

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

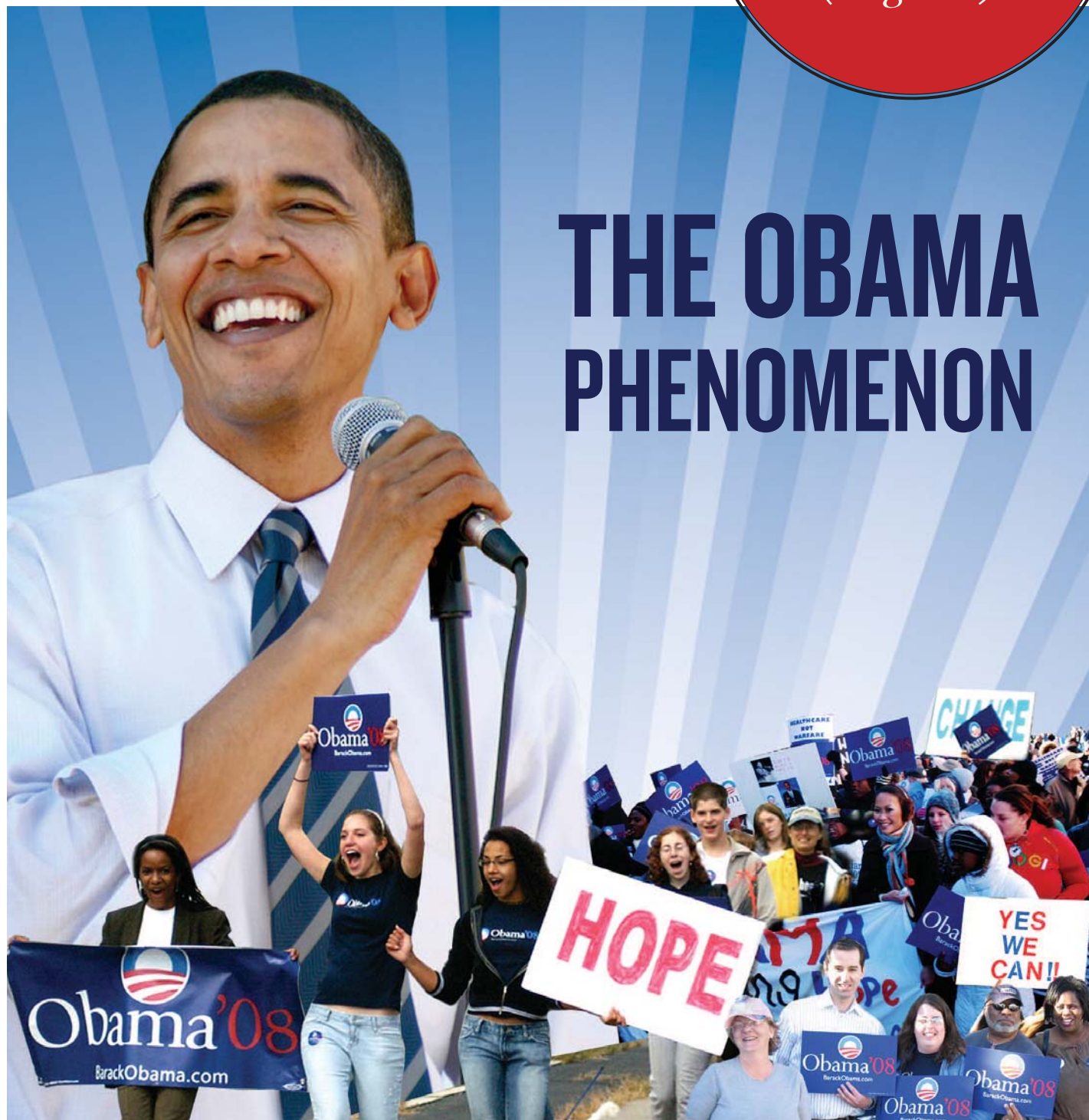
(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

MARCH/APRIL 2008

repenting our
ABORIGINAL SIN

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THE OBAMA PHENOMENON



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Sabiha Basrai

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Readers Respond

CAMPOLLO—HOW JEWISH WAS JESUS?

I AGREE wholeheartedly with Dr. Tony Campolo's observations concerning resurrection and affirmation of bodily life as the Christian hope, rather than Greek understandings of a disembodied "soul" going to "heaven" ("How Jewish Was Jesus?" [*Tikkun*, November/December 2007]).

However, as one who spent most of his adult life trying to be someone he was not, I would suggest that the whole business of "essential self" is more complicated than his table-pounding single-mindedness will allow. Finding one's true self is a necessary and commendable exercise. He need not weep for those youth who so inexplicably place themselves beyond the reach of his own clear-eyed conviction as to what their "commitments" ought to be. They'll be okay.

REV. KEN MOODY-ARNDT
Akron, OH

IT'S HARD TO ARGUE against Tony Campolo's premise that Jesus' Hebraic views were historically supplanted by Greek thought, giving rise to a tradition of the pre-existing "good" soul and

the "evil" flesh into which humans incarnate. Campolo makes a great case for a "positive existentialism" that is made possible by abandoning the supposition that there is a self we have to go off and find. Then he makes a remark about the time wasted by young people who go off to find themselves through introspection, "usually in Boulder, Colorado."

If this is a reference to Naropa Institute, and Boulder's Buddhist community, then it is ironic that Campolo does not realize that this Boulder community agrees with him and is validating this view with their discipline. For it is precisely through the introspection of meditation that such spiritual seekers discover by looking and failing to find one, that, indeed, there is no essential self to find or to defend.

PAUL FELTON
Nashville, TN

CAMPOLLO—PSYCHOTHERAPY

As Tony Campolo points out in "Psychotherapy and the Politics of Meaning" (*Tikkun* January/February 2008) the shadow side of self-exploration can be isolation and narcissism. However to say that we should direct people to community and service rather than self-exploration, as he seems to suggest, invokes a false dichotomy. Concern for and exploration of the individual self and concern for and exploration of the collective

exist in a crucial dialectic. Ideally, each supports and develops the other. Equal to the dangers of isolation and narcissism which unbalanced self-exploration can produce are the dangers involved in the shadow side of the collective. These dangers are varieties and degrees of suppression and tyranny, which inspire accompanying inauthenticity and duplicity on the parts of individuals. Just as individual narcissism can be largely unconscious, so can the ills of a collective. It is the self-reflective individual that serves as a check and balance on the potential ills of the collective, and it is the collective, the group, which can assist with the narcissistic ills of individuals. Growth depends on our being able to move simultaneously in the directions of self-exploration and community. We may long for a simpler means of responsible praxis, but it does not exist. Immersion in community and service, without self-exploration, is just as irresponsible as the converse. I see plenty of people who have compulsively served others without attention to an authentic sense of themselves, and they are not bringing their greatest gifts to the world, because they are not acting out of their highest and deepest selves.

Part of what I see as the promise of the Network of Spiritual Progressives is a recognition of the need to work on all fronts. The levels

of individual meaning, local community, national policy and ethical (caring and just) international involvement all interpenetrate. Any one of these arenas, if not explored and nurtured, can hold back or undermine the others.

JANET LEWIS
Penn Yan, NY

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

I READ WITH GREAT interest "Science & Spirit" (*Tikkun* November/December 2007). The most fundamental of all fundamental principles is that a Spirit supreme and unchanging pervades the entire universe and the material world is merely a manifestation of that Spirit. More than 3500 years ago India perceived this principle even more deeply than the most highly civilized nations do today. You may call it anything, principles, evolution, consciousness or God. Each will speak in its own tongue.

The Hindu scholar Nani spoke beautifully of today's problem: "In these days of spiritual illiteracy and poverty of spirit, when people when people find that wealth can only multiply itself and attain nothing, when people have to deceive their souls with counterfeits after having killed the poetry of life, it is necessary to remind ourselves that civilization is an act of the spirit. Material progress is not to

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be mistaken for inner progress. When technology outstrips moral development, the prospect is not that of a millennium but of extinction."

Your write-up was very timely and I hope many readers will read and think on it.

K. S. RAMESH PH.D.
Charlotte, NC

IMPEACH BUSH?

I'VE BEEN ARGUING with people over their insistence on choosing "electable" candidates over candidates they believed in since the 1980s. It's nice to see *Tikkun* take up the gambit ("The Presidential Primaries" [*Tikkun* (January/February 2008)]). However, given the level of defiance on the part of Nancy Pelosi, who, against the wishes of her San Francisco constituency, supported warrantless wiretapping, subsidies for

rich commodities farmers; and did little to stymie the Bush efforts to keep up the war, and who has taken Impeachment "off the table," your utter lack of any discussion over removing the speaker from office, or at least voting her out, seems like a political calculation in itself. The operative saying, perfect for T-shirts and bumperstickers everywhere, should be: Impeach Bush or Recall Pelosi. Your Choice, Nancy! While a recall might not have any legal weight, if it was supported by a significant majority of San Franciscans from districts generally liberal/progressive in their voting habits, it would have the effect of censuring the wayward Representative; it would certainly be a damaging vote of no confidence. It does little good at this point to continue to take swipes at the corrupt Administration,

when a leader who has so miserably executed the duties of her office, and is accountable to such a small number of voters, is not facing any serious repercussions for her behavior. I would posit that it is this calculation, that she will not face any consequences, which has led Speaker Pelosi to put the priorities of the Democratic Party over the demands of her constituents.

PAUL TOMINAC
San Francisco

DENVER MOSQUE

I ENJOYED READING about your experiences at the Denver Mosque (*Tikkun*/NSP email blast, January 9th, 2008). I suspect that you would agree with me that these sort of events should be more frequent, in houses of worship of all faiths, and perhaps even more importantly, out-

side of those temples. It seems to me that people of good will are all seeking to communicate with God in the languages with which they're familiar. There is no basic conflict between those channels of communication, as it's likely that they all wind up in the same place.

I'm privileged to currently live and work in a nation that is, statistically, about 85 percent Muslim. I live with, play with, work with, and laugh and cry with Muslims, and they with I. Their faith is not so terribly different than mine; indeed, it is much more alike than not. Among those who obey Halal dietary laws, a person brought up in a Kosher home would, or at least should, feel comfortable. The history of Islam is so much the history of Judaism, and of Christianity. It is so tragic that so many, of all faiths, have lost track

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of that, or chose to ignore it. The gracious hospitality that is a part of Islamic—and Kazakh—tradition is a reality here in the heart of Central Asia.

Demonization of a particular people and faith led to the Holocaust against the Jews. It led also to the Holocaust against the Gypsies, or Roma, with whom my cousins shared a common trench grave at Babi Yar in Kiev, Ukraine. The consequences of that sort of hatred in turn resulted in the fear that prevents a viable peace in the Middle East, at least insofar as Israelis can control that process. Yet hatred is alive in the world, and from Kenya to Darfur, from Pakistan to Iraq, and in so many more places, ethnic cleansing, genocide, political expedience, human exploitation, and enslavement are daily facts of life.

I recently received a plea from one of my best friends. She's a physician, a healer, and, without question, a good and decent person. She passed along a petition, perhaps from AIPAC, and asked me to join her in signing an opposition to any concession by Israel of territory in exchange for forward movement in the peace negotiations with Palestine. This fine person, who has never been to the Middle East, who has told me that she distrusts Muslims, but who would never consciously cause harm to another soul, who thinks of herself as a thinking and caring Jew, fails to grasp to even the smallest degree the pain of growing up stateless, the anger of young people condemned to wander the earth homeless, the frustra-

tion that gives rise to terrorism that in turn begets more horror.

Someday, people like my friend will open their eyes. They'll see that those of us who urge a creative and open approach to solving the critical problems of the world do not necessarily embrace or justify the politics or acts of terror, do not seek to reward hatred with kindness, and are not fools with wool over our eyes. We argue from a position of strength and some of us—I am one—have no difficulty doing so with the support of a strong and capable military force. But as we said in the 1960s, give peace a chance.

I wish that more Americans would have the chance to experience Islam firsthand. Like any faith, taken to extremes it is extremist. Similarly, like any faith, it is a way to talk to God. Perhaps we ought to be more aware of the former, while being cautious about the latter, first in our own religions before we condemn the faith of others.

IVAN SAFYAN ABRAMS
Republic of Kazakhstan

CHANUKAH AND CHRISTMAS

THANK YOU SO MUCH for your inspirational messages and rabbinical interpretations (*Tikkun*/NSP email blast, December 2nd, 2007). I find them so helpful for living in the world and for giving value and vitality to my faith of origin.

I would like to mention the wonderful messages of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. It's a festival of lights that also brings light into a dark world and which celebrates the triumph of justice

over evil, as told in the ancient story of Rama and Sita. Unlike either Judaism or Christianity, the goddess symbol is very strong and no god is ever unaccompanied (at least for long) by a goddess (or perhaps metaphorically no man abandons (or should abandon) his feminine and nurturing spirit. Unlike monotheistic religions, Hindu polytheism allows for each person to manifest his/her godlike spirit as a god or goddess in the world. Another difference is that Diwali is celebrated by bringing food and treats to each other, rather than exchanging gifts. Vive les differences!

PAULETTE MEHTA
Little Rock, Arkansas

CLINTON/OBAMA

Ed. Note: *The day before the Super Tuesday primary, Tikkun forwarded to our large email list a news article about feminists who supported Obama, a strong statement of support for Clinton by feminist Robin Morgan, who took the form of her famous 1970 article "Goodbye To All That" and transformed it into an argument that many who were rejecting Hillary Clinton were doing it out of insensitivity to the struggle for women's liberation, and a critique of Morgan's perspective by feminist anthropologist Nancy Fraser. The following is one of the responses we received online:*

What I found most offensive about Robin Morgan's rant was her disparagement of younger women, who are the most progressive demographic. I work with a lot of surveys and exit polls, and her im-

plication (constant among feminists) that older women are politically liberal while younger women are backsliding is absolutely false. In 2004, for example, women age 30 and older split evenly for Bush, and those over 45 supported Bush—while younger women under 30 voted 6-4 against Bush, and under 25, 2-1 against Bush. Younger men are more politically progressive than older women.

I see incessant generational hate speech inflicted on younger people by older ones. Older feminists demean younger women at every turn—using the same language once brandished by male supremacists—then complain that many younger women won't identify with their brand of elder feminism. I would urge *Tikkun* to apply the same standards to generational hate speech as to other forms.

MIKE MALES
www.YouthFacts.org

CONFUSION OF TERMS

I FOUND IT IRONIC THAT in the same issue (*Tikkun*, January/February 2008) Chet Bowers wrote about the dangers of misusing and misunderstanding the words "liberal" and "conservative," Svi Shapiro contributed an article in which the words "education" and "schooling" were conflated. He might have benefited from recalling Mark Twain's quip: "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."

Daniel Grego
Executive Director,
TransCenter for Youth, Inc.

Current THINKING

Arun Gandhi Quits Peace Institute

We are saddened to see the University of Rochester succeed in pushing Arun Gandhi out of his post as president of the board of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence that Arun himself had founded. Arun had posted an opinion piece on the *Washington Post* blog, "On Faith," accusing Jews of being "locked into the Holocaust experience," which Jews "overplay...to the point that it begins to repulse friends." Israel, he wrote, is too reliant upon weapons and bombs and should instead befriend its enemies.

Up until this point, Gandhi was repeating what has been said countless times in *Tikkun* and supported by some of the greatest Jewish thinkers of our time. Unfortunately, Gandhi then went on to say, "Apparently, in the modern world, so determined to live by the bomb, this [making friends with one's enemies] is an alien concept. You don't befriend anyone, you dominate them. We have entered a culture of violence (Israel and the Jews are the biggest players) and this Culture of Violence is eventually going to destroy humanity."

Well, yes, the culture of violence is going to destroy humanity (other creatures take note and prepare for your future), but Jews as "the biggest

players" in a culture of violence? Give us a break! The United States has done more violence in the past five years in Iraq than Israel has done in its entire existence. And then there is China in Tibet, Russia in Chechnya, the million people killed in Rwanda, etc.

We know Arun Gandhi as a principled teacher of non-violence and a voice of moderation. So what can possibly explain this kind of distortion in what he wrote? "Anti-Semitism" is the answer provided by the Jewish establishment, which entered quickly into the dispute and helped make sure that Gandhi would lose his position. "Blaming Israel's actions on 'the Jews' is a classic racist move," they say. "On the one hand, Israel is not 'the Jews' and so why blame the entire Jewish people? On the other hand, Israel is not the biggest player in violence."

While the second part of their critique is right, the first part is more problematic. You can't build a Jewish community that identifies dissenters from Israeli policy as "self-hating Jews" and that accepts Israel's claim to be "the Jewish state," justifies its human rights abuses by reference to Jewish suffering and oppression around the world, and then act surprised that people hold the Jewish people ac-

countable. If Israel is the Jewish state, then Jews can be rightfully critiqued and held responsible in the same way Americans can be held responsible for the activities of the United States in Iraq.

But Gandhi's claim itself about the Jewish people and even about the State of Israel is wildly wrong. What would have led Gandhi to make such a wild claim? We know him, we heard him speak at the founding conference of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, and we know he is no anti-Semite. But like so many other progressives, Gandhi surely feels (as do we at *Tikkun*) huge frustration and anger that the oppression of the Palestinian people continues, justified by an arrogant discourse and by the use of American Jewish political power to silence dissenters or make them pay a high personal price for challenging Israeli policies. We know many rabbis who share this perspective, but who would never dare say so in public for fear of losing their livelihood, and all the more so for other Jewish professionals.

The frustration is justifiable, but the claim made by Gandhi is not. So again, why did he make it?

Our guess is that Gandhi has been seduced by the anger and hatred that often

finds more extreme expression among academic community lefties and the surrounding Palestinian communities in the United States than in the West Bank itself. There are parts of the Left that accept any extreme language against Israel as legitimate, and enjoy taunting the Jewish supporters of Israel more than they enjoy going into the community and trying to build public support for a change of U.S. (and ultimately Israeli) Middle East policy. It's much easier to escalate the rhetoric than to engage in the hard work of building political support. Gandhi may well have been exposed to too much of that kind of influence, to the point that he would make such an extreme statement.

Yet, Gandhi should not have lost his job. He should have been required to learn a more balanced picture of Israel/Palestine, and then teach that more balanced picture through his non-violence center. The University of Rochester leadership lost a wonderful opportunity to contribute to a new kind of dialogue, and instead went for harsh punishment. Everyone loses. Particularly the Jews, who are perceived by many as stifling free and open debate and using power to silence critics.

Praise for the Catholics

Like every other religious community in the world, the Catholic Church continues to be divided between those who hear God's voice encouraging domination, power, and control over others and those who hear God supporting love, generosity, and caring for the poor and the oppressed. Since the holy texts and traditions of every religion contain both voices, the relative balance between them is constantly shifting; though in the past few centuries the controlling voice of God has too often been given special credence by many of the establishment figures in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. So it deserves special praise when a large group of Catholics break rank.

Many Catholic priests have earned a place of honor through their strong support for liberation theology and their role in supporting the needs of the poor and oppressed in Central and South America—helping to overcome the Church's historical reputation as a ferocious inquisitor and persecutor of Jews and native peoples.

The most significant gathering of these spiritual progressives takes place each year at a vigil outside the gates of Ft. Benning, Georgia, home to the School of the Americas, the U.S. Army's training program in counter-insurgency, torture, death squads, and repression of unions and democratic social change movements. Father Roy Bourgeois organized the School of the Americas Watch organization. His courage—including serving over five years in prisons for various acts of nonviolent civil disobedience—and his persistence in reaching out to Catholic parochial schools and universities, produced a spiritually moving protest at Ft. Benning in November 2007. Twenty thousand (mostly Catholic, though they did also have Rabbi Lerner as a speaker) of the faithful intoned the names of those murdered or “disappeared” by the trainees of this “school of assassins.” They raised little wooden crosses and chanted “presente” (present: this soul has not been forgotten by us).

It was dignified, deeply

spiritual, and emotionally powerful. And it raised a powerful question for the Network of Spiritual Progressives, which we now address to you: what are the prayers, rituals, and spiritually rich symbols that we can use to create a spiritual progressive political message? We don't want to use the lowest common denominator prayers and rituals that seem inauthentic to those who have grown up with a rich religious tradition. But, we also have to avoid those prayers and rituals so deeply rooted in one set of meanings (e.g. the communion with its interpretation that one is eating the blood and flesh of God) that they can offend people from other religious backgrounds, who feel that they can neither affirm the predominant understanding of the ritual nor, out of respect to those who can, transform it to mean something quite different and interfaith. What we are looking for is *not* some abstract thinking, but concrete prayers, rituals, and symbols that could help us develop resources for spiritual progressives of all faiths to connect to.

Meanwhile, a word to non-Catholics: it's time to stop allowing the right wing of the Catholic Church and their homophobia and opposition to abortion under any circumstances to shape our vision of all Catholics, and instead to acknowledge and appreciate the courage and decency of millions of Catholics who support the liberation vision of Jesus of Nazareth.

In 2008, the School of the Americas Watch has invited *Tikkun* to partner with them to gather spiritual progressives from all the different religious and spiritual communities. We, in turn, invite you to put aside that weekend, Nov. 21-23, to join us in Columbus, Georgia at Ft. Benning for an amazing and important weekend of education and protest. Details will be in the September/October 2008 issue *Tikkun*.

Responses welcome:
Letters@Tikkun.org

Protesters Boo and Heckle Ashcroft

Protesters were evicted when they rushed the stage and heckled former Attorney General John Ashcroft at Colorado University last November. It would have been better if the American public had a legal and accessible way to charge public officials with criminal misconduct or, in the case of Ashcroft, with crimes against humanity. Watching abettors of mass murder like Henry Kissinger, John Bolton, Oliver North, or the Bush neocons, who designed the illegal

invasion of Iraq, get away with murder and get paid tens of thousands of dollars for their speeches to an array of universities and corporations can really ruin one's day. Repressing the right to free speech is not the way to show our upset. As the liberal world correctly notes, the way to respond to distorted speech is through more speech on another side. But what this perspective underemphasizes is that the access to audiences is not free, but controlled. If the organiz-

ers of speeches by those who support mass murder were to ensure that at the same event another perspective could be aired that was under-represented in public discourse, or if minority opinions were given adequate attention in the media, there would be little reason for booing and heckling. Without that access, however, these can be acceptable forms of protest, especially when the occasion is a talk by a present or former official of the government and when they do

not prevent the speaker from talking. In England, which has a reputation for being well-mannered but also for subjecting politicians to a more robust public accountability, booing is accepted as a perfectly legitimate form for expressing disapproval, while heckling is prized for its wit and accuracy. Booing and even heckling, when done with wit and respect, are appropriate nonviolent techniques that should be welcomed in overtly political contexts. ■

What's the Vision Driving Change?

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

THIS POLITICAL SEASON APPEARS TO BE THE YEAR OF Change. Barack Obama's campaign is defined by "change"; Hillary Clinton is the candidate who can make "change" happen; even President George Bush says he would campaign for "change" were he running. All of us, it would seem, are looking forward to something different than what we have today.

Some things no doubt will be different: we will witness the first female or African-American major party presidential candidate. And, importantly, we will see a dramatic shift in America's foreign image with the end of the Bush presidency.

But will the vision of our new leader simply reflect the ordinary course adjustments associated with a new presidency or truly transform the direction of the nation?

First, we can expect a change of tone. Whether named Clinton, Obama or John McCain, our next president will likely diminish Washington's partisan, bickering tone. All three candidates, both in word and deed, have a track record of working well with members of the opposing party.

Second, while differences in detail abound, we can expect changes in domestic priorities. Contrary to the Bush Administration, the three leading candidates have emphasized global climate change, increased access to health insurance, and responsible fiscal policies in their campaigns.

Third, we can expect at least modest shifts in foreign policy. While there seem to be major differences between the Democratic and Republican candidates on the Iraq War, none of the leading candidates have advocated an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. McCain would pull out troops at a pace dictated by security conditions on the ground and with an eye to restoring the strength of a U.S. military sapped by war; Clinton and Obama would pull out troops at a pace intended to drive political reconciliation and with an eye to reducing American casualties. And none of the candidates differ significantly on the need for an aggressive response to the War on Terror, on our commitment to Afghanistan, on a wary posture toward Iran, or on active steps to preserve stability in Pakistan. None of the candidates have reservations about our commitment to Israel or the modest efforts Bush is making to promote a two-state solution. Unfortunately, none of the candidates have yet embraced the Strategy of Generosity advocated in this magazine.

These changes, while not unimportant, are the adjustments

expected in a change in the presidency. On the other hand, we should not expect the transformative change implied by Obama's soaring rhetoric. An expensive health and welfare program cannot be squared with our fiscal position; an immediate end-the-war position is at odds with a lengthy, phased pullout from Iraq. The separation of powers in our Federal government, the rigidity of Congressional composition created by gerrymandering, the balance of lobbying power across issues and constituencies, and the protection of minority rights in the Senate create significant structural impediments to truly transformative policy change. Our Founding Fathers were rightly suspicious of resting executive power in the hands of a monarch or demagogue and built structures to check that risk, even if one party controls two branches of government.

Moreover, this election will be closely fought and is not likely to produce the kind of landslide that would provide the mandate for transformative change. In the general election, the race will likely be contested between two compelling narratives, each offering a distinctive and appealing vision.

The Democratic vision will be one of national unity and harmony, inspired by a leader whose personal story embodies a post-racial (or post-gender) America coming together to address shared challenges through an active, consensus, and expensive government.

The Republican vision will be one of a nation driven by personal achievement and liberty, inspired by a leader whose courage, sacrifice, and patriotism reflects values of individual responsibility, innovation, and constrained government.

These two themes—community and shared values on the one hand and individual achievement and liberty on the other—are competing narratives of and in America. If both candidates are equally effective in championing their respective visions, the election will be closely contested.

This does not mean that this election is unimportant—quite the contrary. The visions of the two parties have important implications about what change we can expect in the next four years. We all want change, and the kind of change ordinarily attendant to a change in administration will no doubt occur. However, the vision that will transform and accelerate change in America has yet to be presented to the American people. ■

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

The Obama Phenomenon

BY MICHAEL LERNER

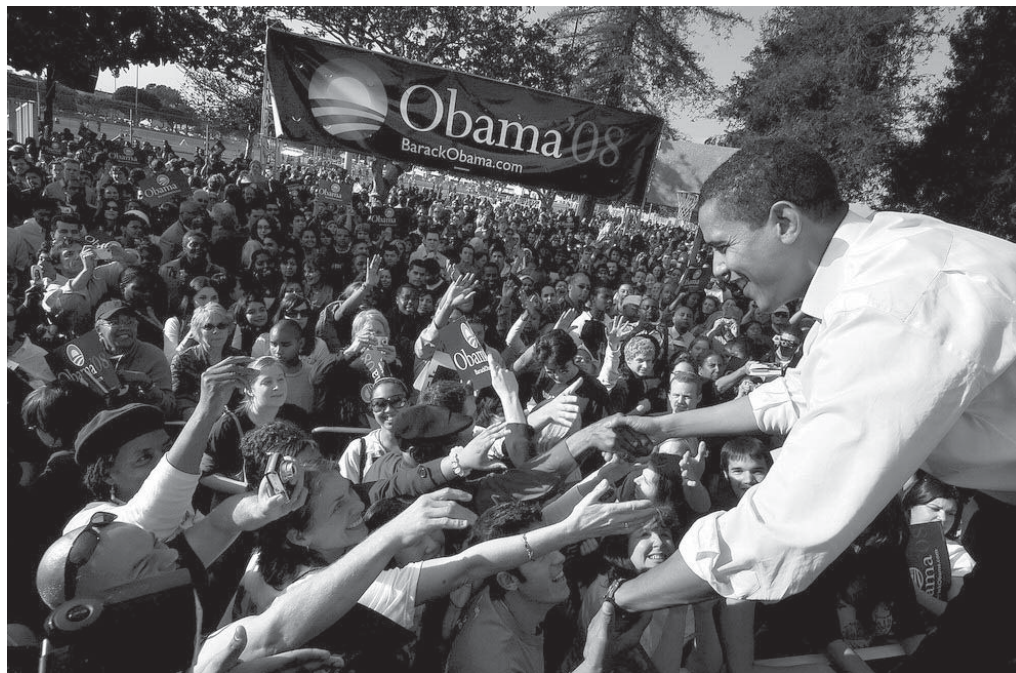
THE PHENOMENON IS NOT Barack Obama. Senator Obama is a masterful organizer and teacher. But this editorial is not about Obama as much as about what he elicits in others, and should not be read as an endorsement of him.

The energy, hopefulness, and excitement that manifests in Obama's campaign has shown up before in the last fifty years, only to quickly be crushed. It was there in the 1960s and 1970s in the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement, and the movement for gay liberation. One felt it flowing at rallies and demonstrations at which Robert Kennedy, Cesar Chavez, Betty Friedan, Isaac Deutscher, Joan Baez, and Martin Luther King, Jr. articulated their visions. It was there again in Earth Day, in the anti-nuclear movement, and in the movement against the war with the Contras. It was there during the campaign of Jesse Jackson in 1988 and the Clintons' campaign in 1992. And it has been there—dare we say it—in the growth of the religious right and the Campus Crusade for Christ.

What is that energy and excitement, and why does it touch people so deeply?

Since *Tikkun* started in 1986 we've been trying to convince the political leadership of the liberal and progressive forces that they needed to understand this phenomenon and speak to it. Sometimes we've written about it as a hunger for meaning and purpose, and prescribed a "politics of meaning" as the way to respond politically; in the last few years we've written about the need for a spiritual progressive politics to bring this energy into the public sphere.

The phenomenon in question is this: the intense desire of every human being on this planet to overcome and transcend the materialism and selfishness that shape the global economic arrangements and permeate the consciousness of all people, to overcome the looking-out-for-number one consciousness that divides us and the technocratic language that shapes our public institutions and denies us access to our common humanity, and to overcome the alienation from each other that this way of being has created so



that we might once again recognize each other as embodiments of God or Spirit (or however you want to talk about the force-field of goodness, generosity, kindness, justice, peace, nonviolence, and care for each other and nature and the entirety of all that is).

We avert our eyes from each other

EVERY GESTURE, EVERY WORD, EVERY DEED, EVERY POLITICAL act, every interaction with others, every message we give ourselves all combine to either reinforce our separation and estrangement from each other or to reconnect us in a deep way that allows genuine mutual recognition, the seeing and hearing of who we really are, the contact we have with the sacred in ourselves, in each other, and in the world.

We live in a world that is humanly deadening. It's not just the actual murders committed in our name. I picked up the newspaper this morning and read that U.S. forces barged into a home in the village of Door, 100 miles north of Baghdad, and began to fire at the family living there, killing four, including an eleven-year-old girl. Perhaps tomorrow they will issue a statement acknowledging that this was a mistake, as they did today about the killing of nine Iraqi civilians in Iskandariya a few days ago, and the death "under mysterious circumstances" of an Iraqi militiaman who died "in custody after being held for three days on a Baghdad arrest warrant" as a result of a bullet in the head. At some point they'll

acknowledge that the U.S. invasion let loose dynamics that have led to the deaths of over one million Iraqis, and that the “surge” could only be described as “working” because it accelerated the process of some 3 million Iraqis leaving their homes while neighborhoods were being surrounded by concrete walls to provide protection to one ethnic group while the other groups fled to “safety” elsewhere. But today, most Americans remain in a state of zombie-like denial of what this country continues to do.

Nor is the deadening process confined to the various ways we deny our involvement in the world and what is happening therein. For example, our refusal to acknowledge that paying the taxes to keep the war going is part of what makes it possible; and our refusal to acknowledge that the 20,000-30,000 children who die (on average) every single day around the world because of inadequate food and healthcare are directly connected to our global economic system in which we participate daily and which we accept as “inevitable”; and the distance we maintain from those who seek fundamental change, whom we reject as unrealistic.

No, it's not just these large systems of oppression and manipulation that deaden us. It's also our own withdrawn and depressive certainty that nothing much can happen in the world of politics and economics, or even in our interactions with each other. We walk down the streets or ride the buses, subways, or airplanes, averting our eyes from the others who share our circumstances. We are certain that if we start talking to others that they will feel that their privacy has been invaded and will resent it, suspecting that we are out to sell them something or take advantage of them or manipulate them. Instead, as *Tikkun* associate editor Peter Gabel has so frequently articulated on these pages, we stay inside ourselves, offering ourselves to others only in tightly controlled roles, the dimensions of which have been carefully constructed to ensure that we will not awaken in the others their own hunger for love, friendship, recognition, or aliveness.

And so we deaden ourselves and deaden each other. Each time we avert our eyes, each time we pretend not to see the homeless person, the fellow worker getting into trouble, the neighbor who needs our help, the car stalled on the freeway, and each time we tighten our face and muscles to give to the other the message of “don't go there” where “there” means “don't try to force me to be real with you when I'm scared to do that,” we manage to convince the others that nobody gives a damn, that they, too, are alone, and that they would be making a huge mistake to try to break out of their isolation or to think that their own desires for connection are shared by billions of others and are not simply a manifestation of some private inadequacy or pathology.

Recently, some columnists have compared Obama to a rock star because his supporters seem to treat him more like that than like a politician. They are only partially mistaken. What the best and most fulfilling rock concerts of the past several decades have offered one generation is what other multi-generational mega-churches or Super Bowls and World Series' offer to others: a chance to momentarily experience a transcendence of all those feelings of loneliness and alienation, a momentary ability to be part of a “we” that reminds us of what it feels like to be less alone.

For a moment we experience a community of shared purpose, and no matter how intellectually, psychologically, or spiritually empty that moment might be, for that moment we get a distorted but, nevertheless, powerful way of reminding ourselves of how much more we could be than when we are alone and scared.

The problem, of course, is that these moments are often based on an us-versus-them vision of the world: our community requires that some other people be the bad guys. As contemporary psychodynamic psychotherapists like to point out, we are often engaged in splitting our own internalized image of ourselves as fundamentally good and decent from another part, which we see as dirty and unacceptable and hence not really part of us at all but rather part of some “evil Other,” which in the West, through history, has been the Jew, the Black man, the feminist, the homosexual, the communist, the terrorist, the illegal immigrant, etc.

The effectiveness of not demonizing

OBAMA'S APPEAL STARTS FROM HIS INSISTENCE ON NOT demonizing the Other—the very point from which *Tikkun* started as a project of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health (ILMH) twenty-two years ago. At ILMH we learned—through conducting an intensive study of working class consciousness—that people moving to the Right politically were not primarily motivated by racism, sexism, and hatred, but by the spiritual crisis in their lives that the Left failed to address and the Right spoke to (albeit with distorted solutions).

Obama avoids detailing his political programs precisely because he knows that in so doing he would shift the discourse from how to break through the fear we have of each other and our “certainty” that we are condemned to be alone and alienated, back to the old discourse about point X or point Y in his health care or environmental program, leaving most people behind in despair. Instead, he confronts that despair straight on.

Obama knows that most people want a very different world, but don't believe it is possible unless someone else makes it happen. He challenges his audience by telling them that there is no one else, that they themselves are the people who must make the world different. To quote Obama from his Super Tuesday speech: “So many of us have been waiting so long for the time when we could finally expect more from our politics, when we could give more of ourselves and feel truly invested in something bigger than a particular candidate or cause. This is it. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

In short, Obama is telling his supporters, we are not in need of some magical leader, not even Obama himself. Rather, what we need is the confidence in ourselves to reclaim the public space, to break down our fears about ourselves and each other, and to recognize that it is only when we move beyond our personal lives and work together for our highest vision that anything substantial will change.

Obama has used his campaign to teach us that we actually can emerge from our frightened, withdrawn state, and enter into a public community and affirm each other's humanity, whether that be through our foreign relations, in our approach to immigration,

in our economic lives, or, even, in overcoming the ossified categories of “the Left” and “the Right.” And Obama presents himself with a sense of certainty that helps us overcome our own uncertainty—he is determined to win the election because he thinks we can do this if we are willing to “declare that we are with each other.”

It is precisely this striving to create a transcendent experience of connection without demonizing the Other that has been the important element in the Obama phenomenon. Although the criticisms of his seeming inability to recognize the depth of the struggles that must be waged against the entrenched

powers of global capital are well-founded, the Obama phenomenon promises to accumulate the power to challenge the powerful precisely by rejecting the demonizing of the other and following a path of nonviolence, not only in actions but also in words. This kind of nonviolent communication, a powerful extension of Gandhi’s and King’s methodology, may actually, in the long run, prove far more effective than pointing out the cruelty and hypocrisy of those who will not challenge the existing systems of militarism and global economic and political domination.

This is about us, not about Obama

SURELY, ONE MIGHT OBJECT, WE ARE GIVING FAR TOO MUCH credit to Obama himself. After all, many on the Left argue, Obama is just a consummate politician, and not one committed to the programs that we all need. Obama voted against the war in Iraq, but he does not advocate the kind of withdrawal that we at *Tikkun* believe is the necessary precondition for any real healing in that country, namely a total and complete withdrawal not fudged by turning our military into “advisors” who could then stay in the country until it is stabilized. (Our troops are *still* in Germany and Japan sixty-three years after the end of the Second World War, so we know how hard it is for any government to acknowledge that “stabilization” has been achieved.) Obama does not support a single payer health care program of the sort that the NSP supports, and his ideas on health care have been less plausible than those of Hillary Clinton. Obama has not supported a serious tax on carbon emissions and his environmental programs have not challenged the global corporate polluters and exploiters of the earth, nor is he likely to support the kinds of radical changes in our Western levels of consumption necessary to save the planet from destruction. Obama has not been on the forefront of struggles against poverty and for the empowerment of workers. And Obama does not yet advocate for a Global Marshall Plan or for the Strategy of Generosity that has been central to this magazine and the NSP’s approach to transforming the world.

All of the above would be relevant points if we were discussing whether to endorse the candidate Barack Obama. But we are not.



We have never endorsed a candidate, despite the many who misperceived our enthusiasm for the language being used by the Clintons during the 1992 campaign and for Hillary Clinton’s spontaneous speech when she explicitly endorsed our “politics of meaning” and then invited us to meet with her and strategize together in the White House in 1993. The truth is that even beyond the legal prohibitions that make endorsement impossible for a 501c3, we actually don’t see any political party or candidate who fully articulates a spiritual politics of the sort you’ll find in our Spiritual Covenant with America at www.spiritualprogressives.org. So while some of us may endorse a candidate in 2008 as private citizens, in no way does this extend to an endorsement by the magazine or the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Nor are we surprised to find that members of the NSP differ sharply in who they would endorse.

These dead bones shall yet live

WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT IS THE PHENOMENON OF HOPE and the coming back to life of the spiritually dead. This is the good news of Spring, with nature blooming; the good news of Passover and its message that no system of slavery or deadness is inevitable because there is a Force in the universe that makes possible the transformation from that which is to that which ought to be; and the good news of Easter with its message that even the dead can be resurrected, or as our Jewish prophet Ezekiel put it, that “these dead bones shall yet live.”

Or to put it another way: no matter how spiritually and emotionally dead the majority of people on the planet may appear to be, no matter how lost in their pursuit of money and fame and sexual conquest and me-first-ism and don’t-bother-me-ism, the truth is that the resurrection of the dead is always at hand, always a possibility. Human beings can always be awakened again to choose life, to choose love, to choose kindness, generosity, ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. That capacity of human beings is what it means to have a soul, though in my view it might be better to say that all human beings participate in the soul of the universe, which is the God of the universe.

The big task for spiritual progressives is to keep the Obama phenomenon alive whether or not he becomes the next president of the U.S.; either way, the challenge is substantial. In the early days of the Clinton presidency when the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* were describing me as Hillary Clinton's guru, and Bill Clinton was steadily reading *Tikkun*, Hillary told me a powerful story that has stayed with me ever after. She told of a meeting that FDR had with leaders of the labor movement who were trying to convince FDR to support the Lehman Act (to grant legal status to union strikes and organizing). After four hours of discussion, FDR summarized this way: "Gentlemen, you have totally convinced me that you are right. Now, go out there into the world and *force me to do it*" [emphasis mine]. His point, Hillary explained, is that even as president, the forces pushing in the direction of the status quo are potentially overwhelming unless countered by a well-organized popular movement, and she and Bill did not feel that they had enough of a movement behind them to push for their most visionary ideas.

That's why the movement is so very important.

The living movements we need

IT MATTERS, HOWEVER, WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT. THE LEFT and the liberal progressives have not been particularly effective in building a transformative movement in large part because they've been stuck on the level of "policy and program" while ignoring the spiritual hunger for meaning and purpose, for connection and mutual recognition, that we've been talking about in *Tikkun* all these years.

All of the movements and campaigns that were mentioned above were originally embodiments of that larger set of spiritual concerns, and they drew their energy precisely from their ability to reconnect to the deep and abiding hunger, often well-hidden below the surface appearance, for a return to life, to the spirit, to God, or however else you choose to express this. When that hunger explodes into life, when people are resurrected from their spiritual death, everything becomes possible. And that itself can be overwhelming, as we can see from reading how scared the people were at Mt. Sinai when God revealed Herself to the people. It feels so much safer if people can find a way to turn that energy into something not quite so revolutionary: into commandments, social programs, rituals, legislation, political platforms, or concrete demands. And there's nothing fundamentally wrong with this as long as one keeps the fires burning inside, the connection to the loving and awesome energy of the God of the universe, or of the power of staying alive to each other and to oneself at every moment.

Unfortunately, what often happens in social change organizations is that the fear becomes so great that it overwhelms the hopefulness and the love, and so they barely keep alive the pale shadow of that hopefulness, and instead try to prove that they are "realistic" by focusing their energies on struggles for this or that specific program, now increasingly out of touch with the underlying desire which led them and their supporters into these struggles in the first place. And without that desire and the contact with the

aliveness that it first evoked, these struggles become deadening and people drop away, and then they are lost. Washington, D.C. and many of our major cities around the country are filled with people who are involved in these liberal or progressive organizations that have lost their fire, and many more who have dropped out because the experience was no longer humanly satisfying or sustainable.

It's not enough to conclude that one should keep the movement alive after the campaign is finished. That was the promise of the McGovern campaign in 1972, the Carter campaign in 1976, the Kennedy campaign in 1980, the Jesse Jackson campaign in 1988, and the Clinton campaign in 1992. This won't happen unless the people work to make it happen during the campaign, right now, in the midst of the struggle. And it must be done in such a way that people are not re-privatized, passivized, and then eventually demobilized. It has to be planned regardless of what happens in the actual horse race for the presidency.

And this year there is a special challenge, because the people who have returned to life and energy are *not* just in the Obama campaign but in the Clinton campaign, and in the Green party, and in other political parties as well, and they need to be welcomed into an ongoing movement that keeps this energy alive, without facing recriminations for not having backed whoever others think that they should have.

Win or lose: what Obama needs to do right now

OBAMA HIMSELF SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE, AT TIMES, THAT WHAT really counts is not the horse race or even who wins the presidency, but the creation of an ongoing movement that will last. Unfortunately, he does not take the next, absolutely necessary step of telling his supporters what they can do to keep the movement going right now and endow it with the energy to last beyond the November elections. So, for example, the people in New York, California, Massachusetts, Iowa, New Hampshire and all the other states that have voted are implicitly being given the message that there is nothing for them to do right now except to donate more money to the campaigns of their candidates.

Imagine how different that could be if Obama were to ask people to meet weekly in their neighborhoods in small groups to begin to build ongoing projects of social change that would embody their highest ideals. Groups could be organized, for example, around universal health care, environmental sanity, the Global Marshall Plan as the path to homeland security, corporate social responsibility, and electoral reform. If the millions of people who have been touched by the campaigns (and yes, not only by Obama, but by Hillary Clinton, John McCain, etc.) were to begin working *now* for the changes they want their candidate to bring to the country, then these campaigns would stop resembling horse races and start resembling the building of mass movements and the reclaiming of social space from all those columnists, politicians, and public opinion leaders whose impact historically has been to deaden our hopes and convince us that we should just attend to our own personal lives.

This is where the NSP comes in. We are not of any particular

candidacy, and not feeling conflicted about people who didn't back Obama but backed Clinton or even Huckabee or McCain or Nader or whoever. We see the big picture. We know that the key is to keep the hopeful energy alive, regardless of the outcome of the election, because that is the energy that will set the contours for what elected officials do once they have won.

That is the challenge, and for that, we need a way for people to become fully engaged in the electoral arena, and yet to recognize that what moves them is something far bigger than a great speaker and dynamic politician, but rather the goodness within them and within everyone else that has momentarily been allowed to reveal itself through the legitimating framework of an electoral campaign. But far too few people know about the NSP, and unless *you* help us change that (e.g. by inviting friends to a weekend afternoon or weekday evening gathering at your apartment or house

and showing them the NSP video and then discussing with them our program and ideas) people will not know where to go or what to do, and instead will simply be waiting for the next round of the election from September to November, and after November will feel lost and powerless and may even feel that they've been used and tricked once again.

It has always been that way after elections. But it doesn't have to be. The movements that have been generated by Obama, Clinton, McCain, Huckabee, and others could remain alive if we choose to make them such—alive, and able to transcend sectarian political boundaries. We at NSP will do our part to make that happen, but we can't do it without your involvement.

Contact: www.spiritualprogressives.org or (510) 644-1200. ■

Open-Heartedness and Generosity

NSP National Programs 2008

BY NICOLA TORBETT

We outline below the programs our national office will focus on this year. The goal in all our programs is to stimulate new ways of thinking that emerge from a worldview of open-heartedness and generosity rather than cynicism and fear. Our efforts will be successful to the degree that we generate new conversations and new thinking, so please don't be disappointed if you get involved and don't "win" in the conventional sense.

A contact person is listed for each program. We would be happy to coach you and provide you with resources to do this work. You can also find more information on our website at www.spiritualprogressives.org.

Strategy of Generosity and Global Marshall Plan Campaign

THIS PROGRAM HAS TWO GOALS:

1. To raise consciousness about the potential effectiveness of, and ethical mandate for, a new approach to homeland security that is based in open-heartedness and generosity rather than domination and control.
2. To propose and eventually implement a plan that would once and for all end poverty, homelessness, and hunger, and improve healthcare and education worldwide, as well as provide funding for healing the global environment.

Tactics:

- Religious services and petition drive on Generosity Weekend, April 11-13
- Advocate for support for a Congressional resolution
- Fundraise and run full-page newspaper advertisements
- Host house parties and forums
- Introduce city council resolutions
- Solicit endorsements by key individuals and organizations (faith communities, antiwar and anti-poverty organizations, etc.)
- Bird-dogging at political candidate appearances, asking candidates whether they would support replacing military domination and control with solidarity and generosity in our homeland security policy

To get involved, contact David Hart, Director of Advocacy and Outreach, at david@spiritualprogressives.org

New Bottom Line in Politics

OUR GOAL IN THIS PROGRAM IS TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE political conversation so that it challenges the "common sense" view that our highest goals are unlimited economic growth for the United States and personal prosperity for Americans at all costs. We need a president who is unashamed to talk and act from a

commitment to a new bottom line of solidarity, love, caring, kindness, compassion, generosity, cherishing of the planet, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe. These are not the terms one usually hears from a politician, but we desperately need prominent leaders who can inspire us to believe that there is enough, that we can afford to share, and that slowing down and acting from love, gratitude, awe, and wonder is actually more satisfying than the frenetic material consumption and competitiveness that is currently taken for granted in American life.

Tactics:

- Recruit, support, and train delegates to the nominating conventions of the political parties
- Host inspiring, spiritually rich events at the national conventions (visitors welcome: the Green convention will be July 10-11, the Democratic convention August 25-28, and the Republican convention September 1-4)
- Work through state processes to introduce platform resolutions for a strategy of generosity in homeland security and a Global Marshall Plan
- Create spiritual caucuses within the political parties
- Distribute our Voter's Guide far and wide
- Host debate-watching parties with discussion questions from an NSP perspective
- Fundraise for and run full-page ads in major newspapers

To get involved, contact: Nichola Torbett, Director of National Programming at Nichola@tikkun.org.

Chapter Network

OUR NETWORK OF LOCAL CHAPTERS IN MORE THAN EIGHTY towns and cities serves:

1. To provide a place for spiritual progressives to meet and support each other and to deepen their practice of spiritual activism
2. To cultivate a group of people who are more involved with our work and who give feedback and advice to the national office via monthly conference calls and regular emails.
3. To teach people to think in terms of worldview change and to frame issues with that shift in mind.

Tactics:

- Hold monthly chapter leader conference calls
- Maintain a chapter leader listserv to facilitate conversation and idea-sharing throughout the network
- Provide rich resources on our website, including a detailed organizer's guide
- Provide resources for organizing more informal local "meet ups"

To get involved, contact: Nichola@tikkun.org.

"Meaningful Life Now" Ongoing Consciousness Raising

1. CREATE SUSTAINED BREAKTHROUGHS IN WHICH PEOPLE become fully conscious of their own longing to live in a different way: more mutual recognition, more meaning and purpose, more connection, more love, more joy, more awe and wonder and in which people engage in mutual recognition and connect deeply with

each other.

2. Raise consciousness about the ways in which we have each been shaped by a culture of greed and materialism that urges us to ignore those longings. Awaken the possibility of choosing another way of being. Make different choices starting now and also work for systemic changes that open up greater latitude for people to choose differently.

3. Invent new ways of doing activism that rejuvenate burned-out activists, invite people in who have been turned off by or disinterested in conventional activist methods, and capture the imagination of the media and the country at large by tapping into widespread longing for a different way of living.

4. Catalyze changes in people's personal lives that will eventually change the culture.

Tactics:

- Develop a rich social networking website and other mechanisms through which people can connect with others and share the ways they are choosing "meaningful life now," what the challenges and rewards are, etc.
- Possibly develop an optional pledge through which people pledge to make changes toward a new bottom line in their lives right now
- Encourage local meet-ups where people can connect with others who are trying to choose "meaningful life now" and talk about the joys and challenges of that.
- Work with our subgroup, Psychologists for a New Bottom Line, to create and field test materials that will allow people to overcome their fear and "old bottom line" consciousness; these materials could range from discussion guides to twelve-step programs to street theater
- Coordinate a conscious-consumption campaign at holidays and possibly other times

To get involved, contact: Nichola@tikkun.org.

Progressive Renewals

THROUGH INSPIRING EVENTS AND MEDIA APPEARANCES, WE WILL create breakthroughs in which people engage in mutual recognition and connect deeply with each other, gain a felt sense of interdependence and oneness and the love that comes with that, and commit to live in a new way and to work to make it possible for others to do the same.

Tactics:

- Attend our Spiritual Activism Training near Washington, DC, over Memorial Day Weekend; see our website for more information and to register
- Invite our staff to speak to audiences in your area
- Help us break into the media in meaningful contexts
- Host one-night "Meaningful Conversation" evenings using the resources on our website
- Help us organize interfaith progressive "Renewals" in your area
- Plan to attend our next national conference, either in August or January; stay tuned for details!

To get involved, contact: Nichola@tikkun.org. ■

Aboriginal Sin

by A. Jay Adler

Will indigenous peoples ever receive justice for the crimes of colonization?

THE ORIGINAL UNREDEEMED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL crime of human history is the displacement and genocidal destruction of aboriginal populations. Yet despite the powerful and irrefutable history of these events, overwhelming numbers of people in the Western world have yet to be moved by conscience. What is the reason for this demurral, and what is to be done about it? For those attuned to discordances in matters of social justice, this harsh reality is a historical given of the modern world. For others, whatever it is that may have occurred took place long ago—it is history, it is past, there is nothing to be done.

Recent events in the United States and elsewhere suggest otherwise, however.

During his visit to Brazil of May, 2007, Pope Benedict outraged many South American indigenous groups by suggesting that the deliverance of Christian faith to the native populations of South America had been a benefit of the colonial era—a benefit, indeed, for which the indigenous peoples had been “silently longing” and that had “shaped their culture for 500 years.” Speaking defensively, and in denial of the historical record, he declared, “The proclamation of Jesus and of his Gospel did not at any point involve an alienation of the pre-Columbus cultures, nor was it the imposition of a foreign culture.”

Of course, the belief that European civilization and religious conceptions were superior to the native cultures, which were barely dignified as such, was what originally rationalized the subjugation of those cultures for those uncomfortable with purely materialistic motives. In Africa, the Western Hemisphere, and Oceania, notwithstanding the pain and loss—whole societies, millions of lives—the native peoples would be better off in the end. The cross or the sword had really been the cross and the sword. And now, in the twenty-first century, the leader of one of the world’s predominant religions, that had in fact served as the handmaiden of conquest, that had offered spiritual balm to soothe cultural disembowelment, can still assert that no real crime was committed and the aboriginal peoples had been delivered a gift.

How does the conscience not reel?

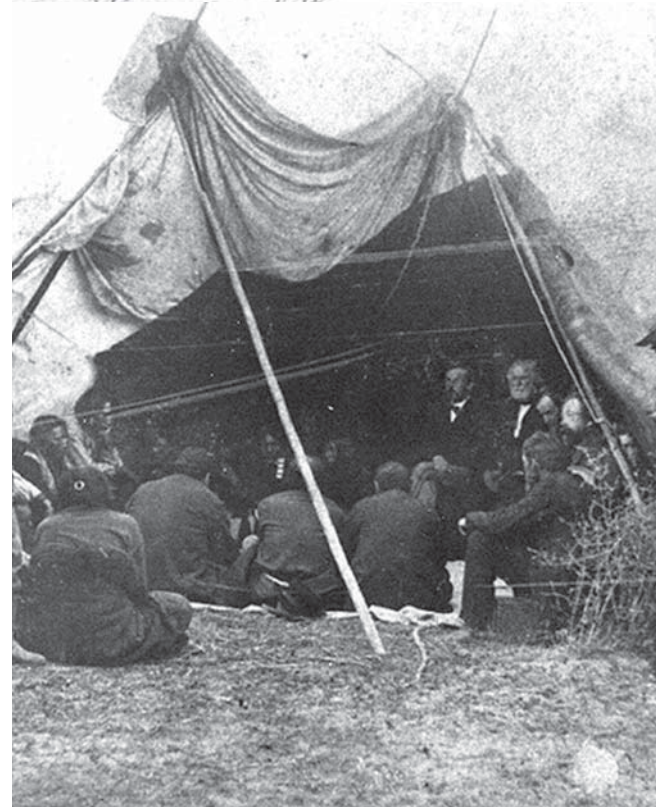
Newspaper accounts reported the protests for a day or two and the world reacted with habitual indifference.

Around the same time HBO premiered *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, an Yves Simoneau film inspired by Dee Brown’s seminal 1970 book of the same name. The book is a



Manifest Destiny
by John Gast 1872

William F. ...
 General Alfred ...
 S. B. Henderson, Nathaniel ...
 Santorn and Samuel J. Tappan, ...
 Commissioners on the part of the United States ...
 the different Bands of the Sioux Nation of India ...
 by their Chiefs and Head men whose names are ...
 hereto subscribed, they being duly authorized to ...
 premises



Fort Laramie Treaty
 negotiators, 1868

corrective account of the final act, in the second half of the nineteenth century, of the U.S. government's subjugation of the American Indian, its title drawn from the location on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota where in December 1890 the United States 7th Cavalry massacred over 300 Sioux Indians.

Despite the film's mediocre reviews, there is no reason to think that quality is the explanation for the film's failure to resonate in the American consciousness. Better films over the years, and a fairly complete revision in the scholarly histories of European-Indian contact, have served to undermine any serious, sustainable narrative of the expansion of the United States as, simply, a heroic and noble endeavor. Yet there has not been any fundamental alteration in the American sense of nationhood—no commonly accepted understanding of a sin concomitant with the nation's origin and development that demands some form of atonement.

Such crimes, however, are not mere history. In South America, for the past century up until the present day, miners, ranchers, and multinational corporations have overrun, despoiled, or committed murder among small indigenous societies in the Amazon rainforest. Throughout Latin America indigenous peoples have been bandied between the poles of oligarchic exploitation and demagogic tyranny.

And what of the United States? Were the Native American tribes not so thoroughly conquered and diminished in the nineteenth century as to make any continuing assault on their dignity, culture, and lives effectively impossible? Unfortunately, no.

More than a century later all of the expected social afflictions and human maladies of a conquered and disintegrated culture are present: inadequate education, joblessness, drug dependence, despair, and poverty. The Pine Ridge Reservation itself is wholly within Shannon County, South Dakota, which is the second poorest county in the United States. The very poorest county is Buffalo County, South Dakota, which is mostly constituted by the Crow Creek Indian Reservation.

It might be argued that these are the sad and unfortunate after effects of a regrettable past that we do not oppress and exploit the Indian today. We have, after all, the achievements of the Civil Rights and feminist movements behind us. Gay marriage is a subject of public and political debate. But what consideration is there of American Indians beyond occasional, unsympathetic arguments about naming athletic teams and mascots after them?

Indeed, though it is little noted by the American people, even today the U.S. government is actively deceiving and plainly stealing from Native Americans in lineal continuation of the deceptions and thefts of the nineteenth century. In fact, two current lawsuits brought by Native Americans against the U.S. Department of the Interior originate in obligations the government forced or coerced the tribes to accept during that long ago history of conquest. The conflict, we thought, had ended well over a century ago, but the end game is being played out today. A precursor lawsuit set the stage, though.

Among the most well known deceits in an extensive history by the U.S. government, the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie caused several Indian tribes, including the various Sioux tribes, to relinquish their customary freedom of movement and accept large tracts of the Great Plains as designated reservations for each tribe. In the successor 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie, the Sioux were compelled to renegotiate the original treaty and accept as theirs a much-reduced expanse of territory, but which still included the Black Hills of South Dakota, land the Sioux consider sacred. After the discovery of gold in the Black Hills by prospectors who were

already there illegally, the U.S. government broke the treaty and seized the Black Hills.

In 1980, in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the tribes of the Sioux Nation in their claim to the Black Hills. The monetary award was the \$17.5 million market value of the land in 1877, which at 5 percent interest came to \$105 million in 1980. The Sioux decided that they wanted not the money, but the land, and refused the award. Today, with continuing interest, the award money held in trust is in excess of \$700 million dollars. However, the Black Hills trust money is very small compared to other Indian trust funds that the U.S. government has mismanaged and institutionally embezzled for over a century.

In the Dickensian lawsuit of *Cobell v. Kempthorne*, filed in 1996, individual American Indians sought reform of the Individual Indian Money (IIM) trust system of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). It is important to recognize that the BIA is not an agency charged by the American government with delivering any kind of reparation to Native Americans or with actualizing any restoration of relations with them. The BIA manages a problem.

It manages the problem poorly, negligently, scandalously, even criminally.

Since 1887, the BIA has managed between 375,000 and 500,000 individual accounts of Native Americans. The funds it collects and disburses are the proceeds from government and corporate use of individually owned Indian lands. In the early 1990s, after many decades of the trust's inability to properly account for the funds it was charged to manage, the accounting firm of Arthur Anderson & Co. was hired to audit a random sampling of 17,000 IIM accounts, along with the distinct and separate tribal trust fund accounts that the BIA also manages, but which are not included in *Cobell v. Kempthorne*. Just for the twenty-year period of the audit that Arthur Anderson was able to reconcile, the auditor noted several billion dollars from the tribal accounts that were unaccounted for or untraceable.

Worse, according to the auditor, the 109-year-old IIM account records were so incomplete as to be beyond reconciliation. Estimates by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), which filed the suit, are that over the life of the trust up to \$10 billion owed to individual Indians—some of the poorest people in the United States—have been mishandled and are undiscoverable.

Over the eleven years of *Cobell v. Kempthorne*, through three Secretaries of the Interior and two court-appointed efforts at mediation—both of which were declared by the mediators to be hopeless—two of the Secretaries have been held in contempt by the judge for failing to produce documents and withholding evidence, records have been destroyed prior to their required presentation in court, and the generally obstructive behavior of the government during the life of the suit finally enraged U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth—a Republican appointee of President Ronald Reagan—to declare after ten years of presiding over the case: “Alas, our ‘modern’ Interior Department has time and again demonstrated that it is a dinosaur—the morally and culturally oblivious hand-me-down of a disgracefully racist and imperialist government that should have been buried a century ago, the last pathetic outpost of the indifference and Anglocentrism we thought we had left behind.”

In December 2006, at the request of the U.S. Justice Department, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia removed Lamberth from the case.

In the same month, in response to a congressional directive setting December 31, 2006 as a final deadline for any claims regarding the tribal trust fund accounts, NARF filed *Nez Perce Tribe v. Kempthorne* on behalf of what are now twelve tribes, with the ultimate intent to be a



Chief James Red Cloud, left, and Chief Robert Bad Wound, right, Sioux Indian leaders of Pine Ridge, SD, meet with Calif. Rep. John McGroarty in Washington D.C. on March 10, 1936.



Activist and actor Russell Means speaks at a news conference in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2007.

A Declaration of Withdrawal

Treaties between European powers and American Indian tribes go back as far as 1621. The first treaty signed by the warring colonies was a 1778 alliance with the Delaware tribe against the British. The Lakota signed their first treaty with the United States government in 1805, after the Louisiana Purchase brought part of their land into what the U.S. now considered its national territory. There are several hundred treaties between the federal government and hundreds of Indian tribes. In 1871, the Indian Appropriations Act ended the government's practice of signing treaties with the tribes, though the act provided that the obligations of the existing treaties would remain in effect. Now, a group led by long-time Indian activist Russell Means has declared, on December 19, 2007, its withdrawal from the treaties and the establishment of the "Republic of Lakotah." Means, an early member of the American Indian Movement (AIM) who participated in its most famous, early acts of protest, serves in no Lakota tribal government, and none has expressed support for the action. In recent decades, Means has been controversial in Indian circles. He ran for Vice President in 1984 on the Libertarian Party ticket along with Hustler publisher Larry Flynt. AIM has long distanced itself from Means. The declaration of withdrawal cites the "continuing violations of these treaties' terms" that "have resulted in the near annihilation of our people physically, spiritually, and culturally." In essence, Means argues, the treaties have been rendered useless. Tribal leaders, while expressing their agreement with Means's historical account, state that he is not empowered to speak for the Lakota people. They further argue that it is in the treaties that the U.S. government legally acknowledges its obligations to Native Americans as well as the land rights and sovereignty of the tribes.

class action on behalf of over 300 tribes. The tribal accounts were intended to hold in trust monies owed to the tribes as collectives, rather than to individuals, for the use of tribal lands and their resources. These monies dwarf those at issue in the IIM suit. In testimony before a U.S. House committee in 2005, Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez testified that the liability for tribal trust fund mismanagement potentially exceeded, not the estimated \$10 billion of the IIM case, but \$200 billion. Yet in response to the ongoing litigation of *Cobell* and the filing of *Nez Perce*, the Bush administration informed the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on March 1, 2007 that it would settle all tribal claims as well as *Cobell* for an amount of "up to \$7 billion."

How does this continue? How can the U.S. government—nearly 117 years after the Pine Ridge massacre, long after most Americans believe their nation began its struggle to repair the injustices that shadowed the ideals from which it was formed—continue its deceptions, its thefts, its oppression of Native Americans, and have its people still be silent? While even the great sin of slavery is confessed, the genocide of the American Indian is not even discussed. Can it be that the fundamental truth is too painful, too disillusioning to acknowledge? Slavery was an enormous and inconceivable crime. It cannot be undone any more than can any other crime. But we do not continue to perpetrate it. Yet every day, just by virtue of our presence in the lands we occupy—in the Western Hemisphere, in Australia—we affirm as real not just our political ideals and heroic myths, but the conquest and the genocide that enabled our cultural ascension. Still, we cannot undo them. We cannot give the land back. We cannot undie the dead.

The answer for too many is denial. The land was so vast, and they were so few. They could not use it all, did not need it all. And they simply did not understand. The conflict was inevitable. We were stronger, more unified, more ambitious. We *had* ambition. It is the sad way of the world. It was always so. But the world—we—are different now.

But we are not. The lawsuits are now. The money that could change the lives of so many Native Americans, still contending with their decline as the legacy of our ascension, the money is now, and it is theirs. We require the Germans to confess and pay for their genocidal crimes. We admonish the Japanese for refusing, still, to fully acknowledge theirs. Yet how well do we confront our own?

How can we be so great if the land is not ours?

Despite changes in scholarship, and the education of a segment of the population that might consider itself more historically enlightened, the public events of the past fifty years have achieved little for Native Americans. Events have not galvanized the American people or their government finally to concede the crime committed and to begin a policy of moral and social restoration.

On the contrary, as the University of Colorado's Patricia Nelson Limerick has written in *The Legacy of Conquest* (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1988) a "myth of victimization" was cultivated among settlers of the American West. It was they, as they conceived it—in their attempts to settle, farm, and ranch—who were victimized by marauding Indians. Even today, almost any local event in the West and elsewhere aimed at respecting traditional Indian customs—such as fishing practices or land use—is perceived as impinging on non-Indians' rights, and will be met with aggrieved resistance. Arnold Schwarzenegger's television advertising campaign targeting Indian tribes' casino gambling profits during the California recall election against then Governor Grey Davis was a recent variation of this behavior. Of greater cogency than Schwarzenegger's own attitude toward Native Americans was his campaign's belief that stimulating resentment of Indians was a credible tactic in aiding his election prospects.

How will this inverted mythologizing of the sin that was committed ever end? When will the American people, and through them their government, come to recognize that the great potential of the nation's fundamental and evolving ideals can never be fully realized until there has been adequate acknowledgement of the nation's fundamental flaws?

During the second half of the century in which so much progress was made for African Americans, for women, and for gays and lesbians, too, there has been little progress for the American Indian. The last period of any heightened and sustained public attention to the legacy of conquest in the United States was over thirty years ago, when two different approaches to raising public awareness proved equally fruitless. Occurring during the social unrest of the Sixties and Seventies, a certain kind of chic media display—such as the spectacle of Sacheen Littlefeather rejecting in protest Marlon Brando's 1972 Oscar for *The Godfather*—only managed to impress on the public the sense that anyone who speaks too vociferously on behalf of American Indians is engaging in a form of crackpot eccentricity. The radically threatening obverse of such acts were those like the seizure of the town of Wounded Knee in protest in 1973 by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM). A seventy-one day siege by U.S. Marshalls that followed in which two Indians were killed and one FBI agent was shot and paralyzed. Such incidents served only to brand aggressive protest on behalf of American Indians in the public mind as part of the era's general wave of 'subversive' leftist radical violence.

What can we do now to address the wrongs committed against aboriginal peoples?

In Australia, the course of conquest was strikingly similar to that of the United States. Again, all of the predictable social ills of a subjugated population struggling to overcome the loss of integral selfhood afflict aboriginal Australians today. Nonetheless, Australia has taken measures to acknowledge this history of subjugation, both substantively and symbolically, that cannot be observed in North and South America. On the symbolic level, in 1998, Australia instituted National Sorry Day as an annual acknowledgment of the wrongs that were committed against the indigenous population. So purely symbolic an act can easily be construed as pathetically inconsequential, but all acts of redemption must begin or end symbolically with acknowledgment of the wrong committed. When will the United States do as much?

Readers of *Tikkun* are familiar with the Global Marshall Plan, and with the version being

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

After twenty years of negotiations between representatives of the United Nations and indigenous groups throughout the world, and over thirty years after the first ten points were drafted by authors including chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy—just short of 515 years following the arrival of Columbus in the Western Hemisphere—the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007 passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The declaration proclaims in forty-five articles the rights of an estimated 370 million indigenous people throughout the world. Rights that indigenous peoples are stated to possess collectively as well as individually include those of autonomy relating to their internal and local affairs, of self-determination, to hold a nationality, the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture, or to be forcibly removed from their lands or territories, and effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for, violations of their rights. On December 13, 2007, the UN Human Rights Council additionally resolved to create an "Expert Mechanism" on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of the Expert Mechanism—a standing committee of experts—is to report on conditions and abuses and to seek practical means of enforcement. Since UN "declarations" are non-binding, backers will work to make the declaration a "convention" and thus binding international law. The September 13 General Assembly vote had 143 nations voting in favor, eleven abstaining, and only four nations—Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States—opposing.

BREAKING NEWS!

The justice system may be moving towards justice! In January, Judge James Robertson ruled that the Interior Department has “unreasonably delayed” its accounting for billions of dollars owed to Indian landholders. The suit, first filed in 1996 by Elouise Cobell, Blackfeet, claims that the government has mismanaged more than \$100 billion in oil, gas, timber, and other royalties held in trust from Indian lands dating back to 1887. Robertson took over the case after Judge Joyce Lamberth (see above, p. 17) was removed because a Court of Appeals said he had lost his objectivity, after he wrote in a decision that the Interior Department “is a dinosaur—the morally and culturally oblivious hand-me-down of a disgracefully racist and imperialist government that should have been buried a century ago.” That wasn’t objective? Sounds like Judge Robertson might think it was, given he has now ruled “that a remedy must be found for the department’s unrepaired, and irreparable, breach of its fiduciary duty over the last century.”

For more, see Indian Country Today at www.indiancountry.com.

proffered by the Network of Spiritual Progressives. The plan is a vision of equity conceived in a spirit of commonality and a shared sense of responsibility on the part of those nations that possess so much of the world’s wealth and that control, in one way or another, so many of its resources. However, it is not a vision of simple equity alone that guides the plan. There is a deep and necessary reparative spirit that informs it. As Rabbi Michael Lerner wrote in the introduction to the plan, “[O]ur approach must reflect a deep humility and a spirit of repentance for the ways in which Western dominance of the planet has been accompanied by wars, environmental degradation, and a growing materialism and selfishness reflected in a Western-dominated

global culture.” Nowhere need this spirit of repentance be greater than in the modern Western world’s treatment of indigenous peoples.

A call for gestures of atonement toward the world’s conquered and exploited aboriginal populations need not rely first on resolving the differing perspectives of left and right; the symbolism of the gestures may help to initiate the resolution. Whatever progress may have been made over the past century—consisting of even very great and significant achievements—there is so much more to do, and it seems appropriate to ask how we can repair the world before we have fully acknowledged the nature of the damage that requires our repair.

Part of a Global Marshall Plan should be dedicated, in appropriate countries and in appropriate percentages of the funds invested in each country, to reparative policies specifically targeted at the surviving indigenous population, to assist it in its educational, economic, and political development, and to aid it in the reclamation of its history and culture.

The United States alone can act both symbolically and substantively. On the symbolic but very significant level, the United States should follow the lead of Australia and institute a national day of mourning and atonement in permanent recognition of the various crimes against the Native American population. At the appropriate levels, school curricula should more fully educate American students in the complex legacy that would call for such a day. The day might even be instituted to coincide with Columbus Day. As it is, an unacknowledged divide exists in the nation with respect to Columbus Day. Some casually look upon it as an honorific occasion for the origin of American history and culture, and others ironically, even bitterly, disdain the day. To join a day of atonement with Columbus Day would capture all of the contradictions and ambivalence with which a developed, mature, and confident nation and culture should regard human history.

Substantively, it is time that *Cobell v. Kempthorne* and *Nez Perce Tribe v. Kempthorne* are settled generously, which is only to say rightfully. This does not mean through the courts. Cobell amply illustrates how the courts’ necessary devotion to impartiality and procedure, and a defendant’s clever play on that devotion, may be used to delay justice until, in Gladstone’s formulation, justice is denied. Indeed, in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, Justice Blackmun himself, speaking for the majority, wrote, “Other decisions clearly establish that Congress may recognize its obligation to pay a moral debt not only by direct appropriation, but also by waiving an otherwise valid defense to a legal claim...” It is long past time for the U.S. government to still be extending its subjugation of Native Americans through legal defense when the opposing moral claim is so great. It is time for Congress to act, in the spirit of Blackmun, to legislate the settlement of the lawsuits. Such legislation has not emanated and will not emanate from Congress on its own. It will require the urging and a movement of the national citizenry.

(continued on page 62)

Forgiveness and Apology: What, When, Why?

by Charles L. Griswold

HUMAN LIFE TEEMS WITH TEMPTATIONS, ONE OF WHICH IS TO THINK THAT the people who do grave harm to others are fundamentally different from us. We reserve a special vocabulary for them: “beasts,” “monsters,” “inhuman.” Yet that outlook is a self-protective delusion. As Primo Levi somewhat shockingly remarks of the concentration camp guards at Auschwitz:

“These were not monsters. I didn’t see a single monster in my time in the camp. Instead I saw people like you and I who were acting in that way because there was Fascism, Nazism in Germany. Were some form of Fascism or Nazism to return, there would be people, like us, who would act in the same way, everywhere. And the same goes for the victims, for the particular behaviour of the victims about which so much has been said, mostly typically by young Israelis who object ‘but we would never act that way’. They’re right. They would not act that way. But if they had been born forty years earlier, they would have. They would have behaved exactly as the deported Jews—and, it’s worth adding, the deported Russians and Italians and the rest” (“Interview with Primo Levi (1979),” in *The Voice of Memory: Interviews 1961-1987* [New York: The New Press, 2001]).

One must distinguish between degrees of wrongdoing, to be sure. Yet, honesty requires recognizing that Levi’s point applies to each of us. The disturbing fact is that even those who commit terrible wrongs are by and large not “beasts,” but rather all too human—characteristically and predictably human, one might even argue. Look into your heart and recall the last time you treated another badly. Nearly everyone has wronged another. Remember too your response to the last time you felt mistreated or insulted. Nearly everyone has suffered the bitter injustice of wrongdoing. We have all struggled not to retaliate in kind.

What a struggle it is to resist the cycle of retaliation! Revenge impulsively surges in response to wrong, and becomes perversely delicious to those possessed by it. The agony of our predicament is as ancient as it is well established, and Homer’s Achilles articulates it incomparably well:

Why, I wish that strife would vanish away from among gods and mortals,
and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind,
that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man’s heart
and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey
(*Iliad* 18.107-110, trans. R. Lattimore).

Vengefulness, resentment, and moral hatred cloud judgment but seem sweet to the one they possess, transforming a peaceful character into a connoisseur of violence. Personal and national credos proudly anchor themselves in tales of unfairness and the glories of retaliation. Oceans of blood and mountains of bones are their testament. It is an addictive cycle.

Forgiveness is and should be of intense concern to us in ordinary life, both as individuals and as communities. Not surprisingly, the discussions of forgiveness, apology, and reconciliation in theology, literature, political science, sociology, and psychology are

innumerable. In a development of great importance, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have been forging powerful new approaches to ancient conflicts. Groundbreaking work in conflict resolution, international law, the theory of reparations, and political theory pays ever more attention to forgiveness and the related concepts of pardon, excuse, mercy, pity, apology, and reconciliation. Yet, every position taken in theory or practice with regard to these notions assumes that it has understood them accurately. In particular, a defensible analysis of forgiveness in both its interpersonal and political dimension is crucial; for how else are we to know that when we say we forgive, or apologize, or reconcile, we are doing what we claim, and not something else?

At first blush, the answer to the question “what is forgiveness?” seems perfectly straightforward. To forgive is to stop hating the person or persons who have injured you. Notice that even this commits to a criterion: if you still hate someone, you have not forgiven them. But have you forgiven them if you’ve stopped hating them no matter what the reason? Say you forgot all about them or the injury caused to you (you took the latest bliss drug, or had brain surgery that deleted that part of your memory, or possess a remarkable ability to repress from consciousness emotions you do not like). Since forgiving is not forgetting, it must be the case that it requires remembering; so that too is a criterion. And if you stop hating, while not forgetting, but still take revenge, you haven’t forgiven: so revenge too must be forsworn, if forgiveness is to take place.

Resentment or moral hatred may rightly be felt; indeed, we would surely think ill of a person who responded to injustice with indifference. One *should* feel angry in response to wrongdoing; it can be a warranted emotion that expresses self-respect, a respect for moral principle, and the resolve to defend oneself. Consequently, if forgiveness requires that resentment be forsworn, it cannot be in spite of the fact that the anger is still warranted. It must be because the anger is no longer warranted. And what would provide a reason that makes it no longer warranted?

Answers to this question diverge at the deepest level, but here is mine: the victim’s anger at the offender should be forsworn first and foremost because the offender has taken certain steps that render continued anger inappropriate. What are those steps? Ideally, they will include acknowledgment of responsibility for having done the wrong; repudiation in deed and word of oneself as the wrongdoer, and a commitment to become the sort of person who does not do such things; the expression of regret to the victim for the specific wrong done by the offender; and finally, some sort of narrative accounting for how one came to do wrong, how the wrong-doing does not express the totality of one’s character, and how one is changing for the better. This last provision will help the victim answer such questions as “who is that person who could injure me thus, that I should trust with my forgiveness, and be reconciled with?”

In the face of such steps taken by the offender, a victim who categorically refused to embark on the road to forgiveness, and thus to forswear moral hatred, would betray an ethical shortcoming of his or her own—assuming, of course, that the wrong is not in principle unforgivable. For the wrongdoer has supplied just the *right* sorts of reasons for rendering the victim’s anger.

To come off fully, however, forgiveness also requires steps on the part of the victim. We have already named several of these: giving up revenge; letting go of moral hatred; and remembering the relevant facts about the injury. Additionally, the victim should re-envision or re-frame his or her view of the offender, such that the latter is no longer conceived of as the monster whose sum and substance is wrong-doing, but instead as one-like-us, as redeemable. Moving past one’s vengefulness and anger for reasons such as these will also mean reframing one’s view of oneself. For one must begin to see one’s injury, terrible though it may have been, as a chapter of one’s life, not as defining who one is. So the victim’s narrative of self too must change. As anybody knows who has struggled to recover from moral injury, this can be a difficult challenge to meet. And the final step is one we applaud instinctively: the victim, far from withholding the expression of forgiveness, explicitly addresses it to the offender.

Then all that can be done to repair the breach has been accomplished. Importantly,

forgiveness has not collapsed into either excuse or condonation, if both parties meet all of these conditions. A theory of forgiveness fails if it cannot distinguish forgiveness from excuse or condonation. To excuse is not to hold the perpetrator responsible, whereas forgiveness does not absolve the offender of responsibility even while—and here is its wonder—somehow allowing both parties to repair their moral relationship. To condone is to sanction (if implicitly) or even to enable continued wrongdoing, just as happens when, say, an abused spouse “forgives” the offender every morning for beating her the night before, thereby encouraging more of the same misbehavior. If that counted as forgiveness, then forgiveness would no longer be a virtue.

In thinking of forgiveness along these lines, my view—though secular—parallels that of the Medieval philosopher Maimonides (consider his discussion of repentance in the opening four chapters of Treatise 5 of *The Book of Knowledge*, Book I of his *Mishneh Torah*), and differs from those theories (which I would think of as congenial to a Christian framework) according to which forgiveness is a “gift” and requires no steps at all from the offender. According to theories of the latter sort, the victim undertakes forgiveness for his or her own sake—in particular, to shed the painful and toxic emotion of retributive hatred. Call this the “unconditional” or “unilateral” conception of forgiveness. Its inspiration is the insight that the victim is not dependent on the offender in order to forgive; perhaps the victim depends on the grace of God, but in any case, may forgive without the offender showing the slightest contrition, taking any responsibility, or apologizing. Countless books both in the Christian theological tradition and in the self-help literature talk about the “work” of forgiveness as being purely internal in this sense: it’s all about your overcoming moral hatred for the sake of your own spiritual, moral, and psychological well-being. When achieved, forgiveness thus understood often sounds as though it is a gift, or a release from debt, bestowed upon the offender; the offender is presented with it, for the victim’s own sake as it were, even though the offender may have done nothing to “earn” it.

As examples of the position I am disagreeing with, consider two relatively recent books. The first is Colin C. Tipping’s *Radical Forgiveness: Making Room for the Miracle* (Global 13 Publications, Inc., 2002). The author’s “Four Steps to Forgiveness” program is solely about the victim’s moving beyond his or her anger; nowhere in the book are we told that the victim’s “radical forgiveness” is dependent on the offender taking any steps. Indeed, on page fifty-four we read: “Radical Forgiveness has no limits whatsoever and is completely unconditional. If Radical Forgiveness cannot forgive Hitler, it can forgive nobody. Like unconditional love, it’s all or nothing.”

Similarly, in *The Process of Forgiveness* (Continuum, 1996), Father William A. Meninger argues that, “It is extremely important from the very beginning to understand that the primary consideration and motivation for forgiveness is ourselves. We forgive others, in the first place, for our own sake.” Specifically, he writes that we forgive others for “our own happiness.” The five stages of forgiveness he delineates in chapters nine through thirteen overwhelmingly assume or emphasize that the power to forgive lies entirely in the hands of the victim (perhaps with the help of God); the offender is not required to take any steps. Thus in speaking of the successful completion of the final stage of the “process,” viz. that of “wholeness” or our own “healing,” Meninger remarks:

Your injurers are also free—at least, as far as you are concerned. The perpetrators still have to deal with their part in their transgression, but they don’t owe you anything. You are not dependent on what someone else does for you just as you are no longer dependent on what someone else did to you. You can now freely release them of all personal debts. It is quite another question as to whether or not you allow them to make amends for their own personal needs, the requirements of justice, or the promptings of love.

This in turn is to lead to the recognition that the offender is a “child of God with his/her own sorrows, sins, pains, wounds, regrets, and needs,” just as you are *qua* victim. And we are encouraged to consider initiating “reconciliation” with the offender, perhaps by writing “a

I disagree with
the idea of
“unconditional
forgiveness.”



Pope John Paul II, second from right, stands near Michelangelo's sorrowful Pieta statue prior to the beginning of the Day of Pardon Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Sunday, March 12, 2000. The pope asked forgiveness Sunday for the sins of Roman Catholics through the ages, singling out the mistreatment of Jews and the violation of rights of ethnic groups.

forgiving letter," even if the letter is not actually sent, though it might be—again, all this in spite of the absence of the slightest emendatory steps on the part of the offender (p. 71).

I disagree with the idea of "unconditional forgiveness." To my mind that view collapses forgiveness into either excuse or condonation, precisely because it demands nothing of the offender. While neither of the two texts I've just mentioned deploy the metaphor of gift-giving to characterize the unilateral forgiveness bestowed by the victim on the offender, given that the metaphor seems so natural a way to express the

unilateral waiving of the "debt" as well as the one-sided way in which the wrong-doer is released from the victim's vengeful anger, it is worth noting that the metaphor does not perfectly cohere with the view that forgiveness is unilateral. For gifts, too, come with expectations of reciprocity attached.

Putting aside issues of metaphor and theology and returning to the most important point, I argue that the view of forgiveness as unilateral occludes a fundamental feature of the context. The original context was from the start bilateral and, in that way, social, involving at least two people (the offender and victim). The situation to which forgiveness responds represents a rupture of a basic interpersonal moral relationship (even where the parties to it did not previously know one another) and forgiveness inherits the basic features of that situation. Forgiveness is other-directed; except in cases of self-forgiveness, it is another person who is the target of this moral and affective relation. Ideally, forgiveness preserves, rather than dismisses, the relevant features of that original context. My view does that, whereas the rival view that champions the primacy of unilateral and unconditional forgiveness dispenses with it. That competing view is literally ego-centric; by contrast, mine requires reciprocity, and is responsive to moral ideals that the other ignores in part.

I am not arguing, I hasten to add, that absent the conditions for forgiveness, the victim ought to hold onto vengeful anger; there may be self-regarding reasons to give it up, and any number of therapeutic steps or stages may be required to achieve that end. But not every manner of giving up moral anger or revenge counts as forgiveness.

But what, then, of forgiving the dead and the unrepentant? The one cannot and the other will not take the steps I have set out. Is forgiveness therefore impossible under those circumstances? Does this not mean that the victim is doubly injured—first by the original injustice, and second by being unable to forgive since the offender does not take the required steps?

Such non-ideal or imperfect cases of forgiveness *may* fall below the threshold of what can count as forgiveness, in which case we must, with regret, conclude that forgiveness there is impossible. What is that threshold? Three conditions must be met for it to be crossed: the victim must be willing to lower his or her pitch of resentment to the degree appropriate to the injury, and to forswear revenge; the offender must take minimal steps to qualify for forgiveness, namely to take responsibility and apologize; and the injury must be humanly forgivable. Between that threshold, and perfected forgiveness, lies a spectrum of cases.

Forgiveness in the political realm is another, related matter. "Political forgiveness," as it is often called, is not so much a kind of forgiveness as it is part of the same family of notions. It shares some characteristics in common with forgiveness, but not others. For that reason, I would denominate it "political apology," a phrase that refers to the offering and receiving of apology in a political context. What is the difference between political apology and forgiveness? First, one or both of the parties concerned may be corporate or state entities, rather than individuals. This means that some, or the entirety, of the moral transaction is conducted

by representation or substitution: so-and-so, speaking for entity X (say, the United States government, or a corporation), apologizes to so-and-so, speaking for Y (say, another nation, or consumers in a particular state).

For example, consider the U.S. government's apology to Japanese Americans for their internment during the Second World War. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 explicitly apologizes for the government's wrongdoing. It specifies what the wrongs were and to whom they were done, citing the documentary work of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians—in effect, a sort of Truth Commission (its report is entitled *Personal Justice Denied*). The Act explains that, “For these fundamental violations of the basic civil liberties and constitutional rights of these individuals of Japanese ancestry, the Congress apologizes on behalf of the Nation,” and details further steps to be taken, including restitution (the amounts to be determined subsequently) and the funding of a public education program. Interestingly, it also declares as one of its purposes “to make more credible and sincere any declaration of concern by the United States over violations of human rights committed by other nations.” In signing the bill into law, President Reagan is quoted as saying “Yet no payment can make up for those lost years. So, what is most important in this bill has less to do with property than with honor. For here we admit a wrong.” President Clinton's letter of some five years later, accompanying reparation payments, also was explicit, succinct, and unambiguous in its apology.

This is an example of a successful political apology in the political realm. Notice that the forswearing of revenge and violence is certainly a precondition of the transaction, but not the forswearing of any particular person's resentment, especially not by those involved in the current discursive exchange. Neither the spokesperson for the relevant body (in this case, the U.S. government), nor for the recipient(s) of the apology, may have any personal feelings about the harm involved; the apology or receipt thereof does not require them to do so; and the individuals offering the apology may bear no responsibility, personally, for the wrongs. Not all those receiving the apology, furthermore, may have themselves suffered the wrong for which the apology is offered; they may accept the apology on behalf of someone else. In the context of political apology, that is, the exchange requires to one degree or another a fair amount of symbolism and representation.

This is not to say that the exchange is morally vacuous—on the contrary. Genuine apology in the political realm, while neither the same as forgiveness nor a modulation thereof, embodies substantive moral ideals. These include the ideals of truth telling; the taking of responsibility; the call to address others respectfully; the possibility of a future that does not simply reiterate the past; and the importance of promoting peace. The reconciliation that successful apology brings about—consisting in respectful non-interference and the willingness to cooperate with each other, for example—may seem to be a superficial achievement in comparison with reconciliation understood as deep reunion, love, and harmony. But compared to ongoing violent conflict and ferocious retaliation, it is heaven on earth. Furthermore, the reconciling ideals of political apology are substantive and noble, even though they are not intended to satisfy the soul's deepest yearnings. I would not argue that political apology is the magic key that unlocks the secrets of reconciliation at the political level. And yet, the part that political apology may play in civic reconciliation is neither trivial nor dispensable, and a community in which it is commended and practiced is an accomplishment as difficult as it is rare.

But what of self-forgiveness? Of forgiveness by God, or indeed, of forgiving God? Or of such notions as amnesty, pity, mercy, clemency, pardon? Are they imperfect forms of forgiveness or, like political apology, simply part of the same family of concepts? I attempt to answer these complicated questions in my book on forgiveness (from which the present essay is drawn). But by way of conclusion we may briefly consider this further question: why forgiveness? What makes it morally good?

Utilitarian considerations provide a first answer: without forgiveness, human life is worse off. Egoist considerations provide a second answer: without forgiveness, my life is worse off. But there is a third reason, one that cuts deeper: forgiveness is a virtue, and expresses a



Two young boys stand in a yard in Bart, PA, Thursday morning, Oct. 5, 2006 where the funeral processions for slain Amish girls passed. On Monday, Oct. 2, in Nickel Mines, a gunman, Charles Carl Roberts IV, laid siege to a one-room schoolhouse killing five Amish schoolgirls.

commendable trait of character. And what makes that characteristic itself valuable? The answer brings us back to the ideals that articulate the moral good, namely those of truth-telling, responsibility-taking, spiritual and moral growth, reconciliation, and love. Given the moral imperfection endemic to the world as we have it, these may seem to be merely ideal, abstract, and irrelevant in practice. But that is not so. We necessarily measure our actions according to some conception of the good. Our success or failure, both in discerning accurately the nature of the good, and in living up to that conception, decisively mold the moral character of our lives. These are practical ideals, and we ignore them at our peril. ■

Charles L. Griswold is Professor of Philosophy at Boston University. His recent publications include Forgiveness: a Philosophical Exploration (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Why Unconditional Forgiveness IS Needed

by William Meninger

I HAVE BEEN INVITED TO RESPOND TO PROFESSOR GRISWOLD'S ARTICLE ON forgiveness. It is a fine article but I think his feelings against unconditional forgiveness need some modification. He holds that the victim should not (cannot?) forgive until the offender does something to earn it. Unilateral or unconditional forgiveness breaks a moral relationship, a need to move forward together or not at all. Unconditional forgiveness is tantamount to excuse or condemnation. There is a need to move forward, but not necessarily together.

Forgiveness, that is, reciprocal forgiveness, is necessary or every victim would just become a source of vengefulness, resentment, moral hatred, and clouded judgment. Peaceful characters would be transformed into connoisseurs of violence. Thus forgiveness should be of intense concern to us in ordinary life, both individually and collectively. It is an indispensable response to inevitable vengefulness, violence, and injustice.

The victim's anger at the offender, says Professor Griswold, should be forsworn only when the offender takes certain steps that render continued anger inappropriate. This includes an acknowledgement of responsibility for the wrong; a commitment to become the sort of person who does not do such things; an expression of regret to the victim; and some sort of accounting of how that wrongdoing does not express the totality of the perpetrator's character. In the face of these steps, the victim would be unethical to refuse forgiveness. The victim must reframe his view of the offender, which would also mean reframing his view of himself. He must see the injury as something that happened to him and not intrinsic to his very being. Then he explicitly offers forgiveness to the offender.

It is only in this way, Professor Griswold claims, that forgiveness does not collapse into either excuse or condonation for the evil done. To excuse would be not to hold the perpetrator responsible, to condone would be to enable continued (continued on page 62)

Changing the Story of Our Future

by Matthew Gilbert

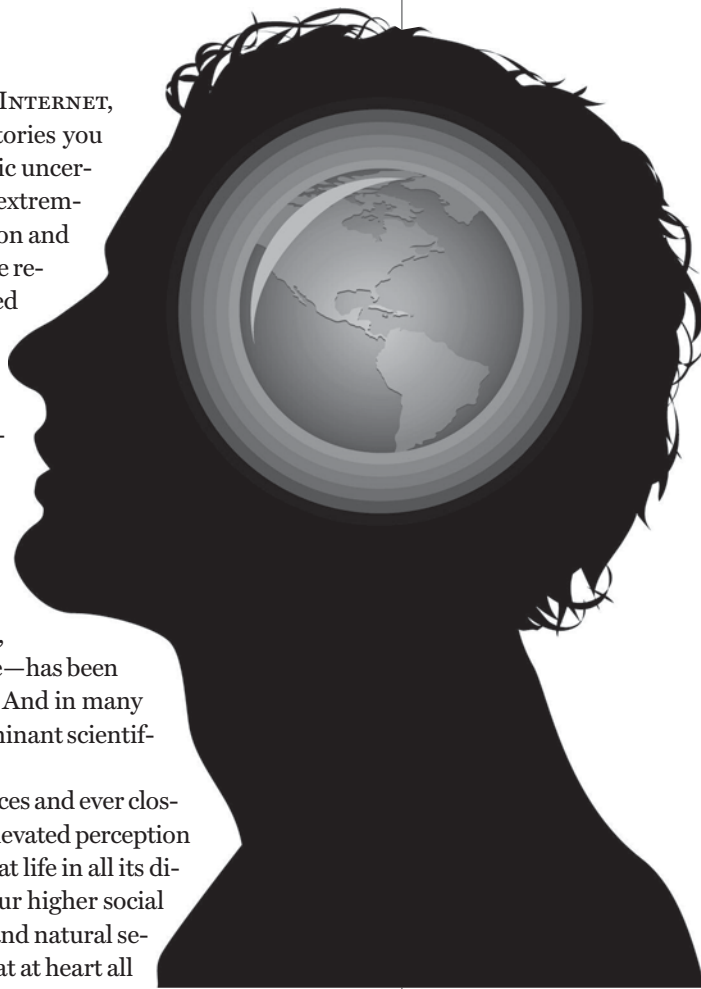
FOR ANYONE WHO READS THE PAPERS, SCANS THE INTERNET, listens to the radio, or kibitzes with a neighbor, the stories you hear seem relentlessly hopeless and complex. Economic uncertainty, ecological collapse, ethnic conflicts, religious extremism—the list goes on, an endless tickertape of frustration and despair. They depict a world filled with conflict, fear, and pain while reinforcing a belief that there is little we can do about it. We are locked in competition for scarce resources, disconnected from the natural world, at the mercy of political, religious, and economic power blocs, and spiraling ever deeper into greater disparity between the haves and have-nots. Look no further than the new documentary, *What a Way to Go: Life at the End of Empire*, for an immersion experience of worst-case scenario dénouement.

The tendency in times like these is to look to science or religion for answers, but both have fallen on hard times as sources of hope. Traditional religions have been challenged to remain relevant while struggling to deal with their more zealous factions, while science—more specifically materialistic-reductionist science—has been denounced as one of the reasons we're in this mess to begin with. And in many ways that's true, for the story of who we are as portrayed by the dominant scientific narratives of the last few centuries is bleak indeed.

As scientific materialism extended its reach into the social sciences and ever closer to our interiors, it presented one challenge after another to our elevated perception of ourselves and our sense of purpose. From biology we learned that life in all its diversity is a big accident, and that all human behavior, including our higher social and moral instincts, could be explained by the random mutation and natural selection of our “selfish genes.” From economic theory we learned that at heart all humans are “economic rationalists” programmed to pursue their self-interest in every situation. From behavioral psychology we learned that we are machines that can be conditioned by a simple regiment of reward and punishment to do almost anything. And from neuroscience we learned that, in the words of the late Nobel laureate Sir Francis Crick, “You, your joys and sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.... You are nothing but a pack of neurons.” And spirituality? An evolutionary adaptation to keep us interested in staying alive, the result of complex chemical interactions.

The Story of Our Potential

THIS IS HOW “THE 2008 SHIFT REPORT: CHANGING THE STORY OF OUR FUTURE” BEGINS. It was produced by the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) to connect the dots of both worldview breakdown *and* worldview emergence, because it's vitally important to



distinguish between the two. Yes, the evidence is compelling that the arc of the human species is one of self-destructive decline, and the report, as well as its predecessor, “The 2007 Shift Report: Evidence of a World Transforming,” does not shy away from recognizing that. And yet, once the pieces are put together, there is no denying that another reality is fighting through the cracks of the dominant narrative. Braving the currents of post-modern malaise, the Institute, founded in 1973 by Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell, believes that we are just beginning to tap into our potential as human beings despite, or perhaps because of, the multiple crises that we are facing.

This new story remains largely unreported—it’s one of people and institutions worldwide that are proactively moving ahead with initiative, daring, and collaborative spirit. It reflects not an evolutionary model of randomness and survival but a revolution of human potential that may alter the course of history, and a growing body of data that psychologists, paleontologists, neuroscientists, and quantum physicists are beginning to acknowledge.

Over the past several decades, new scientific discoveries along with a surge in grassroots initiatives addressing social and economic injustices have begun calling into question the modern view of the universe—and essentially of ourselves—as ultimately cold and mechanistic. Revealing both the mysterious directionality of the evolving cosmos and the irrepressible humanity within our own natures, new evidence is emerging that we are innately capable of far more than we realize. On the scientific front, credible studies are finding that we’re as hardwired to connect and collaborate as to compete; that genes—as well as the brain—are malleable; that altruistic behavior enhances our immune system; and that at a subatomic level, everything is connected—literally. On the field of daily human endeavor, thousands of groups and millions of people are saying “No” to the madness of our time—a tacit acknowledgement that we have been sold a bill of goods about our potential and who we are. The story being told of a conniving, selfish, survival-driven species is in fact a small part, perhaps even a footnote, of a larger story.

Empirical science itself is a relatively new approach to understanding reality. And of the collection of disciplines that fall under its domain, the human sciences represent the newest of the bunch. So it’s perhaps not surprising that as the biological, behavioral, and social sciences move out of their infancy, the picture they are uncovering turns out to be far more complex than it initially seemed. Much as the quantum mechanical revolution overturned the field of physics in the early twentieth century, we may be seeing the beginnings of a revolution in the human and life sciences destined to transform our understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe.

A Convergence of Science and Spirit

A NEW STORY MAY INDEED BE RISING UP FROM THE ASHES OF THE OLD, BUT THE OLD ONE still has us in its tenacious and potentially fatal grip. The natural response to both the obvious and insidious influences of reductionist science, economic dogma, and religious fundamentalism is to fight back, to reject all three in a spasm of righteous anger. If most of us take a moment to reflect, this rage is close to the surface of our daily experiences, and there aren’t many places it can constructively be expressed. Yet, underneath the rage are mountains of grief. What to do?

At this point the wisdom of our spiritual traditions and the findings of new science are converging to suggest a way out. And rather than convert the ideological loyalists of reductionist science or argue with religious fundamentalists until you’re hoarse, it may be time to just keep building a different paradigm, one that starts in the center of our own hearts and minds. This doesn’t mean that we cast our fate to divine providence or ignore the injustice of specific acts or policies, but rather that we begin to redirect some of our energy to co-creating the new story, a process that is already, inexorably, underway. For the ultimate change, the one having the most lasting impact, will be a change in consciousness, in our assumptions about reality and in the taproot of our relationships to the world around us.

A decade-long research program at IONS has been studying the phenomenon of personal transformation. It began in 1997 with a collection of narrative descriptions of what people from all walks of life felt were transformative moments or experiences. The accounts had much in common and often used the same words. What followed was a series of focus groups consisting of teachers and leaders in the human potential movement. This led, in 2002, to in-depth interviews with more than forty scholars and religious leaders representing a wide range of philosophies, spiritual traditions, and transformative practices. All of this information was analyzed, and the results published in a new book, *Living Deeply: The Art and Science of Transformation in Everyday Life* (Noetic Books/New Harbinger Publications, 2008).

Most notable in this research, and germane to the discussion in this article, is both the commonality of experience and practice uncovered across traditions—though each has its own unique perspective—and that such experiences lead to life-affirming shifts in worldview. And because we have internalized the dominant story inside us, we will need to consciously identify it in order to transcend it. One of the findings of the research is that the various practices and teachings agreed on how to facilitate deep change: you start with an *intention* to change, pay *attention* to old repetitive patterns that are keeping you from changing, and then keep *repeating* new patterns to sustain the desired positive change. As stated in the book, “Learning how people can change their consciousness to become more balanced, compassionate, altruistic, tolerant of difference, able to hold complexity, and motivated to promote peace and sustainability, is one of the most fundamental tasks before us.” It’s a daunting challenge indeed, but blessed by both contemporary science and ancient spiritual teachings it suggests there is no place else to go because the responsibility for preserving the future of this planet still rests in our hands.

Worldview Matters

AS SCIENCE AND HUMAN PROGRESS ARE INEXTRICABLY LINKED, THE TWENTY-FIRST century must find a way to bring the highest potential of both back together, and shifting paradigms is never easy. As the late environmental scientist Donella Meadows wrote in a paper entitled “Leverage Points: Place to Intervene in a System,” “[P]aradigms are harder to change than anything else about a system.” And how do you change them? Paraphrasing the late science philosopher Thomas Kuhn, he writes, “...you keep pointing at the anomalies and failures of the old paradigm, you keep speaking louder and with assurance from the new one, you insert people with the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. You don’t waste time with reactionaries; rather you work with active change agents and with the vast middle ground of people who are open-minded.” And once a paradigm shifts, the impact is exponential.

This reorientation of our grand perspective is vitally important, because worldview matters: It shapes how we see the world, how we evolve our institutions, and how we find meaning in what we do and where we’re going, individually as well as collectively. The influence of modern science on our worldview—the assumptions we make about how the universe works and the means we use to test those assumptions—is significant. How we’ve internalized this paradigm into our own being is also significant, perhaps even more so. And so while marching on the World Trade Organization and confronting misuse of power remain necessary acts of defiance, marching against the dominant paradigms that live in our own hearts may have even more far-reaching effects.

A metaphor often used to describe where we are as a species is that we are struggling through adolescence, transitioning between stories. In drawing the lines between new scientific research, social action initiatives, and spiritual exploration, we may just be uncovering the nascent signs of a collective maturing, perhaps foretelling a coming Age of Re-enlightenment. ■

Matthew Gilbert is director of communications at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (www.noetic.org), editor-in-chief of Shift magazine (www.shiftreport.org), and editorial director of Noetic Books.

Working for Peace Without Recreating War

by Miki Kashtan and Dot Maver

*"I suppose leadership
at one time meant
muscles; but today it
means getting along
with people."*

—Gandhi

IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE TALKING TO A STATE LEGISLATOR ABOUT PEACE AND reducing violence, and in response you hear: "Are you another one of those anti-war people? Don't you understand we are waging war for peace?" How would you respond?

Like most people who hope to bring about peace for everyone on our planet, you have likely had conversations with people who hold very different opinions from your own. Whether with family members, in work places, during a demonstration, or even within your own activist groups, these conversations often heat up and turn into arguments. Despite our desire for peace, we continue to perpetuate the very thing we want to transcend.

How do we bring our way of relating with people into line with our core values and ideals? In our experience, we have found that the practice of Nonviolent Communication (NVC)—a set of skills anyone can learn (see box on page 31)—can hugely increase the effectiveness of nonviolent social change, both inside our activist organizations and with those we are trying to connect with outside.

Since June 2005, scores of activists have had access to a unique resource: a monthly ninety-minute conference call to receive support, coaching, reflection, and empathy in applying Nonviolent Communication. The results of this apparently simple strategy surprised us. The activists who attended (all of whom were volunteers with the U.S. Department of Peace [DOP] campaign—[see box]) often became more enthusiastic about their commitment to their campaign, and more confident in surfacing difficulties and moving through conflicts with peers and legislative representatives. Enthusiasm for learning and applying Nonviolent Communication has grown in the network. Since 2006, organizers of regional and national DOP gatherings have been adding trainings and workshops in NVC skills to their agendas. Though not every activist seized this work as a path to more effective participation in the campaign, many have and are actively doing so.

This article is an opportunity for us to celebrate what has happened, and to share this model with other activist networks. Many *Tikkun* readers are connected to the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP). Starting in April we (Bay Area Nonviolent Communication) will provide the same kind of monthly calls to NSP members, which we hope will help to increase the national impact of the NSP.

Core Challenges to Being Peace

PEACE ACTIVISTS TYPICALLY EXPERIENCE FOUR AREAS OF CHALLENGE IN THEIR efforts to *practice* nonviolence in the present while working *for* a nonviolent world in the future:

1. **Within Each of Us:** Many activists experience fatigue, burnout, doubt, and internal conflict. They want self-connection, self-acceptance, a sense of integrity, and vitality.
2. **Within the Movement:** Many activists experience conflict within the movement, as well as reduced productivity, difficulty staying focused on a task, and mistrust. They

want effectiveness in running meetings, mutually satisfying relationships working towards a shared goal, and faith in their ability to connect with colleagues.

3. **With Family Members and Friends:** Many activists dread family gatherings, which are often either superficially pleasant or acrimonious. They want a way to maintain relationships of love and openness and the capacity to engage with different viewpoints productively.
4. **With People across the Political Divide:** Many activists feel discouragement about opening and maintaining dialogue with people and officials in fundamental disagreement with their positions. They want effective communication, capacity to stay in dialogue, and hope for transformation.

Activists operate on all these levels. As Gandhi said: "The way of peace is the way of truth.... We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make steady progress towards it." Alas, we still see much evidence that many people engage in nonviolent *action* while their thoughts and speech remain unchanged. From the first conference call, participants repeatedly expressed how often they find themselves angry, fearful, even outright hostile to the people they most want to reach and influence.

What can Nonviolent Communication offer activists?

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE transformation of caring, angry activists to caring, compassionate people working together for a cause. As we address the internal dimension consisting of consciousness, personal skill, and language, a slow groundswell of transformation is happening within individuals and within the DOP movement. This cultural shift within the movement serves as a blueprint and preparation for a larger cultural shift towards peace.

The monthly calls sustain the commitment to peace through the basic practice of attending to the needs of all concerned while consciously resolving conflict before it escalates to violence. We work together towards this intention by focusing on three core practices that support movement towards mutually beneficial solutions that stem from full connection:

1. We aim to shift from a focus on what we oppose to clear inner connection with what we want to create.
2. We aim to listen empathically to others, even in times of great disagreement, to hear what it is they want to create, and to give them the experience of being heard and understood (*not* agreed with, just heard and understood).
3. When an opening exists, we aim to express succinctly, without blame or criticism, what is of importance to us, and to include clear requests that support continuing the dialogue to full connection.

Some activists remain suspicious of what they worry would be only a "feel good" practice. Some are even concerned that anyone who experiences the power of inner peace and self-connection that arise through the practice of NVC, might not even *want* to continue engaging in social change efforts.

Instead, DOP activists have found that focusing on the transformation within allows them to have more energy, more faith in the possibility of transformation, *less* reactivity, and *more* willingness to take risks. Bringing the skills of clear expression and empathic listening to their work, they say, is increasing their capacity to engage with conflict with more confidence and grace.

About the Peace Alliance and the U.S. Department of Peace (USDOP) Campaign

The Peace Alliance (www.thepeacealliance.org) is a non-partisan citizen action organization advocating for legislation that supports a culture of peace, working to foster positive, proactive change toward the creation of a more nonviolent and peaceful world. The Peace Alliance motivates and coordinates a nationwide movement of independent grassroots activists who are campaigning in all fifty states and the District of Columbia for passage of legislation currently before Congress that will establish a U.S. Department of Peace (HR808).

Sixty-eight members of the House Representatives have signed on to the legislation so far; a third of what's needed to pass the bill. These numbers are growing slowly and steadily, along with the popular support for the bill: thirty-two city and county governments, representing a population of 12.8 million people, have endorsed the bill so far.

The movement that the USDOP Campaign is part of is now international in scope through the Global Alliance for Ministries and Departments of Peace. At the Japan Summit in September 2007, Miki facilitated a group of delegates from twenty-one countries and six continents, who embraced NVC as a means of communicating with one another across cultures and politics.

About Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) was developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the 1960s. Since then, NVC has been taught and used around the world in intentional communities, prisons, school communities, families, and organizations. It contributes skills and insight to individuals seeking to transform their personal lives as well as to take leadership in creating a world that works for all. The global network now includes NVC groups working in seventy-five countries. Over 200 trainers are affiliated with the global Center for Nonviolent Communication (www.cnvc.org). Within the NVC network, we see that when individuals and communities integrate the vision of nonviolence and master the skills necessary to engage in dialogue with others in difficult situations, creativity is unleashed and long-lasting, peaceful solutions are found.

NVC rests on several core assumptions and principles, including:

1. Violence of Any Kind Results from Unmet Needs
2. Being Heard is Key to Transformation
3. Everyone Matters

A set of skills anyone can learn can hugely increase the effectiveness of nonviolent social change.

NVC Resources

If you want to engage with the practice of Nonviolent Communication, consider these options:

1. Starting in April *Tikkun* will be sponsoring monthly conference calls for NSP members using the same format as the DOP calls. For more information, see ad on page 74.
2. To participate in a training, visit www.cnvc.org for trainers close to you. For offerings in the San Francisco Bay Area or with Miki Kashtan, visit www.baynvc.org. For an online training option, visit www.nvctraining.com
3. To find study materials, visit www.cnvc.org or www.nonviolentcommunication.com.

As one congressional district team leader said, “I was speaking to someone in the campaign and said very negative things about a certain politician. My State Coordinator used NVC to help me understand on a workable level how important it is to bring the message of peace in a peaceful way.” And a campaign state leader shared: “I continue to see the exploration of how we can ‘be the change’ in challenging circumstances within the campaign as enough to keep me in these [difficult] conversations.”

Becoming Peace from Within

DURING THE CALLS, WE ADDRESS SPECIFIC CHALLENGES THAT PEOPLE BRING from their work and lives. One of the core practices is training our attention to focus on hearing the other person, so we can understand the meaning behind their words or actions, and thus open our hearts to seeing the full humanity of whomever we are in conflict with.

Here’s an excerpt from one call, as Miki (the NVC trainer) works with person A, from Atlanta:

A: I was talking to a state legislator about women’s reproductive rights, and he immediately responded with ‘murdering babies.’ I wanted to reach a place where I understood more about what he was saying, and I wanted him to understand what I was saying, but that sort of ended the conversation with a bristling back sort of response.

Miki: In his statement about murdering babies, what did you hear mattered to him?

A: What did I hear? End of conversation. He didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

Miki: What is the value in the name of which he says this line? Can you hear it? The biggest hint that I will give you is that you share that value.

A: I know, I have a grandbaby that’s three months old.

Miki: I want you to just name the value.

A: I agree with him. I’m pro-life myself.

Miki: Don’t agree or disagree, name the value.

A: Human life.

Miki: OK. There you go.

Notice that A needed two reminders to name the value before he finally let go of agreeing or disagreeing. This is not because A has a unique personal problem. Over the last several thousand years, we have been deeply trained that to resolve conflicts is to get people to agree with our views and wishes, using force if necessary. It takes practice and commitment to undo this habit and listen first so we can prepare the ground for productive dialogue.

Dialogue for Connection through Conflict

AS A RESULT OF BEING ON THE CALLS, AND EITHER WITNESSING OR PRACTICING THIS form of communication, many activists have reported a dramatically increased capacity to *listen and reflect* before speaking about their own concerns.

It puts us in a vulnerable place to let go of “being right” and instead focus on understanding someone else’s heart, especially if they are upset, angry, or in a polarized position. It is precisely that vulnerability that supports the diffusion of conflict and the establishing of human connection. What we have found most inspiring about this shift from agree/disagree to understanding the meaning behind what someone says is that as we make this shift we *feel* differently. Something changes inside of us. We are no longer separate from the Other. Our very capacity to hear another humanizes them to us and creates more space. *Both* of us are transformed.

As a result, when we then turn to expressing what is of meaning to us, the other person is likely to be more ready to listen, and we are more ready to speak *with* the other person rather than at him or her. The chances that we will (continued on page 64)

Democrats Need an Iran Strategy ASAP

by Guy T. Saperstein



DEMOCRATS ARE ALMOST GIDDY ABOUT THEIR PROSPECTS OF WINNING THE presidency and increasing their majorities in the House and Senate. In fact, in an article in *Mother Jones* magazine (November/December 2007), Simon Rosenberg and Peter Leyden of the New Democrat Network even predict a fifty-year shift of power to Democrats.

Due to the near-complete collapse of conservative ideas and policies, Democrats have an opening and perhaps even a strong hand to play, but they are underestimating the Republican trump card and Bush's willingness to play it: national security. In fact, Democrats are woefully unprepared for what is likely to happen between now and next November.

The last three federal elections have been decided on security issues, with the Republicans winning two of them. Even in 2006, with the Iraq war collapsing around the Republicans, according to a Greenberg Quinlan poll, 22 percent of voters said "protecting America from terrorism" was their No. 1 voting priority and these "security voters" broke 74 percent to 24

Uncle Sam casts his long shadow.

BREAKING NEWS!

Americans Do Not Believe U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) Finding That Iran Has Ended Its Nuclear Weapons Program

Washington, D.C., 12/13/07 - A new bipartisan poll commissioned by The Israel Project shows Americans do not believe the NIE and worry it will make the U.S. less safe. The survey shows that:

- 75 % of likely voters had heard a “great deal” or “some” about the NIE report
- 27 % believed that Iran’s nuclear program ended in 2003.
- 64 % believe the NIE findings will make us less safe because it might lead to reduced pressure on Iran
- 69 % of U.S. likely voters think the Iranian nuclear weapons program is still underway
- 69 % think that the international community should try to prevent Iran from further civilian nuclear research
- 76 % of likely voters approve of expanded United Nations economic and diplomatic sanctions on Iran

www.theisraelproject.org

percent for Republicans. On all other issues, Democrats maintain 20-plus point advantages over Republicans. In light of such facts, which are well-known, should we assume the Republicans, specifically George Bush, Richard Cheney and Karl Rove (who continues to advise Bush) will let the election be dominated by Democratic issues? Wouldn’t it be more prudent to assume Bush/Cheney will play the one strong card they have? These people have proven their willingness to lie, cheat, manipulate, create fear, and even go to war against a country which posed no threat when it served their political purposes. In short, we must assume the worst: that they will take aggressive action against Iran, most likely an air attack, before November 2008.

Mainstream media opinion has already cohered around the sunny view that the recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which reported that Iran had discontinued its nuclear weapons program, will prevent Bush from acting against Iran this year. That view is hugely premature.

Responding to the NIE report at his December 4th press conference, Bush said “I think the NIE makes it clear that Iran needs to be taken seriously as a threat to peace. My opinion hasn’t changed... Look, Iran was dangerous. Iran is dangerous. And Iran will be dangerous

if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon.” It is generally a mistake to ignore Bush’s own words.

Democrats are not merely unprepared for a Bush attack on Iran; they appear to be traumatized by it. Given a mandate by voters in November 2006 to wind down the Iraq war, they splintered, proved incapable of uniting, and failed to use the authority expressly given to them by the Constitution: the power to withhold funding for the war. In fact, many Democrats are continuing to blame Republicans for the impasse on Iraq, contending that they need a filibuster-proof sixty votes in the Senate to put conditions on funding to stop or wind down the war when, in fact, all they need to stop continued war funding is a simple majority in the House (which they have) and forty-one votes in the Senate (which they have). In short, if the Democrats were as resolute in what they believed as are the Republicans, the United States would be well on the way to meeting the Iraq Study Group Report recommendation of near-complete withdrawal by March 2008. Instead, Dick Cheney’s prediction in October 2006 that the midterm election results would not matter, as he and Bush would continue to prosecute the war regardless of the election results, has proven to be 100 percent accurate.

Democrats are fragmented and disorganized, blood is in the water, and Bush/Cheney are set to exploit this disarray to the Republicans’ advantage.

Sometime in the spring of 2008 we should expect the Republican drumbeat about Iran to crescendo and the Republicans in Congress to promote an Iran resolution much like the one they foisted on the Democrats in October 2002, shortly before the midterm elections of that year, where they crushed the Democrats. They will claim the resolution will not specifically authorize war against Iran, that its purpose will be to strengthen Bush’s hand in negotiations with Iran, but the resolution will be broad enough in its terms to be used for an attack on Iran. Democrats will whine and moan, but the more conservative Democrats, approximately seventy-five in the House and twenty-five in the Senate, fearing accusations of not being “strong on defense,” will crumble and sign on with the Republicans. A charade of “negotiation” will ensue, punctuated by claims that insurgents in Iraq are being supplied by Iran, and perhaps even that Iranians are moving into Iraq. Then, in late fall 2008 (my guess is Oct. 1) Bush will authorize an air attack on Iranian targets to protect our soldiers in Iraq and reduce the

Iranian nuclear threat (a still-unproven threat). Act One in this drama has already occurred, with the Republicans promoting the Kyl-Lieberman resolution in the Senate to brand the Iranian Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization (the first time a part of any national army has been branded as such). Predictably, twenty-five Democratic senators, including Hillary Clinton, voted for this resolution and it passed 76-22. The resolution was nonbinding, but the exercise displayed the inherent weakness and lack of self-confidence of Democrats on national security issues for all to see.

Attacking Iran would be mostly symbolic, but would have disastrous consequences.

An attack on Iran would not protect American soldiers in Iraq. Rather, it would almost certainly have the opposite effect. In Iraq American soldiers are already stretched to the max and replacements and reinforcements are not available. According to Maj. Gen. Paul D. Eaton (ret.), who was commanding general in the Office of Security Transition in charge of training the Iraqi military from 2003-2004, even without the added pressures of an attack on Iran, the current "...15-month tours will break the Army." Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel, a decorated Vietnam War veteran, said recently that, "The answer to dealing with Iran will not be found in a military operation. The U.S. is currently bogged down in two wars. Our military is terribly overburdened, and we are doing great damage to our force structure and readiness capabilities."

The United States does not have the capacity to widen a ground war and take on a nation with more than double the population of Iraq. Attacking by air risks Iran retaliating by sending armed forces and advanced weaponry into Iraq, which, to date, Iran has not done. Iran also has the capacity to send armed forces into neighboring nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Lebanon, creating a wider front, as well as increasing its political reach. General Eaton confirmed that, "The United States has insufficient forces in Iraq to defend from an Iranian attack." He added, "Iran has the capacity to send thousands of soldiers into Iraq in 4-9 person teams, armed with rocket-propelled grenades to support the Iraq insurgency; the U.S. does not have sufficient forces to respond to this." Eaton also said that Iran is believed to have "sleepers cells" throughout the Middle East, increasing the chance of widespread asymmetrical warfare the United States is not prepared to counter. The prospect of putting our soldiers in Iraq at much greater risk and transforming a one-nation war into regional war is real.

The downside to attacking Iran is even deeper. If Iran controls Hezbollah, attacking Iran could lead directly to "non-attributive" terrorist attacks on American soil. It wouldn't take a nuclear device or dirty bomb to disrupt the American economy. A few suicide bombers and/or "suitcase bombs" in crowded transportation hubs, shopping malls, movie theaters, or perhaps an NFL football stadium would cause major economic dislocations in the United States. Iran could also use sea mines to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil supplies must pass; Iran could attack Iraqi, and perhaps even Saudi, oil production. If world oil prices hit \$200 a barrel, the world economy, already weak, would be seriously threatened—a global depression is even possible. And while the United States gets relatively little oil from the Middle East, this region is the main source of oil for China, Russia, and Japan. Are these countries going to sit by quietly while the United States threatens or diminishes their oil supplies? China and Russia possess great influence and the unintended consequences of attacking Iran could be dramatic.

At a minimum, China has the capacity to stop buying U.S. bonds or even to begin selling their huge supply of U.S. dollars, further devaluing the U.S. dollar, already at historic lows. And Russia, which is building close economic relations with Iran, would likely provide more sophisticated weaponry to Iran in the event of a U.S. attack, including advanced anti-aircraft weapons. Hagel has said, "The challenge of Iran will not be successfully met without Russia and China and the world community." It certainly will not successfully be met by jeopardizing China's and Russia's oil supplies.

Attacking Iran also will unite the Iranian population against America for a generation: the Arab street throughout the Middle East will become even more hostile to America, and the

**Would Bush/Cheney
attack Iran to change
the American vote?
Yes. With disastrous
world-wide
consequences.**

Democrats cannot out-hawk the Republicans: they must out-think them. Diplomacy can work.

world community (with the exception of Israel and possibly a few other nations) will condemn the United States. Can our position in the world get worse? Yes.

Lastly, a “surgical strike” at Iran’s nuclear program would largely be a fiction. For one thing, we should not assume U.S. intelligence about where Iran’s nuclear development sites are located is any better than the faulty intelligence about Iraq’s supposed WMDs. Further, current U.S. “bunker busters” (a.k.a. “penetrating warheads”) do not have the capacity to bust into deep underground bunkers. In fact, dropping a series of bunker busters would liquefy the soil around the bunkers and make them even more impregnable. The only way to knock out the bunkers is with nuclear weapons, but nuclear weapons and the radioactive fallout they leave behind could cause millions of deaths and casualties, and not just in Iran. Last year, Gen. Wesley Clark stated that Iran’s nuclear program could not be stopped by an air attack alone, and last week Maj. Gen. Eaton confirmed that assessment. Thus, a Bush/Cheney decision to bomb Iran would largely be symbolic, designed for an audience of American voters. It would not fundamentally alter realities on the ground, except to diminish U.S. standing in world opinion—already at historic lows.

Alternatively, Bush could attack the many Iranian Revolutionary Guard encampments. Of course, the Democrats who voted to condemn the Revolutionary Guards as “a terrorist organization” have left themselves wide open to this; if the guards are “terrorists,” how will those Democrats be able to object to an air attack without appearing to be weak on fighting terrorism? Remember, Bush/Cheney were not the ones who made “regime change” in Iraq official U.S. policy; credit for that belongs to Bill Clinton and congressional Democrats who collaborated with Republicans in 1998 to accomplish this. Democrats play chess one move at a time; Republicans seem to be able to see the whole board.

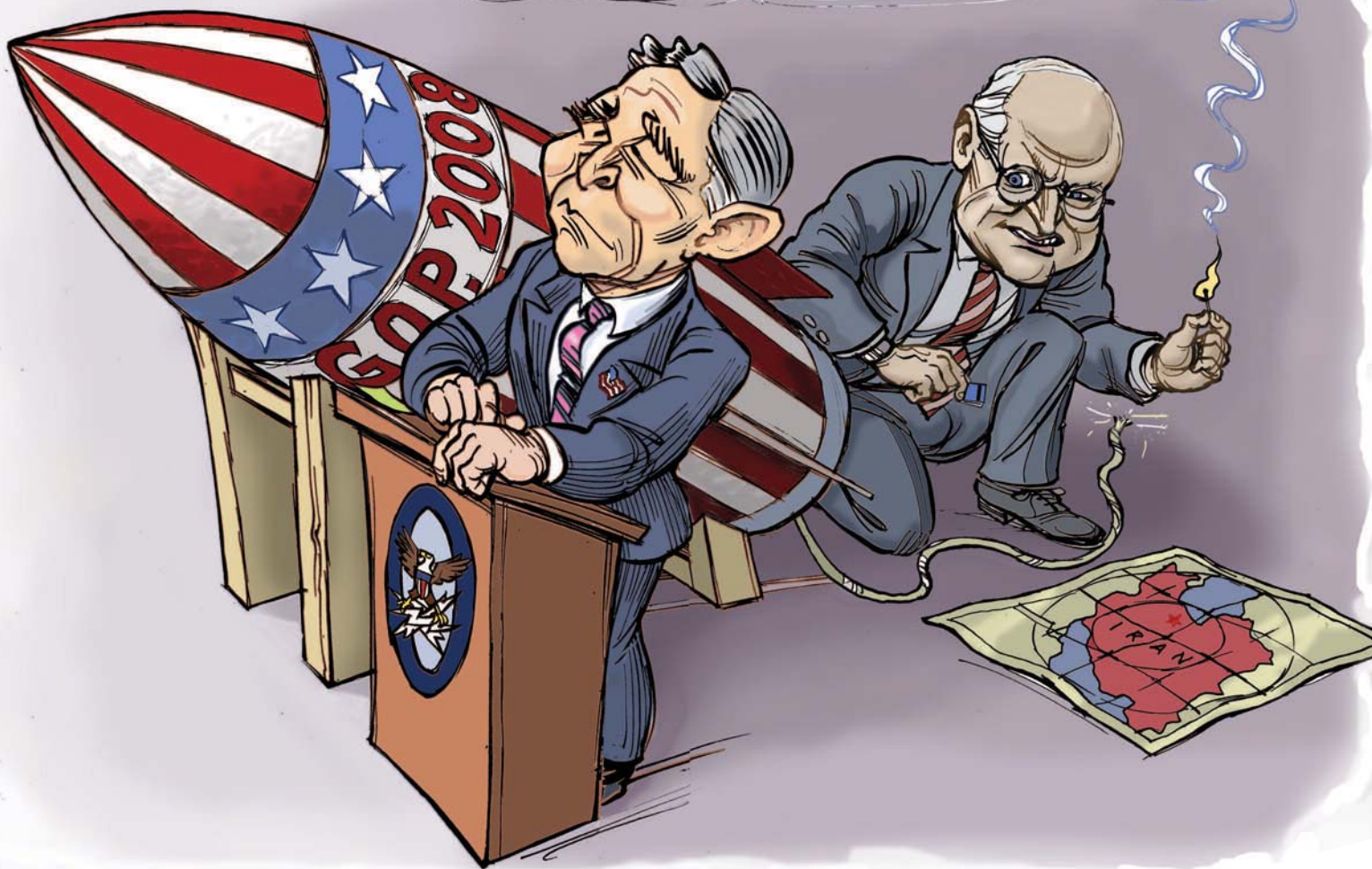
If Hillary Clinton is the Democratic nominee, and her past behavior is a guide, we can expect cautiousness and triangulation on Iran, and perhaps even outright support for military action. Already, she has fallen into the Republican trap of supporting the Kyl-Lieberman Senate resolution, which, as mentioned above, characterizes a part of the Iranian national army as a “terrorist organization.” This is the kind of rhetoric which Sen. Hagel recently called “the lowest common denominator of ‘who can talk the toughest’ and who is the ‘meanest cowboy on the block.’” That kind of rhetoric...political as it may be...will only drive the world further away from America and deepen a world crisis...that we may not be able to recover from.” Democrats falling in line with Republican “cowboy” rhetoric and behavior on Iran sets up the prospect of the 2008 election mirroring 1968, when progressive opponents of the Vietnam War, outraged by Democratic inaction, deserted the Democratic Party, thereby helping to elect Richard Nixon. We could even see the rise of third, or even fourth parties. Given Clinton’s already record-high unfavorable poll numbers and her weak match-up poll numbers with Republican presidential candidates, it won’t take much to tip the election to the Republicans.

Will the military stop Bush/Cheney?

IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF THE U.S. MILITARY ARE OPPOSED TO military action in Iran. A posting on the leftwing progressive blog Think Progress reported that Adm. William Fallon, head of Central Command in Iraq (i.e., General Petraeus’ boss) has said there will be no attack on Iran “on my watch.” And, it is rumored that more than twenty high-ranking army officers have already tendered resignations in case Iran is attacked. We should salute these brave officers for keeping sight of America’s long-term interests in the Middle East, rather than the short-term political needs of Republicans, but the American tradition is civilian rule, not mutiny. We should expect that no matter how many courageous military officers object, when the order is issued to attack Iran, it will be followed.

What can Democrats do?

DEMOCRATS CANNOT OUTBID, OUTSPEND, OUT-COWBOY, OR OUT-HAWK THE REPUBLICANS. If Democrats play the “tough on Iran” military card, they will be chasing Bush/Cheney all the



way into another un-winnable war. From a strategic game-theory standpoint, those who are posturing “tough on Iran” are putting control of the game totally in the hands of the opponent. Isn’t this the one lesson from the run-up to the Iraq war that every Democrat should have learned? Democrats need to get ahead of this issue, not continue to passively respond to hawkish initiatives, like the Kyl-Lieberman resolution, which accepts all the hawk assumptions and set the table for war.

The Bush’s justification of attacking Iran will likely be threefold: (1) he is protecting American troops in Iraq, (2) he is preventing World War III by stopping Iran’s nuclear program, and (3) he is responding to threats to the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf. Democrats need to attack, as well as put into context these claims. While there may be some Iranians in Iraq supporting their Shiite compatriots, and some of the IED’s found in Iraq may have been manufactured in Iran, Iran has been remarkably cautious about arming or supporting Iraqi insurgents, particularly given the fact that Iran has 300,000 American soldiers and mercenaries on its borders. While Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has, like Bush and Cheney, been bellicose, Iran’s actual behavior in Iraq has been cautious. One prominent national security expert, Peter Galbraith, has even argued that Iran is our natural ally in Iraq, as it does not want continued instability on its borders, and both Iran and the United States support the Shiite-dominated Maliki government in Iraq. This provides Democrats the opportunity to make the case—perhaps through investigative hearings featuring testimony by military commanders—that attacking Iran will



Will these young people on the streets of Tehran be candidates for collateral damage in an American attack? How many like them have died in Iraq as a result of the American war?

put American soldiers in Iraq at more risk, not less. Adm. Fallon, testifying in Congress regarding his doubts about taking military action against Iran and his “not on my watch” statement, might take the initiative from the Bush-hawks and push the terms of public debate in more sensible directions. Army commanders testifying in public about “breaking the Army” with multiple fifteen-month tours of duty and not having sufficient forces available in Iraq to contend with Iranian retaliation might change perceptions about which party “supports the troops.”

Democrats also need to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat for what it is: potentially long-term, but not immediate. In fact, many security experts, including United Nations chief inspector El Baradei, say Iran’s nuclear threat will not be realized for five years or more. This assessment has been confirmed by the recently disclosed National Intelligence Estimate, which Bush has discounted, if not ignored. We know it is possible to deal with such threats diplomatically. Last February the Bush administration made a deal with another member of the “Axis of Evil,” North Korea, to dismantle the North Korean nuclear program in favor of promises of economic aid. Bush has been remarkably quiet about this—perhaps his one legitimate foreign policy success—but there is no reason for Democrats to be quiet about this example of diplomacy working. Furthermore, there have been efforts by Iran to forge a game-changing deal with the United States. As Trita Parsi’s book *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran and the United States* (Yale University Press, 2007) shows, in May 2003, the Iranian government sent a proposal to the United States via its Swiss ambassador proposing a deal in which Iran would freeze its nuclear program in exchange for an end to U.S. hostility. As explained in the book, as well as Peter Galbraith’s article published in *AlterNet*, the deal was summarily rejected by Bush/Cheney. But, with the current weakness of the United

States in Iraq, and with its real options limited in Iran, diplomacy and a deal should be pursued, just as the Iraq Study Group Report recommended. In short, there is no reason for Democrats, or for anyone, to assume that diplomacy has no chance of success.

Lastly, Democrats need to carefully scrutinize any claim of threats to U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf if they are to avoid another manufactured pretext for war as in the Gulf of Tonkin. The U.S. needs to understand that when we put fifty warships close to Iran (the Strait of Hormuz is only fifty miles wide), some interaction with Iranian boats is inevitable. In fact, interaction occurs routinely, providing an opportunity to inflate innocent contact into “near-attack,” as recent events have shown. Having said this, the fact that there will inevitably be contact between Iranian and U.S. ships does not mean there is no danger: Fast-moving Iranian speedboats armed with torpedoes have the capacity to sink U.S. ships. Last year, I spoke with Jim Webb, a former Secretary of Navy and now U.S. Senator from Virginia who said, “I am terrified about the U.S. putting a second aircraft carrier fleet into the Persian Gulf. It is wholly unnecessary from a strategic standpoint, is provocative to the Iranians, puts the U.S. fleet at greater risk [it is hard even to turn the fleet around in the narrow Strait] and could lead to inadvertent or manufactured conflict.” Webb has called for the removal of aircraft carrier based fleets from the Gulf, but his fears have largely been ignored. This is a ticking time bomb that Democrats need to investigate, challenge, and defuse.

Last November, Sen. Hagel gave a thoughtful, well-reasoned speech about Iran and the Middle East. Echoing the recommendation of the Iraq Study Group Report, he called for direct talks with Iran: “[N]ow is the time for the United States to actively pursue an offer of direct, unconditional, and comprehensive talks with Iran...We should make clear that everything is on the table—our issues and Iran’s—similar to the opportunity we squandered in 2003 for comprehensive talks with Iran.” Hagel added:

We must be clear that the United States does not... seek regime change in Iran. There can be no ambiguity on this point. This should include offering Iran a credible way back in from the fringes of the international community, security guarantees if it is willing to give nuclear weapons ambitions, as well as other incentives.... Creative approaches like these, rather than war speeches and talk of World War III, would strengthen our ability across the board to deal with Iran. Our friends and allies and international institutions would be more confident to stand with us, not just because of our power, but rather because they trusted our purpose, our words and our actions. It could create a new dynamic in U.S.-Iran relations, in part by incentivizing the Iranians to react to the possibility of better relations with the West because it is in their interests.... By refusing to engage Iran in direct, unconditional and comprehensive talks, we are perpetuating dangerous geopolitical unpredictabilities.

Let us salute Republican Sen. Hagel for his insights and courage to speak forthrightly about Iran. Shouldn’t we expect the same from Democrats?

In November 2007, Rep. John Tierney, who sits on the House Select Committee on Intelligence and chairs a National Security and Foreign Affairs subcommittee, initiated a series of subcommittee hearings. He invited experts to teach Congress about Iran, such as what the Iranian people want, where power lay in the Iranian government, how Iran might be engaged diplomatically, what the costs of military intervention in Iran might be, etc. And, recently, Sen. Jim Webb sent a letter to President Bush contending that, “Offensive military action should not be taken against Iran without the express consent of Congress.” As many, including Steve Clemons, who directs the American Strategies program at the New America Foundation, have argued, in light of the Kyl-Lieberman resolution, Democrats need to get fifty votes on something, even a nonbinding resolution, even a letter to the president, showing that a majority of the Senate opposes an attack on Iran. This is an opportunity for leadership from Democratic U.S. Senators. Can one or more of them rise to the occasion and bring some sanity to the discussion of Iran?

Conclusion

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I ATTENDED A TWO-DAY DEMOCRATIC PARTY POLICY DISCUSSION. The featured luncheon speaker on the second day was famed Democratic strategist James Carville, whose topic was the 2008 elections. Carville provided a rousing, rosy picture of Democratic opportunities in 2008, but missing from his discussion was any mention of national security contingencies. During the Q & A, a major Democratic donor asked Carville how the Democratic Party would respond to a major act of terrorism or a manufactured security event, such as Iran. With Nancy Pelosi sitting nearby, Carville answered, “I don’t have a clue; that is way above my pay station.”

If the Democrats hope to avoid another crushing, demoralizing defeat in a presidential election, as well as prevent America from digging an even deeper hole in the Middle East, they will need more than a clue: they will need a coherent strategy about what to do about Iran, and the sooner the better. ■

Guy T. Saperstein is a member of the Democracy Alliance, past president of the Sierra Club Foundation, and founder of the National Security/Foreign Policy New Ideas Fund. The National Law Journal named him one of the “100 Most Influential Lawyers in America.”

A Scent of Sustainability in the Negev

by Linda Aziz-Zadeh

STRONG DRAFTS OF BOTH SWEET AND savory scents flutter through the warm, sanguine air in the Bedouin township of Tel Sheva, Israel. Forty pairs of captivated eyes and legs follow as Mariam Abu Regayak, a Bedouin herbalist, leads them through the freshly planted circles of powerful desert herbs. These guests to the official opening of the Tel Sheva Desert Medicine Site kneel, rub leaves between their fingertips, and learn of the medicinal value of the pungent-smelling herbs they inhale.

For the past six months Jews and Arabs have worked in partnership to create, on this spot of Bedouin land, a learning site where Bedouin knowledge and culture could thrive. Female members of the Abu Regayak family, who own the land, formed the concept for this garden in collaboration with BUSTAN, an environmental justice organization focused on sustainable development and fair allocation of resources in the Negev desert. Every week international and Israeli volunteers joined BUSTAN's Volunteer Coordinator, Tali Weinberg, to work alongside these Bedouin women. The process entailed clearing the site area, setting the design of the garden with stones, and of course planting the actual herbs. Most of the herbs were sought out from the wilderness of the desert and transplanted to the site. Volunteers were welcomed into the family's home and learned first-hand not only about desert herbs, but about Bedouin culture and lifestyle as well.

Herbal knowledge is an intrinsic element



TALI WEINBERG, BUSTAN ARCHIVES

of the Bedouin culture. For generations the Bedouin roamed the desert in their nomadic fashion, living primarily off sheep- and goat-herds and subsistence farming. The desert herbs have been of crucial importance to their lifestyle since they were a primary source for medicine, food, and cosmetics. Plant lore is also a natural part of the Islamic tradition that is embedded within the Bedouin lifestyle. As the Bedouin herbalist, Mariam, lets us finger and taste from a heap of the black cumin she uses in her organic soaps, we learn cumin not only strengthens the immune system, but, according to the prophet Mohammad himself, it contains the potential cure for anything but death. Thus there is a spiritual reverence for this ancient knowledge that can be felt within the accumulation of herbs at the site.

This herb garden is only part of the greater vision of what will become the Tel Sheva Bedouin Cultural Learning Site. Mariam is converting her family's whole strip of land into a site that represents the many different facets of the traditional Bedouin lifestyle. Opposite the garden, in between a patch of wheat and another of barley, stands a mud-building demonstration site, which provides an example of Baika mud-building techniques and various examples of the traditional earthen ovens that have been an important part of the Bedouin culture and pita preparation process for centuries. This element of the site was built recently, when Sara, an elder of the family, helped lead a Taboun (Bedouin bread) workshop. Along with the samples of grains, the ovens are set up to teach all about the process of bread-making, which has long been one of the fundamental parts of the Bedouin diet. Also planned is the development of an animal husbandry site, carpets made from goat and sheep hair, vineyards, and models of Bedouin farming methods, as well as a traditional Bedouin tent where workshops will be held and other Bedouin wares will be displayed.

There is dire need for an authentic Bedouin cultural site. Currently, the only interaction most tourists have with the Bedouin is through inauthentic nights of "Bedouin Hospitality." They are taken on camel rides, led into traditional tents where they drink Bedouin tea and coffee and served resplendent meals on beautiful Bedouin mats while being fed quaint stories of traditional gender and tribal dynamics. Not only does this romanticized glimpse reflect nothing of the current political status of Bedouin in Israel, but it also gives a false orientalist slant to the culture and neglects crucial aspects of the land-oriented Bedouin lifestyle.

Yet, perhaps an even more pressing reason for this site is to enable the Bedouin to maintain and reconnect to their own heritage. Local identification of native Bedouin plants and of their medicinal, culinary, and cosmetic uses is seriously endangered. So is much knowledge of traditional food production and preparation. Just a generation ago Bedouin were living almost primarily off the herds they grazed and the land they farmed or gleaned from, as were the Jews who lived here. Within the last generation the Bedouin have lost much of their land and have generally relocated into seven urban townships. This change in environment along with the pressure to integrate into contemporary Israeli society contributes to a modern Bedouin lifestyle that is becoming more and more out of touch with the land, and the lifestyle that was intimately integrated within it. The BUSTAN site hopes to inspire and rekindle Bedouin's connection with their heritage and ensure that this valuable knowledge will not be buried in the dust of modernity.

As the sky darkens and guests head back home from the Site's opening day, the most poignant scent lingering in the garden is that of hope. The traditional practices being restored by the Site have much to offer in this time of re-imagining development in the Negev. Just as precious as the sanguine scents that have taken root in this garden are the roots of a truly devoted partnership between Arabs and Jews. ■

Linda Miriam Aziz-Zadeh is an organic gardener, poet and novelist, and alum of Adamah: the Jewish Environmental Fellowship. She has been involved with BUSTAN since 2006 and was their Green Center Coordinator in Be'er Sheva.



Corporate Free Speech: A Progressive Trap

by Allen D. Kanner

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN FIGHTING THE COMMERCIALIZATION of childhood since the early 1990s, I'm frequently asked what I think we should do about it. If you have a few hours I'll be glad to tell you. But one suggestion I immediately make is that we implement a nationwide ban on marketing to children. This proposal, however, is unacceptable to many of my progressive colleagues and friends, who see it as a serious infringement on the corporation's right to free speech.

In 1906, the English writer Evelyn Beatrice Hall paraphrased Voltaire as having said: "I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to my death your right to say it." I believe it is sentiments such as this one, with which I agree, that are behind the mistaken idea that marketing is, or ought to be, granted protections similar to those given to other forms of speech. For example, in order to protect free speech the *Nation*, the *Progressive*, and *Daily Kos* have adopted policies of accepting most legal and non-libelous advertising, no matter how "loathsome" the content.

But as critical as free speech is to a democracy, and as vulnerable as it is to suppression, it is not an absolute right but rather one that needs to be evaluated in terms of the contexts in which speech occurs. As I will argue, modern marketing, especially as developed by large corporations, has created a context in which limits on commercial speech are not only justified, but essential to a free society.

In discussing limits to commercial speech, we need not restrict ourselves to legal precedent, since we are trying to determine what is fair and just rather than what is currently legal. However, it is useful to note that historically commercial speech has been distinguished from political speech and been afforded less protection.

It is also instructive to consider the variety of existing legal limits to speech. For example, the courts have restricted political speech by placing caps on individual and corporate campaign contributions (considered a form of speech) and barring non-profit organizations from endorsing any candidates or making any contributions. Laws governing defamation, libel, slander, court testimony, and advertising each prohibit lying and deception under specific circumstances. Private property rights often override free speech protections, which is why shopping malls may evict protesters. Sexual harassment is grounds for a lawsuit. Speech that is a public nuisance or disturbs the peace can be suppressed. Pornography cannot be sold to minors.

This partial list suggests some of the circumstances under which limits on speech might be justified. Speech has been restricted when the courts deemed it too harmful to society or individuals, in conflict with other rights, or as targeting individuals who are too vulnerable.

Where does corporate marketing fit into this picture? There are two properties of modern commercial speech that make it extremely harmful to both society and to individuals, and therefore a legitimate candidate for governmental restrictions.

The first is that corporate marketing has developed in the last century into a form of commercial speech that dwarfs all that has preceded it in scope, sophistication, and influence. It is now virtually impossible to participate in public life without constant exposure to commercial messages. Through a combination of advanced technology, new marketing techniques, and enormous amounts of funding, modern marketing is functioning more like propaganda

for a materialistic ideology than like simple advertising. As such, we should seriously consider whether it has evolved into a qualitatively new type of commercial speech.

As it stands, corporate marketing is generating great harm. It routinely employs a large number of subtle and damaging psychological manipulations that adversely affect people's health and emotional well-being. The enormous scope of marketing itself is problematic. For example, the hyper-materialistic message promoted by corporate advertising drives the consumer frenzy that is destroying complex life on the planet. Junk food advertising is a major contributor to the international obesity crisis.

Second, an unusual feature of commercial speech is that it typically requires money to engage in it. This is a decidedly undemocratic arrangement. It has been exacerbated by the historic amounts of wealth recently accumulated by corporations, which allows them to dominate national and international marketing and therefore control the media in general. Recognizing this, media activists advocate limits on the number and types of regional news outlets a single company can own. In essence, these activists seek to restrict the speech of media corporations in order to ensure the survival of democracy.

In sum, corporate marketing is a form of speech, perhaps a new form, which is harming individuals, society, and nature on a massive scale. Its negative impact is escalating. Under these circumstances, legal restrictions on corporate advertising are not only justified but also necessary to protect democracy and preserve a free society. ■

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

Congress of THE United States,

begun and held at the City of New York, on
Wednesday the fourth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

Congress shall make no law respecting
an establishment of religion, or
prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or
abridging the freedom of speech, or of
the press; or the right of the people
peaceably to assemble, and to petition
Government for a redress of

Theology for Healing the Nation

by Glen Stassen



Rev. Cal H.P. Merrell of Atlanta, reacts during a sermon during the last session of the New Baptist Covenant Meeting in Atlanta Friday, Feb. 1, 2008.

us with something very deep. We were the only white family among 2,000 members. When Pastor Walker welcomed our new-members' class into church membership one Sunday morning, he pointed to my family, and said: "The Stassens may look like some folks who have not treated you right. But they may be a little different from those folks. And in any case, the Stassens are now our members. You treat them like our members!" And the members of Canaan did. Their warm welcome each Sunday was a far deeper experience than these words can say. Some kind of healing happened for me that I am still trying to understand.

It's not like I was some kind of segregationist finally getting reconciled with black brothers and sisters. I was deeply engaged in the civil rights movement, and antiracist teaching since. My father, sister, and I were part of the March on Washington where we witnessed Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech; I was not raised in a racist family. Maybe you would not think I needed such healing from a black church family. But something deep happened. Why?

A STRANGE THING HAPPENED to me when, on the first evening of the New Baptist Covenant meeting in Atlanta (see box), The Greater Travelers Rest Baptist Church choir sang. I buried my head in my hands, and sat there weeping.

Why? That choir had transported me back into Canaan Baptist Church of Christ on 116th Street in Harlem. My family and I joined Canaan the year I was on sabbatical leave at Union Theological Seminary. Something deep happened to me at Canaan, and I am still trying to understand it.

Canaan was celebrating the thirty-fifth year of the ministry of its very thoughtful pastor, Wyatt Tee Walker. The church's three choirs were fantastic. They connected

It wasn't only about race. When the Canaan choir sang, they made contact with suffering, and also with rejoicing. They reached some kinds of suffering that are buried deep in me, and they brought me to reconciliation and then to rejoicing. On Easter Sunday the choir was absolutely phenomenal; it was the best Easter worship I have ever experienced. My soul was touched, it was deeply moved, and it was resurrected, rejoicing. I know why that woman at the New Baptist Covenant meeting was crying out, "Hallelujah" when the choir sang. I was too, silently. There are depths of unreconciled disconnection in many of us that are not all about race—most of us have our own inner wounds, shames, or alienations; to experience hospitality, welcome, acceptance, and embrace that touch an ethnic divide in us can also bring an experience of healing for other unreconciled disconnections.

I believe many white Americans, consciously or unconsciously, feel a sense of shame when we think of ourselves as part of a nation that has a history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination. Many of us aren't aware of it, but for too many, this shame partly blocks us from making the kind of open connections with other people that we need. I believe that much of the religious right consists of people who have some hidden shame that they displace by insisting on an authoritarian righteousness. Once it was not smoking, not drinking, and not doing wrong sex. Now it is condemning abortion and homosexual sex. The leaders of the religious right opposed the Civil Rights movement, and many opposed a Martin Luther King Jr. holiday due to the self-righteous authoritarianism that has displaced their hidden shame.

This nation has deeply needed a leader who would reach out and say: "The struggle for civil rights was hard for many. It brought forth resistance, anger, shame, and resentment in some whites, and experience of pain and hope, mixed with disappointment for some blacks. But now we realize that our nation would be in much greater trouble if we had not had the nonviolent accomplishments of that movement. Let us reach out to one another and give each other many warm welcomes, as we join together as a new, more reconciled family."

John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. could have led us in that healing, but they were all assassinated. Lyndon Johnson was disempowered by the Vietnam War. Tragically, we have been deprived of the redemptive leader we have needed. Canaan Baptist Church of Christ, its pastor and choirs, its members who regularly saved a seat for us, and their warm welcome, brought about that healing for me. Maybe I am only projecting my own needs on others, but I think our nation deeply needs healing from our past shame and our present polarization.

In Atlanta, I shared some of these thoughts with the Theological Education Steering Committee of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and it immediately caught resonance. We decided that our next AAR annual meeting of 10,000 academics will have a session on "A Theology for Healing a Polarized Nation." We will invite Cornel West, Michael Lerner, among others, to lead us in thinking deeply about the kind of public rhetoric we need to bring healing to this nation. ■

Glen Harold Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics and Fuller Theological Seminary. He has published a number of books, including Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War, Living the Sermon on the Mount, and Kingdom Ethics, which won the Christianity Today award for best book of 2004 in theology.

The National Baptist Convention

Fifteen thousand Anglo, African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic Baptists gathered in Atlanta on Jan. 30th this year. They began to fulfill the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. that "One day, on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners would be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

Jesus' call, based on Isaiah 61, inspired The New Baptist Covenant: "to promote peace with justice, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick and marginalized, welcome the strangers among us, and promote religious liberty and respect for religious diversity."

William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, proclaimed that Jesus "concretized" his mission by seeking to reverse the injustice of structures that caused oppression. Marian Wright Edelman called for Baptists to unify around protecting children. She cited a litany of statistics that reveal the depth of poverty, neglect and risk that describe the United States's 13 million children in poverty—a national catastrophe. Former vice president and Nobel laureate Al Gore called for Baptists to make creation care one of their major initiatives. "The scientists are screaming from the rooftops. The ice is melting. The land is parched. The seas are rising. The storms are getting stronger."

Convener Jimmy Carter said that in March, the leaders will plan follow-up actions.

Easter: What Happened to Jesus?

by Walter Wink

CONSIDERING THE WEIGHT THE EARLY CHURCH ATTACHED TO THE resurrection, it is curious that, subsequent to the empty-tomb stories, no two resurrection accounts in the four Gospels are alike. All of these narratives seem to be very late additions to the tradition. They answer a host of questions raised by the gospel of the resurrection. At the core of all these accounts is the simple testimony: we experienced Jesus as alive.

A later generation that did not witness a living Jesus needed more; for them the resurrection narratives answered that need. But what had those early disciples experienced? What does it mean to say that they experienced Jesus alive? The resurrection appearances did not, after all, take place in the temple before thousands of worshipers, but in the privacy of homes or cemeteries. They did not occur before religious authorities, but to the disciples hiding from those authorities. The resurrection was not a worldwide historic event that could have been filmed, but a privileged revelation reserved for the few.

Nevertheless, something “objective” did happen to God, to Jesus, and to the disciples. What happened was every bit as real as any other event, only it was not historically observable. It was an event in the history of the psyche. The ascension was the entry of Jesus into the archetypal realm. Though skeptics might interpret what the disciples experienced as a mass hallucination, the experience itself cannot be denied.

This is what may have happened: the very image of God was altered by the sheer force of Jesus being. God would never be the same. Jesus had indelibly imprinted the divine; God had everlastingly entered the human. In Jesus, God took on humanity, furthering the evolution revealed in Ezekiel’s vision of Yahweh on the throne in “the likeness, as it were, of a human form” (Ezek. 1:26). Jesus, it seemed to his followers, had infiltrated the Godhead.

The ascension marks, on the divine side, the entry of Jesus into the son-of-the-man archetype; from then on Jesus’ followers would experience God through the filter of Jesus. Incarnation means that not only is Jesus like God, but that God is now like Jesus. It is a prejudice of modern thought that events happen only in the outer world. What Christians regard as the most significant event in human history happened, according to the Gospels, in the psychic realm, and it altered external history irrevocably. Ascension was an “objective” event, if you will, but it took place in the imaginal realm, at the substratum of human existence, where the most fundamental changes in consciousness take place.

Something also happened to the disciples. They experienced the most essential aspect of Jesus as remaining with them after his death. They had seen him heal, preach, and cast out demons, but had localized these powers in him. Though the powers had always been in them as well, while Jesus was alive they tended to project these latent,

God-given powers onto him. They had only known those powers in him. So it was natural, after his resurrection, to interpret the unleashing of those powers in themselves, as if Jesus himself had taken residence in their hearts. And it was true: the God at the center of their beings was now indistinguishable from the Jesus who had entered the Godhead. Jesus, in many of the post-Easter son-of-the-man sayings, seems to speak of the Human Being (the “son of man”) as other than himself. Was Jesus stepping aside, as he seems to do in the Gospels, to let the Human Being become the inner entelechy (the regulating and directing force) of their souls?

The disciples also saw that the spirit that had worked within Jesus continued to work in and through them. In their preaching they extended his critique of domination. They continued his life by advancing his mission. They persisted in proclaiming the domination-free order of God inaugurated by Jesus.

The ascension was a “fact” on the imaginal plane, not just an assertion of faith. It irreversibly altered the nature of the disciples’ consciousness. They would never again be able to think of God apart from Jesus. They sensed themselves accompanied by Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). They found in themselves a New Being that they had hitherto only experienced in Jesus. They knew themselves endowed with a spirit-power they had known only occasionally, such as when Jesus had sent them out to perform healings (Mark:7-13). In their struggles with the powers that be, they knew that whatever their doubts, losses, or sufferings, the final victory was God’s, because Jesus had conquered death and the fear of death and led them out of captivity.

Jesus the man, the sage, the itinerant teacher, the prophet, even the lowly Human Being, while unique and profound, was not able to turn the world upside down. His attempt to do so was a decided failure. Rather, it was his ascension, his metamorphosis into the archetype of humanness that did so for his disciples. The Human Being constituted a remaking of the values that had undergirded the domination system for some 3,000 years before Jesus. The critique of domination continued to build on the Exodus and the prophets of Israel, to be sure. But Jesus’ ascension to the right hand of the Power of God was a supernova in the archetypal sky. As the image of the truly Human One, Jesus became an exemplar of the utmost possibilities for living.

Could the son-of-the-man material have been lore that grew up to induce visions of the Human Being? Could it have been a way to activate altered states of consciousness based on meditation on the ascended Human Being enthroned upon the heart? It was not enough simply to know about the mystical path. One needed to take it.

The ascension was real. Something happened to God, to Jesus, and to the disciples. I am not suggesting that the ascension is nonhistorical, but rather that the historical is the wrong category for understanding ascension. The ascension is not a historical fact to be believed, but an imaginal experience to be undergone. It is not at datum of public record, but divine transformative power overcoming the powers of death. The religious task for us today is not to cling to dogma but to seek a personal experience of the living God in whatever mode is meaningful. ■

Walter Wink is professor emeritus of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City and author of 16 books. He is best known for his trilogy on “The Powers” and his fascinating interpretation of Jesus’ teachings on nonviolence.



Two of Jesus’ despondent disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus after the crucifixion when a stranger joined them and spoke so interestingly about the scriptures they invited him to eat with them. As soon as he broke bread they recognized him as Jesus (Luke 24: 30-31). As Walter Wink writes, these few appearances by Jesus were private ones to trusted friends, not to multitudes.

“The Supper at Emmaus” (1958) by Ceri Richards (1903-1970), from the Methodist Church [of Great Britain] Collection of Modern Christian Art. The painting hangs in the chapel of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

Take Back Jesus:

The Queer Christ Arises for the Good of All

by Kittridge Cherry

SPRING IS COMING AND THE saccharine Nativity Scenes of Christmas are making way for the gruesome crucifixion tableaux that point to Passover and Easter. Religious icons change with

the seasons, and yet the iconography remains surprisingly safe and static. Nativity scenes enshrine the nuclear family and obscure the shocking point of the Christmas myth: God became human, and in a most disreputable context—born in poverty to an unwed teenage mother.

When the usual white male Jesus hangs impassively on the cross, people may be desensitized to the violence and bigotry behind his execution.

Jesus is supposed to represent all people, including the outcasts and the sexually marginalized. Nobody owns the copyright on Christ, so the uniformity of the “holy” images raises important questions about who controls them and what purposes they serve.

My experiences as a lesbian minister and art historian have shown that people are longing for spiritually progressive images of the Divine. Many are turned off by dogmatic, male-dominated religions and the wars they fuel. They welcome reassessments that are multiracial, pro-woman, or gay-sensitive. People of faith and conscience have the right—even the duty—to create alternative spiritual iconography.

Artists are rising to the occasion by creating a more diverse range of religious art. The new visions can free the minds of viewers and start to compensate for institutional religion’s past biases and omissions.

Depicting divinity is fraught with peril, as revealed by the commandment against graven images. Every picture of God tempts the viewer to idolatry and



ELISABETH OHLSSON WALLIN

requires remedy by inevitably falling short of God's infinite variety. But the followers of Jesus began making images of him almost from the start, and now countless versions have been created, each adapted for a particular audience and era. The historical Jesus was a Middle Eastern Jew, but in general Europeans make him look white, Asians picture him as Asian, and Africans depict Jesus as black. Every group needs access to the divine; so now those who have been left out of traditional Christian imagery are reclaiming, defusing, and transforming the old systems of symbolism.

This important work is not just being done by Christians. Each community's experience is unique, but there are strong parallels between Marc Chagall's mid-twentieth-century paintings of an observant Jew on the cross and the newer images. Chagall's crucified rabbi symbolizes the martyrdom of Jews everywhere. Likewise, the cross is being used to convey the suffering of other groups.

Female crucifixion in the paintings of artists such as Jill Ansell and Sandra Yagi (both of whom are Buddhist, although Ansell was raised a Reform Jew) expresses the sacrifice of all women. Janet McKenzie of Vermont paints a nude female Christ that has largely been censored by the gatekeepers who decide what gets exhibited. Called *Christ Mother*, it is a towering, gritty and majestic painting of a naked woman bound in a crucifixion pose. Another new woman-centered vision comes from Atlanta painter Becki Jayne Harrelson. She gives Mary a lesbian partner in her painting *Madonna, Lover and Son*. After all, the story of the virgin birth means that Jesus was conceived without the involvement of any man.

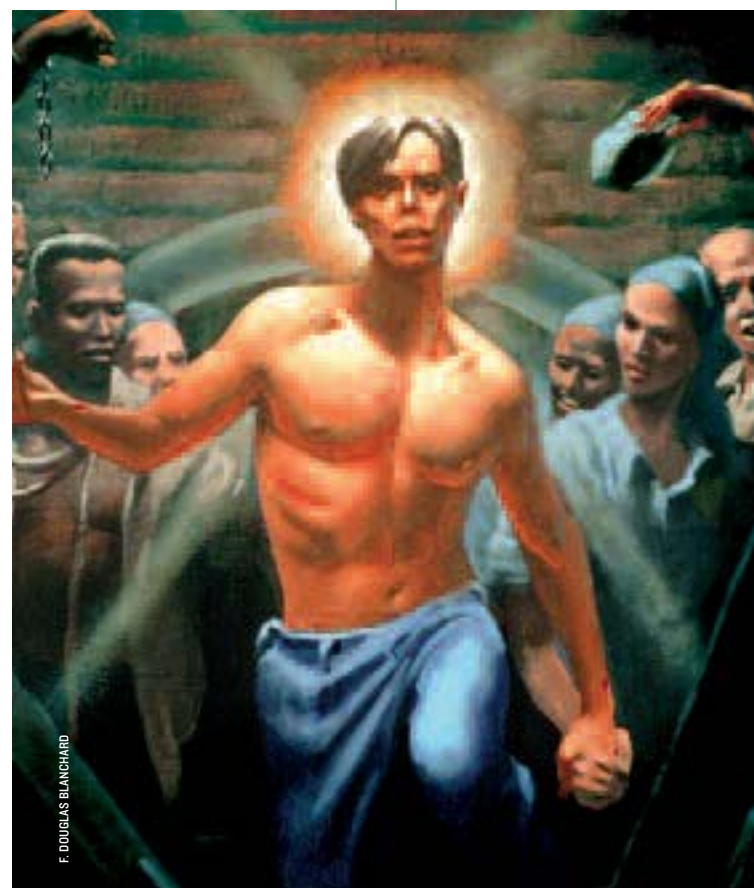
Today the most daring—and most needed—image of all is the gay Jesus. The queer Christ is necessary because conservatives are using Christian rhetoric to justify discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Christ was killed for teaching radical love, and now his image is being twisted to promote hate. The Jesus of scripture broke gender rules and gender roles. He befriended prostitutes, lepers, and other outcasts. He challenged traditional family values at almost every turn, ignoring his blood relatives in favor of those who became his “brothers and sisters” by loving God and neighbor. Traditional iconography such as the Stations of the Cross and the Passion narrative are increasingly being adapted to address gay suffering, sometimes with references to AIDS. Queer Christian art enlarges the way people see God and makes it easier to recognize the image of God in oneself and in others, particularly LGBT people.

I decided to write about the queer Christ as part of my own healing process after Chronic Fatigue Syndrome forced me into a more contemplative life. No doubt I was influenced by my experiences as clergy in the LGBT community. One of my main duties had been promoting dialogue on homosexuality at the National Council of Churches (U.S.A.) and the World Council of Churches. As National Ecumenical Officer for Metropolitan Community Churches, I had helped develop gay-friendly theologies. LGBT people of faith and our allies had studied the scriptures used to condemn homosexuality, and found out that they had been mistranslated or taken out of context. Homosexuality is not a sin. In the Bible Jesus never said a word against same-sex relations and gladly healed the centurion's “boy,” the same word used for a homosexual lover. Still, we stopped short of questioning Jesus' own sexual orientation.

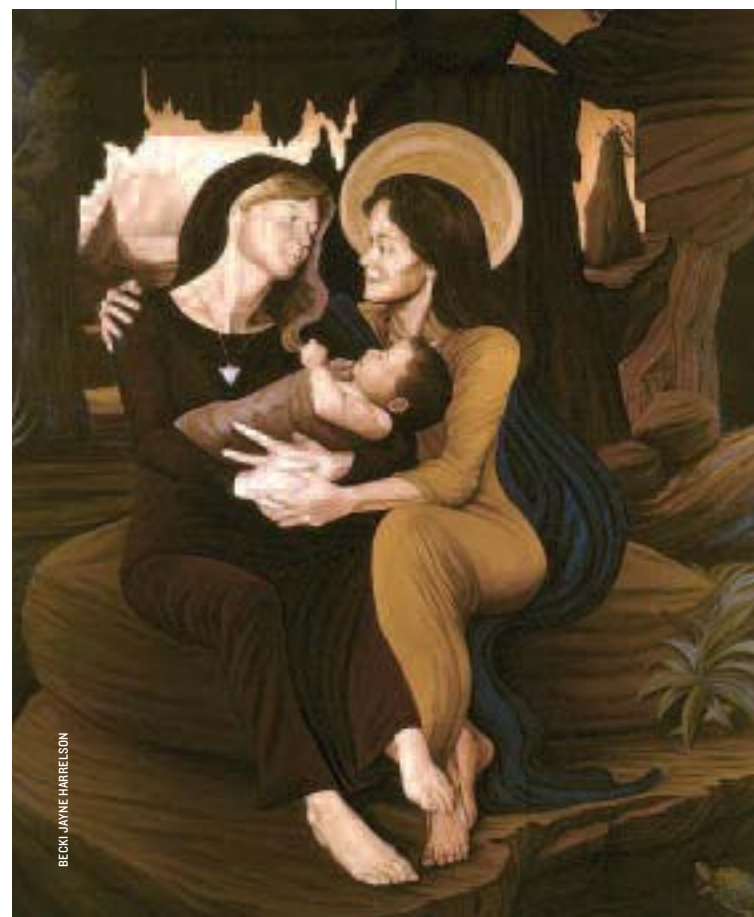
I count myself in the vanguard of people who are reimagining Christ as queer, although I paint my pictures with words. In my *Jesus in Love* novel series, a Christ has today's queer sensibilities and psychological sophistication as he lives out the Christian myth. I wrote about a sexual Jesus because human beings are sexual, and he is bisexual-transgender because I did not want to limit Christ's sexuality. During the writing process, Christ seemed to reveal this aspect of his all-encompassing self to me, not as a historical fact, but as a spiritual truth. Like many artists who portray the gay Jesus, I began my creative process in isolation from the others, unaware that I was part of a budding movement. Immersing myself in Christ's miraculous story of love, death, and resurrection helped me heal.

When the manuscript was almost done, I discovered that my vision was part of a larger trend. Queer Christ images are emerging now in theology books, at art galleries, on stage, and across the Internet. Seminary professors such as Theodore Jennings are seriously proposing that the historical Jesus had a homosexual relationship. I eagerly began contacting





F. DOUGLAS BLANCHARD



BECKI JAYNE HARRELSON

these kindred spirits. We became a network of support for each other. When I displayed some of the new images on my website, JesusInLove.org, the response was so enthusiastic that I compiled them into a book, *Art That Dares*. In spring 2007 some of us collaborated on the first National Festival of Progressive Spiritual Art, which gathered hundreds of enthusiastic art lovers in Taos, New Mexico.

On the other hand, many people strongly reject the queer Christ. He lives in the fertile, uncharted zone between two almost irreconcilable opposites: too gay for most Christians, but too Christian for most of the LGBT community. Artists who dare to show Christ as gay have had their work destroyed—if they can find a way to exhibit or publish at all. Many, myself included, were accused of blasphemy.

In one of the most notorious cases, all hell broke loose when Swedish photographer Elisabeth Ohlson Wallin recreated twelve scenes from Christ's life using contemporary LGBT models and locations. Her method resulted in stunning images such as *Sermon on the Mount*, which shows Jesus with gay men and lesbians clad in full black leather with chaps, chains and harnesses. Her *Ecce Homo* series toured Europe, often in churches, but the Pope expressed disapproval by canceling a planned audience with the Swedish archbishop. Opponents vandalized the art, threw rocks at the artist, and issued death threats. This kind of religious bigotry is exactly why the queer Christ is needed.

The most valid criticism is that the progressive Christ figures may violate historical fact. Nobody knows whether the historical Jesus was attracted to other men, although some contemporary scholars do think so. He certainly wasn't a woman. Jesus of Nazareth, the first-century man known through scientific and academic disciplines, was probably nothing like the new Christ figures, and that's okay, even liberating. After all, he was probably very different from the traditional Christ figures as well. The new images invite people to connect with what could be called the "myth" of Christ's life, the archetypal story that rings true to the human spirit. I believe that my own healing came from connection with the living Christ who is known through myth, faith, and meditation.

The images that strengthen me most are not Christ's birth, but his rebirth. New York painter Douglas Blanchard explored the resurrection theme in a twenty-four panel gay Passion series with Jesus as a contemporary gay man. In Blanchard's *Jesus Rises*, Christ holds another man's hand as he leads a jailbreak from a dark, crowded dungeon. He fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of a savior who releases prisoners, restores sight to the blind, and lets the oppressed go free.

This and other queer Christ images can liberate everyone. For too long people have been in bondage to conservative interpretations of Christianity's central figure. Without a broader vision, humanity is likely to continue down the destructive path of hatred, war, economic exploitation, and ecological destruction. Now it's time to take back Jesus—not just for gays, but for the good of all. ■

Rev. Kittredge Cherry is a lesbian Christian author, art historian and minister. She offers progressive spiritual resources at JesusInLove.org.

Zot, Ayin, and the Hundredth Monkey

by Deborah Allen

I NEVER WANT TO READ ANYONE ELSE'S ACCOUNT OF their spiritual awakening. Some crusty old part of my soul feels annoyed, usually by how happy and slightly smug they sound. When my friend Ramona started talking about feeling “ecstatic” as part of the daily ebb and flow of her life, I hated her just a little bit.

I have the same higgledy piggledy feeling about the word “enlightened.” For no good reason except that I feel I will be left out. You will be better than me. You will have all this light streaming out of your head and you will be Above and I will be Below, which will make me feel separate from you, which is not even close to “unity consciousness.”

For me, spiritual awakening remains as complex as that old Hundredth Monkey legend, which goes like this: on an island in Japan, a group of monkeys learn to wash sweet potatoes and teach this skill to their children through observation and repetition. Once a critical number of monkeys have this skill down—thus the Hundredth Monkey—the behavior suddenly jumps across the water to a nearby island where other monkeys suddenly know how to wash sweet potatoes.

Actually, the researcher who published this story made it up. The part about learning to wash sweet potatoes was true, but the part about the monkey's behavior jumping to another island wasn't. For years I thought this tale was true. It was a hopeful story, designed to give meaning to our individual toil, creating hope that we are of service on a grander scale simply by performing the smallest acts of life.

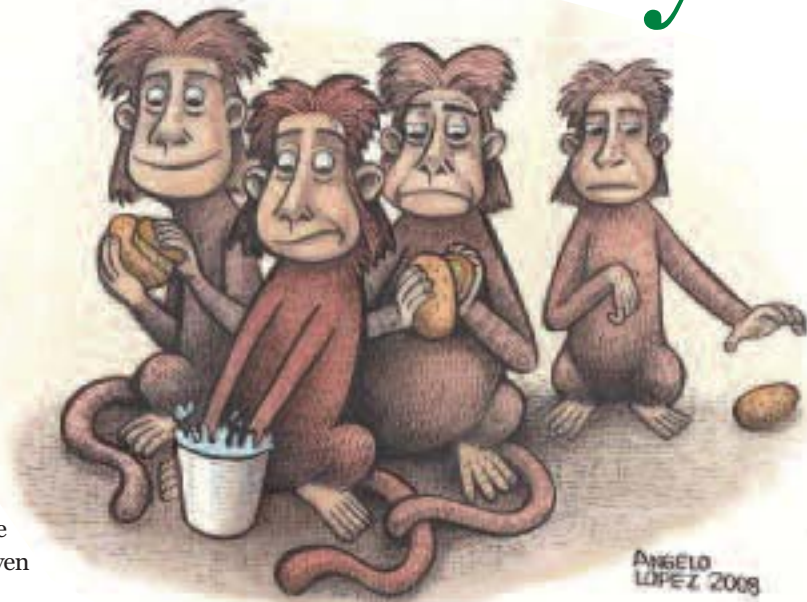
Spiritual awakening is complex. It takes a lot of observation and repetition with no guarantees. And—here comes the paradox—sometimes it seems simple. All the years of practice and intention to know the Divine pay off big time. A flood of pure love and gratitude tumbles through. All doubt disappears. In these moments, it's easy to believe that something so powerful must affect the lives of all monkeys everywhere.

Which brings me to my awakening as a Jew. The basic tenet of Judaism, the one that set Judaism apart at the time of its origin, is the belief that there is only one God and God is everything.

Sitting in bed one morning, reading because I was too restless to meditate, I came across this paragraph in Avram Davis's book, *The Way of Flame* (Jewish Lights, 2007):

There is a teaching: “When we become aware that only God exists, then God receives from us the complete joy he hopes for.” This expresses two pivotal points. First, there is only God, by which we mean the Oneness that subsumes all categories. We might call this Oneness the ocean of reality and everything that swims in it. “Only God exists”—this teaching is itself a wonderful and ancient meditation. It is the first admonition of the *esert hadibrot*, the Ten Commandments. Ultimately, no matter where we are in our level of perceptions, there is only *zot*, thisness. *Zot* is a feminine word for “this.” The word *zot* is itself one of the names of God—the thisness of what is.

ZOT! I finally got what it means to believe in only one God. I am going to risk sounding





sophomoric. If there is only one God, and God is everything, then, really, God is *everything*. This was the turning point for me, after years of studying every other theology I could get my hands on. When I finally returned to my own roots, the key to the door was sitting on my night table.

God is not only *in* everything, God *is* everything. Even in the ignoble thoughts, the sleepless nights, and the traumatic stories of childhood. Suddenly, I am the mythical monkey hundred and one, on the other island, shocked into noticing that I am washing a fat orange vegetable for the first time. I don't care if this story isn't true; metaphorically it packs a whopper. All the observation and repetition seem to kick over into something new. The words might be ones I have read a thousand times, but the state of awareness is profoundly different. The Divine is really—no kidding—everything.

However, there is another step. If we stop at “God is everything,” it does not solve the issues of torture, poverty, and starvation. We actually have to do something. We have to choose something amidst all this “everythingness” of God's. Let's say I decide that I will love God as my first choice. What does this mean? Is it the same as my love for other people? Actually, yes. In Jewish theology, there are two basic ways we can love God: through right action and loving-kindness. How terribly self-responsible and accountable this makes me. While even my shitty choices are part of “God is everything,” *loving* God is a practice of right action and kindness.

Right about now, when I think I have it all settled, paradox rumbles mercilessly forward. Is it enough that I choose right action and loving-kindness? Why does this “everything God” appear to respond so slowly? How does this “everything God” resolve the really dreadful realities of suffering? Is my “everything God” in Hitler, the starvation of children, and all the truly unspeakable realities of life? The light inside my awakening experience begins to dim.

All I know to do here is struggle with God. I love this about Jewish faith. In the very heart of our people is the word *Israel*, meaning he who wrestles with God, not he who knows for certain. After struggling for a long time I realize, with humility that maybe should've been there before I started wrestling, that I don't know why there is so much suffering. As I understand Jewish theology, we have to travel to ayin, nothingness, (which translates literally as “nothing,” but I translate as “no answers”) in order to hear the still small voice of God. *Zot and ayin*. Now I am saying that God is everything and nothing.

A sequence of feelings arises when I offer my question about suffering to the nothing. There is a release of often paralyzing grief, usually followed by feelings of despair, hopelessness, and guilt. Some version of, “Why didn't I personally stop the Holocaust even though I wasn't born yet?” And in the meantime, “Have I given enough of my time, money, and spirit to tikkun olam? Is tikkun olam a specific formula? Have I done enough? Is it a doing?” Usually, at this point, my whole system floods with too much input. Overwhelm threatens and I move into the giving up phase.

The high spiritual attainment that can follow giving up might be called surrender. On a good day, I allow overwhelm to relax towards surrender: what will happen if I don't know the answer? In this letting go place, sometimes, new ideas arise. The thoughts seem to come up from inside my heart. Here is an example of a heart thought from the center of *ayin*: what if we *are* all one and attached like a great membrane? From this position, there isn't an answer because there is no One outside the system to answer.

As I go deeper into the stillness of *ayin*, a feeling of compassion arises so powerful it is painful. It feels like falling inward. Like I am falling into a mysterious awareness that is truly bigger than me and, in this compassionate presence, the questions rest.

They don't go away. They rest. From here, I find I have the energy to take right action. It isn't such an effort. From here, I cry a lot because I am so grateful to feel love in my body. From here, at a healing school in Europe, I sat with the adult children and grandchildren of the Second World War, listening to grief, confusion, and longing. From here, I lived in Uganda and fell in love with an entire people, becoming powerfully aware that to be brilliant, creative, and spiritual is in no way dependent on having a bunch of things. And from here, I trudge into my backyard to hang my laundry on the line instead of using the dryer. From here, tikkun olam becomes part of the fabric of my day rather

than a duty so overwhelming that it suffocates hope.

I fear I sound like my ecstatic friend. Actually, from here I am happy for my friend. I don't have a clue why there is so much suffering. All I know is that when I center deep inside, the still, small voice has a chance with me.

Suddenly, having an awakening experience doesn't sound so separate, so "aren't you special?," so exclusive. It is "awakening" experience, not "completely awake forever" experience. It's available inside every body, part of the human equipment. Rest assured, for those of us who need a dose of shadow with our ecstasy, it rarely lasts all day. In fact, just writing this brings a powerful rush of self-doubt that threatens to paralyze me. Who am I to have anything to say about God? What about those children who are still suffering?

And so the cycle begins again: God is everything; I am not separate from God. These feelings are part of God: sit with the suffering, fall down into the heart, wait for the connection with the still small voice, watch the right action arise out of the field of love, and take it.

So here are the great awarenesses of my recent life: God is everything. We have to choose because it is right action. Choosing from a heart of compassion seems to make more compassionate things happen. It does not guarantee the end to suffering. Awakening means more awake, not always awake. Enlightenment means feeling lighter, not the absence of dark.

Now I think I will go about my day. The washing machine has stopped and I am wondering how long it will take the clothes to dry in the fog. ■

Deborah Allen is a counselor, teacher, and free-lance writer. She lives with her family in Soquel, California and can be found on the web at www.healersforum.com.

Renewal For All

by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

SOME TIME AGO I WAS ASKED WHAT I AFFIRM ABOUT MY RELIGION. MY RESPONSE was that I adhere to empirical religion of the Jewish tradition. The questioner challenged me, saying that this was heresy because I did not state divine revelation as the basis for my commitment. What my challenger could not recognize from his perspective is that Divine Revelation is also empirical.

I had a conversation with his Holiness the Dalai Lama about his characterization of the way in which we need to live our ethics as *secular*. I tried to say that I would much rather call it an *empirical* ethics. My sense of the law of karma is that it is an empirical law that is discovered by being observed rather than legislated. As an observer of Jewish *halachah*, I feel the same about the word "observance"—that it has the meaning of watching, discerning, observing what works.

This is really what Jewish Renewal is about: what works. No wonder many people have abandoned "religion" that did not work for them. People are not interested in being subjected to boring aesthetics and vapid sermons, spending time merely spinning their wheels.

People often say that they like spirituality over religion and I take that to mean something that works for them. People would not continue to practice yoga, tai chi and various forms of meditation if they did not derive some benefit from it.

Life is difficult today. From the tasks that go into making a living, keeping a family together, or dealing with the cloud of depression that derives from an anxiety-producing political and social environment, people would love to find something that they could actually do that would connect them with the resources that we usually term "spiritual."

This commonsense approach concerned with tikkun olam, social equity, lucid awareness, emotional equanimity, and most of all with maintenance of kindness and relating to self and



*Reb Zalman
Schachter-Shalomi*



As Reb Zalman sees, there is a growing hunger among young Jews for ritual practice and community that is often best met through non-establishment initiatives. Due to its ties to environmental and justice issues, Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year of the Trees, is quickly becoming a holiday that appeals to young, progressive Jews. The photos (above and opposite) were taken at the first ever Bay Area Community-Wide Tu B'Shevat Seder, which was held this year. A group of young organizers from various communities came together in a grassroots collaboration to organize this celebration. The event, filled with song, prayer, and topical discussions, attracted hundreds of Jews of all backgrounds, many of whom had never before celebrated the holiday.

others, is very much rooted in Jewish Renewal.

When those of us in the Renewal Movement are in conversation with people who come from other religious or creedal backgrounds we often find that they experience an affinity with our grounded ethics and family values. Those we talk with are not necessarily interested in following our specifically Jewish rituals, praying in Hebrew, or celebrating our holy days but, and this is decisive, they are interested in what I call our weekday Judaism—that empirical religion that they observe us to live and may participate in when invited to a home or life cycle ritual with a Jewish family.

Without fully and ritually converting, many such people would like to have a social bond with us Renewal Jews. When they attend our worship services they often find welcome and inspiration. Experiencing satisfaction makes them wonder if there is a way for their informal affiliation to become more explicit.

It turns out that this is not a new phenomenon. Way back in the time of our prophets when the Syrian general came to the Jews for healing from his leprosy, he was ready to embrace the worship of God as Jews worshiped God. There were people in Rome who considered themselves God fearers. There are clear references in the Psalms to Jews inviting those who fear the Lord to celebrate and worship alongside the house of Aaron (Psalm 115:11). Their sacrifices were offered on the altar in Jerusalem. Isaiah would tell us (Isaiah 67:18 to the

end) that they would also be invited to minister as priests and acolytes in the house of prayer for all peoples.

The rabbis of the Talmud recognized such a category under the name the children of Noah, called the Seven Noachide Laws. There are several websites dedicated to these laws, which they list as:

1. **Worship God:** do not worship anything except God.
2. **Respect God And Praise God:** do not curse God or anyone in God's name.
3. **Respect Human Life:** do not commit murder, suicide, or abortion.
4. **Respect The Family:** do not participate in sexual immorality.
5. **Respect Others' Rights And Property:** do not steal, cheat, or kidnap.
6. **Respect All Creatures:** do not eat the flesh of any animal while it is still alive.
7. **Pursue Justice:** establish courts of law to enforce the Seven Noachide laws.

There are people who, as a result of their Bible reading, turn to the organizations of Noachides and are happy to receive guidance from Orthodox rabbis who interpret those seven laws according to the *halachic* traditions of the old paradigm. In Jewish Renewal, these seven rules serve in a way that is illustrative, not normative. We don't demand that the relationship to the higher power necessarily be couched in the parameters of rules one and two above. As regards rule four, we recognize and respect families of same gendered people who would like to sacramentalize their shared life. In our tradition, we expand rule six to include how we view ecology and health. We also do not demand that the courts of law enforce the seven Noachide laws to make people obedient as if it were a Shariya court; we accept legitimate legal judicial forms based on shared consent.

The way in which the Talmud dealt with Noah's children, and the form of affiliation they had with Judaism and the Jewish people, was to make a distinction between the full convert: *Ger Tzedek*, and the Sojourner: *Ger Toshav*—a category which, according to some Orthodox halachic authorities, fell into desuetude at this time in our history (the Talmudic books were written approximately between 200 and 500 CE). However, there were some very eminent authorities who sought to bring this category back into life, like Rabbi Elie Ben Amozegh of Livorno in Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was visited by Aimé Pallière, a man who grew up as a Roman Catholic and went on to embrace the way of the Salvation Army, until later feeling an attraction to Judaism. Rabbi Ben Amozegh, who was an eminent Kabbalist as well as a legalist, counseled Pallière not to take on the full Jewish halachic observance but to become an affiliate under the category of *Ger Toshav*.

This is what he did and described in his book, published in translation as *The Unknown Sanctuary*.

I have encountered many people who would fit under the category of Ger Toshav. Dr. Jean Houston speaks of such people as psycho-Semitic souls. There are as many of them today as there were in the time when the apostle Paul traveled to invite them to join the nascent new branch arising out of Judaism.

When I wrote my book *Jewish With Feeling* (Riverhead Trade, 2006) I had a different working title: *If You're So Universal Why Be Jewish?* If I were to check on the basic reality map shared by progressives I'm sure I would find that many of them are in harmony with those who adhere to Jewish Renewal: We share the concern for the planet. We no longer see ourselves in a triumphalist vision. We recognize the impact of the spirit that rises from the earth and shapes the rituals and celebrations of different ethnic groups. We welcome them all as expressions of the Divine on the earth. Woman mind holds for us the hope for some answers to the problems man mind has created. Ecology is, for us, the major motivator for ethics and morality. We each seek an awareness that transcends the shopping mall mentality. Our theology is more earth-based than heaven-based.

In this way, we want to issue an open invitation to those who would like to be affiliated with us in the common religion that seeks to heal the planet. We'd like to share some of our spiritual and social tools for generating value experiences in the family. We want to make the rabbis and congregations of Jewish Renewal open to the participation of affiliates in such ways as will not disturb our own social community/immunity response.

Many churches have experienced a shift in their magisterium. Stewardship of the earth, greater emphasis on the teachings of the beatitudes and less emphasis on the medieval creeds has become the rule. No religion can manage to hold people if they insist that their creedal structure remain anchored to the paradigms of the past.

What is amazing is that the more one delves into the findings of the currently avant-garde cosmologists, the more one is in touch with the teachings of Jewish Kabbalists, Christian and Sufi mystics, and the deeper philosophical teachings of Buddhism. Underpinning much of the emerging theology is a sense of monistic pantheism, which is in close harmony with the biological matrix of Gaia and the findings of quantum physicists.

There still is the chthonic invitation rising from the spirit of Earth to celebrate the seasons. The transfer of values from generation to generation is most effectively done and celebrated through ritual. Where this is lacking, the mere assent to a high philosophy cannot inspire and enthuse. The great error of many philosophical and theological thinkers has been to address only the cortex of our brain. Religious celebrations demand that the reptilian brain feels itself in a safe sacred place. The limbic brain seeks rhythmic, aesthetic, social acting out.

Besides ignoring the reptilian and the limbic, theologians have not encouraged much contemplative awareness of the deep intuition. I like to spell this word *in-tuition*, the teaching that takes place in the deepest inside.

In Jewish Renewal we have fostered social settings that create a safe and sacred space, and allow for lively rhythmic chanting and speaking as well as for shared contemplative silence. We have also updated the liturgy. All of this makes for engaged participation and creates a context for development of conscience, which makes for better moral and ethical decisions. Unaffiliated people concerned about inculcating values to their children will find that the connection with the empirical religion as guided by Judaism will be accessible to them.


This then is an invitation to people who feel an affinity for the distinctive flavor of Jewish generic religion to affiliate with those congregations that will welcome them. ■



Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, better known as "Reb Zalman," is the father of the Jewish Renewal and Spiritual Eldering movements, an active teacher of Hasidism and Jewish Mysticism, and a participant in ecumenical dialogues throughout the world.

Sacred Doubt

by Irwin Kula



I WAS NEVER ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO IDEALIZED MOTHER Teresa. Though I surely respected how she dedicated her life so totally to the needs of the most destitute—after all, how many of us sacrifice our lives so completely to care for the most vulnerable—I also harbored this gnawing discomfort that such selflessness was driven by a sense that there was actually something good and noble about being poor and about their suffering. Perhaps it was my Jewish this-worldliness or my liberal disposition, but I was disturbed that Mother Teresa never showed any concern in India or elsewhere about the root causes of poverty, including: the lack of education, corrupt dictatorships, inequitable distribution of wealth, and bigotry against social, religious, and ethnic underclasses. I knew the Jewish teaching of how Elijah, the harbinger of the Messiah, spends his time at the city gates bandaging the wounds of those suffering, one wound at a time. But the image of putting band-aids on sores rather than attempting to fight poverty itself seemed to be a glorification of suffering—a bit too Christian for my tastes. And, of course, I was angered, not only by her lack of concern for the hate and oppression of women, an overt cause for poverty, but by her claim in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech that abortion was the worst evil and the greatest enemy of peace.

So when I picked up the recent best seller *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (Doubleday, 2007), the collection of “dark letters” she wrote to her spiritual advisors over the years passionately expressing her doubt, I did so with great skepticism. I discovered in this flawed spiritual leader—and what spiritual leader isn’t flawed—a human being whose profundity of faith firmly places her in the tradition of the great spiritual figures who have been shaped by the exquisite anguish of being finite and human while genuinely yearning for the infinite. This window into Mother Teresa’s agonizing spiritual darkness and wrenching doubt about God, Jesus’ love, and prayer invites not only deep respect for her spiritual honesty but reflection about the character of authentic faith, especially in these days when faith is confused with certainty and doubt with weakness.

How undermining Mother Teresa’s letters are to all fundamentalist faiths, be they religious or secular. She was not some God-intoxicated mystic confidently empowered to offer her life in sacrificial service to the poorest people on this planet. Yes, we might have liked her to have been in ecstatic union with God as it would allow us to get off the hook by either idealizing her as someone with extraordinary faith, the sort of faith we normal human beings could never possess, or by seeing her as massively psychologically deluded, the sort of delusion normal human beings ought never suffer. But it appears there is no escaping Mother Teresa’s challenge. Neither an extraordinary faith in some simplistic, sweet, and light-filled New Age God, nor a belief in some fundamentalist God who ultimately saves if just heeded, nor some liberal secular humanism about doing good, enabled her to endure decades of wiping leprosy sores, feeding the hungriest of the hungry, or suffering with the dying of so many. It turns out that what motivated Mother Teresa was the depth of her doubt. She served, she bandaged, she fed, she healed, she worked, she smiled, and she loved without any of the ongoing awareness of God’s presence that we assume she surely possessed.

Mother Teresa’s honesty about her spiritual emptiness is uncomfortable because we tend to see genuine faith and love as free of doubt. But nothing could be further from the truth. A mature faith, a rich love, a genuine relationship with God or with another person (it is no accident that every mystical tradition analogizes the two relationships) is born of the grit and insecurity of life. We yearn for that place with God or with another person that can banish anxiety, anguish, and

insecurity. But any faith that is certain is no faith at all; just as any love never doubted is very shallow love. The paradox of love and faith is that the more deeply we love, the more we risk, and the greater the intimacy we desire, the more vulnerable we need to make ourselves. We may try to convince ourselves otherwise with declarations to our lovers like “till death do us part” or proclamations about God’s unconditional love for us, but the awesome truth about faith and love is that we can never be one hundred percent sure we are loved by another human being or by God or whether we genuinely love another person or God with all our heart and might. Maybe this is why we need to hear “I love you” so often from those whom we most love and why so much traditional prayer proclaims our love for God and so much new age meditation invites us to feel bathed in cosmic love. We can never be certain.

What makes Mother Teresa so much more fascinating now that we know about her painful doubt is that we realize her choice to live in service to others and to mitigate suffering was a choice made every day to love in the grip of doubt, to do good without the certainty that her actions would make any ultimate difference, and to be bound to a vision and a call—once heard but never to be confirmed again—that love was ultimately real. No false dogma or illusions of certainty fueled her; rather the pain of living with the possibility of ultimate meaninglessness and abandonment. And how could it have been otherwise for Mother Teresa? Day in day out caring for the most destitute on our planet, witnessing firsthand the depths of people’s suffering, and seeing the insignificance of her own actions relative to the enormity of that suffering, any posture but doubting God would have been a lie.

For Mother Teresa doubt was not simply part of faith and love; anyone who has ever loved deeply knows that doubt and faith are always in a dance. Doubt is a necessary path to greater intimacy, whether with God or another human being. No doubt means no growth in love or in holiness. The profound teaching reflected in Mother Teresa’s “dark letters” is that doubt is a *result* of receiving guidance; doubt is a *consequence* of love, *not* a way of preventing or undermining it. Certainty is the enemy of compassion; doubt an invitation to prove, through action, that Reality/God/Self/Kosmos, whatever we name that which we have all yearned for, if not tasted, is fundamentally loving.

Mother Teresa connected her feeling of spiritual abandonment into an act of ego abandonment and it gave her unique access to the meaninglessness, loneliness, and suffering in life that most of us will do anything—use drugs, go shopping, watch television, worship celebrities, meditate, worship God—to avoid feeling. That access compelled her to impose compassion upon the suffering, solidarity upon the loneliness, and love upon the meaninglessness. In her extreme devotion and doubt Mother Teresa is an absorbing contemporary model. For many of us devotion requires certainty, and doubt undermines devotion. The paradox of faith, as illuminated by Mother Teresa, is that to all appearances God is indeed absent, contrary to our religious fundamentalist’s dogmatic assertions. And yet, there is a possible faith, contrary to our secular fundamentalists, that can supply what is lacking. This is a faith that combines active and engaged devotion to healing people’s pain, and fiercely honest doubt about whether such action makes any ultimate difference. From this sacred contradiction may well flow the sort of joy that must have been the reason for Mother Teresa’s ever present smile. The joy Jewish wisdom names “*simcha shel mitzvah*,” the joy of doing that which one knows one must do. In these days, when certainty not only undermines our search for the truth and our capacity to love but threatens us with destruction, perhaps what we need is the type of doubt Mother Teresa felt—sacred doubt—that births humility and compassion that paradoxically proves faith more than any creed or dogma. ■



Sisters in Mother Teresa’s order, Kolkata India, December 2007.

Rabbi Irwin Kula is the author of Yearnings: Embracing the Sacredness of Life (Hyperion, 2006) and President of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning.

In-Your-Face, Mussar Style

by Leonard Felder

HOW DO YOU CONFRONT SOMEONE EFFECTIVELY? HOW DO YOU CHANGE someone's behavior when you strongly dislike what he or she is doing? Growing up in an activist congregation in Detroit during the 1960s, I heard a lot about the need to repair the world and speak up for important causes. But I barely heard anything in those days about how to be effective and act responsibly when you are up against someone who sees the world differently from you.

The Slum Landlord And The Self-Righteous Teenager

MY FIRST REAL-LIFE ENCOUNTER WITH IN-YOUR-FACE ACTIVISM CAME WHEN I WAS fifteen years old. Several of us from my temple youth group spent the summer months working as classroom aides for a Head Start program in a low-income neighborhood in the riot-torn Motor City. Helping the diverse preschool kids was exciting, but I was upset to discover that many of them lived in run-down apartments that weren't being kept up by their absentee slum landlords.

So I did some research at various city-housing agencies to find out who owned these particular unkempt buildings. To my surprise, one person owned all the buildings: the president of my temple.

Immediately a few of us decided to speak up and force this prominent member of our tribe to clean up his act. We wrote angry letters to the rabbi, the board members, and various local media. We appeared on a late-night television talk show and blasted the slum landlord publicly, calling him a hypocrite and a phony.

Within a few weeks, the man responded by having his lawyers warn us about slander laws and financial penalties for those who engaged in slander. He also announced that he absolutely had nothing to apologize for. He said he felt misunderstood, inaccurately depicted, and horrified that our temple youth group was turning into a name-calling circus.

Despite all our passionate zeal and our self-righteous statements about his "hypocrisy," we essentially made no impact on this individual or on the buildings he owned.

A Different Approach

IT WASN'T UNTIL SEVERAL YEARS LATER THAT I BEGAN TO LEARN WHY WE HAD BEEN SO ineffective (and what could be done differently when confronting a defensive individual about improving some broken corner of the world). In a class on the Mussar tradition within Judaism, given by a beloved rabbi, I found the missing piece of my earlier Jewish education on repairing the world.

Mussar consists of a series of daily character development steps and profound teachings from various Jewish sources that were compiled by several generations of rabbis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Mussar movement within traditional Judaism was led at first by Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon of Vilna (often called the Vilna Gaon) and his student Rabbi Israel Lipkin (who was later called Rabbi Israel Salanter because of his studies and teachings in the Lithuanian town of Salant).

These scholars and their students composed an organized system of self-monitoring and

personal-change methods on how to develop the patience, wisdom, and insight to treat each human being with dignity and compassion, even during the tension-filled moments of daily living and passionate disputes. They drew from the practical wisdom of the Torah, the sages, the Talmudic debates, and the oral tradition of rabbinic Judaism to address the question of how to develop one's character and be a good person even when those around you are taking nasty shortcuts. The central theme in the Mussar teachings is to treat one's fellow human beings (especially during a disagreement or a power struggle) in the mutually respectful way you would want to be treated.

From several Mussar teachers, courses, discussions, and readings over the years, I've found there's a much more effective and profound way of speaking up for justice and fairness than the self-righteous name-calling and reflexive demonizing I succumbed to when I was a teenager in the 1960s (and that we still see in most political and social turf-battles today). Specifically, in order to move someone from being stubbornly in opposition to your progressive ideas, there are several key Jewish teachings highlighted by various Mussar scholars that can make an enormous difference, including:

1) Try a dignified one-on-one first

As far back as the twelfth century, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon (often referred to as the Rambam or Maimonides) said that the best way to rebuke/correct someone is to make sure the conversation is private, one-on-one, and dignified so that you show respect for the essentially decent character and soul of the person about whose objectionable behavior you are commenting.

Many Jewish teachings talk about the fact that embarrassing someone in public or crushing someone's self-worth by name-calling or a shaming tone of voice is tantamount to murder. The Hebrew word for shaming someone is *mahlbeen*, which literally means "to make white" or to cause the blood to leave someone's face as a result of being disgraced. Rather than attempting to crush the soul or spirit of someone whose actions you would like to change, it's far more effective and ethical to deliver your feedback or suggestions with such delicacy that the other person feels supported and encouraged (rather than attacked or shamed) by your comments.

2) Make sure you aren't trying to blast someone for what you yourself need to be working on

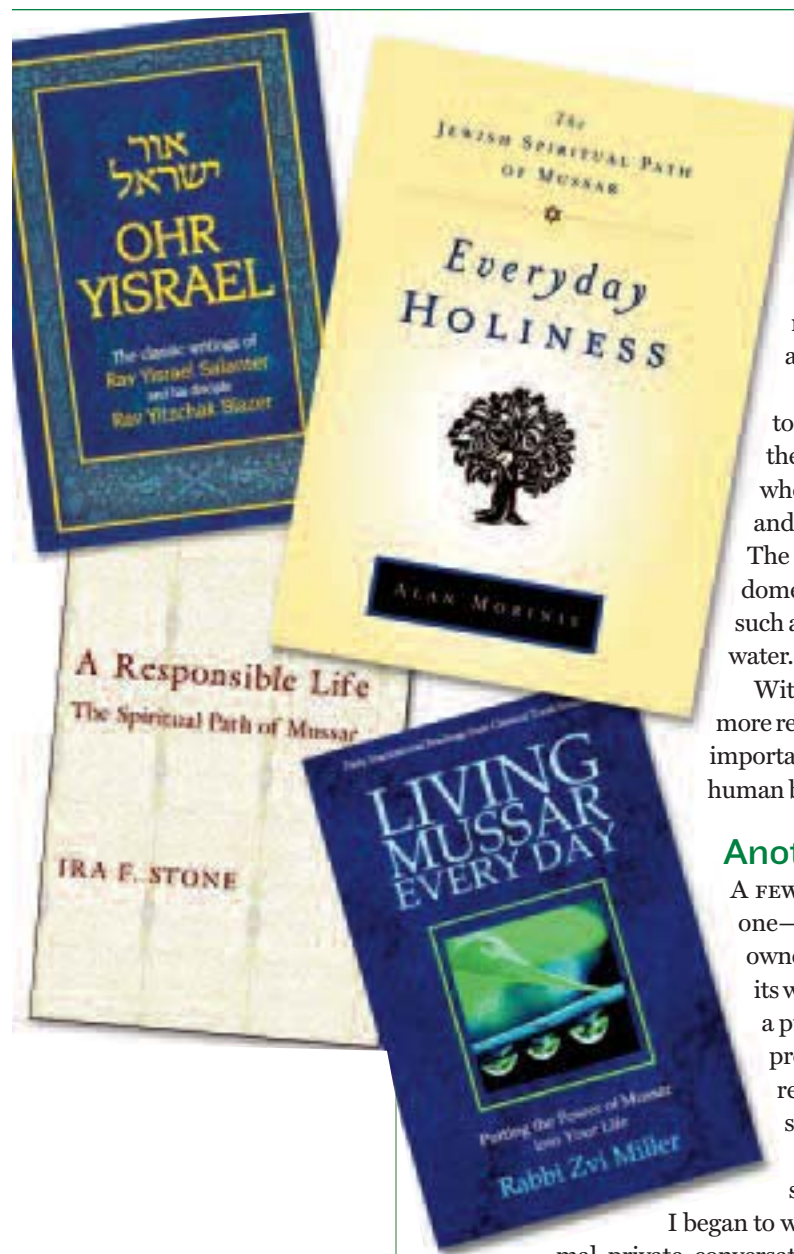
In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Nathan said, "Reproach not your neighbor for a blemish that is yours." In the biblical Book of Zephaniah (2:2) it says, "Remove the chaff from yourself, then remove it from others."

So rather than calling someone else a hypocrite or a phony, it would be helpful to use that person's misbehavior first as an internal flashlight to look into your own sneaky places. Then, when you have connected with your own imperfections, manipulation tendencies, and human-ness, you can begin to have a less self-righteous or patronizing tone in your one-on-one dialogues with the person you are hoping to understand and impact in a positive way.

The other person will find it much easier to hear the wisdom of your words if your tone doesn't have the shaming or contemptuous undercurrent of a closed-minded know-it-all. It may not be easy to build rapport and engage in respectful conversation with someone whose views or actions make your skin crawl, but if you come from a place of humility and teamwork



A man is taken into custody during a race riot in Detroit, July 23, 1967.



you are far more likely to be successful than if you come from a holier-than-thou place.

3) Mussar teaches us to put human dignity and peace ahead of any other rules or laws

One of the most inspiring elements in Mussar stories about the Salanter rabbi and his followers is how these highly-observant Jews made sure not to put any laws, rules, customs, or commandments ahead of the need to treat each human being with dignity.

For example, there is a story of Rabbi Israel Salanter being asked to perform the ritual of having water poured over his hands prior to the Shabbat dinner at the home of a wealthy follower. Rabbi Salanter, who normally would perform a Shabbat ritual with great enthusiasm and gusto, decided that night to pour only a few drops on his hands. The host asked why and the rabbi explained to him in private that the domestic workers appeared tired from having to carry the water from such a great distance and that he didn't want them to have to go get more water.

Without shaming anyone, he had made his host aware of how to be more respectful toward his employees and to let him know that even the all-important Shabbat rituals were less important than the way we treat other human beings.

Another Chance To Shake Things Up

A FEW YEARS AGO, I HAD ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT someone—but to do it differently this time. A member of my congregation owned a nearby business that was reputedly being unfair and unkind to its workers. A few local rabbis and union leaders were planning to make a public stink about this rigid employer in order to humiliate him and pressure him into changing his ways. The accused business owner had responded by saying he would never bend to public insults or pressure-tactics.

I wondered if maybe this was a chance to experiment with Mussar methods for confronting someone with integrity and dignity. So

I began to write gentle notes and make some phone calls to set up a few informal, private, conversational meetings with this embattled employer to see what we could learn from each other.

When we soon met in person, I found out that this anxious man cared deeply about his family and the financial future of his children. I learned that this highly stressed individual had been forced at a very young age to focus on business and had never been able to pursue his secret dreams in the field of art and architecture. I discovered, during one of our conversations, that he often felt trapped between the rising labor costs in his company and the endless pressures from his stockholders to somehow keep increasing quarterly profits and share prices. I also learned that this somewhat self-aware man desperately wanted to do a much better job at being a compassionate human being than his harsh father (the former owner of the company) had been.

During each of our conversations, I had to keep reminding myself to pay attention to his precious soul (and the fragile wounded human being) that was underneath his rigid, intimidating outer personality. It took several conversations and a few awkward moments before he was willing to brainstorm on what might be a win/win solution for both his firm and the workers.

Slowly, however, this man began to engage in a two-way problem-solving dialogue where we each kept coming up with new ideas on how to address the legitimate needs of each person in the mix. Once we began to work together as fellow human beings (rather than objectified adversaries), some excellent solutions began to emerge. Over the next few

weeks, he not only was able to save face and feel good about the eventual outcome, but he was able to significantly improve the lives of his workers.

Why Mussar?

I'M NOT SAYING MUSSAR IS THE ONLY PATH THAT GETS GOOD RESULTS. CERTAINLY there are many excellent dialogue and mediation techniques in the fields of political activism, psychology, and spirituality for addressing difficult situations where passionate people have clashing viewpoints.

So why am I recommending Mussar? Why should a modern activist or progressive thinker study a self-monitoring system that comes from traditional Judaism? Indeed, the Mussar tradition is becoming more accessible to liberal Jews and non-Jews for the first time through several modern sources, including the recent writings of Alan Morinis, author of *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar* (Trumpeter, 2007).

Here are a few practical reasons why this little-known spiritual approach might be useful to you (or to someone you know who occasionally gets self-righteous or shaming during a heated conversation):

1) It helps you look at subtle process issues and not just overt content.

Have you ever been in a political, religious, or intellectual debate where what you said was clearly correct, but the way you said it caused people to tune you out? Mussar gives you daily self-awareness and refocusing tools so that you can examine any unfortunate moments where you tend to shoot yourself in the foot.

For example, you might be speaking up at meetings or writing essays and blogs about important social issues with excellent facts, analyses, and suggestions, yet there is an element of sarcasm, victimhood, self-righteousness, excessive people-pleasing, or a shaming tone that is getting in the way of your profound words. It's ineffective to talk about love, peace, goodness, repairing the world, or higher values when your tone of voice or your writing style confuses people who aren't sure how to connect with your underlying sense of contempt or your "us versus them" self-righteousness.

2) It helps you discover the power of humility and compassion, which is crucial when you're brainstorming toward innovative solutions with someone who holds a very different set of beliefs.

Have you ever said to someone (in a personal or political dispute) that you wanted to be regarded as equals, but you silently felt intellectually superior to this individual? Quite often if you are trying to work toward a healthy win/win solution with someone who comes from a different political viewpoint, social class, religious perspective, or personal history, this individual can sense any arrogance, cliquishness, or one-up-manship that is leaking out of your comments and suggestions.

The person with whom you are trying to work toward a healthy resolution of a long-standing conflict might resist or sabotage your good ideas simply because he or she is not willing to let your arrogance, condescension, or huffiness win the argument. That's why the Mussar exercises of developing humility, compassion, and consistent decency are so essential in order to be a successful agent for positive change. Only when you and the other person are truly equals/teammates in search of an innovative solution can you open up bridges of understanding and cooperation that were previously blocked.

3) It gives you strength and centeredness even when you're in a stressful or frustrating situation.

The purpose of Mussar is not to cause you to withdraw from conflict, to be overly "nice," or to refrain from trying to improve this broken world. Quite the opposite, it shows repeatedly how to maintain a sense of strength, backbone, and integrity even when you are faced with the most upsetting or unfair conditions.

Learning how to stay strong, open, and creative (rather than fragmented or vengeful) during the most stressful disputes might be the most valuable asset you bring to an important confrontation with someone who is doing or saying hurtful things. In fact, if the other person repeatedly witnesses your strength and centeredness, in some (but certainly not all) cases he or she is likely to think at some point, *(continued on page 78)*

ABORIGINAL SIN

(continued from page 20)

It may be that one reason that African Americans have managed advances in American society that Native Americans have not is the common spiritual and intellectual tradition upon which Black people in the United States were ultimately able to draw in appealing to the conscience of the nation. Slaves and the descendents of slaves adopted Christianity as their religion and came to speak to white people, and the world, out of the familiar history of Judeo-Christian moral conceptions, a shared language of origins and eschatology. It may be that in this way and others, Native Americans remain for the American polis—and indigenous peoples everywhere for the dominant cultures—radically other. In all these ways they are different from those who conquered and continue to dominate them, and despite the choice of some individual Indians to assimilate, as groups Native Americans do not seek to end this difference. While hyphenated Americans of every kind may retain or seek to reclaim some essential cultural forms, or merely the customary trappings of their origins, they have always ultimately assimilated. But Native American is not hyphenated; the Native is unalterably prior and unassimilable. Whenever Indians assume and act out their native cultural selves, they express not a variation on a human theme, but a different human theme. They remind us that they were not an element in the great, historically evolving American amalgam, but the original state to which that amalgam was applied, and which has been overwhelmed by it, yet continues to resist it. They remind us, uncomfortably, how this all began.

For this reason and others, the effort to repair the sins committed against Native Americans will clearly be more difficult than other already difficult endeavors. Non-native Americans, and the many different civil rights and social justice organizations dedicated to the varied aspects of the ultimately unitary human rights cause, need to recognize that the time has come to address themselves together, in a single grand cause, to righting the original wrong, from which can flow

only good to all. If the past is to be our guide, no lesser effort will succeed.

Other nations have no basis upon which to feel condescension and contempt. Racism and cultural arrogance are observable all over the globe. When the imperial nations of the colonial era decided out of practical necessity and a growing moral imperative to forswear slavery and, ultimately, recede from their colonies, they had the luxury of withdrawing into homogenous cultures and maintaining mostly symbolic ties. It is the nations born of their colonies that have had to struggle to face the consequences and obligations of the African diaspora produced by the slave trade, and of the conquest and genocide of aboriginal peoples. It is in the New World and its outposts that the great laboratory was incidentally constructed to test whether human beings can ever live together, heterogeneously, in the face of what they have done to each other.

There are dispossessed and subjugated peoples all over the world, some currently favored by history and some not, and they learn every day what aboriginal peoples in many parts of the world can never forget: that while life may be short and art long, history is long and hard. It feels no sympathy, it sheds no tears, and it represses every awful memory but those that can be wrenched from it by the retrograde jolts of revolutionary upheaval or the lengthy, arduous treatment of the liberal imagination.

HBO's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* has two unexpected virtues. The first is found in a dramatically absurd battlefield debate between the Sioux Chief Sitting Bull and Colonel Nelson Miles in which Miles argues forcefully that long before the white man arrived, the Sioux had warred with, conquered, and taken land from their Indian enemies. The second is in the portrayal of Henry Dawes, a U.S. Senator and white friend of the Indian, who, it is soon clear, was in the end only a patronizing pawn in the campaign of subjugation, offering the Indians help in giving up their land, culture, and language, as the only way for them to "survive." The lessons are that indigenous peoples need not be idealized to recognize

the wrong that was done them, and there is no friendship in the unrefusable offer.

If we are ever to deserve the various appellations we take upon ourselves to claim we are unlike those who came before and would not do what they did, then we must freely acknowledge, without reservation, the sins of those who produced the world in which we live. We must do this not because we are personally guilty of the crime against native peoples. None of us lived when the genocide was committed, and in the United States most may not have ancestors who were even on the continent when these acts were committed. But if we are not familial, we are cultural descendents of those who committed this wrong, and like any people of conscience, we must accept the full legacy that we inherit, all that is so great and kind and all that is not. There need be no single set of ideas for how this may be done. In every nation the way may be different. Nothing lost can be reconstituted. Nothing can be restored except a form of balance. But we may be redeemed. ■

A. Jay Adler is professor of English at Los Angeles Southwest College. His essay "The American Road: Route 66 at 80" appears in the Fall-Winter issue of DoubleTake/Points of Entry.

FORGIVENESS

(continued from page 26)

wrongdoing. He then takes issue with what he calls "unconditional forgiveness" because it demands nothing from the offender. It is, as he calls it, a "gift" which is given to the offender. This is a strange notion, which I do not recognize as coming, as he claims, from Christian sources. In Christian sources the gift (referred to as a grace, which means a free gift from God) is given to the victim, not to the perpetrator. When the victim tries to open his mind and heart to the love he is called to have for all men, including his enemies, this is referred to as a grace.

Unconditional or unilateral forgiveness is necessary for the same reasons that Professor Griswold gives for

reciprocal forgiveness. Without it, how can the victim avoid becoming the source of vengefulness, resentment, moral hatred, and clouded judgment if the perpetrator of his wounds is unknown, absent, or dead? Perfect forgiveness does demand reciprocity, but often we have to be satisfied with imperfect forgiveness because nothing else is possible. Imperfect forgiveness, as I understand it, is based on the premise that what is worth doing is worth doing poorly. If union with the perpetrator cannot be accomplished (because of the absence, death, or refusal), then on the part of the victim there must at least be a reaching out—that is, an imperfect forgiveness.

Most forgiveness issues must begin with imperfect forgiveness. We have to forgive on three levels. The first is intellectual, the second is emotional, and the third is the instinctive or gut level. It is only when grace takes us to the gut level that forgiveness is complete and we finally see the offender, not as the perpetrator of our wounds but as another human being with our own gifts and failings. This is true whether or not the perpetrator reciprocates. An overriding principle in this approach to forgiveness is that forgiveness is essentially something we do for ourselves. It is not done, primarily, for the sake of the perpetrator. A dramatic example of this is the Rabbi who came to Brooklyn from a concentration camp where his wife and parents were killed. “I could not bring Hitler over here with me, but the only way I could leave him behind was to forgive him.”

As for Professor Griswold’s concern with unconditional forgiveness condoning or excusing harmful activity, I cannot answer him philosophically but only practically. Is there anyone who would say that the Amish community condoned or excused the murder of their children when they forgave him? ■

Father William Meninger is a Trappist monk at St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. In 1974 he originated the workshop on Contemplative Meditation (later known as Centering Prayer), which he now teaches worldwide along with workshops on Forgiveness, the Enneagram, Sacred Scriptures, and Prayer. See www.contemplativeprayer.net.

Unconditional Forgiveness? Reply to Father Meninger

by Charles L. Griswold

I am grateful to Father Meninger for his thoughtful, acute, and instructive reply to my article on forgiveness. We are in agreement about our central difference: I argue that model (paradigmatic or accomplished) forgiveness is not unconditional or unilateral, and he argues that it is precisely that. Let us see if we can take the debate about this fundamental issue a bit further.

Meninger asks, “Without it [unconditional or unilateral forgiveness], how can the victim avoid becoming the source of vengefulness, resentment, moral hatred, and clouded judgment if the perpetrator of his wounds is unknown, absent, or dead.” My answer is twofold. First, I allow that if certain “threshold” conditions are met, the victim is afforded what I call “imperfect” forgiveness. By that phrase I mean that all of the conditions we would wish to see fulfilled—for example, that the offender be able and willing to offer an apology, and so forth—have not been fulfilled. I do not see that Meninger either denies this or has grounds for denying it (if they could be fulfilled, would we wish for them *not* to be?). Consequently, he is committed to the view that were it possible for the relevant conditions to be met, we would want them to be met; that is, he’s committed to my view. He writes: “Imperfect forgiveness, as I understand it, is based on the premise that what is worth doing is worth doing poorly.” As that statement of my view might mislead, allow me to put it this way: if something is above the threshold of what’s worth doing, even though it can’t be done perfectly, it’s better to do what one can than nothing at all. And that may still be a lot, though by definition it won’t be everything one would have hoped for.

Second, if one falls below the threshold of what counts as forgiveness, or if one is somewhere in the spectrum of imperfect cases and finds the results less than fully satisfactory, the answer to Meninger’s question is that one must take other steps—therapy, for example, or perhaps prayer or meditation—that,

while not constituting forgiveness, may nonetheless be effective in helping to lift the burden of resentment. Advocates of unilateral forgiveness seem to want forgiveness to be the magic wand that resolves the serious problems Meninger mentions. My view is that human life does not offer any such wand; sometimes forgiveness isn’t possible, or is possible only in an incomplete or imperfect way. Suffering cannot always be redeemed through forgiveness. But there are other resources available to help the victim overcome the toxic effects of moral hatred and clouded judgment.

Father Meninger mentions “grace,” meaning no doubt God’s grace, and stipulates that it is required for forgiveness (“It is good for us to be aware of God’s role in every step of the forgiveness process.... We could not begin without God’s grace...” [*The Process of Forgiveness* (New York: Continuum, 1996)]). This too is a deep conceptual difference between our outlooks. His is predicated upon the truth of a certain theological view, and indeed upon the individual believing that it is true (one could not accept God’s grace while disbelieving in God). Mine requires no such commitments; I suspend judgment about the theological issues and work out a conception of forgiveness. His outlook has to exclude all convictions that differ in a fundamental way from his own (whether because the conception of the divine differs, or because the view is secular); mine has no parallel logical feature.

Meninger and I have a second, less important difference: it concerns the connection between Christianity and the notion that unconditional forgiveness is a “gift” bestowed upon the offender. I am instructed and fascinated by Meninger’s assertion that, “This is a strange notion which I do not recognize as coming, as he [Griswold] claims, from Christian sources.” I certainly am no theologian. Allow me, however, to call as my witness Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who, in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Doubleday 1999) remarks, in the context of his famous discussion of forgiveness that, “The victim may be ready to forgive and make the gift of her forgive-

ness available, but it is up to the wrongdoer to appropriate the gift—to open the window and draw the curtains aside. He does this by acknowledging the wrong he has done, so letting the light and fresh air of forgiveness enter his being.” In the next paragraph, Tutu cites Jesus in support of this view. So far as I can tell, Tutu is speaking from within a Christian outlook about forgiveness as a gift bestowed by the victim upon the offender. I would be very surprised if this is the only such passage in Christian literature.

One reason is that this conception of the gift of forgiveness flows naturally from the idea that forgiveness is unconditional and unilateral, and that it is not *self*-forgiveness that is at stake, but rather forgiveness *of the other*. In all such cases, the notion is inherently relational or other-directed. Furthermore, consider Meninger’s own talk in his book *The Process of Forgiveness* about “God’s gift of grace.” God’s gift to us is certainly relational (God is not giving grace and forgiveness to himself). In forgiving our fellows, are we not taking as our model God’s unconditional love—that love of which the “gift of grace” is an expression? Meninger seems to answer affirmatively since he wants us to imitate, in our relations to others, God’s love of us. He writes in *The Process of Forgiveness* “The Father loves all his children without conditions, and we are told to love one another in the same way. Indeed if we are to love one another for the love of God, it must also be that very love of God which we have for each other. This is an unconditional love.” But then, the metaphor of the gift is an appealing way to characterize our unconditional forgiveness of others. Presumably this is one reason why Tutu uses it. My point was that on reflection, the metaphor itself pushes against the idea of forgiveness as unconditional, and for good reason: perfected forgiveness isn’t unconditional. Where this leaves the concept of “God’s gift of grace” I would not venture to say.

Meninger concludes his stimulating reply with a compelling rhetorical question. The answer to his question is affirmative. ■

A Further Thought

by William Meninger

Thomas Aquinas said, “Never deny, seldom affirm, always distinguish.” Perhaps we should distinguish between philosophical forgiveness and the practical experience of forgiveness. In practice reciprocity is obviously not a necessity for the experience of forgiveness. Christians (and others) take as their model Jesus on the cross, who prayed, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!” I don’t think we should allow verbal definitions to define this away as something other than forgiveness. It is necessary for the good of society (individually or collectively) for an individual to be able to forgive a perpetrator who is dead or absent or even unknown. Otherwise there would be no option but frustration, seeking vengeance on uninvolved parties (family feuds), unrequited anger and festering growth of evil effects that should have been long ago released.

When I was six years old, I stood weeping before the coffin of my dead father. A woman, whom I do not remember, told me that my father would not like to see me crying and so I had to smile. She actually forced me to smile as I stood grieving for my dead father. I hated her for years, not even knowing who she was. Not until I was an adult was I able to release that hatred by forgiving her.

Also, a word should be said about condoning, taken in the sense of making excuses for the perpetrator. To some degree, this may be necessary. I think that most of the harm people inflict upon one another is viewed quite differently by the perpetrator and by the victim. To the degree that the victim can be brought to see the action of the perpetrator from his point of view, the act of forgiveness can be seen as that much more reasonable—or even perhaps even unnecessary if no harm was intended. The harmful action lives on in the mind of the victim and grows and distorts itself until it sometimes becomes something quite different from what it was in actual fact. An effort to understand this might well lead to some form of condoning. Indeed, is not some form of condoning very explicitly included in the words, “Father, forgive them. They know not what they do”? ■

WORKING FOR PEACE

(continued from page 32)

then be heard increase immeasurably from this simple and difficult exercise of pausing before responding, and listening for meaning, for common values, for our shared humanity.

In changing our listening and speaking habits, we shift from debate to dialogue. Martin Buber defined dialogue as a conversation with an unknown outcome. To be open to an unknown outcome requires a willingness to be changed by the encounter with another. If we are unwilling to be changed, on what basis can we expect another to be changed by what we say? It is only when we can see and respect the humanity and intelligence of an “opponent” that the door to finding mutually satisfying solutions opens.

Here’s an example of how Carol Hillson, USDOP Campaign State Coordinator from New York, used her skills at a recent political event where she spoke with someone about her involvement with the campaign.

As soon as he heard the word “peace,” he immediately said: “Peace is ineffective, the only thing ‘these people’ understand is force.” I instantly became excited about the opportunity to try to connect with a person whose views were so different from my own. I wanted to try and focus on areas where we could find common ground. So I said: “That’s really interesting, so what you are really concerned about is security and effectiveness? I can really appreciate that.”

Then I paused, to check if that was enough connection. Seeing a nod, and what looked like some willingness to hear me, I added: “What you may find interesting about the DOP campaign is that it is all about reducing violence effectively. Domestically, for instance, it would support programs that reduce bullying in schools, that help prevent gang violence, etc....” In other words, I tied what I said to what I had just connected with him

about, to increase the chances he would hear me. To which he said, “Well, I’m all for reducing violence in schools. Who wouldn’t be for that?”

We may leave any one conversation without an immediate outcome. But our willingness to engage, to model what we are working towards, leaves people we interact with more open to hear more in the future, to reflect on their views, to be more curious about what we are doing. We plant seeds this way, even if we are not around to harvest the fruits of our interactions. And the seeds may bear more fruit than we can easily foresee.

Seven representatives spoke together passionately about the DOP bill at the closing event of the national USDOP conference in February. In addition, activists were able to schedule over 220 meetings in the House and the Senate during the conference, often meeting with the actual Member. Many more drop-in visits were held as well. Is it possible that this movement’s growing capacity to engage with opposing views paved the way for more members of congress from both parties to engage with the campaign?

Core Intentions for Principled Nonviolent Activism

To align our work with our vision and principles—so we can embody nonviolence and peace in our thoughts, words, and actions—we are called to address the four levels at which we experience challenges:

1. *Within Each of Us*—Being Grounded in Vision and Values: To sustain self-connection, integrity, and vitality we are called to shift our focus from what’s wrong to what we envision as an alternative. This shift in focus happens in terms of vision and in terms of what values and commitments sustain us. The practice of uncovering the underlying needs in each situation supports us in embodying this intention in each moment. For example, L’s sense of a painful interaction she had recently with a representative’s aide shifted dramatically when she was able to connect with her need: basic recognition as a citizen. Instead of anger and resignation, she found in the incident an opportunity to become *more* connected with herself: “I think it’s bring-

ing an awareness that I did not realize was so deep. I don’t think I made this kind of connection with myself. I’m surprised.”

2. *Within the Movement*—Taking Leadership Seriously: To increase effectiveness, cohesion, and a sense of purpose we are called to step into leadership in all our interactions with colleagues. This leadership is a commitment to take full power, to work with others to ensure that everyone’s needs are addressed, to craft strategies all parties can live with, and to support others in experiencing full choice.

3. *With Family Members and Friends*—Open-Heartedness: To maintain satisfying, authentic relationships with our loved ones we are called to keep our hearts open to ourselves and to others, so we can prioritize connection, compassion, and understanding in our relationships.

4. *With People across the Political Divide*—Transforming Enemy Images: To open up the possibilities of connecting with people different from us, the people we are most afraid of, the people we least understand and respect, we are called to the simple and difficult practice of seeing the shared human needs and aspirations behind all actions and opinions. As we do this, we discover that they are not so different from us after all. Says Cathy Barham, USDOP activist: “It was during these role playing conversations that I understood on a workable level how important it is to bring the message of peace in a peaceful way. I knew it intellectually but I required that experiential teaching that moves one’s knowing through an ‘Aha!’ moment and into the self. I could then be more confident in a conversation about peace. I finally understood that I can go to the politician or anyone with the idea of laying a foundation of what we *both* want for our community.”

Reflecting in a similar vein, Owen, another USDOP activist, shared: “The tools of NVC have been a huge asset in being able to see the needs of my reps in congress in the actions or non-actions they choose. It has helped me to gain clarity and be able to speak and write in a way that honors and respects their needs, even as I disagree with the strategies they use. It also helps me refrain from knee jerk reactions and defense mechanisms to throw back when I’m hearing something that is not meeting my

Did the activists’ growing capacity to engage with opposing views pave the way for more members of congress from both parties to engage with them?

needs for respect, empathy, and understanding. I’m convinced that the more deeply I am immersed in the process of NVC in my interactions with congressmen, the more likely I will make an impact on change in this country. I feel very empowered and hopeful because of that and am so grateful.”

To sustain our work, to be nourished and hopeful about what we do, and to create long-lasting results, we are called to an ongoing commitment to practice nonviolence, as all of us have been raised in a culture of domination, separation, and war. We come to social change work often in great despair and anger, and want to see immediate sweeping results. It takes effort and practice to remind ourselves that we are never guaranteed results. We make the effort regardless, for our own sense of integrity and care, and heart and presence in the world. As J, an activist from Texas said: “It is my dream that one day the communication techniques of NVC will be practiced so widely that they will no longer be known by any name, they’ll just be taught by example as children are growing up—as culturally-accepted “givens” of human social interaction—and I’m telling myself that will be a great day for peace in the world!” ■

Miki Kashtan, certified trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication, and co-founder of Bay Area NVC, offers NVC workshops and retreats, mediation, facilitation, coaching, and organizational training throughout the U.S. Dorothy Maver, Ph.D. former Executive Director of the Peace Alliance, focuses her political work and grassroots organizing on applied peacebuilding and the global call for ministries and departments of peace.

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

Harvey Pekar: Mensch Author, Mensch Editor...and other Jewish Comic Stars

Recent comics reviewed by Paul Buhle (See box on next page)

THE DAY HAS ARRIVED FOR THE art comic, with respectable attention in the review columns of slick magazines and (possibly more important) the appearance of a regular comic page in the *New York Times Magazine*.

More than a handful of "alternative" artists—that is, those working not in Superhero Comics, drawing for the daily newspapers or seen often in the *New Yorker*—are making a living without a day job. And the day of the Jewish comic artist has arrived as well.

There's a deeply buried irony here, because from its earliest days at the close of the Depression the mainstream comic book industry has always been deeply Jewish, from management to artists, inkers, and scriptwriters. Alternative comics, in their original version Underground Comix, were the exception, probably because they were centered in the Bay Area of the later 1960s-70s, and their ambience flavored the proliferation of styles (and publications) in Seattle and elsewhere. Perhaps it was Art Spiegelman's *Raw* magazine (1980-91) that brought Jewishness back, even if there was nothing (beyond his own totemic work and that of Ben Katchor) especially Jewish about *Raw*. More likely, with the graphic novel picking up steam in the new century, younger artists came from (and gravitated to) New York City. By an old adage never entirely wrong, New York=Jewish. Or at least a lot of people think so, and the publishing contacts are still overwhelmingly there.



When the Masters of American Comics exhibition traveled during 2005-06 and the accompanying prestigious (and gorgeous) volume set a new standard for claims of comic art, few commented on its disproportionately Jewish nature (not even when the show opened at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and traveled onward to the Jewish Museum in New York); nor has anyone made much of the abundant Jewish talent in the emerging work, for kids and adults alike. But it is scarcely hidden.

Stuck in the Middle is a pained look backward at junior high life (someone must have enjoyed it, certainly not these artists or myself). Like a high proportion of comic art, it is aimed at the younger reader ("Ages 12 and Up"), but it is tough as well as occasionally scatological, and two of the loveliest pieces are by Vanessa Davis and Lauren Weinstein, respectively recalling a thwarted craving for boys, and a perfectly dreadful summer camp. Davis, from West Palm Beach, may be regarded as a product of the latest diaspora into the wilderness of suburban America; Weinstein, a Brooklynite, recalls the familiar dangers of travel to a rural America that is unknown and unknowable, something better suited to the Gentiles.

Go Girl! Robots Gone Wild! is aimed at females of the same age-group, combining the talents (writing) of Trina Robbins, the founding figure of the original feminist comics (*It Ain't Me Babe* [1970] and later anthologies) with the art work of relative youngster Anne Timmons in an empowering alternative to Archie comics. In *Go Girl!*, a gamine with superpowers fights off the bad guys, human and robotic. Most notably, her own posse of ordinary teens is made up of runaways and abuse victims, male and female, who become a substitute family. It may be recalled, at least by a few veteran comics fans, that Robbins's father was a prominent left wing Yiddish journalist, and that the "family" has stood for something like egalitarianism/socialism

across her long career as artist, editor, and scholar of women's comic and cartoon work.

The story on *Satchel Paige: Striking Out Jim Crow* begins properly with James Sturm, an editorial assistant at *Raw* back in the day, the founder-director of the Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction, Vermont, and the artist of one of the astounding newer works of comic art, *The Golem's Mighty Swing* (about a touring Jewish baseball team of the 1920s, beset by anti-Semites). Sturm, a generation younger than Robbins, is another mighty force for comic art at large, and *Striking Out Jim Crow* (in the Hyperion Books for Children series) offers up a deeply empathetic tale of the racial outsider in 1943 Alabama—the proud pitching giant who won't give an inch, even when his life is at stake. Sturm knows his baseball as well as his social history, and I sure wish that a book like this had been around for me a half century ago, when the photos of Willie Mays making an astounding center field catch in the 1954 World Series were plastered on my bedroom wall. I know what this little volume would have meant to me.

Sturm's fellow instructor at the Center for Cartoon Studies is Jason Lutes, whose continuing series, on Berlin as Hitler is about to come to power, has been among the grand artistic achievements of younger comics generations. *Houdini*, done in collaboration with Nick Bertozzi, tells the story of the Wisconsin-born Jewish escape artist who adamantly denied his Jewishness through much of his life. Splendid art is followed by five pages of historical notes on the subject of the volume and a very

funny page on the Center, arguably the chief fount of future American comic talent.

The latest of Houghton Mifflin's *Best American Comics*, arguably the totemic anthology of today's artists, might be described as having a Jewish comic section, because three strips appear in a row. Each is amazing in its own way.

Twenty-eight year old Sammy Harkham, born in L.A., educated in Australia, and living back in L.A., is himself an anthologist in the art-for-arts-sake section of today's comics world, his *Kramer's Ergot* a show-place for comic modernism. But "Lubavitch, Ukraine, 1876" is deeply and precisely historical: the best recreation of shtetl life in comic form thus far, with a curiously Harkham-like protagonist whose tedious work is to produce mezuzahs on demand for the village rabbi. He smokes,



Comics Reviewed in this Article:

The Best American Comics, 2006. Edited by Anne Elizabeth Moore, guest-edited by Harvey Pekar. Houghton-Mifflin.

The Best American Comics, 2007. Edited by Anne Elizabeth Moore, guest-edited by Chris Ware. Houghton Mifflin.

Harvey Pekar's American Splendor: Another Day. Vertigo.

Go Girl! Robots Gone Wild! By Trina Robbins and Anne Timmons. Dark Horse Books.

Satchel Paige: Striking Out Jim Crow. By James Sturm and Rich Tomasso, Hyperion.

Houdini, The Handcuff King. By Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi. Hyperion.

Stuck in the Middle, Seventeen Comics from an Unpleasant Age. Edited by Ariel Schrag. Viking Books.

toward Jewishness.

Ample other examples come to mind of Jewish comic artists of various but especially of younger ages. Some of them (*Mad* staff artist Peter Kuper, militantly revolutionary artist Seth Tobocman, and their steady collaborator on *World War 3 Illustrated*, Nicole Schulman) are in continual dialogue about Jewishness—their own, or Israelis’—or related familiar issues; others would rather not talk about it in their art, and those others included perhaps the most personally religious of them, Sammy Harkham, until his recent work on life in the Pale. So, typologies are doubtful and it’s better to look at artists as individuals.

Which bring us to Harvey Pekar. Hardly a reader in these pages will find the name of Pekar entirely unfamiliar. Late night viewers of the *Late Show with David Letterman* remember Harvey’s appearances during the 1990s and the tough political jabs at corporate power that got him kicked off the air. Movie-goers are likely to be more familiar with the 2003 award-winning film *American Splendor* with Paul Giamatti playing Harvey, in an unprecedented combination of the originals, the actors playing them and the animation of them all on the big (and for the rental crowd, the small) screen. Old time comics fans have, of course, been following Harvey since the first series of *American Splendor* appeared in 1976, embracing both the gritty reality of Cleveland and the sublime drawings of Robert Crumb among others.

It’s no secret, then. If there were an *Oxford Yiddish Dictionary* and every noun had a picture, Harvey’s picture would be there, under “Mensch.” He is the humanist of profoundly ordinary Jewish American life. The son of the owners of a little grocery store, his mother determinedly left wing despite the growing dangers of the streets around them, he was not yet a teenager when the Cold War wiped out dreams of an expanded New Deal in a peaceful world, and not yet twenty when the disillusionment with Russia and Stalin swept the Jewish American Left. (The same mother greeted the formation of Israel as a miracle of the times, but never managed to fulfill her ideal of moving there.) As a college dropout and a file clerk in a Veterans Ad-

ministration hospital for decades, as a dweller in a deteriorating Cleveland that somehow missed all gentrification (except a Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame), Harvey kept a steady eye on his surroundings.

Unlike the Jewish realist novelists and short story writers of the previous generation, examining the social life of the Lower East Side, Brooklyn or a dozen other “*yiddishe gassen*” (Jewish streets) around the country or world, he chose to put his narrative into pictures. And not the fine art of Jewish realists (or surrealists), but a visual vernacular that had been used in this way, for these purposes, more by painters than anyone else.

American Splendor in its original format made waves in the comic world and endeared many of us to him. But it never sold all that much. The late-blooming graphic novel genre, snippets now seen in the *New York Times Magazine* among other places, served him fairly well, in a series of nonfictional paperbacks. But the real comic book form, 24–36 pages of pulp wrapped in a four-color cover, seemed to have been left behind. The new *American Splendor*, published by a division of DC (the old publisher of Superman, Batman, etc) puts his work on comics shelves as never before, and after only a thirty-year wait. *American Splendor: Another Day* is highlighted by a tale of his parents’ background in Europe, one more slice of the Pekar saga, as tasty, one imagines, as the kosher pickles at his parents’ corner grocery of the 1940s. It may just, possibly, give the comic format itself, after sixty-some years of existence and many rises and falls, a new life as truth-teller.

What are those truths? They belong to Harvey and his assorted artists. They are about his parents, his home life, increasingly about his foster-daughter, a teenager with her own agenda, about Cleveland neighborhoods and traffic, about people he meets on his book-promotion tours, and whatever else strikes him as a tellable tale. Pekar is a past master at drawing the reader in. Now, at sixty-seven, he is arguably at his peak, a Dostoyevsky of daily life.

A decade or more before the original



American Splendor emerged, he was already an acute reviewer of records and books for mostly small-scale, specialist publications. He puts on the Critic hat to explain, in the introduction to the 2006 premier edition of *The Best American Comics*, that while comics failed realism (or vice versa) in the past, the genre is potentially limitless. “I have always maintained that there were more gripping dramas and hilarious occurrences in every day life than you see coming from high-budget films and sitcoms,” an observation that should be understood as a Pekar Aphorism.

Series editor Anne Elizabeth Moore, a staffer of the now defunct Chicago-based *Punk Planet*, has given him the space to pick out his favorites, and his taste is at once eclectic and impeccable. Yiddishist Ben Katchor, lesbian artist Alison Bechdel, Seth Tobocman (with a searing tale of Nigerian women bearing their nakedness to shame the brutal army serving the oil companies), R. Crumb, Joe Sacco, Kim Deitch and a crew of others deliver, and how. Houghton-Mifflin’s *Best American* series of volumes began in 1915. Ninety years later and counting, it has finally reached comics as an art form. One is tempted to say “Jewish Art,” but that prognostication, however firmly based on three generations of Jewish comic book artists and writers, will be made clearer in the further emergence of the mature form. ■

Paul Buhle’s latest comic works include SDS: A Graphic History (Hill and Wang), A People’s History of American Empire (Holt-Metropolitan, an adaptation of Howard Zinn’s People’s History) and Jews and American Comics (New Press).

[BOOKS]

WAITING FOR SPIRITUAL ATHEISTS

WAITING FOR GOD; THE SPIRITUAL EXPLORATIONS OF A RELUCTANT ATHEIST by Lawrence Bush, Ben Yehuda Press, 2007

A PLAUSIBLE GOD; SECULAR REFLECTIONS ON LIBERAL JEWISH THEOLOGY by Mitchell Silver, Fordham University Press, 2006

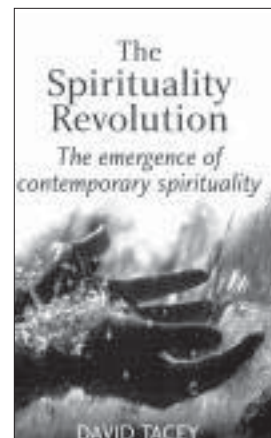
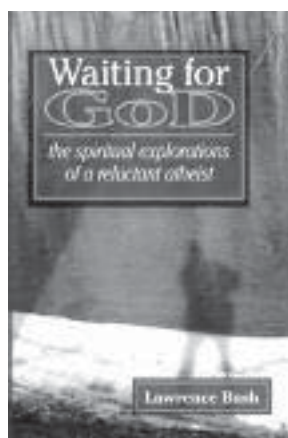
THE SPIRITUALITY REVOLUTION; THE EMERGENCE OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY by David Tacey, Brunner-Routledge, 2004

Review by David Belden

ATHEISM TODAY STILL FOCUSES on what's wrong with religion and religious belief. Where are the atheist books that go the next step and tell us how the secular faith and values that humans need are built up in a post-religious age? Come on people. We have to end poverty, racism, and religious divisiveness, and tackle global warming and species loss on a worldwide basis together, as one people. The human species needs a massive infusion of energy for non-commercial, heart-to-heart values. Is there any point in looking to atheists for leadership in that shift, or can we only look to "spirituality" and the more spiritual (i.e. less divisive, more universal) religions? And if spirituality is critical, where do "spiritual atheists" fit in?

Larry Bush calls himself a "spiritual atheist." He would quite like to join in with the liberal/Left spiritual movements of his boomer peers, but he can't, because they insist on believing in supernatural entities and assistance. "Is it so hard to keep hope alive," he asks, "without believing that the entire universe is on your side?"

Bush's *Waiting for God* is a great improvement on the anti-religion tirades of Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Richard Dawkins. For an atheist Bush has had an unlikely life, earning his living as a writer within Jewish religious institutions. He has grown to admire liberal faith communities. He finds that many of them "offer their members tools with which to cope



with life's challenges, celebrate the most meaningful moments, struggle with egoism (or the unhealthy lack of it) and aspire to powerful virtues of discipline, generosity, humility, joy, compassion, mindfulness and more."

Bush investigates three movements in particular that have held attractions for him and many other spiritual seekers: Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionist Judaism, Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality, and Wiccan or Goddess religion, as typified for him by the writings and leadership of Starhawk. But he can't join any of them because each requires belief in the unbelievable. And he objects that the anti-science, anti-capitalist ethos that suffuses these movements fails to appreciate how the prosperity, education, freedom, and longevity of life that nurtured them came to be.

An agnostic myself, I agree with most of Bush's reasons for not believing. But the book was a deep disappointment. For a start, I would give a lot more credit to spiritual left movements for making capitalism livable than he does. But that's not my main beef. It's that in the aftermath of his demolition job Bush is left with a purely individualistic, lonely pride at not succumbing to others' delusions. I want to know how spiritual atheists can create nourishing communities. What is stopping us from reviving ritual, dance, song, service, teaching and many other functions of a good congregation, not splitting each of those off into separate disciplines as at present, but combining them in a holistic quest to honor and serve each other and the biosphere? And while creating such communities, I want to know how we nonbelievers can join with other spiritual progressives, including believers in all kinds of things we don't believe in, to make humane, ecologi-

cal values rule in this world. If you are a spiritual atheist trying to create that values-centric coalition, you don't start with a belief-centric take on what is intellectually wrong with those who should be your natural allies. I expected a man of Bush's sensitivities would be trying to create that coalition but clearly he isn't.

America is a society with a religious majority. If you are a person who believes in democratic transformation you cannot build an adequate progressive movement unless it speaks to this majority and makes it feel welcome and comfortable, and that can't happen with Bush's religio-phobia, no matter how smartly articulated. Anyone who is content to be a lone secular critic—like so many in the literary and academic world—gives up on the coalition building with religious believers that is essential to challenge the contemporary elites of wealth and power and their destructive values. Too often it seems the Left would rather be right than effective.

Bush's book sent me to one I had not heard of and, more amusingly (and tellingly for the publisher's publicity department if they have one), one that *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner had not heard of. Mitchell Silver's *A Plausible God* is a secular philosopher's study of three contemporary Jewish thinkers: Mordecai Kaplan, Arthur Green, and... Michael Lerner. Silver says he wrote the book because so many of his secular friends and family started finding a place for God in their lives. But theirs was the kind of God even an atheist could believe in. It was a plausible God, one who does not stand outside the world but suffuses the cosmos with her (his? its?) presence, a God who has no quarrel with science. This God had no power to avert the Holocaust. She cannot make your prayer-wishes come true, other than by inspiring you and your



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community to action. This is a God to encourage those who are used to having some degree of agency in this world, who don't imagine their only hope lies in turning the tables through magical Raptures or after-death Judgments.

Silver seduced me with his clarity: he has a lovely ability to sum up these theologians' ideas. Yet I have always gravitated more to the sociology of religion: thinking it impossible in principle to judge the truth of God-talk, I still wanted to know its effects. For a philosopher Silver surprised me by going beyond the logical consistency of beliefs to a concern with how much comfort and inspiration the theologians' beliefs, stories, myths, metaphors, and theological equivocations provide to their followers. And most usefully, he asks whether secularism does better or worse than the plausible God in providing reassurance and inspiration.

He notes that Green, Lerner, and Kaplan "do not want to dispute scientific facts, but the wonder and mystery that religion provides are dear to them... This is a powerful brew. Hope and faith, intense emotionality, and total commitment, mystery,

and infinity." The secularist in contrast "takes no joy in the mysteries of existence and she bridles at the notion that anything is in principle unknowable." But the moral benefit of mystery, Silver argues, is that it keeps us humble, for "...the secularist has no principled bulwark against the belief that she has got the fundamentals all figured out." So comes his surprising conclusion that "Nonbelievers are more liable to dogmatism than new-God believers."

This insight provides a much better basis for building a coalition of the secular and spiritual.

Faith is often used as a synonym for belief, but can better be seen as its opposite, if faith is the quality that allows us to go forward in love, service, and joy when we have no certainty. If we have no certainty of belief and no compensating rational hope of progress either, then what stops us from sinking into despair? The non-believer who is pessimistic or realistic but doesn't let that stop her from helping others and reveling in the universe, may be the most purely faith filled person of all.

What words do we have for the nonbeliever's trust in whatever it is that feeds her

faith: her body, community, connections with nature? To call her a philosopher implies too much cerebral logic. No, she is spiritual. What better word do we have? "Spiritual" doesn't have to mean escapist, nor does it have to be a synonym for a believer in spirits, other worlds, or a traditional God.

This is the kind of "spiritual" David Tacey talks about in *The Spirituality Revolution*. He makes a good case that there is an upsurge of interest in spirituality in wealthy countries, despite the decline in belief. For example, he writes, "According to the Soul of Britain project sponsored by the BBC in 2001, 76 percent of Britons indicated an interest in spiritual matters, even though only seven to ten percent of them attend church regularly. Underneath what appears to be increasing secularism lies a deep thirst and hunger for the sacred."

If American atheists are still obsessed with religion rather than with developing a liberating, life-affirming and politically progressive spirituality, that may be because fundamentalist religion is still so strong in America. Breaking news of secular society's search for spiritual engagement with the world is likely to come most clearly from the young in the most secular societies, like Western Europe, Australia, and Canada.

David Tacey is an Australian literature professor at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He was drawn first to literature for what it gave him spiritually and psychologically in responding to the world. But he spent twenty years teaching it in the approved secular manner, in universities where, he says, every kind of liberation is encouraged (feminist, gay, Marxist, psychotherapeutic etc.) except for spiritual liberation, which is mistrusted as premodern and irrational. So he kept his true love of literature private. Various leading authors like Patrick White sympathized with his problem. Eventually, secure in tenure and self, he offered courses in spirituality and found students flocking to them in large numbers.

"Secular education was associated with freedom, free-thinking and liberation from ecclesiastical authorities," he writes. "But now secular education bestows a new

[FILM]

THEFT OF THE COMMONS

THIRST: FIGHTING THE CORPORATE THEFT OF OUR WATER

Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman with Michael Fox
Jossey-Bass, 2007

Review by Barbara Garson

kind of baleful authoritarianism, in which the soul and spirit are imprisoned and never allowed to take flight. Our deepest spiritual impulses are repressed and denied by secular education. As the cycle of history turns, we discover that the freedom of one era is the oppression and tyranny of another.” He cites Jacques Derrida (the founder of Deconstructionism) for his new interest in spirituality now that religion has been deconstructed, but says this is one strand of postmodernism that the secular university refuses to absorb.

The book annoys at times, claiming to speak for “youth spirituality” as if that was one thing. It is at its best when Tacey actually quotes his students. He is writing in large part to conventional church people, telling them what they are missing in the younger generation. What many of Tacey’s students appear to want seems remarkably similar to the plausible God of Silver’s book. Two quotes give the feel of the book: “By ‘spiritual’ we refer to an encounter with a source of mystery that transforms us as we come into contact with it.” “If we care to listen to what youth are saying they are indicating that their spirituality is engaged spirituality, concerned with the welfare of the world and the sacredness of endangered nature,” as opposed to the escapism the older secular generation fears it is.

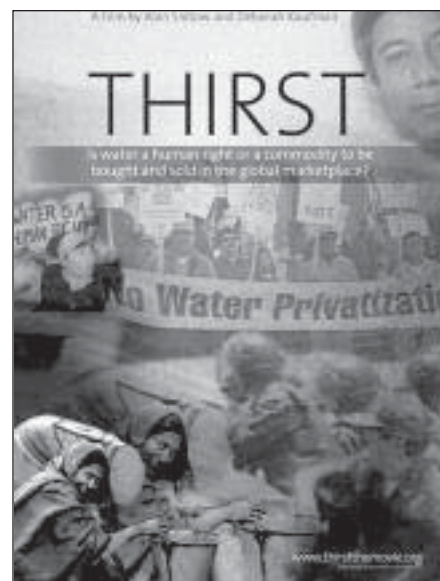
This seems to me the core challenge of the twenty-first century: How to create spiritual movements inspired by our deepest values and understanding of what is sacred, able to generate the social energy we need to transform our society along compassionate, inclusive, and ecological lines, and that embrace science and scholarship (and avoid cultism—but that’s a topic for another time). A tall order. We need the best hearts and minds of our time to sign on and make it happen. If you don’t know where to sign on, try www.spiritualprogressives.org. ■

David Belden’s doctorate at Oxford was in the sociology of religion. He is a Unitarian Universalist, novelist, and Managing Editor of Tikkun.

A FEW YEARS AGO I READ THAT some South Africans had been arrested demonstrating against water cut-offs in the Johannesburg township of Soweto. I happen to be a shareholder in Suez, the private company that owned Johannesburg Water, so I responded by organizing a shareholder’s demonstration outside the South African consulate. I’d demonstrated so often outside the old apartheid consulate that I felt entitled to sound off against the new government’s policy of privatizing water and charging everyone the full cost.

My protest was on the behalf of distant people, so poor that rate hikes led to Cholera epidemics when disconnected families took to collecting polluted water. Yet I was joined, to my surprise, by affluent citizens of Bergen County, New Jersey, who had their own grievances with my water company. Their water bills had also gone up when Suez took over. But their main complaint was that the company had sold off what they considered to be preserve land around the reservoir to real estate developers. As an investor I called Suez and learned that they ran profitable water systems in seventeen U.S. states and Canada.

I had no idea that water privatization had gone so far in my own country. But I would have known if I’d seen the impressive documentary *Thirst* on PBS, for it describes the opposition to water takeovers all around the United States. Now the filmmakers Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow have, with Michael Fox, given us a written version of *Thirst* featuring detailed case studies of the successful and unsuccessful local fights that inevitably follow



water privatization. It’s the book you need as soon as you hear about a privatization scheme in your region. As a matter of fact, you need it sooner than that. For if the water companies have their way, you won’t hear about water theft until the wells run dry.

In the United States, those who want to privatize services like health, education, and transport can count on rallying people against big government. But every Western movie fan knows immediately that the man who wants to control the water is the villain. Water is so vital and so traditionally communal that talk about selling our water to a private company automatically evokes anxiety. Furthermore, water privatization makes no economic sense. So corruption and concealment are often big factors in pushing the plans through. Most of the successful tactics explained in *Thirst* depend upon finding out early, spreading the word, and demanding a local vote.

One lively chapter of *Thirst* describes how the governor of Wisconsin made a quiet agreement to allow Nestles (Perrier) to pump out huge amounts of state water for bottling. Nestle chose to start at a stream in a state park where they would, presumably, be least noticed. But as it happened, a big Republican contributor fished in that stream. A single letter to the governor got the pumping sight shifted to another location. But a group called “Trout Unlimited” didn’t share the all too common not-in-my-trout-stream philosophy, alerting individuals in the less influential

community. There it took an exhausting public struggle to halt the plan. Foiled in Wisconsin, Nestle moved on to Michigan.

By the time you read *Thirst*, many of the corporate names will be outdated. For you can't generate constantly rising profit rates by delivering clean water to everyone in a community year after year. So the common business plan in the United States seems to be: buy a management contract, cut staff and raise prices, then sell the system back to the government when the water gets unacceptably dirty. You can also sell off an asset, like the land around the reservoir, and deliver the one-time cash to shareholders, then sell the system to someone else. Sometime after I demonstrated against the French company Suez, it sold its U.S. holdings to the German company RWE. Bergen County's water system has yet another owner today. When no bold privateer can think of any further asset to strip, the public will have to take it back.

Unfortunately, the only asset worth stripping, in many places, is the water itself. India, with 18 percent of the world's human population, has only about 4 percent of its fresh water. That's why some Indians are furious about water sales to Coca-Cola (Dasani) and Pepsi (AquaFina). It is important to note that pumping contracts can give bottlers access to all the ground water in a region's aquifer. Imagine: a private company has the right to sell away the underground water, before then shared not only by humans but also by the region's vegetation. Indian environmentalists have called for a boycott against *all* bottled water. That means that they're organizing on our behalf too.

It is certain that the bottling barons won't give up on us easily. Science fiction writers have fantasized the bottling and selling of air in some future dystopia. But water, too, is life, and bottled water is already here. We'll have to hone the tactics documented in *Thirst*, and invent some new ones too, if we're to foil this theft of the commons. ■

Barbara Garson is the author of the play MacBird!, and the books All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work, and Money Makes the World Go Around.

[BOOKS]

ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE

HOW TO WIN A FIGHT WITH A LIBERAL

by Daniel Kurtzman, Sourcebooks, Inc., 2007

HOW TO WIN A FIGHT WITH A CONSERVATIVE

by Daniel Kurtzman, Sourcebooks, Inc., 2007

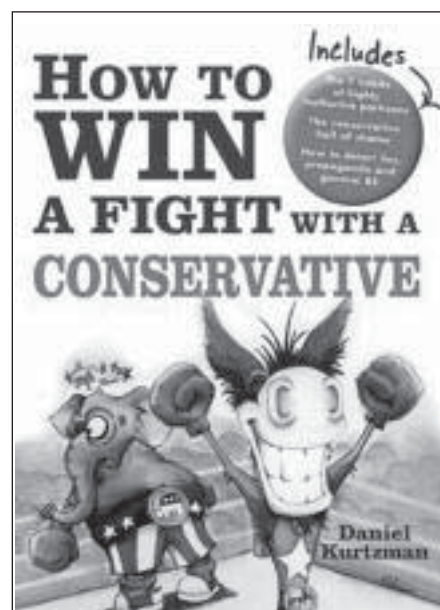
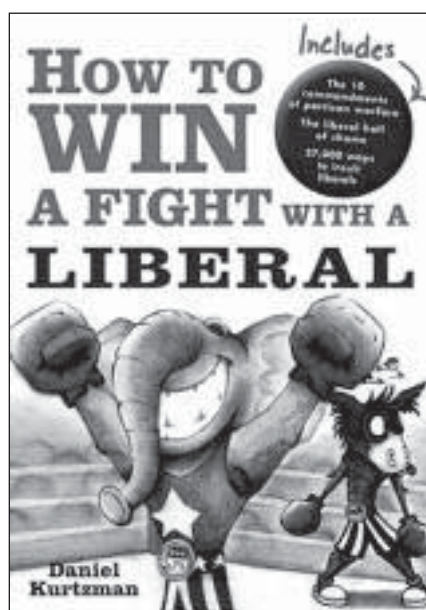
Review by Paul Lewis

THESE ARE ROLICKING TIMES for political satire in the United States. The rise of figures like Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Michael Moore on the Left and Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Dennis Miller on the Right suggests that obviously flawed politicians have been working overtime to create material for wags at both ends of our political divide. While these less-than-ideal leaders often inspire hilarious riffs—think of Limbaugh's song parodies on the Clinton-Lewinsky affair or Stewart's celebration of Dick Cheney's hunting accident—they also produce darkly comic examples of the degraded state of discourse in a country founded by such deep thinkers as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton.

This is the sharply satirical and consistently funny point Daniel Kurtzman makes in *How to Win a Fight with a Liberal* and *How to Win a Fight with a Conservative*, twin books that provide mirror images of what passes for argument in the United States today. In each of these volumes, partisans are encouraged to understand their own core beliefs, know their enemy, and avoid bullshit. Kurtzman is particularly effective in identifying and condemning logical fallacies and invented facts in common usage. The ideals he promotes will seem familiar to anyone who has ever studied logic: avoid emotional appeals, hateful invective, and sweeping generalizations. In place of these "habits of ineffective partisans," Kurtzman urges us to follow the "Ten Commandments of Partisan Warfare," which include: "3. Frame the Argument to Your Advantage, 4. Find Common Ground, ... 8. Make Your Opponent Laugh, [and] 9. Be Open-Minded."

For the most part, Kurtzman—who follows the daily production of political argument from his perch atop <http://politicalhumor.about.com/>, the ever-expanding and wildly popular website he edits for the New York Times Company's About.com network—is going for laughs. Still, in the process of recommending logic and fact, he exposes the manipulative and deceptive practices in widespread use by both politicians and pundits.

The America Kurtzman describes is



BE THE CHANGE!

All paid-up members of the Network of Spiritual Progressives or the Tikkun Community are invited to join a series of Free Coaching Conference Calls on Nonviolent Communication with Miki Kashtan, cofounder of Bay Nonviolent Communication

Second Thursdays of every month starting April 10
6pm Pacific/ 9pm Eastern

To participate, join or renew your membership at www.spiritualprogressives.org. We will email you the call-in information. (Or email info@spiritualprogressives.org for the details.)

CULTURE

vatives are warned not to “stand over a deceased liberal saying, ‘Let’s see if that affirmative action plan helps get you into heaven now.’” A set of contrasting views juxtaposes the way liberals imagine the conservative utopia and vice versa. Newspaper headlines that liberals believe conservatives would “love to see” include “Schools Replace Math with Faith-Based ‘Intelligent Counting’; Witch Trials Recommence, Hillary Clinton Proves Fully Combustible; [and] Global Warming Declared Hoax, White House Calls New Kansas Coastline ‘Naturally Occurring Phenomenon.’” Meanwhile, far across the political divide, conservatives imagine that “liberals would love to see” such headlines as, “School Sex Ed

downs, the fallacies and factoids lurk questions we are evading and values we need to clarify. Beyond, if frequently supported by, the verbal jousting Kurtzman rightly pillories are actions that have spoken louder than our words.

George Orwell had this idea in mind when he traced the decline of political speech at the end of the Second World War to group-think and “the defense of the indefensible”:

Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties.

Examples in recent American policies and the arguments used to promote them would, unfortunately, be all too easy to offer. Indeed, Orwell’s examples seem eerily contemporary:

...political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification.... People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements.

How to Win a Fight with a Liberal and *How to Win a Fight with a Conservative* update Orwell’s observation that “thought corrupts language [and] language...corrupt[s] thought.” Though they can be enjoyed as joke books, attentive readers will get Kurtzman’s satirical point: in the exchange of pre-fabricated positions, the appeal to emotion, and the indulgence of self-approval, we have been sidestepping, to our peril, urgent problems. Exposing such failures and mocking those responsible for them is the highest calling of the satirist. ■

Paul Lewis is the author of Cracking Up: American Humor in a Time of Conflict.

divided into such color-coded regions as the Brokeback Belt, Bagel Belt, Botox Belt, and Ivory Tower Belt (blue); the Kitsch Belt, Cookie-Cutter Belt, Bud Belt, and the Can’t-Buckle-My-Belt Belt (purple); and the Chastity Belt, Saved Belt, Dow Jones Belt, and the Locked and Loaded Belt (red). Civilizing the exchange of ideas across these ideological and geographic borders is the primary objective here.

But first, partisans need to distinguish the variety of opponents they will encounter. While conservatives are likely to meet up with such creatures as Granolacrats, Oppressedbyterians, NPR Parrot-Troopers, Hollywood Ignorati, and Kumbayaniks, liberals can expect to run into Rapturefarians, Enron-omists, Big Brethren, Gunfederates, and FOX Trotters. As these examples suggest, Kurtzman has a fine ear for both cultural stereotypes and the opportunities they provide for neology.

By offering differently illustrated sets of the same advice, Kurtzman highlights the sheer rudeness of our political exchanges. In *How to Win a Fight with a Conservative*, for instance, liberals are urged, not to “try to get in the last word with a conservative loved one at his or her own funeral. It comes off as insensitive to stand over a deceased conservative saying, ‘Guess that estate tax isn’t so important where you’re going.’” Similarly, in *How to Win a Fight with a Liberal*, conser-

Broadened to Include Alternative Lifestyles, Live Demonstrations; Global Terrorist Leaders Invited to Camp David for Self-Esteem-Building Summit, Yoga Retreat; [and] Global Warming Solved Following Worldwide Oil Ban, Triumphant President Gore Takes Cross-Country Victory Lap in Horse Carriage One.”

Contrasting Halls of Shame in the different books feature such conservative “sex fiends, sociopaths, and weasels” as “Rudy Giuliani, America’s Adulterer, Ann Coultergeist, [and] Duke ‘Supersize my Bribe’ Cunningham”—and such liberal “perverts, morons, and degenerates” as “Jesse ‘Who’s Your Daddy’ Jackson, ‘Chillary’ Clinton, [and] William ‘Cold Cash’ Jefferson.” That most readers will find the book written for their ideological group more palatable than the one written against it is only natural, though it serves as yet another reminder of the rifts in our political culture.

Considering the dishonesty (okay, lying) that has passed for leveling with the American people in recent years, Kurtzman’s diagnosis of the problem (bias, ignorance, closed-mindedness, and a give-no-quarter approach to argument) and his proposed remedy (a return to facts and logic) are useful. Still, not everything that has gone wrong with and for the United States in this new century has been based on the tenor of our discourse. Beneath the distortions and put-

ROCK AFTER AUSCHWITZ

FORCE OF LIGHT by Dan Kaufman/Barbez
Tzadik Records, 2007

Review by Charlie Bertsch

IF YOU LISTENED TO *FORCE OF LIGHT* without reading anything about it, you might think it a somber update of the sort of psychedelic experiments that proliferated in the late 1960s, with its coupling of spare yet trippy sounds, and spoken-word passages that call to mind the pretense of that era's alternative poetry scene. Or you might think it a blurred-edge take on the sort of music made by acts like Tortoise in the 1990s, a subgenre labeled "post-rock." Or you might just be struggling to figure out a proper response to the record, which manages to be simultaneously airy and grave, pretentious and earnest. None of these possibilities are meant as a criticism, either, for Dan Kaufman and his bandmates in Barbez have crafted an album that has the potential to appeal to a wide range of people on its substantial musical merits.

The thing is, the kind of listening that formulation supposes—hearing something on its own terms, without the frame provided by both professional and amateur commentary—has become as antiquated as powering a train with a steam engine. These days, it's second nature for even casual music fans to turn to the Internet for context whenever they come upon something new. If artists use the accessibility of information to their advantage, they can find an eager audience for even the most difficult, obscure work. And they can count on a good percentage of those listeners to comprehend its complexity.

That's why records like *Force of Light* seem both more frequent and more popular than ever before. The capacity to discover, in a few seconds at the keyboard, that an album is "a three-year long labor of love" that pays "searing homage to Holocaust survivor and poet Paul Celan," redefines our sense of the music it contains. It puts us in a position, not just to listen, but to listen *for*, hearing the album with a specific purpose

in mind. For the most part, this is a salutary development, particularly when a record is as interesting as *Force of Light* is. But it also puts added pressure on artists, since they are more likely to be held to their own statements about what they were trying to do and why.

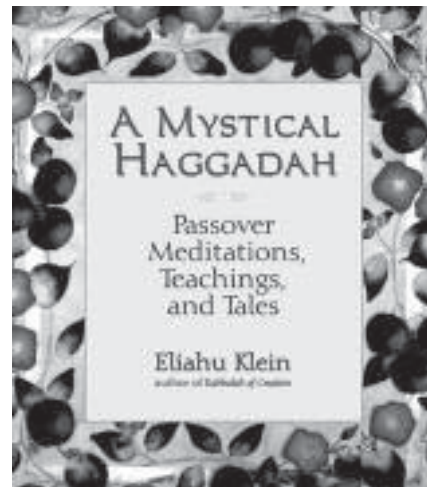
In the case of *Force of Light*, for example, someone listening carefully for the way in which it provides musical accompaniment for Celan's words might wonder why Kaufman opted to pair them with a style that might be described as "cabaret rock." While that particular aesthetic, most famously implemented by Tom Waits and Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, works wonderfully for over-the-top storytelling that channels the dark hedonism of the Weimar Republic, it's an odd fit with the emptiness of Celan's work. Leaving aside the fact that Celan, who was raised in Romania, was both too young and too far from cosmopolitan life to have experienced the fragile decadence of that world directly, there is also the problem that many of his poems play off literary influences antithetical to the messy Modernism of the Expressionists or their politically engaged successors.

In Celan's German, the words in songs like "Aspen Tree" or "Count the Almonds" resonate because they turn the beauty of the classic poetry of German Romanticism, with its belief in the purity of nature, inside out. From this perspective, the most obvious way to set his work to music would be to expand on what composers like Schönberg undertook with their "New Music," reexamining the *Lieder* tradition of Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms through the tint-free glasses of the avant-garde. In a rock idiom, this might mean composing spare, dissonant music in the singer-songwriter vein.

Force of Light takes a very different path, one which threatens to conceal the fact that Celan was first and foremost a lyric poet, one who repeatedly demonstrated that Theodor Adorno's oft-cited injunction against writing poetry "after Auschwitz" is best interpreted, not as a ban on the literary form itself, but an insistence that poets always feel the presence of the Holocaust instead of consigning it to the past. But it is for precisely this reason that the record may do a better job of provoking listeners to ruminate on Celan's *oeuvre* than an overtly "ap-

propriate" treatment would have. In a sense, the fact that *Force of Light* does not seem to fit his poetry makes it a fitting tribute to the themes of failure and loss that course through it. ■

Charlie Bertsch (cbertsch@gmail.com) currently teaches American literature, cultural theory and new media at the University of Arizona.



[BOOK]

ACTIVIST SEDER

A MYSTICAL HAGGADAH: PASSOVER MEDITATIONS, TEACHINGS AND TALES
Commentary and Translation by Rabbi Eliahu J. Klein, North Atlantic Books, 2008

Review by Kennard Lipman

Note for our non-Jewish readers: The word Haggadah ("telling" in Hebrew) comes from the scriptural commandment to tell our children about the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt, as described in the book of Exodus in the Torah. This story is told every year at the Pesach Seder (the family ritual meal for Passover). Eds.

DO WE NEED ANOTHER HAGGADAH? Do we even need another 'mystical haggadah'? After all, we can find Haggadot with titles such as *The Chassidic Haggadah* and *The Secrets of the Haggadah*.

The answer is definitely 'yes,' for Rabbi Klein brings us deeper into the ways of tikkun according to Kabbalah and Hasidism, than any other Haggadah in English.

As far back as 1989, Lawrence Fine, a scholar of Lurianic Kabbalah, showed how much our contemporary understanding of *tikkun olam* (including that of this magazine) has been influenced by the Lurianic notion of *tikkun* and its correlative notion of *shevirat hakelim* (shattering of the vessels of creation). Although *tikkun olam* has come to mean little more than 'social action' in mainstream American Judaism, the understanding that repair of our contemporary world must go deep and deal with the foundations of society will resonate with *Tikkun* readers. But how 'deep' and what are the 'foundations' that must be transformed?

Rabbi Klein's *Mystical Haggadah* is an ambitious undertaking. It has two goals. The first is to present a fresh, egalitarian, and soulful translation of the traditional Haggadah text. He does this based on the advice of his teacher, Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, pioneer of contemporary teaching and translation of Jewish mysticism: "First translate exactly word by word, and then, throw everything away and write the way you, and only you, would communicate these sacred words." To have only accomplished this task would have been reason enough for another Haggadah. One example will suffice to give the reader a taste (in this case the beginning of the *Kiddush*): "Blessed are you, Hashem-**Adonai**, our

Creator-**Eloheinu**, Divine Steward of the universe, who has given us the opportunity to transcend our egos through free choice, above all those who lack this sublime view, and who has made us whole with Your divine rituals." Although the Hebrew sources are all traditional, this is not your grandfather's Haggadah.

The second goal is to present Kabbalah *in practice*, especially as it was practiced by the Hasidim of Brooklyn, among whom Rabbi Klein grew up. One of the great strengths of this Haggadah is that it reflects Rabbi Klein's personal experience. He is particularly adept at weaving more abstract kabbalistic commentaries with stories and personal advice from Hasidic rebbes. But what does this practice teach us about the essential message of the Haggadah, liberation, and how it can be achieved today?

Once again, just one example will give you the distinct flavor of a Passover Seder conducted with this book. It is a *kavanah*, an intention with which we break the middle of the three *matzot* and hide away a piece for the *afikomen*: "I heard from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (of blessed memory), 'We break this *matzah* and hide a part of our selves. Only we know which part we are hiding. It is the part that is our broken heart that we hide and protect as we travel through the Haggadah. At the end of the

Seder, we bring out this precious part that has become healed. At that moment we eat this broken piece.'"

In the work of transforming the world we need to acknowledge our broken hearts. Our hearts are broken, and not just by those who suffer so much more than we do, in Iraq, Kenya, Mexico or the other side of town. We too are broken. *Tikkun olam* is an inner and outer process, a restoration of wholeness. Depending upon our personalities we may feel more comfortable starting with either process, but eventually the work needs to include the part that is hiding.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said of the famous march from Selma, Alabama with Rev. Martin Luther King, "I felt as if my feet were praying." Rabbi Heschel came out of the same background as the sources used by Rabbi Klein. Do we read these words as just a poetic flourish or as a deep truth? They contain a truth that those engaged in *tikkun olam* need to learn in order to avoid the demons of egotism, bickering, burnout, vengeful anger, resentment, or despair. The Kabbalistic and Hasidic commentaries in *A Mystical Haggadah* can help teach us how to pray with activist feet, or at least rehearse the steps on Passover night. ■

Rabbi Ken Lipman lives in Berkeley, California.

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[BOOKS]

LAWYER AS HEALER

MAKING WAVES AND RIDING THE CURRENTS:
ACTIVISM AND THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM

by Charles Halpern, Berrett-Koehler, 2008

Review by Nanette Schorr

UNHAPPINESS WITH THE U.S. legal system as a vehicle for righting wrongs has caused many lawyers to abandon a profession they experience as overly shackled to the conventions of an adversarial zero-sum arena, largely driven by motives of profit and self-interest. These lawyers, whose values and instincts respond most powerfully to a progressive conception of the law, experience a yearning to participate in a justice system that recognizes competing interests and claims, yet fosters dialogue and the repair of relationships.

Responding to this hopeful vision, and believing in the capacity of the law to evolve in a fresh direction, some lawyers have dedicated themselves to building movements for cultural renewal of the law. They use models such as therapeutic jurisprudence, meditation and the law, humanizing legal education, transformative mediation, collaborative law, restorative justice, and lay advocacy. Participants in other initiatives, such as the Project for Integrating Spirituality, Law, and Politics, support these efforts, but also seek to link the transformation of legal culture to a broader social movement that challenges the basic values and priorities underpinning our economic and social life and institutions. For those of us with this perspective, renewal of the legal culture should be located in the context of this larger project.

Charles Halpern's *Making Waves and Riding the Currents* speaks to these streams of engagement within the legal culture. This nuanced personal memoir focuses on the interplay between work in the world ("Making Waves") and inner work ("Riding Currents"). Halpern asks: Can we use inner work to assist us in being more powerful agents of change? Is there a connection between meditation, attunement to nature, and activities devoted to creating a more sustainable, just, and compassion-

ate society? Using humor, storytelling, and personal example, Halpern argues that practices which deepen inner life can infuse the work of social transformation with a culture of wisdom that carries the potential to have a profound impact on society.

After a significant summer experience working in northern Louisiana with participants in the Civil Rights movement, Halpern spent his early professional years working at the law firm of Arnold & Porter. Over time, he came to feel that the values most validated in that context did not reflect who he was and wanted to be. However, his engagement there gave him the opportunity to take on pro bono work, which had an important impact on his vision of his future commitments.

Halpern's experience of a life of meaning in the law began with his handling the case of a mentally ill man, Charles Rouse, who had been convicted of a misdemeanor, and spent four years in an institution without receiving adequate treatment. When trying the case for Rouse's freedom, Halpern did more than experience his own power in the courtroom and the potential for using the law to expand the recognition of human rights. He also understood the courtroom from Rouse's perspective, as an arena where parties manipulated the truth for their own purposes. He later helped to create the *Selective Service Law Reporter*, which played an important role in supporting Vietnam draft resisters. Halpern ultimately left the firm to work full time creating CLASP, The Center for Law and Social Policy, the country's first public interest law firm, which is now about to celebrate its fortieth anniversary.

Halpern recounts how he and his colleagues at CLASP used their elite connections to create an anti-establishment institution. They obtained a temporary injunction against the construction of the Arctic pipeline, enforced the rights of the mentally ill to treatment and care, and empowered shareholders to hold corporations accountable for their actions towards consumers and the environment. He was also

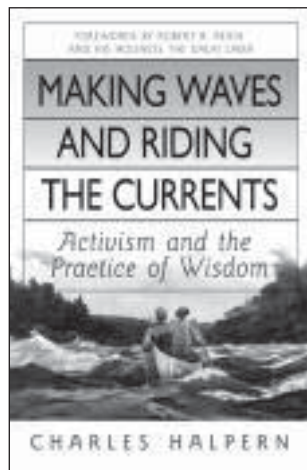
instrumental in shaping the culture of CLASP as a law firm that reflected powerful changes occurring in American culture. These changes included the emergence of women in key leadership roles and the breakdown of hierarchical relations in favor of more free-flowing and egalitarian organization. He also introduced contemplative practices, such as yoga and retreats

in nature, as ways of shaping the consciousness and mission of the organization. As this culture unfolded at CLASP, he began to see ways in which practicing law by intellectual acumen, objectivity, and professional distance could be powerfully enriched by a higher level of attunement to self and Other. And he also began to feel that public interest

lawyers could embrace models of advocacy beyond highly adversarial and polarizing litigation.

After spending years in key public interest law positions, Halpern accepted an offer to create a public interest law school as part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system. As the founding Dean of the CUNY Law School, Halpern confronted a gritty physical plant, political pressures which challenged his sense of ethics, chronic underfunding, and deep rifts between students and faculty. Nonetheless, he recounts, out of this maelstrom of pressures, a public interest law school was born. Touchstone principles in the design of CUNY's pedagogy included: moving the focus of legal education from the primacy of doctrine to the impact of law on the human beings affected by the case, recognizing the emotional component of lawyering, and cultivating in aspiring lawyers the ability to nurture appropriate compromise. Halpern's goal at CUNY was not limited to educating future lawyers in a particular way; he also aspired to create a non-traditional learning community "where people could mix openly across deep and normally impermeable barriers."

Readers, however, leave Halpern's detailed account of creating the CUNY Law School with unanswered questions. We learn much about Halpern's personal



struggles at CUNY, but not as much about the content of the ideas and practices he was proposing. One wishes for more specifics about what was taught in this school that was not taught in other law schools, and how he envisioned the CUNY values of “forgiveness, generosity and community” leading to an alternative way of practicing law once graduates were out in the world of lawyering. One also wonders what spiritual wisdom Halpern would seek to infuse into a law school he might create now, and what such an institution would look like.

Halpern’s emerging sense of participating in a culture of wisdom proceeds in a parallel but separate trajectory from his discussion of engagement with legal culture. He speaks of key mentors who taught him a different way of listening and understanding, and skills he learned which enhanced his willingness to take chances. He takes us with him in his encounters with solitude, the wilderness in winter, yoga, and meditation, painting an evocative picture of the refreshing and enlivening effect of personal retreat. He invites us into his process of spiritual development, learning of personal and professional experiences which fostered his ability to handle misfortune, feel more integrally connected to his own identity, and deepen his experience of community. The vision of individual and social expansion he articulates is of meditation, wisdom, and a commitment to social transformation that would “flow together [as] a vigorous advocacy that avoids demonizing people who disagree.”

But there is an important issue in which Halpern does not engage that relates to the connection between his inner work and the law. The existing legal culture has evolved to reflect a conception of the human condition that stands in contrast to the values and aspirations Halpern puts forward. Present-day American legal culture tends to validate personal aggrandizement at the expense of the social good, and reflects a highly individualistic conception of the world. In this conception, human beings are fundamentally wary of and isolated from one another, and pursue their separate interests in an environment where each primarily looks out for him or herself, because there is no one else to look

out for them. This conception of human motivation and behavior is facilitated by our laws of property, contracts, and torts, which lack a structural acknowledgment of our essential interconnectedness as human beings. This adversarial system all too often ratifies this experience, as it fails to incorporate the virtues of forgiveness or affirmation that Halpern identifies as integral to a culture of wisdom.

Certainly, one can agree with Halpern that the spiritual practices he advocates can help to elevate the consciousness of the legal practitioner and can be one step in a process of change. But a strategy of fundamental change must also include critiquing the embedded individualism of the existing legal order in all its aspects. The lawyer-client relationship should be re-examined and deepened, and new modes of social healing that challenge the mistrustful and overly hostile assumptions underpinning the adversarial system should be integrated into legal practice. It is not just the consciousness of the individual lawyer that needs elevation, but also the cultural meaning of justice itself, as it is embodied in the myriad forms of legal thought and processes that currently dominate the surrounding culture. As Martin Luther King Jr. said so eloquently, “Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.”

As an attorney who aspires to be a strong and effective representative for my low-income clients, and as an advocate for renewal of the law in a context of social justice, the struggles Halpern faced, and his strategies for addressing them, have great relevance and meaning for me. And yet, they also imply larger questions, which move beyond the rubric of individual growth and capacity, and which are not addressed in the book. Can lawyers play a significant role in helping to create a more interconnected social fabric? When processes such as restorative justice or transformative models of mediation are used to address conflict and repair relationships, do they tend to move towards impacting the larger culture, or being subsumed by it? Can the law embody a commitment to justice, and to recognition of the dignity of every human being?

The kind of wisdom-enriched thinking

and behavior Halpern describes is an anchor for transforming the legal culture in ways that support a more compassionate form of legal practice. As lawyers learn new forms of activism which shift social dynamics by fostering dialogue and engagement, the “practice of wisdom” will be seen as ever more integral to law students’ training. Charles Halpern’s memoir is a valuable contribution to thinking about how law schools and other legal institutions can move the practice of law from the status quo to the progressive waves and currents we can only imagine will emerge. We await his further thinking on next steps towards achieving broader transformation in the legal culture and the larger society. ■

Nanette Schorr is a supervising attorney in a free legal services office in New York City, and an advocate for renewal and healing in the law and the legal culture.

MUSSAR STYLE

(continued from page 61)

“Wow, I wish I could be as clear, strong, and compassionate as this caring, high-integrity individual seems to be. This person isn’t mean or aggressive, yet I can tell I’m not dealing with a pushover.”

Building Centuries Of Wisdom

MUSSAR DOESN’T REQUIRE THAT YOU BE perfect or flawless in how you handle stressful situations. Rather, it’s a system of checks and balances to make sure you keep learning what allows you to live with more integrity and inter-personal effectiveness.

Yet, rather than having to figure all this out in a vacuum, you are able to call upon many hundreds of years of wise teachings and great debates about how to live mindfully each day. It comes in handy right at the moment when you are about to go off on someone who gets on your nerves, because those are the moments when just a sarcastic tone or a shaming turn of phrase can cause damage which takes years to repair. ■

Leonard Felder, PhD, is a licensed psychologist in West Los Angeles whose books include Seven Prayers That Can Change Your Life, The Ten Challenges, and When Difficult Relatives Happen To Good People.

Body Text

"CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING" -Acme Matches

Toe speckled with blood, sour blush of spirit,
the villager's thumb smashed blue

from hammering evil thoughts into
the Yoruba totem man:

his marble eye and smile of bone
float above the indigestible belly

of griefs that the townsfolk
have fed him nail by nail....

A baby fights gravity to stand; her body
lists and yaws, begins its life of self-correction

so that later, if she slashes her wrists
and chokes down all the pills—

still, they are anti-coagulants;
she wakes up alive but scabby.

Unversed in poetic justice,
the body forgives

but can't forget. We used to read it slowly:
during the ancient wars, a messenger

could dawdle weeks in camp
until his hair grew back,

hiding the map tattooed on his scalp.
Now we pay for our figures:

when the dictator proclaims
"the future's in your hands,"

rebels chop off a thousand arms,
asking the victims, "short sleeve or long sleeve" —

Shall our bodies grow innocent again?
We have cleansed ourselves, planting

crimes in the spongy flesh of our teachers:
open to our mistakes, their skin absorbs

every fault, a body's true instruction:
the botched colon and missing period,

the "terminally disorganized
Appendix"—: Our problems plump

their calf and moon, their dimpled
pedimental haunches that

waggle up the schoolhouse stairs,
these simple men of Hobbes, swimming against

a student whaleherd of Rousseau—
In summer, teachers moonlight

as customs inspectors...credulous,
starved for human histories, they swallow

cock and bull tales, and let through
the satchelfuls of drugs

that later dim their students—
Tonight, older than the yearbook images

gaping back at us, we compose ourselves
in sleep, walking the error of our ways

amidst the smiling, still handsome
schoolmasters of our youth, now voided of us.

Knowledge settles back like dust
inside the mouth, blue dust of berries

by night, bleaching at dawn
to fine chalk, or ash.

—David Gewanter

Swami Beyondananda's 2008 State of the Universe Address

Swami Predicts Heart Times Ahead

BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

Every year at this time, I am asked to make predictions, and each time I politely refuse because I don't want to jeopardize my nonprophet status. But this year is different. With 2012 just one quantum leap year away, we humans might finally be ready for a quantum leap of our own. The message is coming in loud and clear. Time to shift or get off the pot.

To upshift our karma into surpassing gear, however, we must shift our awareness from the static of the head to the ecstatic of the heart. If we are to have an awakening instead of a wake, I predict heart times ahead.

For millennia, spiritual teachers have told us to look inside for this universal wisdom. It turns out, they were right. The real spiritual pilgrimage is actually a journey of about twenty-four inches, roughly the distance from the head to the heart.

The Heart of the Matter is the Matter of the Heart

Yes, everyone is equipped to attune to universal wisdom because everyone has been given a heart. And yet, the heart seems to be the last gift we open. The most underdeveloped resource on the planet is the treasure inside our own treasured chest! Given all the craziness in the world, maybe if we invested in expanding our hearts, we'd have less need to shrink our heads.

And less of a need to be so all-consumed by consumerism. We have learned to spend so much energy pursuing happiness that we never stop to think what would happen if we actually

caught it—or rather, if it caught us. With all this hot pursuit, we have left real happiness in the dust. It is sad indeed that we end up jealous that someone else's happiness might be bigger than our own. Freud called this “happiness envy.”

As the saying goes, money can't buy happiness, although it can buy anti-depressants. But if you are seeking more out of life than not being depressed, the key to happiness is to grow your own. Every one of us should be asking, “What good am I?” What good can I add to the greater goodness? Maybe if we had greater goodness, we'd need fewer goods. As human beings, our biggest asset is love, so now is the time to get up off our big fat assets, and practice supply-side spirituality. Because we aren't here to earn God's love, we are here to spend it. We are here to re-grow the Garden from the grassroots up, and have a heaven of a time doing it!

Heartland Security

We need to amplify the love and light to counterbalance the darkness and fear, and that is why we need a nongovernmental Department of Heartland Security to secure the heartland and let the powers in power know in no uncertain terms, “Bigger brotherhood is watching you.”

To do that, we must migrate en masse—regardless of political or spiritual affiliation—to the land of the heart. Instead of squabbling over the differences that separate us, we must cohere



around the heart-core values we share in common. That is the only way we can trade our insecurity for inner security. No matter where we stand on climate change, one thing is clear. Global heart-warming is bound to change the political climate for the better.

Whatever the problems, we have the wherewithal to address them. Now all we need is the aware-with-all. Whether you call yourself a creationist or an evolutionist, or take the simplest approach of all to the Great Unknown—not knowing—one thing is undeniable: we are all one with the same One. The story of separation, survival of the fittest, and lowest common dominator—that is the old story.

Only we have the power to close the book on the old story once and for all, by declaring: And they all lived happily ever after.

And happily ever after begins now. ■

Swami Beyondananda is the comic alter ego of Steve Bhaerman and can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com.