

# THE SERVANT SONG

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## Lifting Our Ebenezer In Haiti

by Suzanne Belote Shanley

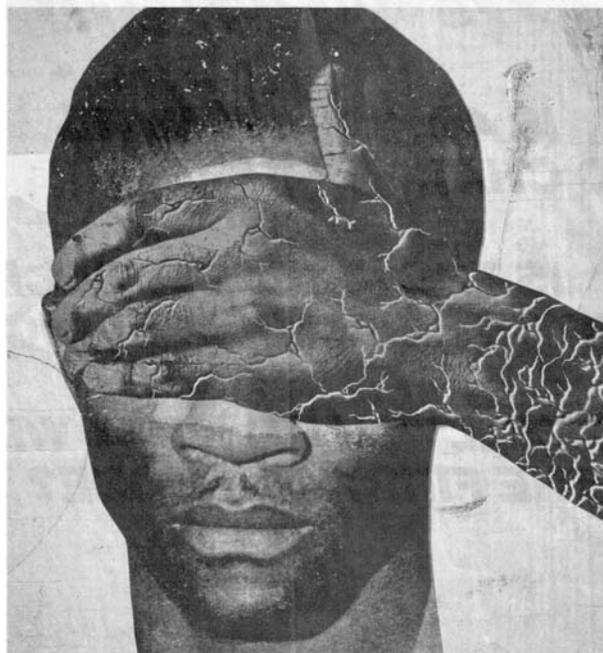
Before departure for Haiti, we at Agape began singing an old hymn, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (words by Robert Robinson, 1758) loving its melody and joking about one odd line in the hymn, "Here I raise my Ebenezer." What does it mean to "raise an Ebenezer"? It wasn't until we went to Haiti in March and found the word "Ebenezer" emblazoned on public buildings, hospitals, and roadside stands that the elusive phrase took on meaning. While in Haut Limbe, Haiti, with our friends of over 30 years, Steve and Nancy James, doctor and nurse serving as missionaries for the American Baptists and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, we learned that Ebenezer is actually two words in Hebrew, "Even Haazser" and that the etymological root of the word means literally, "Stone of Help."

Phrases from the hymn strike me uncannily now as part of my emotional response to Haiti. Whenever I recall the words, I believe that Jesus truly did "Tune my heart to sing" the Grace that is Haiti. I felt myself drinking from Haiti's "Fount of every blessing," and now, upon my return, I want to sing "songs of loudest praise" which well up in me in response to this country, its people—how they stole my heart. "Jesus sought me when a stranger," in this tormented yet sanctified land. Haiti and its people put an indelible seal on my soul, not totally explicable, but I did touch it briefly. Unlike any reality I have ever known...my heart is tuned and still singing. Listen to the song.

### Arrival in Limbe

Blond-haired Micah James, sixteen and resident of Haiti for nearly the span of his young years, sits at the family dinner table in Limbe with his parrots Arawak and Taino, one on each shoulder. Brayton and I had just arrived after a ride over seemingly endless roads that were really not roads but craters, exposed rock and stone that belie the lack of transportation infrastructure in Haiti. As dizzying and disorienting as the noise and pitch of honking horns, motorbikes, tap-taps, trucks and buses, with people hanging from sides of vehicles, the James' living room and kitchen on the campus of UCNH (Universite Chretienne du Nord d'Haiti) was contrastingly comforting and tranquil. UCNH is one of the handfuls of colleges outside of the city, where palm and mango trees beckon warmly in all directions and Haitian students linger on the walkways.

Steve and Nancy had participated in early discussions that led to the founding of Agape in 1982 and to their decision to move to Haiti where they raised their six children, with their service as a family in Haiti an important link to Agape's mission. Their strong commitment to nonviolence as a model of daily practice, which took the form during one of the many Haitian coups they witnessed, of their refusing military protection or arrangements for departure not available to ordinary Haitians.



Shannon Freshwater

Unlike Brayton who had two previous visits to Haiti, the most recent to Port au Prince immediately after the recent catastrophic earthquake, this was my first time in Haiti. Nothing, however, could have prepared me for the fitful flight on the chaotic IBC Airlines from Fort Lauderdale. The noise, fighting, shouting, random handing over of passports to agents behind desks where people reached across grabbing identification, some shouting, some crying, begging in Creole to be let on the plane, stunned, me even set foot on the plane. "It's just Haiti. Wait, you'll see," Brayton consoled. We were still in Fort Lauderdale.

Indeed, I did see, right from the moment we set foot in Haiti. Travel by truck from Cap Haitien to Limbe was hazardous, as we cruised along at 5 or 10 miles per hour, bouncing up and down in our seats no stop signs or lights, no police, no traffic control, no road demarcations of any kind. People seem in constant motion in Limbe, yet, there aren't many places in such a rural area, with small concrete houses one after another, for them to go—no stores or industry or any kind.

Just a short way up the street from the college, I caught glimpses of the breathtaking countryside, with rolling hills reminiscent of Ireland. An hour's bumpy ride away, we beheld sweeping ocean views as panoramic as the roads were catastrophic. On one ocean trip, I watched as if I were in a movie, a woman striding on the beach, balancing a basket on her head, a common sight in Haiti.

Daily dinner at the James' house in Limbe, shaded by tropical trees, some with

emphatic handshakes: "It is proud for me to welcome you to my country. I am happy that you came to visit our country."

"Let Thy goodness, like a fetter/Bind my wandering heart to Thee," words from The Fount of Every Blessing, seemed verifiable as God's goodness kept overflowing to include several lunches with Jules Casseus, founder and President of the Seminary, with whom we spoke of the service and social involvement that is part of the training at the seminary for the anticipated renewal of the Haitian community by the youthful leaders who will become preachers and activists in their ravaged country.

As Jeff Dietrich comments in the *Catholic Agitator*, "Haiti Still in Bondage" (March 2006): "For Haiti's entire existence, it has been relegated to pariah status by the great Western powers...where the business elites, the CIA, and the French collaborated to depose the democratically-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide" the expatriate widely regarded in US peace communities for his nonviolence which many in Haiti regard as a fraud. They point to Aristide's inflammatory rhetoric which encouraged internecine attacks and hostilities. Aristide's return to Haiti from South Africa the day we left, one day before Haitian run-off elections, was controversial to say the least, creating concern about violence, always seeming to be welling up beneath the surface.

### Haut Limbe Baptist Church

On Sunday in Limbe, we walk along the road with young men in uniforms and girls in beautifully crisp and seemingly brand new dresses, strolling arm in arm, while small children peered out of yards strewn with clothes drying on rocks and trees. Some of the children with decorative and colorful ribbons in their hair extend their shy greetings: "Bon Jour" or "Bon Soir". We respond in kind, with nodding enthusiasm, using the only Creole we know. Occasionally a young person shoots a hostile glance or a suspicious glare, but, for the most part, people watch with calm amusement, relative indifference or smiling detachment as these white people walk in their midst.

The Creole service, translated by Steve, was punctuated by one powerful song after another belted out in Harlem style by the impeccably dressed and swaying all women choir. At one point, during a rousing solo, by a rivetingly superb male vocalist, Steve leaned over and whispered to us: "Can you believe this? Here you are in Haiti hearing 1 Corinthians 13 to the tune of Danny Boy." Two days later, we learned that the singer, John Fenelus, was severely burned in his home in what appeared to be a suicide attempt, details unfolding the next few days about voodoo, curses and family feuds.

Pastor Dorsainville spoke of the small number of Jesus' followers after the Resurrection, how they persevered,

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# The Sweetest Revenge

By Brayton Shanley

The most accepted story about Osama bin Laden comes from our own government. US intelligence informs us that bin Laden was responsible for 3,000 Americans being killed in the World Trade Center.

But there are those who are not convinced. They say: "No, Bin Laden wasn't the mastermind. As a matter of fact he was in Mumbai, India tending to his damaged kidney on 9/10/2001." As unacceptable as this may sound to most Americans, this contradiction is just the beginning of clash of stories about what really happened starting on September 11, 2001. We can absolutely conclude that the Pentagon was attacked and that the Towers collapsed that day with roughly 3000 people in them. But what do we conclude about Bin Laden? Who was he really? What did he actually do and where did he spend the last ten years while unanswered questions and conflicting evidence mount over those years? *And where do we go to get the truth?*

The State, with the strong endorsement of our media, says: "He did it. We will find him. We will make him pay." The American public, weakened by fear, trauma and years of pent up blood-lust cried: "Yes, get him!"

But for many, it remains hard to know how to respond to recent accounts of the killing of Bin Laden. They ask: "Can we trust our government and the main stream media to tell us the whole truth? And, conversely, can we ever trust what comes to us as bin Laden's position? Aren't there too many questions about 9/11, how it happened, who knew what, when? A body of evidence has developed that suggests we knew the attack was coming, and we let it happen. Could it be the State needed a foreign enemy, an Islamic extremist, an Arab man, one who inhabits oil rich lands? **By 2001 were we embarking on a resource war and occupation of the Middle East to establish control of their oil?**" Why else would we engage in three wars there in ten years?"

In the wake of 9/11, the State continued to build this irrefutable case against Bin Laden feeding the peoples' longing for a "just" revenge. Our invincible military invades Bin Laden's hideout in Afghanistan with high tech armies that subdue rag-tag Taliban fighters in a few weeks. US operatives are armed too, with \$25 million bounty to buy bin Laden's whereabouts. But he is not there. Everyone points east saying, "He went to Pakistan."

With limitless resources, escape-proof intelligence, scanners, radar, cameras that can locate every living



being in Pakistan, millions in cash, we can't find him? Anywhere?

A few years of pounding Afghanistan with bombs, and the State gathers its citizens together and says, "Listen, there's a new plan...now we have to get Sadaam Hussein in Iraq, never mind bin Laden." Never mind Bin Laden? What happened to him? We thought he caused all this?

## Ten years go by.

The State's new leaders commit to returning to Afghanistan to kill the Taliban and find bin Laden. Revenge thwarted for years, the people now feel a glimmer of hope. The State now says: "If we can stop him, we will stop them. God forbid terrorists should get their hands on nuclear weapons." Our new leader makes good, logical sense.

Most Americans continue to come down on the side of the accepted narrative. What we believe to be the real facts of this story seems to depend entirely on whom we trust enough to believe. But, doesn't the State with its Empire agendas always have too much to lose by telling us the unvarnished truth? Can our government ever level with us about the real story of Bin Laden, the true facts about 9/11 and the underlying causes of terrorism?

In the meantime the people's single-minded passion for revenge on Bin Laden is important to the State. It is *"esprit de corps."* It keeps the rudders of war and aggression steady. The people remain fearful of terrorism, and money is no object when it's all about revenge that is "fair."

Then the State finally finds Bin Laden, residing two hours north of Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. He is living in the largest, highest profile, opulent, and visibly well-guarded compound in the area. What a strange place for this most wanted fugitive to "hide out" for five long years. We assumed he was lurking in some cave in Tora Bora. His compound is one hundred yards south of the Pakistan Army's "West Point." Was he walking around freely outside the compound as well? Are we to accept that **absolutely no political authority inside or outside Pakistan knew he was there?**

The State hires its military vanguard, The Navy Seals, to go in. It's top secret. The State plans the attack with great anticipation. Pull this one off and imagine the bump in the polls. Odd name. Navy "Seals". But these "Seals" aren't harmless sea creatures; they are hyper-trained military men, fast moving, hair-trigger marksmen, oblivious to mortal risk, and invincibly certain of victory. With their Black Hawks screaming, they find Bin Laden hiding, kill him, and ditch his body in the sea, the State reassures, "with reverence."

The State then declares, "Bin Laden is dead. Al Qaeda, therefore, will die soon. Let's celebrate." The people dance in the streets. But where is the head?

Many question: "Why the hasty and secret burial miles away out at sea?" The narrative the State continues to provide sounds very plausible, very appealing. "Arch villain bad guy masterminds ghastly crime, then runs and hides. After 10 long years we find him and kill him, bury him at sea." That's it. Too much unexplained, too many holes in the story. It's too clean and neat.

But as the days after the attack unfold, the reporting becomes contradictory. "The attacking Seals took fire. They didn't take fire. Pakistanis knew Bin Laden was there. They didn't. Bin Laden's wife was a human shield. She wasn't a human shield. It was his wife. No it wasn't. Bin Laden had a gun. No, he didn't have a gun." Whatever the actual truth of this unfolding story, people fell in love with the sweetest revenge regardless of ongoing and preposterous contradictions.

Al Qaeda has just weighed in. "Yes it is true, the Navy Seals did kill Osama bin Laden. Watch out for retaliation." Since when has Al Qaeda told us the truth?

Tolstoy was the first to explain the politics of information control that is evident here: The State has to create enemies that are a foreign threat. The citizenry is sufficiently distracted by dreaded fear of this dangerous, life threatening enemy. This fear keeps the people from naming out loud the crimes of their own government. The

State, to protect itself from its own citizens, instills the fear of takeover by invading armies. As protector, the State then exacts taxes and unwavering patriotic loyalty, then deploys the best military money can buy. Now, with the people preoccupied with fear and obedient, the State feels safeguarded from the power of the people to indict their leaders and revolt. Steady enemy propaganda becomes the drip, drip, drip of the State's manipulative control of the story. Tolstoy's conclusion? **Government is violence.**

The State is triumphant now. "You will never again see bin Laden walk this earth!" The people continue to dance. The State succeeds in hanging tough and its leaders are now assured of re-election. But as the smoke of deception slowly rises, the question remains: Who dares challenge the accepted story of Osama bin Laden? Was he simply **not** the man most Americans think he was?

Was Bin Laden, rather, the perfect scapegoat, the super-charged villain, real or fabricated, who must be seen as so cruel and horrifying a monster, that he can only attract the bitterest rejection and hatred. When the scapegoat is captured and sacrificed, it is a great moral purge. We project our own evil onto the scapegoat and this collective evil too is eliminated in the all-consuming "fire of purification." A scapegoat is necessary now for one essential reason—Americans need to convince themselves and the world community that as a nation we are innocent, that Bin Laden and Al Qaeda are indefensibly guilty of murder.

Conversely, we are without fault, without any complicity in causing the harm that has befallen us. We want to believe our nation to be, quite literally, the "guilt free" victim. Nothing is more reassuring and self-justifying than claiming: "We are not responsible." So we kill the killer, trusting that our own collusion in murder will be magically wiped away in this most ritual of sacrifices. This is why revenge feels so good.

We invaded without authorization Pakistan, a sovereign nation, killing the scapegoat and traumatizing its citizens, certainly a violation of International Law and another US war crime. Satan drives out Satan. And what is Satan's victory dance? On the Hill we see Barak Obama and Glenn Beck triumphant together, joyously leading.

As this dark saga begins to come into the light of day, we might take heed of the truth of the Chinese Proverb: **"Whoever campaigns for revenge should dig two graves."**

# May The Rejoicing Go On

by Fr. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

*"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought." John F. Kennedy*

On May 2, 2011, after Mass, a well-educated, 80-year-old nun came up to me, jubilant that "we" had killed Osama Bin Laden. I asked her: Is this what Jesus would have done? Would He have been positively elated about one human being slaughtering another? She said: "We had to kill him after what he did to us on 9/11." I left that morning with a certain sense that something terribly evil going on in the Catholic Church, so all-permeating that we Catholics breathe it in like air, unable to evaluate its awful personal and communal spiritual toxicity.

The breadth of this evil is far from limited to the Catholic Church. On television, I saw virtually an entire society debauching itself in the erotic pleasure of revenge, with the media egging it on, entering into it, and advertising it. I can only hope that the bishops, priests, ministers, and pastors of the various Christian Churches will take this "teachable moment" to catechize their people that jubilation over revenge and/or human destruction is participation in evil and can never be Christ-like.

The killing of Osama Bin Laden (if it really was Osama Bin Laden who was killed) and/or the "killing" of the mythical scapegoat, along with the ceaseless and extravagant media hype surrounding it, in no way invalidates a single piece of the scientific evidence that has been gathered and which proves that, according to the laws of physics, the three World Trade Center buildings could not have been destroyed in the way they were destroyed, by planes flying into two of them. Nor does it invalidate any of the other, incontestable, documented evidence that reveals that the official 9/11 Government Commission Report is, beyond a reasonable doubt, a fabrication.

## A Serendipitous Discovery

Defenders of the "official Government story" often argue that Osama Bin Laden was caught on a video, "accidentally" found by the U.S. military in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, on December 9, 2001, proudly confessing to the crime of 9/11 in front of a group of his constituents. The now famous "confession" video was released later in an effort to respond to growing international pressure to provide definitive proof tying Bin Laden to 9/11. But, as with so much of the government's "evidence," this "definitive" proof is riddled with conflicting assertions of fact, quantum leaps in judgment, censored evidence, and scientific impossibilities.

## Evaluating Capability

To begin with, we should remember that in the so-called international "intelligence" community nobody (<http://www.brasschecktv.com/page/744.html>) assessed Osama Bin Laden as having the ability to, in the words of Paul Roberts, "defeat not merely the CIA and the FBI, but all 16 US intelligence agencies along with Israel's Mossad and the intelligence service of NATO, NORAD, The National Security Council, the Pentagon, as well as, the USAir Force and Air Traffic Control Security, to cause security to fail four times in US airports in one hour on the same day, to cause state-of-the-art Pentagon air defenses to fail and to manage to have three airliners flown into three buildings destroying four buildings by pilots who did not know how to fly."

We should also remember that Bin Laden's first reaction to 9/11 was not to take credit for the crime but to continually deny any involvement until the "confession" video mysteriously and fortuitously appeared on the scene in December of 2001.

Few in the U.S. have read Bin Laden's first statement in response to 9/11, which utterly conflicts with the later "confession." On September 17, 2001, he publicly stated the following: "I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seem to have been planned by people for personal reasons. I have been living in the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan and following its leaders' rules. The current leader does not allow me to exercise such operations."

We have been media-badgered to accept without question his reputed video "confession," "found" by accident in December, 2001 but to ignore and dismiss his statements of September 17, September 29 and October 16, 2001 stating his non-involvement.

## A Fake

These statements obviously do not prove that Bin Laden did not orchestrate 9/11, but they do raise crucial questions. For example, why would a man spend six weeks denying a crime, then suddenly flip-flop 180 degrees and happily start taking responsibility for it? Most people—including scientists, CIA analysts, FBI, and other independent investigators—who have a working familiarity with the "confession" video, know the answer to this question: that the man making the "confession" is almost certainly not Osama Bin Laden. The tape is a fake.

The man shown in the video—though bearded, Arabic, and of darkish complexion—is much heavier than the actual Bin Laden was seen to have been in most authenticated photos and videos of the time. Furthermore, the man in the video is seen writing something down with his right hand. Bin Laden is well known to be left-handed. And there are scores of other reasons to question the validity of the tape. In fact, the FBI's page on Bin Laden as a "Most Wanted Terrorist" does not list him as wanted for 9/11, and when asked why, an FBI spokesperson said, "Because the FBI has no hard evidence connecting Bin Laden to 9/11."

The U.S. Defense Department has publicly admitted that there is no documentation relating the circumstances by which it came to possess the infamous tape of December 2001 wherein Bin Laden supposedly confesses to 9/11, nor about how this tape was authenticated.

## Rejoice! Mission Accomplished.

### All is Justified. More on the Way.

Make no mistake, this announcement of the heroic attack that killed Bin Laden, made by "chance" on the eighth anniversary of George Bush's foolish "Mission Accomplished" piece of patriotic theater, signals a clear intention to vindicate all the decisions of the past ten years. The clear emotional motif being implanted in the peoples' minds is that the last decade's wars have been worth it, and likewise that the extraordinary domestic security measures and loss of civil liberties and civility here at home have equally been worth it. It is also making clear that we are not going to "cut and run" but will bravely and with steadfastness continue on

a similar well-worth-it course long into the future.

And where will the cannon fodder come from for the next ten years of saving the world from terrorism? The media's immediate focus on the "spontaneous," energetic, aggressive and bubbly demonstrations of patriotic fervor that sprung up, with choruses of "USA, USA," brings every present day adolescent right back to those days in September 2001.

The media-propagated, youth oriented tenor of these celebratory gatherings of revenge, death and the myth of American self-righteousness is evident. Osama Bin Laden, long dead or recently killed, is being used the same way that he and WMDs were used in 2001. They are images and manufactured narratives

geared to mobilize the emotions and feelings of the America people in order to justify a perpetual war economy and to have middle class and poor adolescents psyched-up and ready to kill and die in the wars that are on the way.

The editorial in the *Boston Globe*—a 100 percent-owned and operated subsidiary of the *New York Times*—on May 3, 2011, features this headline: **Young People and Bin Laden: MAY THE REJOICING GO ON.** It

begins, "Thousands of young people took to the streets to cheer the death of Osama bin Laden Sunday night and yesterday." It ends with the words "Let them revel." A government-media plan is already operating to assure a well-stocked pool of future jobless young men and women who have been emotionally hardwired into the concocted myths of Americanism, and who will be the casualties for this decade's new wars on behalf of an economic, political and military elite lusting after power and wealth above all else.

## The Myth of the Scapegoat and Two Minute Hate as the Way to Peace

The death of a single individual, Osama bin Laden, is essentially, but irrationally, being trumpeted from sea to shining sea as a total justification for the murders of hundreds of thousands, mostly civilians, and the maiming of millions more in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. It somehow remedies all the illegal and criminal activity, all the lies, and all the squandering of human life and resources by the Bush and Obama cabals, as well as expunges all the moral turpitude of the intentional and premeditated use of depleted uranium, of "enhanced interrogations (torture)," of "extraordinary renditions," of the massive indiscriminate slaughtering of civilians who did nothing to the U.S. or its people.

The killing of Osama Bin Laden is being orchestrated to emotionally ratify the trillions of dollars spent on wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, while tens upon tens of millions of American citizens languish in cauldrons of reliable pain. Retroactively, this one death is being promoted to validate the Bush administration's open-ended waging of global warfare on any group on which it chooses to pin the label "terrorist." Prospectively, it opens

the floodgates for those who pull Obama's strings to terrorize—domestically, in the Middle East, and internationally—anyone or any group they wish to terrorize, with every high-tech and low-tech, pain-causing and life-destroying apparatus created by, or within the reaches of, the US Government.

## Controlling You by Controlling the Content of Your Mind

So I ask: Where will you and your Church stand in the future when, after the elections of November 2012, the future becomes a blood-red carbon copy of the murderous immediate past? Will you be selling your mind, soul, heart, and body to the government, military, mass media, and the multi-nationals to make ends meet? Will you be putting on the mind and helping others to put on the mind of FOX, MSNBC, ABC, NBC, CBS, or the mind of Christ? Will you be again acquiescing to calling wickedness good?

Government and media are working like the devil to form and control human consciousness and conscience, so that they can then more easily manipulate ordinary people into doing their bidding, without those people even being able to conceive the smallest thought that the cruel and grave evil, that they are being called upon to do, is evil. The present exuberant rejoicing—on the streets, in the media, in the halls of government, and in the military at the killing of Osama Bin Laden—is the ugly public evidence of how far the minds and consciences of people, including Christians, in this society have been taken over and formed in this direction.

## "Metanoia!" "Repent!"

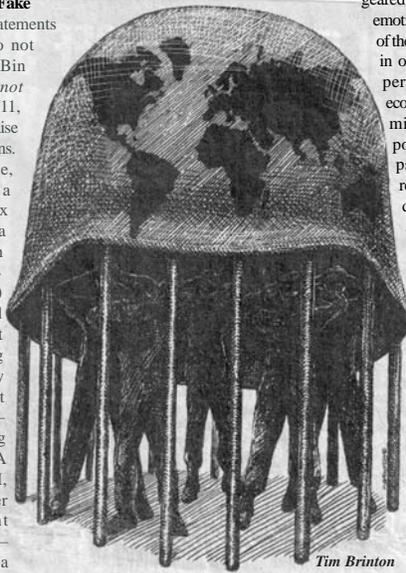
### "Change your mind!" Cries Jesus.

Government, media, and the military know well, as every advertising firm knows, as Gandhi knew, as Jesus knew: "The spiritual battlefield is the human mind." So maybe the best way then to conclude this reflection, and to try to expose the depths of depravity and wickedness to which this society and by extension the Christian Churches have sunk, is to look at a counterpoint. That counterpoint lies in the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. who articulated and illustrated what it means—self-evidently—to logically follow Jesus, to have a mind and a conscience and a program for life, not formed by the government, the media and the military, but rather formed by the Jesus of the Gospels:

*Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate...Hate scars the soul and distorts the personality. Mindful that hate is an evil and dangerous force, we too often think of what it does to the person hated. This is understandable, for hate brings irreparable damage to its victims. But there is another side which we must never overlook. Hate is just as injurious to the person who hates. Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a person's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes a person to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and to confuse the true with the false and the false with the true.*

## Let us pray:

*Eternal rest grant unto Osama bin Laden, O God, and let the Perpetual Light shine on him. May his soul and the souls of all the departed, through to mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*



Tim Brinton

# Twenty Somethings at Agape are “Creatively Maladjusted”

*I'm about convinced now that there is need for a new organization in our world. The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment—men and women who will be as maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth who could say to the men and women of his day, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you.” Through such maladjustment, I believe that we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man (sic) into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice.” Martin Luther King Jr.*

## **Creatively Maladjusted's Statement of Purpose**

**The Present:** The goal of the Creatively Maladjusted is to solidify a consistent group to deepen reflection and build lifelong relationships based on gospel-based nonviolent spirituality and simple lifestyle rooted in prayer and action, Agape's core vision and values. Four Creatively Maladjusted groups, three in Boston and one in DC meet at their own frequency, typically every 2-3 weeks. Members discuss nonviolence, share readings and resources, set action goals and hold each other accountable.

**The Future:** To combat transience and communicate regularly includes becoming ambassadors to bring new people into the Agape Community. This introductory retreat will be facilitated by the “core group” of individuals who have a lasting investment/commitment to Agape and who comprise the first circle of involvement.

## **Voices from the Core Group of the Creatively Maladjusteds**

Martin Luther King's words have a deep resonance for me and a group of other young people who have congregated around Agape and have decided to take the name, the “Creatively Maladjusteds.” We hope to embrace more fully the virtue of “creative maladjustment,” demanding not only resistance to the violent and death-dealing aspects of our culture, but also to the actualization of creative alternatives as we seek to help each other to be more like Christ or the Buddha even while constantly falling short.

In seeking to live this virtue, there is no clear path. How to resist the evils of culture without abandoning its victims? How to avoid the endless talk, talk, talk that brings no action, but also the harried doing, doing, doing that fears real reflection (almost as much as it fears stillness)? How to face honestly the grayness in institutions, people, and ourselves while still acting with conviction to drive out the darkness and bring light (dim as our light may be)? Thousands of questions crop up as soon as you take the term “creatively maladjusted” seriously.

These questions permeate our meetings at Agape. Those of us in Boston have monthly potlucks and meet regularly in smaller “discernment action circles.” The format is raw and sometimes scattered, but the idea is to hold each other accountable and to remind ourselves of the call to abundant life, and to see where we have settled for something so much less. It's hard to say what will become of it all right now, but that's the hope.

**Geoff Gusoff**, one of the founding members of *The Creatively Maladjusteds*, is pursuing a MA at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.



The nation seems to be getting over, in typical US-American channel-changing fashion, the hoopla surrounding the killing of Osama bin Laden which I see as a benchmark. I was the age of many of the students I work with when Bin Laden was named the murderer of more than 3,000 persons on September 11, 2001.

Those who questioned the legality and/or morality of killing Osama bin Laden were immediately labeled fanatics. Even our great president, who was supposed to right all the wrongs of his predecessor, said that those who “questioned that bin Laden didn't get what he deserved needed to have [their] head examined.”

9/11 cemented my “creatively-maladjustedness” as I shuffled through my classes not being able to shake wondering what affect this would have on my future after being evacuated from downtown Minneapolis and hearing the entire fleet of planes of the Minnesota Air National Guard take off from the airport at about 2:30 am on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Attending a Mass for Civil Unrest, I was scared and angry about our nation's once again falling back on the god of violence.

After September 11, I got quiet; not silent, but quiet. My generation's Pearl Harbor created a need for peace and justice rooted in spirituality and reflection. My anger and passion against injustice could not parallel and mimic the violence done to this country and the world that terrible day nearly ten years ago.

As I've moved on from college and started my career in education, I've become keenly aware of the need for community to keep me from burning out in this “creatively-maladjusted” life. Community is not only important for us as peace-lovers but also important as we take from Acts the encouragement to “speak your word with all boldness, as you stretch forth your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4: 29-31) What a great creatively-maladjusted “alternative consciousness” for our current time. (Walter Brueggeman)

**Joe Miller**, STM grad from BC, is currently Campus Minister at Stonehill College in Easton, MA.

When I first heard the phrase “creatively maladjusted” I thought it was a negative,

meant to be applied to those contributing to systems and institutions of inequality and injustice rampant throughout contemporary society, referring to those who were maladjusted as in not being creative enough. Creatively maladjusted, rather, refers to those that are maladjusted in creative ways, or perhaps also creative in maladjusted (in the positive sense) ways. It was upon this second exposure to the term that I became aware of its depth and prophetic tone.

To be creatively maladjusted is to resist those forces of our culture that are consumerist, violent, corrupt and unjust, to live creatively in the face of such forces, standing in resistance to the cultural standards and expectations that fly in the face of compassion, selfless love and peace. The Creatively Maladjusteds, founded on the values and the peaceful witness upon which Agape stands, seek to live in this tension. We seek support from one another in community as we all continue our “experiments with truth,” (Gandhi) and seek small yet creative ways of living out our maladjustment through prayer, protest, and peaceful resistance.

**Bennett Comerford**, School of Theology and Ministry at BC, will spend the summer in Bangladesh.

When I was three years out of college, and washing dishes with Suzanne at an annual St. Francis Day, I lamented that it was difficult to find intentional spaces for people in their 20s and 30s to meet, share, and pray on the topic of nonviolence. Suzanne had heard this same lament from young people at Agape, and so our wheels began to turn. The result is that this past April, we held the fourth gathering of the Creatively Maladjusted.

As we prayed, broke bread and laughed together, we relished the possibilities for this group, all challenging, and a bit scary; yet the work we are doing is filled with a Holy Spirit. In this polarized and chaotic world, it is essential that we strive to ask hard questions: What does it mean to be Christian? To be nonviolent? Is violence ever ok? Spaces built with intention, founded on strong relationships, are where answers can arise that are not to be discussed in just the peaceful woods of Agape, but to be taken back to wherever we live and put into action.

**Emily**, an MDiv candidate at Harvard, organized of a peaceful vigil in support of Women's Ordination at Boston's Holy Cross Cathedral during Vocations' Week in May.

Like Neo in *The Matrix*, we have long carried a sneaking suspicion that something is not right with the world, the gap between the haves and the have-nots accelerating, the achievement gap widening, the ice caps melting. Surely there are alternatives to participating in systems of oppression and supporting wars which cycle violence from generation to generation, another way besides consumerism, sheltered pretense, and indifferent individualism

We come together because alone, we become distracted and misled. Together, we are more than the sum of our parts. Idealistic when the world around us seems to choose “pragmatism,” also known as succumbing to systems of violence, we know it's not all over out there as dire as it may look. Hamlet speaks of a divinity that shapes our lives which is reflected in the deepest part of our own humanity, unraveling the mystery of the solutions. So we journey together, not totally certain of where the path leads, but strengthened in the conviction that Love has brought us here and Love will light the way to Peace.

**Kate Fiegel**, MA in Education from Harvard in May; summer volunteer in Nuamata Rwanda.

Somewhere during my college years, I resolved that being a creatively maladjusted was really the only thing I wanted to be. I had not heard King speak of the “creatively maladjusteds” then, but I knew they were the Catholic Radicals, the nonviolent revolutionaries, the modern day prophets and medieval saints whose lives and words challenged and inspired me as I, the eager college student, stumbled to discern what being a person of faith on this planet, and in these times, required of me.

Over the past five or so years, I've humbly journeyed in the direction of creative maladjustment, leading me to a place that's probably the least creatively maladjusted as they come, law school. On most days it's a rather intriguing experiment, immersing myself in the study of the system that I am simultaneously endeavoring to maladjust within. Other days, however, are more difficult.

I am fortunate to attend a law school that is oriented towards the public interest, but I still worry that I am unknowingly re-adjusting to the consuming nature and inherent self-centeredness that characterizes the life of a grad student. Aspiring to creatively maladjustedness, even though I am certain this is where I need to be, makes me feel distant from the communities and values that led me here.

The Creatively Maladjusteds represent rootedness and reminder but we still have much growing to do as we wrestle with similar questions, tensions and desires. On our own spiritual paths, we had already made the momentous leap in committing to simple living, nonviolent resistance, community, looking at what living out such a commitment means at this chapter in our lives and our world. As in all Beginnings, “so much is in bud.”

**Stephanie Gharakhanian** is pursuing a law degree at Northeastern University.

# Homesteading

## Love, Manure, and Conflict at Agape

By Jerrod Oltmann

I was talking with an Agape Community member today while I shoveled manure. A great way to start a story? I mean manure right? There is a hidden gem here that I believe sums up my time at Agape, that is the word "love" which people often throw around. Being in seminary, I hear it probably more than most, and it gets old fast.

I consider myself practical, so when people talk about love, I roll my eyes on a fairly frequent basis, not because I do not believe in love, but because the more you talk about loving people the less time you have to actually do it. I believe that if you are going to teach love, you need to show the work of your hands and not some book or paper you wrote.

In short analogy, I am going to wrap up a year of part-time work here at Agape. Just like gardening, love is about shoveling the s\*#t. Real love isn't pretty and lacy. At Agape, love is sometimes about dirty grimy nails and jeans that smell like cow poop. This gardening process turns into the food that people eat all year. Love is about taking care of other people especially when the task might be distasteful. This love is not a fancy feeling on paper, which is almost always meaningless.

The hardest manure to shovel for love often arises in conflict and disagreements. As an un-stereotypical Agape intern, I have been involved in both. A Unitarian Universalist, I am also a proud Second Lieutenant in the United States Army delayed from active duty so that I can attend seminary and one day, hopefully, become an Army chaplain. For Agape, that would seem about as kosher as a double bacon cheeseburger on Passover. The initial discussions we had about my internship were about my motivations for military chaplaincy, about which I will elaborate for the sake of clarity.

Many at Agape believe wholeheartedly that the military is an evil, corrupt tool of imperial power that should be avoided at all costs. A dear friend of mine and an extended community member went so far as to compare military chaplaincy to being a chaplain for the Mafia,

though he later apologized, probably more for my feelings than because of a change of heart (I think the people in the Mafia could probably use a chaplain).

probably feeling pretty spiritual about the whole thing, but I'd be the only one benefiting. I think life is more about what you give than what you get, that you are either willing to engage the world in its infinite complexity and grayness or

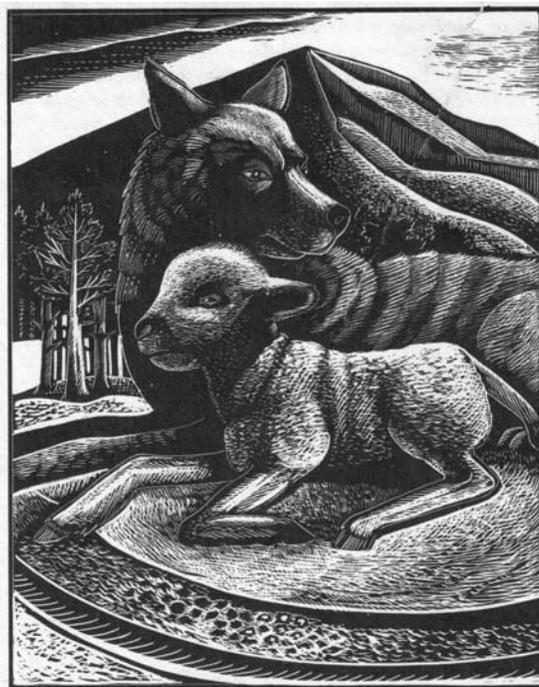
privileged elitism that religious institutions can ill afford. The military is inescapably wound up in American politics and life. To ignore the spiritual care of those involved such as soldier's families is no less destructive to one's soul than racism, classism, ageism or any of those other "isms" that in forward thinking circles, we always talk about eliminating.

The pacifists I met at Agape, some of whom are known for their work with veterans, seem to specifically oppose spiritual counsel under the employ of the military. My counterpoint is that one must be an officer to be chaplain and as such there is no other choice. No matter what your personal feelings about military service, I view it as an important part of citizenship which is about engagement with and through your government. In a democracy, we the citizens, control and people the system so, if we don't contribute, then our voice isn't heard.

There are still soldiers being traumatized by hell on earth. They are no less worthy and deserving of pastoral care than anyone else. To disengage from military chaplaincy on religious grounds is to deny a whole segment of not only soldiers but also their partners and children from having the benefit of a chaplain.

So, why did I come to Agape? First, Michael Boover a friend and former professor had been trying to get me to come for years. Second, I wanted to engage in dialogue about nonviolence and conflict resolution. Third, I had to pick a nonprofit for volunteering as part of my Divinity School's M Div. program.

Despite disagreements, we made it together because love is more resilient than disagreement. While we did have many long discussions, a few of which were heated, we still acted with enough love. I'll conclude with a famous phrase: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" which came up when society was primarily agrarian. Therefore, I would put forth with some confidence that I am probably part of a long line of people influenced by biblical texts who shoveled manure as an act of love.



Michael McCurdy

I also personally believe the military is an institution controlled by humans and will never be perfect as there has never been an institution that hasn't committed evil. If I held the belief that I could only work with "perfect" institutions, I would end up sitting in the woods by myself,

you aren't (see how easy it is to fall into the trap of "either/or"). There is no person or institution unworthy of my attention and care.

You can't abandon any part of society. To do so is necessarily exclusivist, which if done so for moral reasons, has an element of

## Sowing Seeds

### Freedom Farm Community

by Ann Rader

When I was 16, and my brother Ben was 19, we started dreaming about being part of an organic farm that would connect to the city. Ben and I were influenced by the radical hospitality and urban community ministry of Dorothy Day House in D.C. and by learning about organic agriculture at Hopeland Farm in PA with our older cousins who were also dreaming of a transformative farm project.

Over the next few years, we shared visions of getting off the "grid," enjoying the land, being liberated from the global economic system that we were learning was not fundamentally supporting life. We were also thoroughly inspired by visiting Christian Base Communities in Latin America. At 21, I met Edgar Hayes (then 24) from New York City who, unbeknownst to me, was "schooled" at Agape. I worried that when I described my "career" goal of an unrealized community farm dream, Edgar might just write me off as some tof-loving hippie. Instead, he leapt at the mention of the farm and soon I learned about his transformative experiences at Agape and later

spent time with him there before we were married, making the dream of Freedom Farm much more concrete.

In February 2004, we (my brother Ben's family, Edgar, our son Josiah, and I, and my parents Clara and Bill) settled on 59 acres of land in Mt. Hope, NY, an hour and a half from New York City. We named it Freedom Farm. Soon afterwards, a man who introduced himself as our neighbor Rick Vreeland drove up our driveway in a truck and asked us what we wanted to do with the land. Nervous that he wouldn't be pleased we were planning to host urban youth on the farm, I stalled and invited him to meet the rest of the family. As soon as Dad told Rick our farm ministry plans, his face glowed with joy. "Don't buy any equipment!" Rick explained that they'd been praying over the land for years and God told him to go "talk to your neighbors."

That was the beginning, and now Rick and his wife Julie have started Freedom Hill Farm right next to us, a sustainable dairy that enables all the youth who visit Freedom Farm to

experience the gift of animals and fresh milk and eggs.

In the summer of 2004, we had our first Christian-based revolutionary retreat with 10 teenagers, 5 staff and 4 children from Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the South Bronx, where I had been working since 2000. The following spring, pregnant with Micah, we moved from our Bronx apartment to the farm, full-time. Neither of us had grown up on a farm, and had just begun learning about gardening. What an adventure!

Along with hosting young people from Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx, we work with youth mostly from Brooklyn and Harlem who camp at Camp Deepark, a Mennonite Camp a few miles from Freedom Farm. During their time here, young people learn where food comes from by harvesting and cooking, i.e. picking berries and cooking them in homemade pancakes. We make butter from Freedom Hill milk and use Camp Deepark's home-tapped maple syrup on top. Freedom Hill's brown Jerseys graze on our front field, the water and air is clean, the corn is sweet, the children who come here are beautiful. Life is Good.

And the weeds get outta control, the critters invade, youth work takes intensive prep and energy that I sometimes don't have, and there are sessions that make me feel like a failure. But when fears and negative perspectives threaten the life, the Spirit waits patiently for me with embracing arms in which to rest and let go of whatever's weighing me down. Life

is good on the farm. We just need help.

We aim to be a base Christian community that shares the fruit of God's land with the wider community, particularly those who are hungry and lack access to affordable fresh produce and green space. At Freedom Farm we want to experience the land and God's love with youth through farming, cooking, drama, music, art, and discussion, emphasizing that God loves each of us profoundly and longs for us to love ourselves and each other, a vital message, both for us, the youth leaders and for many of our youth from the city who face the brunt of our nation's racism.

The neighborhood of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx has some of the highest asthma rates in the country due to illegally low levels of green space. Less than 50 percent graduate from high school and many of our youth's parents are overworked, broken-up, imprisoned, or dead. In the midst of the storm, Jesus is walking on the water in the South Bronx. He is here at Freedom Farm, and we are all invited to join in wherever we are. We are called to Shalom, peace in the fullest sense, where the violence of economic oppression, depression, racism and any pattern that treats people as less than children of God is erased. Shalom, the beloved community, where we are free to be loved for who we are.

Freedom Farm welcomes people from all walks of life. We're looking for potential community members, interns, and volunteers. ([freedomfarmcommunity.org](http://freedomfarmcommunity.org))

## Five Nights at the Agape Hermitage

By Bennett Comerford

I'm glad I made the trek. Tearing myself away from the distractions of city and school life, the computer, apartment, bills, work, clutter. It is a miracle to be here right now. I longed for this even before I thought to come. This moment right now, writing by candlelight in the loft of the hermitage. Silence, here I am.

So here you are. Made it. All alone. The hermitage, the rain outside, and a huge wooden cross. Why did you come? What are



David Klein

you needing? Balance of life, and a reminder of what is really important. What *is* really important? Well, a lot of things. Love, start with love.

It's been raining for hours. The fire is hot. It's plenty warm in here. No time. I do not know the time. Establishing my own rhythm.

Two days in. I am not lonely. Quite at peace actually. Enjoying the silence. The sound of the rain. Enjoying the freedom to do as I please. The invitation to rest. Centering, grounding. I do not really know what results may come, but I know I need it. I think it is an end in itself, although it does help toward other ends. Love, patience, kindness, peace, all those good things.

The sun poking its head out of the clouds shedding light on the floor through the

window. Tea brew. Caught a glimpse of two chipmunks scampering out my window. Drawn to the extremes.

Gettin' on evening already. A walk in the woods. The sun is out. Sky pure blue. Glorious. Cold cheeked. Wood gathering and trespassing up the hill. Looking for a lookout.

## Canticles of Silence

Lettin' that fast life slip on past. Sooner or later it will catch up with you. I really prayed. I haven't prayed like that for a while. I had forgotten...

It's my last night. I think I've set some good goals for myself. Cook more, read more fiction, write more letters, go deeper. It has been a gift to pray and meditate deeply, seriously. Reflect, get outside, watch the sunrise, and gaze at the stars. I feel humbled, more centered, more at peace. This is a beautiful place to be. What a stunning, indescribable mystery it is to be a human being.

*Bennett is a member of the Creatively Maladjusted, an organizer of the BC protest of Condoleezza Rice's honorary degree at Boston College where he is pursuing and advanced degree in Theology.*

## Farm Rains Collect in the Wheelbarrow

By Garrett Gundlach nSJ

I am Garrett Gundlach, nSJ, Wisconsin Province Fellow, on 30 day pilgrimage, blessed to be a pilgrim as a Jesuit novice, given a one-way bus ticket, \$35, and 30 days as part of our formation before we can return home to the novitiate in MN, where I met Brayton and Suzanne who did a presentation on "Living an Integrated Life" in April.

The pilgrimage leads us into greater daily intimacy with Christ, by becoming "contemplatives in action," weaving together prayer and work. This time at Agape, in the garden and in the hermitage, befriending black flies and sitting in meditation, has been a beautiful example of how harmoniously work and prayer can mingle.

ourselves as heroic prophets are constantly interrupted by blatantly unromantic struggles: the need to care for a difficult relative, the need to cope with physical and mental illness, the daily struggle to accept oneself unconditionally against all the voices of an anxious culture. And this is no less true on the broader scale of society: we live amidst the ugliness of sexism and racism and militarisms and imperialisms and a thousand other forms of sin that though we may perpetuate we did not alone create. And even when we find the courage and will to fight against these things it is rarely in the form of eloquent speeches or triumphant actions, but most often involves the unromantic and seemingly hopeless practice of absorbing the anger, anxieties, and even violence of others.

It is a fight we did not choose against an enemy we did not alone create. But like Gandhi, like Dorothy, like Oscar, and especially like Simon, the forces of oppression and death in our world compel us to take up the cross against them.

*Geoff read this station at the Boston State House on Good Friday. He began coming to Agape while a freshman at Brown University.*

So many times, we are trapped by the "shoulds:" I "should" be working more or I "should" be praying more. With the time and support of an established community, these "shoulds" can dissolve, leaving a simple and smooth rhythm of work and prayer. I am blessed to have spent time in such a community. We can also take cues from our earth, who constantly is transitioning seasons and weather.

farm rains  
collect in the wheelbarrow  
afternoon off

Despite the anxieties of "tomorrow", today's ending slows down enough to appreciate the hermitage:

steadily flamed  
kerosene-  
not so much as a  
flicker on the wall.  
it has-or i have  
matched my breath:  
slow patient gentle.  
my ears still ring  
from the city three days  
ago-i carry it with me.  
perhaps the prophetic  
is to carry this,  
with me into the city:  
the look and the smile  
the breath of the hermitage.

Nighttime in the hermitage on the hill. A muddy path and a thick, tall section of woods led me here, grateful for a headlamp. We barely got the storms predicted for us, so I write in yellow light until bed.

There! The winds sweeping the whole forest—bare of trees of spring.

Japanese Zen trail

Salamanders So ambivalent.

## Witness

### 5<sup>th</sup> Station: Simon Helps Jesus Carry His Cross

By Geoff Gusoff

The Gospels tell us that Jesus' helper was "compelled" to carry the cross by the Romans. Simon was not taking the role of Good Samaritan here. Rather, he was co-victim of empire. So how is it that he is a saint, one in whom we encounter a model for holiness? Perhaps it is because this is the form that grace so often takes in our crucified world: being forced to bear a cross that is ostensible not ours, a cross we never fully choose.

It is a story replayed innumerable times throughout history. The young Indian lawyer thrown off a South African train because "coolies" are not allowed to ride first class. The single mother journalist gets a knock on the door from a ragged street prophet calling on her to serve the needs of the poor. The conservative Salvadoran bishop sees his people murdered in the name of Christian values. The temptation is

always the same: to say "this is not my fight." And it is not hard to imagine that response: Gandhi decides it is more prudent not to rock the boat in a foreign country; Dorothy Day regretfully informs Mr. Maurin that he has come too late, that her radical days are over, that it is hard enough to raise a daughter alone during a depression; Monseñor Romero anesthetizes himself from the blood of his people with an other-worldly "accept-your-lot" theology. In fact, each of these three likely gave into these temptations multiple times, but what makes them saints is that there was a decisive time that they did not.

Perhaps this is the lesson of Simon, who shared the cross of our savior, though it was initially against his will. Because for us too, the cross we imagine is rarely the cross that we get. The romantic images we may have of

## Robynn Murray Unwilling Poster Girl

By Pat McSweeney

Last October, at the Agape's St. Francis Day event, six remarkable women reported on the toll that various wars had taken on their respective lives. The audience listened with collectively-held breath.

Robynn Murray's account was riveting. The youngest of the Women and War group, she is a veteran who (barely) survived unspeakable events in Iraq. In addition to being directly involved in brutal military action, she was subjected to sexual harassment and had her complaints casually dismissed by commanding officers. Appointments with medical doctors led to "drugs and more drugs and more drugs".

She returned to the States shattered in spirit and physically fragile. Robynn's candor about her persistent PTSD and dependence on drugs was heart-breaking. Barely audible gasps were heard when she described her attempt to take her own life, and several listeners shook their heads when she revealed that she had come from a rehab center that very day in order to speak to us.

Having been back from Iraq for a while and finding normal life impossible,

*continued on page 7*

Haiti - continued from page 1

exhorting the congregation to break out of the "state of chronic repetition," to vote their "hearts" at the upcoming election. He spoke of the need to overcome the "indignities" inflicted on Haiti by always looking to the United States "to free us."

"Think of a new Haiti. Get our leadership right," he pleaded with his congregation. "Three million of the nine million people in our own country do not eat every day." He called for "radical leadership that can affect people at the very core of their behavior." Whether that leadership will be provided by president-elect singer and political outsider, Michel "Sweet Mickey" Martelly, remains to be seen.

#### The Daily Practice of Nonviolent Love

In December, 2010, after Haiti's fraudulent elections, Steve, one of the few doctors in the area, set off to Cap Haitien to drive his daughter Carrie to the airport and to pick up cholera medications during the epidemic. All access roads, which themselves are so torn up that drivers constantly lose tires, break bushings or sustain major damage to their vehicles, were at that time, barricaded by burning tires. Angry young men brandished knives and sticks and rumor had it that anyone daring to break through would be killed. Steve's Haitian driver and friend, Milair, the unofficial mayor of Limbe, paved the way for Steve to talk to the young men at the barricades. Steve related how while he prayed, he experienced the gift of fearlessness. He walked in this aura of protection towards the armed men. After explaining his cholera mission, the young men replied: "It makes no difference to us what you do." Steve, relied on his Ebenezer, Jesus, the Stone of Help, and responded with a scene right out of Acts: "Christ knows no barriers among people. I come here in the name of Jesus." The "guard" checked Steve's credentials and waved him on. Quite a contrast to the UN trucks we saw upon arrival patrolling the streets, armed soldiers with guns on the ready.

#### Guy Noel and the Mountain Climb

*I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God. Haiti and its people took me in as "a stranger," and, although not my physical home, Haiti imbued in me a feeling of closeness to Christ. I touched lives needing rescue "from danger," yet, feeling consistently that it was I who was being rescued, I who had wandered somehow "from the fold of God," and who was finding it here in Haiti.*

One evening on a walk up Old Mountain not far from the seminary, I had my own mini-mystical "rescue" from danger. Steve and Nancy had called a young friend, Guy Noel, (whose first name

is pronounced Gee) to assist us up the mountain, defined by a view of the horizon and twilight, both poetic and other-worldly. The climb with its twists and turns left us "wandering" as the hymn would have it. Not in need of a physical rescue, I felt the power of Gee's arm on mine, as he assisted my movement from ledge to ledge and rock to rock. Goats, sheep, and cows, driven by farmers on the hillside who had also planted personal gardens there, climbed with us. A child appeared out of nowhere in the mist. His name was Wenzel. He had been Brayton's guide up the mountain the day before and continue to appear day after day, an angelic apparition, to shepherd Brayton on his walks.

My Sherpa, Gee, who is studying English in high school, has deep-set eyes, a gentle calm and a love so centered and open that I wanted to say out loud: "You are my Christ, my comfort, my guide." Of course I dared not embarrass him with such ramblings, yet, looking at Gee, I couldn't help but think of beauty—his skin, a varnished mahogany, his features chiseled and noble. He leans gently when he speaks, keeping his face slightly averted, in a posture of humility and confidence.

Upon return from my mystical encounter with Gee, my own Ebenezer, my stone of strength, back to the firm ground of the compound, I gave him my copy of *Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoyevsky. The next day, he arrived at Steve and Nancy's with about thirty words meticulously copied and listed individually on what looked like cardboard carefully cut from a cereal box, the letters so tiny that I could barely read them. Without explanation, Gee handed me this list of words. I felt as if I were receiving an ancient text. Afterwards, we spent some time dissecting and defining the words. Gee returned every day until our last meal before departure. We hope that one day he will visit Agape.

The rest of our time in Haiti included visiting an orphanage, several hospital compounds, including one named Ebenezer. We met a stunningly precious newborn who had been left at a hospital doorstep, and, a two year old child found in the rubble of the earthquake in Port au Prince, sucking from her mother's breast. ("Here I raise my Ebenezer; here by Thy great help I've come.")

Today and every day since returning from Haiti, I lift my Ebenezer, to praise Steve and Nancy and all those who serve in Haiti, and its beautiful people. On this pilgrimage, Haiti became The Font of Every Blessing. I was baptized in a new life of solidarity with the Haitian soul. As I move toward my final destination in life, I will not wander too far from the people of Haiti, the people of God. "Teach me some melodious sonnet, /Sung by flaming tongues above. /Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, /Mount of Thy redeeming love."

## Voices

We have a work study here it called GENETEX so we have a project going about reforestation. Nicely and I have been planted 15 trees up on the mountain. Also my Kids club we were planning to pick up trash in the area just to keep it clean and put some trash can along the street so that we can have a better live. (sic) Proper hug! Love you and may God bless you. Please don't forget about me.

*Guy Noel, is the Haitian Sherpa who led Suzanne up the Great Mountain, Haiti.*

My Geology class at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota grabbed my attention for several reasons: Agape's sustainable way of living with producing more than 60% of their food.

While I am not religious person, I am very spiritual and I could clearly see the dedication and strength of faith of Agape's passion for justice and peace. Quite simply, their love for the land and the environment are what made me wish to travel to Massachusetts and spend time volunteering at Agape to explore a deeper, spiritual connection with the environment and the peace and happiness that Agape so clearly inspires.

*Quinn Wrentholt will travel to Agape with several other students from St. Thomas this summer.*

It's my turn to thank you—for inviting me to be part of the Good Friday witness, one of the most meaningful Good Fridays I have experienced in a number of years: the presence of so many dedicated and faithful witnesses; the depth and resonance of each sharing; the beauty of the songs and the sings; the beauty of the day.

*George Cappacio is a story-teller, Quaker activist who has spent much time in Iraq.*

In early October, I thought I might lose my faith. My faith is what I live for and who I am. I prayed a lot to the Lord, and used the four community supports I have to help me: My family, Bethany Hill School, Agape and Bethany Health Care Center. For the past 13 years, I have been a member of the Agape. What I like is that they not only speak about nonviolence, but practice it in everything they do. The most difficult thing is to tell others my situation and have the faith that they will listen. Agape listened without judging. Talking so openly about tough things is "baptism by fire." With Lord's help, I have my faith back.

*Tom Driscoll, has been selflessly serving Agape for the past 13 years.*

I hope and feel the prayers, yours and the community, but I will feel detached, alone, and longing for the "connection" and the kindness/love that comes with such connections if they are real.

*Bob Lena, Bridgewater State Prison. W85990.0.C.C.C., One Administration Rd. Bridgewater, MA 02324*

Sometimes I get down and I wonder what I could do to change my life and maybe straighten the little faith I do have.

*Brian Gilligan, MCI Norfolk Prison*

Murray - continued from page 6

she became connected to Iraq Veterans Against the War which, she said, is helping to save her life. Along with other vets, she has been speaking to young Americans about the reality that lurks behind the recruiters' hype of false patriotism and a chance for college.

Now, thanks to film-maker Sara Nesson, a wider audience will learn how Robynn and countless other young Americans can have their lives twisted by the diabolical US war machine. The US Army had created a poster of three uniformed women, one of whom was Robynn who, in the video, holds the poster aloft and tearfully declares that she didn't join the Army to become a "poster girl", which led to the title of the documentary. One strong scene shows her wearing punching gloves and repeatedly punching her bedroom wall until, unintentionally, she breaks an ugly

hole in the plaster and then dissolves into uncontrollable tears.

But there's light at the end of the tunnel: the video ends with Robynn in a Syracuse art gallery, clearly looking more "together", commenting on various pieces of art she and other veterans created from their ripped-up uniforms and other shredded military artifacts.

*Poster Girl* will be shown on HBO in September and, after that, will be available to counter-recruiting groups.

*Pat McSweeney activist and peacemaker, advocates for Fr. Roy Bourgeois and attended recent plowshares trials, just a few of her contributions to nonviolence.*

## Earth's Tabernacle of the Circling Seasons

By Rich Bachtold

An early morning light softly shines  
through dark clouds  
as gentle whispering winds of winter  
remember a holy landscape patiently waiting  
that You revealed through a secret word  
from Sacred Silence,  
a pure, precious word of springtime-  
a revelation that sings of life and death  
enshrined forever on Earth's tabernacle  
of the circling seasons.



Steve and Nancy James, with rescued Haitian Earthquake child, whose mother was killed, with her aunt in Limbe.



Bethany Hills School, Framingham MA, yearly adult Bible Study



Boys from Nativity School for November, 2010 Retreat

We adults spoke after Nativity School's Retreat at Agape in awe of how the boys adapted, beginning to love silence, simple living and care for the earth and each other. I heard a depth of vulnerable honesty I never hear in the almost all male environment in which they spend their time. From the warmth of your opening greeting, the hot bread, cocoa and hot cider, I was drawn into your wonderful embrace as were they. Gracias.

*Fr. Jack Fagan SJ; Nativity School Retreat Day at Agape in November. The boys return in May.*

**Annual St. Francis Day**

Sat. Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 10 am – 5 pm

“Building a Nonviolent World”

Fr. Ray Helmick SJ-Peacemaker, N. Ireland, Palestine

Young Activists involved in Nonviolent Communities; music; tours of strawbale house; solar energy, compost toilet, grease car. Pot Luck.

**Summer Building Project**

For Francis House  
“New Kitchen”

We Need: Carpentry Help!!!

Volunteer Help!!!

Project Start Date: June 1<sup>st</sup>

Please Come and Help...Bring Friends ...Call Agape

**News Notes**

**Creatively Maladjusted Witness at BC after Bin Laden's assassination:** We felt it particularly urgent in light of some wild celebrations that happened on campus on Sunday night (ranked “4th best” nationally on Yahoo's list of best Bin Laden “celebrations”, the only Catholic school to grace the list from what I've heard). 100 people there included representatives from the Pro Life group as well as the St. Thomas More society and ROTC in addition to the usual student groups, which I find hopeful. *Geoff Gusoff*

**Leave a Legacy: Include Agape in your Will:** Please continue your support of Agape by designating Agape in your will. Your gift will help to ensure the future of the ministry.

Prayers for Marie and Bob Lueders, Paulette Lacoste, Roni Bethell, Debbie Kirk, Bob Solari and Agape members for many years who are coping with cancer-related and other illnesses.

**AGAPE CALENDAR**

June 18—Summer Work Day—Bring chain saws, gloves, boots, putting up winter wood. (June 25-rain-date)

Thursday and Friday, July 14 and 15, 2:00-4:15 p.m. Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry, Continuing Ed, Agape Work will develop the theology, theory, and practice of a life that integrates the Gospel of nonviolence, contemplative prayer, simplicity, with follow-up retreat:

July 15-17<sup>th</sup> - BC Continuing Ed Retreat at Agape: Early Registration through BC.

October 1st - Annual St. Francis Day

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