to be supportive and compassionate has been a difficult balancing act, and that at times we've appeared too compassionate to some, too critical to others. So, in this season of repentance, we ask forgiveness for where we've made mistakes, even as we renew our commitment to being that prophetic voice.

Meanwhile, please help keep our voice alive by joining the Network of Spiritual Progressives as a dues-paying member (you then get *Tikkun* magazine as a benefit) at www.spiritualprogressives.org.

In an age in which print magazines are falling like flies—as readers' attention spans shorten and many turn to the Web, never asking themselves how progressive voices are going to be sustained if no one pays for them—we really need your support! ■

# Imagine There's No Capitalism

## by Allen D. Kanner

ALL ECONOMIC SYSTEMS REST, IN PART, ON FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN MOTIVATION. Like all institutions, economic institutions not only reflect but also mold our behaviors, values, and beliefs. We might say that, ultimately, economic systems constitute a high-stakes argument that our species is having with itself about what it is and where it is trying to go.

In moving beyond capitalism, we need to abandon its core assumption that *Homo sapiens* are basically self-interested, competitive, and materialistic. In constructing new systems, careful and even mindful attention is required regarding the assumptions that we do make, for they determine so much. Do we make paramount our capacities for generosity, cooperation, and soulfulness, and therefore nourish them? Do we recognize self-interest, competition, and materialistic desire, but not let these qualities define us?

If all goes well, capitalism will be shed like a tarantula's old skin, cast off as an empty husk from within which a fresh spider rejoins the world. Shedding is far gentler than violent collapse due to resource depletion, incurable new diseases, or severe weather change, which are alternative dooms our archaic economic system could meet, perhaps all at once. But if millions of us find thousands of paths, some individual, some communal, some governmental, some spiritual, some artistic, some humorous, some just plain lucky, to a more wild, thoughtful, and sensual love for each other and our miraculous planet, capitalism might just slide away, recycled into history without need of war, revolution, or savior. In its stead, we build economic systems that weave webs of compassion, not commercialism.

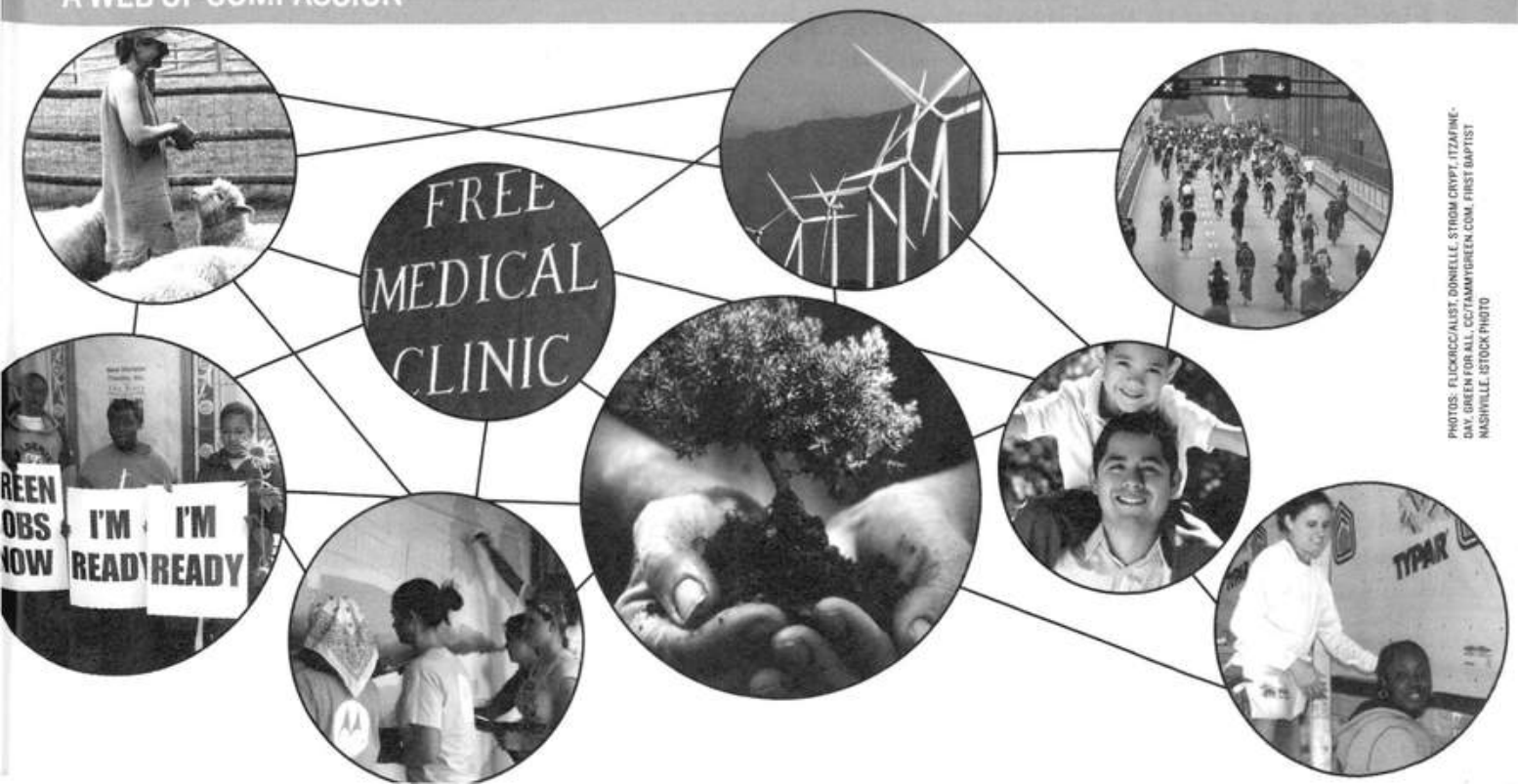
No one knows the "answers." That is not a problem. For we have definite directions to pursue—social and environmental justice, local determination rather than centralized power, and grieving the destruction that has occurred— before rounding the bend of complexity that hides the future.

Now to it. ■

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*Allen D. Kanner, Ph.D., is a co-founder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialfreechildhood.org); co-editor of* Psychology and Consumer Culture *and* Ecopsychology*; and a child, family, and adult psychologist in Berkeley, California.*

## A WEB OF COMPASSION




PHOTOS: FLICKRCC/ALIST, DONIELLE, STROM CRYPT, ITZAFINE-DAY, GREEN FOR ALL, CC/TAMMYGREEN.COM, FIRST BAPTIST NASHVILLE, ISTOCK PHOTO

# Finally, Getting Tough on Crime

## by David Belden

Imagine an America in which crime victims thank the prisons for the chance to express their devastation to violent criminals, and the criminals thank the prisons for teaching them how to own up to and control their own violent behavior so they can leave and become valued members of their community. Think it's a fairy tale? It already happens in one big American city jail, which has reduced re-arrests for violent crime by full graduates of its program by 82 percent.

Flash back to 1994. A woman creates a program that reduces violent incidents in her jail. Skeptics object that the reason is her jail only gets the less violent criminals. She spends two days going through hundreds of records. Her research proves that her prisoners are the same as those at other jails. Her program works. But she only feels depressed. She knows it's not enough.

The program involves learning all day long, the first ever Sheriff's Department charter school in jail, classes for addicts (who make up 90 percent of the inmates), and only approved TV shows. No one has time to be bored. Some amazing turnarounds have happened in prisoners' lives. Her boss the jail director had told her, "I want to pull the jail culture down, down to the studs, and rebuild so it might actually help prisoners and make it a better place to work." And, with the help of many, she has done it. Prisoners have been helped. It is a better place for prison staff to work. But she only feels depressed. So many violent men, and most of their victims are women. She turns to her boss: "'How are they going to stop being violent?' We both sat there. Neither of us had the answer."

Sunny Schwartz's depression at that moment of apparent success explains much about what happens next. Though she is an attorney, for her there is hardly any sense of "us and them" between herself and the women victimized, or their victimizers. In her new book, *Dreams From The Monster Factory*, co-written with David Boodell, she writes:

> I'd met thousands of these men, and no addiction prevention class or English class in any jail or prison I'd ever seen addressed the issue of a man's violence. I was frustrated. I was frustrated at work, and also frustrated at home. Becky [her partner] and I argued nonstop, and it felt connected. The violence I despaired over in the prisoners resonated with me. I wasn't physically violent, but I was an emotional bully just like my dad. When Becky didn't agree with me I could be brutal, screaming and yelling, stomping out of rooms, going completely out of control."

Sunny Schwartz is not going to be happy with efforts to manage violence. She wants to go deep and end it, in herself as well as in the physically violent.

### Finding the Key to the Criminal Justice Universe

At a conference shortly after, Schwartz, who by this time has worked fourteen years in the jails, first encounters the concept of restorative justice. It lights her up. She doesn't hear the speaker, long-time restorative justice promoter Kay Pranis, but reads this in her information packet: "Restorative justice recognizes that crimes hurt everyone: victim, offender, and the community, and it creates an obligation to make things right. The three principles of restorative justice are offender accountability, victim restoration, and community involvement to heal the harm caused by the crime."

She flies back early to her job at San Francisco's County Jail 7 in San Bruno with a new purpose: to run programs that deal head-on with male violence. "Listen to me, this is it," she tells her boss. "This is the Kabbalah, the key to the criminal justice universe."

With the approval of two courageous men, San Francisco Sheriff Michael Hennessey and jail director Michael Marcum, she creates the Resolve to Stop the Violence Program. At first she thinks "RSVP," coined by Hennessey, sounds corny, as if they were inviting people to a tea party, but then she thinks the civility of it sounds right. She persuades her boss to do the unthinkable: put sixty-two of the most violent men together, in one dorm. She promises there will be no riot. The planning takes more than a year, and brings in religious leaders, victims, victims' rights groups, probation officers, business leaders, the DA's office, police, politicians, and everyone she can think of.

She researches existing programs and finds one that seems by far the best: Manalive, created by community organizer Hamish Sinclair. The program teaches men that they have been raised with a "male role belief system" that sets them up. They have been taught to shun their own feelings of weakness and shame, and to reassert control by any means necessary. It chimes with the work of Harvard psychiatrist James Gilligan, whose decades of work with criminals have led him to identify shame as the principal cause of male violence.

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*David Belden, D. Phil, is the managing editor of* Tikkun.

## Violent Criminals Owning Their Responsibility?

A MAJOR GOAL OF RSVP IS TO BRING VIOLENT OFFENDERS TO A sense of empathy for their victims and of personal responsibility for their own actions. Schwartz describes how "everything about the system of prosecution and defense is set up so that criminals get into the habit of *denying* their responsibility." A whole team of victims is recruited to come in and tell their stories to the men. Not one of them regrets the experience, and most return to do it again. In other sessions the men themselves learn to take newcomers through their last violent incident moment by moment, analyzing what they felt, what he or she said, where the triggers were, when the moments of "fatal peril" arose, how the male role belief system operated minute by minute.

In a recent article written as a letter to President Obama, Sunny Schwartz says:

> There are over 2 million men and women in our nation's jails and prisons. Most of these men and women are housed in what I call monster factories. The prisoners have nothing to do other than to stew and rage and whine until they are released. The vast majority sleep all day, play cards and dominos, and watch slasher movies. For years, this has been called "getting tough on crime." I call it coddling prisoners. Why? In this environment, these men and women will never learn introspection, will never experience remorse, and will not learn how to stop their violence and their criminal ways. They will be a bane on our system, and our communities.



*Prisoners in a "Resolve to Stop the Violence" dorm at San Bruno Jail teach and learn in a Manalive group, which helps them explore the roots of their violence, take responsibility for it, and acquire the skills to end it. Recidivism for full graduates of the program dropped 82 percent.*

Roughly 650,000 people are released from prison every year, and 70 percent return. James Gilligan and another independent academic studied RSVP in 2004. They concluded that among those who took the full sixteen-week course, 82 percent fewer ended up back in jail a year later for violent offenses, compared to a control group of men who had not been through the program. Schwartz says, "Every extra dollar we've spent on programs has been paid back into government's coffers with seven dollars in savings from the crimes we've prevented."

## Concepts Embodied in Stories

SCHWARTZ'S BOOK PRESENTS DETAILED STORIES OF MEN GETTING TOUGH ON CRIME IN THE ONLY WAY THAT REALLY MATTERS. Like this one: "Ben Matthews is but one example of our success. He was a meth addict and a skinhead who came into our jail wanting to start a race war. He left a counselor and leader of his peers who still wrestled with his demons, but has stayed out of jail, paid taxes, and helped other criminals to reform."

The tale of how Ben apologized at a synagogue for his beating up of Jews, blacks, and gays and for his own attack on another synagogue, and of how warmly—after a rocky start—the congregation received him is astonishing, a classic. By the time we get to it in the book we have some understanding of how it happened, because we have read reports, with much verbatim dialogue, of the sessions that turned Ben around.

But at the heart of all these stories is Schwartz's own. Her decision to tell her own life story—of truancy and failure at school, family anguish, tough relationships, her fighting spirit, eventually passing the bar, and life with a new partner and their daughter—alongside that of the creation and success of RSVP is brave. It is of a piece with the bravery of every victim who has told her story in jail, of every violent man who has relearned his belief system, and of the sheriff and jail director who decided to back her in turning around the definition of "coddling prisoners." It exemplifies her understanding that it is through sharing our own stories and analyzing them that all of us broken people can be bound back together.

After reading this book and even more after she took a group of us to the jail, I am in awe of Sunny Schwartz. This woman is more real, has more heart, is more of a creative fighter, and loves the unloveable more than almost anyone I have ever met.

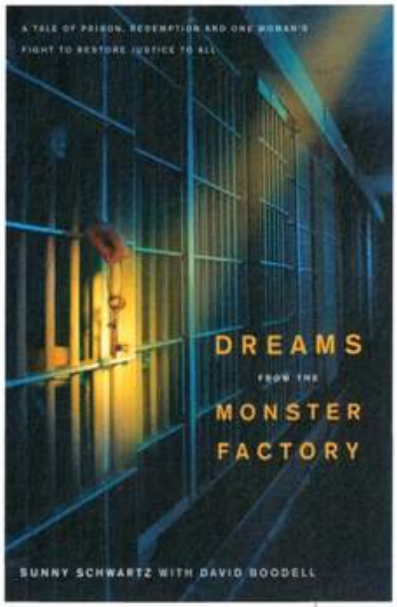
Every sheriff and prison director in America should pick up this program. Buy the book and give copies to your local cops, prison staff, attorneys, and politicians. Make it a bestseller. Pass the bar. Run an RSVP program. Shout about it.

The horror of America's prison system can be turned around. And that's just the start of what happens when we learn to deal with the male role belief system. ■

# Restorative Justice
## Restores Power to Communities

by Ronnie Earle

*Ronnie Earle is nationally known for filing charges against House Majority Leader Tom DeLay in 2005. We think he should be even better known for his restorative justice philosophy during his long tenure as district attorney in Austin, Texas. We asked him to reflect on Sunny Schwartz's book and his own related experience.*




### "Dreams from the Monster Factory"

In the prologue to her tour de force, "Dreams from the Monster Factory," Sunny Schwartz makes a confession that is quintessentially American and in tune with the changed times in which we now seem to be living. She says, "I root for underdogs." Even though her book is about jails and those who populate them, the underdogs she roots for are all of us.

That's because we are all victims of the way we deal with crime. We pay too much for protection, and what we get in return is more danger.

It takes the courage of the mythic hero's journey to look inside yourself, pick up what you see, and deal with it in a way that redeems yourself and others. In her book, Schwartz performs that ritual for all of us as she looks inside the collective Shadow that is our penal system. Even though she writes of the San Francisco County Jail, the lessons she learns and teaches are universal.

The term "monster factory" is chillingly descriptive of the reality of the places we send those who break our laws. Few, if any, come out better than they went in. How could they? We send them, in the case of prison systems in most states, hundreds of miles away from home and family to a community of criminals from whom they learn how to be better at breaking the laws that the rest of us live by.

For those to whom law school often seemed distant from the real world that waited for us after class, Schwartz's revelation that she "felt more comfortable in the jail" than in law school classes rings familiar. The success of her work in the jail probably owes more to her gift of empathy than anything else. In the roiling mass of alienated humanity that is a jail, she had, she says, "seen shadows of myself." This is an extraordinary and blessed revelation of the true character of Sunny Schwartz, and it is at odds with the attitudes of the many workers in the prison-industrial complex who find it easier to do the work if they dehumanize their charges.

Her observation that there are reasons why people end up behind bars, including herself, is revelatory. She writes:

> But the past did matter. There are plenty of people with sad stories to tell who end up as good citizens, but I never met anyone behind bars who went through childhood unscathed. There are reasons why people end up behind bars. It's no coincidence, not for any of the inmates I've worked with, and not for me, either.

There is an irony in Schwartz's early educational history. A difficult kid, her elementary school teachers gave her the grade of "Citizenship Failure." How ironic it is that she has written a book that is such a gift to the rest of us and such a sterling example of what successful citizenship really means.

*Ronnie Earle is a former judge, member of the Texas Legislature, and from 1977 to 2008 was the elected district attorney of Austin, Texas. He is considered a pioneer of the emerging concept of community justice.*

**ASK THE AUTHOR!**

**September 21: Sunny Schwartz**

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She didn't have to work in the jail to encounter monsters. Her life was indelibly marked as a child when Richard Speck murdered eight student nurses a few blocks from her house. She watched, sitting on her bicycle, as the police worked the horrific scene. Perhaps that is one reason that she chose to confront monsters in their lair instead of waiting for them in her own home.

The word that comes most immediately to mind to describe Sunny Schwartz is fearless. She says, "I confronted the monsters every day. I didn't run from them."

Throughout the book there are stories of her confrontations with fearsome adversaries, from a legendary law professor who bullied for effect to psychopaths in jail. What they all had in common was that they illegitimately exercised authority, and that is the hallmark of a despot. We are all lucky that we get to live at the same time as Sunny Schwartz; she does not suffer despots lightly, and neither should we.

Schwartz does an excellent job of describing the bureaucratic compartmentalization of the criminal justice system, quoting a line from a coworker that you hear from everybody in this business almost like a mantra: "We're not social workers" ... in other words, "it's not my job." But then she wonders, "whose job it was to fight for justice ... it was no one's job."

## A Time for Renegades in the Justice System

But the law in Texas makes it the duty of the prosecuting attorney "to see that justice is done." That is why I first ran for district attorney thirty-two years ago, and it's why I stayed so long. Those words were magic to me then and are magic even now.

I had never been a prosecutor before I was elected district attorney. When I was asked during the election campaign what my qualifications were for a job I'd never done, I said that I had a virgin mind and a keen sense of justice.

Even though the law makes it the duty of the prosecutor to see that justice is done, it doesn't define justice. Over the years I've developed a definition of justice that works for me: *Justice is the fairness and balance that come from healthy relationships.* But what is a healthy relationship? Again, a definition that is more of an aspiration: *A healthy relationship is one that shares joy, pain, and power.*

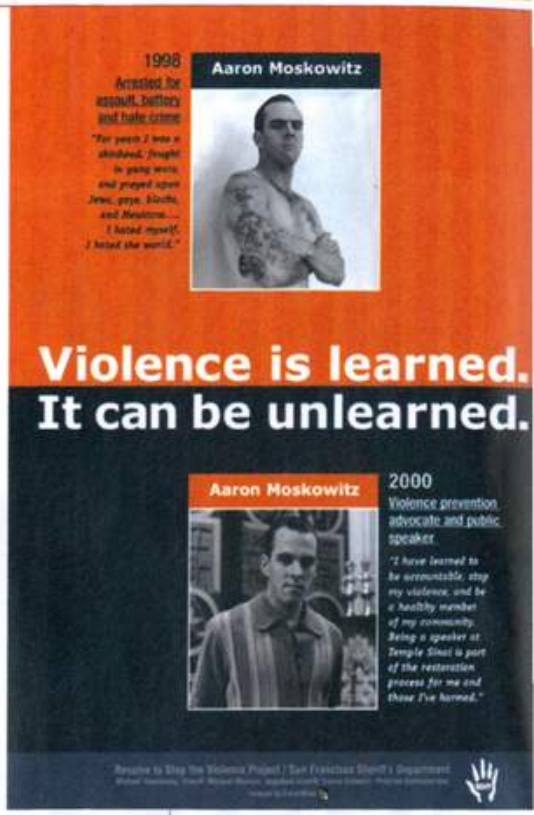
Few would disagree with these notions, yet all of us have trouble living them. Our addictions get in the way, whether to substances or feelings. Schwartz points out that she "felt addicted" to the "power of my anger" and "ashamed by it." It could be said that anything we're addicted to is both a source of power to us and a source of shame. An antidote, as conveyed to Schwartz and her brothers by her parents, was: "Be a good person. Do the right thing." How easy to say. How monumentally difficult to do, especially when doing the right thing means that you have to go against all that passes for conventional wisdom.

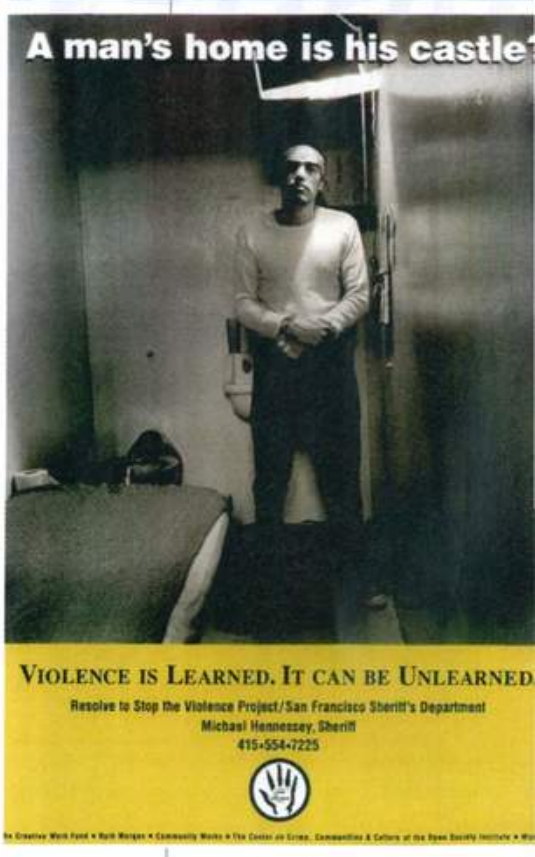
Yet that is what Sunny Schwartz and many other workers in the vineyards of peace find necessary to do. It is a time in the prison-industrial complex for renegades. What we're doing not only doesn't work, it makes no sense. It's a lot like expecting gasoline to put out a fire.

If an aesthetically pleasing jail or prison has ever been built, I haven't seen it. But in one of my favorite passages from the book, Schwartz, in asking why we don't make jails pretty, asks a lovely question: "Why withhold easy grace?" She describes the jail in words that could apply to every jail and every prison, calling it "the kind of place where dreams went to die."

But the dreams that die in such places are not confined by the walls and fences that restrain those imprisoned behind them. Dreams escape such constraints; ultimately the inmates get out and can become our nightmares. The dreams that die are the dreams of all of us: the dreams of a safe, peaceful, and just community and nation; of cherished and nurtured children; and of honored elders. That which we do to those we keep locked up we do to ourselves.

But this book is not a how-to manual for do-gooders. Schwartz is no fool and she doesn't suffer fools gladly, pointing out that there are "a lot of flaky people in *(continued on page 75)*




SUNNYSCHWARTZ.COM

# A Labor Leader Loses His Way

by Peter Gabel




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## The Hopes That Were Invested in "Change to Win"

FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN SEVERAL KEY LABOR UNIONS FORMED CHANGE TO WIN as an alternative umbrella organization to the AFL-CIO, many of us hoped that a new vision of the labor movement was being born—one that would go beyond the economics-only focus of industrial unionism and see unions as an important social context for building a greater sense of community and a new universal vision of a society based on empathy and compassion for other human beings.

Of course, the labor movement had always in part been identified with the ideal of social solidarity, with the brotherhood and sisterhood that ought to be at the heart of all human relations. But since the high-water stage of labor idealism in the 1930s, the AFL-CIO's public voice had become increasingly identified with an acceptance of the hierarchies of American capitalism, seemingly limiting its vision to the laudable but limited goal of bringing workers the material benefits of middle-class life.

When the garment workers and the hotel and restaurant workers joined forces to create the new International UNITE HERE, and UNITE HERE joined forces with the Teamsters, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the Laborers, and the United Farm Workers (UFW) to form Change to Win, it looked like a new labor vehicle might be emerging—one that could link a renewed commitment to organizing with a revival of labor's historic commitment to the creation of a more egalitarian and communal world.

But we always knew there was a danger in the break-up of the AFL-CIO—and not only that labor might weaken itself through internal division. For while the AFL-CIO seemed to sacrifice any universal vision in favor of a vision of permanent material class conflict in which the labor movement was focused primarily on expanding labor's share of the economic pie, the new organization ran the risk of subordinating militant labor activism in favor of a bland labor-management partnership that would sacrifice workers' real needs and interests in exchange for easy union recognition and a new "humanistic" integration of labor into the management-run corporate hierarchy.

## Our Fears about Stern's Leadership

MANY OF US WERE CONCERNED THAT ANDY STERN—THE HEAD OF SEIU, WHICH HAD emerged out of the new service sector to become one of the largest unions in North America—had personal ambitions to become a new psychologically sensitive labor guru. We feared that he would fall prey to the temptation to expand union membership by agreeing to contracts favorable to employers, while he himself pursued a personal ambition to become labor's leading public spokesperson supplanting AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. For all of our efforts in *Tikkun* to shift progressive political discourse from a purely economic to a spiritually deep, communal focus, we have been equally aware that the New Age concern

*Peter Gabel is associate editor of* Tikkun *and is the partner of Lisa Jaicks, national boycott director for UNITE HERE.*




*Textile unions were once powerful. Above: garment workers in New York were among 100,000 in eight states who went on strike and won a famous victory in 1958. As jobs went overseas and their membership shrank, the still financially strong textile unions came together in 1995 in UNITE. In 2004 they joined with the hotel and food service union HERE, which had a fast-growing worker base, to create UNITE HERE.*

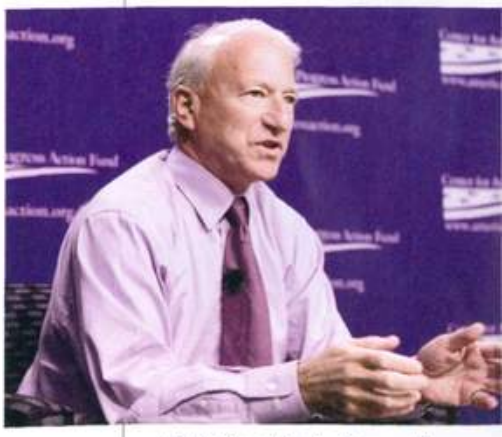
with spiritual and psychological oppression has often been the context for the pursuit of narcissistic self-interest by charismatic leaders all too ready to abandon the necessary militancy of transformative struggle for acceptance within the socio-economic status quo. Which way would Change to Win, with Stern as the most publicly visible representative of the new organization's largest union, go?

Tragically, we may now be witnessing our worst fears being realized—or at least gaining ascendancy. Stern has recently spearheaded a series of SEIU-led interventions in other unions that appear designed to increase SEIU's own wealth, power, and influence without regard to the well-being of the workers it represents or the historical continuity and integrity of the unions he is seeking to take over. The worst of these has involved his open attempt to take advantage of a rift that has arisen within UNITE HERE, which is among the largest of the private sector unions in Change to Win and is thought to be one of the most progressive private sector unions in the country, representing 450,000 workers in the hotel, restaurant, food service, and gaming industries in the United States and Canada. Stern's actions have now provoked twenty-six union presidents, including the heads of the Steel Workers, the Teamsters, and the Teachers, to issue a formal public pledge standing in solidarity with UNITE HERE and pledging to defend it against any incursions by another union.

Understanding what has been so alarming about Stern's conduct in relation to UNITE HERE requires going into some detail about the historical forces that shaped the formation of UNITE HERE. It also requires discussing the growth of SEIU as a significant public-sector representative of service and health care workers and examining the way that Stern is seeking to take advantage of those forces in a manner that may be destructive to the entire labor movement.

## UNITE HERE's History in the Private Sector

In 2004, UNITE (the successor to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union) and HERE (the union representing hotel, restaurant, food service, and more recently gaming workers, including the 60,000-person Las Vegas Local 226) made the decision to merge in 2004 into UNITE HERE. In the early years of the labor movement during the first few decades of the twentieth century, the textile, garment, and needle workers had been a leading force in the emergence of organized labor, and the textile workers' leadership had had the foresight to invest the union dues that were the fruits of their successful organizing into a union bank for the benefit of the workers. This substantial UNITE asset was matched, however, by a gradual hemorrhage of the UNITE workforce, the result of the movement of capital in clothing manufacture overseas, a tendency which has only increased since the passage of free trade legislation like NAFTA, which has decisively contributed to the waves of closure of the historic textile mills in the United States that had previously employed UNITE's workers. The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union (HERE) was in precisely the opposite position. HERE has become an increasingly important force in organized labor with the



*SEIU head Andy Stern—the leader who, Peter Gabel fears, is losing his way as he exploits a rift between the co-presidents of UNITE HERE.*

TOP: AP PHOTO; BOTTOM: CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS ACTION FUND/RALPH ALSWANG

shift toward service sector employment within the continental United States, and therefore has had a potentially expanding base of workers, although lacking the accumulated wealth held by UNITE and its Amalgamated Bank.

The merger of these two great unions into UNITE HERE was therefore understood as an integration of UNITE's capital assets with HERE's workers in a way that would be potentially beneficial for both unions and for the labor movement as a whole. Plus the two leaders who formed a co-presidency were both shaped by the mix of their labor heritage and the idealism of the 1960s, in a way that seemed to bode well for realizing the common aspirations of both unions to form a single body that was greater than the sum of its two parts and that could exert a major influence on both labor organizing and the progressive rejuvenation of the labor movement.

## SEIU's History in the Public and Non-Profit Sectors

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that UNITE HERE remained a private sector union forced to engage in challenging economic struggle with owners of private capital, who were not inclined to "make nice" in either recognizing unions during organizing drives or cooperatively agreeing to long-term collective bargaining contracts after organizing drives had succeeded in gaining union recognition. By contrast, SEIU emerged in the decades following the emergence of industrial unionism as a much larger representative of increasingly public employees, whose employers are federal, state, and local governments much more inclined to willingly agree to union recognition and to enter into long-term collective bargaining contracts within large state bureaucracies.

The expansion of public-sector unionism that followed the 1950s and that gained momentum within the governmental sector with the liberal social consciousness fostered by the social movements of the 1960s has made it possible for unions like SEIU and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to expand and grow as the state sector of the economy has itself grown, even during the conservative decades following the election of Ronald Reagan. It is true that the rise of the New Right had a powerful impact on undermining the early successes of labor unions in the private sector, which declined in membership in the decades following their high point in the 1950s as the idea of socialism itself lost its idealistic appeal as the metaphorical carrier of the longing for community existing in all human beings. But this same New Right was relatively unsuccessful in attacking public-sector unions whose unionization actually facilitated the smooth long-term functioning of governments that do not have to battle for their existence in competitive private markets and that are not nearly as motivated by profit maximization and cost discipline as are the owners of private capital.

From the point of view of advocates of equality and social justice, one could say that SEIU and other public employee unions were able to take advantage of the inherently social nature of government to receive a greater and more stable share of their employer's collective assets, and in a way that facilitated the long-term stability of the governmental bureaucracy as a form of socio-economic life. And in addition to and consistent with its expansion in the state sector, SEIU also found increasingly willing partners in the growing non-profit sector, which also experienced enormous growth in the decades following the 1960s, with non-profit employers showing substantial willingness to embrace unionized workforces when asked to by their workers encouraged by SEIU's well-publicized nationwide initiatives within the non-profit sector.

In this larger context, we can see how the social contexts that gave rise to the growth of SEIU encouraged the emergence of a public leader like former social worker Andy Stern—a leader who on the positive side is idealistic and more socially progressive than traditional bread-and-butter trade unionism, but on the negative side might be tempted to prefer easy unionization across the labor force in exchange for a weakening of bargaining standards, by too easily agreeing to employer take-aways, and by subordinating *(continued on page 78)*

# Humanity at the Crossroads:
## a Time for Commitment and Action

by Graeme Taylor

HUMANITY NOW FACES A GLOBAL EMERGENCY: IF WE continue with business as usual, rising global temperatures, growing resource shortages, and increasing environmental degradation will cause the catastrophic collapse of major ecosystems and the global economy.

Average global temperatures are now less than one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, but even this small increase is devastating. Twenty percent of the world's coral reefs have already died, glaciers and polar ice are melting, storms are strengthening, deserts are spreading, and droughts and floods are more frequent and intense.

The diagram on the following page (Figure 1) shows the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 forecasts for how quickly sea ice in the Arctic is melting. The blue line is the mean estimate for the minimum summer sea ice remaining.

The diagram shows the existence of three critical problems: our planet's ability to regulate global temperatures is failing; this problem is worse and more urgent than was forecast; and the scientific models used to make the forecasts were badly flawed. This means that most experts and policymakers have been basing their judgements on inaccurate scientific data. As a result, they do not understand that we are only a few decades away from a catastrophic collapse of the global environment and economy.

If present trends continue, by 2016 atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations will reach levels that will cause average global temperatures to increase four degrees Fahrenheit by mid-century. Rising temperatures will not only destroy most coral reefs and tropical rainforests, but also trigger runaway global warming by melting Arctic permafrost and releasing hundreds of billions of tons of methane gas. This will create an irreversible cycle in which the weather will get hotter year after year, crops will fail, and the oceans will become too acidic to support life. The result will be the mass extinction of most terrestrial and marine species and the end of our advanced civilizations.

Because the global emergency is a common threat, it provides us with a unique opportunity to unite humanity around the need to create a sustainable global system. Preserving life on earth and protecting our children's futures is not just one task among many—it is the most important ethical and practical issue facing humanity. If we do not take immediate action to reverse climate change, our children and grandchildren will inherit a dying world.

Preventing disaster and ensuring a safe future requires a completely new strategy: instead of making international agreements that increase pollution and raise global temperatures, we need to immediately negotiate agreements to reverse global warming, refreeze the Arctic, and restore a safe climate.







*Recent climate change victims around the world provide a mere hint of the vast refugee crises to come.*

*Top: flood victims in Bangladesh. Middle: Hurricane Katrina survivors. Bottom: cyclone victims in Haiti.*

TOP: AP PHOTO/PAVEL RAHMAN, MIDDLE: AP PHOTO/ERIC GAY, AP PHOTO/RAMON ESPINOSA

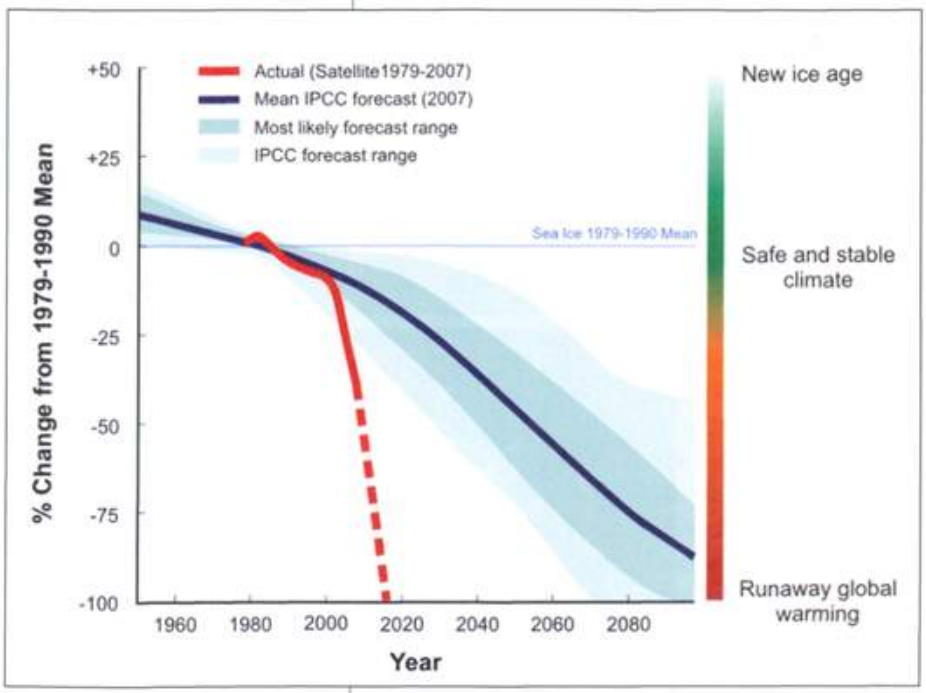
*Graeme Taylor is the coordinator of BEST Futures (www.bestfutures.org). His book* Evolution's Edge: the Coming Collapse and Transformation of Our World *won the Independent Publisher's 2009 Gold Medal for the book "most likely to save the planet."*

However, even if we manage to restore a safe climate, another environmental disaster is looming. In the coming decades, a combination of failing ecosystems and resource shortages will likely destabilize and eventually collapse the global economy. This will happen because the continuous expansion of the global economy is impossible on a planet with finite resources.

Our global footprint now exceeds the world's capacity to regenerate by about 30 percent. If our consumption of resources and our production of waste continue to increase at current rates, by the mid-2030s we will be using the equivalent of two planets of resources. Computer modeling indicates that this trend will cause environmental and economic collapse by 2050.

Although there is a growing awareness of environmental issues, most of the world's policymakers still talk and act as if sustainability is a negotiable political option, rather than a non-negotiable ecological requirement. The real bottom line is not financial profit but survival.

**FIGURE 1:**
**MELTING OF ARCTIC SEA ICE: FORECASTS VS. REALITY**




SOURCE: BEST FUTURES 2009

## The Growing Economic Crisis

THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO THE CREATION OF A sustainable societal system is the myth that the global economy is in a cyclical recessionary phase from which it will soon recover and then continue to expand. In reality any economic recovery will be fragile and short-lived.

Many resources are approaching peak production levels. Production shortages were major factors in the sharp rise in food, energy, and commodity prices in the period leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. With the global recession, demand has been reduced and the prices of many resources have fallen. However, if a recovering global economy increases demand, resource shortages will again force prices back up to pre-recession levels.

Another problem is that the global economy is a virtual economy in which value is given to virtual wealth (e.g., financial derivatives) instead of real wealth (e.g., living ecosystems). The current financial crisis is the result of the sudden contraction of imaginary wealth in the form of credit, shares, and overvalued assets. The U.S. economy is particularly vulnerable to further shocks because underlying the American credit and mortgage bubble is what George Soros (the world's leading currency speculator) calls the "Superbubble"—an overvalued U.S. dollar, which has been printed in enormous quantities to cover annual trade deficits and a growing national debt.

The foundations of this unsustainable financial arrangement are starting to collapse. Foreign investors are becoming increasingly nervous that there will soon be a massive sell-off of U.S. dollars. Americans consume five times their share of global resources, and China, India, and other countries are increasingly competing for a limited supply of global resources. At some point in the near future, these countries will refuse to keep propping up American overconsumption, and both the U.S. dollar and the American economy will go into free fall.

These problems are not unique to the U.S. economy. The whole global system is based on unsustainable resource consumption. Figure 2 illustrates why the American economy—the largest in the world—will have difficulty recovering from the current recession.

## Sustainability and Ethics

WE CAN'T SEPARATE THE ISSUE OF SUSTAINABILITY FROM ETHICS. THE REASON WHY THE GLOBAL system will inevitably collapse is because it is organized by destructive values. A culture that values shopping over survival is doomed.

In the world today the dominant view is that reality is a hierarchy of separate objects, rather than a *holarchy* of interrelated systems. In this alienated reality, competition for power and

resources is viewed as the natural state of existence, as is the exploitation of the weak by the strong. The popular media accept that it is normal for billionaires to hoard wealth in a world full of hungry children, and for weapons of mass destruction to be developed in tandem with the mass extinction of species.

The industrial system has improved living standards for much of the world's population, but at the cost of ruined cultures, communities, and ecosystems. We now have more but belong less. Many people feel alienated from their families, from their work, from nature, and from spirituality. Because emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs can only be satisfied through actions that develop community, creativity, and faith, a life of consuming will always leave people feeling empty and incomplete. And people who are alienated from themselves and each other will never feel satisfied and will never stop consuming.

In our materialistic age, the majority of people place more faith in money than in God. As a result, criticizing the accumulation of wealth has become a modern form of heresy. Politicians, business leaders, and teachers who speak against the consumer society are putting their careers at risk. All the material resources and scientific knowledge needed to resolve the major problems on the planet have been available for decades, but the will to change the political and economic priorities of society has not. So increasing global wealth has been accompanied by increasing global poverty.

We will only be able to prevent global collapse if global resource consumption is kept within sustainable limits. Businesses and consumers are not able to determine these limits because markets are mechanisms for determining economic prices, not ecological sustainability. It will only be possible to reduce total resource consumption if consumer values and behaviors change, and if markets are provided with clear regulatory and financial guidance.

Regulating economic activities is neither a new nor a radical idea. Because our societies recognize that not everything can be efficiently managed by market forces, governments already build and operate roads, schools, and emergency services. They also regulate every type of business, from railways to restaurants. Every society considers that wars and natural disasters are too important to be left to private interests and markets. With the future of humanity at stake, we now need to ensure that markets serve the interests of society and not the other way around.

Our economic and accounting systems are a part of the problem rather than the solution. Accounting systems that value existing material wealth but not the future of our children are both dangerous and flawed. Their failure to value other life forms puts the survival of our own species at risk. Their failure to place any value on love, trust, justice, faith, and sacrifice robs us of the vision to avert disaster and preserve life on earth.

## Choosing Life and Hope

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE ARE ENORMOUS, BUT NOT INSURMOUNTABLE. ALTHOUGH TIME IS not on our side, the accelerating pace of change works both ways. Not only is there increasing destruction, but also growing awareness and more and more constructive innovation. New system-based views, values, social structures, and technologies are emerging all over the planet. The process of transformation has already begun.

However, it will not be easy to make the transition from economic growth based on increasing resource consumption to economic growth based on increasing efficiencies. This enormous technological and cultural transformation will require the mobilization of entire nations and the reorganization of the global economic system. But this type of effort has succeeded before.

Americans have not always taken the easiest path. In World War II our parents and grandparents didn't ask whether the war would cost too much, or wait for the rest of the world to join the fight. Then Americans simply agreed that losing the war was not an option, no matter what sacrifices needed to be made. If our children are to have a future, we must act with the same courage and commitment now.

But we must act now. Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, says: "If there's no action before 2012, that's too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment." ■

**FIGURE 2:**
**THE UNSUSTAINABLE U.S. ECONOMY**



▲ Credit and Mortgage Bubble


▲ U.S. Dollar Super Bubble


▲ Unsustainable Resource Consumption

The Virtual Economy


▲ Growing Global Resource Shortages


▲ Collapsing Ecosystems

The Real Economy

FLICKR/CC/W.MARSH, SWISSCAN, MEEPOOH, ISTOCK PHOTO

# Today's Synthetic Foods:
## Shrinking Our Brains, Testicles, and Livers?

by Conrad Miller

*Here comes synthetic food*
*And their big time money*
*And they want to control*
*Our body and soul*
*—Ziggy Marley, from "Tumblin' Down" (1988)*



Bob Marley's son Ziggy warned us about synthetic food two decades ago, before corporations started commercially gene-gunning virus and fish sequences into DNA to corner the seed market. Now that 90 percent of our soybeans are genetically modified in this manner, along with 75 percent of our canola, 73 percent of our corn, and 83 percent of our cotton (which we eat in the form of cottonseed oil in our baked goods, potato chips, etc.), how come we all don't commonly know about it? About 80 percent of our processed foods contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) amid their ingredients.

This is not true in Europe. There, GMO foods are banned for the most part. European supermarket shelves are practically devoid of any products with GMO ingredients. Why? Because of mandatory labeling. Plus, their media, food activists, and governments have revealed the many risks of GMO crops and the synthetic foods manufactured from them to a now-educated public. In fact, England's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food officially warned our Food and Drug Administration about the dangers of engineering foreign DNA into our plants and cells a decade ago.

On May 19 of this year, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine advised "physicians to educate their patients, the medical community, and the public to avoid GM (genetically modified) foods when possible and provide educational materials concerning [their] health risks." They warned that "several animal studies indicate serious health risks associated with GM food consumption," including infertility, immune problems, accelerated aging, insulin regulation and changes in major organs and the gastrointestinal system. Their conclusion was that **"there is more than a casual association between GM foods and adverse health effects. There is causation."**

Meanwhile, biotech companies are pushing for "synchronized commercialization of biotech traits" in wheat. Fifty percent of U.S. non-organic sugar will soon be GMO due to the approval of patented GMO sugar beets. Yet Monsanto's attempt to sell genetically altered alfalfa (or hay) has been rejected again, this time in a federal appeals court.

In one study rats fed gene-altered potatoes developed smaller brains, testicles, and livers, compared to rats fed the parent line of the very same potatoes. In another, when male rats were fed GMO soy, their testicles changed color "from the normal pink to dark blue."

Milk from cows injected with genetically modified or "recombinant" Bovine Growth Hormone

*Roughly 73 percent of U.S. corn is now genetically modified. Europe has kept itself mostly free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).*
*Above: in 2003, Greenpeace Mexico activists protested their government's lifting of a ban on experimental planting of genetically modified crops. GMOs threaten the country's stock of native corn species.*

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*Conrad Miller, MD, is a board-certified emergency medicine physician. On GMO foods, see his book* The Most Important Issues Americans THINK They Know Enough About (2008) *and www.crestofthewave.com. To protest the Taylor/Wolff appointments, visit www.organicconsumers.org.*

**ASK THE AUTHOR!**
**October 26: Conrad Miller**
We'll interview Conrad for 20 minutes, and then he'll take questions from YOU.
**6 p.m. Pacific Time**
**(9 p.m. Eastern)**
**Monday, October 26**
**Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!**
**Then enter this code: 11978#**
See full schedule at www.tikkun.org






*Top: "Genfood? No Thanks!" (A sign in Aachen, Germany.) Below: The push to gain approval of GMO wheat was abandoned in 2004 due to opposition from virtually every major wheat user in the world. But now a new push to make GMO wheat worldwide is afoot. It is aided by Obama's reliance on biotech enthusiasts.*

TOP: FLICKR/CC/JAMESKSBOTTOM: FLICKR/CC/BENNITT

(rBGH) every two weeks (as about 17 percent of U.S. milk cows are) has been found to have up to ten times the amount of insulin growth factor-1 (IGF-1), which studies have linked to increased incidence of breast, prostate, and colon cancer. Yet forces within and without our government have prevented the labeling of milk as having rBGH, or being "Bovine Growth Hormone-Free" over the past decade.

Readers should not feel isolated about desiring labeling of GMO ingredients and crops in America. A CBS poll from May 11, 2008, showed that 87 percent of those polled wanted GMOs to be labeled, as is currently mandated for the foods consumed by 40 percent of the world's population. Yet there is no labeling requirement today in the United States for GMO foods. With 53 percent of those polled that day saying they won't buy food that has been genetically modified, nutritionist Marion Nestle explains that the "Gene Giant" corporations that produce GMO food "didn't want it labeled because they were terrified that if it were labeled, nobody would buy it."

The latest news relating this all to the Obama administration finds that the president is trying to put two major opponents of labeling GMO products in charge of food safety. Michael Taylor—a former vice president of Monsanto who orchestrated the approval of rBGH without adequate investigation while he was a lawyer working for the FDA, and then saw to it that government policy denied the need for safety testing *any* GMO foods or crops, and then went back to work for Monsanto—has been appointed senior advisor to the FDA commissioner on food safety. He also headed Mr. Obama's transition team for agriculture and energy. This is pertinent information if you have been wondering how a man like former Iowa governor and biotech enthusiast Tom Vilsack became our secretary of agriculture, or how pro-nuclear power physicist Steven Chu became secretary of energy.

Then there is dairy farmer and Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff, who is just being nominated under-secretary of agriculture for food safety. Wolff spearheaded legislation in Pennsylvania that would have taken away the rights of consumers to know whether their milk and dairy products were contaminated with Monsanto's (now Eli Lilly's) genetically engineered Bovine Growth Hormone.

This may be politically troubling to many Americans who expected change and new direction from Obama, whose wife, Michelle, planted the first organic garden at the White House.

Many of us hear that GMO foods will solve the world's hunger problem. However, as Bill Freese wrote on the Council for Responsible Genetics website in January, "The UN and World Bank recently completed an unprecedentedly broad scientific assessment of world agriculture, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development, which concluded that biotech crops have very little potential to alleviate poverty and hunger." Last year Syngenta's chairman told the London *Guardian*, "GM won't solve the food crisis, at least not in the short term."

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's "Agricultural Outlook 2004 to 2013" report found that "the growth rate in the production of most agricultural products is expected to be *larger* than that for consumption, leading to a continuation of the long-term decline in real food prices [adjusted for inflation]." With Monsanto et al patenting seeds and crops to increase their control of the world's food supply, while also increasing sales of their herbicide Round-Up, the claim about feeding the world's hungry—but perhaps at a higher price—appears misleading at best.

The Pesticide Action Network noted in 2001 that "about 73 percent of all genetically engineered crops planted last year were engineered to be used with weed killer—not to increase yields or to be drought tolerant, but to increase sales of special brands of weed killer."

Americans should be aware that Monsanto's Round-Up has been banned in Denmark since 2003. We should also know that its active ingredient, glyphosphate, has been found to damage "placental cells at exposure levels ten times less than what Monsanto claims is safe," according to a June 2005 report in the *Environmental Health Perspectives* scientific journal. Exposure to glyphosphate can lead to spontaneous abortions and fetal gene mutations that are expressed when a child is born. *(continued on page 82)*

# The Misuse of Academic Freedom in an Era of Global Warming

by Chet A. Bowers

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT ACADEMIC FREEDOM? WE IN THE ACADEMY HAVE COME to believe in it as our highest value—the only value we can all agree upon. And even I, who am skeptical, think it has its importance. In this article I want to convey why academic freedom should not trump all other values, and why the extreme obedience to this individual right of free speech for college professors actually produces a university that is intellectually and morally incoherent.

Evidence of this lack of intellectual and moral coherence can be seen in the political discourse carried on by today's politicians who are, with few exceptions, university graduates. In too many instances, academic freedom is being used to justify a state of denial on the part of professors that there are world-changing crises: the crisis of environmental degradation and the crisis in cultural assumptions and practices that can be traced back to earlier western thinkers who were unaware of environmental limits—assumptions that many professors still take for granted.

Many advances in understanding can be attributed to academic freedom, but it nevertheless has a checkered history. One of the reasons that its current misuse has not been given the attention it deserves is that it is based on the cultural assumption that freedom of inquiry leads to changes that are inherently progressive. Indeed, the widespread acceptance of equating freedom of inquiry with social progress makes questioning this tradition appear reactionary and even deliberately pernicious. What self-respecting academic could possibly take seriously such questioning—especially when so many genuinely reactionary and traditionalist social groups have a long history of attacking academic freedom?

But the stakes have never been higher in human history, given the rapid degradation of natural systems and the rate of global warming, which now threatens billions of humans and other species. So it is now necessary to ask whether academic freedom is being used as an excuse by the majority of non-science faculty to avoid addressing the cultural roots of the ecological crises. And the myth of progress that many scientists took for granted as they introduced into the environment one toxic chemical after another needs to be kept in mind in considering the extent of their complicity in contributing to the global ecological crisis, and the current state of denial that is so widespread on the part of most faculty.

Freedom is the context-free metaphor used to justify the professor's right to determine course content and other scholarly interests. Personal scholarly interest is, of course, influenced by a number of considerations—ranging from an awareness of what the politics of the department will allow if tenure is to be obtained, to what represents the conventional wisdom within the field of inquiry. For example, academic freedom cannot be used to justify research that is intended to represent the Holocaust as a liberal hoax, nor can it now be used to justify the genetic inferiority of racial or other marginalized groups. There are many other examples of how personal scholarly interests may be viewed as illegitimate, depending upon what is widely accepted as progressive thinking.

*Chet A. Bowers is the author of nineteen books that address the cultural roots of the ecological crises and the role that educational institutions have played. His most recent writings are available at cabowers.net.*

**If universities give short shrift to the ideas of deniers like these ...**



*In 1996 an English court found that David Irving, above, was an "active Holocaust denier," as well as an anti-Semite and racist.*



*Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Holocaust denier.*



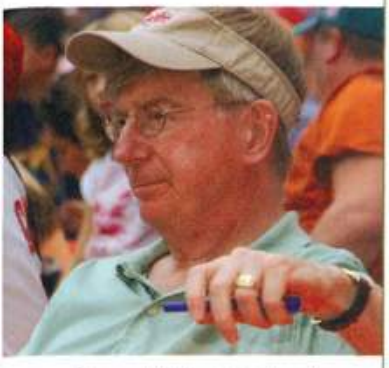
*David Duke denies that he is a white supremacist and instead calls himself a "White civil rights advocate."*

**... then why do universities not treat the denial of global warming in the same way?**

**After all, only global warming is actually threatening to end human civilization.**



*On March 20, 2009, Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele said: "We are cooling. We are not warming."*



*George Will promoted major inaccuracies on global warming in his* Washington Post *column this year.*



*Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), as chair of the Senate committee on the environment, called global warming "a hoax."*

TOP: WIKICOMMONS/STEELE FOR CHAIRMAN, MIDDLE: WIKICOMMONS/SCOTT ABLEMAN BOTTOM: WIKICOMMONS/SENATE

While the phrase "academic freedom" is associated with the process of inquiry and scholarship, there is little about professors' ways of thinking that is free of the cultural assumptions learned at a taken-for-granted level when they are learning to think and communicate in the language of the larger culture, and in the specialized language of their chosen disciplines.

## The Hidden Assumptions in Our Discourse

Most professors still think of language as a conduit in a sender/receiver process of communicating ideas, data, and information to others—even when they are critically reflecting on the prejudices reproduced in the culture's "languaging" processes. The result is that they remain largely unaware of how their academic freedom is constrained by the analogs carried forward in the metaphorical language they take for granted—analogs that too often reproduce the prejudices and silences of earlier thinkers who were also unaware of environmental limits.

An example of the unrecognized linguistic constraints that led professors to perpetuate the prejudices and other misconceptions of earlier thinkers can be seen in the fact that, until recently, most professors took for granted the gender biases that limited the prospects of women.

Today, leading scientists such as E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins continue the long tradition of relying upon analogs that represent organic processes, such as the human brain, as having the characteristics of a machine. The seemingly unending quest for new ideas, values, and technologies is also rooted in Enlightenment thinkers' practice of associating traditions with analogs that suggested backwardness, impediments to progress, and critical reflection.

After I sat in on a meeting of humanities professors who discussed their relevance in today's world without mentioning the ecological crisis, it became clear to me that the cultural assumptions they take for granted prevented them from recognizing how to make the transition from an individually-centered to an ecological form of intelligence—which is far more complex than it is represented as being in Daniel Goleman's new book, Ecological Intelligence. Evidence of being unable to make this transition can be found in many disciplines.

For example, the cultural assumptions reproduced by generations of Western philosophers are audacious in their claims, and for the silences they have helped to perpetuate in other academic disciplines. The rational process, which philosophers claim to exercise more judiciously than any other group in the university, has been represented as free of all cultural influences—including the influence of Enlightenment thinkers. This view of the rational process, which is shared by most faculty in other disciplines, led past and current philosophers to claim that both abstract and empirically based thinking are free of cultural traditions, that rational thought is the activity of autonomous individuals, and that other cultural ways of knowing are irrelevant.

Thus, the questions seldom asked include: What can we learn from the misconceptions of past thinkers who have contributed to marginalizing the knowledge of cultures that have learned to live within the limits and possibilities of their bioregions? How have the giants in the history of Western philosophy contributed to the hubris that characterizes the various systems of high-status knowledge that failed to recognize environmental limits and the short- and long-term consequences of colonizing other cultures?

Reading Plato, Descartes, Locke, and other western philosophers—including present-day iconic figures such as John Dewey and Richard Rorty—would be justified if it led to examining how they contributed to the misconceptions and silences about human participation in the complex interacting webs of cultural and environmental ecologies. But this is not what most students are asked to consider. Unfortunately, most students graduate with a fragmentary understanding of the history of abstract theories. Graduates think of themselves as critical thinkers—and are totally unaware of the silences about the changes their world is undergoing that will make irrelevant what they learned from their courses.

The problem of academic freedom's entanglement with the culture's taken-for-granted assumptions is not limited to philosophy professors. The power of a received vocabulary and its interpretive frameworks are acquired in each professor's own education, and generally reinforced by colleagues who are unable to throw off their own taken-for-granted traditions of thinking encoded in the language of their discipline.

As we move closer to the tipping point beyond which the rate of global *(continued on page 83)*

# The Nonduality of Ecology and Economy

by David R. Loy
















*How ironic that the very animals we use to sell products are endangered by the rampant growth of production and sales. Amphibians and tigers are already in dire trouble. What's next? The ubiquitous rabbit?*

## "The American way of life is not negotiable."

So declared President George H. W. Bush at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It was his response to what everyone else there had realized: that the earth's ecology is endangered and "that nothing less than a transformation of our attitude and behavior would bring about the necessary changes" to protect it, according to Maurice Strong, the secretary-general of the conference.

A ten-year follow-up to the Earth Summit was held in 2002, but President George W. Bush did not bother to attend. When his White House press secretary Ari Fleischer was asked whether the new president would encourage Americans to reduce consumption in order to reduce pollution, he said no: "The American way of life is a blessed one."

What happened during those ten years? Unfortunately, not very much. After the Earth Summit it seemed like the world had finally awakened to the eco-crisis, and for a couple of years I noticed that almost every media report on the oil industry referred to global warming. And then ... the world seemed to fall asleep again. The environmental crisis was not really forgotten, but the linkage between ecology and economy was de-emphasized—and so very little was achieved, because not much can be achieved without addressing their interconnectedness.

Why did so little happen during that decade? It's only a guess, but I suspect that two different reactions reinforced each other. Corporations—especially oil companies—realized that the new green movement was a threat to their profit margins, and rather than restructure they decided to fight, with a massive advertising and propaganda campaign designed to muddle the issue by denying climate change. (Jim Hansen, who is the head of NASA and a globally respected climatologist, has called their misinformation campaigns "crimes against humanity.") At the same time, consumers began to realize the same thing—that the eco-crisis is a serious challenge to consumerism—and rather than change the "blessed American way of life" it was easier to ignore the problem. After all, the experts disagree, don't they? The result was mass denial. At some level of consciousness, many if not most people were aware that the environment was deteriorating, but that didn't have much effect on our day-to-day lives. As the economy boomed, most of us consumed more than ever.

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As a result, much valuable time has been lost, and the need for drastic change has become even more urgent. Yet that will not happen until we realize the nonduality of ecology and economy. Although most people still see the issue as merely a technological problem to be solved by lowering carbon emissions, atmospheric carbon is only the visible tip of a much more ominous iceberg. According to the United Nations Environment Program, one in four mammalian species, one in eight bird species, one in three amphibian species, and 70 percent of all the world's plant species are now endangered. Global warming, along with deforestation, agriculture, and urbanization, could drive half of all species on earth to extinction by 2100, according to eminent biologists such as Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University. Ninety percent of all large fish species have been driven toward extermination. Depleted water tables are becoming a global problem, and since 1950 the world has lost about 30 percent of its arable land and soil fertility.

## The End of Business-as-Usual

MOST OF US ARE FAMILIAR WITH THESE GRIM FACTS, BUT TOO OFTEN SUCH STATISTICS REMAIN abstract and disconnected from our lives. We overlook the institutions that mediate between the biosphere and our own patterns of consumption: the world's globalizing economic system, which today is *seven* times as large as it was in 1950.

The fact that 20 percent of the Amazon rainforest ("the lungs of the earth") has been cut down in recent decades needs to be connected with our "need" for more soybeans to feed the cattle and pigs who provide our beef and pork. The fact that almost all large fish species are endangered is a consequence of the high-tech ship-factories that trawl the oceans with enormous drift nets. Most fresh water is used for agriculture and manufacturing; vast amounts of topsoil are lost because of industrial farming. And so forth.

It would be a serious mistake to blame everything on capitalism. Most of us (at least in the "developed world") have benefited much from the affluence provided by its innovative dynamism. The old Soviet Union was not capitalist, it was a classic example of "command socialism"—and its ecological record was perhaps the worst of all developed nations. What capitalism and state socialism have in common is a preoccupation with industrialization, which has accelerated and taken on a life of its own.

Today, however, socialism is more or less dead, and globalizing capitalism is the only game in town. Our collective relationship to the biosphere and its ecosystems is largely mediated by what corporations do, and what they do is largely determined by what is most profitable—quite apart from the ecological consequences, which still tend to be ignored or "externalized" when possible.

The result is an unsustainable economic system supported by a deluded worldview. All the world's economies are wholly owned subsidiaries of the earth's biosphere, but we still have great difficulty understanding what that implies. Yes, it does mean the end of business-as-usual. It means the greatest possible challenge to consumer capitalism, whose corporations must either mutate into something very different, or be replaced altogether. And this is a transformation that Buddhists should embrace and encourage, because it is also implied by the teachings of the Buddha.

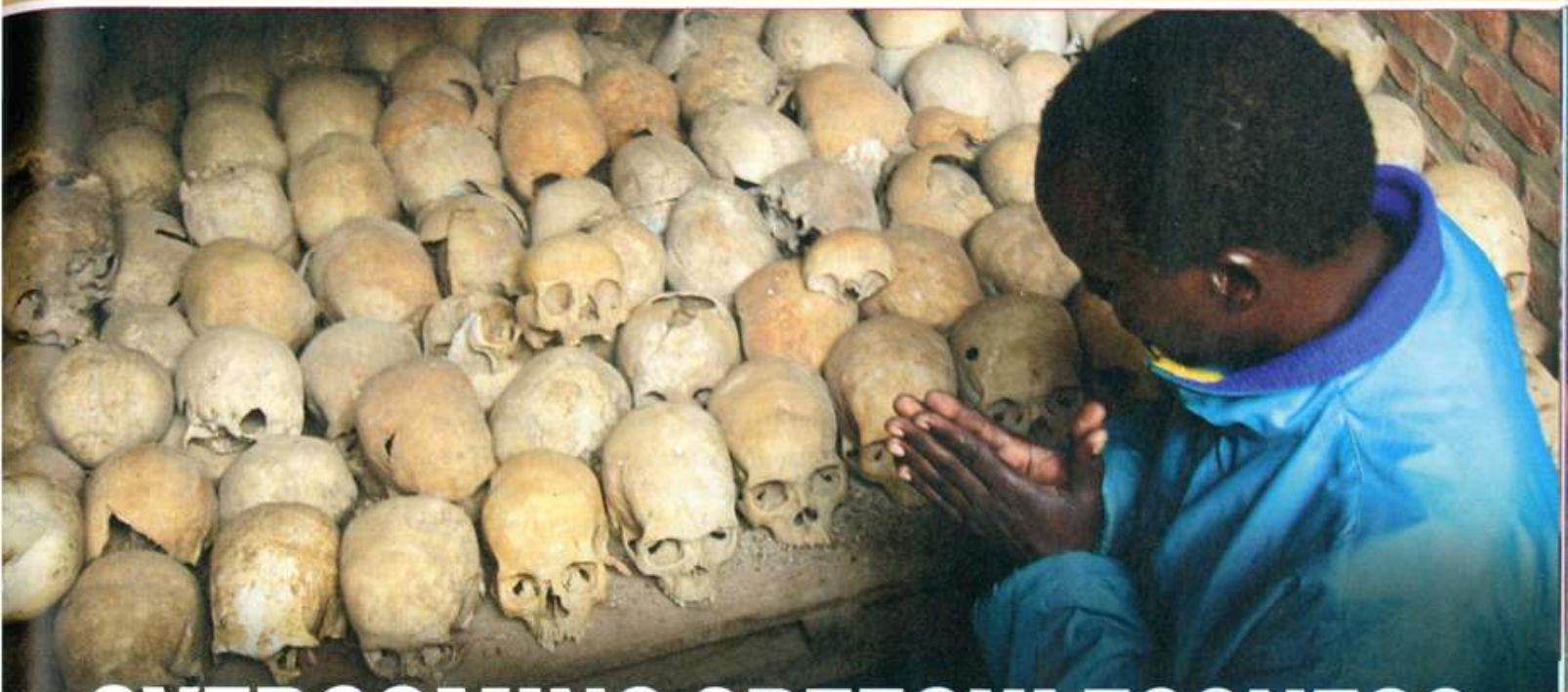
## Better Software for the Economy

THE NEWS MEDIA HAVE BEEN TELLING US THAT THE FINANCIAL CRISIS—WHICH IS FAR FROM over—is due to the excessive greed of Wall Street speculators and the unbridled spending of Main Street borrowers. Yet the problem goes much deeper, and our predicament is much worse. Greed is not a virus that has infected the economic hard drive; it has become the software that runs our economy.

Buddhism does not say much about evil itself, but it emphasizes the *three roots of evil*: greed, ill will, and delusion. The basic problem with our present economic system is that it institutionalizes the first of those roots. As George Lakoff put it on May 22 in the *Huffington Post*, "the economic and ecological meltdowns have the same cause: the unregulated free market and the idea that greed is good and that the natural world is a resource for short-term private enrichment. The result has been deadly, toxic assets, and a toxic atmosphere." Two sides of the same coin.

Greed also takes two forms, according to our means. As Ivan Illich argued, "In a consumer society there are two kinds of slaves: the prisoners of addiction and the prisoners of envy."

The Buddha's first noble truth identifies *dukkha* (dissatisfaction) as inherent *(continued on page 84)*



# OVERCOMING SPEECHLESSNESS

## A Poet Encounters "the Horror" in Rwanda, Eastern Congo, and Palestine/Israel

by Alice Walker

*"Three things cannot be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth."*
*- Buddha*

Three years ago I visited Rwanda and Eastern Congo. In Kigali I paid my respects to the hundreds of thousands of infants, toddlers, teenagers, adolescents, young engaged couples, married people, women and men, grandmothers and grandfathers, and brothers and sisters of every facial shape and body size, who had been hacked into sometimes quite small pieces by armed strangers, or by neighbors, or by acquaintances and "friends" they knew. These bodies and pieces of bodies are now neatly and respectfully buried in mass graves. Fifteen years ago, these graves were encircled by cuttings of plants that are now sturdy blossoming vines that cover their iron trellises with flowers.

Inside the adjacent museum there are photographs of the murdered: their open smiles or wise and consoling eyes will remain with me always. There is also, in the museum, a brief history of Rwanda. It tells of the long centuries Tutsi and Hutu lived together, intermarrying and raising their children, until the coming of the Belgians in the 1800s. The Belgian settlers determined, because they measured Hutu and Tutsi skulls, that the Tutsi were more intelligent than the Hutu, more like Europeans, and therefore placed the Tutsi above the Hutu. The hatred this diabolical decision caused between these formerly friendly peoples festered over generations, coming to a lethal boil in the tragedy of genocide.

Though I had done research while in college, and written a thesis of sorts on the "Belgian" Congo, where King Leopold of Belgium introduced the policy of cutting off the hands

*Rwandan survivor of the 1994 genocide prays over the bones of victims at a mass grave in Nyamata, Rwanda.*

AP PHOTO/SAYYID AZIM

*Alice Walker, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her novel* The Color Purple, *is a poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist, publisher, teacher, feminist, and activist. She will be speaking on repentance and atonement at High Holiday Services conducted by Rabbi Michael Lerner in San Francisco in September 2009 (more info at www.beyttikkun.org).*






*The Belgian colonialists embittered the Hutu people of Rwanda by elevating the Tutsi above them, on the basis of racist, pseudo-scientific theories then popular in Europe. In November 1959 (top) the first major violent backlash claimed an estimated 20,000 to 100,000 Tutsi lives. During 100 days in 1994 (bottom) an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed, most of them Tutsis.*

TOP: AP PHOTO. BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/JEAN-MARC BOUJU

of enslaved Africans who didn't or couldn't fulfill their rubber quota—collecting the latex for the rubber that made tires for the new cars everyone was beginning to want, in America and Europe—I had not known these same activities spread into the Kingdom of Rwanda. But apparently, to the Belgians, it was all one vast "empty" territory, to be exploited without any consideration for the people living there. Indigenous Africans didn't seem to exist, except as slaves.

While I was visiting the set for the film *The Color Purple*, many decades after college, a sad older man from Africa—who had been a doctor in the Congo, and was now hired as an extra for our film—lamented the loss of his country, his people, and his land, telling me that the Firestone Corporation had taken millions of acres of land, "leasing" it for pennies an acre, in perpetuity. The people who'd lived there since the beginning of humanity had been forced to tend the trees planted there on Firestone's vast rubber tree plantation. Needless to say I immediately thought of every car I'd owned and all the tires that ran under them.

## The Woman in Purple and White

From Kigali, and meetings with survivors, witnessing their courage and fortitude, their willingness to move on and beyond unspeakable tragedy, I went to Eastern Congo. There, I met with women still victimized by the killers of Kigali who had been chased across the border into their country. These women had been the victims of rape on so large a scale—rape as one of the cruelest weapons of war—it seemed impossible they had not, in their despair, chosen to destroy themselves. Their villages had frequently turned against them, because of their abuse; if their husbands were still alive, they regularly dismissed them, refusing them shelter in their own homes.

One beautiful woman, who came to meet me wearing white and purple, had been a sex slave in the bush for over a year, forced to carry loads that bent her double, her eyes repeatedly struck to damage her vision so that she would not be able to identify her assailants, her whole body beaten until, over a year later, there was still a discernible limp when she attempted to walk with what one assumed was her former grace. We embraced each other with tears, and with joy. I was more thankful to see her radiant resurrection than I had been to witness anything in my life. She had been raped with every imaginable instrument, including machete handles and gun barrels. Thanks to you, my sisters of Women for Women International, she said, I have come through. Many of us have come through. We will not go back. We will not be slaves and beasts of burden.

Over 4 million Congolese have been murdered in an endless war whose foundation rests on the mineral wealth of the Congo. One of those minerals, coltan, makes cell phone use possible. Millions of families are homeless and in ruin, living in the rain and heat. War continues, like a sickness that has no cure. Infectious diseases are rampant. Weapons flow into the hands of the young, even into the hands of children. How can she smile, I wonder, about my just-met Congolese sister. But she does so because she is alive, which means the Feminine is alive. There is the work of The Mother to do. There is the work of The Daughter to do. This is a source of joy. We embrace, parting. She will learn how to start a business and longs to take lessons in computer use.

## Propelled into Speechlessness

I found, coming home, that I could talk about this woman, and, indeed, she would later come to America and talk about herself. She understood the importance of speech, speech about the unspeakable, and she is a source of my ability to share the following story, which propelled me into a period of speechlessness.

While in Congo we were invited to visit a young woman, just my own daughter's age at the time, thirty-six, who was in a local hospital. When we first saw Generose she was lying on a pallet on the floor in an outer passageway, waiting for us. Taking up her crutch, she led us to a quiet area at the back of the hospital where we sat circled around her, as she told her story.



*Two Hutu refugee women reunite, after two years of separation, inside a church in the village of Kabiza, Rwanda.*

AP PHOTO/JEAN-MARC BOUJU

Her story was this: Her village had been terrorized by the Interahamwe murderers (presumably Hutu) that had been chased out of Rwanda by the Tutsi forces of Paul Kagame (now president of Rwanda); the suffering had been unbearable as people were chased from their homes at all hours of the day or night, many of them choosing to sleep in the forest or hide themselves in their fields. She was home with her husband and two children because, among other reasons, such as this was her home, and her husband was sick. One evening, there was a fierce knock at the door. Gunmen who also carried machetes entered, demanding food. There was little to offer them but the staple diet: a boiled vegetable (that to my eyes, being shown it in the fields earlier, looked like okra leaves) and a few balls of steamed millet. The men ate this but were angry and not satisfied. They went and found the husband, still in bed, and hacked him to pieces on the spot. They came back to Generose and her children and took hold of her. Holding her down, they began to cut off her leg. They cut off her leg, cut it into six pieces, and began to fry it in a pan. When some part of it seemed nearly done, they tried to force her son to take a bite of it. Strongly, beautifully, and so much the son of our dreams, he said: No, I will never eat my mother's flesh. They shot him to death without more conversation. The daughter, seeing this, watching her mother bleeding to death, knowing her father had been hacked to pieces, was now offered the same opportunity. Terrorized, she bit into a piece of her mother's body. Her mother, having crawled away, does not know what became of her. Though she does know that her assailants went next door that same evening and murdered a couple who'd been married that day, raping and mutilating the bride, and tearing out her eyes.

## Generose's Lost Daughter

THIS WAS THE CHILD GENEROSE WAS HOPING WE COULD HELP HER FIND. APPARENTLY she had escaped after this gruesome torture, and now, where could she be? Generose hoped for only two things from us: that we help her find her daughter (beyond our capacity, probably, though Women for Women International would try) and that we help her start a small business so that when her daughter is found she can provide a safe place for them to live. A proud woman who reminded me of a young Toni Morrison, she did not once stammer in the telling of her tale, though those of us around her felt a quaking in the heart. I have not forgotten this child who was forced to eat her mother's flesh for a moment. Yet it has been almost impossible to speak of it.

Coming home I fell ill with the burden of this story, as I had fallen ill after reading in the *New York Times* a year or so earlier of similar torture used against the so-called "pygmies" of Africa's rainforests ("pygmies" because in ancient Egyptian the word means *elbow high*): in order to frighten them away from their homes, to ultimately make way for lumbering and mining interests located in the West, mercenaries were indoctrinating their soldiers to believe that killing the "pygmies" and eating their hearts would make the soldiers invisible and capable, as these smaller people seem to be, of evading capture by blending with their environment. Reading this story I felt as if my own heart had been taken out of me, and this assault on the planetary human body that I represent brought me low.

I was fortunate to have a Sangha (a Buddhist community) to which I could eventually turn. Sitting around me as I talked, two of our members realized I needed even more of a healing than simply being able to speak about what I had witnessed and heard of what is happening to the people of the earth. They immediately devised a ritual for my care. Placing me on the green grass of my yard, surrounding me with flowers, stones, photographs of those who comfort us (I placed several under my blouse: John Lennon, Pema Chodron, Howard Zinn, the Dalai Lama, Amma, and Che among them), and their own loving words, they helped me shed tears of hopelessness, as I asked myself and them: What has happened to humanity? Followed by more tears of resolve. Because whatever has happened to humanity, whatever is currently happening to humanity, it is happening to all of us. No matter




*Singing on the Rafah border: Medea Benjamin, Cindy and Craig Corrie (Rachel Corrie's parents), and Alice Walker.*

KIM ELLIOTT

how hidden the cruelty, no matter how far off the screams of pain and terror, we live in one world. We are one people. My illness proved that. As well as my understanding that Generose's lost daughter belongs to all of us. It is up to all of us to find her; it is up to us to do our best to make her whole again. There is only one daughter, one father, one mother, one son, one aunt or uncle, one dog, one cat, donkey, monkey, or goat in the Universe, after all: the one right in front of you.

## Getting to Gaza

AND SO I HAVE BEEN, ONCE AGAIN, STRUGGLING TO SPEAK ABOUT AN ATROCITY: THIS time in Gaza, this time against the Palestinian people. Like most people on the planet I have been aware of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict almost my whole life.

I got to Gaza the way I have gotten so many places in my life: a sister called me. My friend—the writer Susan Griffin, with whom I was arrested protesting the start of the war against Iraq in 2003—sent an email. Would I be interested in going to Gaza? With Code Pink, the women's peace group that had gotten us into such soul strengthening trouble six years before. She would go, she said, if she could sell the book she was currently writing. This is how so many of us live; I remember this when I look about the world and want more witnesses to the scenes of horror, brutality, chaos. We all have to work to feed ourselves, look after our families, keep our heads above water. I understand this completely, and wasn't sure I was free enough myself, to go.

However, it happened that, in the same week that the Israeli military began its twenty-two-day bombardment of Gaza—a refugee camp that became a city and is today a mere sliver of Palestine left to the Palestinians (a city and environs that Israel had laid siege to months before, keeping out food and medicine and building materials, among other necessities)—my own sister had died after a long illness. Our relationship had been a good one for most of our lives, and then, toward the end of her life, it had become strained. So much so that when she died I had not expected to feel devastation. Surprise. As I was grieving her loss, I learned of the dropping of bombs on the people of Palestine. Houses, hospitals, factories, police stations, parliament buildings, ministries, apartment buildings, and schools went up in dust. The sight of one family in which five young daughters had been killed was seared into my consciousness. The mother, wounded and unconscious, was alive. Who would tell her?

I waited to hear some word of regret, of grief, of compassion, from our leaders in

Washington, who had sent the money, the earnings of American taxpayers, to buy the bombs destroying her world. What little concern I became aware of from our "leaders" was faint, arrived late, was delivered without much feeling, and was soon overshadowed by an indifference to the value of Palestinian life that has corrupted our children's sense of right and wrong for generations. Later our government would offer money, a promise to help "rebuild." As if money and rebuilding is the issue. If someone killed my children and offered me money for the privilege of having done so I would view them as monsters, not humanitarians.

I consulted my companion, who did not hesitate. We must go, he said. The sooner we reach the people of Gaza, the sooner they'll know not all Americans are uncaring, deaf and blind, or fooled by the media. He went on to quote Abraham Lincoln's famous line about fooling the people: you can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time. Americans, we know, are, for the most part, uninformed about the reality of this never-ending "conflict" that has puzzled us for decades and of which so many of us, if we are honest, are heartily sick. We began to pack.

It's a long way to Gaza. Flying between San Francisco and Frankfurt, then from Frankfurt into Egypt, I kept my mind focused by meditating as much as possible, reading Aung San Suu Kyi and Alan Clement's book *The Voice of Hope*, and thinking about Desmond Tutu and his courageous statement earlier in the month about the immorality of the walls Israel has built around Palestinian villages, as well as the immorality of the siege itself. President Jimmy Carter's book *Peace Not Apartheid*, I had read before leaving home. I also ate a good bit of chocolate. And slept.

## A Southern White Woman in Cairo

Arriving in Cairo at 3:30 in the morning, my first task, assigned by the beautiful, indomitable, and well loved co-founder of Code Pink, Medea Benjamin, was to meet with her and the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, Ambassador Scobey, at 10:30 AM to ask for assistance in crossing the border into Gaza from Egypt. After a few hours' rest, I appeared early for the meeting (concerned that Medea had not arrived yet) which, though cordial, would yield no help. Even so, I was able to have an interesting talk with the ambassador about the use of nonviolence.

She, a white woman with a southern accent, mentioned the success of "our" Civil Rights Movement and why couldn't the Palestinians be more like us. It was a remarkable comment from a perspective of unimaginable safety and privilege; I was moved to tell her of the effort it took, even for someone so inherently nonviolent as me, to contain myself during seven years in Mississippi when it often appeared there were only a handful of white Mississippians who could talk to a person of color without delivering injury or insult. That if we had not been able to change our situation through nonviolent suffering, we would most certainly—like the ANC, like the PLO, like Hamas—have turned to violence. I told her how dishonest it seems to me that people claim not to understand the desperate, last-ditch resistance involved in suicide bombings; blaming the oppressed for using their bodies where the Israeli army uses armored tanks. I remembered aloud, us being Southerners, my own anger at the humiliations, bombings, and assassinations that made weeping an endless activity for black people, *for centuries*, and how when we finally got to a courtroom that was supposed to offer justice, the judge was likely to blame us for the crime done against us and to call us chimpanzees for making a fuss.

Medea arrived at this point, having been kept circling the building in a taxi that never landed, and pressed our case for entry into Gaza. While appearing sympathetic to our petition, our ambassador emphasized it was dangerous for us to go into Gaza and that her office would be powerless to help us if we arrived there and were injured or stranded. We were handed some papers telling us all the reasons we should not go.

## Two Buses: 2009 and 1963

On the bus ride through the Egyptian desert, toward the Rafah gate, which leads into Palestine, I think about this particular cycle of violence humans have made for themselves. Hitler learned from the Americans how to "cleanse" Germany of the Jews. Even to the use of






*Just as Jews and others from outside the Black community provided solidarity with their bodies in the American civil rights struggle, Israeli and foreign activists have risked their lives for Palestinians. Above: civil rights demonstrators are blasted by hoses July 15, 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama. Below: Israeli troops fire a water cannon at a protest against the construction of Israel's separation barrier in the West Bank village of Bilin on February 23, 2007.*

TOP: AP PHOTO/BILL HUDSON. BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/EMILIO MORENATTI

Jewish hair to stuff mattresses. American Indian hair had been mattress stuffing long before. Indian skin made into various objects. Indian children and families, massacred. Not because they were "savages"—one glance at their art told anyone who they were—but because the European settlers who came to America wanted their land. Just as the Israelis have wanted, and have taken by force, Palestinian land. Like Americans they have attempted to hide their avarice and cruelty behind a mountain of myths: that no one lived in Palestine, that the Palestinians are savages, that there's no such thing as a Palestinian (Golda Meir's offering), that the Israelis are David and the Palestinians Goliath. Which is ridiculous, if you haven't been indoctrinated against the Palestinians for centuries from reading the Bible where, as the Philistines, they are forever causing trouble for God's children, the Hebrews. And then, there's Hollywood, which has a lot to answer for in its routine disregard for Arabs, generally, but which, where Palestine and Israel are concerned, projects Israel as always in the right, no matter what it does, as American politicians, for the most part, have learned to do. This is not good for Israel, or the United States, just as always praising the regrettable behavior of one's child, or of anyone, can only lead to disaster. A disaster, where Israel is concerned, that is happening before our eyes, even if the media in America refuses to let Americans fully see it.

I had not been on a bus with so many Jews since traveling to the 1963 March on Washington by Greyhound when Martin Luther King, John Lewis, and others spoke so passionately of Black Americans' determination to be free. I went then with a half-Jewish young man named, not so ironically when I later thought of it, David. He was not considered really Jewish because his mother was Irish, and you can only be a real Jew if your mother is Jewish. I didn't know that then, though. I thought his behavior, coming to the side of the oppressed, very Jewish. It was fairly Irish, too, but at the time the Irish in Boston, except for the Kennedys, seemed far from their tradition in this area. They were regularly stoning and/or shouting obscenities at black children who tried to attend "their" schools.

It was moving to hear the stories of why the Jews on our Gaza-bound bus were going to Palestine. Many of them simply said they couldn't bear the injustice, or the hypocrisy. Having spoken out against racism, terrorism, and apartheid elsewhere, how could they be silent about Palestine and Israel? Someone said her friends claimed everyone who spoke out against Israeli treatment of Palestinians was a self-hating Jew (if Jewish) or anti-Semitic (though Palestinians are Semites, too). She said it never seemed to dawn on the persons making the anti-Semitic charge that it is Israel's behavior people are objecting to and not its religion. As for being self-hating? Well, she said, I actually love myself too much as a Jew to pretend to be ignorant about something so obvious. Ignorance is not held in high regard in Jewish culture.

## The Bedouin

Riding on the bus, listening to the stories of people drawn to the side of the Palestinian people, I leaned into the landscape. Mile after mile of barren desert went by, with scatterings of villages and towns. The farther into the Sinai we went, the more poverty we saw. One sight in particular has stayed with me: the Bedouin, formerly the Nomads of the desert, attempting to live alongside the road or on the barren hills, without their camels, without mobility. Sometimes in dwellings made of sticks and straw. Occasionally lone women in flowing black robes walked along a ridge in the heat, going someplace not visible to the eye. *(continued on page 86)*

# The Trial of Israel's Campus Critics

## by David Theo Goldberg and Saree Makdisi

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the most visible political issues on campuses around the nation. A rising level of concern about the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory (now in its fifth decade), as well as the precarious position of Israel's beleaguered Palestinian minority, have been countered by increasingly strident, even furious, attempts to silence or stifle criticism of Israeli policy on American college campuses.

Tensions have been heightened especially in the wake of Israel's January 2009 re-invasion of Gaza, the consequent mobilization of protest, and the growing campaign for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. As the tide of public opinion in the United States and around the world continues to turn against Israel's policies of occupation and repression, the response to criticisms of Israeli policy on campus are growing uglier. Off-campus organizations—many tied to the most assertive Israeli lobby in Washington—are playing a growing role in on-campus debates. Campus activities, as a result, have been wired directly into national politics, and have become more contentious and infinitely more bitter. And the situation is likely to continue to get worse as Israel's image continues to deteriorate and as its defenders grow more anxious and resort to ever more desperate measures to turn things around.

It is an extraordinary fact that no fewer than thirty-three distinct organizations—including AIPAC, the Zionist Organization of America, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish National Fund—are gathered together today as members or affiliates of the Israel on Campus Coalition. The coalition is an overwhelmingly powerful presence on American college campuses for which there is simply no equivalent on the Palestinian or Arab side. Its self-proclaimed mission is not merely to monitor our colleges and universities. That, after all, is the commitment of Campus Watch, which was started by pro-Israel activists in 2002. It is, rather (and in its own words), to generate "a pro-active, pro-Israel agenda on campus." There is, accordingly, disproportionate and unbalanced intervention on campuses across the country by a coalition of well-funded organizations, who have no time for—and even less interest in—the niceties of intellectual exchange and academic process. Insinuation, accusation, and defamation have become the weapons of first resort to respond to argument and criticism directed at Israeli policies. As far as these outside pressure groups (and their campus representatives) are concerned, the intellectual and academic price that the scholarly community pays as a result of this kind of intervention amounts to little more than collateral damage.

We have become increasingly concerned at the ways in which scholarly critics of Israeli policy have been cavalierly and maliciously misrepresented, mostly through ad hominem attacks on their characters, reputations, and careers. We are troubled also by the ways in which

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*In 2004–2005, Columbia University's Middle East Studies program was the bête noir of Israel's most strident supporters. In March 2005, Bari Weiss, above, a sophomore at Columbia University, protested—in the name of academic freedom—the report by the university that cleared its Middle Eastern studies professors of charges that they had intimidated pro-Israel students. Later, she became a vocal critic of tenure for Barnard anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj. The authors argue that these "pro-Israel" campaigns have themselves amounted to assaults on academic freedom at several major universities. They focus on incidents at the University of California schools where they teach.*

AP PHOTO/TINA FINEBERG

academic programs—most notably Middle East Studies programs at major universities—are being attacked as bastions of irresponsible radicalism and anti-American activity. Our concern has been heightened especially in view of the outside pressure being brought to bear on university administrations, some of which seem to have yielded to coercion, even while trying to "balance" calls for responsibility with commitments to academic freedom. Some senior university administrators seem willing to take for granted the misrepresentations and fabrications by boisterous supporters of Israel, and have done so merely on the strident assertion of those making these claims. This is a curious position to take in the name of "balance," a notion about which we will have more to say in a moment.

These are not altogether new developments, of course, as the dire threat to a number of academic careers and institutional programs in recent years, particularly in Middle East studies, will attest. Scholars whose work is critical of Israeli policies have been denied jobs, denied tenure (or faced a threat to their prospects for tenure), and in general have had their lives made difficult—not because of academic criteria, but because of political interference from extra-academic forces. Outside political intervention by those who advocate unflinching support for Israel have plunged one American program or campus after another into crisis. The University of California is only the latest in a string of such campuses, following incidents at Columbia University, Barnard College, Yale University, Wayne State University, and DePaul University.

## Trumped-Up Furor at UCLA

For several weeks this spring, considerable pressure was brought to bear on UCLA and especially on its Center for Near Eastern Studies. As the crisis came to a head, Stanley Kurtz, in a *National Review Online* article, predicted that UCLA's Center was on the way to becoming today's *bête noir* of the academy, just as Columbia's Middle East Studies program had been for Israel's strident supporters a few years ago. Kurtz is one of a trio of non-academics (Martin Kramer and Daniel Pipes round out the group, and David Horowitz is a kind of associate) who repeatedly chide and harry academic scholars for their criticisms of Israeli policy.

It is crucial to note that Kurtz's prediction was fueled by completely falsified accounts of an event the UCLA Center sponsored earlier this year, by ongoing attacks on faculty members who have spoken critically of Israeli policy, and by thoroughly misleading characterizations of them intended at the very least to make others think twice before speaking out.

In January 2009, UCLA's Center for Near Eastern Studies hosted "Human Rights and Gaza," a panel discussion on campus to address the situation in Gaza in the context of human rights and international humanitarian law. One of us attended as an audience member; the other spoke on the panel, alongside professors Richard Falk, Lisa Hajjar, Gabriel Piterberg, and Susan Slymovics (as chair). Each of the panelists had published extensively on this topic, and Richard Falk is, of course, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, and hence the global authority on this matter.

The panel discussion was only one of three events on Gaza that took place at UCLA around the same time. The other two, sponsored by the UCLA Israel Studies program, were explicitly intended to bring Israeli perspectives, including that of the Israeli Consul in Los Angeles, to campus, and to justify the bombardment of Gaza. "Human Rights and Gaza," by contrast, was not designed to present a Palestinian perspective (indeed, three of the five

participants were Jewish, and one an Israeli); rather, it was meant to restore a sense of intellectual balance and historical context, by offering, in an academic format, a space in which established scholars could address the growing concerns (on campus and more broadly) about the human rights of a population under devastating attack by the Israeli military. That the panel was concerned with violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perhaps explains why no advocate of those violations was added to the panel (after all, advocates of legal and human rights violations are not often forthcoming).

The talks by the four speakers were largely uneventful, being interrupted by pro-Israeli jeers just once and briefly. The question and discussion period grew a bit more heated and contentious. But it was hardly uncivil, save for a mostly irrelevant rant read by an insistent member of the Socialist Workers Party who refused to stop even when she was asked to by the chair, and by a couple of Israeli supporters becoming heated. This provoked one ironic and misinterpreted response from one of the panelists to a comment from the floor about the murderous nature of all Arabs (for which the panelist but not the audience member offered an apology).

Now if you read the characterizations of this event published in various outlets—from the *Jewish Journal of Los Angeles* to the *National Review*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Los Angeles Times*—you would take away a very different view of things. Repeated descriptions of the event *by those who admit that they did not attend it* have characterized the proceedings as akin to a "beer hall political rally" and an anti-Semitic lynch mob, and have gone so far—by the time Stanley Kurtz joined the chorus—as to charge the panel, apparently working on behalf of Hamas, as having led an increasingly frenzied crowd in chants of "F-ck Israel" and "Zionism is Nazism."

## Plain Facts: What Actually Took Place at UCLA

Both of us were present throughout the entire event, we have listened in the wake of these absurd accusations to the publicly available podcasts of the talks, and we have checked with others present. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A testament to the civility of the evening was made evident by the appearance of a campus policeman beside the front stage as discussion grew a little heated. His very presence seemed to cool tempers, and he exchanged smiles and greetings with some audience members. While there was applause at various points, laughter at others—how different from most academic panels—at no time was there chanting or invective hurled by the audience (that either of us, or anyone we talked to, witnessed) or by panelists at Israel or at any other state. No panelist called for or led the audience to chant or collectively to chastise Israel. In fact, the most uncomfortable expression of the evening was heard repeatedly at the front stage after the event had ended. A well-known Israeli provocateur from the UCLA neighborhood (neither a student nor a faculty member), who had once been involved in a scuffle with the UCLA campus rabbi (of all people), was marching up and down hissing wildly beneath her breath at one of the speakers on the panel, calling him out by first name and insisting in a tone laced with invective that he should be ashamed of himself.

How, then, have hearsay, exaggeration, and sheer fabrication managed to replace a sturdy, robust account of the event based on actual facts? Two accounts of the panel were published shortly after it took place.

The first was by a professional journalist writing for *UCLA Today*, the campus newspaper of record, on January 22. It characterized the forum as "a well-attended public event," and went on to summarize the main arguments of the papers. It made no mention of jeers, chants, or other untoward behavior (because there were none). It is remarkable that in all the discussion of the panel that has subsequently taken place, there are, as far as we can tell, only two links to this article on the entire internet.

## How the Internet Loves Malicious Fictions

The second article, which has proliferated widely through the enchantment of the internet, was written by the education/research director of Stand With Us (one of the most vociferous components of the Israel on Campus Coalition), who sometimes identifies herself as a member of the faculty of UC Irvine (which in fact she is not). Under the headline, "Reviving 1920s Munich Beer Halls at UCLA," she presents an incoherent and rambling account of the talks *(continued on page 90)*

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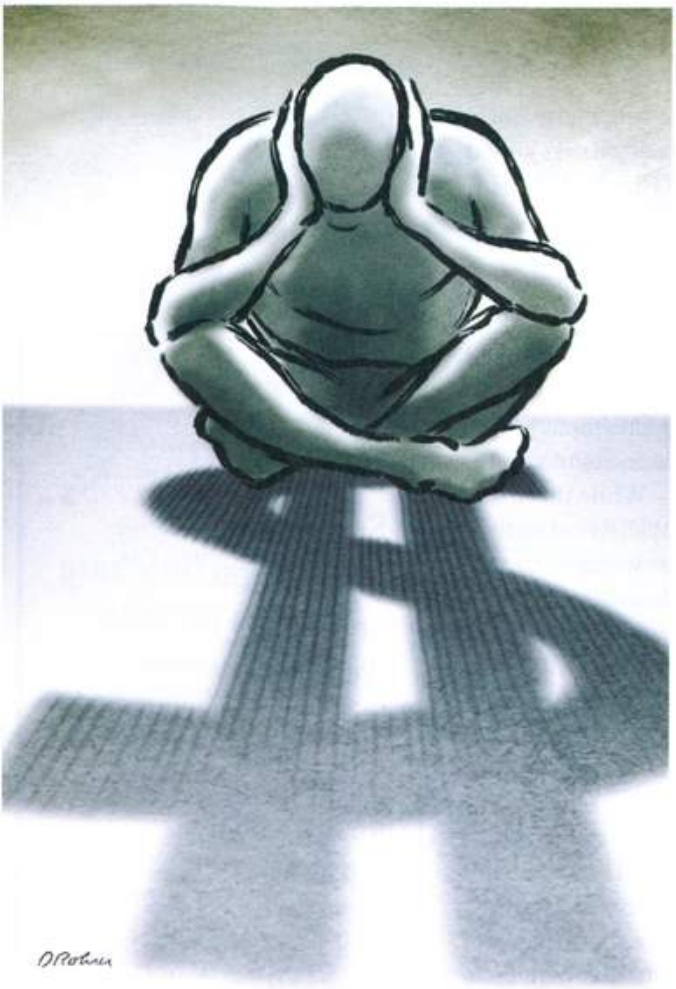
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[**Editor's Note:** The original research of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, the parent nonprofit organization behind *Tikkun* magazine, focused on the destructive impact of self-blame at the workplace and demonstrated that reductions in self-blame produce an increased sense of power, better health, and better ability to use social supports to buffer stress. We are delighted to welcome Ofer Sharone as a columnist for *Tikkun* who will address the ongoing impact of self-blame and the ways that our work and our economy can be organized to reduce self-blame and empower workers.]

# Self-Blame and Self-Help

## by Ofer Sharone



NEWSART/DEAN ROHRER

"I FEEL LIKE I HAVE A CHARACTER DEFECT, LIKE I AM FLAWED IN SOME way." This is how Marsha, a forty-two-year-old technical writer, explains her difficulties in finding a new job after three months of unsuccessful job searching. Despite the fact that Marsha was one of hundreds of employees laid off by a large high tech company, and that 14 million other Americans are currently unemployed, Marsha blames *herself* for her difficulties in finding work. Marsha is not unique. In-depth interviews that I conducted with white-collar American job seekers, as well as numerous other studies, reveal that intense self-blame is pervasive among American job seekers.

Can this self-blame be understood as a universal human response to the experience of unemployment? No. Cross-national research shows that self-blame is far more common and intense among American workers than among workers in other advanced economies. For example, my research shows that Israeli white-collar workers typically blame the state or "the system" for their difficulties, and only rarely themselves. To explain self-blame among unemployed Americans requires examining the effects of the dominant institution that structures the subjective and practical experience of job searching in the United States: the self-help industry.

Losing one's job is a disorienting experience, and in most cases the newly unemployed look for sources of advice and support to help them make sense of their situation. In the American context, the decline of job security in recent decades has been matched by the rise of a self-help industry that consists of best-selling books, workshops, and private coaches, all of which tempt unemployed job seekers with seductive promises: you can be in control of your economic destiny, and you can get your "dream job," if only you consume self-help products and services. Self-help typically engages job seekers in exercises designed to assist them in finding, packaging, and presenting their occupational passions. Although self-help strategies come in many flavors, the dominant underlying premise is that if you can exhibit passion, everyone will want to hire you. The self-help industry's enormous success in marketing its products is rooted in its promise to fulfill job seekers' intense longings for *control* and *meaning* in their work lives. Not only is there no tension between pursuing one's passions and achieving financial security, self-help claims that one depends on the other. Anxious job seekers are reassured that upon discovering and learning to present their "true" passions, employers' doors will be flung open.

The promise of control and meaning often gives job seekers a temporary motivational

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*Unemployed and not getting anywhere? If you blame yourself, you may have been reading too much self-help advice.*

boost, and undoubtedly in some cases, exuding passion can help in getting a job. Yet, the majority of unemployed American job seekers, passionate or not, do not quickly find their "dream" job, or even one as good as their last one. For this majority of job seekers, the self-help discourse of control ultimately leaves no one to blame for their unemployment but themselves. The control message obscures the structural impediments that job seekers face, such as the fact that there are currently *five times* as many job seekers as there are job openings. When job seekers encounter these very real obstacles, self-help's message of control backfires. Its focus on presentation of the passionate self as the central determinant in finding a job often leads those who experience difficulties to perceive their self to be "defective" or "flawed."

Self-blame, in turn, frequently leads job seekers to cease or greatly reduce their search. As self-blame sets in, each further unsuccessful attempt to find work intensifies the sense of a flawed self. Marsha had initially reported feeling "inspired" by the self-help message that, as she put it, "you can create you own reality," but when the reality she attempted to create did not materialize, Marsha joined the ranks of the discouraged workers, the over half a million Americans who want jobs but have given up and ceased searching.

Beyond subjective pain and job search discouragement, the most significant effect of self-blame is that it inhibits our collective capacities to imagine and seek transformative possibilities. The self-help description of reality fills our imaginations with highly individualized images, and obscures the larger context. It misses the fact that even if every American job seeker mastered the art of self-presentation, there would still be a wide disparity between the number of job seekers and the jobs available, as well as extreme scarcity of jobs that offer meaning and security. A real solution must be collective in nature. This will be the subject of future columns. Until the underlying labor market conditions are transformed, the well-being of job seekers such as Marsha requires a more comprehensive support structure than self-help. It requires support that clarifies both what job seekers can do to help themselves—including improved presentation-of-self—*and* elucidates the larger structural situation in which job seekers find themselves. This kind of support would combat debilitating self-blame, and perhaps galvanize transformative collective action. ■

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# Autumn Wonders

## by Jonathan Klate

The downsides of aging are painfully obvious. Physical capacity inexorably diminishes. Bellies soften. Lower limbs gradually crumble. Some things dry out while others clog up. Details once easily remembered slip from an ever more porous mind.

And that's the easy stuff. Truly catastrophic time bombs tick ominously. We wait with trepidation for awful news, and shudder in sympathy as friends our age contend with the predicaments in which we timorously expect to find ourselves some dark day.

Is there any upside to the aging process? Can it be that the human life cycle might be structured so as to encourage the unfolding of surprising and welcome qualities as we mature into advanced years?

I have, to my own astonishment, been discovering something marvelous spontaneously emerging here that I scarcely expected, and toward which no elder gestured when I was young.

One sweet autumn afternoon I was jogging beneath the overarching limbs of beeches and poplars along a secluded country lane in a sleepy hill town in western Massachusetts. Shafts of sunlight filtered through the mosaic canopy overhead, dappling the honey-colored dirt of the road with a playful shadow dance. A breeze now and then would lift some branches, exposing the glistening multi-colored undersides of myriad shuffling leaves. I felt like I was floating beneath a luminous whirlpool and found myself gasping in awe at the sudden chaotic sparkling panoply of yellow, orange, red, and green.

I happened to be listening on my iPod to a masterful performance of Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor performed by Itzhak Perlman and the Philadelphia Orchestra. As the *Allegro Molto Appassionato* crescendoed, it felt as if a knot that I had not known was tied inside my heart loosened and then fell apart. I nearly wept, or maybe did a little, not in sorrow but in transcendent joy. As tears welled, a smile softened the creases of my face, and a wave of climactic laughter heaved my chest.

I slowed to a walk and watched, listened, and sighed my way through a cascading outflow of feelings far too sublime to adequately craft into words. Life seemed all at once so utterly beautiful, so achingly sad, so abundant with possibility. I felt a deep recognition that I am, and that each of us is, part of this mad, infinite, splendorous dance, all arising and passing away. Like the music, like the leaves, like these thoughts, like our lives—not ours at all, but features of the inconceivably immense cosmic drama. Such a rush of epiphanies encouraged by sunlight, autumn leaves, a gentle breeze, and a radiant concerto!

I recall when I was a child driving in the country with my family in October. Now and then my mother would smile with delight as she pointed out the window to a particularly brilliant oak or maple by the roadside. I would think, "A tree. Looks kinda pretty. What's the big deal?"

And I have listened to this same piece of music dozens of times, enjoyed it, and thought I'd listened well. But now, sometimes, I hear with ears, heart, mind, and spirit open to the surging possibilities of enchantment that I feel the composer, in his genius, must have intended for us to know. But in my younger years, I was not quite able to absorb all its layered magic.

As the mind opens to the fullness of beauty, the heart opens to the hearts of others. The awareness ripens that our life does not sustain itself in isolation, but has its minute special radiance in the incredible interdependent wholeness of the light-filled cosmos. The sufferings, joys, struggles, and triumphs of others become our intimate concern, as the universe and our own little souls interpenetrate. And so, if we encourage it, compassion increasingly animates our days. By self-transcendence we lose something of ourselves and grow, paradoxically, spiritually richer.

Perhaps some rare fortunate ones among us may live their whole lives awakened to this grace of being. These I guess would be our high artists, our healers, our saints if there be such. For the rest of us, this aesthetic sensitivity and this compassionate consciousness can be cultivated, and with practice, although they may take years to ripen, blossom as the surprising gifts of maturity. As this happens we grow into a fuller actualization of our birthright as human beings, with vitalized sentience and empathy.

So while I wistfully watch the hard-bodied younger folks gambol around the park, I do not envy them their everything. I stroll more slowly along the path, but I see more deeply into life, hear more, and feel more, than at their age I could possibly have imagined. They would not guess it, but I know some secrets now that life will whisper to them in time, if they learn to pay attention well, as the leaves of their lives turn. And I am forever grateful for the gift of autumn, well earned. ■

*Dr. Jonathan Klate resides in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he practices traditional acupuncture and Chinese medicine and writes frequently about spiritual consciousness, progressive political ideology, and the relationship between these two.*

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# A Letter to Young Students from an Old Professor

by Tony Campolo

DEAR STUDENTS OF THE 2010 SCHOOL YEAR,

As this school year begins, you will find your campus filled with students craving spiritual experiences, but it is likely that all they will be offered is religion. You know that there is a difference between the two!

There will be plenty of displays of religion on your campus, no matter where you turn. It will be hard for you to escape them. You will see football players in the middle of the gridiron huddling to pray to a Jesus who said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in Heaven" (Matthew 6:1).

You will see track stars pointing up to God after trouncing their racing rivals, indicating that God made them victorious, much to the dismay of the losers, who, by implication, were declared not to be in God's favor.

Undoubtedly, you will be accosted by well-meaning religionists who, sometimes with genuine sincerity, will smile at you with beatific radiance as they invite you to share in this or that special gathering wherein their paths to ultimate fulfillment will be explained.

On almost all the billboards there will be posted notices of ministries ranging from Hillel to the Newman Club, along with announcements for every imaginable guru promoting various Eastern nirvanas.

Some of your fellow students will find help and hope in such religious activities. But for many, these types of religiosity only remind them of what is absent in their lives while leaving them all the more thirsty for those fruits of ecstatic spirituality that the Apostle Paul listed as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Given these realities, it is not surprising that Rabbi Jesus offered a proposal that deserves serious consideration. He told his disciples:

> And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:5–6).

The seventeenth-century intellectual and spiritual giant Blaise Pascal took the advice of Jesus and did just that. On Monday, November 23, 1654, he sat alone in a darkened room and waited in silence to be invaded by a sacred presence. After sitting for hours, Pascal yielded to what the theologian Paul Tillich called "the Ground of all Being" and entered what the Celtic Christians called "the thin place"—that holy place wherein the walls between the self and the Sacred become so penetrable that that which transcends religious forms can break through and envelop those who "wait patiently for God" (Psalm 40:1). In that moment he wrote, "From about half-past ten at night to about an hour after midnight ... the world forgotten, everything except God ... Joy, Joy, Joy, tears of Joy."

Martin Buber found a special spiritual ecstasy within the communal experiences of Hasidic Judaism. He then was able to translate the experiences derived from this Hasidic fellowship into his poetic masterpiece, *I-Thou*. According to Buber, there is an attitudinal disposition that any of us can assume in which ecstatic spiritual aliveness can be experienced through personal encounters. There are moments, he contended, wherein one person can miraculously become connected with another person in a way that enables the one to "*know*" the other even though little, if anything, is known *about* the other. There are, in such encounters, declared Buber, disclosures of the sacred. When the *I-Thou* happens, there is, simultaneously, a discovery not only of the sacredness of the other, but also of one's own sacred self. It is this transition from the mundane to the sacred that is recorded in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

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*Rev. Tony 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. *He is a regular columnist for* Tikkun.



*What would Jesus do on campus? He specifically told his followers not to make a public display out of prayer—like this one?*

FLICKR/CC/SDDIRK

It would be good for you to read *I-Thou* so that you can learn of such encounters, and then practice them; otherwise, your academic life might only be cluttered with the accumulation of innumerable facts devoid of wisdom.

Still another way to experience spiritual aliveness is through gracious ministry to someone in need. But for this service to be truly spiritual, it is best done in secret. Ideally, not even the recipient should know that you have rendered the blessing. Jesus taught:

> So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:2–4).

It does not diminish the spiritual gift you receive through such ministry if you are inadvertently discovered, but such discovery should never be sought. Consider the truth in this story commonly circulated among the Jews of another generation:

> In a certain Russian synagogue, there was a rabbi who was such a holy man that those who studied Torah with him would say in jest that after services on Shabbat he ascended into heaven to commune with God. Some children overheard what was said about him and believed it to be literally true.
>
> The following Shabbat, the children followed the rabbi to see if what they had heard was really true. What they witnessed was their rabbi going to the homes of old and infirm non-Jewish widows, cleaning their homes and cooking meals for them to eat.
>
> When the elders of the synagogue heard that the children had taken what they had said literally, they laughingly asked the children, "Well? When you followed our rabbi, did he actually ascend into heaven?"
>
> "Oh, no!" answered the children, "He went much higher!"
>
> Then none of the elders laughed.

If religion's rituals are vehicles that put you in touch with transcendent realities, then it is a good thing. But religious practice can become a hindrance to spirituality when it becomes an end in itself, a set of practices meant to impress others with the claim that you are spiritual.

More than sixty years ago, I learned a gospel hymn that connected mystical communion with God with reaching out through people like you and me to change the world that is *(continued on page 94)*

# Transformation of Consciousness as Messianic Age:

## A Nondual, Non-Triumphalist View

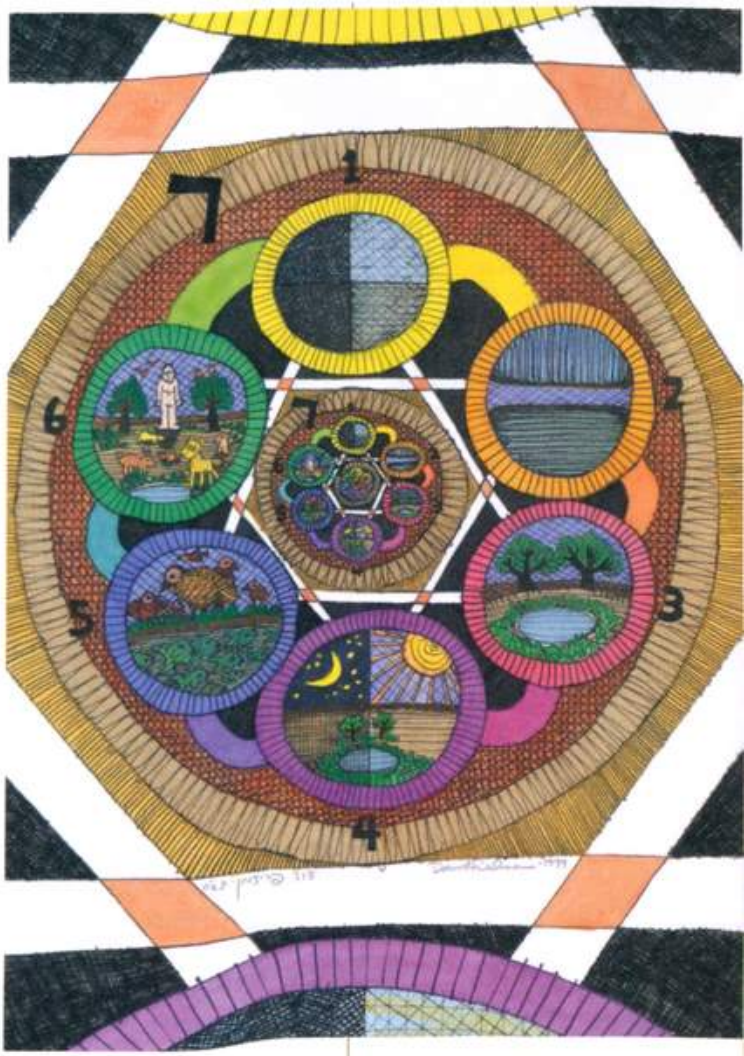
by Jay Michaelson

MILLENNIALISM AND MESSIANISM HAVE LONG BEEN anathema to progressive religion. In their most raw forms, they are triumphalism undisguised: the good (i.e., us) are taken to heaven, the bad committed to the flames. And, unlike those aspects of traditional religion that seem to cry out for a renewal or restoration, messianism's bathwater seems not to hold a baby worth saving. A utopian ideal, sure; perhaps something for which to strive. But as an actual, future-historical event, the Messianic Age offers little to the contemporary spiritual progressive.

And yet, we ignore the messianic impulse at our peril. Defying common sense, apocalyptic millennialism recurs, again and again—most recently, in the American spiritual scene, connected with the year 2012 (thought by some to be a turning point in the Mayan calendar), but also in connection with Y2K (remember that end of the world?), American evangelicals' support of Israel, some New Christian Right interpretations of the War in Iraq, and so on. The notion of an end-time seems to be as deeply rooted in the human psyche as other religious concepts, and seems to be alive and kicking today. Thus, to ignore such a deep-rooted impulse seems to miss something essential to how billions of people understand themselves and their religions.

So, what options are there for spiritual progressives dismayed by triumphalism and supernaturalism, but cognizant of the seeming centrality of the Messianic impulse? In this essay, I want to share one such alternative: a longstanding Jewish "spiritual view" of global transformation—that the "Messianic Age" is about a change in consciousness, not in politics or religious structures—and explore how we might see it underway today.

To begin, let us recall that Judaism is both a historical and an ahistorical religion. Ahistorically, Jewish time is cyclical: the Sabbath comes every seven days, and our agriculturally timed cycle of holidays renews itself each year. This Judaism shares with other earth-based religions. Historically, though, Jewish time is linear. We Jews tell stories of an ancient creation and hold hopes for a future redemption. We involve ourselves in history—in collective enterprises such as Zionism and individual ones such as righteous action on behalf of the less fortunate.




"The 7 Days of Creation" *by David Friedman. The artist says this painting "shows the fractal nature of time that leads to eternity (the eternal shabbat that includes all moments of time)."*

DAVID FRIEDMAN

*Jay Michaelson is the author of* Everything is God: The Radical Path of Nondual Judaism, *from which this article was adapted, and other books. He is also a columnist for the* Forward, *the* Huffington Post, Zeek, *and* Reality Sandwich, *and director of Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture & Spirituality. This is the first of a series of columns for* Tikkun.




*"Imagine this Messianic age: a world in which everyone understands that all of us are God," Jay Michaelson writes. Above:* "Meditating on the Holy Name" *by David Friedman. "This woman is aware that she was created in the image of God's Name," the artist writes, "and is thus a reflection of the Shechinah, the Divine Presence."*

DAVID FRIEDMAN

In this linear mode, one of Judaism's central historical tenets is the belief in a Messiah, a redeemer who in some future time will change, or even end, history. Jewish beliefs about the Messiah have themselves evolved over time. Initially, the Messiah was seen as a military/political leader who would bring independence back to Judea. Over the centuries though, the Messiah came to be seen as a cosmic redeemer who would change the entire nature of reality—even, as in Christianity, a semi-divine figure who would atone for the sins of Israel. Because Jewish law is largely silent on matters of belief, all of these views have held sway at one time or another. Today, many Hasidim believe that the last Lubavitcher Rebbe will somehow return from "apparent" death to unite all the world. Many nationalists believe that an "inevitable" war in the Middle East will bring the Messiah. A handful of ultra-nationalists have even plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock to jump-start the process. Fortunately, these remain a miniscule fringe.

In contrast to such traumatic and supernatural accounts of messianism, however, there is a longstanding Jewish tradition to regard the messianic age as one of evolving consciousness rather than revolutionary history. This view has two major forms.

The first is what Gershom Scholem called the "neutralization" of Jewish messianism, which took place in the Hasidic movement in the late eighteenth century. Contrary to Hasidism today, Hasidism then was a radical, spiritual renaissance. It arose in the wake of a great historical trauma: the Sabbatean heresy, during which one-third of European Jews believed the Messiah had arrived and now walked the earth. After that Messiah converted (under duress) to Islam, the movement underwent a crisis. Many still believed; some followed their Messiah and converted outwardly to Islam, while remaining secretly Jewish. Many were disillusioned. But for most, the messianic impulse remained—and remained unfulfilled.

In response, early Hasidism claimed that the messianic "world to come" could be experienced here and now, in moments of spiritual ecstasy. That is to say, "There is no Messiah, and You're It," in the words of the contemporary writer Rabbi Robert Levine. This redefinition of messianism, which has its roots in older Kabbalistic sources, largely de-historicizes the Messianic Age. In its most raw form, messianism becomes more a state of mind than anything else.

But there is also a second, hybrid form, which brings together the historical and the ahistorical elements. This view is expressed in the eighteenth-century Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto ("Ramchal"); the writings of the founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov; and the work of the twentieth-century Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. The Messianic Age, these sources suggest, is a time at which the consciousness that all is God will fill the earth. And it will come not suddenly, but gradually, as more and more people begin to transcend the illusions of the separate self and realize the truth of their natures. The contemporary Kabbalist David Friedman writes, "According to Luzzatto, the messianic era (the 'days of Messiah') is the culmination of one huge evolutionary learning process which was conceived with the Universe, born with the emergence of Life, and becomes mature when Humanity easily achieves Divine Inspiration, Ruach Hakodesh" (the complete essay is at www.kosmic-kabbalah.com).

At its apogee, such a change in consciousness becomes an apotheosis, not through transfiguration but through an understanding of the divine state we inhabit already. In this view, the Messianic Age is that which is described in Joel 2:28: "And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." And it is how one may understand the epistle of the Baal Shem Tov, in which the rabbi is told that the Messiah will come "when your teachings become publicized and revealed to the world, and your wellsprings have overflowed to the outside ... so that others, too, will be able to perform mystical unifications and ascents of the soul like you." The messianic transformation is a global, gradual transformation of consciousness.

Notice too that the Baal Shem Tov is told that "the *wellsprings* of your teachings" will be spread out around the world. Naturally, the eighteenth-century rabbi despaired at this news: how distant it must have seemed to him! Yet today, we may understand it somewhat differently. The "wellsprings" of the Besht's teachings—their source, not their final expression. And that source? The nondualistic principle that *alzt is Gott*, all is God, all is One, separation is illusion.

And this source is indeed found throughout the world.

Imagine this Messianic Age: a world in which everyone understands that all of us are God. Not one in which each person thinks he or she is God alone—that would be disaster. But one in which the nonduality of Being is understood, in some form or fashion, by all human beings. This would be an entirely different world from the one we now inhabit, free of the conflicts and crises, petty and grotesque, which fill our moment. And imagine what it would be like, right now, to believe that, as Ramana Maharshi has said, "civilization ... will finally resolve itself—as all others—in the Realization of the Self" (*Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, 256).

Such a time is, of course, far off. But this conception of the evolution of consciousness as messianic unfolding casts new light on the development of religious consciousness from its most primitive to its most refined stages. Religious consciousness evolves (cf. Karen Armstrong's *The History of God*), as Spirit comes to know itself in history (Hegel). Humanity moves through different stages of individual and communal religious consciousness, each of us at our own rates, according to myriad circumstances. But we move toward one non-supernatural Omega point (Teilhard de Chardin): the knowledge—the intimate knowledge—that all is One.

Now, in our postmodern information age, the noösphere (Teilhard again) is indeed upon us. Already, thanks to global information technology, the hidden mystical teachings of the world's religious traditions are accessible to everyone, as are scientific, cultural, philosophical, and artistic works from the better part of humanity. But even this is just the beginning. The internet, nanotechnology, and wearable computers are but the initial stages of a noetic revolution in which nonmaterial information may displace material matter as the ultimate future of the body. Most probably, we are only a few decades away from being able to upload our minds onto renewable data media. Is this the "immortality of the soul" of which some religions once spoke? What is the meaning of humanity if we are able to transcend the limits of matter? And more proximately, what is the significance of this new knowledge, accessible all over the world—including, for our purposes, the highest truth (singular!) of so many spiritual traditions, that there is really no one either reading or writing these words?

The Messianic Age is already unfolding, in this interpretation, and the gradual emergence and dissemination of nonduality is among its signal phenomena. The wellsprings of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings have indeed spread out throughout the world; they are already flowing on every continent and in every city with unrestricted access to the internet.

Fundamentalists are terrified that religious meaning evolves over time. But from a nontriumphalist, nondual messianic perspective, that is exactly what it should be doing. Indeed, the evolution in spiritual/religious consciousness may be part of a larger process. One description of that process, found in the work of Ken Wilber, maintains that the general progression from stages of conventional consciousness to successive realms of unconventional consciousness (gross/nature mysticism to subtle/deity mysticism to causal/formless mysticism to nondual/both emptiness and form) mirrors the progressions of cultural systems, social structures, even the physical structures that compose the material corollaries to "spiritual experiences," and the orders of complexity of the material world. For Wilber, this progression can be represented as mineral>vegetable>animal>impersonal>personal>spiritual; for the Hasidim, it is *domem>tzomeach>chai>medaber* (inanimate>vegetable>animal>speech).

This evolutionary understanding can also help spiritual progressives relate to problematic texts and traditions from the past. There is no experience apart from interpretation, not merely because mystics must interpret their experiences according to the language and culture they know, but because those linguistic and cultural structures condition the nature of the experience itself. Perhaps "I" will "have" a "vision" of "angels," but all of the quoted terms are cultural constructions. The structural/historical conditioning of experience is unavoidable, so much so that it makes little sense to speak of "experience" or "God" or "mysticism" apart from the stages in which such experience is interpreted. Put simply, God looks



DAVID FRIEDMAN

"Tree of Life" *by David Friedman. Friedman outlines the complex symbolism in his paintings at www.kosmic-kabbalah.com.*

different depending on where, and when, you stand.

For example, from what Wilber (following the integral approach developed by the philosopher Jean Gebser) calls the magical stage, God looks like the provider who answers all of your (egocentric) needs. From the mythic stage, God—as understood in your faith tradition exclusively—is the sole source of salvation, and everyone who doesn't believe in Him is doomed. From the mental-rational stage, God is a moral principle and the Bible a useful, though flawed, teacher of ethical truths; other teachers may also be valuable. From the pluralistic stage, God is love, expressed in a thousand ways by a thousand religions, all deserving of respect. And from the integral stages, God is variously Nothing, and all of the above.



"The Big Bang"
*by David Friedman.*

Experiences of all types are available to all kinds of people. But the same experience will be immediately contextualized and interpreted according not only to one's religious/spiritual/scientific tradition but also one's "stage" of religious development. Perhaps an experience of light is a spirit, or an angel, or the Agent Intellect, or an opening to the Infinite—all interpretations of luminous internal light found within Jewish mystical sources. Or perhaps it is merely an experience, which opens the soul but which, in and of itself, brings one no closer to God than waiting in line at the post office. The point is not that there is a True God perceived in these partial ways; rather, these partial ways define what is meant by "God."

In the beginning, our ancestors were animists and polytheists. They believed in "power gods," nature spirits, warrior deities, and fertility goddesses. Eventually, some came to venerate one sky god above all others, insisting that all the Divine energies in the world were from a single source alone. Later, philosophical thinking refined these notions of this single source, away from an anthropomorphic deity and toward an impersonal Oneness. Mystics experienced the One in love, and in so doing resacralized the whole world as the veiling and unveiling of the Beloved. Everything became seen as the costume of God. When we gaze into the mirror of the Infinite, we cannot help but project the contents of our minds onto It. And all of these projections are partial truths.

Finally, if a transformation in spiritual consciousness is to take place, it must by definition be an inclusive, integral, and non-triumphalistic one. In contrast to adolescent images of God (or gods), nondual messianism does not exclude other traditions. Nor, I maintain, need it depict "earlier" stage religious experiences as variously imperfect approximations of this one true one (as Wilber himself often appears to do). Yes, early stages are partial, but so are all but the ultimate ones. Thus, unlike, for example, rationalistic religious Reform movements, the view of messianism as the gradual, global evolution of consciousness toward nonduality entails no patronizing allegorization of myth and narrative, no reductive confusion of the prerational with the transrational. It entails neither the offensively naive privileging of mythic-stage gender roles, nor the erasure of mythic power in the attempt at egalitarianism.

Utopian ideal? Exactly—and that is exactly the function of the messianic urge, here reconfigured away from nationalism, triumphalism, and supernaturalism, and toward the dawning of enlightenment. Will everyone be Christian or Gnostic or Jewish in the Messianic Age? Will a magical chariot descend from the sky? Of course not. Rather, the nondual wellsprings of the world's mystical teachings will water a thousand plants in Eden. A biodiversity of spirit will flourish that, as in ecology, nourishes the whole by supporting difference. Consciousness will shift until such a point at which even the lion may lie down with the lamb.

We don't have to wait until 2012, or any other magical time, to begin doing this work. Imagine the great *shabbat*, the great resting and relinquishment, that could unfold if we believed that all concepts are masks. Our certainties and pronouncements would be interrupted by little notes of uncertainty, of unknowing, of remembering that the mystery lies beyond our grasp and that even sacred totems are only best efforts. We return, perhaps unexpectedly, to a state of wonder—both at the One and at the Many. As Jews have said for millennia: speedily, in our days ... ■

DAVID FRIEDMAN

# Homelessness, the Blue Angels, and the Nightly News

## Remembering a 1997 Rally at the Presidio on the Day After Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement)

by Abby Caplin

*Dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Alan Lew, z"l*

"*LET JUSTICE ROLL ...*"

on a beautiful blue Sunday in San Francisco, October 1997. I stand with 200 others on a steamy weed-strewn parking lot at a former army base called the Presidio. It is the morning after Yom Kippur, a time to build the *sukkah* in many Jewish homes: a flimsy outdoor "booth" covered with palm fronds, a reminder of impermanence and the Jews' wandering through the desert thousands of years ago. Jews later camped in them outside the Temple in Jerusalem, offering the first fruits of their harvest to God.

*"roll like a mighty river ..."*

to carry our desire to transform vacant army housing to help homeless people, many of whom are veterans of past wars. Activist and veteran Ron Kovic rolls forward in his wheelchair. I am familiar with his story thanks to his memoir and the movie that followed, *Born on the Fourth of July*, which I saw in a theater blocks from where we are now standing. I feel shy in his presence. He is a celebrity. I try to keep my glances unobtrusive.

Overhead, the "Blue Angels" fly. This is their day as well, their noisy arrogance a slap-in-the-face backdrop to the peaceful gathering. They fly close enough that we cover our ears. I notice how Ron winces painfully with each overpass of the jets, just like in the movie. But this is real, and Ron is not Tom Cruise on the big screen.

*"washing away all obstacles ..."*

as a priest stands and asks if anyone has ever flown such a plane. He has, he tells us. Did we know that it costs $10,000 a minute to put on this airshow? How many thousands of homeless individuals could be helped with that amount? Money is allocated to military gallantry, while army barracks lie vacant and veterans sleep on San Francisco streets.

Rabbi Alan Lew brings out his *shofar*, a ram's horn blown during the Jewish High Holy Days. Exhausted from the previous day's fasting and prayers, he gathers his strength and blows the shofar before a hand-held microphone, blasting its ancient sound toward the heavens. The resonant wail, deep and raspy, tugs at the heart and awakens the soul. It calls us to action and momentarily washes away the shriek of the jets.

The timbre of a Buddhist bell, the sprinkling of healing waters, an Islamic prayer, a Native American song, and we proceed up the hill to a grassy knoll where a small plaque lies dedicated to the memory of Vietnam's veterans.

Ron Kovic is handed the microphone, and in a trembling voice, he asks that we bow our heads in memory of those who fought in a war that shouldn't have happened. He reminds us of the many veterans, now discarded, who live on the streets and need housing. We must properly care for our veterans, he urges us. Then he wheels past me, and I reach out to thank him.

He takes my hand, grasping it tightly. "Thank YOU!" he says, his eyes filled with gratitude. I am stunned that I seem to matter.

"*... to the peaceful, life-giving society we seek to create.*"

We pass by a line of police officers and slowly move downhill to the administration building, singing Holly Near's "We are a gentle angry people, and we are singing, singing for our lives!" In the brick-lined courtyard, we form a large circle, shielding the center from police visibility.

Someone tosses a boxed tent onto the grass, with its clear directive: "assembly required." Many pitch in, calling out numbers, aligning the poles. Finally the tent is completed and a community sukkah has been erected, that ancient symbol for those forced to wander in makeshift shelters.

Two hours have passed, and I am exhausted. I walk past the police line to my car in the vast, deserted lot. I learn later that several people have been arrested for sitting in this sukkah, but no mention of it is made on the evening news. I hear reports only of the "Blue Angels," a fire in the Mission district, and a poll conducted by the local newspaper listing the top ten names for dogs. ■

Please note: the italicized quotations in this piece came from a flyer produced by Religious Witness with Homeless People in San Francisco.

*Abby Caplin, MD, practices mind-body medicine in San Francisco, where she helps people living with chronic illness lead empowered and vibrant lives.*

# New Monasticism and the Resurrection of American Christianity

## by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

ALMOST EVERYWHERE I GO THESE DAYS, PEOPLE AGREE THAT SOMETHING IS wrong in American Christianity. Whether I'm talking to Pentecostals or Presbyterians, Democrats or Republicans, Muslim friends or secular neighbors, there seems to be a consensus on this: the church in America isn't living up to what it claims to be. Somehow we've lost our way.

Some Christians get defensive when others point out the irony of Crusades fought in the name of the Prince of Peace or anti-gay preachers getting caught for soliciting gay sex. We're a little embarrassed by reports that suggest battered women are at greater risk if they talk to their pastors or that people are more likely to be racist if they are members of a church. But I think we may have reached a point of clarity here at the dawn of a new millennium.

Much of my generation has grown up with this sense that we are living in a post-Christian era. But I'll have to confess that I didn't. I was raised the son of Southern Baptists in King, North Carolina, one of those last bastions of Christendom between the ever-expanding holes in America's Bible Belt. Born in 1980, I was born again while Reagan was still in the White House. Where I grew up, we talked about Jesus like he lived just over the next hill. My people taught me to love God and memorize scripture, and I did as I was told. By the time I was in high school, I was certain the Lord had called me to lead the nation in Jesus's name by becoming president of the United States. While still a student in high school, I made my way to D.C. to work as a page for Strom Thurmond, then president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate.

That's where I learned firsthand that it's hard to be Christian in America. Just outside the doors of Union Station, as I was walking to get lunch one day I saw a man crouched down, holding a Styrofoam cup. He asked if I could spare some change, and I looked at him without saying a word. I remembered what I'd heard back in King about how poor folks in the city were lazy and begged money to buy drugs and booze. A country boy in the city, I was dressed in my Sunday best, doing everything I knew to fit in. I didn't want to look naïve. So I looked straight through the man and kept walking.

But about the time I stepped through those glass doors into Union Station, I recalled one of my memory verses from Vacation Bible School. They were the words of Jesus, ringing in my head: "Verily I say unto you, just as ye did not do it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did not do it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). I knew that if those words were true I had not only just ignored a fellow a human being; I had also completely missed the Lord I was trying to serve. In my rush to follow Jesus to the White House, I'd almost tripped over him outside Union Station. Following Jesus wasn't as simple as chasing after my dreams.

Though the signs of the time suggest that it's hard to be a Christian in America, there are also signs that God is doing something new in places that have been overlooked and abandoned by our society. Stumbling to follow Jesus myself, I found my way into some of these communities and learned to read the Bible anew with them. The story of the people of God came alive in that context, and I began to see how God has moved through the centuries to

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remind the church of her true identity through monastic movements. Monasticism, I learned, isn't about achieving some sort of individual or communal piety. It's about helping the church be the church.

In the midst of the madness that overwhelmed Nazi Germany, the Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in a letter to his brother, "The restoration of the church will surely come from a sort of new monasticism which has in common with the old only the uncompromising attitude of a life lived according to the Sermon on the Mount in the following of Christ." It was the prayer of a desperate man, but it was also a prayer to which a community called the Bruderhof was already becoming the answer. Led by Eberhard Arnold, this group had fled Berlin in 1920 saying: "We need brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to live Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. We need to show that a life of justice and forgiveness and unity is possible today." In their first year together, they hosted 5,000 guests.

From Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement to Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Farm, from the grassroots Christian Community Development Association to Jesus People USA in Chicago, this underground new monastic movement has continued up to the present in this place called America. It has, by and large, been overlooked by journalists and historians. Yet it has produced Habitat for Humanity and national affordable housing legislation; the movement has formed many of Christianity's most creative and hopeful leaders. And now, as almost everyone acknowledges that it's hard to be a Christian in America, new monasticism is spreading like kudzu, springing up as little signs of resurrection during Christendom's twilight.



*"New monasticism is spreading like kudzu, springing up as little signs of resurrection during Christendom's twilight," writes the author, who co-founded Rutba House, a new monastic community in Durham, North Carolina. Above, Leah Wilson-Hartgove (in red) and Sarah Jobe greet neighbor Jeremiah Green at one of two Rutba Community Houses.*

Once a month I travel to neighborhoods all across the country where young people are choosing not to be cynical about the challenge of finding an authentic life of faith, but rather are giving themselves fully to a whole-life faith in community with other people. It's beautiful to see murals painted over gang tags and gardens planted in abandoned lots. I delight to hear stories of crack houses reclaimed, neighborhoods redeemed, children embraced, and ex-offenders restored to their communities.

I hold the stories of those few days with me the rest of the month as I live my life at Rutba House, a new monastic community in Durham, North Carolina. We have our signs of resurrection, too—and I love to tell those stories—but at home I am also aware of how hard it is to love one person, to be faithful in one place over a lifetime. The revolution of love that we've been invited into doesn't feel very exciting when an alcoholic friend stops by at 6 AM to say once again that he doesn't need anybody's help, but could he get a ride downtown?

But we live this life by faith, trusting that a seed can grow up into new life only if it falls into the ground and dies. The prophets and monastics who have called us back to our roots generation after generation remind us that the roots of God's kingdom spread beneath the surface, effecting change from below. It is a quiet revolution—one that is often ignored by the newspapers and missed by the historians. But it is, in the end, how God plans to save the world. Like those rhizomes, God's kingdom just won't go away. It is, as the book of Daniel says, "a mountain that grows to fill the whole earth" (2:35).

In Robert Coles's biography of Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, the author writes about how Day understood working from the bottom to be "Christ's technique." "She was always taking Jesus as seriously as possible," Coles observes. "She was always trying to remember that He was an obscure carpenter who in His early thirties, did not go talk with emperors and kings and important officials, but with equally obscure people, and thereby persuaded a few fishermen, a few farm people, a few ailing and hard-pressed men and women, that there was reason for them to have great hope."

There is, indeed, reason to have great hope. Even as the signs of the time say it's hard to be a Christian—or a person of any faith, for that matter—new life is springing up all around. May we have eyes to see it and grace to live into it where we are. ■

SCOTT LANGLEY

# Hungry for Change:
## Interfaith Service in Action

by Eboo Patel and Samantha Kirby



*Student volunteers load food donations to bring to the food pantry after the Interfaith Fast-a-thon.*

COURTESY OF RACHEL BERKOWITZ

Rachel Berkowitz is a Jewish student at Wesleyan University and an alumna of Interfaith Youth Core's College Fellows Alliance. She is friends with a Muslim student, Nadeem Modan, an alumnus of the same program.

Jews and Muslims form friendships on college campuses across America all the time. But what makes Rachel and Nadeem's friendship an *interfaith friendship* is not just that they come from different faith traditions, but also that they took the time to find common values between them. And what makes them *interfaith leaders* is that they took the time to act on those values together.

The common value they found was service, and the common practice they discovered was fasting. In each of their religious practices, they realized that by forgoing food, they more closely understood those who live in poverty every day and were called to help ease their struggle.

And they realized that the bridge between service and fasting within their respective traditions was also a bridge between their two religions.

When he was an Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) Fellow, Nadeem organized a fast-a-thon on campus during the holy month of Ramadan to promote understanding and service. One year later, when Rachel was an IFYC Fellow, she built off Nadeem's event—and the insight she gained from their friendship—and organized an interfaith fast-a-thon during Ramadan. The event engaged not only a quarter of the campus (800 students), who fasted for a day and donated their meals to a community soup kitchen and food pantry, but also the broader Middleton, Connecticut, community. The local Rotary and Kiwanis clubs skipped lunch at their meetings for one week and donated the money they saved. Several members of local churches and faith communities did the same. Through this initiative, Rachel and the campus' interfaith leaders raised $11,300 for their local pantry.

These students make it clear that this event is about more than being hungry

**For more information, visit www.fastathon.org or www.ifyc.org.**

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together. It is about appreciating the shared value of service illuminated through their common fasting practices and acting on it together. Rachel says, "Fast-a-thons caused me to connect personally with the contribution I'm making, and to reflect on the issue of hunger, not just for the five minutes it takes me to make a donation, but for the entire day." Nadeem agrees, saying: "The fast-a-thon is a perfect demonstration of interfaith in action. I'm not OK that our neighbor is hungry, and neither are you. Let's do something tangible about it together."

Just imagine hundreds of Rachels and Nadeems nationwide, bringing together faith communities and raising money to combat poverty and hunger. What's exciting right now is that this is more than a beautiful image—it is part of President Obama's vision of national service. And while interfaith fast-a-thons have been promoted for several years by the Muslim Students Association, now is the time for this idea—and others like it—to spread.

In June, Obama made a speech from Cairo intended to be a message to Muslim communities. But in fact, he spoke to a much broader audience. His words reached the 930 million Hindus in India, and the 5 million Jews in Israel, and the 38 million Catholics in Spain, and the 500,000 Muslims in his own city of Chicago.

This is what he told them:

> Indeed, faith should bring us together. That is why we are forging service projects in America that bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews.... Around the world, we can turn dialogue into interfaith service, so bridges between peoples lead to action—whether it is combating malaria in Africa, or providing relief after a natural disaster.

I doubt that Obama's call to interfaith service is the first you have heard. As a Muslim, I heard this call from the Holy Qur'an, where it is written, "O mankind! We have created you male and female, and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another."

As an American, I heard this call from Charles Bonney, who at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions declared, "Henceforth the religions of the world will make war, not on each other but on the giant evils that afflict mankind."

This message certainly isn't new to young leaders around the country. A study released in July by the Corporation for National and Community Service found that 441,000 more young adults volunteered in 2008 as compared to 2007. According to this study, "The interest among young people in volunteering coincides with their reported increase in the belief that it is essential or very important to help others in need." These are the kinds of young people—like Nadeem and Rachel—who are interested in not only exploring the motivations for service, but are also committed to acting together across faith lines.

With more young people than ever serving their communities, and public support for interfaith work on the rise, now is the critical time for us all to hear and act upon this most recent call to interfaith service. The momentum is building—from our country, from young people, and from our international community—to bring together diverse faith communities in service.

Let's not miss this chance. ■






*Top: Students line up for the second annual Fast-a-Thon Ramadan Banquet at Wesleyan University. The fast was sponsored by the Interfaith Justice League and the Muslim Student Association. Bottom: Muslim Chaplain Marwa Aly speaks on the importance of fasting.*

OLIVIA BARTLETT DRAKE, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

# The Foundation of Dignity

## by Jonathan Granoff

THE HUMAN BEING HAS THE CAPACITY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WHICH IS MOST WORTHY OF praise: the indivisible unity of being. It is realized through the divine attribute of love. The expression of this capacity is through intrinsic dignity, realized through the nurturing of inner character and the kind of knowledge that emerges from that effort, which is often called wisdom. This uniquely human capacity leads to the clear perception of the inner connectedness and inter-connectedness of all life. It manifests as ethics based on the Golden Rule.

The aspiration to our highest calling—as a unique creature capable of knowing our uniqueness as well as realizing it—should not be ignored. In this modern age, cynicism toward higher ideals is like a cancer. We hear so much about man as a beast and the great value of seeking the "bottom line." An appropriate bottom line is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts our common humanity. Below that is where the law of power tends to overtake the power of law. When individuals allow power to overtake the rule of law, personal tragedy is the result. Human respect is corroded and relationships deteriorate. When societies seek power over respect for humanity through the law, war and tyranny ensue.

When nations pursue the Golden Rule and treat other nations as they wish to be treated, peace and prosperity result. When they pursue the quest for ultimate dominance, chaos always follows. One only need compare the result of post-World War I's punishing process and its results with the success of the post-World War II's Marshall Plan and the creation of the UN system.

I am not positing that the world can become heaven easily. I am proposing that when we follow the Lord's Prayer, which calls us to aspire to do God's will here on earth, much goodness results. It is also true that when too many fail to honor the calling to do good works, enormous suffering results. And what we never know is how our own personal commitments affect the whole. What we can know, however, is how such personal commitment affects us. This knowledge is based on experience rather than on doctrines.

We can never aspire enough to our personal highest potential, which might not have a limit. As it partakes of the divine, it certainly cannot be measured or quantified. But, then again, neither can self, consciousness, soul, or conscience. Only objects can be measured, not that which knows them.

We need not bemoan the fact that in our time pursuing the highest ideals, where dignity shines in sacred beauty, is not treated with appropriate respect. One need only look at the trials and tribulations of Socrates or Jesus to remember that those who honor truth above all else might stimulate the most undignified conduct by many. Yet Jesus reminds us that we can forgive all wrongs and preserve the greatest treasures of the spirit. Socrates knowingly gives up his own life fully aware that the law has been misapplied to his individual case but is nevertheless well worth respecting since it is an institution necessary to guide the conduct of many. He gives up his body because he has found something far more precious, the profound presence of divine love for the benefit of others. His actions manifest the presence of the sacred infinite mystery within the finite world.

Can we all attain these standards? Who knows? Can we strive to emulate them? Why not? Both of these men encouraged all to follow in their ways. Both asserted the presence of capacities for human dignity we all too often forget. I had the privilege of seeing this level of dignity in our time and thus have the responsibility of sharing it with you.

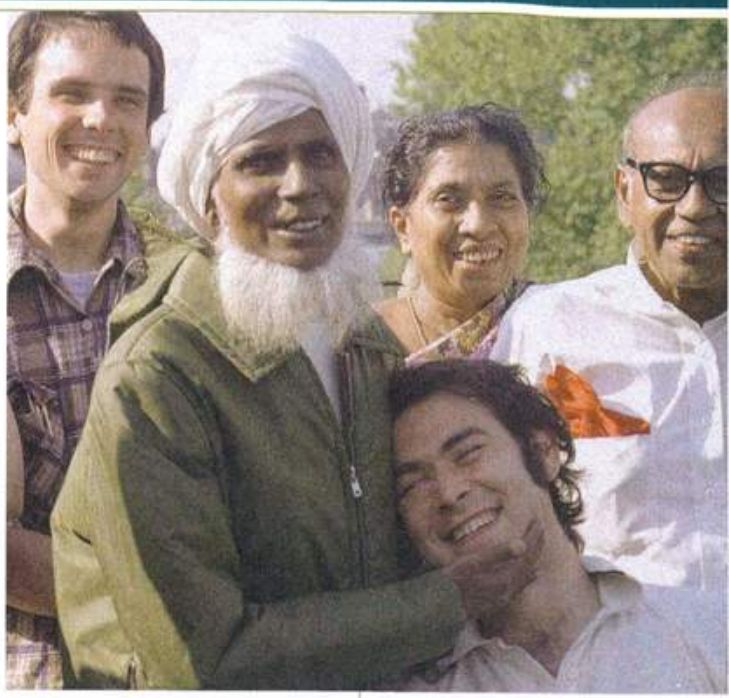
I was in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, in 1974, and it was a very hot day. I was sitting at Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's

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bedside. He was very old, and his ashram was made up of a cement floor, a corrugated steel roof, and a courtyard ten yards from his bed with a variety of animals. There were goats, peacocks, dogs, cats, and a deer that had followed this gentle Sufi out of the jungles when he entered society to teach. I was struck by how the deer was always attentive when Bawa would sing and pray.

Bawa's day consisted mostly of sitting on his bed and giving advice on understanding the wonder and beauty of God. Because he was respected as a living saint, people attributed many things in their lives to him—both good and bad—sometimes, things that should not have been blamed on him.

One day a fellow came in absolutely shaking with rage and hatred. I was sitting right by the bed, and the man pulled out a short machete, the kind that one uses to cut bamboo. He was screaming. I understood that some tragedy had befallen his family and he was blaming Bawa. I was close to him, close enough that I could have sucker punched him. He wouldn't have expected it. He would never have seen me coming. But I thought, no, it's not for me to step in front of this sage. I'm here as a student, and it's not for me to intervene.



*Bawa Muhaiyaddeen holds the author, Jonathan Granoff (Ahamed Muhaiyaddeen) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1973. Behind, left to right, Rick (Asma'el) Hackett, Mrs. Markar, and Dr. Markar.*

You must understand the kind of love that Bawa Muhaiyaddeen generated in me, so this was a profound position that I was in. But I knew, deeply, that I wasn't supposed to do anything. I was to watch and not engage.

Bawa attributed all beauty, goodness, wonder, and the miraculous events that happened in creation only to God. He never centralized any events on himself. He did not use miracles as a way of promoting wisdom. He promoted the supremacy of love and the knowledge of the nature of consciousness as the pathway to human realization.

Now Bawa opened his arms fully wide. He had no shirt on, and he leaned his head backward, exposing himself fully to this flood of violence. He looked with the most melting eyes of gentleness at his assailant and said, "My Brother, will taking my life give your soul the peace it is seeking?"

It was as if the molecules in the room began to scintillate and vibrate with the power of love. That love just filled the space we were in like a tangible presence, and the man with the machete became like a puppet whose strings had been cut. He collapsed on the ground and sat up gazing deeply into the sage's eyes. Bawa then embraced him with such kindness and motherly absorption, and said, "Go home and clean yourself, and come back, my child."

I bear witness to having seen somebody respond to ultimate violence with no concern for his own life but only for the well-being of the attacker. I saw the power of divine love in this world in action.

I learned the value of a true human being.

I am sharing with you a secret he told me: "If you treat other lives as your own life and live within the resonance of God's compassion, wisdom will dawn and you will know yourself. If you know yourself, you will know that God lives in you and you live in God."

A person with such knowledge shines with a light that guides others even without speaking. They do not protect the grace of God for they have surrendered themselves into God and reside knowing that God protects them. Thus, they express the grace of God as part of their own being. Such an expression is a unique human potential and the ultimate ground of human dignity.

For generations people who have attained this level of realization have been admonishing all who would listen to see the human family as one and to respect the mystery and sacredness of life. In this modern age —when our reach is extended through science and technology to the point where we can shred the very fabric of the web of life by following the excessive quest for power through nuclear weapons or through greedily irresponsible business practices that hurt the environment—this admonition has become an imperative.

Persons who have chosen to pursue the secret inner treasure upon which real value is based are capable of presenting a different route. This route is based on nothing new or old. It is based on living to know and honor the Creator of the indivisible unity of being through the attribute of love. A life lived in such a fashion is resplendent with dignity. May we live to know this. ■

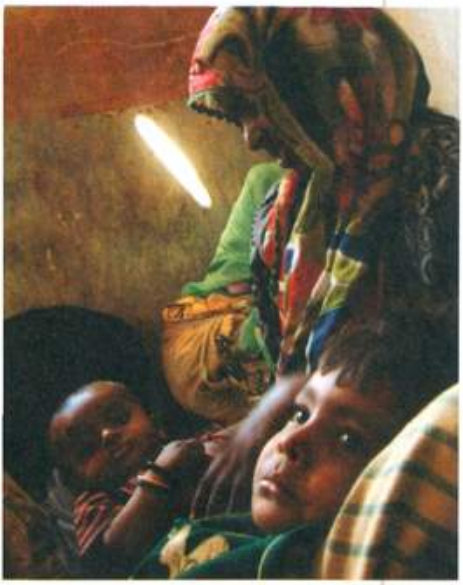
COURTESY OF JONATHAN GRANOFF

# Searching for a Progressive Hindu/ism:

## Battling Mussolini's Hindus, *Hindutva*, and Hubris

by Balmurli Natrajan





*Top: Hamid Roja, a Muslim boy who received burns over 75 percent of his body in Hindu-Muslim riots, recuperates at a civil hospital in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, March 4, 2002. Bottom: Four-year-old Muslim Atul Azad, foreground, shocked by the riots that burned their small hut, is seen in a temporary shelter with his family in Ahmedabad on March 4, 2002.*

TOP: AP PHOTO/MANISH SWARUP. BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/SIDDHARTH DARSHAN KUMAR

AROUND THE TIME ANTI-JEWISH CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANS WERE SEEKING A Christian legitimation for racism and Nazism (as described by Susannah Heschel in *Tikkun*'s March/April 2009 issue), the long process of racializing Hinduism, militarizing Hindus, and Hinduizing India had already matured. On March 19, 1931, Mussolini met with Dr. B.S. Moonje at the Palazzio Venezia, the Fascist headquarters in Italy. Moonje was there to study the applicability of the fascist youth organizations, Balilla and Avanguardisti for Hindus. He was no ordinary visitor, being the mentor of Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, who was the first *sarsanghchalak* (supreme leader) of the Hindu supremacist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, the National Volunteer Corps founded in 1925). Through the 1920s, the RSS had generated a public fascination with fascism in western India. In his diary Moonje wrote: "The idea of fascism vividly brings out the conception of unity amongst people.... India and particularly Hindu India need some such institution for the military regeneration of the Hindus.... Our institution of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh of Nagpur under Dr. Hedgewar is of this kind, though quite independently conceived."

Hedgewar's successor, M.S. Golwalkar (known popularly as "Guruji"), made the RSS vision even more explicit in 1939: "To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan [a term for India that literally means the "place of Hindus"] to learn and profit by." Less than ten years later, Nathuram Godse, a Hindu militant with close connections to the RSS, would assassinate Mahatma Gandhi. Godse also had close ties to the Hindu Mahasbaha (Hindu Convention), an organization that inhabited the same ideological field as the RSS), and was a close confidant of V.D. Savarkar, the future leader of the Hindu Mahasabha and chief theoretical inspiration for the RSS credited with the notion of India as the exclusive land of Hindus.

The blood on the hands of the RSS, however, did not prevent its vision from taking firm root in independent India. By 1948, the RSS had already dealt a severe blow to the idea of a plural secular India espoused by Jawaharlal Nehru and the humanist Hinduism espoused by Gandhi by successfully ensuring that the Jewish Question became the Muslim Question for many Hindus in India. Over the next fifty years, the RSS enjoyed tremendous growth, with an estimated 700,000 to 900,000 men and boys attending its daily military drills in 2004. Simultaneously, it spawned an intricate network of political and cultural organizations collectively known as the *Sangh Parivar* (Collective Family) in India and abroad. The Sangh organizations advanced their major political vision and philosophy, *Hindutva*. The term, coined in 1923 by Savarkar, literally means "Hindu-ness," but in reality combines the prejudice of Hindu supremacy with the policy of fascism by fusing nationalism, racial purity, religious exclusivism, and militarism.

Members of all the minority religions in India, as well as secularists and progressives of all hues, are doubtless deeply troubled by the above history and valiantly oppose the Sangh. But these groups are severely limited in terms of the scale, ideological cohesion, and organizational capabilities needed to systematically oppose the Sangh or Hindutva. Nor can they rely much on the Indian state, whose secularism has suffered long-term attrition due to resolute attacks by the Sangh, and due to the fact that many state functionaries in India are members of the Sangh. Finally, the millions of Hindus who historically struggled against the hierarchies and oppressions of caste within Hinduism have also failed to systematically challenge the fascism of Hindutva. All the above forces' ability to resist Hindutva and the Sangh is severely limited by Hindutva's rapid consolidation over the terrains of "Hinduism" and "Hindu identity"—a consolidation that ironically owes much to official policies of multiculturalism.

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## Misusing Multiculturalism to Marginalize Dissent

Over time—in India, the United States, and the United Kingdom—Hindutva has successfully arrogated Hinduism to itself, making the Sangh appear as the chief votary of Hindus and "protector" of Hindu institutions, practices, and "heritage." It is now commonplace for Sangh organizations to lead any public and legal discourse around "negative representations" of the Hindu community in textbooks, print media, films, and popular culture. This has happened at least in part due to the Sangh's strategic and cynical uses of the policy of "multiculturalism." Since the 1970s, various societies have instituted official and semi-official policies of multiculturalism, aimed primarily as bulwarks against racism, bigotry, and ethnocentrism. Multiculturalism today structures public debates of justice, civility, and management of "difference" and "identity." However, the dominant form of multiculturalism paradoxically gives rise to stereotyped notions of discrete, exclusive, and different "heritages" for every "ethnic," "racial," or "national" group. When combined with the notion of "cultural rights," this ensures the axiomatic status of the fuzzy notions of "insider" and "outsider" (with respect to religions and cultures) such that "outsiders" are deemed as less valid commentators and critics than "insiders." While some of this bias has existed throughout human history, multiculturalism has made these boundaries sharper and less easy to traverse. Hindutva's hold over Hinduism is difficult to loosen since multiculturalism becomes Hindutva's unintentional handmaiden by politically recognizing the latter's claims of being Hinduism's "authentic insider" and official representational voice. This is why the real power to resist Hindutva must come primarily from *within* the "Hindu community."

Multiculturalism is, of course, not to blame for this state of affairs. Hindutva has risen largely due to the fact that progressive and secular Hindus have, for all practical purposes, exited intellectually, physically, and in part sociologically from the space of a "Hindu community." In a different era but a markedly similar context of rising chauvinism, Hannah Arendt noted in *Jewish Writings* how "Jews who wanted 'culture' left Judaism at once, and completely" in the face of a racist European Enlightenment that devalued all things Jewish, including Judaism. This effectively allowed Judaism to be defined in particularly conservative ways. In a similar fashion, it may be said that progressive intellectuals who are at least enumerated in the census as Hindus (and who may even nominally consider themselves spiritually and philosophically as Hindu) have allowed Hindutva to define what Hinduism and Hindu mean.

## The Hindu Fascist Threat Is Real

While a majority of Hindus may indeed find the rise of Hindutva fascism deeply troubling, a dismissive attitude toward the threat of Mussolini's Hindus has become popular enough to aid the long-term legitimation of the Hindutva vision.

Many Hindus prefer to either think of the Sangh and Hindutva as being the work of fringe fanatics (hence without power), or the above history as being safely in the past (having no power to shape the present), or the Sangh as restricted spatially to particular areas within India (having no power to become a national force), or the Sangh as not fascist. The facts, however, are quite contrary to such a benign presentation of the Sangh. The "political wing" of the Sangh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party set up in 1961 as the Bharatiya Jan Sangh), is currently the second-largest party in parliament, next only to the Indian National Congress. It captured state power in India (1998-2004) and continues to hold power in various states all over India. Other organizational arms of the Sangh—the "cultural/religious wing" (Vishwa Hindu Parishad or VHP, the World Hindu Council, set up in 1964), the "paramilitary wing" (Bajrang Dal or BD, the youth wing of the VHP, formed in 1984), and the "student wing" (Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad or ABVP, All India Student Council, set up in 1948)—have brought together a vast and diverse set of people linked ideologically and militarily to the cause of "protecting Hindus and Hinduism" from enemies (usually Muslims; Christians; secularists; intellectuals including artists, filmmakers, writers, and scholars; Westerners who are critical of Hinduism; Westernization except for its technology; and a vague but selective form of modernity).

Together, their resume includes fomenting and participating in almost every documented religious "riot" in independent India including the 2002 pogrom against Muslims in the western state of Gujarat in which at least 2,000 people were killed and innumerable women were publicly raped, the continuing murders and rape of Christians in the eastern state of Orissa, campaigns of hate (couched as Hindu





*Top: Narendra Modi, the chief minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, is the brightest star in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the "political wing" of the Hindu supremacist Sangh movement. The record of the BJP and the Sangh's other wings, the author writes, "includes fomenting and participating in almost every documented religious 'riot' in independent India."*
*Bottom: Residents run following riots in Vadodra, in the western Indian state of Gujarat, on May 2, 2006.*

TOP: AP PHOTO/AJIT SOLANKI. BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/AJIT SOLANKI


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pride) such as the one which resulted in the demolition by Hindu fanatics of the sixteenth-century mosque in Ayodhya (north India) in 1992, regular terrorizing of intellectuals who write against Hindutva and Sangh versions of history and society, and the cultural policing of youth who display any sign of "Western" influence (such as women wearing "Western" clothes or couples celebrating Valentine's Day).

Although the various arms of the Sangh regularly attempt to display their "independence" of the RSS ideology, their top leadership are dyed-in-the-wool members of the Sangh. Mr. A.B. Vajpayee (who was the prime minister of India during the BJP regime) even authored an essay titled "The Sangh is my Soul" in the RSS official mouthpiece in 1995. Most recently, a network of terror cells run by various offshoots of the Sangh was unearthed in Malegaon to the northeast of Mumbai. Thus, the Sangh is by no means a fringe element, nor is it a spatially confined force or only a historical reality. Nor has it ever bothered to disavow its continuing commitment to fascism. A dismissive view of the Sangh sadly underestimates the scope, vibrancy, and power of Hindutva today and hence becomes an apology for the Sangh.

## The Vulnerability of Hinduism to Takeover

Another popular view that has served to legitimize the Hindutva vision is the idea that Hindutva is different from Hinduism. This claim supports the Hindutva project by providing ideological cover for it.

Proponents of this intellectually lazy idea often put it forth without explaining the reasons behind it, thereby becoming complicit with the agenda of Hindutva. For it has been the historical policy of the Sangh to take charge of Hinduism, to shape it according to its vision, and to become its official representative. To this end, the Sangh has worked tirelessly to successfully establish sway over the content and representations of what constitutes Hinduism. This is done chiefly through prolific and persistent interventions in public discourses and "Hindu" practices. It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the structural features and history of the term "Hinduism," which originated far more recently than is popularly imagined. Scholarly consensus places this term, in its religious sense, anywhere from the fifteenth to mid-nineteenth century, or no more than five centuries ago. Suffice it to say that the Sangh has made deft use of the lack of a single ecclesiastical structure or centralizing force that characterized Hinduism over its short history, and transformed it over the twentieth century to give rise to a "standardized" and "syndicated" Hinduism over which it now dominates intellectually, organizationally, congregationally, and financially.

The case of Hindutva in the United States offers the clearest examples of how the Sangh and Hindutva have additionally become global phenomena by dominating the terrain of Hinduism. In a recent legal battle over the representation of Hinduism in California school textbooks, the Hindu Educational Foundation (the educational project of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, which is the arm of the RSS in the United States) represented the "Hindu community" whose "sentiments" it claimed to protect from bigotry in existing representations of Hinduism in California textbooks.

Notably, in keeping with Hindutva claims of an eternally pure and perfect Hinduism, the revisions sought by the Hindu Educational Foundation focused on erasing or misrepresenting histories that challenged such hubris. Thus, the foundation assumed all ancient India to be Hindu and proceeded to seek to portray *caste* relations as mere social difference (rather than as a form of birth-based social inequality and stigmatization), to portray *gender* relations in ancient India as egalitarian (rather than patriarchal), and to blur distinctions between the Indus civilization and the later Vedic society in ancient India. Thus, whereas the Sangh's attempt to rewrite history has met with strong opposition from secular intellectuals in India, it is far more successful in the multicultural context of the United States.

Significantly, any opposition to the Hindu Educational Foundation's position gets painted as "Hindu-hating," as happened to the renowned Sanskritist at Harvard, professor Michael Witzel. The result is that most (not all) sites within which Hindus learn, preserve, and transmit their version of Hinduism have a very high chance of being shaped by Hindutva ideology, and many times they are controlled by Sangh organizations. For example, the Campaign to Stop Funding Hate recently offered evidence that the most prominent organization of Hindu students on American campuses, the Hindu Student Council, is linked to Sangh organizations in India and the United States. Mercifully, many Hindu students reacted positively in as much as they sought to distance themselves immediately from the Hindu Student Council.

The claim then that there are clear distinctions between Hindutva and Hinduism, even when the two are systematically blurred by the Sangh, appears hopelessly anachronistic and obfuscates the




*One of Hinduism's most progressive leaders, Swami Agnivesh (about whom the author will write in a future issue of* Tikkun*), takes part in a rally of the well-known Indian Organization for Learning and Science. The banner states, "Work for All, Wages for All."*

FLICKR/CC/HEMANSHU KUMAR

work of Hindutva. If the claim is to have meaning on the ground, in teaching Hinduism to young Hindus and its representation to others, let alone in Indian politics, a great deal of hard work has to be done by progressive Hindus.

## Toward a Progressive Hinduism

THE EMERGENCE OF HINDUTVA HAS FAST ERODED ANY space for what may be called "progressive Hinduism." Such a Hinduism would mean at the very least a clearly anti-racist, anti-casteist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and anti-exploitative theology, cosmology, and social vision for living and loving that would enable a democratic Hindu, committed to the separation of religion and state, to emerge in the twenty-first century. Progressive Hinduism does not as yet exist, definitely not in any systematic manner. Yet, the rich traditions of humanism in Indian history—as articulated by its peace prophets and seekers of truth, love, and justice—offer some guide for those who wish to rethink and construct a new Hinduism.

Such an enterprise must begin with the unequivocal rejection of Hindutva's hubris, which has prevented the emergence of progressive Hinduism in two fundamental ways: by channeling all energies for renewing Hinduism into the recovery of an imagined "golden past," and by imposing a discursive tyranny that insists upon defining "Hinduism" as a doctrinally homogenous tradition, rather than as a linguistic technology that refers to an incredibly diverse and many times contradictory set of beliefs, practices, and traditions. Breaking free from such hubris clears the ground to give content to a progressive Hinduism that need not be beholden to *all* teachings, dicta, or practices claimed as "essential" to Hinduism.

Progressive Hindus can then engage in principled selection from Hinduism's traditions and its very large corpus of teachings. We can construct our own "Hindu heritage," a Hindu liberation theology that makes economic justice, freedom from oppressions, and critical humanism central to Hinduism and constitutive of our spirituality (not an occasional sentimental add-on).

Gandhi began this task a long time ago by reworking the key Hindu concept of *moksha* or Hindu liberation as *not* meaning an other-worldly existence (the Hindu orthodox view), but rather as an ongoing quest for ethical living in the here and now. His notion of a *Daridra Narayana* or a God who was with, for, and by the poor and oppressed articulates a Hindu theology of liberation that makes the *karmayogi* (spiritual activist) the exemplar for Hindus. But it falls short on many accounts, primarily due to Gandhi's inability to break free from the caste concept (perhaps his greatest flaw) and his underdeveloped theory of the roots of poverty. For, although Gandhi famously developed his theory of economic freedom as the solution to poverty, his reliance on the notion of "trusteeship" (the expectation that propertied classes had to be trusted to be responsible to the community at large) did not allow him to explore the notion of classes in society and the exploitation or extraction of surplus as the root of poverty.

Consequently, Gandhi's radical insight that "poverty is the worst form of violence"—which directly implicates the *social* and *moral/spiritual* universe and relations as the context for suffering—could not become the foundation for a transformative Hinduism in which personal liberation depended upon the liberation of all from poverty and oppression.

Will progressive Hindus be able to move forward the liberatory potential within Hinduism, build a renewed sense of being a Hindu, and become part of the global processes of renewal underway in many other traditions? I believe that this is not only possible, it is a calling that is impossible to neglect. But it requires the unegotistic critique of much of Hindu scriptures, orientation to this world, and practices, and the simultaneous construction of a new Hinduism that will allow progressives to avail themselves of the sagacity that did indeed exist in the crevices of the past; identify with the struggles and spirit of those subalterns who hoped for Hinduism's fundamental renewal, even when facing the brunt of its oppressions; creatively rework Hinduism's large corpus of symbols (including key concepts of maya, karma, dharma, and moksa) so that they become insightful teaching tools for living as a progressive; and establish new institutions (and reform or at least challenge existing ones) that will ensure the durability of the above energies and pave the way for a new understanding of heritage as never exclusive, but a selection from one's particular pasts that belongs to all of humanity's seekers of truth, equity, and justice. ■



AP PHOTO/AJIT SOLANKI

*Seventy people were counted dead or missing in Gulbarg Society—a small Muslim housing development in Amedabad, Gujarat—after a 10,000-strong Hindu mob entered the houses, attacking residents with swords and choppers and burning them alive, with apparent police complicity. Above, the survivors pay homage at the sixth anniversary of the massacre.*

### Know Your Sangh Parivar/ Hindutva Organizational Structure

**IDEOLOGICAL/INTELLECTUAL NODE:**
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, India)
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS, USA)

**POLITICAL WING:**
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, India)
Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP, India)

**SERVICE WING:**
Sewa Bharathi (India)
India Development Releif Fund (IDRF, USA)
Hindu Educational Foundation (HEF, USA)

**PARAMILITARY WING:**
Bajrang Dal (BD, India)
HinduUnity.org (USA)

**CULTURAL/RELIGIONS WING:**
Vishwa Hindy Parishad (VHP, India)
Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA, USA)

**STUDENT WING:**
Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)
Hindu Student Council (HSC, USA)

# Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

## DarWin-Win

**THE GENIAL GENE: DECONSTRUCTING DARWINIAN SELFISHNESS**
by Joan Roughgarden
University of California Press, 2009

*Review by David Belden*

I STILL HAVE MY 1978 PAPERBACK edition of Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene*. Its browning pages survived three major cross-ocean or cross-continent home moves, when most of my books got dumped. Two of my best friends, animal behaviorists, gave it to me to explain their world. It read like a fine mystery novel, full of clues that spelled out an unexpected truth: that the unit that natural selection selects is not the animal, still less the group or species, but is instead the gene.

We may think we are altruists, Dawkins taught me, but our genes have no such ethical scruples. They have no intentions either, it's just that genes are selected for by two forces: natural and sexual selection. The latter usually means female choice of mate (more important than male choice, which seemed a nice feminist point). Genes for altruism can and do get passed down to the next generation when they prompt an animal to sacrifice its own interests to help relatives with the same genes, or when the self-benefit of altruistic behavior actually outweighs the cost.

Altruism is just a variety of selfishness.

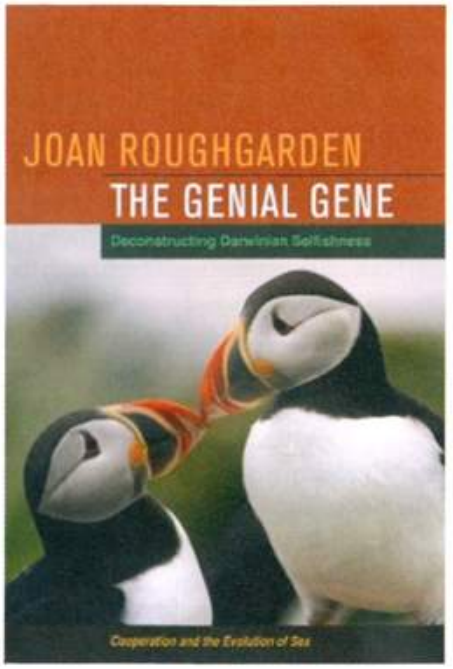
I was persuaded by my expert friends' certainty as well as by Dawkins's logic. As the holder of a recent sociology doctorate, I was aware that sociologists hated the entry of genetic arguments into explanations for behavior. Committed to feminism, I knew my feminist friends did too. They saw any kind of sociobiology as an oppressive "biology is destiny" theory. But they didn't seem to understand that, whatever some of its proponents might say, sociobiology itself does not negate culture or legitimate selfish behavior. It definitely doesn't prescribe selfish behavior. How could it? Human genes provide for a rather flexible animal, demonstrably able to create different cultures, some kinder than others, some more feminist than others.

But to build a culture based on unselfish values, we have to be aware of our selfish genes and deal with them. This is the conclusion I drew after reading Dawkins. The carpenter cannot create a functional and beautiful staircase if she doesn't know the wood: working against the grain just creates a mess.

Over the years the vehemence of feminist and Left opposition to sociobiology, or evolutionary psychology as it has been rebranded, has become less fervent, partly as a result of women pursuing the field and mitigating male biases within it (e.g., see Sarah Blaffer Hrdy's *Mother Nature*). But it has been slow, and I had concluded my baby boom generation would have to pass away before most sociologists would accept evolutionary psychology.

But now something new has happened. Browsing the *Tikkun* book review shelf, I find another slim book: *The Genial Gene*, by Stanford biology professor Joan Roughgarden. It too reads like a mystery novel. It too presents facts that are new to me and offers a completely surprising broad theory: that sexual selection cannot explain the facts, and has actually become an ideology that demands the facts be explained in increasingly contortionist ways to fit its orthodoxy. Roughgarden sets out to comprehensively demolish sexual selection and the selfish gene worldview, while leaving natural selection and Mendelian genetics intact.

Roughgarden proposes that far from engaging in constant fierce conflict, the




genes of different sexes and genders are selected for their ability to work together to produce the maximum number of offspring in changing environments. Her logic hits me with the same astonished sense that I am indeed reading the truth as I had thirty years ago reading Dawkins. This is a more politically and spiritually congenial truth to me, but for that very reason I read skeptically. Nonetheless I am overwhelmed. I am a layman, of course, no biologist, and parts of the book are hard for me to grasp, but most of it is beautifully written and extremely clear ... and convincing.

Darwinian *natural* selection explains how species change in response to changing environments: lucky genetic mutations can help individuals survive and reproduce better in new circumstances, and if they do, then those mutations spread widely through the species. Darwin sought another explanation for traits some animals possess that apparently *hinder* their survival, like the peacock's tail, which must weigh the poor old peacock down and make it harder to do everything. Darwin hypothesized that

they have splendid tails to sell themselves to peahens, as mates strong enough to survive despite the handicap. The theory would explain other protein-expensive or flashy male characteristics. He called the theory "sexual selection" and it did not at first cover that many cases.

But allied to the selfish gene concept, sexual selection became the basis of all modern theories about reproduction, and it became foundational that males and females have conflicting interests. The idea developed that the big egg and tiny sperm themselves developed as competing methods for genes to reproduce themselves. Then because there are few, relatively immobile eggs and many mobile sperm, the egg-makers, or females, become the choosy ones. In mammals, due to females' extra investment in pregnancy and lactation, they can be even choosier.

But there are awkward facts. It turns out peacocks with the biggest tails don't actually survive better than ones with smaller tails. If it's advertising for better genes, it's false advertising. Field research proves that the same is true of various other bird species. Perhaps, Roughgarden suggests, what needs explaining is females' drabness, not male splendor. Do females need the camouflage more than males do? That suggests an explanation concerning natural, not sexual, selection.

And if genetic fitness is usually a matter of only a 1 percent difference in genes between fitter and less fit males, and if there isn't a correlation with display features such as colored feathers, then how exactly is it that females discern that minute difference in order to make their choice? Could there be another explanation? What if females and males are both choosing, and for things like pheromonal compatability or even emotional congeniality, to enable them to cooperate? What if reproductive choices involve not just the pair of birds in the nest, for example, but the wider social network of birds? What if female birds who have sex with males outside their pair bond are not "cheating" and their mate is not "cuckolded" as the literature has it, but instead they are maximizing their own, their mate's, and others' chances of rearing viable offspring? Has an ideological expectation of male-female conflict informed the research to such an extent that the research itself is being skewed and the wrong questions are being asked?

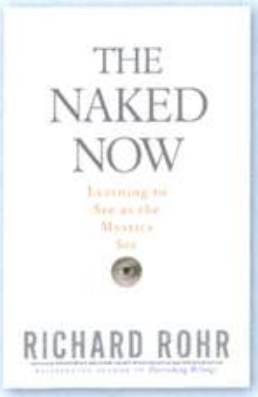
Roughgarden presents numerous examples of research papers couched in the language and expectation of selfish gene competitiveness that present facts that nonetheless contradict that frame, or can be equally well or better understood within a cooperative frame. For example, she finds that basic research on egg and sperm size actually shows that the size differential arises because it enables the maximum number of contacts between gametes (egg and sperm are both gametes) that result in viable fertilizations. It's a win-win scenario, not a vicious struggle. But even the papers presenting these statistics are couched in terms of such a struggle.

Other awkward facts concern the existence of multiple genders in various species (such as three distinct body types and behaviors for males in one fish species), and various kinds of hermaphrodism. When the same individual produces both egg and sperm, current theory can get highly convoluted. Sexual selection theory sees hermaphrodites as aberrations from a male/female binary norm. Roughgarden posits that hermaphrodism is the starting point, and other sexual arrangements including binary male/female ones arise to more efficiently deliver sperm in particular environments. At every point she posits a cooperative explanatory framework. In this view the various genders and sexes in a species work together to maximize genetic variability in their offspring, as a hedge against environmental change, and to raise the maximum number of offspring that they collectively can. She calls this theory "social selection."

At the end of the book she presents a table of twenty-six assumptions or hypotheses in sexual selection theory that are contradicted by equivalents in social selection theory. All of these can potentially be resolved, as to their truth or falsity, by field and experimental research. Roughgarden already presents enough data to show that social selection must be taken very seriously, and will likely prevail. This would be a huge paradigm shift. She finds widespread and

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deep resistance even to testing the theories.

Let me be clear. Roughgarden's is not an argument against sociobiology, and whatever explanations and descriptions of a universal human nature it can establish. Her beef is only with a vision of sexual and social relations based in selfish, as opposed to genial, genes.

Other books have objected to selfish gene theory because it appears to be an ideology, and one fully in line with modern capitalism and competitive individualism. But this is the first book I have read that attacks the whole ideology of selfish Darwinism on a broad scale from the perspective of purely biological research. As a Christian and transgender woman, Roughgarden has plenty of ideological reasons to oppose selfish gene theory and a worldview based on binary male/female conflict and traditional sex roles. But the beauty of this book is that she has pursued in a strictly scientific manner whatever skepticism her own life experience has taught her to hold about mainstream scientific ideologies. Here she is concerned solely with what is scientifically testable and true.

The very idea that there is truth in these postmodern times, when even physicists seem to have got beyond the hope of it, is a breath of intellectual oxygen. Roughgarden writes:

> As often stated in this book the issue before us is not whether a biological nature predicated on selfishness, deception, and genetic hierarchy is appealing or repugnant compared with a biological nature predicated on teamwork, honesty, and generic equality. The issue is which of these views of biological nature is true.

And when she adds, "I believe I have shown that the overwhelming weight of data and theory reveal that the selfish-gene picture does not truly and accurately describe biological nature," I applaud both her conclusion and her courage in saying it so forcefully, for she is stirring up a storm that will rage for at least a generation.

My reaction on reading the book was, "this is a civilization-changer." Roughgarden is a powerful thinker and writer. I have rarely been as energized and delighted by a book as I was by this one. You could say it's no big deal: our capacity to choose to love each other is experientially real, however biologists choose to explain it. But to the contrary, I think we are in desperate need of significant intellectual support for a post-capitalist, post-patriarchal, post-individualistic social order that prioritizes community, caring, and interdependence. What a gas, what an unexpected bonanza, what a grace, if it turned out that's what biology supports at a genetic level anyway. ■

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*David Belden, D. Phil, is the managing editor of* Tikkun.

[DANCE]

# DANCE BEYOND BOYCOTT

**PERFORMANCE BY THE BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY**

*Review by Jill Goldberg*

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN I WAS GOING to a political event. I didn't see it coming until the very day that I was scheduled to see "Deca Dance," choreographed by Israeli tist Ohad Naharin, and performed by the Batsheva Dance Company of Tel Aviv. I suppose I'm glad that I read in the Georgia Straight that there would be protests outside the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre; I had time to collect my thoughts before I approached the venue and heard the bellowing of a voice through a megaphone crying out, "dead children can't dance." The group was small, but the message was amply clear: by attending this show, the audience was in some way complicit with the atrocities that had recently unfolded in Gaza.

But is boycotting Batsheva the most effective course of action? Of course I understood the reasons behind the protest: the horrors that took place in Gaza were innumerable and bloody. More recently, the Israeli government—under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, with Avigdor Lieberman at his side—has all but dismissed Barack Obama's speech in Cairo. Instead Israel has continued on a path to add to the settlements in the West Bank, thereby insulting Palestinians and enthusiastically creating massive obstacles to peace in the region. Yes, there are many reasons to protest against the policies and acts of the Israeli government, but I can't help but think that protesting Batsheva creates a missed opportunity for dialogue with a group of people, the members of Batsheva itself, who quite likely hold nuanced and intelligent ideas about the situation in their homeland. Choreographer Ohad Naharin, for one, has publicly stated his interest in using dance to turn conflict into dialogue, an admirable goal for someone whose work is often boycotted, his company threatened. It may seem like an impossible dream, but I would much rather have witnessed a civilized conversation between, say, Naharin and the protesters than watched the two polarized performances: the one outside the theater and the one inside, each one reinforcing the other's feelings of alienation from the other.

In the author's notes that accompany the novel *Life of Pi*, Yann Martel writes: "If we, citizens, do not support our artists, then we sacrifice our imaginations on the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams." Watching the superlative talent that went into "Deca Dance," I was transfixed; how could participating in such imaginative, beautiful, and clever art not be edifying? "Deca Dance" was such a tremendous offering that I feel certain it has the ability to reach people in a way that transcends the harsh reality of life in the quagmire that is the Middle East. If art is the triumph of imagination over crude reality, then "Deca Dance" is the proverbial victor, vanquishing the ordinary with the power of creativity as its only weapon.

At the risk of sounding naïve and overly idealistic, I have to wonder: if the small group of protesters outside had snuck in and watched Naharin's choreography, would they have been moved out of the rigidity of rhetoric and into the relative softness of dialogue? Would they have seen something in the work of these immensely talented Israelis that showed them that they too are human with the same longings for peace and security and the same fears as

their Palestinian brethren?

I have seen precious few dance shows in my life that hit me in the way that "Deca Dance" did. As I write, I'm considering adding this show to my very short list of all-time favorites, which currently includes only three other pieces: "Le Cri du Monde" by Marie Chouinard, "Masurca Fogo" by Pina Bausch, and "Kagemi" by Sankai Juku. All of these works share a grounding in technical excellence, and each draws power from its ability to excavate the depths and layers of the human imagination and psyche. Each emerges as a coherent work that is utterly original and, at the same time, totally recognizable as a sometimes beautiful, sometimes hilarious, and sometimes tragic reflection of what it means to be a living, thinking, sensitive human being in a world that contains beauty and sorrow, violence and redemption.

"Deca Dance" opened with a single male dancer performing a staged pre-show show. The house lights were on, and the audience talked and milled about. The lone dancer moved to the rhythm of music that was part swing, part show tune, all the while making us feel like we were the privileged recipients of a special feature. The dancer played with and to the audience, literally inviting members to join in the fun that he was having. This set the inviting tone for the piece, for "Deca Dance" was captivating throughout. It moved seamlessly through sections that were humorous, sections that were dark, and sections that brought the artists and the audience into the realm of the absurd. All the while the dancers maintained a level of technical excellence and emotional commitment and absorption that not only sustained the piece but made it a glorious, exalted work of art.

Once the audience was fully seated, the solo dancer pulled a suit jacket over his white shirt and without even a pause was joined by the rest of the dancers who were now moving to a rocked-up version of "Hava Nagilah." There's nothing so powerful as a large number of dancers on stage, especially when they have the level of unison and clarity of intent that Naharin's dancers clearly have. All seventeen of them wore the same suit as the first dancer, reminding me somewhat of Jean-Pierre Perreault's choreography "Joe" and as in



*The dancers' suits looked at once chic and Hasidic.*

GADI DAGON

that work the dancers in "Deca Dance" managed to suggest the power of unison and congregation while also exhibiting their individual talents.

In this first section, the dancers were all eventually seated on chairs arranged in a semi-circle, although "seated" seems like the wrong word for what they were doing. They were engaged in a repetitive, highly kinetic sequence that had each dancer moving as if performing an athletic duet with his or her chair. However, it was the music that seized my intellectual and emotional attention. Played at top volume, it was a version—punctuated by what sounded like the earth-shaking beat of taiko drums—of a Hebrew song that is typically sung at the Passover meal (the seder) once the religious rituals and the meal are finished. The song "Echad mi yodea?" is a counting song that enumerates the thirteen attributes of God. It begins and ends with the words: "*Echad mi yodea? Echad ani yodea. Echad Elokeinu, shebashamaim uva'aretz*" (Who knows one? I know one. One is God, our God of the heavens and of earth). That line is usually returned to thirteen times, but Naharin, like so many weary families at Passover, elected to shorten the song. Each time the dancers got to that line, there was a sense of emotional catharsis that bordered on the ecstatic. If this had been the only piece in the evening, it would have been enough for me.

With this section Naharin reminded me of the beauty of my own somewhat spiritually cynical father pouring his heart fully into the song every year at Passover, letting the music work its magic by drawing him in without restraint, prompting him to leave doubt behind. It was thus that Naharin also evoked the idea of the sacred and of the transcendent power of prayer, his own art performing for the audience what the song was clearly doing for the dancers. I have a stubborn belief that no matter the form we project onto God, we, all of us, pray to the same force. Seeing this piece I could only think that surely there is a way for the terrible differences between people to be bridged. Even if I am wrong in thinking this, Naharin's courageous exploration had the emotional depth and breadth to lead me to this feeling, if only for a short time.

"Deca Dance" was not a singular, cohesive piece—it was a series of reconstructions of several of Naharin's previous choreographies. Nevertheless, the overall effect was so smooth that I could scarcely tell where one piece ended and the next began. It was as if the various themes and styles were made to embrace each other, each one complementing the next, showing that a choreographer whose work is of such a consistently high caliber can easily weave together his varied threads to create an aesthetically beautiful tapestry, the marvel of the sum exceeding the already elevated value of each part.

Another section that stood out was a hilariously clever and quirky piece in which the dancers—garbed once again in their suits, this time with the addition of brimmed hats—entered the audience and selected a partner. This had the potential for embarrassment and cruelty. But instead the dancers displayed an elegant and highly disciplined ability to lead their partners through a fluidly choreographed pas-de-deux that mimicked the tango, along with other partner dances. Although some of the audience partners looked nervous to begin with, the dancers' friendly humor and relaxed yet certain demeanor amply demonstrated that anyone can look graceful in the arms of a good lead.

And I should say, too, that there was something that was at once chic and

delightfully ironic about the dancers' suits. In their black outfits and broadly brimmed hats, they vaguely resembled Hasidic Jews, or perhaps Amish men. Yet the choreography bordered on cheekily funny, and the music included a version of "Over the Rainbow," thus gently playing with the apparent seriousness of the dancers' attire. This is one of the things that Naharin excels at: injecting an unexpected and perfectly timed element of humor that is so witty and so intelligently executed that it doesn't even come close to undermining the gravity of his work.

In the spirit of risk, "Deca Dance" included moments of nudity that were at once provocative and comedic in a measured way; sudden transitions that could have come across as being abrupt, but were perfectly handled; and a series of Degas-like tableaus that were underscored by a soundtrack that instructed the audience (or perhaps the dancers) to "Pay your taxes. Fuck. And if you can't fuck, copulate. Make money, but don't work too hard ... drink enough to relax."

After the intermission, there was only one piece left, and for this the dancers were costumed casually in t-shirts or tank tops and short pants that went just to the knee. They opened as though they were on the dance floor of a club. This evolved into a more ordered and serious piece whose choreography dived into the realm of human sexuality, exploring the spectrum from playfulness to violence.

As the piece grew more somber, I noticed that many of the dancers' pants reminded me of military fatigues. And then I realized that if most of the dancers are Israeli, many of them probably have only recently finished their military service. Reflecting on this, the dance became an eerie reminder of my Israeli cousins, all of them born and bred, like Naharin, on a kibbutz, all of them hungry for peace in the region. The intensity of the dance on the stage brought to mind a comment one of my cousins once made about the psychic splitting that so many young Israelis feel; he explained that he feels obliged to serve his country, but is also frustrated to the point of devastation at the ongoing violence. All this was explained to me while we sat outside his kibbutz's Saturday night "disco" where young Israelis, some of them home for the weekend from their military service, let loose after long weeks of discipline and of shouldering their part of the burden of a country mired in conflict.

The dancers on the stage, so young in appearance, have probably carried a similar weight, and I wished that they could go outside and introduce themselves to the protesters as the eloquent interpreters of a lofty and visionary imagination that exposes the richly nuanced possibilities of humanity. These dancers, like the Jewish community in Vancouver, cannot be monolithic in their thinking—people seldom are. I for one would have gladly taken the opportunity to discuss things with the protestors over the awful feeling of alienation I felt as I walked by them. Leaving the theater, I felt precisely what Yann Martel meant. It is the freedom to think imaginatively and to see possibilities that do not yet exist that might be able to save us, if even for an evening, from perishing on the altar of crass reality. ■

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*Jill Goldberg teaches English literature at the college level, organizes (and participates in) a volunteer massage project at a women's drop-in center, and enjoys writing for a variety of publications. Her website is www.jillgoldbergshiatsu.com.*

[BOOKS]

# POWER THROUGH RENUNCIATION

**GANDHI: THE MAN, HIS PEOPLE, AND THE EMPIRE**

**by Rajmohan Gandhi**
**University of California Press, 2008**

*Review by Michael N. Nagler*

HAVING READ ALL THE standard biographies of Gandhi, as well as written a forward to the one that best captures his spiritual practice and spiritual significance (*Gandhi the Man*, by my teacher, Eknath Easwaran), I was not prepared to be as educated, entertained, and inspired as I was by this mighty work of his grandson Rajmohan Gandhi (hereafter referred to as RG). RG combines scholarly competency (he is a research professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) with unique access to many records of his famous and well-documented grandfather (including a priceless photo of himself as a child whose grandfather is showering him with love). More importantly—for it can be disastrously hard to understand Gandhi, no matter how well informed one is—he combines objectivity with devotion, managing to present the human side of the Mahatma along with his incredible greatness and accomplishments in a way that enlarges our imagination of what it means to be a human being. If Jesus had had such a biographer, I mused, rivers of blood shed in bitter debates over the Savior's godhood or manhood or both could have been spared.

A close reading of this book brings home to us King's declaration that if we want to live in peace—or live at all, I would add—"Gandhi is indispensable."

I'm inclined to start with some insights into the Mahatma's leadership—and a new anecdote for me about it. Upton Close, an American Far East expert who met and admired Gandhi, wrote, "What was his secret? I think my wife discovered it. She said, 'In his presence I felt a new capability and power in myself rather than a consciousness of his power. I felt equal, good for anything—an assurance I had never known before, as if some consciousness within me had newly awakened.'"

The popular image of saintly Gandhi as a timid, "good" person who would not hurt a fly is of course drastically mistaken, arising as it does from our distorted (I almost said perverted) belief that violence is the only form of power. This belief invites us to assume that if a person is not violent, he or she must be weak—an idea that this book debunks soon enough. When the intercommunal violence that even Gandhi could not quell raged as India was torn apart in the act of independence, he wrote to colleagues, "there is such a fire raging in me that I [will] know no peace until I have found a solution for all this.... If I find that my comrades are deceiving me, I will be furious and I shall walk barefoot on and on through hail or storm. I would throw away the soft seat and other amenities which you have offered me."



Yet Gandhi gained his great power not by grabbing for it, as I would be inclined to do, but by renouncing it—exactly the opposite of our "normal" human response to challenge. When a prayer meeting he was conducting in Rajkot, Gujarat, was being broken up by a 600-strong mob of reactionaries swinging swords and lathis (clubs), the nearly seventy-year-old Gandhi stood still, closed his eyes and repeated his mantram ("Rama") with a force of devotion noticed by a young follower who had rushed to his side. Then, the prayer having worked, Gandhi dismissed all the coworkers who were trying to protect him and *put himself entirely at the disposal of the mob*, saying to one who was in his vicinity, "I wish to go under your sole protection, not co-workers." RG quotes the young worker's eyewitness report that, "to everyone's amazement the thugs' violence melted like ice [and] the leader of the gang stood before Bapu with folded hands."

Writing to his nephew Maganlal from Champaran, the scene of one of the early triumphs of Gandhi's Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance) in India, Gandhi said of the great poet-saint of medieval Rajasthan: "Mira was stabbed with the dagger of love ... if we too can get at this dagger ... we can shake the world to its foundations." And it seems that's exactly what he did. Of all the commentators and biographers who have dared to tread on the baffling episode of Gandhi's final *yajña* (sacrifice) during the extreme violence of partition, RG is the only one I know of who I believe has got it right. Here is the story.

Touring violence-torn Noakhali in Bihar, Gandhi had his grandniece Manu sleep alongside him. Both slept without clothes. Why? And why just then? Many of Gandhi's closest followers could not understand and begged him to stop the practice, but Gandhi had long since ceased to obey any but the "still small voice" within him. And while he did not launch into justifications, it's pretty clear what he was trying to accomplish. A secretary at the time, the brilliant and skeptical scientist N.K. Bose, "one day overheard Gandhi saying to an associate about *brahmacharya* [control of sexual and other passions], 'If I can master this, I can still beat Jinnah' [his great adversary over Pakistan]." Trying to interpret this for an earlier, western biographer, another secretary, Pyarelal, explained: "Gandhi is under his own complete control. That generates tremendous energy and passion."

Throughout the book, RG brings his cultural insights and perspective as a fellow Indian to bear on this paradoxical dynamic of "renounce and enjoy" (a favorite line of Gandhi's from the Isa Upanishad). RG has done us a great service. His detailed but readable, fact-filled but insightful work enables us to peer through various windows into the person who, at least as I believe, wielded the most powerful, inventive spirit for good the modern world has seen. ■

*Michael N. Nagler is professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, founder and president of the Metta Center for Nonviolence Education (www.mettacenter.org), and author of* The Search for a Nonviolent Future.

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[FILM]

# FEEDING THE DANGER HABIT

**THE HURT LOCKER, Summit Entertainment, 2008**

*Review by David Sterritt*

THE HURT LOCKER, a technically brilliant film about American combat in Iraq, was directed by Kathryn Bigelow, who developed her action-movie skills in the early 1990s with pictures like the cop melodrama *Blue Steel* and the crime 'n' surfing yarn *Point Break*. Her new film takes its title from military slang in the Iraq war—slang meaning the box you'll be in if danger catches you off guard. The movie's highly authentic atmosphere comes partly from the docudrama urgency of Bigelow's shaky-cam visual style and partly from the screenplay by Mark Boal, a journalist who was embedded for a couple of weeks with a U.S. Army explosive-disposal unit in Iraq, like the one portrayed in the film.

The story centers on a three-man bomb squad, and the opening scene tells everything you need to know about their job. When someone alerts them to a roadside bomb, booby trap, or other explosive hazard, they rush to the location and send in a wheeled robot—complete with video transmitter and remote-controlled claw—to examine the object up close. Then the squad leader puts on protective armor, walks into the danger zone, and disarms the device by hand, while his heavily armed teammates scan the area for additional threats. When all goes well, the squad then relaxes and awaits the next assignment, which never takes long to arrive. When things go wrong, the consequences are horrific, as in the opening scene, when the soldiers don't spot an Iraqi with a remote detonator until he's about to trigger the bomb, which kills the team leader despite his heavy-duty blast suit. This is a harrowingly suspenseful episode, acted and photographed with great attention to naturalistic detail, and edited with razor-sharp timing.

After a quick scene registering grief at the team leader's death, the movie introduces his replacement: Staff Sergeant William James, a young officer with extensive bomb-squad experience. Soon he and his teammates, Sergeant JT Sanborn and Specialist Owen Eldridge, race to their first operation together, and it's like the one we just saw, except that the new leader's modus operandi is very different from that of his predecessor. Instead of sending in a robot, he puts on blast armor and strides nonchalantly toward the explosive as if he were walking into his favorite bar. Along the way he sets off a smoke device to confuse any enemies who might be watching, thus cutting off his teammates' vision too. He pulls

off the job successfully, but Sanborn and Eldridge are furious at the way he put the mission—not to mention their lives—unnecessarily at risk.

And so it goes for the rest of the movie. Whether it's an ambush in the desert, an intricately wired car bomb, or an explosive charge packed into the entrails of a young Iraqi's corpse, James swaggers into the thick of things while Sanborn and Eldridge fidget on the sidelines, trying to protect a guy who doesn't like protection. At one point they grow so frustrated with James's bravado that they consider killing him, if only to save their own skins from constant exposure to needless jeopardy. They decide against this solution, hoping they can survive until their tour of duty is finished, but it isn't easy. What can you do with a man who defuses deadly bombs the way other people play video games, and throws off his body armor when he gets to feeling warm?

The most unusual aspect of *The Hurt Locker* is its structure, relentlessly hurtling from one crisis to another, hardly ever pausing for a glance at psychology, much less a glimpse of politics. Boal has likened the picture to *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 classic about Vietnam, saying both movies have an episodic format that's true to the existential realities of war. Maybe so, but Coppola's film packs an enormous number of ideas—some intelligent, some not—into its ambitious story line. By contrast, each episode of *The Hurt Locker* is a marvelously wrought specimen of suspense-movie technique, and that's *all* it is. Only near the end, in a brief scene showing James back home with his wife and baby, do we get a sense of who he is and how profoundly he's addicted to danger. This appears to be the movie's message: that some people crave deadly peril the way others crave alcohol or gambling, and that front-line military service feeds the danger habit while extracting social value from it. It's hardly a dazzling insight, even when fleshed out by Bigelow's ingenious filmmaking.

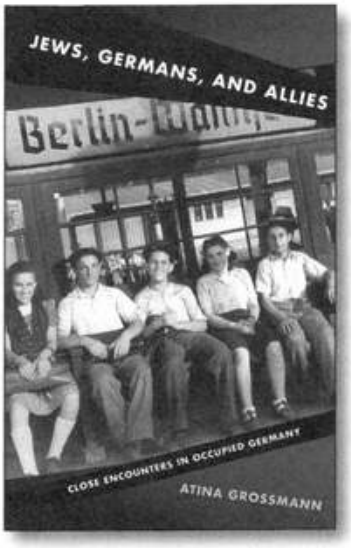
If the psychology of *The Hurt Locker* is skin deep, its politics are shallower still—or rather, it doesn't have any politics beyond the war-movie cliché that in the fog of war a soldier's main job is to get the job done without worrying about whys and wherefores. In a *New Yorker* interview, Boal said he didn't want his characters "standing up and giving speeches" because "you're probably not thinking about the geopolitics of oil when you're standing over a bomb." Does that mean the rest of us shouldn't think about geopolitics either? Boal takes the same attitude Steven Soderbergh took when he made *Che*—that in a war movie, talk only slows the action down—so it's little wonder *The Hurt Locker* gives little insight into why James and his team behave the way they do. The picture shows even less interest in who's planting all the explosives and what their motivations might be. They are just "Iraqis," and they're pushed into the margins throughout the film, never developed beyond bit-part caricatures.

The political and psychological shortcomings of *The Hurt Locker* are surprising, because Boal's earlier work includes "Death and Dishonor," a *Playboy* article about the murder of an Iraq war veteran near Fort Benning, Georgia, in 2003, which was the basis for *In the Valley of Elah*, directed by Paul Haggis in 2007. Named after the location of the biblical fight between David and Goliath, that picture starred Tommy Lee Jones as an aging army veteran whose son, recently returned from fighting in Iraq, has been savagely murdered. Looking for culprits and reasons, the hero learns one poisonous truth after another about the war's toxic effects on American soldiers. The movie is an honest and outspoken indictment of the conflict's unconscionable human costs, and I wish Boal's screenplay for *The Hurt Locker* didn't veer in such a different direction.

*The Hurt Locker* is splendidly directed by Bigelow, however, and richly acted by a terrific cast. Jeremy Renner, best known for his TV work, emerges as a sharp and subtle actor despite the limitations of the script. Ditto for Anthony Mackie and Brian Geraghty, who play Sanborn and Eldridge, and Nabil Koni makes an indelible impression as a gentle Iraqi professor who deserves much more screen time than he's given. Christian Camargo is persuasive as Colonel John Cambridge, a military psychiatrist whose mini-sessions with selected soldiers give the movie what little psychology it has, and Ralph Fiennes, David Morse, and Guy Pearce make brief appearances that will please their fans. On every technical level, *The Hurt Locker* is a striking achievement. But its evasion of deep issues and hard questions makes it the most sorely missed opportunity so far this year. ■

*David Sterritt, Tikkun's film critic, is chairman of the National Society of Film Critics and professor emeritus at Long Island University. He was film critic of* The Christian Science Monitor *for decades. His latest books are* Guiltless Pleasures *and* The B List.

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## Love the Stranger

By Rachel Berkowitz

In college, you're supposed to question your identity. At Wesleyan, where I went to college, students spend a tremendous amount of time discussing their political identities, their sexual identities, and their identities as shaped by their socioeconomic statuses. What we don't talk about as much are our religious identities—we tend to talk about religion in private, with our closest and often like-minded friends.

I grew up in rural upstate New York, with a very strong awareness of being a minority as a Jew. The first time I visited Israel, in fifth grade, I felt a tremendous sense of belonging. Restaurants were kosher, people spoke Hebrew, and I didn't have to explain to anyone what my holidays were or why I couldn't go out on Friday night. After that trip, all I wanted to do was go back, and I later spent a month between my junior and senior years of high school living in Jerusalem.

The next time I went to Israel was on Wesleyan's interfaith Muslim-Jewish dialogue trip during the spring of my freshman year. Before the trip, I knew very little about Islam, and I didn't know any Muslims. (I'd actually already met Jamal and Kulsoom, but I didn't know they were Muslim, because we hadn't talked about it.) I clearly remember our first group discussion, before the trip, about the offensive cartoons of Prophet Mohammed that had recently appeared in Danish newspapers. I remember being acutely conscious of everything I said, wondering whether I was going to offend any of the Muslims in the room. But after spending three and-a-half days in Istanbul and six in Jerusalem, we understood each other within the contexts of our faiths, and felt comfortable discussing almost anything.

One day on the trip, we went into East Jerusalem for lunch. East Jerusalem is the Arab side of Jerusalem, and I had been told on a prior trip to Israel that it was not a safe place for a young Jewish woman. As we walked into East Jerusalem, I began to see and hear Arabic everywhere instead of in Hebrew. Men in kippot and *tzitzit* were replaced by women in hijabs, and I got more and more anxious. All the warnings I had ever heard about East Jerusalem were repeating themselves in my head. Just as I was thinking that I had felt much more comfortable when there were men in kippot around, my Muslim friend Maggie turned to me and said, "I see a lot of women in hijabs. That makes me feel safe."

At the same time, we'd had exactly the same thought, which was completely the opposite thought. It was a really incredible moment, and I was able to feel safer and relax knowing that Maggie felt safe. It also occurred to me that in the rest of Jerusalem, where I'd felt so at home, my Muslim friends might have felt uncomfortable; I hadn't seen that perspective before. In the Torah, there's a line that repeats over and over again: "Be kind to the stranger in your midst, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." My experience in East Jerusalem was a reminder of what it is like to be a stranger.

I came home from the trip with some very close Muslim friends, as well as memories of the intense and growth-filled discussions we'd had. These friendships have caused me to examine and explore and strengthen my connection to my own faith. Something changes when we recognize each other's backgrounds, when I acknowledge that I, a Jew, am talking to you, a Muslim or Christian or Hindu. This change allows us to have deeper and more meaningful relationships with one another. Interfaith engagement for me was primarily about having incredible conversations.

It wasn't until my junior year that I realized the connection between interfaith work and social justice, and the importance of reaching out to the rest of campus. That year, my friend Nadeem organized an interfaith fast-a-thon during the month of Ramadan. Students fasted for the day, and donated what they would have spent on food to the local food pantry. His goal had been to raise $1,000; we raised $4,000. For me, it was a reminder of the change that can happen when a few people come together to motivate others. In regards to interfaith engagement, it helped me to realize the importance of not just talking together, but *doing* together. Feeding the hungry is a value that we can all agree on, whatever our religious or political



COURTESY OF RACHEL BERKOWITZ

*Rachel Berkowitz (seventh from right), writes about this Muslim-Jewish dialogue trip to Jerusalem, which was organized by Wesleyan University.*

background. This past year, I worked with Nadeem and another friend to plan a second fast-a-thon. In addition to students, we involved Middletown residents from local religious communities and service clubs, and we raised more than $11,000.

The commandment, "Be kind to the stranger in your midst, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," is not merely a call to *remember* our own enslavement in Egypt and empathize with the stranger—we're also told to "be kind"; we're told to act. For me, that means working for social justice and planning events like the fast-a-thon. It also means starting conversations about faith and interfaith on my campus. There's a ton of peer support at my college for a student who's questioning his or her (or hir) sexual identity, but not nearly as much for someone questioning faith or religious identity. My hope is to get people talking, so that faith stops being something we only discuss in private, so that we can recognize what we have in common and work together toward social justice. ■

*Rachel Berkowitz recently graduated from Wesleyan University. She was a fellow with the Interfaith Youth Core in 2008–09 and is currently studying at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.*

# Jobless in Michigan: Eating Beans and Allaying Fears

By Josh Kaminski

ALPENA IS A GERIATRIC EDEN in northeastern Michigan, on the shores of Lake Huron. Friendly locals, beautiful historic homes, and unlocked doors. This is a town to die in, and happily. But for those of us unfortunate enough to be in the hunt for a job, Alpena is Normandy. In early June. In 1944.

I'm here. I'm young and strong, with a variety of labor skills and not enough pride to avoid using them. I've applied for no less than fifty jobs in the last month. Florists' shops, grocery stores, automobile parts distributors, organic farms, banks—you name it. I've gotten head shakes, smiles, apologies, outright laughs, and gruff dismissals, but not a single callback.

Why? Despite the natural beauty suggesting very much otherwise, the local economy is devastated. Two of the area's biggest employers (a concrete technology plant and a pressboard factory) recently laid off a combined force of more than 200 people. Not much in the grand scheme of things, but in a town of 11,000 (where the under-sixty-five population is around half that number) 200 jobs lost in one fell swoop is a wicked blow indeed. People are frightened, angry, confused, and depressed.

And they should be. The irresponsible lending practices perpetrated by banks nationwide have led to a record number of foreclosures. American families are being displaced at a disturbing rate. And when pieces of the pie start disappearing, it is all but natural to cling to the pie one has left. Shut down. Put on your winter fat and dig in for the long haul, because it's not getting better any time soon, right?

Yes, the housing crisis is very real. But apart from that, deeper than that, there has been a crushing blow dealt to American morale, particularly American *consumer* morale. In a recent scientific study that I conducted, the prospect of buying the Good Milk instead of the Cheap Milk induced more terror than Freddy Kruger in a nursery school. We are afraid to buy things because we are afraid that next week we won't have the means to buy them. Or, in my case, because the Unemployment Monster is supping on the marrow of my savings.

This is partly wise and partly damning. Wise because being careful with one's assets in an economic downturn is generally, well, *wise*. But this type of duck-and-cover is especially damaging to Alpena because the town has been so successful in repelling larger corporations and national chains. This has resulted in a number of businesses being built on family names and succeeding on family reputations: Garant's Office Supplies, Perch's Fresh Meat, Losinski Excavating, etc. As colorful and salty as the proprietors of these businesses may be, they simply do not have the hardiness of a national chain. There is no surplus capital to be absorbed in a time of need, no intimate familiarity with juicy corporate loans. Alpena is make-or-break for these families, and in a financial climate where everyone fears to spend money, cracks are beginning to show.

So. How do we fight seemingly justifiable fiscal cowardice? Spending with reckless abandon obviously creates a different kind of problem. And macroeconomic policies such as the Obama administration's stimulus package only go so far. With such practices come endless distribution and further evaluation. Which is not to say these capital-serums won't have a positive effect, but merely that it may take a considerable amount of time. Time that Alpena's entrepreneurs may not have. The question then becomes: what can I, as a jobless American schlub, do to help these people?

I advocate *being aware*. Whether we find ourselves in northeastern Michigan or downtown Los Angeles, we must be aware of the small businesses in our communities. We must be aware of who needs help. We must be aware of our own finances—how much can we really afford to spend?




*Josh Kaminski reports on his fruitless job hunts in Alpena, Michigan, and calls on community members to keep local businesses alive.*

NATALIE JOYNTON

Chances are we can trim a bit of fat and throw it to the entrepreneurial dogs. It may be tight (I have as of late become far too acquainted with potatoes, beans, and tuna), but it can mean the difference between entrepreneurs staying open and shutting down. On the community level, I recommend organizing patronage. Talk to small business owners and find out who is really hurting. Print up flyers and distribute them around town—perhaps you can wrangle up a group to eat at Mrs. Crittenden's restaurant or buy flowers from Mr. Grotenhuis's shop.

Finally, we must learn the difference between legitimate fears and phantoms. Imminent job loss or the electric company turning off your power—these are real and urgent concerns. But intellectual paralysis over the "terrible economy" or shaking one's head at the state of things—these are phantoms. No finger will descend from the sky to wag at you if you decide to support your local economy. What's more, if we continue to wring our hands and stuff our pittance under our mattresses, we will not, we *cannot* recover. We must make purchases in the hills and in the streets—we must never hoard. Now, pardon me. I'm going to go buy some flowers for my girlfriend, and maybe take her some lunch. A lady of her caliber deserves the finest local peanut butter and jelly. ■

*Josh Kaminski is an MFA candidate in creative writing (poetry emphasis) at Purdue University.*

# The One That Keeps Me Up

By Samantha Kirby

EVERY MORNING WHEN I READ the paper, I think about the following question: what do religious affiliations—our deepest tribal ties—mean in a globalized world increasingly filled with sectarian violence?

Most days when I am at work at the Interfaith Youth Core, a non-profit organization in Chicago, I think about the following question: what does it mean to be an American Jew (or Muslim or Buddhist or Humanist) living among the great diversity that above all else defines our nation?

And then, one day last December, I was faced with this question: what does it mean to be an American Jew working to build interfaith engagement when violence breaks out in Israel/Palestine?

In the year since I graduated from Northwestern University, my perspective on these questions has changed. I used to think the grand questions mattered most—the ones that address overarching global trends, the ones that I thought made the world spin round and kept powerful people up at night. But I have come to realize instead that it is the narrow questions—the personal and complicated ones that I used to avoid in academia so elegantly—that are transformative.

Like most progressive twenty-somethings recently minted with a liberal arts degree, I stand firmly for many things. I believe in dignity, equality, and freedom for all. Women (and men) should have control over their bodies (and minds). Access to education is a right, not a privilege; occupation of other lands is unacceptable.

## ASK THE AUTHOR!

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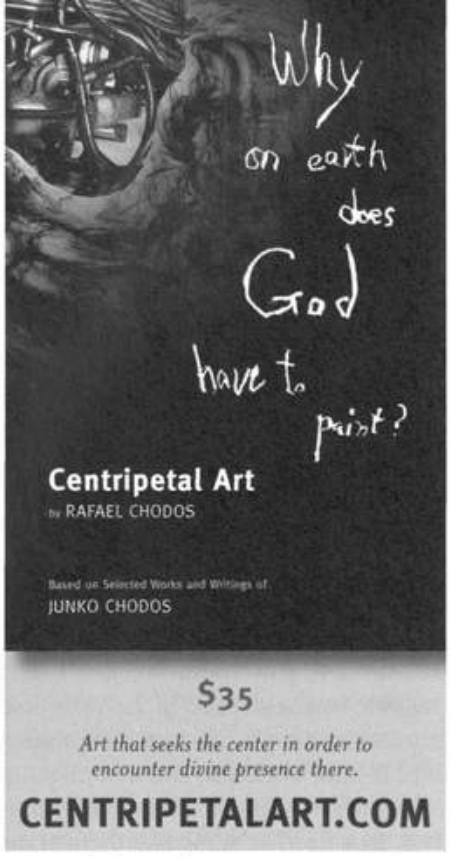
During the Gaza attacks, the Interfaith Youth Core—whose mission is to mobilize a movement of young interfaith leaders promoting religious pluralism and cooperative action—held an all-staff meeting to discuss our response to the situation. I happened to be the only Jew in the office that day sitting in the conference room facing my Muslim, Christian, and nonreligious colleagues. And as I looked from face to face, I realized an unpleasant truth: no matter how skilled you are at dialogue facilitation, talking about Israel/Palestine is uncomfortable.

The common misconception about the people who work at interfaith organizations is that they 1) practice a watered-down religion, 2) believe all religions are equally valid, or 3) are hippies who only want peace. None of these is true of the staff



COURTESY OF SAMANTHA KIRBY

*Samantha Kirby (pictured here in the Sahara Desert), writes about her interfaith work.*




at Interfaith Youth Core. Many people here hold deep, exclusive truth claims; are incredibly devout; and have a clear stance on geopolitical conflicts.

So when I talked about the situation with my colleagues, the conversation was not about peace, love, and relativism. It was a challenging and demanding discussion of how we should respond to this situation and provide our network with tools to process the crisis, no matter our own personal or political ties.

During the roundtable, I understood my colleagues' frustration at the disproportionate means being used by Israel, and I shared their outcry at the number of civilians killed and injured. But I didn't wear a *kaffiyeh*. While I don't think that anyone should have to live in fear of air raids, I don't think people should have to live in fear of rockets, either.

As an American Jew, I can't speak for the government or people of Israel, and I won't defend the killing of innocents or the defacement of mosques.

But as an American Jew, I can't pretend that I think the Jewish claim to a homeland is unreasonable or unfounded.

And above all, as an American Jew, I won't accept the common narrative that for my people to have a place in this world, others must suffocate. Loving Israel doesn't have to mean sacrificing the inherent dignity, humanity, and right of Palestinians to their homeland.

Some call this riding the fence.

I call it bridging the false divide between honoring my heritage and my humanistic values—the same values that are echoed throughout Judaism.

During our meeting that day, we realized that the issue at hand was not how to create a two-state solution or how to convince one another to think the same way. Instead, we needed to come up with a way for diverse communities—even those with strong, close relationships—to respond to issues of unrest in the Middle East without compromising the bonds they worked so hard to build. Every time a bomb explodes thousands of miles away, Jews and Muslims in the states can't turn on one another.

It is at these very moments of heightened unease that we must come together and recognize that while we might disagree on who is right or wrong over there, there is still much work to be done here. There are parks to clean, houses to build, and mouths to feed. We need both sides working together to realize our shared vision of a better America.

I don't know how this situation will be resolved, or if I will see it resolved in my lifetime. But I know that when I first heard about the Gaza offensive, I thought of my favorite professor of Arabic, who moved to Chicago with his family from the West Bank. He helped me prepare for studying abroad in Morocco, where I lived with a Muslim family and studied the Jewish community in Casablanca. When I returned to school the next year, he and I drank coffee and spoke *darija*, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, sharing stories of our experiences in Morocco—mine more recent, his as an undergraduate in university there years ago.

Until there is peace, I hope that we can at least treat one another like we believe in it.

And figuring out how to do this in the face of widespread violence? That is the new question—provocative and personal—keeping me up at night. ■

*Samantha Kirby is an executive associate at the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago. A native Californian, she studied religion at Northwestern University.*

# Here to Hear: Healing and Supporting Through Listening

By Corinne Knight

WE WERE PACKING UP supplies after a recent cancer fundraiser on campus, and a professor, who knew I was a cancer survivor, asked me, "How do you reconcile what has happened to you with your spirituality?" I have been asked this question, in myriad forms and phrasings, many times since childhood. This faculty member was quite polite about it, even asking permission to ask such a personal question.

Often the question is asked in a far less congenial fashion. The usual phrasing is along the lines of "How can you believe in a God (or higher power, or entity, or deity) that would allow something like this to happen?" Often (but not always), the person asking has lost someone to cancer and is asking out of pain or anger. I will admit that through most of my childhood and adolescence, the best answer I could come up with was a non-answer: a weak smile, a shrug, and something muttered quickly so I could make my escape from what inevitably turned into an uncomfortable situation.

Over time, however, both the answer and I have changed: "I believe because there has to be a point to it. There has to be a reason I had cancer twice and made it through." This is my honest belief. I have been either a cancer patient or survivor since I was four, and there must be a larger reason behind it.

People then pressed for follow-up answers. What reason would God have for a baby fighting a brain tumor, a promising young athlete losing a leg to bone cancer, or, in my case, a child enduring treatment for leukemia? What's the point of such suffering?

The instant answer (almost putting me back to the non-answer phase): "I have *no*

idea." It was reflective, perhaps, of my perpetually slightly baffled state of being at the time, especially where my thoughts on my own experiences were concerned, but it wasn't exactly useful, either to my listeners or to myself.

Not doing anyone any favors as I was, I went back to the metaphorical (and metaphysical) drawing board for more contemplation. What *was* the point? No matter how many times I asked, or how many ways I posed the question to myself or to God, I still had a complete lack of satisfactory answers.

The answer came, as such answers seem to for my generation, on a social networking website. A young man was starting up a cancer awareness club on our campus, and I happened to see the notice. On a whim, I decided to attend the first meeting, expecting, as I often was, to be the only cancer survivor in the room. Instead, I was surprised by the fact that there were two other survivors there. Though our experiences varied widely (I was fifteen years post-treatment, another was only two years out, and the third just between cycles of chemo), we had an instant connection. We sat and told jokes, shared stories, and compared notes on treatment. It was a spiritual experience, a sort of cancer communion. This was where I was meant to be.



COURTESY OF CORINNE KNIGHT

*Corinne Knight describes her spiritual journey as a cancer survivor.*

I began to work on finding the point of my own personal experience. I didn't know the phrase at the time, but this is where *tikkun olam* began in my little corner of the world. Our club began spreading awareness on campus, and my role as head of survivorship put me out in front, talking to and making connections with people affected by cancer.

The point finally became clear when I noticed that people, when I told them I was a survivor, would pour out their stories to me. Most of the time, it was a story about a distant relative or a parent of a friend. Sometimes, it was about a grandparent, parent, or sibling.

The ones that resonated with me the most, however, were the personal accounts. A grad student who had to give up a prestigious scholarship to her dream school. A staff member who has few people with whom she can talk about cancer. A faculty member whose perpetual good nature carried him through treatment for two different cancers. There were also the stories I observed rather than heard: an advisor clearly in pain, hinting at it but not yet willing to talk openly; an entire academic department shaken by a colleague's sudden decline and death; a young student in and out of hospice, but tirelessly fighting her aggressive cancer with a rare optimism.

The point, I found out, is listening. I found that my purpose in being here is to support the people still going through treatment, from diagnosis to long-term effects. That's the reason for each successive wave of cancer patients: we are here to ease the path for those who come after us by something as simple, as second nature, as listening.

With time, all cancer may be curable or even entirely preventable. Until then, the best we can do is ease the loneliness, the fear, the helplessness, and the hopelessness of fellow patients and survivors. We can support the people who just need someone to hear their stories and know that they are not alone in their experiences.

How, then, can this be broadened into a larger sense of *tikkun olam*? It expands into something much larger, something in keeping with the spirit of healing the world, quite easily. Listening to and sharing stories goes beyond just cancer patient and survivor support. Even as we confront social and political challenges, there are countless people who have suffered mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual torment. Listening to another person's stories gives the speaker a voice and validation.

Spiritual leaders, educators, and politicians all exhort my generation to "change the world." We should change the world with an energized spirit of *tikkun olam*, by all means, but we should do it by starting with the person next to us. With listening, we can begin healing others and, in the long run, ourselves. And that world healing, perhaps, is the ultimate point of being here. ■

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*Corinne Knight studies English in the MA program at California State University, Fullerton. She enjoys studying the intersection of literature, religion, and pop culture.*

# Reclaiming Sin

**By Natalie Smolenski**

THOUGH PROFOUNDLY COMMITTED to universal human equality and the importance of justice and reconciliation, I have never quite fit in with activists on the liberal or radical Left.

This is not to say I forsook the political process—I participated in both the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns on behalf of candidates I believed represented progressive alternatives to the reactionary status quo; I wrote columns for my college newspaper in which I argued for or against certain policies; I attended some rallies and demonstrations for causes I believed in; and after September 11, I used my position as a radio journalist to portray the American Muslim community in a truer light, hoping to counter some of the reporting that had resulted, directly and indirectly, in increased violence and suspicion against Muslim (or "Muslim-looking") people.

But I have never been able to affiliate myself openly and consistently with one movement or activist group, or even to label myself a "leftist" without feelings of great discomfort. The reason for this lies not in my particular political disagreements with members of the

Left, but rather with the spirituality I have held deeply—though not without crises of doubt—since I was a little girl.

When I was a child, I saw no conflict between religion and justice, religion and science, or religion and modernity. My family (by which I mean not only my parents, but also my grandparents, aunts, and their children), which emigrated from Poland, represented a combination of Old World values and New World pragmatism and aspirations. It was this combination that colored my views of what it meant for people to live justly and in balance. Though my relatives considered themselves mostly secular people who disagreed with many of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, they never belittled religion, they loved the Pope, and they even sent me to Catholic Sunday School at the local Polish church. Growing up, I believed that it was truly possible, indeed requisite, to love both people and God at the same time.

When it came time to understand the political realities of the world, however, I was absolutely floored by the weight of rancor and resentment against religion among those who shared my commitments to peace, justice, and equality. I simultaneously saw the rage emanating from religious leaders and circles, convinced they were battling Satan himself in the guise of other people for the sake of civilization.

As I watched the "religious" and "anti-religious" camps sacrifice integrity, patience, principle, and humility to score blows against one another, I became profoundly disillusioned. I vacillated wildly from one extreme to the other. By the time I graduated from college, my value system was so conflicted and frustrated that I teetered on the brink of despair, suffering from an identity crisis I couldn't explain either to my nonreligious or religious friends. I would sometimes joke with them, "It would be a lot easier if I just didn't believe," but the joke usually fell flat. It seemed ridiculous to most well-meaning people that I was so profoundly torn over what appeared to be fairly straightforward issues.

Eventually, while studying in Cairo, I realized I had come to evaluate people's actions so entirely in political terms that I had missed the point of spiritual instruction altogether: helping people overcome the rancor and demons within themselves. I, like many "secular" progressives influenced in overwhelming ways by Enlightenment ideas, had rejected entirely the concept of sin, seeing it as an arbitrary and reductive way of evaluating moral behavior. For moral condemnation, it seemed we had substituted legislation and the political process, which proved ultimately unsatisfying as yardsticks of moral behavior, given the notoriously compromised nature of any judicial and legislative system.

I am now convinced of how necessary it is for all those engaged in the political arena to take a step back from the ends for which they are fighting and evaluate their own conduct on the basis of the age-old notion that it is the health of a person's soul and conscience, not how much they are able to "get done" politically, that determines his or her overall well-being and relationships with other people. And, yes, his or her relationship with God.

I use the word "God" knowing that not all those on the spiritual path believe in it, and that it turns some automatically away. But it is our responsibility to speak what we know, and to own what we believe without imposing it on others. Liberalism and multiculturalism, not to mention spirituality, must not mean reducing everyone to a common denominator. Universalism is not the same thing as sameness. We are all different people, and I hope that my difference finds acceptance and respect along with the differences of others.

Since my reacceptance of the idea of sin, I have engaged in a long process of repentance and cleansing that is far from complete. I can see how far my own moral conduct has strayed, not only from what I was intrinsically comfortable with, but from ideals that I had once believed people should aspire to, while of course understanding that they can never fully reach them. I also see now that I have been greatly conditioned by a cultural and political climate that roils with outrage, recrimination, and character assassination, not to mention cutthroat competition for position, status, and sexual desirability. This climate seems to worsen with every passing year.

If the term "spiritual progressive" has any meaning, it must be to help lift American society—and, increasingly, the world, which imbibes our values and ways of life whether it wants to or not—out of this deep state of spiritual disrepair. Thinking about sin is a tool to help break this downward spiral, which is a result of the unchecked tyranny of the ego.

I am optimistic. Times of great chaos are always crucibles for the formation of new spiritual and political traditions. God willing, those who see themselves as "spiritual progressives" will not shrink from the tasks at hand. ■

*Natalie Smolenski graduated from Brown University in 2007 with a BA in Middle East Studies. She lived in Egypt for two years and now resides in Boston.*



COURTESY OF NATALIE SMOLENSKI

*Natalie Smolenski (pictured here on the Mount of Olives) reflects on spirituality, activism, and the idea of sin.*

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**
*(continued from page 19)*

the prisoner services world," with programs that are "as effective as a Band-Aid on a broken leg." Those are welcome and familiar words for many of us who have struggled to find the golden ring of redemption as a counterpoint to our jaded and cynical colleagues whose few remaining hopes dangle by a thread.

## Change Must Become a Mark of Manhood

THE DREAM MOTIF IS PROFOUNDLY powerful. It is the philosopher's stone of life itself. Yet behind the walls, as Schwartz points out, "no one had dreams." She asked a table of inmate card players, "What are your dreams of the future once you get out?" The only man to break the ensuing silence said, "Shit, what's a dream, man? I don't know what that is."

In most jails and prisons, lassitude and boredom are endemic. Men get up, eat, watch TV, play cards, and waste time. Nobody tries to do anything different, especially anything to change the behavior of those confined.

One reason for that is because it is a point of pride, a mark of manhood, in the confined population that nobody is going to "mess with" them, or try to change them. A friend of mine, a man who had done time in Texas as a habitual criminal, used to quote the inmates' mantra: "Don't mess with me, man. I'll do my time standing on my head. Just don't mess with me." What that means, of course, is not only that we have to mess with them; it also means that change must become a mark of manhood.

That makes Schwartz's success in implementing "a largely untested jail philosophy—create a humane atmosphere, give criminals some opportunities, [and] make them responsible and accountable for their behavior" all the more remarkable. At the same time, she was herself seeking to learn some of the moral lessons that accompany responsibility and accountability, lessons "about the sin of anger, the sin of violence and something about shame."

But who among us isn't, or (a better question) who among us shouldn't be, seeking to learn those lessons? The difference, or one difference, is that Schwartz names things for what they are. She struggles with anger when hurt or ashamed, "something many people struggled with, criminals and citizens alike." And that is part of the beauty of this book; it is a window into the soul of Sunny Schwartz.

This book is full of little and sometimes big pearls of wisdom, like the observation, "Few people were ever just the bad guy." Anybody with any sense who has ever spent much time in the criminal justice system knows that, with the exception of psychopaths—and there aren't many of those—most people are a mix of good and bad. The Shadow, like a river, will run its course; the question is which channel it will follow and whether the banks can contain it. Each of us individually and all of us together have the capacity to prepare ourselves and each other to choose that channel.

## The Dysfunctional Criminal Justice Process

ANYONE WITH ANY SENSE WHO HAS EVER spent much time dealing with criminals knows that most criminal behavior is the result of anger, shame, poverty, and child abuse. Usually these are not stand-alone factors but exist in combination. They are aggravated by the criminal justice process, which is more like a game that rewards avoidance of responsibility and exacerbates anger. It is a game, moreover, that is played by professionals—lawyers, police officers, judges, probation officers, bailiffs, prison guards, and others—who make their living from the prison-industrial complex. Amateurs—the public—get to participate by watching, either in the courtroom or through the news media, or by sitting on the occasional and increasingly rare jury.

This process pretty much does away with the principle of accountability to one's peers upon which our system of justice was founded. It conflates the victim and the offender, with the latter often feeling like he is the wronged party, and the actual victim feeling like she has been victimized again, this time by the system.

Most cases are settled by plea bargaining, in which the prosecuting attorney and the defense attorney engage in what looks for all the world like a poker game, with the stakes being years taken out of the defendant's life and satisfaction supposedly given but often taken from the victim's life. Justice wins less often than the most skilled poker player. After this process, the defendant pleads guilty in court, usually with a vacant stare and oblivious to the real decision-making, which has already occurred between his lawyer and the prosecutor. The most common scene outside a criminal courtroom occurs after a plea when the defendant, shielded from the emotional consequences of his actions, asks his lawyer, "What happened in there?"

This is a travesty and it satisfies no one, not the victim, not the offender, and not the public, which is ill served and not protected by a system in which true accountability seldom if ever happens. That is in large part because of the basic structure of the criminal justice system, which keeps people apart, often for good reason in the case of the violent and psychotic. But those offenders are in the minority and like most one-size-fits-all arrangements, this one can get in the way of the genuine remorse that leads to behavior change and safer streets. That is the magic of restorative justice, or as I have come to call it, restorative community justice.

## Restorative Community Justice in Austin, Texas

WE STARTED DOING WHAT WE CALLED community justice many years ago in Austin. I defined it as "an effort to reweave the fabric of community by forging a partnership between local governmental entities, the private sector, and community groups to facilitate the performance by private citizens of the functions that were once performed by the extended family, neighborhood, and school. It consists of a matrix of programs designed to increase cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among and between citizens, their local governments—city, county, and state—and private enterprise. The focus of the programs at the most intense, private, and personal level is the development of the kind of caring relationships between individuals that form the basis of community and that can only happen through the sharing of pain and joy. Such sharing once was part of the warp and woof of community, but as the community's fabric has frayed, the personal sharing of lives has

diminished, and the resulting erosion of the quality of our public life is profound. The solution is to replenish our social capital, and that is what we have set out to do."

Restorative justice was the next step.

My wife, Twila, a scholar of chaos theory, and I started going to conferences at which the fledging restorative justice movement was discussed. We became friends with Kay Pranis, whom Schwartz discusses in the book, and others who had come to share our dissatisfaction with the current system and the way it actually prevents the kind of connection for which we all long. Schwartz's reaction to the magic of restorative justice was much like ours.

It's like how Schwartz describes the atmosphere in the first meeting of what was called the antiviolence coalition in the jail: "There was a sacred hush to the room, one I'd felt sometimes in temple. I felt a deep yearning for connection, for these disparate groups to find common cause and stop the suffering in our communities." This, better than anything, describes the spiritual hunger that forms the basis of restorative justice: we are all bound together in our shared grief.

## A Revival of the Spirit of Democracy

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, OR RESTORATIVE community justice, could be essential to our future as a democracy. Our country has at times been a bright and shining beacon when we were doing something really special with our notions of democracy and justice. But both the world and we have realized that our light has been dim lately. We are in need of a revival of the spirit that brought us forth. That is the promise of restorative justice: that the spirit of democracy rests on the shoulders of justice, which in turn rests on the shoulders of an informed and responsible citizenry. Responsibility in a democracy belongs to all of us together, and restorative justice practices make the doing of justice everybody's job. Sunny Schwartz's book is about how it can be done in even the most unforgiving and hostile environments.

What Schwartz and her compatriots have been able to create behind bars is best illustrated by the comment of a prisoner, who said, "I've been arrested somewhere like thirty times. I been to a hundred holding cells, been processed and humiliated so many damn times. But here, this is the first place where I got to work on my problems. The first place!"

Those problems end up being our problems if they are not addressed, and that quotation explains eloquently why the current system makes that work of behavior change, already the hardest there is, even more difficult. The author points out that "Voters have been happy to spend money on jails and prisons, but not on anything to keep these men out of jail."

I may be an incurable optimist, but I believe voters are getting smarter. At some point the public will realize that in our criminal justice policies we are replicating Einstein's definition of insanity by doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

## Restorative vs. Retributive Justice

OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS retributive in nature. It looks backward. That means that it is based on the principle of payback, as in, if you do that, we'll do this to you. The current criminal justice system asks three questions:

Whodunnit?
What laws were violated?
How are we going to punish the offender?

Restorative justice is proactive and forward-looking. It is a problem-solving approach that focuses on making things right. It also asks three questions:

What is the harm?
What needs to be done to repair the harm?
Who is responsible for this repair?

There are three reasons to do community restorative justice. First, it is what people want, because it empowers them. Second, it is what victims want because they get to participate. And third, it is what the public wants because it speaks to that internal sense of justice that we all share. All of these reasons make restorative justice good politics.

Moreover, restorative justice is what the country needs. It strengthens the institutions of liberty by involving the public, and we all know in our hearts that such strengthening is necessary to rescue democracy. That makes it good government and the next evolutionary step toward a better life for our children. That means that restorative justice is what the future holds.

Crime victims realize that the justice process doesn't end with the courtroom. Life continues, and so does the search for justice. The relationship between the victim and the offender continues. They affect each other's lives whether or not either wants that to happen. Some victims want to work with offenders because often the victims find themselves in prisons of their own rage and for some, such work is a way to get out. Nobody can bring the reality of the effect of crime home to an offender like a crime victim.

I was the district attorney in Austin for many years. (I was once told by a waitperson at a restaurant just outside Dallas that a customer at a nearby table wanted to know if I was the "district eternity" of Austin.) For the first few years of my tenure I thought that justice was vengeance, and that all I had to do was to be tough on crime. And I was. Our conviction rate during my tenure hovered around 85 percent and juries, which can sentence in Texas, assessed long prison terms for dangerous people.

But as I worked with crime victims and saw their pain, I got tired of waiting for something terrible to happen before I could do anything, and so I started working on prevention. I was elected to eight four-year terms, opposed twice in thirty-two years, and both times the issue was the role of the district attorney. My opponent contended that the proper role was just processing the cases, not the kind of social worker stuff about prevention that I talked about. My campaign slogan was "not *just* tough prosecution but *both* tough prosecution and smart prevention."

I cited Austin's low crime rate as evidence of the success of our approach. In the process I learned that the public is not interested in who can sound the toughest. The public is interested in programs that ensure public safety, accountability, and the strength of community.

People want to be strong. One source of strength is self-reflection. It is too easy to just blame the offender; at a deep level the community knows this and knows it must look at itself. Restorative community justice provides opportunities for such self-examination.

That is the way that we can counteract the cultural messages that we often get from the media, which understand that fear sells.

## Restoring Power to the Community

IN A DEMOCRACY, THE POWER IS NOT IN the criminal justice system; the criminal justice system depends on the community. The community is the source of power in a democracy. It is the source of healing, of values. We learn our values from the institutions of community—home, family, neighborhood, church (or temple or mosque), and school. I call that the ethics infrastructure, and it is what regulates behavior, not the law. The law is just a backstop. It catches those few who make it through that team of mommas and daddies and aunts and uncles and teachers and preachers and neighbors and cousins and friends. That team has suffered over the years from the pressures of increasing urbanization and mobility. Power has traditionally resided in that team, and now that it is different from the way it was in simpler times, we must rearrange our notions of power. Restorative community justice brings that team back together in an atmosphere of shared power.

That raises the question we must ultimately face: how do we share power? The answer is as ancient as our species and it is in our bones: we share stories. Our task is to re-story if we are to restore, and restorative community justice is a way to share stories. It is a way to make the community a partner in its own protection and a way to make victim pain and public anger count. Restorative justice creates relationships through stories.

In Austin, we employ a restorative practice called Neighborhood Conference Committees most extensively in cases involving juveniles. We also sometimes employ what are called sentencing circles in adult cases. In our practices, the issue of guilt is not in question; it has been answered by a plea of guilty. The remaining questions are those of restorative justice dealing with harm, including sanctions, which can be best addressed by citizens.

It appears to many Americans that democracy is in trouble, stalked by apathy like a wolf that is never far from the door. It manifests in a feeling of what's the use, and it is based in a sense of powerlessness to control the forces that influence our lives. That powerlessness is dangerous, because the next step is the fear that can enshroud itself in fascism.

And it's all so unnecessary. It is contrary to our tradition of a muscular people who are not afraid to determine our own values. That is the reason for the connection and mutual respect that form the basis of democracy.

It takes moral muscle to tell kids no, to sit in a sentencing circle with neighbors and confront young offenders and bullies that disturb our quality of life. That is where we get the strength to say no to corrupt government and big corporations, why we are able to influence the forces that impact our lives. That is what we have always done historically. It is our moral tradition.

The London Metropolitan Police force was founded in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel, who said:

> The police at all times should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police; the police are the only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to *duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare.*

## How Everybody Can Protect the Community

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN EVERYBODY took responsibility for the protection of the community. Some people rode out in posses and confronted the lawbreaker and others stayed home and took care of the victim, but everybody was involved. The real reason for the emergence of restorative justice is that, for a long time, people have been concerned about our values eroding along with our communities.

The functions that are necessary to the existence of community include the resolution of disputes and the maintenance of order. Those functions, now divorced from the community, are those of the criminal justice system. In a healthy community the ethics infrastructure made justice an organic product of community. But the historical decline of the ethics infrastructure, coupled with increased urbanization, increased the need to control the population, which led to the emergence of the criminal justice system and its artificial social controls.

The old mandate for law enforcement was to control crime and preserve liberty and freedom. It presumed an ordered society with intact institutions of liberty and communities where children were cared for and neighbors looked out for each other. The ladder then had bottom rungs, and crime was dealt with one case at a time. The police and prosecutor were reactive, and the focus of reform was on streamlining the criminal justice system and making it more efficient.

The current mandate for law enforcement is to prevent crime by being more proactive. Examples include community policing, community prosecution, and community courts. But they are not enough. They are just more government action, more case processing, more of the government taking ownership of the conflict. We are coming to understand that there is value in the conflict itself.

The evolving mandate of community restorative justice is to use the opportunities that are created by crime to solve the problem that led to the crime by reweaving the fabric of community. Like Schwartz's work, these are not just new techniques; they require a new way of thinking. They do not necessarily spring from new values as much as they represent rediscovered old values and a recognition that values must come from community.

The meaning of restorative community justice for government agencies is that they must work together and share power and authority. That is hard, given the ubiquitous turf wars of the system that are the result of scant public oversight and the erection of walls of blame over which the

various agencies throw accusations.

The antidote to such bureaucratic dysfunction is for those public agencies to collaborate in bringing lay citizens into the process, teach them how to exercise power, and then work with them to exercise that power together. Community restorative justice has worked in Austin as citizens and criminal justice professionals have joined in the exercise of power through modalities like circle sentencing, neighborhood conference committees, and mediation. In short, we have tried to do in the neighborhoods much of what Schwartz has been successful in doing inside the jail.

The lesson for all of us in the challenges we face in dealing with crime is that we must mean what we say about justice and democracy. We will make mistakes, and admitting that is a new role for lawyers and other system professionals. But what we need is a new relationship with the public, an open dialogue with people through which we share power and share our passion. That's why we go into this work in the first place. This way we are giving people a way to do something directly about values in their town, in their neighborhood, and in their school. In the process of doing that, we are helping the community become more prosperous, more peaceful, and more interesting.

And that just might be justice after all. ■

**A LABOR LEADER LOSES HIS WAY**
*(continued from page 22)*

worker self-organization and empowerment to smoothly negotiated deals between union leaders and government managers.

And we can also see how the respective ways in which UNITE and HERE came to their potentially very beneficial merger in 2004 could also have sowed the seeds for the merger's own destruction, insofar as the UNITE side was likely to continue to lose its base in workers who were losing their jobs to relatively cheap labor outside the country, while the HERE side would proportionally be likely to increase its influence with the expansion of the hotel, restaurant, and especially gaming sectors as the United States itself shifted to an increasingly service economy. We can see that this confluence of historical forces might well provide a temptation for mega-union SEIU, with its upwards of 2 million members and its very well-paid and large union staff with a presence in virtually every major American city, to leap in and exploit the potential structural conflict inside UNITE HERE, believing that it has a more correct vision of widespread and easy unionization, and a chance of success in leading a raid on a fellow union, even one with a strong, private-sector rank-and-file base and a powerful and loyal infrastructure of long-time organizers and capable union leaders.

## SEIU's Raid on UNITE HERE

THE COMING TO FRUITION OF THESE negative tendencies appears to be exactly what has happened in the past year. UNITE HERE began with a co-presidency between UNITE's Bruce Raynor and HERE's John Wilhelm. With the possibility of a single presidency that Wilhelm appeared likely to win at the annual convention in June, Raynor made the decision, sometime in the fall of 2008, to reject the possibility of true UNITE HERE unity that had been envisioned when the merger originally took place. Instead, he decided to declare the UNITE HERE merger a failure, ignore the explicit terms of the union's constitution that prohibit actions designed to undermine its integrity, and either seek out or respond to overtures from Andy Stern to take the bank and the UNITE-side workforce and pursue a merger with SEIU.

Stern for his part had already made unsuccessful overtures to both UNITE and HERE to join SEIU under his leadership four years ago, and it is the contention of many in these unions that Stern has now decided to take advantage of the conflict within UNITE HERE to try to achieve the same outcome by a process of divide and conquer. He financed and, with Raynor, created an artificial new hotel-restaurant-gaming union called "Workers United" that is an affiliate of SEIU and is now openly trying to undermine traditional UNITE HERE jurisdictions around the country, and essentially pillage them.

This has been a tragic and, for many, infuriating development just at the historical moment when the country has a new pro-labor president in Barack Obama and a strongly pro-labor Secretary of Labor in Hilda Solis, and just at the moment when the long-struggled-for Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)—guaranteeing unions the right to gain legal recognition and collective bargaining rights upon presentation of a majority of signed union cards to employers—was very near passage in Congress. Already the disunity in labor's ranks that Stern's actions have in significant part precipitated has strengthened Republican resistance to the passage of EFCA in Congress. Most recently it led Democrats to abandon the inclusion of the card-check provision that seemed headed for passage at the time of Obama's election. Thus, just as organized labor seemed poised to forge a national consensus in support of the most progressive pro-labor legislation since the passage of the Wagner act in 1933, it now appears to be beset by internal wrangles that have allowed moderate Democrats resistant to the expansion of workers' rights to break from Obama and the Democratic leadership and ally with the openly anti-labor Republican forces to block truly significant reform.

## Choices the Leaders Could Have Made

BUT THE IMPORTANT THING TO RECOGNIZE about Stern's attempt at a hostile takeover of UNITE HERE is that the larger socio-economic and historical forces that have created the opportunity for him to take this kind of action do not themselves explain the action. Bruce Raynor could have responded to his declining power within UNITE HERE by honoring the spirit of partnership that was the basis of the 2004 merger and participating in the power sharing negotiations that John Wilhem repeatedly offered to him. Andy Stern could have used his leadership role in Change to Win to seek to heal the fissure between Wilhelm and Raynor and participate in a dignified three-way conciliation process that acknowledged the former HERE side's expanding role in the private sector but that incorporated initiatives to protect and strengthen remaining UNITE side sectors of the workforce, including initiatives

likely to be supported by President Obama and Secretary Solis that would limit and even seek to reverse the loss of UNITE side manufacturing jobs overseas.

Why then have Raynor and Stern chosen instead what appears to be the most destructive path possible, replete with internet smear campaigns against Wilhelm and other UNITE HERE leadership, attempts by SEIU staff to undermine and even defeat ongoing UNITE HERE organizing campaigns to the detriment of workforces that had nearly unionized, the creation of the SEIU-bankrolled artificial new union "Workers United" whose main objective is to weaken UNITE HERE by capturing a portion of its workforce, and the use of physical threats and lockouts in areas of the country where the UNITE-side leadership has majority control of the union's regional governing boards to evict elected HERE-side leaders of UNITE HERE locals from their offices and replace them with UNITE-side counterparts? Why would two life-long labor leaders who have devoted their whole adult lives to the labor movement do something so seemingly irrational and counter-productive?

## Reasons for Leaders' Destructive Behavior

THE ANSWER HERE REQUIRES BRINGING to the forefront of our thinking an aspect of what shapes historical events and processes that is not yet well understood by progressives—namely, the vulnerability of everyone raised in our individualistic, socially separated, alienated culture to the legacy of unworthiness and humiliation that introduces a compensatory narcissistic distortion into both our perception of events and our interpretation of and response to them.

We live in a world that is corroded not only by the material injustice of economic and other forms of inequality, and not only by the material threats posed by environmental degradation and unsustainable production and consumption practices, but also by the spiritual immiseration that results from the deprivation of sustained authentic and affirming connection with other human beings. Buried beneath the artificiality and noisiness of our media culture and the often passively endured and isolating routines of everyday life is a chronic and universal sense of "underconfirmation" of our deepest self, of being insufficiently recognized at the core of our being by other human beings, including family members and those we love most and most long to connect with.

Although in reality this failure of recognition and social solidarity is no one's fault and is but a social legacy of centuries of alienation, of the as yet unrealized possibility of a world based on love and mutual affirmation, we each internalize this deprivation of recognition as inherently humiliating and a source of mysterious unworthiness and shame, an abnegation of the self that is so painful as to be unsupportable and which we therefore deny and banish from awareness. In its place we build the narcissism of the ego, a compensatory self-"image" worn on the outside of the underrecognized and concealed real self and compulsively motivated to aggrandize itself in order to ward off the threat of the other's refusal of reciprocating connection.

This epidemic of non-recognition circulating through our culture is the psycho-spiritual root of human suffering, and the need to deny the humiliation attendant to it exerts a distorting influence on judgment, choice, and action, leading us to repeatedly misunderstand what situations require to move us all forward.

Seen through the lens of this psychic structure—this humiliated "inner victim" that is a legacy of our culture's pervasive alienation—the historical socio-economic tendencies I described earlier as creating "vulnerabilities" inside the UNITE HERE merger or in the potential SEIU response to a breakdown inside UNITE HERE are actually experienced by leaders like Raynor and Stern as what might be called temptations to go crazy. Although I know neither of these men personally and do not pretend to know the actual workings of their minds, the reality of the universal effects of social alienation on our collective psyches makes psycho-social hypotheses of the following kind plausible in a way that begin to make sense of what otherwise appears to be simply irrational and destructive conduct.

On the Raynor side, the "loss of face" associated with UNITE's decline and the waning of Raynor's power relative to Wilhelm and HERE may well have created the illusion that he, a lifetime labor leader now approaching sixty, would suffer a humiliating "defeat" at the June UNITE HERE convention, tempting his compensatory ego to puff itself up and try to destroy the union itself.

In Stern's case, his already existing narcissistic persona—that compensatory image that inhabits all of us and that in his case he imagines is himself—may be tempted by the opportunity history is offering him to be the godfather and "save" the colleague who comes to him, to put Amalgamated Bank's resources to the correct use, and to bring his partnership-with-management organizing model drawn from public-sector organizing to the entire labor movement, with him as the leader of a new twenty-first-century labor vanguard that will revitalize a movement that has been stuck or declining for many decades. These are the narratives of the narcissistic ego covering over and protecting the unconfirmed real self in each man, and because there are partial truths in each man's story, they are each able to convince themselves that the destructive course of action they have embarked upon is the best one possible, is even necessary.

Thus we see that whatever explanatory force the development of objective conditions have to "setting the stage" for the historical events that follow upon and respond to them, these conditions acquire human meaning through their appropriation by subjective human consciousness—in this case through the distortions of perception shaped by Raynor and Stern's psychology that may have led them to succumb to the temptation to act out their self-protective grandiosity rather than respond to the same conditions in the constructive manner called for by the historic opportunity of Obama's election (and of course called for simply to advance the internal solidarity and mutual support of the labor movement).

## The Inadequacy of Constitutions to Ensure Cooperation

THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM ALL this is that to address the distortions

embedded in all of our psyches that are the legacy of under-recognition and residual humiliation—of the alienation of self from other that pervades our capitalist culture—we must create processes of collective reflection and modes of collective intervention that can identify and thaw the distortions that can so derail progressive progress. These dynamics actually play themselves out all across our cultural landscape, inspiring horrific and unnecessary social violence in the name of grandiose, compensatory nationalism in the context of war-inclined nation-states and also undermining one progressive organization after another to the point that many people have come to choose the safety of privatism to idealistic public movements that threaten them with exhausting and emotionally or physically threatening trauma.

The standard way that we have sought to address this dynamic up to this time is exactly the way UNITE and HERE tried to do it at the time of the merger: write a UNITE HERE constitution that purports to state in writing how conflicts and other internal difficulties will be resolved, while forbidding (on pain of expulsion from the union) actions that seek to ignore the constitution's democratic processes with the intent of harming the union or undermining its jurisdiction. Bruce Raynor's conduct in fomenting rebellion among UNITE HERE's regional boards around the country, in purposely forming a competing union ("Workers United") designed to effectively steal sectors of UNITE HERE's workforce, and in joining forces with SEIU to promulgate attacks on UNITE HERE's leadership through internet smears and expensive mailers sent to tens of thousands of worker households (including my own, as my partner works for UNITE HERE) ... all of these actions appear to be obvious violations of UNITE HERE's founding documents, which clearly prohibit secessionist organizing and participation in actions in concert with any other labor organization aimed at displacing UNITE HERE's authority and influence over its own jurisdiction and membership.

But written documents like these, while important as representing a binding moment of solidarity among their signatories, are also no more than words on paper that are dependent for their efficacy and meaning upon the good will, cooperation, and commitment of those who have agreed to be governed by them.

At the time of this writing, UNITE HERE has brought suit against Bruce Raynor for these and other actions, and Raynor has responded by resigning his position in UNITE HERE, becoming president of Workers United and executive vice president of SEIU, and hiring his own bank of lawyers to argue his case. However this legal battle unfolds in the coming weeks, it is clear that the pathological dynamic that has led to this crisis will now be played out in the legal arena—with the political struggle that has been carried on in the public arena involving media manipulation, inflammatory websites, misleading mass mailings, and the consequent stirring up of confusion among workers—now taking the form of a war of legal interpretations by lawyers trained by their own ethics codes to make "any available legal argument" irrespective of its moral validity based on the actual truth of what has taken place.

## The Need for Psycho-Spiritual Healing Processes in Progressive Movements

Because legal documents and concepts are always subject to this kind of indeterminate interpretation, with rational arguments always available to construct legal positions congruent with pre-existing psycho-spiritual distortions, these documents and concepts cannot provide the solution to the tendency toward psycho-spiritual distortion itself. Instead what is needed is the creation of healing processes built into the ongoing practice of our social movements, processes that consciously foresee the vulnerability of all of our social change movements to what we might call "internal panic," to losing touch with our most idealistic commitments to the creation of a loving and egalitarian future society and lapsing into the narcissistic ego-identifications that are a universal expression of the humiliation built into our conditioning within the system of social relations we are seeking to surpass.

I am now sixty-two years old and have been involved in social and political activism for my entire adult life, and not once have I been involved with a progressive movement or project that did not undermine itself and, in many cases, destroy itself by succumbing to the ghost of its own internalized humiliation, the legacy of the under-confirmation that every one of us suffers from as a result of being shaped within a social world in which we have been trained to doubt the lasting presence of the other as a reciprocating carrier of love, acceptance, and recognition.

Those who wish to preserve the existing society rather than transform it have sought for centuries to manage this problem through the control systems of reified roles policed by disciplinary hierarchies and various forms of "the pledge of allegiance." But those who want to transform the world have hardly begun to practice the kind of ongoing spiritual reassurance needed to consciously monitor and very gradually heal the same wounds that the preservers of the status quo seek to keep in a state of unconscious repression.

There is no sense and no future in proceeding as if we in the social change movements are already in the future society, with our only obstacle being those benighted others who don't yet see the justice of our cause—because the reality is that others do see it, but rightly don't trust that we have any means to assist them in getting from the present moment to a world that is actually better than the one they are carving out within the relative safety, however despairing, of their private solutions.

What such healing-centered psycho-spiritual processes would look and feel like in the context of a hard-boiled arena of class struggle like the labor movement is something that spiritual progressives may be uniquely able to address and propose. These processes must include regular occasions of celebration that elevate our sense of connection to each other and serve as regular pre-figuring reminders of the world we aspire to bring about, as well as mediations that allow us to manifest the truth of our differences and to work out a path toward reconciling them. What these celebratory and meditative processes look like concretely is something we will take up in future issues of *Tikkun*.

In the meantime, I hope the leadership of the labor movement as a whole (and

there is no good reason this should not include Andy Stern) will see clearly the destructive dynamics that the legacy of narcissistic identifications has unleashed, and intervene decisively to stop and reverse these dynamics before they undermine the greatest opportunity that organized labor has had in a generation to make significant social progress and exert influence on the moral direction of society. ■

**GREEN LIVING**
*(continued from page 26)*

world in a new way.

We lived in an eco-neighborhood called the Bustan, which means "orchard" in Hebrew. It consists of ten geodesic dome structures insulated with straw bales and plastered with mud. These domes were our homes for the six weeks we were there. Built by students of previous green apprenticeship courses, the domes serve as a testament to the ever-evolving status of the Bustan. As each new apprenticeship group contributes in some way, the neighborhood becomes a living inspiration for students during their time at Kibbutz Lotan. At present, along with the domes, the Bustan includes a mud-plastered kitchen, solar oven, mud oven, organic gardens, active compost, worm compost, compost toilets, solar panels, and solar-heated water for the showers. Utilizing these facilities on a daily basis allowed us to live and breathe permaculture.

In addition to the hands-on experience we gained by simply living in the Bustan, we also studied and worked full-time, five days a week. We learned the principles and techniques involved in permaculture, and then we went out and built our own compost piles, planted our own gardens and watched them grow, and built a bench out of old tires, trash, and mud plaster. One of the basic tenets of permaculture is the idea that each of us has the ability to "just do it." Whatever particular task "it" refers to, permaculture encourages us to get out there and make it happen. This quality of the course is what made the apprenticeship one of the most empowering experiences I have ever had. Here I was, surrounded by like-minded people, being encouraged by knowledgeable mentors, and studying something about which I was passionate. On a daily basis I got to *experience* my ability to go out there and "just do it." I realized that we are often held back by our fear of failure. But in reality, making mistakes is the best way to learn, and the *only* way to "fail" at anything in this life is to not act. My experience at Kibbutz Lotan gave me the confidence to manifest my dreams.

In addition to learning permaculture techniques, the apprenticeship group learned about community design through a component based on the internationally recognized Gaia Education Ecovillage Design Curriculum. We learned what is involved in establishing a new community and what is necessary to nourish it into a long-term entity. Again, life in the Bustan, and on the Kibbutz, provided for first-hand experience. We could observe how our small community within the Bustan was functioning, as well as examine the already established community of Kibbutz Lotan. We visited neighboring kibbutzim and communities in order to compare how they function. These communities served as inspiration for the communities we eventually designed for ourselves.

First we formed groups based on shared visions that would be the backbones of each community. Then each group followed its vision to design the ecological, social, spiritual, and economic factors that we wanted to shape and sustain our community. This process encouraged us to think about what qualities we look for in a community, a home, and a support system. It highlighted the "people care" ethic of permaculture, which points out that caring for the earth and interacting harmoniously with nature include learning to interact harmoniously with each other. In my opinion it would be incomplete to teach permaculture design without also teaching community design.

During the course it was obvious how our apprenticeship group was forming a community and making connections that would last a lifetime. Since the course has ended, I have come to realize that we are part of an even greater community of green apprenticeship alumni. This community extends around the world and connects hundreds of people who are now doing amazing things in their respective homes. Currently, an international alumni network is being established through which we will be able to look up where people are and get involved in each other's projects when we travel. In my apprenticeship group alone, there were six countries represented.

I could have studied permaculture anywhere in the world in a variety of "convenient" ways. All of the courses teach the same theory and principles required to obtain a Permaculture Design Certificate. Living in the Bustan and being able to *participate* in what I was learning for six weeks was what made the green apprenticeship unique. Moving to Lotan, I did not know what to expect. I knew I would have fun, learn a lot, and play with mud. What I did not know was that the six weeks I spent doing the apprenticeship would turn out to be one of the most significant periods of my life. ■



COURTNEY ROSSER

*Students at Courtney Rosser's course apply a second coat of mud plaster to a bench they built using tires and trash as the structure.*

# An Apprenticeship in Green Living

by Courtney Rosser





COURTNEY ROSSER

"YOU KNOW, WE JUST DON'T RECOGNIZE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS OF our lives while they're happening," says Moonlight Graham in *Field of Dreams*. *Field of Dreams* has always been one of my favorite movies, and that quotation has always resonated with me. As I participate in this beautiful life, I realize just how much truth there is to Graham's statement.

Permaculture (from "permanent agriculture" and "permanent culture") is a way of living life in which we aim to exist in harmony with nature, making as little impact on our environment as possible. Based on the ethics of "earth care," "people care," and "fair share," permaculture teaches us to create cycles that enable us to live sustainably and enrich the earth rather than destroy it.

Nature, of which we are a part, functions in cycles. Unfortunately, human beings tend to break those cycles, creating linear progressions that cause us to lose sight of where things come from and where they go when we are done with them. In permaculture we strive to recreate those cycles in an attempt to give back to the earth as much as we take.

Looking back, it is hard for me to believe that "permaculture" was not always a presence in my life. I already knew certain ideals were important to me: simplicity, anti-consumerism, anti-corporatism, using natural products, avoiding foods with chemicals, promoting the fair treatment of animals and people, and caring for the environment. In short, I was already considered a "hippie" by most of my friends. I simply did not realize that all of these ideals are incorporated in the principles of permaculture. Taking a course on permaculture helped to organize my values, give structure to my future, and provide me with a vocabulary, knowledge base, and ability to pursue these ideas and to manifest them in my life. But it was not simply the act of studying it that changed my life. Rather, it is the particular *way* in which I studied it.

I participated in the six-week Green Apprenticeship Training at Kibbutz Lotan in Israel (www.kibbutzlotan.com). Located in the Arava Desert, forty kilometers north of Eilat, and approximately fifty meters west of Jordan, Kibbutz Lotan is a member of the Global Ecovillage Network. Kibbutz Lotan's Center for Creative Ecology offers "Green Apprenticeship Training," an internationally recognized certification course for permaculture and ecovillage design. The apprenticeship teaches all the necessary theory and techniques required to attain a Permaculture Design Certificate and an Ecovillage Design Certificate. But that is where its similarity to other courses ends, and that is where its influence on my life begins.

We lived in an eco-neighborhood on the Kibbutz for the duration of the course. This allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in everything we were learning. We were able to forget our "other lives" for six weeks and completely open ourselves up to a new way of thinking and living, which is what permaculture is all about: looking at the *(continued on page 81)*

*Courtney Rosser (bottom left at Kibbutz Lotan) lives in Northern California, where she uses her permaculture and community design skills to help heal the land and cultivate love, inspiration, and creation within a local homestead community.*

**SYNTHETIC FOOD**
*(continued from page 28)*

Distribution is actually the main problem in feeding the world's 700 million hungry people. If food can be produced locally with better efficiency in many poorer nations—without compromising the genes or environment or abandoning many cultures' age-old practice of saving seeds to be freely shared—the numbers of hungry individuals can be decreased worldwide over time.

However, the so-called "Gene Giant" corporations want to patent their genetically constructed seeds and chemical entities, and have them called "genetically equivalent" to the same plant from which they altered the DNA make-up. They object to safety testing or labeling, and because of their power, they are still having their way in the United States.

Scientifically, what must be divulged is that by gene-gunning foreign genetic sequences into DNA strands, strange things are happening that will take a long time to understand and discover.

Dormant virus sequences that incorporated themselves into our DNA or a plant's DNA can be awakened and wreak unpredictable havoc. Active or inactive gene sequences already on the DNA can be joggled or displaced, leading to abnormal function of the cell.

We now know that, despite claims to the contrary that this could not occur, GMO DNA has been absorbed into our vital organs. This could lead to an alteration in these organs' normal processes, possibly producing cancer, allergies, and imbalances in what these organs produce.

Here are some of the gene-gunning attempts that have been tried, as listed by author Jeffrey M. Smith on his Seeds of Deception website:

- arctic fish genes were implanted into tomatoes and strawberries to produce a tolerance to frost
- jellyfish genes were introduced into pigs' DNA to light up their noses in the dark
- human genes were inserted into corn to produce spermicide
- corn was engineered with hepatitis virus genes.

Nutty as this all sounds, and dangerous as the reality is, Tom Vilsack, our new secretary of agriculture, championed the engineering of experimental pharmaceutical sequences into plants to help develop new drugs. Unfortunately, the plots of these plants were not necessarily adequately greenhoused or isolated: the corn pollen could drift into another field and contaminate the corn there with its experimental drug sequence. This obviously could adversely affect an unsuspecting eater of this unlabeled contaminated corn.

The fact that a federal court upheld the ban on GMO alfalfa this June (because its pollen could similarly contaminate the alfalfa in other non-GMO fields) should give us pause to question the wisdom of furthering more GMO-patenting of our plants without adequate study and safety testing. Not everyone in the United States is ignorant of the possible calamities that might arise with the advent of unrestrained biotechnology development.

The push to gain approval of GMO wheat was abandoned in 2004 due to opposition from virtually every major wheat user in the world. But now, with the political force of Monsanto and Syngenta—along with the Obama administration's choice of men like Vilsack, Taylor, and Wolff, instead of those who would favor organic sustainable agriculture—a new push to make GMO wheat worldwide is afoot. And who is reporting this to the people of the world?

The sugar story is very frightening because sugar is so ubiquitous in our food supply and no labeling of GMO sugar is required. Half of U.S. sugar currently comes from sugar beets. To be certain you are not getting exposed to sugar from GMO sugar beets, you'll have to buy organic sugar or sugar cane.

For optimum understanding of the problem with GMOs, let us look at the most common "promoter" that is gene-gunned into the DNA to ensure expression of the desired accompanying engineered genetic sequence: the Cauliflower Mosaic Virus (CaMV) promoter with its 1100 base pairs. Biotech geneticists know that the CaMV promoter works like a highly amplified complex turned up 10 to 10,000 times louder than other genes around it. This can cause the gene sequence(s) closest to it to be expressed successfully. However, this also may drown out the normal symphony and harmony of the plant's functioning. Other sequences may also unintentionally be turned up, leading to their expression in heretofore unanticipatable ways.

Other gene sequences may be turned on or off, adversely affecting the cell's functioning. If a native gene sequence that prevented the expression of some toxin is turned off, this may lead to an increase in the level of that toxin. Or a "hot spot" may be created in the DNA, possibly making the entire DNA section or chromosome unstable. This can cause breaks in the DNA strand or exchanges of genes with other chromosomes. Mutations can result which may change the essence of the plant. And the entire Cauliflower Mosaic Virus promoter complex has been found to be absorbed by humans. This disturbance can damage our immune systems, as well as affect our organs: lab rats developed severe viral infections in this way. "Scientists from all over the world have expressed concern about the Cauliflower Mosaic Virus, calling for an immediate ban," Jeffrey M. Smith informed us back in 2003.

Alas, much of this information has not been imparted to the American public. You may be surprised to learn that Monsanto has moved 50 percent of its research and development funding toward "marker-assisted breeding" with an eye toward the future and away from the rather random gene-gunning cellular "engineering" the company has employed to gain its share of the market. Marker-assisted breeding utilizes the annotating/gene-mapping of traits discovered in different plants and animals to then aid in more old-fashioned cross-breeding of two carefully chosen plants, or two similarly chosen animals. Syngenta, another Gene Giant corporation, is spending 80 percent of its research and development money exploring marker-assisted breeding.

Meanwhile crop yields are not increasing as advertised in GMO soybean fields. This is due to herbicide resistance, the adverse effects of glyphosphate (Round-Up's active ingredient) on plant health, and

unintended effects of the genetic engineering process used to create the plant. Two to five times more pounds of Round-Up per acre are used in GMO soybean fields, in comparison to the herbicide usage on non-GMO soybean fields. Add to this the linkage of glyphosphate exposure to increased risk of non-Hodgkins lymphoma by the American Academy of Family Physicians; to an increased risk for miscarriage in a Canadian study; and to the increased incidence of attention deficit disorder in children in a 2002 study. Yet Monsanto is still saying Round-Up is one of the "safest" herbicides on the market!

What will Vilsack, Taylor, and Wolff do to help ensure a safe food supply? If the American people knew the facts, as sampled above, would they go along with what may happen on the fields and in the protoplasm of Earth's life forms as championed by this trio of biotech proponents? Or can the apparent tide be turned in favor of sustainable agriculture and organic food development? ■

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

*(continued from page 30)*

warming cannot be slowed, the question of whether professors of philosophy, economics, sociology, classics, political science, education, and so forth are exercising a form of academic freedom that contributes to the public's ability to recognize the ideas and values that are major contributors to the ecological/cultural crises becomes increasingly critical. Unfortunately, when compared to today's scale and rate of environmental change, most of the issues that professors pursue in the name of academic freedom are really quite trivial. Even the knowledge of genuine achievements in the arts and civil liberties will become irrelevant as potable water, sources of protein, and the ability to meet the most basic human needs become limited to the point where armed conflict is seen as the only way of ensuring survival.

## Previous Misuses of Academic Freedom

WHEN WE CONSIDER HOW SCHOLARSHIP and research have been justified in the name of academic freedom over the years and in different cultures, there is clear evidence that its exercise has been framed by the prejudices held by the larger society—and by the political centers of power in the society. We have only to examine the role of philosophers, jurists, and scientists in giving legitimacy to the Nazi regime in Germany. Martin Heidegger's overtures to Nazism are especially noteworthy, along with the decision by the University of Bonn to strike the name of Thomas Mann from its list of honorary doctors. More than 900 German scholars and scientists signed pledges endorsing Hitler's "patriotic" actions.

Our own history of misusing academic freedom includes research and scholarly writings that perpetuated racist and gender prejudices, the Tuskegee experiment involving the study of the death process of over 360 African American men who were suffering from syphilis, the long history of involvement in the eugenics movement, and the development of intelligence tests that favored speakers of English. More recently, academic freedom has been used to justify developing new weapon systems, and now surveillance technologies that are strengthening our downward slide toward a police state.

The penchant of liberal professors for arguing from competing paradigms of understanding simply reinforces the idea that all people, regardless of how well informed they are, have the right to their own opinions—both as to whether there is an environmental crises and to what steps, if any, should be taken to reduce its impact. But one thing is clear: it seems that no amount of scientific evidence about the nature of the ecological crises, and no amount of reporting on the human suffering directly attributable to changes in the sustaining capacity of natural systems, will cause more than a small minority of faculty to make more than minor adjustments in their courses and research. Past experience has shown that there is little likelihood that the widespread reforms in curricula and research that must be undertaken can be achieved when academic freedom is used to justify ignoring the cultural roots of the ecological crisis.

## A Precedent for Overriding Academic Freedom for Progressive Purposes

HOWEVER, THERE IS A WAY OF OVERCOMing the resistance that the minority of ecologically oriented faculty face in their departments. The precedent for supporting a minority point of view within otherwise traditionalist thinking can be seen in earlier responses of the academic community to changes in the public consensus about the need to address discrimination in the areas of gender and race. That is, the exercise of leadership by university administrators contributed in many instances to a new climate of opinion within departments that led to avoiding granting appointments to new faculty who exhibited racial and gender biases.

Unfortunately, the record of leadership on the part of university administrators, from the president to department chairpersons, is uneven. But if administrators exercised leadership, they might motivate otherwise indifferent faculty to reframe the content of their courses and scholarship in ways that clarify the connections between cultural and environmental issues that stand in the way of achieving a sustainable future. Thus, the problem becomes one of identifying the sources of authority that university presidents and administrators will take seriously—even when they personally fail to understand that humankind is at a turning point and that daily life is undergoing fundamental changes that have their roots in the degradation of natural systems. The sources of authority that would influence many university presidents and administrators to exercise a more visible form of leadership include the president and Congress. Unfortunately, most members of Congress reproduce the patterns of thinking, including the assumptions and silences, acquired from their university experience.

If the nation's foundations fail to provide leadership in promoting university-level reforms that address the cultural roots of the ecological crisis, and if the people occupying the highest levels in the political process, including university presidents, give only lip service to ecologically sustainable university reforms, it is likely that most faculty members will continue

to think that their own cutting-edge thinking and research makes it unnecessary to take seriously the ecological crises. The fact that many faculty see research based on ecologically destructive conceptual traditions as cutting-edge thinking is part of a tragedy that few of their former students will recognize. The fragments of knowledge students acquire from the diversity of courses and faculty perspectives will also leave them unable to recognize that the spread of social chaos (the chaos that will follow the further decline in the life-sustaining capacity of natural systems) opens the door to a fascist form of government. The technological infrastructure is already in place for this development, and graduates of our most elite universities are already demonstrating the political and legal skills necessary for ensuring that the interests of corporations, the military, and the fundamentalist religious groups that have merged their theology with an extreme form of patriotism will not be adversely affected by the environmental changes.

Just as we need to reframe the idea of the autonomous individual by adopting culturally and ecologically informed analogs, we need to reframe the focus of academic freedom in ways that address the multiple political and ecological crises of our era. ■

**ECOLOGY AND ECONOMY**

*(continued from page 32)*

to the human condition. It is the nature of an unawakened mind to be bothered by something. We usually experience this as the feeling that "something is wrong with me." Our economic system (which includes the media mega-corporations that make their profit from advertising) takes advantage of this and conditions us to understand our sense of lack as "I don't have *enough* ... "—especially *not enough things* and *not enough money*. The consequence is that we always want ("need") more. This individual lack is institutionalized into a collective craving that can never be satisfied. Investors seek increasing returns in the form of dividends and higher share prices. This puts pressure on business executives, who must think this way if they hope to rise to the top. This general expectation translates into an impersonal but constant demand for ever more profit and growth, which requires ever more production-and-consumption, and ever more sophisticated advertising to make us want things that often didn't even exist last year.

Here's one way to point out the basic difficulty: Capitalism is about using capital (money for investment) to create more capital. Since the *goal* is to end up with more money, everything else becomes a *means* to that end. "Everything else" in this case includes Mother Earth ("resources"), human life ("labor"), and society itself, which must continually adapt to the changing requirements of the economy.

## Converting the Whole Biosphere to ... Nothing

THE ULTIMATE IRONY IS THAT MONEY in itself is literally *worthless*: whether pieces of paper or numbers in bank

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accounts, money has value only because it is our socially agreed-upon medium of exchange. A $100 bill is just a piece of paper. We can't eat it, drink it, ride on it, etc. We forget that money is a social construct—a kind of group fantasy. The anthropologist Weston LaBarre called it a psychosis that has become normal, "an institutionalized dream that everyone is having at once."

This dream can become a nightmare. Psychologically, the danger is that means and ends become reversed, so the *means* of life becomes the *goal*. The philosopher Schopenhauer called money "abstract happiness"—that is, not genuine happiness but something that now represents it in our culture. Another way to say it is that money becomes "frozen desire": not desire for anything in particular but a symbol for the satisfaction of desire in general. And what does the Buddha say about desire? Frozen or not, it remains the root cause of suffering.

Collectively, this means that what motivates our economic system is *the drive to use anything and everything* (now called "natural resources," including "human resources") *to create something that is really nothing*. We don't usually notice the absurdity of this because we are preoccupied with the *more and more* that the system produces. The fact that so many of us already have more than we need is addressed by manipulating our awareness, in increasingly sophisticated ways, so that we always want something else that we don't yet have. It's always the *next* _____ (fill in the blank) that will satisfy us.

Max Frisch said technology is the knack of arranging the world so that we don't have to experience it. That's why modern technologies fit so well with consumer capitalism, which works to transform the whole biosphere into consumer goods. Together they are making Mother Earth into a gigantic Wal-Mart.

This system is unsustainable because it involves a growth obsession that, left to itself, will not cease until the whole of the biosphere has been converted into profit—which, of course, will then be useless. Capitalism made more sense a couple of centuries ago, when the earth seemed infinite and capital was relatively scarce. Today the obvious metaphor is cancer on a planetary scale. Cells become cancerous when they mutate into uncontrolled growth and spread throughout the body to disrupt its healthy functioning. Unfortunately, that is not a bad description of our collective situation now.

Ultimately, does it come down to a choice between our present economic/financial system and the survival of the biosphere? Our current system is doomed no matter what, in the same way that a cancer is always doomed: if it's successful enough to kill its host, it kills itself. If the biosphere gets sick, we get sick. When ecological systems collapse, so will human civilization as we know it.

Despite what President George H. W. Bush and his son both declared, the "blessed American way of life" is negotiable—or it becomes a suicide pact.

This means that the financial meltdown is actually a wonderful opportunity to address a much deeper problem. No one should make light of the economic pain that we can expect to continue and deepen over the next few years. Many—perhaps most—people are also disgusted with the present system, and are becoming more open to possible alternatives. Such a crisis would be a terrible thing to waste because this sort of opportunity does not happen very often. There is no better time to address the fundamental challenge of our times: the intimate relationship between an out-of-control, self-destructive economic system and the ecological crisis.

## Bodhisattvas for Obama

No other nation is in a position to begin reforming that relationship, which is why Obama's leadership on this issue is so important to the whole world. Admittedly, this is an extraordinary challenge. According to the Center for Public Integrity, in the last year more than 770 corporations and interest groups have hired an estimated 2,340 lobbyists to influence federal policy on climate change. That number is more than three times what it was only five years ago, and it means that Washington now has more than four climate lobbyists for every member of congress. The center also estimates that lobbying expenditures on climate change topped $90 million last year, a figure that will no doubt be much higher this year.

That puts the onus on the rest of us to emphasize the nonduality between ecology and economy. So far, at least, Obama's economic appointments have not been encouraging. Some of the people most responsible for the financial crisis have been appointed to fix it. No wonder the only solution they can think of is to try to patch up the present system. But they only represent a much bigger problem: the people who benefit the most from our present economic system—and who therefore have the least incentive to change it—are the ones who control it and (through their lobbyists) control much of the political process as well. As Will Rogers put it some eighty years ago, we (still) have "the best Congress money can buy."

Nevertheless, Obama has given us reasons to hope that he might rise to the occasion and grow to meet the challenge. Yet even with the best will in the world, this is not something Obama (or anyone else) can do by himself. Very little will happen without broad public pressure, based on a new understanding of our perilous situation. This does not require a specifically Buddhist movement, but there is need for a Buddhist voice in such a movement, to emphasize our nonduality with the earth, and the karmic effects of greed and delusion, both individual and institutionalized.

The *Lotus Sutra* speaks of bodhisattvas springing forth from the earth, to preach the dharma. Is it time for new types of bodhisattvas to rise up from the earth, to manifest the dharma that defends her? ■

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**OVERCOMING SPEECHLESSNESS**
*(continued from page 38)*

Hundreds of tiny white brick houses, most unfinished, studded the hills. I asked my friend: what do you think those small white buildings are? He said: bunkers. Mausoleums? But no, seeing them appear in all manner and stage of construction, over hundreds of miles, I saw they were poor people's attempts at building housing for themselves. They looked like bunkers and mausoleums because no one was around them, and because they were so small: some of them barely large enough to lie down in, and often with no windows, only a door. I realized people who worked far away and were able to return to build only sporadically were building them. This is true in many places in the world, and I was moved by the tenacity of people trying to have a home, no matter how uprooted or displaced they have been. Creating and having a home is a primary instinct in all of nature as well as in humankind; seeing these tiny dwellings, with no water sources, no electricity, no anything but white mud bricks, made me remember my own childhood feelings of insecurity around housing, and the preciousness of having a home, as we were forced to move, year after year.

## Strangers Who Give Their Lives, and So Become Family

I CAME OUT OF THIS REVERIE TO HEAR the story of Cindy and Craig Corrie, the parents of Rachel Corrie. Rachel Corrie was murdered when she tried to stop an Israeli tank from demolishing a Palestinian house. I was struck by her parents' beauty and dignity. Cindy's face radiates resolve and kindness. Craig's is a study in acceptance, humility, incredible strength, and perseverance. Rachel had been working in Palestine and witnessed the ruthlessness of the deliberate destruction of Palestinian homes by the Israeli army, most surrounded by gardens or small orchards of orange and olive trees, which the army consistently uprooted. No doubt believing the sight of a young Jewish woman in a brightly colored jumpsuit would stop the soldier in the tank she placed herself between the home of her Palestinian friends and the tank. It rolled over her, crushing her body and breaking her back. The Corries spoke of their continued friendship with the family who had lived in that house.

Everywhere we went, after arriving in Gaza, locals greeted the Corries with compassion and tenderness. This was particularly moving to me because of a connection I was able to make with another such sacrifice decades ago in Mississippi, in 1967, and how black people became aware that there were some white people who actually cared about what was happening to them. The "three civil rights workers" as they became known, were James Cheney, a young African American Christian man, and Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, both white Jewish men from the North. The Northerners had been called to the Civil Rights Movement in the South by their conscience, having watched the racist and sadistic treatment of black people there. The three young men were riding through the backwoods of Neshoba County, Mississippi, when their car was firebombed. They were dragged from the car, bludgeoned, and shot to death; their bodies were buried in a dam that was under construction in the area and would not be found for months. While America waited for the bodies to be found, black and white people working for black liberation in the South discovered new ground. Who could not love these young men, all three of them, for risking their lives to change ours? And so, in every church, every Sunday, prayers went out for James, yes, but also for Michael and Andrew. They became ours, just as the Corries have become family to the Palestinian people.

This is one of the most beautiful passages for human beings. It is as if we enter a different door of our reality, when someone gives her or his life for us. Why this should be is a mystery, but it is the mystery, I think, behind all the great myths in which there is human sacrifice—not on an altar but on the road, in the street—for the common good. At a meeting of the Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement held in Jackson, Mississippi, last year, I saw the widow of Michael Schwerner. There she was, over forty years later. There she was, still belonging to her own people, and still, also, one of us.

## Abdullah at the Border Crossing

WE ARRIVED IN THE GAZA STRIP IN THE afternoon, after being kept at the border crossing for about five hours. Long enough to become accustomed to the bombing someone informed us is a constant just inside the Palestinian border, reminding the Palestinians of the Israeli presence during the cease fire. I had never been so close to bombs being dropped before, and I took the opportunity to interrogate my life. Had I lived it the best way I could? And so forth.

A young Palestinian man, Abdullah X, a student of video at a school in Egypt, had come on the bus with us. His story was that he had managed to leave Palestine on scholarship to go to school in Cairo three years ago. Because of the siege, and all borders being closed, he had not been able to see his family. He had not seen them for three years. Because of Israel's bombardment of Gaza, he feared for the lives of his family and was determined to see them. Abdullah might have stepped out of ancient Assyria. With his large dark eyes, olive complexion, and hair in curly dark ringlets, he is a striking young man. Between Cairo and the Gaza border, he had, without doing anything special, made many of us on the bus care about him. Sure enough, the Egyptian border patrol gave him a hard time. When I was told of this by a woman who had stood next to him until ordered away by a patrolman, we decided to stand some distance from him, while he seemed to be pleading to be allowed to visit his parents, and to send the mother force, the universal parent force, to speed his liberation. We stood together, closed our eyes, and sent every ounce of our combined energy to Abdullah's back. When he was given his passport and allowed to join us, we cheered. We could only imagine what going back into Gaza meant for him. It was his home, and much of it had been obliterated. We could not know at the time that, coming out of Gaza, Abdullah would be kept at the border crossing, not permitted, as he had feared, back into Egypt with us. We would wait for him, but ultimately we would leave him there. He had realized his education, his future, were at risk. But the love of his family, his home, his land,



AP PHOTO/HATEM MOUSSA

*Palestinian women gesture during a rally marking International Women's Day in Gaza City on March 8, 2009. On the same day, in Gaza City, Alice Walker was meeting with Palestinian women, talking about headscarves and sharing experiences of oppression and of not hating.*

was very strong. Later we would also have a glimpse of his father, and his relationship with his father. We were moved by the love and affection expressed between them. For what could it mean to know from day to day that you could easily lose each other to the madness of war? A war brought to your door by people who claimed that everything you had, no matter how little was left, was theirs?

## At Home in the Ghetto

ROLLING INTO GAZA I HAD A FEELING OF homecoming. There is a flavor to the ghetto. To the Bantustan. To the "rez." To the "colored section." In some ways it is surprisingly comforting. Because consciousness is comforting. Everyone you see has an awareness of struggle, of resistance, just as you do. The man driving the donkey cart. The woman selling vegetables. The young person arranging rugs on the sidewalk, or flowers in a vase.

When I lived in segregated Eatonton, Georgia, I used to breathe normally only in my own neighborhood, only in the black section of town. Everywhere else was too dangerous. A friend was beaten and thrown in prison for helping a white girl, in broad daylight, fix her bicycle chain.

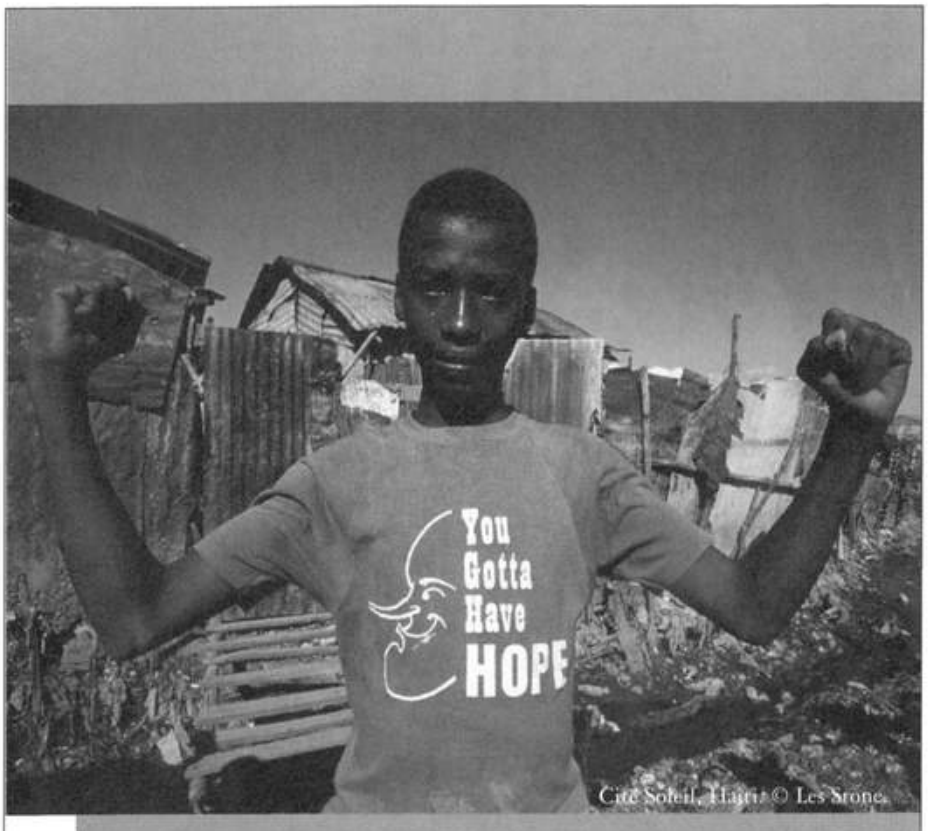
But even this sliver of a neighborhood, so rightly named the Gaza strip, was not safe. It had been bombed for twenty-two days. I thought of how the first and perhaps only bombing on U.S. soil prior to 9/11 was the bombing of a black community in Oklahoma. The black people who created it were considered, by white racists, too prosperous and therefore "uppity." Everything they created was destroyed. This was followed by the charge already rampant in white American culture, that black people never tried to "better" themselves.

There is ample evidence in Gaza that the Palestinians never stop trying to "better" themselves. What started as a refugee camp with tents has evolved into a city with buildings rivaling those in almost any other city in the "developing" world. There are houses, apartment buildings, schools, mosques, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Driving along the streets, we could see right away that many of these were in ruins.

I realized I had never understood the true meaning of "rubble." Such and such was "reduced to rubble" is a phrase we hear. It is different seeing what demolished buildings actually look like. Buildings in which people were living. Buildings from which hundreds of broken bodies have been removed. So thorough a job have the Palestinians done in removing the dead from squashed dwellings that no scent of death remains. What this task must have been like, both physically and psychologically, staggers the mind. We pass police stations that were simply flattened, and all the young (most Palestinians are young) officers in them killed, hundreds of them. We pass ministries, bombed into fragments. We pass a hospital, bombed and gutted by fire. If one is not safe in a hospital, when one is already sick and afraid, where is one safe? If children are not safe playing in their schoolyards, where are they safe? Where are the World Parents of All Children? The World Caretakers of All the Sick?

## Living with Sisters

MY COMPANION AND I ARE ASSIGNED to the home of two sisters who share their space with friends and relatives who come and go. One morning I get up early to find an aunt sleeping on the floor in the living



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room. Another time, a cousin. In the middle of the night, I hear one of the sisters consoling her aged father, who sounds disoriented, and helping him back to bed. There is such respect, such tenderness in her voice. This is the same place that, just weeks earlier, was surrounded by rocket fire, a missile landing every twenty-seven seconds for twenty-two days. I can only imagine what the elderly residents must feel, as, even in their old age they are subjected to so much fear.

Each morning we are sent off to learn what we can in our four days in Gaza, well fed on falafel, hummus, olives and dates, sometimes eggs, tomatoes, salad, and cheese. All of it simple, all of it delicious. More delicious because we realize how difficult it is to find such food here; the blockade keeps out most of it. Delicious also because it is shared with such generosity and graciousness. Always the culinary student, I try to learn to make the especially tasty dish that consists mainly of tomatoes and eggs. I learn the tea I like so much is made out of sage! On International Women's Day we leave for the celebration for which we have come, a gathering with the women of Gaza.

### Women Talking

Gael Murphy, Medea Benjamin, Susan Griffin, and I, along with twenty or so other women had been arrested for protesting the war on Iraq on International Women's Day, 2003. If the world had paid attention we could have saved a lot of money and countless sons' and daughters' lives, as well as prevented a lot of war-generated pollution that hastens globe-threatening climate change. How *doofus* humans are going to look—we thought as we marched, sang, accepted our handcuffs—still firing rockets into apartment buildings full of families, and dropping bombs on school children and their pets, when the ice melts completely in the Arctic and puts an end to our regressive, greed-sourced rage forever. That had been a wonderful day; this International Women's Day, of 2009, was also. It was the kind of day that makes life, already accepted as a gift, a prize. Early in the morning of March 8, we were shuttled to a Women's

Center in the North of Gaza City, to meet women who, like their compatriots, had survived the recent bombardment and, so far, the siege.

This center for women was opened under the auspices of the United Nations, which has been ministering to the Palestinian people since 1948, when thousands of Palestinians fleeing their homes under Israeli attack became refugees. It is a modest building with a small library whose shelves hold few books. It isn't clear whether most of the women read. The idea, as it is explained to us, is to offer the women a place to gather outside the home, since in Palestinian culture the mobility of most women is limited by their work in the home as mothers and caretakers of their families. Many women rarely leave their compounds.

However, today, International Women's Day, is different. Many women are out and about, and women who frequent this particular center are on hand to welcome us. After arranging ourselves around a table in the library, we, about thirty of us, sit in council. I learn something I'd heard but never experienced: Arabs introduce themselves by telling you they are the mother or father of one of their children, perhaps their eldest. Then they tell you how many children they have. They do this with a pride and joy I have never seen before. Only one woman had one child. Everyone else had at least five. There is a feeling of festivity as the women, beautifully dressed and wearing elegant headscarves, laugh and joke among themselves. They are eager to talk.

Only the woman with one child has trouble speaking. When I turn to her, I notice she is the only woman wearing black, and that her eyes are tearing. Unable to speak, she hands me instead a photograph that she has been holding in her lap. She is a brown-skinned woman, of African descent, as some Palestinians (to my surprise) are; the photograph is of her daughter, who looks European. The child looks about six years old. A student of ballet, she is dressed in a white tutu and is dancing. Her mother tries to speak, but still cannot, as I sit, holding her arm. It is another woman who explains: during the bombardment, the child was hit in the arm and the leg and the chest and bled to death in her mother's arms. The mother and I embrace, and throughout our meeting I hold the photograph of the child, while the mother draws her chair closer to mine.

What do we talk about?

*We talk about hatred.*

But before we talk about hatred, I want to know about headscarves. What's the deal about wearing the scarf? Why do so many women wear it? I am told something I'd never considered: in desert countries, most of one's hydration is lost at the back of the neck, which can quickly lead to heat stroke, so a headscarf that wraps around the neck is essential to block this loss. The top of the head is covered because if a woman is living a traditional life and is outside a lot, the sun beats down on it. This causes headache, dizziness, nausea, stroke, and other health problems. In Gaza, one of the women pointed out, there were many women who did not wear scarves, primarily because they worked in offices. This was true of the women in whose home we were sheltered. They seemed to own a lot of scarves that they draped about themselves casually, just as my friends and I might do in the United States.

Because I had shaved my head a week or so before going to Gaza, I understood exactly the importance of the headscarf. Without a covering on my head I could not bear the sun for more than a few minutes. And, indeed, one of the first gifts I received from an anonymous Palestinian woman was a thick black and red embroidered scarf, which I wore everywhere, gratefully.

Our host told us a story about the uglier side of the headscarf business: on the first day of bombing, she was working downstairs in the basement and wasn't aware that her apartment building was next to one that was being shelled. When the policemen came to clear her building, and she stepped out of the elevator, one of them, a political and religious conservative, was taken aback at the sight of her bare head. So much so that instead of instantly helping her to a shelter, he called a colleague to come and witness her attire. Or lack thereof. He was angry *with her, for not wearing a headscarf, though Israeli rockets were tearing into buildings all around them.* And what could we do but sigh along with her, as she related this experience with appropriate shrugs and grimaces of exasperation. Backwardness is backwardness, wherever it occurs, and explains lack of progressive movement in afflicted societies, whether under siege or not.

## On Not Hating

One of the triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement is that when you travel through the South today you do not feel overwhelmed by a residue of grievance and hate. This is the legacy of people brought up in the Christian tradition, true believers of every word Jesus had to say on the issue of justice, loving-kindness, and peace. This dove-tailed nicely with what we learned of Gandhian nonviolence, brought into the movement by Bayard Rustin, a gay strategist for the Civil Rights Movement. A lot of thought went into how to create "the beloved community," so that our country would not be stuck with violent hatred between black and white, and the continuous spectacle, and suffering, of communities going up in flames. It is astonishing, the progress, and I will always love Southerners, black and white, for the way we have all grown. Ironically, though there was so much suffering and despair as the struggle for justice tested us, it is in this very "backward" part of our country today that one is most likely to find simple human helpfulness, thoughtfulness, and impersonal courtesy. I speak a little about this American history, but it isn't history that these women know. They're too young. They've never been taught it. It feels irrelevant.

Following their example of speaking of their families, I talk about my Southern parents' teachings during our experience of America's apartheid years—years when white people owned and controlled all the resources and the land, in addition to the political, legal, and military apparatus, and used their power to intimidate black people in the most barbaric and merciless ways. These whites who tormented us

daily were like Israelis who have cut down millions of trees planted by Arab Palestinians and stolen Palestinian water, even topsoil. They have bulldozed innumerable villages, houses, and mosques, and in their place built settlements for strangers who have no connection whatsoever with Palestine; settlers who have been the most rabid anti-Palestinian of all, attacking the children, the women, everyone, old and young alike, viciously, and forcing Palestinians to use separate roads from themselves.

It feels very familiar, I tell them, what is happening here. When something similar was happening to us in Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, I say, our parents taught us to think of the racists as we thought of any other disaster. To deal with that disaster as best we could, but not to attach to it by allowing ourselves to hate. This was a tall order, and as I'm talking, I begin to understand, as if for the first time, why some of our parents' prayers were so long and fervent as they stayed there, long minutes, on their knees in church. And why people often wept and fainted, and why there was so much tenderness as people deliberately silenced themselves, or camouflaged atrocities done to or witnessed by them, using representative figures from the Bible.

At the end of the table across from me is a woman who looks like Oprah's twin. In fact, earlier she had said to me: Alice, tell Oprah to come see us. We will take good care of her. I promised I would email Oprah, and, on returning home, did so. She laughs, this handsome woman, then speaks earnestly. We don't hate Israelis, Alice, she says, quietly, what we hate is being bombed, watching our little ones live in fear, burying them, being starved to death, and being driven from our land. We hate this eternal crying out to the world to open its eyes and ears to the truth of what is happening, and being ignored. Israelis, no. If they stopped humiliating and torturing us, if they stopped taking everything we have, including our lives, we would hardly think about them at all. Why would we?

## The Spirit in the Dance

THERE IS, FINALLY, A SENSE OF OVERWHELM, trying to bring comfort to someone whose sleeping child has been killed and buried, a few weeks ago, up to her neck in rubble; or a mother who has lost fifteen members of her family—all her children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, and her husband. What does one say to people whose families came out of their shelled houses waving white flags of surrender only to be shot down anyway? To mothers whose children were, at this moment, playing in the white phosphorous-laden rubble that, after twenty-two days of bombing, is everywhere in Gaza? White phosphorus, once on the skin, never stops burning.

There is really nothing to say. Nothing to say to those who, back home in America, don't want to hear the news. Nothing to do, finally, but dance.

The women and I and everyone with us from Code Pink went across the hall to a big common room where music was turned up full volume. At first I sat exchanging smiles and murmurs with an ancient grandmother who was knitting booties, and who gave me two pairs, for my own grandchildren. Sitting didn't last. Without preamble I was pulled to my feet by several women at once, and the dance was on. Sorrow, loss, pain, suffering, all pounded into the floor for over an hour. Sweat flowing, wails and tears around the room. And then, the rising that always comes from such dancing: the sense of joy, of unity, of solidarity and gratitude to be in the best place one could be on earth—with sisters who have experienced the full measure of disaster and have the heart to rise above it. The feeling of love is immense. The ecstasy, sublime. I was conscious of exchanging and receiving Spirit in the dance. I also knew that this Spirit—which I have encountered in Mississippi, Georgia, the Congo, Cuba, Rwanda, and Burma, among other places—this Spirit that knows how to dance in the face of disaster will never be crushed. It is as timeless as the wind. We think it is only inside our bodies, but we also inhabit it. Even when we are unaware of its presence internally, it wears us like a cloak. ■

**ISRAEL'S CAMPUS CRITICS**
*(continued from page 41)*

that fails to convey accurately any of what was actually said (which can be easily verified by comparing her article to the podcasts of the talks at www.international.ucla.edu/cnes/podcasts). She also liberally adds unsupported and indeed unsupportable assertions and wild exaggerations into the mix (e.g., saying that the event amounted to "an academic lynching of Israel," claiming that the speakers "expressed hope that Israel would lose against Hamas," and comparing the talks by four academically distinguished and well-published scholars to "the anti-Semitic rabble rousing of 1920s Munich beer halls").

These baseless assertions (even a quick listen to the podcasts will confirm that that is what they are) have gone on to frame and color the way in which the event has been represented and characterized in almost all of the subsequent discussions. Not only has most of the subsequent discussion been based on this one article, no one relying on it has pointed out its provenance or the inherently unreliable testimony of the author, or the gap between the article and the actual talks as embodied in the live recordings publicly available to anyone in the podcasts. Thus, subsequent discussions—by, it bears repeating, *people who admit that they were not actually at the event*—have followed the pattern taken by the children's game, "telephone." A message is passed on from person to person until, having gone around the room, it bears only a passing resemblance to the original utterance. Only in this case not only does the original message (itself already faulty, given the source) deteriorate, but further layers of exaggeration and hyperbole are added to it at each pass.

## Pearls of Misinformation

JUDEA PEARL, A PROFESSOR OF COMPUTER science at UCLA and one of Israel's most ardent defenders in Los Angeles, helped to ratchet up the misrepresentations of the event. Pearl began writing about the Gaza panel first in the *Wall Street Journal* (February 3, 2009), then in another article in the *Jewish Journal of Los Angeles* (February 18, 2009), and then in yet another piece,

in *The Los Angeles Times*. In his first piece he asserts without evidence or justification that the event was essentially "a Hamas recruiting rally" intended—*by Hamas*, the reader could be led to believe—to score "another inroad into Western minds." By the time he published the piece in the *Jewish Journal*, Pearl had embellished his account further, adding the utterly fictitious allegation that the panelists "led the excited audience into chanting 'Zionism is Nazism,' 'F-ck, f-ck Israel,' in the best tradition of rhino liturgy." What is most interesting about Pearl's many accounts of the event, however, is not their hyperbolic nature, but rather the fact that he was not at the event which *he has described in such lurid and varying terms in three different published accounts*. His source (as he acknowledges in one of his articles, though not the others) is the Stand With Us article. Later, referring back in seamless circularity to this series of articles sealing itself from the truth, another writer in the *Jewish Journal* (Tom Tugend, published on February 25, 2009) comes to refer to the event as "the by now notorious UCLA symposium." Character assassination by self-referencing fabrication!

The mischaracterizations and fabrications of Pearl's account, themselves building on the unsteady foundation provided by those in the Stand With Us piece, have been repeated ad nauseam by others as the gospel truth. For example, although it is highly unusual—if not altogether unheard of—for a university president to criticize his own faculty for expressing their views in an academic setting, in public comments at a Los Angeles synagogue the president of the University of California, Mark Yudof, did just that, chastising the scholars participating in the Center for Near Eastern Studies panel, according to what he had learned of it from Pearl's misrepresentation of the event. Stanley Kurtz's main "evidence" for his characterization of the panel in the *National Review Online* article also comes from Pearl. In short, the fabrications have become the public record of note, the "truth" of the matter.

## A Wider Pattern—Barnard College, UC Santa Barbara

THIS BROADER LOGIC, TOO, FOLLOWS A disturbing pattern. In a campaign (initiated by an angry alumna living in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank) against a tenure case at Barnard College two years ago, professor Nadia Abu el-Haj was accused of shoddy scholarship by those who had never read her work. She was falsely charged with writing about Israeli archaeology while knowing no Hebrew, and of falsifying the history of archaeology to anchor an argument about Palestinians' historical claim to the Holy Land (she makes no such argument).

Analogous mischaracterizations have been made about the scholarship of other vocal critics of Israel's policies and actions toward Palestinians, equally based on false, misleading, or nonexistent evidence—or sheer fancy. Public fabrications of other events, including letters of complaint to chancellors, some at sister-UC campuses, have stuffed false, damaging, and demeaning language into the mouths of the critics of Israeli policy; twisted arguments and intentions to something altogether unrecognizable; and sometimes garbled, while refusing to discuss in any way, the substance of the criticisms expressed. Like a growing list of others, we have both repeatedly been subjected to "the treatment."

The most recent episode of this kind of distortion involves Professor William (Bill) Robinson of the Sociology Department at UC Santa Barbara. During the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in January 2009, Robinson forwarded to his class on "Globalization and Politics" material that drew comparisons between the Nazi assault on the Warsaw Ghetto and the Israeli assault on Gaza. Two Jewish students in the class, after apparently talking with the Anti-Defamation League, filed a complaint against Robinson for "violating the Faculty Code of Conduct" and dropped the class. It turns out that Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League, met (under misleading pretexts) with senior UC Santa Barbara administrators and began to pressure them to investigate and censure Robinson. Foxman also apparently threatened to encourage Jewish donors to the university to withdraw their financial support unless Robinson was censured. Stand With Us—the same outfit that played such a damaging role in the UCLA incident—likewise became actively involved, organizing a massive letter writing campaign and threatening to bring pressure to bear to cut off donations to the campus.

The most troubling aspect of this case is not that the Anti-Defamation League made the accusation or that Stand With Us jumped into the fray so eagerly, but rather that the UC Santa Barbara administration took the accusation seriously, and apparently succumbed to outside political pressure to have Professor Robinson investigated (http://sb4af.wordpress.com). Evidence mounted of numerous violations of university procedures in the conduct of the investigation. This included, most disturbingly, key committee members (themselves known supporters of Israeli policy) discussing the case privately with Foxman who, it should be emphasized, had no standing to be involved in the investigation at all. And yet the investigation apparently pressed on, in the face of mounting faculty, student, and external criticism of the university's violations of academic freedom and of its own investigative policies. It was only in mid-June 2009, six months after the case was initiated, that Professor Robinson received notice that all charges against him were being dropped. No reason was cited, but the remarkable mobilization of students and faculty against the investigation—culminating in an uncontested UC Santa Barbara Academic Senate vote to investigate the administration's own mishandling of the entire affair—no doubt played a key role.

## Political Effects: the Case of Charles Freeman

PERHAPS BECAUSE MANY OF THE SAME organizations, like the Anti-Defamation League, are involved in both cases (via the Israel on Campus Coalition), the situation in the academy has now dovetailed with that outside the academy, and in the world of actual, hard politics centered on Washington. In the recent speech in which he explained his sudden withdrawal from the chairmanship of the National Intelligence Council, for example, Ambassador Charles Freeman said, "It is apparent that we Americans cannot any longer conduct a serious public

discussion or exercise independent judgment about matters of great importance to our country as well as to our allies and friends." In a message published March 10 on Foreignpolicy.com, Freeman blamed this situation, and his own departure from public life amid a swirl of unfounded allegations, mischaracterizations, distortions, and fabrications, on the dominant elements within the Israeli lobby in Washington:

> The tactics of the Israel Lobby plumb the depths of dishonor and indecency and include character assassination, selective misquotation, the willful distortion of the record, the fabrication of falsehoods, and an utter disregard for the truth. The aim of this Lobby is control of the policy process through the exercise of a veto over the appointment of people who dispute the wisdom of its views, the substitution of political correctness for analysis, and the exclusion of any and all options for decision by Americans and our government other than those that it favors.

We should all find alarming that what is taking place in the academy today is an extension of what takes place on Capitol Hill and in the corridors of (real) power. What is at stake is the process of representation, which shapes memory, disposition, and arguably—in the long run at any rate—the policy process itself. Many of the same tactics are being used in both situations; and they share the aim to monopolize legitimacy by tarnishing all criticism and questioning it as inherently illegitimate and malevolent.

## The Most Assertive Israeli Lobby: Dishonorable Tactics, Avoidance of Debate

IT IS WORTH POINTING OUT THAT THOSE who resort to the sorts of unbridled and unfounded charges exemplified by the attacks on the UCLA Gaza panel or the Robinson affair at UC Santa Barbara rarely if ever actually engage the arguments of Israel's critics. Counter-arguments are hardly ever mounted, counter-evidence almost never thought necessary. The rhetoric of response is predictable, and it takes the shape of the familiar litany of exhausted assertions that are inevitably recited *en bloc*, without any reference to what is actually being said; what evidence is being offered; what reasons, arguments, facts, figures, and citations are being assembled. Thus any criticism of Israel and Zionism is treated as criticism of Jews (even if made by Jews, who are then obviously self-hating), and therefore anti-Semitic or worse, as Judea Pearl asserts in his piece in the Los Angeles Times of March 15, 2009. Israel is merely protecting the security of its people; any state under rocket attack would do the same. Hamas, like Hezbollah, is a terrorist organization and Israel, like the United States, has the right to protect itself by all means necessary (a right that in such accounts the Palestinians never seem to possess). And it's not fair—or, better yet, it's inherently anti-Semitic—to single out Israel for criticism when there are places in the world that are far less democratic and far more violent toward their residents than Israel (Darfur, the cause célèbre of many pro-Israeli organizations, is often trotted out as an example, though usually without it being noted that the United States does not support, arm, and subsidize the Sudanese government or give its illegal actions political cover in the UN Security Council, let alone that there is no one in the United States—much less dozens of well-funded organizations and an armada of campus outfits—actively condoning the atrocities in Darfur).

## The Pro-Israel Propaganda Handbook

IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEN, GIVEN ITS provenance, that the Stand With Us report on "Gaza and Human Rights" expresses what pro-Israel campus activists refer to using the Hebrew word "hasbara." This means, essentially if not literally, "propaganda." The *Hasbara Handbook: Promoting Israel on Campus*, which is distributed to campus activists by organizations like Stand With Us (e.g., click "Guides for Activists" on www.middle-east-info.org), explains that it is often better to score points than to engage in actual arguments, and offers an explanation for how, in its own words, "to score points whilst avoiding debate." Point-scoring, the *Hasbara Handbook* explains, "works because most audience members fail to analyze what they hear. Rather, they register only a key few points, and form a vague 'impression' of whose argument was stronger." Part of the strategy is to recycle the same claims over and again, in as many settings as possible. "If people hear something often enough," the document points out, "they come to believe it."

The *Hasbara Handbook* offers several other propaganda devices, all of which can be seen vividly at play in the coverage of the UCLA Gaza panel and other similar events, including, again, the Robinson affair. "Creating negative connotations by name calling is done to try to get the audience to reject a person or idea on the basis of negative associations, *without allowing a real examination of that person or idea*," the handbook states with remarkable bluntness, in advocating that tactic. It also suggests using the opposite of name calling, to defend Israel by what it calls the deployment of "glittering generalities" (words like "freedom," "civilization," "democracy") to describe the country; manipulating the audience's fears ("listeners are too preoccupied by the threat of terrible things to think critically about the speaker's message"); and so on. The point of all this is not to use arguments backed by reason and evidence. It is, instead, to *manipulate* (the handbook's own term) an audience precisely in order *not* to examine arguments, not to think critically about what is being said. Which is a rather remarkable approach for a book intended for a university audience.

This is precisely, almost to the letter, the approach taken by most of the attacks on scholarly critics of Israeli policy. It matters little what is actually being discussed by critics; the familiar stock-in-trade responses will be brought to bear to terminate the discussion. Or a campaign to silence the critics will be promoted by making life uncomfortable for them or threatening the withdrawal of support for their institutions, or most extremely threatening their very careers, or their very employability (as happened with Norman Finkelstein at DePaul). The less successful the initial attempt to close things down, the louder the next round of condemnation, the more heated the invective, the more extreme the charges, the more gratuitous the escalation. Thus escalates the crescendo of attacks aimed at the UCLA panelists, which now basically has

them taking orders directly from Hamas, and leading a chanting mob of anti-Semites. We have both been subjected to similar accusations, in person and in print, mangling what we mean, putting words in our mouths we neither uttered nor thought, meanly misquoting or decontextualizing or partially citing what we write. It matters not that we have repeatedly and publicly endorsed nonviolent forms of protest and counter-action to Israel's violence; that we believe in justice, law, and human rights; that we would have all the people in the promised land enjoy its promise rather than some suffer strangulation at the hands of the others.

## Unbalanced Calls for "Balance" Undercut the Very Idea of the University

WHY THEN CAN STRIDENT SUPPORTERS OF Israel repeatedly resort to these tactics and be taken so seriously without engaging—indeed, while altogether avoiding—actual debate? Critics of the critics of Israeli policy repeatedly call for "balance," assuming that every panel by their opponents—but not the ones they organize themselves—should have counter-voices. Of course, the fact that every one-sided panel may be countered by one equally one-sided on the other side suggests that campuses can achieve a broader semblance of balance in other ways, as UCLA Chancellor Gene Block rightly noted in response to attempts by Israel's supporters to silence Israel's critics. We don't hear too many calls for economics departments having to hire Marxist political economists, or (in the opposite political direction) biology departments having to hire intelligent designers, in the name of "balance." Not to worry, we are not attempting to open up new cans of worms! We mean only to point out how one-sided the calls in the case of Israel-Palestine are, how unbalanced in the name of balance. Indeed, how off-balance.

We certainly don't recall hearing from these quarters any condemnation of the one-sidedness of, say, Alan Dershowitz. Nor do we hear at a minimum any expression of concern by those so volubly condemning Hamas rockets fired at southern Israel for the devastation wrought by the Israeli bombardment of civilian men, women, and children taking shelter in schools and UN compounds during the recent assault on Gaza.

And when Benny Morris, Israel's most renowned revisionist historian, famously insists that if you have to kill or be killed, it would be better to kill, we hear no pro-Israeli voices objecting in the name of "balance" that these are hardly the only options. Posing the issues reductively and solely as ones of survival in terms of physical self-defense so skews the issues as to essentially end the possibility of any debate. But perhaps that's the very point of the claim (as the *Hasbara Handbook* points out).

When President Jimmy Carter was invited to speak by various campuses, including one of our own, after the publication of his book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, Alan Dershowitz insisted in the name of "balance" that he share the stage or follow the former president's appearance. No doubt Professor Dershowitz speaks to many groups on his own, pushing *his* one-sided position. We don't hear calls that his audiences have access to an immediate counter-view. If balance is required in public of a former U.S. president, is it not also to be applied to a "one-sided" professor? And then what—every lecture on every issue on every campus is to be followed by a counter-lecture? The very idea is absurd. Likewise perhaps with public forums such as *National Review Online*. In his article, Stanley Kurtz makes a good deal of the lack of balance by public forums giving voice to Israel's critics. And yet he does so in a forum hardly known for publishing pro-Palestinian pieces. Be careful what you call for!

In *The Trial*, Kafka writes that "the charges are never made frivolously, and that the Court, once it has brought a charge against someone, is firmly convinced of the guilt of the accused and can be dislodged from that conviction only with the greatest difficulty." Israel's campus critics are accused without notice, condemned without evidence, convicted without recourse, and sentenced without representation. Israel's most vocal American proponents serve as policeman and accuser, judge and jury. In the end, those convicted are reduced to nothing more than shadow figures, straw persons set afire by the flaming terms of accusation.

Those undertaking to place off bounds all criticism of the Israeli state or military regarding treatment of Palestinians by automatically and offhandedly denouncing such criticism as anti-Semitic trivialize any legitimate charge of real anti-Semitism. This accusatory trivialization confronts such strident supporters with a quandary. They seek to de-exceptionalize Israel by insisting that critics do not equally condemn Sudan or China or North Korea for violations of human rights. And yet they exceptionalize the Israeli state by seeking to shield it from any criticism whatsoever. No good ever comes from a state rendered or rendering itself immune from criticism, as the instances cited by Israel's supporters prove without qualification.

True to our nature, however, academics as such should live to push ideas, to press difficult points, to debate the ins and outs. As Edward Said repeatedly pointed out, academics and intellectuals have a responsibility not just to speak in clearly articulated ways but also to air ideas even about difficult subjects, to venture where others might avoid going. The misrepresentations formulated by Israel's most vociferous supporters are designed to narrow not just what can be said about a subject but what subject matter can be raised at all. The misrepresentations, the implied silencing, and the insidious implications are not simply pernicious; they seem obviously designed to quash any criticism of Israeli policy. In short, such intervention has the effect of undercutting the very idea of the university.

## Proposed Guidelines for Debating Israel/Palestine on Campus

HERE, THEN, IN THE SPIRIT OF INTELLECTUAL civility, are some guidelines that we believe will facilitate the discussion of Israel/Palestine on American college campuses. These are the criteria, we suggest, by which criticism—criticism of Israel *and* criticism of Israel's critics—should be assessed. We urge that when there are disagreements that interlocutors be judged by whether they:

- respond to arguments with counter-arguments, not ad hominem accusations;
- respond to evidence with counter-evidence, not mere assertions;
- focus on what is being said and on the extent to which what is being said is supported by evidence, instead of resorting to cries of "imbalance" and "one-sidedness";
- make every effort not to distort what

someone else says: in particular, whether they reconstruct quotations out of context or quote only half-sentences;

• put words in other people's mouths, and try to portray someone who identifies herself as an advocate of peace and justice as in fact secretly—or is it obviously?—a monstrously racist advocate of violence;

• try to stifle dissent by threatening or jeopardizing the critic's career;

• discount the numbers of dead or injured or the innocence of the dead or injured among those regarded as "the enemy" while justifying the devastation produced by the action in question as "necessary" even if the effects were "unfortunate."

One other point. There have long been academic centers and teaching programs for Jewish Studies, as well as Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, Arab, and Islamic Studies. In the past, the best of those institutional formations have looked to engage—and to engage across personal and political divides, precisely—the complex relations marked by the segregating political conditions. More recently, as the separationist politics and their ideological rationalizations have hardened on the ground, academic programs have begun to mirror these isolating conditions. For instance, there have begun to emerge programs or research centers solely in Israel Studies, funded largely by private endowments, tending to ignore or lament or rationalize away the relation between conditions in Israel and those in the Occupied Territories. Such programs attempt to consider Israel as though it could be framed as an object of study in isolation from the Palestinians (who make up a fifth of its own population and half of the total population over which Israel rules) and the whole question of Palestine, to both of which Israel is in fact inexorably tied. Imagine trying to frame an American studies program today that consciously (or, worse, unconsciously) excludes any treatment of blacks or Hispanics.

Given the complex constitution of the region, accordingly, we consider it imperative that any teaching or research program about Israel-Palestine take seriously the complex and interacting ways that social, cultural, political, legal, and epistemological arrangements are deeply intertwined, that conditions of life and death for some turn relationally on those for others. This entails a different way of thinking not just about the region but also more about institutions of knowledge formation and their institutional arrangements than tends to be the dominant trend today.

## A Proposal for *Tikkun* Forums

*Tikkun* has occupied an extraordinarily important progressive and productive position amid the intellectual and political tensions. We consider *Tikkun* and the communities it is able to reach and address uniquely well-placed, accordingly, to promote a set of forums—whether online, in print, or face-to-face—designed to promote civil, respectful, but critical engagements across the political divides. Such forums would (and already do) provide the platforms to air difficult positions about the Israel-Palestine divide, to critique and counter-critique without being maligned, and to discuss alternative arrangements without fear of being reduced to ridicule, invective, or even threat.

Such forums would be well-placed to establish ground rules and guidelines for criticizing political programs and practices, as well as their supporters and critics, civilly and without engaging in a witch hunt as a consequence of the criticism aired. They would establish the standards similarly for unacceptable disparagement of Jews *and* of Palestinians, as well as of critics of Israel and the Palestinian cause. And they would set the example for distinguishing between acceptable criticism of Israel's actions and policies and anti-Semitic criticism of Jews as such. This example, in turn, would have the effect of encouraging the major representatives of the Anti-Defamation League to return to its historically crucial role of monitoring not only anti-Semitism but also all forms of bigotry, without reducing criticism of Israel of necessity to anti-Semitism.

To put off the table crucial counter-considerations is to unbalance consideration of the alternatives. A forum dominated by those who can shout loudest, have more access, have more resources, or feel more insulted is one-sided and, in the end, destructive. One-sided, self-regarding assertion is no exchange at all. In the final analysis it does no one any good, least of all the people suffering the consequences, on pretty much all sides of the divide.

We call, by contrast, for engaging the arguments, for respecting the right to say difficult things, countering without abuse, making criticisms and counter-criticisms without mischievous mischaracterization. Without *hasbara*. In calling for respectful exchange, for critical engagement, then, we are calling for respecting the positions taken by honest thinkers. In insisting on balance and recalibration, we are agreeing to balance in all the complexity, on all registers and dimensions. The lives at stake—all the lives—are owed nothing less. ■

**A LETTER TO YOUNG STUDENTS**
*(continued from page 46)*

into the world that ought to be. Now that I am old, its words still challenge me. It goes like this:

> Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
> In living echoes of Thy tone;
> As Thou has sought, so let me seek
> Thy erring children lost and lone.
>
> O lead me, Lord, that I may lead
> The wandering and the wavering feet;
> O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
> The hungering ones with manna sweet!

That hymn tells me that spirituality without secret works of loving-kindness and sacrifice for others is dead.

Finally, that test as to the validity of your spirituality is whether what you believe to be spirituality transforms you into an advocate for social justice. Otherwise what is masked as spirituality might just be an excursion into narcissistic religiosity.

Becoming saturated with the presence of the Ultimate Thou is to have your heart broken by the things that break the heart of God. Racism, sexism, homophobia, militarism, ageism, environmental degradation, poverty, political oppression of the weak, and all other social evils become intolerable to those who truly are possessed by God.

This academic year will be little more than a grind for you unless something more than knowledge is sought. In the words of Scripture, "Redeem the time, because the days are filled with evil." Take the risks that go with loving and acting for justice. Carpe diem! Become a spiritual activist. Become an agent of *tikkun*! ■

# OCTOBER

Reddening dogwood and sugar maple,
deep dark dramatic red of sumac
along a Cape road, and in the city,
jackets donned, then at mid-day, shed.

Days of Awe.
Month of our parents' deaths.

Nature's refrain, the return of losses,
piercing glory of the leaves' palette
before the tossing windy rains,
slop and decay, the burial under snow.

And yet, a new year, new breath:

repetition of stories that once wounded
or bewildered and now delight—
actual stories, after all
this time: Funny. Sad. Slight.

Memories, misquotes.
Days of reflection, of reconciliation.

Their faults now only foibles
and all the meannesses and pathos,
hoarding and generosities,
the stoniness and warmth,

part of their allure,
part of the layered shapeliness.
Enduring, granitic characters
at last achieved.

With acceptance of them,
some also perhaps of yourself.
*It is not your job to finish the task,*
*but neither are you free to abandon it.*

— **Gail Mazur**

# Dear Swami

## Where Swami answers your questions, and you will question his answers



**BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA**

*Dear Swami:*

*I have impulses and habits that wreck my willpower—the one thing I need to overcome the bad habits. What do you recommend?*

*Malik E. Fawcett*
*Detroit, Michigan*

Dear Malik,

Hopefully one of your bad habits is procrastinating. If so, then next time you have the urge to turn an impulse into an outpulse, call on the positive power of procrastination, and simply put it off.

*Dear Swami:*

*What on earth will I do with the rest of my life after enlightenment? Being a seeker has kept me busy all these years ... searching, finding, and discarding ... it has given me a sense of purpose in life—I shall be lost without it and, with nothing to achieve, I might as well be dead.*

*Kirsten Spatapahn*
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Dear Kirsten:

Well, you know what they say. Before enlightenment, do the dishes. After enlightenment, do the dishes ... but they're 40 percent brighter. Maybe you need to take a break from your purposeful activities, and get a sense of porpoise instead. Go swim with the dolphins. And if you want to help humankind, you can help spread human kindness. This is particularly important when you feel weighed down by the gravity of world conditions. Just attune in to the levitational forces and you will find the corners of your mouth being pulled upward in a smile. You may not be aware of it, but smiling is contagious. You can start an epidemic and, just like that, increase the laugh force on the planet. Now if you really want to speed up evolution by having enlightening strike twice as often, you can get enlightened with a friend as part of my Buddysattva program.

*Dear Swami:*

*I would love to know your take on the whole idea of "mind viruses" and "memes"—these thought forms that are spread through mass media. How do we keep from being infected with negativity, or worse yet, infecting others unconsciously? (I have my mental floss at the ready, just in case.)*

*Frieda Mind*
*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Dear Frieda:

It is good that you are prepared. Given that the mainstream media are a brainwashing machine stuck on spin, both truth decay and malconclusion are rampant. That's why four out of five transcendentists recommend mental floss to dislodge all the superfluous "flossify" that has lodged itself between the ears.

One of the greatest causes of truth decay is mistaking one's own beliefs for reality. Believe me, what people believe is truly unbelievable. And the secret for releasing unbelievable beliefs? You won't believe it. It is silence. That is why I have labored to produce Swami's Ultimate Meditation tape, which is completely blank. You may have heard meditation tapes before, but until you hear this, you ain't heard nothing.

Now finally—and perhaps most importantly—the way to avoid being infected with negative belief viruses is to avoid being negative, period. That is why I have launched my Just Say No to Negativity campaign, where the slogan is, "Positively no negativity." For example, perhaps your kids are driving you batty. Could it be that you have been reinforcing their negativity by responding negatively to them? If that is so, you must positively reverse course, and speak only positive words. Imagine how your teenage son will respond when he hears: "Get out of bed, you useful good-for-something! What's right with you, anyway?" And imagine how exasperating it will be to your adversaries when they hear you good-mouthing them for no reason. ■

*Swami Beyondananda is the comic alter ego of Steve Bhaerman and can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com. On the serious side, Steve recently coauthored* Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and a Way to Get There From Here *with cellular biologist Bruce Lipton.*

# Tikkun RECOMMENDS

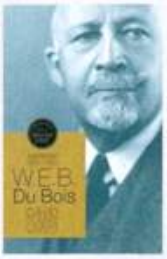
## AMERICAN RADICAL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF I.F. STONE

D.D. Guttenplan
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2009




## W.E.B. DU BOIS: A BIOGRAPHY

David Levering Lewis
Henry Holt & Co., 2009

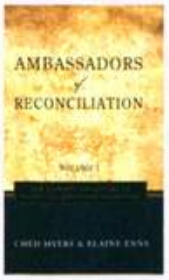



HERE ARE TWO AMAZING BIOGRAPHIES OF RADICAL intellectuals whose activism took quite different forms. *I.F. Stone Weekly* became a source of information and a lifeline for liberals and progressives as American media became increasingly propagandist for the interests of the powerful and increasingly intimidated by the McCarthyism that dominated public discourse from 1945 until the middle of the 1960s. Stone was a relentless critic of the lies and deceits of the Cold War and its attendant depredations, and he empowered his readers by his careful and detailed research into the realities of American politics. He was a one-man Internet, supplying for his generation in the form of a weekly newsletter what we get today from a thousand bloggers and email mavens. Guttenplan's book does an excellent job of recapturing for us the historical feel and intricacies of radical politics in the post-World War II period.

David Levering Lewis's paperback is a condensation of a Pulitzer Prize-winning two-volume version of Du Bois's life and thought. Du Bois was one of the outstanding African American intellectuals of the twentieth century, and a major figure in shaping the struggles for civil liberties and/or Black liberation that were central to twentieth-century American politics. Lewis's biography is a work of sensitivity and brilliance, and indispensable for anyone who wants to understand the currents that still flow beneath the surface in the Black community today.

## AMBASSADORS OF RECONCILIATION

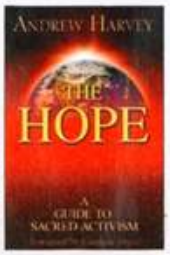
Ched Myers and Elaine Enns
Orbis Books, 2009




MYERS AND ENNS ARE CLOSE READERS OF BIBLICAL texts, and in this first volume of what is subtitled "New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking" they use this skill to recapture the truly revolutionary elements in the original versions of Christianity. Elaine Enns is a restorative justice trainer and mediator, and Ched Myers is a nonviolence organizer and educator. Together they are unequivocal in their insistence that Christianity is about the struggle against violence and oppression, and they emphasize the continuity of that focus with the teachings of the Jewish prophets.

## THE HOPE: A GUIDE TO SACRED ACTIVISM

Andrew Harvey
Hay House, 2009




ANDREW HARVEY IS A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE OF the accumulated spiritual wisdom of the human race, and his new book, subtitled "A Guide to Sacred Activism," is a useful supplement to the work of the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Imagine, if you can, a movement that was both advocating for a Global Marshall Plan and simultaneously developing in its members an inner depth and wisdom, a willingness to confront their own "shadow parts" without abandoning their commitment to public social action, and a real practice that fostered joy, wisdom, and a deepening connection to the Divine. If that goal intrigues you, Andrew Harvey's book is an important next step in the process.

## HALLOWED SECULARISM

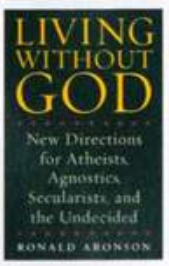
Bruce Ledewitz
Palgrave Macmillan, 2009



## LIVING WITHOUT GOD

Ronald Aronson
Counterpoint, 2008



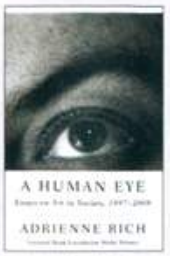



*TIKKUN*'S NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES welcomes "spiritual but not religious" people, as well as people connected to a traditional religious or spiritual community. Former Yeshiva student turned secularist Bruce Ledewitz shows how it is possible to not believe in God, and yet be serious about the search for meaning in life; to take seriously the experience of awe and holiness in life; and even to feel deeply connected to many of the most inspired teachings of the religious traditions. His sophisticated appropriation of the spiritual wisdom of the human race is accompanied with an appreciation of the sacred and a plea to secular humanists to discover common ground with religious people and a common foundation in hope.

As the book's subtitle suggests, Ronald Aronson attempts to find "new directions for atheists, agnostics, secularists, and the undecided." He is less interested than Ledewitz in finding common ground with the religious but nevertheless seeks to provide an approach to meaning in life and in the face of death that is the common challenge of all humanity. Choosing to "use reason actively to synthesize what one knows, is also the decision to give up any pretense to absolute knowledge," he writes. "It is a statement of humility. It entails allowing oneself to enter into discussion, to submit what one says to the judgment of others, to be proven wrong by them, to be seen as fallible, and thus to realize that any particular piece of knowledge is always tentative, always subject to revision, always demanding verification." Unfortunately, Aronson doesn't tell us the verification for this worldview, which seems on its face to be a faith commitment of its own.

## A HUMAN EYE

Adrienne Rich
W.W. Norton & Co., 2009




ADRIENNE RICH HAS ACHIEVED ALMOST ICONIC status as a poet and critic of contemporary American society and culture. In this collection, subtitled "Essays on Art in Society, 1997-2008," the reader will discover why Rich is often described as the quintessential Jewish feminist public intellectual (despite her proclivity for reclusiveness). Poetry, she teaches us, has been charged with "aestheticizing," thus being complicit in, the violent realities of power—of practices like collective punishment, torture, rape, and genocide. Whether she's reminding us of the disgusting way Americans continue to treat immigrants, or of the outrages of Israel's occupation and its recent reinvasion of Gaza, Rich manages to combine a humane eye with a powerful articulation of what too many intellectuals avoid.

# WHY READ TIKKUN?




## Not every toddler loves *Tikkun* ... but most college students who read it love it.

## Why?

*Tikkun* is a different kind of magazine. *Tikkun* is about healing and repairing our world. It approaches contemporary politics, culture, social thought, books, and film from a unique perspective. Many other progressive magazines assume that human beings are motivated primarily by economic needs and self-interest. Well, yes, they are important! But we know that human beings also seek something more:

- a purpose to our lives that transcends the individualism and selfishness of the competitive marketplace and connects us to a transcendent source of meaning
- a community in which we feel deeply connected to others
- love and sexual pleasure and fulfillment
- the opportunity to give and take care of each other
- the joy of responding with awe, wonder, and radical amazement to the majesty and mystery of the universe
- friendships based on generosity and not just on "getting something for oneself" without regard to the needs of others
- rationally based hope that we can save our planet from ecological destruction
- social movements that are not only about changing the world but also about changing ourselves and connecting to our inner spiritual needs

You don't have to be religious, spiritual, or politically progressive to read *Tikkun*'s articles. We are not "politically correct"—but we do have a revolutionary way of understanding the world. And we urge you to read us, subscribe, and join our movement to heal and repair the world.