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SUMMER 2011

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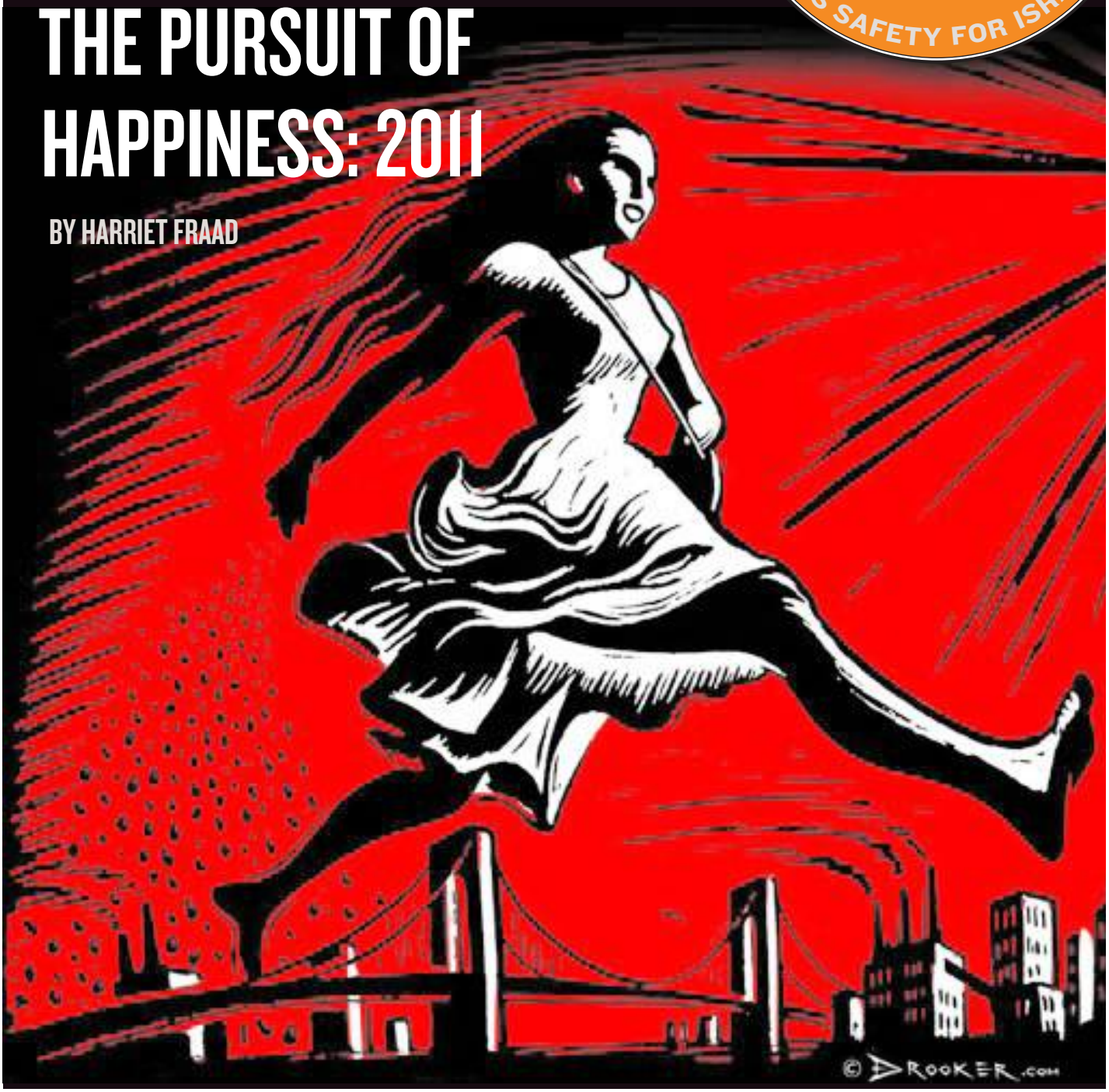
PLUS SAFETY FOR ISRAEL

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: 2011

BY HARRIET FRAAD



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Readers Respond: Letters from Summer 2011

by Tikkun Readers

July 1, 2011

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

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 email, 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.*

GMP ASSUMES U.S. SUPERIORITY

I cannot help thinking the idea of a **Global Marshall Plan** that Rabbi Lerner proposes is farfetched and misguided. It would probably be better if the United States "simply" withdrew its military (bases and all) from around the world, stopped selling weapons to everyone, and stopped political and corporate intrigues, but this is wishful thinking, of course. The idea of a Global Marshall Plan would only lead to more empire building.

An Iraqi friend of mine and cofounder of the Muslim Peacemaker Teams was interviewed by a news reporter some years ago, and the reporter asked what the United States could do to help rebuild Iraq. He replied that the rapist cannot be the therapist. It would be best, he continued, for the United States to simply withdraw from Iraq and let Iraq and the Middle East work on their own problems. Perhaps, he added, those European nations that have not been involved in the war could also help.

The Global Marshall Plan assumes a certain superiority that the current U.S. military hegemony and excess (in consumption, per capita pollution, and reliance on external goods) belies.

Perhaps if Americans first learned to moderate their consumption to levels their own environs could sustain (without relying on taking from others what in the end those others need for their own well-being) and moderate their penchant for international violence,
weapons sales, corporate promulgation, and support for oppressive foreign dictatorships, etc., the United States could begin seeing clearly enough to be of help to others.

Currently we could use help from others, rather than the other way around, perhaps no more so than from older indigenous cultures, on how to live "reasonably" and sustainably, even if not perfectly (since neither we, nor our societies, are ever perfect).

Dave Kast
Wausau, WI

BIN LADEN'S ASSASSINATION

Thanks to Peter Gabel and Michael Lerner for their **important message** about the response to Osama bin Laden's assassination. I was uncomfortable with all the celebrating on the day after the announcement, and was delighted to read this thoughtful and life-affirming piece from *Tikkun*. I shared it with many friends along with this note: "This article from *Tikkun* expresses well what I have been feeling all day. It is unseemly to be celebrating the death of anyone — even a sworn enemy and dangerous terrorist — with such glee. Feeling relief and feeling safer are not the same as feeling the call to wild celebration. Thanks again to *Tikkun* for keeping our eye on the prize of peace and connection."

Patti Breitman
Fairfax, CA

US VERSUS THEM

I agree with Peter Gabel and Michael Lerner's joint web article, "**Tikkun's Spiritual Response to the Assassination of Osama bin Laden**," which expresses shock at the media exultation over the announcement of the bin Laden killing. Peter calls for Americans to conduct themselves "in a way that manifests our empathy and compassion for … every human person" and conveys "our awareness of the tragic distortions in human relations across the globe that still hurl human beings into the horrors of ongoing violence and war."

By now it is well known that many Americans reacted with similar aversion to the widespread celebration of the killing of bin Laden. Thousands apparently found articulation for their feelings in a widely reproduced quote on the Internet — which, as it turns out, was, at least in part, falsely attributed to Martin Luther King.

In his 1963 book Strength To Love, King had written: "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

It seems that a Facebook user picked up this quote as content for her personal profile and then added this lead-in sentence: "I will mourn the loss of thousands of precious lives, but I will not rejoice in the death of one, not even an enemy." Though the portion of the profile comprising the quote from Dr. King was enclosed by quotation marks and duly attributed, the quote marks separating the King quote from the entire profile statement were lost in its viral iteration on the Internet. In consequence, the entire statement, including the attribution at the end, was accepted without challenge by most who saw it as, in its entirety, a genuine quote from Dr. King.

Much has been made of this development as an illustration of why you can't trust everything you find on the Internet, especially on social networking sites. This complication aside, the misrepresented statement appears to have also reflected the feelings of at least tens of thousands of Americans. It certainly did for me. Killing, even in the apparent cause of justice, is always a moral tragedy, a failure of human reason, empathy, and compassion. As such, it offers no basis for celebration, especially when that is marked by vengeful glee. When news of the bin Laden killing broke on Sunday night,

May 1, 2011, I too was dismayed by all the triumphant chanting of "U.S.A! U.S.A!" shown from around the White House and even at ballparks. I found the response inhuman, not patriotic and unifying, as the president would later have it.

The notion, moreover, that "justice has been done" struck me as the sheerest hypocrisy. I hate all violence, including bin Laden's, but when you compare his murders to America's, he comes out a piker. How many millions did we kill in Vietnam and Iraq — and for what reasons? And when bin Laden laid out his grievances against us — our invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan; our stationing of troops prior to "Desert Storm" in the Muslim Holy Land of Saudi Arabia; our propping up of Arab dictators, especially Mubarak and the Saudi royal family, to ensure unhindered and cheap access to Middle Eastern oil; our abandonment of Afghanistan after bin Laden and the other Mujahideen had done the dirty work for us in helping bring down the Soviet Union; and, above all, the uncritical and contemptuous onesidedness of our support of Israel over the Palestinians — who's to say, considering the sorry history of the world, that he didn't have his reasons to wage war against us in the only way he could? Can't we at least say, now, starting with the president, that, while the killing of bin Laden has fulfilled America's promise to bring justice to his victims, we look forward to, and will work for, a day when people of every nation will recognize their common humanity with all other humans and no longer settle their conflicts by violence?

I hope that Americans can in time come to define their sense of identity not by their differences, but by their own creativity and efforts to contribute constructively to the world. It remains a fact, however, that after two thousand years of Christian preaching about the need to base human relations on love and forgiveness, most Americans, as perhaps most humans generally, still see the world as "us against them."

The possibility clearly exists that division, not unity, is the destiny of the human race. But, for those of us who cannot accept that outcome, conscience and compassion give us no choice but to fight to change the world. We're in the minority now, but so were those few who once found repugnant the spectator sport of duels between gladiators and lions, or the spectacle provided by public executions. We must operate on the evidence and faith that moral progress is possible; that one day, as Beethoven's Ninth proclaims, all men will be brothers.

Bob Anschuetz
Ypsilanti, MI

TIKKUN'S HAGGADAH SUPPLEMENT

Thank you. Your **Haggadah supplement** is most inspiring for an Anglican priest in South Africa struggling with issues of Palestine/Israel and the inevitable (for us) comparison with apartheid South Africa. I was born in Poland eighteen months before the war broke out, my father on one side and my uncle on the other in that war, and I remember as a child the horror of the films shown at local cinemas as Dachau and Belsen and many others were opened. I remember having made a pilgrimage to Auschwitz and having "seen" in my deepest soul those people's suffering. And then having visited Palestine/Israel and seen. The question always is: how can we do to others what was done to us? How can the Israeli State do to the Palestinians what was done to them?

This isn't the time for answers, but I am trying to contribute to the struggle through the Kairos Palestine movement — and have been very moved by the struggle of some Jewish theologians around the meanings of all this. I'm not sure how I will find your coming book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, but I will try. I need to continue my main focus this year of encouraging people of faith to come to Durban in late November/early December so we can together move mountains of stubborn opposition by governments (especially the United States, even under Obama) to sign anything that would bind them to save Planet Earth, our only home most graciously bestowed on us by the One we know as Creator, Sustainer, Strengthener.

So, I just wanted to thank you and hold hands with you for a moment, with tears in my eyes, over the miles.

Sue Brittion
KwaZulu Natal, Republic of South Africa

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RELIGION

In view of the photo of Isis, Osiris, and the Imyut emblem (the animal skin on a pole) on page eleven in your **Passover Haggadah supplement**, I think it's worth noting that despite the oppression in Egypt, ancient Egyptian religious texts present significant values, concepts, and imagery that resonate strongly with those of the Tanakh, and in some cases are even considered to be related by critical scholars. I have commented on some of this in my papers:

"The Caring God: The Experience and Lexicon of Grace in the Ancient Egyptian Religion," in *The Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*.

"Cosmic and Personal: The God of Awe and Grace in Egyptian Texts, the Hebrew Bible, and Rabbinic Commentary," in *Text and Community: Essays in Memory of Bruce M. Metzger*.

Edmund S. Meltzer
Stevens Point, WI

THE NATURE OF EVIL

I was delighted to find Terry Eagleton's "**Nature of Evil**" in the Winter 2011 issue of *Tikkun* and to read his argument that the rise of working-class values of sacrifice and hard work have managed to dull the image of Virtue while sexing-up the image of Evil. I would have liked him to have expanded upon this theme and articulated some ideas as to how the ordinary mortal — ensnared in life's dull regimes and tired rituals — could break free and live fully, and therefore more virtuously. Instead, the second half descended into an intellectual exercise attempting to explain how fictitious and mythical images of evil are flawed and why, as if by seeing this we would no longer find zombies and vampires entertaining. I would argue that most of their appeal has nothing to do with the dullness of the portrayal of virtue and a lot to do with their fictionality. If we actually awoke to find vampires or zombies at our bedside, we would not entertain such positive images of them.

What really troubled me was the paragraph at the bottom of the first page, which seemed to equate the struggle for democracy in the Middle East with this desire for the glamorous image of evil. The piece was written before the events in Cairo unfolded, but if I am reading it correctly, it seems to echo a refrain conservative American pundits have been using in support of Mubarak: namely, that if democracy comes to the Middle East, and if voters there decide to elect anti-Israel governments, then their efforts at democracy should be cut short. Even by the standards of arrogance set by earlier Zionist statements, this is arrogance personified. Americans have been rather polite in refraining from asking the hard questions of the Israel Project that should have been asked decades ago. While that willful ignorance and intellectual blindness troubles me, I have little doubt that once Americans are faced with the idea that Israel's survival depends on its millions of neighbors — in ancient and historical nations — living in tyranny in order to maintain Israel's "freedom," they will instead begin to dissent and demand answers. Is this, then, the argument we want to see the light of day?

I am no friend of Israel, but I am gravely concerned with the future of American Judaism and how the reduced status of a post First Republic America will be abused to blame America's Jews for America's post imperial existence. If Israel is in any way involved in that last great battle — where the First Republic staggers into the sands of the Bible and can't get up — Americans will echo their German brethren of 1919 and look for simple answers and scapegoats, and I fear they will find the Usual Suspects, and "It Will Happen Here." We need to find a voice to kill this arrogant argument. Let democracy ring throughout the Middle East.

Paul Tominac
San Francisco, CA

AN EFFECTIVE PEACE PROCESS

In response to Rabbi Lerner's editorial on "**Middle East Peace Negotiations?**" (*Tikkun*, November/December 2010), an effective peace process will only begin to develop between Israelis and Palestinians when both peoples conclude that neither is to blame for the historical situation they are in. They will only arrive at this judgment when they both realize that (1) ultimately they are both victims, direct and indirect, of the centuries-long historical process of anti-Semitism; (2) this historical process was indifferent to collateral damage to all "innocent bystanders"; and (3) if their historical places had been switched at the beginning of history, each people would most likely have acted in a very similar manner in reaction to the combination of the events of the twentieth century and the cumulative arc of events from the previous centuries. Only then will they be able to officially, unofficially, and subconsciously forgive each other — collectively and individually — for what they have both been provoked into doing to one another.

The requisite transformative insight is recognition that the historical and cultural forces mounted by the numerous forgotten, unknown, and unacknowledged, as well as obvious third parties in the histories of Europe and North America caused the current Arab-Israeli conflict as surely as heat and water produce steam.

Many post–World War II third parties made mistakes of judgment and/or opportunistically sought to profit from the conflict, or to use it for their own ends, such as diverting attention away from oligarchic

corruption and malfeasance. These opportunistic actors may be despicable by today's standards, but their overall share of blame is very minor compared to the European and North American historical actors through the end of World War II. But their "sins" still loom large enough that they will not want to acknowledge their wrongheadedness, mean-spiritedness, and exploitative behavior. They will, out of necessity, also resist the conclusion that both the Israelis and Palestinians are effectively blameless for their acts in the conflict over land to live on. Some sort of co-catalytic process of both negotiations and larger public and private discussions (with this item of "who's really to blame" at the top of all the agendas) will most likely be required to develop the prerequisite "non-blame understanding" among the main adversary groups and subgroups.

Unfortunately it may also require at least a few outside third parties willing to take implicit responsibility, if only by proxy, for the now more historically remote third parties that really caused the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Finding the appropriate proxies qualified by historical linage and current position, and also willing to acknowledge the necessary level of responsibility for this conflict is not very likely to say the least! Any candidates for such agency would fear the bad public relations, adverse domestic political consequences, and potential financial liability, even if they acted jointly to acknowledge this historical responsibility. They may conclude that the probability of success is not worth the multiple risks, that accepting proxy responsibility may still not be enough to facilitate a "non-blame understanding" (between the Israelis and the Palestinians), and a relinquishment and reduction of long held hostilities by all sides.

I'm not very optimistic, but I hope I am wrong and that it will take far less than what I have just described to bring real peace to the Palestinians and Israelis.

Ben Andrews
Phoenix, Arizona

REFLECTIONS ON THE 2010 NSP CONFERENCE

I've been an active member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives in Palm Beach County, Florida, since 2007. Attending the June 2010 NSP conference in Washington, D.C., reenergized and inspired me to continue to advocate for a caring society and world. I resonated most with Peter Gabel's talk on relationships. I bought ***The Bank Teller*** and have read a sampling of essays that further strengthened my alignment with Gabel's ideas. Reading Gabel's article — "**A Call for Sacred Biologists**" — in the March/April 2010 issue of *Tikkun* prompted me to connect you with Michael Dowd, a spiritual evolutionist/cosmologist, who is an answer to your "call."

Today, Michael Dowd seems to be branching into the realm of neuropsychology, which leads back to the psychological underpinnings of Gabel's, Lerner's, and my work: teaching, research, and psychotherapy/progressive activism to change culture.

I agree that we need to bridge the conflict between the emerging revelation of science and Bible-based fundamentalism and its narrow, literalistic interpretations, which restrict, rather than expand, our minds and spirits. Closed systems are choked off from the air and the light of new truths. We can't move together to solve the human and planetary crises of our times if we fight with each other and cling to our rigid defenses. This bars us from communicating in a common language

for the common good. We can't reach our higher levels of consciousness to handle democracy responsibly if our government fails to enact and protect laws and policies that foster meeting basic human needs.

There is little room for growth and compassion in people who are fighting for survival in a hostile environment. Draconian cuts to services and environmental safeguards will cost us in more crises, dysfunction, economic loss, dependency, violence, illness, and death.

Thank God for Evolution (the title of one of Michael Dowd's DVDs) and the injunction of *tikkun olam* that birthed the Network of Spiritual Progressives!

Judith Kraft
Briny Breezes, FL

LIBYA

Rabbi Lerner's March 29, 2011, editorial, "**Violence in Libya**," gives new life to a very good old idea. As a former professor of international relations, it has been a lifelong sadness to witness the wrong action coming too late to be right. Even that legendary warrior, Winston Churchill, fully understood this when he called the Second World War "the unnecessary war."

Raphael Shevelev
El Cerrito, CA

CHRISTIANITY, EMPIRE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

I wish to thank *Tikkun* for publishing the bold "Life in Just Peace" portion of Ulrich Duchrow's "**A European Revival of Liberation Theology**" in the Winter 2011 issue. The destructive effects of the unregulated market system supported by the politics of empire have been analyzed and deplored by the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches because their members include Christians from the global South who look upon the world from the margin. The Churches of Europe and North America have become more timid, betraying the critical statements they made in the 1970s. The European groups and networks that have signed "Life in Just Peace" represent a small minority, just as the corresponding groups do in the United States and Canada. I live in the French-speaking province of Quebec where the Catholic Left is still a significant minority addressing church and society. My colleague Ulrich Duchrow is a prophet and troublemaker who will not give up: I greatly admire him. But before I sign his declaration, I would ask that it acknowledge the human rights crisis in Europe, caused by the spread of racist hostility to immigrants, especially Muslims, and the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in all European countries.

Gregory Baum
Montreal, Canada

LOVE YOUR SITE

I just wanted to compliment you on your site, most especially its content. The issues you are addressing are so important. I am in Madison, Wisconsin, and trying to fight against the cruel austerity budget presented by our governor. It's inspirational to find a site that provides some hope, especially on a day when I'm finding it hard to hang on to hope in a state where the government is now totally controlled by corporate interests. I will definitely spread the word about the **Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment** to those who have been protesting with me over the last four months and anyone else who will listen.

Christine McDonough
Madison, Wisconsin

A GROSS MISINTERPRETATION

I am shocked by the title of "**The Culture Wars Continue: Catholic Church Blames the 1960s for Priests' Pedophilia**," Michael Lerner's article about "The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010" by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The latter was commissioned by the United States Catholic Conference, but the John Jay College is hardly the Catholic Church. And saying the five-year study blames the sixties for priests' pedophilia is a grossly inaccurate characterization of the report. I refer you to "What Caused the Crisis?" by Kathleen McChesney in *America* magazine June 6-15, 2011:

> Less than 5 percent of priests with abuse allegations exhibited behaviors consistent with pedophilia…. Formation seems to have played a significant role in the likelihood of a man becoming an abuser. Abusers failed to recognize the harm they did to their victims…. As seminaries gradually intensified the focus of formation on the "human" aspect of development, the number of incidents of abuse began to diminish…. The failure of some diocesan leaders to take responsibility for the harms caused by priestly abuse was egregious in some cases…. The study fairly notes that some bishops were "innovators" in dealing with the issue of abuse well before 2002 and some, the "laggards," were not…. The study found that the increase of abuse incidents during the 1960s and 1970s was consistent with "the rise of other types of 'deviant' behavior such as drug use, crime and changes in social behavior such as the increase in premarital sexual behavior and divorce.… This finding may be dangerously misinterpreted by some as a "cause" of the abuse. While the sexual activities of clergy members with consenting adults during this time may reflect a sexually liberated society, at no time was the sexual abuse of minors legal, moral, or justified. As adult followers of the Catholic faith, these offenders knew, or should have known, that their behaviors violated and injured the young. The sexual abuse of minors is a long-term societal problem that is likely to persist, particularly in organizations that nurture and mentor adolescents…. The report's recommendations reinforce the actions undertaken by bishops and religious superiors to prevent future abuse — actions that can and should be replicated in other countries and by other organizations. The suggested prevention policies focus on three areas: education, situational prevention models, and oversight and accountability.

I think we can agree with the John Jay College report that the sexual abuse of minors is a long-term societal problem. All faiths need to cooperate together to minimize future abuse. I would add that the world family abuses minors in many other ways as well. Children are hungry, poor, homeless, lacking in proper education, exposed to violence in video games, entertainment, a real-life war system, an exclusive global economy, a deteriorating planet. *Tikkun* has done much to make this a better world for children and adults. Misinterpreting reports and efforts to minimize sexual abuse can't be listed among your many good works.

Father Benjamin J. Urmston
Cincinnati, OH

Michael Lerner responds:

Dear Father Urmston, Thank you for your letter. Obviously our intent is not to distort the report or the meaning, and I think your letter goes part of the way in that direction. Still, it leaves a few things unclear that you might choose to clarify. First, you distinguish between the Catholic Church and John Jay College. Is that distinction meant to say that the Church does not feel that John Jay College did a good job of fulfilling its commission from the Catholic Church? If that is not your point, then what point are you making when you say "the John Jay College is hardly the Catholic Church?"

Second, what exactly did you mean by saying: "The study found that the increase of abuse incidents during the 1960s and 1970s was consistent with the rise of other types of 'deviant' behavior such as drug use, crime, and changes in social behavior such as the increase in premarital sexual behavior and divorce"?

Most of those who have commented on this report have understood this claim to either be a) causal and/or b) a thinly veiled contextual excuse. If it wasn't meant to be either of those two things, what exactly was the reason that this would appear in relationship to a report about Catholic priests' sexual abuse cases? Suppose I said that the sexual abuse cases unveiled at Abu Ghraib by the U.S. military were consistent with the increase in sexual abuse that had been taking place in other U.S. institutions at the time, for example in the Catholic Church and on the Internet. Would you find that statement suggestive of either a causal relationship or a possible attempt at excusing or reducing culpability of those engaged in Abu Ghraib? If, of course, you don't think that there is any problem in the conjoining of elements in the original report, perhaps it would be helpful to say why.

SINGULARITY AND SYNCRETISM

At "my" church (St. Luke's Episcopal in Knoxville, TN), we do not think of religion as a set of beliefs; we think of religion as a way of life. In that case, the teachings of Rabbi Hillel (what is hateful to yourself, do not to another), Jesus (love your neighbor as yourself), and Muhammad (God is beneficent and merciful), are essentially the same, as are the sutric teachings of the eastern religions. So what is the problem? (A rhetorical question, I guess.) Onward and upward; special blessings to the people in North Africa and the Middle East. Keep the faith!

TJ Blasing
Knoxville, TN

LIMITS OF EXTREMISM

What are the extremists in Indonesia or in other parts of the world achieving except civil disturbance?

With great sadness and pain I heard about the killings in Indonesia. My deepest sympathy goes to the families. Three members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community were martyred in Indonesia in an utterly barbaric and brutal attack by self-proclaimed "Muslims."

Such attacks are definitely not compatible with Islamic teaching. Islam is a religion of peace and guarantees freedom of speech. This is not the first time that members of the community have been murdered because of their faith.

Again and again members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have been the target of violent persecution, whether in Pakistan, Indonesia, or Bangladesh.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a peaceful and tolerant community that does not support any kind of violence. I appeal to the politicians in Indonesia, and worldwide, to raise their voice against the extremists and to take severe action.

Khilat Ahmed
Ginsheim-Gustavsburg, Germany

EGYPT AND ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Israel would not be harmed but helped if an Egyptian regime should arise that promotes Israeli/Palestinian peace, beginning with an end to Israel's cruel siege of Gaza.

Of course, the particular Israeli politicians who chose to impose destruction and siege on Gaza might find their political prospects clouded, but that is a price for them to pay — and I pray the price is steep — but not a price to be paid by Israel, or by Jews elsewhere.

Israelis, like Palestinians, and especially like the people of Gaza, need to be rescued from Israeli governmental intransigence. Egypt might just help, particularly if the example of Tunisia and Egypt spread throughout the Arab world.

As an American, I am coming to understand the helplessness of living in a hyper-aggressive imperial state (soi-disant "democratic") and thus to sympathize with Israelis who share that problem. We will all be better off after a democracy comes into being in the Middle East — that is, a democracy for all the people of the country and not just for a royal, racial, religious, or economic ruling class.

Peter Belmont
Brooklyn, NY

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tags: **Letters**
http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/readers-respond-letters-from-summer-2011

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to heal, repair, and transform the world

Print this article

Recognize Palestine and Give It UN Membership

by Michael Lerner

June 30, 2011

If the UN raised Palestine's flag and accepted it as a member, peace talks might really move forward. This photo collage invites us to imagine that day actually coming to pass. Credit: Collage by Natalie Rogers. Photos from Wikimedia Commons/Michael Loadenthal/Aotearoa.

To the dismay of peace activists and Israeli opposition parties, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu rudely rejected President Obama's mild parameters for Israeli/Palestine peace and then managed to receive twenty-nine standing ovations for his militant intransigence as he delivered a fiery rejectionist speech to a joint session of the U.S. Congress.

Netanyahu has lots of chutzpah to come to our country and treat our president disrespectfully — which is precisely what he did when, the day before meeting with the president, he rejected Obama's suggestion that negotiations between Israel and Palestine should begin (not end) from the point of the 1967 borders that Israel trampled when it captured and then retained the West Bank for the last forty-four years.

We want the Jewish people to be secure, and we want a strong Israel. But that can only be achieved when Israel is perceived by the world and by the Palestinians as seeking a peaceful solution that is based on justice for the Palestinian people and security for both sides. That day will never come if Israel insists on holding on to the occupied territories and placing troops in the tiny Palestinian state it envisions, nor will it come as long as the Palestinian people are treated disrespectfully and oppressively.

Somebody has got to talk sense into the heads of the leaders of Israel before the anger its current policies are engendering explodes once again and causes both sides even more suffering.

Israeli Prime Minster Benjamin Netanyahu addresses a joint session of Congress on May 24, 2011. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Avi Ohayun.

Obama is reported to have told his advisers on May 19, 2011, that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will never make the concessions necessary for a peace accord. Well, we in the peace movement say, duhhh. While the official organs of Jewish life — many of them controlled by those who believe Israel is always right and Palestinians are always wrong — managed to corral congressional leaders into a large public celebration of the most right-wing government and policies Israel has ever had, most Jews under fifty find Netanyahu's behavior obnoxious. In fact, most younger Jews applauded Obama for finally taking a stand, however weak, for a policy that has been insisted upon by every U.S. president since 1967, when Israel conquered the West Bank and Gaza. It took some courage for Obama to stand up to the little tyrant from Jerusalem who claims to represent an Israeli democracy while simultaneously refusing Palestinians the vote in Israel or national self-determination in a separate state. Unfortunately, our president backed down very quickly in face of public criticism by members of Congress.

Tikkun's contributing editor Stephen Zunes offered an **insightful description** of how these dynamics played out:

> In an apparent challenge to her president, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-California) told Netanyahu, in response to his harsh retort to Obama, "I think it's clear that both sides of the Capitol believe you advance the cause of peace." Similarly, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada) rebuked President Obama by stating, "No one should set premature parameters about borders, about building or about anything else," and that terms for peace talks, "will not be set through speeches." As former president Jimmy Carter observed in an op-ed in The New York Times, in embracing Netanyahu's position, the current Democratic leadership is not only rejecting the current U.S. president, but previous agreements involving the Israelis and longstanding positions taken by the United Nations (UN) and previous administrations.
>
> Palestinians and most other international observers believed Obama did not go nearly far enough in challenging Netanyahu's colonization and annexation of occupied Palestinian territories. He did not call for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian West Bank — which the Israelis invaded in a June 1967 war and which is legally recognized as a non-self-governing territory under belligerent occupation — only that the pre-1967 borders be the starting point of negotiations. Obama assumes Israel should be allowed to annex parts of the West Bank with large concentrations of Israeli settlers who moved into the occupied territory in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, a series of UN Security Council resolutions and a landmark decision of the International Court of Justice. (In return for allowing Israel to annex these illegal settlements, Obama called on Israel to swap Israeli land, something that Netanyahu has rejected.) In addition, while Jewish West Jerusalem remaining part of Israel was a given, Obama insisted that Arab East Jerusalem — the largest Palestinian city and center of Palestine's cultural, religious, commercial and educational institutions — was subjected to negotiations. Obama defended Israel's right to "self-defense," but insisted the Palestinian state be demilitarized. Indeed, he rejected Palestinian independence except under conditions acceptable to their Israeli occupiers. He even questioned whether Israel should negotiate with the Fatah-led Palestine Authority if it included Hamas in its ruling coalition because the Islamist group refused to recognize Israel's right to exist even as it insisted the Palestinians negotiate with the Israeli government despite the fact that some parties in Netanyahu's ruling coalition refuse to recognize Palestine's right to exist.

If Obama really understands how far-fetched it is to believe that Netanyahu will ever negotiate a deal that Palestinians could live with, it is time for him to create a new initiative. Our president needs to go over the heads of the leadership in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Speaking directly to the Israeli and Palestinian people, he should propose a peace accord that the United States could enthusiastically support. Presenting a full picture of what a U.S.-backed peace could mean for both sides would have a powerful impact on public opinion in both Israel and Palestine, and could create the political pressure from within both societies to push their political leaders toward a rational agreement.

President Obama is foolishly urging Palestinians not to push for UN recognition of a Palestinian state. What else does he expect them to do when Israel's leaders remain intransigent in their desire to annex yet more of the West Bank, and all he offers is hope backed by nothing but new agreements to strengthen Israel militarily?

What if Obama went over Netanyahu's head to propose a peace plan directly to the Israeli and Palestinian people? Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Executive Office of the President.

For Israel to achieve security, it must reject its strategy of domination and instead embrace a strategy of generosity toward the Palestinian people; as long as Israeli leaders choose to harden their own hearts, they can expect little else but rejection from the Palestinian people. In this context, Obama's reiteration of previous presidents' contention that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement should depart from the 1967 borders by allowing substantial land swaps to enable Israel to incorporate part of the settlements in the West Bank and give an equal amount of high-quality land to Palestine risks coming across as useless rhetoric. To be powerful, Obama's statement on land swaps must come along with a public embrace of a larger agreement involving a demand for sacrifices from both sides, a compassionate and caring attitude toward the needs of both sides, and an understanding that only openhearted reconciliation will unthaw both sides.

Here is what a peace plan must involve for it to have any chance of swaying hearts and minds on all sides:

1. The peace treaty will recognize the State of Israel and the State of Palestine and define Palestine's borders to include almost all of pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza, with small exchanges of land mutually agreed upon and roughly equivalent in value and historic and/or military significance to each side. The peace plan will also entail a corresponding treaty between Israel and all Arab states — including recognition of Israel and promising full diplomatic and economic cooperation among these parties — and accepting all the terms of this agreement as specified herein. And it should include a twenty-to-thirty-year plan for moving toward a Middle Eastern common market and the eventual establishment of a political union along the lines of the European Union. This might also include eventually building a federation between Israel and Palestine, or Israel, Palestine, and Jordan.

2. Jerusalem will be the capital of both Israel and Palestine and will be governed for all civic issues by an elected council in West Jerusalem and a separate elected council in East Jerusalem. The Old City will become an international city whose sovereignty will be implemented by an international council that guarantees equal access to all holy sites — a council whose taxes will be shared equally by the city councils of East and West Jerusalem.

3. Immediate and unconditional freedom will be accorded all prisoners in Israel and Palestine whose arrests have been connected in some way with the Occupation and/or resistance to the Occupation.

4. An international force will be established to separate and protect each side from the extremists of the other side who will inevitably seek to disrupt the peace agreement. And a joint peace police force — composed of an equal number of Palestinians and Israelis, at both personnel and command levels — will be created to work with the international force to combat violence and to implement point number six below.

5. Reparations will be offered by the international community for Palestinian refugees and their descendents at a sufficient level within a ten-year period to bring Palestinians to an economic well-being equivalent to that enjoyed by those with a median Israeli-level income. The same level of reparations will also be made available to all Jews who fled Arab lands between 1948 and 1977. An international fund should be set up immediately to hold in escrow the monies needed to ensure that these reparations are in place once the peace plan is agreed upon.

6. A truth and reconciliation process will be created, modeled on the South African version but shaped to the specificity of these two cultures. Plus: an international peace committee will be appointed by representatives of the three major religious communities of the area to develop and implement teaching of a) nonviolence and nonviolent communication, b) empathy and forgiveness, and c) a sympathetic point of view of the history of the "other side." The adoption of this curriculum should be mandatory in every grade from sixth grade through high school. The committee should moreover be empowered to ensure the elimination of all teaching of hatred against the other side or teaching against the implementation of this treaty in any public, private, or religious educational institutions, media, or public meetings, along lines pioneered by the U.S. in Japan and Germany after the Second World War.

7. Palestine will agree to allow all Jews living in the West Bank to remain there as law-abiding citizens of the new Palestinian state, so long as they give up their Israeli citizenship and abide by decisions of the Palestinian courts. A fund should be created to a) help West Bank settlers move back to Israel if they wish to remain Israeli citizens and b) help Palestinians move from the lands of their dispersion to Palestine if they wish to be citizens of the new Palestinian state. In exchange for Palestine agreeing to allow Israelis to stay in the West Bank as citizens of the Palestinian state, Israel will agree to let 20,000 Palestinian refugees return each year for the next thirty years to the pre-1967 borders of Israel and provide them with housing. (This number — 20,000 — is small enough to not change the demographic balance, yet large enough to show that Israel cares about Palestinian refugees and recognizes that they have been wronged.) Each state must acknowledge the right of the other to give preferential treatment in immigration to members of its leading ethnic group (Jews in Israel; Palestinians in Palestine).

8. Full and equal rights will be afforded to all minority communities living within each of the two states. All forms of religious coercion or religious control over the state or over personal lives or personal "status" issues like birth, marriage, divorce, and death will be eliminated. Each state, however, will have the right to give priority in immigration and immigration housing (but not in any subsequent benefits) to its own leading ethnic community (Jews in Israel; Arabs in Palestine).

9. The leaders of all relevant parties will agree to talk in a language of peace and openhearted reconciliation, and to publicly reject the notion that the other side cannot be trusted.

Inequalities of power may create circumstances in which a less generous agreement is eventually reached, but only an agreement like the one I have outlined — an agreement based on a new spirit of generosity — has a chance of lasting. Anything else is just a product of leaders jockeying for temporary advantage and political popularity, not for an actual end to the Israel/Palestine conflict.

In my forthcoming book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, which is partly an update of my 2003 book *Healing Israel/Palestine* and partly a new discussion of how embracing a love-oriented emancipatory Judaism could energize peace efforts, I show what could help spread the new spirit of openheartedness necessary to solve this conflict. It should be in bookstores by the end of November, just in time to share with friends and family as a Christmas or Chanukah (or other winter holiday) gift. I would be so grateful if you could help me draw others into this discussion by setting up a speaking engagement for me in your local synagogue, church, mosque, ashram, local book store, community center, college or university, or any other institution that can afford to pay my way and give a little something to help keep *Tikkun* alive, which is one reason I'm willing to do this kind of travel! If you want to arrange something, **contact Mike Godbe** (mike@tikkun.org) and tell him what you have in mind.

But in the short run, there is really only one thing that might move Israel and Palestine toward serious peace negotiations: the threat or reality of Palestine being accepted as an equal member of the United Nations along with a resolution that also acknowledges and reaffirms Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 borders as a Jewish state that gives equal rights in employment, housing, education, and financial support to its Arab citizens and to members of every other religious community, including secularists, Muslims, Christians, Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, Sufis, Sikhs, and any others I've forgotten to mention.

Why would this spur along the peace talks? Because Palestine, as an equal member of the UN, might sue Israel in the International Court of Justice to leave the Occupied Territories! In truth though, that's not much of a threat,

since that court has no army and since the U.S. will veto any UN Security Council plan to send troops to enforce a World Court decision for Israel to leave the West Bank and Gaza.

The real spur to the peace process would be the hope that might emerge from Palestinian membership in the UN. Let us embrace this path and bring that hope into the world! If the UN raised Palestine's flag and accepted Palestine as a UN member, Palestinians would feel less of the humiliation they've endured for decades as they've been denied their rights, first by Jordan, which occupied them till 1967, and then by Israel in an even more brutal way in the past decades. The dignity and recognition that come with UN membership would likely translate into a more flexible attitude toward negotiations, and that could break the impasse in the peace process.

If all that comes to pass, Israel could really move along negotiations by releasing the thousand Palestinian prisoners whom it has held, some for many years, denying them the rights of "prisoners of war" and treating them like hated criminals — in exchange for the U.S. releasing Jonathan Pollard and Hamas releasing Gilad Shalit. This exchange would be a tremendous icebreaker, along with UN membership for Palestine.

Most analysts believe that the last thing Netanyahu wants is a peace breakthrough that might break up his right-wing coalition and put his prime ministership in the hands of a coalition with slightly more moderate forces like Member of Knesset Tzipi Livni. Netanyahu can easily head that off by saying he refuses to make any deal with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas. In that case, Hamas' leaving the proposed unity government of Palestine would actually force Netanyahu's hand slightly. But on the other hand, an agreement with the Palestinian Authority that did not include Hamas would be virtually useless. You "make peace with your enemies," and that means negotiating with them. If they are not part of the agreement, they are not part of the peace. So refusing to include them in negotiations is a surefire way for Netanyahu to avoid negotiations. All the more reason for us to push for UN membership to smooth the way toward serious negotiations.

Obama is already under tremendous pressure from the Israel lobby to veto Palestinian membership in the United Nations. That's why you could make a difference by joining our campaign to support Palestinian membership in the UN along with a UN resolution restating its commitment to Israel's security. If you want to get involved, sign our petition at **tikkun.org/recognizepalestine**.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Rabbi Michael Lerner, author of The Left Hand of God: Taking Our Country Back from the Religious Right *is editor of Tikkun Magazine, chair of the interfaith Network of Spiritual Progressives, and author of the forthcoming book* Embacing Israel/Palestine*, which will be out in December.*

tags: **Analysis**, **Editorial**, **Israel/Palestine**
http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/recognize-palestine-and-give-it-un-membership

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Print this article

No to the Proposed Legal Ban on Circumcision

by Michael Lerner

June 30, 2011

Because *Tikkun* has always sought to create a community in which issues that are taboo elsewhere can be explored with intellectual honesty and tolerance, particularly when those positions differ from our own or from the accepted worldviews of our readers, we are printing in this issue an article that fiercely critiques the Jewish practice of circumcision. I have invited others to write a response to it, which I hope to print in addition to your letters to the editor on this topic.

Circumcision does not have a higher status in Torah law than other commandments that have been ignored or transformed in the course of the evolution of Judaism. The entire system of animal sacrifice has been abandoned. The author of the article on circumcision in this Summer 2011 issue of *Tikkun* contends that it has been a key element in patriarchal practice. Perhaps. But even the most cursory look at other societies that did not practice circumcision, e.g., feudal Europe, Chinese dynasties, Nazi Germany, or Soviet Russia, shows that they had no problem maintaining patriarchal practices without it.

In the last forty years of feminism within Jewish communities, there have been many articulations of an anti-sexist Judaism and efforts to challenge patriarchy that have not required the jettisoning of circumcision, which many still experience as a culturally and religiously meaningful tradition. Historically, violence against women has been officially shunned within the Jewish community, unlike in many other societies where it has been accepted and even legitimated by the dominant cultural ethos. Of course this has not prevented such violence from occurring, but our tradition's official opposition to sexist violence has helped to buoy the work of Jewish men and women committed to creating a safer and more just society. When considering the arguments of those opposed to circumcision on feminist grounds, it's important to realize that "intactivists" are just one voice within a strong and diverse Jewish feminist community.

Why did circumcision become so important? Why did it not get "reinterpreted" or simply abandoned over the centuries as so many other ancient rites disappeared from Jewish practice? Largely because the Greek and Roman conquerors of ancient Israel found the practice "barbaric" and banned it on penalty of death. Jews resisted the imperialists' attempt to inscribe on Jewish bodies the imperialist designs, and so circumcision became an arena of resistance to the conquerors. Throughout the past two thousand years, and then even more dramatically during Nazi Germany's short but wildly destructive period, circumcision became for the dominant oppressors the sign that could identify Jews and hence lead them to the tortures of the Inquisition or to death in the gas chambers and crematoria of Nazi-dominated Europe.

It was in response to this dynamic that Jews have clung to circumcision as our right and as a reminder of continuing resistance to those who seek to dictate to Jews how we should shape our bodies, much the same way as some African Americans refuse to allow dominant cultural norms to push them to appear "less black" by straightening curly hair or using skin-lightening products.

There is little evidence that circumcised men have less sexual pleasure than uncircumcised men, and some evidence that they are less likely to carry some diseases than the uncircumcised.

The debate on circumcision will likely intensify in coming years. But one thing should be clear: the American majority should not impose its will or cultural preference on members of the Jewish minority who are committed to continuing the practice. Those who have put circumcision on the ballot in San Francisco and elsewhere, or used other methods to ban circumcision, are undermining the First Amendment rights of Jews and creating a slippery slope toward the abolition of all religious practices. It's not hard to imagine some who were sexually abused by Catholic priests as children attempting to ban Catholic educational institutions or even the Church itself, attacking the entire institution as sexually perverted or violently patriarchic. Indeed, there are some who believe that all religions are so deeply patriarchal that they need to be replaced or banned, as they were for a time in the Soviet Union.

Freedom of religion, as well as freedom from religion being imposed by the government, should be expanded, not contracted. So while we have printed a severe critique of circumcision, and encourage this debate within our own pages, we strongly oppose the use of state power to impose through coercion a ban on circumcision. Just as the state should never criminalize abortion, it should never criminalize circumcision.

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tags: **Editorial**, **Judaism**
http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/no-to-the-proposed-legal-ban-on-circumcision

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Print this article

The Pursuit of Happiness: 2011

by Harriet Fraad

June 29, 2011

This article was written with help from Gretchen Van Dyck.

The founding mothers of the Women's Liberation Movement were socialists. We were activists who came from committees against the war in Vietnam. We believed that since we were at the bottom of the wage scale, if we demanded an equal chance for all women, we would rise and bring everyone with us to create an America with full equality for all. Instead, we helped to create near equality for women within a system of ever greater class inequality.

"Tomorrow" by Eric Drooker. Click on the picture above to visit the artist's website (www.drooker.com).

A new kind of movement is clearly needed to re-energize our struggles for equality and for a society that values the happiness of all over the power or profits of a few.

I was inspired to write this article after some sensible young activists formed a renewed socialist party in New York City and then asked for my ideas about feminism. In the pages that follow, I will do my best to analyze why the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and '70s lost its vitality, to envision a path out of passivity and toward mass political engagement, and to sketch out what might be an appropriate feminist platform for 2011.

I did not conceive of this platform alone. After I wrote an initial version of my ideas, I sent them to a brilliant political friend with many years of political experience. My friend and I then consulted with Gretchen Van Dyck, a wise twenty-three-year-old feminist from the New York Socialist Party. Together we crafted the Platform for the Pursuit of Happiness that appears at the end of this article.

Why the Feminist Movement of the 1960s Lost Its Vitality

I became a feminist in 1968 when we began what we then called the Women's Liberation Movement. The America of 1968 was starkly different from the one that young people now confront. Unemployment was about 3 percent. Job opportunities for white men were omnipresent. White men were paid a family wage whether they had a family or not. Jobs for women were available, albeit at lower wages and in fewer sectors. Men of all colors earned more than women did. Education guaranteed a job, even though a lesser one for women or people of color. The United States and the U.S. dollar were the kings of the world. In that prosperous America, women were paid fifty-nine cents of every dollar of men's pay, even when women supported their families alone or worked side by side with men on the same job. That was the historical context of the feminist movement of 1968 to the late 1970s, which later lost its vitality through a combination of forces within itself and a transformation in the U.S. economy.

Gloria Steinem at a news conference in January 1972. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Library of Congress.

One of the women's movement's largest mistakes was its failure to maintain its original insistence on class justice as well as gender justice. Whatever class consciousness our movement had was usurped by successful organizing under the clever leadership of the CIA operative Gloria Steinem (for the most recent documentation of this, read Charles Trueheart's Bloomberg article, "What Gloria Steinem and Henry Kissinger Have in Common: CIA Pay" and *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* by Hugh Wilford). Many were and still are shocked to learn of Steinem's CIA connections. They have been kept from wide publication until recently and of course they were never reported on television. These facts were first unearthed in *Ramparts* magazine in March 1967, as part of a revelation of the CIA's role in international youth festivals ("Who Paid the Piper"). They were followed by later revelations in *The Village Voice* in 1979, which exposed Steinem's particular role within the CIA and the Women's Liberation Movement ("**Inside the CIA with Gloria Steinem**" by Nancy Borman, May 21, 1979). Steinem's voice was never the only voice in the feminist movement. However, her rich funding and expertise combined with our naïveté to blunt the impact of class awareness and power for the mass of U.S. women.

The mainstream feminist movement thus became a movement for gender equality within our current increasingly unequal America. It lost its mass base and class dimension. It devolved into separate issue projects of importance to the female gender, such as groups for abortion rights (for those who can pay for abortions), and legislation to help women, particularly those with education, to enter previously male professions. Three-quarters of working women, particularly uneducated women, still work in pink-collar jobs.

Larger women's groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) worked to pass legislation protective of women. They lobbied for pro-female legislation within our highly unrepresentative two-capitalist-party system. The feminist movement became a series of projects working for equality with men. We achieved near equality for women within the American system of gross inequality. We lost our vision of a just, equitable society for all people.

We made another serious mistake. We understandably wanted to be included in the valued, rewarded, economically powerful areas of life from which we were excluded. We wanted jobs; careers; economic independence; and intellectual, social, and political power. We wanted to be in the sectors that are rewarded, recognized, and funded in American culture. Of course, those are worthy goals.

However, we shared society's devaluation of the knowledge and wisdom learned from sustaining vulnerable lives, maintaining the conditions for life, and performing emotional labor, i.e., caring for people. Those powerful, life-affirming areas of knowledge were unspecified, unexplored, and largely devalued then, as they are today.

Emotional Labor: Undervalued and Undercompensated

The concept of emotional labor got its first mention in 1983 in Arlie Hochschild's book, *The Managed Heart*. Even though it is crucial to the survival of infants and a basic component of humanity, it is still scarcely mentioned, much less explored outside of Hochschild's work, my work, and the work of Pam Smith and her group from the UK, who explore emotional labor in the field of nursing. Smith is joined by Catherine Theodosius in the U.K., working in nursing. Their books are unavailable in the United States.

Emotional labor is the act of expressing sensitivity to another person's needs and trying, in a given moment or situation or over time, to respond to those needs. It's one of the primary ways that we express love and concern for a parent, child, lover, spouse, friend, or co-worker. On the street, emotional labor is the polite assistance we give to a stranger who's seeking directions. Even though all human beings are often called upon to "be sensitive," emotional labor has traditionally been associated with femininity and expected of women in their presumably "natural" roles as mothers, wives, keepers of the home, nurses, and caregivers. Historically, emotional labor was hardly conceived of or noticed, much less valued, because it was considered "women's work."

So what does emotional labor in action look like?

A perceptive parent senses, in one instance, that her/his infant needs to be held, rocked, and cooed to; or, in another instance, the parent senses that the baby is over-stimulated and just needs to be held quietly, without interaction. Emotional labor can entail responding to a friend's needs in an indirect way so that the person in need doesn't feel like a burden. Here's a challenging situation: A man comes home from work angry and upset but is trying to conceal his feelings.

His partner senses that something is wrong and quickly comes up with a strategy for soothing him. He/she asks the children to give them some time alone so they can discuss each other's day. Or he/she suggests that they take a walk together, or says "I'm so glad you're here because I desperately need your advice about something" — which distracts the upset person and suddenly reminds him that, at home if nowhere else, he's important and appreciated.

Like other kinds of work, emotional labor can be time-consuming, tiring, and even exhausting. Because we are social beings who need each other to survive and thrive, emotional labor is indispensable to sustaining the family life, social life, and public life of humans. Emotional labor must not be regarded, and thus devalued, as "women's work." Concern for other people, whether for the stranger who needs directions or for one's family members, friends, and co-workers, is a necessary and admirable quality in all humans, regardless of gender.

People whose work is focused on emotional labor, such as U.S. day care workers, have some of the **twenty-five worst-paid jobs** in the United States. The worst-paid professions are social work, early childhood education, and nursing — largely female professions that provide emotional care for people, as well as assistance with other vital needs.

In the twenty-first century, people are beginning to realize there's no excuse for two parents not to receive paid leave and paid "personal time," or for day care workers trained to care for infants and toddlers not to command respect for their professional skills and be compensated fairly, or for our elected officials not to respond to U.S. parents' desperate need for subsidized or free child care, preferably offered on-site in workplaces. But demands for emotional labor to be acknowledged as legitimate labor and properly compensated as such were not central to the Women's Liberation Movement back in 1968, which focused more on equal pay within labor sectors historically dominated by men.

Because our traditional work was largely devalued, most of us back then did not understand its social impact and import. We therefore did not celebrate the areas in which women have had valuable unrecognized skill and wisdom. When women entered the workplace, we did not demand remuneration for our expertise in emotional labor and maintaining basic needs of life. We neither knew the value of our traditional work nor gave men an incentive to share women's emotional or domestic labor. We did not teach men or ourselves the value of learning how to relate intimately and emotionally, or how to nurture children's lives, or ours, or their own.

"People whose work is focused on emotional labor ... have some of the twenty-five worst-paid jobs in the United States," the author writes. Emotional labor is part of teaching preschool (top), day care provision (middle), social work (bottom), secretarial work, physical therapy, nursing, counseling, and more. Credit: Creative Commons/peoplesworld/Jean-Marc Carisse/BC Gov.

What Happened to Change U.S. Gender Roles?

U.S. feminists' ideological shift away from concerns with class justice and failure to fight for the valuation of emotional labor were not the only reasons why the movement lost its vitality; drastic changes in the U.S. economy were also a contributing factor insofar as they transformed gender roles and the lived experience of women during the last three decades of the twentieth century.

The most dramatic economic change came when, in 1970, real wages flattened. They never recovered, a fact developed and documented by Richard D. Wolff in *Capitalism Hits the Fan*. Ever more sophisticated computer and international telecommunication systems enabled millions of jobs to be outsourced. Our weak union movement was used to cooperating with the Democratic Party to get a share of the profits their workers generated. They did not prevent outsourcing, unlike their militant socialist and communist European brothers and sisters, who succeeded in doing so. Our two-party system had no socialist or communist alternatives to militantly fight for basic job security for the mass of Americans. U.S. white men lost their job security and a good deal of the male hegemony that used to accompany their family wages and steady jobs.

Women, particularly mothers, **entered the job force en masse** in order to sustain their families and expand their lives. In 1970, fewer than 40 percent of U.S. mothers were in the labor force. U.S. women then worked mainly part-time. By 2008, fully 75 percent of U.S. mothers were in the labor force, mainly full-time.

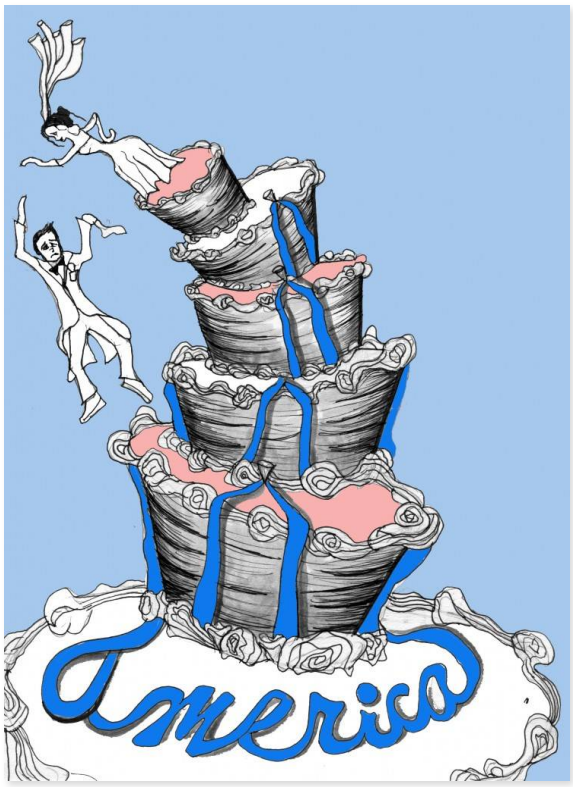
In 2008, the current recession struck deep and hard. It hit men's jobs hardest. Fully 75 percent of the jobs lost are jobs in predominantly male fields like construction, heavy machinery, finance, and aggressive, big-ticket sales, according to an April 3, 2009, ***Wall Street Journal* article** by Rex Nutting. Traits stereotypically associated with men, such as physical strength and aggression, are far less welcome in our changing labor force and in personal relationships as well. According to the Center for American Progress's "**Shriver Report**," only two of the fifteen most rapidly growing U.S. jobs are traditionally male jobs: janitor and computer engineer. All the rest of the growth is in jobs traditionally held by women — jobs in health care, child care, and food services. Nurturance and the ability to cooperate and connect socially are qualities associated with women and are required in America's new service economy.

Women in the United States now hold most of the nation's managerial positions, and most job growth is currently in jobs traditionally held by women in health care, child care, and food services. Credit: Creative Commons/World Economic Forum/ReSurge International.

U.S. women adjusted to our changed role in the marketplace. Women now occupy half of the nation's jobs, as well as most of the nation's seats in higher education, according to "The End of Men" a 2010 article by Hanna Rosin in the *Atlantic*. Women also hold most of the nation's managerial positions, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Unfortunately, women's changed roles have not been matched by men's participation in child care or home maintenance. The average unemployed man currently does less housework than his fully employed wife (a reality explored at more length by Stephen Resnick, Richard Wolff, and me in our chapter in *Class Struggle on the Home Front*). In addition, many men seek additional domestic and emotional services to compensate them for the emotional impact of losing their manly provider roles.

Women are working harder than ever and are no longer willing to do an overwhelming share of the domestic and emotional labor to sustain homes, children, and men. Women have responded to men's financial incapacity, lack of emotional work, and refusal to share equally in housework and child care. It is now women who initiate most U.S. divorces. It is women who increasingly **refuse to marry**.



"Women have responded to men's financial incapacity, lack of emotional work, and refusal to share equally in housework and child care," the author writes. "It is now women who initiate most U.S. divorces." Illustration by Laura Beckman.

The United States has the highest divorce rate in the world. We also have the weakest family supports among wealthy industrial nations. Women can no longer stand the extra work in caring for men who cannot support them and do not substantially lighten women's quadruple shifts in domestic labor, emotional labor, child care, and jobs outside the home. The state does not step in as it does in Europe. As I discussed in "American Depressions," an article in the January/February 2010 issue of *Tikkun*, in the United States there are no massive quality subsidized day care centers, after-school programs, and child or elder care allowances. This work is still done primarily by individual women.

At the present moment, women are still paid only 75 to 77 percent of what men earn. We still suffer from gender issues such as extensive sexual harassment and rape. However, the collapse of the stable family; our society's failure to support family life through basics like free quality child care, elder care, or health care; and the decimation of particularly male jobs combine to create an urgent need to define a feminist agenda that addresses not only wage equality and traditional gender issues, but also the broader social and economic conditions of our lives.

We are facing a huge capitalist recession. The United States is divided and largely passive as our jobs and homes are lost. In 1970 America was the most egalitarian nation in the Western industrialized world. Now we are the least egalitarian nation. We urgently need a unified movement to save a decent standard of living for *all* Americans. We need a movement that appeals to both men and women together and also inspires major transformation of male and female relationships. We need unity as a class-conscious nation aware that we who are in the middle and at the bottom must unite to save our quality of life.

When I sat down to write a feminist platform, I realized that a new feminist platform would need to incorporate the profound knowledge learned from sustaining life and nurturing people. It would need to extend to people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. It is for that reason that an intergenerational group of women created the following platform. It is a program for the pursuit of happiness, which is a forgotten part of the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

A Program for the Pursuit of Happiness

The founding documents of the United States of America contain several inspired and inspiring phrases, none more so than "the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence, which promises every citizen the right to seek fulfillment of their personal life's dream. The "pursuit of happiness" — accompanied by other principles in our Constitution such as *equality before the law* and *freedom of speech* — forms the centerpiece of the traditional, nearly official narrative that paints our republic as the grandest nation on earth. Ours is a New World nation, the narrative goes, in which all are free to live where and as they choose, speak and worship as they choose, associate with whom they choose, and do the work of their choice. Moreover, we are all "created equal" to enjoy these freedoms, which were unknown in the socially, politically, and religiously stratified kingdoms of the Old World across the sea.

The founding of the United States was a major moment in the evolution of humanity, inspired, as the French Revolution of 1789 was, by the ideals and concepts of the Enlightenment. However, as we know from life experience the ideal and the real are rarely aligned. So has it been with the birth and historical trajectory of our complex New World nation.

From the very beginning, class and caste, poverty alongside wealth, injustice amid justice, and the bondage of some — even amid general freedom — have prevailed. The European settlers slaughtered most of North America's Native peoples, seized their lands and, from the late 1600s through six-and-a-half decades of the 1800s, imported an estimated 15 million to 25 million Africans to live and die as slave laborers. When George Washington was elected president, only 6 percent of the total population — a small minority of white, propertied men — could vote into office the president and congressmen who would formulate and establish the laws of the land. Native people, women, white men without property, and Africans were prohibited from voting and thus had no say in our government. In 1870, passage of the Fifteenth Amendment ostensibly enfranchised the emancipated black male population, but poll taxes, literacy requirements, and violent intimidation kept most freedmen away from the polls. Fifty years elapsed before all women were enfranchised (in 1920), and not until 1965 was the Voting Rights Act passed, granting all adults the legal right to vote and barring discriminatory restrictions on that right. Yet even today, voter suppression tactics target various groups.

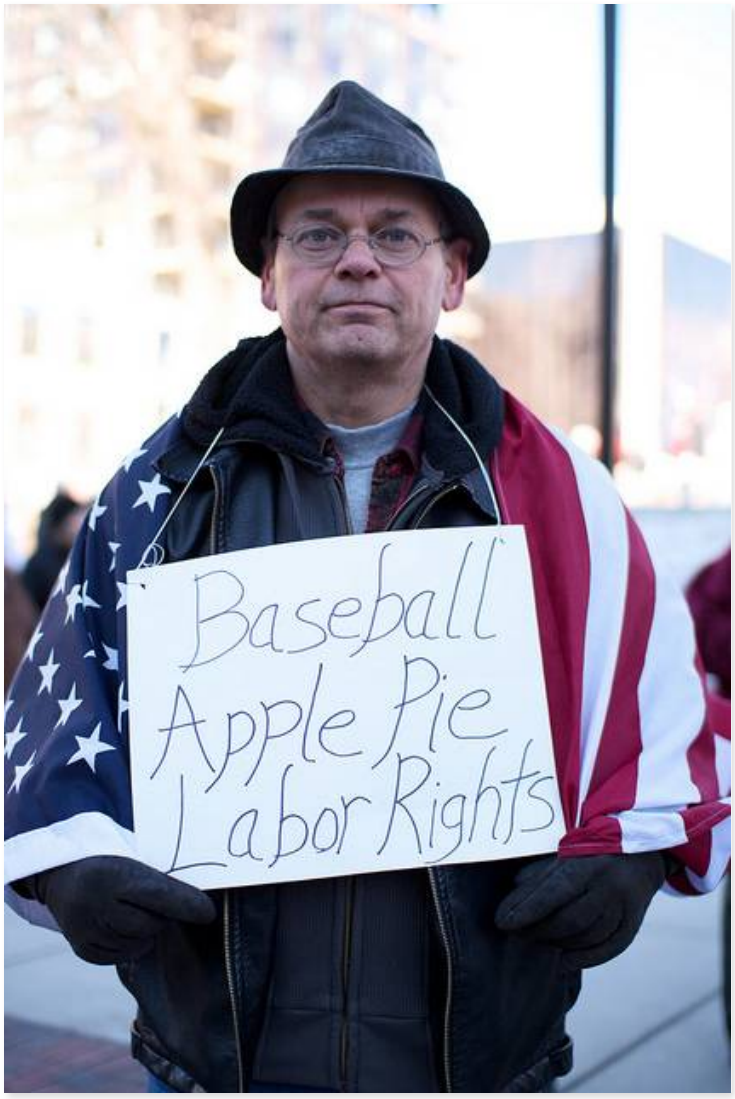
And today, something new has been added: the huge and insidious influence of lobbyists, who, bearing gifts for politicians' election campaign coffers, subvert elected officials' duty to serve the people's will, driving them instead to help members of the nation's powerful elite to increase their fortunes. Billion-dollar corporations fund candidates' campaigns and are paid back after elections in laws and policies that enable their capture of more money. Which adds up to this: overtly and covertly, interference with the people's right to be honestly represented by elected officials whose work bears directly on our quality-of-life prospects thwarts our "pursuit of happiness."

Education is another area in which the real and ideal have diverged in our nation. In the colonial era, belief in the government's obligation to fund schooling ran deep among the European settlers, as a matter of democratic principle. Therefore, in 1866, after the Civil War and the end of slavery, the Reconstruction Congress established a nationwide system of free, compulsory elementary and secondary education. When several states, including virtually the entire South, ignored that mandate, a federal Department of Education was created in 1867 to spur compliance. The following year saw the founding of the nation's first public institution of higher education: the University of California in Berkeley.

By the turn of the twentieth century, as European immigrants poured through Ellis Island, public education had taken such root that a school principal, Julia Richmond, was inspired to create the nation's first bilingual instruction program – Yiddish to English — to help speed assimilation of the immigrant children settling on New York's Lower East Side. And by mid century, the pioneering state university systems of California and New York had been replicated in almost every state of the union, attracting admiration from the entire developed world.

Today? Steadily, Americans' access to free, high-quality public education is evaporating. As our political system deteriorates, becoming less democratic, more corrupt, and generally dysfunctional; as extreme income disparity and rising poverty destabilize our society; as worldwide surveys of education place the United States embarrassingly low in their rankings at the same time that the life prospects of poor, middle-class, and working-class young people depend more than ever on high-quality public schools; as these problems mount, how is government responding? Instead of budgeting the refurbishment and upgrading of public grade schools, government is slashing budgets and even dismantling some schools! Numerous politicians, cheered on by Education Secretary Arne Duncan, are promoting privatization, such as charter schools (modeled after businesses), and extensive standardized testing as the prescriptions for "reform." Moreover, today, while 80 percent of U.S. college students attend public institutions, the resources of those schools are being sliced to the bone.

The late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century was also the period when thousands of European immigrant men, women, and children labored in the factories of a raging industrial revolution under hazardous and abusive conditions. At the same time, Chinese immigrants were building our cross-country railroad system, sometimes being blown to bits by the dynamite used to tunnel through the Rocky Mountains, while coal and copper miners plied perhaps the most death-plagued trade of all. Determined to achieve safe, fair working conditions and recognition of their human dignity on the job, male and female workers fought difficult struggles to organize themselves into unions — which were the most effective means by which they could confront business owners and managers. Even in the Deep South, white and black farm workers joined forces in clandestine, union-building meetings. Whites who participated risked being beaten and ostracized; blacks risked being lynched.



A protester in Madison rallies against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's attacks on labor rights. Credit: Creative Commons/Rob Chandanais.

The people who agitated and died bringing justice to the workplace gave our whole society quality-of-life improvements such as collective bargaining rights for private and public employees, higher wages, the eight-hour day, sick time, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, pensions, Social Security and Medicare, and the overall empowerment of U.S. working people on every level. Union strength peaked in the 1950s, when 35 percent of U.S. workers carried union cards. Sadly, during the same decade McCarthyism struck: the extreme right-wing purges orchestrated by Republican Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin drove out most of trade unionism's most talented and committed leaders, leaving a malaise from which the movement has yet to recover.

Today, only 12 percent of public sector workers remain unionized, as do a mere 7 percent in the private sector. The situation is worsened by the failure of unions to organize new worker populations. Add the transnational corporations' unchecked outsourcing of jobs to low-wage countries in the global economy, along with their co-option and corruption of some union executives, and we're left with a seriously disempowered working class. Consequently, all of the gains won by the sweat, blood, and courage of our forbearers — Social Security, Medicare, even trade unionism *per se* — are under fierce attack by those who would turn the clock back to a time when the majority of Americans had few rights the super-rich at the top of society were bound to respect.

Faced today with a greatly diminished ability to secure the wages and benefits necessary for the attainment of a decent life, hardworking Americans find enormous boulders blocking the road to happiness and fulfillment of their legitimate aspirations.

We, the People, Are the Solution

The narrative of U.S. exceptionalism is very powerful. Most of us have internalized that narrative to one extent or another, even those of us whose ancestors experienced slavery, immigrant discrimination (yesterday or today), or other challenging aspects of life in the United States. The harsh realities confronting us today — widespread joblessness; home foreclosures; outrageously wasteful spending on wars; and misguided under-spending on education, libraries, and social services – such realities, when held up to the light of our national narrative, can be disorienting. We might ask ourselves: Could these awful things really be happening in "the world's greatest nation"? And happening to *me*? Self-doubt, desperation, and hopelessness may kick in. Many of us may ask, "What's wrong with me that I've lost my job and could lose my home and my whole lifestyle?" In the face of unexpected problems and sudden hardship, it's difficult for anyone — whatever their country of residence — to immediately summon the presence of mind to step back, look at the big picture, and prepare a response. For Americans it may be even harder, given the potency of our national mythology.

The fact is, however, that the big picture is worth a hard look because it reveals a lot. Something fundamental changed in the United States, beginning in about 1970. From as far back as 1820 up until 1970, every generation of U.S. white male workers saw their wages increase. It was a given that children would make more money and have a better life than their parents. Even during the Great Depression of the 1930s, rising prices still lagged behind the continued climb in most white male wages, which meant that the profits generated by labor were still sufficient to sustain a steady rise in the living standards of the employed. For 150 years, mainly white male Americans experienced a reality in which individual effort, combined with training (often on-the-job) and steady work, could improve their lives significantly.

Wages are no longer increasing as they did from 1820 through 1970. As unemployment rates soar, Americans are struggling to make ends meet. Here people line up for a hot meal at Our Daily Bread Employment Center in Baltimore, Maryland. Credit: Creative Commons/Jim Stipe.

Then, in about 1970, that steady rise in living standards ended abruptly. Wages flattened out. Advanced communications technology enabled transnational corporations to bypass homeland labor for overseas, low-wage workforces. As a result, corporate profits skyrocketed, followed by an explosion of unprecedented executive salaries and bonuses. Wealth in the billions has been piling up at the top of our society ever since, as working people and the middle class lose ground. Indeed, the United States, once the developed world's *most* egalitarian nation, is today its *least* egalitarian.

These circumstances have caused a marked change in people's lives. Credit card debt is a fixture on the landscape. And social withdrawal has become the norm: participation in activities such as sharing dinner with friends, joining bowling leagues, engaging in civic work like Red Cross blood drives and PTAs, or engaging with grassroots politics and social issues has fallen off sharply.

At a time when we, the people, need to join together and make our collective power felt by those forces that have tightened the screws on us, some of us are expressing our outrage and taking action, but millions more of us are feeling so ignored, alone, helpless, confused, and fearful that we are de-energized, as if the wind has gone out of our sails. Stunned that our dream of steady jobs, comfortable homes, and bright futures for our children are dissolving into dust, we're retreating into the privacy of our troubled thoughts. Great numbers of us are standing at the edge of an abyss of self-negation and inertia and finding it hard to step back from that abyss.

Overcoming Passivity, Denial, and Abuse

Workers in Wisconsin have mounted a fierce battle to preserve their collective bargaining rights. Here, thousands pack the Capitol Rotunda in Madison, Wisconsin, to protest anti-union legislation in February 2011. Credit: Creative Commons/Jessie Reeder.

As you read this, thousands of public workers are battling government efforts to revoke their collective bargaining rights, lower their wages, and hollow out their hard-earned pension accounts. Apart from the obvious noteworthiness of these workers' determination to prevail and the support they've attracted from around the country and around the world, *their actions mark the first mass response to the injustices visited upon Americans by the global financial crisis and its recessionary fallout* — which were caused not by us, the middle- and working-class people of the United States, but by obscenely rich bankers and brokers playing fraudulent games on Wall Street. Many months ago, France's six trade union federations put 3.5 million strikers in the streets under the slogan, "Do not permit governments to make the mass of people pay for the failures of capitalism." Greeks, Germans, and other Europeans turned out in huge numbers to challenge their governments' policies of indulgence for the rich and belt-tightening for the majority of people. At the time, one could only wonder why there was hardly a peep coming from Americans.

Indeed, by comparison to our counterparts abroad — and notwithstanding the admirable resistance that's finally rearing its head in various parts of our nation — U.S. working people have responded to these hard times in ways that are largely personal. Or, to put it another way, we have reacted in primarily individualistic, rather than collective, ways. Some prior experiences of success with the personal approach may account, in part, for that tendency. But we think this response may also reflect the influence of our national mythology, which champions "rugged individualism" and "taking personal responsibility" as the most appropriate reactions to adverse circumstances (even when the adversity has been caused far less — or not at all — by our personal failings than by the interplay of economic, class, and political forces in our society). Also in the mix is the mental deflation and emotional anxiety brought on by the rug of dreams and economic security having been yanked out from under us.

Here's an example of the "personal" or "individualistic" response: beginning roughly in 1970, millions of couples with children caucused in the privacy of their homes and decided the wives should join the labor force for the long haul — unlike in the past, when wives sought jobs temporarily in response to divorce or a husband's sudden unemployment, disability, or death. Today, the vast majority of U.S. women work outside the home permanently to supplement their partners' depressed wages. This strategy has helped families, but it has also incurred new costs: the obvious costs of work clothes and transportation, the cost of domestic help to take on some of the tasks previously handled by Mom, as well as the costs of day care and/or afterschool programs, which can be hugely expensive. Then there's takeout food and restaurant dining, which cost a lot more than the home-cooked meals that are so much harder to prepare with both parents working. And of course, getting the laundry washed is more expensive when it has to be dropped off at a laundromat, and mending costs more if done by a commercial tailor instead of at home.

The great post-1970 societal shift triggered some family and social relationship costs, as well:

- A majority of women complain that they must work a "second shift" at home after the first shift at their outside jobs. As a result, millions of working women are both exhausted and resentful that their male partners are failing to assist with domestic chores. Many men, feeling deflated by the loss of status that society attached to their previous role of exclusive breadwinner, often make even more, rather than fewer, demands on the women in their families. (The perception of domestic work as the "natural" province of women, and wage-discrimination against women, persist and must continue to be challenged.)
- Marriage, under heavy pressure, is crumbling. Today, a majority of U.S. women are single, 65 percent of divorces are initiated by women, and the U.S. divorce rate is the highest in the world. At the same time, our marriage rate is the highest, as both men and women seek, in committed relationships, solace from the depressive psychological and emotional effects of vanishing economic security.
- In response to the current recession, U.S. working people and the dwindling middle class use their leisure time quite differently than in the past. As mentioned earlier, social withdrawal has become the norm. Overeating has soared, causing one out of three adults to be obese. The number of hours spent watching television has climbed: the average U.S. man watches seven hours of TV a day; the average woman, four to five hours.

Millions of women work two shifts: first their day jobs and then a second shift of domestic labor each evening. Credit: Creative Commons/Sean Dreilinger.

- Americans have turned to drugs — legal and illegal — to ease their psychic pain. The United States, where 5 percent of the world's population resides, consumes 66 percent of the world's supply of psycho-pharmaceutical drugs. In general, these expensive products (the economy's bestsellers) are minimally effective, and the positive effects experienced by 25 percent of the medicated population disappear if they stop taking the drugs. As one might expect, difficult economic conditions correlate with depression, precarious mental health, overeating, drug dependency, and excessive TV-watching.

These changes in social behavior and mental health suggest that the U.S. population suffers from *the abuse syndrome*. Here's what we mean: abusers lie, make false promises, threaten abandonment, and demand — and yet betray — trust, breaking down the victims' resolve to push back. Unable to face how humiliated and powerless they have become, victims often can't bring themselves to admit that the people they trusted don't really give a damn about them.

So consider this: employers and governments can also be adept at abusing the people they should respect, care about, and treat fairly. Examples:

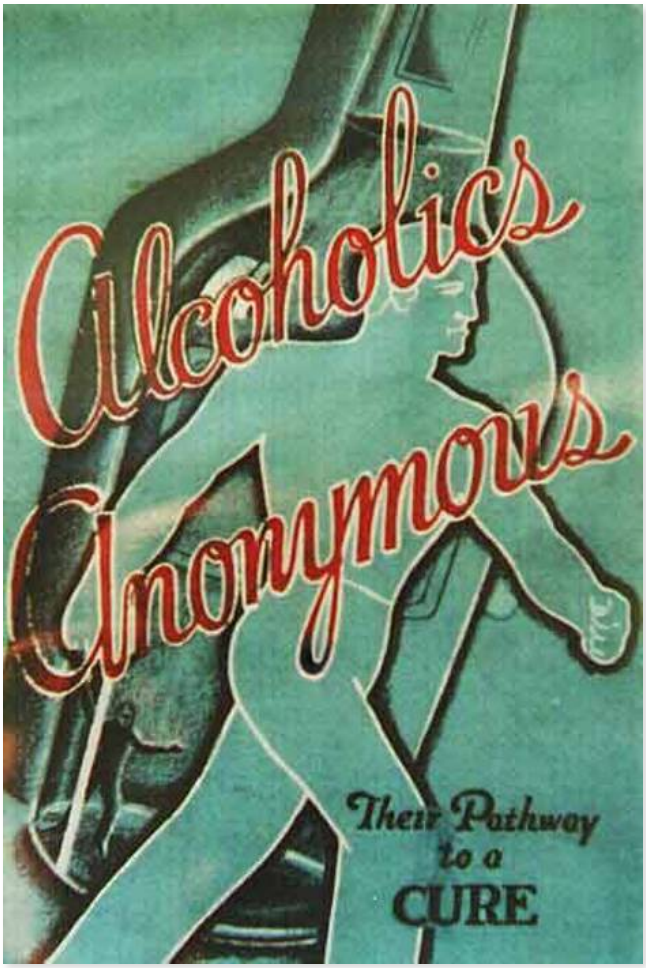
"Terminal City" by Eric Drooker. Click on the picture above to visit the artist's website (www.drooker.com).

- A corporation, instead of giving a worker prior notice of dismissal, fires employees on the spot and gives them only minutes to collect their possessions; then a security guard escorts them out, as former co-workers watch.
- A for-profit "career school" rips off young people by falsely claiming (in ubiquitous subway, bus, and TV ads) that its training courses give nearly all of its graduates access to available, high-paying jobs. More often than not, the young folks who drink the Kool-Aid end up deeply in debt with useless certificates.
- A low-income family signs up for a city's subsidized housing program and waits for a year before learning that the city shut the program down without notifying its thousands of applicants.
- A private health insurance company refuses to cover the cost of a kidney transplant, resulting in the patient's most likely preventable death.
- A wholesale sports gear company pays reasonable salaries to its staff of sneaker designers, but doesn't pay for the overtime hours the sneaker staff has to work almost daily.
- Deceitful mortgage lenders lure homebuyers into adjustable-rate contracts the buyers can barely afford and can't sustain, disappear the mortgages into a labyrinth of derivative sales, and pocket millions while the clients eventually lose their homes to foreclosure.

We could go on. The point is these are all cases of abuse that leave real scars on those seeking to put together viable lives in the nation they call home. And just as the victims of domestic and sexual abuse often know they should walk away but can't, millions of American victims of employer, governmental, and institutional abuse know they should join with others, fight back, and demand their rights. The problem is we can feel so beaten down, tired, and fearful that we find it nearly impossible to take that step.

What must we do to stop being passive and become active, to overcome denial and face reality, to refuse abuse, resist, and fight back? What must we do to make of ourselves a force so powerful that we cannot be ignored?

An Environment for Political Growth and Empowerment



Alcoholics Anonymous has been impressively successful. What if we constructed a twelve-step program for political empowerment and energization? Credit: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

I discovered through some research that in this time of social withdrawal, tension, and emotional strain, twelve-step programs are attracting more and more participants. In cities and towns across the country, the most famous, original twelve-step program, Alcoholics Anonymous, has created a place for numerous offspring: Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and others, including the newest and most important development, which is Adult Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families. Anonymous twelve-step programs like these are drawing millions of Americans who had previously resorted to self-medication with alcohol, drugs, and/or food — efforts, people have discovered, that were making their problems worse. Instead, by joining others in small, admission-free twelve-step groups, people are able to share and examine their pain and suffering with a supportive, nonjudgmental collective. Participants choose one or more of their peers to lead the group, and each person selects a “sponsor” who helps him or her stay with the program. The twelve-step Adult Children/Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families program works with all people who are traumatized by their families, which means practically everyone. Why does the twelve-step model work?

1) It enables members to acknowledge that they have a problem — thus, the well-known line, “My name is X and I am an alcoholic.”

2) It elicits from members the admission that they haven’t been able to solve their problems alone. Having realized that they need a group’s assistance, they quickly discover that however much they may have felt alone, they are *not* alone. Their concerns and problems are not unique.

3) The twelve-step model recognizes and incorporates the importance of *family*. The group functions as a second family that members can rely on for understanding and nonjudgmental support. This is especially important for people whose relations with their biological relatives have had an abusive or otherwise destructive dynamic, or who live far away from their families and can’t easily be in touch with them.

4) Members listen to, validate, and honor one another’s personal stories, which enables the whole group to “own” the wisdom, insight, and thoughtfulness that energize its discussions and engender solidarity.

Given the popularity of twelve-step programs, I began thinking… why not adapt this model to help people overcome the passivity and denial brought on by these tough times, so they can participate in and contribute to building a project of political development and empowerment?

Americans’ attraction to twelve-step programs indicates that millions of us yearn to connect with others and share our experiences of anxiety, anger, and uncertainty, which mark this era of crisis. Wouldn’t the holistic environment of a twelve-step program — in which an individual is listened to, supported, comforted, and encouraged — be empowering and conducive to raising her/his political consciousness? A popular axiom of the 1960s was “the personal is political,” and that’s true for all seasons. Why not connect and trace, together, the origin of the multiple threats to our common pursuit of happiness? Constructing, with friends and neighbors, ways to repel those threats sounds to us like time better spent than struggling in isolation.

Twelve-step programs are spreading, even as unions are shrinking. Might it be possible to create an AA-style political program to help fill the vacuum? Here, members of SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin prepare to lobby their representatives in the State House on forced overtime, home care organizing, and immigration reform. Credit: Creative Commons/SEIU International.

To illustrate our adaptation process, I checked out *The Little Red Book*, a popular piece of recovery literature designed for Alcoholics Anonymous. I borrowed its format but changed the content of its twelve steps to reflect the chosen goal of political growth and empowerment. Below, I present each Alcoholics Anonymous step from *The Little Red Book* alongside our alternative step:

Step One

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol– that our lives had become unmanageable.

Our Alternative: We understand that one person cannot alone solve the chronic societal problems that are making our public and private lives very difficult to manage.

Step Two

AA: We came to believe that only a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Alternative: We have come to believe that only a collective, which is a power greater than our individual selves, can help move our nation forward to a healthier, more just and democratic place.

Step Three

AA: We made the decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.

Alternative: We decided to commit some of our time, energy, will, and belief in the future to work with each other for change.

Step Four

AA: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Alternative: We took a serious and thorough moral measure of ourselves, noting the ways we collude with societal forces in our own exploitation, and noting our embrace of practices and beliefs about ourselves and others that make us vulnerable to being manipulated and exploited. This is an important step: we need to be aware that we are not just victims, we are also collaborators. We are not helpless, we can also act… for better or worse. What we need to do now is unite around basic principles and create programs to achieve goals for the benefit of all.

Step Five

AA: We admitted to God and to ourselves and to other human beings the nature of our wrongs.

Alternative: We have admitted to ourselves, and out loud to others, the ways we have collaborated in our own victimization.

Step Six

AA: We are ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Alternative: We are working to move beyond certain dysfunctional behaviors by taking action to better our own and others' lives. Some members of our collective also take support from their religious or spiritual beliefs, as a private matter. Everyone's contributions enrich our group's development and efforts. All of us join in the spirit of hope and connection that the group shares.

Step Seven

AA: We humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

Alternative: We ask for, and are ready to give, the much-needed support that will help us unlearn collusion and internalize the new knowledge and wisdom that comes to us through our efforts, and which is so necessary for our growth. We also ask for, and will give, support to help us rebound from the disappointments likely to occur among our triumphs.

Step Eight

AA: We will make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.

Alternative: We will draw up a list of all persons we have harmed and make amends directly to them wherever possible, except if to do so would injure them or others. We continue to take a moral measure of ourselves, and when we are wrong we admit it.

Step Nine

AA: We make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Alternative: We're studying to fill the gaps in our knowledge of U.S. history so as to better grasp both the similar and different realities lived by the diverse peoples who've populated our nation from the very beginning. We're studying the systemic arrangements: economic, political, social; the terrains of class and color, poverty and wealth, privilege and persecution, the marvelous and shameful, the horrible and the beautiful. We do this to inform our thoughts about the dignity of life as we create change and build the future.

Step Ten

AA: We continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong, we promptly admit it.

Alternative: We work to promote fair and just domestic policies that support Americans' efforts to live healthy and productive lives, and to demand their implementation by our federal, state, and local governments. We also work to promote and demand humane and nonexploitative foreign policies that encourage peaceful relations among nations and the well-being of all humanity and planet Earth.

Step Eleven

AA: We seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Alternative: We seek — through experience, study, meditation, imagination, discussion, and listening to each other — greater understanding, knowledge, and consciousness of the human condition and all life, the better to connect with others in developing a well-functioning, life-affirming, hopeful, democratic society.

Step Twelve

AA: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Alternative: Having come to realize, by taking these twelve steps, that certain structural characteristics of U.S. society hinder Americans' pursuit of happiness, and having also realized the ways in which some of our own actions reinforce those hindrances, we have experienced an invigorating moral, ethical, and political awakening. Feeling the changes within ourselves, we are motivated to reach out and engage sympathetically and supportively with whomever we can. We ask each other here to do the same. Our collective plants hope and cultivates action. Our collective is powerful. We will reap a sustainable future.

Prioritizing the Pursuit of Happiness

Variations of the policies I propose below on health care, the workplace, support for families, and education have been in effect for years in France, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), South Africa, Australia, Japan, and Spain, of the developed countries. Many of the developing nations, and even some of the poorest ones, also have these policies. Understandably, you may ask where the money would come from to fund the services we believe our government should provide. According to the National Priorities Project, the U.S. government has spent at least $815 billion of our tax money since fiscal year 2003 destroying the nation of Iraq. For that amount the government could have provided:

The $815 billion that the United States has spent attacking Iraq could have provided 107.2 million Head Start slots for children for one year, the author writes. Credit: Creative Commons/U.S. Army/Grace Rodriguez.

- Health care for 417.7 million low-income children for one year ***or***
- 12.5 million elementary school teachers for one year ***or***
- 14.3 million firefighters for one year ***or***
- 107.2 million Head Start slots for children for one year ***or***
- Renewable electricity — solar photovoltaic — for 184.6 million households for one year ***or***
- Renewable electricity — wind power — for 492.1 million households for one year ***or***
- VA medical care for 104.5 million military veterans for one year ***or***
- Health care for 167.6 million low-income adults for one year ***or***
- 12.3 million police or sheriff's patrol officers for one year ***or***
- 103.4 million scholarships for university students for one year ***or***
- 146.8 million Pell Grants of $5,550 for college and university students.

Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that we spend approximately $16 billion in Afghanistan in just one month; this is roughly equivalent to the amount it would cost to employ 262,500 teachers, provide 1,995,000 children with day care, and cover the annual health care costs for 5 million people. When elected officials tell us our nation is bankrupt, we should tell them to *bring our dollars home*. (For more information about the costs of war and the "bring our dollars home" campaign, go to **www.nationalpriorities.org** .)

If the government taxed corporations and the wealthiest individuals more, *it could maintain high spending without having to incur huge deficits.* **One recent calculation** showed that if corporations and individuals earning over $1,000,000 per year paid the same rate of taxes today as they paid in 1961, the U.S. Treasury would collect an addition $716 billion per year. That would cut the 2011 deficit by half and likewise cut the associated interest costs. Second, consider who lends to the U.S. government. Major creditors include the People's Republic of China, Japan, and large corporations and wealthy individuals in the United States and abroad. The greater our deficits, the more of everyone's taxes go to pay interest to those creditors. Third, consider the basic injustice of deficits: Washington taxes corporations and the rich far less than it

used to in, say, the 1960s; Washington therefore runs a deficit; and the *U.S. Treasury then borrows from corporations and the rich the money that the government allowed them not to pay in taxes*.

In the 1960s the wealthiest Americans were required to pay 91 percent of their income in income taxes. That amount was agreed upon by Democratic presidents like Truman and Republicans like General Eisenhower. We had prosperity and were the most equal society in the Western industrialized world. This year, according to the IRS, the richest individuals will pay 16.67 percent in income taxes. In addition many of our richest corporations, such as GE and Bank of America, will pay no taxes. That could be corrected. If we returned to our 1960 corporate tax level and cracked down on the tax cheating of the wealthiest Americans we could easily pay for the programs above. The United States levies taxes on property in cars and homes. If we extended those taxes to what they call intangible property in stocks, bonds, hedge fund investments, etc., we would enjoy equality of opportunity.

A Platform for Retrieving the American Dream

1. Universal Single-Payer Health Care: We agree with the majority of humanity and most governments, that health care is a human right, not a privilege of the affluent. Thus, we regard the profit-based "managed care" system brought to us by the Clinton administration (and continued in the plan initiated by the Obama administration) as inherently discriminatory as well as irrational, in that its structural dependence on the private delivery of care disallows cost-efficiency. It is widely known that we spend more than any nation on care that falls short of being universal in its coverage and is very uneven in quality. It's urgent that we convert to a practical, public model that can provide high-quality care for all. The advent of universal, high-quality health care would remove a huge burden of anxiety and economic insecurity from American shoulders.

2. **Maternity and Paternity Leave**: In the developed world, paid maternity and paternity leave is the third- or fourth-generation leave granted by both public sector and private workplaces for the birth of a child. In Norway, paternity leave is *mandatory*, to prevent employers from offering fathers a salary bonus as an incentive for them to forego their leave, the point being to encourage father-child bonding. It is time for the United States to follow suit.

3. **Paid Leave for Family Care**: We favor the provision of paid leave to workers to care for a sick child or other relative. The Scandinavian version ranges from thirty days to eighteen months. This saves people from having to choose between attending to emergency family needs and losing their jobs.

4. **Paid Vacation Time and Paid Personal Time**: By law in France, both public and private employers must grant their workers five weeks of paid vacation leave. Paid personal time is also a feature of some workplaces in several developed nations. We favor establishment of both requirements in the United States.

5. **Single-Mother Subsidies**: 40 percent of U.S. children are born outside of marriage, and single mothers and their children are the poorest of all Americans. To meet basic human needs — food, housing, health, and education — government assistance should be available for these families.

6. **Recognition of Emotional Labor with Appropriate Compensation**: The time is overdue for our society to acknowledge the value and indispensability of emotional labor, which is the active expression of sensitivity to another person's needs and the effort, in a given moment or over time, to respond to those needs. Traditionally, emotional labor (for example, early childhood care, infant/toddler day care, social work, guidance counseling in schools, addiction counseling, executive assistance/secretarial, nursing, hospital attendance (by orderlies), and physical therapy) has been presumptively "women's work." As a result it is hardly noticed, even less valued, and low-paid. In the twenty-first century, emotional labor professionals deserve recognition, respect, and higher pay for the essential services they provide.

7. **Gender Equality in Workplaces and Households**: In the United States, mothers are disproportionately the targets of discrimination against women. Our mothers currently earn 73 percent of what American males earn, whether or not the males are fathers, while childless women earn 98 percent of what men earn. Indeed, having a child in the United States is a predictor of poverty. In no other wealthy nation are mothers as underprivileged in comparison to childless women or as flat-out poor as American mothers. Privileged upper-middle- and upper-class mothers avoid the worst of gender bias by having the funds to leave their children in the care of other women — most frequently poorly paid immigrants — and to supervise their children's care without directly providing it. Given society's stake in having both mothers and fathers as available as possible to deliver a new generation of well-raised, hopeful people, public programs supportive of mothers and gender equality in wages are both sorely needed.

8. **Democracy in the Workplace**: Democratic principles should not disappear at the door to our jobs. Adult workers are qualified and competent to participate in decisions on salary scales; on the volume of production; and on the percentage of profits to be paid out in wages, allocated to consultants, reinvested in the business. Such workplace arrangements exist not only in foreign locations such as Mondragon, Spain, but also in the United States. For example, in the 1990s, computer programmers fled rigidly structured corporate bureaucracies like IBM and established small, nonhierarchical start-ups that became the most creative businesses of their time. Their regular, inclusive meetings, held to address all levels of operation, also inspired and incubated new internet product ideas. This is not surprising: dynamic work environments that empower all workers by giving everyone a say, thus engendering mutual respect among workers of different education levels and skill sets, bring forth hard work and a commitment to excellence.

9. **Subsidized Cleaning and Laundry Services for Two-Working-Parent Families**: Many New York condo buildings offer their affluent residents the option of housecleaning and laundry services. Providing those subsidized services to all would lighten American women's load and provide employment for thousands.

10. **Free High-Quality Public Education from Day Care through College**: Cities or states should subsidize highly trained day care personnel for children from birth to four years, for all families above the poverty line. For poor families, the service should be free. Subsidized/free afterschool and summer programs in the arts, science, and sports should be provided for families with children age four and up.

11. **Reproductive Education**: In the early grades, children could study plant reproduction (as in Sweden) as the first components of a comprehensive reproduction curriculum that continues in an age-appropriate way up through the grades. Pre-teens would learn about human anatomy, human reproduction, and gender and sexual orientation differences. Teens could learn about personal relationships, sexual responsibility, and family planning/birth control. Teens should also learn that the morning-after pill and abortion are reasonable, available options when birth control has failed, but that these options are not intended for use as alternatives to contraception. Such a comprehensive curriculum empowers young people to exercise control over their lives and behave responsibly.

12. **Relationship Education**: Free courses should be available, beginning in the teen years and throughout life, to individuals wishing to develop skills for relating constructively, responsibly, and empathically to partners, their children, friends, coworkers, and others. Such courses help facilitate people's healthy connectivity to one another at home and in society, as well as raise consciousness about the harmful effects of sex and gender discrimination.

13. **Whole-Family Counseling**: Community-based and otherwise accessible counseling centers should be available free of charge to the poor and at low cost to others. Family members would visit these centers to address problems, seek solutions, develop self-awareness, and learn or improve social skills with the guidance of a trained professional.

14. **Addiction Counseling**: Fortunately, addiction counseling programs already exist in our society (although long waiting lists indicate many more are needed), and as noted earlier, they are quite successful. Twelve-step programs are free and widely available. We do suggest that twelve-step participants be asked to consider what covert role authoritarian-type families and profit-driven industries — for example, the highly advertised liquor, diet supplement, fashion, pharmaceutical, pornography, and junk food industries — might play in encouraging various addictions. These are considerations that Adult Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families already allows.

In conclusion, I believe that the vision of Adult Children of Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families (ACA) may be a path toward reaching depressed, confused, and demobilized Americans who are blaming themselves for their lost promise. Progressive groups can learn from Alcoholics Anonymous and even more from ACA's insistence on listening to people without judgment. We can learn from listening to personal experiences of defeat and shame. Sharing those very experiences of lost hope may transform us. We can learn from our power to connect. Group realization may lead to joint action to change the conditions of despair. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous and ACA choose a sponsor who helps them navigate the way the group works. We all need help to fit in and learn how to learn from each other. We need a vibrant new movement building on the unspoken wisdom that comes from maintaining the conditions of human life, whether those are physical or emotional.

We may save ourselves, each other, and our planet in an inclusive and soulful movement.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

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Print this article

A Climate for Wisdom?

by Timothy B. Leduc

June 28, 2011

"Why don't researchers ever ask us about wisdom?"

Almost a year after I began talking with Jaypeetee Arnakak about Inuit ways of thinking about northern warming, he asked me this question. From his position as an Inuit policy worker and philosopher, Arnakak stressed to me that wisdom, or *silatuniq* in Inuktitut, should be of central importance to anyone concerned with climate change.

We have lost our way. The climate is in crisis. Might a more spiritual view of the climate help us change course? Here, an Inuit cairn (inuksuk) guides travelers on Whistler Mountain in Canada. Credit: Creative Commons/Evan Leeson.

Considering the significant changes that are occurring globally and in the north — a region that some describe as climate change's canary in the coal mine — it may seem highly impractical to shift our attention from questions of how to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to that of wisdom. What may seem even more impractical is the argument I am going to make in this article: that a sustainable and just response to northern warming and global climate change may depend on our capacity to inspire climate research and politics with something akin to silatuniq.

For many who study northern warming and global climate change, there is an increasing sense of urgency that a comprehensive response needs to be initiated now; the time for delays is over. In Fall 2010, Lester Brown wrote in *Tikkun* that "we're beginning to move in the right direction but we've got to move faster." A year earlier, Paul

Wapner expressed a similar sentiment in this magazine by quoting a 2007 statement from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change chair Rajendra Pachauri that declared: “The next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment.”

Whether we choose to heed such urgent calls for change or continue with our current political and economic inertia, significant change on climatic and cultural scales is on the way. In that context, do we have time for wisdom? To explain why I think an Inuit view of silatuniq is important beyond the north, it is helpful to start by going back to the events that led to the discussion in which Arnakak introduced this concept.

As with many researchers who have headed north over the past decade to document Inuit observations of changing weather, land, ice, and animals, I was originally focused on Inuit ecological knowledge. For weeks we had been discussing the relevance of *sila* to northern warming. Trying to give me a broad sense of this term, he described sila as an ever-moving and imminent force that surrounds and permeates Inuit life, and that is most often experienced in the weather.

I came to our dialogues with knowledge from two largely divided academic disciplines: climatology and ethnography. Contemporary climate research often assumes that sila is a direct translation for “weather,” with it most often coming up in relation to unexpected weather phenomena. Meanwhile, Inuit ethnographies from the first half of the twentieth century described sila as the spirit of the air, upholder of the weather, and the breath source of all life on earth.

It was while discussing this divide in Western thought between the physical weather properties of sila and a more spirited sensibility that Arnakak brought up silatuniq. As he explained, the sila and climate surround our lives, and silatuniq is an inquiry into “the context and consequence of applying knowledge and/or how our interacting with the surround affects that surround.” This understanding seemed relevant to northern warming and climate change, for at their root, are these changes not the planetary response to industrial society’s exhalation of greenhouse gases?

A sustainable response to climate change "may depend on our capacity to inspire climate research and politics with something akin to silatuniq," the author writes. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/jezzer-hozzer.

Various world religions have struggled to define a wisdom that is inspired by an ineffable spiritual surround. Navajo tradition describes our internal winds as continuous with the external winds, and as such recognizes an immanent reality that influences human thought. In the Christian tradition, there is the ancient Latin sense of *spiritus* that

connects the individual's breath with a divine force. It is from this spiritual unity of inner and outer realities that wisdom inspires our lives. Comparable views abound in various religions and, I would say, are beginning to affect contemporary climate research.

Particularly symbolic of such rising scientific awareness is Charles Keeling's documentation in the 1950s of the earth's climatically changing respiration. Looking at carbon dioxide concentrations in the high altitude of Mt. Mauna Loa in Hawaii, Keeling documented an increasing planetary exhalation of carbon over the span of the twentieth century. Since then, climate scientists have documented an increase in carbon levels from about 295 parts per million (ppm) in 1900 to 379 ppm in 2005, an increase that coincides with our rising fossil fuel combustion. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 report states, this level of carbon "exceeds by far the natural range over the last 650,000 years (180 to 300 ppm)."

Ice melts in Tasiilaq, Greenland. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Christine Zenino.

Industrial greenhouse gas emissions have heightened the planet's respiration and, consequently, sila's northern warming. We are, in a sense, being initiated into the need for scientific research and political responses to be inspired by silatuniq. Blocking such an inspired alternative approach to human-climate relations are a host of political economic forces that are seemingly not much interested in rational, let alone wise, climate responses.

This issue plays out in a variety of ways, as I can clarify by first returning to my dialogue with Arnakak on silatuniq. What he was particularly concerned with was the tendency for environmental researchers like myself to focus on Indigenous ecological knowledge while marginalizing cultural and spiritual understandings. He saw this tendency as a kind of resource extraction of information that fits Western models focused on planetary economic management. Any understandings that conflict with such a model are discarded as a kind of cultural waste.

Arnakak is not alone in making this claim; Sheila Watt-Cloutier, an Inuit climate activist and runner-up for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, similarly criticized the conclusions of an Arctic climate research project as being constrained by political and economic pressures from the south. Unlike climate skeptics, who tend to deny the knowledge of climate research, these Inuit critiques of an economizing tendency did not lead to a rejection of Inuit or Western climate knowledge and its linkages to economic concerns. In fact, Arnakak continually stressed to me that the issue is one of defining a balanced relation between knowledge, economic livelihood, and silatuniq. Such a balance is, in this view, central to a sustainable way of living.

While Watt-Cloutier went on to stress that "climate change is a cultural issue" for Inuit communities, my engagement with contrasting Inuit views made it increasingly clear to me that climate change is also a cultural issue in Western nations.

There is a pervasive and unbalanced tendency toward an economizing mentality that utilizes *consistent* scientific knowledge, and makes concepts like silatuniq seem soft and impractical. This issue was highlighted at the beginning of the environmental movement by the likes of E. F. Schumacher, and many others have reiterated it since then. From such a perspective, the issue goes beyond the power of the "industrial infrastructure" that Chris Hedges has argued "we need to target and take down."

While I agree with Hedges that a substantial organized resistance is needed, I suspect one reason it is so difficult to build such a revolution is that these economic institutions are merely the outward representation of a pervasive cultural belief system. Thinking about the limited public response to our looming energy and climate change crises, Paul Roberts in *The End of Oil* speculated that individuals do not want to see themselves "as extensions of an out-of-control energy system that begins at home, in our own cars and houses." Our daily practices inform this economizing belief, a belief that I argue even influences our research of climate change and engagement of Inuit understandings. It is interesting to note that while silatuniq attempts to mirror its sila context, this economizing belief continually expands in a way that is today calling forth from that same context dangerous climate changes in the north and beyond.

Hot sun melts ice at the edge of the Glenmore Reservoir in Calgary, Canada. Credit: Creative Commons/ocean.flynn.

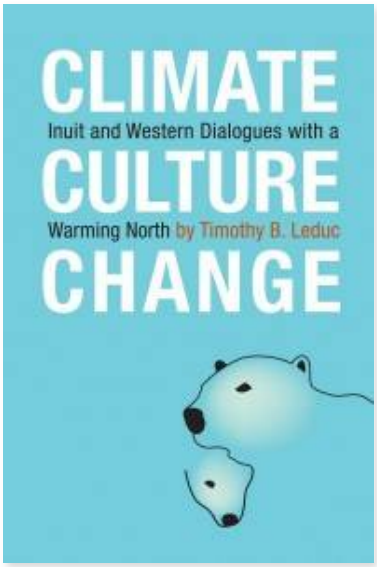
There is one last vignette I want to look at which I think helps clarify the cultural challenge we face today. On the front page of a December 2008 issue of *The New York Times* was an **image and caption** that I think highlight our climatic situation. With newly elected President Obama a month away from power, the economic crisis hitting hard and the automotive industry in disarray, a full-color photo showed an altar of a Pentecostal Christian congregation in Detroit, a choir, three large white sports utility vehicles (SUVs), and a caption that read "praying for a miracle."

Many questions arise for me when I look at this image. Are white SUVs a good symbol in a time of climate change and peak oil? What do they symbolize to these people who are most likely economically dependent on Detroit's automotive industry? What if the SUV symbolized the inefficient energy practices of our auto culture that need changing? What if a different hybrid vehicle or mass transit symbol was placed on the altar? What is the relation of this American car tradition to my own Canadian nation, which recently surpassed Saudi Arabia as the largest supplier of oil to the United States? What about its relation to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who described the Alberta tar sands as "an enterprise of epic proportions, akin to the building of the pyramids or China's Great Wall"? Are there religious dimensions underlying not only the politics of oil and climate change, but also the debates about the validity of climate science? What about the potential adaptive and maladaptive value of religious traditions in relation to climate change? Our answer to each of these questions has implications for our lived cultural relation with the surrounding climate system.

As Paul Wapner writes, our current challenge "consists of nothing less than weaning ourselves off of fossil fuels and transitioning to a clean economy." President Obama had an opportunity in 2009 to enact a bold political agenda, equal to that of Roosevelt, when he called in the leaders of the automotive industry during the height of the economic crisis. Wapner urged President Obama to "undertake a huge public works program" that generates millions of green-collar jobs by investing "in hybrid and electric cars; better mass transit; solar, wind, and tidal energy," instead of bailing out various industries. Such significant action has not yet materialized in the United States or Canada because the enemy we have to mobilize against is ourselves, and to do that our scientific knowledge and political actions will need to be inspired by wisdom.

In a 2011 *Tikkun* article on climate change, Wapner wrote that “Awe awakens us to the world.” It is a view consistent with the awe-inspiring silatuniq described here, and I think the preceding analysis clarifies two vital implications of awakening to our climatically changing world.

First, we need to consider the way in which we are culturally intertwined with maladaptive political and economic behaviours that are creating injustices in various parts of the world — from northern ecologies to threatened islands like the Maldives.



This article is based on the author's recently published book. Click on the image above to learn more!

Second, and perhaps more importantly for those of us concerned with moving beyond our present state of inaction, we need to engage with those cultural and religious traditions that can offer us inspiration, passion, and wisdom for making the changes required to become a sustainable and just society.

We have an abundance of scientific proof and policy options; what we lack is a wise sense of our situation and the resulting willpower to manifest cultural change that will push our political and economic leaders forward. There may be a void of political leadership in response to climate change, but there are myriad alternative grassroots climate responses.

Perhaps it is a visionary municipal government, green Christian activities like the What Would Jesus Drive campaign, the Evangelical Climate Initiative, Bill McKibben’s 350 campaign to reduce carbon levels, or the Cochabamba People’s Agreement, which represented visionary responses to climate change from around the world. There are a host of activities, rituals and understandings that can inspire and build passion, but for them to embody wisdom they will need to be culturally relevant, informed by accessible climate knowledge, and politically engaged.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Tim Leduc has published the book Climate, Culture, Change: Inuit and Western Dialogues with a Warming North*, which brings Inuit views of northern warming into a transformative dialogue with Western climate research. He works in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto.*

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Print this article

The American Empire's Terrorist Network

by John Gerassi

June 29, 2011

The United States of America is the biggest and worst terrorist nation of the world. And most Americans approve enthusiastically. Those two statements need careful corroboration. They need a careful reading of history.

Credit: Truthout.org.

In his State of the Union speech in December 1823, President James Monroe told European nations to stay out of the Americas, and North Americans applauded what was rapidly dubbed the Monroe Doctrine. Of course, most European countries ignored it back then because the U.S. armed forces were not strong enough to enforce it. But soon they were, giving President Theodore Roosevelt the opportunity to declare in his infamous 1904 corollary that the United States had the right to intervene in Latin America to "stabilize" its economic affairs. As every Latino school kid immediately understood, that corollary meant that the United States could decide whatever made the United States richer. And it did — massively.

Grabbing Land, Grooming Dictators: U.S. Interventions in Latin America

At first the victims of the Monroe Doctrine were almost always the United States' close neighbors in Central America. Examples would take hundreds of pages. But let me mention a few. In 1824, then Secretary of State John Quincy Adams (who later became president) told Simon Bolivar that he must not interpret the Monroe Doctrine as "authorization for the weak to be insolent with the strong." Bolivar wanted to kick out the Spaniards from the Caribbean, but U.S. oligarchs sought those islands for themselves, leading Bolivar to quip in 1829: "The United States appear to be destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of liberty."

"The Monroe Doctrine." Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

In 1833 England invaded the Falkland Islands, which as Las Islas Malvinas belonged to Argentina. The United States did nothing. Nor did it object when England seized a huge chunk of Guatemala, plus the island of Roatan. The reason was that while abolition of slavery did not become a formal law until the 1840s in Spanish America, Afro-Spaniards had become an integral part of the land ever since the great liberators — José de San Martín, Manuel Belgrano, Bernardo O'Higgins, and Simón Bolivar — made them free because they joined the wars of liberation. Not so in territories dominated by England.

By 1830 slavery was firmly outlawed in Mexico. That did not stop U.S. land-grabbers from pouring over its borders, bringing slaves of African descent with them. When Mexico objected, the gringos declared their area independent, calling it Texas. And when war ensued, the United States seized over half of independent Mexico — its richest part, of course. A few years later, when Mexico asked U.S. residents in what was left of its territory to pay taxes just like all Mexicans, U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes scoffed at "the volatile and childish character of these people" and sent troops across the Rio Grande to teach them a lesson.

In 1854, the United States settled a minor argument with Nicaragua, again over taxes, by sending a warship to bombard San Juan del Norte. Three years later, when the United States levied a fine of twenty thousand dollars because one of its latifundistas refused to pay his taxes, and a scuffle ensued and Nicaragua could not pay, President Buchanan dispatched the navy to flatten that town and, to make sure, sent in U.S. Marines to finish the job.

These were also the years when privateers, paid by U.S. corporations, raised private armies to conquer top land in Central America for exploitation by those corporations. Some were flamboyant. One, John Anthony Quitman, who had fought with Texas, then at Veracruz and at the storming of Chapultepec, was made governor of Mexico City during the 1847-48 U.S. occupation and organized an invasion of Cuba to make it “clean,” that is, American. Indicted for violating the treaty between Spain and the United States, he was never tried; instead he was elected to the House of Representatives.

Another filibusterer was William Walker, who raised a private army, invaded Mexico’s California and was defeated and tried for violating neutrality laws. Acquitted, he raised a bigger and better-armed army, paid for by the First Boston Group (later known as the United Fruit Company), seized Nicaragua, had himself “elected president,” and asked President Franklin Pierce to admit Nicaragua, which had banned slavery since 1823, as a slave state into the union. Pierce liked the idea, but before he could act, Walker was defeated at Santa Rosa by another private army (paid this time by Cornelius Vanderbilt’s massively exploitative Accessory Transit Company) and his Latino allies. Walker surrendered and was again tried for violating neutrality laws.

At his trial, Walker, a trained lawyer, pressed government witnesses to describe exactly what he had done — and planned to do. When it was the defense’s turn, he made himself a witness, told the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) jury of his peers that he was indeed guilty of all the government’s charges and proud of it, then screamed: “Who would not prefer to be a slave in the United States than a free man outside of it!” The jury rose, applauded, and shouted, “Not guilty!”

Walker returned to Central America with an even bigger force and conquered El Salvador and part of Honduras (where he declared English the official language), as well as Nicaragua, again legalizing slavery — and burned recalcitrant Granada to the ground. Captured once again, he was turned over to the British Navy, which, taking no chances this time, tried him in British Honduras and promptly executed him by firing squad.

But U.S. bullying interventions were not limited to private filibusterers. In 1871 the United States occupied ports in the Dominican Republic to control its sale of sugar. In 1881 it openly sided with Peru in its war against Chile, in exchange for the port of Chimbote, which it turned into a base; the coal mines nearby; and a railroad connecting both. The reason for U.S. intervention was never humanitarian. It was always commercial. In 1884-85 an official U.S. government commission toured Latin America and reported it ideal for U.S. businesses and “to introduce the use of our goods.”

From 1895 the United States really got greedy and intervened in every Latin American country — every single one — either to overthrow a popular democracy or to help an unpopular dictator keep his rule. It seized land in Venezuela for the Rockefellers, fabricated a phony war with Spain (with the agile aid of the Hearst Press), annexed Puerto Rico, and set up Cuba as a “republic” controlled by the Platt Amendment (1901), which gave the United States the right to intervene in matters of “life, property and individual liberty” and “Cuban Independence” — that is, in everything. U.S. intentions were certainly clear: in 1848 it had offered Spain 100 million dollars for the island, and when that failed, the nonofficial but very popular “Ostend Manifesto” asserted that “by every law, human and divine,” the United States had the right to take it by force.

After the United States did, it forced the Platt Amendment upon Cuba's freedom fighters, the survivors of Jose Marti's victorious struggle for independence from Spain. It then compelled them to grant to the United States the Bay of Guantanamo as a military base at two thousand dollars per year, forever. Marti had died in 1895, so Americans were told that the real victor was none other than Teddy Roosevelt, who defeated Spain by his glorious, courageous charge up San Juan Hill. The fact is, contrary to all of American historians' propagandistic books and the swashbuckling films showing the brave "rough riders" winning battles and charging up San Juan Hill, there was no one on top of the hill, and the only shot fired was by one of Teddy's riders, who got off his horse and shot his own foot.

This U.S. political cartoon, circa 1900, highlights the ravenous nature of U.S. foreign policy in its depiction of the debate over whether the United States should build a canal through Panama or Nicaragua. Credit: Creative Commons/The Granger Collection, NY.

Once president, Teddy Roosevelt continued to try to dominate all of Central America. He fomented a revolution in the Colombian province of Panama, recognized it as a separate country, sent the U.S. Navy to stop Colombia from trying to get it back, bought the canal from the French company that was developing it, and "imported" slaves from English Barbados to work it when Panamanians refused. He proudly boasted, "I took the canal." Years later he would have smiled approvingly when President Reagan bellowed, "The canal is ours: we paid for it, we built it, we will keep it."

And so it went. As the much-decorated U.S. Marine General Smedley D. Butler admitted:

> I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue.… I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909–1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interest in 1919 [occupied officially until 1924, unofficially until 1934]. I helped make Honduras "right" for American fruit companies.

Those fruit companies often demanded that the United States get rid of any Latino leader who tried to regulate land tenure. In Haiti, the sugar interests General Butler mentioned murdered two thousand Caco rebellious patriots and their chief, Charlemagne Péralte. In Nicaragua, two U.S. cruisers helped

keep extremely unpopular President Emiliano Chamorro in power because he had signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty without the legally necessary approval of Nicaragua's Parliament. Under the treaty, the United States gained the right to build another Atlantic-Pacific canal at any time it found convenient, "free from all taxation or other public charge," and "by way of any route over Nicaraguan territory," "in perpetuity and for all time." When the people rebelled, U.S. Marines were sent to crush them.

But the rebel Augusto Cesar Sandino, an American-trained agronomist and mining engineer, escaped and with his two brothers waged war against both the United States and the illegal government. U.S. ships bombed his land and village, U.S. planes strafed his men and farm hands and bombed seventy towns (including Las Timas in Honduras by mistake). Ever more popular, backed by as many new recruits as he could muster, "*General de los pueblos libres*" Sandino was never defeated. Finally U.S. ambassador Arthur Bliss Lane guaranteed his safety on the condition that he and his brothers come to his neutral embassy grounds for the possibility of a truce. When the three Sandinos arrived, National Guardsmen, well concealed in the embassy, opened fire and killed all three. The National Guard's chief, Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza, then seized power and ruled Nicaragua with a brutal iron fist. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt tried to change American habits in Central America, he was asked why he remained on good terms with the dictator. "Somoza may be a son-of-a-bitch," FDR quipped, "but he's *our* son-of-a-bitch."

Somoza's son, "Tachito," took over from his father when he died, using the National Guard as his personal, and very vicious, army — but always at the service of the United States. The National Guard helped train the CIA's army to overthrow Guatemala's first and only totally freely elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, who was denounced by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA boss Allen Dulles, as communist because Arbenz wanted to give untilled land to 300,000 landless peasants. The land was owned by United Fruit Company, for which the Dulles brothers had worked and in which they owned stock, but to which Arbenz planned to pay the full book value. Tachito also let the CIA train the Cuban exiles who invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and got creamed not by Cuba's regular army, which Fidel purposely held back, but by its peasant militias. The modern-day Sandinistas overthrew Tachito; the great defender of freedom, President Reagan, used Tachito's exiled National Guardsmen, who had become Latin America's best-trained (by the CIA) torturers, as "contras" to try to bring down the Sandinistas. Subsequently, Sandinista agents blew Tachito's armor-platted Mercedes six stories high when he was enjoying a ride during his Paraguay exile.

FDR did dump the Platt Amendment and did sign Reciprocal Trade Agreements with most Central American countries. But he plotted against Cuba's mildly decent but equally mildly corrupt President Grau San Martin (who had replaced the dictator Gerardo Machado after a popular rebellion) and supported Grau's successor, dictator Fulgencio Batista, who became one of Latin America's most vicious dictators.

On the other hand, FDR defended Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas's 1938 nationalization of Rockefeller's Standard Oil, officially because Cardenas was willing to abide by the World Court's evaluation of its worth. The real reason was in no way an act of friendship; it was based on FDR's foreboding of the lack of oil in the coming world war. (The World Court sustained Mexico's figures, and the United States accepted the verdict — the first and only time that the United States respected an

international treaty. Question: Why did the United States not accept the same procedure when Fidel Castro nationalized U.S. refineries in Cuba, which was long before Fidel asked for Russian economic help and declared Cuba communist in exchange?)

Busting Unions and Persecuting the Left: Post-World War II Overthrows

The history of U.S. plots and interventions after World War II is well known. The United States overthrew Argentinian President Juan Perón, calling him a fascist, mainly because of his reforms: he organized unions in every industry, spread social security to cover all activities, made education free and compulsory, launched and completed low-income housing projects and turned them over to low-income earners, made paid vacations a law, gave working students a week off before exams, and gave mothers-to-be three months' paid leave before and after giving birth. Perón also guaranteed free medical care for everyone and half of workers' vacation trip expenses, and built worker colonies all over Argentina. Outraged by such social-minded reforms, the United States pushed *los gorilas* ("gorilla" can refer to coup-making military leaders throughout Latin America but in this case refers to a group of Argentinian generals who served U.S. interests) to overthrow all Peronist leaders, organized the generals' *Revolucion Libertadora* and ordered the CIA to plot the dirty war which disappeared at least 30,000 people, though today the United States denounces it as loudly as any media will listen.

In Brazil, the United States arranged for the overthrow of presidents Vargas, Quadros, and Goulart, and anyone else fighting for a better life for its commoners. The generals took over and started executing liberals, socialists, and anyone who liked democracy, but not one member of the Communist Central Committee. The plot was so carefully worked out in Washington and at the U.S. embassy in Rio that both President Johnson and U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon congratulated Gen. Humberto Castelo Branco, the gorilla who was made boss by the rest of the gorillas, the day before they had actually seized power, when Goulart was still in his office in Brazil.

Vargas was deposed by the army twice: the first time in 1945 after the U.S. Congress called him a fascist because he had freed the thousands of political prisoners who had been arrested by the oligarchy-controlled previous governments; and the second time in 1954, because the United States and Brazil's oligarchy dubbed him a communist after he returned from exile, overwhelmingly won a second term, and launched the Brazilian oil company Petrobras, which would compete with U.S. oil companies. Vargas was also hated in Washington because he invited world-renowned sociologist Gilberto Freyre to map out a land reform, a no-no to every U.S. government. As army tanks surrounded the presidential palace, Vargas got on a nationwide radio hookup, accused a battery of U.S. economic and financial groups allied to native oligarchs of "domination and looting" of Brazil's economy, and said: "I gave you my life. Now I give you my death." And he shot himself dead on the air.

In 1962 it was Quadros's turn. A conservative but honest politician, he had tried to better Brazilians' lot. But, he said on the radio, he was constantly hampered by former U.S. ambassadors John Moors Cabot and Adolf Berle, Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, and his own oligarchs, including Carlos Lacerda, whom Washington and *Time* magazine adored. Quadros did not shoot himself on the air, but simply quit; he walked out of his palace and disappeared "on a slow boat to China," and the right-wing press celebrated. His successor, vice-president Joao "Jango" Goulart, was a former trade unionist and Labor Minister, so U.S. plotters went to work immediately.

Brazil's military, which learned how to torture from CIA experts who, as exhaustively documented by A.J. Langguth in his book *Hidden Terror*, used their new skills throughout the continent: in Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Guiana. In Ecuador they got President Velasco Ibarra overthrown three times. Uruguay, one of the world's best and least-disturbing democracies, the very first country to make the eight-hour work-day a law (in 1916), obviously didn't please the United States. But the United States got the military to establish a vicious dictatorship because Uruguay refused to break relations with Cuba; the police were then trained in torture by former FBI captain and CIA torture expert Dan Mitrioni. Mitroni was captured, tried, and executed by the Tupamaros resistance movement in 1970.

In Peru, military coups succeeded one another rapidly, always because U.S. mining enterprises sought bigger and better deals to make more and more profits. In my book *Great Fear in Latin America,* in which I carefully recount the United States' self-serving interventions (with sources), I detail one such company, Marcona Mining, which in six years on an investment of 500,000 dollars made more than 30 million dollars after taxes, a return on no less than 6,000 percent. I also show how U.S. corporations use huge amounts of the continent's potable water, then dump it back into the area's rivers with all the poisons they need for their extractions; the result is that 5 million children die each year from those poisons. When my book was published in 1963 (and again in 1965 and 1967) I was sued for libel by various U.S. corporations, but the suits were all dismissed when I showed my evidence, usually the formal statistical accounts filed by the mines themselves to the appropriate Ministries of Interior; in Peru, wherein all ministries served U.S. interests (or faced U.S. intervention), the documentation had been stolen and given to me by a Peruvian patriot.

Supporters of Salvador Allende march in Santiago, Chile, rallying behind his bid for the presidency, September 5, 1964. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

The worst U.S. intervention, of course, was the military coup, which overthrew and killed the popularly and freely elected president Salvador Allende. Not only were 30,000 so-called leftists tortured to death in the infamous sport stadium, but thousands more simply disappeared because they were, at best, democrats. The list of those who should die was prepared by the CIA, which organized the plot through the good offices of IT&T (at least part-owner of the biggest open copper mines in the world — Chuquicamata, el Tenente, and Salvador, all in Chile — at the behest of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who then convinced South America's military dictatorship to set up an organization of special squads of police in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay to assassinate one another's exiled leftists.

U.S.-backed Coups in Southeast Asia and the Middle East

The CIA backed similar purges in every Third World country that tried to steer an independent course. For example, the list of "communists" in Indonesia ruled by its wartime hero Sukarno was at least half a million, according to *Time*, and probably closer to two million, as claimed by Seth Mydans of the *New York Times*; both reported that the list had been prepared by the CIA. Sukarno, who had led the fight against the Dutch imperialists before World War II and against the Japanese invaders during that war, was guilty, according to U.S. politicians, of being a neutralist, meaning an independent. In other words, he sold to the highest bidder and bought from the lowest, a perfectly natural economic principle — except that U.S. corporations are used to selling high and demand to buy cheap. The CIA repeatedly tried to throw him out, once painting a fake sign on one of its planes and bombing the palace (1958), another time making a pornography film featuring Sukarno making love over and over again (the film actually increased Sukarno's popularity because most Indonesians did not know that scenes could be stopped and spliced together later, and hence saw him as a man with extraordinary vigor who could just keep making love).

The man the CIA chose to replace him, Gen. Suharto, a Japanese collaborator during the war, proceeded to rule with a vicious police and military for thirty-one years. Suharto eventually invaded independent East Timor and, armed by the United States, murdered one-third of its population. What especially pleased U.S. investors was Suharto's policy of killing union organizers and keeping wages low. One of the many U.S. firms that took advantage of this was Nike, which paid its workers eighty cents to make hundred-dollar sneakers. Always obeying U.S. orders, Suharto helped the CIA overthrow democracy in Fiji (2006) when, like New Zealand, it passed a law declaring the island nuclear-free. Reagan denounced New Zealand and banned its main products (lamb and butter) from being sold in the United States. But New Zealand refused to comply with U.S. demands, bringing an end to SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization, similar to NATO and considered even by conservatives to be a U.S. front for dominating the Pacific). It still refuses, whether its elected officials are liberals or conservatives. Fiji, however, was not strong enough to say no to the United States, so its democratic government was abolished.

Today, as we watch dictators in the Middle East beat and murder civilians there (mostly young people seeking democracy and freedom) it is crucial that we remember that the United States is to blame for every death caused by the repressive regimes — except in Algeria, where the culprit is France, which would not honor a free election that tossed out the old pro-France Front for National Liberation and helped it remain in power, causing a massive resistance movement, which has resorted to terror. Everywhere else, though, the United States gave military, financial, political, and intelligence aid to

vicious dictators who are now being combated by the pro-democrats.

Egypt's dictator Hosni Mubarak was especially loved by the CIA. After he turned his jails and jailers over to the CIA, the CIA kidnapped thousands of innocent folk off the streets of foreign lands and shipped them to Egypt, where they were tortured for months (and often died) in what became known as the Rendition program. More people were there, sent by the CIA, than in all other secret jails combined. In exchange Egypt got more arms, more dollars (about 2 billion dollars a year), and more advice from torture experts than did any other friendly dictatorship (the one country which got a bit more: Israel). And for forty years Mubarak killed, tortured, and jailed his own countrymen with impunity, making himself and his family extremely rich in the process.

In an attempt to gain hegemony in the Middle East, the United States has given military, financial, political, and intelligence aid to vicious dictators throughout the region, the author writes. Credit: Truthout.org/Night Owl City.

The United States has also been a firm friend of Saudi Arabia, which has by far the most alarmingly repressive governmental regime, where the religious police can arrest anyone it dislikes; where the United States accepts the kingdom's no-women rule to maintain its biggest base in the world; where no one whose ancestors do not go back at least four Saudi-born generations can be a citizen; where women cannot drive, cannot work, cannot ask for divorce, cannot accuse men of beating them, and cannot have bank accounts; and where a few years ago a royal princess was decapitated in the main public square because she wanted to marry a Lebanese commoner, who was also killed. In Saudi Arabia the United States says "yes, sir," and does not criticize, even when the Saudi army is sent to Bahrain to crush a popular peaceful protest.

By the time in 2011 that the United States, England, and France had decided to intervene in Libya and started killing more people than Libyan leader Muammar *Qaddafi* had killed, the repressive forces of

Bahrain and Yemen had also butchered protesters in those countries. Yemen had been especially cruel. Yet the triumvirate of rich Western countries did not intervene in either Bahrain or Yemen, where more democratic protesters had been slaughtered than in Libya. Why? Because the U.S. Fifth Fleet lodges in Bahrain's ports, and Yemen's president lies about it to his own people and fights our enemies.

What turned Iran into a such pariah nation, as we all know, was not just the result of the CIA's coup, which overthrew the country's first genuinely honest, freely and overwhelmingly elected prime minister, Mohammed Mosaddeq, in 1951, but also the result of the fact that Mosaddeq dared to nationalize Iran's oil, 80 percent of which was owned by the English and 20 percent of which was owned by the United States. The coup gave the oil to the United States (that England did not protest shows how it had become a puppet of the United States). It was the CIA that then trained Iran's National Intelligence and Security Organization (SAVAK), admitted by all to be the most vicious, blood-thirsty intelligence agency in the world. When I went to Iran with the Ramsey Clark delegation in 1980, I was shown film footage made by the CIA and its "experts" guiding SAVAK agents in methods of torture — using live prisoners. Obviously all Iranians also saw that film and never forgot.

The U.S. Pledges to "Protect" the Middle East from Communism

These days many people are wondering, "Why Libya? Why did the U.S. decide to get involved?"

Muammar Qaddafi of Libya has described Gamal Abdel Nasser (second from left) as his hero, the author writes. Here Nasser appears in 1952 with other members of the Association of Free Officers that he founded. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Al-Ahram Gallery.

This issue goes way back, but let's begin with President Eisenhower's 1957 declaration that the United States would protect all Middle Eastern countries from communism or "its agents." Nasser, who had been chosen leader of the Free Officers, had led Egypt's 1952 revolution and was certainly no communist; in fact, once president, he had executed all the members of the party's Central Committee he could find. But he advocated Arab nationalism as an independent force; ever since the great liberal Secretary of State, General George Marshall (in a speech written by Charles Bohlen, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines, Russia, and France) declared that neutralists were America's enemies, Nasser's independence was viewed as antagonistic by Washington (Bush II was not the first to bellow, "You're either with us or against us").

For U.S. corporations, Washington was right, as Nasser nationalized all foreign holdings, including its oil and the Suez canal, and established diplomatic relations with both left and right. He became president in 1954, after General Naguib, the figurehead of the Free Officers, was made to resign. Nasser was determined to develop his country into the major force in all of Arab countries. He was helped by an attempted assassination: as he delivered a speech in Alexandria celebrating the British withdrawal, a gunman only twenty-five feet away fired eight shots, which all missed. Panic broke out in the mass audience, but Nasser raised his voice and shouted, "If Abdel Nasser dies — each of you is Gamal Abdel Nasser — Nasser is of you and from you and he is willing to sacrifice his life for the nation." The crowd roared in approval and the assassination attempt backfired, vastly increasing Nasser's popularity.

It increased even more after his nemesis, President Eisenhower, ordered the French, English, and Israeli forces to stop their invasion of the Suez, which they had hoped to retake from Egypt. After that, there was no stopping Nasser. He helped Syrian officers rebel and join the United Arab Republic, which Nasser created and of which he was chosen president. He gave the various factions of the Palestine Liberation Front arms, money, and asylum in Egypt. He invited Saddam Hussein, after his first attempted coup to keep Iraq in the United Arab Republic failed, and George Habash, after Jordan's King Hussein crushed the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, to live in Cairo. He repeatedly invited representatives from all Arab countries, friends and foes alike, to come to Cairo to discuss their differences — and join the world's Non-Aligned Movement.

This group of states, which decline to align themselves formally with or against any major power bloc, first met formally in Bandung. The Non-Aligned Movement was started by Indonesia's Sukarno; Morocco's leading opposition leader Ben Barka (murdered in Paris by King Hassan's principle aide, who was allowed to escape by President De Gaulle, who wanted to keep Morocco's assets flowing to France); Ben Bella, head of Algeria's Front National de Liberation; and the world's most admired (or hated) Third World revolutionary, Frantz Fanon, author of the one volume that best explains the need for armed struggle in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Nasser then got the Non-Aligned Movement to move to Cairo, spreading his prestige not only in Arab countries but also throughout that part of the world, which saw the Cold War as an excuse for the United States to dominate all noncommunist countries.

Through his speeches, his actions, and his ability to symbolize the popular Arab will, Nasser inspired several nationalist revolutions in the Arab world. Muammar al-Qaddafi, who overthrew the monarchy of King Idris in Libya in 1969, considered Nasser his hero and, after his death, sought to succeed him as the "leader of the Arabs." Ahmed Ben Bella, who led Algeria to independence from France in 1962, was a staunch Nasserist and held him in great esteem. Abdullah as-Sallal drove out the king of North Yemen in the name of Nasser's pan-Arabism. All were strong supporters of the Egyptian president and advocated pan-Arab unity. Nasser remained a neutralist, executed the head of the Islamic Brotherhood, and — after the United States stopped helping him build the Aswan Dam because he refused to vote in the UN as the United States told him to — completed the dam with Russian money and was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union title.

No wonder the United States wanted Nasser dead. Did the CIA kill him as most Arabs and most Europeans believe? The United States tells the world over and over again that he died of a heart attack brought about by his diabetes and three packs of cigarettes a day. Few Arabs or Europeans believe it. No proof exists either way, but plenty of other examples do. Among them is the death of Frantz Fanon. Born in Martinique, educated in France, Fanon was so vociferous an African liberationist that Algeria's Front de Libération National made him minister without portfolio, free to travel the world and preach revolution to all peoples subjugated by the white race, specifically in England, France, and the United States. Early in 1961, Fanon came down with leukemia, went to Moscow for treatment, and did experience remission. Though not confined to bed, he knew he would eventually die of the disease and so dictated his famous work, a work absolutely crucial to anyone who wants to understand why subjugated people revolt. He spoke various times to the Algerian Liberation Army, went to Rome to talk with his admirer, France's foremost novelist-playwright-philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, then journeyed to Maryland in December 1961 to be treated at the Bethesda Navy Hospital, reputed to be the top center for treatment of leukemia. He was pronounced

dead the very next day. Those who claim he was murdered say no one who can walk into a hospital without help dies in one day. So, too, told me his charming and dedicated wife French wife, Josie, when I went to interview her before she committed suicide in 1989.

Corporate Interests Behind the U.S. Decision to Target Qaddafi

At the moment in 2011 when France, England, and the United States decided to go after Qaddafi, he had killed far fewer people than U.S. allies had in Bahrain and Yemen. So why did they decide to target Libya in particular? Even by the time U.S. B-2s had flown all the way from the United States and dropped thousands of tons of blockbuster bombs on Qaddafi's people, he had mostly fired his cannons at the wind and sand. But U.S. and French missiles and bombs did hit many people, mostly innocents, so many that the Arab League, which had called for a no-fly zone over Libya in the first place, was shocked to see U.S. flying cowboys plaster the country and butcher civilians. The League protested — to no avail.

So what was the real reason to go after Qaddafi? He had never completely joined the United Arab Republic and certainly never helped Arab nationalists after the death of Nasser. True, he was an independent loco who liked shooting from the hip. But not at Americans. Yes, he helped Irish revolutionaries fighting English domination; yes, he helped France's rebellious Action Directe. Yes, he helped the Red Brigades and the Red Army Faction. He supported the old Yugoslavia, which, he said correctly, was really dismembered to reinforce German and U.S. corporations in Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (and the heroin traders of the KLA, who are now the established leaders of Kosovo). He did send his henchmen all over Europe to murder his opponents, and did eliminate brutally all domestic rivals. His only crime against the United States, however, was not allowing U.S. corporations to make money in his country, and selling his oil to France, not the United States.

Yet the United States found reason to attack Libya in 1986, when it accused Qaddafi of bombing "La Belle" nightclub in West Berlin in l986, killing three American soldiers and wounding more than two hundred. President Reagan used that as an excuse to bomb Tripoli, killing Qaddafi's adopted daughter and a score of his military staffers.

A fighter plane leaves England to participate in the air strike on Libya in 1986. Credit: Creative Commons.

But Europeans didn't buy the affair. First, as reported in *Der Spiegel* and various other media sources on the Continent, the nightclub was a hangout for black American soldiers who had come to the

conviction that the U.S. wars were racist. Secondly, upon serious investigation by neutral detectives hired by the soldiers' families, it turned out that the U.S.-made trigger mechanisms were not available in Germany or on any U.S. overseas base but were readily available in CIA training camps.

Not satisfied with that, the CIA, convinced the world would believe its fantasy because the United States had blown up an Iranian airliner in international air space, which then sought revenge, next concocted a really perverse and outrageous coup: putting bombs on Pan Am 103, which blew up over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people. Anyone who studies the evidence in the documentary *The Maltese Double Cross*, which meticulously shows every bit of evidence, must come to the conclusion that something is wrong in the official version. The film documents that neither of the two Libyans (presumably loaned to Iran by Qaddafi) accused of placing the bomb in luggage of the plane was in a position to do so. It further documents that both the CIA and the DEA (the Drug Enforcement Agency) did have such access both in Malta, where the feeder flight originated, and in Frankfurt, where Pan Am 103 took off, and that there was a major rivalry between the two U.S. "investigating" agencies for control of the heroin trade, which is why the most damning evidence is the packages of heroin that fell on Lockerbie's surroundings and were at first openly shown by the Scottish police.

It is important to know that both agencies spend a huge amount of money not voted on by Congress and hence not part of any overseeing commission. For example, the CIA's secret war in Laos cost 1 billion dollars a day, but the whole budget of the CIA then was 44 billion dollars, and the war lasted more than forty-four days. So what money did the CIA use for anything besides Laos? Various other documentaries by the BBC Channel Four and Boston's Frontline, plus a brilliant book by Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin and the CIA*, convincingly show that the biggest pusher of heroin in the United States is none other than the CIA, which, incidentally, is why "the war on drugs" never did include heroin.

Even today, despite all the pictures showing those beautiful lakes of poppies caressed by their well-fed Afghani cultivators, their eradication is never shown because the CIA arranges for their transport to labs in Pakistan and shipment to the United States. McCoy thinks the CIA ships in about 60 percent of U.S. addicts' needs. (In one commercial TV program, *Law and Order*, the claim was 85 percent.) In *The Maltese Double Cross*, the evidence shows that the DEA had placed a lot of heroin on that plane for their network in Detroit, so the CIA blew up the plane.

If the United States intervenes only out of a sense of morality to stop unjust wars, and not just because it has something to gain — oil, minerals, access to an area's domination — why did it not intervene in the massacres of Tutsis and Hutus, the war between Burundi and Rwanda? In the Congo? In Ivory Coast? Why did it not stop the massacres in Sudan? On the other hand, why did it encourage Africa's biggest gangster, Savimbi, head of the UNITA, supported by Apartheid South Africa and Africa's most vicious and corrupt dictator, Zaire's Mobutu, to pillage and murder the poor people of Angola, who while dying, still protected U.S. Gulf Oil interest in its island of Cabinda by inviting Cuban volunteers to defend it? Why?

Millions and millions of people are killed, maimed, and deprived of food and shelter because the U.S. government is interested not in its people but in its corporations. The United States causes massive deaths — more than the crusades, more than the Hundred Years' War, more than the Holocaust, more than either World War, more than Stalin's gulags and executions walls — for just one reason:

the dollar. It does so by always arming and aiding the world's worst scumbags, by using such weapons of mass destruction as anti-personnel mines and fragmentation bombs, which, after they were declared crimes against humanity by the UN because their victims were mostly children playing in the fields after the bombing had stopped, were sold to Israel. Israel then used them in its war in Gaza. (Today, the United States uses a new weapon of mass destruction, the drone, which in Afghanistan and Pakistan has a record of one militant for every fourteen innocents, mostly children.)

The Underbelly of the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex

Most Americans want to believe that the United States is a positive force worldwide, but our militaristic foreign policy has caused widespread suffering. Credit: Truthout.org.

The typical American wants to believe that the United States is good, helpful, and friendly, that it sends its tomahawk and cruise missiles, Marines, and secret CIA armies all over the world only to help the unfortunate. Yes, the United States today is helping devastated Japan, an important ally. But after the Pakistan earthquake, which killed 8 million people, it sent 800 million dollars: a hundred bucks per dead, not even enough to bury them. And in Haiti? U.S. private charity organizations raised 7.2 million dollars but the U.S. military, which occupied the island without invitation or UN mandate, has so far distributed only 2 million dollars. Ah yes, but it sent a great gift: former presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, who walked around the disaster area shaking hands like potentates greeting their flock. But the United States did more serious damage: the first doctors on the scene were Cuban; after working day and night they ran out of medicine, and when they asked permission from the uninvited but occupying U.S. forces to bring in more, the United States said no!

Ordinary Americans are hurting today. Since 2006, about 6 million families have lost their homes to

the banks. At least 15 million are unemployed. Neo-fascist governors are trying to crush unions. Reactionary politicians want to get rid of all government aid to health care, abolish public schools, and let the infrastructure rot rather than raise taxes on the top 1 percent of the population, whose total yearly income averages around 12 million dollars each. That 1 percent owns more than half of the country's assets. There is a bigger gap in pay between the average corporation head and his workers than in any other country of the world. Yet average Joe American supports the rich. Why?

Because the dominant force, the establishment WASPs and their stooges, convince average Joe American to love wars and to "kick ass" (their favorite expression). One of my best friends, who got drafted into the Korean War at the same time I did, was not as lucky as I was. He died in Korea. When I came home I went to see his wife. She showed me his last letter:

> Everyone around here is dying, my love, men, women, and children. We are ordered to shoot at anything that moves. We hate them all, both sides. We just like to kill. We get off on it. We shriek with joy when we wipe out a whole family. You can't imagine how cruel we have become, how cruel I am, killing children while thinking of my little Wally riding piggy-back on me and Junior crawling to his daddy. We didn't come here to save anybody, but to destroy. Our friend, their dictator Syngman Rhee, whom you are all told is a great defender of democracy, is a scumbag of the worst kind. He hates us just as much as we hate him. But as long as we kill for him, he pretends to love us, and as long as he lets us kill for him, we pretend we love him. Killing has become so much of my way of life that, I'm sorry to have to tell you this, my love, but I have no doubt, no doubt at all, that I will die here myself, and my love, please, please don't mourn; I deserve it. I really do. Raise the kids with the love I should have given them, and try to make them understand that I was a good guy before they sent me to this place.

No wonder ordinary U.S. service men committed so many "My Lai" massacres in Vietnam.

As the Quakers have calculated, the War in Afghanistan is costing 1 million dollars *per soldier per day*. That's 140 million dollars a day. The United States maintains 760 foreign bases, fully armed and equipped. That's 6 million dollars a week, or 850,000 dollars per day, which is another 350 million dollars per day, more or less. (Which should remind the United States of General de Gaulle's affirmation that "no country with a foreign base on its land is free.") If the United States did not go to war and closed its bases, the 500 million dollars per day would be enough to triple all entitlements, double foreign aid, open fully staffed hundred-bed hospitals in every city of 100,000 people or more and keep them going, quadruple the number of schools, septuple the number of teachers thus keeping classrooms occupied by fifteen or less, and still have enough money left over to modernize its crumbling infrastructure.

This is not a choice for Americans because, as President Eisenhower warned us all in his farewell speech, the industrial-military complex wants permanent war to keep increasing its profits. The neocons of the "New American Century" made that very clear. In a 1998 letter to President Clinton, signed by many of the neocons who ended up in George W. Bush's cabinet, they insisted that war in the Middle East was the only way that the United States can remain leader of the world. And the average American, they said, will approve, because America is the best country in the world. (That is probably the reason most Americans did not gripe when President Obama created an assassination squad, a sort of "Murder Incorporated" of CIA and private thugs, to go kill — without a trial — American citizens in foreign countries who dare to denounce his Afghanistan policy.)

Americans' faith in the United States dates back to the first colonizer.

The Puritan Roots of American Exceptionalism

Three years before she was hanged in Boston, Dorothy Talbye had been a revered member of the Salem church, esteemed for her devotion to her husband and admired for her care of her children. Then one day she asked, why should my husband be master of my life? The answer then — enforced by the church, the governor, and the court — was clear: by the laws of Moses. But the same Puritan code proclaimed that any full member of the church who discovered grace was no more fallible than any minister. Dorothy had experienced grace and refused to obey her husband. She was flogged, shunned by other women, and lived in misery until one day in early fall of 1638, she took her daughter, Difficult, to a secluded gulley and quietly broke her neck. No one, she declared, should be forced to live in the misery suffered by women in Puritan America.

"The Salem Martyr" by Thomas Slatterwhite Noble. Wikimedia Commons.

"She was possessed by Satan," wrote Governor John Winthrop in his journal, as if that explained her aberrant behavior in the "city upon a hill" he hoped to create in America. A gaunt, ascetic, forty-two-year-old lawyer and self-trained physician-turned-preacher who would become the first Massachusetts governor, Winthrop had defined that hope to his ocean-weary Puritan flock, swaying gently aboard the 150-ton *Arbella* as it approached their colony-to-be. He urged his voyagers to create the model of Christian charity, the embodiment of a covenant with God and men, a Bible society of justice and mercy, where pure law and pure relationships of harmony and brotherhood would reign. He and his fellow conquerors of North America believed that they had been chosen by God to form a covenant amongst themselves to purify the action and mores of their homeland churches and of those rulers back there who falsely claimed to have inherited God's wisdom — and His divine power.

Thus it became clear that Dorothy Talbye's real crime had not been her act of murder, but rather her challenging of the political stability anchored in the authority of church and governor, whose code of imposed harmony demanded a wife's total obedience to her husband. For all their heralding of freedom and equality in the "city upon a hill," Winthrop and his peers could not allow their society's way of life to be questioned. The America they had founded and used the courts to preserve was based on the dual principles of individual freedom and collective obedience to its ruling elites.

Indeed within ten years of Winthrop's death, those elites who never betrayed doubts over the righteousness of their mission, had fought off what they believed were false faiths and all insidious forms of corruption that might have subverted their adventure in the wilderness. But in the process they had instituted a code of behavior that considered rebellion, asocial activity, and irreverent talk as synonymous with crime. What's more, because of their emphasis on dedication to the building of a successful "city," they established in practice a dual system of justice: those who achieved material success had proved their dedication and were treated much more leniently than those who failed. It was a system of justice whose underlying philosophy — "the rich deserve their wealth; the poor are lazy" — would permeate the American way of life. And so no one criticized Reagan when he spouted, "The rich work hard; the poor are lazy." It also explains why the courts send a homeless hungry unemployed worker to jail for up to five years for stealing a steak from a supermarket but give a Wall Street financer who embezzles 3 billion dollars two years in a "country-club" prison where he orders meals from his favorite restaurant, and then allows him to serve only one year because he gave back two billion.

That same Puritan spirit has led all U.S. politicians to end their major speeches with "God Bless America" as if God blesses no other.

And that's the key. Only America is blessed. To early Americans, the native population was known as "hostiles," which the early dictionaries defined as "half-savage humans." Blacks were considered inferior, even by Abraham Lincoln, though he conceded that they should not be used as slaves. Foreigners only want "our goods," most WASPs used to say; recently they changed it to "want our freedoms." But only WASPs think they have freedom. Legally admitted foreigners know differently; they can easily get arrested by America's gestapo, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement thugs who need no warrant to ship anyone who looks too brown out of the country. "No one on earth can possibly be as noble, as moral, as we white Americans," claim many WASPs. Yes, just like Filibusterer Walker shouted at his trial, it is better to be a slave in America than free outside of it. And — conclude the neocons, the Tea Party lupen, all those who feel only contempt for other skins and other religions — we descendants from those Puritans, who made America strong and great, are the best. We have the right to police the world.

The unemployed worker, whose home was taken over by the bank whose CEO grabs never less than a billion dollars per year, says: Yeah, life's tough; I know that the folks in other countries are guaranteed health insurance even if they are unemployed; I know that in other countries a person's home or tools of his or her trade, including the person's car, cannot be seized by a bank if the occupant cannot pay for it; I know that in other countries the established media gives all sides, whereas our free-enterprise press just gives our establishment's views; I know that our child mortality rate is twice as high as in Cuba; I know all that, but the United States of America is the best country in the world and we have a right, a God-given right, to bomb those who disagree.

(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, ***click here****. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article,* ***click here****.) This article was adapted from a paper delivered at the Oxford Round Table on Terrorism at Oxford University on March 29, 2011.*

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Print this article

A New Psychology of Hope in Palestine?

by Warren Spielberg

June 28, 2011

Ten years ago as a consultant for a dialogue project designed to promote understanding between young Palestinians and Israelis, I witnessed the following exchange during a dialogue in Ramallah:

Shaul, one of the Israeli participants in the Peace Now/Palestinian Authority Dialogue Project, had been lecturing the Palestinians in the room on how they should conduct themselves to "earn peace." This enraged a number of the Palestinians.

In defiance, Sabri, one of the Palestinian youths, praised the work of "The Engineer," the premier suicide bomber of the era, who had, according to Abu, "been effective in waking the Israelis up to the plight of Palestinians."

In response, Motti, a husky twenty-five-year-old Israeli, angrily replied, drawing on the famed sarcasm of twentieth-century Israeli diplomat-politician Abba Eban: "You Palestinians will always lose an opportunity to make final peace."

Another young man, Taisir, angrily shouted, "You Israelis think you are so smart — you brag that you created a state out of nothing … with your hands, yet you have had the money of the rich Jews around the whole world who have helped you."

Graffiti brightens the Separation Wall in Qalandiya, a Palestinian village in the West Bank. Credit: Creative Commons/Amerune.

This exchange occurred within a larger verbal battle that had erupted earlier, highlighting Israeli disrespect of Palestinian competence and Palestinian resentment toward Israeli assertions of intellectual and moral superiority. The interaction, taken as a whole, represents what I have termed as an "identity enactment," a psychological impasse blocking dialogue and human interaction. Enactments play out negatively, often via unconscious feelings or attitudes such as cultural identity, trauma, and shame. Embedded in the outbreak was the expression of insecurity, envy, and shame felt by many Palestinians.

Ten years later, as I traveled the land, I heard no such "bitter lemons" from Palestinian young people living on the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem). Instead, I witnessed a new generation of young people displaying cautious confidence and optimism. Take, for example, the students I met in Nablus: a group of fifteen-to-twenty-year-old Palestinians busy setting up their own Internet company to provide advanced technical tutoring for a new generation of computer users. Maha, a keen

fifteen-year-old girl whose eyes conveyed a strong sense of purpose, remarked: “I do not know when there will be peace. This will be up to our leaders and Allah. But I don’t care in the long run; I am intent on educating myself and developing our minds to build a new state.”

Faisal, a seventeen-year-old honors student who has experienced the worst of the Israeli Occupation, echoed similar sentiments. Both he and his father have been taken from their home several times in the cold of winter to stand all night for interrogation.

“Who do you know that is working against the Israeli state?” This was the question they heard over and over again on many cold nights from 2 a.m. until they saw the hues of the rising sun. They were released because they had no information. But the humiliation of having their hands tied behind their backs and being forced to stand all night embittered Faisal. “Still,” he asserted, “I can only fight through education, through bettering my people.”

To be sure, the changes in the Palestinian infrastructure and economy have increased confidence and optimism. According to Dr. Samir Abdullah, Director for Economic Research for the Palestinian Authority, there have been huge strides: increased tax revenues and growth in investment, both privately and by donor countries, have spurred the economy. Productivity grew by 9 percent in 2009, and the government deficit was cut by $1.2 billion. The stock market average grew by 11 percent. New schools, more trained police, new roads, and new health centers have been built as improvements have been made to the water systems. With the addition of new schools, the school day is now down to a single shift, and teachers are receiving more training.

Even amid Israeli attacks like the one that turned these three homes to rubble in Anata, a town in the central West Bank, Palestinians have managed to build new schools, new roads, and new health centers within the last few years. Credit: Creative Commons/Michael.Loadenthal.

Ghassan Khatib, spokesman for Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, noted in an interview, “the sense of hope is also tied to increased security — work brings hope and hope brings work. And with increasing employment, political radicalization has decreased.” A calculated message of self-empowerment is also part of the overall economic program. According to Khatib, the message of “self-reliance and state-building” is passed along by the media, in the mosques, and through the education system (by teachers and in textbook material that emphasizes personal initiative).

But other factors are spurring self-reliance and optimism, supplanting the negativism of decades of despair and victimization. Based on my interviews with students, policy makers, and intellectuals, I have come to the conclusion that even as the Separation Wall constructed by Israel has restricted Palestinians’ ability to travel freely within their communities (the wall cuts substantially into the West Bank, sometimes dividing Palestinian farmland and towns, rather than tracing the pre-1967 borders), and even as it has generated feelings of imprisonment, threat, and outrage, provoking some Palestinians to angrily describe it as an “Apartheid Wall,” it has also inspired many toward self-reliance and improvement.

This observation about the Wall’s unexpected silver lining is not meant to undercut legitimate criticisms of the Wall or foreclose debates over the ethics of its construction. Nonetheless, in my interviews with West Bank Palestinians I found that the Israeli security barrier has provoked many Palestinians to turn inward, to focus on their own hopes and dreams, and to build the infrastructure of their own lives complementing the work being done by the government on the community level. It has also diminished the intruding psychological specter of the threatening “Israeli in mind” who are now seen as living “behind the Wall.” This has given many young Palestinians some emotional respite and more internal space to imagine their own futures.

The Wall has also changed the major reference group of comparison for Palestinians. A Palestinian psychologist and policy expert confided to me: “Before the Wall we compared ourselves to Israelis. Now most Palestinians have begun to compare themselves with other Arabs, particularly Jordanians. Before the barrier we felt ‘we can’t do’; now, we feel we can be successful and we can acknowledge our achievements, especially our survival.”

The sense of invidious comparison used by Israelis and others to dismiss Palestinian humanity, which has been so injurious to Palestinian self-esteem, has been reduced. As a result, positive identifications of competence already existent in Palestinian identity have risen to the surface.

A child marches to the Separation Wall in Bil'in, taking part in a nonviolent protest against Israeli military attacks on civilians in July 2006. Credit: Creative Commons/Michael.Loadenthal.

Optimism and confidence among West Bank Palestinians has also increased with the growing democratization of the West Bank. The rule of law, the building of a judicial system, the removal of suppression, and the encouragement of free speech have all helped young people to feel that they have a future imbued with the possibilities of free expression. This is usually understood as involving political and economic freedoms, but religious choice must also be clearly included. The hunger for free expression in Palestine must include respect for all religious aspirations, even if they offend secular sensibilities.

Previous failed talks sponsored by the Egyptians between Fatah and Hamas had given hope to many Palestinians that a reconciliation government can be formed to represent all beliefs. Further challenges to Palestinian democracy are also reflected in the recent backlash by Fatah old timers against Fayyad in his attempts to open the society. Curbs to democratic institution-building and free expression are most likely to impact the young. And without them, the optimism revolution on the West Bank will likely come to a standstill.

The challenges for Palestinian society remain great in other areas. The society is a youth culture. More than 53 percent of Palestinians are below the age of eighteen, and close to one-quarter of all Palestinian children live below the poverty line. Almost 90 percent of Palestinian families do not have a computer at home. Most alarming, however, is the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among these children — close to 40 percent in many areas of the West Bank. More than 50 percent have either directly witnessed political violence or been subject to it. Trauma undermines children's ability to learn, impairs their emotional development and symbolic thinking, and defines their attitudes toward war and peace.

Close to 40 percent of children in many areas of the West Bank struggle with PTSD, the author writes. Here, a child perches in a car destroyed by an August 2006 Israeli military incursion into the Askar Refugee Camp, during which two homes were bulldozed. Credit: Creative Commons/Michael.Loadenthal.

Added to all these effects of violence is the problem of special populations. In my research it has become clear that the young men of East Jerusalem are among the most traumatized and impaired Palestinians. Under total Israeli sovereignty, outside the reach of the Palestinian Authority, and harassed daily by Israeli soldiers and police, they are suffering a loss of identity. They are continually faced with negative comparisons to their Israeli counterparts, as well as with corruption of their own culture. Overcrowding in local schools, poverty, and clan conflict add to the negative effect. Like the young Palestinian men who have been held in Israeli jails, they have suffered from political violence and are beset by PTSD and depression.

The history of the twentieth century reveals a pattern of domination of the Palestinian people by many foreign powers. Palestinians have suffered repeated evictions from their homeland, including displacement of 50 percent of their population in 1948. They have endured two generations of harsh occupation by Israel. These legacies and humiliations bred by many decades of conflict present an array of problematic national identifications that are slow to change. The traumas and their sequelae of helplessness, despair, and rage are deeply imbedded in the young Palestinians of today, as they have been transmitted from one generation to the next. Also deeply rooted is the constant invidious comparison between themselves and the Israeli “superman” who has conquered both the land and all opposing Arab armies. This perception is only compounded by the Palestinian failure to achieve statehood. For their survival as a people, Palestinians require recognition and appreciation of their real accomplishments under the harshest of circumstances; instead, they are subjected to a constant echoing of Eban’s comment: “The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.” A new generation is attempting to establish a new Palestinian identity, but it will take time.

Palestinian women wait at a checkpoint in Nablus, West Bank, on their way to a wedding. Credit: Creative Commons/Michael.Loadenthal.

Facts on the ground also continue to undermine the psychology of optimism. The ever-present checkpoints, essentially the only places where Israelis and Palestinians interact, exacerbate the wounds of domination and undermine the Palestinian will, imagination, and solidarity. The day I arrived at Al-Quds University I waited three hours for my Palestinian colleague to arrive. He had been stuck all that time at the Kalandya checkpoint, a sun-drenched installation just outside Jerusalem. When he finally reached the university after three hours in the blazing sun, he was spent, both physically and emotionally.

The background to all of this is the failure of the negotiations. A fair peace deal would surely have been a boost to Palestinian hope and confidence. But few people on the West Bank ever expected it. As early as the summer of 2010, surveys conducted by the Near East Consulting Group placed optimism about a future Palestinian state based on the recent negotiations, at only 40 percent. Nevertheless, over 60 percent of those polled approve of the current Fayyad government, noting their satisfaction and indicating optimism about their own lives.

The psychology of optimism and self-reliance among many Palestinians is a fragile movement. It will be sensitive to events on the ground, to the changing landscape of the negotiation process and to the economy. But the dynamism of hope and optimism among the young of Palestine is one that could potentially withstand the moment. This optimism could lead to greater hope and confidence, which in turn could inspire greater imagination, creativity and productivity.

This movement is small at the moment, but it has been activated by a prime minister who calls for an independent declaration of statehood whether or not the Israelis come to the table. Then at least 130 other countries will likely recognize the new state of Palestine. At that point, both Israel and the United States will face a test of their own courage and identity in the face of those who wish to continue the Occupation.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Dr. Warren Spielberg, a Fulbright Scholar, clinical psychologist, and psychoanalyst, is a part-time associate professor at the New School University. He is currently researching the lives of Palestinian young men in East Jerusalem with UNICEF. He is co-author of The Psychology of African American Boys and Young Men *(Praeger 2012).*

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Print this article

The Chemistry of Friendship: My Lunches With Norman

by Mark I. Pinsky

June 28, 2011

"I was unprepared for my friendship with Dr. Norman Wall," writes longtime religion reporter Mark Pinsky (seated). Credit: Sarah M. Brown.

There's no accounting for the chemistry of friendship. Sometimes it's the shared experience of being young together, or military service, or a function of family — the coincidence of neighborhood or parenthood. It's often common interests like work, sports, music, or alcohol. Most of the close friends I have today I met in high school and college in the 1960s, and I haven't made many more since. So I was unprepared for my friendship with Dr. Norman Wall, which began when the retired cardiologist was in his mid-nineties, more than thirty years my senior. In retrospect, I shouldn't have been surprised. Despite the decades that separate us, we have a great deal in common, beginning with the fact that we are both Jewish Democrats, of a leftish mien, with a strong, enduring commitment to social justice.

Still, the beginning was not especially auspicious. We first connected through Rabbi Steven Engel of Orlando's Congregation of Reform Judaism, who introduced us above the din of a reception following an evening service. "I think you'll like him," Steve told me. I got recommendations like that a lot when I was covering religion for the *Orlando Sentinel*, and often they didn't pan out. But this one did. The man I encountered looked closer to seventy-three than ninety-three, fit, lean, and compact, with a full head of white hair, impeccably dressed and obviously vital. As impressive as his physical appearance was, it is the life of his mind that has proved so striking. When he called and suggested we get together for lunch, I agreed.

Over the past three years, the invitations have come the same way. My cell phone rings, I answer, and there is a short pause. Then a gravelly voice says, "Mark? Norm. How about Wednesday at one?" My answer is usually yes, and I look forward to another midday meeting with this remarkable man. Sometimes it's just the two of us, but often three or more men get the same call or email.

My lunches with Norm have become more regular and intimate, especially after I was laid off by the *Sentinel* in the summer of 2008. I have plenty of free time and am usually available on short notice for leisurely midday meals, sometimes twice a week. Increasingly, it's just Norman and me. More than anything, he wants to talk about books, ideas, history, public policy, and philosophy. His interests range from Middle East politics to health care reform to the origins of World War I. We exchange newspaper and magazine clips and recommend and loan books to each other, often upper-middle-brow fiction with Jewish themes and authors. I introduced him to Dara Horn and Alan Furst, and Janet Malcolm's takes on murder. Going high-brow (and flattering me), he once pressed on me a collection of Primo Levi

interviews and lectures. Other times it was a book about Emile Zola and Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's *We Jews*. His latest was Harry Bernstein's *The Invisible Wall*, which he delighted in telling me was published when the author was ninety-five. His favorites are Jewish history and biography; he's always delving into hard-to-find books that the local library — which by now should have a reading room named in his honor — finds for him.

Norm read and critiqued an early draft of my latest nonfiction book, suggesting, naturally, that I focus more on a crusty, older character, a crusading, small-town lawyer he obviously identifies with. We agree on most issues, like support for a single-payer health care system and a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, and opposition to expansion of West Bank settlements. We agree to disagree, amiably and respectfully, on others, like the Islamic community center near Ground Zero — I support; he opposes. So far, we've never run out of things to say.

Credit: Sarah M. Brown.

Occasionally we eat at Norm's house in a gated, upscale community, but usually his charming wife Faye wants him out from underfoot for a while, so we go to nearby restaurants. They're all a short drive for him in his white GMC with the "Save the Wolves" bumper sticker, the one he calls "Rocinante," after Don Quixote's steed and John Steinbeck's camper truck in *Travels With Charlie*. Over time, I've noticed his steps have become more cautious, his gait a little tentative, and his hearing uneven. But the only concession to Norm's age I've made has been to accompany him to and from Rocinante. My motto: "No broken hips on *my* watch."

Notwithstanding, if Norm gets to the restaurant's front door before I do, he opens it for me. Wherever we go, the waitresses and maître d's greet him by name and fuss over him, which he loves. It's as if by physically touching him they can access his secret to long life. For three years Norm has insisted on picking up every check, because he invited me. I never protested until recently at a local deli, when I grabbed it. He objected, like a father insisting he pay for the pleasure of dining with a son or daughter. But Norm relented when I told him I wanted to say at least once that I took *him* to lunch.

The lunch bunch around the table occasionally varies. Sometimes, Norm selects a topic for discussion and assigns one of us to make a formal presentation — one included a laptop PowerPoint — which he calls the "Wall-Pinsky Seminars." Often Rabbi Engel joins us, and from time to time so do Norm's visiting sons or one of his grandchildren, or my daughter. A retired school administrator or a developer may sit in, but the group usually has a strong medical bent: Dr. Cliff Selsky, head of pediatric oncology at Florida Hospital and a molecular biologist, as well as a member of the Congregation of Reform Judaism choir; and Dr. Leonard Dreifus, a former president of the American College of Cardiology. Once, noticing all the high-priced medical talent sitting at the meal, I was tempted to ask if I could take off my shirt and climb onto the table for a consult.

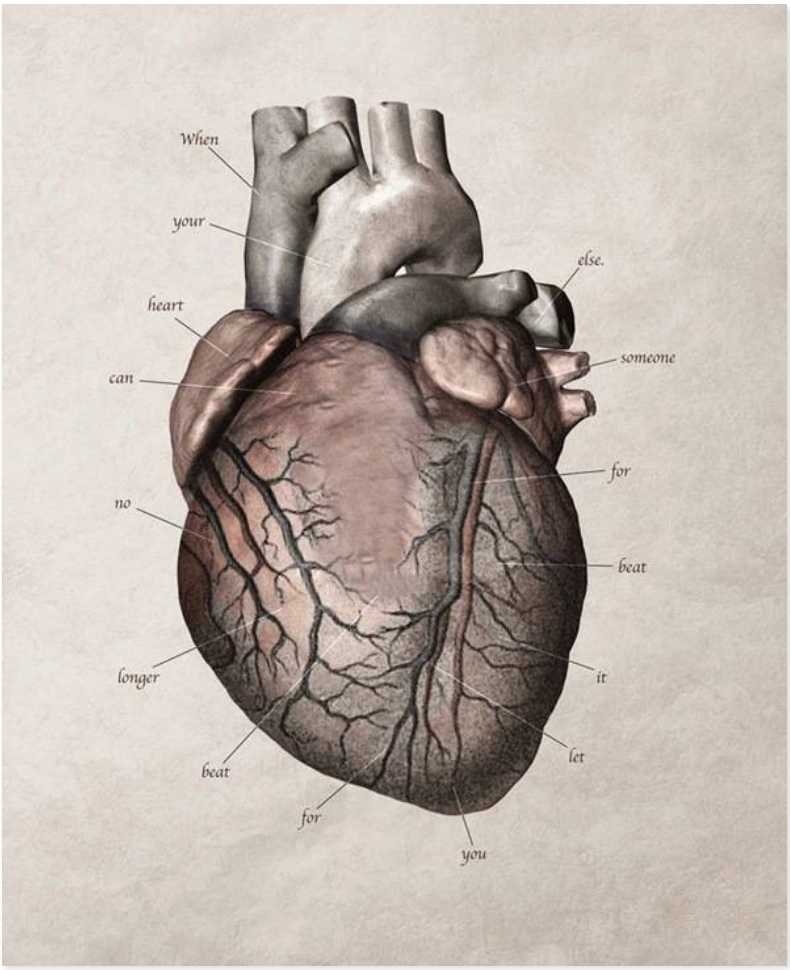
I am amazed at how sharp Norm is, his mind still nimble, his attitude feisty. He reads the *New York Times* regularly and watches "The Daily Show" nightly, subscribes to *Mother Jones* and is Web-savvy. His humor is by turns clever, droll, and sarcastic. There are also coincidental connections: my rabbi during high school in Southern New Jersey in the 1950s, the charismatic Harry B. Kellman, turned out to have been Norm's religious mentor and teacher while he was studying at the University of Pennsylvania, just across the river, and gave him the Jewish education not available in his small home town. "He taught me what it was to be a Jew," Norm said.

And Norm is about the same age my father would have been if he hadn't died in 1978. Perhaps that's a part of it — he is a father figure without the familial baggage. Once, after my return from a trip to my home town in Jersey and a visit to our old next-door neighbor, who was eighty-seven and living in a Jewish assisted living facility, I shared with Norm her story about a mitzvah my father had done — which I hadn't heard before. It was the only time I ever saw my lunch partner tear up, as if the secret act of charity was typical, a testament and a tribute to his own generation.

Without making a conscious decision, we tend to steer clear of some topics that might be too sensitive or too intimate — like parenting adult children. Norm's own children — who are about my age — and grandchildren live far away, so maybe I am a fill-in son. My two kids are college age. He gives advice, but only when asked. In any event, I see him as a role model, something to aspire to in however many years to come there are for me.

Like everyone else, I can't help asking myself what Norm's secret of active longevity is. He's still driving and, when we first met, he was still playing golf. Among the books he has written is *Living Longer, Living Stronger*. Genes aside, his younger son, Harry, attributes his extraordinary vitality to "exercise, naps, reading, good conversation, and — since his retirement — two belts of Chivas whisky a night. I've often said Chivas should make him their poster child and pay him in an ad campaign for 'living longer, healthier.'" He is very attached to the Congregation of Reform Judaism services (where his High Holiday seats are much closer to "courtside" than my own) and its programs, as well as the Holocaust Museum and Research Center in Orlando.

Norm wants to be useful, and is. He no longer practices medicine, but when neighbors ask for help, he calls friends and colleagues to get them in to see specialists. After I had minor heart surgery, Norm volunteered to be my back-up cardiologist, reviewing my tests and exam results, and he calls to check up on me when I am sick or injured. For months, while I was recuperating from a burn injury and a subsequent skin graft, and feeling reclusive, my lunches with Norm were the only thing that could draw me out of the house.



"After I had minor heart surgery, Norm volunteered to be my back-up cardiologist," the author writes. "While I was recuperating from a burn injury ... my lunches with Norm were the only thing that could draw me out of the house." Credit: Nizar Swallem.

Gradually, Norm has told me the story of his life. He is the youngest and lone survivor of nine children. His father left Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, part of the large migration of Jews escaping persecution and seeking a better life in America. The patriarch's saga was a familiar immigrant's story, not unlike my grandfather's: an itinerant young peddler whose journey took him to a small mining town in the Anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania. There he opened a dry goods store and made a decent living in a community made up largely of Irish, Polish, and Baltic immigrants.

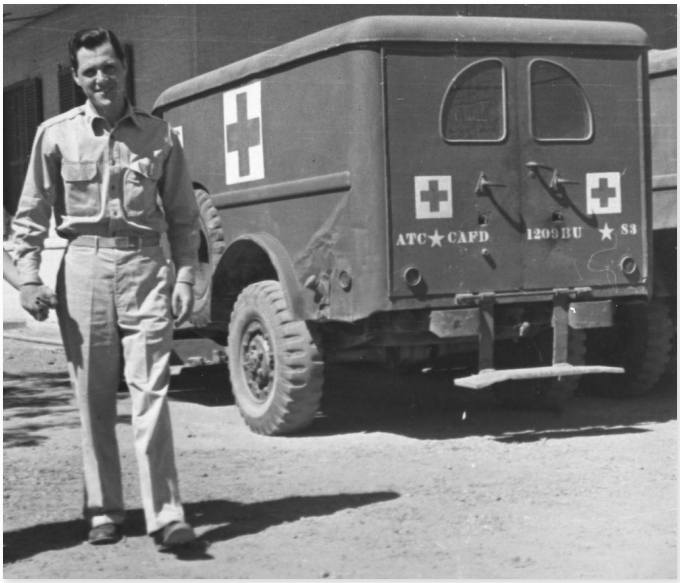
Over the years, the family did its best to repay the nation. During World War I, two of Norm's brothers served in the army, one wounded, and a sister who was a student nurse perished in Philadelphia treating soldiers with the Spanish Flu. The family gave similar sacrifice and service in World War II. Another sister, in the Women's Army Corps, was killed in a tank accident.

By happenstance, Norm likes to say, his was a “good war.” Some of the young doctors he trained with in the months before World War II erupted were later killed in the Pacific or en route to other assignments. Norm served as a medical officer, first in 1943 with the Army’s 24th Field Station Hospital outside Tel Aviv, a tent and Quonset hut camp established to treat expected Allied casualties from the North African campaign. But after British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery stopped German General Erwin Rommel’s drive toward Cairo at El Alamein, Norm’s unit was ordered out in 1944, and scheduled to be turned over to America’s English allies. But Norm, fearful that the supplies would then fall into the hands of the Arabs, took it upon himself, without authorization, to commandeer the surplus medicine and equipment. He used his jeep to deliver it to skeptical Haganah soldiers (who distrusted anyone in an Allied uniform, especially someone with an English-sounding last name), who stashed it in the hollowed base of a kibbutz water tower, next to an arms cache.

Capt. Wall kneels outside a Quonset hut built to treat Allied soldiers wounded in battles with German and Italian forces in North Africa during World War II. Courtesy of Dr. Norman Wall.

The priceless supplies were ultimately transferred to a crumbling Ottoman-era building in nearby Tel Aviv, where the legendary Dr. Chaim Sheba was treating civilians and Jewish fighters. In the process, Norm formed a lifelong relationship with Dr. Sheba, for whom Tel Hashomer-Sheba Hospital — established on the hilltop site of the U.S. base after it was captured in 1948 by the nascent Israeli Army — is in part named. In a small way, Norm’s experience had a personal resonance for me; I was a civilian volunteer attached to the Israeli army in the Sinai in 1967.

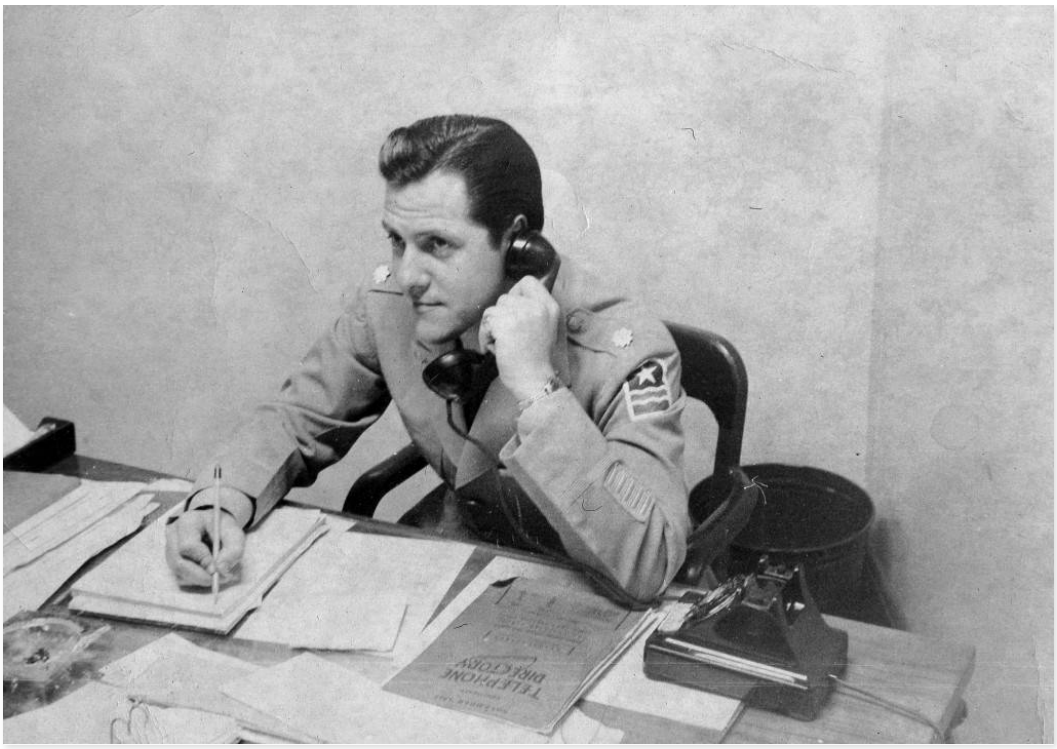
In early December of 2010, Norm was recognized for his contribution, along with the U.S. Army, to sowing the seeds of what has become the largest medical center in Israel. It was a moving ceremony, bringing together what Norm devoted his life to — medicine, his passion for Israel, and his love of America — and celebrated in Orlando, where he has made a niche as elder statesman in the community. He also had the tact not to mention, in the presence of a general on hand to accept the Army Medical Corps share of the award, that Captain Wall’s superiors were unaware of his contribution to the Jewish underground, then technically at war with the British.



Capt. Norman Wall stands with an ambulance at U.S. Medical Station Tel Litwinsky outside Tel Aviv in 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Norman Wall.

Later in WWII, Norm headed Army station hospitals in Africa and the Middle East, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. While commanding a mountaintop medical unit in Eritrea, he rounded up the unit’s five Jewish soldiers and drove them to the East African capital of Asmara for High Holiday services with Italian colonial expatriates and dark-skinned, Ethiopian Jews.

Norman’s activism on behalf of Jews and Israel in the years that followed was often behind the scenes. In the late 1960s, at the request of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, Norman and Jay, his older son, smuggled medical supplies, especially insulin and digitalis, to Russia and the Ukraine. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, with the assistance of Mossad, he arranged for a surgical company in the Midwest to donate highly specialized equipment, quietly spirited out of the country to Lady Sieff Hospital in Safed, where it was used to treat Israeli soldiers whose bones were being shattered when the tanks they were in imploded under attack.



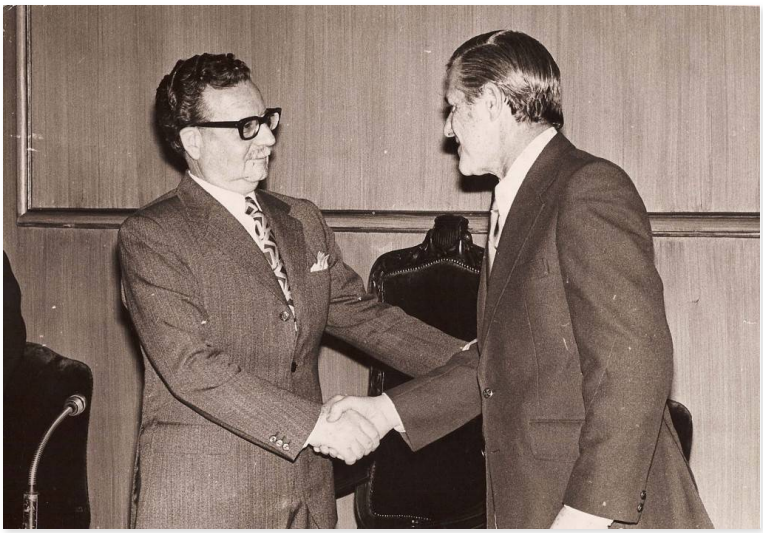
The five hash marks on Capt. Wall's uniform indicate the three years he had already served overseas when this photo was taken in 1943. Courtesy of Dr. Norman Wall.

Norm refights other, older battles. He is still nettled about his struggles in the 1930s against restrictive quotas barring Jews from applying for scholarships at University of Pennsylvania and its medical school. After World War II, when his father died, Norm discontinued a prestigious fellowship and a bright future at Boston's Lahey Clinic, en route to a planned career in a major medical center. He returned to his small home town of Pottsville in Schuylkill County, in order to support his large family. There, he was hired by the Catholic nuns who were preparing to build a modern hospital; they were grateful to have such a talented doctor, despite his faith.

Like longtime CBS and CNN newsman and National Public Radio commentator Daniel Schorr, who died in July 2010 at age ninety-three, Norman is a living history book, especially when it comes to the healing arts. His life has spanned a century of dramatic changes in the world of medicine, from the discovery of penicillin and the advent of open-heart surgery, to the takeover by the HMOs and money-driven health care. As he likes to say, "I had the best fifty years of medicine." A keen, intuitive diagnostician of the old school in the years before (and after) sophisticated testing and technology, he believed in treating his patients holistically — before that term was commonly used.

For half a century Norm cared for everyone in the area, from coal miners to bankers. He turned his work on the miners and their dust-damaged lungs and hearts into more than twenty academic papers in national medical journals. These were a response to cynical mine owners who insisted that workers had tuberculosis, rather than Black Lung disease, to avoid paying even meager compensation. This experience, he says, like the penury he experienced growing up, fueled his commitment to social justice. He began bringing promising young medical students from the United States and Israel — where he helped develop Ben Gurion Hospital and Medical School in the Negev — to his hospital for summer training programs. Some of his former students are now among Israel's medical mandarins.

Norman rose to prominence in his community, a town made (in)famous in the novels of native son John O'Hara. In his books and short stories, the writer called it "Gibbsville," lacerating local society for its open tolerance of gambling, prostitution, and Prohibition-era speakeasies, as well as its pious hypocrisies. In the decades that followed, Norman and other members of the town's small Jewish community were still barred from the local country club and main civic organization. Norm took them on, because he could, as the top cardiologist who often took care of the same bigots, as well as the few who helped him start changing the restrictions. When the bars fell in the 1970s, it was a small but notable victory. While medicine was his profession and calling, he made an impact on his community, mainly through local activism; he later served on the national stage with the Anti-Defamation League.



Wall meets Chilean President Salvador Allende (left) in 1971. Courtesy of Dr. Norman Wall.

Norm admits to a certain vanity at this point in his life. On my first visit to his house, he showed me a photograph of himself with Salvador Allende, a fellow physician and then president of Chile, who was killed in a U.S.-backed coup in 1973. It was years later before Norm told me that after he returned from the much-publicized visit to Santiago, shortly before the coup, FBI agents informed him that Chilean security officers had intercepted a letter that contained poison addressed to him at his hotel.

On the wall he has a framed copy of an op-ed column he wrote in 2005 for the *New York Times* about bringing foreign physicians to the United States to respond to the doctor shortage, arguing that it was wrong to bring foreign doctors here rather than encourage them to practice in their own, Third World countries where they were needed most. He's also had letters to the editor published in the *Times*. An auditorium at his old hospital in Pennsylvania is named for him and many of his medical protégés have inscribed dedications to his honor in their textbooks.

Sometimes, I notice, he repeats stories he has told me before — but I do that too. If he has any serious regrets about his long life, Norm has kept them to himself, or dismisses them with a shrug: "What are you gonna do?"

The Yiddish expression *bashert* literally means destined, or fated. In recent years, it has come to refer to a future marriage partner, because it connotes soul mate. But I think it was fated that Norman and I would meet. For all the Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays with Norm, our lunches are not tutorials on life like Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays With Morrie***.** I haven't been watching him die; I am watching a life well lived — and living. I'm still learning from him, but our lunches are meetings of equals. For my part at least, the formula for our friendship is a mix of equal parts admiration and affection. There is no way I could ever live a life like his, but I thought that just by listening to his unfold, by sharing it, even vicariously, I would become a part of it.

Recently, I asked Norm, now ninety-seven, why he thought our relationship has become what it is. "That's easy," he said with a chuckle. "You learn from me and I learn from you."

(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, ***click here****. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article,* ***click here****.)*

Mark I. Pinsky, longtime religion writer for the Orlando Sentinel *and the* Los Angeles Times*, is author of* A Jew Among the Evangelicals: A Guide for the Perplexed *(Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).*

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Print this article

A Journey of Passion: Spirit and Horror during the Christian Holy Season

by David A. Sylvester

June 27, 2011

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

1.

We were gathered in front of our church for **the Palm Sunday celebration**, full of Sunday morning cheer, waiting for the priest to arrive and begin the service. It would begin outdoors, as it does at Roman Catholic churches, and many other Christian churches, around the world. I went to one of the tables where I could pick up a palm frond to wave aloft during the procession into the church. It was the beginning of **the most sacred portion** of the year, the climax of the Christian story.

This story has become such a commonplace of the culture that it hardly seems real any more. Like many of us, I expected to hear the familiar readings, to sing and clap at the traditional hymns, hug some friends, and then leave to resume my normal life. I expected to carry home in my pocket a fresh green palm frond woven into a cross, my salvation safely tucked away for another year. After all, aren't we commemorating the promise that Christian believers have been rescued from their sins and are destined for heaven? In spite of all the ups and downs of life, it's the story with the classic happy ending.

Or is it? Perhaps we are so familiar with it that we no longer understand it. We can hear it, sing it, talk about it — but do we live it? If we really paid attention, we might notice that this journey is shattering — but do we allow a holy shattering in our own lives? We hear that this journey begins with the illusion of triumph, travels through disaster and trauma, grief and confusion, and culminates at Pentecost with the in-flooding of a new spirit. We've been told how this spirit poured like tongues of fire into the first apostles, ordinary people who were so transformed that their human flaws became pores radiating light.

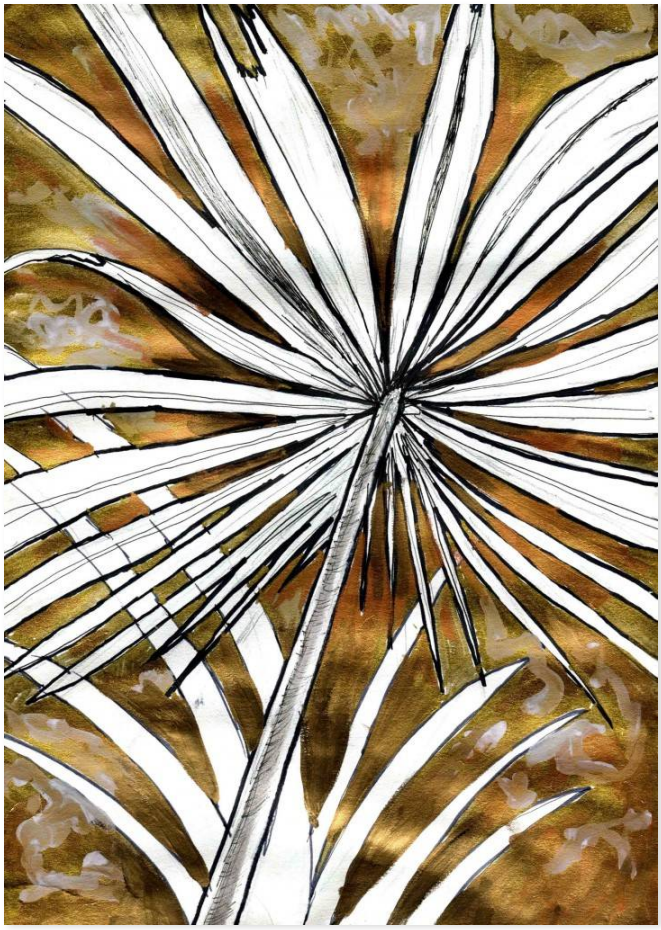

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

None of them had any idea this would happen. They could not, like us, turn aside from the rough, painful truth that they were forced to face. They had to recognize how cowardly, fearful, and self-centered they really were. In the long journey from Palm Sunday through Easter and then, fifty days later, Pentecost, they had to endure the collapse of their self-image and public exposure of their worst traits. They had no way of knowing that this destruction of self-pride was the only way to empty their souls enough to permit the entrance of infinite love. If they had known in advance what this sacred wounding entailed, would they have agreed to endure it? Would we? Do we really want to live through **this journey of passion**? Or do we prefer **the social symbols** we celebrate in words and songs, the scenes immortalized in stained glass windows?

I must admit that such questions were far from my mind last Palm Sunday when I got my palm frond and joined friends for the party atmosphere outside the church. People were laughing and hugging, showing off their best clothing, including some in a fiery red for **the liturgical color of the day**, making plans for special brunches after Mass. At one end of the sidewalk, some prosperous businessmen were milling about, wearing blue pinstriped suits, white shirts, and red or blue silk ties. They argued in fun about local baseball teams or groused about the high price of gasoline and glitches with their Internet connections. Their wives had bought new red jackets, sweaters, or in one case, a red lace shawl, for the occasion. A few young mothers rocked their infants in baby carriages and compared travel plans for the summer.

Throughout the crowd, there were conversations in Tagalog, Thai, and Swahili; the Spanish of Mexico and Central and South America; and the French of former colonies in Africa. Like the Catholic Church itself, our parish is a world parish; members speak more than forty languages and come from even more countries. One group of African women, decked out with brilliant headscarves and boubou dresses, stood like matrons in the midst of a swirl of children, hugging and nodding and laughing. The youngest children ran with excitement between their fathers' legs, chasing each other with the sacred fronds like flyswatters until an adult caught them by the arm and made them look down the road for the sign that the priest was arriving and the Mass would begin.

It was a festive time, a time of triumph. The church had undergone a renovation for the special Holy Week services. Our congregation was proud that the stained glass windows had been restored, the mosaics in the ceiling cleaned and polished, a new organ installed, and the Italian marble floors refurbished. The altar was made of handcrafted mahogany, and for the sacred text, a new silver and gold case. All we needed now was the priest to arrive and begin the ceremonies that would save us from sin and assure us of our redemption in God.

The tallest young men pushed their way to the front left end of the crowd, so that they would be among the first to greet the priest. They began to crane their necks and peer up the road off to the left. They scanned the horizon with the flats of their hands.

"What's happening?" one asked.

"Can you see anything?" asked another.

"No, nothing."

The spot where the road disappeared into the hills was only a blur on the horizon.

The sun was rising, the day growing hotter, and necks and foreheads became wet with perspiration. The youngest children sat down on the sidewalk, whimpering with impatience until their fathers picked them up and rocked them to sleep on their shoulders.

One young boy tugged on his father's sleeve.

"Daddy," he asked, "is it time for Mass yet?"

His father looked down and smiled. "Not yet," he said.

2.

"There he is!" A cry erupted from those in front who had the best view of the road in the hills. "He's coming!"

In a tremor of excitement, everyone surged forward and clogged the street. "He's coming! He's coming!" the cries echoed back and forth, and people pushed forward to get a glimpse.

"Make way, make way! Give him room," ordered a tall, burly man up front with the greeters.

The crowd in the street instantly divided in half, forming a walkway down its middle; people faced each other and looked up the road, **waving the branches of palms** and shouting with abandon:

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Far away toward the horizon, where the road threaded its way out of the hills toward the city, a tiny figure was visible, riding on what looked like a young horse, **a colt with a robe across it**. It was difficult to see, but to some in the crowd, he seemed to ride erect, a regal figure with the dignity of a ruler. Perhaps he was seven feet tall, a giant of a man, someone who could command thousands with a single word.

"What is he doing? How far away is he? Tell us what he is doing!" some called to those in front.

One businessman, unaccustomed to the sun, squinted down the road, then ripped off his suit coat and threw it across the road. "Help us, Lord!" he called out. "Our daughter is dying! Crack cocaine is killing her!"

A society woman stepped forward in high heels and laid her red lace shawl on the street and said in a strained voice, "Our son is homeless and refuses his medication." Then she shut her eyes and gasped. "And he was such a beautiful baby!"

Two of the African women pulled off their headscarves and cast them over the road:

"Oh save us! We work two jobs and still can't pay the rent and buy enough food for our children!"

An office worker in shirt sleeves threw his palm frond on the road and cried out:

"Every day, I wake up in such a depression that I feel dead! Restore my desire to live!"

Similar cries came from the crowd as people shed the façade of their lives and named their deepest pain. Jumping and shouting, they fanned the air with the fronds so vigorously that it seemed a wind was blowing into the city from the hills.

But he was still too far off to be visible.

The crowd doubled, then tripled in size as word spread, and people came by the busload from the regions around the city. Day laborers were there in baseball caps and sweatshirts, farmers from the valleys in their overalls and rough clothes.

"King of kings," called out one elderly man who tended olive trees on his family plot, "the tax collectors rob us of all our harvest, and my family is starving!"

"Son of David," shouted a man wearing torn clothes and leaning on a crutch. "My son has lost his senses and lives in the cemeteries, beating himself with stones. Cast out his demons, I beg you, every last one!"

"Messiah!" screamed a mother who had fallen to her knees even as her relatives tried to hold her back. "A soldier trampled my baby daughter with his horse and never looked back! She was only four years old and couldn't see him coming! Restore her to life!"

"O Great Healer and Prophet!" sobbed a woman covering her misshapen face with her hands. "What was my sin that I should be born like this and forbidden to enter the city or temple? Heal me for I am dying of loneliness!"

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

Many in the crowd were crying now, admitting the daily cruelties they had to live with, the struggle to eke out a living in the harsh world.

And now, relief, at last!

The figure far down the road grew more distinct. It wasn't a man on a colt but someone bending forward as if under a great weight. He seemed to suffer and stumble, inching forward more and more slowly with each step.

"He's bleeding!" shouted one of the tallest men closest to the road. Only a few could see his battered forehead, his broken ribs that made him gasp for breath, his back shredded from lashes. He was bearing on his shoulders an instrument of death, a fiendish invention of torture.

The crowd grew quiet. "What can this mean?" a few asked in half-whispers.

There must be some mistake.

A shiver of fear ran along the street as more could see the bent figure and the blood staining his tunic. On each side, soldiers were riding along, cracking jokes, and whipping him impatiently. They were late for their noon repast and annoyed with the people interfering with their horses — **women crying and reaching out to him**, companions with **ravaged wounds from dogs**, and the dead walking beside him, wearing the ghostly white of burial wrappings.

"Who can this be?" cried out the tallest ones in the crowd, who had seen him first. "How can this be the one we are waiting for?"

The procession was temporarily lost from view as it descended into a long dip in the road, perhaps a third of the way toward the church. After some minutes, what emerged was not a single man with companions and soldiers, but entire armies. Battalions had charged out of the fields, their horses rearing and swords flashing. Shouts pierced the air, and a large white battle flag was unfurled in the front, a flag emblazoned with a vertical bar over a horizontal, the ancient instrument of death.

This symbol glowed and shimmered in the noon-day sun, as if traced in golden thread. From both sides, the armies crashed together, surging around the battle flag. The sounds of metal clashing on metal and the cries and screams of slaughter reverberated in the air, and a cloud of dark red dust arose and obscured the road from view.

At the church, the young boy asked his father:

"Daddy, is it time for Mass to begin yet?"

But his voice was lost in the sounds of battle from the distance.

3.

When the noise quieted and the air cleared, the armies had melded into a single unit, marching in unison past outlying villages, closer and closer to the crowd at the church. Instead of one battle standard, there were now dozens, some larger than others, flying in their whites and blues, reds and greens, all embroidered with the sign of the instrument of death. Suddenly, groups of soldiers broke away from the procession and charged into the villages along the road. The air shook with screaming and crying, and the smell of blood was like the scent of sweet wine turning rotten in the burning midday sun. Those in the crowd closest to the road saw things so unspeakable that they turned in horror, their faces blanched and their voices choked. **"They're massacring the villagers and burning the towns!"** shouted one man in disbelief. And he began to claw his way back to where his wife and children were picnicking at the far back of the crowd, oblivious to events down the road.

A towering farmer, tanned from much labor, stood as if paralyzed by the sight of the oncoming procession. Then he too turned and lunged back toward the crowd running in awkward leaps as if filled with superhuman energy. "Turn away! Do not look! You cannot bear to see what we've seen!"

They dared not say what they could not have imagined. The soldiers were attacking the villages and hacking to pieces anyone who would not bow to this symbol of death. In one village, parents were so desperate to remain faithful to their truth rather than be enslaved to alien gods that they were **driven to mass killing of their children and themselves**. Boys and girls, looking up into the eyes of their mothers and fathers holding above them knives of sacrifice before turning them on themselves, tried to fathom what kind of love was making them do such a thing.

In front of the church, pandemonium broke loose: "Run for your lives! Take up your children and flee!" The shouts reverberated throughout the crowd.

Everyone threw down their palm fronds, forgot their coats, shawls, scarves, and sweatshirts in the roadway, and dashed about, calling out for their children to come to them, children who were playing with friends away from their parents.

The armies were much closer now. Before them, they were herding not just the villagers but **hundreds of thousands of people speaking a mixture of languages** – English, French, Spanish. There were families with oxcarts, teachers with long grey beards, financiers in carriages attended by servants, the wisest and richest and poorest trudging with the few possessions they could carry to flee the standards emblazoned with this instrument of death.

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

The soldiers trampled the fields on both sides to keep the migration moving, and the grass became as dry as tinder. Priests with tall hats rushed out into the fields and seized whole families, **threw them in cages or tied them to stakes and burned them alive**. A tent with the emblem of the instrument of death was erected and was filled with priests and kings in their robes who watched the deaths.

No one in the crowd at the church saw this. They were already in their cars, gunning their engines and driving over sidewalks and curbs to get home, where they could lock their doors and find safety. Those on foot were running, panting, sweating, leaning against walls in the side streets to catch their breath and then run again. No one was looking back to see that **wildfires had broken out in the fields** along the roadway where the priests had built their tents and where the armies had trampled the underbrush.

Fires were driving forward a migration that had **grown into the millions**, whole populations as far as the eye could see, speaking another set of languages — Polish, German, Lithuanian, Italian, Greek. A human stampede was racing toward the city.

What could be driving these people in such terror?

The roadway in front of the church was shaking now, the ground itself convulsing and the air thundering. The walls of the church

trembled and the bells in the steeple clanged in a discord of incomprehensible notes. The armies and horsemen were now themselves in full flight and mingling pell-mell with the populations they had been attacking.

Behind them, something monstrous was advancing, something unimaginable and moving at the speed of lightning. The pounding of hooves and the shouts and screaming had become deafening; the horsemen came galloping down the street by the church. They were whipping their horses while glancing back over their shoulders. Priests and bishops were stumbling over themselves, their robes tearing at their feet, falling in the oncoming roar. They all charged into the city at once, the pursued and pursuers now indistinguishable, bishop and refugee, soldier and gray-haired teacher, businessman and farmer and financier.

Suddenly, the unseen pursuer broke into view out of the dip in the road. It was a wave of armored tanks that were surging forward and towering over the hundreds of thousands fleeing toward the city. These tanks roared along the road faster than anyone could run and crushed a path through the human sea before them. Tens of thousands of people were falling under their treads, even those carrying standards with the symbol of the instrument of death. Rivers of blood ran in the ditches along the road, and thousands were clawing at each other, frantic to escape as they ran past the church, their eyes wild and their faces frozen in masks of horror.

Then there came waves of tanks and detachments of soldiers with harsh voices marching in unison. Some were carrying the flags with the sign of the instrument of death turned upside down and were jousting in mock battle. They danced and laughed and kicked at the remains of palm fronds, pinstriped coats, red lace shawls, headscarves, farmers' overalls, baseball caps, and sweatshirts. In the city, people slammed and bolted their doors against the newcomers with foreign accents who were begging for someone to take them in. When no door opened, the newcomers kept running, hoping to reach a farther, friendlier city.

It was futile. Above, squadrons of airplanes were circling and landing, and tanks were rumbling into the city like boulders racing down a mountainside. The armies of soldiers with harsh voices had already swarmed forward and were engulfing the city on both sides, unrolling barbed wire, building high walls and encircling the city faster than anyone could leave. The soldiers banged on doors with their rifle butts and forced people out of their homes into a smaller and smaller neighborhood until **they were twenty to a room**.

Squatting on the floor, lined against the walls, they were all there: churchgoers in the disheveled clothes, soldiers who had lost their uniforms, villagers who had escaped the massacres huddled with their children, financiers and their servants conferring in low voices, and even a priest and a bishop, who had cast off their robes and hats.

A businessman in shirtsleeves held the hand of his terrified wife.

"But we didn't do anything wrong!?" she whispered to him.

"And you think we did?" snapped a villager as he glared at her.

At the far end of the room, the young boy huddled with his father.

"Daddy, is it time for Mass yet?"

"Shh…" said his father.

Anyone who could be heard asking a question was shot.

Days became months, and starvation broke out. Every day the bodies of those who had died lay along the sidewalks and in the gutters, and everyone kept thinking this madness could not last. They prayed and hoped and waited. Some of the more enterprising people found ways to climb over the walls undetected at night or slither underneath the barbed wire, sneak past the guards in watchtowers, and run into the countryside. There, one by one, they could hide in the fields, or bury themselves in stacks of hay during the day, or take refuge in the horse stables, if they paid enough to keep the owners quiet.

From a distance, they could see that the city was burning, and the cries of those trapped inside were lost in the roar of the explosions and flames. The air was thick with **the smell of burning flesh and bodies putrefying in lime** on the floors of locked railroad boxcars and mass graves covered hastily by bulldozers. At night, those who managed to escape began to find each other, brothers reuniting and occasionally a man and wife finding each other in the same gully or hillock. With suppressed groans of joy, they embraced before collapsing into tears and falling asleep until midday. Only by night was it safe enough to continue their escape.

Night after night, for what seemed like months, they walked. The city had burned, the smoke from the chimneys ceased, and its once busy streets became as silent as cemeteries. The escapees found to their surprise that their pursuers had vanished. They could take greater freedoms and travel farther and farther away. Was it possible to resume some kind of new life?

Then they heard new voices behind them. Strange noises made them peek out from their hiding places, and as in a surreal dream, they saw air-conditioned buses pulling up, and legions of young people, barely beyond high school age, descending. They were grinning from ear to ear, and walking through the fields in their white shirts and formal black slacks and skirts, each holding up a Bible with a shiny, red cover. In these Bibles, some of the words, the words to memorize, were printed in red ink. They had come a long way, from places like Nebraska and Iowa and Florida.

“Have you accepted Him as your Lord and Savior?” the young people called out. “Do you **confess with your lips and believe in your heart** that He is Lord?”

Those who were hiding left their places in the fields and haystacks and ran for the horizon. Mothers scooped up their children in their arms and ran barefoot.

“Wait! Wait!” the young people called out, running after them. “We’re here to bring you the Good News.”

But no one listened, not even the few from the church or from the fields who had managed to escape. And certainly not those mothers who had learned how to run from generations of training. They raced away, leaping over streams like champion hurdlers, leaving behind the young people winded and panting. They fled from those Bibles with passages in red ink that dripped a trail like footprints of blood across the field.

4.

In a hayloft, two men had hidden themselves since their escape and were not running any more. They sat opposite each other, staring into the space before them, seeing nothing, frozen in thought, neither eating and drinking, nor sleeping.

On the third day, the older man with a long white beard cleared his throat and said:

“And to think we were waiting there by the road patiently, like cattle at the gate of a slaughterhouse. For what? Some dream of liberation? A belief in final redemption?”

The other kept silent.

“Were we fools or dreamers — or both?” he said. “Then again, who could imagine it would turn into such horror?”

The other, younger man seemed to be searching for words, but remained silent.

The question hung in the air.

“What are you talking about?” a third voice said from the end of the hayloft.

The two men jumped to their feet, ready to run once more, but they saw it was only an idle farmhand leaning against the back wall of the barn, picking his teeth with a piece of straw, his arms folded as if he had woken up from a nap.

“Are you the only one around who doesn’t know what has happened?” said the younger man, as they sat back down.

“What do you mean?”

The older man spoke first:

“We were waiting for the arrival of this man who we had heard so much about. It is true we were suspicious, but the crowds were so exuberant. Who could not be moved by their pitiful cries for help? Who could not fail to hope this was the King of Kings, the one we were all hoping might relieve our suffering and oppression? But no! Instead of a king, he was only a weak imposter who allowed himself to be abused by the very tyrants we suffer from. He hardly spoke a word in his own defense and put up no resistance when they killed him. Afterward, his most fanatical followers, trying to hide their disappointment in his failure, stole his corpse from his tomb in order to make preposterous claims that he had returned to life and was walking among those who believe in him.

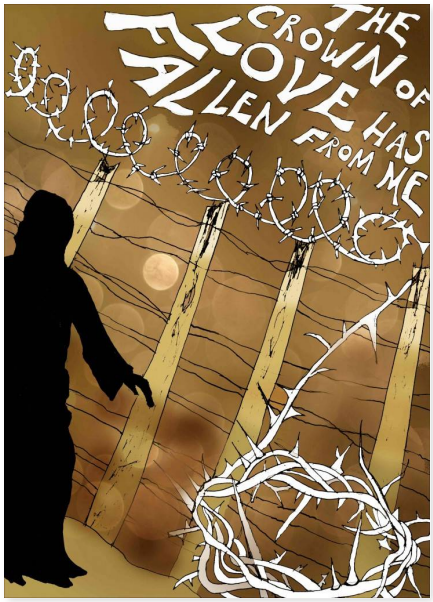

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

"That alone was tolerable, but then these believers spread false teachings throughout the world to glorify suffering and abuse, and they provoked armies to hunt us down and slaughter us in our homes and villages. Their hatred against us spread like an infection to all kinds of people, people with whom we lived in peace for centuries. Our neighbors were driven mad and herded us into ghettos and prisons, murdering us the way malicious children stamp out ants for fun. Now the few of us who are left are hiding in these fields and barns and gullies. We have a double task: to survive for the sake of our children and to teach them how to speak of a **merciful and gracious God**, slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love and faithfulness, in a way that does not sound like an insane illusion."

The younger man had struggled to speak several times but lapsed back into silence, as if inwardly arguing with himself.

The farmhand listened but said nothing.

"We certainly never expected what we got," the younger man said finally. **"We expected he would free us from our oppressors**. Instead, he was the first to die."

He was silent for a moment, then blurted out:

"Oh my brother! Hell itself cannot contain worse than what you have experienced! **The blood of the innocents is crying out** across the centuries. What can we say that would not dishonor their memory?"

"Nothing," said the older man. He put his forehead on his arms across his knees.

"May His great name be magnified and sanctified… " the younger man began.

The older man said nothing.

"… in the world He created by His will…" the younger man intoned, rocking back and forth.

"I can't say it," the older man snapped.

"You must!" the younger man insisted. "Is it not true that all of us will, no matter how we die, have a final moment in which we can choose to praise or curse the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, before we perish in this world and enter the world to come?"

"At that moment, I will stay silent."

"Then that is a curse by omission."

The farmhand was leaning back on the wall, twirling a straw between his fingers, half-listening to the conversation.

"What if you had been among those millions who were murdered?" the younger man began again. "In that last moment, if you died with His name on your lips, you would join the sages who were **tortured to death and still praised God** with all their soul. Would that not have been the crowning achievement of your life? Would that not have been enough?"

The younger man warmed to his speech and leaned forward even more urgently:

"Yet you did not die! You survived! If you had survived only to praise His name day after day, but had no children to teach, **would that not have been enough**? But you and I do have children, if not our own, then our neighbors' children — you can hear their voices outside the walls of this refuge — and they need help knowing the truth of their existence. Is this not enough?"

"You have no right to lecture me on what is or is not enough!" the older man snapped. "You did not experience what I did. You had the luxury of a bystander, the refuge of the coward who watches and does nothing."

At this point, the younger man lost his words again, looked around the hayloft at the farmhand, who watched him, then turned back to face the older man. "I was no bystander. You see, I was with him as he walked along the road on the colt and then as he walked to his death. I saw him as …"

"You?!" the older man gasped. "You are one of them?!"

“I was with him and **denied him three times**. I was the soldier who pierced his side with a lance. I was the emperor who hunted his followers and later turned on you and drove you out. Yes, I was the king who ordered the expulsions, the soldier who ravished your villages, and the inquisitor who gave the orders for the autos-da-fé and lit the fires under the innocent. I was on the council that ordered your detentions in small ghettos and marked you with badges…”

“You?!”

“I was the politician who fed the popular frenzy to pander for votes and the priest who published thousands of intolerant tracts, fanning flames of prejudice against you. And I was destroyed, myself, in the conflagration that I had helped unleash.”

“You fiend!” the older man could scarcely believe his ears.

“Yes, it is true. I committed hideous deeds. I know too well how the madness and the lusts can sweep me up in a mob and drive me and everyone else insane, the way rabies infects a pack of dogs. But don’t blame the dogs for their rabies. And don’t blame our behavior on this man whom we followed and loved. His name was only the excuse for us to let loose **the evil inclination of our hearts**. Wherever we went, he was already there, his spirit interfering with our crimes. He pecked at our consciences, confused us, and garbled our hateful speech. You see, to do what we did, we had to fight his presence in our very souls. We had to declare war on him.”

“And you, not he, won this battle? Then he is an illusion, and you are a fool.”

“Oh no, you are wrong. He shamed me with a single glance when I denied him and I wept and tore my clothes in inconsolable grief afterwards. He haunted me for years after I had pierced his side, and I spent my old age begging for forgiveness. He stirred the conscience of **emperors and bishops to try to control the rampaging mobs**, and **restrained the king from issuing his decree** – yes, admittedly aided by the temptation of gold but also by touching his heart — before the king weakened and gave in to evil counsel. His spirit forced **a monk to leave his monastery and risk his life** to stop persecutions**.** He made **a young social worker risk her life to save 2,500 children** from murder and then work to reunite them with their parents after the whirlwind had passed**.** The spirit of this man gives us hope because he gives us new power to obey the goodness of our nature and rise above our evil inclination.”

5.

“Ridiculous!” shouted the older man, his fists clenched in rage. “These were insignificant flickers, moments of clarity that did nothing to divert your people from their rampage. Would you pardon a killer because he feels a pang of conscience while he swings his axe? You’ve twisted the facts into a self-congratulatory fiction. You ignore the impact of his evil teachings.”

“Answer me this,” the older man continued. “Did he not teach that, if slapped on one cheek, a person should **turn the other cheek** for a second slap? Not only did you hypocrites fail to practice this, but you inflicted it on us! Once a year, on the Friday when you glorified his miserable death, you **claimed the right to slap us** when we had no power to strike back. You forced us to conform to teachings that you don’t practice yourselves! In this way, you reveal the emptiness of his chimerical idealism.”

Illustration by Laura Beckman.

“Yes, all these things have happened,” the younger man nodded. “But consider this: Don’t we have a choice in how we remember the past? We can see the events alone — or recognize the deeper truth, the inner truth. When you look back on the liberation of your people from Egypt each year, do you honor the events in the wilderness, the grumbling and rebellion, the calf made of gold and the subsequent slaughter of the idolaters? No, you honor the God who, with a **mighty hand and outstretched arm**, brought you out of slavery into a new land to serve and worship Him. How much more powerful are actions of God than those of wayward humans! When we see only superficial facts, we are like the blind trying to understand a painting by rubbing its rough surface. When we open the eye of our heart, we see the whole image and it instantly moves our soul. Only through God can we recognize those invisible miracles that would guide people from the inside out, if they would accept the guidance. Our senses see only the exterior and blind us to reality, the way that **the sight of the apple appealed to the eyes of Eve** yet distracted her from the true meaning of her choice.”

“Exterior? Interior? More sophistry!” the older man raged. “You talk as if there is some mystical spiritual reality apart from the world around us. We who suffered the ‘exterior’ events, as you say, know your

interior reality better than you do. You are monsters! You are poisoned with teachings of absurdities and impossibilities — births without sexual intercourse, magicians walking on water, water turning into wine, dead men returning to life and walking on earth. Such things cast a trance over people and block the normal functioning of the mind."

"You know that teachings such as these describe spiritual, not physical reality. It is spiritual ignorance that turns them into absurdities and impossibilities."

"What of this cruel delusion that a few loaves of bread can be turned into **enough to feed thousands of people** through some spiritual hocus-pocus? Millions are dying of starvation and need real, physical bread, not some ethereal idea of bread."

"That story is not about bread, but about sharing. Everyone who followed him into the hills had hidden pieces of bread in their own clothing. They only needed the confidence to share freely what they already had for the whole crowd to have enough. Then they could break free of their self-centered fears and stop hoarding what could rightfully be available for all. Yet we interpret the story as a fairy tale, and we wait to find some magical, bottomless basket rather than admit our greed and selfishness. We turn these stories into excuses to justify the crimes of our evil hearts."

"Yes, evil hearts that learned from your texts to call us his killers!"

"We are all his killers. Every sin murders him anew!"

"And those texts that condemn us with words we never spoke: '**His blood be on us and on our children**.'"

"His blood is the **blood of reconciliation, not vengeance**. May his blood be upon all of us."

"That's not what the mobs were screaming when they burst into our homes, raped our mothers, and **carved the crossbars of that hated instrument of death on our foreheads** between our eyes!"

The older man was now leaning and shouting at the younger man, ignoring any effort to calm him down.

"My friend," the younger man stammered. "All these events that you mention, terrible as they are, are not the fault of the man we followed. For where do we find the living God? In the wind, the earthquake, the fire? No! Is it not written: "After the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire **a still small voice**."

"Yes, I hear small voices, those of the ones who suffered from such crimes!" roared the older man with a force much stronger than his age. "I acutely feel the **presence of my spiritual and physical ancestors at this moment**. Their faces are pressed against the windows of this place, looking in, watching how I respond to your self-exculpating fictions! These still small voices were crushed not by the earthquakes and storms of nature but by you and your mobs."

"You judge us by the worst of us."

"The worst of us are better than the best of you."

"Are you exempt from the temptations of evil? If you were the ones with the weapons, the power of the state, and self-rationalizing claims, don't you think you would persecute and tyrannize? **When you did have such power, how did you behave?** All of us have these evil seeds that blossom in the soil of our obstinate sin, faint repentance, our lulled and enchanted minds. Isn't this true, my brother, **mon semblable**?"

"Let us have this conversation in 2,000 years, and compare our record with yours."

"**There is no simple explanation for the horror** of this world. **Do not lose faith in Divine retribution**. Have faith that **this world is only a corridor into the world to come**. The Messiah is leading us into a world greater than this one."

At these words, the older man flew into such a rage that he picked up a scythe leaning against the wall and swung it high over his head.

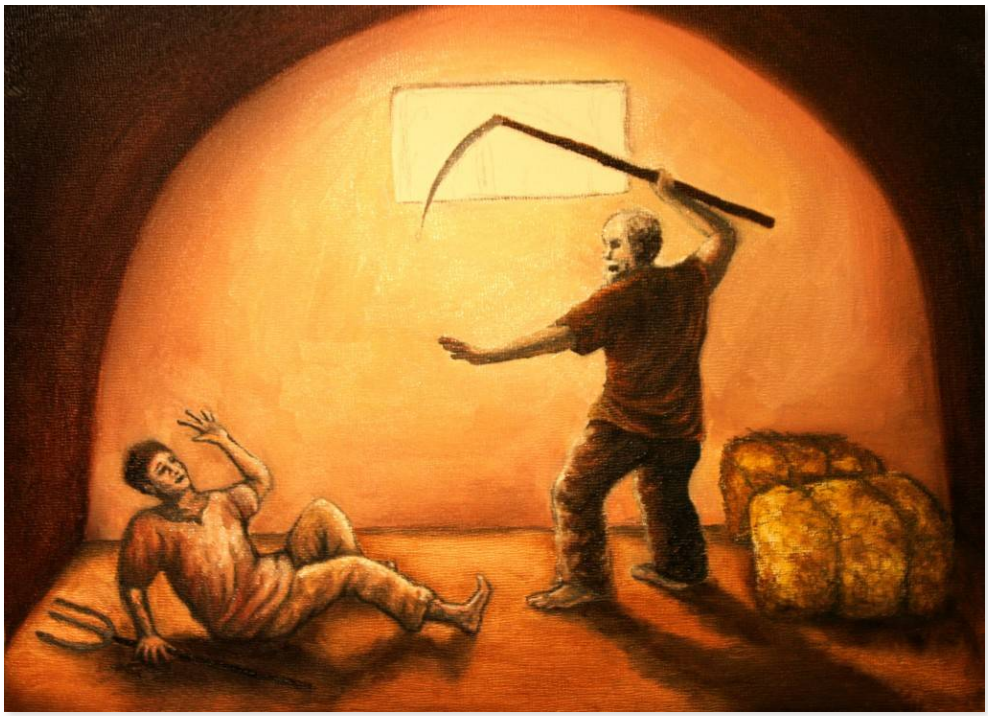

Illustration by Sayaka Merriam.

“If you are so in love with death and the next world, then I will give you the benefit of leaving this world and entering the next sooner than you expected. See if this man you claim to follow gives you visions and comfort as you experience a fate that you and your kind subjected my people to through the ages!”

The younger man scrambled backward, looked around and seized a pitchfork to defend himself.

“Hold your anger, my brother. Do not act like the murderers you denounce. I’m not worshipping suffering and death, but worship the one who held to the truth even unto death, love even in the face of hatred.”

“Don’t speak his name to me!” the older man cried out. “That’s when this all began. ***Yemach shemo vezichro***.”

“I know this: he saved me from myself,” shouted the younger man, jumping up and shaking his fist. “And I will prove it! Look outside. **If I am right, the streams in the fields will flow backward** at his command.”

“I’m not looking outside to please your whim,” laughed the older man in bitter mockery.

“Look around us! If I am right, the walls of this barn will incline.”

Just as he said this, the wood around them heaved and the walls began to lean in on themselves as if they were about to fall.

“These old rotten beams? Not a single one is straight.” the older man snorted.

“A voice from heaven will speak out loud to you and convince you,” said the younger man, raising his pitchfork.

“Enough!’ the old man roared, his scythe high above his head and trembling with anticipation. “Even if the Almighty himself appeared before us in this hayloft, we are commanded to think for ourselves and defend what is in our hearts!”

“I am the living proof that he has the power to **turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh!**” the younger man screamed.

“That I can see!” shouted the older man, eyeing the younger man’s pitchfork.

The two glared at each other, rigid with fear and fury, waiting for the slightest movement to unleash their rage.

Knowing it was their last moment, the younger man said:

“What must the Almighty be thinking to see us here, now, enemies to the death.”

6.

The farmhand was sitting listening to the argument, his head turned toward the window next to him, as if he were hearing sounds beyond the barn. He picked up a blade of straw, eyed it carefully, split it with a fingernail, and blew into it. It made a buzzing sound. He frowned, broke off the tip of the straw, split it again, and blew. This time, it tooted a single clear note.

“He is weeping,” the farmhand said to himself. “He is grieving because his children have defeated him.”

He put the straw to his lips and blew the note again, then again, and kept blowing until the sound of the straw became deep and guttural, as if issuing from the center of the earth through the hollowed horn of a ram. He stopped, and a mournful silence ensued.

“You both have spoken well,” the farmhand said finally. “Does not the text teach us that “**every sound tree bears good fruit**, but the bad tree bears evil fruit”? We learn from this that there is no real distinction between a person’s heart and his actions. And what will happen to the tree that does not produce good fruit? As it is written, **such trees will be cut down** and thrown into the fire.”

“As for those armies of soldiers and priests and bishops,” he continued, “what else does the text teach us? Does it not say that **many will cry out his name, saying, ‘He is Lord! He is Lord!’** They will seem to do great things and speak fine words in his name, but their works will be evil, and what will the King of Eternity do? He will close the gates of the world to come against them. Soldiers with standards, priests with robes, bishops with staffs will be astonished and say, ‘But we devoted our lives to you, spread your message, and filled the churches in your name!’ And what does the text tell us about how the King of Eternity will respond?”

The younger man lowered his pitchfork and replied:

“He will say, ‘I never knew you; **depart from me, you evildoers**.’”

The farmhand nodded. “You are right, and these evildoers will cry out: ‘What?! How can you not know us if we preached and fought in your name and chased after people with our little red Bibles?’ What does the text tell us that King of Eternity will say?”

The younger man responded hesitantly, under the suspicious eyes of the older man:

“It is written: ‘**I was naked and you did not clothe me**. I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was in prison and you did not visit me.’”

“How they will complain and protest!” said the farmhand. “‘We never saw you naked or hungry and in prison!’ What does the text say that King will say then?”

“It is written: ‘What you did not do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did not do for me.’” the younger man said.

“And what reward will these people receive?

“Eternal punishment,” the younger man said.

The farmhand nodded, listened for a moment, as if he was momentarily distracted by a sound far away.

“Now imagine, if this is what awaits those who failed to act to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit the imprisoned, how much worse a fate will befall those who starved the hungry until they fell into the streets and died as skeletons, stripped the naked of their clothes, and imprisoned and slaughtered them in death camps? If this befalls the person who fails to visit the guilty prisoner, how much worse will it be for those who convict and torture the innocent in the name of imperial security!

“That’s not all. We can make deductions from what the text deliberately leaves out. It never says that the King will ask whether you said, ‘He is Lord’ or ‘*Yemach shemo vezichro’* with your lips. It never says that he will ask in what manner you worshipped. But it does say he will ask what you did. As it is written: ‘**Be doers of the word, and not hearers only**.’ How many times did he say, **‘If you love me, you will obey my commandments!**’”

He looked sharply at the older man. “What, for you, is the greatest commandment?”

“Sh’ma Yis’ra’eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.”

“And?” he asked.

“V’ahav’tah eit Adonai Elohekha b’khol l’vav’khah uv’khol naf’sh’khah uv’khol m’odekhah.”

He turned to the younger man and asked:

“For you?”

“It is exactly as he has said — and also to love your neighbor as yourself.”

“**So it is for us also**,” agreed the older man.

The two men threw aside their weapons and sat down.

The farmhand leaned forward and cocked his ear as he had so often before.

“Listen!” he said. “What do you hear?”

Outside, they could still hear the roar of airplanes, the grinding of tanks, the tramp of soldiers, the cries of grieving parents, the shouts of children, the drone of liturgical recitations, the slamming of doors, the crackling of fires, the barking of dogs, the snoring of sleepers, pages turning in books, and murmuring minds thinking.

“Listen again,” the farmhand said.

They concentrated more deeply and now these noises seemed to lose their resonance. Each sound seemed to take place in a giant auditorium where the vastness of the space absorbed and silenced it. At their core, these sounds seemed hollow, empty caverns with only the ebb and flow of emptiness and fullness, grief and joy, hope and despair, like invisible subterranean rivers.

“Listen yet again,” the farmhand insisted.

Their minds relaxed, letting go of distinctions between sound and silence, and they were tumbling into a kind of hum, a sub-audible pressure vibrating with energy, like a mountain forcing its way up from the depths. It was terrifying in its power, fascinating in its beauty. It was their deepest desire and their greatest fear.

“You have listened well,” the farmhand said.

The two men opened their eyes in surprise.

“What is that?” asked the younger man.

“Heaven being born within the earth,” said the older.

“Do either of you know this process well enough to be able to judge it? Do you really know what is happening in the souls of other people if you don’t know what is happening in your own?”

Both the older and younger man looked away, in different directions, and said nothing.

Outside, it was nearly evening. The hay in the loft was still warm from the day’s heat and gave off a rich and musty smell. Their mouths were dry, their stomachs aching, and their backs itching from the straw poking through their clothes. It had been a long time since they had eaten. The farmhand stirred, obscure in the deepening shadows, and reached for his sack and walking stick.

“No, please, the hour is late,” the younger man said. “**Stay with us**.”

The farmhand paused and pulled out a loaf of peasant bread, tore it in half, and gave a piece to each man.

It was strong and chewy, full of seeds and grains, and they each closed their eyes and bit into it. I tasted it and fell backward into the abyss within myself, tumbling toward this place of pressure, this hum and tremble of **an infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing**.

7.

“Daddy, I think the Mass is over.”

I came to myself in the pew, the bread still in my mouth and my hand on my heart. My son had given me a shake. Around me, the congregation was silent, the air fresh with the scent of lilies. The priest was leaning forward to kiss the altar, and he lingered a moment. He then walked noiselessly around to its front and turned back to bow. We watched his every move. He threw his head back and thrust his arms up, his body tense as a bowstring reaching for what was far beyond the arched ceiling of tile and polished mosaics. In the hush around us, we could hear the pulsing of hearts, his, mine, and all others, the sound of humans alive in communion.

I looked down, and my son was gazing up at me with a quizzical, trusting expression in those hazel-green eyes. He too could feel it. I put my arm around him and he yawned, took my hand, and leaned against me as I drew him toward me. The priest lowered his arms, turned, and stepped forward down the center aisle to lead the recessional. At that signal, the organist hit the keys and a toccata of Bach blasted from the pipes and shook the church from floor to ceiling. The priest threw open the doors to the brilliant spring morning, turning to smile and greet the parishioners carrying their palm fronds, in their blue suits and red lace shawls, their African dresses and headscarves, their baseball caps and sweatshirts.

Illustration by Sayaka Merriam.

A hummingbird, iridescent in scarlet and gold, darted in through the open doors from where it had been humming and hovering in circles around the steps and sidewalk and street throughout the Mass. It had been waiting for this moment, and now, it could finally enter, finally free.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

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A Commentary and Guide to "A Journey of Passion"

by David A. Sylvester

June 28, 2011

A journey into spiritual experience and trauma may seem disorienting, like entering an ancient labyrinth. We push ahead into the twists and turns, concentrating so much on where we are going that we don't notice the walls we are passing or the marks left on them by the generations who traveled before us.

*Even if we did stop, we might not be able to read and understand the markings. They may seem like remnants of a lost language, or one that we remember only through faint impressions. Perhaps many of the references in the main story of "**A Journey of Passion**" are familiar to you; others might sound remote, mixed with childhood associations or relatively meaningless to our modern lives.*

Christians are often surprised to learn about the full extent of the anti-Jewish past; Jews who have closed the door on Christianity may not know about Christian spiritual traditions or about post-Holocaust re-interpretations, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church.

For this reason, these notes are intended to provide context. They might serve as the remarks of tour guides who shine a light onto the walls to point out what we miss as we pass along.

You may prefer to read the story on its own, free of distractions, or you may find that reading these notes alongside it provides a reflective backdrop, a second level of meaning, the way the rabbinic commentaries are consulted in parallel to the main text.

I speak in both the notes and the main story from the perspective of the Roman Catholic tradition, partly because it is my tradition and the one I understand best, and partly because it is the Christian tradition that is most compromised by its anti-Jewish history.

The inevitable consequence of a faith commitment is that some of you, Christian, Jew, or atheist, may not find your understanding of your faith reflected here. I apologize in advance and invite you to respond.

Your thoughts will be most welcome.

***

the Palm Sunday celebration —

For Roman Catholics, Palm Sunday marks the halfway point and the convergence of the three related but distinct aspects of the Christian religious life: the biblical story, the Church liturgical year and the individual's spiritual journey toward God.

In the biblical story, this Sunday commemorates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem to the acclaim of crowds waving palm branches. It initiates Jesus's last days that are recounted in the New Testament stories of his trial, his crucifixion and burial.

In the Church's liturgical year, Palm Sunday closes the season of Lent and begins Holy Week and the *triduum.* This is the Mass commemorated over three days: Jesus' Last Supper on Holy Thursday, his crucifixion on Good Friday and his entombment during Holy Saturday. The week ends with the celebration of his resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The **Catholic Encyclopedia of 1917** calls Palm Sunday "a Sunday of the highest rank." It says that the Eastern Orthodox churches "celebrate the day with great solemnity; they call it *kyriake* or *heorte ton baion* or *heorte baiophoros* (the feast of Palm-bearing) or also Lazarus Sunday, because on the day before they have the feast of the resuscitation of Lazarus."

Along with these communal and outward aspects of the Christian experience, individual Catholics are expected to follow an interior journey as well. They pray, take the Eucharist and practice self-examination and confession through the year to unite their hearts with Jesus and the community in his journey during his life. By now, they have become accustomed to praying with Jesus' presence in the weekly readings at Mass.

Suddenly, Palm Sunday and Holy Week thrust them into what Catholic mystical tradition calls the second conversion, or the "passive purgation of the senses." At the moment of greatest triumph, disaster strikes. Jesus vanishes. Confusion reigns. All assumptions collapse.

In their prayer life, spiritual Christians experience the complete destruction of their interior world, "the crushing of their sensibility." The Holy Week reveals to them, as it did to the original disciples, that their deepest motives for seeking God have been self-centered. At the critical moment, they choose themselves and abandon God.

This triggers utter desolation, and they enter a "dark night of the senses," or perhaps better called the "dark night of the ego," because they find in themselves that "strange but not uncommon mixture of sincere love of God with an inordinate love of self," as **Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange has described it**. "The soul loves God more than itself … but it has not yet reached the stage of loving itself in God and for His sake" (*The Three Conversions*, page 37).

This is a difficult but essential experience if they are to become emptied of themselves enough to receive a flow of infinite love and experience a radical transformation of personality at Pentecost.

the most sacred portion —

The Christian year may be identified in the culture with Christmas and Easter, but from a religious perspective, the eight-week period from the resurrection at Easter to the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is what rescues the individual from the prison of the self. This liberation to the freedom of a new life in God is the culmination of Jesus's gift to humanity. According to **Abbot Guéranger**: "The Paschal time, from Easter Sunday to the Saturday after Pentecost is the most sacred portion of the Liturgical Year, and the one towards which the whole Cycle converges."

this journey of passion…. the social symbols –

Like many religions, Christianity has several variants. Acculturated Christianity blends with the dominant culture. It surrenders its symbols of humility and sacrifice to a worldly culture that uses social power and status to magnify the importance of the self through the domination and devaluing of others. Intellectual Christianity insists on the conformance to orthodox (from Greek for "right-opinion") beliefs and the acceptance of outward practices. Mystical Christianity focuses on developing the interior life, aligning the individual's heart toward God and orthopraxis (from Greek for "right-action). It's up to the individual Christian to choose his or her form of participation.

the liturgical color of the day –

The seasons of the Church's liturgical year representing the stages of the spiritual journey are symbolized in the changing colors of the robes worn by Roman Catholic priests for Mass: Violet, or dark blue for the preparation and anticipation of Advent (from Latin for "arrival") of Jesus; white for the joy of new hope at his birth at Christmas; green for the fruitfulness of his earthly life; violet again for the penitential period of Lent; and white again for the Easter resurrection. Red is for Palm Sunday, the crucifixion on Good Friday and Pentecost, the sacred feasts that bracket the holy season.

The Catholic Encyclopedia discusses the color symbolism: *"*The variety of liturgical colors in the Church arose from the mystical meaning attached to them. Thus white, the symbol of light, typifies innocence and purity, joy and glory; red, the language of fire and blood, indicates burning charity and the martyr's generous sacrifice; green, the hue of plants and trees, bespeaks the hope of life eternal; violet, the gloomy cast of the mortified, denotes affliction and melancholy; while black, the universal emblem of mourning, signifies the sorrow of death and the somberness of the tomb."

waving the branches of palms —

From ancient times, the celebration of victory over enemies was symbolized by the waving of palm branches. Jewish and Christian tradition has used palms to celebrate the defeat of spiritual enemies. In 1 Maccabees 13:51, the Jews entered the citadel of Jerusalem "with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel."

Jewish reflections in ***Midrash Tehillim*** say:

"The Sages interpreted our waving of the *lulav* [willow branches] on Sukkot as signifying the victory of the Jews over Satan on the Days of Judgment that precede the festival."

"When Hoshanah Rabbah comes, they take willows, and make seven circuits around the synagogue, while the Hazzan of the synagogue stands like an angel of G-d, holding a Torah scroll in his arms as the people march around him as around the altar."

"For thus our Rabbis taught: every day it was customary to circle the altar reciting, 'Please, O Lord, deliver us; please, O Lord, bring success,' and on the seventh day they would march around seven times, as King David said explicitly, as it is written, 'I wash my hands in innocence, and walk around Your altar' (Ps. 26:6). Immediately the ministering angels rejoice and proclaim, 'The people of Israel are victorious.'"

*The **Catholic Encyclopedia** says that Christian tradition also uses palms "*as an emblem of joy and victory over enemies" or, in Christian symbolism, "a sign of victory over the flesh and the world." Palms allude to Psalm 92:12 — "The righteous will flourish like the palm" – and so are especially associated with the memory of the martyrs.

"The emperors used to distribute branches of palm and small presents among their nobles and domestics…. Because every great feast was in some way a remembrance of the resurrection of Christ and was in consequence called *Pascha*, we find the names *Pascha floridum*, in French *Pâques fleuries*, in Spanish *Pascua florida*, and it was from this day of 1512 that our State of Florida received its name…. The palms blessed on Palm Sunday were used in the procession of the day, then taken home by the faithful and used as a sacramental. They were preserved in prominent places in the house, in the barns, and in the fields, and thrown into the fire during storms. On the Lower Rhine the custom exists of decorating the grave with blessed palms. From the blessed palms the ashes are procured for Ash Wednesday."

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

The cry of acclaim by the people as Jesus entered Jerusalem:

Matthew 21:8-10: "Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?'"

In Jewish synagogues, the Hebrew word הוֹשַׁעְנָא or *hosha'–na* ("Save us, please") is a refrain recited in the procession during Sukkot. The seventh day of Sukkot is known as Hoshanah Rabbah, the great Hoshanah.

In ***Sowing the Seeds: Life and Times of the Early Church***, one Christian blogger asks: "How did [Hoshanah] move from Jewish usage to Christian usage? … Hosanna was an exclamation of joy and triumph. Like all acclamations in frequent use, it lost its primary meaning and became a kind of hurrah of joy, triumph and exultation."

A colt with a robe across —

These were deliberately messianic symbols that Jesus used at his entrance into Jerusalem:

Mark 11:1-2, 7: "And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it.' … And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it […and entered Jerusalem.]."

John 12:14-15: "And Jesus found a young ass and sat upon it; as it is written, 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass's colt!'"

The New Testament writers are referring to the words in Zechariah 9:9: " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass."

"He's bleeding!"

Jesus' crucifixion begins with the Roman punishment of a severe beating:

John 19:1: "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him."

Matthew 27:27-31: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him."

women crying and reaching out to him —

Luke 23:27-29: "And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!'"

ravaged wounds from dogs –

The early Christians were persecuted under **eleven Roman emperors** by crucifixion, execution, and exposure to wild animals in Rome's Coliseum. Emperor Nero started the first after a devastating fire in Rome: historian Suetonius said Christians were "covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn by dogs; were crucified and set on fire, that they might serve for lights in the night-time… Sometimes they were covered with wax or other combustible materials after which a sharp stake was put under their chins, to make them stand upright, and they were burnt alive, to give light to the spectators (at the games in the Circus)."

One estimate puts the number of Christians killed during **the persecutions** at 3,000, but this has been highly contested and is most likely unknown.

This symbol glowed and shimmered in the noon-day sun –

Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in its waning days under Emperor Constantine. The story of Constantine's conversion has many versions. According to Catholic historian **Thomas Bokenkotter**:

"When Constantine finally emerged victorious in 312 CE he attributed his victory to the help of the Christian God. According to the Christian writer Lactantius (died 320 CE) on the eve of Constantine's fateful battle with Maxentius, Constantine had a vision of Christ, who told him to ornament the shields of his soldiers with the Savoir's monogram — the Greek letters chi and rho. Constantine obeyed and in the ensuing battle was victorious as promised. Writing somewhat later, Eusebius, in his *Life of Constantine*, gave a more sensational account: Constantine and his whole army saw a luminous cross appear in the afternoon sky with the message, 'In this conquer.'"

They're massacring the villagers and burning the towns … driven to mass killing of their children and themselves —

During the Crusades of the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, European armies were summoned by the Roman Catholic popes to conquer Jerusalem from the Moslems, and as they marched, bands of soldiers joined with mobs to massacre the Jewish inhabitants of towns throughout France and Germany if they did not convert to Christianity. **Rabbi Dan Sherbok Cohn** reports what an eleventh-century observer wrote: "An enormous host coming from all regions and all nations, went in arms unto Jerusalem and obliged the Jews to be baptized, massacring by the thousands those who refused. Near Mainz, 1,014 Jews, men, women and children, were slaughtered, and the greatest part of the city burned" (*The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism*, page 41*).*

In many cases, mob violence took over in spite of the efforts of local bishops and archbishops to protect their local Jewish populations. **Historians Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx** describe: "The bishops John at Spires, Adalbert at Worms, Ruthard at Mayence, in response to the solicitations of such Jewish leaders as Moses son of Jekuthiel and Calonymus son of Meshullam, did what was in their power to safeguard Jewish lives and property.… The mob overpowered the Jews themselves, though some of them offered armed resistance, and intimidated their protectors."

In Spires, the local bishop took "quick and effective action" to seize and punish the guilty and so frightened the mob away. But in Worms, the mob surrounded the bishop's palace, where Jews had taken refuge. "After a heavy combat, they penetrated within and slew all; many Jews had slain their children and then themselves."

The archbishop and 300 armed men tried but were unable to protect another group of Jews. "However, the villagers and the rabble which soon followed could not be fought off. The Jews then proceeded to lay hands on themselves; Calonymus slew his own son Joseph" (pages 360-362).

hundreds of thousands of people speaking a mixture of languages –

Marx and Margolis recount the expulsions of Jews from Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. England expelled its Jewish citizens in 1290, France in 1306, Austria in 1420; Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1496.

threw them in cages or tied them to stakes and burned them alive –

Historian Cecil Roth cites a wide range of estimates of those killed during the Roman Catholic Church's Inquisition from the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries in Spain and Portugal and their colonies. One high, but most likely exaggerated, estimate is a total of 341,000 victims, which includes 32,000 burned and about 300,000 forced to confess and repent. He sides with a much smaller estimate of 30,000 victims, including 2,000 burned in auto-da-fé. When he wrote his book in 1932, he noted: "Since history began, perhaps in no spot on the earth's surface has so systematic and so protracted a persecution ever been perpetrated for innocent a cause" (*A History of the Marranos,* page 145).

wildfires had broken out in the fields –

Saul Friedlander is a Jewish historian whose parents were murdered in the Holocaust in spite of several attempts to escape. Friedlander himself survived by hiding in France and adopting a Catholic name and identity, which he shed after the war. He **describes** the anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 1940s as the consequence of the late phase in what he calls "the crisis of liberalism in Continental Europe":

"This crisis of liberalism and the reaction against communism as ideological sources of anti-Semitism, pushed to their extreme on the German scene, became increasingly virulent throughout Europe, the Nazi message thus garnering a positive response from many Europeans and a considerable phalanx of supporters beyond the shores of the old Continent….

"Moreover, anti-liberalism and anti-communism corresponded to the stances adopted by the major Christian churches, and traditional Christian anti-Semitism easily merged with and bolstered the ideological tenets of various authoritarian regimes, of fascist movements and partly of some aspects of Nazism. Finally, this very crisis of liberal society and its ideological underpinnings left the Jews increasingly weak and isolated throughout a continent where the progress of liberalism had allowed and fostered their emancipation and social mobility.

"This anti-Jewish frenzy at the top of the Nazi system was not hurled into a void. From the fall of 1942, Hitler often designated the Jew as the '**world arsonist**.'"

In fact, the flames that the Nazi leader set alight and fanned burned as widely and as intensely as they did only because, throughout Europe and beyond, for the reasons previously mentioned, a dense underbrush of ideological and cultural elements was ready to catch fire. Without the arsonist the fire would not have started; without the underbrush it would not have spread as far as it did and destroyed an entire world."

grown into the millions –

The Nazi genocide against the Jews destroyed the 1,000-year culture of Eastern European Jewry in three years. It murdered an estimated 6 million people, a third of all Jews worldwide, including most of the oldest Jewish communities throughout Europe.

they were twenty to a room –

During the war, the Nazis created ghettos for Jews in most of the major cities throughout Poland after their invasion. These were at the last stage of persecution before extermination in the death camps. Friedlander reports that in 1940, the Nazi armies herded 400,000 Jews into the Warsaw ghetto and sealed it against exit:

"In March, 1941, the population density of the Warsaw ghetto reached 1,309 persons per hundred square meters, with an average of 7.2 persons sharing one room, compared to 3.2 persons sharing one room in the "Aryan" sections of the city. These were average figures, for as many as 25 or even 30 people sometimes shared one room 6 by 4 meters. By all accounts the Warsaw ghetto was a **deathtrap** in the most concrete, physical sense. But cutting Warsaw off from the world also meant destroying the cultural and spiritual center of Polish Jewry and of Jewish life well beyond."

the smell of burning flesh and bodies putrefying in lime –

The inhumanity of the Holocaust is beyond description. Death came from firing squads, gas chambers, open pits, starvation, overwork, untreated disease and overcrowded transportation.

In one case, 1,450 people had died during their transit among 6,700 brought in forty-five train cars to the Belzec death camp, according to **a report after the war by SS officer Kurt Gerstein**.

Some transport cars had a three-inch layer of caustic **quicklime on the floor** to prevent contamination, according to a **Catholic member of the Polish underground** who infiltrated Belzec at the request of the Warsaw Judenrat. The passengers were "literally burned to death, the flesh eaten away from the bones."

Some of the stories in Friedlander's *The Years of Extermination* are more like descriptions of hell:

"Near Kiev in 1941, German soldiers shot 800 to 900 local Jewish parents. Their children were abandoned without food or water in a building on the outskirts of town…. Soon the screams of these ninety children became so unbearable that the soldiers called in two field chaplains, a Protestant and a Catholic to take some 'remedial action.' The chaplains found the children half naked, covered with flies and lying in their own excrement. Some of the older ones were eating mortar off the wall; the infants were mostly **comatose**…. On August 22 [three days later] the children were executed. The (German Army) Wehrmacht had already dug a grave. The children were brought along in a tractor… lined up along the top of the grave and shot so that they fell into it… The wailing was indescribable."

confess with your lips and believe in your heart

This is a familiar refrain from some fundamentalist Christians and missionaries who are seeking converts.

Romans 10:8-11: "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart [that is, the word of faith which we preach]; because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.'"

But no one listened –

The Holocaust destroyed Jewish populations of Europe, but it also damaged the moral credibility of Christianity itself. After the Holocaust, no Christian can honestly re-adopt the naïve triumphalism of Christianity that motivated the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the pogroms and anti-Jewish marginalization. The Holocaust revealed the emptiness of the Christianity professed by its adherents in Europe.

Many in the pews feel the crack in this foundation of Christianity to this day; and many theologians are struggling with it. Fr. Edward Flannery, a Catholic priest and author of ***The Anguish of the Jews***, has **interpreted** anti-Semitism as anti-Christianity: "The anti-Semite, not the Jew, is the real Christ-killer. He thinks he's religious, but that's a self-delusion. Actually he finds religion so heavy a burden, he develops 'Christophobia.' He's hostile to the faith and has an unconscious hatred of Christ, who is for him, Christ the Repressor. He uses anti-Semitism as a safety valve for this hostility and is really trying to strike out at Christ."

We must ask: Do baptism and Eucharist really transform people as advertized? Does faithful Church participation work? Or is something much more radical and challenging really required of anyone claiming to "take up their cross" and follow Christ? If so, has the Church shirked its responsibility to make this clear to those who fill up the pews?

What are you talking about? –

Just after the crucifixion and the scattering of the disciples, two were on a road to an outlying town. Jesus, at first unrecognizable, walked up and acted as if he knew nothing about what had happened to him:

Luke 24:13-19: That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' And he said to them, 'What things?'"

merciful and gracious God —

These are the first two of the thirteen attributes of God's compassion that are basic to Jewish faith and frequently sung in services as "***Adonai, Adonai, El Rachum***."

The **Jewish Encyclopedia** cites the following verses as their source:

Exodus 34:6-8: **"**The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.' And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped."

We expected he would free us from our oppressors –

Luke 24:19-21: "And [On road to Emmaus] he said to them, 'What things?' And they said to him, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.'"

Acts 1:6-7: **"**So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.'"

The blood of the innocents is crying out –

Genesis 4:10-13 "And the LORD said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till

the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.' Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.'"

"May His great name be magnified … in the world He created by His will …" –

These words begin Mourner's Kaddish, recited at Jewish Shabbat services for those mourning the dead: The English words in the story translate the Aramaic original: *"Yit'gdal v'yit'kadash sh'mei rabbah, … b'al'ma di v'ra khir'utei."*

tortured to death and still praised God –

The Babylonian **Talmud** tells the story that when Rabbi Akiva was taken out for execution, it was the hour for him to recite the Shema, the most basic Jewish prayer. While the Romans combed his flesh with iron combs as punishment for joining the Bar Kochba rebellion, he was "accepting upon himself the kingship of Heaven."

His disciples marveled at his tenacity even at the point of death. He replied that he had always wondered how he would completely fulfill the command of the Shema from Deut. 6:4-5: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

"All my days, I have been troubled by this verse — "with all thy soul, (which I interpret) even if He takes thy soul.' I said, "When will I have the opportunity of fulfilling this?" Now that I have the opportunity, shall I not fulfill it?" He prolonged the word "אחד" – (the Hebrew word for "one" at the beginning of the Shema) — until he expired saying it…"

The Talmud says that the angels proclaimed: "Happy thou art, R. Akiva, that thou art destined for the life of the world to come" (Berachoth 61b).

would that not have been enough? —

This comes from the refrain, ***Dayenu***! – Hebrew for "It would have been enough for us" — sung during prayers at Pesach, the Jewish Passover. The lines praise God's action during the Exodus and liberation from the Pharoah:

"If he had brought us out of Egypt and had not carried out judgments against them — Dayenu!"
"If he had carried out judgments against them and not against their idols — Dayenu!"

denied him three times –

Jesus' disciple Peter had bragged just the day before that he would defend Jesus to the death, but Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. Jesus knew that Peter's egocentricity would lead him to save his own skin in the final hours.

Matthew 26:73 – 75: "After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know the man.' And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

the evil inclination of our hearts –

In Jewish ethical thought, the ***yetzer hara***, (Hebrew for "the evil inclination," or "evil purpose in the heart") refers to the human tendency to put self first, do evil and violate the will of God. The term is drawn from the phrase "the imagination of the heart of man [is] evil" (Hebrew: יֵצֶר לֵב הָאָדָם רַע,*yetzer lev-ha-adam ra*), in both Genesis 6:5 and 8:21. The ***yetzer hatov***, the heart's good inclination, counters the evil, if people develop it.

emperors and bishops to try to control … a monk to leave his monastery and risk his life –

During the Second Crusade, a **French monk Radulph** left his monastery without permission to preach in Germany that Jews were enemies of God and should be persecuted.

"Many Jews fell before the aroused mobs which rushed upon them crying, 'Hep, Hep.' Neither Emperor Conrad nor the bishops could stop them…. St. Bernard, at the risk of his life, went to confront Radulph and prevailed upon him to return to his monastery."

restrained the king from issuing his decree —

Flannery tells the story of King Ferdinand's **last-minute hesitation** about expelling the Jews of Spain:

"On January 4, 1492, while still in Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella issued the fatal decree. All Jews must leave the realm by June 30 under the penalty of death, since in the words of the decree, 'Jews seduce the new Christians, and the expulsion is the 'the only efficacious means of putting an end to these evils.' Stunned by the edit, powerful Jews, led by Abraham Senior, chief Rabbi and tax

collector, offered an enormous sum of money to the king, who was known for his avariciousness. The story is told that at the critical moment, as Ferdinand reconsidered his decision, Torquemada rushed onto the scene, holding a crucifix aloft, and cried: “Judas Iscariot sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver; will Your Highness sell him for 300,000 ducats? Here He is, take Him and sell Him” upon which the king held fast to his decree. Many, including Senior himself, were converted, but the majority, brokenhearted, left within the appointed time.”

a young social worker risk her life to save 2,500 children –

Irena Sendler was a Polish Catholic social worker who served in the Polish Underground and the Zegota resistance organization in German-occupied Warsaw during World War II. Assisted by other Żegota members, Sendler saved 2,500 Jewish children by smuggling them out of the Warsaw Ghetto, providing them with false documents, and sheltering them in individual and group children’s homes operated by nuns and the religious Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary order.

In 1943, **Sendler was arrested** by the Gestapo, severely tortured, saved from execution by bribes and left unconscious in the woods with broken arms and legs. She recovered and lived through persecution from the Polish Communist government. Her heroism **was discovered** late in her life, and she died at the age of ninety-seven in Warsaw in 2008.

turn the other cheek —

One of Jesus’ most famous sayings after the Beatitudes in what is called the “spiritual Torah” of Christiantity in Matthew 5-7:

Matthew 5:38-41: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

claimed the right to slap us —

Flannery **describes** “this atrocious custom”:

“A custom grew up in these years (around 1000 CE) whereby on each Good Friday, in retribution for the crucifixion of Jesus, a Jew received a blow in the face. The custom lasted for 300 years…. Probably in this era also began the practice of making special mallets for a Holy Week ritual to symbolize the killing of Jews. Traces of this practice seem to have come down to the present.”

mighty hand and outstretched arm —

Deuteronomy 5:15: **“**You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

the sight of the apple appealed to the eyes of Eve –

Genesis 3:1-7: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, “You shall not eat of any tree of the garden”?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.”

enough to feed thousands of people —

Matthew 14:14-21: “As he went ashore he saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ Jesus said, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They said to him, ‘We have only five loaves here and two fish. ‘And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.”

His blood be on us and on our children —

This quotation comes from the mob's call for Jesus's death in Jerusalem and has echoed on the lips of anti-Semites for centuries:

Matthew 27:22-26: "Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Let him be crucified.' And he said, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified.' So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' And all the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified."

the blood of reconciliation, not vengeance —

In *Jesus of Nazareth – Part II,* his most recent book on Jesus, Pope Benedict XVI has **affirmed and expanded** on the message of *Nostra Aetate*:

"The Christian will remember that Jesus' blood speaks a different language from the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24): it does not cry out for vengeance and punishment; it brings reconciliation. It is not poured out *against* anyone; it is poured out *for* the many, for all…. Read in the light of faith, it means that we all stand in need of the purifying power of love which is his blood. These words are not a curse, but rather redemption, salvation." A **reviewer** for the *National Catholic Reporter* remarked on Benedict's explicit re-interpretation: "Benedict argues, in **excerpts of his forthcoming book**, *Jesus of Nazareth — Part II*, not only that the charge of deicide was always misplaced, but that such misplacement cast centuries of Christians in the role the centurions played at the Crucifixion, seeking a scapegoat to avoid looking to their own guilt."

carved the crossbars of that hated instrument of death on our foreheads –

Yiddish novelist Lamed Shapiro **captures the grotesque cruelty** of the pogroms in his stories compiled in *Pogrom Tales* that was published in 1909. The story tells how anti-Semites burst into a family's house, raped and murdered the mother and carved a cross on her son's forehead:

"Enough. Let her kick the bucket little by little right before his eyes. And I'm gonna cross him up, to save his kike soul from hell. I felt two deep cuts on my forehead, one across the other, and heard laughter again. A small warm stream ran down my forehead, over my mouth and nose, and into my mouth. I lost consciousness for a second time."

This is a particularly heinous torture because the observant Jew prays with a miniature Torah scroll in a black box laced onto his forehead between his eyes as the fulfillment of the command from Deut. 11:18: "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

a small still voice –

1 Kings 19:9-12: "And there he came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He said, 'I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.' And he said, 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

the presence of my spiritual and physical ancestors —

In the 1990s, Rabbi A. James Rudin was invited to speak at a Good Friday service. Here are some excerpts of his remarks:

"This is a unique moment, a historic moment, a moment to remember. For one of the first times in history, perhaps the first time, a rabbi has been asked to speak during a Good Friday service…." For Christians, Good Friday in its compelling power forms a mystical bridge between earth and heaven, between life and death, between past and future … but there is another far different side to Good Friday … if I omitted this other side of Good Friday, I would be unfaithful to my calling as a rabbi, as a Jewish teacher. I tell this other story of Good Friday because I have learned from many Christians that Good Friday is a day to face truth as on no other day of the year.…

"Today, I feel the thirty-five centuries, the 3,500 years of Jewish history, present in this sanctuary. I acutely feel the presence of my spiritual and physical ancestors at this moment. Their faces are pressed against the windows of this church. Their voices of earnest prayer resonate within me. Their songs of longing for God echo in my head. I am comforted by this link with those Jews who have lived before me. They are with me today as I with them.

“Their presence within my heart and head demand that I speak now of other Good Fridays, in other times and in other places. For this day, these very hours, was a time of terrible dread for many Jews, for my own grandparents who left their ancient homes in eastern Europe to escape persecution and who came as youngsters to this land, to Pennsylvania, a place founded by William Penn, a peaceful nonviolent man, a Quaker.

“Their poignant painful personal stories of past Good Fridays are permanent parts of my own memory bank, stories that have a tragic predictability. As a child, my grandparents told me how Christians in their native villages would each year rush from their churches at the conclusion of Good Friday services in countless towns, cities and villages in Europe … rushing as an angry mob intent to do harm, to rape and to murder their Jewish neighbors. Somehow Good Friday provided an annual religious mandate for open hunting season on Jews.

‘Christ killers!’ they called out. ‘Yids! Kikes! You have killed our Lord and you must die!’ these mobs would shout in a variety of languages, but whatever language the murderous Good Friday mobs used, their intent was always lethal.”

(Excerpts from “A Rabbi Speaks at Good Friday Services.” Reprinted in *Journal for Preachers*, Lent 1995. Delivered by Rabbi A. James Rudin, interreligious advisor for the American Jewish Committee.)

When you did have such power, how did you behave? –

During the first centuries of the bitter Christian-Jewish division, violence became brutal and frequent on both sides. Major outbreaks of anti-Christian violence from Jews came during the Bar Kochba revolt in Palestine between 132-35 CE, in Alexandria around 400 CE and later around 600 CE during the Persian invasion of Jerusalem. According to Edward Flannery’s *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*:

“Sufficient incidents of Jewish violence against Christians are recorded to show that Jewish hatred was widespread, and while sporadic, often intense…. During his revolt (132-35) **Bar Kochba massacred Christians** who refused to deny Christ.… In Smyrna a century later, St. Pionius, burned under [Roman Emperor] Decius, addressed the Jews who derided him before his death: ‘I say this to you Jews … that if we are enemies, we are also human beings. Have any of you been injured by us? Have we caused you to be tortured? When have we unjustly persecuted? When have we harmed in speech? When have we cruelly dragged to torture?’

“Exasperated by the new disabilities (under Roman emperor Justinian) Jews and Samaritans (the latter being more severely treated) made common cause, **massacred Christians** at Caesarea in 556 and destroyed their churches, but were, in turn, cruelly punished by Justinian’s legate. A half century later under (Roman emperor) Phocas (602-10), the Jews of Antioch killed many Christians, burned their bodies and dragged the Patriarch Anastatius (died 598) through the streets before killing him. Some observers exonerate the Jews of the murder of the Patriarch, but all concede their active participation.

“More serious was Jewish complicity in the Persian invasions of Koshru II (590- 628)…. Smarting under the oppressions of Justinian’s Code and hoping to retain control of the Holy City, Jews organized in Palestine under Benjamin of Tiberias to join the Persian invader. They helped him lay waste to Christian homes and churches and assisted at the fall of Jerusalem (614). Thirty thousand Christians are said to have perished.”

Mon semblable –

“Our sins are obstinate; our repentance is faint.

We exact a high price for our confessions,

And we gaily return to the miry path,

Believing base tears wash away all our stains.

On the pillow of evil, Satan Trismegist,

Incessantly lulls our enchanted minds,

And the noble metal of our will

Is wholly vaporized by this wise alchemist.

… You know him reader, that refined monster –

Hypocrite reader, — my double (mon semblable) — my brother!”

(Charles Baudelaire, excerpts from “To the reader” in ***The Flowers of Evil***.)

There is no simple explanation for the horror –

These are among the most familiar passages of the well-known ***Pirke Avot***, an ethical mishnah in the Talmud:

"R. Yanni said, 'It is not in our power to explain either the prosperity of the wicked or the afflictions of the righteous' " (Avot, 4.19).

Do not lose faith in Divine retribution –

"Nittai the Arbelite said, keep thee far from a bad neighbor; associate not with the wicked and abandon not the belief in retribution." Rabbi Joseph Hertz commented: "The doctrine of divine retribution follows inevitably from the attribute of divine justice" (Avot, 1.7).day

this world is only a corridor into thead world to come —

"R. Jacob said, 'This world is like an ante-chamber to the world to come; prepare thyself in the ante-chamber that thou mayest enter into the hall'" (Avot, 4.21).

Yemach shemo vezichro –

These are the Hebrew words in the acronoym Yeshu, the name used to refer to Jesus and other Jewish heretics. It means:"May his name be obliterated and forgotten"

If I am right, the streams in the fields –

A story from the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Bava Metzia* 59a-59b):

It was taught there: "If you cut it [an earthenware oven] into sections and place sand between the sections, Rabbi Eliezer says it is pure, and the sages say it is impure. And this is the oven of Akhinai." What is "Akhinai"? R. Yehuda said in the name of Shemuel: "They surrounded him with words like an *akhna* (a snake) and made it impure." It was taught: "On that day, R. Eliezer responded to them with all the arguments in the world and they did not accept them from him."

He said to them: "If I am right, this carob tree will prove it." The carob tree was uprooted from its place and moved one hundred cubits; some say, four hundred cubits.

They said to him: "We do not bring proofs from carob trees."

He said to them: "If I am right, this stream of water will prove it." The stream started to flow backwards.

They said to him: "We do not bring proof from streams."

He said to them: "If I am right, the walls of the study hall will prove it." The walls of the study hall inclined to fall.

R. Yehoshua rebuked them [the walls]. He said to them: "If talmudic scholars contest one another in matters of Halakha, why does this concern you?" They did not fall, out of respect for R. Yehoshua, but they did not straighten, out of respect for R. Eliezer, and they are still inclined there.

He said to them: "If the halakha is as I say, let it be proved from the heavens." A heavenly voice came forth and proclaimed: "Why are you contesting R. Eliezer, when Halakha follows him in every area?"

R. Yehoshua arose and said: "'It is not in heaven' (*Devarim* 30: 12). What does this mean?" R. Yirmiyah said: "The Torah has already been give at Sinai. We pay no heed to heavenly voices, since it has already been written in the Torah at Sinai, 'follow the majority'" (*Shemot* 23: 2).

R. Natan came upon Eliyahu. He said to him: "What is the Holy One, Blessed be He, doing at this time?"

Eliyahu said to him: "He is laughing and saying, 'My children have defeated me; My children have defeated me.'"

turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh —

Ezekiel 36:26-27: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances."

every sound tree bears good fruit … Such trees will be cut down –

Jesus tells his disciples to look beyond appearances and know people by their actions, not by their words.atthew 7:16-20: You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad

tree bears evil fruit. a sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

Many will cry out his name, saying, “He is Lord! He is Lord!” … “depart from me, you evildoers.”

Jesus predicts he will have many false followers who will disguise their evil deeds in a superficial Christian appearances.

Matthew 7:21-24: “‘Not every one who says to me, ’Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’”

I was naked and you did not clothe me …

Matthew 25:31-46: “When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ [44] Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

James 1:22-24: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”

“If you love me, keep my commandments!”

John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:21: **“**He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

“Sh’ma Yis’ra’eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad …V’ahav’tah eit Adonai Eloheha b’khol l’vav’khah uv’khol naf’sh’khah uv’khol m’odekhah.”

These are the first two lines of Shema, the most sacred Jewish prayer, from Deut. 6:4-5: “Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

It is exactly as he has said — and also to love your neighbor as yourself.

Mark 12:28-34: “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; [30] and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.’ And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’”

So it is for us also.

Leviticus 19:18**: “**You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” Rabbi Joseph Hertz offered a comment on this Leviticus passage: “The world at large is

unaware of the fact that the sublime maxim of morality, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. 19: 18)' was first taught by Judaism…. And the command of Leviticus 19:18 applies to classes and nations as well as to individuals. Of Rabbinic opinion in all times, the following saying of Judah the Prince is typical: 'On the Judgment Day, the Holy One, blessed be He, will call the nations to account for every violation of the command 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' of which they have been in guilty in their dealings with one another.' … One need not be a Hebrew scholar to convinced oneself of the fact that *rea* (Hebrew for neighbor) means neighbor of whatever race of creed."

Stay with us —

At the end of their journey on the road to Emmaus, Jesus prepared to leave the two disciples:

Luke 24:28-32: "He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?'"

an infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing —

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

(T. S. Eliot, the ***Preludes***)

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

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Circumcision: Identity, Gender, and Power

by Miriam Pollack

June 27, 2011

"Isaac's Circumcision," as depicted in the Regensburg Pentateuch, Germany, c. 1300. Credit: Creative Commons/BecomingJewish.org.

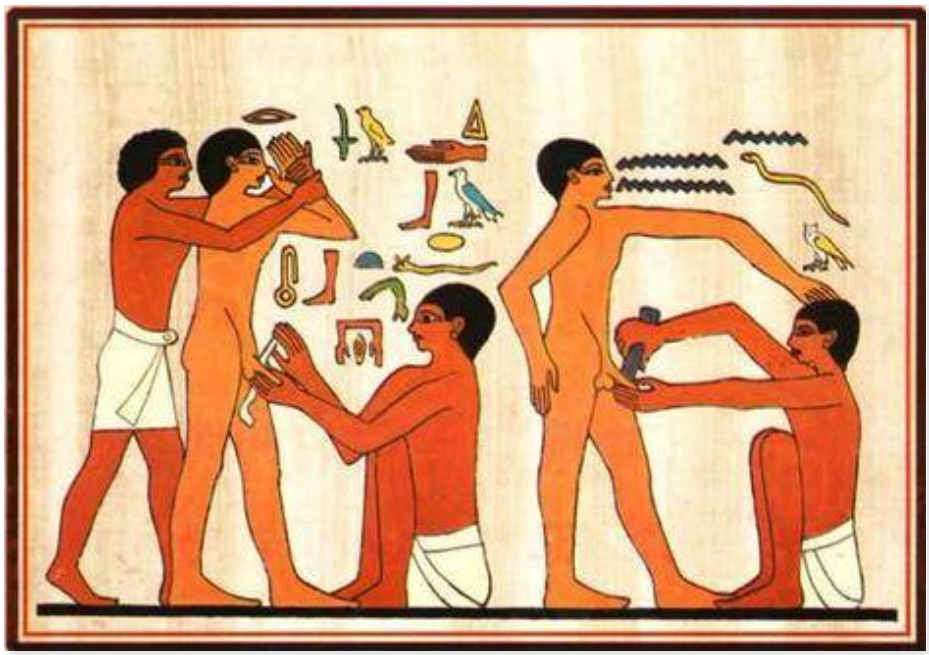
Circumcision is seen as the central *mitzvah* (or commandment) of Judaism. Even for nonreligious Jews, circumcision continues to be perceived as the *sine qua non* of Jewish identity. And yet, unlike any other controversial topic that we Jews address, the subject of circumcision is not to be challenged. We can calmly discuss whether there is a G-d or no G-d, if G-d is masculine, feminine, or neuter, or whether homosexuals should become rabbis. Yet, questioning circumcision has been out of bounds. This taboo, in and of itself, is indicative of how strong the feelings are that surround this ancient rite, and how much lies below the surface, in the dark silence, where powerful forces have coalesced for thousands of years.

In order to attempt to understand the role of circumcision in Judaism, we need to explore not simply the biblical injunction found in Genesis 17:10-12. We are also obliged to focus on the functions that male genital cutting serves — socially, politically, psychologically, and individually — in order to see what and whose invisible needs are being fulfilled. Some of this information comes to us from scholarship; some can only be derived by examining the more subtle ramifications that result from the permanent alteration of male sexual organs.

Circumcision is hardly unique to Judaism. However, two elements distinguish the Jewish version of male genital cutting. First, in Judaism circumcision is expressed as the divine mandate, which seals and perpetuates the covenant, G-d's contractual and eternal relationship, with the Jewish people. Second, it is commanded to occur on the eighth day of the baby boy's life. Other than these unique identifiers, circumcision in Judaism shares much with rites of circumcision in other societies.

What I intend to do here is to show that cutting out a portion of a child's genitalia is fundamentally about gender and power. This is true whether the mandate is divine, tribal, secular, or pseudo-medical, and it pertains to little girls as well as little boys.

For those of us who have grown up with the normalcy of newborn male circumcision, this may seem like a bold, perhaps even outrageous statement. As Karen Ericksen Paige and Jeffrey M. Paige state in their book, *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual*, of the many theories advanced that attempt to explain the function of reproductive ritual, all agree that "the purposes of ritual are seldom if ever the object of conscious knowledge."



In ancient Egypt, circumcision was depicted as a rite of passage to adulthood. This drawing of a tomb painting from Ankhmahor in Saqqarah, Egypt, is the oldest known illustration of circumcision. Judaism took this painful rite of passage and placed it on the eighth day of the child's life to reduce the pain it involved. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

In each and every circumcising society, circumcision fulfills multiple unspoken social, political-tribal, and sexual needs. Paige and Paige claim that male circumcision originally functioned as a vehicle for attempting to achieve by means of ritual what could not be accomplished by means of political arrangement: that is, the defusing of possible competitive claims by male progeny for the same limited resources. In pre-industrial societies, where clan and tribal loyalties formed the basis of economic and military security, the father's willingness to expose, sacrifice, and risk the tender organ of his son's procreative potential and the promise of his own male progeny to the knife was a dramatic demonstration to the elders (read that as male elders) of the father's allegiance to his tribe, a point noted by Leonard B. Glick in *Marked In Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America*. For this reason, circumcision is rarely a private surgical event. Rather, it is most commonly a communal ceremony accompanied by feast and celebration. Circumcision is, typically, a public declaration of alignment and thus not simply a social event, but a political statement as well. Without a whisper of the true hierarchical intentions of this ceremony, the outcome was always, and continues to be, a reassertion and institutionalization of a power structure based on gender.

The timing of male circumcision furthers the political/social relationships in less obvious ways. Even though the age for circumcision ranges widely across all circumcising societies, what is most universally

constant is the requirement that circumcision occur *before* marriage. This rule not only establishes the father's status in the male-dominant community, but it also works to achieve another salient objective: marriageable girls are entrained to view any uncircumcised man as undesirable, thereby ensuring the ethnic stability of the tribe. Girls know from an early age that they would risk social ostracism by mating with an uncircumcised male. By enculturating all group members to the necessity, normalcy, and moral superiority of circumcision, circumcising children not only reaffirms the political and social structure of the tribe, but also deepens the identity formation of the group. In this way, circumcision functions as a primary and potent entrainment for group bonding.

At a more muted level, circumcision does more than restructure identity based on contemporary and historical alliances of gender and power. On a meta-historical and biological level, circumcision acts to rename, remap, and invert our fundamental and primal relationship to the feminine. It is not coincidental that this ritual of tribal belonging necessitates the cutting, blood-letting, and altering — in a public ceremony — of the male child's sexual organ. As Glick points out, "Female blood contaminates, male blood sanctifies." Thus, he explains, "the shedding of male blood is an act of consecration." By creating historical and social linkage through this sacrificial ritual, circumcision functions to supersede and transcend our most primary maternal and biological system of relationship making patrilineal and patriarchal hierarchy appear "natural and inevitable," as Nancy Jay notes in her brilliant book, *Throughout Your Generations Forever*. Karen E. Fields, in the foreword to this same book, comments as follows:

> In no other major religious institution is gender dichotomy more consistently important, across unrelated traditions, than it is in sacrifice. This is true not only of ancient and so-called primitive religions. Even among contemporary Christians, the more vividly the Eucharist is understood to be itself a real sacrifice, the greater the opposition to ordaining women. … Consequently, a study of sacrifices focusing on gender leads to a new understanding: sacrifice as remedy for having been born of woman.

Similarly, in both the Hebrew Scriptures (Samuel 1:1) and the New Testament (Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38), by citing and repeating the lineage of male progenitors, legitimacy is established. The names of the mothers are usually unmentioned, irrelevant in a male-dominant culture.

Circumcision subverts the community's relationship to the life-giving principle of the feminine, not only by obliterating the woman's rightful identity in structuring the historical social network of her tribe, but also by trivializing and implicitly forbidding her to acknowledge, much less act upon, her deepest mammalian instincts to protect her newly birthed child. She knows, long before she has even conceived, that in order for her male child to be bonded to the male community — past, present and future — and to a male-imaged god, she must surrender him to the men with a knife to cut, wound and cause great pain to the very vulnerable sexual organ of this newly birthed child. Typically, a mother's feelings are dismissed or ridiculed. Her voice is silenced, even to herself.

Can it be a coincidence that we have language for the primary disempowerment for men, but not for women? When men are wounded in their primal potency of manhood, we say they have been "emasculated." When women are wounded in their primary potency of womanhood, we rarely notice. We have no language, no conceptual structure, no word to claim, much less attempt to heal the experience of core female disempowerment.

The wounding of circumcision irreversibly alters both mother and child: the mother is fractured at the base of her deepest womb-wisdom, which knows that she must protect her child no matter what; and the baby, shocked and traumatized, is fractured in his ability to absolutely trust the protective arms of the mother he has biologically and innately turned to as his primordial source of safety. From the beginning, masculinity is now defined as that which must be cut off from the mother and all that is female, nurturing,

and essential for human survival. In this way women are made complicit in this masculine-defined model of motherhood. Nancy Jay states, “Gender is therefore unequaled as a cornerstone of domination.” Circumcision is the weapon that not only destroys a boy’s foreskin but also deftly excises maternal authority over the ultimate well-being of her child. For if a woman is forbidden to feel entitled to her instinctive need to protect her newborn child, what feelings of her own can she ever trust?

In all circumcising societies, the sacrifice endured by the child is considered incidental to the social, political, and/or religious forces that require it. Typically, the extremity of the baby’s pain is denied, ignored, or made the object of countless jokes. Because we Jews circumcise at eight days of age, when a child is easily overpowered and will not consciously recall this event, we deem those who circumcise children at later ages barbaric.

Many Jewish families continue to view their observation of the Torah’s circumcision command as a joyous occasion. Credit: Creative Commons/spilltojill.

Many of us Jews are capable of witnessing a *bris*, that is, a ritual circumcision, looking into the eyes of the shocked, terrified, and shrieking baby, his head flailing and chin quivering, as his foreskin is severed from the delicate surface of the glans, cut, and crushed, and many of us conclude that this is no different from a routine infant protest of having a wet diaper changed.

We ignore or choose to be ignorant not only of what our hearts and wombs are telling us, but of the abundance of scientific data, replicated numerous times in the past several decades, that leave little question about the reality of the baby’s experience. Heart and respiratory rates, as well as cortisol levels of babies undergoing circumcision point to the unambiguous conclusion that circumcision is excruciatingly painful to any baby. And, as is the case in other severe trauma at the neonatal level of development, the implications of lasting sequelae in the nervous system are serious (for the data behind this, check out *Male and Female Circumcision: Medical, Legal and Ethical Considerations in Pediatric Practice*). Science has not yet turned its attention to identifying what these sequelae may be. Nevertheless, a modicum of psychological awareness is sufficient to suggest that issues of trust, fear, intimacy, sexuality, and gender relationships would be reasonable places for scholarly investigation. While traumatizing an infant is neither the stated nor the conscious intention of circumcision, it is an inevitable corollary of cutting a child’s genital organs with possibly unspecified but hardly neutral alterations in the nervous system.

Although the fact is vigorously denied by the proponents of circumcision, the forcible removal of the foreskin also has profound and long-lasting effects for a male's sexual experience. Even during ancient times, when circumcision was less radical than it is today, the unique quality of the foreskin was understood. In biblical Judaism, circumcision consisted of cutting the foreskin that extended beyond the glans, leaving most of it intact. The full reaming and ablating of the entire foreskin, known as *periah*, was only innovated by rabbinic decree during Hellenic times in response to the practice of some Jewish men who were trying to avoid ridicule of their fellow Greek athletes by attempting to tie and stretch their foreskins so as not to look circumcised.

Both the Hellenic Jew Philo, in the first century CE, and Moses Maimonides, also known in the Jewish tradition as the Great Rambam in the twelfth century, wrote of the consequences of violently removing the most sensuous part of a man's sexual organ before he is old enough to understand or consent to this loss. Philo wrote in *Special Laws* that the "excision of pleasure [caused by circumcision] . . . is most necessary to our well-being." Many centuries later C.J. Cold and J.R. Taylor would confirm in the *British Journal of Urology* that the effects of circumcision on sexuality were, indeed, significant, when they discovered that there are over 20,000 specialized fine touch receptive cells in the human foreskin, which function to allow far greater nuanced sensation and control than any other penile tissue.

Additionally, the removal of the foreskin creates a secondary loss of sensitivity: not only has the most erogenous tissue of the male sexual organ been removed, but, as the man ages, the glans loses its mucosal covering, becomes dried out, and keratinizes over time. Typically by middle age the glans of the circumcised penis has lost much of its receptive potential and the man requires more abrasive stimulation to achieve orgasm. Often this is just as a woman is becoming peri-menopausal and experiencing decreasing vaginal lubrication. Typically, the problem is identified as the woman's entry into menopause; the contribution of the circumcised partner is rarely acknowledged. In subtle but profound ways, circumcision functions to diminish a man's pleasure potential, allowing his bond to his partner to be subordinated to his bond to his tribal male peers. Both Philo and Maimonides knew beyond a doubt that, as in all other aspects of biology, altering form alters function. Here is what Maimonides, the great philosopher, physician, and Talmudist, had to say in his famous book, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, written in 1160:

> The fact that circumcision weakens the faculty of sexual excitement and sometimes perhaps diminishes the pleasure is indubitable. For if at birth this member has been made to bleed and has had its covering taken away from it, it must indubitably be weakened. *The Sages, may their memory be blessed,* have explicitly stated: *It is hard for a woman with whom an uncircumcised man has had sexual intercourse to separate from him* (Genesis Rabbah LXXX). In my opinion this is the strongest of reasons for circumcision.

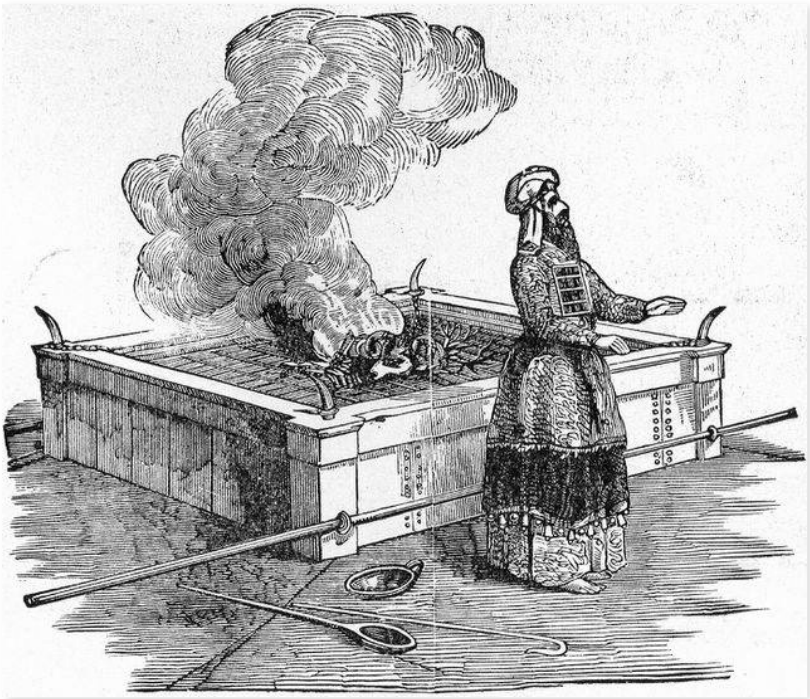
There they are, the twin patriarchal fears: the fear of woman and the fear of pleasure. Circumcision is both the vehicle and the product, the menace and the antidote, which simultaneously assuages and perpetuates these ancient terrors. This is the achievement and true function of circumcision. Circumcision achieves this by violently breaching the maternal-infant bond shortly after birth; by amputating and marking the baby's sexual organ before he knows what he has lost; by disempowering, "taming," the mother at the height of her instinctual need to protect her infant; by bonding the baby to the community of men past, present, and future and to a male-imaged G-d; by restructuring the family and the society in terms of male dominance; and by psycho-sexually wounding the manhood still asleep in the unsuspecting baby boy. In all of these ways — socially, politically, religiously, ethnically, sexually, tribally, and interpersonally — the cutting of our baby boys' sexual organs is the fulcrum around which patriarchy exerts its power. Circumcision is a rite of male domination — domination and the entitlement of domination over other men, women, and children, both institutionally and personally. It is the essence of patriarchy.

Nevertheless, it would be grossly oversimplifying to characterize Judaism as a purely patriarchal religion, nor would it be accurate to view Judaism as the source of patriarchy in Western religions. The emphatic and elaborate emphasis on this life, on the sanctity of all life as a primary organizing value throughout both biblical and talmudic texts is in complete contradiction to the practice of circumcision. Removing functional sexual tissue is harmful: it is harmful to the infant, to the pleasure potential and sexual bonding of the mature man, and to the mother who is entrained to surrender her sacred bond with her infant in order for his masculinity to be redefined in terms of his community.

The rabbis explain that, because women are closer to the divine due to our ability to give birth and sustain life, men are in need of other ways to access spirituality — circumcision being the primary one. However, the notion that trauma can be a bona fide path, much less an ethical avenue, to greater spiritual awareness would be vociferously challenged by contemporary neonatologists as well as epigeneticists. What is unethical cannot be spiritual. The dichotomy and hierarchy assumed and taught for millennia in multiple religions between sexual aliveness and spirituality is false and has led to ages of human suffering. Spiritual sexism is still sexism and needs to be discarded.

I remember when I first learned about the phenomenon of female genital cutting. I was appalled. How could they? How could anyone? It took years before I could hear their voices: “It’s who we are, who we’ve been for thousands of years.” “No one will marry us if we’re not cut.” “Intact genitalia are ugly.” “They are unhygienic.” Then, I realized… we say the same things.

Yes, there are significant differences between female and male cutting, but it is not honest to claim that one is physically and sexually insignificant and the other barbaric; that one is enlightened, the other primitive. Holding a child down and forcibly removing genitalia is sexual abuse. We would not hesitate to use that label for an individual or culture that countenanced sexual fondling of children. Why do we think slicing off genitals is acceptable? Circumcision is not holy, it does not transmit the Jewish spiritual heritage, nor does it secure Jewish continuity.



Could Jewish communities discard circumcision rites, just as they discarded the kind of animal sacrifice pictured above? "The discarding of animal sacrifice ... did not result in an unraveling of Jewish spirituality or continuity," the author argues. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

For religious as well as tribal and secular reasons, many Jews believe that “circumcision ensures our survival.” Without circumcision, we tell each other, the Jewish people will disappear, a very frightening prediction to a people for whom annihilation is a perpetual possibility. Again, the transparent sexism of such a contention is only too apparent. Are males the only ones who count as Jews? Is the contribution of Jewish women irrelevant, invisible, and insignificant? More fundamentally, why is it that Jewish women can carry on our spiritual legacy and remain whole, but Jewish men cannot? How, indeed, did circumcision

further our survival during the desperate epochs of Jewish purges when the enemy had only to pull down pants in order to eliminate Jewish males?

In the United States, where most men over thirty have been circumcised, or in the Middle East, where circumcision is normative for Muslims, are naked Jewish men distinguishable from their non-Jewish counterparts? And if circumcision is the quintessential protector of Jewish identity, why do we have tens of thousands of Jewish men in the United States who have had their genitalia radically and permanently altered but are ignorant of Judaism and completely unaffiliated with Jewish communities? The question of how we are to secure and sustain Jewish survival is extremely serious, but the answer is not circumcision.

An orthodox rabbi interviewed by Eliyahu Unger-Sargon in his brilliant movie *Cut: Slicing through the Myths of Circumcision* stated unequivocally that circumcision was tantamount to sexual abuse. Yet this thoughtful man went on to justify the practice of circumcision for religious reasons, saying that this is where "the rubber hits the road" if you are a Jew. It is a commandment. We have no choice.

Indeed, we do have a choice. What is sacred is our obligation to protect the integrity and privacy of all of our children's genitals. They are not the province of family, community, or anyone else. Spiritualizing the wounding of circumcision does not change the damage, nor make it ethical. As Deuteronomy 30:6 teaches, what is truly required of us in order to contact the divine has to do with the architecture of the heart, not the alteration of male genitals. Creating a joyful and loving Jewish home, and providing our children with meaningful and in-depth Jewish education, are the only authentic means we have to ensure our survival. Cutting our babies' penises will not do it.

Neither in biblical texts nor in the Talmud has *brit milah* been commanded for hygienic reasons. Nevertheless, in the United States routine neonatal circumcision has been normative, in spite of the fundamental standard of all U.S. medical practice that requires that surgeries be used as a last resort, not a preventive strategy, particularly when dealing with healthy tissue on non-consenting minors. For these reasons and more, the medical societies of Holland, Finland, Australia, Canada and the UK have been explicit in stating that routine neonatal circumcision is medically ill advised and not in the child's best interest. Promoting circumcision for presumed health benefits is neither an authentically Jewish position nor medically valid.

Circumcision may be an ancient rite, but it is wrong. Over the ages Judaism has demonstrated a remarkable ability to mutate in practice and retain the integrity of its spiritual legacy. Judaism was not vanquished when the first temple was destroyed, nor when the second temple was razed. The discarding of animal sacrifice as the primary mode of worship did not result in an unraveling of Jewish spirituality or continuity. Legally, Jewish identity is defined both by *halachah* (Jewish law) and by the Israeli Supreme court according to the status of the child's mother: if the mother is Jewish, the child is Jewish. Circumcision does not trump maternal lineage.

Without compromising either our children's identity or the survival of our people, we can invite all of our Jewish children, our baby girls and our baby boys, into a *brit b'lee milah,* a covenant without circumcision, and school them in the wisdom, love, and beauty of the Jewish tradition. Unlike Christianity, which teaches that a child is born into original sin and must be redeemed, Judaism teaches that the soul is pure — only the penis needs "redemption." The truth is that the whole baby is pure, body and soul, *including* his tender genitals, and it is both a *mitzvah* and our most sacred duty to protect him.

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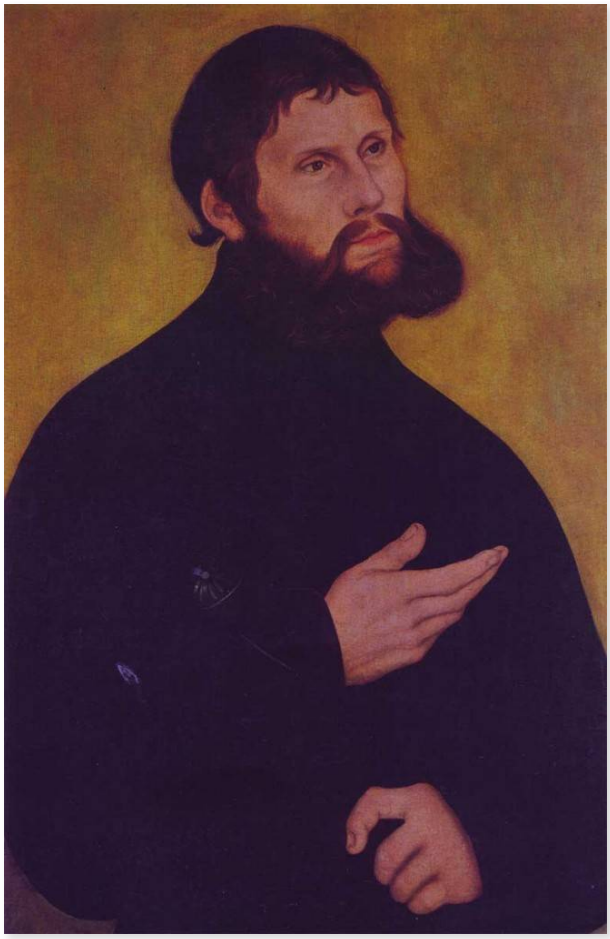
Luther's Call to Resistance: "Not with Violence, but the Word"

by Thomas W. Strieter

June 27, 2011



"Martin Luther als Junker Jörg," painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder in 1522. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

Some remember Martin Luther as an inspiring resistance theologian. Others see him in a negative light due to his indefensible stance against the peasants in their revolt in the 1520s, which he entitled, "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants," and particularly due to the anti-Semitic rantings he published in his declining years. While not seeking to apologize for these unconscionable writings, I am nevertheless interested in discussing some of his insights that may resonate for progressive people of faith.

When I first read Luther's anti-Semitic diatribes in my younger years, I initially wished that he had died before he wrote this stuff. A number of years ago, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America rightly asked Jews for forgiveness for Luther's racist writings.

Sometimes I wonder whether those uncharacteristic diatribes may have been related to the kidney stones that Luther suffered throughout all of his adult life. At one time, he could not urinate for a week, which caused uremic poisoning during the last decade of his life. In these declining years there were times when he produced excessive writings that were paranoid and weird. In his prime, Luther wrote a fine book in defense of Jews, entitled *That Jesus Was Born a Jew*. If that were all he had written on the subject, he could have been remembered as a heroic figure to Jews. I was inspired to write this piece on Luther after reading Ulrich Duchrow's article in the Winter 2011 issue of *Tikkun*, which effectively addresses the imperative that people of faith must confront the destructive effects of global capitalism. Duchrow is one of the European leaders in ecumenical and interfaith action for peace, justice, and the sustaining of creation. He was my doctoral mentor, and I wrote my dissertation based on his research in Luther studies and his perspective of Martin Luther as a resistance theologian.

One of the main criticisms of Luther's followers has been that they have been unwilling to address systemic injustices within society. During Luther's time, because Germany had only a Catholic religious administrative hierarchy, Luther turned to Germany's Lutheran princes to temporarily serve as administrators of Lutheran church affairs. Unfortunately, with Luther's death, this "emergency" arrangement became the permanent order

of things, and the church became a department of the state in which church administration and clergy were beholden to the government for their financial support. The church, therefore, was expected not to make waves for secular rulers. Subsequently, Lutheran theologians adapted Luther's thought and distorted his ideas to conform to this subservient situation.

Lutherans and others within the anti-Semitic Deutsche Christen movement worked to align German Protestantism with Nazi goals. Here, Nazis inaugurate Deutsche Christen leader Ludwig Müller as Reich Bishop in 1934 at the Berliner Dom. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Deutsches Bundesarchiv.

Duchrow in his writings refers to this legacy of quietism and passivity as a "neo-Lutheran heresy" that culminated in German Protestants' acceptance of Adolf Hitler. The Reformed Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, who played a major role within the so-called Confessing Church, attacked this "neo-Lutheran heresy," saying it was the result of what he referred to as "Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms." This heresy interpreted Luther as having had a dualistic notion that the theological realm, or "kingdom," was a personalistic spiritual realm in which "Jesus is king of my heart." Thus, religion had no prophetic role in society.

On the other hand, the secular realm was considered entirely autonomous. (The German word for this sounds even more extreme: *Eigengezetzlichkeit*, "a law unto itself.") In this secular realm, according to this heresy, the Christian serves in unquestioning quietism and obedience. This dualistic understanding was convenient for both Lutheran liberals and conservatives. For liberals, it freed scientific investigation from the church's outmoded worldviews of Biblical interpretation. At the same time, conservatives could justify the church's subservience to the state, which was free to embark on colonialist expansionism (which liberals actually supported too) and to squelch the rebelliousness of the masses with brute force (something liberals did not appreciate). Thus, for instance, Adolf Eichmann, who was in charge of transporting Jews to Hitler's concentration camps and gas chambers, could defend himself on trial by saying, "As a good soldier, I only did what I was told."

Of course, Karl Barth would have been correct to blame Lutherans' passive, and sadly often even active, acceptance of Hitler, on Luther himself, if this were what Luther had taught. Luther was, in fact, a brilliant and creative resistance theologian, whose ethics were echoed in Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism in the mid-twentieth century.

If Luther, in fact, did not promulgate a Christian quietism and passivity in a society that evidences demonic elements, what then is Luther's "doctrine of the two kingdoms," and how does it speak to resistance against political, social, and economic evil in society? Luther spoke of the two kingdoms as the cosmic struggle of the powers of good against the demonic forces of evil. This mythic vocabulary is expressed in apocalyptic literature in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, which describe the world in upheaval during particularly chaotic and trying times and which spoke to Luther's world and to ours today.

God, Luther said, governs creation in this chaotic situation with two “hands,” or governances. The power or governance “on the left hand” is secular authority, whose function is to bring peace and order to society. Its instrument for preserving order is the force of law. Luther never, however, perceived this to be unanswerable to the law of God, which is expressed in principles of justice in society. Luther cautions princely rulers that their governance should be carried out with *Kopfrecht* (the justice or law of reason), not with *Faustrecht* (the justice or law of the fist or brutality). Nevertheless, for the sake of peace and order, this realm has the power of the sword.

The “right hand of God” in the world is the spiritual realm, through which God maintains his church. He empowers the church with his “Word.” The Word is proclamation based on Scripture, but not simply in a biblical-literalist or legalistic way. The Word is a living thing that both accuses and liberates, and which ultimately manifests God’s grace and salvation in Jesus Christ, freeing the believing community to be whole and responsible as children of God.

Luther cautions that people of faith "live the Word ... by serving in a curative and charitable function," the author writes. Here, quilts donated by Lutheran World Relief are distributed to villagers in Niger through a local NGO supporting the disabled. Credit: Creative Commons/4Cheungs.

The function of the faith community in society, Luther cautions, is never to impose its sacred texts or religious convictions by force or coerce by the sword. In society, people of faith “live the Word,” both as individuals and as communities, by serving in a curative and charitable function — “to love one’s neighbor as oneself” and to work for healing and peace. This is its “priestly function.”

The community of faith, says Luther, also has a “prophetic function” in the world. It calls society to operate under the rule of law with justice, fairness, and the well-being of its people. In all this activity, the weapon of the community of faith is *non vi, sed verbo,* “not with violence, but the Word.” Proclaiming the Word is more than simply quoting Scripture. It is with the power of this Word that people of faith become truth-tellers, unveiling injustice and corruption in church and society, and speaking out against persons and systems that destroy human integrity through war and failure to sustain God’s good creation.

Luther often said that we “cannot leave the world to the serpent.” If people of faith do not act for the common good against corrupt and unjust forces, then who will? We serve God by serving our neighbor through our various vocations, or roles, in society. This may mean that for the good of society people of faith may have to fill public roles that may call us to perform tasks that we normally would not do as private citizens. In other words, in society we may not always be able to literally obey the Sermon on the Mount. In a number of his writings, Luther elaborated on how he perceived the role of the believer in society.

In *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, Luther urged Christians to be good and obedient citizens, but when flagrant injustice and evil are perpetrated that compromise the gospel, then Christians must resist, but wherever possible, nonviolently. As followers of Jesus Christ, operating according to conscience, we

may experience pain and retribution as a result. Luther urged the ruling princes, on the other hand, to regularly read Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in order to influence their use of power among his people.

In *On Sending Children to School*, Luther called upon citizens to see to it that their children receive a proper education so that they can play meaningful roles in society, especially in governmental administration, since princes were often drunken and profligate. It is important, therefore, that people of faith play a stabilizing and reforming role within the structures of society.

In *Can Soldiers Too Be Saved?,* Luther assured soldiers that if they are keeping the peace, even when minimal violence is necessary to thwart a greater violence, this can be a God-pleasing vocation. Luther, however, questioned "hiding behind the skirts" of princes who falsely claim that they are involved in a just war. When a soldier is called to violate his conscience by commiting acts that are manifestly wrong or evil, then the soldier must disobey. Thus, Luther may very well be the father of selective conscientious objection. He warned, however, that to do so means that one may have to "bear the cross" of serious consequences, even imprisonment or death.

Rev. Booker Vance of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church draws on Luther's most progressive insights as he calls for economic justice outside the American Bankers Association's October 2009 convention in Chicago. Credit: Creative Commons/Heather Stone.

Finally, in Luther's tract *On Usury and Trade,* he made it clear that early capitalistic abuses were very much operative in his day. Luther warned his readers against the "big boys" who were getting immensely rich by loaning money at usurious interest rates and by holding monopolies over various products, charging artificially high prices. Luther said that, for instance, for a widow to support herself, it might be appropriate for her to charge a low rate of interest on some object or commodity, but to enrich oneself through usurious methods was unbiblical and unjust. He called his readers to subsistence living, if necessary, to boycott these capitalistic big boys.

What does all of this have to do with us today? It means that in society we cooperate with the powers that be when they perform their functions with justice. We are called to play a reforming role when such powers deviate from their just functions. And we are called to roles of resistance when these powers develop demonic tendencies contrary to their just purposes.

It is not only appropriate to resist in such struggles between good and evil; it is imperative for our calling as people of faith. If we have no experience in struggle, then we must learn from those who have. We must learn from our own past failures and from those who have served a prophetic function in a broken society — from the biblical prophets and Jesus, from Gandhi and Mandela, from Tutu and King, from Luther and Duchrow, and from secular voices in society who call for peace, justice, and the sustaining of creation.

Theologians such as Duchrow have done careful analysis of how the world economic systems affect the vulnerable and nature itself. They offer an agenda for people of faith to work hand in hand with progressive humanists of every stripe. We must find common cause ecumenically, in interfaith cooperation and with all people of good will, to marshal our significant resources of power to transform unjust and demonic national and international structures that have devastating and deleterious effects on the well-being of our world.

Luther, as we have said, recognized that it may be necessary to do minimal violence to avoid greater violence, but this is not the tactic of the church and other institutions of faith. The worst strategy to strive for God's will for the world would be for us to initiate violent action against the powerful. Ours is the "sword of the spirit," which is the Word of God. Let us use this weapon wisely and well.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Rev. Thomas W. Strieter Ph.D., a Lutheran minister, has divided his career of fifty-plus years between the parish and academia. He is a social and political activist in progressive human rights, peace and justice issues and interracial and interfaith affairs.

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Are Americans Coming Out of the Fog?

by Karen L. Bloomquist

June 27, 2011

Liberation theology's call for economic justice may gain support in North America as outrage over economic inequality mounts. Here, Pastor David Weasley leads a prayer during the October 2009 Showdown in Chicago, a protest of the American Bankers Association's annual meeting. Credit: Creative Commons/Heather Stone.

"Life in Just Peace," the joint statement on liberation theology reprinted in full within Ulrich Duchrow's article "**A European Revival of Liberation Theology**" (*Tikkun*, Winter 2011), is quite commendable but, like other declarations made by religious leaders, it runs the risk of remaining "on high" instead of fueling the struggles of ordinary people. In the interest of broadening this discussion in *Tikkun* I'd like to offer a response.

I concur with the strong critiques in the statement, which was a collaborative effort of "twenty-six European religious initiatives and networks, including Kairos Europe, Pax Christi (German Section), INKOTA, Christians for a Just Economic System, Pleading for an Ecumenical Future, Winds from the South, and several regional ecumenical grassroots networks, working together in the German Ecumenical Network in preparation for the May 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica."

The statement resonates with what has been said in many statements and events of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, what is now the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and other religious bodies. Since the 1970s, some of us North American theologians and church leaders, inspired by liberation theologies emerging in Latin America, have also been writing and saying similar things. Biblical critiques of empire have become increasingly familiar to those preaching in churches, even though far too few sermons name and make the connections with how empire is embodied and expressed today in American policies and practices, perhaps out of fear of the repercussions they might face. When the World Alliance of Reformed Churches took a strong faith stance against neoliberal globalization in 2004, the *Wall Street Journal* actually took note and was quick to ridicule this in an editorial.

However, the shortcoming is that such analyses and stances tend to remain abstract statements “from on high” that are either ignored or viewed cautiously by those in mainline U.S. churches, captive as they are to assumptions of neoliberalism and American exceptionalism, as well as suspicious of critiques that come from outside (for example, from Europe). I would add that in local settings, pastors can be pivotal in helping working folks (who still *are* present in our churches) to see and name the contradictions between what they have been promised and the actual realities of their lives, and in opening up more politically engaged, liberating faith understandings. I sought to do this thirty years ago in my theological work on American working-class realities (*The Dream Betrayed*: *Religious Challenge of the Working Class*). But in general on the American scene, it is not the clergy, theologians, and other church leaders who are the vanguard for making these radical changes in American politics and economic policies.

Many of us have been deeply frustrated with how ordinary working folks have often failed to see the glaring realities of classism in American society and have instead supported views and positions that work against their self-interests — such as the choice that so many made when voting in the November 2010 elections. But with the significant people’s movement that has been awakened and surged in my native state of Wisconsin this winter, the confrontation between workers and corporate-driven economic and political power has become blatantly evident.

Suddenly, the populace may be waking up, not just to what radical neoliberal policies are doing to the rest of the world, but also to how they are stripping ordinary Americans of their rights and of the government support essential for the common good. People’s rage has been fueled by their awareness of how corporate power has invaded the political process and now threatens basic democratic values and rights that Americans have long championed. Although religious leaders were prominent among the demonstrators, this spark was lit especially by the impassioned struggles for democracy in places outside the United States (such as Egypt).

Imagine! Americans finally being inspired and learning from others in the world, rather than telling others what to do, and in the process, perhaps even learning from European history how critical it is to confront emerging fascism. Dare we hope for a new era in which the United States, through its ordinary citizens, rejoins the world rather than dictating to the world?

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Karen L. Bloomquist drafted many theological-ethical statements over the years in her work with the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, and before then, for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She now lives in Bellingham, Washington.

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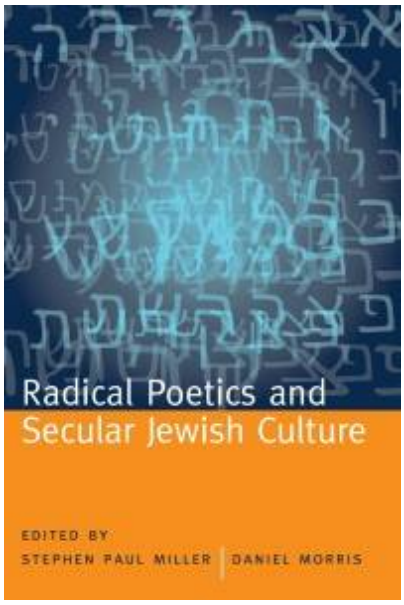
Radical Poets Set Jewishness Adrift

by Emily Warn

June 27, 2011

RADICAL POETICS AND SECULAR JEWISH CULTURE
Edited by Stephen Paul Miller and Daniel Morris
University of Alabama Press, 2010

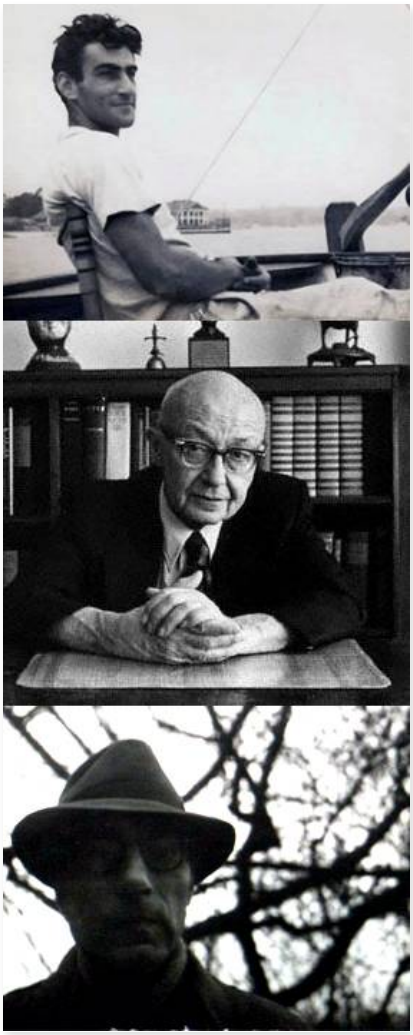


Don't let the title dissuade you from reading this provocative book. The poets and thinkers represented here, many of them groundbreakers in American literature and thought, don't know what it means either. That's the point — to define these terms so as to answer a question that has not yet been posed in American poetry: what is radical Jewish poetry and how is it related to secular Jewish culture?

In good talmudic fashion, editors Stephen Miller and Daniel Morris and their writers tease out the original question into a whole host of them, provoking lively discussion that often addresses some of the most pressing concerns of secular Jews today. What does it mean to claim a Jewish identity or to say that one is a Jewish poet? What is secular Judaism? And is it, in some circumstances, paradoxically religious? When is the intense scrutiny of texts a secular rather than a religious activity?

The proffered answers are worth listening to because this particular group of poets and critics are masters, if not of the Good Name, then of the possibilities and pitfalls of language. They are its provocateurs, taxonomists, gematria-ists, and tour operators, roles that are quintessentially Jewish. This collection does nothing less than establish an important Jewish artistic tradition, and as such, inherently comments and expands upon the larger tradition. The essays elaborate radical Jewish poetry's founding aesthetic, identify its current practitioners, and canonize its forebears — a remarkable group of American Jewish poets from the last century, many of whom were concerned with social justice: Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Muriel Rukeyser, and Charles Reznikoff.

Being present at the groundbreaking of a tradition must be comparable to overhearing the secret conversations of twelfth-century Spanish kabbalists just before they risked publicly refuting dominant Jewish beliefs and practices. In this case, the impetus for going public is a recently published anthology of Jewish poetry, *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry*, whose editor Steve J. Rubin claims to publish the work of writers who "can be classified as American Jewish poets," a classification one can only assume covers poetry arising from a core Jewish identity grounded in normative Jewish cultural experiences and religious practices. From the editors' point of view, Rubin's greatest sin is his failure to provide a theoretical basis for his selections — to ask and answer what Jewish poetry is — a shortfall the editors hope their book redresses.



George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, and Louis Zukovsky (shown top to bottom) are three of the poets seen as forebears of the current radical Jewish poetic tradition. Credits (from top): University of Edinburgh; Gerard Malanga; Jonathan Williams.

Yet when the editors and writers seek to answer the question, a kind of attachment disorder settles in. In the fluidity of experience, any fixed identity seems false to them, and they share a predicament with many secular Jews: they feel an intense ambivalence toward claiming a Jewish identity because it presumes allegiance to the all-knowing authoritarian Jewish God, a belief which has often led to religious wars. While "religious texts remain important sources of inspiration," poet Rachel Blau DuPlessis writes in "Midrashi Sensibilities: Secular Judaism and Radical Poetics" (her essay in the book), they "no longer possess canonical authority or signify the poet's allegiance to Judaism as a religious practice."

In place of a core, or "essentialist" Jewish identity, Charles Bernstein proposes a "performative" one. Bernstein, the group's seminal thinker, is a Houdini-like poet whose work has confounded neat literary (and now Jewish) definitions ever since he co-founded the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E school of poetry in the 1970s. Bernstein first asked and elaborated on Jewish identity as it plays out in poetic practice at a literary program devoted to the subject at the American Jewish Historical Society in New York in 2003. In his talk, now republished in this book, he asks:

> Am I Jewish? Is this Jewish? I am no more Jewish than when I set my Jewishness adrift from fundamentalist religious practice. I am no more Jewish than when I refuse imposed definitions of what Jewishness means. I am no more Jewish than when I attend to how such Jewishness lives itself out, plays tunes not yet played. Jewishness can, even must, in one of its multiple manifestations, be an aversion of identification — as a practice of dialogue and as an openness to the unfolding performance of the everyday. Call it the civic practice of Judaism.

Bernstein views identity as an ongoing performance of an ever unfolding self and its relation to Jewish traditions. Refusing a fixed Jewish identity in favor of an inherently fluid, unstable, and evolving one mirrors the practice of midrash, which according to DuPlessis, is a "continual interpretation and reinterpretation, never complete and never fulfilled." Therefore this refusal is at its heart Jewish, as Lazer writes in this book in an essay called "Who or What Is a Jewish American Poet":

> The paradox of this particular refusal of identity — the Jew who refuses a Jewish American or Jewish label — is that it has become an identifying Jewish trait.

Adeena Karasick's performance poem "The Wall" is just one example of how these ideas about identity inform the radical Jewish poetry discussed here. The poem's subject is the disorderly compendium of texts stuffed into the Wailing Wall, its prayers written in multiple languages, its "tiny scraps of paper on which supplicants have confessed their deepest desires." In her essay "Imp/penetrable Archive: Adeena Karasick's Wall of Sound," Maria Damon writes that the cracks and fissures stuffed with texts represent both Judaism and the female body, "an archive continually reproducing, a repository repositioning itself at every turn."

Adeena Karasick performs at Voices from Venus, a monthly feminist poetry series held at Umi Café in Ottawa, Canada.

Damon lauds the poem as a "cacophony of fonts, formats and voices, illegible print superimposed on photographs, visual and verbal puns, prayers, send-ups and equivocations." Such language is intentionally opaque and slippery so as to perform an absence, a longing for a missing wholeness and a missing source — both the literal Temple and the absence of the female from its ritual practices and the religious texts that codified them.

On encountering the poem, most general readers will be stymied by its obtuseness, a disorienting meaning-making that Karasick wants us to believe is kabbalistic. It is not about "what is being said," she writes in her essay on radical poetics called "Hijacking Language: Kabbalistic Trajectories," "but how language is being manipulated; how 'meaning' is determined through an experience of letters." These assertions do echo the twelfth-century kabbalists' promise and practice. A mystical union with God could be had through "language-based ecstatic concentration practices," as Norman Fischer writes in his essay "Light(silence)word." While the promise of union attracted and still attracts followers to Kabbalah, the esoteric complexity of the practices befuddles and disappoints many of them.

Similarly, radical Jewish poetry promises an experience that expresses the agitated, untethered relationship that many secular Jews experience in relation to normative Judaism. Yet to comprehend the poetry requires the equivalent of the audio tours at postmodern visual art exhibitions — a function that this book provides. The essays by Rachel DuPlessis, Norman Finkelstein, Hank Lazer, and Eric Selinger are especially adept at elucidating the aesthetic and cultural relevance and provocation of radical Jewish poetry.

Norman Finkelstein turns what can be construed as negative — the refusal of an inherited identity — into a process of self-discovery. Dismantling the "first self," the one that cultural and religious texts and institutions have prefabricated**,** leads to taking part in, and in this case expressing, the disintegration and renewal of a shifting yet rooted identity.

Of special interest to all readers are essays that answer the question first posed by Bernstein at the American Jewish Historical Society: "Can we say there is a distinctly Jewish component to radical modernist and contemporary poetry?" Placing the major American poets Zukofsky, Stein, Oppen, Rukeyser, Celan, and Bernstein within a Jewish context significantly broadens our understanding of their work. For example, Meg Shoerke discovers poetic and political affinities in the poetry of George Oppen and Muriel Rukeyser. Neither of them, she contends, felt it necessary to reconcile the "pull of different identities," or the contradiction inherent in writing a spiritually revelatory poetry that is also "profoundly anti-transcendental, due to its focus on the material world."

Of equal significance are essays that examine how the domain of Jewish poets reaches beyond Judaism. Marjorie Perloff breaks Paul Celan out of "a kind of solitary confinement" wherein he is perceived solely as a Holocaust poet by reading him as a mid-twentieth-century poet. Norman Fischer's essay delves into the relationship between silence and language that is at the core of both Judaism and Buddhist practices. He argues that living with the phrases of Zen koans or Jewish texts can lead to an experience of language dissolving into what is beyond language. And Benjamin Friedlander's provocative essay defines secular Jewish culture "as a radical sect within Judaism, one that owes much to the precedent of St. Paul who proclaimed 'an ethics without adherence to law.'"

An anthology of Jewish essays would not be complete without a dissenter, a writer who questions the very premise of the book. Alicia Ostriker wonders why there needs to be a "polarization between 'secular and 'sacred.'" She pokes fun at "radical poetics" as a code for "poetry that avoids sentences… Or doesn't use uppercase. Or has spaces instead of punctuation between words." But then she gets down to business. As she defines it, "To be radical is to go to the root of the matter." Yet as these essays demonstrate, to go to the root of the matter is to arrive at another set of questions. Does the activity of questioning become an identity with which secular Jews are at ease? One answer found in Norman Finkelstein's essay is the philosopher Marc-Alain Ouaknin's comment on a quotation from Edmund Jabès:

"'The Jew not only asks questions, he has himself become a question.' He is a question without an answer."

(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, ***click here****. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article,* ***click here****.)*

Emily Warn's latest book is Shadow Architect*, an exploration of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. She most recently served as the founding editor of poetryfoundation.org, and now currently divides her time between Seattle and Twisp, Washington.*

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A Wayward Eulogy

by Sean Enright

June 27, 2011

TO THE END OF THE LAND
by David Grossman
Knopf, 2010

In his essay, “Writing in the Dark,” David Grossman says, “I have a distant ally who does not know me, and together we are weaving this shapeless web, which nonetheless has immense power, the power to change a world and create a world, the power to give words to the mute and to bring about *tikkun* — “repair” — in the deepest, kabbalistic sense of the word.” Grossman tirelessly explores the idea of peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians as a human, one-to-one discovery and dialogue. His fiction too wants to make repair. ***To The End of the Land***, his remarkable 2010 novel, tells of a journey through a family’s past, a love affair between a woman and two men, and a literal hike across the country of Israel, shot through with peaceful homes and beribboned with war zones.

Fearing suicide bombers, Ora begins "randomly riding city buses, as if she could ... deflect the random chances of terror her son faces every day." Illustration by Laura Beckman.

The novel opens in a flashback to 1967. Three Israeli teens — Ora, Ilan and Avram — are recovering from hepatitis in a deserted quarantine ward. Ora and Avram become companions in dark solitude, learning by listening. Avram leads Ora to a third teen, Ilan, in a coma in a hospital bed. From there, the three enter an enduring, complicated, and ultimately saving ménage a trois. Ilan is handsome and mysterious, and Ora falls in love with him on the spot. Avram, shorter, less attractive, feels sidelined. Eventually, he will force Ora to decide which man she will stay with.

In 2000, Ora, now separated from Ilan, estranged from her oldest son Adam, and mourning the re-enlistment of her younger son Ofer in the army’s border guard, sets off on a physically daunting hike across Israel, to escape what she fears is the imminent arrival of soldiers to inform her that Ofer has been killed. In her mind, by walking, “she will be the first notification-refusenik.” Her journey across Israel is a psychic trip back in time, as she recruits her former lover and best friend Avram to accompany her.

Avram had been captured, interrogated, and tortured by Egyptian forces during the Yom Kippur War. At home, the Israeli authorities also interrogate him, suspicious about what he might have divulged. Out of touch with Ora and Ilan, Avram drops out of the world, abusing marijuana and sleeping pills. Ilan says Avram “just turned himself off and he’s sitting inside himself in the dark.”

"Avram drops out of the world ... sitting inside himself in the dark." Illustration by Laura Beckman.

It is Ora who is the compelling central figure here, as the novel is an exhaustive portrait of her personality. She is having an extended, literate nervous breakdown, “reciting a eulogy for a family that once was, that will never be again.” Her tone can be annoying and excessive but is redeemed by love. “You’re an unnatural mother,” her son Adam tells her, but she is only too natural. Ora thinks Israel, by taking her youngest son Ofer, has “nationalized her life.” During Ofer’s first term of service, Ora becomes paranoid about people’s faces on the streets, fearing suicide bombers, and she begins randomly riding city buses, as if she could be a lightning rod and deflect the random chances of terror her son faces every day.

Ora uses the weeks-long hike to slowly bring Avram up to date on her sons. Clues quickly emerge to suggest that Avram has more of a stake in Ora’s family than he knows. In a patient and beautiful fashion, Ora paints a verbal picture of their lives, and Avram slowly begins embracing it.

The other surprise Ora has for Avram is how Ilan went back and searched for him, after Avram was wounded and left behind, lying in a ruined, abandoned stronghold surrounded by Egyptian forces. Her revelation takes place right after Ora and Avram make love again for the first time on the trail; the power of that timing is significant, as Ilan first told *her* about his rescue attempt the morning Adam was born, before they left for hospital. Thus unfolds one example of Grossman’s exquisite layering of past and present tense. Avram is broadcasting on a busted radio transmitter, and Ilan hears his feverish outpourings as he weakens and the enemy closes in.

Eventually, Ora succeeds in re-connecting Avram to her family. The argument Grossman makes is that humans will succeed *because of* the intricacy of our hearts, the amount of detail we pluck from our memories and shower upon the world. If humanity heals, it will be from the inside out. Ora "converts" Avram to being human again by the sheer mountain of anecdote and detail she shares about her sons' lives.

Growing up, Ofer emerges as Avram's true son in Ora's depiction: like Avram, he is sensitive and strange. When his brother Adam exhibits frightening OCD behaviors as a young boy, Ofer intuitively begins aping them, and asking Adam which of the tics can be his, Ofer's, habits. He gradually assumes the lion's share of them, blocking Adam from doing them, and miraculously cures him.

Grossman's allegory — the hike across Israel is an attempt to make sense of the country's history and the history of Ora's loves — is built upon a juxtaposition of present narrative and past recollection. Weaving together characters and dialogue in the present and past tenses, as he did in his 1989 masterpiece, *See Under: Love*, Grossman makes history continuous. Real time is a compressed dream-space where duration of experience is nothing compared to depth of emotion.

On the hike, Ora digs a hole and tries to bury herself in it, triggering Avram's memory of three times being forced to dig his own grave in Egypt during his captivity.

"Ora digs a hole and tries to bury herself in it..." Illustration by Laura Beckman.

The physical journey Ora and Avram take becomes Eden-esque; they might be the first man and woman in the world. Avram says, "I mean the walking itself, where you have to go from point to point, you can't skip anything. It's like the trail is teaching us to walk at its pace." Late in the novel, Ora is trying to describe to Avram the sounds of their different steps on the trail: "It's a good thing they have all the right sounds in Hebrew."

> Avram counters, "Do you mean these paths speak Hebrew? Are you saying *language springeth out of the earth*?" And he runs with the idea that words had spouted up from this dirt, crawled out of cracks in the arid, furrowed earth, burst from the wrath of *hamsin* winds with briars and brambles and thorns, leaped up like locusts and grasshoppers.

Ora responds, "I wonder what it's like in Arabic. After all, it's their landscape too…"

This edges as close to the political as Grossman gets, but it feels closer to the truth than an overt political argument. Metaphor is key to Grossman. People have outdoor names: Ofer (fawn), Ilan (tree), Ora (light). Ora and Avram are attacked on the trail by a pack of wild dogs but repel the pack and adopt one of the animals, which proves not so wild at all when alone. The journey also chronicles the history of Israel, as Ora and Avram visit biblical and military historical sites. Ora begins a journal of the hike, then loses it. It is found and continued by a pediatrician they meet, who is making a similar hike, interviewing everyone he meets about Israel, asking: “What do we miss most? What do we regret?”

"Do you mean these paths speak Hebrew? Are you saying language springeth out of the earth?" Illustration by Laura Beckman.

Explicit political argument in the book is rare, but there are nevertheless some striking examples of it in the opening chapters, when Ora is driven around by her Arab driver and friend, Sami. Sami calls his five children his “five demographic problems.” And Ora says to Ilan, when Ofer is born: “Here you are, my darling. I’ve made another soldier for the IDF.”

Ora recalls something Avram once said: “If you look at someone for a long time, at anyone, you can see the most terrible place they might reach in their lifetime.” Not to spoil the novel’s ending, but any critical review of the novel threatens to grind to a halt at the thought of Grossman’s crushing afterword — that he began the novel when his own youngest son Uri was alive and about to begin a tour in the Israeli army, and that he wrote the final draft after Uri was killed in Southern Lebanon: “What changed, above all, was the echo of the reality in which the final draft was written.” Having begun the book in autobiographical style, he finished it marred by a tragedy he thought he could only imagine in words.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Sean Enright’s poems have appeared in Threepenny Review *and* Triquarterly*, among others. His Lincoln assassination play, "The Third Walking Gentleman," was a semifinalist in the 2007 National Playwright’s Contest at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center.*

Source Citation

Enright, Sean. 2011. A Wayward Eulogy. *Tikkun* 26(3).

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Carving Fresh Initials on the World Tree

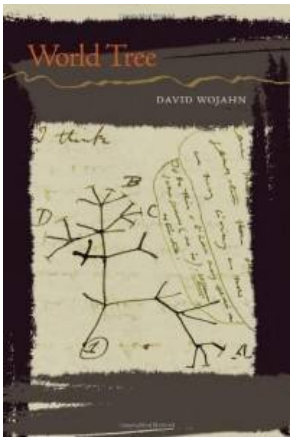
by David Danoff

June 27, 2011

WORLD TREE
by David Wojahn
University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011

Credit: Tristan Kerr.

In Paleolithic cave art, alongside the bison, aurochs, deer, and horses, a recurring motif is the outline of a human hand. It's easy to imagine the shamanic significance of animal shapes to a society of hunters, and how animal paintings might have figured in religious rituals, eerily spanning the dimly lit chamber in a flicker of torchlight. But then imagine the ancient artist, before the tribe has gathered, putting aside his charcoal crayon or horsehair brush, chewing lumps of an ochre-rich clay, and spitting it in bursts through a narrow reed, to create a fine mist of color capturing the silhouette of his hand against the wall. Was it a kind of signature? Among the figurative art, these ghostly handprints endure, anonymous yet unmistakably personal traces left behind in a cave that might have been used by generation after generation, for tens or even hundreds of thousands of years.



In his richly textured new collection, *World Tree*, the poet David Wojahn fuses the imagery of the cave paintings, and of those elusive handprints, with scenes drawn from his own biographical past and pains, contemporary politics and news, daily domestic life, and a torrent of literary and pop culture references. He weaves it all together into a kaleidoscopic meditation on life, death, and the human instinct to leave some mark, to make some artistic statement, as well as the corresponding effort (however vexed) to preserve some trace of those who are gone.

Wojahn writes from the perspective of a middle-class man, cresting middle age, alive in early twenty-first-century America. He writes as a husband, a father of two young children, a homeowner, a citizen, a teacher, an air traveler, a web surfer, a consumer of news and music and pictures. He observes the busy world with a knowing, slightly mocking, slightly pained and disillusioned sensibility, whether he's cataloging his day's errands:

> it's hardware store & CVS: ant killer, a/c filters, orange tabs
> to twist the dials of serotonin,
> a goofy card for Noelle's fiftieth. Also her grocery list ...

Or observing the late night scene at Newark Airport:

Key chains, quarters clinking into plastic trays, shoes off,
snaking belts, laptops spirited from leather cases.

Backpack, stroller, purses boasting Italian monikers,
titanium hip replacements marching

back & forth through detectors—until the TSAers tire
& wave them limping past.

And yet, the present is loaded with the freight of history. In the airport, in between the PowerPoint and CNN, the businessmen, the mother with young children, the soldier on his way back to the war in Iraq, we have scraps of Leni Riefenstahl's biography (the speaker is reading to pass the time), with glimpses of Neville Chamberlain and Walt Disney, echoes of historical atrocity, betrayal, complicity. Today, does Riefenstahl's art outlast her tainted life? Does it last at all — does anything?

We incise our initials
on the granite feet of Ramses, on Khufu's basalt sarcophagus,

too unwieldy for plunder.

The perspective grows suddenly vast, epochal. The waves of history lap one another, with the scattered details of modern life merging with the details of ancient eras, and the names and jargon of one blurring almost interchangeably with the others. Khufu, PowerPoint, Disney, IED, Chancellory, Xanax, Chauvet — is all of our language just so much bric-a-brac? So much flurrying effort against a vast, featureless extinction? In the airport, effaced every night by "the waxers' hypnogogic back & forth against the tile," any single transient body seems to leave no trace.

Although traces do remain. Throughout the book, snatches of Thomas Hardy, W.H. Auden, W.B. Yeats, Frank O'Hara, Bob Dylan, Janice Joplin, Elvis Costello, David Byrne, and many others, sometimes identified and sometimes not, bob along through the flux. The poems are multi-voiced. The texture is often thick with names and quotations and descriptive details, mingled and juxtaposed freely. But the effect, which in other hands could be off-puttingly pretentious or opaque, is instead somehow welcoming, liberal. Wojahn's voice retains a warmth and likability, a naturalness, even as it careens through epochs and registers and ventriloquizes others.

This cave painting is one of the many illustrations interleaved with David Wojahn's poems in "Ochre." Credit: Tristan Kerr.

Robert Oppenheimer's son, Peter, tries out his father's pipe in this portrait, which appears as part of Wojahn's poem sequence. Credit: Tristan Kerr.

The heart of the book is a sequence entitled "Ochre," consisting of twenty-five ekphrastic poems, each in the form of a loosely rhymed sonnet, and each loosely describing, exploring, or riffing upon an image shown on the facing page. The images range from reproductions of cave art, to anonymous snapshots from the early twentieth century, from a portrait of Robert Oppenheimer's young son Peter trying out his father's pipe (while living at Los Alamos in 1944), to a saturnine Dick Cheney modeling a gas mask shortly after September 11. Some of the images seem to depict Wojahn's own family — his father in the army, a sonogram of his unborn twins — but mingled with the others, they become depersonalized, archetypal.

Politics run through the poems, as well as anthropology, archaeology, and family matters. The politics are pointed (Dick Cheney: "I am three hundred eyes, I ingest / Mine enemies. I *smite* them. I am Kali"), but the wide-angle vision of history grants an unexpected tenderness. For instance, in the poem accompanying a snapshot from Abu Ghraib, in which a grinning American MP gives a thumbs-up above the partially bagged corpse of an Iraqi prisoner, the rituals of burial create an ironic link between the Iraqi wrapped in plastic, "a Russian doll / With duct-taped eyes," and "a Neanderthal male, / Half-blind with a withered arm, impossibly old / At forty," as he:

receives his grave-goods—armloads

Of burdock, cornflower, hollyhock.
& a cache of flints
For the perilous & beflowered afterlife.

As participants in a much larger drama, both the Iraqi and even the callow soldier are granted a larger measure of dignity and shared human grace.

Wojahn displays a vulnerability that is often very moving, especially in his love for his family, and for the dead, and in his shyly passionate desire for artistic expression. At the conclusion of the title sequence, which aligns autobiographical snippets with the history of audio recording media, from 78s to 8-tracks, to CDs, and finally "Download, Shamanic," he invokes:

The dead arisen. From the cul de sacs
of neural mazes, return, from wax
& acetate, from the white diamond light

lasering words to our ears, return.
Verse chorus verse. 7 a.m.,
the second of June.

And as he hears his toddler sons awake and dancing to the Ramones ("Gabba gabba hey") upstairs, he offers a kind of prayer:

Return, return. It is here that I
shall dwell. The morning blazes up
& my speech shall not be confounded.

Throughout this engaging and wonderful collection of poems, Wojahn's speech never falters, as his voice knits the fragments of the pain-filled world into a marvelous pattern — one that seems likely to endure.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

David Danoff is a writer and editor living near Washington, D.C. He received his MFA in 2010, and his poems and reviews have appeared in Tikkun *and several other publications.*

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tags: **Books**, **Poetry**, **Reviews**

http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/carving-fresh-initials-on-the-world-tree

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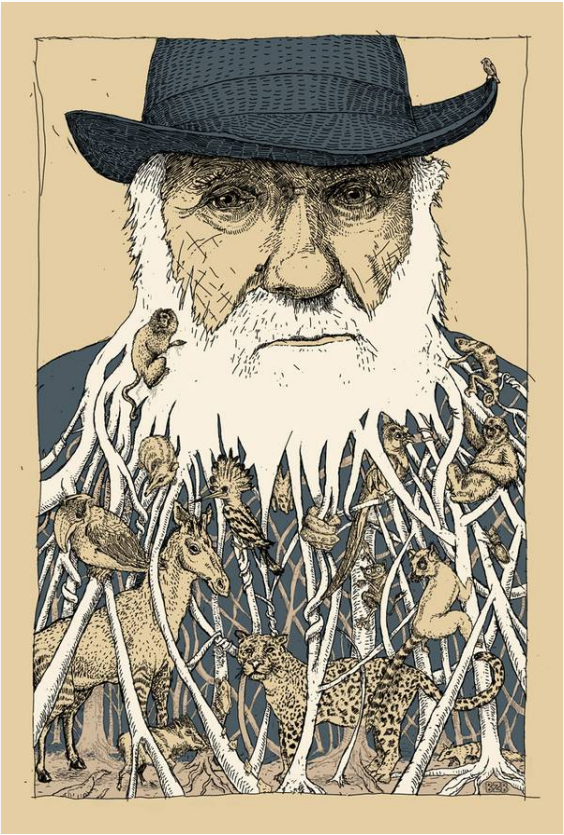
Print this article

The Evolutionary Roots of Morality

by Dan Levine

June 27, 2011

DARWIN'S LOST THEORY: BRIDGE TO A BETTER WORLD
DARWIN'S 2nd REVOLUTION
by David Loye
Benjamin Franklin Press, 2010



Darwin's ultimate interest, according to David Loye, was in the evolution of human moral sensitivity. Credit: "Darwin" by Barry Bruner.

When most people think of evolution, the first thing that comes to mind is either survival of the fittest or selfish genes. Yet the psychologist and system theorist David Loye argues this is a misreading of the gist of evolutionary theory and the intent of that theory's founder. Moreover, misreading Charles Darwin has severe social consequences: it fosters the belief that the worst side of humanity is bound to win.

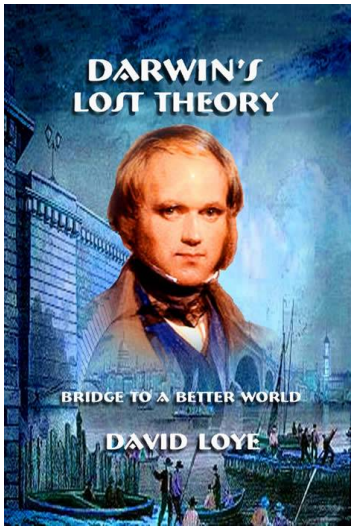
Darwin's ultimate interest, Loye argues, was in the evolution of human moral sensitivity. He adds that Darwin's celebrated principle of natural selection was just the first stage on the way to moral development. Loye founded the **Darwin Project**, with a council of over sixty natural and social scientists, to promote the view that moral development is at the heart of evolution.

Loye is familiar to *Tikkun* readers (his **most recent article** appeared in the November/December 2010 issue on Spirit and Science). He has written several books about partnership relations, worked as a pioneering television reporter, and served on the faculties of Princeton and UCLA. Yet despite his credentials he couldn't get his work about Darwin published by a mainstream press because it violated academic conventional wisdom. This led Loye to start his own publishing company, Benjamin Franklin Press.

The two books reviewed here lack the "polish" of mainstream books: the printing is not easy on the eyes, and there are significant spelling errors. Yet the surface "roughness" of these books conceals the fact that they bear messages found, to my knowledge, nowhere else. The books are a must-read for anyone interested in reconciling science and spirit. They are also guideposts for tracing the origins of our society's prevailing ethos of selfishness and replacing that with an ethos of caring.

Darwin's Lost Theory details Darwin's view of moral development, mainly from the 1871 book *Descent of Man* (with its unfortunate sexist title) and some unpublished notebooks. It explores connections Darwin drew between moral development and natural selection, the central theory of Darwin's more widely read *Origin of Species* (1858). *Darwin's 2nd Revolution* details the history of evolutionary theory after Darwin's death. It traces the work of scholars who distorted the theory into a message of endless competition and ultimate meaninglessness, and the opposing work of other scholars who synthesized evolution with cooperation and meaning. I review Loye's two books in succession.

The Social Roots of Goodness: Notes on *Darwin's Lost Theory*



Loye's inquiry began with notebooks that Darwin had written in his early thirties and that later became accessible to scholars. He had returned from the voyage of the *Beagle*, which launched his evolutionary studies, but not yet settled into either a career or a marriage.

Darwin's informal notebook holds the phrase, "May not the moral sense arise from our strong sexual, parental, and social instincts," but his published work, Loye notes, never mentions the connection between morality and the sexual instinct. This, Loye believes, is because Darwin had enough trouble gaining acceptance for the idea that humans evolved from apes, and dared not offend his reading public further by associating sex with morality. Yet the other connections the young Darwin made, between morality and the parental and social instincts, was featured in *Descent of Man*.

Darwin told numerous stories about kindness in social animals. The kindness sometimes took the form of feeding a handicapped animal (e.g., pelicans feeding the blind pelican among them). Other times it involved saving other animals from predators or grooming them (e.g., monkeys extracting thorns from each other). He saw the evolutionary roots of our moral development in animal behavior. It is only because of our higher intellectual capacities that we, more than other animals, can extend concern for others to all of humanity and to other species.

Kindness can sometimes lead to actual or potential sacrifice of one's own life or reproductive capacity for the benefit of others or the group as a whole. Loye's other book notes that modern-day evolutionists still jump through hoops trying to explain altruistic or self-sacrificing behavior within the framework of maximizing fitness. Yet he cites Darwin himself stating clearly in *Descent of Man* that something *beyond* natural selection is needed to explain altruism:

> The bravest men, who were always willing to come to the front in war and who freely risked their lives for others, would on the average perish in larger numbers than other men. Therefore it hardly seems probable that the number of men gifted with such virtues, or that the standard of their excellence, could be increased through natural selection, that is, by the survival of the fittest.

If morality doesn't come from natural selection, where does it come from? Darwin notes that our desire for good relations with other people impels us to behave in ethical ways. We inherited these tendencies from other mammals. But because our brains are more developed than the brains of other animals, only humans are, in his words, "capable of comparing our past and future actions or motives, and of approving or disapproving them."

While Darwin doubted that natural selection favors the development of kindness, sympathy, and altruism at the level of *individuals,* he believed natural selection favors those qualities at the level of *communities* or *groups*:

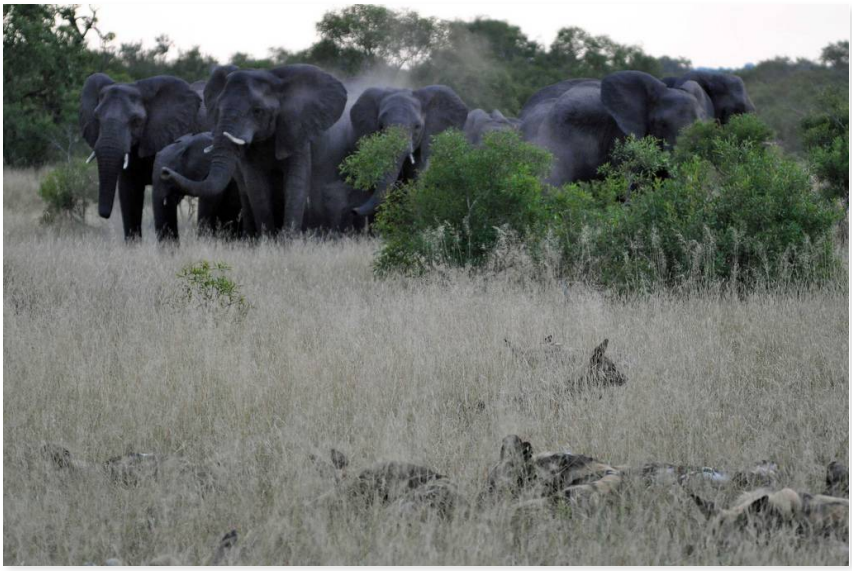
> Communities that included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.

There is constant debate among contemporary evolutionists between those who believe in group selection as well as individual selection, and those who believe only in individual selection. Yet the debaters rarely note that the founder of their field came down on the side of group selection.

How Evolutionary Narratives Shape Political Visions

The picture Loye presents of Darwin's outlook is very different from the widespread view that evolution consists only of selection among random mutations with no purpose or direction. Loye believes Darwin pointed to another evolutionary principle — in addition to natural selection — which he did not name, but which Loye calls *organic choice*. That is, natural selection gives us, and other animals, various instincts, but we often need to choose between competing instincts (such as competition and cooperation). This, to Darwin, is the root of conscience.

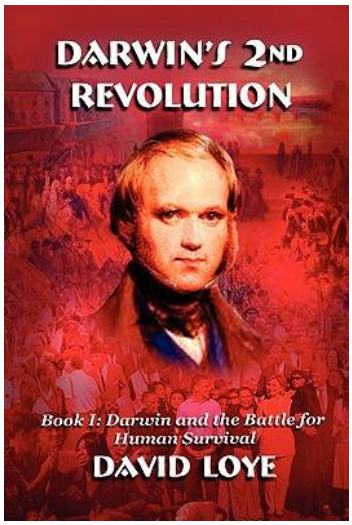
Loye emphasizes that our take on evolution is important for the “story” of our culture, the narrative that powers our unconscious but self-fulfilling beliefs in what kinds of social, political, and economic arrangements are possible. If life is meaningless, if morality is just disguised selfishness, and if all our behavior is driven by the competition to survive and reproduce, no wonder we get endless wars, income inequality, and environmental destruction. By contrast, if we have biological motives to treat each other well, and if we can direct our own evolution to enhance cooperation, nations can learn to live together in peace with abundant, sustainable, and equitably shared resources.



Animals often act in solidarity to protect vulnerable members of their communities. Here, adult elephants create a circle to protect the entire herd's calves from wild dogs. Creative Commons/Andy Withers.

Why has competitive struggle and not cooperative sharing dominated our story about evolution? Loye invokes the human desire to simplify. Before Darwin’s day, most mysterious occurrences were attributed to a single cause: God. Since Darwin upset the prevailing outlook, most of his readers have sought to replace God with another single cause. For academics, the one cause became natural selection. For the lay public, the one cause became survival of the fittest, a phrase originated not by Darwin but by the social scientist Herbert Spencer. Spencer verged on Social Darwinism, the belief that those who have the most money or prestige deserve their privileges because they are biologically the fittest. From a computer search of *Descent of Man*, Loye showed that “survival of the fittest” appeared only twice in the book, whereas “love” appeared ninety-five times. Darwin was no Social Darwinist!

Neo-Darwinian Dogma: Notes on *Darwin’s 2nd Revolution*



Loye’s second book traces the history of evolutionary scholarship after Darwin’s death. There are too many individuals and crosscurrents for me to review here. Yet most of the authors he reviews fall into one of two camps Darwin suggested. One camp emphasizes the acceleration of evolution through the extermination of others; the other emphasizes the acceleration of evolution through the improvement of others. These are, respectively, the scholarly wings of what Riane Eisler calls the dominator and partnership mindsets.

The first scholar whose work Loye reviews is George Romanes, Darwin’s designated heir. Romanes founded comparative psychology but died young before he could effectively combat the rise of dominator-oriented evolutionists, whom he called neo-Darwinians (a label that’s still used). At death’s door, in his book *Darwin and After Darwin*, he expressed frustration that many neo-Darwinians “represent as ‘Darwinian heresy’ any suggestions in the way of factors ‘supplementary to,’ or ‘co-operative with’ natural selection.” To this day many neo-Darwinians reject both moral evolution and group selection. Before the rise of feminism, some even rejected *sexual selection*, the notion (central to *Descent of Man*) that traits get passed on to offspring when the other sex finds them attractive in mates.

Loye then discusses such writers as Gregor Mendel, Julian Huxley, Teilhard de Chardin, and Theodosius Dobzhansky. But to capture the flavor of current debates, I will skip to his review of more recent writers.

Edward Wilson's book *Sociobiology* (1975) was a manifesto for a new interdisciplinary science of behavior. Yet the field of sociobiology emphasized genetic causes for behavior and personality traits, often to the exclusion of environmental causes. Naturally this led to an outcry from political activists and social scientists, joined by progressive evolutionists like Stephen Gould and Richard Lewontin. Gould and Lewontin argued that belief in radical genetic determinism endangers society, and that human intelligence data refute genetic determinism.

The current descendant of sociobiology is called evolutionary psychology. The "bible" of evolutionary psychology is the 1992 book *The Adapted Mind*, edited by Jerome Barkow, John Tooby, and Leda Cosmides, which, Loye notes, gave a constructive critique of social scientists for neglecting the natural sciences, but then went overboard in dismissing social scientists' legitimate contributions. He quotes statements by the book's authors that are reductionist to the point of dehumanization. For example, the book dismisses morality under the heading "Conscience, Guilt, and Neurosis."

Yet Loye notes the paradoxical fact that most neo-Darwinians are political and religious progressives. They see evolutionary biology as a counter-force to ignorance and superstition. So why do they fall into a trap that plays into the hands of reactionaries? Why, in fighting traditional religious dogma, do they create their own dogma? Again, this is an unfortunate byproduct of simplification.

In the final chapters of the book, Loye gives accounts of people from all walks of life (religion, politics, entertainment, and academia) that he sees as promoting positive human evolution. He calls these people, including himself and his wife, Riane Eisler, *evolutionary outriders*. The outriders' life is captured by Hazel Henderson, an economist and Darwin Project Council member, in describing a gathering with two other like-minded women:

> We are, all three of us, trying to play midwife to the evolutionary growth processes, and in so doing we subject ourselves to almost intolerable levels of stress…. I've accepted the fact that the stress is going to be there until I die because I'm doing what I ought to be doing. I'm throwing myself into the stream of the process — and it's okay.

The Next Stage of Human Evolution

For all his focus on morality, cooperation, and love, Loye adds the caveat in both books that Darwin's theory also includes natural selection and competition. He does not say the prevailing evolutionary paradigm focusing on natural selection is wrong, just that it is incomplete. Natural selection enabled us to get where we are now, but organic choice and moral development are more important for where we need to go.

Both *Darwin's Lost Theory* and *Darwin's 2nd Revolution* conclude with an urgent call to action. Both books call for progressive social scientists, natural scientists, lay writers, and activists to transcend their boundaries, work together, and help direct the next stage of human evolution. They ask us to abandon the unproductive conflicts between nature and nurture, between evolution and creation, and between science and religion. Instead we need to focus on the conflict between partnership and dominator approaches to understanding and acting on human nature. The future of our species, and our planet, depends on a story of human evolution with contemporary relevance around which visionaries can rally. And it depends on our living by that story.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Dan Levine is a professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Arlington and a member of the Darwin Project Council. His review of Daniel Dennett's Breaking the Spell *appeared in the November/December 2006 issue of* Tikkun.

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http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/the-evolutionary-roots-of-morality

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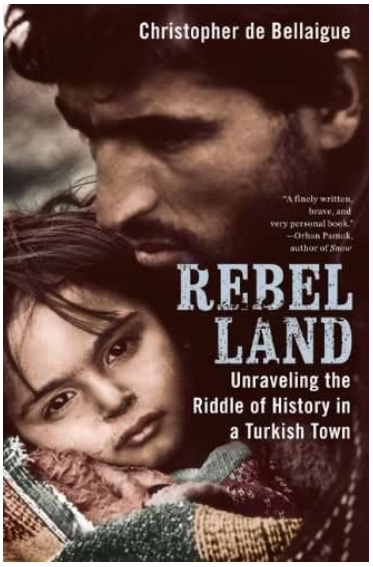
Print this article

Blood Brothers

by Zach Dorfman

June 27, 2011

REBEL LAND: UNRAVELING THE RIDDLE OF HISTORY IN A TURKISH TOWN
by Christopher de Bellaigue
Penguin Press, 2010

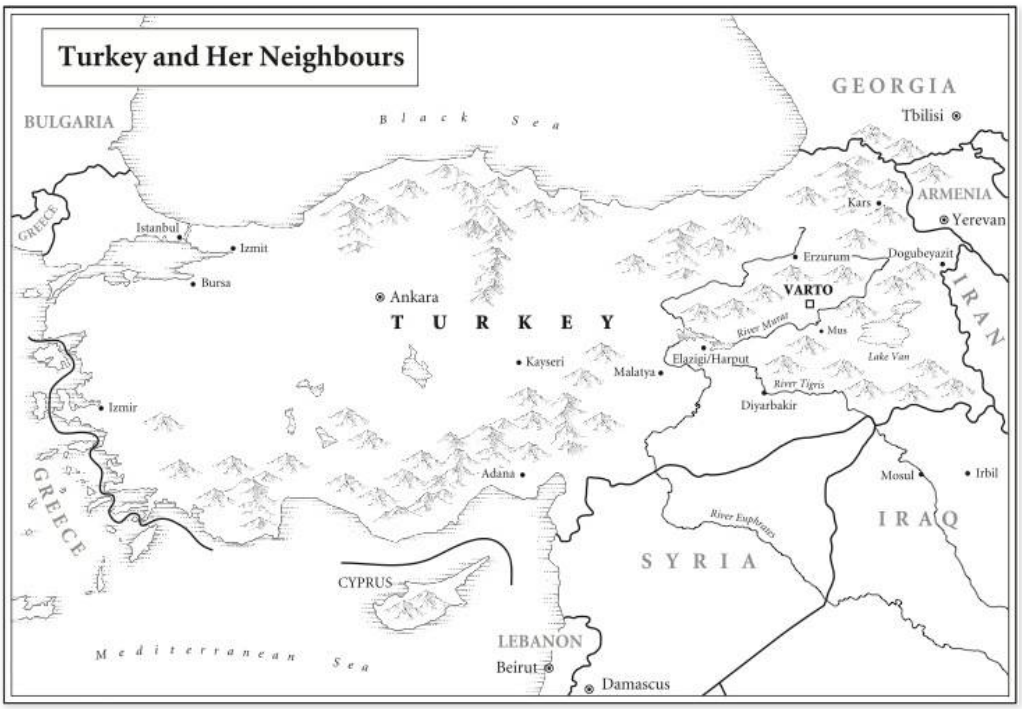


A work of taut and absorbing beauty, Christopher de Bellaigue's *Rebel Land* documents the author's exploration of the area known as eastern Turkey, where history is simultaneously elusive and oppressive, cloaked and hiding in plain sight.

From the weather-beaten ruins of a church; to a slip of the tongue over drinks; or to a conversation where commission, at least of a conceptual sort, is betrayed by an important omission in one's account of a massacre that occurred almost one hundred years ago — in places like these, history hangs in the air.

"It is not for nothing," the author observes, "that eastern Turkey, a.k.a western Armenia, a.k.a. northern Kurdistan, has never properly been scrutinized." De Bellaigue, a former Turkey correspondent for the *Economist* who spent years living in Istanbul, immersing himself in Turkish culture, language, and — importantly — history, returned to explore the history of the District of Varto, in Turkey's Kurdish East.

Here, however, I've already fallen into a linguistic trap. Conventional descriptors do not do justice to *Rebel Land*'s project, which is precisely to explore how this corner of the world can only implausibly be considered "Turkish," and certainly not be considered historically "Kurdish." And the region is only "eastern" if one's gaze is directed outward from cosmopolitan and western-oriented Istanbul and not plaintively from Yerevan, or wistfully from Mosul.



Credit: Penguin Press.

One of *Rebel Land*'s chief virtues is its attention to complexity, and its refusal to cede the superiority of one narrative over another, for many peoples are bound to Varto through blood and soil.

Five generations of an Armenian family gathered together for this photo from Christopher de Bellaigue's book. Credit: Penguin Press.

The first are the Armenians, whose presence is now vestigial, and whose ancient churches remain as testaments to their long history in the region. During the waning days of the Ottoman Empire — or alternatively, the gestative period for the modern Turkish state — the Armenians of Varto, and all over the Empire, were subject to what was at the very least a vicious program of ethnic cleansing with concomitant, if unplanned, massacres, if not a genocide masquerading as a series of "forcible transfers." Supplementing scholarship on the matter — good examples of which are difficult to obtain, given the Turkish state's suppression of data related to the matter — with first-person interviews, *Rebel Land* reconstructs the events of 1915-1917 in Varto. This is history at its most personal. Body counts do not speak to us: they are merely numbers, abstractions. But when De Bellaigue pieces together an account of the deportations, and subsequent massacres, that decimated the Armenians of Varto, he writes so movingly, and with such an attentive gaze, that the horror appears to unfold simultaneously before both author and reader.

The Sunni Kurds are the second group to inhabit Varto. It is from their ranks and tribes that the local leadership traditionally arises. The Sunni Kurds have been both oppressor and oppressed, complicating any simple moral schematic.

While they have formed the backbone of resistance to the discriminatory anti-Kurdish policies of the Turkish state (which operated for many years under the official illusion that Kurds did not exist), their participation in the Armenian massacres was widespread, and their treatment of minority groups within Turkish Kurdistan has been, at times, less than savory.

Which brings us to the third group to feature prominently in *Rebel Land.* The Alevis form the lowest rung on the social ladder in Varto, and have been intermittently but violently persecuted by the Sunni Kurds for their beliefs. According to De Bellaigue's account, Alevis in Varto consider themselves Muslims. But theirs is, at a minimum, a heterodox interpretation of Islam. For instance, while they revere Ali and Hussein — holy figures in Shia Islam — *Rebel Land* relays accounts in Alevi texts "of the Prophet bowing to Ali and the Prophet and Ali becoming one." This, unsurprisingly, has been seen as deeply disturbing by the Alevis' orthodox Muslim neighbors.

Kurdish Hamidiye fighters, c. 1900. Credit: Penguin Press.

Questions about Alevi identity extend beyond matters of religious faith, and *Rebel Land* explores how they have become enmeshed in debates about national and political membership. Are Alevis Kurds or are they Turks? This is not an easy question to answer, and De Bellaigue deftly traces the shifting alliances and ideological currents that have led the Varto Alevis to associate themselves, at least recently, with the Kurdish national cause.

The idea of “Turkishness” also features prominently in *Rebel Land*. Although there are no ethnic Turks living in Varto (aside from representatives of the state, most notably the military), the Turkish state is pervasive — a kind of absent presence. Varto is not merely administered; it is occupied. Much of the latter part of *Rebel Land* surveys the history of Kurdish nationalism in Varto: the town’s tense relationship with the Turkish state, and, beginning in the 1970s, the profusion of militant leftist organizations — the most famous and successful of which was the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) — that found in Varto fertile terrain for recruitment efforts. Although sympathetic to Kurdish nationalist aims, De Bellaigue looks wearily upon the PKK’s guerilla campaigns. His disdain for Apo, the PKK’s megalomaniacal and ultimately craven founder, is even more pronounced.

Unusually, De Bellaigue himself features prominently in *Rebel Land*. After living in Istanbul for years, he admits to having previously been enamored with the vision of Turkey proffered by Ataturk — secular, rational, and indivisibly Turkish. *Rebel Land* is thus also the story of a man chastising himself for the lies he once willingly believed, and who has decided to peer into the abyss in order to shine a light. We should be glad that, whatever sense of ablution De Bellaigue may have achieved from the researching and writing of *Rebel Land* aside, he has produced this illuminating and delicate work.

*(To return to the Summer 2011 Table of Contents, **click here**. For an attractively formatted, ready-to-print PDF of this article, **click here**.)*

Zach Dorfman is assistant editor of Ethics & International Affairs*, the journal of the Carnegie Council. He can be contacted at zdorfman@cceia.org.*

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tags: **Books**, **Reviews**, **War & Peace**

http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/blood-brothers

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Print this article

Convention Hall

by Alan Shapiro

June 27, 2011

There was the amplified and echoing

“optimistic hatred of the actual”

that every flag waving

to make it so kept

waving to the joyous rhythm of

even after

in the docile chaos of a

confetti of balloons

tumbling out of darkness

high above the lights.

Look at Us, the anthem,

Look at Us, the shield,

the sacrifice –

but look

at how unfillable

the cavern of the Great Hall is,

more vacant and silent

for the stage dismantled,

the massive absence

of the cheering and singing; look

at how the last of us,

our delegate

torch in hand

sleepwalks in patrol

patrolling nothing

like a soldier “in the

midst of doubt, in

the collapse of creeds”

who doesn’t know

the war has ended,

behind enemy lines

no longer there,

obedient to “a cause

he little understands,

in a campaign

of which he has

no notion, under

tactics of which

he doesn’t see the use”–

moving in darkness

from light to smaller light

along the catwalks

through the tunnels

over the swept floor

to the farthest exit sign.

Alan Shapiro is a poet and professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the author of nine poetry books, including Tantalus in Love*,* Song and Dance*, and* The Dead Alive and Busy*. He received the Kingsley Tufts Award and the Los Angeles Book Prize. He was also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. In 2005, Shapiro won the North Carolina Book Award for poetry, for* Tantalus In Love*.*

Source Citation

Shapiro, Alan. 2011. Convention Hall. *Tikkun* 25(1): 12.

tags: **Poetry**

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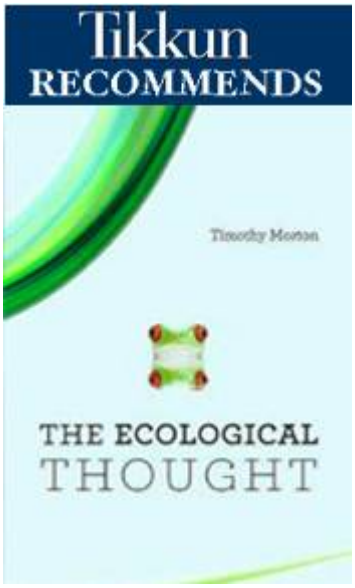
The Ecological Thought

June 29, 2011



THE ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT
Timothy Morton
Harvard University Press, 2010

Timothy Morton has a unique take on ecology that challenges much of the alternative consciousness that floats around on the periphery of environmental circles. He offers a profound take on human possibilities. To Morton, human society and Nature are not two distinct things but rather two different angles on the same thing. We have been "terraforming Earth all along — now we have the chance to face up to this fact and to our coexistence with all beings," he writes. The destruction of Nature is neither inevitable nor impossible — we have a choice. But we must recognize that the language of sustainability becomes a weapon in the hands of global corporations that would like nothing better than to reproduce themselves in perpetuity. Ecological thought, he writes, must conceive of post-capitalist pleasures: not bourgeois pleasure for the masses, but forms of new, broader, more rational pleasure; not boring, over-stimulating, bourgeois reality, and not fridges and cars and anorexia for all, but rather a world of *being* (as opposed to having). How to care for the neighbor, the stranger, and the hyper-object are the long-term problems posed by ecological thought. Ecological thought forces us to invent ways of being together that don't depend on self-interest.

tags: **Eco-Spirituality**
http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/the-ecological-thought

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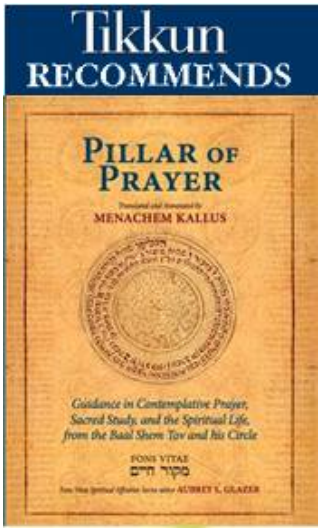
The Pillar of Prayer

June 29, 2011



THE PILLAR OF PRAYER
Menachem Kallus
Fons Vitae Publisher, 2011

Menachem Kallus has provided us with some of the most important teachings of the founder of Hasidism in this book, which he describes as "Guidance in Contemplative Prayer, Sacred Study, and the Spiritual Life from the Baal Shem Tov and His Circle." Kallus is himself both a scholar and a practicing rabbi who, in the words of Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, "brings his sensitivity to the nuances of contemplative and ecstatic prayer and offers the spiritually inclined reader an entrance into the encounter with the Divine." The teachings reveal the wisdom of Hasidism, which is not only an ecstatic mystical path but also a compelling rethinking of Judaism — a rethinking that gave birth to the current Jewish Renewal movement.

tags: **Judaism**, **Spirituality**
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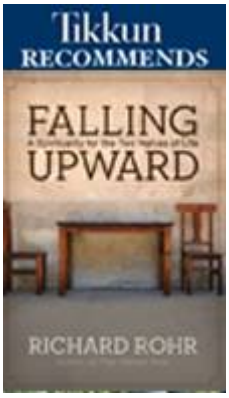
Falling Upwards: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life

June 29, 2011



FALLING UPWARDS: A SPIRITUALITY FOR THE TWO HALVES OF LIFE
Richard Rohr
Jossey-Bass, 2011

Franciscan Father Rohr is one of the great teachers and practitioners of the contemplative path in Catholicism, a contemporary successor to Thomas Merton. He is also founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation and a regular contributor to *Tikkun*. Rohr's previous book, *The Naked Now,* was a stunning exploration of mystical Christianity, revealing the nonduality that underlies the biblical claim of the oneness of God and the oneness of humanity as well. Mystics learn how to let go of control — and that is precisely the wisdom that is needed in the second half of life when, after having built whatever we could in the way of career and income and family, we face a different set of challenges as our bodily strength and earlier successes begin to fade. Rohr shows how we can "fall upward" into a spiritually rich experience in which the soul has found its fullness. He shows us how to live inside the big picture of reality as we realize that great people come to serve, not to be served, and that the falling apart of the first half of our lives can be a blessing if we recognize it as such.

tags: **Christianity**, **Spirituality**
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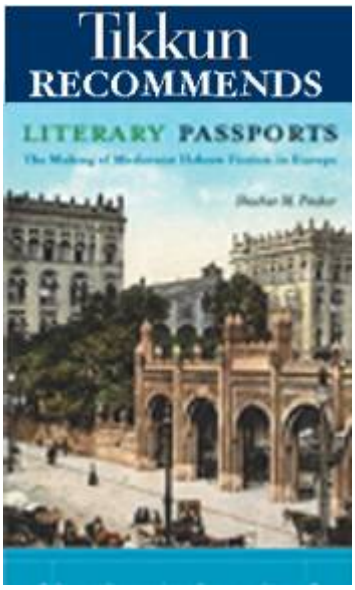
Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe

June 29, 2011



LITERARY PASSPORTS: THE MAKING OF MODERNIST HEBREW FICTION IN EUROPE
Shachar M. Pinsker
Stanford University Press, 2011

Pinsker's book reframes Hebrew fiction in Europe as part of the European modernist explosion from 1900 to 1930, rooted in the literary scene of Europe and not simply an adjunct to the Zionism developing in Palestine. Pinsker is particularly attuned to the emergence of Jewish male sexuality at the very moment when women were beginning to struggle for their position and power in the larger society and in Jewish life as well. It was a complicated time. Jewish men were facing the demand to sublimate their erotic desires, and Jewish writers were beginning to affirm Jewish women's sexuality. Pinsker is conversant with and often insightful about the development of European literary culture, so this study turns out to be just as exciting an exploration of Western cultural themes as it is of early Hebrew ones.

tags: **Analysis of Israel/Palestine**, **Judaism**
http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/literary-passports-the-making-of-modernist-hebrew-fiction-in-europe

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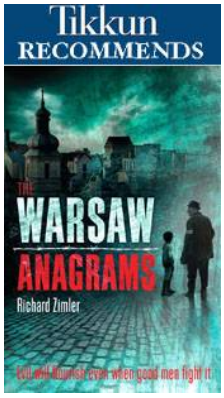
The Warsaw Anagrams, The Mighty Walzer, and Scenes from Village Life

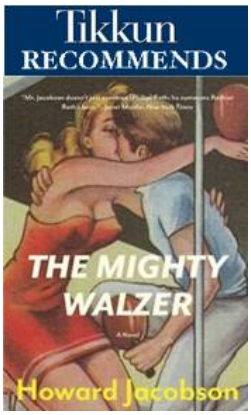
June 29, 2011



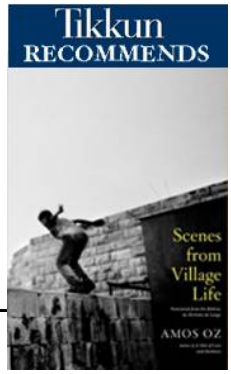
THE WARSAW ANAGRAMS
Richard Zimler
Overlook Press, 2011

THE MIGHTY WALZER
Howard Jacobson
Bloomsbury, 2011

SCENES FROM VILLAGE LIFE
Amos Oz
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011



From Portugal, England, and Israel come three of the world's most accomplished Jewish novelists, each reflecting a prototypical Jewish consciousness wildly different from each other's. Zimler's *Warsaw Anagrams* tells the story of Jews locked in the Warsaw ghetto. His previous book, the highly regarded *Last Kabbalist of Lisbon* also had a grim setting: the lachrymose reality of the Portuguese Inquisition. Yet Zimler is not a mourner of deaths, but a champion of hope and life. His novels are at once thrillers and deeply instructive. Jacobson's *The Mighty Walzer* is a coming-of-age story about a ping-pong playing Jew in 1950s Manchester, England, and it throbs with Diaspora Jewish humor. Jacobson previously won "the 2010 Man Booker Prize "(a great literary UK honor) for *The Finkler Question*, which was quite inferior to *The Mighty Walzer*. Amoz Oz is the much honored Israeli who is best known in the West for being a spokesperson for the fast-disappearing middle-of-the-road Israeli humanists and peace seekers, though he often ends up supporting Israeli wars and then cries as they (surprisingly?) bring death and destruction in their wake. Better to stick to his novels, which often capture the flavor of Israeli life. This one is an intriguing mystery set in a village being transformed by the (partial) yuppification of Israeli society.



tags: **Judaism**
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