

THE SERVANT SONG

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The Failure to Grieve and Its Consequences

by Suzanne Belote Shanley

Recently I came across artist Matt Mitchell's oil painting rendition of a photograph depicting an American Iraq War Vet, Rick Yarosh, whose face is distorted beyond recognition by burns. ("The Emotional Awareness of War"; Valley Advocate, 4/23/09). The picture-portrait, reminded me of the emotional awareness of absorbing daily, the images of suffering in war, and responding to them in ways that I usually think are never adequate to that suffering. Inevitably, full of sorrow and questioning, I ask myself: "Can I do more?" "Why, even though I think I grasp the mystery of suffering, must there be so much of it?" How do I harmonize my energies for peace and my sorrow over war, to find ways of coping with what anti-war poet Denise Levertov, in a surfeit of war atrocity, laments is just "too much grief"?

This dilemma surfaces each time I read a new book or see another picture that depicts torture, the disfigurement of war, the killing of children. I would venture a guess that many of us have had these feelings. How much more can I bear, we ask ourselves? Then, in the next breath: "How dare I even think such a thought when they have suffered so much?" Such punishing thoughts swirled inside my brain when I picked up the book, *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak* and read, among the others, "Death Poem," by Jumah al Dossari, a detainee, whose last will and testament describes what he forces us to "take" as he dies in isolation and invisibility: "Take my blood/ Take my death shroud and/ The remnants of my body. / Take photographs of my corpse at the grave, lonely." Dossari declares that the purpose of this photo-poem of his symbolic and perhaps actual, death is to "bear the guilty burden before the world/ Of this innocent soul."

Although only a handful of people will ever read his poem and those of the other detainees, millions have already read about America's current plans for and "success" in "drone to death" the Taliban and their families as collateral "shields." Daily, we participate, directly or indirectly, through the barrage of media and electronic images, in the destruction of the "worst of the worst," along with their families and neighbors, sometimes without a bleep on the screen of consciousness, except for the Jumah al Dossaris photographs in words, not knowing whether they will ever be read or seen, capture what philosopher Judith Butler describes in her book *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* a question that I have been wrestling with since my mother was diagnosed with cancer when I was seven. How do I "attend to the suffering of others?" How do I attend to my own suffering as a consequence of the suffering of others?

In order to "respond effectively to suffering at a distance," if we do at all, how do the mind, emotion and psyche, the deep

subconscious, interact to "frame" photographic and poetic images of war? Since these images are both imaginary and real, such as the actual photographs of the "shackled and crouched bodies in Guantanamo Bay," Butler contends, that they all serve "as a way of registering certain lawlessness?" Currently, Barak Obama, on the advice from the Pentagon and numerous generals, has reversed himself, and is now refusing to expose additional photos of American soldiers abusing



Mother and Son.

New York Times Photo

prisoners in Afghanistan and Iraq. Instead, he submits "a jumbled set of explanations including his fear of inflaming anti-American sentiment and jeopardizing American soldiers." (NYTimes 5/17/09).

Butler exposes this concept of "protection" of the "lawless," commenting that nation-states, "exploit targeted populations, lives that are not quite lives, cast as 'destructible' and 'ungrievable', 'losable'...framed as already lost or forfeited...rather than as living populations in need of protection from illegitimate state violence. The loss of such populations is deemed necessary to protect the lives of 'the living'." Obama's censors ensure that we continue to get away with murder, rather than to allow the visuals to open up avenues for repentance, grieving, perhaps even healing, from collective guilt for participation in murder. I begin to question whether national repentance could be both awakened and assuaged by participation in rituals of grief?

During the horror of 9/11, Matheiu Mabundo, an intern at Agape from Kenya wept unrestrainedly while the Americans among us were numb and speechless. Bewildered, Matheiu felt that Americans don't know how to grieve, and than in Kenya, people would be weeping in their churches and homes over such carnage, this sorrowing, lasting for days.

Thus, the Guantanamo poems provide a context for understanding what photographer and award-winning writer, Susan

Sontag means in her treatise on photography, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, when she states that "atrocious images" are meant to "haunt" us, though many of us are probably more haunted by foreclosure statistics and GM bailouts. Is haunting enough? Shall I spend the rest of my days being depressed and disturbed by gruesome reminders of cruelty, responding with protests and actions designed to register public outrage, but often without the benefit of the catharsis of grieving?

Western Afghanistan, described by one villager, Sayed Ghusuldin Agha, as "body parts littered around the landscape. 'It would scare a man if he saw it in a dream' or if one could smell the "powerful smell" rising from groups of refugee survivors or the newly dead as "clouds of flies swarmed about their faces." (NY Times, May 7, 2009)

Chris Hedges, author and former war correspondent for The Times, in a review of yet another book on a photojournalist's memoir on war (*The Photographer*), comments that:

It is impossible to know war if you do not stand with the mass of the powerless caught in its maw. All narratives of war told through the lens of the combatants carry with them the seduction of violence. But once you cross to the other side, to stand in fear with the helpless and the weak, you confront the moral depravity of industrial slaughter and the scourge that is war itself.

Without the poems and photographs, provided by these women writers, Sontag and Butler, we would not have their unique perspective of gender and sexual humiliation as they reveal brutish behavior, mostly male-to-male, of the species. This context for considering the male dynamic in such ritualistic cruelty, (though female enticers certainly were paid and performed their jobs in the pornographic humiliation) offers us a "frame" of justification for war to "liberate the women in Afghanistan or bring democracy to Iraq." I have always internally rebelled at this false premise which Hedges describes: "How do you explain that the very proposition of war as an instrument of virtue is absurd?" During the post-9/11 bombing of Afghanistan, when so many women throughout the world cheered the liberation of Afghan women as a justifiable goal in the slaughter of the oppressive Taliban, it was not easy, in political terms to ask: Is liberation worth the cost of one dead child?

But we do not grieve the Taliban, the instruments of oppression and degradation of women. They are undeserving of our grief. Or are they? When is the last time you heard anyone in your religious circle, pray for the Taliban? But in the process of their destruction and the necessity to demonize them, as Obama seems to be doing, what about the children, millions of them, caught in the crossfire, or those kidnapped as recently as an hour ago as I write this piece?

Hedges travels Butler's terrain of grievability, when he asks the unaskable: "How do you cope with memories of children bleeding to death with bits of iron fragments peppered throughout their small bodies? How do you speak of war without tears?" And if we do speak of war without tears, as we almost always do, what is the consequence on the human soul of this failure to grieve?

We don't see, smell or taste, for example, the carnage of the recent air strikes which killed more than 100 civilians in

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Will Primitive Brain Reign in Gaza?

By Brayton Shanley

It is almost impossible not to be horrified by pictures of the death and mourning of the Palestinians, especially the children from the December 08 war and its aftermath. The weeks of ongoing killing and trauma heaped on these innocents calls us to cry out: "Who would commit such vicious acts of murder?" The reasons lie tragically beneath the surface of this decade's long conflict.

In his December 30 *New York Times* editorial, Israeli Benny Morris, a professor at Ben Gurion University, lays out this climate of war in: "Why Israel Feels Threatened." Morris outlines four key points that shed light on Israel's fear-driven state of mind: First, is the Arab world's non-acceptance of Israel in Palestine since 1948, opposing the Jews unilateral decision to locate the Jewish



they will pay a price not worth paying by risking complete defeat and loss of their significant power and influence. The death ratio of the latest Israeli assault in Gaza? 400

by
Edel
Rodrigues

State in Palestine and subsequent occupation of that land. Second, in the years since 1948, Israel, a country of five million, has further alienated this surrounding Arab world of one hundred million with its sixty year dominance of the Palestinians. Third, the Arab-Israeli population within Israel is growing larger each year. These Arabs have no allegiance to Jewish Israel and represent a grave long-term internal threat. Lastly, Morris says, "the holocaust is increasingly becoming a faint and ineffectual memory while the Arab states are increasingly powerful and assertive."

All of these factors put Israel on a lethal hair trigger. The recent "military victory" over Israel of the Lebanese militia Hezbollah has intensified Israel's sense of threat. Hezbollah claimed victory because it inflicted more damage and persevered longer than expected. That fact now puts Israel on a more aggressive military readiness. And, pounce they can, with over \$2 billion of American aid going for Israel's defense yearly that finances weapons which can neutralize any neighboring enemy within weeks. This money and these weapon purchases have caused unimaginable suffering and fear throughout the Middle East over decades.

Triad Of Violence

The U.S. and Israel represent two parts of this war triad. The third angle is Hamas. Ethan Bronner, the Middle East correspondent for the *New York Times*, characterized Hamas as a "popular militia with extraordinary power and influence, especially in Gaza." They are also "positioned among the people." That is, their militia capabilities are located within civilian pockets of the Palestinian population throughout Gaza.

"To express opposition to Israel's blockade of Gaza during this current fragile ceasefire," Bronner continues, "Hamas periodically fires missiles into Israel." Israel, given the shock and embarrassment of Hezbollah's apparent "victory" isn't for one moment about to let any military threat get a foothold. Responding to the apparent aggressions of Hamas, Israel kills and wounds thousands of people in Gaza with its total and disproportionate bombing and land war. Why so disproportionate? Bronner says that this attack "is psychological warfare." The point is to prove to Hamas that

Palestinians deaths to one Israeli.

What is motivating Hamas to challenge Israel with these odds? Is it that Hamas can taste the beginning of a real military victory over Israel? Trained by Hezbollah and funded by Iran, they will take these casualties and rely on the outrage of the International community to condemn Israel. Meanwhile the Palestinian civilian population continues to be at terrible risk in the crossfire. A phosphorous smoke bomb intended to mask Israeli troop movements in El Atatra instead became a flaming inferno burning small children to death. Palestinians describe Israeli military actions as a massacre; Israelis blame Hamas for putting civilians in harm's way. The *New York Times* quotes Israeli Col. Herzl Halevy's rationale: "(We) blow up houses if we found large amounts of explosives." One of the recent 50 houses that have been destroyed was later found to contain no explosive material. Israeli Captain Y said "We thought we saw things that made us suspicious. I didn't want to risk the lives of our men." Israel's military goal in this war is to sustain as few casualties as possible.

Bakr Ghanem, whose house was destroyed, said "a house is something in your heart. This place has been injured and there can be know peace after this." In another incident two teenagers were killed taking two wounded children from this battle to the hospital. Israelis said they were armed. Palestinians villagers strongly denied that.

From their side Israelis bitterly talk about the eight years of rockets fired from Gaza. The *Times* interviewed Palestinians who didn't acknowledge the presence of Hamas in Gaza at all. One Hamas defense official interviewed on N.P.R. said that the missiles fired at Israel from Gaza breaking the ceasefire in December were not launched by Hamas. A Feb. 4, 2009 *Times* article on the skirmish in El Atatra ended on a tragic note. In this blood-soaked town, the most serious casualty is in the memory of the Palestinians; it is this memory of a shared past with Israelis who have been their neighbors for decades which is now obliterated. In its place there remains no hope in a shared future. "We used to tell fighters not to fire from here," said Nabila Abu Halima, looking over a field through her opened window. "Now I'll invite

them to do it from my house."

Each side contradicts the other on the facts and this relentless retaliatory pattern is frozen in place: Israel's sights remain fixed on Hamas; Hamas fixed on Israel.

Each side runs down the complicity of the other and denies their own. It begins to appear that this war, as in every war, is first and foremost a war of lies, fueled by a kill or be killed paranoia that twists every fact into propaganda. Those swayed by the spin of propaganda on either side have no capacity to see the truth that lies deeply within this very bloody conflict itself. They are trapped in it with no apparent way out.

Primitive Brain

Both the Palestinians and the Israelis are acting out of what might be called the primitive brain. It is a mindset of an anguished fear that is hardwired for flight or fight. Responses to each other are quick, reactive and centered primarily on survival and fear of extinction. The raw nerves of this "reptilian brain" are fed by the anguish of their suffering and a dreaded fear of being trapped in unbearable suffering. What challenges this fossilized fear of the primitive mind and its retaliatory tendencies is the effort to begin to put a reflective space around these dreaded fears. As this reflective inner space opens, it illuminates one basic fact--the real war we are waging is within ourselves. This awareness empowers the oppressor and the oppressed alike to see that one's suffering and fear are a cry for an inner not an outer revolution.

As one evolves in a more enlightened way one begins to be less driven by the fear of my own extinction and now use my suffering more as a force of awareness and radical patience. While this more peaceful direction influences me and "my side," the bloody conflict subsides as I lower the sword of threat and violence.

Nonviolent Perspective

The nonviolent perspective can offer real hope in this process. Nonviolence as a theology, a tactic, a philosophy and a way of life relies on this ability to look within, to self-examine. A courageous look at inner motives yields the question: How is "my side" contributing to the conflict? If Americans were to look inside themselves regarding these warlike dynamics of the Middle East, we would see that thousands are dying due to our tax money. Therefore our first and fundamental task is to admit our complicity that makes these grizzly photos of the war dead possible. We must demand that our government cease this funding that provides Israel with a deadly weapons arsenal that primitive brain is a only too happy to deploy. If we are unsuccessful in our demands, then we need the courage to refuse our tax payment. Starving the violence at its source will indeed stop the killing.

Those of us who oppose the oppression of the Palestinians, and continue to question how Israel has used military threat to control the movements of Palestinians over these last 60 years, must have the courage to admit Hamas's warlike use of aggressive rhetoric. Hamas has a strong anti-Jewish Charter, which includes the demand that "Jews forfeit the land to Islam, forever, and there is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by jihad." The Charter further states that "the hour of judgment shall not come until the Muslims fight the Jews

and kill them." Hamas has forged a powerful religious and military bond with Hezbollah, asserting together-- "Israel does not have the right to exist." If all you do is list the sins of your enemy and call for their demise, you will engage only the vicious primitive brain of your enemy.

In response to this aggressive language, Israel sees no option but to be on continual military readiness. When hostilities break out, Israel acts swiftly, unavoidably committing unthinkable atrocities. When Hamas strikes Israel, Hamas does so as the elected and governing party of Gaza, and therefore acts with the implicit support of the people of Gaza. They launch missiles while imbedded in civilian centers. The *New York Times* writes that Hamas has booby-trapped huge sections of Gaza, stashed weapons and personal under hospitals, schools and libraries. When Israel viciously attacks can one assume their military intelligence is accurate? That is, do they really know where Hamas is?

What we can be certain of, however, is the result of their aggressions, a 400 to 1 casualty rate which is overwhelming civilian. Because these odds are almost casualty free for the Israelis there is no incentive for Israel to stop the one sided carnage. Throughout the Israeli attack on Gaza this past December and January, Defense Secretary Ehud Barak gained in the election polls for Prime Minister due to these low casualty rates for Israelis. Like the early popularity of the U.S. war on Iraq, very minimal casualties on "our" side must equal maximal and horrifying casualties on "their" side. The Israeli military continues to insist that they do not wish to kill civilians, resorting to the justification that "Hamas gives us no choice".

Conversely, Palestinians consider Hamas the resistance movement, fighting the foreign occupier and a political and religious body that offers urgently needed social, educational, and medical services. The hard won political power of Hamas comes from the overwhelming support of its people even though their own unarmed people continue to die due to Hamas provocation. Palestinians have often said that "Hamas doesn't hide behind us, Hamas is our only protection." The moral outrage from around the world the Palestinians are counting on is widespread and growing but insufficient to stop the massive casualties. Like Hezbollah in their battle with Israel in 2006, Hamas has already "won this war," this battle of wills, even if Israel goes on to kill every one of them. But what could it really mean to "win" this war?

Who Is The Victim?

The Palestinians who support Hamas' rhetoric and tactics are victims yes, but not "innocent" in this conflict. This present war has tremendous support within Israel. Similarly, relatively safe Israelis aren't innocent bystanders in this bloodletting. The conflict remains locked in on both sides with a kill or be killed standoff with the primitive brain in command. The question tragically remains: Who will protect the children?

Then who is the true villain here? Is it Israel? Or are Israelis just hopelessly driven to violence through the threat and violence of Hamas and the surrounding Arab world? Is Hamas the villain? Or is Hamas just desperately trying to protect oppressed Palestinians who are attempting to survive 60 years of Israeli dominance?

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No. The real enemy is the violence of the triad, which begins with U.S. funding of Israel. Then the retaliatory hate dynamics keep this war and suffering going without any hope of relief. Hamas resorts to the ancient logic of the reptilian brain's desperation: "Only military defeat of Israel will protect and liberate the Palestinian people." Israel harbors the same ancient and retaliatory illusion: "Our military superiority is the only force that will insure our survival." Faith that violence "will truly protect us" is the real enemy.

God Is Love

This triad that has done so much harm—the United States, Hamas, and Israel—also has the potential to heal the grave damage it has done. This triad contains within it the three monotheistic religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. If we all come from the one God of love, then wouldn't that very same God who loves us all, want us to repent and turn from our violence and hatred, stop justifying war and live together? We can stop the wounding and killing only with love, compassion and forgiveness courageous-

ly expressed in the midst of war. The inspiration to love even enemies, not to kill them, in these World Religions, has the real spiritual power to elevate us above our own fear of suffering and extinction, even as we are immersed in the violence. The spirit of nonviolence is a true and lasting peace, and its adherents move from compassion for one side exclusively, to compassion for all sides. The compassionate mind dares to ask the most dangerous question: Why is my enemy suffering?

What is the first priority in this con-

flict? Stop the killing, wounding and trauma. This living hell will cease when all parties are invited to the table of true dialogue and reconciliation: The U.S., Hamas, Fatah, and Israel. The lives of the innocents will be protected only when these parties in this futile and deadly war begin to build a permanent commitment to lay down the sword and keep it down and reject the temptation to raise it again under the tutelage of primitive brain's desperation and fear. "Nonviolent love," the great reconciler Mahatma Gandhi said, "is the only way."

Voices of Response to the Palestinian Conflict

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, co-founder of Sts Francis/Theresa Catholic Worker, together with her husband Scott have worked to highlight the plight of the Palestinians.

Yes, fear of the other plays a part but it is not the only motive. Hamas is "a popular militia" but it has other functions--social welfare agency and political party. It is an offshoot of the Palestinians Muslim Brotherhood which like its Egyptian counterpart originated to reassert the importance of Islam and to resist the corrupting influences of the West. I think the colonial lens is useful here. Unfortunately, Israel, a state created by Europeans is seen as the last vestige of colonialism in the Arab world.

Many Muslims regard Islam as the best defense against Western intrusion (see *Who Speaks for Islam* by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed). While Hamas is an Islamist movement, unlike the more amorphous Al Qaeda, it is very much a Palestinian nationalist movement (think IRA/Sinn Fein).

The US press repeatedly describes Hamas as hell-bent on the destruction of Israel but this is a deliberately inaccurate

description of their negotiating position. The pattern is familiar. For years, the PLO was regarded as pariah, sub-human, desiring to push the Jews into the sea etc. Hamas has committed atrocities to be sure. Like any group with a militant wing, war has made them more militant and lawless. The great tragedy here is that the 2006 Palestinian elections signaled an opportunity for militants to enter the political process but the US and Israel obstructed that.

While fear surely plays a role in Israeli/Palestinian conflict, I think power is at the heart of it. Disparity of power, rather, I agree with your recommendation that Americans examine how they are arming the already armed Israelis. What kind of power does nonviolence offer the Palestinians? Israel? Much, I believe. Finding the power to forgive will be important for both sides.

Nonviolence has much to say about injustice and offers the only way to "right the imbalance" without killing. I think righting that balance will help ensure the survival of Israeli society. If Israel doesn't provide the Palestinians with a viable political future then she is destined to be in a constant state of war and likely to collapse.

Sherrill Hogan spent at the White House, fasting and vigiling during the 100 Day campaign against torture and Guantanamo and has been a committed activist for the Palestinian people.

I put my small amount of hope for the Palestinians in the unforeseeable future-- that which we can not predict any more than we could predict the collapse of the Soviet Union and in God who works through the unpredictable.

For nonviolence to be successful, it must appeal to the hearts and minds of the "enemy" by its proponents taking the high moral ground, refusing to use violence, and having the courage to risk one's life while refusing to take life. If the hearts and minds of Israel are closed to any appeal, and, if Israel prefers to use violence and dehumanization to pursue its ends, the nonviolent movement cannot bring about a solution.

The nonviolent movement, which is growing every day in Palestine, cannot succeed in the face of the Israel-U.S. policy. If, however, a seismic crack should occur in that policy, a solution would be possible, and it would have to come from nonviolent means. Nonviolent resistance

has a long and healthy history in Palestine, which is well documented in the book *A Quiet Revolution* by Mary Elizabeth King, Nation Books, 2007.



In The Presence Of The Feminine

by John Schuchardt

John presented this reading, at Agape's Annual Stations of the Cross at the State House in Boston, co-sponsored with Pax Christi, Sisters of St. Anne, and the House of Peace where John and his wife Carrie, live and serve the needs of victims of war and those who struggle with developmental challenges.

Eighth Station: JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN

Large numbers of people followed him, and women too, who mourned and lamented for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children. For look, the days are surely coming, when people will say, 'Blessed are those who are barren, the wombs that have never borne children, the breasts that have never suckled!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us; to the hills 'cover us!' For if this is what is done to green wood what will be done when the wood is dry?" Luke 23.27-32

The merciless torture of the Merciful Healer is a soul-shocking revelation of gender. Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Herod, Pilate, the soldiers, are men. Yet, a different voice is heard, that of Pilate's wife who is disturbed by images from the spiritual world. She pleads with Pilate: "Have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him." (Matthew 27.19)

Dr. James Gilligan observes: "Violence is primarily men's work. Most of the lethal and life-threatening violence that is committed on this earth, in every nation, every culture, and every continent.... And every period of history, has always been violence by men..." (*Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*; pp.16-17).

"Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me; weep rather for yourselves and for your children." Jesus' final encounter with the women is a soul-awakening affirmation of the feminine, a revelation of gender made emphatic in at least three ways: First, in Luke's Gospel, these are Jesus' last living words. (The Seven Last Words of Jesus, spoken from the Cross, are his dying words.)

Second, Jesus' last living words are a reversed echo, a chilling introversion, of the words shouted out by a woman at the critical moment when Jesus turned from Galilee and faced towards Jerusalem, "Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts that you suckled." (Luke 11.27)

Third, in Luke's Gospel Four Beatitudes are followed by Four

Maledictions: "Happy are you who are poor, who are hungry, who weep; blessed are you who are hated, abused and denounced. Alas for you who are rich, who are full, who laugh; cursed are you of whom the world speaks well." (Luke 6.20-26)

And so we hear, with blinding force, Jesus' last living words, a Beatitude expressed as extreme Malediction: "Happy are those who are barren". "Happy the wombs that have never borne." "Happy the breasts that have never suckled." Apocalypse. Anti-Genesis. Woman, no longer the Giver and Nurturer of Life. The future doomed. Jesus is confronting male destruction, not female creation.

Jesus' first words are from the

prophet Isaiah: "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor; to proclaim liberty to the captives...to set the downtrodden free." Luke 4.18 (Isaiah 61.1-2) Similarly, Jesus' last words are from the prophets:

"The glory of Ephraim flies away like a bird: no birth, no carrying in the womb, no conception. Were they to bear children, I would slay the darlings of their womb. Even though they bring up their children, I will make them childless, till not one is left. Woe to them when I turn away from them! Give them O Lord! Give them what? Give them an unfruitful womb, and dry breasts." (Hosea 9: 10-14) And in a continuation of his diatribe

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Agape Mission: Christian Community and Lifestyle



Bob Wegener

Our mission is four-fold:

1. Commitment to community.
2. Dedication to gospel nonviolence.
3. Lifestyle of simplicity.
4. Discipline to both solitary and communal prayer and observance of Sabbath.

I. Community: For those who live at Agape and for the extended community who do not, our mission of faith, simplicity and nonviolence means community through Jesus Christ, implying both a way of life and of seeing reality. The counter-cultural pull of the gospel demands that we live at variance with the popular culture and embrace an alternative lifestyle, rejecting the isolation and individualism that the culture encourages, as we turn towards community.

Because living for the common good is the most human way to live and because of the apocalyptic toll of violence in our age, we attempt to move out of fear and alienation, into community rooted in faith and a love that is nonviolent.

A. Interns and Volunteers—Interns commit to a minimum of nine months, entering and fully living the life at Agape. In addition, adults volunteer at the community for stays that range from one week to six months. College students often volunteer during summer months, semester breaks, some having received academic credit for independent study or course work at Agape.

II. Nonviolence: Our community name, Agape, grounds us in the Biblical Jesus, His nonviolent being and mission in the world, a theology of love based on the historical fact that Jesus lived, died and rose from the dead exclusively in the spirit of nonviolent love. To those who follow him, Jesus reveals the names we give God: Love, Compassion, and Mercy. Scripture calls us to the furthest boundaries of charity, to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44). It is in these names that we struggle to ground our personal and communal thoughts and actions. Gospel nonviolence has a profound effect on:

A. Lifestyle: The power of nonviolence is determined by how we live our lives every day. This unarmed love promotes merciful speech and demeanor, especially in the face of violence and fear. Such love rejects an "eye for an eye" standard of justice, seeking instead the long-haul-power of healing, truth and

Founded in 1982, Agape is a lay Catholic Christian Community, living in the urgencies of 21st century North America and seeking to create and preserve a morally coherent life in fidelity to our faith and calling as Christians. While grounded in the practice of our Catholic Christianity, we are all-embracing Catholics in that we experience an affinity and connectedness with sisters and brothers from other faith traditions, and those who follow no particular faith tradition, learning from them and seeking to live in harmony with them.

reconciliation both within ourselves and with our adversaries. Even in light of our own failures, we attempt to live a family and community life involving nonviolent child-rearing and discipline.

Living nonviolence changes our entire habit structure, infusing our daily speech, work, family, and community relationship with mindfulness and compassionate listening and acting. In Christianity grounded in the gospel, we soon learn that the real battleground is within us.

B. Ministry: Our ministry in education is our effort at "right livelihood." Agape's education mission in nonviolence and sustainability takes us into arenas of education—universities, parishes, and retreat sites in various settings, outside of and within the community.

Our struggle to know the truth calls us "out" to evangelize—sharing struggles, and insights, learning from and supporting those with whom we interact. The community's main residence, Francis House, is the site of frequent days of reflection, prayer, and hospitality for interns, volunteers, and those in need. Retreatants use our hermitage located behind Francis House, joining us for community prayer and if desired, for vegetarian meals.

C. Events: Agape holds a number of annual events: Francis Day, Adult and College Retreats, Advent Evening, and Feast of St. Brigid, Stations of the Cross at Boston's State House and Easter Vigil and Annual Summer Workdays.

D. Witness: We are "public" Christians in that we are concerned about the well being of our society. In that light, our faith and experience leads us to clarify that: "Thou shalt not kill" does not admit to exceptions, that love is at the heart of God.

This belief compels us to reject institutions in our society which promote the violence of war, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia and the most lethal of weapons— unjust economic systems. When our Christian Churches promote "Just Wars" or "Just Defense" or view injustice with indifference or become complicit in oppression, we call ourselves and the Christian Community to a change of heart. Our level of conversion comes in the form of active nonviolent resistance, public witness, fasting, and prayer vigils.

E. Solidarity with the Poor: We struggle to live our Christianity on the margins where we meet the involuntary poor, the rejected, the broken, and children at risk, prison and death row inmates. In sharing our lives with those in extremity, we come to know our own complicity in their suffering, experience our own woundedness, our common bond with those in need and better recognize the face of God.

III. Voluntary Poverty and Living Simply: The core community at Agape has decided to live in the mystery of poverty as Beatitude and as a "voluntary" choice. Such a choice is an economic one that begins to open us and our communi-

ty to share some of the inconveniences of the "involuntary" poor.

Attempting to place our lives in the care of Divine Providence, we renounce the privileges of wealth as an illusion of security. We look "to set our minds on God's reign and Justice," trusting that the "rest will come as well." (Matt. 6:33). We find that a more creative life unfolds when we pursue simplicity and discover that the path of gradual divestment from the riches of this world is a joyful one. Attendant to this choice for voluntary simplicity, we attempt to be faithful by:

A. Living Under Taxable Income: Agape co-founders have a long-standing commitment to tax resistance. As Christian Pacifists, we are committed to resisting violence, wherever we encounter it in our institutional settings—political, legal, economic and social. Waging war is impossible without tax money. The United States military requires tax revenues to deploy troops or invade other countries, to build and deploy nuclear and other weapons in flagrant denial of the teachings of Jesus.

Conscience informed by faith leads the co-founders to non-cooperate with this evil by non-payment of federal taxes, protecting life as Jesus would protect it by living below taxable income.

B. Reverencing the Natural World: For centuries, Christians have been deaf to the Divine speaking through the voice of the natural world. We chose to locate our community on 34 acres of wooded land to immerse ourselves in the urgent and experimental task of learning the language of nature with her many voices, walking amid the untamed forest, working the rich earth, breathing the undefiled air, drinking water from our well and communing with creatures, great and small. We endeavor to live on Mother Earth as a "Thou" and not plunder her as if she were an "It."

C. Vegetarian Diet: The grace of good health celebrates our bodies as temples of the Divine. Because grace builds on nature, health is more likely to be maintained within wholesome living habits. We follow a simple vegetarian diet and fast periodically to clean and rest the body.

D. The Arts: To reverse the addictive effects of our electronic age, computers and television, Agape periodically gathers people in a circle to share poetry, song and stories. This work of the imagination is one of the joyous celebrations of living life creatively.

E. Sustainable Living: The real work of reverencing the earth involves living within it and reading our Christian Scripture in light of the wisdom learned from natural things. Working the earth with our hands is an antidote to the frantic pace induced by our technological age and grounds us in the simple joys of being human.

Our homesteading activities incorporate the elemental basics: house building and repair, cutting wood for heat and organic gardening for food.

We have intensified our efforts to live an ecologically wholesome life by building Brigid House, a straw bale house with solar energy and a compost toilet,

and heating both Brigid and Francis Houses with only wood.

We are committed to implement progressively, the use of sustainable energies, i.e. wind and sun, by weaning our community from dependence on fossil fuels, especially oil. Hence we drive a Jetta, which is fueled by grease from a Restaurant 99.

IV. Prayer Life: "Pray ceaselessly." (1 Thess. 5:17) This command reminds us that if our efforts at hospitality, service, and resistance to evil are not deep and filled with the spirit of contemplation, then our actions will not be loving enough or radical enough. Therefore, we seek knowledge of God which can only come from direct experience, so our prayer reaches up to God and out to our neighbor. Because Christian life and community are filled with ambiguity and hardship, our daily prayer strengthens us, fills us with courage and perseverance for the long haul.

A. Communal Prayer: Common life under the spirit of God's word begins with common worship. For centuries, back to the ancients, seekers have risen at dawn to pray together. At Agape, the deep stillness of the morning is broken by readings of the Hebrew Scripture and The New Testament. A noonday meditation is followed by the "Angelus," an historic prayer for world peace and reconciliation. In the evening, we pray the Christian Office.

B. Silence: If we are to submit to the nonviolent call of Jesus in our fast-paced and noisy culture, we need silence. In the silence, we listen to a speaking God, a voice that is alive in our very midst. Periods of silent meditation punctuate our daily prayer.

C. Sabbath: To fully experience the blessing of being alive, enjoy leisure and rest, is to observe the Sabbath, an ancient practice originating in the Genesis Story and loved by People Israel for thousands of years. In observing the Sabbath, all work ceases from Sundown on Saturday through Sunday. We encourage leisure activities, fellowship, hikes, recreation, music and days of solitude.

D. Liturgy: As a Catholic lay community, we maintain a devotion to the liturgical traditions. At the same time, we are aware of the creative tension of new movements within the church and the uniqueness and power of our experience as lay Catholics. Our own prayer is informed by the diversity of religious belief and practice of those who sojourn here. We rejoice in the inner authority with which women and laity inspire a new vision of the church as together we build authentic Christian communities for the 21st Century.

All Are Welcome at Agape

Finally, all are welcome at Agape. No one is excluded from participation in Agape's community life, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious or non-religious affiliation. We rejoice in our shared struggles to conform to the mind of Christ—mercy, love, compassion.

Circle of Being

The Cathedral at Agape

by Brad Landry

The religious experience might dwell outside of time, but it certainly resides in space. When we find ourselves in the midst of a mystical experience, we can look for its roots either externally or internally. Internally, we see our prayers, thoughts, and meditations as a potential cause. Externally, we can look to a certain space.

The great Catholic Cathedrals are awe-inspiring because of the way they set up and transform space. They are sacred environments, but sacred space is not limited to man-made moments. A great temple can be found here at Agape as well. The natural world here forms an organic space for worship.

There is a cathedral in these woods and the hermitage is only the carriage house. Ascending the hill towards the reservoir, you confront a massive network, a narthex marking the entrance to

hallowed space. Proceeding down the dirt road, you feel as if you are traversing the aisle of a great nave, amidst the center chamber of a holy structure. Each side of the aisle is marked by massive natural columns and swarms of living parishioners who have come to eternally worship.

Of course, the head of this cathedral is the Quabbin itself. Its purity and expansive water mark the sacred aspe. This place is the sacristy itself. Quieter, calmer, and more barren than the other aspects of the cathedral, this section is where a most powerful presence resides. This is the Cathedral at Agape.

Brad Landry, graduated from St. Anselm's College in May and spent time in preparation at Agape's hermitage where he wrote this prose poem.



Michael McCurdy

Who Got Killed Today?

by Julia Krauss

Ten young hearts entered Agape on May 16, 2009 and blessed the community with their presence, enriching the list of brothers and sisters, who have come to Agape in the past.

Ten young souls, between the ages of 16-20, mostly Latino, and their adult leaders, experienced for the first time, some of them said, silence, and being, literally, off the grid--NO cell phone service, no TV = no entertainment

Once they got used to the idea that emails and text messages couldn't be checked for the next hours and family and friends couldn't be reached except by the

part of our day together.

And when the silence began to sink in, then came their stories. How humbling it was for me to see them opening up to us, three Anglo beings, who are talking about sustainability, Jesus and non-violence and the interconnection of it all. We were talking to these kids who are exposed to violence and crime every day. And yet, they trusted us enough to share their stories. Something about St. Francis House and all the memories of the many souls it has hosted over the years brought an invisible force of trust and love.

Ten young "angels" who had to grow

said that his intention for the retreat was to make us laugh and have a good time. Yet, his friend was shot and killed last year while in a basketball game. Kevin wears a button on his trendy basketball hat that shows his friend and the date of his death. His comment about the situation back in Roxbury and the crime and violence that is happening every day is simple: "You just get used to it, you know. Instead of asking, 'How are you?'" he said, you start asking "Who got killed today?" when you pass someone on the street.

And Jose, a R & B singer who seems to like the role of being the clown and the loveable one, but when asked about the violence where he lives, his beautiful smile fades and he says: "It's stupid, you know. Violence, you know, killing each other. It's stupid."

And there is Jessica, wearing big golden earrings in the shape of a heart, who when we circled to say good-bye started to recite a poem - by heart - that she wrote about a friend who got killed a couple weeks ago. So many emotions: "Why do you look away? We're in this together! Gunshots, bam, bam, last night," she reads her poem. She is 16.

And then Vianny, who shared for the first time, her story of how she got robbed at work and the guy slashed her face three times. Oh beautiful Jewel, what a story behind your face. There are tears and the group is visibly moved. "It happened on my 18th birthday" says her sister, Gabby, who also starts crying. "We share the memory of this day together."

My heart is full of emotions two days later, and I can still see their faces, hear their stories, still alive in me and St. Francis House still filled with their presence. How humbling. I was raised in such a different neighborhood in Germany where gun shots were only a reality on TV and, even then, when I was older. These kids grew up with that sound.

Now I am sitting in Brigid House, silence and beauty all around me. Life at Agape moves on. And yet, two hours from here, these kids are back in their reality, the "real life," filled with fear and uncertainty and the feeling of powerless-

ness. These kids are on my mind and took a place in my heart. I pray for them.

For Jose's smile to be smiled many more times.

For Jerry with his serious face and heavy walk to find a place to be silent and feel safe.

For Jessica to write many more poems about love and life and beauty instead of fear and death and injustice.

For Julio for many more basketball moves and little smiles.

For Joshua to find what is important to him.

For butterfly to find her calling in life.

For Gabbi and Vyanni, these 2 jewels to find moments of peace and to realize how beautiful - in and out - they are.

For the Marileysnika to meet many people who tell her how awesome and lovable she is.

For Debb, Father John and Ryan in gratitude for their work with the kids, their love and passion. Day after day.



telephone one of them said to a leader before arriving at Agape: "But what if we died out here? How are we gonna ask for help?"

Nevertheless, when the youth arrived, they were quick to entertain themselves with what was around, mainly exploring St. Francis House: "Is it all out of WOOD?" they asked, followed by: "That's quite a fire hazard."

The pond behind Francis House, the hermitage behind the pond, the straw bale house across from Francis House, the woods and the garden, stacking wood, playing basketball and yes, being silent and simply breathing, all of these were

tough enough to survive in their world, trusted us enough to give us an inside view of their struggle. They let us have a peak of their light and the beauty of the jewels they all are. Their jewels are sometimes covered under big words and a tough attitude.

Ten, young "angels" and many more back in Roxbury, so called "Inner City kids," shared their stories, their experiences of life--people around them who are loud and rude, unfair and violent. What a culture shock it must have been for them to come to Agape. And what stories we heard.

There is Kevin, for example, who

My heart is full of gratitude that my path crossed the path of their lives. I wasn't sure why I felt called to come back to Agape instead of going to Virginia. Now I know --to meet with these storytellers. Let us pray for these young souls, these angels who are so brave and yet so fragile that there will be many more Agapes along their way.

Con Jesus todos vas bien.

Julia Kraus came to us through the WOOFer organization, joining a vibrant group of volunteers and interns in the fall of 2008. She returned recently to be reunited with her mother and father from Germany, all of whom blessed the community with their conversation and gifts. We know that Jules will return as she did for this retreat, because the Agape Call is in her soul.

Canticles of Silence

At The Gate

By Philip Schmidt

During my eight days of retreat at the Agape Community, I spent three of them attempting to capture a view of the Quabbin, a reservoir, a vast expanse of water located in a wooded conservation park. On my last visit, I was overcome by the beauty of its breath-taking silence. It reminded me so much of the landscapes that the Canadian, Tom Thompson, had painted in the early 20th century on his trips to Algonquin Park in northern Ontario.

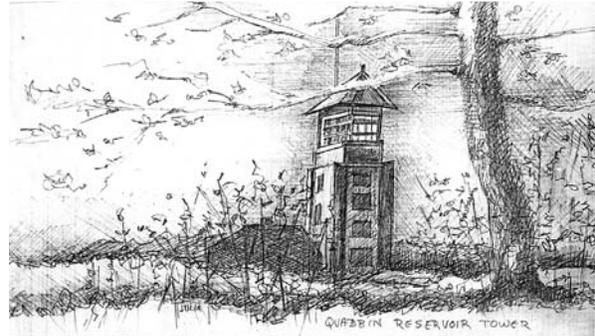
Poor One at the Gate

The Quabbin was like a magnet for me. At some point I would get to it. My third attempt found me starting out at 10 in the morning. Previously, I had begun in the afternoon, much too late to capture at dusk the scenery I remembered from the autumn of last year. On this occasion, I would take my time. I ambled along leisurely, soaking up the sun, stopping occasionally in awe of the bright blue sky and the tall, stark, majestic trees that stretched upward, with whom I sang lustily. Last fall, I had taken a path through

the woods, far too deep with snow for me to follow now. So I continued along the ploughed gravel road to the gate where I was not sure what I should do.

The gate-I looked around it to see if there were any tracks that would indicate the freedom I sought at that very moment. Not a trace. The gate was padlocked. I stood dumbfounded, gazing beyond at the road which continued to where I supposed my heart's desire lay, an open, inviting path, a frozen lake of snow, grey woods, green forest and a bright blue sky. Such was the metaphor of unattainable beauty, forever out of reach and a close glimpse of it was only an affirmation of my isolated place at the entrance to this vast, mysterious universe.

Suddenly, what might have been an invitation to communion was ripped apart. The unmistakable roar of wheels in the distance grew louder, as I helplessly stood absorbed by the beauty beyond. Fear overtook me. Park rangers were on their way. What would they make of me? Had I stepped out of bounds? WAS I TOO CLOSE TO THE GATE? (I had announced no intention of trespassing by



Julia Fullam

going any further than I had.)

As she got out of the van, the young park ranger and I exchanged greetings. She took out her keys, opened the gate and, as the heavy lock and chain fell to the side of the metal gate with a clang, I forged a question: "Do you think that I could continue along the road?" "I'm afraid not", she replied. I forged again. "Are you sure?" "I'm sorry", she answered. My heart sank. The silence of those stark trees became ominous. They annihilated me. I was a kind of poor

Lazarus, overwhelmed by their defensive, rejecting anonymity. The gate was ajar and the padlock hung opened. I stood frozen, rigid, unwelcomed.

I wondered how loose or how taut the strings of my heart would have to be, before I could raise a note that would pierce that wall of beauty and together make us sing again.



D Roberts Kirk

To write about the Agape retreat will be very difficult for me, sitting in a maroon comfy chair in the distinguished Saint Michael's College library room. I feel so solemn, only because visiting Agape was like being provided a glimpse of heaven, then being thrown back into the tumult of a collegiate life which has been very difficult. I was placed back into the emotional, physical and spiritual struggle of a graduating college senior. I think my heart was guarding me from indulging in my attachment to the beautiful Agape Community.

But I will indulge myself in recounting Agape, remembering the little piece of heaven God has placed in Western Massachusetts. I heard of Agape my sophomore year of college. My friend told me all about this community, saying, "It was Catholic. It was liberal. You would love it."

At the time, I was enlivened to learn about this spiritual community which heightened my own soul, hearing there were others with convictions and religious beliefs like mine. There were peo-

ple that practiced Catholicism and lived the gospel teachings of non-violence, connecting environmentalism, conservation and stewardship of the earth. But it was not until this year, my senior year of college, that I heard that part of my Christian Social Ethics class with Professor Bob Thiefels would have the option of attending Agape Community.

As we left from Saint Michael's College, located near Burlington, Vermont on March 27, there were three other students, boys that I did not know too well, me and the professor. It must have been my third eye opening enormously because I felt so excited with anticipation. After a four hour drive, a trip to Burger King, (the boys ate there as I picked up granola at the gas station), we were there. And what a greeting!

I walked from the van, feeling slightly guarded until after opening the door of Francis House, we were flooded with warmth and joyous exaltations as the retreat parties from different college converged, for this first taste of Catholic camaraderie. Speaking of taste, (I found this very funny) one of the Saint Michael's College students when handed a beautiful plate of organic vegetables stated, "Well, I guess we had our last taste of sin."

As I glanced around during the circle of introductions including the co-founders, the volunteers and the students from different colleges, I realized something—these were not one dimensional, one issue conservative apocalyptic people who would be thinking: "Let's pretend that homosexuality and women's rights don't exist."

This kind of labeling is actually what I receive at times from some of the unbelievers at Saint Michael's. Here there were highly intelligent, attractive, spiritual, practicing and compassionate people. The students talked of involvement in

peace-keeping organizations, social work in Washington DC, love of music, art and reading.

I ate my vegetarian food, smelled the Massachusetts wooded air and peered at the countless pictures of Agape members and others at nonviolent gatherings and peace rallies. We listened as Suzanne discussed the need to commit to expressions of the self. She incorporated Eastern Spirituality, speaking of Jesus in the purest, most real way that I hope He always will be to me. He was non-violent. He was merciful.

For me, all of these pieces of myself started falling into place. I was Catholic. I was a Peace and Justice Major. I was a Reiki (holistic and energy healing practitioner.) I was a vegetarian, I loved community living.

Who knew that I would find my whole self, fully realized, accepted exactly how I was at Agape? But this is why God is so good. God loves us to no end and knew that I needed to discover Agape Community so that I would be inspired to continue the ideals that the community had materialized. I literally cried tears of joy, alone in my little room at the top of the Agape retreat house.

I sit here and contemplate actualizing the hope and ideals that Agape set out for me. I can reflect truly that each day in our lives is such a gift, and we all have the capacity to love each other as Jesus loved to pray and work for peace and harmony in our world. The best part about this all is that I do not have to be in a cramped cubical in suburban sprawl, next to a corporation that promotes sweatshop labor. I have learned that a community of peace is built everyday where we live.

Back here in Burlington, Vermont, I have just participated in car abstinence week. I handed in my car keys to our environmental office, walking everywhere, feeling all the while that I am

shedding this physical attachment of a car. The longing to be somewhere quickly, having quick fix answers from questions, really points to the need of Jesus in our lives. I know that I cannot be sad that the Agape retreat is over. I will take it with me wherever I go.

I will take Agape with me as I choose to walk or take public transportation into and around the city.

I will take Agape with me in every bit of garden organic food that I eat. Simplifying, not indulging in my meal.

I will take Agape with me when I see a group of young intellectual men and women who are also lovers of Our Lady and the Holy Spirit.

I will take Agape with me when I see a concentration of birch trees in the woods or while I converse with my friends under a patch of stars. I will take Agape with me as I turn the other cheek when someone produces words or the spirit of violence.

I will take Agape to the alter when I am to be married, inspired by Suzanne and Brayton's wedding vow of teaching and working for nonviolence in communities.

I will breathe Agape in every morning as my inhalation is infused with the word "Jesus" and my exhale emits the word "mercy" as our retreat meditation taught us.

Agape has done something very important for me. It has made me fall in love with God, and the true meaning of my Catholicism. This is because God has brought me to a place where every dream I have ever dreamt about spreading the message of Jesus Christ already has a name. It has already been built.

This is why God gave me a glimpse of heaven in Agape because heaven can be experienced on earth. God has graced and inspired our young hearts with the community of Agape.

A Glimpse of Heaven

by Maggie Rowlands

The Failure To Grieve and It's Consequences

Continued from page 1

I have often had the thought that regular grieving sessions could become part of our religious practice which could have cathartic and healing benefits for all who participate. Personally, I notice that I protect myself from grief, fearing that I will not be able to function, will be in a state of perpetual sadness, a reasonable response to be sure, but limited as a singular view of one who has not tested a community grieving circle, not totally reconciled to the accuracy of my own projections.

What would happen if this shield of protection were tossed away? Could we then partake in a shared sorrow, offering renewed commitment in our peacemaking? Could we then add to our practice of grief, the men involved in these addictive rituals of death: our own American military, the Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas, Zionists, and the enemies of our enemies and beyond? What would be the effect of such prayers of grief on us, our communities, congregations, our planet?

The recent Combatants for Peace tour has demonstrated the efficacy of public repentance and mutual forgiveness, placing former enemy combatants in dialogue about peaceful solutions with each other as they reveal the points of their conversion from participants in killing, to peacemaking. What a gift such a public sharing would be to our veterans returning from Iraq, a public or private forum for sharing their nightmares, losses, cruelties in our religious congregations.

Jesus offers us an example of one who grieves, who regards the pain of others in his own nation state, Jerusalem: "As he drew near and came in sight of the city, he shed tears over it and said: 'If you in your turn had only understood on this day, the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes.'" (Luke 19:41-44) Like the

Guantanamo poets and the photo-journalists of war, Jesus exposes the "dominant ideologies that rationalize war through recourse to righteous invocations of peace; they confound and evoke the words of those who torture in the name of freedom and kill in the name of peace." (Butler) Jesus grieves over and forgives his torturers, his executioners, the authors of state-sponsored violence.

For we Christians, this failure to grieve those we kill comes from the secular perspective that "those we kill are not quite human, and not quite alive, which means that we do not feel the same horror and outrage over the loss of their lives as we do over the loss of those lives that bear national or religious similarity to our own." After all, "Islam is barbaric." (Butler, p.41-42) In a sense, Jesus' grief at the grave of Lazarus and the many instances of his sorrow at the bedsides of the dying, particularly the children of grieving mothers, fathers and widows, presents grief that goes outside of the clan or tribe, extending to the cursed and the hated "other" in Jesus' day, as well as to his own crucifiers.

In this context, Dossari and the other Guantanamo poets, provide a biblical context of prophets who carry the searing truth: "Take photographs of my corpse at the grave, lonely, /Send them to the world, /To the judges and /To the people of conscience, /Send them to the principled men and the fair-minded." Refusing invisibility, Butler responds, by writing that "the lives of those at Guantanamo do not count as the kind of 'human lives' protected by human-rights discourse." They offer instead a different kind of moral responsiveness. "Once we are able to enter their world, their words, what they write will 'contest and explode' a 'military rationale that has restricted moral responsiveness to violence in incoherent and unjust ways.'"

Butler contends that "grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters. ...Without grievability" she contends, "there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. Instead, 'there is life that will never have been lived,' sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost." We cannot relate to the detainees because we treat them as though their lives "never have been lived." They don't exist. We cannot grieve a person who doesn't exist.

These smuggled poems expose the misery of those who share in the precariousness of death. The Guantanamo poets "break through the dominant ideologies that rationalize war through recourse to righteous invocations of peace; they confound and expose the words of those who torture in the name of freedom and kill in the name of peace." Poetry thus serves as a frame of humanizing the other, thus exposing, as Jesus does, the shocking cruelty and indifference of torturers to the pain of others.

Poems from Guantanamo begins to unmask and unravel the socially contrived ruse of protection and its suffocating web of lies. These mere 22 poems which survived "the censorship of the US Department of Defense" raise for Butler and for all of us who read them the question: "*What is it about the poetry that seems particularly dangerous?*" In the beginning "prisoners in Guantanamo would engrave short poems on cups they had taken away from their meals," using "small rocks or pebbles to engrave their words on the cups, passing them from cell to cell; and sometimes toothpaste was used a writing instrument." (Butler, p. 56) Their danger, Butler concludes is that they are together "critical acts of resistance, insurgent interpretations, incendiary acts, that somehow, incredibly, live through the violence they oppose. ..."

"The Claim of Nonviolence" title of

the last chapter of *Frames of War*, must be "mediated in some way," our very capacity to respond with non-violence" depending "upon the frames by which the world is given." We Christians possess such an outline in our Scriptures, an evocation of grief over the killing of an innocent we believe to be Divine. Our structure rejects the "dominant frames sustaining the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan." (p.182) Nonviolence is "a mode of resistance, especially when it refuses and breaks the frames by which war is wrought time and again."

The potential for community based resistance, exemplified by the Apostle Paul in Acts, the hard and joyous road of evangelizing the truth of nonviolent love from jail, reminds us of prisoners of conscience throughout the global network of resistance. Paul, like many of those imprisoned, is heartened by a presence: "The Lord stood by him and said: 'Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome.'" (Acts 23:11).

If we trust in the purity and clarity of Jesus' teachings, then theoretical constructs and philosophical paradigms, though instructive and even inspiring, fade in significance. We are left with the haunting similarity between the words of Jesus and those of the Guantanamo poet, Jumah al Dossari: "Let them bear the burden before their children and/before history, /Of this wasted, sinless soul, /Of this soul which has suffered at the hands of the/protectors of peace."

Simply put, we bear witness, with Jesus standing by, and we mark our lives in such a way as to regard the pain of others as our pain, not because of Susan Sontag, or Judith Butler, though they are mighty articulators of the cause, as all women of compassion and intellect are, but because, aided by their insight, we return to what we already know. We have the gospels. We have Christ.

Voices

I think of Agape and your work everyday. On the mornings that I wake up before Grace, I sit quietly in our living room and I recall all of the quiet prayer in the hermitage and the morning, and especially the evening prayer in Francis house. Truly, I learned to pray at Agape.

It is typical I am told, for missionaries to ask themselves quite frequently: "Why am I here? What good am I doing? What could God possibly want me to do here? So many are so poor, so sick, so victimized. It's hard to know what to do to make a contribution. And it is impossible to have much hope. There are just opportunities to connect - shaking hands, embraces, smiles, a few words. But when I ask myself these questions with these poor ones in front of me, I imagine that the audience for my pondering includes the many, many people, who sent us, love us and support us.

Agape is large in my imagination as I pray and think and scratch for hope amidst the squalid poverty I see. And the questions I pose to myself are also framed by the actions and words of the Jesus of Mark's gospel depicted by Ched Myers in the book I am reading now, *Binding the Strong Man*. This is not a "nice", "soft" Jesus, but one who loves fiercely, courageously and tirelessly. I let go of the questions of doing and reaching (again, as so many times before), for the question of Being. And so my questions change (but not my imagined audience or my actual stage): What am I called to be here? How can I share myself authentically with those who are separated from me by a chasm

seemingly deeper and more unbridgeable than what separated Lazarus and the rich man? What am I called to become after this experience in Brazil?

I am listening to WBUR's "On Point" which is discussing women in combat. The guests say that they do not want to glorify war by discussing the "accomplishment" of female soldiers being allowed to go on raids, but of course that is what they are doing. And we are just one week into the post-election euphoria that has gripped so many.

I was recently discussing the impending Obama presidency with a friend in the U.S. and I pointed out that I HOPE for much more CHANGE than Obama wants. We will have a new emperor, more to our liking, but the empire will continue as it has. Brazilian activists, by the way, are not fooled by the situation. While they recognize the significant symbolic value of an African-American president, they believe that little will change in the ways of U.S. relations with Latin America. U.S. mining and commercial interests will dominate the economic scene allowing the rich to get richer and the poor (somehow) to become more destitute.

Jonathan and Anne Marie Yu-Phelps, both former interns at Agape where they met, are now Maryknoll missionaries in Brazil, who, with their daughters Madeleine (5) and Grace (3), visited Agape this summer. For queries about and support of their mission, please contact Agape.

In The Presence Of The Feminine

Continued from page 3

Hosea cries out Yahweh's words: "Then they shall cry out to the mountains, 'Cover Us!' and to the hills, 'Fall upon us!'"

Ezekiel too, adds to the repository of Hebrew Scripture from which Jesus takes his words and inspiration: "I am kindling a fire in you that shall devour all trees, the green as well as the dry. green tree as well as every dry one." Ezekiel continues:

"They afflict the poor and needy and the resident alien without justice; Thus I have poured out my fury upon them; with my fiery wrath I have poured out my fury upon them; ...I have brought down their conduct upon their heads, says the Lord God own heads." Ezekiel 21.2; 22.29

Again, Dr. James Gilligan: "To understand physical violence we must understand male violence. ...Listening to women (for the first time) is a necessary

prerequisite for learning how to transform our civilization into a culture compatible with life."

The occult meaning of The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is a Subconscious Will to Destruction: wombs that are barren, dry breasts that will never suckle. The Bright Shining Lie of Violence is unmasked by Jesus. The spiritual laws of karma, the laws of harvest, are inescapable: Life-giving or

Death-dealing. The choice is ours. And the consequences.

To the women who loved Jesus, who followed Jesus from Galilee to Golgatha, I believe what Jesus is saying is "*Daughters of Jerusalem, your wombs shall be fruitful, for you will give birth to a new humanity, a humanity which will renounce violence forever.*"

"Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me."



Springfield College work crew at Quabbin Reservoir.



Workday with Martin Marosy, third from left and students from St. John's Prep in Shrewsbury, MA.



Agape Workday Retreat - Fairfield University.

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News Notes

New Agape Website, by web artists Amy Kotsopolous and Judy Vedder, still a work in progress; it lends an earth-tone color to the Agape Story in its 27th Year. Check it out: www.agapecommunity.org

John Dear SJ, noted nonviolent speaker and activist, will be at St. Rose of Lima, Diocese of Worcester on Thursday, September 10th. Contact Roger and Charlotte Stanley: cstanley041258@verizon.net

Rage Rage Against the Dying of the Light

By Skip Schiel

Thanks to generous support from the many communities, including Agape, in mid June I plan to return to Palestine/Israel for another 3-month residency. As on my previous 4 journeys of discovery since 2003, I will volunteer my photography to organizations in the region, such as the American Friends Service Committee and the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information. I will concentrate on Gaza, mostly the AFSC youth program, teaching photography and photographing their operations; Jenin and Bethlehem to work in cultural centers for youth in refugee camps; and hydrogeology, associating primarily with a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization for support and consultation. And I'll be based for the first two months journey in an apartment in the Ramallah Friends School.

Francis Day

October 3, 2009 10-6 pm

Judaism, Islam, Christianity: Stepping Into the Tragic Gap

--Resolving Differences

--Learning to be Nonviolent

A Day of Reflection /Discussion

Music and Liturgy

Speakers Include:

Raymond Helmick SJ

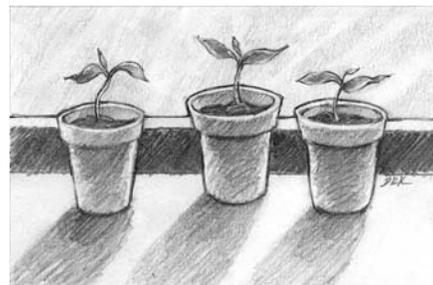
mediator for over 30 years in world trouble zones, including Palestine and Northern Ireland

Rabbi Sheila Weinberg

teacher of mindfulness meditation, peacemaker, speaking on Jewish Roots of Nonviolence

Combatants for Peace

former Israeli-Palestinian combatants who have reconciled and work for peace.



AGAPE CALENDAR

June 19-21 - Sal y luz - Salt and Light Retreat at Agape for Latino Peace and Justice groups from New York City.

August 28-28 - Pax Christi Massachusetts - Retreat at Agape

September 19 - Just faith day Retreat at Agape

October 3 - Annual St. Francis Day with Raymond Helmick SJ, Rabbi Sheila Weinberg, Combatants for Peace - see website for details - www.agapecommunity.org.

October 17-18 - Just Faith Weekend Retreat at Agape for inquiries contact Marilyn Paul-Lewis (mpaullewis@gmail.com) of Justfaith of Ludlow. Space is limited, so register early.

November 6-8 - College Retreat for College Graduates, former Agape retreatants and interns and for all those in their mid-20's and up - *How Do I Live My Life??:* Lifestyle, Sustainability, Nonviolence.