

via paciis

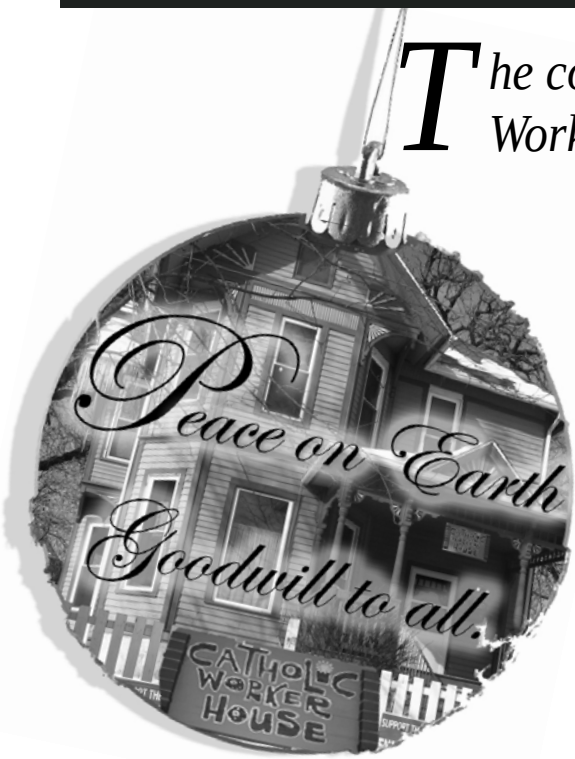
The voice of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

December, 2009

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

Volume 33, No. 4

The common Works of Mercy that take place at the Des Moines Catholic Worker are things that money cannot buy.



What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words—we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.

—Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement



Des Moines Catholic Worker

P.O. Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50305

www.desmoinescatholicworker.org

515-282-4781

December, 2009

Dear Friends,

The most satisfying moments of hope and grace that occur at our drop-in center for the poor and at our free food store happen within poignant human encounters between workers, volunteers, and guests. These moments are frequent and free. A chilly mood is warmed; an encouraging word is spoken; a grateful look is exchanged; a hand is held. The material things we share—food, clothing, and shelter—are secondary to and less tangible than the hearts that are nourished and the spirits lifted here. It is to preserve a place that encourages acts of love and compassion—a place where it is easier to be good—that is our strongest reason for seeking your help.

Even so, we are zealous stewards of the material donations we receive, and our average annual budget of about \$50,000 accomplishes a surprising measure of good.

Last year we served nearly 40,000 meals or snacks, provided hot water, clean towels, soap and shampoo for about 5000 showers, distributed groceries and fresh produce to about 6000 families, gave clothing and toiletries to another 3500, and poured 30,000 cups of coffee. We provide the use of a phone, a television room for socializing, and, for those without an address, a place to receive mail. We also publish and mail this newsletter quarterly.

In winter months the coats, hats, scarves, gloves, dry socks, candles and blankets we distribute not only comfort lives, they save them. Often, we are the ones many call when no one else can help. Sometimes this means finding someone a bus ticket home, a dress-shirt for a funeral, a ride to the doctor, or helping an elderly person clear debris from her yard.

We can do as much as we do because our food, sundries, and labor are donated; and, while our live-in community members are given a free room, no one receives a salary or other paid benefits. Workers and volunteers may also eat the same donated food prepared and served to our guests, but otherwise are not given a spending or meals allowance. We receive no grants or government funds. Nor are we sponsored by or under the umbrella of any church or other sponsoring organization. Cash donations (our \$50,000 budget) are used to pay taxes and utilities, maintain a community van, make house repairs (no small thing with 100-year-old houses), and buy other necessary supplies.

We depend as well on the enormous hearts of our large extended volunteer community—amazing souls who give us their time doing every kind of task or service imaginable.

This has been a difficult and blessed year. The deaths of several of our friends and family members have given us a time to mourn and celebrate life. Many we know have been hurt by the economic crisis, and it will surprise few to learn that the need for what we do is growing, and the food lines are getting longer. However, we write this letter confident that our ability to give will grow with that need because we are also confident that our friends will continue to be generous in their giving to our work. This confidence comes from years of experience and with the knowledge that the work we do is truly the stuff of the Kingdom of Heaven. Mostly though, our confidence rests firm in the faith that acts of goodwill are acts of God's will.

Blessed Christmas and joyful New Year to one and all!

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

via pacis

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Unless noted (or we goofed), all photos and art are produced by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community

The Des Moines Catholic Worker Community, founded in 1976, is a response to the Gospel call to compassionate action as summarized by the Catholic Worker tradition. We are committed to a simple, nonviolent lifestyle as we live and work among the poor. We directly serve others by opening the Dingman House as a drop-in center for those in need of food, clothing, toiletries, use of a phone, toilet, a shower or just a cup of coffee and conversation. We also engage in activities that advocate social justice.

Becoming a Des Moines Catholic Worker

We are usually open to considering new community members. For information about joining our mission, contact any community member or visit our web site.

Mailing Address

PO Box 4551
Des Moines IA 50305

Bishop Dingman House (Hospitality Center)

1310 7th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-243-0765
Residents: Frank Cordaro, Alex Barnes, Ed Bloomer, Brianne Boylan, David Goodner, Tracy Robson

Phil Berrigan House (Social Justice Center)

713 Indiana Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-282-4781 (DMCW business phone.)
Residents: Frank Cordaro and Mona Shaw

Viola Liuzzo House (Residence)

1301 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-288-4326
Residents: Renee Espeland, Dan Hughes, Frankie Hughes, Reetzi Hughes, Norman Searah

Lazarus House (Residence)

1317 8th St.
Des Moines, IA 50314
515-326-4832
Residents: Ashley Megan, Sean Megan, Wrigley Megan

Weekly Lectionary Bible Study

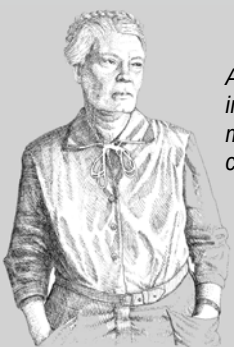
Mondays, 7pm. Berrigan House
Call to confirm.

Weekly Mass or Spiritual Renewal Service

Fridays, 7:30pm, Dingman House
All are welcome!

The Chiapas Project

Chiapas, Mexico
Richard Flamer
flamerrichard@hotmail.com



As for ourselves, we must be meek, bear injustice, malice, and rash judgment. We must turn the other cheek, give up our cloak, go a second mile.

-Dorothy Day

Helen Oster, "Presente!"

Our community has lost one of our most beloved friends, and we don't know what we'll do without her. Helen Lucille Steward Oster, 92, of West Des Moines, Iowa, died November 20, 2009.

Helen was born November 23, 1916 in Shellsburg, Iowa, the daughter of Franklin James and Susan Busler Steward. She graduated from Shellsburg High School in 1934. Following graduation, Helen worked for six months cleaning houses to earn tuition to the Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls. She studied for nine months and earned an elementary teaching certificate. She then taught country school until 1941, when she married George Robert Oster of Dy-sart.

Helen taught for 35 years, ending her career in the West Des Moines school system



as one of the first learning disabilities teachers in Iowa and as a teachers' union activist.

George, Sr. died in 1978, and Helen retired from teaching in 1981. At the age of 65 Helen began her final career—advocate for peace and justice in our world. She was active in many organizations: the Des Moines Catholic Worker, Catholic Peace Ministry, Women's Interna-

tional League for Peace and Freedom, Des Moines Area Volkssport, and her church, St. Catherine of Siena.

Helen was an outspoken critic of social injustice and war. She loved to travel, especially to unusual places including Haiti, Guyana, Cuba, Israel and Palestine, Russia, Turkey, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and many European countries.

Helen is survived by her son, George J. Oster of Ames; and daughter, Susan Hayes of Cohasset, Minnesota; grandchildren, George Oster, Nathaniel Oster, Jessica Oster, Dylan Hayes, and Erich Hayes; and two great-grandchildren, Mikayla and Chantelle. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, George; a daughter, Evelyn Lucille, who died in infancy; four sisters and three brothers.

Eight arrests at Qwest Die-In



DES MOINES—On Wednesday, November 4, Omaha and Des Moines Catholic Worker communities and friends held the fourth annual protest and "Die In" at the Qwest Center in Omaha, where STRATCOM's Space Weapons Bazaar, called the Strategic Space Symposium, takes place.

The effort began when a group of more than thirty gathered across the street from the main entrance of the Qwest Center at 11 a.m. The group moved *en masse* to the main entrance, and set up a banner that read "Space Weapons = Death." They gathered around the banner and read a statement asserting that space weapons result in death and called for efforts toward uplifting human life instead of creating weapons to destroy it. After the statement was read a number of people, including the eight who were arrested, lay down on the ground in front of the banner, enacting a "Die-In". After five minutes people were called to their feet and directed to take the "Die-In" into the Qwest Cen-

ter where the Space Weapons Bazaar was taking place. The protesters were stopped just inside the front doors by Qwest security guards and Omaha police officers. The protesters proceeded to reenact their "Die-In" at the feet of the security people and police. The statement was read again. Qwest security ordered them to leave the building or face arrest. All but eight left. The eight were placed under arrest, handcuffed, and escorted from the building into a police vehicle.

Among the eight was 91-year-old Peg Gallagher, "Grand Dame of the Omaha Peace Movement." Peg was ticketed and released right on site. The seven others were taken to the Douglas County Jail, processed by the police and charged with City of Omaha ordinance "20-155 Request to Leave," a misdemeanor offense with a maximum penalty of six months in jail and/or a five hundred dollar fine.

The seven included Fr. Jack McCaslin, 80, Mark Kenny, 52, Daniel McCarville, 22, all of Omaha; Friar Louis

Vitale, OFM, 77, of Oakland, California; Steve Clemens, 59, of Minneapolis; Fr. Jim Murphy, 55 of Wisconsin; and Frank Cordaro, 58, of the Des Moines Catholic Worker.

The four Omaha residents were cited and released. The four from out of town were held overnight in the Douglas County Jail and appeared in jail court the following day.

On Wednesday, November 5, these four appeared before Judge Darryl Lowe in jail court, with sixty other Douglas County Jail inmates. After witnessing two hours-worth of Judge Lowe's self-aggrandizing, bluntly racist, sexist, and otherwise politically incorrect judging methods, the four finally had their opportunity before the judge. Upon hearing Friar Louis's "no contest," plea and without looking at any paperwork about the case, Judge Lowe sentenced him to five days in jail. This was followed by a "not guilty" plea from Fr. Jim Murphy, who was sentenced to three days in jail. Halfway through the sentencing, Judge Lowe finally asked what the four men were doing at the Qwest Center. Upon hearing the reasoning behind the men's actions, the judge called both Friar Louis and Fr. Jim back into the courtroom, sentenced all four to time served, and sent them on their way.

The four Omaha residents face trial December 9.

Losing the Moral High Ground



by Frida Berrigan

On the eighth anniversary of the launch of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the spotlight is on the Obama administration's evolving war strategy in a nation long known as the "graveyard of empires."

The current discourse on what is now dubbed "Obama's War" focuses on the number and composition of troops, as well as the overarching strategy (counter-insurgency, rapid withdrawal, a mix of military and reconstruction operations).

But we should not lose sight of another consequence of the October 7, 2001 invasion: the detention of thousands of people suspected of being hostile to the United States. They remain held at prisons at Guantánamo, Bagram Air Field, and elsewhere. They have now become Obama's enemy combatants.

Closing Gitmo

"I think we lost the moral high ground," concludes Marine Brigadier General Michael Lehnert (Ret.), once tasked with setting up the detention camps at the Guantánamo Bay U.S. Naval Base, where more than 200 prisoners remain. "I think we should close it down. I think the information we're getting is not worth the international beating we're taking."

President Barack Obama came into office promising to

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do just that. Less than 24 hours after his inauguration in January 2009, he signed an executive order requiring the "closure of the Guantánamo detention center no later than one year from the date of the Order."

At the time, the act -- along with a ban on "enhanced interrogations" -- seemed like Obama's decisive break with the moribund policies of the Bush White House. But the deadline for Guantánamo's closure, less



than four months away, almost certainly will be missed. And on so many vital issues, the Obama administration has not broken with the past but instead has upheld Bush's legacy of legal loopholing, moral doublespeak, and crude vengeance.

With the nation stricken and scared from the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration tapped lawyers to twist the law to transform immorality into "legality." The military began shipping people swept up in Afghanistan and surrounding countries and dumping them in a remote corner of Cuba. An excruciating combination of torture, abuse, stonewalling, and lies ensued. Dubbed "enemy combatants" and denied basic protections of domestic and international law, the detainees were told they would be there for the "duration of the hostilities." This out-of-court judgment was a *de facto* life sentence since no one expected that a

"global war on terror" fought in as many as 60 nations would be settled any time soon. For six Guantánamo inmates, death has already come - five by suicide and one from cancer.

Thousands of billable hours of painstaking work later, legal activists have ascertained the names and nationalities of all of the men detained at Guantánamo and filed *habeas corpus* writs and other legal challenges to grant them access to the U.S. courts. Multiple Supreme Court rulings and countless other legal judgments against the Bush administration's detention policies followed. As a result of legal and civil society pressure, the U.S. government has released many of the men imprisoned at Guantánamo -- almost all of them without charge. Whatever the Pentagon's bogus claims of "detainee recidivism" (returning to the battlefield), the vast majority of

released detainees have posed no threat to the United States.

What's Up at Guantánamo?

After signing the executive order in January, the Obama administration began reviewing the cases of the remaining detainees. Most of that work is now complete. Of the 240 cases, 90 men at Guantánamo -- many of whom have been there for more than eight years -- have been approved for transfer. They will not be charged with any crime.

For many, though, a new problem has emerged, since freedom from Guantánamo means returning to the nation they fled for fear of persecution. These men -- like the ethnic minority Uighurs who fled persecution in China to live in poverty in Afghanistan only to find themselves imprisoned at Guantánamo --

(Continued on page 10)



Norman's Whereabouts

by Norman Searah

Hello there! I was looking at a picture of Pete Seeger, who believes that our earth is a sacred place. I even have a picture of two hands holding the earth. I wonder who's holding the earth, God or mankind. I have a flag of the earth hanging there to remind me that for now this is all we have.

I also have a thing called the *Earth Anthem*, the Earth Verse sung to the melody of the *Star Spangled Banner*. If you may, here's the words:

"Oh say can we see/ by the one light in all/ our Earth to embrace/ at the call of a nation/ Where our children

can play/ in a world without war/ Where we stand hand in hand/ in the grace of creation/ Where rivers run clean/ through the forest of green/ Where the cities stand tall/ in the clear skies of freedom/ O say do our hearts sing/ for harmony and love forever/ on the planet of our birth/ Blessed with peace on earth." The end.

I'm hoping that in December delegates from nearly 200 countries will gather in Copenhagen to replace the United Nations' Kyoto Protocol and save the planet from global warming. I'm hoping. I don't know if there's anything else to do. I'm hoping that the

United States and China can come to terms along with others to succeed. If not, we might lose and I don't know what's to come or when, I can only hope for the best.

I think and feel that we need to end all wars, we've seen too many. They're getting worse every time. One of these days or years we'll have a nuclear war or even better, a nuclear exchange. Whoever survives might realize that there's not much of the world. Instead of living for profit, we'll work for mankind.

At first it'll be hard, but we'll all be equal. I hope, or we'll all be fighting over the simple things of life. There'll

be no one to stop the little wars that pop up. We need to stop our wars now, talk and share along to teach each other. All we got is this one planet we call home. We need to save it, not destroy it.

So I'm hoping that some good comes out at the Copenhagen meeting this December. Maybe they can realize that war does contribute to global warming and try to put an end to war. But that's just a hope. What do I know.

I wish you hope on Earth. Thank you. My name is Norman.



The Quality of Mercy Is Not Capital Gain



by Mona Shaw

"But he isn't wearing anything."

From *The Emperor's New Clothes*
by Hans Christian Andersen

"P"erception is reality. It doesn't matter what the facts are. We don't have time for the facts. We're going to do it the way people think it's best to do it."

My boss wasn't kidding. I had just presented him the research I had prepared that proved a plan he wanted me to implement would cost the department more not save funds as he had previously announced to his faculty. He was up for faculty review. The "plan" was popular among the faculty. If he implemented it, he would be viewed as responsive to their ideas. Educating them would be time-consuming, confusing, and might be misunderstood. I complied with his directive, of course, because, I, too, wanted to keep my job. The facts bore out. The plan cost more money, but rather than concede the plan was the problem, we invented another excuse for the outcome and then spent even more funds addressing the "problem" we had invented.

The term "genocide" did not exist before 1944. It is a very specific term, coined by the U.N. and refers to violent crimes committed against groups with the intent to destroy the existence of the group. Human rights, as laid out in the U.S. Bill of Rights or the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, concern the rights of individuals.

On December 9, 1948, in the shadow of the Holocaust, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention establishes "genocide" as an international crime, which signatory nations "undertake to prevent and punish." It defines genocide as:

"Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:"

"(a) Killing members of the group;

"(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;"

The problem is that genocide and crimes against humanity can't be stopped with incremental change.

How do we decide who still dies?

"(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;"

"(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;"

"(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

It is important to note in this definition (see letter "c") that negligence that leads to loss of life qualifies as genocide as well as direct slaughter of the targeted group.

There is a related term of relevance, namely "Crime against Humanity." A Crime against Humanity consists of certain acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, in pursuit of a state or organizational objective.

Still, there is often scholarly quibbling about whether it is one or the other when massive death in a specific population is driven more by political expediency than by hatred of the group. The number of deaths to qualify as genocide is also a quibble, but generally a million deaths hit the mark. Deaths due to lack of access to healthcare will reach that mark, if we start counting them this year, by about 2015.

Some historians maintain it is still genocide if a group is targeted out of political ambition rather than a constructed hatred of the group or a comprehensive intent to eliminate all members of the targeted group. E.g. the actions of Joseph Stalin leading to the deaths of about seven million Ukrainians is considered genocide by some scholars and not by others. In 1932-33 the former leader of the Soviet Union caused a famine in the Ukraine because the people there were seeking independence.

The difference of opinion also persists when considering the slower elimination of

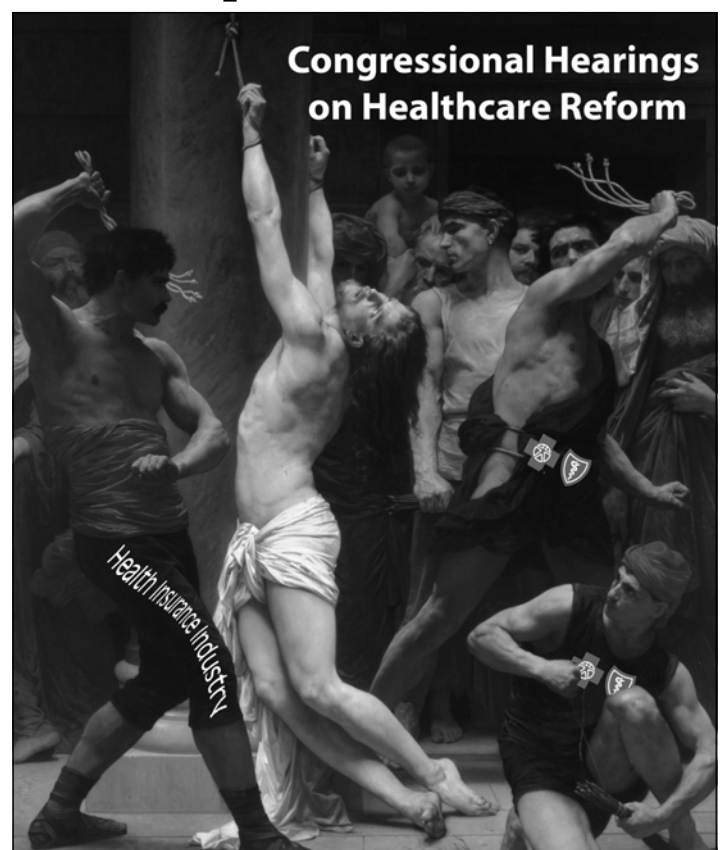
about fifty million Native Americans following the European invasion of North America in the fifteenth century, since the objective wasn't necessarily to kill all native people but to occupy and appropriate their land.

Even more controversial has been the claim the U.S. response to AIDS/HIV in the 1980s was genocide. Proponents of defining it as genocide point to the fact that more than 20,000 gay men had died before there was any state response to the epidemic and that a response only was triggered when a significant number of members of the dominant culture (heterosexual people) were infected by the virus. In fact, religious leaders like Jerry Falwell fiercely resisted any response to the epidemic calling it "God's way of weeding his garden." And, while Falwell's comment seems more outrageous today, at that time it was considered a simple difference of opinion to which Falwell was entitled.

The change in how remarks like this are viewed is relevant toward how genocide is defined. That is, massive loss of life among a targeted group is more apt to be deemed genocide years, if not centuries, after the incident even though it was not at the time.

In any case, the primary prerequisite test to qualify as genocide must include evidence that "dehumanization" of the targeted group has taken place. To begin the claim of genocide it must be established there have methodical and intentional schemes to cast members of the targeted group as less human or less worthy of survival than members of the dominant culture.

A case can be made—and likely will be made at some point in the future—that the contemporary practice of healthcare in the United States, if allowed to persist unstoppped, is genocide. As many as 100,000 people die annually because they cannot afford healthcare. About half die because they do not have health insurance, and the other half die because their health insurance provider will not pay for the care they need to survive. The apartheid of healthcare access in America is glaringly obvious. The healthcare one receives in the U.S. depends on the healthcare one can afford. The wealthy have no fear whatsoever that they will receive the best health available. The targeted group includes those who cannot afford the healthcare they need to survive. Comprised



primarily of the working poor, the size of the targeted group is increasingly exponentially and proportionately to the greed and political ambition of those who benefit from health insurance company profits.

These deaths are not caused by a lack of fiscal or natural resources. Everyone in the nation could have access to healthcare for less cost to taxpayers if corporate profit was eliminated from the equation, and few knowledgeable people deny this. These deaths persist because corporations wield more national power than those whose lives are lost.

None of the incarnations of legislation seriously considered by the 111th Congress ever seriously considered ending a significant portion, let alone all, of these deaths, even though it was entirely within the scope and resources of Congress to do so. Indeed those lives that will still be sacrificed to the god of profiteering were never acknowledged nor mourned nor even given a moment of silence when Nancy Pelosi cheered at the passage HR3962 even though she knew this legislation would effectively still allow many to die.

Even though legislation had been introduced and reintroduced since 2003 (HR676) that would have covered everyone by eliminating insurance profiteering, this legislation was not only not taken up, it was blocked from even mere discussion by the Speaker of the House and the White House at every turn. Even the president said at one point, regarding healthcare reform summits, "Everything is on the table. Well, everything but HR676."

Congressional Hearings on Healthcare Reform

"Why was HR676 blacked out?" This is a salient question and adds evidence that allowing thousands to die was an intentional act by the State. Undoubtedly the motivation by the State and the Health Insurance Industry which essentially owns and controls the State, was to avoid what they knew would be a public outcry for HR676 if the public learned the bill's merits.

Merely asking this question, however, not only pricked the ire of the State, a.k.a, the corporate control to which it yielded, but also vexed those whom one might assume would have been natural allies.

Healthcare forums sponsored by "progressive" Democrats didn't merely exclude HR676 from their lineup. Across the country, they banned and even had arrested activists who tried to expose the cover-up.

"We're all for HR676," progressive Democrats sometimes claimed, "but there's not the political will to pass it now."

When pressed, some, like Iowa State Senator Jack Hatch, admitted at an Iowa healthcare forum last March (at which the keynote speaker was Blue Cross Blue Shield representative and Republican former Iowa Governor Robert Ray) that "political will" was not lack of public support, which by most polls was overwhelming for such a bill. "Political will" was the lack of support of healthcare corporations who bankrolled too many Democratic election bids.

Or, as U.S. Senator Tom Harkin said at an AARP healthcare forum in late summer, "Just because most

(Continued on page 11)

Feast of Holy Innocents Retreat Dec. 27-28



Massacre of the Innocents, Giotto di Bondone, 1315

The Des Moines and Omaha Catholic Worker communities invite you to deepen your Christmas observance and join us as we examine an often-ignored element of the season. Taking cues from the Gospel of Matthew's infant narrative, we will study the parallels between King Herod's first-century killing of the innocent children in Bethlehem and the murderous acts committed by twenty-first-century Herods in the U.S. The Herods of Jesus's day carried out their deeds through their command of legionary Roman armies. Modern-day Herods employ the U.S. Global Military presence and Of-

futt's Nuclear and Space Commands.

This year's retreat takes place in the basement of St. John's Church on Creighton University campus at 2500 California Plaza, Omaha. The Retreat begins at 3:00 pm Friday, December 27, 2009, and concludes Sunday, December 28 with a 10 a.m. Mass at St. John's followed by the Witness and Line Crossing at Offutt Air Force Base.

For information contact:

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Five Arrested in Plowshares Action



Susan Crane, Lynne Greenwald, Sr. Anne Montgomery RSCJ, Fr. Steve Kelly SJ, and Fr. Bill Bichsel SJ

BANGOR, ME—Early morning, November 2, 2009, five peace activists crossed the perimeter fence of the Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor. Those arrested are Bill "Bix" Bischel, S.J., 81, of Tacoma, Washington; Susan Crane, 65, of Baltimore, MD; Lynne Greenwald, 60, of Bremerton, Washington; Steve Kelly, S.J., 60, of Oakland, CA.; and Anne Montgomery RSCJ, 83, of New York City. The five had the objective of calling attention to the illegality and immorality of the existence of the Trident weapons system. Upon arrest, they were thrown to the ground face-down, handcuffed, hooded, and kept for four hours in that position. The five were cited for trespass

and destruction of government property, given a bar-and-ban letter, and released.

The action in Maine calls itself the "Disarm Now Trident Plowshares Action." Plowshares actions are taken from Isaiah 2:4 in the Old Testament (Hebrew) scripture of the Christian Bible, where it states, "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." Since 1980 there have been approximately 100 Plowshares Nuclear Resistance Actions worldwide.

Six Found Guilty: Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Trial



Left-to-right: Frank Cordaro, Leonard Simons, Mona Shaw, Kirk Brown, Renee Espeland, Christine Gaunt, Edward Bloomer, and Robert Cook, taken July 29, 2009, the day all nine were arrested.

DES MOINES—Six of the nine arrested at Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Headquarters were found guilty on Monday, November 23, 2009, in Polk County Court in Des Moines, Iowa.

Ed Bloomer, 62, Kirk Brown, 29, Rev. Robert Cook, 66, Frank Cordaro, 58, Mona Shaw, 58, and Leonard Simons, 67, were convicted by a six-member of jury for Criminal Trespass, a simple misdemeanor.

The conviction followed a three-day trial that at times left jurors near tears and nearly applauding following testimony by the defendants. During the trial several defendants told wrenching stories of loved ones they'd lost because they could not afford they care they needed to live. (During the jury selection process, two jurors had disclosed they had Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance and were battling for payment for care for themselves.)

The conviction was somewhat surprising since the judge's instructions to the jury pointed toward an acquittal. The six above along with Renee Espeland, 48, Christine Gaunt, 50, and Frankie Hughes, 11, were arrested on July 27 in the lobby of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield after they stated they were remaining until they were given the company's financial information requested in a letter sent a month earlier.

The defense sought acquittal based on the interplay between two laws in the State of Iowa Code. First, Iowa law stipulates that a person is guilty of trespassing if that person remains on private property "without justification." Second, another

Iowa law stipulates that the policy holder of a company may have access to corporate records at any time. This law also allows for the policy holder to bring assistants to gather those records. Two of the original defendants (Espeland and Gaunt) are policy holders of Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. William Price, the judge in the case seemed inclined to give the defendants the fairest trial possible under the law and gave instructions to the jury that could clearly lead to the acquittal of the defendants. Specific in the judge's instructions was that unless the jury believed beyond a reasonable doubt "the defendants did NOT enter Wellmark with the intent to assist a policy holder in exercising the policyholder's right inspect business records," they must find the defendants NOT guilty.

Ironically charges against Espeland were dropped the morning of the trial because the State believed Espeland did have a legal right to be there. (Christine Gaunt had filed a guilty plea in October because she was not available the date of the trial.)

It was revealed in the trial that Fusion (the State and Federal Homeland Security, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement Center) had, for some time been monitoring the activities of Des Moines Catholic Workers and had been in ongoing communication with Wellmark executives about the defendants.

At sentencing each of the defendants expressed grief for the lives lost because of the State's complicity in preventing the defendants' access to the information essential to save those lives.

Defendant Frank Cordaro punctuated the rabid greed of health insurance companies and their strangle-hold on Congress by singing a verse of "Money Makes the World Go 'Round" from the musical Cabaret.

At sentencing, the State pointedly recommended the heaviest consequences including ten times the minimum fine or \$625 plus court costs for Cook and Simons and the maximum fine allowed by law for Bloomer, Brown, Cordaro and Shaw of thirty days in jail.

The Judge, however, sentenced all defendants to a \$150 fine. Plus court costs. When Bloomer and Cordaro told they judge they would not pay their fines, both were given 72 hours in jail. Following the sentence, the judge informed Bloomer and Cordaro that he could not order their prescriptions be administered because the county jail is now privatized and no longer under Court authority for such matters.

101,000 people die annually due to lack of access to healthcare. Pending legislation in Congress still fails to make a dent in that massive loss of life, although it increases the profits of private health insurance immensely.

The Des Moines Catholic Worker continues to hold its weekly vigil before the entrance to Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield every Tuesday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and will continue to do until all have equal access to the same healthcare regardless of their ability to pay for it. The DMCW also resists laws that criminalize those who do not purchase private insurance.

A Catholic Worker Wedding



Two beloved guests, Charlie Dodson and Amanda Larson, were married on October 18, 2009, at New Friendship Church in Des Moines, officiated by Rev. R.L. Dave. The DMCW was blessed to help them plan their wedding and reception.

Amanda wore a home-made dress stitched by one of our summer interns, Mallory Heggen. (Mallory is studying in London this fall, so she was sadly unable to attend the wedding.) Amanda was beautiful bride in her white satin dress with lace accents and a blue lace sash. Amanda also wore a veil and white shoes borrowed from a friend.

Charlie looked dapper in a suit and top hat.

In between the wedding and reception, Amanda and Charlie took off in the “get-away vehicle,” DMCWer Tracy Robson’s Grand Am,

painted with congratulations for the newly weds. A short tour was taken through downtown Des Moines during which Amanda pleaded with Tracy to honk the horn as many times as possible to gain attention from all passers-by.

The wedding reception was hosted by the Des Moines Catholic Worker and took place at Dingman Hospitality House. Guests were served a variety of snacks including a slice from the two-tiered cake decorated with blue roses.

Longtime friends at Dingman House, the couple now have an apartment and have begun classes at Des Moines Area Community College.

We couldn’t be happier about the love and dedication that we see from these two, and we pray that their marriage will be full of happiness and love.

**Please
check our
back cover
for items
we need es-
pecially in
these cold
winter
months.**



Consumer Christianity or What Would Jesus Buy?



by Justin
Norman

It’s that time of year again—the time when our ears begin to flood with cliché reminders about the “real meaning” of Christmas. “Jesus is the reason for the season,” countless churches will proclaim in what appears to be an attempt to trigger a different approach to Christmas.

About five years ago, these sorts of slogans became particularly bothersome to me, because despite Advent traditions at church, or scripture readings with my family, Christmas looked pretty much the same in the end. Since the days when I was a slobbering tyke I was routinely told, “Christmas is not about gifts,” yet there was always a hefty pile of shiny stuff for me to consume under the elaborately decorated tree.

As I grew older, my frost-bitten mind sought for some way to bridge the gap between the birth of the impoverished Christ and my family’s lights-clad, sparkling suburban home. Yet I felt odd for even thinking about this when those around me seemed to accept this strange pairing without question as if the connection was obvious: God gave us Christ,

so I should buy my family gifts, right?

As I parked in a lot full of Lexuses and Hummers for a Christmas church service, that once-convincing premise fell apart in more obvious ways than before. Inside, tens of thousands of dollars worth of equipment worked to put on the best Christmas service in Las Vegas: dramatic lighting and giant screens projecting Christmas carol lyrics.

It wasn’t difficult to see that not only were the usual corporations capitalizing on literally everything they possibly could during the holiday season, but the church was also functioning this way, even if genuinely oblivious to it. Christmas is the time of year when more people than usual attend church services, and what better way to reel in new customers than by attracting them with a flashy show that ostensibly has God’s stamp of approval on it?

Indeed, Christ – the gift – has ironically become a profitable commodity. This is the “real meaning” of Christmas: our local Christian bookstores successfully sell to many each year. Why buy that new Xbox at Best Buy when you can purchase Noah’s Ark brand jewelry, Jesus-covered t-shirts, ‘Christian’ music, and even the now-jewel-encrusted instrument of torture on which Christ died right across the street at Barnes & Moses?



(Answer: the Xbox is way more fun, but you can still buy *Guitar Praise* for your console if you want some God-approved entertainment.)

This predatory profiting seems rather obvious to me now, but when I was younger I completely bought into it, filling my shelves with loads of ‘Christian’ rock CDs. I think this was at least partially due to the fact that this sort of ‘Christian’ consumerism went hand in hand with a popular interpretation I was repeatedly given of Jesus’ interaction with the rich young ruler: Jesus told him to give all of his stuff away not for the benefit of the poor, but because the rich young ruler had turned his possessions into a god. Moral of the story: buy as much stuff as you want, just don’t bow

down and worship it. Easy enough, I thought. Until I figured out that buying a ton of excess stuff in and of itself is an act of worship to the god of overconsumption.

Drawing a line to denote where “enough” crosses into “excess” is tricky, but I’ve often found it useful to think about it in the same way that one might think about drawing a line between drinking alcohol safely, and becoming mind-numbingly drunk. Pinning down the exact point someone crosses into the land of “too much” is difficult...until you see a naked guy plowing his moped into a lamp post at 60 mph. Then it is clear: he has had too much to drink. This is the same clarity I gained amongst all those Lexuses and Hummers at church: they have consumed too much in a world

where people are starving to death.

It seemed that many, including myself, had been in the habit of subconsciously asking the question, “How much can I consume before crossing the line into excess?” I realized this, and began to move toward asking the question, “How much can I live without so that I can give more to others?”

Thankfully, I was not alone in asking this question. Eventually, my dad decided to alter years of Christmas tradition by opting out of the madness himself. “From now on,” he told my brothers and I, “I don’t want you to buy me gifts for my birthday or for Christmas. I have everything I need.” Instead, he suggested that we give the money we would have spent

(Continued on page 9)

A) Not Two; (B) Not One—Listen Advent In



by Renee
Espeland

On another level, real listening is a kind of prayer, for as we listen, we penetrate through the human ego and hear the Spirit of God, which dwells in the heart of everyone. Real listening is a religious experience. Often, when I have listened deeply to another, I have the same sense of awe as when I have entered into a holy place and communed with the heart of being itself.

—Morton Kelsey

Patience Robbins begs us to “Imagine listening underneath the words, listening for Mystery. Imagine listening for the unique way God is manifest in another person. Imagine listening for God in the other, or listening to God on behalf of the other. Some of the fruits of this practice are connection, intimacy, authenticity, integrity, deep peace and love. These fruits are neither forced nor manipulated—they unfold and are given. The great surprise is that it does not take years for this to happen. If this is invited and people are open and willing, it can happen very quickly—as we are hungry to be received on that deep ‘soul level.’”

There is no advent in the bible. This is a season that Christian communities developed so that we remember and cleave to each other... expand. We adhere in the collective I AM THAT I AM. Traditionally this has been a time of group *confession of transgression*, so to speak. What are we to do in light of our collective complicity amidst injustice? I don’t know. I have been thinking about this and my temporary conclusion is that I don’t know. I will not be able to think my way out of this unknowing. We may be able to listen our way in.

Jordan Romanus comments that “Whether we go back thousands of years to Socrates’ corrupting the youth” or more recently to Bertrand Russell’s condemnation of the Vietnam War, it is obvious that philosophers used to take a stand against a callous system. Now they simply summarize and over-analyze all the irrelevant aspects of life. Philosophy has been badgered to death by dogmatic opinions and shallow thoughts. What happened to Just thinking?” Can we determine what is moral

by thinking? If indeed advent is the cleaving together of community and listening in our collective heartbeat—the matrix of I AM THAT I AM, what coheres?

Philosophy, theology, morality, even the pros fall short in these areas... capish? Take, for example, Eugenio Pacelli who was born in 1876 in Rome. He studied philosophy at the Gregorian University, learned theology at Saint Apollinare and was ordained in 1899. Pacelli was elected Pope on March 2, 1939, and took the name Pius XII. As Pope, he had three official positions. He was head of his church and was in direct communication with bishops everywhere. He was chief of state of the Vatican, with his own diplomatic corps. He was also the Bishop of Rome. In theory, at least, his views could influence 400 million Catholics. In October 1941, the Assistant Chief of the U.S. delegation to the Vatican, Harold Tittman, asked the Pope to condemn the atrocities being committed by the Nazi regime. The response came that the Holy See wanted to remain “neutral,” and that condemning the atrocities would have a negative influence on Catholics in German-held lands. In late August, 1942, after more than 200,000 Ukrainian Jews had been killed, Ukrainian Metropolitan Andrej Septyckyj wrote a long letter to the Pope, referring to the German government as a regime of terror and corruption, more diabolical than that of the Bolsheviks. The Pope replied to this by quoting verses from Psalms and advising Septyckyj to “bear adversity with serene patience.” On September 18, 1942, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, wrote, “The massacres of the Jews reach frightening proportions and forms.” Yet, that same month when Myron Taylor, U.S. representative to the Vatican, warned the Pope that his silence was endangering his moral prestige, the Secretary of State responded on the Pope’s behalf that it was impossible to verify rumors about crimes committed against the Jews (Jewish Encyclopedia.) All this from a philosophy major and theologian—a guy who supposedly knew how to think!

In this following excerpt from an article written by Douglas Haddow, we can see that thinking has not helped us much now either. Arguably, this is not thinking, or perhaps we frame it in terms of good or bad thinking, or we can go another

“With robots off fighting our wars for us, we’ll have nothing left to do but quietly sip our lattes and listen to our iPods.

While somewhere, far off in the distance, a drone may or may not be dropping 50kg units of hellfire on some yet-to-be-named human being.”

step to avoid dualism and ask, “good for what and in what ways” or “bad for what and in what ways.” Reframing does not resuscitate.

“For years now a debate has raged within the US government concerning the use of military drones: unmanned, remote-controlled aerial vehicles with long-range missile capabilities.’

“Opposing arguments vary, from those based on moral grounds to pragmatic criticisms, with experts saying that “surgical killings” are good for taking out key personalities but have little effect on the long-term viability of terrorist organizations.’

“In the West we are gradually becoming pro-drone and anti-flesh. Just like our nonalcoholic beer and “I can’t believe its not butter,” we want our war sans casualties – conflicts fought through computers so as to not get a drop of blood on our soft, Palmolive hands. The rationale is somewhat altruistic, albeit selfish: fewer troops will die, fewer mothers will cry, and the horrors of war will become a thing of the past.’

“Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, citizens and politicians were constantly embroiled in a battle over what was moral, what was acceptable and what was necessary. Guantanamo Bay, rendition flights and torture all served as benchmarks against which Westerners could gauge their moral pulse. Each new assault, on what we considered to be our humanity, deserved to be challenged and inspired fierce debate.’



“But when we remove the humans from the equation – when war becomes literally inhuman – what’s left to debate? War crimes will become guiltless: a mere twisting of knobs. Slowly, with each OS update, innocent casualties will be curbed to an acceptable level. The Marine will be replaced by the computer programmer.’

“With robots off fighting our wars for us, we’ll have nothing left to do but quietly sip our lattes and listen to our iPods. While somewhere, far off in the distance, a drone may or may not be dropping 50kg units of hellfire on some yet-to-be-named human being. It’s not even post moral. It’s a Zen algorithm that melts steel.”

Does heaven/paradise anesthetize the burn of molten slaughter? Perhaps the dead could weigh in on this and tell us what they think!

The health insurance industry—drone-like—embodies this same machination of our humanity. So too the FRB/IMF/WTO/GMO/CDC/NAFTA/CAFTA/ETC/OMG/WTF! Scholars, theologians, politicians and popes don’t seem to get it. Think a thought...how’s that workin’ for ya?

It hasn’t been working so well here at the DMCW, at least not for me.

Louis Wolcher asserts that “Enlightenment may be summarized in the following commands: (A) not two; (B) not one. We must first resist the temptation to divide our world into conceptual and moral dualisms. Then we must be vigilant that our new awareness does not itself

become the basis for a dualistic discrimination favoring this awareness over other worldviews.” I perceive inequities and iniquities and become severe in my “fight for peace.” Divisions in community, misunderstandings, and chasms in solidarity have been some results of a year’s worth of “thinking.” Advent—and not much cleaving going ‘round!

Don’t get me wrong...the coffee is on, the noodles are hot, the dishes are done (with gratitude for the new sink), and direct action is taking place at our local Blue Cross/Blue Shield headquarters. My vision for community has been for shared influence amongst all, mercy legislated is oxymoronic and the harder I fight for fair process, the more that I argue for egalitarianism, the more brittle and narrow the result. Notice my words: harder, more, fight, argue, so in the spirit of *do what you did—git what you got*, and I do so hunger to be received on that deep ‘soul level’, I surrender to advent.

I pray to listen as prayer. I pray that I may listen as prayer—avoiding the temptation to judge, resolve, diagnose, fix, solve, understand or project my agenda. (A) Not two; (B) not one—plunging headfirst into the plasma of I AM THAT I AM. This advent I will listen my way into unknowing and await the whisper.

[Do us all a favor and pray that I don’t get some excessive earwax condition or other state of constipation that prevents me from receiving this gift.]

DMCW Names House for Justice Martyr

Earlier this year the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community decided to name our house on Indiana Avenue and Eighth Street, the Viola Liuzzo House. The DMCW will have a formal blessing ceremony sometime in 2010.

Viola Gregg Liuzzo held a life-long commitment to social justice and gave her life for the cause of civil rights. The 39-year-old mother of five was murdered by white supremacists after her participation in the protest march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Viola Gregg was born on April 11, 1925, in California, Pennsylvania. Viola grew up in poverty and in the midst of racial segregation, discrimination and hatred. At age six, when her mother was manager of a small Georgia grocery store, Viola took money from the cash register and gave it to a Black child whose family was even poorer than her own.

The Gregg family moved to Michigan during the early months of World War II. In 1943 while working at a Detroit cafeteria, Viola met and married George Argyris. The same year she met Sarah Evans, an African American woman who became her closest friend. The two had much in common, including childhood in the South. Viola gave birth to two daughters, Penny and Evangeline Mary, in 1946 and 1947. Evans cared for the children while Viola worked as a waitress.

Liuzzo was active in local efforts on behalf of reform in education and economic justice. Twice she was arrested, pleaded guilty, and insisted on a trial to publicize the causes for which she was an advocate. Evans said of her friend, "Viola Liuzzo lived a life that combined the care of her family and her home with a concern for the world around her. This involvement with her times was not always understood by her friends; nor was it appreciated by those around her."

In 1964 Liuzzo began attending the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Detroit, two blocks from the Wayne State campus, and, through Evans, became active in the Detroit chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). That same year Evans and Liuzzo drove to New York City to attend a United Nations Seminar on civil rights sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Liuzzo's spiritual journey included putting hands to work. Unchurched as a child, she had converted to Roman Catholicism when she married Jim Liuzzo. Drawn to Roman Catholic mysticism for a time, she was later interested in Protestant evangelicalism. She sought personal relationship with a God active in the events of human history, and she wanted to make a difference in the world. At First Unitarian Universalist Liuzzo found a faith matching both her ideas and her longing to be of service. She became a full member on March 29, 1964. Many members of the church had been Freedom Riders.

In late February, 1965, Jimmy Lee Jackson, a young African-American, was fatally wounded by police following a voter rights demonstration in Marion, Alabama. In response the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. organized a march of protest from Selma to the State capitol in Montgomery. On March 7, "Bloody Sunday," 500 peaceful and prayerful marchers were attacked and dispersed by Alabama State Troopers with billyclubs and gas grenades. King then called for any and all persons to come to Selma. His telegram to clergy all across the United States, and subsequent events, brought one hundred Unitarian Universalist ministers to Selma. Among the earliest to arrive was Rev. James Reeb, who was attacked on the street by a group of whites on March 9 and died two days later.

Liuzzo, with millions of other Americans, had seen on television the horror happening in the South. On March 8 she decided to go to Selma. Shortly afterward, she attended a memorial at First Unitarian Universalist for the Rev. Reeb. On March 16, after participating with daughter Penny and 250 Wayne students in a Selma sympathy march, Liuzzo called her husband and told him there were "too many people who just stand around talking," that she had to help, and that she was going to Selma for a week. She asked Evans to explain to her children where their mother had gone and to tell them she would call home every night. Evans warned Viola that she could be killed. Liuzzo replied simply, "I want to be part of it."

The drive to Selma took three days. Liuzzo presented

herself at the Roy Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church, "Brown Chapel," and volunteered to work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). She was asked to serve at the hospitality desk, welcoming and registering other volunteers. On Sunday, March 21, she joined 3,000 other marchers as, five abreast, they marched across the Pettus Bridge, the site of Bloody Sunday, and began



the trek towards Montgomery. On Monday and Tuesday she continued her work at Brown Chapel's registration desk and also made shuttle runs from the airport to the marchers' campsite. Afterward she served at the campsite's first-aid station.

On March 24 Liuzzo stayed overnight at St. Jude's, a complex of buildings including a Catholic Church, hospital and school, just inside the Montgomery city limits. From the church tower she watched the approach of 25,000 marchers. When she came down from the tower, unsettled and anxious, she told Timothy Deasy, one of the parish priests, "Father, I have a feeling of apprehension. Something is going to happen today. Someone is going to be killed."

Calmer after prayer, she joined the marchers, barefoot, for the last four miles to the capitol building in Montgomery. With everyone else she sang freedom songs and listened to the speeches. When the march was over, Liuzzo met civil rights worker Leroy Moton, who had been using her car all day as an airport shuttle. The two of them drove five passengers back to Selma. When they were dropped off, Viola volunteered to return Moton to Montgomery.

Viola's biographer, Mary Stanton, describes the ride to Selma. "Between the airport and Selma a car full of whites drove up behind them and banged into the bumper of the Oldsmobile several times before passing . . . When they stopped for gas, Moton remembered, white bystanders shouted insults at the integrated group. Further along, the driver of another car turned on his high beams and left them shining into Vi's

rearview mirror. 'Two can play at that game,' she said and deliberately slowed up, making the offending car pass her. Finally, when another car pulled up alongside the Oldsmobile while one in front slowed down, Vi had to jam on her brakes. They were boxed in, one of the passengers remembers, but Mrs. Liuzzo seemed to be more annoyed than afraid. As they drove along Highway 80, Viola began singing freedom songs: "And before I'll be a slave I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free."

Gary Thomas Rowe was a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informant and a member of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). According to his court testimony, events transpired as follows. After the passengers were delivered, he and three other members of a KKK "missionary squad"—Collie Leroy Wilkins, Jr., William Orville Eaton, and Eugene Thomas—spotted Liuzzo and Moton stopped at a traffic light in Selma. They followed her car for twenty miles. While she attempted to outrun her pursuers, she sang at the top of her lungs, "We Shall Overcome." About half way between Selma and Montgomery the four men pulled their car up next to hers and shot at her. Liuzzo was killed instantly. Her car rolled into a ditch. Moton escaped injury.

Jim Liuzzo learned of his wife's death at midnight. The following day President Lyndon Johnson called Jim to say, "I don't think she died in vain because this is going to be a battle, all out as far as I'm concerned." Jim told the President, "My wife died for a sacred battle, the rights of humanity. She had one concern and only one in mind. She took a quote from Abraham Lincoln that all men are created equal and that's the way she believed."

On March 27 a group of about 200 protesters, black and white, led by the Rev. James Orange of the SCLC

marched to the Dallas County courthouse in Selma. The Rev. James Bevel told them, "[Viola Liuzzo] gave her life that freedom might be saved throughout this land." On March 28, at San Francisco's Grace Episcopal Cathedral, Martin Luther King said of Liuzzo, "If physical death is the price some must pay to save us and our white brothers from eternal death of the spirit, then no sacrifice could be more redemptive."

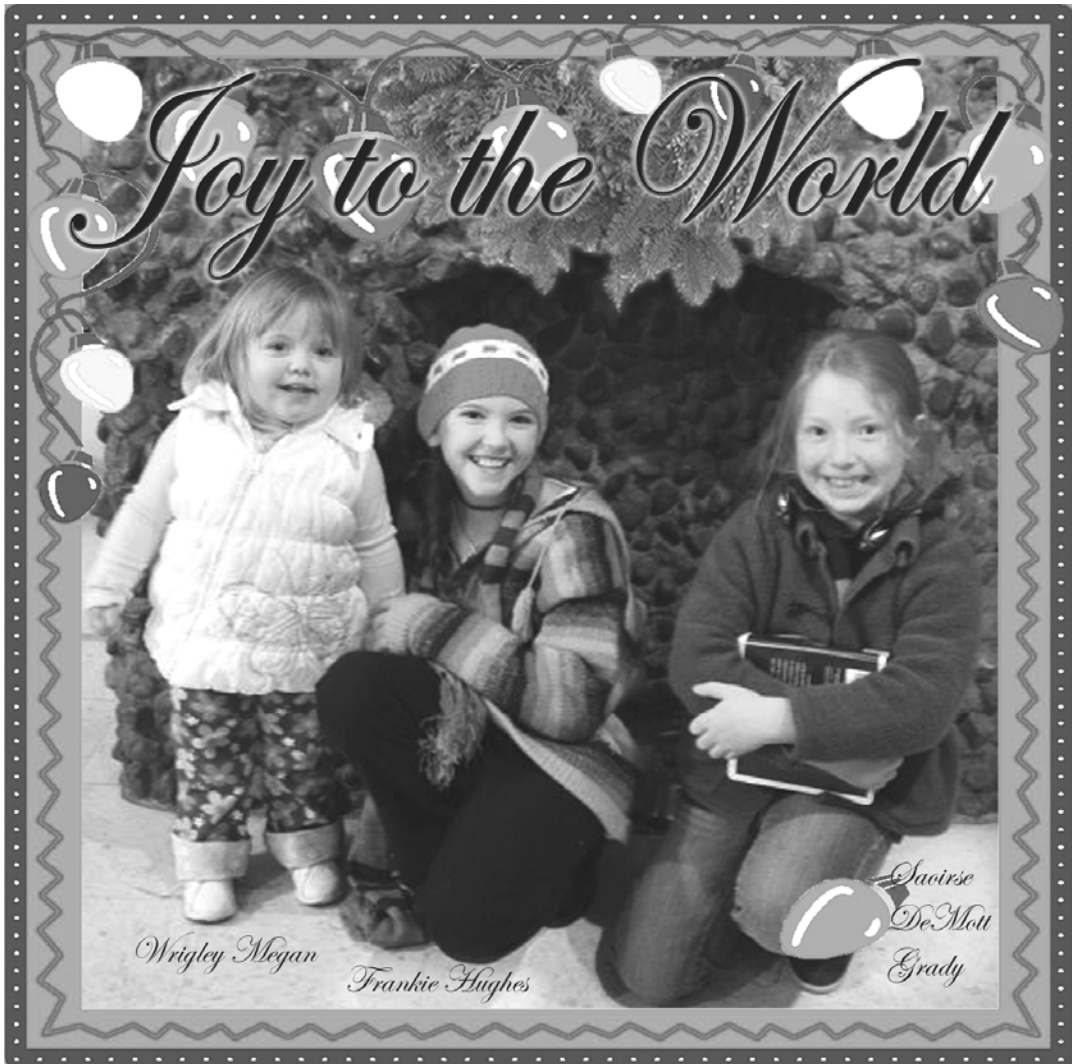
On March 29 the NAACP sponsored a memorial service for Liuzzo at the People's Community Church in Detroit. Fifteen hundred people attended, among them, Rosa Parks. On March 30 at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church in Detroit a high requiem mass was celebrated for Liuzzo. Dr. King was among the 750 people attending the televised service. Some Catholics protested the mass, citing Liuzzo's divorce. Father Deasy said, "I felt very strongly about this woman and her goodness. She inspired us all. Her energy, enthusiasm and compassion were contagious and put many of us to shame."

On April 5 the Wayne Friends of SNCC sponsored a memorial service for Liuzzo in the Community Arts Auditorium at Wayne State University.

After these tributes, attempts were made to discredit Liuzzo. Entirely false rumors spread that she was a member of the Communist party and that she had traveled to Selma to have sexual relations with men in the Civil Rights movement. Not one of the four KKK members was convicted of murder. Rowe testified for the prosecution and thus received immunity. The other three were eventually given ten-year sentences, under federal law, for violation of Liuzzo's civil rights. From 1979-83 the Liuzzo children tried through legal action, unsuccessfully, to get the FBI to acknowledge complicity in the death of their mother.

In 2002, nearly forty years after their deaths, a Selma Memorial plaque, honoring Jimmy Lee Jackson, James Reeb and Viola Liuzzo, was dedicated at the UUA's Boston headquarters.

This story is excerpted from an article written by Joanne Giannino for the Dictionary of Unitarian & Universalist Biography



What Would Jesus Buy?

(Continued from page 6)

on him to people who are impoverished and starving across the globe.

So we did. Then we asked him to do the same for us. And suddenly, the gap between the impoverished Christ and our Christmas celebration seemed to shrink a little bit. Sure, we missed the excitement of unwrapping mysterious boxes each year, but eventually that was offset by the knowledge that someone in greater need than us was able to eat.

Last year, some friends and I decided we would share this idea of an altered Christmas with the rabid shoppers at our local malls on Black Friday – the biggest shopping day of the year. I suppose you could say it was a protest, but it was a different kind of protest than the ones to which I'd been accustomed. Instead of the usual justified anger, it was almost gleeful. We dressed in Santa and elf suits and handed out "Buy Nothing Day"* flyers to people, offering them an alternative: instead of piling up more stuff for yourself and your family, give to Action Against Hunger, and provide help to people who are starving.

Of course, I didn't expect an immediate about-face. I simply hoped to plant a seed that would gradually grow. It is not easy to make such a drastic transition, as many of us have had it ingrained in us through years of repetition that buying purchased gifts is the primary way of showing

love to family members at Christmas time. Gathering around the tree creates a sense of family community that rarely comes elsewhere in the year. But this sense of community doesn't have to go away in an altered Christmas – we just have to shift the focus from communing around the Christmas tree to communing around those in greater need than ourselves.

This will take time. But I've found a few great ways to start moving in that direction. One is by making sure that the companies I do buy from are not contributing to the misery of impoverished people. For instance, with a bit of research I found that Coca-Cola has hired paramilitary troops to kill union workers in Colombia (amongst other atrocities), so I no longer purchase anything from that company. A little book called *The Better World Shopping Guide* has been particularly helpful in sorting out purchase decisions as it gives companies a letter grade based on their treatment of humans and the environment.

Another way I have been able to shift the focus of Christmas throughout the year is by living in a house with nine other people, similar to the tenant-to-room ratio at the Catholic Worker houses. While this is not an option for many, for those with large houses, it may be a feasible way to move in the right direction. Through my experience at this house, I've discovered that the less space I have, the less stuff I'm likely to buy. The more people I have living around me, the less likely I am to think I need material goods.

The less rent I pay, the less money I have to make, the more time I have available to spend serving others at places like the Catholic Worker.

This Christmas, the Catholic Worker will serve a meal to the homeless on Christmas day, joyfully celebrating the birth of the impoverished Christ with the sharing of a meal with impoverished people. "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me..."

Not all of those lines we've heard a million times about the "real meaning" of Christmas are worthless. Many of them have simply been misinterpreted or ignored. Jesus truly can be the "reason for the season" if we shift our focus to Him. After all, Christ really does offer the ultimate gift - the gift to experience a transforming life lived for the transcendent good of loving God through loving our neighbors as ourselves.

* Buy Nothing Day is an international campaign initiated by Adbusters Media Foundation.

Justin Norman is a frequent volunteer at the DMCW. He spoke at "The Economics of Christ the King" – an event featuring a screening of the film, *What Would Jesus Buy?* and a discussion about resisting the forces of overconsumption at First Christian Church, November 22nd, 6:00pm.



Winter Wheat

a reflection on I Corinthians 13 by Mona Shaw

On that softened swell of summer day
when sun and soil engage
to marry the gold to the marigolds
and your fancy to your fate.
You breathe in all its beckoned blues,
and your eyes are filled with days,
and days to harvest glory
from a green and grace-stemmed stage.

I want to change the world.

Did an up-breeze sweet-talk a down-stream whim,
or the grass write it on your feet?
Did a thread of Then wind its way to When
and sing triumph to your grief?
When your hands are pink and plumped with young,
does it always seem
you have strength and time enough
to homestead any dream?

I will change the world.

A welcome wing of rain falls short
of time and what goes wrong.
An acre of heartaches founders
for every row that's won.
You battle on through losing
while your heart and back stay strong.
But, who knew planting would be so hard,
and faith would take so long?

I still might change the world.

Like a Trailways bus on a twilight binge,
chances pull away.
Your seeds lie fallow, but your failures sprout.
They ask questions the "right" way.
Did you bring enough water? Did you insult the sun?
Whose child did you fail to save?
Death divulges the dreams you won't make
come true on this or any day.

I can't change the world.

Then someone younger who still believes harvest comes
hauls a basket into the wind.
You rise to help *because* now you know
there is no quo pro quid.
"We won't change the world," you whisper,
then she lifts the basket lid.
The hearts inside bear your fingerprints.
"But look," she says, "You did."

Losing the Moral High Ground

(Continued from page 3)

are the collateral damage of the war on terrorism.

Very slowly, the Obama administration is parceling out these men to third countries. According to the Justice Department, 17 men have left Guantánamo since Obama came into office. Men held at Guantánamo for years have been shipped to Bermuda, Portugal, Yemen, and Ireland. Hungary is willing to take a single Palestinian man. Palau is likely to take in a number of former detainees. Through all the diplomatic wrangling, the sad fact remains that innocent men, unjustly detained and often tortured, wallow in America's off-shore gulag.

As the administration courts more countries to serve as post-war-on-terror-detention way stations, it dodges a fight with Congress over welcoming some of these men into the United States. The administration has chosen to play international matchmaker instead of insisting that these men deserve to see the best of America, after experiencing the worst of America for all these years. The lamp beside the golden door has gone dim. Fearful of jeopardizing potential Republican support for its domestic agenda, and taken by surprise by the hysteria over the detainees' fate, the Obama administration has done little to correct the lies and distortions about who these detainees are and refute the absurd notion that they represent a security threat.

Then there are the cases of another 40 Guantanamo detainees referred for prosecution to military or civilian courts. This includes Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others accused of

"complicity" in the September 11 attacks, who are likely to face federal court proceedings in New York City.

All told, the cases of about 100 Guantanamo detainees remain unresolved. Of these, *The New York Times* reports that "as many as several dozen may be held indefinitely, as the authorities have deemed them too dangerous to transfer but unable to be prosecuted because of problems with the evidence." In most cases, "problems with the evidence" means that the evidence was obtained through torture, or has been based on hearsay or coerced confessions. Obama has thus proposed a policy that drew understandable outrage during the Bush administration: that the United States maintain a system of "preventive detention" whereby it holds inmates indefinitely and without charge.

One proposal for this category of Guantánamo prisoners was to hold them in U.S. federal correctional facilities segregated from the rest of the prison population. The administration looked at facilities in Michigan, Kansas, and California that might be appropriate but seems to have lost that battle to the not-in-my-backyarders in Congress.

Gitmo East?

Along with the nose-diving economy, the quagmire in Afghanistan, a still-bloody Iraq War, and a polarized body politic, the Obama administration inherited the legal and moral morass of Guantánamo. And it is now creating new morasses of its own at the Bagram prison in Afghanistan.

The Obama administration has made winning the war in Afghanistan a central foreign policy plank, pouring billions of dollars of new funding and thousands of new troops into subduing al-Qaeda and the Taliban. An

undeniable part of that war effort is maintaining (and expanding) the detention facility at Bagram Air Field. Currently the facility holds a reported 600 detainees, most of whom are Afghans.

Efforts to extend access to U.S. courts to people held there have been largely unsuccessful. Last April, however, Judge John Bates ruled that those held at Bagram who were neither Afghans nor captured in the Afghan theatre are eligible for the right to *habeas corpus* and other legal protections. Yet the Obama administration is challenging this ruling, seeking to deny the right to Bagram inmates that the Supreme Court upheld for those at Guantánamo.

As Melissa Goodman, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), told ABC News in August that little is known about those detained at Bagram. "We don't know who they are or how long they've been there," she said. "They don't have any access to counsel or access to courts." The ACLU sued under the Freedom of Information Act for basic data on the detainees, but Pentagon officials denied the request in July.

Moving Forward (But Where To?)

Right before he took office, President-Elect Obama responded to a question from George Stephanopoulos about investigating and prosecuting crimes committed under the Bush administration, including torture. He responded: "Obviously we're going to be looking at past practices and I don't believe that anybody is above the law."

If he stopped there, it would have been great. But he did not.

Obama continued: "On the other hand I also have a belief that we need to look forward as opposed to looking backwards...We have not

made any final decisions, but my instinct is for us to focus on how do we make sure that moving forward we are doing the right thing...my orientation's going to be to move forward."

What does "moving forward" look like? It looks like going after the little guys. Attorney General Eric Holder appointed a special investigator to look into allegations that Central Intelligence Agency personnel and private contractors hired by the CIA carried out torture. But the investigation extends only to those who may have gone beyond the "enhanced interrogation" techniques -- in plain language, torture -- that Bush lawyers had declared "lawful." Even so, many within the intelligence community are trying to fend off this investigation, saying that individual interrogators should not be held responsible for navigating through very murky legal waters of the Bush administration.

Obama has another option. He can go right to the top. If he needs some help figuring out whom he should go after, the Center for Constitutional Rights—which has filed cases against Donald Rumsfeld and other architects of the Bush torture policies—can help.

The activist legal organization has gotten creative, creating a deck of torture cards. Complete with baseball hats and baseball-like statistics, the "Torture Team" cards feature members of the Bush administration from the president on down to the lawyers who wrote the infamous "torture memos."

Happiness to Bitterness?

Paula Bronstein photographed Afghan men released from Guantanamo for a vivid *Time Magazine* piece. One picture shows Haji Nasrat Khan, the oldest man held at Guantánamo. The 77-year-old was released in 2006. He has a bushy white

beard and dark inscrutable eyes that do not meet the camera.

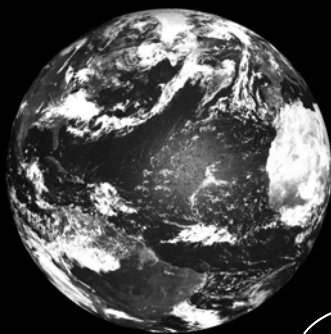
In his statement to American authorities Nasrat said, "When (the Americans) came to Afghanistan everybody was waiting for America to help us build our country. We were looking for you guys and we were very happy that you would come to our country. The people who hated you were very few, but you just grabbed guys like me. Look at me. Our very happiness, you changed it to (bitterness)."

The United States wrestled these men from their home countries and held them from their families for as long as eight-and-a-half years. We found no evidence against them or, in collecting evidence and intelligence, failed to follow our own laws (which have served us well in every other war we've fought). The men have been destroyed physically, psychologically, and emotionally -- and most of them have been found guilty of nothing.

We cannot give them back years of their lives. We can't give them back dignity, wholeness, or their faith in the goodness of America. We can't even -- after 10 months of work -- give them a satisfactory repatriation solution.

Happiness to bitterness. Moral high ground to quagmire. The Obama administration has a lot of ground to cover in the next four months.

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Peace on Earth. Goodwill to all.

If you want things to change, ACT like it.

The Quality of Mercy Is Not Capital Gain

(Continued from page 4)

Americans want something doesn't mean Congress will do it."

Partisan loyalty took precedence over human life. And many political progressive groups whose prestige and/or paychecks required party loyalty capitulated. Groups like Move-On.Org, Health Care for America Now (HCAN) and HCAN's Iowa affiliate Iowa Citizen Action Network (ICAN) advocated any legislation that Nancy Pelosi said to support.

For example despite the fact that ICAN had distributed petitions since March for a "Public Option" that would give Americans the ability to drop their private insurance if they so chose, their party loyalty did not waver when they issued invitations to two events with the purpose of thanking U.S. Congressman Leonard Boswell for voting for HR 3962. They did this even though HR 3962 didn't merely fall short but was completely contrary to what they had promised the thousands who signed their petitions that legislation they supported would include.

HR 3962, in fact, rendered Americans with not more, but less choice, than they'd had before. Rather than being able to drop expensive private health insurance for a "public option," Americans would now be required by law to keep paying those premiums. Further, those who had opted to stay uninsured rather than pay high private insurance premiums would now be forced by law to buy private insurance whether they wanted to or not. "Affordability" would no longer be determined by the budgetary needs of families but by the State with the determination heavily administered by private health insurance companies. Additionally, rather than helping "all," the bill's authors admitted HR 3962 would still leave twenty million people without access to healthcare, an estimate it is reasonable to believe will be far less than reality. (The Senate bill is even worse and will not—because it cannot—improve this.)

When this betrayal was pointed out, ICAN conceded in an email that, "While we may wish that the house bill provided even more relief, it currently includes provisions that will make real improvements in the lives of Americans that may compare with the passage of Medicare and Social Security."

How the word "may" was intended in this statement is

hard to know. Suffice it to say that ICAN did not, because it could not, specify what these "real improvements" were. Certainly the faulty analogy made between HR 3962 and the Medicare and Social Security quickly falls apart under even superficial scrutiny, if for no other reason than that neither of the latter two acts required Americans to enroll in either program, let alone forced them to be consumers of any private industry. What was clearer in this statement was the implication that to "wish" for something more, i.e. to save those lives that would be lost under this legislation, was idealist and even frivolous, like wanting more frosting on an already delicious cake.

When all else failed, Democrats pulled out their most tired clichés and canards. Phrases like "politics is the art of compromise" and "crafting legislation is like watching sausage made" were regurgitated ad nauseum as if they had justifiable meaning. "Incremental change" morphed into an ethic that was held higher than committing what could be morally if not legally described as the negligent homicide of thousands. The problem is that genocide and crimes against humanity can't be stopped with incremental change. How do we decide who still dies?

Perhaps the most cynical scam pulled on the American public was that there ever was a real struggle for the passage of HR3962. The evidence for this was apparent from the beginning when Senators Max Baucus (D-Montana) and Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) were named chairs of the Finance Committee forums on healthcare reform. Both are among the top-three Senate recipients of campaign contributions from health insurance companies. The obvious conflict of interest in this was not particularly challenged by many "progressives" who remained inclined to give the new administration "a chance." Consequently the bulk of the legislation crafted in the House and the Senate was written by health insurance industry staff, making sure every provision ultimately included a strong financial benefit for the companies they represented. The predestined and accomplished goal was anything that happened was to be a windfall for the insurance companies.

Meanwhile a faux public battle was waged with a handful of "tea-baggers" (the instigating ones likely hired by private insurance) and given ridiculously overblown coverage by national news media that was undoubtedly

capitulating to the millions it received from the health insurance industry in advertising revenues. (Not coincidentally, the hundreds to thousands who demonstrated and rallied for HR676—including the more than 200 who were arrested at these actions—were never given a

It is the lack of intense populist outrage that proves our collective acceptance of the dehumanization of those who will die. The seamless accomplishment of this by itself stands as justification for investigating healthcare practice in the U.S. as pending genocide.

moment of air-time by national media.) Concurrently, Organizing for America (OFA), Obama's grass roots group, staged events to "stand up to big insurance" by supporting the Obama Plan, while behind the scenes the White House was arm-twisting reluctant legislators to give-in to health insurance company demands. What was portrayed as a "win-lose" struggle for the American People was never more than a win-win game for private insurance, with insurance company executives chortling all the way to the bank, knowing they would make out like the bandits they are either way. In the end House Representatives mostly voted according to their roles in this theatrical performance. It should not be considered a coincidence that the outcome that most financially benefitted private insurance was the one that won.

Another pocket of resistance to exposing all of this came from anarchists and even a few Catholic Workers who worried, among other worries, that HR 676 gave too much power to the State. Even though HR 676 significantly diminished State power over access to healthcare (in that the only State involvement was to appropriate funds to pay medical bills) compared to the current practice and that both had far

less State intrusion than the legislation the 111th Congress advanced, they balked at being perceived to support any legislation offered by the State. The suggestion that U.S. healthcare practices were inextricably tied to war (because war funding and healthcare corporations are themselves inextricable) was met with particular skepticism, as if how people were killed and where they were killed for corporate profit made them any less dead. These concerns remain inchoate and beg further discussion and questions. How can one call for Congress to use war spending for healthcare and resist legislation that does that? Can anarchists sometimes step aside from fundamentalist ideology when a State act saves life and liberty—such as the Emancipation Proclamation, the Martin Luther King-driven Civil Rights Act, or the enfranchisement of women?

Still, the influence of Catholic Workers was ubiquitous in the resistance to Congressional lies regarding healthcare reform. Nearly every organized action included a current or former Catholic Worker. The first resistance action before a health insurance company was organized by the Des Moines Catholic Worker community and led to the arrest of nine at Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield in Des Moines. Hundreds followed their lead and 183 were arrested at sit-ins at other insurance companies throughout the nation. Those arrested included Sam Pullen, a member of the Center for the Working Poor Catholic Worker community in Los Angeles. Sam's witness included refusing bail, remaining in jail, and a hunger strike to draw attention to those who suffer and die because they are denied healthcare.

Their efforts were not completely in vain and pushed two amendments toward consideration that would have at least ameliorated the viciousness of HR 3962. One, an amendment put forward by Anthony Weiner of New York replaced the entire bill with a single-payer provision. While certainly doomed to fail, the amendment would have at least identified with some surety which House Representatives really did support HR 676 and which did not. This "is you is or is you ain't my baby" hope was stripped by none other than President Obama himself, who personally strong-armed Weiner into dropping the amendment late on the night before the vote.

Capitalism is most insidiously evil when it commodifies and restricts access to resources human beings need in order to survive.

Accomplishing this first requires diminishing and dehumanizing those who will not or cannot comply. Human beings are reduced to their value as consumers, financial contributors or investors. Human beings that cannot provide capital gain—the poor and unemployed or under-employed or those who decline to be cannon fodder in wars for profit—are not worth saving. They are in fact a barrier to profit growth, and so, the dominant culture or the culture that dominates, (the wealthy, corporate owners and shareholders) inflict conditions that allow them to die. Rather than shown compassion, the dead and suffering are blamed for conditions over which they have no power and are shamed as irresponsible, lazy, or unpatriotic.

Perception is not reality. Reality is reality. Pretending something is other than it is doesn't position us to change what it is. Still when the word "genocide" is used in connection with healthcare, some take umbrage, as if somehow suggesting an atrocity in these intentional deaths somehow diminishes lives lost in other atrocities.

It may be this umbrage that is the best evidence for such consideration. It is the lack of intense populist outrage that proves our collective acceptance of the dehumanization of those who will die. The seamless accomplishment of this by itself stands as justification for investigating healthcare practice in the U.S. as pending genocide. History has certainly and repeatedly shown powers and populace choosing to ignore or minimize infamous acts of genocide at their nascence. And history, has shamed us later when we knew the massive body count could have been much less if we'd not called early critics "reactionary" or "extremist." It only gets serious when it's our child, parent, spouse, or friend.

This column is a prologue begging for such consideration. Perhaps this time we can interrupt the mounting body count before such an ascription is undeniable. The longer we delay this rather than demand an end to our ghoulish national practice in healthcare, an ever-increasing share of us will be added to the targeted group of disposable humanity.

The Empire does not need a wardrobe adjustment. The Empire is naked and naked with the shame of this inhumanity to man. Those of us who care must, at the very least, call it what it is.

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<i>Prayers and Love</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health and Hygiene</i>	<i>House-hold Supplies</i>	<i>Clothing and Bedding</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>	<i>Cash Dona-tions</i>
Without your prayers and goodwill, nothing happens.	Cereal Coffee Fruit Vegetables Beans Meat and Fish Soups and Stews Sugar and arti-ficial sweetener Coffee Creamer Juices Milk Cheese Butter or Marga-rine Eggs Salt and pepper Salad dressing and condiments	Tylenol Ibuprofen Multiple Vitamins Ointment Disinfectants Band-Aids Feminine Hygiene Items Disposable Razors Shaving Cream Shampoo and Con-ditioner Lotion Deodorant Toothbrushes Toothpaste Toilet Paper Lip Balm	Bleach Laundry De-tergent Dish Soap Murphy's Oil Soap Pinesol Toilet Clean-ers Paper Towels Sponges Trash bags Brooms Rugs Floor mats Candles Light bulbs Aluminum Foil Plastic Wrap Sandwich and freezer bags	Underwear T-shirts Towels Blankets Sheets Pillows Socks Sweatshirts Hoodies Coats Sleeping Bags	Individuals and work crews for hospitality (serving food, clean-up), cleaning and general inside and outside maintenance.	Cash donations are essential to pay taxes, utilities, re-pair and maine-nance bills and to purchase supplies.
Peace and justice books are always welcome do-nations for the Berrigan House Library. House Repairs With four old houses, there are plenty of projects large and small. We invite do-it-yourselfers--individuals or groups--with skills in carpentry, plumbing, painting, electrical, etc. to come in, look over our housing needs, and choose a project. Bring your own tools if possible. Major House Repair Lazarus House will need its roof replaced this summer. Any help in labor or donations to help defray this expense will be very gratefully received.						

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The Long Loneliness
Fritz Eichenberg, 1952