

THE SERVANT SONG

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Occupying the Boulevard of Broken Dreams

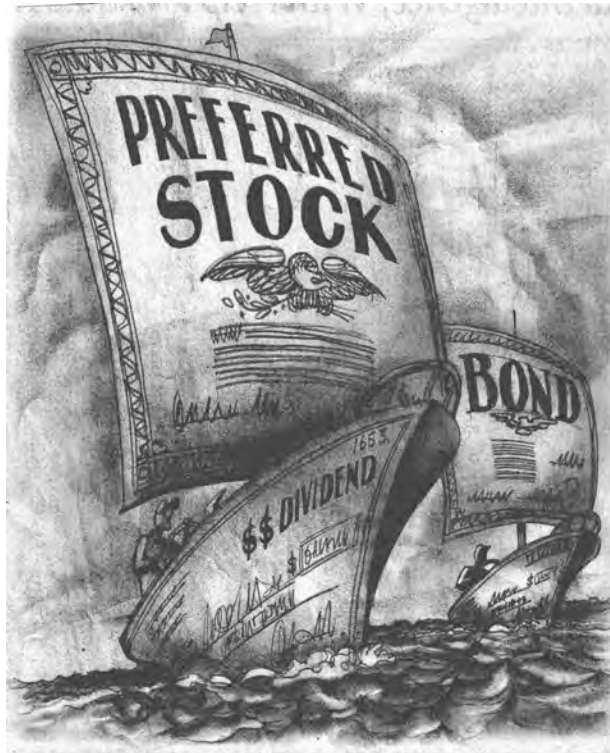
by Brayton Shanley

One of our most cherished institutions under continual attack in the 1960's was corporate capitalism. The left seemed relentless in its attack on the profit-making, frenzy of greed that is enthroned in the American corporation. No one seems to deny the existence of too much money on the top and too little on the bottom. Twenty-percent of the world's people control eighty-per cent of the world's money and resources. I think of the prophetic words of Jacques Ellul: "Unjust economic systems are as violent as a rampaging army." Money made and kept at the top in the face of desperate human need is a grave form of violence. But, in our post-modern world, capitalism is accepted and embraced without critique as the economic heart and mind of our globalized economy.

So, when the Arab Spring moved from the Middle East to Wasp Wall Street downtown, I was relieved by the sudden and necessary analysis of our "free market economy." Once again, some named "the Street" for what it was: "The Heart of the Beast." If the Arab Spring teaches us anything it teaches that every nation's house, especially our own, needs to be cleansed, not just of despots as in Egypt, Libya and Syria, but cleansed of the injustices of our unexamined, unrestrained, economic empire.

I made it down to Wall Street the day after Mayor Bloomberg was to chase out the Wall Street occupiers and clean up the supposed mess, but then backed down. I arrived at Zuccotti Park, one block by two city blocks, a tree-lined sanctuary surrounded by "The Streets," fifty story high finance behemoths. What I found was dreamlike, a 1960's style takeover, but this wasn't the Boston or San Francisco I knew in 1968. This is 2011, way downtown, in the shadow of the engine that drives the Global Economy, located two blocks from the specter of death and finance, Ground Zero.

As if I were back in '68, I felt immediately at home as I did during the Viet Nam war era protests. Similar to the 60's "Occupy" seemed a serious and inspired dissent, people eager to do some risk-taking and to do the suffering of sleeping on hard ground. Unlike the antiwar movements of the past, this scene was more of a rainbow of cultures and colors than the Berkeley protests. Similar to the 1960s, two thirds of those in "Occupy Wall Street" were white, longish-haired early 20's folk. But speckled within was a racial mix of dissenters—Latinos, African Americans, Asians, joined by some street people, comprising a powerful socio-economic



David G. Klein

diversity of New York City's finest crammed into Zuccotti Park.

One in ten were my age, gray-haired veterans of street protests of the past decades. I watch these elder contrarians charm small clusters of "20 somethings" with songs like "I'm sticking with the Union." They busy themselves handing out leaflets and armbands inspiring everyone to join the 99%. Ellen, a fifty year old leaf-letter suggests that "the richest one percent have become wealthy by squeezing the productive class for every penny. The productive class is comprised of: farmers, teachers, trades people, technicians, and factory workers to name a few. It's time for a *copper revolution*." Other "veterans" offered free medical help, or just observed from around the margins. After all, the occupy movements, as most revolutions in history, are youth revolutions. Youth are the real story here.

My biggest fear when attending public protests is that they usually lack the one thing they absolutely can't do without—spiritual introspection and non-negotiable nonviolence. Judging from the recent police attacks on occupiers in Atlanta and Oakland, these occupiers had better remain full of self-

scrutiny and compassion for the hair-trigger police who guard them, and who are threatened by their numbers and often lack the training and skill to respond with a peaceful reserve.

Signs of the spiritual are strong. Like a tribal elder, Betty hands out empathy cards from her "Empathy Booth". The message: *Love your adversaries in corporate America. Meditation is our ally in this struggle.* Betty wisely offers that "this is what we learned from our mistakes of the 60's protests. We need to become peace filled occupiers".

Behind her sits a 25 year old bearded man, a beret covering shoulder-length hair, eyes closed, totally wrapped in a very still meditation. Yep. I feel that this place has enough compassion and spiritual depth to have a chance at succeeding. Dorothy Day, Catholic pacifist and activist called this awareness of the deeper motivations, "the primacy of the spiritual," or the utterly indispensable "looking within." Occupiers need to tamp down self-righteousness and aggressive anger.

Recent challenges to the occupation include the arrest of a man charged with sexually assaulting a protestor, in addition to

an already raucous public discussion of lawlessness at the site. I trust the occupiers will realize soon that nonviolence must completely define Zuccotti Park if they are to be credible.

Down from the Empathy Booth and the Meditation Corner one finds a medical unit designed to help those who are ill and for those flipping out from the stress of day after day sleeping in the cold on concrete. I walk around and see was a small, self-sufficient village of occupying squatters who set up a kitchen for distributing food, a legal advice booth, a sanitation department, and a library of donated books to stir young minds toward a contemporary theory of alternative economics and social justice. Somewhere in the middle is an area was set aside for a General Consensus Assembly to decide important decisions. The assembly is located just down from the Media Center where lap-tops are recharged, using portable generators and not far from the general store called "The Comfort Center," stocked with donated clothing, bedding, toothpaste and deodorant. All is given away and exists within a 100 by 300 foot tree-lined plot of grass and sidewalk, servicing the 200 people milling about.

Throughout my stay I never smelled any marijuana (not very 60's). But like the 60's gatherings, a line of bongo drummers, "Drummers for Peace" join guitars and other instruments, music and song wafting from every corner of the Park. Is this an embryonic vision of a "Village for a New Age" of "Post oligarchical capitalism and peak oil"? People think small and local and want to control their own destinies, looking out for the common good, especially those on the lower end of the economic scale? Could an integration of mystery and levity, of the spiritual with the hard core political, good economic analysis alternating with the sighs and sounds of art and music reflect an alternative style of living?

"We are going to stay here until our demands are met. We need work" George, an out-of-work actor says, as I give him change for a \$20 dollar bill. I tell him what I think: "Social change movements succeed only if there is a sacrifice." I wonder to myself: "Will they stay through the winter like protestors did in the Ukraine in the 1990's, opposing what they knew was a rigged election?" Thousands occupied the city square in Kiev, sacrificing their comfort in a January cold until the election results were reversed. By contrast, the New York City peace demonstration of February 2003, one month before the invasion of Iraq, started at noon and ended at 4 pm and

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“I Will Not Recant”

By Suzanne Belote Shanley

“What you are asking me to do... is not possible without betraying my conscience. ...I will not recant.” With these prophetic words, Roy Bourgeois, Maryknoll priest of nearly 40 years, donned the mantle of women’s empowerment in the Catholic Church over the issue of women’s ordination, with far-reaching implications for women as well as for the all-male hierarchy of the Catholic Church and beyond.

Roy’s question: “Who are we to reject God’s call of women to the priesthood?” inspired me to speak out more forcefully in support of his prophetic stance and to proclaim more emphatically my own endorsement of women’s ordination keying in memories of my years as a Catholic woman disgruntled, angry, yearning for reform.

I have reflected that the teaching and practice of nonviolence as non-cooperation with dominative power, in this instance, male hierarchal power, excluding half of God’s creation from ordained ministry, would be rendered meaningless if I were not addressing this fundamental issue of justice with the same outrage and indignation I confront the power of the American empire. None of this ongoing conviction, however, lessens for one instance, my steadfast friendship, loyalty and love of priest friends who regard priesthood as inclusive of women. Many have not made their support as public as Roy’s, but choose to work behind the scenes, including one priest and university professor in Boston, who has withdrawn from saying Mass as a sign of solidarity with women.

Threatened with excommunication by Maryknoll for participating in the ordination of his long-time friend, Janice Sevre-Duszynska, as well as for an extensive interview in the documentary, “Pink Smoke Over the Vatican” Roy will not reverse course. “Sexism, like racism, is a sin,” he states unequivocally. “Conscience” he maintains, the sacred “sense of right and wrong,” is his Wisdom guide, compelling him to reject “silence as the voice of complicity.”

He calls on Pope Benedict IV and “all Church leaders and the Vatican” to speak out against the “grave injustice of excluding women from the priesthood.” In this position, he is supported by thousands of men, women and priests, who signed a petition to this effect, which he and a group representing various organizations attempted to present in person at the Vatican in October and were prevented from doing so by police who detained them, without official arrest, confiscating banners in the process.

This very public “Yes” to the call of women to the priesthood, and the “No” of recantation were sufficient motivators for me to attend a small protest at the Maryknoll residence in New York during a downpour, with other supporters who held signs that read: “Yes, to Women’s Ordination” and “We Support Fr. Roy”, on a weekend in July shortly after he received a second harsh and chastising letter from Maryknoll, threatening his expulsion. This exhorting reprimand, prompted hundreds from Maryknoll who have “served overseas” to sign a letter which upholds the contention that “sooner or later, the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity will be moved by the Spirit to ordain women.”

Throughout my years as a Catholic, I have read treatises on patriarchy and the unconscionable subordination of women in the church by Rosemary Radford Ruether, Joan Chittister, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza,



Elizabeth Johnson, and many others, who like Johnson, in a 1990 article in “Crossroads,” on “Feminist Christology” contend that “While God is Spirit, neither male nor female but Creator of both in the divine image, in the tradition the maleness of Jesus has been taken as a pointer to the exclusive maleness of God. Consequently, we have named the highest power of the universe (Ultimate Reality) in male terms, a naming which redounds to the benefit of male human beings.”

Such research and feminist Christology solidified my thinking about forms of violence which include the exclusive reign of male clerics in the Catholic Church and the Vatican, my lifelong friendships with priests over the years notwithstanding. Allowing women to give homilies, sometimes having to play language games to indicate that they are not actually doing so is, at least, a step in the direction of recognizing the oppression of women in the church.

I will never forget, for example, in the 1970’s Fr. Bissonnette in Buffalo, NY, who was murdered in his rectory by a homeless man he had taken in, offering an apology to the women at a conference at which I was speaking, that they he could not join them on the altar as priests of God. I had never heard such a declaration in front of a gathered group, bold, heart-felt, and necessary.

It was at about this time, that I studied with liberating confirmation, the 1976 publication, “Women and Priestly Ministry: The New Testament Evidence” published by the Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, with a committee of “prominent scholars” who reported on the “Role of Women in Early Christianity.” The theologians and scholars, including Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Sr. Sandra Schneiders, verified in their theological research, what I had experienced intuitively to be true over the years as a Catholic lay woman: “The assertion that the attitude of Jesus and the apostles provides a permanent norm excluding women from ordained priestly ministry in the Church presents difficulties of both a theoretical and

an historical kind.” The Catholic Biblical Quarterly of 1979, goes on to state that “the most serious logical difficulty lies in the claim that the source for such a norm is the intention of Jesus.... but it cannot be shown that a theological decision was made to exclude women from priestly ministry.”

Paul Lakeland, in *The Liberation of Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (Continuum; NY, 2003), contends that “if laypeople are called into a central position in addressing the ills of the church, the clerical culture of the past will have to bow to lay convictions about the value of an open, democratic, and pluralistic society.” In such a society, one would ask, as Roy does, “Who are we to tamper with God’s call? That Our call is valid, but yours is not,” which got him the response of imminent dismissal from Maryknoll “based on your defiant stance as a Catholic priest who publicly rejects the Magisterium of the Church.” Just the word, Magisterium (the language of subjection) makes one feel small and insignificant, next to the men in august robes, miters and headresses.

Speaking of structural alternatives, including, one would hope, eliminating concepts such as the “Magisterium,” Lakeland adds: “The ways in which the church operates and the visible structures of the institution will have to change radically, if there is to be a vibrant future for American Catholicism.” At Agape, we have always acted as if we are a part of that “vibrant future” perhaps never more so than during the construction of our “lay” chapel in 2009, when we shared at the chapel dedication that “although we have been a part of the larger sense of the universal church”, we thought long and hard about a traditional liturgical blessing, concluding that Agape’s chapel, built, designed and prayed in by laity, represented a new era. Lakeland’s concept of “a vibrant future for American Catholicism,” speaks to people of God standing on their own, in concert with, but not subservient to, ordained clergy. In other words, “We Are the Church.” This reality is quite literally reflected in Agape’s chapel, prayer life, ministry and lifestyle.

Even small efforts such as the use of inclusive language as a remedy of the flagrant disregard of half of the human race have failed, causing many women to no longer to participate in a form of worship which denies their very existence.

At a time of great weariness over these failures and despair over the raging issues of abuse both physical and sexual in the Church, Roy’s courageous stand, revisiting the document mentioned above, which strongly asserts “excluding women from priestly ministry cannot be sustained on either logical or historical ground” re-energized me. In Roy’s words: “Sexism is a sin.” He took those words, to the Vatican in October, along with supporters from many organizations, including Women’s Ordination Conference (WOC).

Roy’s witness reflects the many-sidedness of nonviolence in that he has chosen to combine witness against torture at The School of the Americas (SOA) in Georgia, with opposition to UN presence in Haiti, and that of the abuse of clerical power—quite a contrast to Boston Cardinal Law’s endorsement of the invasion of Afghanistan, news of whose 80th birthday was carried in the Boston archdiocesan newspaper, *The Pilot*. No mention was made of Law’s leaving Boston in disgrace during the onset of the great unraveling of secrecy, criminal neglect and abuse of children within the Catholic Church.

Recently, Dominican Canon lawyer Thomas Doyle writes in the September 14th issue of NCR (National Catholic Reporter) that the Vatican and Maryknoll need “to take a deep breath and step back from starting the process,” strongly stating that Fr. Bourgeois has a “right not to violate his conscience and that “the prohibition against the ordination of women is not infallible”. Doyle is asking that the Vatican take the “input of reputable theologians” on these “two central issues.”

In the meantime, I plan on seeing *Pink Smoke Over the Vatican*, a documentary on the church’s exclusion of women priests including extensive interviews with Roy, which is part of the “grave scandal” his immediate superiors accuse him of. (note the militaristic parallel to titles like Superior General for religious orders). Fellow Maryknollers, refute this contention: “How ironic when indeed it is the Vatican and General Council who are causing the scandal across America and the world by punishing you in a manner that underscores the Vatican’s long-standing negative attitude towards women.”

Further comments on the “scandal” come from Jamie Manson (NCR Online, March 30, 2011) who reported after the New York premiere of *Smoke Over the Vatican* in an interview with Roy, the non-recanter: “The only scandal he seems to experience is his embarrassment over not speaking sooner on the issue of women’s ordination.” Manson quotes Fr. Roy Bourgeois as saying rather sheepishly: “I just feel bad it took me so long.

Finally, in an open letter to the Vatican, Roy writes: “If the call to be a priest is a gift and comes from God, how can we as men say that our call from God is authentic but God’s call of women is not?” Commenting on this position, Sr. Joan Chittister, that prophetic woman of such impeccable resistance credentials, will have the last word here: “After all, the Vatican did not expel pedophile priests or abusing bishops from the secular priesthood for violating children. In some cases, in fact, they protected the perpetrators repeatedly and even refused to defrock them—civil law or no civil law.... Only behavior related to women’s issues, it seems, qualifies for expulsion.”

Universal Access to God's Forgiveness

by Ray Helmick SJ

(Keynote speech on Francis Day, Oct. 1, 2011)

When Peter asks, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (Matthew 18, 21) he receives the answer: "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." Not a limiting number, it means: never stop forgiving, forgive always. Having taught his disciples, in their prayer, to ask "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Matt 6:12), Jesus adds "if you forgive trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The universal access to God's forgiveness appears here, but a hint is given also of its limits.

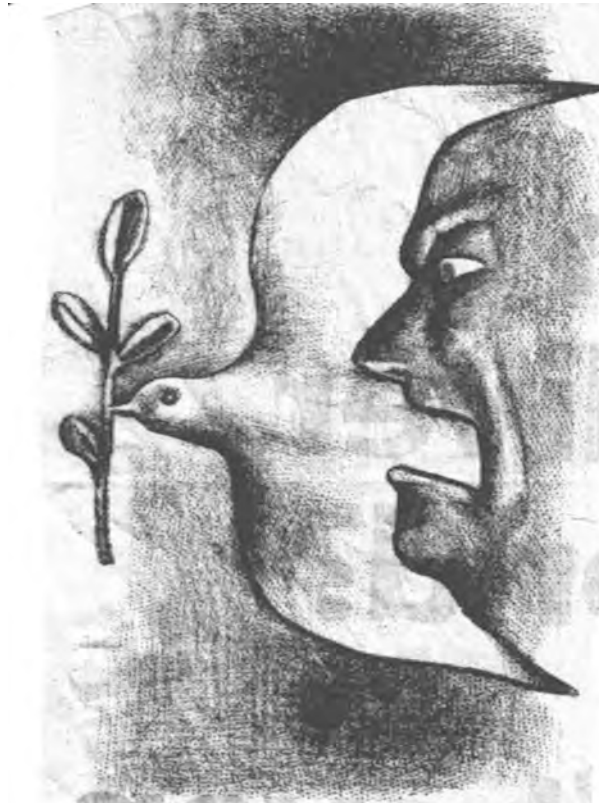
Characteristic passages of all the synoptic Gospels, have a recurrent theme closely supplemented by the call for reconciliation (Matt 5:23-24) so that it can be hard to distinguish between them. In Mark 11:25, it is "...whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer has "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation (11:4)." Jesus himself grants forgiveness unhesitatingly – to the paralytic (Matt 9: 6), to those who nailed him to the cross (Luke 23:34).

Jesus makes no more insistent demand upon his followers than that they should forgive. That forgiveness has marked Christian life far less in our history can hardly obscure this. Only the demand that our lives be marked by faith or by love can rival the call for forgiveness. These three are closely related, both in terms of present-day world priorities and in their theological meaning. We will need to look at both.

Present Context: September 11th, 2001, the terrorist attacks on New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon, with yet another attack foiled over the Pennsylvania countryside, marked a watershed in our American lives. Terrorism, which until then had caused its measure of death and destruction, mercifully, on a much smaller scale than the terrible wars of the 20th century, had now graduated to a scale of massive carnage. We could do little more to the nineteen individuals who had carried out this outrage at the cost of their own lives. But others, persons, organizations or even states which had supported and encouraged their action, had to be held accountable, in proportion to their actual responsibility. A sea of anger existed in the United States over its policies on the part of people who had driven no planes into our towers. How were we to respond to them?

That constituted an unusual situation for the United States which has enjoyed, deservedly or sometimes undeservedly, a startlingly high reputation with the peoples of the world, as a beacon of justice, of liberty. We happen not to be seen so in our own time, but instead as agents of much injustice, of the deprivation of freedom, of the monopolization of the goods of the earth, of indifference to the destruction of the planetary environment, of callousness to people's suffering in vast areas of the world.

When I spoke of this on the night of 9/11, another member of the panel responded angrily that if people thought so about us, we must *make them fear us*. Without stopping to think, I snapped back at him that I thought the nineteen individuals who had



David Suter

hijacked those planes had been trying to do precisely that. I asked: "Do you want to join them?" Not pleased, this man who had unexpectedly become my adversary replied: "We had been taught all these years that we should deal with such animosities by diplomacy, and look where it had got us." Not tempering my own answer with enough respect for him, I retorted: "Well, our diplomacy must not have been very good."

If we, as persons or as a nation, do not attend to the grievances of those who act against us and respond to their concerns, we have failed at the most fundamental level of human interaction. Would we turn this way, or would we enter into a culture of fear and of raw revenge? In fact, since 9/11, we have been conscious of an enemy whose threatening character is constantly borne in upon us, and we react against this perceived peril. This differs from the way we behaved before the Cold War, when the menace we had so long felt from the Communist bloc lifted and with it the dread of nuclear warfare and the Mutually Assured Destruction – MAD – which it promised.

The 1990s had been different. After the end of the Cold War the academy, in both the psychology and the theology departments saw that a new agenda had arisen, in which forgiveness and reconciliation were understood as the keys to peace. Forgiveness became a lodestone for social scientists and peace activists who had a decade of relief, a brief blossoming of hopes for a peaceful world, punctuated by the Gulf War and marred by tragedies in the Balkans and Ruanda. We saw progress in South Africa, in Ireland and seemingly in the Middle East.

President John F. Kennedy had taken a strong peace line from the beginning of his term, though it was along the lines of *si vis pacem, para bellum*. When he tried to

translate this into peaceful compromise in Laos, in Cuba, even in Vietnam and, after his 1963 American University address, with the Soviet Union, he ran into massive resistance from the military, intelligence, political and diplomatic establishments. Scholars such as James Douglass believe that he was murdered for exactly that reason. In full Cold War mode, even the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, which Kennedy initiated as a kind of proto-peace establishment, was quickly transformed into the watchdog on Soviet armaments.

Some scholars such as John Paul Lederach of Eastern Mennonite University, had grasped the threatening nature of nuclear warfare, and were encouraged in their research and field work by Kennedy's success in averting the 1963 Cuban Missile Crisis. Their work remained marginalized until the Cold War began to thaw and came finally to a break in 1989. Interest in forgiveness, as part of a broader front of working to win peace and reconciliation rather than simply victories, stems from this period.

Pioneering work had gone before, especially during the 1970s, by Adam Curle, for whom the English Quakers established the first Chair of Peace Studies at Bradford University in 1973, and my own colleague, Austrian Holocaust refugee Richard Hauser. After the Cold War, academia, psychological and theological, saw a new agenda had arisen, in which forgiveness and reconciliation were understood as the keys to peace.

In the 1990s, forgiveness and reconciliation were the flavors of the period with this interest in a reconciliatory path in conflicts celebrating Gandhi academically and practically. In 1973, Eugene Sharp who published his three-volume work, *The*

Politics of Nonviolent Action (Boston, Porter Sargent) was the teacher-trainer of such activists as Lech Walesa in Poland and Mubarak Awad in Palestine. The anti-war stance of Catholic leaders like Thomas Merton and the Berrigan brothers functioned in the context of Sharp's nonviolence teaching. In the present atmosphere of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt, now in Libya and Syria, the continuing influence of an elderly Gene Sharp can distinctly be seen.

Not all nonviolence was forgiving, of course, but necessarily forgiveness and reconciliation became hallmarks of a mature nonviolent strategy. Mennonite peace strategists replaced the term "Conflict Resolution" with "Conflict Transformation," recognizing that, in working with peoples in conflict, it is never possible to fix everything. The objective instead should be to transform the relations among people, to help them see one another in terms of their full humanity and not simply as "the enemy," as a problem.

Northern Ireland in 1995 illustrated this. I had been asked by friends at Harvard's Conflict Management Center to drop their name with people I would be seeing and introduce them as willing to help in the process of reconciliation that then occupied everyone's attention. I did so with each of the several IRAs, with their prisoners at Long Kesh, with UDA and UVF both on the street and in prison, with British Army, with RUC and Garda, pretty much all the players. Connoisseurs of peace activists, these people knew who was helpful to them and who was not, and with practical unanimity spoke of their confidence in John Paul Lederach and Conflict Transformation.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and movement, inspired by Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and their many colleagues in South Africa, saw that reconciliation as the means to peace had already been the message of Mandela in the prison (as it would become that of the various prisoners in Northern Ireland). The TRC was not the perfect instrument, but simply the best anyone had in a period of national transition after a society's major trauma. Mandela and his colleagues had determined to bring about an amnesty, knowing that a retributive approach to the crimes of apartheid would simply break their society and prevent it from ever healing.

This was a lesson learned after World War II, when the Allied Powers, mounting their trials at Nuremberg and hanging some of the most prominent offenders, realized that there would be no German society if they proceeded to hang or imprison all the guilty.

Many variations on the "hang-them" theme or forget-about-the-crimes were played in other transition situations: Argentina and Chile, Poland, East Germany (where the Stasi had kept meticulous files on which spouses and close friends were spying upon whom) and the various other countries of Eastern Europe. The TRC, with the time limit required to get the country in motion again, left many persons' sufferings unaddressed, and produced many admissions of guilt that were merely pro forma. But the country was genuinely transformed, not rendered perfect but able to breathe.

In both Northern Ireland and South Africa the transformation process took place and was actually initiated by the militant organizations themselves, with the bulk of the serious thinking done within the prisons, Robben Island and Long Kesh ("Her

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Majesty's Prison The Maze"). Prisoners understood that they must learn, within their separated communities and traditions, to accommodate one another, rather a meager measure of reconciliation, but essential. In the Northern Ireland prison, the mantra became—prisoners and their militant organizations must become the guarantors of one another's difference; accept one another as they are. In the Middle East, we can see the same happening in the prisons brimming with thousands of Palestinians, where Marwan Barghouti is increasingly showing himself a Mandela-figure.

Integral to the whole enterprise is Restorative Justice, which redefines the legal system, no longer simply as a way to determine guilt and secure the punishment of offenders, but rather to restore relations among people. The work of Howard Zehr at Eastern Mennonite University has underlined the close connection between this approach of justice and forgiveness to conflicts, as intimate as is the connection with nonviolent forms of protest or resistance to oppression. No system that aims at justice can function as a substitute for accountability but must find ways of compensation and healing that are restorative.

Without these links to nonviolent resistance and restorative justice, the forgiveness and

reconciliation movement falls vulnerable to abuse by those defenders of the established order who would like to make it an instrument of submission and a substitute for justice. That tendency becomes especially evident in the Latin countries, where reconciliation and justice demands are often juxtaposed as opposites.

My own practice is one of approaching those groups who are most central to the violence of the situation with a supposition that they are not simply psychopaths, but rather persons who have undertaken their campaigns for reasons that they believe in, who have seen no other option than force for obtaining some justice they seek (quite possibly misconceived), but who will understand, if they once see convincing alternatives, that their violent course is no longer legitimate. Such persons must be treated with respect, the motivations of their actions sounded and an understanding sought of what truly stands behind their fears and grievances.

Theological Definition

What, then, do we mean by forgiveness? The literature can be very stingy in its treatment of forgiveness, more interested in its limits—what we must require before we grant forgiveness, what stipulations must be fulfilled before we grant it. Often we hear the question whether we must *forget* the offense before it, or the offender, can be forgiven. This is an

improbable demand, as the offense is truly there, and to forget or ignore it is rather a method of evasion than of genuine forgiveness. The implication is then that the person or the offense cannot truly be forgiven at all, but we can only pretend it is not there.

When have I actually forgiven the other person—or group, or community? It can only mean when I accept him/her as having uncompromised personal human dignity as a person worthy of love. This does not ignore or deny that I have been offended. The offense is not removed, but it will not be the basis of my attitude toward him/her, of my relation to him/her. This is the beauty of the Mennonite formula, conflict transformation rather than conflict resolution as the objective to be sought in dealing with the relations of people.

Who has not offended? There is theological truth in the proposition that we are all indeed sinners and in need of forgiveness, true not only before God but before one another. The need for forgiveness is universal, at many levels. There are times when I have knowingly offended others/another; times I have not even known it or averted to it, but the offense and the need for forgiveness remain real.

Why, then, should I forgive? The psychologists tell how when a person is relieved of the burden of un-forgiveness, they can trace the workings, the physical effects, of forgiveness

through the limbic system and prescribe means of therapy. I will feel better for having forgiven, and can therefore do it for my own sake. Or I may do it for the sake of the other, who stands in need of forgiveness.

The question arises whether or not forgiveness must be a transaction between persons, received and accepted for it to have happened. That of course involves the other person's acknowledgment of the offense. As in confessions, it involves repentance and true purpose of amendment. "I forgive you" may be a form of accusation, which the other may want to reject. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the other person, whom I need to forgive, is not even there, has no awareness of whether I forgive or not, perhaps is actually dead. The need for forgiveness remains.

But the true reason for forgiveness is truth. The other is a person of full human dignity, deserving of love, which may be hard to accept, but it is the way God has created the person and how God receives him/her, despite their (and my) need for forgiveness. It is the truth of our relation to one another. We may be reluctant to acknowledge that the other person's human dignity is uncompromised, amounting to a question as to whether an offense is beyond forgiving. Our theological truth, in the light of the Gospel, is that no offense is such.

Sowing Seeds

Potential for Imaginative Sensibilities

by Rachel Ravina,
Smith College 2013

With Emerson's lines from *Self Reliance*, "We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that Divine image which each of us represents," I mentally juxtapose my most authentic moments with the days when I waste my time in busyness, in blindness, in fear of living my inner life. Agape's Francis Day, 2011, resurrects the potential for imaginative sensibilities that I remember being stronger in my childhood, with a sense of divinity. I contemplate as an adult, the forces that ravage havens of peace, internal or external. Out of my own internal contemplation, I draw strength to face places that feel harsh and foreign to this awareness.

Before we even have the inclination to desire another way, something has to happen, the grassroots change that Renana Gal, the Israeli CO, expressed so poignantly. Is it possible to refuse to partake in war, the antithesis of peace, to be a conscientious objector? The pacifist faces one prison, the soldier another—the prison that says "there is no other way." The reason for hatred, Renana maintains, is the simple fact that there is no intercultural contact between Israelis and Palestinians. The answer is friendships, though forming them may not be simple as we need to route communication and identification to the belief in common brother and sisterhood.

Erica Moulner's comments that some of the inner city children she works with at the Simple Way in Philadelphia are taught to hit are not so different from the army that lashes out in blindness and fear. The point is really the blindness because if we could truly see each other, we would see siblings everywhere. Instead of perpetuating violence, we can perpetuate the Divine image: love. Agape love goes deeper than loyalty, than desire, and cuts to the heart of this greater perspective

As Farida Mortada, Cairo attorney who spent time in Tahrir Square said, "I'm not the face of Egypt. I'm just one person." We all represent one perspective; yet the consciousness we bring has the power to shape those around us in visible and invisible ways.

Reconciliation – What Do We Mean?

by Abigail Yanow

We know that reconciliation between people who have been in conflict, especially violent conflict, is difficult. At the very least, we hope that reconciliation will allow the parties to live together peacefully, without violence. Creative processes for reconciliation, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa weren't perfect but did allow people to denounce the wrongs that had been done to them and for perpetrators to talk about the wrongs that they had committed—creating space for people to be heard—to tell their "truth", and to have it acknowledged.

Forgiveness as a goal of reconciliation, in a religious context, has a rich tradition: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." For me this raises a question: Can we expect parties to forgive one another? What I believe we can ask from the parties is acknowledgment: to listen and to try to take in the experience of "the other," that "yes, I hear that this is what happened to you" or "yes, I hear that this is what you experienced". There can be healing in simply listening and acknowledging.

I'm not sure that we can ask aggrieved people to forgive the victimizer or that we have the license to ask that. What is our role in expecting that? Is it as a religious leader, a conflict resolution specialist, the general public? Do we have the right to ask or invite parties to forgive one another? In so many ways I think not.

Forgiveness might be a private act – it may be something the aggrieved feels internally; they may or may not disclose their feeling of forgiveness, if they attain that, to the victimizer. Forgiveness may be something they (or we) experience with god or the divine, whatever form that takes for each of us. It may be private, between ourselves and god, and may not be something we wish to discuss openly.

What about the victimizer? What does forgiveness mean for him/her? I think it's often difficult for victimizers to forgive themselves, to acknowledge or accept that they have perpetrated wrongs on other people. I was struck by this fact in reading Dr. Robert J. Lifton's account of his conversations with some

Nazi doctors who couldn't acknowledge what they had done, for to do so would be too great to assimilate. They might not be able to live with themselves, and their defense mechanism kicks in as a means of self-protection.

The process of reconciliation is a restoring of dignity, a recognition of "the other" as a full human being—as is the victimizer. What the victimizer has done is wrong and has denied the other of his/her humanity. It means sitting in the presence of the other and listening; if the

victimizer can feel compassion and/or identify with their pain that would be a gift, but not an expectation.

Forgiveness is a lifelong lesson. I need to learn to forgive myself, which helps me forgive others. I strive to "forgive others their trespasses"; a wonderful teaching; that doesn't detract anything from looking at the complexity of reconciliation and the features of restoring dignity.

Renana Gal

Actress, peace activist and Israeli Conscientious Objector



Farida Mortada (left), Cairo attorney and Tahrir Square participant with Renana Gal, Israeli actress and Conscientious Objector. photo by Skip Schiel

As an Israeli conscientious objector and as a person active in the struggle against Israel's militant regime and the movement for justice in the occupied territories of Palestine, from a very young age, we are expected to serve our society by joining the military force. Growing up in such a conscript society, young Israelis do not have much room to question the reasons for their recruitment—a factor that allows the Israeli government to reinforce racist laws, and to carry out military operations that have led to many casualties in life and property.

Young Israelis who dare to resist this harsh reality, are brought to a military trial, and often spend time in prison for their refusal. Luckily, I did not end up in prison for my refusal, but I endured many social difficulties and criticism from my society; including close friends and family. Young Israelis who refuse to serve in the army, often receive hostility at places of

work, schools, and sometimes are even rejected from certain institutions. More than the need to continue the struggle against Israel's oppressive policies, Israeli conscientious objectors seek to find understanding and solidarity within their society—in order to stop their society's prejudice against their life choice.

As an actress, I believe in theater as a dialogue tool. Last year, I wrote a play that unfolds my personal story and presented the play at Brandeis where it received much acclaim. One of its achievements was the discussion it opened up at my community: many students did not know about the reasons behind my refusal, and it encouraged them to open their minds to this topic, and explore more about the Peace movements in Israel. I hope to keep using my art as an advocacy for justice and pacifism, and to bring my message to many more communities.

Canticles of Silence

Hermit Musings

by Corinne Yager

For six days in late July, I hermitted. For a young, not specifically religious person who had never done any kind of retreat before, this was an admittedly peculiar thing to do. I, however, was just aching to arrive at Agape, walk myself to the hermitage, shut the door, be alone, and be free.

After two busses and a van from Boston landed me in the Ware Walmart parking lot, Suzanne picked me up in the grease car and we headed back to Agape. I was graciously welcomed by Brayton & Co. at work on the building project, summer interns harvesting the bountiful garden's "kale forest," others inside cleaning up from community lunch. Toilet paper, water, and other necessities were gathered and I was led to my home for the week. I thanked my hosts, shut the door, and finally began the retreat I had spent weeks awaiting.

I came to the hermitage with a lot of undigested material from the first major events of my life. Overwhelmed by the awareness that I had poured my pitcher of energy and presence dry, and then some more, I was also grateful for the experiences I'd had doing so. I was desperate for the relief I imagined I would feel arriving at the hermitage: a stepping-away in order to gain the critical perspective from which I sensed it was important to reflect on those experiences.

But once I got inside the hermitage and closed that door, nothing happened. No floodgates of relief or peace. "Don't all come at once, now," I cajoled my feelings. I settled my stuff in; I made some tea on the camping stove; I arranged the candles I would light at the night. I waited. And for the next few hours I felt bored and frustrated, unsure of how to induce the feelings I had been so long anticipating would come naturally. Being by yourself for an extended period of time is



Paul Ritscher

very strange, and enforcing expectations over what that time is going to look like is even stranger.

Over the course of the week I experienced a whole spectrum of emotions related to my solitude: moments of boredom and frustration as well as anger and ecstasy

and gratitude. Early on in this experiment with myself, I understood that if I was to get anything out of my time alone, I would have to give up the expectations I had for my experience that jailed me with frustration whenever they were not met. Maintaining this attitude of detachment, however, I discovered

that my solitude could be endlessly fruitful.

An amazing aspect of life in a narrowed world, such as the hermitage, is that you are able to see more clearly each of the fewer things you are looking at. I especially tried to practice this each morning when I got up early to shower and root around the kitchen for my day's food and water in the main house before others awoke. Making my way down the hill in my morning delirium, I would suddenly be taken by the forest waking up. The light at dawn is stunning filtered by the stillness of leaves that not yet disturbed by breeze. Only for a brief moment did I really notice it, with my eyes and also my mind, though it is there in an equal state of awe *all the time*. And anything is so awesome when you really look at it.

When it came time for me to return to the real world of relationships and rent and food, I was satisfied. Not satisfied in the way I had wanted to feel when I arrived, not satisfied because my problems were any closer to solved, but satisfied with the awareness that any given thing has within it the infinite mystery and complexity that I just glimpsed in the trees each morning. Somehow, it was consolation that the things I felt baffled by were forever, and that I didn't have to live preoccupied and frustrated with their irresolution.

On my final day, I began to acclimate to the real world by participating in the life of the Agape community. I was touched at Morning Prayer to learn they had been praying for me all week, by the kind guitar meditation before lunch, and the intimacy of a candlelit homemade pizza dinner. This is a community whose daily life embraces the mystery I so rarely slow to acknowledge. I couldn't have asked for a more supportive environment for this kind of solitude.

Circle of Being

From City to Country

by Caitriona Kennedy, from County Cavin, Ireland

Trinity College 7:30 am Dublin, Ire
Five alarms go off. Three people hit snooze and two get up. Quietly stumbling around the room I get dressed brush my teeth and hair (all while listening to music through headphones). Three more alarms go off and two more people get up. In the kitchen I and one other girl fix breakfast to go and fill up water bottles. Only one word is spoken – "Morning". I close the door. The last alarm goes off as two other women leave their rooms. In the evening we arrive in at different times, make five different dinners and talk briefly about our day. When dinner is over, we disappear into our rooms.

Agape 7:30 am Hardwick, MA

The interns and the two founders sit down for a quiet meditative prayer session, and then we eat breakfast together. Jokes and laughter. At nine we all head out to work in the garden, still joking. In the garden, the talk turns to non-violence, civil rights, religion and music. By lunch, more fun while discussing serious topics. After lunch, back outside, two others stay indoors. Evening—and we come together to make dinner, later playing the drums and other instruments, go to bed and sleep like logs.

What is it about Agape that makes every day fun? Looking back over my life whenever I think about the good times, they are usually at times where I am avoiding work or hanging out with friends. At Agape, every moment from when new people arrive at the doorstep (which was fairly often) or playing music, having a Christmas in July party, everyone sings along.

Is it because we all came here with as common goal—Some to learn about sustainable living; others to get a break from their hectic life, or because they didn't know where else to go in life. Possibly, it is religion that allows us to live peacefully, the focus on living peacefully, closely together. Whatever the reason, my time at Agape has opened many new doors for me, an amazing experience (or "awesome" as my American friends would say).

Through the tough times (eating kale and carrying logs down hills) we stayed smiling and laughing (not just when the camera's came out) and created some of our greatest memories. Between beating on drums to our own beat, creating our own intern jokes, my time at Agape was unlike any other experience of my life and the best summer of my life.

Cut Off from the World in the Woods of Hardwick

by Sarah Koethe, Boston College, 2013

I began my internship at Agape hoping to learn about nonviolence and organic gardening. After spending each day in the garden and having numerous discussions with others at Agape, I quickly became immersed in topics leaving me with a wealth of knowledge. However, while I am thankful to have come away with a concrete set of skills, the most formative aspect of my internship was more intangible. What most deeply touched my life was the general atmosphere surrounding Agape—of spacious peace, wholesomeness and love. Living in an intentional community brought to the foreground how the way we live our lives, even the daily minutiae, truly have an effect on our spirit and state of mind.

Before arriving at Agape, I believed living in an intentional community would be no different from living anywhere else; there would simply be more people. As I settled into my time, the uniqueness of the space became more apparent. Out in the woods of Hardwick, with no cell phone service or television, limited internet access and no ability to drive shift, the other interns and I were essentially cutoff from the world. Although the thought of this technological isolation might be anxiety provoking, it was

quite the opposite. It was actually extremely liberating. Without the ability to constantly check email and text message, I was able to live more mindfully in the present. Enlightening conversations and books took the place of brainless forms of entertainment. Time was freed up immensely. I was able to start practicing yoga and had time to actively think about my goals and plans for the future. The distinctive environment at Agape also left an imprint on amazing friendships I formed.

It was with mixed feelings that I adjusted back to life outside Agape, using my phone and computer daily. Responsibilities and deadlines have piled up. While life is not as simple as it was during my internship and sometimes seems like one giant "to-do list", my experiences at Agape have become a touchstone in my life.

Since leaving, I've taken a more inquisitive look at my daily lifestyle and begun to make small changes, incorporating Agape into my present life by both trying to simplify and to establish a few moments of silence and contemplation each day. It is an ongoing struggle to change ingrained habits, but the frequent flashes of contentment and happiness make it worthwhile.

Flotilla to Gaza: A Report from Egypt

by Paki Wieland

I write from Cairo where we wait for news of our friends on the ship The Tahrir, exposing the humanitarian crimes of the U.S. backed Israeli government by SAILING TO GAZA!, with two boats, one with Irish and one with International passengers challenging the blockade!

The Turkish authorities disallowed more of us participating, difficult for those of us who made sacrifices to sail to Gaza, disappointments turned into "weapons of mass distraction," taking the focus off *WHY WE SAIL*. Meanwhile, as I reflect on our "occupations" at home, I am aware that we are engaged in a movement of a magnitude unseen ever before, a world-wide response, sometimes hard to recognize as the same struggle, but we have evidence that it is.

We must not lose patience but stay open to all the voices, all the possibilities. The dreamers and the disillusioned are coming together. The inevitable friction causes both heat and light, but we focus on the light. Our strength in occupations at home is informed by many sources, as we stand, sit, march, and sail in humility with our sisters and brothers around the world.

After 9/11, America entered the world

Witness



Michael Mazur

community which experiences wanton violence over which ordinary people exercise no control. In February 2003, when people around the world marched for peace, the New York Times observed that there are now two Super Powers, The U.S. and the people of the world. Let us take this observation to heart; let us be the superpower for change, for justice. We know that the reigning injustice of the 1%, or even 9% can be overcome by the commitment and creativity of us, the 90-99%.

Supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom reminds me that it is our shared struggle, requiring both breadth and depth through many eyes and perspectives offers a clear vision of grievances and crimes, to hear the voices that have been silenced.

We do not know outcomes, and we can expect the powerful will not roll over welcoming us to co-create a more just world, but trust building and "staying in the conversation," will lead to good outcomes.

Paki Wieland, a peace activist and member of many coalitions in Western MA, is also a "Raging Granny."

March of the Dead: At Westover Air Force Base

"Westover is the largest reserve forces training base for men and women in the Armed Forces except for the Navy" writes Frances Crowe. As a result, soldiers come from all over the US to Westover. Having been arrested at the base many times, Frances, age 91, continues to gather people to witness, especially on Sundays, when hundreds of troops and personnel are changing guard in the afternoon.

Frances, an inspiration to all who know her, has organized many vigils, "not arrest situations", with participants who wear white masks and black covering. Her belief is that by "appealing to the troops as they slowly exit the base" those among the enlisted who may want to seek "an alternative" will learn of one by our "leaf-letting and having the GI Rights Hot Line

Number on a special sign". (877-447-4487). In Frances' words, "We want those facing deployment to know they have options."

Many who leaflet feel that they made significant contact with those who pass by. Frances reports: "We will continue to organize these Marches of the Dead" something that two Agape interns, Sharon Daly and Caitriona Kennedy, experienced within days after their arrival from Ireland. They stood with about twenty others for over an hour in the blaring sun, the mood solemn.

After the vigil, saddened by the steady flow of hundreds from the base, most of whom did not make even eye-contact, we were, nonetheless heartened that a few who did, may feel a little less alone in a decision to leave the military.



Suzanne Shanley, Caitriona Kennedy, Frances Crowe, Sharon Daly at Westover Air Force Base, July 2011

Daily Bread

Building a Nonviolent World in Haiti?

by Steve James MD

Bonjour, mes frères et sœurs! To borrow from Brayton's notion of Haiti, we come from the land of "the perfect other." And from Leonard Cohen, we are here with you to bear witness to "a broken hallelujah". We stand before you not as pilgrim's who have seen the light, but as sojourners accompanying the suffering ones in their lonely cries. The suffering and evil cannot be ignored as the praises to God rise from Haiti, nor can the darkness overcome the light that is Haiti.

Ayiti. Pain, terror, crushing concrete, killing cholera, humiliating hunger, draining despair, pressing poverty, intolerable injustice.

Oh, Ayiti. Land of smiling children hungering for your smile, longing to touch/hold your hand. Masses of the neediest returning good for evil in the face of staggering odds, cynical predictions, cruel predators.

What does Haiti have to do with the agony around us? Troy Davis, executed in Georgia. Worsening economy. Butchering wars of cultural intolerance, rampant greed, and unabashed arrogance. I am wearing the jacket of our beloved Burmese Karen people, our first homeland, suffering still under great oppression.

The nonviolent loving rivers of peace communities such as Olive Branch in Worcester, Ailanthus in Boston, and many

others flowed together to form Agape – our core "church" that sent us to Haiti almost 29 years ago, surrounding us with a great cloud of witnesses

We thought we were being sent to Haiti 29 years ago as leaven, salt and light for building God's nonviolent community among the poorest of the poor. Instead, the people of Haiti have been teaching us the way of nonviolent love, as they patiently persevere in faith, hope and love, to return good in the face of incredible evil and suffering.

Gandhi said that nonviolence, the returning of love for non-love, is not a rare act in our violent world, but is actually the very matrix that sustains life. Nonviolence builds hope, builds trust, and builds nurturing beloved communities of action and power.

Our years in Haiti continue to reveal to us that Jesus' nonviolent way of sacrificial loving and service to all in whatever need is the only hope for sustainable community development. Medicine, the healing arts, at its core is nonviolent love, the returning of good for evil, health for disease, pain free bliss in place of painful suffering.

Very few in Haiti and very few of those who come to Haiti truly understand Jesus' way of nonviolent love though many live it without knowing it – the work of the Holy Spirit.

Steve and Nancy James spoke on Francis Day as original co-founders of the Agape Community.



Boulevard - continued from page 1
we all went home. Why didn't all 200,000 of us stay and "occupy"?

As winter closed in with the recent October snow storm, word from the Wall Street occupation is not so much "Who are these people?" but rather, "how long will they last"? Generators for heat and computer recharging were recently confiscated, leading to the question: Will "occupy" end up being a "movement" or a "moment"? This question puts me in mind of the Civil Rights song that rallied the faithful and drew a line in the sand: "We shall, we shall, we shall not be moved," stating the non negotiable truth. Do with us what you will, but we will not leave or back down.

Philip Berrigan explained once: "The political powers that be will take you seriously only when you absolutely stand your ground and give them no choice but to drag you off to prison." Comfort level protesting on the weekends has never changed anything.

Continuing to circumbulate the crowd, I spot Jim who looks over at me with a welcoming smile. His tee shirt reads: "Iraq Veterans Against the War." "I'm against the war. I've been there. I now see the connection between the war and Wall Street money. Our military protects Wall Street money." Powerful, strong insights like Jim's buzzed everywhere throughout the park where one could hear the young people teaching each other. I was especially overjoyed to see a combat veteran for peace make a crucial connection—unregulated, robber baron capitalism, exemplified by Wall Street trading and banking as our leverage in the global economy. This power to influence the world stage is then protected by our military might around the world at a tax bill of one trillion dollars a year, adding up to ten trillion dollars since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

A Socialist Worker Party newspaper hustler walks up to talk as I joke with him: "You socialists now have your day in the sun." He smiles and we move into our

various positions. He starts by saying: "The workers must unite. Maybe we can help them do that here with occupying Wall Street." We agree that economic change can only come from the bottom up, not from public policy down. I continue with: "The most important thing happening here is that people can't find work, are scared, plagued by massive college loan debt, fed up with corporate bail-outs and have taken to the streets."

History tells us that all social change movements are led by those who are suffering in desperation and have very little left to lose. Many people finally began to crowd into Tahrir Square in Egypt because they couldn't buy any food. So the question remains: "Are we suffering enough yet to actually risk our necks?" Bo, a 30 year old medical student dives into a debate started by five of us gathered in a circle and challenges this notion: "Nobody here is starving; most of us can leave anytime," a consistent and feisty counterpoint. "What are we supposed to do? Become socialists; prevent people from doing what they want, and from making the money they think they deserve?" His challenge rescued the debate from the unexamined and smug safety of one-sidedness.

Larry, a 60 year old union carpenter counters: "Let's just look at income discrepancy. CEO's making 400 times the average employee? Look at real estate values. Our homes are not home any more, places we love. They are investments, owned by the bank. Our homes are money deals. They are no longer a real home in a real neighborhood." I pick up the *New York Times* a week later and read: "The Wall Street Protestors May Have Picked the Right City for Their Campaign." The findings included statistics that "The top 0.01 percent of households, are collecting a greater share of total income than ever before recorded. Among the 1 percent of American households with the highest income, 13% live in the New York metropolitan area with 4.4% living in Manhattan". Another headline reads: "It's Official: The Rich Get Richer," citing the Congressional Budget Office findings that "the top 1 percent of earners more than

doubled their share of the nation's income over the last three decades. Government has done less to redistribute income since the late 1970's." Zuccotti Park is a teach-in on these potent and related facts.

In the meantime, Bo shoots a remark back at Larry: "Personal gain is the motivational and creative force of human beings. You can't mess with that can you?" I respond: "Most everyone here is highly intelligent, informed, have invested in their futures and care about the have-nots. Folks here are very, very articulate in stating what is wrong. Yes, corporate systems are morally, indefensibly wrong. They keep too much of the wealth from the majority of the world's people and trash the earth with consumerism and burning of fossil fuels." Bo cuts back in: "But what do we replace it with?" With a simple practical question he has his finger squarely on the pulse of the human condition.

What social movements have ever yielded social, economic, political systems which seriously attempt to care adequately for everyone, especially the poor working class? What movements stood up to the special interests of the power elite? What economic system doesn't in some way live under the protection of violence? What governmental system in the modern world has truly put self-interest second? None.

I sense this movement will fail similarly, unless an economic collapse ensues (which everyone I spoke with thinks is inevitable). Only with such a collapse will a new level playing field of suffering and urgency be created, a purifying fire that will truly straighten us. Will such a stunning reversal lead us to an economics of compassion?

As we go to print with *Servant Song*, word has come down that riot police have cleared out Zuccotti Park, that occupiers will be allowed back, but without sleeping bags or tents, in effect, neutralizing the ability to "truly occupy." I can hear Gandhi say: "Fine. Time to intensify the risk and the sacrifice."

I find that these difficult and unresolved questions drive me back to the steady guidance of the mercy of Jesus.

Voices

I saw *Servant Song*, and noticed the embracing of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of the International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment (IAACM). Thank you! This is my 35th year as a grassroots community organizer activist for human rights in a challenging field, mental health. I've directed one of the main independent activist coalitions, MindFreedom International, a call for a nonviolent revolution, led by psychiatric survivors and mental health consumers. MLK's vision about "creative maladjustment," is a theme that echoed through many of his essays and speeches for a decade. Along with prison justice, poor people, homeless, youth, etc., we are among the Marginalized and Disempowered, which is perhaps what MAD really stands for. Given that what is generally called normal is shredding the very fabric of our planet's ecosystem.

David W. Oaks
Eugene, OR 97440-3484 USA

I want to write you while it is still fresh - the deep appreciation for the people you attract and then "give back to all of us", the spiritual and political "high" from both these people and their messages, the awesome blending of faiths, ethnicities, ages and expressions of resistance and love. All of it reaffirms for me that building a nonviolent world is the only goal for me, and the one that gives purpose and meaning to my life.

The Sal y Luz Community are a wonderful example of starting to do something because it is the right thing to do, even if you are only a tiny group. I was impressed by their projects, first to go to Rikers Island Prison (I've been there and it is the most isolated and ignored place you can imagine, right in the heart of NYC), and then to take food to where the homeless are, rather than serve it in a church. I hope I can look them up on my next visit to NYC.

Brad also inspired me because he takes meditation into prisons and serves refugees - two populations that are largely discarded by society and sorely in need of inner resources and outer advocates. Then he said that our spiritual lives have an impact on everyone around us - such an important teaching.

Sherrill Hogen

In July, 2011, women interns Sarah Koethe, Erica Sherwood, Sharon Daly and Cairiona Kennedy, organized a Women's Night to discuss some aspects of the role of women in our world. Here are some responses from an "elder" women participants:

I felt we started last night the weaving of a rich brocade. Very powerful and full of energy. I'm interested to hear that the younger women felt it was a history of the women's movement from 1960. I'm reminded of Anne Morrow Lindberg's reference to "the real feminists", which was her mother's generation or those who worked for suffrage. I say, "More!"

Karen Di Franza, Hubbardston, MA

You've locked me up in my own house
Please, you forgetful costume-makers
You have forgotten my first birthday
present
When Allah gave me a heart, a mind, and
a spirit
Yes, Allah gave me a heart
A heart that's still beating under my fabric
cage
No cloth can ever cover my soul

Jeanelle Wheeler, age 15, Agape member and writer, pursues her art in alternative education settings.

Creatively Maladjusted: A Fertile

Ground to Bloom

by Becky Perreault

Our culture can sometimes be overwhelming to the individual. We are constantly fed stories of our country's leaders and popular stars being ruggedly independent, a bit reckless, always working to consume more, and conforming to fit a certain image. We are also bombarded with messages of violence from the simplest child's toy to the way we choose to commute to work or build our homes. Seemingly, the population's increasing reliance on technology increases the amount we are subconsciously exposed to these robotic and unexamined ways of life.

Faith community is a way for individuals to feel supported in a counterculture way of life. Being critical of the status quo does not have to be isolating. It is exhausting to find myself continuously saying no. Finding folks who share similar thoughts on living an intentional, nonviolent life, as an agent of change,

has only strengthened my commitment. The Creatively Maladjusteds create a space were more often than not, I find myself saying yes.

For me, I am most capable when I feel most supported. As a group, the Creatively Maladjusteds, provide a platform for discussion with which we inspire each other to take leaps into our faith as well as into our activism for social justice. We are able to support each other in our journeys to dig deeper and work for the world that we envision.

So far, I've been given the opportunity to wrestle with many questions about life and feel grateful to have come to a point where I have quite a solid foundation for how I will live my life. I know what parts of me I would like to nurture and which parts I would like to not necessarily give room for more budding. Agape and the Creatively Maladjusteds have given me a fertile ground to bloom.

My Birthday, 1998

by Jeanelle Wheeler

- Today I turned eleven.
- Eleven years ago I was born a girl,
- Three years ago I went to school,
- And yesterday you could see my smile.
- Today I got a birthday present
- My very own burqa!
- Like a funny costume, a flowing sack
- With a blue window for my eyes
- Today I walked outside
- I giggled as I tripped in my funny costume
- Father watched me get back up
- The dust tickled my throat, turning giggles into coughs
- Tonight I am thinking in bed
- What is the meaning of this present?
- Why does my body need hiding?
- Do you think I'm ugly?
- You know what?
- I don't think I like my birthday present
- Not because it's hot, or dusty, or clumsy
- But because you can't see my smile
- Tomorrow I want to take it off
- Tomorrow I want to go to school
- Tomorrow I want to walk as me
- Please, you funny costume-makers
- You've stolen my pencils, my mama's job, and my face

News Notes

In Memoriam: Marie Lueders: A devoted Agape Community supporter since the founding of the community, Marie was and Agape regular, supplying gatherings with great salads, bagels and support on many levels. Marie's husband, Bob Lueders, also played a significant role at Agape as long-time member of Agape's Mission Council. Our sympathy to Bob and family.

Roni Bethell: Roni came to Agape in the 90's, contributing her carpentry skills to the building of the Agape Hermitage. She and her former husband Harry and two children, Solana and Isaiah spent several years living nearby and participating in many aspects of community life. Roni's beautiful smile, lovely manner, insightful conversation and probing intellect will be greatly missed.

Creatively Maladjusted: The largely grad school and "older" group of Agape "Twenty Somethings" called The Creatively Maladjusted have been meeting at Boston College with various numbers of people "in" grad school and "out" for rotating pot-lucks. The core group is planning a retreat at Agape for the Boston area participants. Inquiries about the retreat and the pot-lucks, third Friday of the month: Geoff Gusoff (ggusoff@gmail.com) ph. 973-723-8908

Volunteers always needed. We look forward to your coming to help with any number of Agape tasks and then spending time relaxing in the Agape woods, using the hermitage and joining us for prayer.

Searching for long-term community members who would bring their skills in community building, nonviolence and hospitality, ministry to Agape for an extended time. See our website and call us for more information.



New Agape Porch and Kitchen Extension

Agape Kitchen Extension Project: Begun in May, with carpenters Fran Reagan and Paul Chevalier, volunteers and interns, we are a week away from completion, the new porch and kitchen providing the extra room we have been anticipating for years. In the steady rain during Francis Day, we used the elegant porch for food and the enlarged kitchen area which for 25 years allowed fewer than 10 people to move in accommodated a flow of hundreds. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who donated time, money and support.

Hermitage: The Agape Hermitage is a lovely site in the back of Francis House. People who long for a time of solitude in the woods, with meals in the hermitage or at the main house, please inquire at Agape for more details.

Agape needs funds to put Francis House completely on Solar Power. Thank you for past support on our five year plan.



Juanita Nelson wearing her deceased husband Wally Nelson's hat at a tree planting for them and War Tax Resisters Photo by Peter Wuelfing



*Iona College Rural Immersion Week
Martin Marosy and Iona volunteers*

AGAPE CALENDAR

Sat. Dec. 3rd 5:30 pm: Advent Evening, with George Pattery SJ, Gandhi scholar from Calcutta on "What Does Gandhi Have to Say to Occupy Wall Street."

Feb. 4, 2012: Annual St. Brigid Day Celebration with celtic music, poetry and song. Potluck will follow.

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