

## Kenya offers hope again



by Francis Kimani

**K**enya has given hope to the entire African continent. In 1963, Kenya surprised the world. Its founding father, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, invited people of all races to help build the young nation. There had been fears that the white community would be asked to leave the country soon after independence. Mzee Kenyatta asked the white community (or the settlers as they were commonly called) to forgive him for any wrongs he may have done. He also told them he had forgiven them. That act of forgiveness guaranteed the country the stability it so badly needed. Many white farmers decided to stay. They produced enough food for the country while Kenyatta concentrated on running the government.

### SMOOTH TRANSITION

In December 2002, Kenya made history again. Democratic elections took place in a peaceful atmosphere. The Kenya African National Union (KANU), the party that had been in power since independence, lost the elections, as did the former president's preferred candidate. The joy that this country wants to share with the rest of the world is that the transition was smooth and peaceful. Despite there being no clear method of handing over power, the whole affair was a success.

Many individuals and organizations contributed to this. One organization that deserves special mention is Initiatives of Change (IC), which initiated the Clean Election Campaign (CEC) some seven years ago. Through its highly challenging leaflets the CEC became the most powerful weapon in challenging Kenyans to take responsibility for their nation. I had the privilege of working with this campaign.

The 2002 elections were the second in which the Clean Elections Campaign was involved. The campaign succeeded in greatly reducing election rigging. Loopholes witnessed in the 1997 elections were sealed. This was done by fighting to have the votes counted at the polling stations, rather than moving the ballot boxes, which would have increased the opportunity for them to be interfered with.

The Clean Elections Campaign leaflet got special mention from several media houses. About two weeks before the elections I was at a bus stop in Naivasha town and decided to find out how an ordinary Kenyan would react to the leaflet. I called several hawkers and gave them each a leaflet. When they had read it they asked if I had more. I had 6,000 in the car. The hawkers took them and in about 40 minutes the leaflets were everywhere in town. Signed pledge forms in support of the campaign are still coming in from Naivasha, most of them by post. In a country where people don't easily sign documents, receiving signed pledge forms is a true sign of commitment.

The IC team managed to reach every region of the country. The network with

**‘The election process was a success’**

religious groups is very strong, and many a sermon was based on the leaflet. I noticed that the IC team had the skill of passing on the idea of clean elections in the most strong and convincing manner. I still remember the excitement of a congregation of about 3,000 at the Christ the King Cathedral, Nakuru, when Joseph Karanja, one of the CEC organizers, talked to them for ten minutes. The congregation left fully convinced that they could change things in Kenya.

One great lesson I learned from IC during the campaign is that one has to know what other ideologies are being offered to the public by political parties. The timing when IC applied the last kick was well calculated. The two weeks before the elections were the period when the CEC campaign was very intense. This was the time when most of the political parties were also very active. Messages that would have jeopardized fair elections were neutralized by the Clean Elections Campaign.

There is no doubt the 2002 elections in Kenya were the best to date. They were incident-free.

It is amazing to see how the Clean Kenya Campaign—also initiated by IC—is taking root in Kenya since the elections.

The campaign has asked Kenyans to give a mighty shout when acts of corruption occur. It is now common for members of the public to force police officers to return bribes. Recent press reports also indicate that Kenyans have responded to the campaign. Kenyans are looking to the advocates of the CEC to point out the next bridge to be crossed.

### CLEAN AFRICA CAMPAIGN

The new government in Kenya is aware of the campaign. The country, and Africa in general, needs it badly. I hope that the Clean Kenya Campaign will be a well-supported, on-going activity.

The campaign has come of age and this cannot be ignored. Kenya must now export her experience to other African countries. I invite people of goodwill from all over the world to help in supporting the Clean Africa Campaign. If it can happen in Kenya why not in the entire continent?

Francis Kimani is a Nairobi-based lawyer.

### Continued from page 13

every parent through the schoolchildren.

- Two brothers, both taxi drivers operating in two big towns, distributed the leaflets and asked the residents of those towns to support the campaign.
- In total, we printed and distributed 140,000 leaflets, 40,000 of which were donated by ColourPrint Ltd. With more funds this figure would have been higher.
- We sent petitions to all the political parties asking them to make their followers aware of the need to maintain peace and shun bribery during the elections, and to support the CEC as a whole.
- We sent leaflets to all the senior leaders in both the previous government and the current, National Rainbow Coalition, one. NARC helped distribute CEC leaflets throughout the country.
- Many young people were involved and trained in monitoring the elections.
- We told some of the election observers about the campaign, and warned them about potential problems, such as vote rigging, that we saw in previous elections.

The elections have happened. But the campaign continues. We will not stop until the whole political process is transformed. ■

### NEXT ISSUE

Guest column: *For A Change* looks at what the fair trade movement is doing for producers in the developing world.

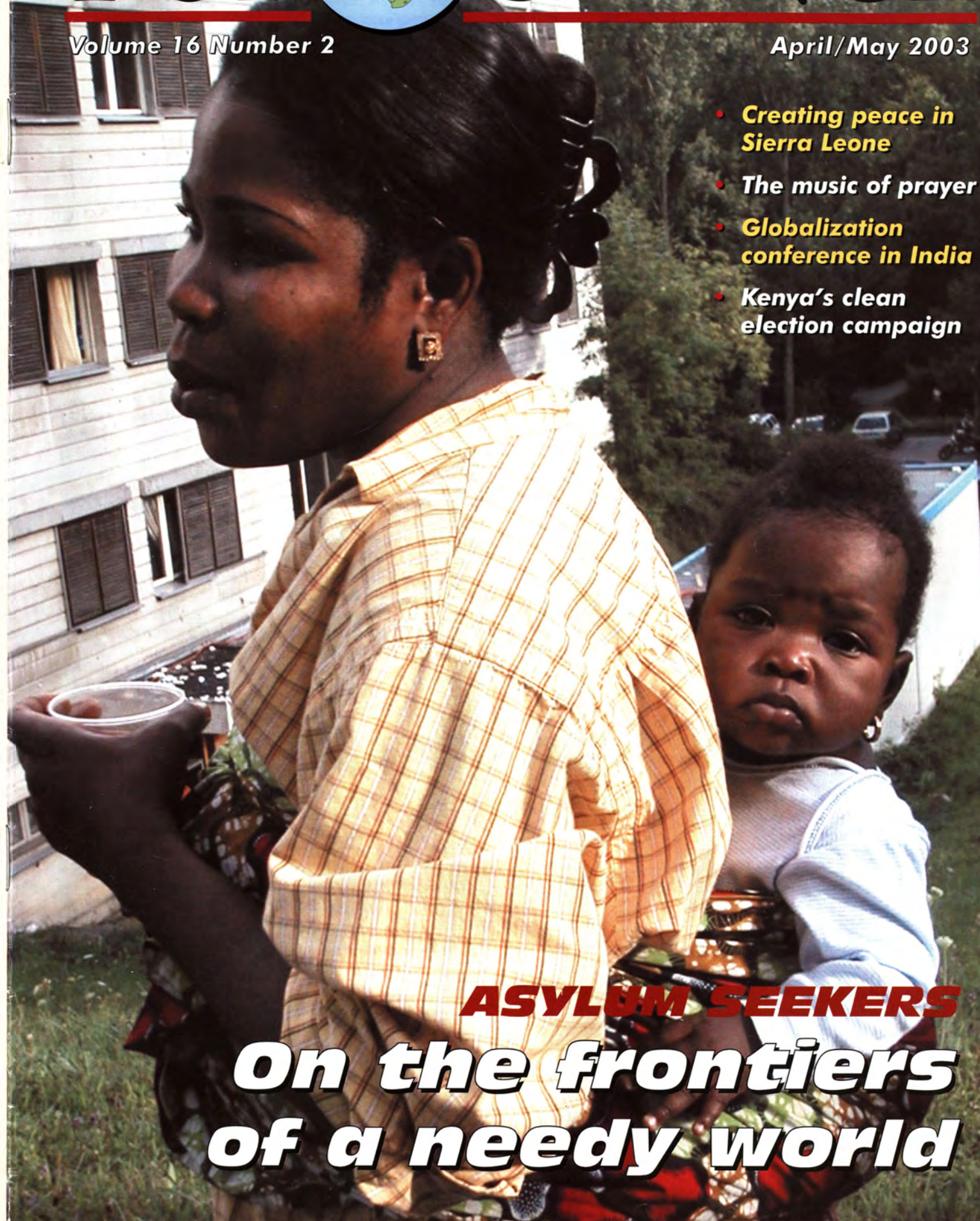
Profile: Tom Tate, the World War II pilot who went back to Germany after 57 years.

# FOR A CHANGE

Volume 16 Number 2

April/May 2003

- **Creating peace in Sierra Leone**
- **The music of prayer**
- **Globalization conference in India**
- **Kenya's clean election campaign**



**ASYLUM SEEKERS**

**On the frontiers of a needy world**



from Nathalie Chavanne in Paris



**Communication skills**

Recently I took my son and daughter and three of their friends for a short holiday with my elderly parents in Normandy.

One of my exuberant carload was Ange, the 12-year-old son of Congolese friends. It didn't take him long to demonstrate his ability to relate to adults. 'Here's one who looks you in the eyes when he talks to you,' my father remarked appreciatively. 'And you can understand what he says, too. Unlike others, he doesn't mumble!'

**Lessons for life**

On a walk in the countryside, as the other boys banged sticks against anything which made a noise, I asked Ange what he wanted to do when he was older.

He had already given the matter considerable thought. He had wondered about being a lawyer—or a stuntman. But, in the end, he had settled on the army. 'I like the discipline and the marching and I'm prepared to die for my country. And because one needs to have an aim, I've decided to be a general.'

Ange said he admired his father, who is often interviewed on the radio, because he had an effect on people's lives—'and I sense that he has an aim in life'.

'And your mother?'  
'She teaches us about life. To wash up, cook, air our beds before making them in the

morning. This means that later we won't be too hard for someone else to live with. Even when she comes home tired from work, she takes good care of us!'

**Stiff joints: supple hearts**

The other evening I rang Georges and Odette, now aged 80 and feeling the limitations of age all the more keenly because of their militant past.

Years ago, as young trade unionists, Georges and Odette came to an unusual conclusion: 'Criticizing the bosses all the time isn't going to help them to change: we'll adopt a different spirit.'

I often think of Georges and Odette when I'm tempted to despair of others. When I told Odette this on the phone, she said that they had also decided to cultivate 'a bias towards benevolence'. 'For example, when things don't work out quite as we'd like at hospital, we try not to blame the nurses. We tell ourselves that there are often things we don't know

about, maybe there's someone in a worse state than we are. I admit it isn't easy.'

Odette complained of the stiffness of her joints, but I envy the suppleness of her heart, always open to change.

**Starting on time**

I recently took part in some days of reflection on the relationship between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. One morning, Hatem, a Tunisian university lecturer, talked about some personal experiences which had marked his life.

He described how when he was in his twenties he had had to catch a train from Paris to the south of France to give a talk on Islam. When he arrived at the station early in the morning, his train was pulling out—carrying his travelling companion who had his ticket. Distraught, he rang a friend, Gérard. 'What do you want me to say?' Gérard replied. 'You're always late.'

'I was livid,' remembered Hatem. 'A fine response from

someone I saw as one of my best friends! I felt Gérard was not only unfriendly but also racist.'

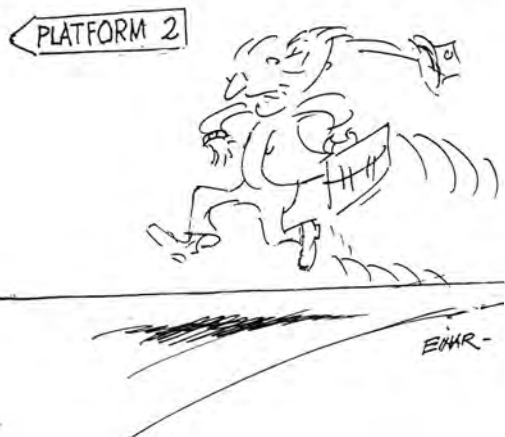
**Responsibility**

This experience made our friend think. 'I realized that I often justified my lateness by circumstances—the train had gone, and it wasn't my fault. If I couldn't find a valid reason, I'd say, "It's fate!"'

'The society I come from is also like that: in spite of the great riches of our past, the Arab world lags behind in several respects. We blame other people: colonization, the Americans.... This may be partly true, but what is our part of the responsibility?'

He described a similar incident at about the same time with another French friend. 'Nowadays I am careful in my reactions to Westerners,' he said. 'Over-sensitivity can be destructive. It often rules the relationships between the Arab nations which are punctuated by outbursts followed by embraces. One day you're angry, the next you reconcile and sign agreements, the day after that you take offence again.... What solid foundations are we going to give to the great community which we dream of building?'

Our friend's honesty helped to anchor the discussions at our seminar in the simplest realities of life. Rather than making us judgmental, his experiences evoked self-recognition—and a desire to look more clearly at our own personal and cultural flaws. ■



Cover: Asylum seeker at an accommodation centre in Switzerland  
Photo: B Zilocchi

**FROM THE EDITORS' DESK**

**Iraq poses long-term questions**

By the time you read this, some of our countries may well be at war.

Few issues have caused such division in recent times as Saddam Hussein's despotic regime. The Bush and Blair governments argue that such a regime must not be allowed to use weapons of mass destruction. Other governments—and millions of peace marchers—feel that war is too costly a solution. Both sides claim the moral high ground. The fall-out has included a split in NATO, the UN Security Council at loggerheads and bad blood between European 'partners'.

How wonderful it would be if there was just one 'right solution'. As David Swann points out in Gordon Legge's profile in this issue, ordinary Iraqis are suffering dreadfully—and will suffer more if war breaks out. Others, including the British prime minister, argue that war is the only way to stop their suffering.

One may question our leaders' motives. But the truth is that Bush, Blair, Chirac, Putin and co have to steer their various courses knowing that whatever they do or don't do, there will be a great deal of danger and suffering. Even those with the most ardent desire to do what is best for humanity cannot know with certainty how the cost of a war with Saddam compares with the danger of giving him room to manoeuvre.

Whatever the outcome, some things seem clear:  
• A massive programme of reconstruction and rehabilitation will be needed in Iraq, just as it is in Afghanistan.  
• Whatever the West's virtues, we need to be equally realistic about our vices and mistakes, past and present, and the effect they have on the rest of the world's perception of us.

• Wickedness has its roots in individual human hearts. Anyone who purges his own soul of hatred is doing his bit for peace, and may inspire others to examine their own approach.  
• Whatever happens, the need to strengthen relations between cultures, religions and countries will remain. This will require acts of statesmanship, generosity, humility and open-heartedness on all sides—especially difficult in times such as these. ■

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**FOR A CHANGE**

• closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.

**FOR A CHANGE** believes that

- in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.

**FOR A CHANGE**

- draws its material from many sources and was born out of the experience of MRA, now Initiatives of Change.

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**A NOTE ON 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 with the individual.

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 of people at work in more than 70 countries in programmes which include reconciliation; tackling the root causes of corruption, poverty and social exclusion; and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundations for democracy.

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# On the frontiers of a needy world

Like most western Europe countries, Switzerland is seeing a rise in asylum applications.

**Mary Lean** finds out how the Swiss are responding.

It has been snowing heavily in the border town of Vallorbe, Switzerland. On the steps of the railway station, two men from Iraq are smoking and gazing out across the valley at the people skiing on the slopes opposite. They have been in Switzerland for less than two weeks.

One of them is a restaurant owner from Baghdad. His mother and sister are in the US, and his contact with them earned him nine months in prison, after which he paid a trafficker \$4,000 to bring him to the West. He is equally appalled by Saddam's regime, by the prospect of war and by the West's motives, as he perceives them.

'So what is the answer?' I ask.

'If I knew the answer, I would tell you,' he says. Then, after a pause, he adds, 'I have come here, that's the answer.'

Last year, over half a million people came up with the same answer to the question of survival and sought asylum in the West. Some were running from



Asylum seekers queue to register their claims in Switzerland in 1998.

oppression and persecution; some from war; some from poverty—many from all three. While a cynical minority exploited the asylum system for criminal or political reasons, most were driven by desperation.

And they were greeted by desperation: systems buckling under the numbers arriving, governments frantic to stem the flow, and host communities fearful for their jobs, houses and traditions. When the figures for 2002 are finally in, the numbers applying for asylum in Britain are expected to have topped 100,000 for the first time. Switzerland's total is a quarter of that, but with a population an eighth the size of Britain's, this gives her one of the highest per capita application rates in Europe.

Since I started working with detained asylum seekers in Britain, seven years ago, I have believed that the West's response to the 'strangers at its door' is a litmus test of our democracies, and of our moral and spiritual values. I went to Switzerland to see how a small country, with a long history of grassroots democracy and cultural diversity, is coping with the thousands throwing themselves on her mercy.

## HOST COMMUNITY

As in Britain, the issue of asylum is a hot one. Many of the host community greet the phenomenon with fear and suspicion, particularly when asylum seekers are placed in small rural communities. People associate

asylum seekers with crime and drug-dealing, even though recent statistics suggest that only a small minority is involved in such activities.

In November a referendum on tightening Switzerland's asylum laws was defeated by a margin of only 0.2 per cent. Had it been passed, stated the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the country would have decided to 'more or less shut its doors to people fleeing persecution'. In December the town of Meilen, near Zürich, hit the headlines with a proposal to bar asylum seekers from most public amenities and from parts of the city. After an outcry the plans were relaxed.

In Switzerland, as in Britain, the voices of fear and reaction often drown out those of welcome and support—but the networks of volunteers across both countries testify that the louder voice is not telling the full story.

Switzerland, after all, is a country which is used to diversity, with its four national languages and its largely self-governing cantons. Every third person in the city of Lausanne is not Swiss. And many who are now Swiss citizens grew up elsewhere—like my host and hostess, Tom and Brigitte Zilocchi, (he in Luxembourg, she in Germany).

In her work as the Protestant Church's liaison with refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in Vaud, Brigitte Zilocchi oversees a plethora of voluntary relief and

befriending initiatives.

One of these is ARAVOH, a group of 70 volunteers set up in 2000, when the Federal Government opened a reception centre for asylum seekers (CERA) in Vallorbe (population 3,000). Last year 11,000 asylum seekers passed through CERA, transforming this small town into a major interface between Switzerland and a needy world.

The centre is one of four in Switzerland where asylum applicants are processed and given health checks before being sent to wait in a canton for the outcome of their cases. They remain at CERA for one to two weeks, receiving full board but no cash. They are allowed out into the town for a couple of hours in the morning and afternoon.

I am met at the station by Christiane Mathys, a feisty grandmother. As we fight our way through the wind and snow, she regales me with her run-ins with the town council over the funding of ARAVOH. The presence of CERA has been a challenge for a community where, not so long ago, a 'foreigner' was someone from France. There have been some thefts, though none of the major crimes or rapes that the locals feared.

## BONE OF CONTENTION

ARAVOH's volunteers take it in turns to man a tiny drop-in centre and second-hand clothes store in the town. This morning René, a town councillor, is dispensing coffee and a listening ear, while Jacqueline, a nurse, is coping with the run on boots, hats and gloves caused by the snowy weather. Karine pops in from the legal advice centre in the next room to give new arrivals lists of contacts in the different cantons to which they may be sent.

Karine's work is a bone of contention with the town council, which is threatening to withdraw funding if ARAVOH continues with it. Coffee and sympathy are acceptable, apparently; helping people to win their asylum cases is more controversial.

Some 25 people come stamping in from the cold during the morning: from Congo, Sudan, Iraq, Burkino Faso, Burundi, Kosovo, Cameroon....

The walls of the room are covered with drawings of flags, sometimes with captions—'God please we need peace in Africa, God's own continent,' reads one. Two men from Congo tell us that in some families there, the men and women take it in turns to eat, every other day.

The chaplains at CERA are also part of ARAVOH and one of them, Daniel Rochat, takes me to visit the centre. The atmosphere is more relaxed than that in the detention centre where I visit in England. Although Rochat tells me that there are 20 police in the basement, their presence is not obvious, and the staff at the centre do not wear uniforms. The major problem is



## On the frontiers of a needy world

boredom, says Rochat—other than a ping pong table and football net, and informal prayer groups, there is nothing for the residents to do.

The chaplaincy has a room of its own, where it has set up a small library. We find a 20-year-old Kosovan there, avidly reading the only Albanian book. He tells me that his father has been killed, and his mother lost her arm in the bombing. He has psychological problems, but while the nurses at CERA are supportive it seems unlikely that he will get specialist help. Another asylum seeker comes in to borrow a Qur'an and settles down in a corner to read it.

On the train back to Lausanne, a young black man walks through my compartment. Shortly afterwards, he is followed by three police. At the next station, I see him walking down the platform. People from CERA often try to go to Lausanne, I am told, but rarely have the money for the ticket.

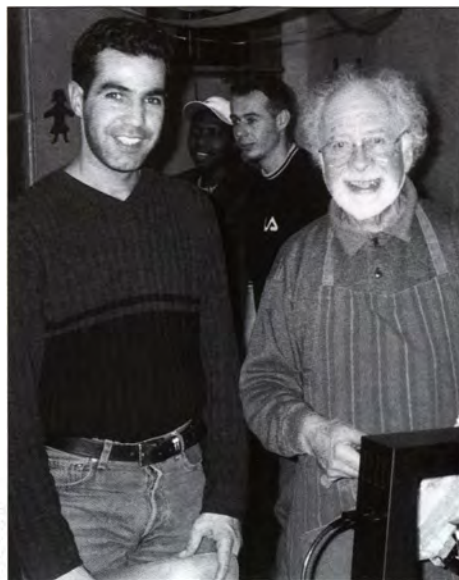
### FALL-OUT SHELTERS

Brigitte Zilocchi meets me off the train with a car full of jam, given to charity by the wholesalers, which she is planning to pass on to asylum-seeking families. The group in Vallorbe is just one of those which she nurtures. There are some 9,000 asylum seekers accommodated around the canton of Vaud and in most towns where there is an accommodation centre there is also a group of volunteers.

In Lausanne itself there are several such initiatives. One team meets the 9.20 train



Brigitte Zilocchi (left) with a Kosovan client



Asylum seeker and volunteer at drop-in centre in Lausanne

from Vallorbe every morning to help asylum seekers being dispersed around Switzerland to connect to the right train. Two other groups run drop-in centres, and there are also projects for children and high school students. Last Christmas over a hundred families invited asylum seekers into their homes.

Zilocchi takes me to visit the drop-in centre at Tour Grise 26, which serves new arrivals from Vallorbe who have been allocated to the canton of Vaud. While they wait for their accommodation to be sorted out, they are housed in one of the underground fall-out shelters which are attached to every public building in Switzerland.

The conditions are grim, an Iranian inhabitant tells me: 50 asylum seekers flung together, in three-tier bunks, with few sanitary facilities and water that is usually cold. They are locked out between 8.00am and 8.00pm, with nowhere to go except the drop-in centre, the streets and the station.

A TV crew is waiting for us at Tour Grise 26. They are following Zilocchi for a 15-minute documentary, but, admits the producer, are having to run fast to keep up. While some of Tour Grise's clients are keen to be filmed, others, like the Iranian, hide their faces, for fear of being spotted by the authorities back home. Others leave hastily because, Zilocchi suspects, they are dealing in drugs.

Asylum seekers in Vaud receive SF12 a day (£5.50)—SF8 for food, SF2 for clothes and SF2 for transport and leisure. This money comes from the Federal Government, which provides a set sum for each asylum seeker, but leaves it up to the cantons to decide how much should be retained to pay for accommodation and social workers' salaries. In the canton of Bern, says Zilocchi, asylum seekers only receive SF8 (£3.60) a day. Permission to work also varies from canton to canton—in Vaud,

**A** small project in Albania is providing a pinprick of light amid the darkness and confusion surrounding asylum and migration issues in Europe.

Western Europe's cities are full of young Albanians, who have left one of the continent's poorest countries in search of a better life. Many work illegally, some are involved in drugs and crime. A recent survey of 260 15- to 18-year-olds in Albania found that 46.5 per cent would emigrate if they had the chance.

Since 1998 the Swiss government has returned 4,900 people to Albania. 'Behind these figures are people whose dreams have not come true,' says Patrice de Mestral, the Swiss coordinator of the Kape të Ardhmen ('take hold of the future') project, which has given 412 returnees a chance to make a new start.

The project offers to carry 60 per cent of the wage bill when an employer takes on a young returnee for a nine-month apprenticeship. Eighty per cent of participants have continued in employment afterwards. The scheme, which is active in 17 towns and villages, also contributes to rural development and so helps to stem the flight from the countryside to the shanty towns of the capital, Tirana.

De Mestral has 17 years' experience as a prison chaplain in the canton of Zürich, and also piloted the post of chaplain to the city police. When he retired, he could not stop thinking of the young Albanians he had met in prison—some waiting for deportation from Switzerland after illegal entry or failed asylum claims, others serving drug-related sentences. 'By the time I met them, their cases were closed and they were going home,' he says. 'All I could say was, "One day I'll visit you in your country."'

A few months after retiring de Mestral kept his promise. He based with a women's project in Tirana, linked to Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS). In December 1998, he funded a survey of all the Albanians coming through the airport on their way back from Switzerland. Only 25 per cent said they planned to stay in Albania.

By early 1999, Kape të Ardhmen had been set up, under the management of Irena Dono, and de Mestral was distributing leaflets in Swiss prisons, inviting Albanians to find help in rebuilding their lives by

asylum seekers are not allowed to work for the first three months, and even then jobs are hard to find. So the food provided at the drop-in centres is welcome.

That evening I go with Zilocchi to a parish council meeting, where she has been invited to speak about her work. As well as coordinating the volunteers, she and her Catholic counterpart act as ombudsmen for the refugee and immigrant communities.

Marc Oberer



A young Albanian sent home from Switzerland and the carpenter who has taken him on as an apprentice

## Young Albanians grasp the future

visiting the project's office in Tirana after their return.

The outbreak of the war in Kosovo in March 1999 brought everything to a halt. 'For four months, hardly anyone came to our office,' says de Mestral. 'People were afraid that we were working with the Albanian secret police. By August 1999 we were almost ready to give up.' Instead, the project's staff distributed leaflets addressing these fears in Tirana's coffee shops. The first clients began to drop in and by the end of 1999, the first 20 contracts were in place.

The project deliberately focussed on a small target group—those who had been returned from Switzerland and whose families depended on them for support. Many rural families scrape together large sums to get a young person to Europe, in the hope that they will make good and send money home. 'When they return with

nothing, they're seen as a failure,' says de Mestral. The project helps them to salvage their self-esteem.

Those who are selected for the project are asked to find someone who will take them on as an apprentice and bring them to the office. In Albania's closely-knit society, these 'mini-bosses' are often family members. They benefit from subsidized labour, while the apprentice benefits from training.

Business life in Albania is hard, with corruption and organized crime to contend with. Lack of banking and postal facilities mean that the wage subsidies have to be delivered by hand. The job falls to Irina Dono's husband, a retired army officer, who varies his days and routes to deter robbery. These monthly visits provide support for both the employer and the apprentice, and the project also arranges gatherings where

'People come to us for everything from how to get papers to the extreme distress of a deportation notice,' she explains. 'They come and they empty their hearts.' Once a week she runs an advice session for *sans papiers*, people who have often spent years in Switzerland, without any legal status, working for peanuts in a 'new form of slavery'.

After Zilocchi has finished speaking, the

questions begin. She answers patiently, but later admits that she is alarmed by the level of ignorance she finds. One of those there admits to employing *sans papiers*, others press on the issue of crime. Of course, she says, those who commit crimes should be deported.

Zilocchi has received anonymous letters, asking what she is doing for 'poor Swiss people'. She replies that she helps whoever

participants can meet and discuss their problems.

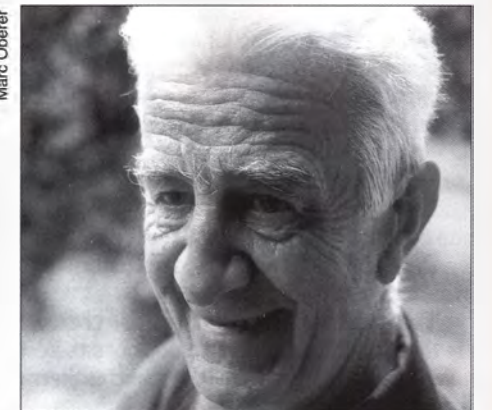
Funding came initially from HEKS and from Catholic and Protestant parishes along the 'gold coast' of the Lake of Zürich. Since then the Swiss department for technical aid and humanitarian relief, the Swiss police, the Development Agency of the Protestant Churches (EKD) in Germany and, most recently, the International Organization for Migration have contributed. As a result, the project is being opened to Albanians repatriated from countries other than Switzerland.

The project's parent association, Hope for the Future, also works to raise awareness in Albanian high schools about the problems facing migrants. As their survey showed, a large proportion of young people want to leave Albania because of its economic problems. 'I had no money, no clothes like my friends, at home we lived a very bad life, we didn't have even bread to eat,' writes one failed migrant in the association's newsletter. 'They watch Italian and American TV, and they think, "Why stay?"' says de Mestral.

When I met him, he was just about to return to Albania for the 20th time. The project's success has led to suggestions that it could be replicated in other countries, but de Mestral, with his 70th birthday rounding the corner, will leave that to someone else.

'I'm quite clear that what I am doing is just a few drops of water on a hot stone,' he says. But, as Mother Teresa (herself an Albanian) once said, 'the ocean too is made up of drops'. And for the 412 young people who have benefited from the scheme it is more than just a symbolic gesture. ■

Marc Oberer



Patrice de Mestral, coordinator of Kape të Ardhmen in Switzerland

comes to her. She might also tell the story of 'Jean', from Congo, who spends one day a week helping an old lady as a Red Cross volunteer.

This isn't an exceptional case, she insists. 'Lots of young asylum seekers would like to do something, but the doors are often shut. People are afraid, mistrustful. What a shame! It could be the beginning of friendship, sharing....' ■





Ruth Neal is welcomed by pupils of Freetown Modern Preparatory School.

**O**n 18 January 2002 a peace agreement between Sierra Leone's central government and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels formally ended a brutal ten-year civil conflict. This was followed by peaceful elections in May, when Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was re-elected President.

Yet much remains to be done. The Government has yet to take full control of the diamond mining area in the east of the country. Security has not been helped either by the on-going civil war in neighbouring Liberia and occasional incursions of Liberian 'rebels'. In January 2003 the United Nations still had over 16,000 peace-keeping troops in the country. Plans to reduce these to 2,000 by December 2004 are causing consternation to many people.

The security vacuum that will be created by the withdrawal of these troops has to be filled by the newly trained Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Sierra Leone Police.

There is a great need to speed up the re-integration of ex-combatants into society. Those most responsible for atrocities committed during the war have to be brought to justice as soon as possible. More support is needed from international donors for the newly formed independent Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Food security is high on the agenda. Productive land has been ruined by the war. But, as we saw during our visit, the good news is that people everywhere have a great

## Sierra Leone's grassroots peace-builders

Keith and Ruth Neal, retired school teachers from Manchester, recently visited Sierra Leone, where a devastating civil war ended last year. They found people determined to rebuild.

hunger for peace and stability, and we met many who are working for it.

One was Emma Kamara. She lives with her husband, their five children and a niece in a small house in Freetown. She was formerly a Lecturer at Njala University College (part of the University of Sierra Leone) 130 miles east of Freetown. In 1994 RUF rebels started to attack neighbouring villages. Emma and her family escaped to Freetown where, with 15 other relatives, they managed to survive in a two-bedroom house.

### PERSONAL TRAUMA

As the war dragged on, Emma believed that only through the power of a higher wisdom could she work through her own personal trauma and sense of helplessness. She attributes her strong faith to her mother, a Muslim who greatly loved the church school she attended and so decided to send all her children to one. Emma says that the words of St Paul, 'If God is for you who can be

against you?' have grown in her like a seed from her school days and are an inspiration to her now.

Through times of prolonged meditation and prayer she felt an inner sense of calling to help young children discover the moral and spiritual values which are essential for peace. She began in 1999 with 100 children aged from four to ten who attended her church. She taught them academic skills, introduced faith-building songs, and encouraged them to become a positive force for good.

Since then Emma has founded Children's Learning Services-Sierra Leone (CLS-SL), and with the support of a dedicated group of volunteers its work has grown. A partnership with the church we attend in the UK and individuals overseas have helped to raise the money to provide some mobile teaching resources for primary schools and orphanages. Through the use of videos and computers, CLS-SL can now give lessons in basic numeracy, literacy and peace-building.

These precious resources are being requested by a growing number of pastors and teachers in rural areas.

Aliou Seasay, Deputy Director of Planning and NGO Co-ordinator at the Ministry of Education, welcomes such organizations as CLS-SL. The Ministry's resources are totally inadequate, he says, in the face of daunting tasks. These include:

- rehabilitation of over three quarters of the schools;
- construction of new schools to meet the demand for increased enrolment;
- provision of adequate teaching/learning resources;
- recruitment of many new teachers so that the teacher/pupil ratio is brought down to the statutory level.

In Waterloo, a rural settlement of about 15,000 people, some 18 miles from Freetown, we visited Pastor John Kamara. In 1996 RUF fighters attacked the town. Many of the residents fled into the bush; others were brutally killed. During a two-year period 90 per cent of the homes were destroyed. Now, people are returning to reclaim their properties and to rebuild them. Many internally displaced people are living in camps in the area.

Many of the women live alone with their children. They have all been traumatized by the war and need both spiritual and material support to rebuild their lives. Kamara has a small church and is also the Headmaster of the nearby Bread of Life Mission School. The main school consists of one classroom and an office. There is no toilet. He and six other volunteer teachers do heroic work, looking after more than 200 children on two different sites. The only help the school receives comes from John Kamara's supporting church in Freetown. During our visit, children of four different age groups were being taught simultaneously in the one classroom by three teachers.



Ex-combatants from the Civil Defence Force and the Revolutionary United Front embrace John Bangura (right), founder of Hope-Sierra Leone.



Representatives of the Sierra Leone Military Brigade in Makeni lead Christian and Muslim prayers after a reconciliation seminar organized by Hope-Sierra Leone.

On a steep hillside overlooking Freetown we visited Mount Carmel Community School, founded by 35-year-old Pastor Michael Williams. The school started in October 2002 with 42 children from this very poor area. It is housed within a church, and has a concrete floor, corrugated iron roof and UNHCR plastic-sheeted walls. The teachers are all volunteers and the resources are minimal. Yet the spirit of that place shone. The nursery class shouted out their unaccompanied song of welcome. The expressions on the faces of the children and their waving arms communicated a picture of hope and determination.

John Bangura now lives with his family in Denmark. We met him in Freetown while he was on a six-week visit home to Sierra Leone. He was inspired to found Hope-Sierra Leone (H-SL) after attending MRA/Initiatives of Change conferences in Caux, Switzerland, and Tanzania. Working with friends in Europe, together with a growing team from all parts of Sierra Leone, he is seeking 'to build bridges of forgiveness, honesty and love' in the quest for reconciliation in Sierra Leone. He is convinced that healing requires a basic change in people's motives and attitudes.

The response to this vision has been dramatic. In December last year H-SL held a peace and reconciliation seminar in Makeni, a town in the Northern Province and a former stronghold of the RUF. The seminar resulted in the planting of a 'peace and reconciliation tree' by members of the RUF, the Sierra Leone Military Brigade, the Regional Police, and the Paramount Chief with his Council of Elders and local citizens. Later, a similar event was held in the town of Bo, Southern Province. It brought together for the first time members of both the RUF and Civil Defence Force (CDF) along with a senior military delegation from the UN

peace-keeping force, Minister of Internal Affairs and National Security Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, the Regent Chief of Kakua Chiefdom Bo, the press and leading citizens.

Hope-Sierra Leone also holds community workshops on non-violent communication. After one of these, fisherman Alimamy from Tissanana said, 'I used to fight a lot with my wife. During this workshop I have been transformed from committing domestic violence to treating my wife with respect, love and care.'

### FOOD SECURITY

Reconciliation can lead to greater food security. Members of RUF and Hope-Sierra Leone are now working together on a new 100-acre farming project in Makeni. In the south the CDF are also working with H-SL on a 150-acre swamp rice project. Rice has already been harvested from an earlier pilot project covering 40 acres. This involved about 50 families in two different communities, one of them totally ravaged during the war. Local farmer Salieu S Kamara said: 'After the war, I thought it was the end of my life, my family and my very existence. But, thank God, through the Hope-Sierra Leone Empowerment Programme, I now own a rice field. I can now support myself and my family.'

Peace-building is a complex and multi-faceted process, but in the end it comes down to relationships between people. The friendships we made during our brief visit changed our perceptions and began to enlarge our vision. Is it just a pipe-dream to think that the globalization of friendships could play a significant part towards creating world peace?

For further information:  
[www.hopesierraleone.org](http://www.hopesierraleone.org)  
[kidseducations@yahoo.com](mailto:kidseducations@yahoo.com) (CLS-SL)



Not many people launch out on a new career in their late sixties, but composer Margaret Rizza did. She talks to Mary Lean.

## A musician, heart and soul

**M**argaret Rizza writes music to lift the heart and still the mind. Her chants, hymns and choral works have made her something of a celebrity—a description she would detest—on the Christian retreat circuit. She describes her work simply as ‘a way of sharing my prayer time’.

She welcomes me into her house with promises of tea, enthuses about *For A*

*Change* and makes me feel as if it is I who am being generous with my time, rather than she with hers. When my mobile rings in the middle of our interview to tell me that my brother is just going into theatre for an operation, it seems quite natural to ask if we can pray for him.

For before everything else, Margaret Rizza is a person of prayer. Although she didn't formally join a church until she was in her thirties, she has always talked to God.

As a painfully shy child in Rhyl, North Wales, prayer and music were a ‘language’ for her, she says. But it was only in her fifties that she had what she describes as her ‘conversion of the heart’, and only in her late sixties—after 25 years as a professional singer and 17 as a teacher of professional singers—that she began to compose.

She studied in London at the Royal College of Music and the National School of Opera and completed her opera training in

Jo Bradbury

Italy. Over the next two decades she sang, as Margaret Lensky, at Glyndebourne, La Scala and Sadler's Wells and broadcast frequently—a career which she modestly describes as ‘middle of the road’. She married George Rizza, a music publisher, and decided to stop travelling when their daughter was born. In 1977 she went to Guildhall, London, to teach singing and voice production.

It was in Rome, in 1967, that she felt the pull to become a Christian and join an institutional church. She describes this as ‘something irreversible’, but ‘really only a head conversion’. Sixteen years later, in 1983, she experienced something completely different, ‘which turned me upside down and made me question everything I was doing’.

By then she had been working in the highly pressured environment of Guildhall for six years. ‘I was happily married, with a wonderful husband and great children, and my work gave me a huge amount of satisfaction. But I realized that there was a part of me that was dying, grieving and anguished.’ Baffled, she went out into the garden one evening and prayed. ‘I don't know what I was praying for—I knew there was something there much greater than myself that I was longing to come in touch with. I was hanging on by my fingers onto a rock face. I came back indoors, life continued and I didn't think too much about it.’

### COMING HOME

Three months later, her homeopathic doctor lent her a book by an Indian swami on meditation. After initial hesitation, she read it. ‘At the end I was totally undone,’ she says. ‘The feeling is very difficult to describe: when you put it into words it becomes banal. I had a feeling of total unconditional love. It wasn't a flash in the pan: it went on for weeks. As I went back to the environment of competition and climbing ladders for success, self-importance and recognition, which affects both students and teachers alike, I felt almost schizophrenic because my reality was beginning to change.’

She visited various ashrams, but found it hard to connect culturally. Then one day her husband came home with information about Christian meditation sessions in London, run by a Carmelite monk, Matthew McGrettrick. He introduced her to the teachings of John Main, a Benedictine, who encouraged the use of a mantra as a means of stilling the mind and opening one's heart to the spirit of God within. ‘It was like coming home,’ she says. ‘It gave me a new understanding of scripture and Christian values.’

She continued at Guildhall, but with an increasing sense of unease. In 1990 she went on a six-week silent retreat at St Bueno's Ignatian Spirituality Centre in North Wales, and decided to come out of high-level teaching. ‘I don't regret one

second of my time at Guildhall: I loved teaching and the experience taught me everything about voices. I owe so much to Guildhall. But I felt I was being unfair to my students, because I couldn't commit myself 100 per cent to the very competitive environment which was—necessarily—the bedrock of professional training.’

She wrestled with whether to leave music entirely and devote herself to working with the marginalized. ‘I felt guilty doing music: it felt such an extravagance,’ she says. But after ‘constant asking’, she felt that she was not being called to give up music. She went back to Guildhall to work part-time with music therapists and became involved with Live Music Now, a project set up by Yehudi Menuhin. This took young professional musicians to sing and play in prisons, hospices, inner city schools and old people's homes. ‘I can say for all the young people that they received more than they gave,’ she comments.

**‘Through silence we allow ourselves to be remade.’**

She also volunteered to visit Maidstone Prison—‘I wanted to take in meditation, but they said no, so we did music’—and became more and more involved in helping with retreats, quiet days and accompanying individuals on their spiritual journeys. In 1994 she left Guildhall to concentrate on this work and on training the St Thomas Music Group, which she had founded at her church in 1989.

In 1996, a persistent friend, Pamela Hayes, launched her on a new, and unlooked-for, career. She asked her to write music to help participants in an international conference prepare for prayer. ‘I said, “Pamela, I don't compose. I can't. You've got the wrong person.” She said, “Come on, Margaret, I'll phone you in a fortnight's time and see how you're getting on.”’

A frustrating couple of days followed. ‘Nothing came: my ego was right up front. On the third day I let go of all that and started out by praying. Little by little the music started bubbling up, and in the end I had six pieces.’ After the conference people came up to her to ask where they could get the music. This gave her the confidence to write to Kevin Mayhew, a music publisher, and her first collection, *Fountain of Life*, was published in 1997.

Three further collections of ‘music for contemplative worship’ followed: *Fire of Love*, *River of Peace* and *Light in our Darkness*. Her latest CD, *Icons 1*, is purely instrumental, while the one before that, *Silence of the Soul*, is a combination of talks

and music tracks.

Her melodies—and the words set to them—bubble up in the mind as one goes about one's daily life. Lawrence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditation, describes her music as an ‘awakening force’ which ‘reminds us of what awaits us in the depths of our soul’. Gerard W Hughes, author of *The God of Surprises*, writes, ‘In prayer our heart speaks to the heart of God. Margaret Rizza's music lifts the heart to pray beyond words.’

### STRONG LANGUAGE

‘I think music is a very strong language and it can heal,’ says Margaret Rizza. ‘It can say to people, “You are precious, you are infinitely lovable.” That's what I want to get through to people. At the prayer days and weekends I do, I come across people who are very hurt, very lonely.’ When we meet she is just about to go to Dublin for a weekend, one day of which will focus on health and healing, and another on alcohol and drug dependency.

Composing is still a struggle for her: ‘I have no academic background for it, and as I go on I realize the difficulties more.’ It is a struggle, too, to put into words the depth of the experience she believes prayer and contemplation have to offer. ‘It's something cosmic, universal, much deeper than the mind. It's ungraspable, both transcendent and imminent, totally within us and completely outside us: something eternal, completely unchanging, deep bedrock. Through prayer, through silence, through stillness we allow ourselves to be remade, transformed. It's so easy not to want to change, but something extraordinary happens when we allow it.’

In her most recent work, *Icons 1*—a collection of instrumental chants on previous themes—she has turned away from words altogether, in the hope of touching people for whom institutional religion is foreign territory. ‘Words can be a barrier to people who are reaching towards spirituality for the first time,’ she says. ‘I want to meet people through music which is birthed in prayer, meditation and contemplation.’ She also hopes that her music can be appreciated by people of other faiths.

She still wrestles with the feelings of irrelevance which once made her wonder about giving up music. ‘It's a huge problem for me: I feel I live a terribly spoilt existence in a very first world environment.’ In her introduction to *River of Peace*, she refers to the ‘injustice, unrest and division between peoples of many different countries where so often it is the innocent and poor that suffer.... For me the struggle for peace is not an easy option but one which will cost not less than everything.’

*Margaret Rizza's music is published by Kevin Mayhew. It can be ordered from Kevin Mayhew, Buxall, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 3BW, UK, or via [www.kevinmayhewltd.com](http://www.kevinmayhewltd.com)*





## Jazz and spirituality

A trip to India transformed life and music for

Uwe Steinmetz. He talks to Paul Williams.

**G**erman saxophonist and composer Uwe Steinmetz is passionate about art. 'Through it I experience dreaming, laughing, crying,' he says. 'When I listen to my favourite jazz musicians or to an organ work of Olivier Messiaen, I feel carried away with all my senses to another world.'

Aged 27, his most recent work includes a composition for jazz ensemble, string quartet and narrator based on the works of the German theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Steinmetz grew up in a small town in north-west Germany not far from Hamburg and has

been playing the saxophone since he was 13. By the end of high school, he was playing in various jazz/rock groups and big bands. He toured with the German National Youth Jazz Orchestra. 'I was clear that I wanted to become a professional musician,' he says.

Before starting at university he did a year's civil service in an old people's home. 'While there, I began to realize that serving people was what fulfilled and satisfied me—even more than playing music.' As a student in Berlin, honing his skills eight to 14 hours a day, he began to miss this 'human factor' in his life. He was soon running his own ensembles and

jazz groups, but feeling 'more and more dissatisfied' with his achievements. A year at the Conservatory in Bern, Switzerland, provided fresh ideas and stimulus, but the 'inner emptiness' did not go away.

As he thought more about his motivation for becoming a musician, he discovered he had two 'unbalanced' sides to himself. 'One side was the contemplative one, that simply liked to listen to music, read poetry and observe nature and the visual arts. In this way I discovered something like "God"—a manifestation of the eternal beauty and truth behind reality.'

He also recognized egocentric feelings 'that poisoned the message of my music and influenced the way I interacted with others. My music had become just a form of self-expression. When I grasped the difference between what was really meaningful to me and the music that I was doing, I saw that I was heading for a dead-end street—both for my music and in my life.'

### INDIA

It had become urgent for him to take a break. 'Religion, which had never meant much to me before, had become more important and I finally decided to apply for a place in a church mission programme.' He was sent to teach music for one semester at the Kodaikanal International School in Tamil Nadu in South India.

There he began to study and play with Indian classical (carnatic) musicians. 'I was overwhelmed by the deep spiritual impact of their performances. There was a devotion in their music, as well as in the simple life that most of them lived. Attending a classical Indian concert is like attending a church service. Playing alongside them gave me the deepest spiritual experiences I had had.'

He found his Christian faith was being deepened. He developed *Roots*, a programme of hymns, spirituals and folk songs, and performed this in schools, churches and private homes with the help of a fellow teacher at the school. Later he

recorded it during a concert tour round Germany. At the end of his stay in Kodaikanal he organized a fund-raising concert to pay for a cancer patient's operation. His first activity on returning to Germany was to raise money for an orphans' village near Kodaikanal.

### RENEWAL ARTS

During his last week in India he visited Shillong. There he met a couple who told him about IC's international conference centre at Caux in Switzerland. In the summer of 2000 he attended an arts conference there. 'I found that week one of the most inspiring events of my life,' he says. 'I enjoyed the joyful artistic presentations and insightful discussions with a very diverse mix of people from different cultures, continents and professions. I was electrified by the fact that we all shared similar ideas and visions about art, spirituality and creating a peaceful world. This gave me hope and strength to continue with my new ideas.' He decided to stay in touch with the organizers, who were forming a new body called Renewal Arts, and helped to architect their next conference at Caux in 2002.

'These life-changing experiences have been turning points for my professional life,' he says. 'They gave me new insights and fresh energy to finish my studies in Germany.' He capped these by winning a two-year scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. 'Since graduating in December 2002 I am enjoying being able to dedicate my full time to composition and working in my own ensembles,' he says. 'It has become very important for me to be open to God's guidance and I trust he will show me the next steps to go.' He now lives in Molfsee, close to Kiel on the Baltic Sea.

'Art touches everyone, in many ways and on many levels,' he says. 'Art connects people of different cultural, social and religious backgrounds. Art creates peace and adds the dimensions of devotion, contemplation and eternity to our secular and goal-oriented society. What matters in art is what matters in life.' ■



## Clean Election Campaign diary

**O**n the evening of 29 December last year, Samuel Kivuitu, the Chairman of Kenya's Electoral Commission announced the victory of Mwai Kibaki in the presidential elections, bringing to end the 24-year presidency of Daniel Arap Moi. Kenyans were bursting with excitement.

The next morning I go into town at around eight in the morning. People are everywhere, dancing, shouting, crying, making their way to Uhuru Park in central Nairobi. Everyone is happy. A new day is dawning. I believe that as it dawns, it will bring new and good things for the people of this country. I truly long for that day: when younger people like me will no longer carry burdens meant for a thousand backs, and will be assured of their children and grandchildren's lives.

I'm not asking for a Jaguar in every homestead; I'm looking for the day when hard work will be rewarded. I'm glad because I know I am not the only one thirsting for that. And I'm glad too because this day will not be long in coming. I want to believe, with a news reporter I heard the other day, that 'Freedom is coming tomorrow, only that tomorrow is today'.

The Clean Elections Campaign (CEC) is an effort to speed up this process. During

Wanjiru Mungai writes about her experience of working with a campaign to end corruption in Kenyan politics.

the last elections, we called on the electorate to pledge that they would not be party to any violence or corruption, and that they would report corrupt practices.

To obtain a voters card, one must have a national identity card, which is issued to Kenyan citizens when they become 18. In previous elections, identity cards were not issued on time and many people could not register as voters. In the recent elections, we successfully petitioned the government to speed up the process of issuing identity cards. The Electoral Commission also accepted our request to set up more centres for voter registration.

In various parts of the country, supporters of the CEC addressed meetings organized by parliamentary and presidential candidates. Our purpose was to sensitize people on the importance of voting and how to go about it. We made it clear that we were non-partisan—our aim was to see the democratic process function fairly.

We sent leaflets about the campaign to parts of the country which we could not visit. And we liaised with residents in those areas who were willing to conduct seminars and workshops.

There were numerous other initiatives: • Joseph Wainaina of Ndaragwa liaised with headmasters to send the CEC leaflet to

Continued on back page



From Antoine Jaulmes, France.

Congratulations to Bryan Hamlin for his courageous attempt to bridge the gap between Europe and the USA by reminding us Europeans of a few facts about America (Feb/March FAC). Yet he may have partly missed the point. If European 'animosity' towards American policies seems so irrational to Americans, it may be that its root causes still have to be fully understood.

There is, for instance, our closeness to the Middle East. If a united Europe was loudly pressing for an immediate war against Mexico, what would the Americans' emotional response be? Moreover a significant Arab minority now lives in Europe. What would happen in the US if Europe was pushing a policy at the UN which would antagonize the Hispanic community? America's Hispanic community would get its message out, loud and clear. This is Europe's situation.

The Arab world, and an increasing number of the general public in Europe, fail to understand why the USA is ready to go to war for UN resolution 1441 and not for resolution 242 (unanimously adopted by the Security Council on 22 November 1967, calling for the 'withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict'). The US may like to see themselves as a global policeman, but Europe sees it increasingly as a hugely biased one.

Other points hurt American credibility. The American U-turn on the Kyoto protocol was widely interpreted as a sign of incompetence, vested interests and blatant contempt for the international community. And the unpaid bills in the UN do not help. With a history of reconciliation over the past 50 years, Europe is a much stronger believer than America in dialogue and multilateralism.

For these and other reasons, many Europeans agree that some American policies may not be the best for the world. But this doesn't mean most of us are anti-American! When somebody thinks or acts differently from you, it's generally not out of hostility. To the Chinese, the centre of the world is and always will be China, and the reason for deciding something is not primarily what the USA—or anybody else—might think. The same goes for Europe.

To solve the 'animosity' problem, America needs to grant the rest of the world the right to differ and the chance to be friends on the basis of mutual respect. It might then turn out that the world needs more global doctors and teachers than global sheriffs.

The editors welcome letters for publication but reserve the right to shorten them.



Michael Smith



# Globalization: threats and opportunities

by Rahul Dev

**O**ver 170 guests from 16 countries, some 35 distinguished speakers, more than 30 hours of speeches, discussions, papers and presentations. By sheer volume and richness of content the recent conference 'Globalization: embracing opportunity, creating synergy', held at Asia Plateau, the Initiatives of Change centre in Panchgani, India, could be called an unqualified success. But the four-day conference, organized by CIB-APARG (Caux Initiatives for Business-Asia, Pacific, Africa Regional Group) last January, was different in deeper, more meaningful ways.

It is not often that a distinguished world citizen like Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, founder of the INSEAD management school near Paris, inaugurates an international conference with an enthusiastic view of globalization, but shifts his position enough over the four days to remark that, from now on, he will advocate that not only each continent but each

country needs to evolve its own model for dealing with globalization.

It is not often that a prominent member of India's Planning Commission rolls up his sleeves to join volunteers in washing the dishes after dinner. But that was not the only thing Som Pal, who is also a former agriculture minister, did on the second night of the conference. He was so caught up in the spirit of the event that he laboured at a computer for over two hours, writing down his previous day's presentation to give to the many people who were asking for it.

### 2.30 IN THE MORNING

It is not often that a senior member of parliament sits attentively through each session for one and a half days, then leaves to attend an event in his constituency two hours away, and drives back at 2.30 the next morning because he does not want to miss anything.

It is not often that a former cabinet secretary and former state governor, a serving secretary to the Indian

government, the vice chancellor of a central university, and several senior serving and retired civil servants bare not only their erudition but also their fears and experiences of delicate geo-political games at the highest level.

One could go on. Suffice it to say that it was not only those who had come to Asia Plateau for the first time who went away deeply touched, richer in understanding, and promising to return. Even those familiar with this beautiful place in the mountains affirmed that the conference had given them fresh perspectives on the hotly debated issue of globalization.

As Sarosh Ghandy, corporate leader and President of CIB-APARG, outlined at the inauguration, the organizers had realized early in their preparations that they could not present an 'India Model' of globalization. The phenomenon was so complex and multi-dimensional that it was difficult even for governments to grasp the full range of its implications, advantages and threats. Instead, CIB-APARG decided to aim at a

comprehensive understanding of globalization.

It was with this in mind that they brought together politicians, civil servants, economists, academics, business executives, trade unionists, media people, civil society organizations and students. CIB-APARG had no hidden interests or agendas, no lobbies and no demands, said Ghandy, except a desire to enable India and other developing countries to maximize the opportunities and minimize the threats represented by globalization.

Prabhat Kumar, a former cabinet secretary who has served under four Indian prime ministers, put Indian perceptions of globalization into sharp focus. Did it demolish national barriers and create 'a stable world economic order'? Or did it 'accrue to only a few people' and widen economic disparities, threatening the sovereignty of national governments? It was essential to reconcile these divergent views of globalization—'to make the two parallel lines meet'. India's federations of small

enterprises, for instance, which have seen many businesses going to the wall due to international competition, had never endorsed globalization. The need, Kumar said, was to manage globalization to the advantage of India's poor and vulnerable sectors.

Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, brother of the former French President, took a more benign view. He listed four major fears it evokes—insecurity due to conflicts, terrorism, and unemployment; US domination and excessive power of multinational corporations; cultural uniformity and a loss of local traditions; and increase in poverty and environmental pollution. But, he continued, we should not underestimate the achievements of the past century due to unprecedented movements of new technologies, goods, money and people.

### ATTACK ON POVERTY

D'Estaing put forward four proposals: an attack on poverty at all levels; massive action on education and training with an emphasis on moral behaviour and individual responsibility; the preparation of people mentally to address new conditions of world citizenship; and the creation of new democratic structures, including a world parliament and world taxes, to deal with global problems.

Prithvi Raj Chavan, member of the upper house in Parliament, supported the Indian strategy of a gradualist globalization to protect the huge number of vulnerable Indians from the vagaries of market forces. India had accepted the World Trade Organization

regime, reducing trade barriers. But, he said, 'the state has to intervene in the interests of the poor and the disadvantaged'.

It was the 'real live situations' of the farmers and rural poor, 80 per cent of the population, that most concerned Nripendra Mishra, government secretary responsible for the fertilizer industry. Mishra has dealt directly with the World Trade Organization over several years, but stressed that the same set of rules could not be applied to countries at different levels of development.

Agriculture contributes 25 per cent of India's GDP and employs over 56 per cent of the workforce, with nearly 70 per cent of the population depending on it. Yet, stressed Som Pal, it receives only 1.3 per cent of economic investment, at a time when European and American farmers received massive public subsidies. Meanwhile, as another speaker highlighted, drought and crop failures, loan sharks and international competition have been driving cotton farmers in Maharashtra and Punjab to suicide.

The most forceful presentation came from Bill Jordan, global trade union leader and member of the UK's House of Lords. He underlined the enormous power wielded by over 63,000 multinationals and their 800,000 foreign subsidiaries, which account for 80 per cent of world investments and 70 per cent of world trade. 'Well over half of all investment in the developing world goes to China,' he said. 'India's products are being undercut in trading competition by China because India's

products carry the cost of decent wages won by independent unions, and India defends their right to organize and bargain collectively. China's prices are made possible with a massive regimented workforce and its state controlled trade unions, and where prison is the penalty for claiming the right to independently bargain for better wages.' India should argue for a level playing field with basic rights at the workplace, he said, 'because India has within its grasp the ingredients to win in fair trade competition'.

### MANAGING CHANGE

'Globalization will not be stopped, much less reversed,' he said. 'But it can and must be changed. The greatest challenge of globalization is change—making it, managing it and accepting that it is going to be a continuous process.'

Like d'Estaing, Jordan advocated massive investment in education which 'sharpens the tools of change—flexibility and ideas. Education instills the confidence to change.' His punch line was: 'It is better to light one candle of leadership than to curse the darkness of globalization.'

And what of the special role of the CIB-APARG group, affiliated to the international body Initiatives of Change, in

the processes of globalization? Both Sarosh Ghandy and Cornelio Sommaruga, Chairman of the Caux Foundation and former head of the International Red Cross, stressed the need to globalize integrity and responsibility. 'One person can make a difference,' Sommaruga said.

Rajmohan Gandhi, author and former MP, said there was a need to 'lower barriers in human hearts' to prevent the world from becoming an angrier place under globalization. Calling especially for closer relations between India and Africa, he said that a much better synergy between all sectors affected by globalization was possible—'if we can deepen our bonds between each other, and the synergy between ourselves and our higher selves, and the power that makes that possible'.

The last word probably belonged to Giscard d'Estaing. 'I have two convictions at the end of this conference,' he said. 'One, the European model of integration and reconstruction will not work everywhere. Each continent must develop its own model drawing from others. Two, India will succeed.'

Rahul Dev is a journalist, newscaster and former editor of the national Hindi newspaper, 'Jansatta'.



Bill Jordan (left) with Appal Raju, a trade union leader from Jamshedpur



## FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNITY IN THE GLOBAL HOME

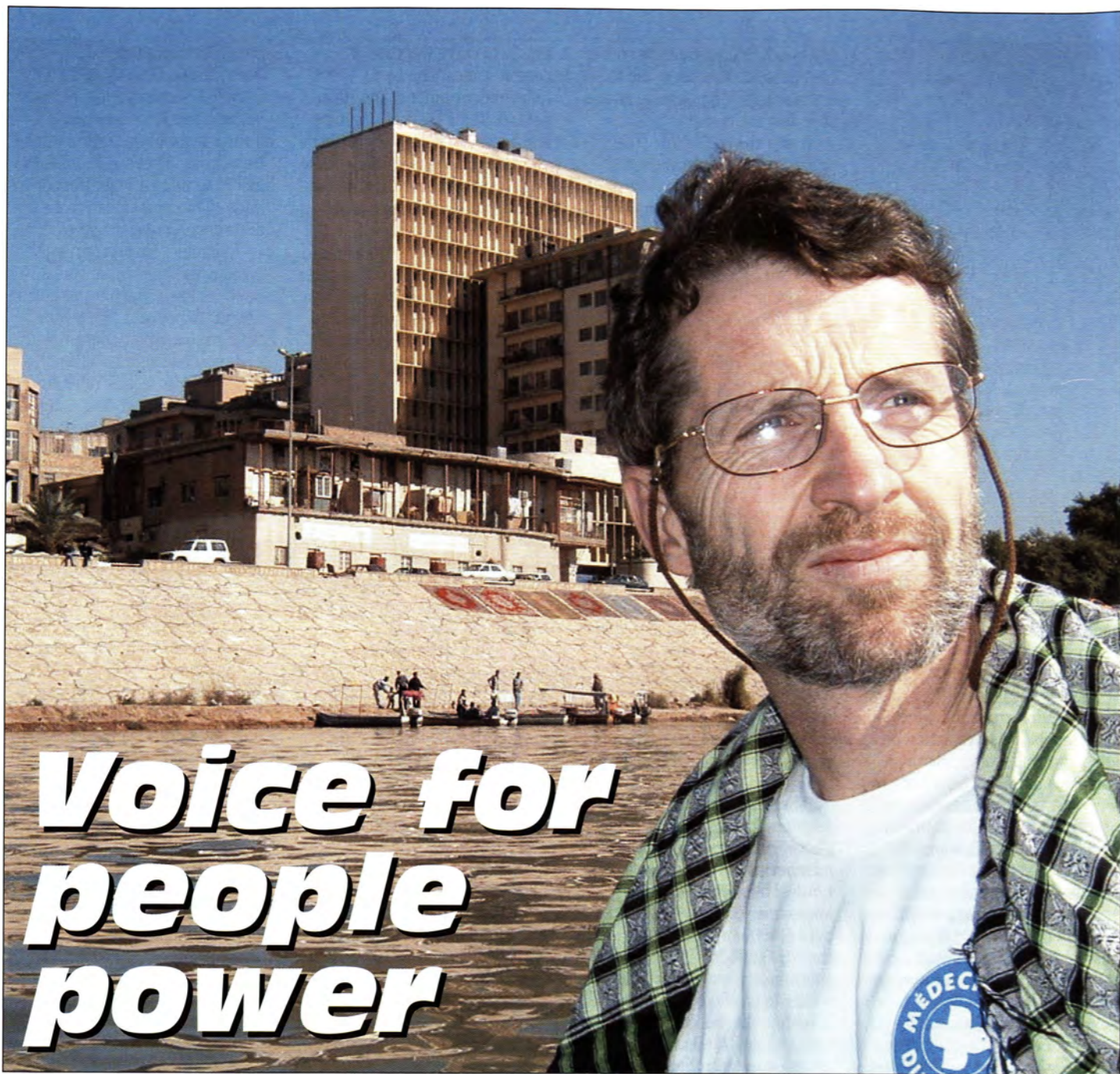
A series of international conferences will take place from 2 July - 17 August 2003 at the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland.

### Programme

- 2 - 9 July: Partnerships in service, responsibility and leadership
- 11 - 15 July: Globalization... as if people really mattered
- 17 - 24 July: From conflict to community at home
- 26 - 30 July: The spiritual factor in secular society: can religions be partners in peace-building?
- 2 - 8 Aug: Peace-building initiatives
- 12 - 17 Aug: Conflict prevention through human security

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# Voice for people power

David Swann is a medical doctor who has become known in Canada for sticking his neck out on points of principle. He talked to Gordon Legge at a moment when the debate about war with Iraq was at its height.

**W**hen Canadian physician David Swann was in Iraq last November, he attended a birthday party. An elderly Iraqi woman looked at him and said, 'We look to you [in the West] for leadership. I hear you want to bomb us. Yet you say, very few Canadians

support that. We're not insects. We have a loving vision for ourselves, our families, our children. I thought you lived in a democracy? How can you let your leaders do this?' 'There was anger and tears in that question,' Swann, 53, recalled in an interview after his return to Canada. He had travelled to Iraq as a representative of Physicians for Global Survival to assess the country's disaster preparedness. What he found was a nation whose health, educational

and basic infrastructure of water, electricity and communications was crippled by 12 years of economic sanctions. In his report entitled, *Dying for peace in Iraq—disaster preparedness on the brink of war*, Swann opens by quoting a retired Baghdad engineer, 'First you tell me I have a headache, and then to relieve me, you decide to chop off my head.' Then he lists several specific indicators:

- The physical environment (air, water

- quality and sanitation, vehicle and building safety) is poor and threatens everyone, especially the disadvantaged;
- The economic conditions for more than 50 per cent of the population are desperate and cause widespread anxiety and stress, particularly when unexpected expenses rise, such as healthcare and household maintenance;
- The entire health sector, once the pride of the Arab world, has been profoundly degraded over the past decade;
- Social problems have increased during the last decade in association with increased unemployment (43 per cent for men; 10 per cent for women) and falling literacy rates (57 per cent in 1997 from 90 per cent in 1985).

Among Swann's conclusions: 'There is a high probability of a major loss of life, including that due to a spiral of civic violence, both in Iraq and in the surrounding countries, if there is a war. This would quickly overwhelm the existing resources and capacity to support life in Iraq.' Within days of his return in mid-December, Swann was taking every opportunity to speak out—in community halls, college classrooms, churches and mosques—articulating a thoughtful and impassioned opposition to war in Iraq. Yet Saddam is threatening the world with weapons of mass destruction, and supports international terrorism?

'Yes, there are many brutal dictators in the world that need to be challenged but not by duplicating what they have inflicted on others,' says Swann. 'There is very little evidence that Saddam poses a meaningful threat even in the Gulf at this time. We have international law (the UN Charter and Geneva Conventions) and we know that to be on the receiving end of war is terrorism. Iraq has a unique historic, religious and political context in the Gulf, in relation to Israel and other conflicts and must be addressed by the Gulf States themselves under the UN auspices—not through war.'

### CLARION CALL

In fact, Swann took his opposition to the war a step further. If you listened closely, Swann was also issuing a clarion call by one ordinary individual to countless other ordinary individuals across the world to bring about change and regain the reins of democracy.

'This feels like a watershed to me,' says Swann, a tall, thin man who could be mistaken for a modern Man of La Mancha—except his intellect is too sharp, his answers too disarmingly honest ('I don't have all the answers... that is a horrendous regime'); his idealism too tempered by realism. From where Swann stands, the war call is marshalled by a global triumvirate of Big Business, Big Government and Big Media. It sets the agenda for the international community. That agenda is leading to political, economic and environmental

degradation, along with increased militarization of the planet. 'Nothing is going to stop it except the power of the people.'

Swann believes he has no choice but to speak out. 'How much of a difference have we made with our silence during the last decade?' he asks. 'In my silence, by not having spoken out, I have contributed to the deaths of 1.5 million people (in Iraq) during the last 12 years.'

'My voice, united with millions of others around the world, can actually renew our democracy and make our politicians accountable to what we stand for: truth, humanity, compassion, human development and the equitable distribution of the Earth's resources,' he says. 'One person speaking the truth encourages many others.'

It's a lesson Swann learned quickly last year. Before his trip to Iraq, Swann gained

**'Democracy, unless it's lived, is just a word, a thought.'**

national recognition in Canada for publicly supporting the Kyoto Accord, by which governments agree to reduce their country's greenhouse gas emissions. In taking the stand he did, Swann, a public health officer in the Canadian province of Alberta, found himself in direct opposition to the region's provincial government, which opposed the accord. He was fired from his job. After a public outcry, Swann was offered his job back. He decided not to take it. Instead, he decided to focus on the Iraqi situation.

'Through the Kyoto thing, people called me from all over the country,' he said, sitting in the kitchen of his modest, two-storey home across the river from downtown Calgary. 'I received e-mails from Europe. What they said was that I was encouraging them. Democracy, unless it's lived, is just a word, a thought.'

Moreover, he says, it comes with a cost. 'If we can't make our politicians accountable here, we're not only letting down our children and our grandchildren, we're letting down the developing world.' When people don't have a voice, corruption reigns, he says.

Swann didn't always find it easy to speak out. He was a shy student at medical school. He describes himself as having 'a saviour complex', believing that science and technology were the answers to humanity's many woes. It wasn't till he worked as a physician in inner city clinics and undertook

an elective in impoverished Haiti that his views began to change. 'I started putting the pieces together during the course of the next 10 years,' he says.

He spent three years working on a medical mission in South Africa. Then he went into family practice in southern Alberta, where he found himself at odds with the medical establishment which set a quota for the number of patients he treated during any given day. He began realizing that he was treating the symptoms rather than the root causes of illness. In the mid-1980s, he decided to study public health medicine because it focussed on prevention.

### COST OF TRUTH

In the late 1980s he went to the Philippines for two years. That was his Waterloo. 'In South Africa, if you spoke up, you ended up in jail. In the Philippines if you spoke up, you ended up dead.' What he found was that if he spoke up against the corruption he witnessed, he'd destroy a project and harm thousands of families; if he didn't speak up, he lived a lie.

It raised a fundamental question. 'What is the cost we're willing to bear for the truth?' Swann was profoundly depressed when he returned. Then the 1991 Gulf War began, a conflict that left him in despair. He reflected on the words of Carmelite monk Father William McNamara. 'If you love, it'll kill you. If you don't love, it'll kill you.'

With grace, time and the nurture of his family, Swann began to see the way ahead again. 'It became more and more clear that I wanted to go out speaking the truth.' As a physician, he began looking at social problems and societal issues, searching for the root causes rather than focussing on the symptoms; by asking different questions rather than trying to diagnose the answers. As a public health officer, he started publicly voicing his concerns about social issues and their impact on health and healthcare—smoking, air quality, gun control, factory farming and the Kyoto Accord.

### STRONGER CALL

'Since my firing, I've felt a stronger call,' says Swann. 'War in Iraq is about much more than Saddam Hussein and his oil. It is about us, in the free world, what we stand for and what kind of a world we want for our children.'

Moreover, Swann, who became a Christian while in South Africa, senses there is a strong spiritual force behind his activism. Fuelled by principles of love, truth, purity and unselfishness, Swann tries to take time every day to pray and read scripture. 'This is kind of a gift from God. This has really strengthened my faith. I've needed God much more profoundly than in the past. I feel so much energy. This is the ultimate in preventive medicine. Contributing to stopping a war is the ultimate in saving lives.'



# PEOPLE

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Performers of 'In each other's eyes'

### Dramatic response to 11 September

A remarkable theatre project is building bridges between communities in Jersey City, New Jersey, just across the Hudson River from the site of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Jersey City was labelled 'terrorist city' by a regional newspaper after it was identified as the address of the bombers convicted for the attack on the World Trade Centre in 1993 and of some of those suspected of assisting in the 2001 attacks.

The International Institute of New Jersey was set up 85 years ago to serve refugees and immigrants to the US. On 11 September 2001 its staff watched the Twin Towers collapsing from their office windows. They knew that immigrants with special language and culture needs would be particularly impacted by reactions to the atrocity.

In the weeks that followed, people in the area reached out to each other in an unprecedented way. At the same time, immigrants perceived to be of Arabic or Muslim origin were singled out for verbal and physical abuse. Flags went up in windows to express patriotism, but also for

protection. While those who could speak English were able to take part in Christian-Muslim dialogues, recent arrivals tended to keep a low profile.

One woman, thrown to the pavement for wearing a traditional Islamic scarf, asked a caseworker, 'What good would it do to report it? That would only make people angrier, and I do not want more trouble.'

The Institute set up a special unit to respond. This launched a theatre project, *In each other's eyes*, to give voice to people's experiences and feelings. Participants included people from Pakistan, Vietnam, Brazil, Palestine, Sudan and the US.

'Although I was born in Pakistan, I've lived in this country all my life,' reflects Sabahat Khan in the production. 'Since 9/11 people look at me differently. People have accused my mother of being a terrorist. My gentle mother? I spend my free time working to separate the word "Muslim" from the word "terrorist" in people's minds.'

The production has been performed four times since last October, to total audiences of some 550 people. Funding is being sought for a video and curriculum guide.

The staff and volunteers of the Institute's September 11 Response Projects also provide free counselling for families

affected by the attacks. They visit schools, mosques, churches, service agencies, libraries and homes to seek out people who are not coming forward due to the climate of fear.

Eiman Fadl-Elmula, a recent immigrant from Sudan, is one of the unit's nine full-time staff. She provides support groups and counselling for those in distress, refers families in need for financial help and runs workshops about her faith and culture. 'This is emotional for me,' she says. 'I see so much need and I can only do a small part. But it is a part that is needed. I like to show people that they can adjust and stand up for themselves, that there is hope.'

Melanie Trimble

### Jamaican award

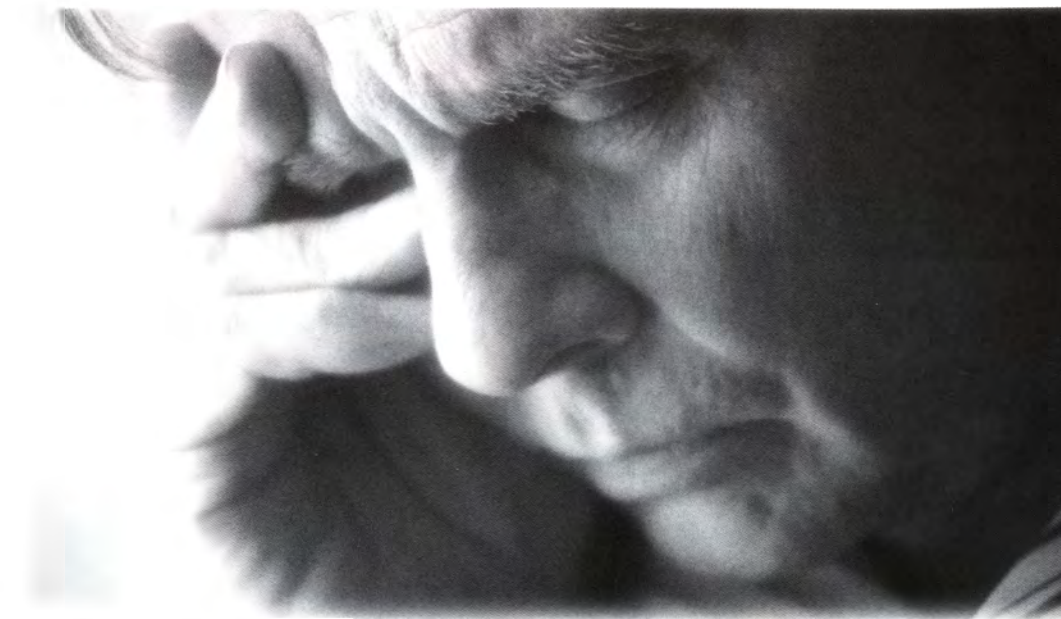
Woodrow 'Woody' Mitchell, Managing Director of a remarkable community-based company in Walkerswood, Jamaica, has won the 2002 Norman Manley Award for 'excellence in service to the community'.

Walkerswood Caribbean Foods grew out of 50 years' experience of community action and self-help in the village from which it takes its name (see *For A Change* April 1988, Aug/Sept 1994 and April/May 2001). It now exports its products all over the world.

The citation for Mitchell's award stated, 'This man has been able to provide leadership at the grassroots level, building the self-confidence of his fellow Jamaicans so that they have successfully initiated and sustained their livelihoods.'

Speaking at the award ceremony, Mitchell referred to the violence in Jamaican society and offered Walkerswood's experience of conflict resolution. 'We believe in our quiet times in the mornings,' he said, 'a time when we read our bibles, listen to God and seek his direction for our lives. I want to recommend this approach to you and the nation. I can assure you it works. Many a hurt has been healed in our community.'

Mitchell has been confined to a wheelchair since an accident in his twenties. Speaking to the disabled community, he said, 'Oftentimes, we feel that we have drawn some bad cards in the game of life, but I want to encourage you to make your contribution.' He hoped that the award would encourage those 'who may have opted out of the race of life' to redouble their efforts on their 'upward journey'. ■



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wouldn't bother to live with a prognosis like yours, Mrs W.'

'Why?' I said. 'What is my prognosis, doctor?'

'Well probably paralysed waist-down for life, and psychotic into the bargain,' he said. 'I know what I would do.'

'Well, I have a husband to live for, doctor, and live I will.' At one point I feared the pneumonia would take me: the hospital had left it to providence. They left me to struggle for my life, and struggle I did.

So I said to God, 'What do you want me to do?' The answer came back heart-to-heart, mind-to-mind, 'Free will I give you, Janet.'

'My will is to do your will, God,' I said. 'I submit my will totally and utterly to you.'

The reply came, 'I need you alive. Rick needs you. Fight.'

So fight I did until after five more days I felt I could let go of the draining battle and rest and trust in God. He took over the strings of the marionette puppet.

### 'TO LIFE'

The next day my husband asked if I had felt something different as if someone had prayed for me. He and my doctor, unbeknownst to me, had prayed in earnest. Their request—and mine—was answered. My chest cleared and my throat muscles began to work again. Richard and I toasted each other with a glass of water, 'To life'. And life we have, and have it more abundantly.

Now a few months on I give thanks for what I have: partial sanity—it could have become total insanity—and partial paralysis—it could have been total. I have a home of my own—friends, family—and a very loving and wonderful husband. My singing voice has returned after five years of not being able to sing. I am able to read and write again after 30 years of fuzz and confusion. I compose and play my father's piano.

My husband and I are joined in submitting our wills and minds—sick though they at times are—to God's will. He is our light, our life and our way. ■

## Fight for life

Janet Walton writes from her experience of mental illness—one of the few remaining taboos of our age.

**M**ost of us are against discrimination. Yet we fail to see that we often discriminate against those things we fear most.

Psychotic illness is one of those strange enigmas people fear. They therefore discriminate against those who suffer from it. It is the worst of the worst. Worse than the big C or death itself. It epitomizes all we most fear—'losing our marbles', losing control.

My grandfather suffered from a severe incurable mental illness and died in an asylum in 1916. It is uncertain whether my father carried a dominant or a recessive gene for this illness. He died aged 40 from Hodgkins Disease when I was

only three and a half. I, his only child, carry the dominant gene for psychotic illness.

Normal people are sometimes at the mercy of their sick and tortured thoughts or emotions. These can temporarily affect their brain chemistry. But we psychotics live at the mercy of changes in our brain chemistry, which can quite unpredictably zing us right out of gear—and may be connected to a change in the weather or diet or to exceptional events or to simple unavoidable everyday stress. These changes can affect our thoughts, emotions and behaviour, as by-products.

### PENDULUM

We psychotics never—or hardly ever—lie back and give in and say what is actually so true, 'We can't help it.' We gather the reins in our blistered bleeding hands to work on that frantic wild beast within. At times we resemble a raging lion, at times a meek mouse. If you can catch the pendulum as it swings you might get a glimpse of the amiable border collie which we perceive in our fellow human beings at their best.

Through weeks, months, years of torture I have learned to let the pool of sanity of God's creative mind touch and circle my sick mind. Like a

stone in a pond, the particle of sanity from Above radiates rings of illumination and sanity in the dark dingy pool. Mostly my mind is alone, cut off from God. But the more I perceive of him, the nearer middle age I reach, the more I stretch forth a calloused hand for a shoot of sanity.

Six years ago when I began to break out of severe psychosis, my anti-psychotic drug was reduced. As a side-effect, my blood pressure rose dramatically. I suffered a heart attack and a slight stroke, which unfortunately were wrongly diagnosed. The medication was reduced still further. There were times when I wanted to die, due to the complete debilitation which resulted.

Eighteen months ago I was taken off mood stabilizing and sleeping medication. As the sick chemistry drifted away from my brain, the physical struck where, unbeknownst to me, it had been threatening to strike for some 40 years. My blood pressure soared and I suffered two severe strokes and a life-threatening and frightening bout of pneumonia. My life was in jeopardy for seven weeks in hospital. For the first year at home I often lay at death's door.

At the onslaught of pneumonia, one junior house officer in hospital said to me, 'I





I have never held a job as a waitress or worked in Wal-Mart or in any other aspect of the service industry. When I read *Nickel and Dimed: on (not) getting by in America\**, I was dismayed at my ignorance. I didn't know:

- that most adults who work at fast food restaurants can't afford to buy a hamburger there;
- that many of the people who work at the minimum wage at a steady job can't afford to live anywhere but a rent-by-the-week room in run down motels;
- that people who work in the service sector have no medical coverage or benefits;
- that some discount department stores actually force their employees to work for no pay or lose their jobs.

**IN EVERY STATE**

And I didn't know that all of this is going on, every single day in virtually every state and city across the United States. The idea that America is a nation that promises liberty and justice for all and a fully accessible economic system is false, according to Barbara Ehrenreich, a journalist and author of over 12 books dealing with social responsibility and the economic system in the USA.

Before the words 'Enron' or 'WorldCom' made CEOs feel embarrassed and the date '11 September' brought either cries of despair or victory, the United States was going through a 'boom' period. The stock market moved upwards in a seemingly unending rise. Dot-coms made money for the most timid investors, and the media declared it a time of wealth and prosperity for all.

The government's new 'from welfare to work' programme was meant to get people off welfare and into productive jobs. Social services and welfare were to be stringently reduced over several years while the recipients got jobs. The programme stressed that the only ticket needed to escape poverty was a job. And therefore, the theory continued, only the laziest would fall victim



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## From welfare to what?

Reading 'Nickel and Dimed' opened **Cricket White's** eyes to the invisible Americans.

to the reduced services that would be offered. Those willing and able to work would share in the economic benefits of the boom.

Ehrenreich questioned this theory. She began an in-depth, undercover investigation of the claim that everyday people could live on the minimum wage. She spent one month at each of three different locations in the United States. Her challenge was to see if she could get a job at the minimum wage with no resumé or references, support herself for one month (room, meals, etc) and be able to save up enough money to pay her rent for the second month.

**JOB ADVERTS**

Her first stop was an off-season tourist town in Florida. There were many job adverts and she applied for several. Her first real lesson came when she realized that employers continue to advertise for workers even when there are no jobs

available. This is a strategy to maintain full employment in a high turn-over industry. As employees leave, new ones are already waiting to be hired. However, it falsely inflates the figures for vacancies.

After numerous applications, she found a job as a waitress. The food service industry in the US can legally pay below the minimum wage. Tips from customers are expected to make up the difference. But this was not possible in the inexpensive family restaurant where she was employed. She had to take a second job at another restaurant to make enough money to pay rent on a small trailer.

Ehrenreich wanted to understand fully what kind of a life was possible working for the minimum wage. For instance, how did her co-workers live? One lived in a van that was parked in the shopping centre lot. Others lived with several folks to a room, and one even lived in a flophouse that only

charged by the week. Ehrenreich herself was able to find a place a 45-minute drive from her workplace.

Thus Ehrenreich's second big lesson was that affordable housing is not available. And the housing that is available can only be acquired with a month's rent as a deposit and a month's rent paid in advance. She found that it was impossible to accumulate enough money at the beginning of employment to pay both deposit and rent. Rooms rented by the week were available. Even though they cost more they were the only possibility for many as they did not require two months' rent up front.

**MAID IN MAINE**

She found much the same during her experience of working as a maid in Maine and later in Minnesota. Her co-workers were unable to pay for child care, dental care or other basic services.

## A DIFFERENT VIEW OF AUSTRALIA

by **Jacques Birnberg**

This is an MRA/Initiatives of Change book and like MRA/IC it breathes optimism, joie de vivre and commitment to the improvement of people's lot world-wide, starting with a commitment to self-reform by every MRA/IC activist it depicts. The author is second generation MRA/IC, his father Gordon Brown, 'having committed (him)self to God without reserve'.

Whilst the international dimension of MRA/IC activities is a constant in Mike Brown's life and work, the book concentrates on specific Australian tasks and on the Australians who inspired him. The book's title underlines this specificity while punning at the same time on the commitment to break with the perceived soullessness of Australian society.

Brown uses significant moments of his own life to link the lively portraits he draws of Australians whose dedication to others is a challenging example of what human beings are capable of. They are people from all walks of life—a dairy farmer, a former war-time air crew staff, a police Commissioner, Labor MPs (such as Kim Beazley, Snr), a prime ministerial adviser on foreign affairs (Allan Griffith), a trade union leader for the wharfies (Jim Beggs), a Laotian refugee, an Aboriginal community worker (Reg Blow)—not to mention their wives of similarly strong personality and dedication. One woman whom the author focusses on is Christobel Mattingley. She 'was asked in 1983 to be a researcher and editor for the first Aboriginal history told by Aboriginal people themselves'. She worked with great determination to see *Survival in our own land* published—it took nearly four years and the help of South Australia's first Aboriginal Justice of the Peace, Ken Hampton.

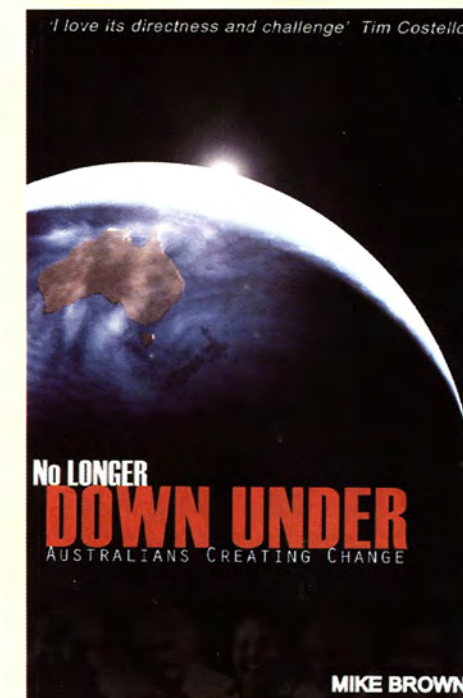
Ehrenreich refers to the working poor as 'invisible' and 'the greatest philanthropic class in America today'—philanthropic because they subsidize the rest of society by doing the worst work for the lowest pay; invisible to most people as they make up the background of support for day-to-day life in the US.

The major weakness of the book was that Ehrenreich

missed the opportunity to suggest substantive solutions.

When I finished the book, I saw the people around me in a totally different light. I became conscious of the issues that Ehrenreich points out and began to notice some of the examples she gives: the middle-aged woman who works behind the counter at McDonald's who always looks fatigued and seldom smiles. I may have

To Mike Brown, that type of endeavour is linked to what he has come to see as Australia's paramount mission. His book traces the time and encounters it took him and his wife Jean to realize that reconciliation with the Aboriginal people was more important than just setting right the wrongs done to the first inhabitants of this continent. After many years of work



### No longer down under: Australians creating change

by **Mike Brown**  
Grosvenor Books, Toorak, Australia, 2002, ISBN: 0-9592622-3-7.

for reconciliation, it dawned on them that 'the struggle in this country is not between black and white. It is a struggle to face our core values—to face the cocky Aussie self-righteousness hiding our insecurity and our

obsession with having "a good time", which often leaves us emotionally homeless, binge-dwellers in spiritual shanties... surrounded by our electronic idols.... Perhaps what Aboriginal Australians could help us find is the dignity of being a forgiven people.'

Mike Brown's narrative is structured by the theme of reconciliation. Indeed, the people whose stories he tells were more often than not equally involved in reconciliation policies—Elsie Campbell's reconciliation with Japanese in 1949, after the loss of her two brothers in the war with Japan; Allan Griffith's contributions to resolving border disputes between Queensland and Papua New Guinea; Jim Beggs' work to bring about the transformation of unions' warfare between themselves and with their employers into policies of conciliation and better work practices. Kim Beazley Snr's action with regard to asserting Aboriginal land rights in 1963 was an early start on the road to reconciliation.

Brown accounts skillfully for Max Gale's shipment of cows to India and his help for Indian disabled children; and for Ray Whitrod's efforts to deal with corruption in the Queensland police force.

Most of Mike Brown's mentors are imbued with the principles Frank Buchman bequeathed to MRA/IC and which Kim Beazley Snr learned at Caux: 'searching for God's leading, testing any thoughts that come against absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love'. Whilst this reviewer does not share the assumptions of absolute principles, he feels unreserved admiration for the moral fortitude, the quiet courage and perseverance against many odds of the characters portrayed by Mike Brown. His book makes for uplifting reading and deserves to find its way to people in search of a purposeful life.

*Dr Jacques Birnberg is Honorary Research Associate at the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University, Melbourne.*

look into the 'living wage movement'. It has changed the way I look at my society. More importantly, it has helped me see individuals in the service sector in a different light. The book has opened my eyes. ■

\**Nickel and Dimed: on (not) getting by in America*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, published by Metropolitan Books, ISBN 0805063889





# WEBSITE

by Robert Webb

## Voices of sanity

**L**ittle of the news from Washington is calculated to raise the hopes of a world that urgently needs answers. Yet clues to those answers often arrive here from abroad. The question is whether our policy shapers grasp them.

Case in point: the recent visit of two Muslims from Beirut, journalist-academic Hisham Shihab and banker Abbas S el Halabi, a Druze member of the Lebanese National Committee for Muslim-Christian Dialogue. The message of these two men was one of Christian and Muslim working together for a just and peaceful society. During Lebanon's long civil war Shihab had come to the point where he tossed his gun aside. Later, in an extraordinary moment, he embraced his one-time enemy, Assaad Shaftari, who'd led a Christian militia. In February 2000 Shaftari apologized publicly for deeds he'd committed in the name of his faith.

I was reminded of the time when I was one of a group of journalists in a Lebanese village where buildings were pockmarked with bullet holes. I'll never forget the faces of the children who swarmed around us, their eager, smiling faces projecting the kind of warmth that penetrates. Three days later, I read that fighting had broken out there again, and I've long wondered what happened to those youngsters. Thankfully, the children of today's Lebanon have a brighter future, though many problems

remain in their country once known as the 'Switzerland of the Middle East'.

We're all familiar with the renaissance in South Africa. In 1980, on a clear, sunny afternoon on the tip of the Cape of Good Hope I could see the Robben Island prison which held Nelson Mandela. Even then, I found South Africans, especially a group of Stellenbosch University students whom I met over lunch, ready for the evolution that would transform their country. The rest, as they say, is history. The civil war, long feared, was averted. Change, while difficult, was peaceful. As a freely elected president, Mandela reached out to enlist his former captors in building a new country.

Stories like these refresh, give hope. They are keys to the future, and they are detailed in British author Michael Henderson's latest book, *Forgiveness: breaking the chain of hate* (Book Partners

Inc, Newberg, Or, and Grosvenor Books, London, 2002). The book carries many other stories which suggest that no matter how desperate a situation, no matter what the grievances, change and renaissance are possible. The book's appeal is universal, but clearly every policy shaper in Washington should have it. Some surely do, thanks partly to Henderson's speech last December to the Women's Democratic Club in Washington. Drawing heavily on his book he told of what can happen when we take an honest look at ourselves, at where we have been wrong, make apologies where appropriate, seek forgiveness and reconcile even with those we have bitterly fought.

Another voice of hope, former British Ambassador Archie MacKenzie, came to Washington last fall to launch his book, *Faith in diplomacy* (Grosvenor Books, London, 2002). He expressed the conviction, based on solid experience, that listening to one's inner voice on a disciplined daily basis can be transforming—can, indeed, accomplish miracles. I heard him give his experience over lunch to several influential Washington thinkers. These are the kinds of voices we all need to hear—not least the highest reaches of government.

*Robert Webb is a former editorial writer for the 'Cincinnati Enquirer'.*

### FOR A CHANGE

**'The more I read 'For A Change', the better I esteem it. History teaches us: even a few devoted people can do much.'**

*György Benke, Bogács, Hungary*

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## REFLECTIONS

by Laura J Nigro

# Free enough to care

**I**t is remarkable how a new look at something can inspire personal transformation.

During my two years of participation in this global movement, I'd learned that IC adherents share a common moral compass for daily decision-making. Its four 'points' are honesty, unselfishness, purity and love.

### SOLID HANDLE

I felt I had a solid handle on three of these. But purity, which to my ears had a Victorian ring of prudishness, kept eluding me. I harboured a troubling suspicion that of all four directions, this was the one my life had tracked least in the course of its journey.

'What does it actually mean?' I asked a mentor who had many years' experience of steering by this compass. His answer has been ringing in my ears, and across all dimensions of my life, ever since: 'For me, purity is the freedom to care.'

This interpretation caught me by surprise. It was quite a different take from how I'd been framing the puzzle in my own mind. There was something unexpected about this definition, which took a fresh twist down an avenue of introspection I hadn't yet travelled.

Until now purity had implied rigid restraint to me. But purity through freedom? Purity as freedom? I'd always viewed these two states as somewhat

mutually exclusive. In the days, weeks and months that followed, I meditated on this notion through the unfolding events of my life. It didn't take long for me to find the brilliance in it.

A striking example emerged this past January, and I found myself ruminating deeply again on this conception of purity. I had started my day in an orthodox Jewish cemetery, to pay my respects through participation in a funeral, and had ended it rather late in a Shiite Islamic centre, to meet local Muslims through immersion in evening prayers. Each experience had been my first, and although I had deliberately sought out both, when the time came they frankly posed a hassle.

My work day was full, as usual, and I was nursing a winter cold to boot. It would have been safer and perfectly acceptable to cling to my daily routine, completing critical tasks, safeguarding my health, avoiding cultural gaffs, relaxing with the evening sitcoms, and getting to bed early—all for the sake of repeating my efficient production cycle the next day.

Yet what would any of this really do to make even a small difference in the world? Staying attached to rote would mean surrendering to potential fears—of failure, illness, endangerment, disapproval, rejection, dissension, loss of face.

As I retired late that night I reflected upon the caring

connections I'd made that day in the Jewish and Muslim communities, simply by freeing myself up from fears and attachments. Recently I had cause to reflect again on this, when I unexpectedly bumped into a Bangladeshi man I'd met that evening in January. This time the venue was an Episcopal cathedral. We had each turned out for a workshop on Islam and the Abrahamic tradition, and instantly recognized one another. As the session progressed we renewed our acquaintance and strengthened our initial connection—a felicitous outcome that would never have happened had I not loosed my self-imposed restrictions a month earlier.

### CLOGS OUR CAPACITY

Since that pivotal conversation over a year ago, I've learned that purity is at the very heart of things when we release the extraneous stuff which clogs our capacity for true caring—whether in our professional endeavors, in our volunteer service or in our private yet wrenching family struggles. But even more than this, I've discovered in purity's pursuit an unparalleled sense of personal liberation.

Thus inspired, I continue to mark my progress toward purity by how well I allow my care to flow freely. And as I clear my life's clutter to make way for this, I find the navigating grows ever easier. ■