

VOLUME • 73 NUMBER • 7/8 JULY/AUGUST 1990

# THE WITNESS

**Clergy and sexual abuse**  
Lindsay Hardin

**A survivor's journey**  
Mary Meader

**Shameful secrets**  
Faith Evans

**Breaking  
silence**

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# Letters

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## Article biased

All across America, law-abiding inner city dwellers (white and black) are saying, "We won't stand this any more," and have been organizing to reclaim their youth and their streets from the drug culture and the often random violence. In my city, whose social programs are among the best and most extensive in the nation, the two blacks on the City Council are in the lead to enforce swift justice (i.e., prison) for those who sell crack and who murder. But Michael Manning [*sic*] in "The myth of equality" (April WITNESS) says that this push for law enforcement and justice is a racist conspiracy to place "millions of young, poor black men and women . . . in a prison cell." Sorry — that is woefully simplistic — and false. Yes, the broad masses of people everywhere want murderers brought to justice, but in Alexandria, and many other communities, every family is contributing hundreds of dollars every year for drug education and rehabilitation programs.

Manning criticizes Douglas Wilder for abandoning "racial politics"; sorry, the vast majority of Virginians are fed up with racial politics. We still proudly keep our Wilder bumper sticker on our car.

Manning eulogizes Jesse Jackson for his "advanced, progressive agenda for social justice," but does not mention Jackson's urgent exhortations through the years to black youth to stop always blaming "the system" and to take advantage of their opportunities.

Manning sees other conspiracies — "the system uses the rhetoric of equality to hide the process of oppression" and "it is hardly accidental that (crack) has been unleashed within the very poorest urban neighborhoods." In Manning's view, those who sell crack or who murder cannot be blamed; rather it is the "system" to be blamed, i.e., the dominant whites who are engaged in "a one-

sided race/class warfare." This is drivel, not worthy to be placed in the same issue with the most perceptive and sensitive articles I have seen in recent years on the labor movement and on Nicaragua. In my community, Alexandria, and in Virginia, I see conscientious, devoted leadership, white and black, working together to make some dent in this awful problem, sometimes at risk of life. (A policeman who lived a few blocks from us was recently murdered by a crack dealer.)

The short biographical note at the beginning of his article states that Manning is on THE WITNESS editorial board. Does this obligate THE WITNESS to publish such a biased and racial article?

**Robert T. Jordan**  
Alexandria, Va.

## Author responds

Since the end of the Civil Rights Movement, the demise of affirmative action enforcement and the acceleration of institutional racism, it has become fashionable for many honest and sincere Americans to "blame the victim" when it comes to race relations. When African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and other people of color state statistics or present evidence indicating the widening gap of inequality between the races, we are accused of "reverse racism," and promoters of a "racist conspiracy theory." Despite the emotional character of Robert Jordan's tirade against me, I suspect that his motives are honest enough. He is obviously concerned about the very valid economic and social problems in black urban communities, and he is sympathetic to black politicians who have attempted to build multiracial bridges. For this he is to be commended.

Yet it is equally regrettable that, despite his honest intentions, Jordan fails to recognize some basic truths about the state of race relations in our nation. If

Jordan would care to refer to any serious studies of patterns of sentencing in the criminal justice system, he might discover that blacks and Hispanics who had the identical criminal records as whites received significantly longer sentences. Moreover, since the death penalty began in this country, not a single white person has ever been executed by the state for the rape of a black woman or the murder of a black person. This is not rhetoric; this is fact.

Progressive and black Americans welcomed the election of Wilder as governor of Virginia. But it is also true that the black Democrat repudiated many of his former liberal beliefs in order to achieve the support of white voters. The central flaw in Jordan's argument is his inability or unwillingness to comprehend that political, economic and social structures prefigure the daily experiences of individuals. If the system deliberately destroys job opportunities in a ghetto, eliminates decent health care facilities, and tolerates the sale of crack in our schools, destructive, antisocial behaviors are the result. This is not to excuse individual behavior, but to explain it.

Finally, the same care which reader Jordan took in misreading my article is characteristic of his inability to read my name correctly.

**Manning Marable**  
Boulder, Colo.

## On staying put

Bless THE WITNESS for "raising" Daniel Berrigan from the dead silence that surrounded the Plowshares Eight in most of the religious as well as secular press. To Daniel's "If he [Jesus] had only stayed put," (April WITNESS) I would add "or risen with a pension in hand fully funded by God in adequate measure to get God's message across, with blare of trumpets and the gleam of gorgeous vestments; making a show of it to beat anything the temple crowd or

Caesar's hordes ever dreamed of . . ."

Instead, he rose as naked and as dirt poor as the day he was born — with 40 more days to fund — and nobody waiting in the wings with any gold, frankincense and myrrh . . . "It would have been easier for the Pharisees and Sadducees" if Jesus had risen as rich as the high priests and Herod/Pilate — an equal to them in worldly goods — or if Jesus had made a lot of money on his resurrection with his beyond-the-grave appearances. The scandal of Jesus is that he did "stay put" in the poverty he was born into. No "up the ladder" into financial solvency, much less financial excess like the Big Boys at the temple, or government ladder-climbing practitioners; he rose as poor as he lived and died. Not much of a role model for the Pharisees and Sadducees and priests of his day or those clergy of our day who desire higher and higher status and financial rewards and more and more power.

**Abbie Jane Wells**  
Juneau, Alaska

## Questions quote

Last fall I saw twice a moving video tape put out by an interfaith group of church organizations which have been trying to stop U.S. aid to El Salvador for many years. It includes a statement by Dr. Charles Clements, who told of his conversation with a peasant who said, as closely as I remember, "You Yankees don't understand violence. You think violence means shooting with a gun. I worked on a hacienda where I had to feed bowls of meat and milk to the dogs. My children never had meat, and rarely milk. I had to see them die for lack of food and medical care. You will never understand violence until you see your children slowly dying of hunger."

I was troubled, to say the least, to find a very close repeat of this story in the May WITNESS in the article by Parker Rossman, "Liberation philosophy for re-

tirement." It is possible, of course, that the young political prisoner and Charlie Clements' informant came from the same hacienda; or perhaps many wealthy hacienda owners feed their dogs meat and milk. But nearly identical wording troubles me.

I am in no way questioning the achievement of Margareta and Lars Inglestam, or the fine example of faith in action they give us. I believe, however, you can understand the doubt cast upon the veracity of both her informant and Charlie Clements by the near identity of their accounts. I will appreciate any genuine help you can give me.

**Dr. Helen M. Corneli**  
Stevens Point, Wisc.

## Rossman replies

Dr. Corneli's concern about the quote is justified and difficult to clarify. Any of us, when we make our reports at home after a long exploratory journey to many countries, may get confused about where we learned certain things that moved us. My article took the story from Margareta Inglestam's mimeographed report to her friends when she got home. She also visited El Salvador and perhaps she saw the video tape and forgot the source and country of the story. In any case, I thank Dr. Corneli for commending the explorations of the Inglestams as examples of "faith in action." Her passion in repeating the story was genuine.

**Parker Rossman**  
Niantic, Conn.

## Dozier brought joy

I want to say how wonderful Verna Dozier's May article is — how it brought me joy. That is my faith, too, and that of all God's wounded ones — to say yes in the face of so many no's. I was performing at a conference on Benedictine spirituality recently when the speaker, the Rev. Lawrence Freeman, said that "Civilization, as per Kenneth Clark, began with

monasticism — a few white, male celibates in the 5th and 6th centuries — on a rock off the coast of Ireland." He then went on to say that contemplation, meditation and the experience of God are at the heart of civilization.

I knew that if Jesus was sitting there he would find that a strangely inadequate definition. I agree that one's experience of God is the heart of civilization, but with Verna Dozier, I would see that most magnificently shown in human courage and faith, in God and oneself — under the slave master's whip, or in the crippled bodies of the poor, the aged, the harassed and pregnant mothers. Their wisdom, their prayer life, their meditations — that's the great "Yes." For me, too, as a child of sexual abuse (which, incidentally, Fr. Freeman called "quite a *fad* these days in the church"), I know of countless survivors who remembered praying during the abuse, and then pulling down their dresses, pulling up their pants and carrying on with life, as I did!

No, Sir Kenneth and Fr. Lawrence, "civilization" is a little larger than monastic life. Yes, that is an important part, and one our churches need to recover, but perhaps we need the grandmother wisdom of a Verna Dozier more than the "sirs" and the "fathers" and the "superiors." Look at the compassion and humility in her face!

**Roberta Nobleman**  
Dumont, N.J.

## Lutherans seek reprint

We would like permission to reprint excerpts from "Saying 'Yes' in a 'No' world" by Verna J. Dozier in our July/August issue of *The Vanguard*. In this issue we are focusing on white racism and its varied affects on different communities. This article presents the kind of thinking we want to emphasize — one that recognizes the problems in society

*Continued on page 27*

## THE WITNESS

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# THE WITNESS

## Breaking silence

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## The buck stops where?

As summer burst into full flower and with General Convention only a year away, THE WITNESS ventured to find out how well the Episcopal Church was fulfilling its mandate concerning socially responsible investments, including its proxy voting record. It is important to track; the Episcopal Church was actually a pioneer in socially responsible investing. In 1971, it was the first church to file a shareholder resolution calling on General Motors to withdraw from South Africa. It is also a founder and member of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, a coalition of institutional investors, including 22 Protestant agencies, pension funds and dioceses, and more than 220 Roman Catholic religious communities, pension funds and dioceses.

These church investments as a group wield considerable influence. According to ICCR, the corporate responsibility movement now includes activist churches and public and private pension funds with over \$500 billion in total invested portfolio worth.

The Rev. Brian Grieves, the Episcopal Church's Peace and Justice officer who oversees its socially responsible investment program, was

commendably forthcoming about national church investments. He sent a copy of the ICCR publication, *Church Proxy Resolutions* — an impressive 66-page book showing in detail 219 church-sponsored shareholder resolutions for 157 corporations. It lists the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Episcopal Church as a sponsor of such shareholder resolutions as one calling on Comcast, a cable TV company, to integrate its board of directors; and another asking AT&T to give a full accounting of its management safety record at the Sandia National Laboratories' nuclear weapons plant.

The Methodist Church's General Board of Pensions appeared over and over in the ICCR list as a sponsor of shareholder resolutions on issues ranging from the end of trade with South Africa to forgiving Third World debt, as did the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches. Conspicuous by its absence in these sponsor lists, however, was the Episcopal Church Pension Fund.

Our inquiry about the CPF's proxy voting record elicited an informal accounting only of resolutions it voted *for*. But judging from available in-

formation, the CPF does not take a leadership role in sponsoring resolutions. Used to operating unto itself, not accountable to the national church or the church's Executive Council, neither has the CPF seen fit to release the complete record of its votes on shareholder resolutions. Such information must be kept by law and should be a matter of public record.

There is some precedent and cause for concern about the CPF's accountability. The 1988 General Convention passed a resolution supporting divestment of shares in Royal Dutch Shell and other oil companies doing business in South Africa and backing a boycott. Not long after, the CPF bought 150 shares — \$6 million worth — of Shell stock and held them for nine months until church activists called attention to the fact (see WITNESS editorial, March 1989).

Eighteen percent of clergy compensation is paid into the CPF, money which comes out of the tithe of the person in the pew. Church-people of conscience should call on the CPF to make public its proxy voting record and use its financial clout to support the church's witness to justice. TW

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# Clergy and sexual abuse

by Lindsay Hardin

The young woman, a college student home on vacation, had gone to her parish priest for counseling. She found him particularly responsive to her and hoped for some guidance regarding a personal problem.

His interest, she found out, was strong. Within the hour, he had kissed her, touched her breasts and told her of his deep admiration for her.

Although she never went back, years later she is still bitter.

“When I see him I’m angry,” she says. “I’m angry for letting it happen. To this day, I feel like I should have done something more, said something more, gone to the bishop.”

Some 10 years later, the priest is still in the same parish. The woman, now 28, believes he has seduced and exploited other parishioners, both men and women, and wonders how many.

That kind of situation, according to both the Diocese of Minnesota and the state legislature, happens too often and must stop. Toward that end, Minnesota church, civic leaders and mental health professionals have lobbied for the passage of stricter laws regarding the conduct of professionals.

Their persistence paid off in 1984, when two laws were passed saying that clergy may now be found guilty of civil and criminal charges for a range of sexual contact, even that which falls short of intercourse. Similar laws have also been enacted in two other states.

Under the statute, sexual contact that

would otherwise be a gross misdemeanor is a felony if it occurs during psychotherapy. In a major break from the past, clergy are considered therapists under the law.

Although there is some debate as to when a clergy person is administering psychotherapy, the message is sharp: Bishops, priests and deacons may be found criminally responsible for entering into sexual relationships with parishioners. Making the legal situation even more serious is the fact that the consent of the parishioner cannot be used as a defense if the case comes to trial.

Even without the law, say several Minnesota clergy and mental health professionals, sexual exploitation of parishioners is always wrong. Such an interest led to a national conference in St. Paul early this year to begin planning for a church-wide response to sexual misconduct by clergy.

“The problem is not a new one,” said conference co-sponsor Bishop Harold H. Hopkins, Jr., executive director of the Office of Pastoral Development for the House of Bishops.

“The church has often looked the other way when exploitation has occurred. Our commitment is not only to recognize that the problem exists, but also to begin immediately to take preventive and educational steps.”

Similar work is also being undertaken by at least two other church bodies: the Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, which are developing national policies on sexual-harassment issues. The Diocese of Minnesota is just completing a Code of Ethical Principles,

which organizers hope will be a model for national Episcopal Church policy.

“Sexual abuse and exploitation by clergy is serious,” says Gary Schoener, a Minneapolis-based psychologist who directs the Walk-In Counseling Center of Minneapolis, and specializes in treating victims of sexual misconduct by professionals. “It happens much more often than we realize and most cases go unreported.”

Schoener, who authored the book, *Psychotherapists: Sexual Involvement with Clients*, believes that as many as 13% of clergy may have had sexual relationships with parishioners one or more times in their ministry.

Because an employer is ultimately responsible for the conduct of employees, Schoener believes that national church organizations may soon find themselves with large settlement debts to pay. Such litigation, he says, is underway against several church groups, and “could literally sink the mainline denominations.”

According to one source within the Episcopal Church, there are about a dozen cases now pending against the church for clergy sexual misconduct.

Although some clergy who become involved with parishioners are repeat offenders and mentally ill, others find themselves straying into dangerous waters during a troubled marriage or isolated professional life.

An August 1989 *Newsweek* article characterized the typical offender: male, middle-aged, disillusioned with his calling, neglectful of his personal life and marriage, isolated from clerical colleagues. And, equally important, he’s

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The Rev. Lindsay J. Hardin is a priest and free-lance writer living in Silver Spring, Md.

met a woman who needs him, depends on him, and makes him feel special.

“Sexual exploitation by clergy is unethical conduct with serious psychological and spiritual ramifications,” says the Rev. Susan Moss, former chair of Minnesota’s Clergy Wellness Committee and a member of Minnesota’s Interfaith Task Force on Sexual Exploitation by Clergy.

“What makes it so unethical is that there is always a power imbalance between someone seeking counseling and a clergy person,” says Moss, one of the Minnesota conference planners.

“A parishioner has a right to be vulnerable — to express that vulnerability and not have his or her trust betrayed.”

The Rev. Margo E. Maris, canon to the ordinary for Minnesota Bishop Robert M. Anderson, agrees. Part of her ministry involves dealing with victims of sexual misconduct by clergy in the Episcopal Church and other mainline denominations.

“Clergy are the ones who need to take the responsibility for keeping appropriate boundaries, for they are the ones with greater power in the pastoral situation. They’re also the ones entrusted with the care and shepherding of souls, and to take advantage of that sacred trust is always wrong.”

For several years, Maris has worked to heal the hurt experienced by those who have been exploited: She brings the parishioner face-to-face with the clergy person who has abused the trust. Although the meeting may take place years after sexual contact occurred, she believes it is necessary to include the bishop or other denominational authority figures.

“Our purpose is not to go after offending clergy so much as it is to help victims become survivors. In order to begin the process of both healing and trusting the church again, those who have been hurt need to be heard. They need to say, ‘You will not have that power over my

life anymore.’ And the bishop must know what happened so he or she can insist on whatever discipline or treatment is needed.”

Susan Moss believes that such reconciliation is necessary between the two parties involved in sexual contact. But she also has learned that entire congregations are affected when their clergy become sexually abusive or exploitative.

“In many ways, the parish is a family,” she says. Inappropriate sexual involvement is, therefore, tantamount to family incest.

“The dynamics are the same. Parishioners come to church expecting that clergy will help provide a nurturing, caring environment, a safe place to grow in the faith. When that trust is betrayed, the whole congregation becomes the victim. Secrets are kept, denial expressed, people are hurt and take sides, often against the one who has been victimized,” she explained.

In addition to clergy exploiting the trust of adult parishioners, Moss believes that such behavior also takes place in other situations: clergy with children or teenagers; college chaplains with students; bishops with clergy, clergy



spouses, or staff members; rectors with assistants, both lay and ordained.

Kelsey Brannick, Ph.D., a faculty member at a large midwestern university, experienced such a trauma in her parish five years ago when the rector was expelled by his bishop, ostensibly for recurring alcohol problems. Two years later, her fears were confirmed. The unspoken reason for the dismissal was that he had become sexually involved with a male teenage parishioner.

“I’m not sure the congregation has recovered yet,” she said. “Denial, anger, depression, blaming — we’ve gone through an entire range of emotions and are still working at it.”

“In addition, we lost a lot of our members, good ones. People who were loyal to the rector left soon after all of this happened. We’ve lost over a third of our pledging units and are still working to rebuild.”

“In the Episcopal Church, work is just beginning with the victims of sexual exploitation. We’re also offering treatment to the offending clergy person, which is good. But we’re lagging way behind on knowing how to heal broken congregations once misconduct has occurred.

“We were not allowed to mourn,” she said. “It was a highly charged situation, a very ambiguous one, and we weren’t given the resources we needed to deal with it and go on.”

Brannick believes there should be what she calls “diocesan action teams”: trained clergy and laity ready to react quickly in a crisis, to offer resources, both psychological and educational, and to help the parish family mourn and heal at the same time. “I would hope that the diocese would have a repository of carefully selected people to facilitate healing. There are so many layers of denial that you need people who are very patient as well as capable of dealing with hard issues.”

Such healing, according to Susan  
*Continued on page 10*

# A survivor's journey

by Mary Meader

*I see the leafless winter sticks sprout green buds, leaves, blossoms; I see them swell into this fruit that I hold in my hand, this fruit that is itself a seed. And so for me the constellation of things becomes an experience of renewal, and I feel it in the flesh of my own woman's body, which seems so vulnerable, so mortal; yet I can know, with a sense deeper than words, how it renews itself.*

—Starhawk

Several years ago, in a shelter for homeless young women where I was a counselor facilitating a weekly support group, I felt the presence of evil. My faith is one that has always rejected personified evil, but I could find no other name for what I felt that evening in our midst. The topic we had chosen for discussion was sexuality and relationships, a major concern, as the women's rejection of abusive situations was partly the cause of their homelessness and despair. But we never got to these issues.

Instead, we began and ended by sharing the violence and pain of our earliest sexual experiences — incest and rape. The 10 women in the group were all victims and survivors. Some of us had mothers, friends, or institutions that had intervened on our behalf, making the pain more bearable, but most of us did not. While the stories differed in detail, the common experience was a profound, death-dealing loss of innocence and betrayal of our trust in the safety of home

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**Mary Meader**, a graduate of the Episcopal Divinity School, counsels abused women and is a lay deputy to General Convention from the Diocese of Massachusetts.

and community. I left grieving for our stolen childhoods and with an overwhelming visceral response to what I could only name as evil.

As an incest survivor, I shared their pain, but mine was not so raw and repressed. I had years of healing behind me, accepting reluctantly that healing is a long process, not a single event, knowing “in the flesh of my own woman's body . . . so vulnerable, so mortal . . . with a sense deeper than words, how it renews itself.” I asked myself how I could help my young sisters.

Ellen Bass in her book *The Courage to Heal* speaks of the healing process, the “experience of renewal.” She names 14 stages of healing, including remembering, breaking silence, trusting yourself, anger, confrontation, forgiveness, spirituality, and finally, resolution and moving on. My young sisters had begun their remembering and had broken silence; all I could do was walk with them for a while on the long road that lay ahead.

Shortly after that evening, I wrote the following reflection for a class in feminist ethics at the seminary where I was studying. It is a remembering of my own time of “leafless winter sticks.” In recalling my own lost childhood, I was able to see the “sprouting green buds and leaves.”

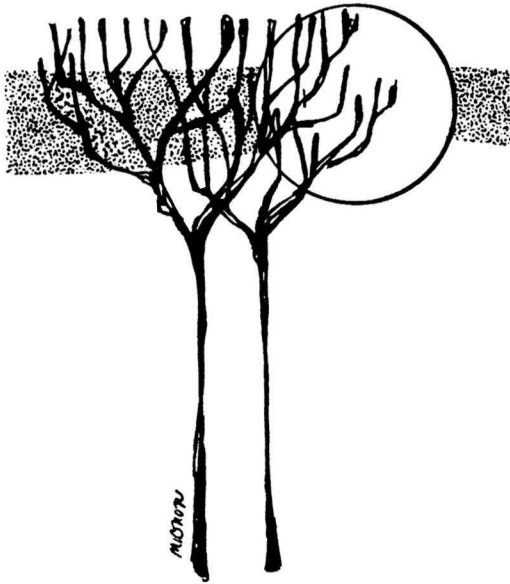
My daughter Rebekah, age 17, home from school and needing help with an English paper, decided in her own wonderful grounded way to write her philosophical essay on saying goodbye to her childhood. This is a phrase she has used for many years when I exhorted her to rid her room of clutter or to give away her children's books or games.

“No,” she would say, “I can't give away my childhood.” We would laugh and hug and she would continue to squirrel away her treasured bits. I rejoice today in her happiness. But after so many years, I continue to mourn my lost childhood. It was snatched from me before I was ready.

I remember the summer I came of age. The memories of that time come to me in waves of emotion and of the knowledge that surely there was something more to the memories than I can recollect. It was in a way a birth. I left something and was given something. I said goodbye and never said hello. It was the summer my mother entered forever her world of madness and it was the summer my father touched me in my private places. With adult words I now can name my mother's escape and my father's violation but then I could only stand still and survive. It might not have been summer and these events might not have taken place at the same time but I remember them as having done so and thus they are for me the markings of the days of my coming of age.

It was August because that is the month of my birthday. I was going to be 12 years old and in some unnamed space I felt the earth sinking and there was no warmth. The air was heavy and hot as my mother sat in her room giving and receiving messages through her “automatic writing” as she conversed with the unseen people in her world. My father's presence was heavy and threatening and I knew I was not





safe. Mother did not talk to me directly and I knew she did not see me. But I always went to see her when I got home from wherever I had been. I recall the desperation with which I tried to enter her world — a world that excluded me, but I so wanted to be with her. I remember talking to the “people” exactly as she instructed me. If only I could enter her world, I would be safe, and the earth would stop its sinking and I would not feel so cold.

I had never had a bicycle. There had never been enough money and I wanted one to ride to the ballfield with my friends. My birthday was approaching and my mother promised me that she would get me one for a present. She said she had ordered one and it was going to be delivered on my birthday.

The window seat in my mother’s room looked over the driveway. When the delivery man came with my new bicycle he would have to pass the window. My mother told me to watch for him. The day was still and hot as late August days are, and I waited in eager anticipation. My mother was giving me a gift;

she had made the arrangements, and I believed my mother. I needed to believe that she saw me and heard my longings. I was there early in the morning — no time had been given for his arrival. I waited, accompanied by my mother’s reveries, her endless writing, and her occasional comment, “Do you see him?”

I never got the bicycle. No one ever came, no explanation was ever given and I never asked. I learned that day that I could not enter my mother’s world, that there was no safety in my home, and my childhood was snatched away before I was ready. I left the room when the shadows of the night were long. I said goodbye but I never said hello.

My mother left me then. She escaped into a world that I could not enter and I began another life that day. I came of age. I was born that hot and still August day so many years ago.

For many years I have grieved and mourned with and for this little girl, orphaned by violation and betrayal. Slowly, over time, I learned to say hello, to trust and to feel the earth as solid.

I have four children now. I have two daughters. I do not know what shadows will stand between them and the world. But I bought them bicycles and I tried hard to hear them, to see them, and to keep them safe.

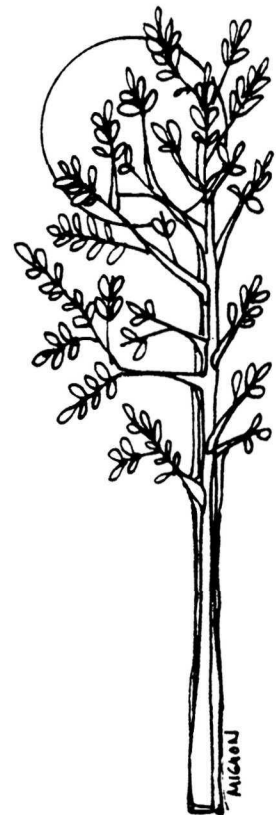
My father, now dead, was an Episcopal priest. He abused his children and wife, had affairs with parishioners and eventually left us and active parish ministry. He was a troubled man, but one of great charm and intelligence. He died unable to acknowledge or to return to us what he had stolen. Yet he remained a priest “in good standing” with the blessings of his bishop, continued his work as a supply priest, and retired with a church

pension.

Today the world and the church is paying attention to sexual abuse in the family and the institution. It is good but difficult work. If we are faithful to our resolve to break silence, we will create a safer world for ourselves and our children.

I serve on a Diocesan Task Force on Victims’ Rights which is addressing the issues of professional misconduct and sexual abuse. My involvement is both a blessing and a burden, but I agreed to participate, recognizing with gratitude the opportunity it presents for me to complete my healing. “Having gained awareness, compassion, and power through healing,” Ellen Bass tells us, we “will have the opportunity to work toward a better world.” It is a way God gives me both to heal myself and briefly walk with my younger sisters on their long road.

Yes, the world and the church is paying attention. Almost any publication we



read today bears witness. In a recent edition of *The Boston Globe*, which I read just as I sat down to write this piece, two articles caught my attention. One headline proclaimed, "Clergy Sexual Abuse: Dirty Secret Comes to Light"; the other, "Daughters Win \$1.2M Jury Awards in Sex-Abuse Case Against Father." The first article reported a major ecumenical conference on professional/sexual ethics for clergy featuring the Rev. Marie Fortune, a United Church of Christ pastor, noted author, and director of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, Wash.

The second article reported on a precedent-setting Denver, Colo. case brought to court by two sisters who had been sexually abused by their father from 1944 to 1965. They decided to prosecute him many years later after reading a news account of the suspended sentence given a young man who had pleaded guilty to the rape of an 8-year-old girl. The judge commented that he had suspended the sentence because of the character witnesses who appeared on the accused's behalf, among them the man's pastor. The two sisters stated that they had filed suit because they "wanted to tell that little girl that not everyone who abuses a child will walk away without knowing what they have done to your soul."

Increasingly, the story of sexual abuse

and incest and the damage done to the victims is being told. Statistics give shape to the prevalence of such abuse, and help us to recognize the extent of the problem, but they don't tell the whole story — the story of how one lives with lost innocence and stolen childhood, the shadows cast on a life, and of the long process, the miracle, of healing.

Violence against women is deeply embedded in Western history and culture and our religious traditions. It is woven into the very fabric of our lives and thought, so securely that we often cannot perceive its presence nor acknowledge the consequences. As a community we must begin to comprehend our complicity in the individual acts of violence which occur on a daily basis.

For me the long process of healing is mostly complete. I have been helped by long years of therapy, the women's movement, living and loving, mothering four children successfully, learning again and again to trust myself and others, and finally discarding old beliefs so that I now know an abusing priest/father is not synonymous with my God.

Significantly, my spiritual healing has been most often in spite of, not within, traditional theology and liturgy. Many women report the need for spiritual healing but feel further abused and marginalized by traditional structures, language and imagery. At present roughly 60% of

women victims/survivors leave the churches of their childhood seeking a safer, more affirming place of comfort and worship.

With the help of feminist scholarship and theology, we are learning to celebrate women's experience as a new paradigm through alternative, woman-centered ritual and worship. We are discovering what it means to envision a God/ess that is not defined by patriarchal, male ideation. We are learning to love and honor ourselves, our embodied female sexuality, by reclaiming a God/ess in whose image we were created. "An image . . . that inspires women," says Carol Christ in *Why Women Need the Goddess*, "to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred, the changing phases of our lives as holy, our aggression as healthy, our anger as purifying . . . through the goddess, we can discover our strength, enlighten our minds, own our bodies, and celebrate our emotions."

For many survivors of incest and sexual abuse, final healing proceeds from the way we image and speak of God. Perhaps this place, where the healing survivor's journey ends, is where the church's journey begins. For as Naomi Goldberg in *The Changing of the Gods* reminds us, "Our images of God dictate who will feel worthy in society and who will feel inferior, who will be respected, and who will be despised." TW

### Hardin . . . Continued from page 7

Moss, is at the heart of the work being done by those who participated in the Minnesota conference.

"We're working at two levels," she said. "First, we're training a group of 10 to 12 people who can respond quickly when exploitation has occurred. Their role will be to work with the one whose trust was betrayed and the offending clergy person — to bring those two together in the presence of the bishop.

"Second, we're working to educate people at all levels: from how to do pre-

employment and pre-ordination background checks now required by law to responding quickly and effectively with the congregation once the knowledge of exploitation takes place."

According to Bishop Hopkins, another conference goal is to train clergy to respond effectively when a person victimized by a professional seeks help. It is also his hope that seminaries will take an active role in assisting future clergy to avoid potentially hazardous situations.

Another conference, "Instruments of

Thy Peace: Strategies for Intervention and Reconciliation," has been scheduled tentatively in Minnesota for the fall. Designed for bishops and assistants of their choice, the conference will discuss the risks and ramifications of clergy sexual exploitation as well as the effect of such misconduct on congregational systems.

"It's crucial to have strong resources to address the problem," Bishop Hopkins says. "Our job is to help people mend — both laity and clergy — and get on with the mission of the church." TW

# Lesbian/Gay Ordination group seeks supporters

A Task Force for Continuing Lesbian/Gay Ordination, comprised of members of several Episcopal social justice ministries, is collecting signatures of those who have participated in ordinations of openly gay and lesbian persons or would be willing to do so.

The Task Force is composed of members of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, the Urban Caucus, Integrity and other groups that "have traditionally worked together at General Conventions."

A recent letter from the group said, "Bishops don't ordain alone. A bishop can ordain only with the approval of the duly-elected Standing Committee of the diocese and the consent of the people of God there gathered. A few people in our church are trying to capitalize on some

Episcopalians' dislike or disapproval of Bishop John S. Spong and/or an individual ordinand. They insist that it is not the will of most Episcopalians that our church ordain non-celibate lesbians and gay men.

"But the issue is faithful response to the movement of the Spirit in our lives and in our church. It is time for us to say — if you want to censure Spong on the grounds that he ordained a non-celibate gay person, then you'll have to censure me, too."

Those willing to sign the statement below are asked to return it to the Task Force for presentation to the House of Bishops' meeting in Washington in September. Note that some information items on the coupon are optional, recognizing some people's need for anonymity.

Dear Bishops,

The issue at stake in the current debate is not Bishop Spong or any particular ordinand. It is our church's practice of ordaining non-celibate lesbians and gay men. Count me in!

\_\_\_\_\_ I have participated in/attended the ordination of a lesbian or gay man and would do so again.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have not knowingly participated in/attended such an ordination but I would if the opportunity presented itself and I knew the candidate to be qualified.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(All the following information is optional. The more you give, the more power your statement will have. However, we recognize some people's need for anonymity. Tell us what you can. We have no wish to press for more.)

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

I am: \_\_\_\_\_ gay

Diocese \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ lesbian

\_\_\_\_\_ straight

I am a: \_\_\_\_\_ bishop \_\_\_\_\_ priest \_\_\_\_\_ deacon \_\_\_\_\_ lay person

Mail by Sept. 1 to: Task Force for Continuing Lesbian/Gay Ordination  
P. O. Box 5202  
New York, N.Y. 10185

# The unforgivable sin

by Carter Heyward

We have become a nation of addicts and survivors. Consequently we are witnessing today a revival of interest these days in recovery and survival — recovery from addictions and survival of abusive relationships. In the United States, we are inheritors and bearers of much shame, regardless of how happy our childhoods may have been.

An assumption I make about my audiences these days is that they are either in recovery themselves, need to be in recovery, or are close to someone who is or should be; moreover I assume that every lesbian and gay man is a “survivor” of abuse in a homophobic patriarchy, whether or not he or she realizes it.

We live in a society in which neither children nor adults grow easily into a strong sense of themselves as good people deserving of dignity, joy and profound respect.

The prevailing cultural motifs which have shaped everyone in this country have shamed us into feeling bad about how deeply we need one another’s affirmation, acceptance and tenderness in order to grow joyfully and fully. We Western Christians have learned to be ashamed of our strongest dreams of radical and passionate interconnectedness and interreliance.

Often we lack adequate comprehension of the social and political character of our life together. Our shame is rooted in emotionally, spiritually, and often physically violent power structures such as heterosexism, sexism, racism, able-

bodyism, classism, and so on. Thus, we are inclined to interpret our feelings of shame as a personal problem, or as something endemic to our families or relationships, rather than as a signal that something is wrong with the larger social order.

The mystical prophetic voice speaks through the pages of the Book of Revelation: “God will wipe away every tear.” We are likely to wonder, how can this be?

In the Gospel according to Luke, we hear Jesus say: “I tell you, my friends, don’t fear those who kill the body and after that can do no harm. But I will warn you whom to fear: Fear the one who, after killing you, has power to cast you into hell.”

And Jesus continues with a cryptic, visionary warning about the so-called Son of Man — the apocalyptic “Human One.” Contrasting the relatively sacred character of the Human One with the absolute sanctity of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says something that has intrigued me over the years: “Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”

As a child, I heard this literally as a warning never to say anything bad about the Holy Ghost — no jokes, no cursing. I want to suggest what I now believe is the link between our tears and shame and the reality of hell by reflecting on what the Holy Spirit may be in our lives, what it means to blaspheme against it, and why this particular sin is not forgiven.

Jesus, our brother in the Spirit, spoke of this Spirit as a gift God would offer to comfort and strengthen us. Augustine referred to the Holy Spirit as the bond of

love between the Father and the Son, or between the creative source of all life and particular forms of life, especially as they seek to know, love and worship the Creator. The doctrine of the Trinity implies that this source of all love, justice and creative power in the universe is moving among us eternally as a spiritual force — the Holy Spirit — connecting our lives and generating right relation. In other words, the Holy Spirit of God cannot be known as an icon or symbol of a static principle or as one person. The Spirit pushes us beyond getting stuck spiritually with any fixed image of God.

Anglicanism is founded theologically (though often not very well in practice) upon a doctrine of spiritual “participation.” This doctrine originates in the faith-assumption that the God whom Jesus loved, the God who was revealed in the work and person of Jesus, is with us now: the Spirit who we reveal, embody, share and enjoy. She is the One Holy Universal God whose very being is with us. She is the connecting link, or bond of love, between and among us. She is the power that enables me to know who I am in right — mutual — relation with you: I am your sister. She is the blessing that assures me it is only in right relation to you that I can know who I am. For she, the Holy One, teaches me that without you, I am nothing. Without one another, we have no identity, no accurate sense of ourselves. The basis of our humanness is our right-connectedness, our mutuality. Without it, we are nothing.

Without the Holy Spirit’s active involvement in our lives, joining us rightly with one another, we are not fully human. The Spirit literally shapes our humanness. This is the metaphysics of who

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we are. As we form together our ethics and the ways we live, we embody God. We become ongoing incarnations. From a Christian perspective, we embody Christ — the sacred, liberating cooperation of divine and human which was the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Our shared vocation is to notice this sacred power in our lives together.

If we literally are constituted together, if this is our natural human state, and if our power in this relatedness is the Holy Spirit of God, then to blaspheme or sin against this Spirit is to break the connections with one another, to disconnect.

To sin against the Holy Spirit is to act as though we were not brothers, sisters, friends; as if each of us were on his/her own in the world, not responsible for one another. This spiritual sin sets the stage for addictions — which are essentially diseases of isolation or disconnection — and for abuse. Emotional, physical, sexual, spiritual or political abuse is done most often not by evil, conniving villains, but by people out of touch with one another and, hence, with ourselves as we are called forth to be by the Holy Spirit of God. The vast amount of abuse done in the world is accomplished by good folks, you and I, when we lose touch with each other as brothers, sisters, and companions on earth.

And to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is the unforgivable sin. But why? Surely, it is not because God has no mercy upon us in our disconnected places of isolation and despair. It is rather because it is in the very nature of being disconnected to fear connectedness, to fear love, to fear God. Alienated from one another, we are incapable of experiencing the love — the Spirit — which is God.

To live without a sense of the power and presence of the Spirit of mutual relation in our lives is to live unforgiven lives. It is literally to live in a vicious circle from which there is no exit. In this state, we cannot hear, take seriously, or

trust the invitation of those who may reach out to us by God's grace to invite us into right relation with them and hence with ourselves. So we remain stuck in isolation — prisoners of fear, loneliness and shame — hidden in our places of disconnection, which for many are addiction and/or abuse.

Unable to trust, or accept, the forgiveness of a God who calls us into right relation, we remain unforgiven — and this, my brothers and sisters, is hell. I am not speaking metaphorically but literally of a place in which we cannot experience the love of God — not because God is not yearning for us but because we are shut down to the possibility of being touched and moved by the Spirit of God.

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*“To sin against the Holy Spirit is to act as if we were not brothers, sisters, friends . . .”*

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Hell is any place, any time, any event in which we are stuck in shame and frozen in fear.

But a feminist liberation theological perspective pushes us further: What is the difference, in this dreadful schema, between the hell in which the abusive person is caught and that in which the abused person is trapped? What is the difference, theologically and ethically, pastorally and politically, between the powerful and the powerless in relation to disconnectedness, isolation and hell? Is each unforgiven in the same way?

No, they are not. In an abusive situation, the victim is not responsible. Black people are not responsible for racist violence against them. Children are not responsible for physical or sexual abuse imposed on them. Gay men and lesbians are not responsible for the

homophobic treatment we receive. Women are not responsible for sexism. In any relationship, only those with power over others — the power to disconnect and abuse — are responsible for wrong relationship. They sin against the Holy Spirit.

But there is a very real danger here as well for the powerless, for all victims of abuse. It is the danger of being sucked into the hell of the abuser, being pulled into despair and isolation by those already there. This is the danger of identifying with the oppressor, of learning to act like and feel like those who violate and abuse us. It is, I believe, the danger against which Jesus counsels when he says, “I will warn you whom to fear — fear the one who, after killing (raping, trivializing, hurting or rejecting) you, has the power to cast you into hell.”

It is against this danger and this hell, this unforgiven place that survivors of abuse and people recovering from addictions are learning together to say no. And we are learning *because* we are together. We may be physically alone. We may often choose solitude. But more and more we know ourselves as sisters, brothers, and friends — our lives, dreams, destinies and freedoms connected at the root, a forgiving and forgiven people. A people more and more aware of the grace of God as a blessing which enables us to experience love together as a joy rather than as something to be feared.

As we come into an embodied realization of the Spirit that connects us, we begin to see that she is an open invitation to shape the future together. We begin to realize that in the Spirit of forgiveness, the future is always open. And this irrepressible blessing draws us into the heart of that power which is love, which is mutual, which is movement, which is constant and which is God.

*And God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes — and the shame will be over.*

TW

# Shameful secrets

by Faith Evans

For a little over a year I have been meeting with a small group of persons to discuss a shameful secret we each have been carrying around with us for most of our lives. We meet about once a month to provide ongoing support for each other around a vast problem, now critical in our society, which is largely ignored or hidden because it's too shameful for us to face. Most of my group have not exposed their secret to any others than those in the group.

When I was a child, I was sexually assaulted before I was nine by three different persons — twice by males and once by a female. Each of these were individuals to whom I had turned out of a deep sense of fear and pain resulting from the mental and physical abuse I received at the hands of foster parents.

Both males involved in this sexual abuse were ordained representatives of the church, who had developed a very close relationship with me as substitute fathers. The female, who knew of my foster parents' abusiveness (she rented their upstairs apartment), provided a comfortable haven for me. Actually, I never thought what she did to me was sexual abuse until several years ago.

When I was eight, I got very attached to one of my teachers, who was also a

minister in the church I attended. He was great at sports and taught science — one of the subjects I really loved. And he counseled kids who were in trouble. At the time, I was a very mean-acting kid who was always in fights at school. He and I had worked out this deal — I wouldn't fight in school, but on Fridays after school I could put on boxing gloves and duke it out in the gym privately. He began to call on me to help him in class and after school with various things he paid me to do. He got me passes to movies and took me on trips to Coney Island and the Bronx Zoo. We talked a lot, and he learned quite a bit about the physical and verbal abuse I got at home. He would buy me clothes and invite me over to his house to eat. He would ask my foster parents' permission for me to help him out on weekends, so I would often stay over at his place and we would bathe together and sleep in one bed. He hugged a lot in private.

At the time I felt strange about where and how he was touching me, but compared to the other comforts I was enjoying, I accepted this as part of our relationship. When I turned nine he got permission for me to attend camp at Bear Mountain with a church group. I was his chief honcho at the time and primarily stayed in the cabin with him. During that two-week period I was sodomized nightly and forced to commit oral sex a number of times. I cannot hope to get across in this article the real pain of that two-week experience. The only thing I can compare it with is someone being raped by a close friend or having a parent commit incest. The physical pain I was able to suppress, for I thought of myself as a tough kid hardened by the abuse I had been receiving most of my

life. It was the utter shame and feeling of total violation I couldn't shake. It was clear to me when I left that camp that I could never trust anyone for the rest of my life. I could never talk to anyone about what had happened, for the only person I could talk to about such a thing was the very person who had done it to me.

For almost a month afterwards, I literally terrorized those around me. I remember almost smothering my foster parents' child to death. I spent my days and nights thinking up ways to kill them, everything from burning down the house to putting rat poison in the food. Instead of going to church every Sunday, I would sneak off to the movies. I dreaded the end of summer because I knew I would have to go back to church or school and run into this teacher/minister. The closer I got to this time the meaner I became. Just before I was to return to school I pushed my foster mother down the stairs and plunged a knife into the chest of my foster father.

As I reflect on that time, I would have to say the most serious impact of that abuse was the loss of my childhood. It seems to me that I leapt over what should have been the most formative years of my life. I can't remember times when I acted or played or thought like a child. I remember just trying to survive a day without being in some kind of pain. I don't remember a childhood friend or buddy. Everything I enjoyed doing I did alone most of my life. It made me feel safe not to be around human beings. I remember envying kids my age who had families that seemed to love them, who had homes to go to. They got Christmas and birthday presents and a party. They bragged about what they got and wore



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new clothes and sometimes I hated them because of it. I also remember how I could always feel someone else's pain, but could never feel or accept that someone loved me.

As an adult, most of my work has been with women's groups, especially low-income groups. I found myself developing strong bonds with women in these groups because I actually could feel the pain they were trying to express about their lives and the conditions they were forced to live under in this society. Their pain overwhelmed me, and I so identified with it that even today those relationships formed back in the '60s have held and bonded us together. On the other hand, several intimate relationships I had grew into distrust, as the result of my partner's need for me to respond to her love. When the subject of loving me came up, I ran as fast as I could.

I believe the difficulty I have had being intimate with women — even though I have been married three times — is also related to those early events. Throughout those marriages I would jump if touched in bed at night. I always used to steel myself to have sex. It wasn't that I never lusted or wanted to have intimacy, but I just couldn't without some mental effort. Alcohol was my greatest help during these years, because I could at times seem to forget with enough of it, and when I couldn't perform, it was a great excuse.

I had also relied on alcohol to get through the days when I was younger. From age 11, when I ran away to live on the streets, part of my reputation was that I "had no throat." That meant that whenever everybody chipped in to buy a gallon of wine, I was not allowed to drink first because I could drink down a quart without taking a breath. Every day I drank anything from wine to whiskey. I was known all over the neighborhoods. Adults would buy me drinks just to see how much I could drink before getting



drunk, which I never seemed to get. When I was 14, a new drink called Thunderbird came out. I remember putting the bottle to my lips and trying to guzzle it down. I have no idea why, but I got sick and threw up on the spot, and from then on, until I was 22, I was never able to drink anything.

But since that time I have on several occasions returned to alcohol as a way to sleep or to take away the pain I felt about my relationships. At times when I am lonely, I find myself going to a bar to drink and get away from the pressure I put on myself because I'm alone.

There was also a period in my life when, as a single parent, I felt I was a potential child abuser. When I say "potential," I mean that I never abused my children, but felt that if I touched them I would kill or hurt them very badly. For almost three years I didn't touch them because of this fear. I kept them from pain and harm, I sheltered them.

During those first three years, being a

parent was like being an alcoholic, taking one day at a time without a drink. Then one day I was sitting in the dining room, and my son came in with tears in his eyes and said his sisters wouldn't let him play with them. I announced it was meeting time. The other three came in and began crying because their brother was crying. I didn't know whether I wanted to cry or laugh at the situation, but I do remember all of us just hugging and laughing and crying at the same time. From that point on, all I ever wanted to do was hug them and make up for all the times I felt I should have touched them. Ever since that moment, I have never felt that fear again. A giant internal weight had been lifted. I wish I could state that something really important or dramatic made that moment happen, but I can only attribute it to my belief in God's loving mercy.

Throughout my life I have had inexplicable things like that hit me out of the clear blue. When I was taken from my last foster home and institutionalized for two years, I spent many nights dreaming of how I could get vengeance on my foster parents. When I was 22, I took a train to New York City, got on a subway and went to their house in Brooklyn. I had no idea what I was going to do to them. I just knew I needed to do something. I arrived just before sundown. As I reached the gate my former foster mother was sitting in front of her little garden. She called out to ask who was there — she could not see well. She looked very old and sickly. As I entered that yard, every bit of the hate I had carried for all those years seemed to disappear and I answered, "It's Faith, one of your boys." As I sat next to her, I was overwhelmed with pity and I touched her hand tenderly. I left an hour later, feeling very empty. From that moment on I don't ever remember being able to stay mad at any human being for more than 24 hours.

As an adult, I have wondered why I so

totally suppressed my anger at the persons who sexually abused me. In discussions with others like me I have learned there seems to be a fairly consistent pattern — we tend to blame ourselves for what happened, as if we were willing participants. We are always asking what we did to encourage someone to do that to us. I got caught up with the need to relate to someone. I trusted and let myself get comfortable and enjoy the little pleasures and kindnesses. Yet I made myself vulnerable and that also was unacceptable. What would people think if they found out? My reaction to those events was part of my denial of what happened to me.

A few years ago, in a private discussion with a black male minister for whom I had a lot of respect, I disclosed the incidents of sexual abuse in my life. Several months later during a debate I was having with him on sex discrimination, he implied that my stance on women's rights was because of these incidents and that I needed help to rid myself of this anti-male problem.

After my initial response of anger, I concluded he was right. Because of the abuse, I definitely grew up with a strong dislike and distrust of adults in general, and a hateful attitude against white males, for both male abusers were white. Even today, I always find myself challenging the authority of any males in positions of power.

I have also decided that this isn't something I need to cure. I believe I have survived with some humanity because I have refused to join this elite, sexist male club that has held sway over the world from time immemorial. Perhaps in some way I've been lucky in that regard.

I don't have many male friends. I have strong non-sexual relationships with many females from different cultures and classes. I am considered by some to be a feminist. That doesn't mean I am free of sexism, but I can admit to being

conscious of my sexism. If the sum total of seeking help for my supposed problem is to make me more understanding of the "problems" of males, I think I'd rather continue to sit with a group of economically, politically and socially-oppressed women and nurture some of the anger that's there.

When I discuss this period in my life, people want to hear about what helped me get through or make it as a human being. They want to understand how people overcome some of the most horrible conditions in life and still retain some humanity.

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*"I would have to say the most serious impact of that abuse was the loss of my childhood."*

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I don't have the answer most want to hear; I cannot point to the times where I am convinced God responded to my prayers. If anything, I became disappointed in God and her inability to respond when I needed her. But I have a very strong belief that God is at work in the world and that who I am *now* has been a part of that work.

Underlying it all is a deep and abiding faith that I have felt from the time I was a child. At certain points in my life I have seriously questioned it, but have always relied upon it. This gave me a foundation to work at not becoming what society and its oppressive institutions, including the organized church, would have me become. Somehow my separation of God from the institution at an early age really made a difference in my functioning as a unique human being. I also know that the faith I possess came out of those same institutions.

I don't have an answer for how that happens, but I see it around me all the time in South Africa, slavery in this country, the oppression of Eastern European nations, or the Philippines. Somehow out of all that oppression against human beings there seems to be a real and personalized faith experience that defies all logic.

I compare my experience with those persons who have, no matter what the oppression, retained a deep and abiding faith in God and her ability to eventually help them keep their humanity.

It has only occurred to me in the last few years what a tremendous impact the three people who abused me have had on my life. I also know there are millions of children and adults in our society who are going through similar experiences. Many of them go through life as I did, harboring this experience as a deep, dark shameful secret locked away in their minds, and refusing to deal with it. They live their lives not knowing why they can't seem to nurture trusting relationships with their partners or children or why they keep even their closest friends at a certain distance. We survivors seem to defy the conventional wisdom of counseling or analysis because we tend to suppress those experiences and not relate them to anyone. How can we ever again trust someone so totally?

As a black male who will be 50 years old this year, I've come to realize how huge a problem sexual abuse is in our society. I also realize that the simple act of being able to discuss this shame can change one's future. It's not the exposure of the abuser (though that may be incentive for some), but the release of this burden that can make a difference. Time after time when I have exposed this secret in groups the number of people who have talked to me about their own abuse has overwhelmed me. Recently someone I've known for the last 20 years, who is a school district administrator, came to me and related her



experience with a school teacher 35 years ago. She told how, after going through years of analysis, she is now responding because she finally decided to discuss her sexual abuse with her analyst.

I have run into people who have at times contemplated suicide as a result of this shameful secret.

I'm hoping that some of you who have sheltered this secret might expose it soon for your own wholeness. Those of you who work with people out there might consider taking an extra look at those whom you counsel and help them rid themselves of this secret.

Granted, it is no easy task to discern who has been affected by abuse, especially years after it has taken place. But it stands to reason that those who always

seem to defy conventional methods for addressing relationship problems, or who seek counseling but seem not to want to discuss certain aspects of their childhood, or avoid touch, or find pleasure in spending a great deal of time isolated and alone, are people who have probably been abused.

I am no expert just because I have been through the experience of sexual abuse. But in the past couple of years I have only begun to feel really liberated after I began to relate these experiences in presentations to church people. On the whole there has been a very good response, and even more surprising has been the number of people who have called, written or talked to me afterward.

This has surprised me because I have never considered myself the type of per-

son who people walk up to and feel comfortable with right off the bat. I found it a little uncomfortable at first. But then I realized my presentations were touching a group of persons (almost entirely female) who really had a need to relate to someone who would understand, and they connected with what I had to say.

As one who was sexually abused, let me state that writing this piece has not been easy for me, and it will not be easy for others to reveal their abuse, whether they are very young or very old. I don't know what life will hold for me in the 1990s, but I do know that there is real potential for me to function more healthily because of my exposure of this most shameful secret. I sincerely hope it can encourage someone out there to do the same. TW

## Pauli Murray fund established

**A** Pauli Murray Minority Scholarship Fund has been instituted at General Theological Seminary in New York to encourage enrollment of minority students, according to Elaine Silverstrim, one of the prime movers for the fund. With \$1,400 already collected, a minimum of \$5,000 must be raised within three years or the amount will revert to a General Scholarship Fund.

The Murray scholarship bears the name of the noted civil rights activist and feminist, an alumna of GTS, who became the first black woman to be ordained in the Episcopal Church.

The idea for the fund grew out of a racism audit at the seminary which investigated staffing, faculty and student recruitment. As a result of this study, an Affirmative Action Committee was formed which worked with the dean to develop an affirmative action checklist for hiring of faculty and staff.

In looking at the recruitment proc-

ess, the committee realized that the high costs of tuition was a significant impediment to minority enrollment, Silverstrim, who chaired the group, said.

A single student living frugally can expect to spend between \$18,000 to \$20,000 per year; for married students, especially those with children, costs run from \$22,000 to \$35,000. "New York is both a blessing and a bane as a seminary site," Silverstrim said. "The opportunities for experiencing the broader church and world are unlimited. On the other hand, even the most mundane items, from laundry detergent to coffee, cost more."

Two black students received Master of Divinity degrees this year and only one had been in residence for the full three years. In terms of Latino enrollment, there is only one Puerto Rican student presently in the M.Div. program.

"A minority scholarship in and of itself cannot give out the message, 'we want you, we welcome you,' but it can be a step in that direction," Silverstrim said.

It seemed logical to name the fund after the late Pauli Murray, a pioneer in other fields besides the church. She was one of two women to enroll in Howard University Law School in 1941 and was the first black deputy attorney general of California. She was also a Freedom Rider in the 1960s and one of the founders of the National Organization for Women. The fund "seemed a fitting way to honor her life and work, while looking into the future with hope and perseverance," Silverstrim said.

Those wishing to contribute can send checks payable to the Pauli Murray Scholarship Fund to Patrick O'Hagan, Development Office, General Theological Seminary, 175 Ninth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

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# Rural reign of terror in Guatemala

by Lawrence Lack

**T**wo leaders of the paramilitary Civil Patrol shot and killed 47-year-old Maria Mejía outside her home in the remote Guatemalan mountain town of Parraxtut in March. Mejía's husband, Pedro Castro Tojin, 42, was seriously wounded. The family had been receiving threats since this past fall when Pedro, his wife's three sons by a previous marriage, and four other men had resigned from the Civil Patrol after learning of their legal right to do so.

Mejía's murder and subsequent events in Parraxtut have fueled a national debate about whether the Patrols should be dissolved. The Civil Patrols give Guatemala's army virtually absolute control over the rural areas of the country.

About three-quarters of a million men, one-fifth of all the men in Guatemala, serve as unpaid reservists in the Civil Patrols, making Guatemala one of the most thoroughly militarized nations on earth. In the hundreds of impoverished Mayan Indian towns like Parraxtut that stretch north to the Mexican border, every male from 15 to 60 who can walk is enrolled.

Patrol members must serve at least 24 to 48 hours every week or two. Generally barefoot and wearing only their ragged clothes, they tramp the impossibly rugged mountain and canyon country in search of a phantom guerrilla enemy they almost never encounter. This is probably best for them, since they are issued only a limited number of anti-

quated guns. Most are armed solely with machetes and sticks. When they are allowed to camp, they have no equipment beyond a few shared blankets. More often, even when they are away from home for several nights, they are expected to stay up and on the march almost continuously.

Often, when they come home from duty, they are too tired to work their plots of corn and beans, but they must try, because without a harvest, their families will face starvation. Patrol members who work on the plantations of the south coast sometimes are required to come home for Patrol duty every week — a trip that can cost half a week's pay or more in lost time and bus fares. (Others pay "fines" to Patrol leaders while they are away.)

Besides the exhausting routine of policing their villages and the surrounding countryside, Patrol members are encouraged and, some say, expected to denounce their fellow villagers to the army as guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators. This policy creates suspicion and sometimes violence.

The Guatemalan Army claims that Patrol service is completely voluntary, that Patrollers sign up and work to protect their families from an ever-present communist threat. Patrol leaders and members are taught to echo this rationale. But Parraxtut and hundreds of highland towns like it live in the shadow of army counter-insurgency campaigns that took the lives of close to 100,000 Guatemalans nationally in the late '70s and early '80s. Most observers agree that fear of the army, not the guerrillas, is what motivates service.

Those who have tried to leave the "voluntary" Patrols have been branded as communists and subversives. In Parraxtut, as in many other towns, they have been threatened and sometimes tortured by other Patrol members or the army. According to Maria Mejía's oldest son Juan, some who tried to leave the Parraxtut Patrol had their limbs bound and, under the supervision of army personnel, were submerged in ice-cold water to the point of drowning until they agreed to re-enlist.

In a number of highland towns where men have resisted duty they have been killed outright or kidnapped, tortured and then killed. Witnesses and family members who have spoken with human rights groups say these killings are the work of the army or of Patrol members acting under army orders.

Late in the summer of 1989, Juan Mejía, who by then had already served nearly eight years in the Civil Patrols, heard a paid announcement on the radio by anti-Patrol crusader Amílcar Méndez. A schoolteacher and head of CERJ, Méndez said that Civil Patrols are unconstitutional and that men have the right to refuse to participate in them. (CERJ, an acronym that stands for "Ethnic Communities — Everyone Equal" in a combination of Spanish and the Maya Quiché language, is based in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the capital of Quiché State where Parraxtut is located.) Some time later Juan, his two younger brothers, their stepfather Pedro and some other men from Parraxtut met with Méndez. All the Parraxtut men who went to this meeting were veteran members, most having served since Civil Patrols were

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**Lawrence Lack**, a free-lance journalist, is a former volunteer with Peace Brigades International in Guatemala.

initiated in 1982. "The army has always told us and everyone else that it was required," Juan says.

In December, the four family members and four of their friends informed the leadership of the Parraxtut Civil Patrol that they had decided to resign.

Even before that, Maria Mejía had been in trouble with the army. Her first husband was killed in an army sweep of the area in 1982. Parraxtut's population of about 3,000 includes over 150 widows, a small proportion for a town in the northwest highlands. Most of these women lost their husbands to indiscriminate army violence in the early '80s. In 1988 Maria had helped organize a Parraxtut chapter of CONAVIGUA, a national widows' mutual support group, and because of this her life had been threatened several times. Now that her family was seen as the core of a revolt against the Patrols, she was viewed as a subversive, and from December on she and her family were frequent targets of verbal abuse and harassment.

The owner of a local mill told Maria he would no longer grind corn for her because she worked with CONAVIGUA and was "in contact with guerrillas." Later she, her husband, and her sister Magdalena were ordered to come to a meeting of Civil Patrol leaders which was also attended by several army officers. Magdalena brought a copy of Guatemala's constitution which states that no one can be forced to join any kind of civil defense organization against their will. Army officers told her "that law has changed."

At about 6:30 p.m on March 17, Maria, Pedro and his two sons Francisco and Diego were eating when two men approached the house. Pedro's sons ran and hid in the bushes while their father and Maria went out front and asked, "Who is it?" Receiving no answer, Pedro turned his flashlight on the two. "They were only two meters from us; we could see right away who they were," says

Pedro. He later identified the men as Juan de Leon Pérez and Domingo Castro Lux, Patrol leaders who are also military commissioners — local officials who work for the army as recruiters and military intelligence agents. The two had threatened Maria and her family on several previous occasions.

When Pedro turned his flashlight on them the two men began shooting. They fired a few rounds in the air, then lowered their guns and fired on Pedro and Maria at point blank range. Hit in the chest, Maria staggered into the house. Pedro, wounded in the back and sides, went with her. The two gunmen followed. One fired at Pedro, collapsed in the corner, but missed him in the dark. The other put his weapon to Maria's head and "gave her the 'tiro de gracia'," as Pedro said later. The killers then left. Pedro went to where his wife was lying and saw she was dead.

Had it not been for some rather atypical connections with the outside world, the story of Maria's murder might have ended with her burial, as have scores of other killings by Civil Patrol members and military commissioners in the highlands, receiving at most a few lines in one of the Guatemalan papers. But since February, Maria's son Juan had been living and working at the CERJ office.

After Maria's burial, a number of the mourners who tried to go home were threatened by gangs of Civil Patrol members. Juan and Amílcar Méndez invited a dozen of these terrified Parraxtut refugees, plus six of their small children and a now near-catastrophic Pedro, to Santa Cruz where they were housed in the small unfurnished rooms of the CERJ office.

Juan and Méndez contacted the press and international human

rights groups, including Amnesty International and Americas Watch, about Maria's murder. They also took steps to have her murderers brought to justice. Pedro and his sons gave depositions before the local human rights attorney and a judge, who authorized an order for the arrest of the two killers.

On March 27 the Quiché human rights attorney for the Guatemalan government, along with his superior, the national deputy human rights attorney César Alvarez Guadamuz, and several of his staffers traveled to Parraxtut in a three-car caravan. Also included were Amílcar Méndez, Juan Mejía, two international human rights observers and two uniformed members of the National Police. The policemen carried arrest warrants for the two men who killed Maria.

At the entrance to Parraxtut the three cars were stopped by a crowd of over  
*Continued on page 24*



Civil Patrol members in Parraxtut

# Mary Brent Wehrli: From affluency to radical activist

by Mary Lou Suhor

Mary Brent Wehrli made front page news earlier this year when she interrupted a Los Angeles speech by President Bush and was dragged out by a Republican who tore her blouse.

LA Times photographer Larry Davis caught the action, and peace activist Wehrli and five other protestors who infiltrated a \$1,000 a plate fundraising dinner made headlines the next day. "I didn't even know a photo had been taken. I was focused on my message," Wehrli marveled.

That message, which caused the President to break off his address was: *"Mr. President, self-determination is what the people of Central America want. Self-determination is what the people of Central America deserve. President Bush, you are an Episcopalian. I am an Episcopalian. You profess to be a man of God. I ask that you listen to our Presiding Bishop who has called for an end to all military aid to El Salvador."*

Wehrli and the other activists interrupted the dinner intermittently to protest U.S. domestic and foreign policies. Michael Breault, a Jesuit, shouted, "George Bush paid for the bullets that killed my Jesuit brothers. The killing has to stop." Fredericka (Freddie) Schrider, who with Wehrli attends St. Augustine's, Santa Monica, intervened, "Stop the killing in El Salvador." A woman claiming to have AIDS shouted down the MC and asked, "What's George going to do about AIDS?" Some 600 protestors who gathered outside the Century Plaza Hotel, site of the dinner, were broken up by 80 Los Angeles police in full riot gear, who arrested nine.

Wehrli, executive director of the Southern California Interfaith Task

Force on Central America (SCITCA) since 1985, was the fourth to interrupt Bush from the same dinner table. "I thought they were going to throw all of us out. I sat there as they ejected the others one by one, trying to look properly outraged until I could speak," she said. Wehrli over the past months has been involved in setting up weekly interfaith liturgies, demonstrations and programs in front of the Federal Building to expose U.S. military intervention in Central America.

Her work has also attracted the attention of former Salvadoran Death Squad members who have come to Los Angeles to live. Wehrli's name appeared on their 1988 death list, and she has had threatening calls at her office. Such harassment is not dismissed out of hand; in a neighboring office, Yanira Corea, who worked with the Salvadoran Women's Union, was abducted and raped with a stick two years ago. But Wehrli persistently coordinates weekly demonstrations for the Coalition for Peace and Justice in El Salvador and the United States, which has resulted in something under 1,000 arrests for non-violent civil disobedience.

Wehrli herself has been arrested more than 20 times. Noted labor unionists, educators, health care professionals, lawyers, religious leaders, and actors and entertainers such as Martin Sheen, Ed Asner, David Clennon, Jackson Browne and Holly Near have appeared in protests she has helped to organize.

SCITCA tries to educate by making connections between violence at home and violence perpetrated abroad. "U.S. military funding kills people in El Salvador and Guatemala, and results in do-

mestic budget cuts which sever aid to the poor, minorities, and AIDS research, producing homelessness and institutional violence which kills people here," Wehrli said. "It comes full circle. In the '60s the administration declared a war on poverty, but today the war is on the poor themselves."

Notables who have participated in SCITCA programs are liberation theologians Robert McAfee Brown and Enrique Dussel, medical activist Dr. Charles Clements, and the late journalist Penny Lernoux. The religious community, including prominent bishops and rabbis, is largely responsible for keeping the momentum going behind high-level lobbying efforts and weekly demonstrations in front of the Federal Building, Wehrli said. SCITCA, now in its 10th year, with a paid membership of 400 and a mailing list of 1500, will honor Episcopal Bishop Fred Borsch of Los Angeles at an anniversary dinner in November for his strong support of Central American refugees living in the area.

The dynamic SCITCA director believes in a lifestyle which witnesses to her commitment. Wehrli follows a simple diet and wears rummage items and hand-me-downs. "But the blouse I wore to the Republican dinner was a hand-me-up from my daughter," she laughed.

Wehrli is a graduate of UCLA, and in June attended the 30th anniversary of her graduating class from the Marlborough School, "which Nixon's daughters attended." She describes her transformation from affluent, Episcopal suburban housewife to radical activist as a "faith journey."

"I was apolitical during the Vietnam



Mary Brent Wehrli is dragged out of a Republican fundraising dinner after she interrupted an address by President George Bush.

War.” she said. “My oldest, Bill was born in 1964, and as I read the paper I couldn’t figure out ‘who started this’ or understand the strange names and changes in borders. One day I just closed the newspaper and decided ‘I’ll let them handle this.’ I’ve festered ever since.”

Her politicization began in 1970 when she volunteered to work in a gang divergency program at the Neighborhood Youth Association in nearby Venice.

“I left the world of privilege I had been born into and worked for five years with Latino and black children in a world of poverty just five miles away,” she said. “I was appalled that the NYA could not get funding for its programs, when on the international scene we were experiencing a horrendous buildup of nuclear weapons and escalation of intervention in Central America. That’s when I began to make connections about what was going on.

“Later, I went to social work classes and was assigned to the Interfaith Hunger Coalition as my field project. They were analyzing why people were going hungry when enough food could be pro-

duced to feed them. I didn’t want to make sandwiches in soup kitchens the rest of my life when I realized there were structural obstacles to reaching those in need. The government is willing to sentence certain people to poverty and homelessness. These are moral issues.”

In 1982, she became active with Women of Conscience, an ad hoc group of church women who came together to do acts of civil disobedience to protest U.S. policies in Central America. Today, many of them supply the paid and volunteer labor to groups in solidarity with Central and Latin America.

Wehrli’s husband, Martin, a lawyer in Century City; her daughter Gail, now a first year medical student; and son Bill, who works as a carpenter and is pursuing a teaching degree, are all supportive of her politics.

“When the children were growing up, I wasn’t always around like some mothers to bake cookies and drive them places,” Wehrli admitted. “But neither do working mothers who get home at 6 p.m. have time for these things. My children understood that what I was doing

was not just ‘gallivanting’.”

She is deeply appreciative of her family’s support. After her speakout with George Bush, “spirits were floating” in the solidarity offices where she worked. Her colleagues saw her protest as their story too.

“But Martin goes to work to mixed reviews,” she said. “And my daughter is at a school not necessarily known for its progressivity.”

Wehrli has traveled to El Salvador three times, having returned recently from leading an ecumenical delegation to the capital and to a repopulated area. She has been to Guatemala twice.

In her view, Guatemala is the more oppressed. “We trained their forces, gave them more technological help and ‘Vietnamized’ them earlier than El Salvador. In the early ’80s, 440 villages were wiped out, and 100,000 people died. So today you hear generals in El Salvador strategizing, ‘Why don’t we use the Guatemala solution?’

“From a general’s perspective, they ask, is it worse to kill 100,000 in a short time, as in Guatemala, or to kill 10,000 a year in El Salvador, which is now up to 70,000 dead? They are actually debating whether to simply kill the opposition and rebuild the country to their image,” she said.

After the photo of Mary Brent Wehrli appeared in the *LA Times*, reader Katherine Callen King wrote a Letter to the Editor comparing what happened to Hipparchia at a dinner party 2,000 years ago. “Her skillful argumentation so frustrated the philosopher Theodorus that all he could think to do was to pull up her dress . . . Hipparchia was neither panicked nor distracted by her disarranged clothing. The photo shows that Ms. Wehrli was not distracted either. Both women apparently kept right on making their point.”

“Some repetitions of history,” classicist King concluded, “are more inspiring than others.” TW

# Lawyer spurns grand jury, faces jail

by Susan E. Pierce

Attorney Linda Backiel believes in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights — and may have to go to jail to prove it. A former public defender in Philadelphia, Backiel has spent much of her career fighting what she calls the “inquisition” of the secret grand jury system, as well as defending political prisoners. Now, because she has refused, on principle, to testify before a grand jury concerning the case of a former client, Backiel could face 13 months in prison.

Her client, Elizabeth Ann Duke, was arrested in Philadelphia in May 1985, along with Dr. Alan Berkman, and indicted when a cache of arms and explosives were found in a shed they had been renting. Backiel was one of four lawyers working for the defense.

Duke disappeared two days before her court appearance while staying at the home of one of the other attorneys.

In March of this year, a federal grand jury seeking to gather information on Duke’s disappearance subpoenaed Backiel, who refused to testify. She said afterwards, “It is not the job of the defense lawyer to appear as a witness. It’s a betrayal of the client’s trust.”

Backiel, who now lives in Puerto Rico, has for several years been involved in an international human rights campaign on behalf of political prisoners in Puerto Rico and the United States. Her attorney, Leonard Weinglass, argued in court that the U.S. government was targeting Backiel because of her work defending opponents of U.S. policy.

She has also long been active in the movement to stop grand jury abuse. For four years, Backiel was staff attorney for the Grand Jury Project of the National Lawyers Guild. She has trained lawyers

in grand jury work, and testified before Congress against grand jury abuse.

The institution of the grand jury in the United States originated in the colonial era, and was designed to protect the individual against the power of the government to arbitrarily decide who to bring to trial. The authors of the Bill of Rights felt that no citizen should suffer the emotional and financial penalty of standing trial unless an independent panel of citizens — the grand jury — decided that the evidence warranted bringing the accused to trial.

A grand jury is required every time a federal prosecutor seeks a felony indictment. The process, Backiel and other activists say, has been manipulated to turn the grand jury into an instrument of political repression.

“Normally,” said Backiel, “grand juries just hear summaries from investigators, like FBI agents. It’s very brief. That could have been done in this case, without calling for me to testify. But the government is using the grand jury’s power to call witnesses and impose immunity to obtain information and evidence that the FBI hasn’t been able to get otherwise. This enables prosecutors to get around the Fifth Amendment right which

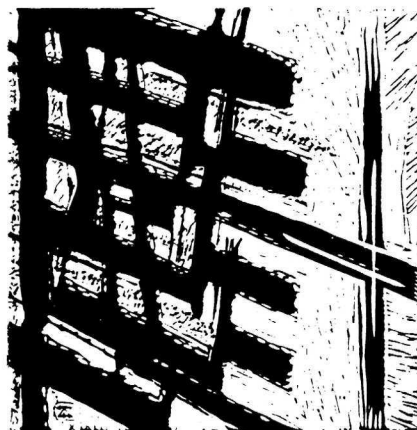
prohibits compulsory self-incrimination.”

Backiel served as a consultant to the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of *THE WITNESS*, during the U.S. government campaign to suppress the Puerto Rican liberation movement in the 1970s and ’80s.

In 1984, Steven Guerra, then a member of the ECPC Board, and Maria Cueto, former director of the Episcopal Church’s National Commission on Hispanic Affairs, were sentenced to three years in jail for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating alleged terrorist activities of the FALN, a Puerto Rican liberation group. Cueto had already spent 10 months in prison in 1977 for refusing to testify before a similar grand jury. Both Cueto and Guerra said they believed that the government was using the grand jury process to intimidate Hispanics, especially those who supported independence for Puerto Rico.

In an interview before going to prison, Guerra said, “This action by the government is a method of chilling the opposition. I’m not going to become a willing partner in their efforts to chill political activity. It’s not a question of knowing something or not knowing. This is a method of persecuting not only you, but your whole movement.”

Backiel knows well the difficulties faced by grand jury resisters. On March 9 at her home in Puerto Rico, she was served with a subpoena ordering her to appear in Philadelphia before a grand jury four days later, even though the U.S. District Attorney knew she was due to appear in New York to appeal one of her cases. When told that because of flight schedules, Backiel could not ap-



pear on such short notice, the prosecutor insisted on her presence. She and Morton Stavis, head of the Center for Constitutional Rights, arrived at the courthouse in Philadelphia only to find the courtroom locked. Apparently no one but the prosecutor knew about her appearance, she said.

After a series of hearings, Backiel's attorneys filed an appeal in April and a decision was due to be handed down April 20. But as of mid-June, no firm date had been set for her appeal hearing. Throughout this process, Backiel has been living in limbo, never knowing when she would be called to appear in court, and if called, whether or not she would go from the court directly to prison or be allowed to go home first. "For months, I'd been living my life in 24-hour increments. I have a case in Boston — the poor woman, I'm her lawyer and I may end up in jail."

Even though facing prison, Backiel is continuing her work as an advocate for U.S. political prisoners. She and others in the movement are currently concerned about Dr. Alan Berkman, who was arrested with Duke and sentenced to 10 years. A physician who worked with the poor and minorities before his arrest, Berkman had just begun his sentence when diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease, a form of cancer which is curable if treated in time.

However, Berkman was sent to the U.S. Penitentiary at Marion, Ill., the only U.S. prison condemned by Amnesty International for violating the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners. It holds more political prisoners than any other prison in the United States. Prisoners are isolated in their cells and subject to great physical and psychological stress. Medical care at Marion is reported to be less than adequate.

After finally receiving radiation therapy, Berkman's cancer went into remission. In 1988, Berkman was transferred

to the District of Columbia jail to stand trial on conspiracy charges. This past winter, the cancer recurred, but the Bureau of Prisons delayed treatment.

Berkman is finally getting chemotherapy. But he told *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, "I'm not the sort of person who assumes the worst about the people who deal with me. But I feel like someone forgot that meanwhile the cancer is growing."

Despite what Backiel knows of the prison system, she faces her impending jail sentence calmly. In a letter to supporters, she quoted a phrase James Baldwin had written to Angela Davis after her arrest: "'If they come for you in the morning, I know they'll be coming for me at night.' Such is the nature of repression. I was aware, with each grand jury witness I represented, that sooner or later my name would turn up on the list . . . I will be much happier and at peace with myself in jail than I could ever be after having testified against a client in the secrecy of a grand jury room."

Backiel summed up her beliefs in a statement to the grand jury in March:

"Like many other defense lawyers in the country today, and all who care about the rights of individuals, I have watched in dismay as various courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States, whittle away what for decades have been vital protections against government lawlessness. Someone has to call attention to this problem. Someone has to say 'No.' "

TW

## Resources

*Movement Network Support News*, a newsletter on political repression, and *You, Your Rights and the FBI*, a pamphlet in English and Spanish, are available from The Center for Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, (212) 616-6464.

*Until She Talks*, a film about a woman caught up in the grand jury process, can be rented for \$15 by writing to Kit Gage, National Committee Against Repressive Legislation, 236 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Suite 406, Washington, DC 20002.

## Fundraising appeal creeps toward goal

Our once a year, low-key but sincere fundraising appeal is creeping toward its goal as of this writing. We ask your urgent attention to our recent letter soliciting your assistance.

As many of our readers know, we operate largely on an endowment inherited from the publishing days of Editor Bill Spofford.

But because of rising costs of printing and funds spent on other worthy advocacy programs supported by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company in the past (such as its Racism and Grand Jury Abuse Task Forces, publishing of study guides on social justice issues and feminism, etc.), we have been consistently digging into the principal of a now-dwindling endowment. And we face another whopping rise in postal costs early

next year.

We know a number of our subscribers have also been hit in the pocketbook by fluctuating interest rates and an uncertain stock market. A recent survey revealed that one out of 13 are continuing to check the \$8 limited income box when they renew, rather than pay the regular \$20 subscription. We count on fundraising efforts to augment these, as well as to help subsidize subscribers in Third World countries hard-pressed to meet the full rates.

So if you still have that return envelope floating around, please do speed it off to us with your tax-deductible contribution. We will be printing a list of our loyal friends who contribute to this appeal in a future issue. Many thanks!

Lack . . . *Continued from page 19*

100 Civil Patrol members brandishing guns, clubs and machetes and shouting threats. The human rights attorneys showed the armed mob their identification and told them what they were there for. This resulted in a fresh outburst of shouting that grew even louder when Juan and Méndez were recognized. The threats directed at Méndez became so intense that he turned his car around and drove away. A number of shots were fired toward the car, but neither the car nor any of its occupants were hit.

While this was happening, one of the human rights attorneys continued to try to get through the cordon of enraged Civil Patrol members. His words were drowned out by shouts and slogans, and he was shoved and struck on the arms, hands and back by screaming Patrollers, while his staff cameraman somehow managed to record the whole scene on videotape.

That evening, Maria's sister Magdalena and other family members told Méndez, Juan and the refugees staying at the CERJ office that everyone in Parraxtut had been rounded up by the Civil Patrol that morning. Four soldiers and two army officers held a meeting to "orient" the town about the anticipated visit of the human rights officials and Méndez. "You don't want the human rights attorney or Amílcar Méndez here," one of the officers told them. "You are honorable people. They are communists."

The vigilante-like conduct of the Civil Patrol in Parraxtut and the unmannerly reception given to the human rights attorneys there made headlines in the Guatemalan press. The Parraxtut confrontation came only three weeks after another mob of about 300 Patrollers in an outlying section of Chichicastenango, about 65 miles south of Parraxtut, stoned and injured members and leaders of GAM — the Group for Mutual Support, an organization made up of relatives of some

of the 40,000-plus Guatemalans who have "disappeared" in recent years. The GAM delegation had been on its way to show support to local GAM members whose houses had been burned by Civil Patrol members who accused them of being communists and guerrillas.

After the mob scene in Parraxtut, members of the Guatemalan Congress, political figures, trade union groups, and others expressed indignation about Civil Patrol behavior. Some even called for the dissolution of the Patrols, although most took the safer position of saying there should be stricter control over the units.

In the wake of Parraxtut, a Guatemalan columnist referred to the Civil Patrols as "cannon fodder," pointing out that when the army does detect guerrilla units they will often arrange to have the poorly equipped and obviously expendable Patrols sent to do the fighting instead of the army.

The violence in Parraxtut and Chichicastenango can be viewed in a similar light. When the army wants to attack protest groups like CERJ or GAM in rural areas, it now uses the Patrols to do so — in urban areas, anonymous death squads are used. The Patrol units are carefully drilled in advance so they will know exactly what to do and say, and they know that questioning, much less disobeying, army orders can be a capital offense.

CERJ leaders and human rights groups say that concerted international pressure for dissolution of the Civil Patrols could be effective now. But without such pressure, since the army holds de facto power over all important decisions in Guatemala, the debate about the Patrols is unlikely to result in their disbanding or even in significant changes in the way they are used. And while it has raised doubts about the Patrol system, the debate has also shifted media and public attention away from Maria Mejía's murder and the plight of her relatives and


other Parraxtut refugees still sleeping crowded together on the floor of the CERJ offices.

The effort to arrest Mejía's killers seems to have been shelved for now. Her murderers are walking around free. By doing so, they advertise the fact that Civil Patrol members can kill dissenters without facing any consequences.

Those like Maria Mejía who rebel against the army's totalitarian control in rural areas by making contact with national protest and human rights groups are often killed. Over recent years the army and its political allies have evidently adopted a strategy of killing off people like Mejía, *campesino* organizers who are unknown outside their villages or regions. Apparently the army hopes that when their families and communities see these loved ones dead, while Amílcar Méndez and the leadership of other protest groups are alive, holding press conferences and traveling abroad, they will turn against the leaders and drop out of the fight.

This strategy of trying to drive wedges between leaders and their grassroots supporters isn't working very well. As it has done in the past, the army has underestimated the courage and tenacity of "ordinary" Guatemalans, who are determined to keep on working for a better future even if it means facing torture and death.

The army might have considered Maria Mejía a nobody they could murder with impunity. But in the long run, the bullets that killed Mejía and others like her may ricochet and end the military dictatorship that arranged for such deaths.

The situation continues to be tense in Parraxtut and the highlands. Visitors to Guatemala who wish to know more about the situation in this region and about the Civil Patrols should contact CERJ through the Peace Brigades International office, Avenida Elena B, 2-62, Zona 2, Guatemala City. Tel. 20085. 



# Short Takes

## Poverty kills children

Over 12 million children in the United States are living in poverty. Many will die in their first year. Between 1980 and 1988, the federal government cut billions from programs that help poor children and their families — from Head Start, from food stamps, from Medicaid, from education, from housing for the poor. During that same time, we spent over \$2 trillion on weapons.

**Marlan Wright Edelman  
Children's Defense Fund**

## Treats torture victims

The Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis had treated 147 survivors of torture and their relatives as of mid-1989. They came from 21 countries, including South Africa, El Salvador, Honduras, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iran and Vietnam.

With its myriad church and state refugee programs, Minnesota has the highest per capita political refugee population in the nation: 39,000 out of 6 million residents, not counting Central Americans and illegal aliens, who aren't classified as political refugees. All told, it is believed that there could be 6,000 torture survivors among them.

*Miami Herald, May 1989*

## ECPC Bishop-maker?

The Rev. Chester Talton, rector of St. Philip's, New York, and a member of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company Board of Directors, was elected Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles in June. He is the second ECPC-related official to be elected bishop recently, the other being the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris, who served as ECPC's Executive Director before her Massachusetts election as first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion. In unrelated business, but a promotion nonetheless, Susan E. Pierce was named Managing Editor of THE WITNESS magazine, published by ECPC, according to Mary Lou Suhor, editor. Pierce has served as assistant editor since 1988.



Mort Broffman/ENS

**Armed Forces Suffragan Charles Keyser, left, and EPF dissenter Ann McElroy.**

## Protests Armed Forces bishop

Episcopal Suffragan Bishop for the Armed Forces Charles Keyser was consecrated recently at the National Cathedral, but not without dissent. When the Presiding Bishop said, "if any of you know any reason why we should not proceed, let it be made known," Ann McElroy, chair of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, came forward to object "to this or any other consecration to the office of Suffragan Bishop of the Armed Forces." Among reasons cited:

The consecration places the church "in the position of being aligned with the military system," which compromises and corrupts the church's message.

It is an election and consecration "without the votes of the clergy and laity over whom the bishop is to have authority."

It is "not necessary to provide a full sacramental ministry to members of our church in the armed forces."

And, concluded McElroy, it is the "visible symbol of a system that identifies the church with what for many is a sign and source of oppression."

The Presiding Bishop thanked McElroy but said the consecration would proceed.

**Episcopal News Service 3/29/90**

## Staggering statistics of abuse

Journalist John Crewdson includes a comprehensive discussion of the available (sexual abuse) statistics in *By Silence Betrayed: Sexual Abuse of Children in America*, Harper and Row. Citing a national survey in the *Los Angeles Times* conducted in 1985 in which 27% of the women respondents and 16% of the men reported childhood abuse, Crewdson writes: "If those percentages were applied to the current (U.S) population, it meant that nearly 38 million adults had been sexually abused as children, several hundred thousand more than voted for Walter Mondale in 1984."

In the *LA Times* survey cited by Crewdson, one-third of those identifying themselves as abuse survivors told the pollster that they had told no one until that very moment.

*Resist Newsletter 1/89*

## Priests ordain Catholic women?

From the 1930s to the 1950s, historical research discovered the existence of three papal bulls authorizing priests who were abbots to ordain monks to all minor and major orders and, in two instances, to priesthood itself. What may we conclude? A (Roman Catholic) priest with papal approval may function as a valid, legal minister of the sacrament of orders. What if a priest ordains without papal approval? The ordination would be valid but technically illegal. Thus, if priests were to ordain a woman she would be validly ordained but under existing canon law the ordination would be illegal.

But how can an all-male college truly symbolize or represent a church at least half of which is woman-church? It cannot. Integrity of service, ministry and witness calls for the ordination of women.

The temporary friction caused by illegality would be a small price to pay. It can be done and should be for the good of all women and men.

**Paul Surlis**

*National Catholic Reporter 11/10/89*

# The story of Princess Tamar

*Based on 2 Samuel 13 to 14:27*

by Sharon Swedean Muhlenkort

When we were growing up, Amnon and I spent hours together around the palace. I looked up to him so much. He was my big brother, prince of Israel, who would one day be king! We used to play a game, where we would pretend that he was king and I was his maid servant. I would sit and listen to him dream of the battles he would win, the wealth he would bring back.

I had dreams then too, but they were very different from his. I would dream of my wedding day, and the daughter I would one day give birth to. But I would not speak of such things to him.

I was so proud of him. I loved our brother Absalom too, but my heart belonged to Amnon. Our father, King David, favored him also. He was the firstborn. There's nothing like the firstborn son. I used to long for father to speak to me the way he did to Amnon — even if he would just look at me, smile at me. I felt as if I didn't exist for him. It was as if he didn't see me, except to ask me to make cakes — which I did, and I made the best cakes around! Amnon was so much like my father — he was strong and powerful, and so handsome. That's probably why I loved Amnon as I did.

It was father that sent me that day to Amnon, for he was sick. He asked me to make fried cakes for his nourishment. I felt honored.

When I was with Amnon, I stretched out my hand to give him food, but he grabbed my wrist and squeezed it so tightly. It hurt and I didn't understand

what he was doing. Then he said, "Come lie with me, my sister," for he hungered for my body, not my gift of cakes. "Come lie with me, my sister," said this brother of mine whom I loved, listened to, and honored.

I reasoned with him, spoke wisdom to him, "No, my brother! Do not shame me! You know our law. If you do this, there is nowhere for me to go." And I looked at him with all the love I had for him, that he would not do this horrible thing to me.

And then my brother overpowered me. He forced himself inside of me — my brother . . . my brother.

And when he was through, he wanted nothing to do with me. His lust turned to hatred. Greater was the hatred with which he hated me, than the desire with which he desired me.

I told him that if he drove me out it would be far worse than what he had already done. But he sent for his servant and told him to put me outside and bar the door after me. When he barred that door I knew that so, too, were all doors barred to me forever. No man would take me into his home. No daughter would ever grow in my womb.

I wept. I screamed tears of anger for an evil done to me that could never be undone.

My brother Absalom found me, and had compassion for me. It was he who desired justice for my sake. And it was he who has given me a place to be with my shame all these years. Oh, my father, King David, was angry when he heard. Angry for what had happened to Amnon, not for the violence done to me, his daughter. At first, I grieved that my father never acknowledged what happened, that he never asked about me,

that he could so completely disregard my pain. I longed for his love. But as the years went by I saw him for who he really was. I heard the stories of his adultery with Bathsheba.

Amnon did what he saw our father do — take any woman he wanted, without a thought for her life or her dreams. Father never acknowledged how Amnon violated me, because if he did, he would have to face his own violation of so many women.

When I saw this clearly, I could begin to let go of my longing for my father. I still weep, but for him, because he has lived a life and never really loved.

For a long time, after all this first happened, I was angry at God too. I couldn't pray to Yaweh. You see, God reminded me too much of my father, David the king, or my brother, the one to be king. To call God king says to me that God has the same qualities my father and brother have. God the king is a God who rapes and ignores and uses women.

But I know now that God has other names. Names that speak to me of a loving God. Names that bring back memories of the way someone held me when I wept, or laughed with my joy. Names for a God I can worship, a God I love.

And this tender God has given me a most unexpected gift, four children whom I love. One niece and three nephews, the children of Absalom and his wife. I have watched them grow, and as I did I found my heart growing open again. Sometimes we all sit outside and take turns listening to one another's dreams. My niece shares her dreams with her brothers. Oh, I ache with the desire for her to have the same chance her brothers will to live her dreams. Her name is Tamar. [W]

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Sharon Swedean Muhlenkort is a free-lance writer based in Berkeley, Calif., where she is working on a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the Wright Institute.

## Letters . . . Continued from page 3

yet promotes the courage to overcome these problems.

We are a non-profit organization supported by Lutheran congregations across the country. Our mission is to combat racism and sexism in the church and society.

**David Knox**  
Milwaukee, Wisc.

## Judaism omitted

In the May issue under Short Takes, you have discussed the percentage of members of the major religions. I strongly object to the omission of Judaism from this list.

Judaism is a major religion. What percentage of the world's population is Jewish? I would like to see this information added to the list and reprinted. As Christians, it is important to remember our mother!

**Legia L. Spicer**  
Watertown, S.D.

*(NCC's Ecu-link opened with the fact that with more than 1.7 billion believers, Christians make up almost one third of the world's population, followed by Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists, percentage-wise. From there the 1989 Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year lists atheists, 4.5%; Chinese Folk Religionists, 3.4%; New Religionists, 2.2%; Tribal Religionists, 1.8%; Jews, 0.3%; Sikhs, 0.3%; Shamanists, 0.2%; Baha'is, 0.1%; Jains, 0.1%; Shintoists, 0.1%; and other religionists, 0.2%. — Ed.)*

## Son at Mideast march

Paul Washington's moving account in the May WITNESS on the Christmas/New Year's peace demonstration in Jerusalem was a special reminder for me.

My son, Dennis, a student at Cal State/Long Beach has been an active member and leader of a campus Peace and Justice group, especially concerned about the Israeli/Palestine situation. He was chosen to be part of the 16-member U. S. delegation to participate in "1990 Time for

Peace." Like Paul, he was there for the Women in Black march and joined hands with the 30,000 encircling the walls of the Old City. In the two weeks he was there he visited many Israelis and Palestinians, went to the Gaza strip and West Bank. It was an experience he will long remember. He visited us right after his return with his personal reaction of the Intifada and has since shared his story on campus and in the community.

The recent remembrances of the Holocaust and the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the USSR are bitter reminders of the agony of the Jewish people. That agony is joined by the suffering of the Palestinians. There must be a just and peaceful solution. As the psalmist (51) tells us: "Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me."

**The Rev. Arthur Kortheuer**  
Charlotte, N.C.

## Seeks Taylor for text

This is a request to reprint two articles by the Rev. Barbara Taylor that appeared in your January and February 1988 issues of THE WITNESS: "Meditations in the city."

I am in the process of developing a

*Reader in Urban Ministry*, a working title for a text to be used both by local community organizers within urban settings and professors who teach within theological education.

Those of us who are critically interested in urban communities and urban ministry are in need of better tools of analysis and practical application to help guide our work in the field and in the classroom. Your publication is a very helpful one (I am a long-time subscriber) and I would like to use these articles not only for their own merit but to signal the importance of your journal in this field. We seek a variety of types of literature and the meditations fill an important need for such a book.

The proposed volume developed from a small group of folks made up of local community organizers/pastors and seminary professors who met in 1989 to work on a set of issues that we share. We have written about our work but recognize important topics that go beyond what we address. We would like for the reader to have breadth and depth. Our request to you comes out of this vision.

**Eleanor Scott Meyers, Academic Dean**  
St. Paul School of Theology  
Kansas City, Mo.

## WITNESS seeks new editor

A search for a new editor of THE WITNESS to succeed Mary Lou Suhor, who will retire in 1991, has been announced by the Rt. Rev. J. Antonio Ramos, chair of the board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. THE WITNESS offices are located in Ambler, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia.

Suhor, managing editor since 1976 and editor since 1981, will leave the post following the Episcopal Church's General Convention in July next year.

Persons wishing to apply for the editorship are asked to submit to the Search Committee no later than August 15 the following items: A letter stating the writer's interest in the post and qualifications for it, not to exceed 500 words in length; a professional resume; and photocopies of recently

published examples of the applicant's writing, not to exceed five in number. The Episcopal Church Publishing Company is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer. Preliminary applications and inquiries are to be sent to: Carman St. John Hunter, Chair, Editor Search Committee, Episcopal Church Publishing Co., 300 Gerard Building, 434 Lackawanna Ave., Scranton, PA 18503.

These preliminary submissions will be acknowledged with more detailed information on THE WITNESS, its publisher's vision for its future, and how to submit a formal application.

The board hopes to select the new editor in October with a view to having the person start work in early 1991, Ramos said.

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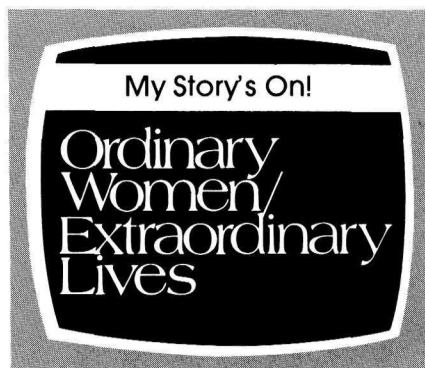
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