



GUEST COLUMN YUKIHISA FUJITA

Why Japan still needs humble statesmen

● IN A RECENT BOOK Japan's Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, has been dubbed the man 'who has made diplomacy a fight'. Five Japanese who had been abducted by North Korean agents have been released as a result of his meetings with President Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. But talks to rescue many more abductees and to resolve North Korea's nuclear development issue have been deadlocked for several years.

For the last two years, the top leaders of Japan and China have not talked to each other, because of Koizumi's yearly visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where 14 Class-A war criminals of World War II are honoured along with 2.5 million Japanese war dead.

The relationship between the two countries has been described as 'politically cold but economically hot' in recent years. Not long ago a mere 10,000 people a year travelled between the two countries, but now the number has risen to 10,000 a day. China has replaced the US as Japan's biggest trade partner. But now the economic temperature is cooling.

Discord

Last year there were mass anti-Japanese demonstrations in both China and South Korea, accusing Japan of refusing to face up to her past. China and the two Koreas have been opposing Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. This kind of political discord has caused such damage to businesses that the President of Keidanren (the Japan Federation of Economic Organisations), Hiroshi Okuda, last year made two secret visits to Beijing to meet Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Koizumi justified his visit to Yasukuni Shrine last October by saying, 'It must not be forgotten that today's peace is

built on the sacrifices made by those who died in war. It is a matter of what one feels in one's own heart.' People outside Japan wonder if Koizumi accepts that Japan was the aggressor rather than the victim during World War II. He has also said he was convinced that the stronger the Japan-US alliance, 'the easier it will be to develop better relations with China and South Korea'.

Dichotomy

Others see things differently. Prime Minister Abdullah of Malaysia, who hosted the first East Asia Summit in December 2005, said, 'We are concerned about the developing dichotomy in Japan-China relations, which we consider as one of the main pillars of East Asia co-operation.' There is growing concern on Capitol Hill and in the Bush administration about exhibits in the museum at Yasukuni that criticise the US embargos before the War and the US-led Tokyo tribunal after the War. President Bush himself is said to have spent much of his time with Koizumi in Kyoto in November urging him to improve relations with China. These acts come from a recognition that an isolated Japan in Asia could isolate America as well and that the worsening relationship between Japan and China could harm US national interests.

Growing nationalism and anti-Chinese sentiments among the Japanese public also have to be dealt with. The Cold War in East Asia which isolated China and North Korea in the 1950s postponed the acceptance by the Japanese people of their war responsibilities. Furthermore, repeated demands for apology and pacifism imposed from outside turned some Japanese against China.

What has to be done to stop this political warfare?

● An alternative non-religious national memorial for the war dead should

be built, where all foreign leaders and citizens can pay their respects. Alternatively, the war criminals who are commemorated at Yasukuni should be enshrined separately elsewhere, so that visits by the Japanese emperor to Yasukuni, which have not taken place since 1975, can resume. This solution would mean the most for the families of the ordinary soldiers who died in the name of the Emperor.

● Historians and World War II survivors from Japan, China and the US should make a study of war-time history and school textbooks covering this period, in order to narrow the existing gaps of perceptions between these countries. This programme should be backed fully by the governments concerned, so that its results can be used in school education and in civil society.

● Cultural exchanges between neighbour countries in Asia should be strengthened. Mutual visits by young people, home stay programmes for high school students, sports exchanges, art exhibitions and music concerts are being considered. More concretely, there are plans for annual exchanges between China and Japan, involving 2,000 high school students.

Most crucial, however, is for Japan's leader to win the trust of our neighbours. Prime Minister Kishi visited nine Asian-Pacific nations in 1957 to apologise for Japan's actions during the War, and this was described as statesmanship with a humble heart. I hope that Kishi's grandson Shinzo Abe, the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the most likely candidate to succeed Koizumi in September, will follow his grandfather's example. ■

Yukihisa Fujita is a Vice Director-General of the International Department of the Democratic Party of Japan and a former Member of the Japanese Diet.

Next Issue

LEAD STORY: For A Change finds out how Delhi's Centre for Governance is fighting poverty and corruption.

ESSAY: Is the Christian concept of marriage outdated?

VOLUME 19 NO 2

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FOR A CHANGE

Family quest for today's heroes



HEALING HISTORY/TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS/BUILDING COMMUNITY

City of many

Centre of Judaism since 1003 BCE, place where Jesus lived, preached, died and was resurrected and from which the prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven—Jerusalem has been occupied, fought over and governed by many faiths; conquered, destroyed, transformed, separated, reunited, established and abandoned. It is holy to three of the world's main religions, has more than 14 names and it is claimed as capital by more than one nation.

Age and mystery

As I walk through one of the 12 gates to Jerusalem's Old City I enter a place of mystery and antiquity. According to Jewish tradition, Abraham's ancestors founded it over 4,500 years ago. It is a city with many layers: the Roman occupation, the Christian Crusades, the Arab Caliphates, the Ottoman Empire and the British mandate.

All this history makes me feel small. It brings back one of the most beautiful Hebrew songs, which I was taught as a Jewish schoolchild in Mexico: *Yerushalayim shel zahav* (Jerusalem of Gold).

*Oh, Jerusalem of gold,
and of light and of bronze,
I am the lute for all your
songs...
I am the least of all your
children,
Of all the poets born.*

Not just a wall?

Three great holy sites—the Western Wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—can all be found within one square kilometre.

The Western Wall (also called the 'Wailing Wall') is what is left of the Jewish Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. It is holy to Jewish people because it is the closest site to the Holy of Holies where the two tablets of the Ten Commandments were kept. Each year millions of people come to touch the Wall and place their prayers, on small pieces of paper, into its cracks.

As I put my prayer in the Wall, I wondered if the paper I left eight years ago was still there. I felt moved by emotions, which I cannot put into words.

Lost utopia?

Since 1909, Israel's *kibbutzim* (collective communities) have

helped to form the country. Many people see them as the only genuine form of communism, where inhabitants share everything and practise the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. But their ideology has been evolving, and nowadays it is more a case of 'from each according to his preference, to each according to his need'.

Private income, DVD players and Internet access have all pulled the *kibbutzim* towards capitalism. Some *kibbutzim* even appear on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange.

Uncertain

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has not been particularly known for being a peaceful country. When I visited in January, the country seemed to be holding its breath as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon lay in hospital, and elections took place in the Palestinian territories.

The Sixth Herzlyia Conference on Israel's national security took place a few days before the Palestinian elections were announced. Issues like democracy, options for the Israeli-Arab peace process, social policy and economic growth were

on the table. The Acting Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, said: 'The existence of two nations, one Jewish and one Palestinian, is the full solution to all the national aspirations and problems of each of the peoples.' A couple of days later the radical Islamic movement Hamas won the Palestinian elections. The same question arises for Israel and for the world: Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

As I write, the Israeli elections at the end of March are in sight. Will they bring any answers or even more questions?

Restless

When I was 18, I lived in Israel for almost eight months and experienced life in a kibbutz, in the army and in Tel Aviv. This time I went on holiday, intending to rest after my exams. But there is something about the country that is restless. I felt drained by experiencing the fear and pain of the Israelis and by trying to imagine the fear and pain of the Palestinians. I couldn't help feeling that all the explanations that I've heard from both sides are not excuse enough for what is happening.

IN MY VIEW

Dialogue as an art



DAVID CHANNER

At the end of last year I heard someone, who is strongly opposed to the war in Iraq, say that he would more readily trust someone like George Bush, who thinks he is accomplishing God's will, than someone with no religion at all.

'I'd know how to establish a dialogue with someone who has a faith, but with someone who has no concept of God, I think that would be pointless,' he said.

Even though he did not mean to offend me - he thought there were only religious people in the room - I felt quite distressed.

I was raised as a Catholic, but at the age of 12 I decided not to follow any faith. The question of ethics has troubled me since then.

In my teenage years some people thought I was bad because I refused to have a religion. The same people talked of indigenous Mexicans as if they were inferior.

Is that the way people who cannot tolerate difference see others? To tell the truth I somehow considered myself to be smarter than those girls who went to church. I thought they lacked a sense of analysis. In fact I was doing the same thing I thought they were doing to me.

To refuse dialogue with others nullifies them and is an easy way to justify what is not just.

I used to be infuriated when my mother made the sign of the cross over me each time I was about to travel. Nowadays I even ask her to pray for me sometimes.

I recently read an interview in which the French philosopher Michel Foucault says: 'From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.'

The idea that one can mould oneself like clay is challenging but a bit of a relief because it means one is not helpless. Dialogue is a way of moulding one's thoughts and beliefs in order to achieve a sense of truth.

This is the experience of Muslims and Christians (p8) in Sydney, who have gathered in order to understand not only their differences, but also their similarities.

Both non-religious people and religious people seek for the same values such as love, trust, equality and respect. That is my conclusion after spending many hours talking with one of my best friends, who happens to be Muslim.

Andrea

ANDREA CABRERA LUNA

email an article to a friend: visit www.forachange.co.uk

FOR A CHANGE

For A Change is about change, how to make it happen and how to live it. We believe that what happens inside people has an effect on the world around them. At the heart of global change lies change in the human heart.

We draw our material from a wide range of sources, including Initiatives of Change. We give a voice to people all over the world who are making a difference. We invite our readers to join them. Your stories are our stories.



Initiatives of Change

Initiatives of Change (formerly Moral Re-Armament) works for moral and spiritual renewal in all areas of life. It was born out of the work of Frank Buchman, an American who believed that change in the world must start in individuals.

Initiatives of Change is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make what they know of God and eternal moral values central in their lives. This personal commitment to search for God's will forms the basis for creative initiative and common action: standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

These ideas have given rise to an international community in more than 70 countries, working in such areas as reconciliation; tackling the root causes of corruption, poverty and social exclusion; and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundations for democracy.



COVER
The de Cherisey family during their world tour

- 04 **Lead story**
What happened when a French family set off around the world in search of change-makers
- 08 **Honest conversation**
How Sydney's Muslims and Christians are learning about each other's strengths and weaknesses
- 14 **Profile**
Mexico's prize-winning artist, Francisco Toledo, cares for his people as well as his craft
- 16 **Building community**
Why cohousing attracts people seeking a real sense of community
- 18 **Living issues**
Nicci Dodanwala's battle with anorexia
- 24 **Guest Column**
Japan's future relationship with China depends on how she deals with her past, maintains Yukihisa Fujita
- 10 **People**
- 12 **Turning point**
- 13 **Newsdesk**
- 20 **Healing history**
- 21 **Letter**
- 22 **A different beat**
- 23 **Reflections**

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FOR A CHANGE

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Family quest for today's heroes

**Worried about the world your children will inherit?
So were Laurent and Marie-Hélène de Cherisey.**



Marie-Hélène filming for French television

● THE WORLD DOES NOT always run as it should. And that can be frightening. What kind of world will we leave to our children?

In July 2004, we set off with our five children, aged between five and 11, to meet men and women in 14 countries who are working for a fairer world. We wanted to discover the secret of those who, faced with the world's problems, have overcome their sense of powerlessness and started to bring about profound changes. We spent a few days sharing each of their lives and filming them for French television. We produced seven hours of film and two books under the title of *Passeurs d'Espoir* (hope traffickers), which have become best-sellers (Presse de la Renaissance, 2005).

Our journey started from a dream, one we shared when we first met. Fifteen years and five children later, the dream became reality. Marie-Hélène, a television journalist, took a course in digital camera work in order to film all these 'anonymous heroes'. Laurent sold his marketing business and, with friends, created the Reporters of Hope Association. The idea is a simple one: for everyone to have a part in creating 'a world for our children', we urgently need to develop a 'global information network' to report both on world problems and on initiatives to resolve them.

At the heart of this approach is the idea of people standing up:

this can be any of us, when we are ready to change. Change in ourselves helps us to be on the look-out and ready to be involved whenever people's dignity is flouted. We then find the courage to act and take initiatives.

We finalised our project at an Initiatives of Change conference in Caux, Switzerland, in August 2004. There we met the first two of our 18 'pioneers of the 21st Century': Dick Ruffin, an initiator of the Hope in the Cities reconciliation programme, which deals with racial tension and violence in the USA and elsewhere, and Joseph Karanja, a slum kid turned builder of democracy in Kenya. We also had a chance that summer to spend time with Cornelio Sommaruga, the President of the International Association for IofC, who provided us with the preface for our first book.

Our aim was to gather evidence from those who testify, through the initiatives they have taken, that the great social problems of the 21st century have nothing inevitable about them. For this purpose we chose 18 major contemporary issues which make up the TV news headlines: education, health, water, corruption, child abuse, environment, waste disposal, poverty, economic development, energy supplies. All worrying questions: everyday, global 'bad news' which makes us feel there is nothing the individual can do. Through the eyes of our children, we wanted to discover the reality of these



Left: Musical encounter in the Andes
Above right: Suzana Padua, Brazil
Below right: Laurent de Cherisey with Pisit, Thailand

THE 18 PEOPLE WE MET REFUSED TO REMAIN PASSIVE AND TO ACCEPT THE INEVITABLE

problems and find out about the solutions being worked out.

The 18 people we met have one thing in common: in the face of these problems, they refused to remain passive and to accept the inevitable. They were not afraid to be the first to take action. Their example is a testimony to man's greatness and to our universal capacity, in the midst of adversity, to find a way to overcome, for the benefit of all.

Take Suzana Padua, for instance. In the 1980s, she discovered the threat to the forests in Southern Brazil, 97 per cent of which had disappeared. Trees and animals were at risk and desertification was accelerating. The government had decided to create huge parks for their protection. The only problem was how to keep out the local people, who were often very poor, and survived on poaching and felling trees.

It dawned on Suzana that the forest could not be saved by keeping people out. She worked out a model of agroforestry which she patiently taught to the most deprived members of the community. This involved alternating the cultivation of such crops as coffee and fruit with tree planting, in order to regenerate the soil. In a few years there was a miracle. All those abandoned families were earning a living replanting the forest. An agreement was concluded with the government to replant 30 per cent of southern Brazil this way. UNESCO voted Suzana Padua's model one of the eight most promising for the planet.

In Thailand, a young academic called Pisit made friends with the local fishermen, who were under threat from illegal industrialisation. They were resorting to such desperate measures as fishing with dynamite or cyanide and were eventually being forced to move to

the cities. It was a tragedy both for the individuals concerned and for the community.

Pisit did not try to impose his academic expertise. Month by month, as discussions went on, he discovered that these fishermen possessed remarkable know-how handed down through the generations. He urged them to unite in an effort to protect 'their' coast and to defend their rights against illegal industrial fishing, as well as to replant the mangrove forests where the fish laid their eggs. The benefits spiralled. The sea beds were quickly replenished and the nets filled once more. Families came back to the village.

Pisit emerges from all this as an enlightened prophet with a vision of the only type of development which will work for the 21st century—the 'down top' model. He rejected the domination and hand-outs of those who use money to impose 'top down' models, which are unsuited to local realities. Instead, he approached local people, in a spirit of support and cooperation. Their initiatives will prove their own point.

In India, we met a 94-year-old ophthalmologist who has inspired a revolutionary approach to the world economy which is both realistic and people-centred. Govindappa Venkataswamy, known by all as Dr V, has developed an effective form of capitalism to serve the millions who, because they have no spending power, are left out of the market studies of the average capitalist. In a country where ten million people have been blinded by cataracts, he applied lessons learnt from the fast food chains to his own specialty of eye surgery.

Dr V has now built five large hospitals in India, without subsidy, and directs a team of 400 surgeons who operate every day, and do so ten times more rapidly than a regular surgeon. This high

productivity means that he can offer free operations to 70 per cent of his patients, who could not otherwise afford them, and still remain cost-effective. In the time that most ophthalmologists would take to operate on one person, Dr V's surgeons can operate on ten, of whom three pay. His teams have already operated on two million blind people and expect to operate on the remaining eight million in the coming years.

The operation concerned involves implanting intraocular lenses, which cost \$250 in the West. In his situation such costs are out of the question, so he has formed a subsidiary company, Aurolab, which produces lenses of equivalent quality for \$5 each, using a similar approach to efficiency and productivity. In a few years Aurolab has become a world leader and a viable company.

These 'best practices' are a tremendous inspiration. The conclusion is simple: models like Dr V's can be developed for all essential products and services required by mankind. If one starts with the price the poorest can pay (most have some purchasing power, even if it is tiny), then, as productivity rises, there is a realistic prospect of access to a non-competitive but profitable world market made up of the billions abandoned by the capitalist system. In such a huge market, production costs can fall drastically. In many spheres of activity where marketing costs reach 50 or 80 per cent of the selling price, there are new and enticing prospects.

Moreover, the motivation of working for profit, while serving the fundamental needs of billions of people at the edge of progress, can generate a fount of energy and knowledge in a company.

Finally, allowing a poor person to satisfy his basic needs (for water, food, health, housing, education, work, energy) will turn him and billions like him into economic players with undreamt-of potential for productivity and consumption. A rich vein of durable, global growth!

Other significant examples prove this approach to be neither utopian nor out of the ordinary. They show that international companies need to take these new markets seriously.

In Brazil, we met Fabio, who developed a model of credit-selling to supply the poorest farmers with solar energy at \$11 a month—the amount they normally spend on candles and kerosene. As a result, their productivity and income increased four-fold, and the spectre of drift from the land, so damaging to people's dignity, receded. This type of solution could apply to some billion people without electricity in their homes.

In the past, the economic and social sectors have often been unaware of each other or, when they have come together, have not known how to work together. In the context of Dr V's work, our century of globalisation and information offers fantastic new prospects.

Suzana, Pisit, Dick, Joseph, Fabio, Dr V and the rest of our 18 pioneers are happy. They have found joy through discovering ways to enable our generation to offer 'a fairer and more tolerable' world to the eight billion humans soon to inhabit the planet. Meeting them convinced us that, however great the challenges, the solutions exist—and that they will not come from great political or economic organisations, although they have a role in encouraging them.

Change can only come about through the choices and determination of individuals—of every person, each one unique and irreplaceable in the building of 'a world for our children'. ■

Translation by Mary Jones

More details in English, as well as French, at www.quelmondepournosenfants.org

SHE HAS TRANSFORMED A DEGRADING AND PRECARIOUS ACTIVITY INTO A VALUED OCCUPATION



Albina Riez, centre, grew up as one of 11 brothers and sisters in the Amazonian forest of Peru. In spite of his friends' ridicule, her father allowed her to study. When she arrived in Lima, at the age of 18, to start university she was horrified to discover that two thirds of the city's rubbish was left to rot on the streets, riverbanks and sea shore, endangering health and the environment. The poorest areas were most affected, and many people made a dangerous living scavenging.

Albina refused to accept the unacceptable. As a student, she organised a series of voluntary clean-up campaigns. She wrote her thesis on the issue of rubbish disposal—and came up with a scheme for micro-enterprises based on rubbish-clearing and recycling. A revolving loan fund helps local people to set up as rubbish collectors, using specially designed tricycles which enable them to separate the waste as they collect it. In so doing she has transformed a degrading and precarious activity into a valued, profitable and professional occupation. The incomes and social status of those involved have soared, Lima's poorest areas are being transformed, and the idea is spreading to other cities.

ISLAMIC FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



Muslims & Christians find common ground in Sydney

Racial and cultural intolerance burst onto Sydney's beaches and streets last December. But that is not the whole story, writes David Mills.

IN JUNE 2004 a pig's head was found impaled on a stake outside a Muslim prayer centre which was being built in the Hills district of north-west Sydney, Australia. The walls of the centre had been daubed with the pig's blood. The whole community was shocked.

There had been local protest against the centre's construction, from Christian groups too. But few imagined it would come to this, particularly in Australia, a country that prides itself on giving everyone a 'fair go'.

The Bali bombings, which claimed many Australian lives, and other international terrorist attacks have produced feelings of fear, antipathy and mistrust towards Muslims in Australia, who are often portrayed as having an intolerant and aggressive religion.

Muslims defend themselves against this criticism by demonstrating their credentials as a peace-loving

community. But they also feel challenged by having to exist in an increasingly secular society. So, of course, do many Christians—but in spite of this common ground, they see Islam as a threat.

One of those who is searching for whether Islam and Christianity can find a basis for working together is Keysar Trad, a controversial figure in Sydney. Trad is a Muslim from the Lebanese community, one of the largest ethnic groups in a city where Arabic is the second language after English. 'Spirituality is dramatically undervalued in Western society,' he says. 'It is assaulted by consumerism. The complexities of human error have outgrown our human ability to unravel it. We need to revive our consciences and rediscover our spirituality through our different faiths'.

In 2003 he and I linked up with Bishop Kevin Manning, head of the

Above: (l to r) Keysar Trad, TV presenter Richard Glover who facilitated the Hills dialogue, Bishop Kevin Manning and Suzan Meguid

Right: Participants in the Hills dialogue

‘SPIRITUALITY IS DRAMATICALLY UNDERVALUED IN WESTERN SOCIETY’

Catholic Diocese of Parramatta in western Sydney, to initiate a series of Community Dialogues between Muslims and Christians. The idea was not popular with some, including Copts who had suffered persecution from the Muslim majority in Egypt, and some Lebanese Christians who remembered their 15-year war. Everyone, including these objectors, was encouraged to take part.

The first Community Dialogue took place in a large school hall in western Sydney and was facilitated by Geraldine Doogue, a well-known TV and radio presenter. Five hundred people, drawn equally from each community, gathered for a discussion on 'Muslims and Christians—sharing common values'. They were greeted with music and a sumptuous spread of mainly Lebanese food.

Desire to trust

Two speakers from each tradition set the scene for the comments and questions which were to follow. Sentiments from the crowd reflected hurts, suspicion and animosity on the one hand, and a desire to trust, appreciate and be healed of negativity on the other. A Christian of Egyptian Coptic background apologised openly for the negative attitudes he had nurtured towards Muslims. 'This evening has changed me,' he said.

News of the event spread and soon others were asking for similar dialogues in their areas. A process developed. Small local teams came together in each area, meeting regularly for several months to plan the event and look towards follow-up programmes. Individuals from churches, Muslim organisations, local government and other community groups formed committees. Teams of Muslim women cooked the food. String quartets and choirs from the area provided music. Local media gave front-page coverage and interviews. A printer generously gave thousands of top-quality leaflets. Prominent media or public personalities were invited to be the facilitators. And the idea spread beyond Sydney, to Brisbane,



ISLAMIC FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

‘I COMMITTED THE CRIME THAT I BEG OTHERS NOT TO COMMIT. I PREJUDGED’

Queensland, where the latest dialogue took place in November 2005.

'I am a normal Australian citizen like everybody else,' Suzan Meguid, a pharmacist and mother of three, told the 800 people who attended the dialogue in Hills in July 2004. 'I regularly go to the gym, I listen to 2dayFM, I love sports, reading, laughing and socialising with my friends.'

'After the events of 11 September and with the media attacking the Muslim community the way they did, I was for the first time scared to go down to the shops. I wanted to cry out to everyone in my area, "I am the same person you saw as a friend yesterday and I, like you, am appalled at this gross act of terror". After a day of sitting at home, which is quite unlike me, I finally mustered the courage and ventured out. To my astonishment people were just as friendly. I felt ashamed that I made the same mistake as the media. I committed the crime that I beg others not to commit. I prejudged.'

Epicentre

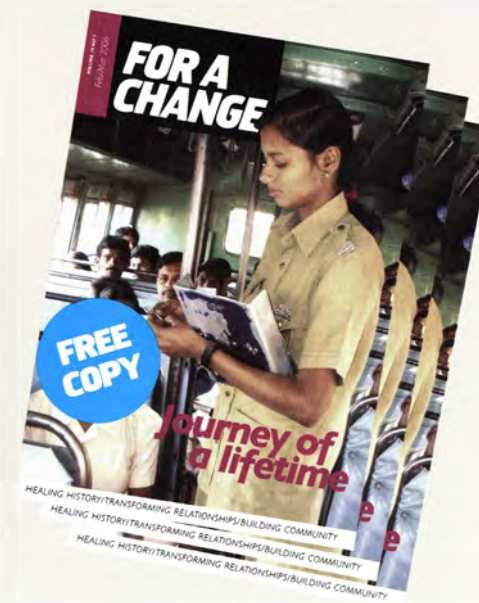
Just before Christmas 2005, images of mob violence flashed across the world as gangs of white and Middle Eastern youths confronted each other on Sydney's beaches and streets. As police, community and religious leaders have acted to bring calm, there has been much debate about

the root of the problem. Archbishop Philip Aspinall, Anglican Primate of Australia, pointed to the answer at the dialogue in Brisbane, Queensland. 'We are appallingly ignorant of other religions and cultures. We must make some effort to learn and understand. Where ignorance continues, it breeds fear and prejudice.'

The Archbishop called on faith groups to be 'honest about the good and the bad' in their own faith as well as in other faiths. 'We must avoid equating the worst in another faith or culture with the whole of it, and the best in our own faith and culture with the whole of it,' he said.

'We should celebrate the common ground between us, as well as understanding better the differences. There need to be face-to-face meetings of people from different faiths and cultures to become peacemakers together. That may be costly in all sorts of ways, but may not be as costly as the alternative.'

Across Australia a great community tradition at Christmas is 'Carols by Candle' in the open-air. Near the scenes of the violence in December, some were cancelled. But at the epicentre of the troubles, 600 people celebrated together, with police, Keysar Trad and other Muslim representatives specially invited. ■



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Images of immigration detention

‘THREE MEN AND THREE WOMEN came to our house at 5.30 am. My wife started to cry. They took first my wife and my son, and then me and the two children.... We were all crying.’

These words of a distraught father are quoted in a new photographic exhibition which features not Chile, South Africa or the Soviet Union in the Seventies but, shockingly, the treatment of asylum seekers in Britain today.

On any one day some 2,000 people are held in immigration detention in the UK. A large proportion are asylum seekers, who have fled from oppression overseas. Some have been refused asylum and are waiting to be sent home; others are still going through the process. Many, like the family quoted, have been picked up in the early hours of the morning with no opportunity to prepare.

Imprisoned, which was first seen at the Spitz Gallery in London in January, was created by Isabelle Merminod, a French photographer who for eight years ran a group of visitors to detained asylum seekers held in centres near

Heathrow Airport. A special needs teacher by training, she is particularly passionate about the detention of children, 2,000 of whom are estimated to be locked up by the immigration authorities every year.

Photography is not allowed inside detention centres, so Merminod uses pictures of former detainees to tell her story. They are accompanied by quotations from detainees

‘YOU DON’T HAVE A VOICE WHEN YOU ARE DETAINED. YOU BECOME SOMEONE WHO IS NOTHING’

and from reports by human rights groups.

Although the regime in Britain’s detention centres is different from that in prisons, the experience is still one of imprisonment. Detainees cannot leave the detention centre and they live behind locked gates and walls topped with barbed wire. Unlike convicted criminals, they can be held indefinitely.

‘You do not have a voice when you are detained,’ says one of those interviewed by Merminod. ‘You become someone who has nothing, who is nothing.’

Another describes being told by an immigration officer: ‘I do not have the right to talk to you, because you have nothing to say.... Speak to your solicitor. Tell him to write to me. I speak with written words.’

For people who have suffered in their home countries and live in terror of being returned, the experience can be devastating and dehumanising. Twelve people have committed suicide in immigration detention since January 2000: one of them the day after the exhibition opened.

The exhibition, sponsored by six charities and NGOs, is available for display in other venues.

Mary Lean

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Getting kids back to school

FRANCES HARRISON only recently came to work as a manager at Fairbridge West in Bristol, UK, with socially excluded young people. ‘Society is unfair to kids who struggle to fulfil their potential. The school system doesn’t always work for them and they don’t fit. Fairbridge meets them on their level,’ says Harrison.

She is not a religious person; instead she operates on her values. The job that she had before was in strategic policy at the National Consumer Council. She took a significant pay cut and left London because she felt that as her career rose, she was becoming distanced from the grass roots.

Last year, Fairbridge separated its courses for under-16s from those for over-16s. ‘We had to change the way we dealt with some very challenging young people, and for instance we have used yellow and red cards to discipline them. This has made a real difference, and forms part of our strategy of plan, do, review and apply,’ says Harrison.

She coordinates the two teams operating at the front line. The first is the Outreach Team, whose job is to target people who may have drug problems, are excluded from school or have a hard time at home. Harrison points out that 60 per cent of prisoners in the UK were excluded from school at some stage, so getting kids back to school at an early stage is essential.

The Development Tutors take the young people on an access course, a week in Wales doing things from climbing and caving to canoeing and gorge walking. This teaches the young people that they can do almost anything they set their minds to. They come back to the office and set themselves a course that could involve outward bound adventure, cookery or a range of other activities. These courses in turn teach them personal and social skills, as well as how to have fun.

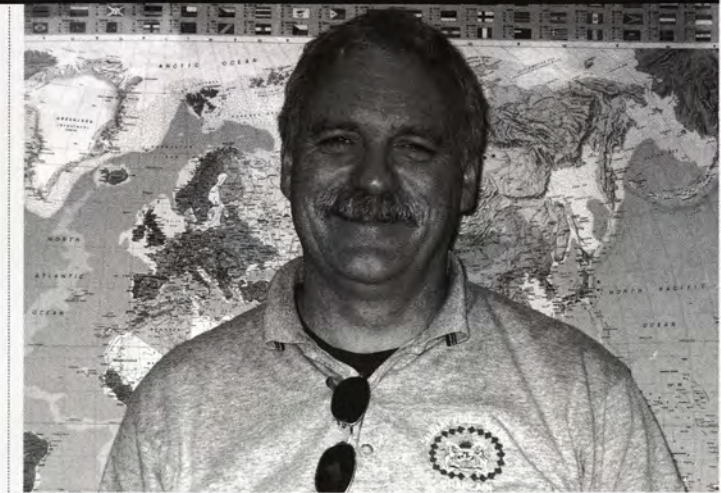
Operating out of a two-storey shop unit on the Gloucester Road in Bristol, Fairbridge West has an annual budget of £400,000 a year. It is one of 15 Fairbridge branches around the country which are almost entirely funded by a relatively small corporate and government contribution.

One of the high points of the last year was a venture set up by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). The clients set up an exhibition at the Watershed on Bristol’s waterfront, showing what they had learned on the course. The main event was a short play by the Fairbridge clients and workers from the FSA. ‘Among the audience were local MPs, businessmen and young people. The applause showed the response to their efforts—it was amazing,’ says Harrison.

Richard Shrubbs



Frances Harrison: ‘plan, do, review, apply’



Jim Amsing: ‘don’t be afraid to give’

Moving from comfort zone

JIM AMSING’S willingness to help others in Calgary, Canada, has taken him through various enterprises. He started working as a police officer in 1978, but that did not seem to be enough for him.

He became Chairman of Emma Maternity House, where he encountered several difficulties. ‘Our problem wasn’t getting the funding or finding the people to help, but with some of the 14- to 18-year-old pregnant residents. All of these girls came from difficult family situations. For instance, some had been brought up in single-parent families, or were prostitutes or hung out with Vietnamese gang members,’ he says. However, not all the girls were difficult, and many of them kept in contact with the organisation to express their thankfulness or report back to it.

Having had this experience, Amsing went on to set up a maternity home for Crisis Pregnancy.

In 1997, he participated in the foundation of the Diakonos Retreat Society that helps emergency service workers, policemen and firemen, as well as their families, to keep mentally healthy even when they work in stressful situations. Diakonos also offers programmes that help families to have quality time together.

Currently, Amsing is the Executive Director of the Crisis Houses in Edmonton and Calgary. These houses host people, who are going through different problems, for three months, offering them professional help and taking care of all their needs.

One of the things that had worried Amsing as a police officer was the increasing number of suicides, addictions and interpersonal problems amongst his colleagues. Following a call he had felt long ago, he became a chaplain in the Police Service. His understanding of the profession has been of much help. ‘As a police officer/chaplain I am perceived more as a fellow worker by my peers. It is easier for them to call me when they run into a crisis,’ he says.

His advice about how to start doing things for others is ‘to understand that there is a specific purpose or mission in our lives. To look at what you are interested in because there will always be a need in front of you. Sometimes we need to move out of our comfort zone. Don’t be afraid to give. It doesn’t always have to be economic help, words can mean more to someone who really needs it.’

Monica Lopez



Dealing with denial

Jessie Sutherland tells Paul Williams about the life-threatening experiences which brought her home in more ways than one.

RECONCILIATION facilitator Jessie Sutherland cites two dramatic episodes that helped transform her life. Both took place outside Canada—her home—on different continents.

Although born and raised in English-speaking Vancouver, Sutherland's education was deliberately fashioned to prepare her to work as well in French as in English. In 1990, at the age of 22, she went to French-speaking Mali in West Africa as a volunteer with a project organised by Canada World Youth. She had visited Africa before as a tourist, 'but now I had a burning conviction to contribute something and to work with real people on the ground'.

On the first day she arrived, Nelson Mandela was freed from prison. 'It was an amazing time to arrive,' she recalls. 'The continent was jubilant. In Bamako people danced and there were parties everywhere—out in the streets and in homes. Though Mali is far from South Africa I could taste the sense of liberation. I wish every human being could have experienced that moment.'

Her visit ended abruptly when she nearly died of malaria and other infections. 'I was evacuated to Belgium

and woke up in intensive care, hooked up to several machines. They didn't expect me to live.' She remembers deciding not to die because she still didn't know her birth parents. 'I was adopted at birth,' she explains. 'My father is black Canadian and my mother of English Canadian origins.' She says that this near death experience had a huge impact on her life. 'Two years in rehabilitation changed my priorities. Prior to this I was an activist, who tried hard to change the world (and often others). The near death experience helped me to go deeper and look at the meaning of my own life and how I wanted to live it.'

It led her to seek out her birth parents. 'Meeting them helped me to develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging. Though parts of the reunion were difficult, I was able to appreciate my genetic heritage as well as my adoptive parents.'

Soon after her return to Canada, the Oka crisis—an armed stand-off over land rights between the Canadian Army, Sécurité Québécois and members of the Iroquois First Nation—hit the headlines. 'I wondered what had happened to my own humanity that I could work around the world

and neglect my own backyard. At that point I made a commitment to focus on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations.' She did so for the next ten years—often living in different First Nation communities and working with inter-cultural exchanges and community development projects.

A second major turning point came when, in 2000, she went to Peru to work with a human rights group in Lima. Torture was common. Colleagues received death and rape threats. 'I began to feel concerned about my own safety. The Fujimori regime was claiming that human rights advocacy was part of western imperialism—and I was one of the few westerners working in this field.' Whenever she raised concerns about her safety, everyone assured her that she was 100 per cent safe. She knew, however, she wasn't.

On returning to Canada she realised that this had been a form of national collective denial. 'If they had admitted to themselves the danger they were in, they might not have been able to work for change at that difficult time. I wondered what form of collective denial Canada had, especially in regard to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations.' She decided to seek ways in which collective denial might be shifted.

This led to an intensive period of study and research, 'across Canada and around the world', into reconciliation methods and techniques. It included gaining a Masters degree in Dispute Resolution from the University of Victoria. The end result was both a book, *Worldview Skills: transforming conflict from the inside out**, and the setting up of her own consultancy, offering strategies and skills to create conditions for reconciliation.

'I found a conflict-handling approach involving all the dimensions I was looking for—reconciliation with self, with others, with nature and with the spiritual realm.' Her experiences at the Initiatives of Change international centre in Caux, Switzerland, where she has facilitated workshops, reinforced for her 'the importance of personal change as an important aspect of societal change'. In the forward to her book, Chief Robert Joseph, Hereditary Chief of the Gwa wa enuk First Nation and Chairman of the Native American Leadership Alliance for Peace and Reconciliation, wrote, 'This may well be the insight that provides the greatest potential for bringing about the healing and reconciliation that must take place.'

*For details see: www.worldviewstrategies.com

If every child were mine

A WOMAN LEANED across the breakfast table, and said, 'Segregation just isn't acceptable in any form any more. It harms all of us!' She was taking part in the ninth Annual Metropolitan Richmond Day breakfast organised by Hope in the Cities in Richmond, Virginia. Hope in the Cities is an IofC programme, which provides a framework for honest dialogue and collaboration among citizen groups of different races and faiths.

This year's theme was 'If every child were my child'. Intense conversations took place at each table as over 650 invitees discussed questions posed by the organisers: 'Most of our schools, like our neighbourhoods, are segregated by socioeconomic class and

race. From your perspective, what is one of the advantages of this? What is one of the disadvantages of this?'

'I think the issue in education is excellence and providing that for all students, regardless of their class or economic levels,' said a retired judge. 'If we can't commit to doing that, our future in this region is not very hopeful.'

Two others at his table nodded their heads. 'But how can we make that happen?' asked a woman who had moved to Richmond three years ago. 'The most important thing to me is to somehow keep parents involved with the teachers and the school so that kids know we are ALL looking out for them, like when we grew up.'

The keynote speaker was the superintendent of the Wake County public school system in North Carolina, William McNeal. McNeal, who was national Superintendent of the Year in 2004, said, 'We don't talk about race any more. The real issue is "healthy schools", not school integration; however, a diverse, inclusive school is more likely to be a healthy school.' The breakfast was followed by a forum on education.

'What is really important is that we are having these conversations,' a long-time community activist said in closing. 'We couldn't have done that 25 years ago.'

Cricket White

Circles for peace

'EVERY PERSON HAS a story to tell and a need to be heard' is one of the guiding principles of a series of Women's Peace Circles which have been taking place in Australia, Malaysia, the US and Lebanon under the umbrella of IofC.

The circles grew out of the Creators of Peace women's network whose conference in Uganda last year was reported in *For A Change* (Vol 18 no 4). They bring together six to 12 women from different cultural backgrounds and faiths to explore their ability to create peace. As they work through a series of topics, participants are encouraged to share something of their personal stories in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Peace circles have taken place in Adelaide, Melbourne and, most



SALAM DEEB

recently, Sydney, where women from Lebanon, Kenya, Iraq, Rwanda, Burundi, India, Holland and Australia took part. Comments from participants included:

- 'I can't be a prisoner of my past. I choose to forgive.'
- 'Islam is not terrorist. I worry about my children's generation.'
- 'I've held anger and disappointment

inside me for many years. I am confronting this and starting the healing process.'

● 'Offering hospitality is a way of building peace.'

Eight more peace circles are starting up in Sydney this year—including one for men!

Jane Mills

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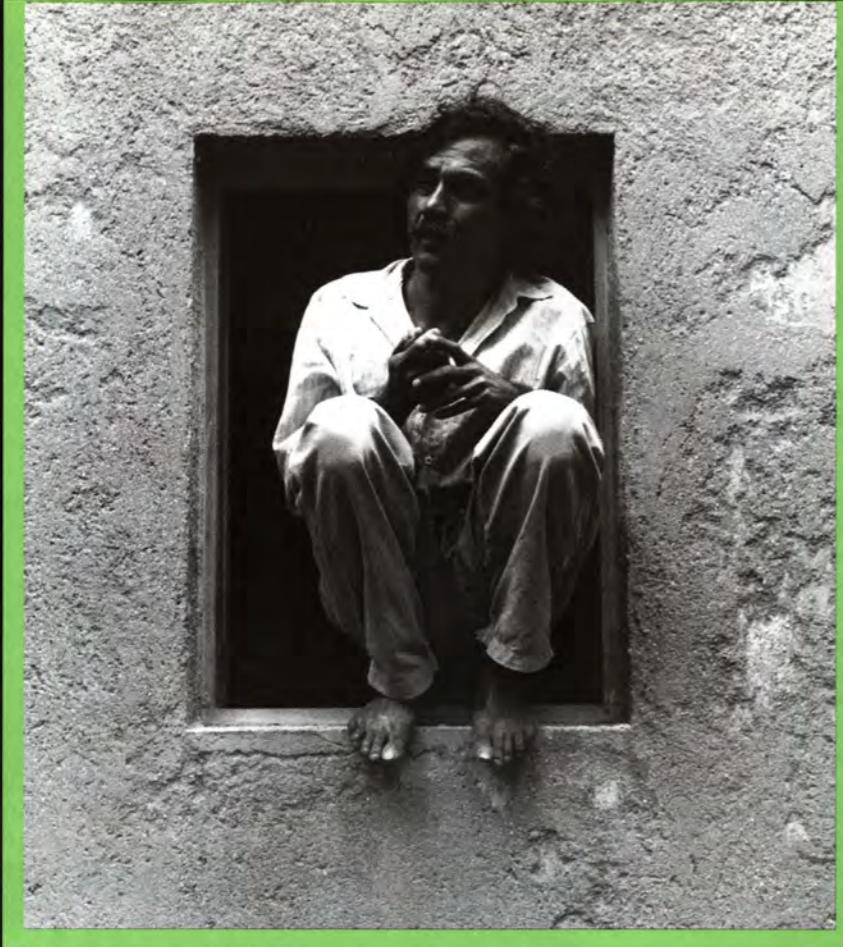
Christmas crossword

THE WINNERS of our Christmas crossword were Tom and Fien Button, of Nakuru, Kenya.

The solution was:

- Across:**
 8 Change yourself
 9 Plunge
 10 Nile
 11 Try
 13 Limb
 15 Autocratic
 17 Ottoman
 19 Sophist
 22 Assumptive
 24 Mart
 26 Sty
 27 Forgiveness
 30 Be all and end all

- Down:**
 1 Chilli
 2 Anon
 3 Demerara
 4 Connote
 5 Frolic
 6 Pen
 7 Afar
 12 Fathom
 14 Brogue
 16 Its
 18 Test tube
 20 Overview
 21 Rigging
 23 People
 25 Result
 28 Node
 29 Nap



Making life an art

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD FOUNDATION

Francisco Toledo is not just one of Mexico's best known artists: he is also a philanthropist. He talks to *Andrea Cabrera Luna*.

After a couple of weeks of chasing the Mexican artist, Francisco Toledo, via telephone and e-mail I was feeling desperate. I had delayed my return to London so that I could interview him. 'You can find him walking around the centre of the city,' many people told me. So, in the end, I got on the bus for the five-hour ride to Oaxaca City. I arrived at the Institute of Graphic Arts of Oaxaca (IAGO) just before the sunset, after a thirsty journey through a landscape of mountains and cacti.

When I stepped through the door I found the Maestro surrounded by three young assistants who resembled Greek Furies more than Muses. They were informing, confirming or reminding him of different things; people wanted to make a documentary about him, bills had to be paid and he had to attend such and such an appointment. 'Maestro Toledo,' I said, 'I came to see if I can interview you.' 'About what?' he asked. 'About your work,' I replied. 'What work?' he asked. Eventually, he admitted he knew who I was: 'Yes,

you are that girl from Puebla, right?' We talked on the patio at the back of the Institute, which he founded. All around us there were young people taking advantage of this welcoming space, talking, doing homework or taking French lessons. 'Many people say they've seen you walking around the city. Why do you like to walk?' I asked. 'I think it's because I can't be still,' he said. As he talked he opened and closed his hands, and I realised they were covered with clay—he had clearly come straight from sculpting.

Toledo has explored a wide range of work possibilities such as painting, sculpture, engraving, photography and ceramics. Many people see him as the archetypal Mexican artist but he resists this, saying that different artists such as Edvard Munch, James Ensor, William Blake, Rembrandt and Durer have all influenced his work. He poses questions of identity often by representing metamorphosed figures that convey an idea of transformation, renewal, and camouflage. By giving animal figures human features, he

humanises the animal world. At the same time, he reminds us of evolution, which is the undeniable point where the human and the animal world encounter each other.

The artist is a man of contrasts, harsh and sweet, indigenous and cosmopolitan, traditional and contemporary. Although his art has put him in a privileged social position, he has used his money and fame to benefit his people. He was born in 1940 in Juchitan, which is part of a region called Istmo, in Oaxaca, that separates the Gulf of Mexico from the Pacific Ocean. Juchitan is a controversial area since it has several times attempted to secede from Mexico.

His parents belonged to Juchitan's indigenous group, the Zapotec. 'My father and my mother were from different social backgrounds. My father's family were shoemakers and my mother's were pig farmers. My grandmother didn't like my father because he was from Juchitan, and people from Juchitan were seen as cattle thieves. When we moved to

I COULD NOT SPEAK THIS LANGUAGE WITH THE PEOPLE I MOST LOVED, MY GRANDPARENTS AND MY PARENTS

Veracruz, my father proved to be a very skilled businessman and my grandmother finally realised he was a good hard-working man,' he said.

Toledo won the Right Livelihood Award (better known as the Alternative Nobel Prize) in November 2005. According to the jury, he was given the award 'due to his commitment to the preservation, development and renewal of the architectural and cultural inheritance, the environment and community life of his native Oaxaca'. This quote summarises a long list of initiatives in which the painter has collaborated, such as the foundation of El Pochote film centre, the Manuel Alvarez Bravo photographic centre and the Jorge Luis Borges library for blind people. He is also an active participant in Pro-Oax, an organisation that fights for the freedom of political prisoners, the reclamation of a former convent (which is a national treasure) occupied by a luxury hotel, and the reforestation of arid zones.

A story that has defined and influenced Toledo's life and work is that of 'Che' Gomez, with whom he has family connections. Gomez was a rebel that led a separatist revolt in Juchitan in 1911. He was killed by Mexican troops under the orders of Benito Mata Juarez, the son of President Benito Juarez, a Zapotec shepherd who became President of Mexico and whose great achievement was the separation of State and Church. In general terms, President Juarez is remembered as a positive figure in Mexico, but not in Juchitan; there he is seen as an enemy of his own people's bid for independence. Toledo has painted Juarez represented by a grasshopper—as a play on his static iconic image.

When Toledo was 12 he left his parents' house and went to study art in Oaxaca. Later he went to Paris and became friends with such renowned Mexican artists and writers as Rufino Tamayo and Octavio Paz. He has also lived in Barcelona and New York.

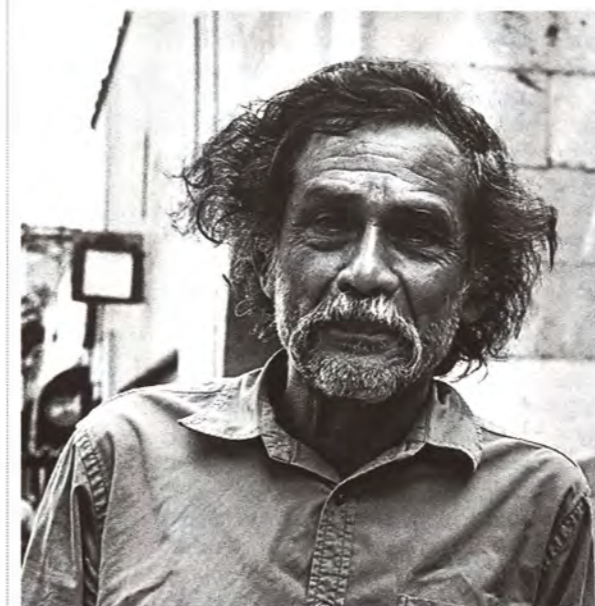
After many years away from Mexico, Toledo went back to live in Juchitan: 'I tried to have a Juchitecan family. But I failed.' He is embarrassed by the fact that his Zapotec is not good. As the language has different intonations, the slightest mistake changes the whole meaning of a word. 'It saddens me to think I could not speak this language with the people I most loved, my grandparents, and my parents. I could say things, yes, but something was lost. It was a broken Zapotec that I spoke,' he says.

His children are all involved in the preservation of their native culture in one way or another. His son Jeronimo, is a famous tattoo artist. 'You may think he's crazy, because he has all those tattoos, but he's a very tender man,' he says. Toledo confesses there was a certain distance between them in the past, when he decided to remarry; but now that Jeronimo is a father himself, they are very good friends.

'Did you have a good relationship with your father?' I ask, and he tells me that he certainly did. 'My father was very brown and I was the brownest of my brothers and sisters. I think that is why he protected me. He also gave me his father's name, Benjamin, as my second name.' In his hometown he has the affectionate name of Tamin, after his second name.

When he was a young boy a friend of his father owned the local library: 'We could go whenever we wanted to. I used to spend many hours there.' This left him with a passion for books and poetry. He has supported the creation of several public libraries, whether in small communities or in big cities and founded the Ediciones Toledo publishing house. He illustrated a book called *A Tale about the Rabbit and the Coyote (Didxaguca'sti' Lexu ne Gueu')*, based on an old Zapotec story. Today, he and his daughter Natalia, who is a poet, are finishing work on a bilingual book that is about to be published.

A woman comes to interrupt our conversation, since other people want to talk to him. Now we have started he does not want to stop, but he concludes with a simple affirmation: 'I like to come to IAGO to see if there's something needed. I like to make sure that everything's all right'. There is a lot of work to do, but with a mentor like him, of course everything is more than all right. ■



Francisco Toledo: 'I can't be still'

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD FOUNDATION



Emily—
one of Milagro's
youngest inhabitants



DAVID BYGOTT (4)



THEY SAY IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD. AND IF YOU HAVEN'T GOT A VILLAGE YOU CAN START YOUR OWN

Creating a village

Many people in the USA and Europe are designing their own communities. **David Bygott and his wife Jeannette recently moved into a cohousing community. What's that like?**

SIX-YEAR-OLD EMILY flies her scooter along the twisty pathway between the houses of her Arizona neighbourhood, through flowerbeds alive with butterflies. She knows all her neighbours by name and greets them as she passes—her reading teacher, the guy from Africa who teaches her camping skills (that's me), the old couple going to the swimming pool, her friend's granny bringing the groceries in a push-cart, the architect taking his washing to the laundry room. She's safe from traffic, because everyone parks in the communal car park and walks to their house.

She jumps off her scooter and runs into the common house. The usual crowd is hanging out in the library, and offers her some popcorn. In the spacious kitchen, her mum and two friends are preparing the Saturday night common meal for about 30 people—smells delicious but Mum says wait! Emily dives into the playroom to play with two

other kids.

Utopia? No, cohousing. They say it takes a village to raise a child. And if you haven't got a village, well, you can start your own.

Emily's parents and neighbours wanted a community more humane and eco-friendly than the developers' dream—those sprawling suburban estates of identical isolated nesting-boxes, where you drive into your house through an automatic garage door and need never see anyone. They wanted instead to create a 'village' where no-one need ever feel alienated or fearful, where neighbours cooperate, and where, by sharing facilities and space, they could reduce their impact on the land. They advertised in local papers and on 'intentional community' websites, and started to meet together to create guidelines for community life. Here they did not have to start from scratch. The cohousing movement began in Denmark in the 1960s and soon spread to

the USA and elsewhere. From the experience of over 300 communities worldwide, they could learn what works, and what pitfalls to avoid.

Finding the right land was not easy, but after looking at dozens of properties they pooled their resources and bought 40 acres of desert on the edge of Tucson, Arizona. The next hurdle was to convince their new neighbours and the City Council that this was not going to be a hippie commune with tents, drugs and free love. Then, they had to find an architect who could translate their vision into practical buildings, and contractors to make it happen. It took several years and many miracles to create our community so we named it 'Milagro'—'miracle' in Spanish.

Jeannette and I came into the picture in 2001, about halfway through construction. We were exploring south-west USA with a view to moving there after 25 years in Tanzania. We were focusing on cohousing

communities because they offered the chance of integrating quickly into a friendly neighbourhood. We chose Milagro, out of the 12 we looked at, because it was well located with an interesting diversity of members. So we put some money down and, in 2003, after months of e-mail conversations, we moved into our new house.

We were welcomed by everyone at a big pot-luck dinner. We'd arrived with very little, but within days neighbours donated or lent spare beds, chairs, lamps and other items.

Our new environment demonstrated all the main principles of cohousing:

Resident participation in planning

The community had formed itself and planned the entire development, and we continue to hold general meetings every month to plan work that needs to be done, expenditure and social events.

Neighbourhood design

We chose to cluster our 28 houses and other buildings on a quarter of the land, leaving the rest unspoiled as a wildlife refuge and buffer against encroaching development. The houses are designed to save energy—thick adobe walls and passive solar heating keep them warm in winter and cool in summer. They are arranged in two irregular rows, separated by a footpath and communal gardens landscaped into basins to trap every drop of rain. Behind our houses we have small personal gardens. A workshop, car park and garages are clustered in a separate area.

A 'wetlands' system collects wastewater, purifies it in beds of rushes, and pumps it back to irrigate the communal gardens.

Shared facilities

Everyone owns their own house, and a share of the common facilities. Our central feature is the common house, described earlier. We also have a well-equipped workshop for maintenance and repairs, and an electric golf-cart for transporting heavy items from car park to house. So, we each have access to a lot more space, but our own homes needn't be cluttered with so much stuff.

Resident management

The day after we arrived we were helping to lay the main driveway! All necessary maintenance, landscaping and gardening is done or coordinated by committees of residents. We each pay monthly dues to cover costs of materials and hired labour.

Decision-making without leaders

We have no leaders, no central council. Our community meetings are chaired by two volunteer facilitators. When decisions have to be made, we aim for consensus, and everyone has a say. We use a voting system

called 'fist to five'. Everyone holds up one hand. A fist means you have a procedural reason for blocking the motion; one or two fingers—you object; three fingers—you're equivocal; four fingers—you support it; and five fingers—you're prepared to take responsibility for it. The facilitators check around the circle and encourage objectors to air their views. Usually consensus is easily reached. If there's an impasse, a few minutes of silent reflection often clears the air, but sometimes after three hours we long for a dictator!

We're pleased with our choice. We've made a lot of friends, and we take care of each other. We can travel without worrying about the homes, gardens or pets we leave behind. We share wonderful meals, carpool, go hiking or camping together, trade skills and local knowledge, and enjoy having surrogate parents and surrogate kids like Emily. Milagro was complex to set up, and the houses turned out to be more expensive than anyone imagined. Many groups have followed the simpler course of sharing one large house or adapting several adjacent houses in the same street. The first step of the journey is the will and the commitment to create a new life together.

How can you find out more? Learn about cohousing at www.cohousing.org. There are many other kinds of intentional community, from self-sufficient farms to spiritual communes, and you can find more on www.ic.org. Is there one near you? Ask if you can come and visit. ■



Above left: neighbours from eight different households drop in for tea at the Bygotts' Above right: preparing a communal meal Left top: Milagro's homes cluster round the community house Left bottom: Jeannette and David



DONNA GILBY



Choosing strawberry milk

Nicci Dodanwela tells the story of how she overcame anorexia.

WE CRIED, sometimes, my mother and I, when she came to visit. I wasn't sure why I was crying (though now I know it was these tears that kept me alive). But tearless days slid by more easily. I was in 'North Ward', the psychiatric ward of the city hospital, suffering from anorexia nervosa. My mother made the long trip in whenever she could, in between holding down a full-time job and holding up a household. I was 18.

At 15, it was sometimes hard to get out of bed, but there was the prospect of something better. At 17, I was holding myself together on the outside but crumbling inside. I contained my world, not daring to look beyond the end of my school years. When school

ended, life opened up into a black hole before me, and I fell in.

My 19th birthday was 'celebrated' in hospital. I was depressed, unable to think straight, skeletal; my heart struggled to keep pumping. But I didn't care. I didn't care whether I lived or died, and didn't have the strength to choose. I could almost cope with this regulated life of being told when to get up and when to go to bed, when to talk and when to eat. I followed the rules and felt little. If anything occurred unplanned; an unexpected visitor, a change in the time of an appointment, strawberry instead of chocolate milk—I felt annoyed that my life had been interrupted.

How did this happen, this

anorexia? For me, the illness was not about slimming to match the 'waifs' in the women's magazines, which I'd never read. I didn't look in the mirror and see an inflated version of myself. I did, however, see someone I'd rather not live with. What was I doing here, taking up space? Who did I think I was?

During the last years, life had grown full of obstacles. Nothing terrible had happened; quite the opposite. I grew up in a happy and loving family, went to a good school where I had friends and did well. In my final year, I was elected captain of sport. But I struggled with the idea that I was a fraud; that I didn't deserve what I had; and that any day I would be found out. I can't explain this

sense of illegitimacy, except that I could never have lived up to my own expectations. Perhaps we all feel this at one time or another, but as a teenager it overwhelmed me and cast a dark pall over the future. When people started telling me to enjoy these years, because they'd be the best of my life, the future seemed even more bleak.

It became a battle to push my way through each day and come out the other side unscathed. Being surrounded by people I loved only seemed to make things more difficult. I could not bear to see them hurt or sick or fearful or disappointed. Every human encounter was an effort because I felt (*knew*) I was a constant disappointment. I also *knew* that

MY MOTHER DIDN'T STOP COMING TO VISIT. MY LOVE FOR HER CORRUPTED MY CONTROL UNTIL I CRIED

things were not going to change. The people I loved assured me that change was possible, even likely. But I couldn't hear them. My only option seemed to be to become smaller and smaller, to take up less and less space until, eventually, I disappeared. The other thing to do was to control all emotion, to mitigate the fear and the love, to suppress all spontaneity.

Friendship bands

In my 'small' state, I seemed to float through the days. This was strange because walking was an effort, I had hardly any stamina, I was always cold and prone to fainting. But physical suffering paled with the relief of living emotionlessly and obstacle-free.

The only time I broke the North Ward rules was during my regular 'escapes' from the hospital, to wander the surrounding streets and sit in the big park. ('Wasn't that you I saw in the park yesterday?' the doctor asked. I was forever grateful he didn't stop me.) Life in the park slid past, uncontrolled, as if on the other side of a frosted glass screen. I was vaguely concerned about this screen, but too afraid to touch it in case it cracked or shattered. On the other side lay joy, fear, hope, grief, anger, love—components of life I didn't know how to deal with. I also knew, somewhere, that life was nothing without them.

Inside again, I spent the days knotting coloured 'friendship bands'. I could knot for hours, in a kind of trance, feeling nothing and making no decisions other than which colour to use next. Then Sue, a fellow patient who never had visitors, asked me to teach her to make the bands. I did, resenting the intrusion, the forced interaction. As we sat together, she told me a little about her life. I felt her face and hands pressed hard against my glass screen, and I panicked. After that, although I knew she wanted to

talk, I avoided her.

When Sue took an overdose, I felt something, briefly—a twinge of jealousy at her release. Then I discovered that her attempt had been unsuccessful, and an unsuspected wave of sadness enveloped me, for her bleak life and for her failed death. The sadness was unbearable and strengthened my resolve to shut out this life component. I knew that joy existed, but it hadn't been a part of my life for so long that I'd forgotten what it felt like, and was happy to sacrifice it to escape the sadness.

Care-less months slid by and my mother continued to visit. I wondered why. Surely she must hate me by now. She looked worn out and desperate. How could I? I always expected that one day she would stop coming. Then, perhaps, I could stop living, give up this charade.

Newspaper

Although I could barely concentrate for more than a minute, I forced myself to read a bit of the newspaper each day, beginning with a target of five minutes' reading. Disasters were occurring somewhere on the earth every minute—hundreds of people were dying and thousands were grieving. I read their stories dispassionately. Perhaps the newspaper was a kind of challenge, to test how well my glass screen was holding up. It seemed to be doing well although deep in the pit of my stomach I felt something again, briefly—an anxiety hatching. Could I feel for these people if I wanted to—just in case—or had I cut myself off with no chance of return?

There was no dramatic shattering of my screen, no epiphany; but, so slowly, the glass became less frosted, and life on the other side less distant. My mother didn't stop coming to visit, and my love for her corrupted my control until I cried. I began to venture out

from behind the screen—just experimenting, I told myself. Sometimes, the sojourns were frightening; things didn't always go to plan and I'd find myself confronted by the turmoil and grief that haunt the earth. But occasionally they held the joy of spontaneity. For moments at a time, I forgot who I was and what I wanted to escape, and discovered again what the present could be...

Paddling in the sea on a warm summer evening. Talking with a friend, not pretending to be anyone but myself. Reading all night. Crying at the cinema. Choosing strawberry instead of chocolate milk! Seeing my mother smile.

Only love them

Without the love and support of my family and friends, my experience would have been different. But they believed in the joy of life, and had a faith in me that I had temporarily lost. I owed it to them to give life a chance. And I realised I couldn't plan it, that life happened and if I was going to be part of it, I'd have to succumb to its spontaneity—and that I might as well find joy in it.

Recently, a friend was talking of her difficulties in bringing up her young children. She'd read heaps of books and knew all the experts' methods, but was finding them hard to follow when real—unplanned—life took over.

'How do you cope?' I asked. 'There's one piece of advice I always go back to,' she said. 'Only love them.'

Now my husband and I are expecting a child of our own. Since my teenage years, I've feared it. What if our child makes me cry, just as I made my mother cry? Children are as spontaneous as you can get. All I can do is love them. ■

Nicci Dodanwela is an editor with Penguin Books, Australia.



Reconciliation triangle

The slave trade has left deep scars. Ann Rignall meets a group of people remembering the past to shape a better future.

DURING THE PERIOD of the slave trade, ships from ports in Britain, such as Liverpool, sailed to West Africa. There they picked up men, women and children and took them under inhuman conditions to the islands of the Caribbean and the southern states of America, where they were sold as slaves. The ships then returned home laden with sugar, cotton and rum. They made their owners rich, as can be seen in the many magnificent buildings which survive from those days.

In recent years, a project has been set up to confront the legacies of this trade and to heal the wounds of society. The Reconciliation Triangle links the cities of Liverpool, UK, and Richmond, Virginia, and the West African Republic of Benin. The key themes identified for this initiative are:

- Historical understanding
- Conflict resolution
- Reconciliation and justice
- Healing
- Promotion of cultural heritage
- Socio-economic development

In its last council meeting of the Millennium in December 1999, Liverpool City Council passed a resolution which 'expresses its shame and remorse for this trade in human misery... makes an unreserved apology for Liverpool's involvement in the slave trade and its continued effects on the city's black communities... (and) commits itself to work closely with all Liverpool's communities and partners and with the peoples of those countries which have carried the burden of the slave trade.'

The President of Benin has also apologised for his country's role in selling Africans to the slave traders. 'We must acknowledge our share of the responsibility in order to start afresh and pursue our goals towards progress. For us Africans this awareness opens the way to forgiveness and reconciliation.'

In Richmond, Virginia, where many of the slaves were sold onto the plantations, a Heritage Trail has been formed, which formally recognises the places in the city connected with the slave trade.

Stephen Broadbent, a

AWARENESS OPENS THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS

Liverpool sculptor, has made a Reconciliation Sculpture, which stands in Liverpool. Another one was unveiled in Benin last summer when a delegation of 11 from Liverpool visited the country. A third will be unveiled in Richmond in the autumn. These three sculptures are a manifestation of a process of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, bringing together the descendants of those who profited from this evil trade, and those in places from and to which they were taken.

Last summer's delegation to Benin paved the way for many exchanges between the three points of the Triangle. A pupil exchange is being set up, the first step being a visit to Benin by Liverpool school pupils this coming summer. There are opportunities for cultural group exchanges—in particular a celebration of African music and dance—for the 2007 anniversary

Representatives from Liverpool and Richmond, Virginia, with members of Benin's Government after the unveiling of the Reconciliation Sculpture

of the abolition of slavery, and when Liverpool is European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Common resources for training teachers in Benin, Liverpool and Richmond are being developed, and the hope is to facilitate dialogue between trainees in each location. There will also be resources for primary and secondary schools. Annual reconciliation workshops in Benin will be open to students, teachers and other interested educators from each of the participating cities. Links are being developed between the museums in each place.

This initiative is open to anyone who would like to be involved in an honest conversation, helping each other forward on a journey of learning, educating and bringing about real change. ■

For further information contact:
www.reconciliationtriangle.com
www.hopeinthecities.com
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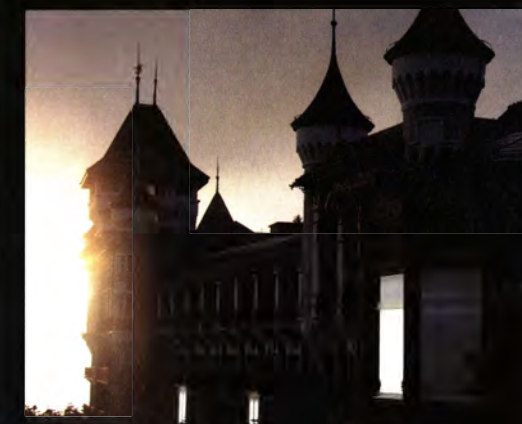
Letter

IN THE FEB/MAR 2006 issue, Rajmohan Gandhi recalled the thought of his grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, 'about the place given to the human conscience in the long story of Britain'.

My wife and I have spent time in countries formerly part of the British Empire. In India and Ireland, for instance, we were taken into people's hearts, able to share in their homes and lives, their joys and sorrows. In great love they have allowed us to see into the dark parts of our past, incidents and events offensive to God. We have been challenged by their high expectations of what humble, repentant Englishmen and women could do in place after place in the world where our rule is still remembered.

I want it to be said of England, the country I love and which I fought for in World War II: 'That country has changed. It is facing up to the dark side of its history. It cares. It thinks and concerns itself for the welfare and future of all people—including those it once ruled. It is becoming God's servant.'

from Ivan Poulton,
London, UK



This summer at the IofC conference centre in Caux, Switzerland

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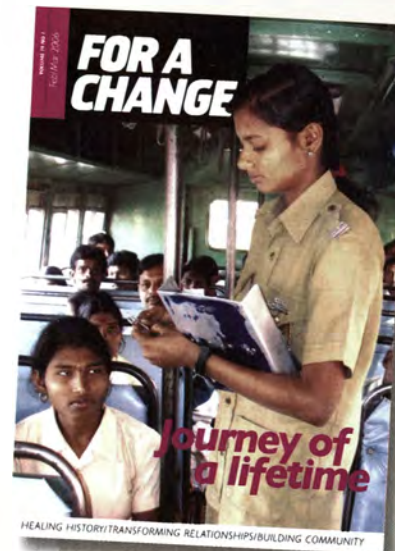
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DAVID CHANNER

Hakuna Matata!

OUR DAUGHTER, Juliet, phoned from 6,000 miles away in California, to say, 'I'm watching the rescue of a beached whale in the Thames. Are you?' Indeed, we were. Having lived in Oregon and followed the saga of the rescue and release of Keiko, the orca featured in the film, *Free Willy*, we have a particular affinity for these huge creatures. Millions the world over were watching as volunteers struggled to rescue the whale in the Thames, and must have been saddened when she died only a few miles from safety. It was extraordinary to hear the scientists talking about blood tests, antibiotics and the like, as if the whale were human.

The short but dramatic episode was a testament to the immediacy with which events are transmitted around the world and the hold that animals have over us humans.

Only a few days earlier my wife and I had been in Kenya where we visited Haller Park near Mombasa, a mined-out limestone quarry that has been transformed into a showcase of ecological rehabilitation, home to spectacular birds, animals and plants. The park is run by Lafarge Ecosystems.

When the tsunami struck Asia, Africa was largely spared but some waves reached these Kenya shores and a herd of hippopotami was swept down the Sabaki river near Malindi. Most struggled ashore but a baby hippo got left behind on a coral reef. After strenuous

efforts he was finally brought to the ground by a rugby tackle, rescued and taken to Haller Park.

Then something happened which has thrilled visitors, baffled scientists and brought world attention to this small park: the 600-pound hippo, now named Owen after his tackler, bonded with a 130-year-old 6,000-pound giant tortoise called Mzee, the affectionate name meaning 'old man' that had also been bestowed on Kenya's first President, Jomo Kenyatta. They go everywhere together, whether swimming or playing, and have apparently recently developed their own language. A photo on the Internet even shows Mzee with his head in Owen's mouth. A year after the rescue, the hippo is now of course bigger than the tortoise.

When we visited the park the wardens were carefully preparing the way to transfer Mzee and Owen to another pond where an older hippo, Cleo, has lived alone for ten years.

A book about the friendship of the two is being published shortly and will be launched at the Tribeca Film Festival which was founded after the World Trade Center was attacked. The publisher writes that the story of Owen and Mzee 'embodies the global unity that emerged in a time of tragedy'. The book is dedicated to nearly 250 employees of the worldwide Lafarge materials group who died or are still missing after the tsunami.

We discovered that another great animal, albeit fictional, has a hold on Kenya. In the film, *The Lion King*, a Swahili-speaking meerkat, Timon, and a warthog, Pumbaa, teach Simba, a lion cub, that he should forget his troubled past and concentrate on the present. 'Hakuna Matata,' they tell him. This phrase has so caught on in the country that it is now as common a salutation as the traditional 'Jambo'. It is a catch-all phrase meaning 'no problem' and, judging by the signs on walls and t-shirts, is not used only for the tourists.

Let me leave you with a song from *The Lion King*, courtesy of Elton John and Tim Rice:

*Hakuna Matata! What a wonderful phrase
Hakuna Matata! Ain't no passing craze
It means no worries for the rest of your days
It's our problem-free philosophy
Hakuna Matata!
Hakuna Matata?
Yeah. It's our motto!*

If you have kept with me so far and wondered what this column is about, then 'Hakuna Matata'.

Michael Henderson is the author of *Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate*, Grosvenor Books, 2002, ISBN 1-85239-031-X

www.michaelhenderson.org.uk

Ordinary and extraordinary



FOR ALMOST SIX YEARS, rain or shine, my mother and I have gone for a daily walk together. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease 13 years ago, my mother has kept mobile by walking every day.

Recently, she moved out of our home into a small group home. Now our walks are in a new neighbourhood, and we take with us one of the home's seven other residents.

My mother is deeply bent from osteoporosis, and as we walk her eyes are directed firmly at the ground. She uses her cane to prod bits of grass, small sticks or gravel, and comments on the variety of objects she sees. Rachel, who holds my other hand, looks up at the tall trees,

the lawns, the houses and the cars, and with a broad sweep of her free hand pronounces the world to be 'wonderful, beautiful, amazing'.

We stop frequently to watch a butterfly, a squirrel, or a bird... often interchangeable in the somewhat blurred vision of both Rachel and my mother. The rare cars that pass slow down, and most drivers wave or smile at us.

After our gentle ramble, we sit on a bench to recover from our exertions, and we drink a glass of water. My mother is quiet; Rachel tells me for the umpteenth time that my mother is beautiful, and has blue eyes and is cute. I relax into God's love shining on and from my mother and Rachel, and am grateful.

KATIA ZIRIANOVA

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