

# Tikkun

POLITICS + SPIRITUALITY + CULTURE

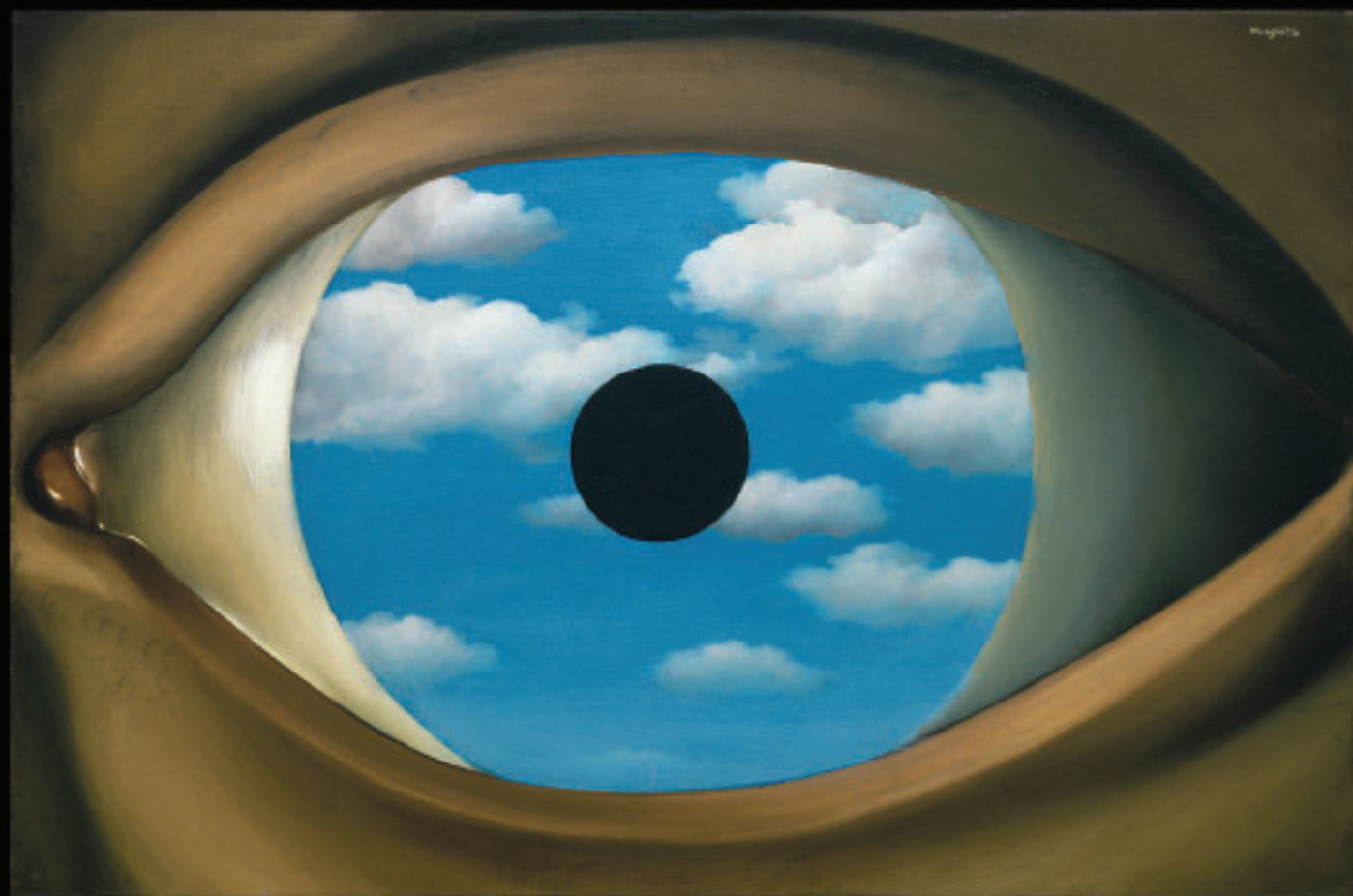
(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

SPRING 2013

A JUBILEE TO  
ABOLISH DEBT

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## A SPIRITUAL WAY OF SEEING



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A Visual Critique of Racism | Remaking the Child Welfare System  
The Mondragón Cooperatives | Transcending Greedy Money  
Liberation Theology for Veterans | Faith-Based Community Organizing  
The Criminal Caste | Reimagining Judaism: The Great Teshuvah

# Get Money Out of Politics



**T**he Republican failure to unseat President Obama in 2012 has led some to conclude that money did not distort the electoral process so badly after all. Not so fast! Let's not forget that Obama and many of the Democrats who won are themselves deeply dependent upon the money of the wealthy. That's one reason why the Democrats have been unable to stand up to Wall Street, regulate the big banks, articulate a populist economic vision, and legislate the new New Deal that our country badly needs. But if they had articulated such a vision, they likely would have created the kind of excitement that the New Deal evoked, and they might have won control of the House of Representatives too. Please join us by urging your local city councils, state legislatures, and congressional representatives to endorse the ESRA—the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It's the most effective and sweeping way to get all private money out of national and state politics. For more info, visit [spiritualprogressives.org](http://spiritualprogressives.org).



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## A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome your responses to our articles. Send letters to the editor to [letters@tikkun.org](mailto:letters@tikkun.org). Please remember, however, not to attribute to *Tikkun* views other than those expressed in our editorials. We email, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements because that is what makes *Tikkun* a location for a true diversity of ideas. *Tikkun* reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

### STOP-AND-FRISK

James Vrettos's November 2012 article on [tikkun.org](http://tikkun.org), "Stop-and-Frisk in New York and the Politics of Crime in America," ably spotlights the fundamentally political nature of discriminatory policing practices such as stop-and-frisk, and keenly advises that, if we seek to end practices that are fundamentally political, our strategies must be so as well. As Vrettos notes, this begins with changing the narrative. As long as those defending stop-and-frisk insist that they are simply fighting violent crime, we must establish that this claim is demonstrably false and at the same time show that it only survives within a worldview that actively criminalizes youth, poverty, and people of color. In addition to publishing the damning statistics on the policy, one way to start this shift is to engage the stories of people who have been stopped—because they are young, because they live in low-income neighborhoods, because they are Black or Latino.

A recent report by the Center for Constitutional Rights, "Stop and Frisk: The Human Impact," tells many of these stories. The center issued the report in an effort to share the personal experiences of the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers represented in *Floyd v. City of New York*, a class-action lawsuit against the NYPD for its unconstitutional stop-and-frisk practices. When a young woman recalls being stopped and searched with her cousins, ages eight through sixteen, as they walked up the stairs in their public housing unit, it is hard to believe that this is the kind of policing that will keep our city safe. When someone tells how, after being stopped and frisked, "my jeans were ripped. I had bruises on my face. My whole face was swollen," the fiction that

stop-and-frisk is protecting New Yorkers from violent crime becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. When the growing "surveillance-directed policing system" that Vrettos describes overwhelmingly targets Muslim New Yorkers, denying the political nature of discriminatory policing becomes downright impossible.

—Vince Warren, *New York, NY*

### CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE CROSS?

It seems that what is objectionable in the discussion of "Christianity Without the Cross?" in *Tikkun*'s Fall 2012 print edition is a particular theory of the significance of the cross: the late Western, Latin, and Protestant "satisfaction theory" of St. Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century and its even later corollary, Calvinist "penal" theory, according to which God required a sacrifice for human sin. Many contemporary Christian theologians reject this line of thinking. This rejection of satisfaction theory began perhaps in the 1930s with Gustav Aulen, who argued that Luther rejected it, too.

Aulen argued that the classic, ancient Christian view was that, in His Son, God absorbed all the forces of violence into Himself. This notion depends on the Doctrine of the Incarnation, in which Jesus is not only a Prophet or a Sage, but also God Himself. The ancients saw this as the "defeat of the devil" by subterfuge—death swallowed up a man, but was poisoned by devouring God. It has nothing to do with sacrifice to God, but sacrifice—and victory—by God. Many prefer not even to use the word *atonement* (a medieval English coinage), but rather, *redemption*. A current variation of this view is found in the "narrative *Christus Victor*"

thinking of Mennonite Denny Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement*. (If you google the latter, you will find all kinds of articles about this matter.) Weaver is a fine scholar who shows that language about "sacrifice for sin" means something different from Anselm's interpretation. For one thing, the Paschal sacrifice was not a sin offering, but a Covenant meal.

The notion that God requires innocent suffering is just monstrous. The notion that the Creator willingly becomes the Subject of the consequences of the creative act, sharing—and overcoming—our sufferings, is somewhat more attractive, isn't it?

—Bill Teska, *Minneapolis, MN*

As a person raised in Catholicism, I would like to suggest (though this is not what Catholics teach) that Jesus came to show us the Truth of our own Divinity, and the physical death he suffered is a metaphor for Liberation from the ego (our personal and collective conditioning, including most religions). Love is our natural state when we are freed from this fear-based conditioning. Said another way, each of us is a Christ (a title, not a name) at the core of our being, and the Second Coming is not through a person, but when all claim and live our Divine Nature.

—Lucira Jane Nebelung, *Niantic, CT*

## MORE LETTERS

We receive many more letters than we can print! Visit [tikkun.org/letters](http://tikkun.org/letters) to read more.

### Volunteer at TIKKUN

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## ATONEMENT THEOLOGY

The theology of atonement is a minority position within the New Testament. It is found only in the gospel of John. In one way or another, the Synoptic Gospels portray the death of Jesus as involving an innocent victim. This Jesus suffers unfairly, and those who witness his death encounter God: the power of vicarious suffering inspired by the suffering servant songs in Isaiah. Jesus suffers not because it is God's plan for him to do so, but because of Roman injustice. The experience of Jesus's death leads one to God. It has nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins. See Matthew 27: 32-54, Mark 15: 16-35, and Luke 23: 26-46.

—Rick Herrick, *Oak Bluffs, MA*



### Have you read *Embracing Israel/ Palestine?*

Order the print copy  
at [tikkun.org/EIP](http://tikkun.org/EIP) or  
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## Tikkun magazine is . . .

. . . a vehicle for spreading a new consciousness. We call it a spiritual progressive worldview. But what is that?

### What Do You Mean by "Spiritual"?

You can be spiritual and still be an atheist or agnostic. To be spiritual, you don't have to believe in God or accept New Age versions of spirituality. You don't need to give up science or your critical faculties. We use the word "spiritual" to describe all aspects of reality that cannot be subject to empirical verification or measurement: everything pertaining to ethics, aesthetics, music, art, philosophy, religion, poetry, literature, dance, love, generosity, and joy. We reject the notion that everything worthy of consideration to guide our personal lives and our economic and political arrangements must be measurable.

### What's a Spiritual Progressive?

To be a spiritual progressive is to agree that our public institutions, corporations, government policies, laws, education system, health care system, legal system, and even many aspects of our personal lives should be judged "efficient, rational, or productive" to the extent that they maximize love, caring, generosity, and ethical and environmentally sustainable behavior. We call this our New Bottom Line.

Spiritual progressives seek to build "The Caring Society: Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth." Our well-being depends upon the well-being of everyone else and also on the well-being of the planet itself. So we commit to an ethos of generosity, nonviolence, and radical amazement at the grandeur of all that is, and seek to build a global awareness of the unity of all being.

If you are willing to help promote this New Bottom Line for our society, you are a spiritual progressive. And if you are a spiritual progressive, we invite you to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives at [spiritualprogressives.org](http://spiritualprogressives.org).

# Tikkun

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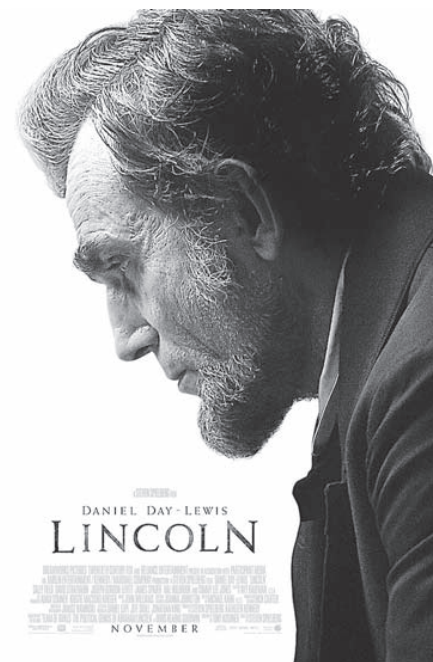


## The Jewish Vote 2012

IN NOVEMBER 2012, Jews voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama and for Democrats at the state and local levels once again. Exit polls indicated that between 69 percent and 70 percent of Jews voted to reelect President Obama. Jewish Republicans predicted that Obama's disagreements with Israeli policies would cost him heavily, but in fact most Jews did not cast their vote primarily on Israel-related issues: most Jews identified the economy and health care as their primary concerns in exit polls.

The majority of voters in most of Obama's other core constituent groups, such as the African American and Latino voting blocs, would directly benefit from Democratic Party economic policies. In contrast, Jewish voters' loyalty to the Democratic Party is unusual because the majority of Jews are prosperous enough such that voting for candidates who support higher taxes to care for the poor and the powerless constitutes a consistent vote against their own narrowly construed economic interests. The election left many Jews wondering why so few relatively prosperous, white voters are willing to vote like we do.

Yet we should also add a cautionary note: the percentage of Jews voting for Obama was down about 5 percent from 2008. Although *Tikkun* does not endorse candidates or political parties, the struggle we've been waging for the heart of the Jewish community will almost certainly have a political impact in the future. There are two major forces pulling younger Jews to the Right. In the Orthodox world, an uncritical support for the government of Israel is reinforced weekly in synagogues that pray not only for Israel as "the beginning of the flourishing of our redemption" but also for "the defense forces of Israel" on whom God's blessing is invoked. Non-religious younger Jews—for whom the countervailing influence of Torah (with its command to love the stranger) and the knowledge of Jewish oppression in the past have largely disappeared—may increasingly be drawn to the dominant individualism, exhortation to "look out for number one," materialism, and lack of interest in the well-being of others that is the central message of capitalist society. As a result they may then begin to vote more in accord with a narrow vision of their economic interests, and hence become a less reliable constituency for liberal politics. This is just one of many reasons why liberals and progressives should support our efforts (through *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives) to revive a spiritual progressive worldview, not only for Jews, but for everyone. ■ DOI 10.1215/088799822081509



## Faulty Wisdom in Spielberg's *Lincoln*

I'D BEEN REFLECTING on the movie *Lincoln* with a certain uneasiness. I deeply appreciated how the movie brought to life a moment of American history that recalls the deep racism that permeated the Congress even during the Civil War, and the courageous role Lincoln played in fighting for an end to slavery. Yet something very deep was missing, and that became clearer to me after reading the misguided response to the movie by David Brooks, a former editor at the right-wing *Daily Standard* who now makes inroads with some liberals by spouting pro-status quo wisdom from his perch at the *New York Times*.

In his column on November 22, 2012, Brooks sums up the individualistic ethics of contemporary conservatives in the course of praising the wisdom of *Lincoln*, which was directed by Stephen Spielberg from a script by Tony Kushner. Precisely what Brooks loves about the movie is what I believe to be its most disappointing aspect. I loved the film's brilliant production but felt more than a little upset by the aspects of its message that Brooks praises.

Brooks writes:

The challenge of politics lies precisely in the marriage of high vision and low cunning. Spielberg's *Lincoln* gets this point. The hero has a high moral vision, but he also has the courage to take morally hazardous action in order to make that vision a reality.

To lead his country through a war, to finagle his ideas through Congress, Lincoln feels compelled to ignore court decisions, dole out patronage, play legalistic games, deceive his supporters and accept the fact that every time he addresses one problem he ends up creating others down the road.

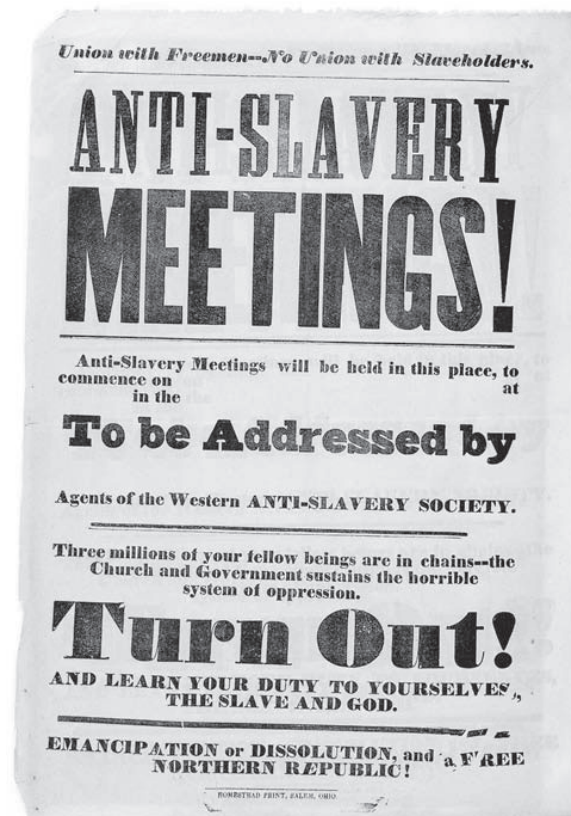
Politics is noble because it involves personal compromise for the public good. This is a self-restrained movie that celebrates people who are prudent, self-disciplined, ambitious and tough enough to do that work.

And so on. In so many words, Brooks is praising the decision to abandon many of one's principles so that one can "win" a legislative battle. He is suggesting that Lincoln's legislative skill is the main reason behind the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment and the consequent abolition of slavery in the United States.

What's missing from the movie and from Brooks's worldview? The entire larger context of the social movement that made Lincoln's election and reelection possible. An inordinate focus on Lincoln's strategic compromises obscures the work of the abolitionists who for decades educated, pushed, agitated, and finally convinced a majority of Americans of the moral corruption of slavery, thereby making possible Lincoln's electoral victory. The intense focus on Lincoln's compromises also obscures how Black people forced the issue of slavery into the legislative agenda by escaping from slaveholders in order to join the Union's fight.

In this way, the film makes invisible the work of millions of people—all the people engaged in the social change movements that have made it possible at various points to elect politicians with liberal or progressive ideas and all the people who have worked inside the Beltway to get bills passed through Congress. For this reason the film does a huge disservice to the many ordinary Americans who have made substantial personal sacrifices to be involved in an ethical struggle to heal their world.

The movie focuses on a member of Congress who wants to repudiate all forms of racism but who overcomes his idealistic scruples and decides to support a much narrower interpretation of the amendment in order to get the votes needed to pass it. The movie obscures the fact that abolitionists wanted the amendment to include a much more sweeping affirmation of equality for Blacks. We are supposed to celebrate his courage to be dishonest, or as Brooks puts it "to stoop to conquer" without destroying himself. In today's language, this is called "being realistic." There is, of course, no consideration given to the possibility that the same popular



By focusing on Lincoln's strategic compromises, Spielberg's film obscures the work of the abolitionists who made Lincoln's victory possible through actions and meetings such as the one publicized in this 1850 broadsheet from Salem, Ohio.

movement that brought Lincoln to power might have yet again exercised its impressive power not only to abolish slavery, a goal for which many Northerners had given their lives (many could care less about "saving the Union"), but also to do so in a way that could have enshrined substantial forms of equality, surpassing even what was ensured by the post-Lincoln Fourteenth Amendment.

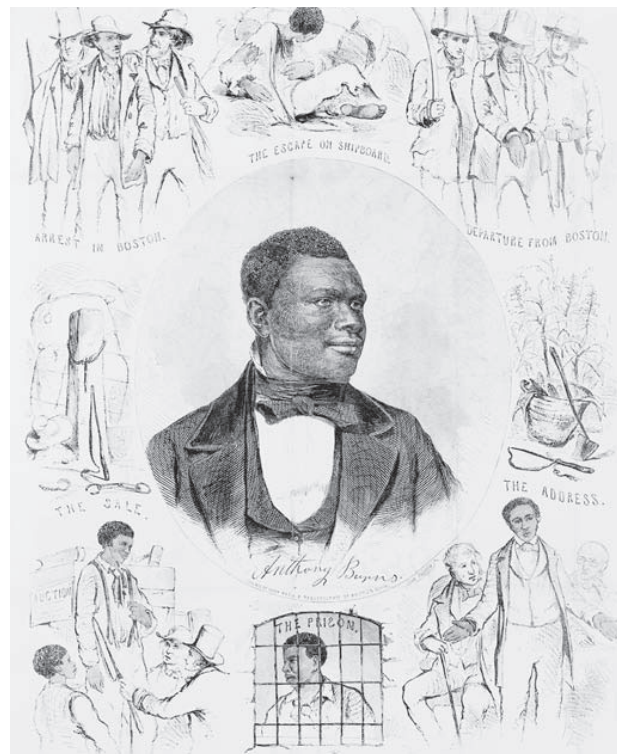
It is precisely this same kind of "realistic" politicking that led to Republican lawmakers' abandonment of Reconstruction just twelve years later in the Compromise of 1877, when they got the Democrats to elect Republican President Hayes at the expense of dismantling the mechanisms in the South that had for eleven years given some measure of equality to former slaves. Whatever the supposed excesses of Reconstruction, its abandonment was a disaster that raised the question of why it was worth fighting the Civil War in the first place, or whether it might not have been better to simply let those southern states form their own country.

By failing to use the moment of the Civil War to instruct Americans from the North and South about the fundamental equality and human rights of African Americans, these Republican realists actually set the stage for the lynch mobs and



segregation that would become the lot of former slaves for another hundred years until the Civil Rights Movement challenged that reality. And now that movement and its demand for substantive equality for African Americans economically and within the U.S. judicial system—including an end to the disproportionate imprisonment of African Americans for drug-related crimes that are not equally prosecuted when committed by whites, and an end to the stop-and-frisk policies that have disproportionately been used against young people of color—have been sandbagged by an African American president who is a similar kind of realist and who doesn't want to be marginalized for forcing the country to face how much of its willingness to abandon basic protections for the poor comes from the frequent identification in the white public's mind of "poor people" with "Blacks."

So the trouble with Spielberg and Kushner's rendition is its almost total lack of attention to the ongoing struggle of the social movement that made Lincoln's triumphs possible. The abolitionist movement became such a powerful force in American politics precisely because of its unwillingness to play by the rules Brooks esteems. And it was precisely those who did play by those rules who eventually sold out the movement and made Lincoln's victories so much less powerful than they might have been. The skills that Brooks encourages us to admire in the inner workings of the Congress are precisely the opposite of the attitudes that make a social movement possible. Social change movements work precisely because they are not willing to abandon their highest vision and ethical insights in order to appear realistic at the moment when they are trying to champion a new way of thinking. Their strength is in holding on to a transformative goal, not in playing it down in order to be less challenging to those who have not yet allowed themselves to think through the implications of a transformative and healing worldview. If a movement stays true to its transformative vision, there will always be accommodating politicians around to run up to the front of the parade and yell, "hey, we are your leaders, vote for us" and then perform the various legislative tricks that get some part of the will of the movement legislated.



Spielberg's film also obscures how fugitive slaves moved the struggle for abolition forward. This nineteenth-century portrait depicts Anthony Burns, whose arrest and trial under the Fugitive Slave Act sparked abolitionist protests and riots in Boston in 1854.

We are helping build that transformative movement with the interfaith and atheist-welcoming Network of Spiritual Progressives. If you don't yet belong, please read our Spiritual Covenant with America, learn about our Money out of Politics campaign, and then join us at [tikkun.org/join](http://tikkun.org/join). If you do belong, would you help us create or re-energize a chapter in your neighborhood? If the answer is yes, please contact me: [rabbilerner.tikkun@gmail.com](mailto:rabbilerner.tikkun@gmail.com). ■

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## More Wars for the Middle East?

**T**HIS MEANS WAR," proclaimed one of my friends. She was referring to the outrageous decision of the Netanyahu government to build more settler housing in Area E1, the area that would create the Jewish settler circle around Jerusalem and thereby make it impossible for Jerusalem to be the capital, not only of the Israeli state but also of the proposed Palestinian state that was supposed

to emerge from negotiations. She feared that West Bank Palestinians would resort to war in response to Netanyahu's decision.

What my friend seemed to have forgotten is that the Palestinians have no army, no air force, no navy, and no long-range missiles capable of accurately striking targets inside Israel. Yes, they can once again resort to the kind of assaults



Palestinians in Jabalia sit amid rubble in the aftermath of an Israeli strike. We pray that right-wing forces in the Israeli government do not repeat such slaughter.

that come periodically from Gaza or the intifada-style acts of terror against Israeli civilians. But these responses of the powerless inevitably provide the justification for the mass slaughter of innocents that we witnessed once again when Israel bombed Gaza in November 2012. More children were killed in that latest Israeli assault on Gaza than in the horrible and outrageous murder of children in Newtown, Connecticut, a few weeks later, but there was barely a peep about the death of the innocents in Gaza in either Israeli or U.S. newspapers.

“Still, Israel must be crazy to do this,” argued my friend. “Don’t they understand that the Palestinian Authority might collapse, or that the Palestinian Parliament might eventually be taken over by Hamas as more and more Palestinians despair of any two state solution?”

But that, it appears, is perfect from the standpoint of the extreme rightists who continue to set the agenda for Israel, despite the strong showing for moderates in the January 2013 election. The Right wants Hamas to appear to be the voice of the Palestinian people, because to the extent that it is, the internal pressure for compromise and accommodation of the needs of Palestinians diminishes almost to zero. As it is, a large majority of Israelis fear that Palestinians want a state for the sole reason of preparing for a future war to push the Jews into the Mediterranean sea!

In the most moderate circles I have heard intelligent and otherwise quite decent people tell me that “deep in their hearts, the Palestinians wish there were no Jews in the Middle East.” I know that such feelings toward a group that is exercising unfair power over another are common among oppressed minorities. Yet I also know that the perception of such feelings is often rooted not in reality but in the projections of the oppressors, who attribute to those over whom they hold power (to kill, to limit travel, to withhold taxes, to harass) the same ethical insensitivity that they themselves exhibit. And the more Hamas speaks for the Palestinian people, the more Jews’ fears get confirmed, as they were in early December 2012, when the Hamas political bureau chief, exiled after Israel unsuccessfully tried several times to kill him, reasserted that “Palestine is ours from the river

to the sea and from the south to the north . . . there will be no concession on an inch of the land.” Many Jews’ fears grew as the bureau chief then went on to denounce the strategy of negotiations with Israel (the strategy followed by the Palestinian Authority) and to praise armed struggle as the only path that could win.

## The Role of Hamas

I deplore Hamas’s commitment to armed struggle. Even though I understand why people who have little protection from Israeli expansionism in the West Bank and its blockade of Gaza feel attracted to reliance on violence, I think it a moral and strategic error. I can also understand why Israelis, drenched by their media with an endless repetition of these kinds of statements from Hamas, can feel terrified. All the more so when rockets like the ones launched last November fly toward Tel Aviv and Jerusalem (however poorly aimed and easily shot down by Israel’s “Iron Dome”), restimulating the terror that underlies the Israeli psyche and manifests as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The key is to understand that this is precisely what the Israeli Right needs to happen to buttress its public support and increase the willingness of Israelis to say: “Who cares what the rest of the world wants from us? We know that we Jews have always been alone. Nobody gives a damn about us, so we have to protect ourselves in the only way we can—by exercising superior military power even if the unfortunate cost is that many of our fellow citizens will live in terror for the rest of their lives.”

Conversely, Hamas benefits every time Israel takes some outrageous action, because so many Palestinians minimize the psychic damage done by Hamas’s provocative behaviors and instead focus only on the truth that nothing Hamas or Palestinian terrorists do or could possibly do will ever threaten Israel’s existence. They experience such talk as nothing but one-sided propaganda bought into by many in the United States, and increasingly their response is, “The Palestinian Authority is making no progress ending the Occupation after twenty years of Oslo and cooperating with Israel to block terrorism, so at least Hamas retains our dignity by acknowledging that truth and fighting back in the only way we powerless people can do.”

And then there’s another truth I experienced firsthand on my latest visit to Israel and Palestine in the fall of 2012: Hamas is supported by a wide variety of people with a wide variety of moral perspectives. Most of the Palestinians who have been attracted to Islamic fundamentalism were not fundamentalists thirty years ago. What changed was the worsening situation for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, the resulting despair, and Hamas’s provision of social services not available under the Occupation. Many voted for Hamas in 2006 because of its critique of the dishonesty and self-serving nature of the Palestinian Authority in the



previous years, not because of its commitment to armed struggle against Israel (which was barely mentioned in Hamas's campaign advertisements).

But when I spoke to Hamas sympathizers in the West Bank, the refrain was consistent: most said the Palestinian Authority has delivered nothing by way of stopping the expansion of settlements, so at least Hamas stands up for Palestinians' dignity and allows some Palestinians to feel a modicum of self-respect. What these people don't understand is that when Palestinians choose to rally around leaders who champion violence, Israelis are less inclined to reconciliation and more attracted to Netanyahu and ultra right-wing politics. But that's what the leadership of Hamas wants—because reconciliation now under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority would almost certainly isolate Hamas, whereas the continuation of the Occupation paired with Israel's disproportionate response to Hamas's rockets enable Hamas to gain growing electoral support. Ending the Occupation in a spirit of openhearted generosity, manifested in the ways I outline in my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, would severely cripple Hamas's support.

The big losers, of course, are the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian people as a whole (including those who live in Gaza), and the peace forces in Israel, which are rapidly losing their ability to influence the consciousness of their own fellow citizens.

But war in Israel/Palestine? Not likely. More slaughter of Palestinians like what happened in the November 2012, January 2009, and December 2008 wars on Gaza? Quite plausible.

## The Threat of War with Iran

Israeli and U.S. militarists have another way of deflecting attention from the pressure to deal justly with Palestinians: war with Iran. The idea is to "take out" Iran's nuclear capacity while simultaneously striking Iran's military and other elements of the Iranian government's apparatus of societal control.

It's hard not to wish for the overthrow of the Iranian fundamentalists who have systematically undermined the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people through torture, imprisonment, and the denial of fundamental human rights. But military strikes would only further empower the fundamentalists, who would be seen as the champions of the nation, while their pro-human rights opponents would be seen as representatives of the imperialist forces from Israel (backed by the United States) responsible for the loss of human life.

As *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives argued in the full-page ad we placed in the *New York Times* in March 2012 (through the generous support of many of our readers and NSP supporters), nuclear powers have no moral standing to tell other countries that they can't develop nuclear capacities, so long as they ignore the aspects of international agreements they entered which called upon



Children run past bombed-out buildings in Gaza City. When will the Israeli government learn that a foreign policy based on generosity, not militarism, is the only path to "homeland security"?

them to rid themselves of these weapons of mass destruction. Until nuclear powers like the United States rid themselves of such weapons, which will only happen if hundreds of millions of citizens demand it, the only hope we have for avoiding nuclear war is through the very kind of containment policy that was used so effectively in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The Soviets were not one bit less ideologically driven and not one whit more humane toward their own people than the current Iranian regime, and they were certainly inclined to believe that militarist strategies were best. Yet we avoided nuclear war not through first strikes against their nuclear capacities, but through guaranteeing total destruction of the Soviet Union should they take a first strike. That same strategy will work with Iran should the mullahs ever develop nuclear weapons.

Yes, the rulers of Iran constantly make choices that cause great harm to their own people. But they also have a great interest in protecting their own regime. They understand that Israel, with or without U.S. approval, would decimate Iran should it attempt to use nuclear weapons (should it ever develop such a capacity) against Israel or the United States.

So why would Israel strike Iran? Because at this stage Israel knows that Iran does not have nuclear capacities and hence cannot launch a war with Israel in retaliation for Israel's strike on Iran, but can only cause damage from a distance. For some of Israel's militarists, the cost would be "acceptable," though countless Israelis would die in the subsequent flinging of missiles in both directions, albeit not as many Israelis as Iranians. The outcome, as far as these militarists are concerned, would be "worth it" because they would have set Iran's nuclear program back many years, caused damage to the hateful rulers of Iran, and proved once again to Israelis that Jews are in constant danger and hence must have a very, very strong and uncompromising Israeli Defense Force. The social protests that threatened to change Israel a year ago would be left behind for another decade or two, allowing the right-wingers to set the agenda, continue the takeover of the West Bank, and even offer a tiny noncontiguous Palestinian state that would allow Israel to continue its expansion through much of the West Bank.

## Prayers for the Future

I pray that voices of sanity will prevail and that, instead of trying to take out Iranian nukes, Israel will concentrate on outstretching its hands in generosity toward the Palestinian people, thereby neutralizing the one card Arab and Muslim extremists have continually used in the past decades to show that the real enemy is not poverty and ignorance, but Israel and the United States.

Imagine Israel helping to create an economically and politically viable Palestinian state, allowing 20,000 Palestinians per year to return to Israel (a number large enough to be significant, but small enough not to upset the demographic balance), seeking world financial help to offer reparations for those who had lost their homes in the creation of Israel (both Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews who fled Arab lands), requiring Israeli students to learn Arabic in school, and genuinely atoning for all the Palestinians who lost their lives during these past sixty-five years. Genuine openhearted generosity is likely to be far more effective as a strategy for Israeli homeland security than are all the wars and measures of repression. In

fact, it is only through a Strategy of Generosity that the whole world can avoid more wars, which is one among many reasons to read our Global Marshall Plan ([tikkun.org/GMP](http://tikkun.org/GMP)) and help us get local city councils and state legislatures to endorse it!

I have to admit that all this ongoing militarism and craziness make me really sad. I'm increasingly aware of how very much I would like the rest of my life to be blessed with a world making love not war. Having just turned seventy, I mourn the failure of my generation to turn around the imperialist capitalism that we inherited from past generations, even while I continue to rejoice in the huge contribution our generation has made to diminishing racism, sexism, homophobia, and insensitivity to the environment. *But it is not over yet*, and I am still planning to use my next years (however much time I may be granted) to participate with aging boomers and the younger generations in the ongoing struggle for a world of love, kindness, generosity, social justice, environmental sanity, peace, and joyous celebration of the grandeur of the universe and the fundamental goodness of so many human beings on this planet. ■

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## Rabbis Get Boxed In

### Criticism of Israel at a High Price

**T**HE NEW YORK TIMES ran a major story when the rabbis of B'nai Jeshurun synagogue in New York City sent a note to thousands of congregants applauding the UN resolution of November 29, 2012, which admitted Palestine to the UN as an "observer state." The story focused on the anger of some (no numbers were given) congregants who were outraged that their rabbis would take such a public stance in support of the right of Palestine to be considered a state. In contrast, the Union of Reform Judaism (the Reform Movement typically and rightly praised for its progressive stance on many other issues) denounced the vote and praised the Obama administration for voting against the UN resolution.

We cheered the B'nai Jeshurun rabbis: Marcelo Bronstein, Rolando Matalon, and Felicia Sol. But the next day, responding to the huge pressure that had been brought on them by the conservative voices in the Jewish community, the rabbis, while not recanting what they said, apologized for giving the false impression that the B'nai Jeshurun community was united on this issue. They also apologized for including in their original letter some names of staff and B'nai Jeshurun board members who hadn't wanted their names to be used. And their statement spent most of its words affirming how much they loved Israel, without a single reference to the oppressive behaviors of the Israeli government that presumably

had led them to sympathize with the Palestinian attempt to get UN recognition.

I've heard this over and over again from fellow rabbis: that they dare not speak out unequivocally about Israel lest they put their jobs and ability to support their families in jeopardy. Even among the rabbinic group associated with J Street, I heard many voicing the same fears. The B'nai Jeshurun rabbis' retreat underscored how even they—rabbis of the synagogue considered by many to be the most successful congregation in the United States in terms of attracting younger Jews—face overwhelming pressure to conform to the official line set by supporters of the Israeli government.

When rabbis do not feel free to engage in controversial political discussions or promote notions of "loving the stranger" for fear of losing their jobs, I feel heartbroken. It is so troubling when these fears override rabbis' ability to convey to the younger generations what is most exciting about Jewish values or make them appear to be inconsistent or silent on one of the most serious challenges to Judaism: how Jewish values play out in Israel. I yearn for the day when we welcome debate within our Jewish community about all matters, including Israel's policies and behaviors, and when we embrace "the stranger" with a generous spirit. ■

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# Envisioning a Thoughtful and Caring Child Welfare System

BY SIDNEY GOLDBERG

**T**HE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM in the United States is not living up to its name. Rather than nurturing the intellectual potential, capacity for joy, and emotional wellness of foster children, the system too often takes a narrow approach to maintaining only the children's physical well-being.

I speak from my experience as a caseworker, administrator, and creator of a unique program in child welfare. Twenty-five years of butting up against the constraints of this system have made clear to me that the problem is structural. The occasional caseworker who would seek to nurture a child's potential interests or passions would usually be thwarted by the limited paradigm around which the system is constructed. Year after year, most caseworkers go through the motions, while heeding the entrenched and narrow mandates set forth by their agencies as the lives of children under their care stagnate.

I believe another system is possible—one that starts from the foundational premise that all people are capable of building satisfying lives through the pursuit of their interests—and that is staffed by workers who treat children and their parents with deep care and respect. To create such a system, we will need to transform the entire structure and pedagogy of social work school, drawing on insights gained through a careful look at the problems with the current system.

## Limiting Harm Is Not Enough

Let me start with a story from Chicago that gets at the heart of the problem. The story starts with a group of restless teenage boys, cloistered inside the dreary walls of a group home on the city's South Side. The group home's regimented routines served as a constant reminder of the system responsible for the teens' confinement.

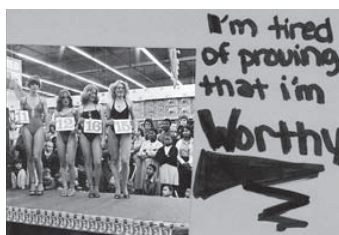
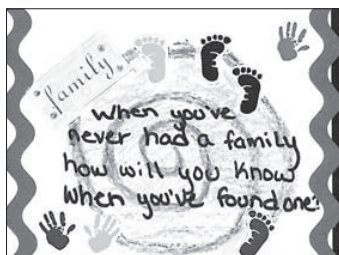
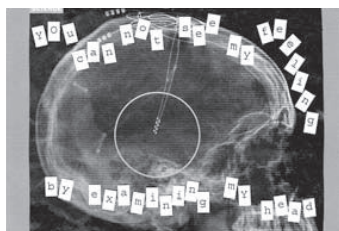
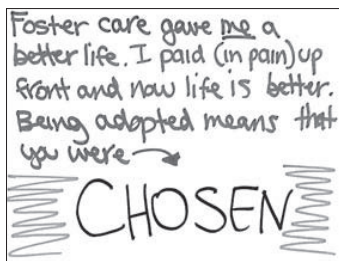
By the time I came to know the teenage residents of this group home, I had worked as a caseworker for twelve years in the Illinois child welfare system. I was painfully familiar with the lack of opportunities to build satisfying and productive lives for children once they were removed from their parents' homes and placed in substitute care, and I wanted to do something about it. I had been promoted and was now part of a new division, targeted case management, whose primary goal was to work with the private sector to end the perpetual years of foster care in which huge numbers of youth found themselves. It was in the context of this new position that I became involved with this group home.

When one of the boys revealed an interest in studying art, I spoke with the group home's administration about allowing him to attend classes at the Art Institute of



What would it take to build a foster care system that not only maintains children's physical well-being but also nurtures their interests in art, science, sports, music, drama, and more? *Art Class* by George E. Miller II.





Current and former foster care children reflect on their experiences through a group art project organized by Foster Care Alumni of America (see page 14 for more postcards from the same project).

Chicago. Since they would not allow the boy to travel to the Art Institute, a world-class art school and museum, the Art Institute agreed to come to the group home and provide weekly art classes for the boy and the other residents, all free of charge. What could have been a boon for this institution was greeted instead with steely opposition.

The group home's response to my persistence in attempting to bring the Art Institute's classes to their residents was a phone call from the director inviting me to a meeting. I arrived hoping to make a case for the importance of what I was trying to accomplish. But the director and a few other employees, including the staff psychiatrist, would have none of it. They lectured me on how I did not understand what these boys needed, which was surely not art classes, part-time jobs, nor any other such "trivial distractions." And in any case, the director deemed the boys "not ready" for such things. Needless to say, the Art Institute was not allowed to offer classes at the group home.

A child's foster care placement is supposed to eliminate the risk of harm that was assumed to have existed in the parents' home. But another kind of harm, a harm very likely resulting in long-term developmental impairment, has been an issue that has not been addressed by most child welfare agencies. That is the harm that comes from the lack of recognition that foster children need to have access to the same kind of educational, social, and cultural opportunities that children living with their parents have. These opportunities provide the building blocks with which we construct our lives. They allow us to find and develop our interests—evolving interests through which we find direction in our lives.

## A System Built on Low Expectations

My decades of work in the child welfare system have shown me that most foster children do not have access to even minimal educational, cultural, and vocational opportunities to nurture their interests.

Bernadette McCarthy, a former Deputy Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, has suggested that the appropriate focus on the child is lost because "perhaps, too much attention is placed on outcomes measured in statistics of reduced intakes and increased permanencies." McCarthy, a perceptive and conscientious social worker with more than four decades of child welfare experience, started as a caseworker and later headed the statewide clinical and training divisions. Looking back at her experiences, she said, "The normal, daily life of the child is lost in the endless stream of conferences and staffings."

I found through my discussions with children living in foster care that many had interests they had never mentioned because they considered the possibility of actually getting the chance to pursue them next to zero. Others were not immediately able to articulate their interests. But once they became familiar with a context within which to think about such things, they too began to identify areas of interest.

When I met with prominent Harvard developmental psychologist Jerome Kagan, he said that a majority of the caseworkers and counselors "do not have much expectation of really helping the child," in part because they constantly see abused children from insecure homes and therefore "do not start with much optimism." Part of the problem, he explained, is that caseworkers "are not judged on whether they are successful with the child but are judged if they make no errors, and their first and foremost goal is to protect their own dignity." Kagan added that the caseworkers and counselors believe that the probability of foster children actually having a life full of joy is so low that they just attend to their physical well-being and concentrate on making no mistakes. This pattern leads many children to feel that the caseworkers and counselors do not really care about them and do not have faith in their ability to flourish.

I believe that an essential problem with the current child welfare paradigm is its reliance on a "therapy and treatment" mind-set—the idea among caseworkers that children fundamentally need treatment rather than a full childhood with opportunities to develop their own interests. Administrators' low expectations of foster children's abilities and



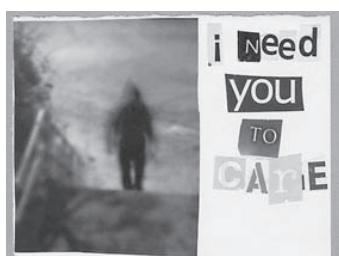
potential, though, do not completely explain the system's longtime failure to provide the means for interest development. If caseworkers on the whole hold the mistaken belief that foster children lack the cognitive skills to engage in activities such as art, music, or science, how can they simultaneously hold the belief that these children have the skills to engage in counseling?

## The Withholding of Arts Education

I recall the time a thirteen-year-old boy and his caseworker were visiting a state child welfare office on Chicago's South Side, where we had a piano. This boy sat down at the piano and for several minutes played by ear. He clearly liked playing and possessed musical ability. After speaking with him, I spoke with his caseworker about possible piano instruction. She was strongly against this idea, saying he was a sex offender and "not ready" for piano instruction. I persisted in trying to have him receive piano instruction through DePaul University, the organization that was contracted to teach music for the program I had founded and administered. Even after I met with higher-level personnel at the boy's group home, he was still not allowed to study piano. I was able to get a clothing store that was located near the boy's group home to donate a suit, a shirt, and a tie for him, but the caseworker refused to take him to the store. He never received the free clothing. He must not have been deemed *ready* for clothing.

I had often heard from therapists and other social service personnel that both children and parents were "not ready" to pursue their interests or to receive vocational training. A young girl interested in voice instruction and in singing in a choir, a mother with a substance abuse problem and a desire to start vocational training, a father with an alcohol addiction and no marketable skills, were some of the many people who were deemed "not ready" to engage in the very activities that would help them build positive and productive lives. I wish more people would see the truth of Kagan's assertion that children are always ready for art and music and that those who say otherwise "do not know what ready means and are using this as an excuse."

It's time to remake the child welfare system around a central ethic of care. To do so, we need to renew our sense of hope in all children's ability to flourish, even amid difficult circumstances. In this Memphis-based mural by Jeff Zimmerman, *A Note of Hope*, children play in a world of love and sorrow, beauty and danger.



Another situation involved ten-year-old twins who “showed great interest and enthusiasm in their work” as students at The School of Ballet Chicago and, according to the school director, were blessed with natural dance ability. Placed initially with their aunt after having been removed from their mother’s custody, the twins were next, unwisely, re-placed from the aunt’s home to a nonrelative foster home. The new foster mother would not take them to ballet classes and said that all they needed was counseling. Even after many months of serious efforts to work with the foster mother; provision of door-to-door transportation; intervention by the state agency’s second in command, who spoke with the executive director of the private agency that was contracted to care for the twins; and a letter emphasizing the classes’ relevance and developmental significance from the former chairman of the Psychology Department of the University of Chicago, the twins were no longer to attend ballet classes.

Why would the administration of both these agencies oppose so very adamantly something so vital for these children? Is it that child welfare personnel do not want intruders to make the regular staff look bad by bringing about positive changes, as Kagan suggests?

## Shifting the Structure

The pattern of withholding interest-development opportunities can be broken in several ways. Protocol and policy often change as the result of pressure generated by extensive media coverage in the wake of incidents involving extreme abuse or neglect. Thus, a steady uproar over the denial of these opportunities for foster children, combined with advocacy of interest-development needs, would be one such way. But such an uproar is unlikely because of the enduring acceptance of foster children’s poor adjustment. Stories of children who have been beaten to death or the discovery of children left alone without food attract media attention, but the ongoing denial of educational and cultural experiences to generations of foster children is something which many have grown to see as normal and unavoidable.

Another way in which this change might occur would be for graduate human services programs (social work and applied psychology) to begin to include normal human development in their curricula, with an emphasis on its vital place in the lives of foster children. Were that to occur, at least some caseworkers might become emboldened not only because of their better understanding, but also because of their assurance that the schools would be behind them, to slowly, and of their own initiative, attend to this matter.

I had often spoken with children in foster care about their interests and was successful in obtaining funds, both from the state child welfare agency and from private donations, to cover the cost of their music instruction and instrument rental. One music school to which I sent foster children agreed not to charge for their instruction. For years I had tried in vain to make this happen on a larger scale; my attempts fell on deaf ears. Finally, in early 1995, that changed.

## Pathways to Development in Chicago

With the strong support of several higher-level state child welfare administrators at the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, I created and ran a program that provided high-quality opportunities for children living in foster care. The program, from the start, consisted of five components, all intended to maximize children’s exposure to a variety of interest areas from which they would be able to choose one or two to pursue over a long period of time. The Pathways to Development Program began with about 300 children and, when I left the department in 2000, enrollment had reached approximately 1,000.

The program centered around weekly classes taught by widely respected organizations. Quality would not be debatable, though I was once told by a department division head that “these children do not need such good quality.” (*continued on page 58*)



# Her Books

## Moving My Mother's Library to Al-Quds

BY DEBORAH KAUFMAN

**W**HAT DO YOU DO with your parents' possessions? With the collections of a lifetime? What do you do with the books?

I sat with my husband, Alan Snitow, in my mom's living room in Jerusalem feeling the anxiety ebb and flow as we pondered these questions. My stepdad, Bill Daleski, had suddenly died, and I had just moved my mom, Shirley Kaufman, to the Bay Area to live near my two sisters and me so we could take care of her now that her dementia was rapidly progressing.

Now, I had flown back to this strangely quiet apartment in Rehavia, the old tree-lined neighborhood of the Ashkenazi elite: professors and intellectuals, mostly secular liberals, the generation that is now passing. We had had our share of passionate moments in this home—mostly arguments about Israel's occupation of Palestine, but also scotch-soaked parties with visiting writers, artists, and far-flung friends. In Rehavia, where the streets are mostly named after scholars and poets from the golden age of Jewish culture in Spain, today you see growing numbers of black-clad Orthodox Jewish families who have taken up residence, and you hear feral cats scurrying amid the overflowing garbage bins.

My stepdad was a well-known English professor at the Hebrew University, a literary critic, and Israel Prize winner. He had a significant collection of English literature, which his family arranged to donate to the Hebrew University right after he died. Beautiful editions from Dickens and Lawrence to Sillitoe and Le Carré. My mom is a poet, author of nine books, and recipient of many literary awards. She had a large and sumptuous library of English-language poetry books, collected over sixty years, many signed by the authors. The shelves lined the walls of her study down to the floor and up to the ceiling. For her, this was the world that mattered most—George Oppen, Adrienne Rich, William Carlos Williams; the shelves burst with whole landscapes of pleasure and pain and mystery. A window looked out over a flowering Jacaranda tree in the garden below and to weathered pines across the street, where



Deborah Kaufman shares a tender moment with her mother, Shirley Kaufman, whose “sumptuous library of English-language poetry books” (top) is now part of the Al-Quds University library in East Jerusalem.

DEBORAH KAUFMAN is a documentary producer and director whose work with Alan Snitow includes *Between Two Worlds*, *Thirst*, *Secrets of Silicon Valley*, and *Blacks and Jews*. Prior to filmmaking, she was founding director of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, the first festival of its kind.

Deborah Kaufman



A Palestinian moving crew from Al-Quds helps Deborah Kaufman load her mother's poetry collection into their truck.

the mourning doves sang at dawn. This library was a cool oasis in a stressed-out city, and it was my mom's private Garden of Eden, tended to over the decades.

I began to investigate our options for the books and quickly learned that it is extremely difficult to donate books to libraries in Jerusalem. There are too many dying Jews with too many books! Israeli schools and libraries want only valuable or specialized collections. Writer friends told us sad stories about their efforts to give away a colleague's private library, and how the only taker was a used bookstore.

But my sisters and I had already decided we did not want to move the books back to California. We had other thoughts, too, thoughts that put us at odds with some of our friends and family in Israel. We had spoken with my mom many years ago about the possibility of donating to a Palestinian university, and she had been open to it—though not without some doubts. Now that the time had come to actually do something about the books, I was immobilized by all the endings that were piling up one upon the other—Bill's death, my mom's decline, the transformation of Rehavia, and the general demise of the Israel in which they had believed. So many changes, and I was unclear about what to do next with this collection that had meant so much to my mother.

## Reaching Out to Al-Quds University

My only connection to a Palestinian university was from years earlier, before the second intifada, when I had met Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian professor of philosophy and the president of East Jerusalem's Al-Quds University, at the International Human Rights Film Festival in Tel Aviv, Nazareth, and Ramallah. We were together with politician and peace activist Shulamit Aloni on a panel that was considering the model of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Panels for Israel. Later, I read Nusseibeh's autobiography and political essays, which transcend the limits of conventional politics, and they touched me deeply.

So I sent him an email asking if Al-Quds University might like to have my mom's books. Nusseibeh's immediate email response blew me away: "This is truly amazing, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this very personalized and generous donation."

The next day, my husband and I met with Nusseibeh at the YMCA's café—known to many as neutral territory in West Jerusalem. It probably looked like a breezy coffee date among aging hippies with unruly hair, but the conversation sped rapidly from the daily news to more personal and urgent matters. He told us he rarely travels to the western, Jewish side of the city anymore—in fact, he said, he thought he hadn't crossed over in perhaps two years. But my appeal was something he related to—his mom was also in her eighties and, like mine, suffered from dementia. With a gentle smile he said he interpreted our offer to donate the poetry collection as a gesture of friendship, and since this was very meaningful to him, of course he would ensure that arrangements would be made to move the books the following day.

The books would journey from their shelves in my mom's Rehavia apartment across town to the Al-Quds University library in Abu Dis, a Palestinian neighborhood now cut off from west Jerusalem by the twenty-six-foot-tall concrete Israeli separation barrier. The books would move into an entirely new and separate reality—on the other side of a great divide. I sat there a bit stunned—pleasantly surprised that the books had so easily found a guardian and an appreciative home, but at the same time on edge—what would my mom and stepdad have thought? What would our friends and family make of this? Would we ever see the books again? *(continued on page 61)*



Freudian narratives, Marxist theory, and the worldview of liberalism are often blind to the spiritual dimension of social life—they fail to perceive the power of humanity's desire for love and connection with others. *Finding a Point* by Mel Kadel.

## A Spiritual Way of Seeing

BY PETER GABEL

**M**OST OF THE THEORIES and narratives we use to understand social reality assume that the material world is the main shaping influence over that reality—economics with its emphasis on goods; evolution with its emphasis on physical survival; or think even of the recent presidential campaign with its emphasis on jobs as the defining issue in determining how people will vote. I don't deny the obvious importance of the material dimension of existence, but I find that theories such as these are often blind to the spiritual dimension of social life: by focusing wholly on humans' desire for things, they fail to perceive the power of humans' desire for love, community, solidarity, and connection with others, or as I will explain shortly, for "mutual recognition" of our common humanity as authentic Presence.

Where we place our emphasis in interpreting the world is critical to being able to act together to influence historical events in a positive way and help to create a better world—a world more capable of realizing the yearnings of the human soul. Or in other words, our "social theory" is central to our capacity for effective and meaningful social action, in the sense that social theory is really nothing more than a way of seeing, and in order to do the right thing, to devote our energies in the time that we are here to worthwhile projects that are most likely to improve our collective lives and the world that we collectively inhabit, we must learn to see what is going on in front of us in a way that allows us to interpret its social meaning as accurately as possible.

PETER GABEL is editor-at-large of *Tikkun* and the author of *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning* and *Another Way of Seeing: Essays on Transforming Law, Politics, and Culture* (available at [quidprobooks.com](http://quidprobooks.com) and [tikkun.org/store](http://tikkun.org/store)).



Most critics analyzed Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* through a Freudian lens. Here, the character Justine, her nephew Leo, and her sister Claire await the apocalyptic collision of Earth with an errant planet.

## Freud and Melancholia

The stakes involved in choosing between different social theories and narratives can be illustrated by a discussion of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*—a movie that has received a great deal of attention from critics and moviegoers. In this remarkable film, a woman named Justine, played by Kirsten Dunst, gets married in a wedding ceremony that is both extraordinarily opulent (vast sums of money are spent by her brother-in-law to assure that this is the happiest day of her life) and yet profoundly alienating in the sense that virtually all the characters, including Justine's parents and other family members, are represented as unhappy, selfish, and preoccupied with the details of the wedding ritual over the substance of any profound human bond.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to most of the guests but somewhat mystically understood by Justine and less mystically and more scientifically so by her brother-in-law, a planet that has been hidden behind the sun has somehow shifted in its alignment and is rapidly heading toward earth. Although Justine is obviously deeply disturbed and disengaged while enduring the experience of her own wedding, she becomes more centered and present in the days following the wedding as the danger of collision with the errant planet—named Melancholia—becomes more likely. In the final scene, as Justine sits holding hands with her frightened sister and innocent young nephew in a hastily constructed “magic cave” that Justine has told the boy will protect them all, it is Justine who seems spiritually prepared for the apocalyptic end that awaits them and all of the world. While during the early part of the film, Justine appeared to be the one doomed to disorientation and debilitating melancholia, at the end it is she who becomes at one with the profound and sudden ending of both the collective life and the collective history and culture of the human experience, of human existence itself.

The theory that has informed most of the reviews of *Melancholia* has been quite explicitly Freudian, perhaps because Freud wrote a very famous book called *Mourning and Melancholia* that addressed the way that loss—in particular unmourned loss—can create a pathological attachment to the lost object that leads one to become in-dwelling and withdrawn, to lose all interest in life, and to become quite literally vitiated of human vitality. This meaning of the word “melancholia,” drawn from Freud's good work on the subject, has then been projected into the movie, so that Justine is identified as deeply “depressed” by the disturbed nature of her conditioned upbringing, which reaches a kind of apotheosis



Magnolia Pictures (magpictures.com)

in the dysfunctional and dysphoric wedding ceremony. This depression is interpreted as a manifestation of her melancholia, her loss of vitality and interest in life. In Freud's analysis, the failure to work through the experience of loss through the process of mourning both expresses and reinforces an infantile belief on the part of the sufferer that he or she is responsible for the loss of the loved object, and this guilt not only becomes a primary cause of the sufferer's unrelenting attachment to the lost object, but also engenders an unconscious need for punishment to partially expiate the guilt, or better, to satisfy the guilt fixation.

For the critics who adapt the Freudian way of seeing to the movie, Justine improves at the movie's climactic ending because that long-deserved punishment has finally arrived in the form of the planetary collision. While the brother-in-law commits suicide and the sister cries, Justine is fully present emotionally and awaits the end with equanimity and perhaps even joy. While not all critics adopt all of the components of the Freudian theory in analyzing the film, there is a consensus that the film is "depressing," that the characters are dreadful human beings, that Justine is a deeply disturbed woman, and that it portends one eccentric but talented director's vision of the end of the world.

While the Freudian interpretation is true to the facts of the movie in the sense that the existing facts can be "seen" in a way that makes them consistent with the theory, the interpretation is in my opinion completely wrong. To my way of seeing, Justine's reactions to the alienation and dehumanization of her social environment are understandable and even courageous, although because she is presented to us as socially absorbed into this world—as a kind of passively willing participant in her dreadful wedding ceremony—she is far more isolated and far crazier as a result than she would have been had she instead, say, joined the women's movement or Occupy Wall Street. But considering the pathological social place in which she found herself as a thoroughly isolated woman, it was obvious to me that she was throwing all of herself into her resistance to what was being made of her from the outside. Her recovery during the course of the movie as a result of the approach of the planet, to my eyes, manifested her emergence into mental health, because the arrival of the errant planet would liberate both her and also all of humanity from the social alienation, brutality, and inauthenticity into which our world had fallen. In a beautiful final scene, it is Justine who can reassure her little nephew of his security in the magic cave they construct out of sticks, because this magic cave, in which Justine, her nephew, and her sister hold hands as the end approaches, is a new little world of authenticity and love and spiritual recovery of their simple common humanity. I left the theater with a full heart and a smile that I could not get off of my face, and I felt that my true self—the authentic longings of my soul—had been recognized and confirmed by Justine's final beauty and presence in the face of death and of the limits of existence itself. We really are here together if only we will embrace one another.

Now, as I say, there is nothing wrong with the Freudian theory, or the related "the movie-is-depressing" theory, on its use of the facts. Exactly the problem of all mistaken but well-articulated theories about the meaning of social events is that they express a way of seeing that *fits the facts*. What is wrong with these theories is not that they cannot explain things, but rather that they *can* explain them and that they do so incorrectly. The error in these incorrect or faulty or too-limited ways of seeing is that rather than illuminate the meaning of social events as they actually are, they impose upon these events an order that renders this true meaning invisible.

## Marxism as a Way of Seeing

For example, Marxism does a brilliant job of presenting historical events through a theory, a way of seeing, that fits the facts of these events. In Marx's own works and the many works that have followed in his tradition, we see the myths of various historical periods penetrated by a critical way of seeing that shows the shaping power of underlying economic factors, the hidden organization of society adapted in each epoch to the production and distribution of material goods under conditions of material scarcity. As

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*Another Way of Seeing:  
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"In liberalism," the author writes, "the social world in front of us is perceived as a vast collection of individuals, each pursuing his or her own chosen destiny." The isolating quality of this worldview is evoked in this untitled painting by Ruben Cukier.

soon as this organization produces a surplus, it is appropriated by the class of people that has gained power within a particular means of production, generating a struggle for survival between classes that is obscured by universal myths and rationalizations—ideologies—that legitimize the status quo and cover up what's really going on. In the Marxist framework, its way of seeing, everything is accounted for: economics, law, religion, culture, gender roles, racism, conquest and domination of other cultures, everything.

But Marxism is nevertheless wrong, not because it cannot explain events, but because the superimposition of this way of seeing on historical events is not true to what we might call the social being of the events as they really are, in their being. Yes, there is a formation of classes, there is a competitive division of labor, there is appropriation of the economic surplus in unjust ways, there are masking ideologies that rationalize unjust social relations and transform might into right. . . but this turns out not to be taking place because of the material struggle for survival but because of a Fear of the Other that has been injected into history and reproduced across generations in ways not reducible to material factors alone, or even primarily. Yet if you come to believe in the Marxist way of seeing, if you are understandably seduced by how brilliantly it fits the facts while appealing to your instinctive sense that the world, as it is, is profoundly unjust, then you will be led in wrong directions by it—for example, you may think that an economic revolution that reorganizes productive relations is the key element to overcoming injustice and fulfilling human possibilities. Since coercion may be involved in such a process, that mistaken way of seeing—adopted with the best of intentions—may lead to tragic and even terrible consequences.

Nothing that I say should be understood to minimize the human suffering manifested in the history of class society—the suffering from poverty, material inequality, exploitation of economic resources and human labor, and the illegitimate hierarchies through which rulers in each historical period have dominated the ruled. Nor do I mean to minimize the human need for food, shelter, and other elements of basic material survival which continue to cause suffering for much of the world's population—for example, the 2.5 billion people who cannot obtain enough food to receive adequate nutrition each day, according to United Nations estimates. Rather what I am saying is that these forms of material suffering and injustice are manifestations of our historical legacy of our alienation from one another—that the "cause" is to be found in the social-spiritual separation expressive of an underlying failure of mutual recognition that expresses itself existentially as Fear of the Other.

## The Worldview of Liberal Democracy

Or consider Marxism's main historical competitor in the last two hundred years and its at least temporary conqueror on the historical stage, liberal individualism and its political corollary, liberal democracy. In liberalism, we are given a way of seeing in which the social world in front of us is perceived as a vast collection of individuals, each pursuing his or her own chosen destiny, each free and equal to all the others, who combine to form collective life through private agreements and through one great public agreement, the social contract that is formed and realized through the act of voting in public elections. Within the liberal worldview, it's acknowledged that we are each born into families and must be nurtured properly through contact with others in order to achieve our individuation, our unique and sane and mature stature as individual participants in the liberal social order; but the outcome of good-enough child-rearing is self-evidently the production of the separate and free actor, who can believe whatever he or she wishes and do whatever he or she wants, as long as this free action does not involve improper interference with others through improper deception or duress or other forms of coercion. Material inequalities are explained by variations in ability or the luck of the draw, but the main point here is that whatever aspects of social life might

Ruben Cukier (rubencukierart.com)



be considered unfulfilling or unjust in liberal society can eventually be solved by the system itself: because it is the free choice of the collection of individuals themselves that will determine the existence of this lack of fulfillment or injustice, if they want to they will eventually—actually as soon as possible considering the commonsense challenges that confront human life with limited knowledge—do something about it. If we destroy the planet through nuclear war or environmental destruction, this would not invalidate the liberal worldview—it would simply reveal, with pathos, that human individuals are too burdened with inherent limitations, understood as expressions of evil or ignorance or simply biological or psychological frailties, to make a success of our own destiny as individual beings. The result of the liberal calculus would be simply that we tried and failed, but not that we had the wrong theory, that we were blinded by an incorrect way of seeing what has been going on.

Like Marxism, liberalism fits the facts perfectly; it can account for the feeling of personhood, social formations, economic life, the existence of law and government, the justifications for collective actions of all kinds, including war and environmental destruction, criminal conduct, personal unhappiness, and so on ad infinitum. The problem with liberalism is not that it doesn't fit the facts, but rather that it does fit the facts, and by doing just this obscures the true reality of the totality of phenomena that it projects itself onto.

We are not actually each individuals thrown amidst a vast collection of other individuals that as a mere collection comprise the social world, the world of social existence, but are rather mutually constituting social beings perpetually knitting each other together through the inter-experience of mutual recognition into a fabric of interrelatedness that is social through and through. The reason that we feel so much like individualized entities is that we have inherited from prior generations a Fear of the Other, a fear of one another, that envelops us in the illusion of separation at a distance. While we can be grateful to liberalism and those who helped to build a world based on it for helping us to overcome the limitations of other earlier ways of seeing that caused often terrible human suffering and social injustice—ways of seeing such as the Divine Right of Kings, the natural superiority of the aristocracy, the superiority of the white race, the superiority of men over women, or of straights over gays—it is important to see that its very completeness as a social theory functions to render invisible the cause of our isolation and despair, our pathological destruction of the natural world, our infliction of starvation on the 25,000 people (many of them children) who die on the planet from lack of food every day, our imminent danger of obliterating each other with nuclear weapons that persists each day, all as if these were inevitable consequences of the way things are and have to be.

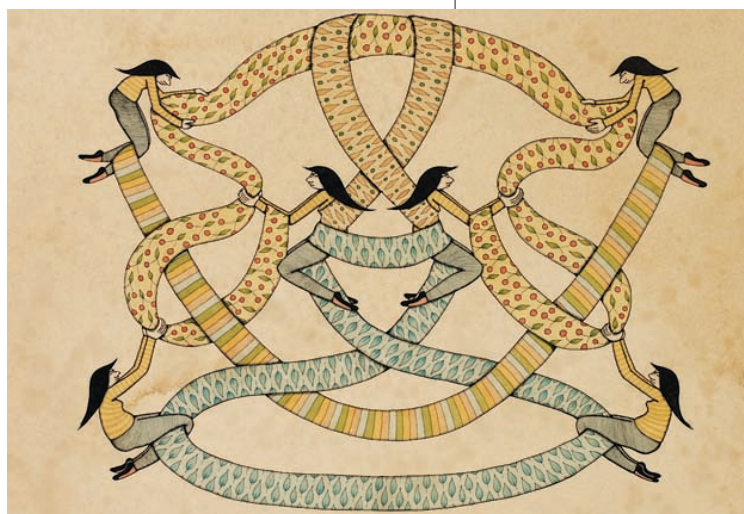
## A Social-Spiritual Way of Seeing

In this article, as well as in my new book, *Another Way of Seeing: Essays on Transforming Law, Politics, and Culture*, from which this piece is adapted, I am offering one expression of a worldwide effort now taking place to bring another theory, another way of seeing, to the forefront of human life. The central aspect of this new postliberal, post-Marxist way of seeing is to begin from the interior of our awareness to grasp the “within” of the intersubjective life-world into which we have been thrown and into which we are, in the words of philosopher Martin Heidegger, always already in-mixed. What we find by this interior-to-interior method—from beginning inside ourselves and from that interior self-transparency going forward by intuition and understanding to the inside of the



A social-spiritual way of seeing takes into account our deep craving for the love and recognition of other human beings. In this painting, *Reaching Out* by Salma Arastu, a woman extends her hands to as many children as she can hold. “If we all reach out and share our love and compassion among all, that will lighten the burden of souls,” Arastu writes.

The world we have inherited “is primarily characterized by the denial of our desire for mutual recognition,” the author writes. What would a world rich with connection and recognition look like? *Ribbons* by Mel Kadel.



world we are trying to see—is that human beings actually exist in a psycho-spiritual world in which they seek not primarily food, shelter, or the satisfaction of material needs, but rather the love and recognition of other human beings, and the sense of elevated meaning and purpose that comes from bringing that world of intersubjective connection into being. Of course the satisfaction of material needs is indispensable to our physical survival, but please see that our survival is different from our *existence*—our survival is the background, the indispensable precondition of our existence, and if it is threatened we can be driven to whatever extreme is necessary to preserve this existence. But our existence itself is a manifestation of our social being that a) is fully present to itself and others, and b) exists only by virtue of our relation to the presence of others as the source of our completion. When I say that we are social beings, therefore, I mean that we do not really exist as individuals except to the extent that our individuality is one pole of our existence in relation to others, and the central longing of our life, immanent within our very existence as social beings, is to be fully recognized by the other in an embrace of love and to recognize that other with the same grace. Insofar as we must maintain the preconditions of our existence, we are motivated by the material need for survival, but our existence itself is animated by the desire to realize ourselves as social beings through connection with others, through the grace of love and mutual recognition.

Taken to the level of an overall social theory, this way of seeing—a way of seeing that bridges the interior of the social person to the interior of that person’s surrounding (or historical) group—produces some core insights about social life that shape the perspective in the essays in *Another Way of Seeing* on law, politics, public policy, and culture. Let me summarize the first two of these insights here.

First, we are all animated by the desire for mutual recognition, for a transparent connection to others in which we become fully present to each other, anchored in each other’s gaze in much the way that the German theologian Martin Buber described in his book *I and Thou*. I aspire to see you and to exist in relation to you not as a mere “you over there,” as a mere passing or glancing presence going by, but as a full presence both there and here, the very completion of myself insofar as we emerge into a We that is neither fleeting nor in danger of dissolving back into reciprocal solitudes corroded by mistrust and fear. The We is not a fusion or erasure of the individual person, but a realization or completion of the social person in authentic reciprocity.

Second, the world that we have been born into and have inherited is primarily characterized by the denial of this desire for mutual recognition, in the sense that we are primarily in flight from each other and experience each other as a threat. But the threat that we experience is not of “destruction” in the Darwinian or even Marxist sense of a struggle for material resources, but rather the threat of non-recognition or ontological humiliation. When we pass each other with blank gazes on the street, punctuated by furtive steals of a passing look, our entire existential state as social beings is revealed to us—namely, that we are each, or both, encapsulated in solitude because we are pulled outward and toward each other by the desire for mutual recognition (the furtive glances *toward* each other that we each experience as compulsory), and at the same time feel compelled to deny this desire and look away, “keep our distance,” because of the immanent anxiety that the other will not reciprocate this desire for mutual recognition. This denial of our core need and desire as social beings for essential authentic reciprocity, for love in its deepest sense of essential affirmation and sight, is actually what creates the massive material injustice that Marxism and its allied ways of seeing correctly name and analyze—it is our social (*continued on page 62*)

# The Mondragón Cooperatives

## An Inspiring Economic Hybrid

BY GEORGIA KELLY

**R**IDING FROM THE Bilbao Airport to the small town of Mondragón, one is struck by the sheer beauty of the forested hills and verdant valleys in Spain's Basque Country. The roads are as smooth as if they were paved yesterday, and there is nothing in this bucolic landscape to suggest anything is amiss in Spain.

However, the economic woes in this country are well known. As of November 2012, unemployment has risen above 25 percent and calls for more austerity have been greeted with demonstrations and widespread popular opposition. But, in spite of the country's financial crisis, there is a solution quietly thriving in northern Spain—a solution that has nothing to do with austerity.

Sixty years ago, the Basque region was the poorest area of Spain. Today, thanks to the cooperative culture, it is the wealthiest. The dramatic transformation leads directly back to the arrival of a visionary Catholic priest, Father Jose Maria Arizmendi, who was sent to oversee a parish church in the small town of Mondragón. Though he questioned the wisdom of this appointment, it didn't take long for Arizmendi to discover his mission in the impoverished town.

Because of the high unemployment in Mondragón, Arizmendi decided to open a school that would provide skills to some of the unemployed men in the area. The polytechnic school trained workers to make machine parts and provided an ethical foundation for the formation of cooperatives. In 1956, a handful of worker-owners who were trained in this school opened the first cooperative, ULGOR.

From such a modest beginning grew the world's largest consortium of worker-owned businesses—a consortium that now comprises 120 businesses and more than 83,000 worker-owners.

In 1959, the Mondragón Cooperatives formed their own bank, Caja Laboral. It is this financial institution that has been the engine behind the expansion and financial stability of the cooperatives. In 2009, when 25 percent of all businesses in Spain failed, less than 1 percent failed in the Mondragón Cooperatives.

GEORGIA KELLY is the founder and director of Praxis Peace Institute, a peace education nonprofit organization in Sonoma, California. She organizes seminar-tours of the Mondragón Cooperatives and has produced several conferences on peace related themes. For information, visit [praxispeace.org](http://praxispeace.org).



Members of the Mondragón Cooperatives vote on a proposed 2013-2016 socio-corporative policy.



The Mondragón Cooperatives manufacture pressure cookers, dishwashers, refrigerators, ovens, washing machines, dryers, and other appliances at factories such as this Fagor production plant.



## Putting People above Profit

Based on a philosophy that values respect, equality, and human dignity, the cooperatives exemplify what an enlightened business environment can be. The mission of the Mondragón Cooperatives Corporation is to create wealth within society, to foster a people society instead of a capital society, and to honor work with dignity. "People are the core, not capital," says Mikel Lezamiz, the corporation's director of dissemination. "This is the main point. If capital has the power, then labor is simply its tool."

The Mondragón Cooperatives have created businesses in four key areas: finance, industry, retail, and knowledge. They have four university campuses, a culinary arts school in San Sebastian, the largest research and development center in all of Europe (with fourteen separate entities), the Caja Laboral Bank with 380 branches in Spain, and an incubation center for creating new products and services. Mondragón also acquired the largest supermarket chain in Spain (Eroski) and has been converting it from a conventional business to worker-owned cooperatives. As of today, all of the markets in the Basque region are worker-owned and those located in other parts of Spain are in the process of conversion.

This year, because of the economic crisis, the five-day Praxis Peace Institute seminar and tour of Mondragón received a special session at the Caja Laboral bank headquarters. Former bank director Pio Aguirre told participants in the special session that Caja Laboral's default rate is less than half that of other Spanish banks, and its solvency rate is a healthy 12.5 percent. As a banker in a cooperative financial structure, he offered an approach we found refreshing.

"We believe that it is important to share the wealth and be generous with others," he said. Their banks were still lending when most other banks in Spain had ceased making loans.

We were impressed to hear a banker who proudly values people above profit and openly speaks about "sharing the wealth." At one point, he stopped mid-sentence and said, "Of course, we know that capitalism doesn't work." We all looked at each other. Was this man a banker? In a corporate capitalist culture, such words would be heresy. But at Caja Laboral, there are no outside shareholders to consider. The bank is solely owned by the worker-owned cooperatives, and it reflects their values and mission.

Mondragón has also created its own social service foundation (Lagun Aro), which offers health insurance, an employment fund (for illness, accidents, and training programs), and a generous pension plan. These programs are in addition to the ones

provided by the Spanish government, which means one can retire very comfortably in this community.

## Weathering the Financial Crisis

Because of the preponderance of cooperatives, the Basque Country seems somewhat removed from the economic crisis that is affecting much of Spain and Europe. In fact, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Basque region is considered one of the wealthiest areas in the entire European Union.

In spite of their ongoing successes, the cooperatives have experienced some fallout from the financial crisis. With fewer domestic orders, the Mondragón Cooperatives Corporation expanded exports, which make up the majority of their sales today. Many Mondragón appliances are sold in the United States. For example, Fagor pressure cookers are sold in Macy's kitchenware department, and Fagor dishwashers, refrigerators, ovens, washing machines, dryers, and other appliances are sold at Crate & Barrel and even online at Amazon. The outreach also extends beyond products: one of the Mondragón Construction companies has supplied materials and labor for reconstruction at Ground Zero in New York.

In spite of the cooperatives' exports, some losses have been inevitable, and a few businesses have been forced to downsize. The Mondragón version of downsizing is worth examining. In the Basque region, unemployment is around 12 percent; in the Mondragón Cooperatives it is zero percent! Maintaining zero unemployment means that the worker-owners meet and democratically decide how best to address their financial problems. In some cases, workers relocate to other cooperatives in the system, or they employ job sharing where people work fewer hours and take a pay cut. In one case, 20 percent of the workforce left their jobs for one year. During that year, they received 80 percent of their pay and could retrain for other types of work (for free) if they wished. Recently, the worker-owners of one of the largest manufacturing cooperatives voted to take a 7.5 percent temporary pay cut.

The Mondragón hybrid is highly entrepreneurial. The cooperatives hold 716 patents for inventions. One of their businesses produced the first computer chips in Spain, and the cooperatives are now a leading source of alternative energy such as wind power, fuel cells, and solar panels. They also make elevators (Orona), high-quality bicycles used by Olympic racers (Orbea), small and large appliances (Fagor), car parts, packaging materials, and numerous other products. One of the Mondragón construction companies built the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Their level of skill and quality control are second to none.

The focus on social responsibility, democratic decision-making, and wage solidarity display the social and humane orientation of the Mondragón Cooperatives. Wage solidarity means that the average CEO of a Mondragón business receives six times the salary of the lowest-paid worker-owner, a far cry from US corporate CEO salaries, which might exceed 300 times the lowest-paid worker. The democratic process means that one worker-owner has one vote. There are no stocks for outside purchase.

The American myth says we can have it all, but in Mondragón that seems provincially (or arrogantly) naive. The countries and communities that value social connection, social services, and the eradication of poverty consistently appear at the top of the Happiness Index. The Basque region has the highest standard of living and the lowest unemployment rate in Spain, and it also has the largest number of people involved in worker-owned businesses. In addition to the Mondragón Cooperatives, there are about 600 other worker-owned businesses in the region.

The Mondragón Cooperatives formed their own bank, Caja Laboral, in 1959. The bank now maintains 380 branches throughout Spain, as well as the headquarters pictured here.





The Mondragón Cooperatives trace their roots back to Father Jose Maria Arizmendi, a visionary Catholic priest who founded a local polytechnic school. "In order to democratize the power, we must socialize the knowledge," he said.

In organizing four educational tours of the Mondragón Cooperatives, I have spent considerable time in the Basque Country and have traveled through most of it. However, one does not have to spend much time there to observe both the lack of great wealth and the lack of poverty. The region is constituted by a vibrant and healthy middle class. Most people are comfortable and secure in their jobs and community. As Mariluz, a worker-owner at Fagor Appliances, said: "The crisis has really affected home appliance sales so much. Many times, in regular companies, if there is a slowdown, you are out in the street. Here you can't get thrown out in the street. This is very important." Such security has deep roots in the cooperative culture.

Participants in the Mondragón Cooperatives admit that worker-ownership is not for everyone. Some people prefer to work solo or build their own companies or aspire to a managerial position in which they can earn more than six times the lowest-paid worker. But the ethics at the Mondragón Cooperatives and their focus on creating a better world by doing all they can to manifest it can be incorporated everywhere and practiced by everyone.

## Values

The seminar I organize at Mondragón always includes an afternoon program at Baketik ([baketik.org](http://baketik.org)), the peace center located on the grounds of a 500-year-old Franciscan monastery in the hills above Mondragón. It is in this spiritual center that one learns about the ethics that underlie the basic philosophy of the cooperatives. In spite of its location, Baketik is not a religious organization. Its educational offerings include frequent classes in conflict resolution, human development, and ethics. The core principles of the Mondragón Cooperatives are down-to-earth and practical but rooted in a compassionate vision for humanity.

The Mondragón Cooperatives are about much more than business. The worker-owners have created a culture of cooperation and an ethics of compassion. These are the qualities that infuse their work and guarantee high-quality products and services. They are also the qualities that have created a viable alternative to corporate capitalism. If we aspire to achieve a more humane, sustainable, and peaceful world, we would do well to learn from the people in Mondragón, Spain. ■

## Volunteer at *Tikkun*

We need volunteers and interns to help us with a wide variety of tasks, both online from home and in person at our office in Berkeley, California. Would you or someone you know like to work with Rabbi Lerner on the Global Marshall Plan or the campaign to get Money Out of Politics, on spreading the ideas in *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, or on helping him develop a spiritual commentary on the Torah and a new book about God?

We also need help with social media, help finding ways to persuade foundations or philanthropists to help us financially, help recruiting young thinkers to write for *Tikkun*, help proofreading magazine articles, help finding beautiful art to use as illustrations, and tech-savvy help to create a more user-friendly index of our past articles.

If you're interested in volunteering, contact us at [internships.tikkun@gmail.com](mailto:internships.tikkun@gmail.com) and tell us about what you want to do, whether you're able to come to Berkeley, and why you are the right person to be working with us. Because we have a tiny core staff, we need people who do not need much guidance, especially for those who are seeking to volunteer from home. It's also important to really understand what we are about, so please do take the time to read *The Left Hand of God* and *Embracing Israel/Palestine*, as well as recent issues of *Tikkun*.



# How Ancient Religions Can Help Us Transcend the Civilization of Greedy Money

BY ULRICH DUCHROW

**W**E ARE FACING a global crisis created by the climax of our capitalist money culture—a crisis that calls for a global answer. The world's many religions are well suited to serve as resources in the face of this crisis because they emerged during the Axial Age: the same time period when money and private property began to penetrate everyday life in precapitalist societies across the globe.

The major religions and philosophies of the Axial Age, the historical period beginning in the eighth century BCE, emerged in direct confrontation with the new political economy of that era. For this reason, they all reach toward a life-enhancing culture that may have the potential to overcome the death-bound Western civilization. In addition, this means that in spite of all the differences in details, the messages and spiritualities of these systems of thought have a direct relation to our own context. This is why a socio-historical analysis of antiquity is very important to understand modernity.

## The Ancient Roots of Modern-Day Greed

The triumph of selfishness and materialism in the modern world causes huge amounts of pain. To understand how this triumph came about, it is important to look backward at how this way of thinking and organizing society emerged in precapitalist societies. This can be observed particularly in the fields of political economy, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy.

Starting in the eighth century BCE, money and private property began to remake everyday life in the context of very violent times, particularly in the ancient Near East and Greece, but also throughout Asia. Politically, this new economy merged with imperial



The Buddha “concentrated on prevailing over greed, aggression, and illusory consciousness in order to overcome the suffering of the people,” the author writes. “It is not by accident that Buddhist economists are now among the most lucid critics of capitalism.” *Buddha in Our Time* by Gonkar Gyatso.

ULRICH DUCHROW is a professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, specialized in ecumenical theology and theology-economy issues. The ideas presented in this article are more fully developed in his book *Transcending Greedy Money: Interreligious Solidarity for Just Relations* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), coauthored by liberation theologian Franz Hinkelammert, professor of economics at the University of Costa Rica in San José.

Money and private property began to remake everyday life in the eighth century BCE, setting the stage for capitalism and a global culture of materialism and individualism. In this seventeenth-century painting by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, villagers contend with new bureaucracies of taxation.



structures and behaviors. Culturally, calculating rationality took over. Linked to this was a loss of solidarity in the affected societies as well as a shift in human self-understanding and praxis toward greed and egocentrism: “Profit is insatiable,” wrote Pittakos of Mytilene, one of the Seven Sages of Greece. This ancient shift toward greed has resulted in the intensified egocentrism that characterizes Western modernity. Since the Axial Age, the capitalist market has become more and more globalized, served by more and more violent global empires. Calculating individualism has become the mark of the current period.

Let us take a moment to consider the implications of an emerging new economy built on money and private property. The emerging markets lead to more and more exchange of goods and services. To facilitate this exchange, money takes on a central role as the “one in the many.” That is, people agree to use money as the accounting unit for the exchange of different goods and services. The fact that money also defines property rights causes calculating individuals to come to the fore, stimulating greed, which becomes institutionalized in the form of interest. This in turn leads to a social split between creditors and debtors who, if not able to service their debt, lose their land and fall into debt slavery. And all of that leads to a growing gap between rich and poor that causes harsh suffering for the latter.

Politically, the development of stark social inequalities links up with the structures of empire, which request tribute from subjected peoples and thereby increase the suffering of the people. The linkage of the money-property economy with slavery and imperial structures finds its first high point in the Hellenistic and Roman empires. Culturally, the solidarity relationships of tribal societies are dismantled, and systemic egoism wins the day.

All these developments are reinforced in modernity because individualist competition and greed are made positive motors of the economy and culture. The money-property economy also has psychological effects. Normally this aspect is forgotten when researchers or movements look for alternatives to the dominant system. However, when it comes to the implementation of alternatives, this neglect turns out to create major difficulties. How do we explain that, although the present system works against the interests of the vast majority of the world’s population, only a minority resists and works actively for alternatives? Many revolutions have taken place, but in nearly all cases the result is neither a new equality nor more humane relationships among people, but rather an exchange of elites. So it is important to work not only for more just structures in society but also for transformed persons. The psychological and spiritual dimensions of our struggle must be given the same weight as the structural ones.





Aristotle warned about the dangerous illusions created by the accumulation of money, but he and other Greek philosophers also laid the groundwork for the reductionist rationality associated with capitalism. Aristotle and Plato appear at the heart of this painting, Raphael's *School of Athens*.

The most helpful psychological school for the analysis of these kinds of problems is relational psychology, which has demonstrated that from infancy we become subjects only through intersubjective relations. The relations in which we engage create basic benign and malign psychological patterns within us that are reinforced by subsequent social, economic, and political experiences, both positive and negative. Consequently, it is important to understand that these patterns find different expressions in the different social classes. Therefore, the healing and mobilization of people from the lower, middle, and upper classes will call for different therapies and strategies. This is why one must deal specifically with the psychological problems of every class. Here the losers in the system turn out to be the most important protagonists of change. In this context the middle classes pose a particular problem because even though the majority of their members lose out in neoliberalism, they side with the elites due to their participation in an illusionary consciousness. How this can change is a big question for the future of humanity.

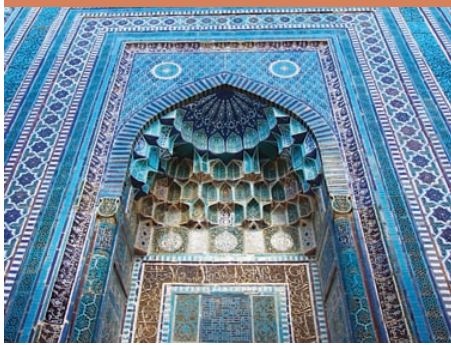
## Religious Wisdom from the Axial Age

If it is true that our modern economy, culture, and political systems are rooted in the Axial Age, then the religions and philosophies that emerged during that period may well give us clues to cope with today's crises. It can be documented that these religions and philosophies are precisely a response to the development of the new money-property economy, causing change not just in economic, social, and political structures but also in the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of persons, thus creating a new comprehensive culture. A proof of this thesis is that the new perspectives in religion or philosophy can be observed not only in one country or region, but everywhere the new economy spreads—in Israel, Greece, India, China, Persia, and later in the Arabian Peninsula. So we have to analyze the developments in each of these regions in order to understand not only the common, but also the particular, features of the religious and philosophical responses.

Historically, the first protest against the new economy and its social consequences came from the ancient Israeli prophets' call for justice. The next stage saw the development of the Torah as a legal instrument as well as a new relational understanding of the human being as being made in the image of God. The Jesus movement and the early Christian church also built on this foundation. Moreover, the apostle Paul identified how law, originally designed for enhancing life, could be turned into an instrument of death when hijacked by greed—an extremely important insight for the understanding of capital accumulation as a death-bringing law in modernity.

The Buddha in India also concentrated on prevailing over greed, aggression, and illusionary consciousness in order to overcome the suffering of the people. It is not by





Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all arose as “a response to the development of the new money-property economy,” the author writes. From Muhammad’s struggle with rich merchants in Mecca to the ancient Israeli prophets’ call for justice, these religions push back against greed.

accident that Buddhist economists are now among the most lucid critics of capitalism and are designers of a new personal and collective alternative.

In Islam we see a second wave of renewal of the spirituality of the Axial Age. The context is Muhammad’s struggle with rich merchants in Mecca. Here the particular emphasis is on overcoming the taking of interest as the institutionalizing of greed and on promoting justice by sharing wealth. The oneness of God prohibits making money an idol, and God’s graciousness requires sharing with the poor. Islamic banks have developed on this basis and constitute an interesting approach when it comes to devising financial alternatives today.

If we look at the classical Greek philosophy of that period, we find a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, it brought fundamental insights into the nature and consequences of the money economy, from Socrates to Aristotle. Particularly the latter presented pivotal reflections on the dangerous illusions created by money (when used for accumulation) and on ethical and political ways to protect society from their destructive effects. On the other hand, this philosophy, especially in its Platonic version, also laid the foundation for reducing reality to what fits into mathematical models and also for authoritarian political structures (with a male bias)—prefiguring western modernity.

## Justice in a World of Capital Accumulation

A critical analysis of modernity as a civilization driven by money structurally, culturally, and psychologically has to start with the analysis of its legitimization narratives by John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith. The basic characteristics of modernity show that the whole of life is subjected to functional mechanisms geared toward the accumulation of capital, which can be defined as greedy money. Indeed, the very definition of capital, as opposed to mere money (which could be used just as an instrument for exchange) is that it has to be invested to produce more money. The foundational invention for this “efficient” thinking is double bookkeeping, calculating everything according to the profit obtained after balancing input and output. This leads to the reductionist rationality of means-end calculation, which in turn becomes irrational and totalitarian. It leaves out the reproductive rationality that puts life and the sustenance of life at the center of critical thinking. This explains why modernity with its science, technology, economy, and politics has ended up in crisis, putting at risk the survival of humanity on earth. This is the core of the thesis that Western civilization is death-bound and why this is so.

In the face of globalization as the climax of the “irrationality of the rationalized,” how can the repressed human subject stand up and how can the common good again become the yardstick for economy? The common good is not to be understood in the Thomistic way against the background of a natural law. Instead, the requirements of the common good are discovered through the experience of the system’s self-destructive tendencies, in the midst of the struggles of the people. These struggles are decisive for becoming human and moving toward liberation.

However, bourgeois society has betrayed this longing for liberation by reducing the human being to an owner of property, using science, technology, economy, and politics as means to a single end: capital accumulation. Symbolic of this is the fact that the French Revolution executed the leaders of the emancipation of workers, women, and slaves. Therefore, we need to examine the myth of modernity through critical thinking and the development of an ethic of emancipation. Young people protesting in front of Zurich banks in the 1980s coined the slogan: “Do as God does, become a human being.” This can be linked with Karl Marx’s “categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which the human is a degraded, enslaved, neglected, contemptible being.” When, on the basis of God’s becoming human, “the human is the highest being for humankind,” as Marx went on to say, then all religions find a reference point that can be shared even with unbelieving humanists. *(continued on page 66)*





# Reimagining Judaism

## The Great Teshuvah

BY RAE ABILEAH

**W**HILE IT FELT LIKE it would never end, the 2012 election season (and its barrage of pesky campaign emails) is over. The apocalyptic buzz associated with the end of the Mayan calendar cycle has come and gone. The Arab Spring, the Israeli Summer, and the American Autumn, all features of a bygone year that shook the world with protest, have left our ears ringing from the clamor of Canadian casseroles and the echo of a mic check. Spring 2013: time to usher in a new paradigm, one of *teshuvah*, of turning (or returning), to the earth, to each other, to integrity.

In turning to each other through teshuvah, we gain the capacity to see the humanity within those with whom we are most deeply in conflict. For those of us on the left, it is often most difficult to accept the humanity of leaders who use their power to uphold economic exploitation or military occupation. It takes work not to harden our hearts to these leaders and their supporters, but this work is an essential part of building an effective movement for social change. Although it feels counterintuitive to us, we must do the work to persuade ourselves, deep in our bones, that accepting the humanity of those

How do we apply our personal experiences of teshuvah to a Great Turning—a broader social transformation toward justice and integrity? Here, Wilderness Torah participants gather in the forest to sing, meditate, and tap into Judaism's earth-based roots.

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whom we risk labeling as the “other” neither condones the violence wreaked by the policies they support nor weakens our condemnation of that violence.

### Suing in Court with an Unhardened Heart

Simultaneously engaging in emphatic political struggle and struggling to stay conscious of the humanity of those we oppose is a deep form of teshuvah with the power to transform our lives and our struggles in unpredictable ways. This year I experienced firsthand the power of this practice through a series of unexpected interactions with two men, one who attacked me physically during a protest action and another who expressed regret on his blog for having failed to join in the attack.

My story begins in May 2011 when I spoke up as a young Jewish-American for equal rights for Palestinians during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech to Congress in the Capital. *Tikkun* readers will remember this first part of the story from my article “Fresh Tactics and New Voices in the Movement for Justice and Freedom in the Middle East,” which appeared in the Fall 2011 issue of this magazine.

On that spring day, I stood up, heart pounding, hands trembling, and unfurled a banner, standing among those who had come to hear Netanyahu’s speech. Words came out of my mouth that I knew to be true with every bone in my body but had never said so boldly, so publicly: “Equal rights for Palestinians! No more occupation!” I was grabbed and gagged by a man sitting near me, rushed to the hospital, treated for a neck injury, arrested, and taken to jail. It was a whirlwind day that changed my life. Inspired by the courage of Palestinian activists nonviolently resisting Occupation daily, and activists here in the United States like the “Irvine 11,” I felt compelled to speak up. I hadn’t always felt so passionately about the Occupation, or been able to see the conflict as such, but traveling to the region in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead in 2009 opened my eyes, showing me the cruel reality of systemic oppression in a place I’ve always thought of as my homeland. I felt particularly emboldened by Beyt Tikkun and Jewish Voice for Peace—groups that showed me that I would be loved and accepted by the Jewish justice-seeking community for applying Jewish teachings to the Middle East crisis, not shunned or expelled.

I pursued legal action to identify my assailant, pressed charges, and filed a civil lawsuit for medical damages. When I discovered that the man who attacked me, Mr. Stanley Shulster, was a volunteer lobbyist with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a veteran of the Israeli Defense Forces, a retired lawyer, and a Jew, I felt even more hurt and betrayed.

Rae Abileah (center) takes part in the Gaza Freedom March, a nonviolent mass protest in Gaza in December 2009. A year and a half later, she was injured by AIPAC volunteer lobbyist Stanley Shulster after protesting at Netanyahu’s speech to the U.S. Congress.



Kelly VanPelt and Morgan Elzey



A year later, Shulster settled the civil suit by financially compensating me for my injuries, issuing a public apology, and offering a statement that included this important sentence: “Mr. Shulster respects the right of Ms. Abileah to hold a different view on the Israel-Palestine conflict and believes she holds this view in good faith.” This strays from the boilerplate language of AIPAC lobbyists, as it affirms the capacity for multiple perspectives on the conflict at a time when much of the right-wing institutional Jewish establishment seeks to silence dissent. In the statement, both Shulster and I jointly “recognize the right, as Americans, to agree to disagree peacefully.” While I still experience pain from my neck injury and continue to heal from the emotional trauma of the incident, I have found this joint, free-speech-affirming settlement to be unexpectedly powerful and comforting. It is a statement based in the basic humanity of both my assailant and myself.

## An Unlikely Ally at the RNC

I had another remarkable experience of teshuvah last August when I went to demonstrate at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Tampa. This time the interaction involved well-known Orthodox author Rabbi Shmuley Boteach (pronounced Bo-tey-ach), who had been sitting a few seats over during Netanyahu’s speech when I rose in protest and when Shulster attacked me.

The day after Shulster assaulted me, Boteach wrote a blog for *Huffington Post* titled “Bibi’s Heckler: To Seize or not to Seize?” In the article, he discusses his “moral dilemma” about whether or not to “assist in subduing” me—in other words, attack me. In a split-second decision, Boteach decided not to interfere because he could imagine the headlines reading: “Rabbi accosts protester in Congress.” Or worse. “Author of *Kosher Sex* grabs woman in U.S. House.” “Rabbi Shmuley all over woman in spectator gallery.” In that moment, the threat of bad publicity seemed to trump actual moral issues, Jewish ethics, or U.S. law.

Appalled by this public admission from a member of clergy, some rabbis wrote letters to Boteach, reminding him of Jewish teachings such as “Do not envy a man of violence nor follow any of his ways.” A letter sent by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb and Rabbi Brant Rosen stated:

Physical assault is a crime. Period. Interrupting a speech may not be well received but it is not physical assault. . . By polarizing the conflict with your words, you are creating new enemies. The mitzvah is “to turn an enemy into a friend.” Our tradition asks religious leaders to rise above the fray and to stand against violence of any sort.

A year and three months after Boteach published the blog post that elicited this response, I traveled to Florida to protest at the RNC. As I sat in the *Huffington Post* lounge, I glanced over my shoulder to do a double take: Wham! There was Boteach! My coworker and I walked over and confronted him about the article he wrote. When I introduced myself as the woman who had been in Congress that day, he appeared somewhat shocked. After all, here we were, both looking sharp in our suits deep inside Republican spin city. But I was equally as shocked by what ensued.

For the next forty-five minutes, we had a congenial conversation about the incident, my spiritual observance, and activism. Rabbi Boteach, who was running for Congress in New Jersey at the time, told me that while he thought I was “misguided,” he admired my bravery and hoped that when his daughters got older they would have a similar kind of courage. He added that he could see I was an observant Jew. And then he invited me to join his family for Rosh Hashanah dinner. The conversation was a redemptive and surprisingly heartfelt exchange to have before the high holidays.

But it didn’t stop there. The next day at the RNC, the Republican Jewish Coalition held a “Salute to Pro-Israel Lawmakers,” a parade of saber-rattling for war and further sanctions on Iran with no acknowledgement of the Israeli Occupation of Palestine. When



Rabbi Shmuley Boteach (above) originally expressed mixed feelings about whether he should have joined Stanley Shulster in using physical force against Rae Abileah. Their unexpected meeting at the Republican National Convention yielded surprising results.



Social transformation, the author writes, must involve the “holy no” of protest, structural change, and consciousness-shifting cultural work. Here, Ariel Vegosen dons a white hazmat suit to protest Monsanto and Saria Idana performs *Homeless in Homeland*, a solo dance and spoken word show about Israel and Palestine.



Rep. Michelle Bachman (R-Minn.) was introduced as a “woman of courage” and one who “speaks truth to power,” I stood up in front of the stage to say, “Speak truth to power! No war on Iran!” I was swiftly escorted outside by security. Little did I know that Rabbi Boteach was one of the next speakers.

Ron Kampeas, Washington bureau chief of the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, was in the room, and contacted me to tell me that when Boteach took the stage, he ditched some of his prepared remarks to comment on how he, according to Kampeas, “knew the woman who had just disrupted the event, and that she was not only a ‘good person,’ if misguided, but a ‘committed Jew.’”

Kampeas later wrote an article in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* titled “When Shmuley Met Rae,” detailing the story of the “Abileah-Boteach summit.” Sometimes reality really is stranger than fiction. Boteach, Shulster, and I may not agree on human rights or the future of Israel and Palestine, but I refuse to harden my heart to them as people. I recall a conversation with Vincent Harding, who wrote Martin Luther King’s famous anti-Vietnam War speech. Harding told me, “Martin would say, ‘I didn’t tell you that you have to *like* Bull Connor. No. I said you have to *love* Bull Connor.’ Someone else said you have to ‘Love the Hell Out of Bull Connor!’”

By acknowledging Shulster and Boteach’s humanity, I am not forgiving the ongoing exploitation or militarism of the powerful, but am accepting reality. That acceptance does not condone the ongoing support for occupation and exploitation, but is essential to take the next right action.

### The Great Turning: Starting with a “Holy No”

Once we have sunk ourselves deep into this process of teshuvah—of returning and seeking forgiveness, and finding ways to acknowledge each other’s humanity, even as we struggle for justice—where do we go from there? How do we take what we learn from our personal experiences of teshuvah and apply it to a Great Turning, a broader social transformation toward justice and integrity?

I am inspired by what author and eco-philosopher Joanna Macy teaches us about the “Great Turning,” a three-dimensional prophetic roadmap for social transformation. Macy is often quoted as saying, “If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people, people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.” I see evidence of Jewish activism, drawing on our great tradition of

Rae Abileah

*tikkun olam*, repairing the world, within each of the branches of change-making that Macy proposes.

The first aspect of the Great Turning is taking action to slow the damage of the earth and the people, exposing and dismantling the current broken system and power structures. Macy says this action component can take the form of “blockades, boycotts, civil disobedience, and other forms of refusal.... Work of this kind buys time. It saves some lives, and some ecosystems, species, and cultures, as well as some of the gene pool, for the sustainable society to come.”

The organizations I’ve worked most closely with—Code Pink and Jewish Voice for Peace—are speaking a loud and boisterous “holy no” in the face of environmental and social injustice. Professor Gene Sharp compiled and elaborated 198 ways to nonviolently refuse to comply with a broken system—from rallies and marches to boycotts to worker strikes to civil disobedience. There is no shortage of creative, active resistance techniques for social change, and it’s useful to remember that many of the freedoms we take for granted (women’s suffrage, the eight-hour work day, civil rights, to name a few) were the result of the effective usage of these direct action tactics.

For example, in the realm of food justice, activists are focusing on abolishing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) from the shelves of supermarkets. In California activists fought for Proposition 37, a ballot measure calling for the labeling of GMOs. Through the ballot initiative, they raised awareness about this issue statewide, even though the proposition ultimately failed. Jewish-American media specialist Ariel Vegosen dedicated much of her time this past year to this issue. A protest she coordinated outside a Monsanto GMO seed factory in Oxnard, California, in October, 2012, shut down the plant for the day and resulted in nine arrests. “Genetically modified foods are not kosher,” Vegosen said. “Judaism gives an outline for how to live justly and nonviolently and has a specific mandate on how to treat the earth. To me, our food laws make it blatantly clear that GMOs are out of bounds with those laws. It’s so exciting to be able to work with people of all faiths to ensure that we have safe food.”

We can all think of instances in which we say no to harm in our society: opposing corporate money in politics, opposing the Afghanistan Occupation, working to end stop-and-frisk racist police policies, stopping the disastrous Keystone XL pipeline, keeping fracking out of our counties, trying to close Guantánamo prison and stop torture, etc. Many of us marched against the war in Iraq, and are now saying no to crippling sanctions or possible war on Iran.

As more people say no to violence perpetrated in our name or using our money, these protest movements start to have deeper effects. For example, this year we witnessed major advances in global campaigns to apply economic pressure to Israel to uphold human rights and international law through boycott and divestment campaigns. Abigail Disney, the granddaughter of longtime senior executive Roy Disney, (*continued on page 67*)



Kat Morgan

An organic-farmer-in-training tends plants at Urban Adamah in Berkeley, California. “Structural change is already happening . . . in community gardens like Urban Adamah,” the author writes.



# What's Next in Faith-Based Community Organizing

## A Rolling Jubilee

BY DONNA SCHAPER

**F**AITH-BASED COMMUNITY organizing has a fine history. I'm talking about Gamaliel, the faith-based network that trains community organizers nationwide to work on immigration, health care, and transportation issues. I'm talking about the Jeremiah Project, which calls young adults into faith-based service projects in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I'm talking about Brooklyn United Methodist Church, and its provision of care to the sick and elderly in New York. I'm talking about PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) and how it puts faith values into action. There are more faith-based initiatives than I can possibly name.

But the "time famine" has deepened for many clergy, who are the gateways to so many congregations. It is time to switch direction. Instead of going from internal parish strength to external extra-parochial action, where we add value to the community from the value we have privately and internally, we need the community's help. We need the community's energy to assist parishes so that parishes may assist communities. We need outer to touch inner. This shift in direction is already happening due to necessity and the extraordinary pressures on parish clergy. Now it's time to pursue this direction intentionally, as well. The churches saved the arts during the Middle Ages. Today, growing numbers of ministers think, the arts need to save the churches.

### Resources to Combat Despair

I came to this realization slowly, with some resistance. I often felt used by the rent-a-collar approach of many community and labor organizations. I often felt I had something different to give from what they wanted. They wanted "my" people in their picket lines. They wanted numbers. I increasingly had decreasing numbers in my congregations, and most of the strongest congregants were also experiencing their own time famine, working three jobs, raising children, and trying to keep their mortgage payments above water. I realized that to be of use I had to get the numbers of people up in my pews before I got them up in their picket lines.

Plus what I really had to give was not numbers but spiritual support. Organizers felt so burnt out to me, so despairing, so uselessly utilitarian. They wanted something from my congregants and me that we couldn't give, while ignoring what we did have: resources to combat despair. They wanted a contractual arrangement. What I had was covenantal. Now when organizers knock on my door to have yet another "one-on-one," I tell them to come to church. I invite them to worship. I ask about the state of their soul. I don't promise to produce numbers.

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DONNA SCHAPER has been Senior Minister at Judson Memorial Church for five years. Her life goal is to animate spiritual capacity for public ministry.

To explain this shift in direction, let me illustrate with a project that is coming out of Occupy Faith, a loose network of faith-based groups that came together through the energy and vision of Occupy Wall Street. We are developing a transitional project, one that goes internal and external dynamically, rather than going from one false polarity (inner to outer) from another (outer to inner). We do want to shift the direction but not in such a way as to just change the chess game. We want to change the real game (how congregations and community organizations get power) and help with the famines of time, housing, and hope. We are calling this project a “rolling jubilee.”

### What Is a Rolling Jubilee?

A jubilee is a biblical practice of cancellation of debt on behalf of just prosperity for all. It is rest from making money and gaining power on behalf of human community. It is a time to let the soil rest and grow rich again.

Concretely, in the present, one manifestation of the rolling jubilee is “a bailout of the people by the people.” A group called Strike Debt, which emerged from a coalition of Occupy groups, has already raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for debt abolition. Here’s the explanation from the project’s website ([rollingjubilee.org](http://rollingjubilee.org)):

Rolling jubilee . . . buys debt for pennies on the dollar, but instead of collecting it, abolishes it. Together we can liberate debtors at random through a campaign of mutual support, good will, and collective refusal. Debt resistance is just the beginning. Join us as we imagine and create a new world based on the common good, not Wall Street profits.

The rolling jubilee is also a new kind of faith-based community organization working to make real the biblical jubilee and enabling faith-based organizing to return to its base in faith. The idea of the jubilee doesn’t stop organizing so much as it deepens the reasons why we must organize. An urgency about the suffering of our people stirs great hope in each other and in biblical power. We start with questions.

Did you know that debt cancellation is the biblical norm, not the exception? Does your faith feel fraudulent as you live in a political economy that enjoys debt and its abuse? Check out Deuteronomy 5 and 13, or Exodus 20, 21, and 23. Find out what Muslims think about debt. Or listen to Jesus in Luke 7, 11, and 16, or in Matthew 6 and 18. You will discover why you feel so much like a stranger in a strange land. From that alienation you will connect to others who feel similarly alienated. In your connection, power will emerge.

The rolling jubilee is a release from the shame of being in debt. Many are ashamed of their student debt, as though they were the only people who had to work into retirement age to pay it off. Even more are ashamed that they are struggling with their mortgages or that they have credit card debt they can’t possibly pay. What people don’t realize is that the banks make out well by this shame. They make it look as if it is our fault that we aren’t rich or famous, all the while gaining interest on the government’s debt and our personal debt. I am always surprised when conservatives say they want to bring down the national debt. That would really hurt the banks!

Our time famine comes from internalized capitalism. There is no need to blame ourselves for doing what “everybody does.” Instead, forgiving ourselves is a good way to start. Too much of faith-based community organizing has an “ought to” attached to it. Rolling



Did you know that debt cancellation is the biblical norm, not the exception? Occupy Faith’s next big project is a rolling jubilee to abolish debt and uproot internalized capitalism.

The jubilee note below is part of *Cash for the Crash*, a set of currency designed by Annie Bissett. The currency also includes four denominations that are free and priceless: earth, air, fire, and water.



the jubilee is a “may.” You may forgive yourself for internalizing capitalism. This spiritual repentance becomes a commandment to enter our difficulty with hope, not with shame or blame.

## Stories to Fight Internalized Capitalism

New directions for faith-based organizing fundamentally disavow the notion of coming to a meeting, of “showing up,” of “being counted.” We hope that our people will be relieved of shame on behalf of something like freedom. From that freedom we believe they will uproot internalized capitalism, first in their own souls, then in their congregational lives, then in their communities. Nobody can go to any more meetings or read any more emails or make any more phone calls. Internally “tilted” community organization does not require a lot of meetings that no one can manage to get to. They are richly democratic and open sourced. They involve the viral and the possible by asking us to engage our friends and families, not people we don’t know or can’t know.

Storytelling is the essential and important first step. Tell your story of money, power, and debt. Tell your story of repentance, too. Were you so ashamed that you lost your job that you didn’t tell anybody? Who are your people, and what is the story of your people’s journey through the lands of money, debt, and power? Do you have student debt? Do you have despair about what it bought you or can buy you? Are you underwater in your mortgage? Have you found a way out of shame about not being rich, in a land where being rich is the Eleventh Commandment? Have you found a way to connect with others who are like you? Tell your story, whenever, wherever, however you can. Engage the people around you. Listen to their stories. Has the financial crisis resulted in depression, isolation, guilt, or helplessness for you? If so, you will be helped and others will be helped if you open your mouth and liberate yourself from the shame of being a part of your own oppression. Think of NPR’s popular “StoryCorps,” and you will see where this is going. A national website—a People’s Investigation of Money, Debt, and Power—will soon be up.

While telling stories, don’t ask faith leaders to attend another meeting or to go outside the gathered community. Ask them to lead storytelling in their congregations and to link your stories to others. We imagine a great consciousness-raising experience, where “aha” moments go viral. “I thought I was the only one in this congregation with crushing debt.” Aha, I am not. “I thought I was the only person who thought I was bad for not being successful.” Aha, I am not. “I thought I was the only person who knew that the system was rigged and that money in politics had destroyed the American dream and the dreamers.” Aha, I am not.

As a next step, begin an internal conversation about how your parish invests its monies. Divest from the big banks and put your congregation’s money into credit unions. Join up with others who will do the same, but don’t do so until the stories have seeped into the spirits of your people. Don’t just bring your pastor to meetings. Bring people’s stories to the meetings and release the power of recognition. Raise the consciousness and combat the great loneliness of shaming stories and their multiplying impotence. Or create a micro-lending fund with some of your congregation’s monies. Experiment with local solutions to a stagnant, death-relying economy. Or buy out some debt. Banks do it all the time, only they sell it and make more money on it. Why not take \$5000 (or raise \$5000) and buy out some debt and cancel it?

What the banks need to do is make money on our debt. What we need to do is to cause them to financially fail the way they have already morally failed. It’s called jubilee and it’s the way our Abrahamic forebears managed their fields. Faith-based community organizations today have to tackle the enormous spiritual problems we face. Then we will be strong enough to take a crack at the material ones as well. ■

Annie Bissett (anniebissett.com)





"The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps has, in recent years, been utilized in roles that conflict with fundamental Judeo-Christian values of peace and reconciliation," the author writes. "Chaplains in my Army unit, for example, were seen as 'readiness maintenance' officers whose job was to keep soldiers on the rosters." Here, an Army chaplain reads a sermon at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti.

# We Are All Victims of War

## Veteran Liberation Theology

BY EVAN KNAPPENBERGER

**A** DEEP RIFT SEPARATES the pacifist and veteran communities in this country. To form a movement strong enough to bring an end to war, we will need to bridge this gap. The articulation of a veteran liberation theology has the power to create a space for cathartic exchange between the pacifist and military communities, enabling both groups to perceive how soldiers are exploited and oppressed by the war system. It is in this space that the end of war as envisioned in the Bible by Isaiah and Micah *will* come about.

The rich tradition of liberation theology has done much to connect the idea of liberation from economic and social oppression to an anticipation of ultimate salvation. In particular, liberation theologians have sought to center the perspectives of the poor and of communities of color, engaging the oppressed in a process of discernment and empowerment that works both within their own hearts and in systems of oppression. There is great potential in taking this approach to veterans and the military community, groups whose desperate oppression is often missed.

EVAN KNAPPENBERGER is a former U.S. Army intelligence analyst and a theology and philosophy student at Eastern Mennonite University. He is studying with and would like to thank Ted Grimsrud, Christian Early, and Peter Dula.

U.S. Air Force photo by Tech Sgt. Joe Zucaro

“The story of Uriah can serve both to illuminate the veteran perspective for pacifists and to illustrate the oppression of the imperial system,” the author writes. In this painting by Pieter Lastman, King David hands a letter to Uriah with an order that will bring about his death.



## The Oppression of Veterans

A misunderstanding of soldiers and their communities is often evident in the pacifist community. Veterans are seen as unstable, violent, over-emotional, perpetrators of violence, militaristic, and conservative. These generally negative views of soldiers and veterans have a historical basis in fact, but that basis is borne from the profound moral and spiritual oppression that military families endure. Veteran communities are founded on models that were intentionally designed by conservative elites to keep vets drunk and submissive. Since the end of World War I, American veterans in particular have seen a century of tragic oppression, culminating in the current gut-wrenching statistics of veteran suicides, divorce, homelessness, joblessness, and incarceration.

The oppression of American veterans began specifically as an ideological enterprise and has been exceptionally successful in its main objectives: to marginalize veterans and to appropriate any political efficacy they might retain after the trauma of war. For example, Wall Street bankers founded the American Legion at the close of World War I because they feared a mass of veterans returning “tainted” by Bolshevism. The two main objectives of the original leaders of the American Legion were to provide subsidized alcohol to veterans (keeping them drunk and uncritical) and to train a core of reserve officers that had not been “exposed” to Bolshevism to fight against a communist revolution on behalf of their wealthy patrons.

After World War II, a protracted struggle within the organization emerged over the famous Montgomery G.I. Bill of Rights: leaders of the American Legion were against educating veterans, but the group’s members overwhelmingly supported it. Ultimately the struggle ended with the group’s endorsement of the G.I. Bill, but it left the membership bitter and divided. Today’s American Legion is more positively focused. On the whole, it is a community like any other. It has concerts, cookouts, and baseball games. Every post has an open bar with extremely cheap alcohol for members. The American Legion has been the model of veteran community-building, despite its foundational purpose of oppression, proving that good can be achieved even in the midst of systems of domination and oppression.

Another tool of oppression is the creation of arbitrary distinctions among the oppressed, keeping them forever divided and unable to challenge their oppressors with a unified voice. American veterans are particularly susceptible to (*continued on page 69*)

# Culture

## A Visual Critique of Racism

African American Art from Southern California

BY PAUL VON BLUM

ONE OF THE MOST valuable functions of socially conscious art is its power to personalize and humanize what can easily become an abstraction. This power was evident again and again at *BAILA con Duende*, a recent Los Angeles exhibition featuring the works of seventy-four black artists.

A strong strain of social commentary ran through the exhibition, with many of the artists addressing issues of racism in their works. For example, in a 2011 photograph that focuses on the martyred fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, photographer George Evans reintroduces the iconic image of Till's unspeakably mutilated, disfigured body following his 1955 murder in Mississippi. After authorities retrieved Till's body from the Tallahatchie River, it was sent back to Chicago for the funeral. His mother, Mamie Till, insisted on an open casket, declaring, "I wanted the world to see what they did to my baby." *Jet Magazine* published this gruesome image, exposing the horrific face of racial murder to a shocked nation.

Evans's depiction of Till's body more than a half-century later is a stark reminder of the all-too-recent past. Scarcely new to most African American viewers, its graphic presence in this show highlights the compelling message that history must never be forgotten. By forcing viewers to revisit the 1955 tragedy, Evans personalizes the violence of racism in recent U.S. history. Early twenty-first-century audiences must remember Emmett Till not simply as a distant symbol of injustice, but as a young man with hopes and aspirations, whose life was brutally ended because he was black in a white racist society. And to those who ask why now, so many years later, Evans's work is a valuable reminder that knowledge of the past is both achingly concrete and crucially essential for present and future liberation.

Evans's photography is just one example drawn from a wide and varied body of brilliant artwork that is often shut out by academic gatekeepers and ignored by art critics who



*Emmett Till* by George Evans. Black and white digital print.

consistently overlook exhibitions in African American, Latino, and Asian American cultural institutions and venues. *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980*, the highly publicized art initiative from which the *BAILA con Duende* exhibition emerged, was a meaningful step toward a proper valuation of the work of artists of color in Southern California, but institutional racism within the art world remains intense, and the road ahead is long.

George Evans



## Critical Recognition for Artists of Color

The *Pacific Standard Time* project, which occurred in Southern California from October 2011 to April 2012, was one of the most highly publicized art initiatives of the early twenty-first century. As a collaboration between the Getty Foundation and the Getty Research Institute funded, it sponsored exhibitions at more than sixty museums and other cultural institutions throughout Southern California. It documented the emergence of the Los Angeles area as a vibrant postwar center for cultural production and revealed Southern California to be an authentic rival to New York as a world arts center.

*Pacific Standard Time* featured work by many more artists of color and women than had appeared in previous mainstream shows, thereby enabling critics and scholars to revise their sectarian outlooks and broaden their geographic horizons. The large presence of controversial feminist artists augured well for a more inclusive vision of the visual arts in the next several decades, and many Asian, Latino, and African American artists were richly represented, including many artists who had rarely had the opportunity for major public exposure. In some cases *Pacific Standard Time* exhibitions represented the artists' first significant presentations before large audiences.

The African American contributions to Southern California artistic ferment were an especially prominent component of the art initiative. The UCLA Armand Hammer Museum featured *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles*, a survey of some of the major Los Angeles figures of postwar African American art, including David Hammons, John Riddle, William Pajaud, Betye Saar, Ulysses Jenkins, Noah Purifoy,

John Outterbridge, Suzanne Jackson, and many others. California State University at Northridge showed a comprehensive exhibition of African American photography depicting arts, politics, religion, and family life in Los Angeles-area black communities after World War II.

I co-curated the most comprehensive show of African American art, *Places of Validation: Art and Progression*, at the California African American Museum in downtown Exposition Park, near the center of black Los Angeles. It featured both well-known artists and those who have been severely neglected in mainstream academic and journalistic criticism over the years. *Places of Validation* also presented documents and photographs about the alternative exhibition venues that have featured African American artists who have long been excluded from dominant museums and commercial galleries on racial grounds—sometimes explicitly.

## Effects of the *Pacific Standard Time* Initiative

The exhibitions and associated public programs of *Pacific Standard Time* helped put artists of color on more mainstream national and international cultural maps. A serious issue, as always, is the follow-up: after the initial enthusiasm, what will be the future for the region's artists of color? Some developments have suggested that the initiative helped generate more sustained attention and critical recognition for these artists. For example, the Hammer Museum's *Now Dig This!* exhibition moved to Long Island City, New York, at MoMA PS1 (an affiliate of the Museum of Modern Art) through March 2013. This provided East Coast viewers a rare opportunity to see striking examples of the vibrant tradition of Southern California African American art.

In Los Angeles, the most exciting African American artistic development emerging from the *Pacific Standard Time* effort was *BAILA con Duende*, a massive group exhibition at the Watts Towers Arts Center that ran from early September 2012 until early January 2013. Curator and artist/activist Lili Bernard selected a stunning array of talent for this show. Its list of participants included internationally known figures such as Betye Saar, Mark Bradford, Kehinde Wiley, William Pajaud, John Outterbridge, Artis Lane, Samella Lewis, and many others. It also included several artists known widely and respected throughout the region, as well as younger men and women whose works join this burgeoning tradition of visual excellence.

*BAILA con Duende* was an appropriate name for this exhibition. *BAILA*, which means "dance" in Spanish, is also the acronym for Black Artists in Los Angeles, an organization that the show's curator started in order to elevate the presence of African American art and artists in the region, especially with the mainstream arts institutions that have largely ignored the tradition for many decades. *Duende* means a sense of soul or spirit in Spanish, lending this exhibition its central theme. In a multicultural region like Los Angeles,



*Carlota Leading the People* by Lili Bernard. Oil on canvas.





*Caroline* by Lili Bernard. Oil on canvas.

and especially in an increasingly Latino venue like Watts, the title of the exhibition was especially fitting.

The exhibition contained works that reflect the formal and thematic diversity of African American visual expression. It highlighted paintings, prints, sculptures, videos, photographs, mixed media works, and other forms. It included political and historical topics, personal themes, spiritual reflections and expressions, abstract works, and many others. Overall, *BAILA con Duende* offered an impressive view of African American visual creativity in Southern California.

### A Graphic Condemnation of Slavery

The artworks of *BAILA con Duende*'s curator, Lili Bernard, often explore her Afro-Cuban ancestry and issues of racism. One of her paintings appropriately occupied a prominent space in the central gallery and revealed the commitment to social change that pervades this exhibition. *Caroline*, a large oil painting from 2012, is the third in her series of Caribbean slave paintings. In that series, she adapts classical European paintings and uses her version to tell stories of Afro-Caribbean slaves. Bernard's works are replete with Afro-Cuban folkloric and religious symbolism synthesized from Yoruba and Catholic traditions.

This artwork, which adapts Eduard Manet's classic 1863 *Olympia*, is a tribute to Bernard's dark-skinned great-grandmother, a servant for her wealthy, white great-grandfather—a typical "arrangement" of sexual exploitation during slavery

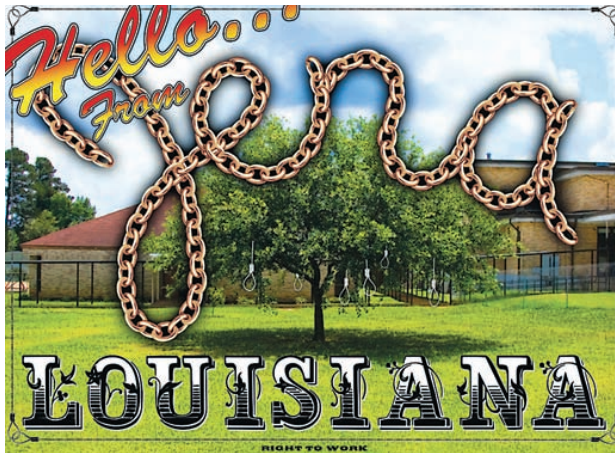
in the Western world. The starkest details in this disconcerting painting are the steel muzzles that surround the heads of the artist's great-grandmother and her great-grandfather's white wife. Called "scold's bridles," they were cruel and humiliating punishment devices used on women. In this case, the bridle on the black woman ensured her silence in the face of rape and on the white wife to ensure her silence—or denial—about her husband's sexual privilege as a white male slave owner. The wife also attempts to shield her child from this unsavory reality. The man's smugness and arrogance as he dresses following the sexual assault reveals, in microcosm, the deeper malevolence of slavery generally. Viewers also experience such other despicable elements of slavery's oppression as leg irons and other torture devices. Overall, *Caroline* is a devastating and effective visual critique.

Bernard's other works in her series adapt iconic works from Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* to complement her powerful artistic response to historical injustice. The latter, entitled *Carlotta Leading the People*, appropriates Delacroix's masterpiece about the July 1830 revolution in France to tell the story of an Afro-Cuban woman, Carlotta, who led a slave revolt in Mantanzas in 1843. She is the central figure, brandishing a rifle and a machete, and is accompanied by her compatriots Fermina and Evaristo, at the left of the painting. When she was captured, Carlotta was dragged and quartered to death, a typically grisly fate for slaves in Cuba and throughout North and





*Looters will be shot!* by Moses X Ball. An image of a Hurricane Katrina survivor painted on objects found on site in the aftermath of the hurricane.



*Hello from Jena* by Joe Lewis. Giclee print.

South America and the Caribbean who challenged their inhuman conditions. In the background are other Afro-Cuban slaves hanging, a warning to the enslaved of their fate if they decide to rebel. This visual representation of slave revolts (exhibited recently in another Los Angeles venue), so imaginatively depicted in Bernard's adaptation of European classical art, has been a thematic staple in African American visual art for more than a century.

One additional point about Bernard's painting deserves specific attention. Carlotta is presented as a conventionally attractive woman, a sensual black counterpart to Delacroix's figure in his early nineteenth-century masterpiece work. Her image is a striking contrast to that of Carlotta in a Cuban website, which depicts her as course and stocky, while acknowledging and celebrating her political courage and heroism.

No actual image of Carlotta's from her 1843 rebellion is available, so Bernard opts to depict Carlotta as a conventionally attractive woman, a vision that more broadly contradicts the view that activist women must be compensating for physical appearances deemed disappointing by those around them.

## Jena, Katrina, and the American Dream

Like George Evans's depiction of Emmett Till, Joe Lewis's *Hello . . . Jena Louisiana* delivers a condemnation of racism with striking imagery. Only a few years ago, in 2006, the small Louisiana town of Jena was the site of a major racial incident that once again revealed the persistence of a Southern racist legal system. Six black teenagers were convicted for beating a white student at Jena High School after the same prosecutor failed to charge white teenagers who assaulted a young African American. More ominously, lynch nooses had been hung from a tree in the school courtyard, exacerbating racial tensions in the school and town.

Civil rights advocates saw the events, especially the prosecutions based on excessive charges, as the legal counterpart of the infamous lynching history that the courtyard nooses signified. Lewis's artwork pointedly positions nooses in the background of the composition, an uns subtle reminder of the state's long and dishonorable record of lynching against African Americans. Dominating the front of the work is the town's name, in cursive style with lettering in chain—the classic material of oppression during slavery and Jim Crow-era chain gangs and racist incarceration in Louisiana. At the bottom, the artist includes the textual addition of “right to work,” the notorious anti-union legislation, common in the South, that restricts labor unions and increases the general right-wing atmosphere that breeds and exacerbates racist attitudes and practices.

One of the most imaginative politically conscious works in *BAILA con Duende* is Derrick Maddox's *It Is What It Ain't: American Dream*. Maddox, a young artist professionally trained at the California Institute of the Arts, is deliberately confrontational with his unorthodox style. This work consists of approximately one hundred prints on white bread, an especially appropriate material for his incisive critique of American white power. At the center, sitting on a large plate, is a white bread slice emblazoned with “whitey world.” Verbally provocative, the artwork calls attention to various incidents, events, policies, symbols, and persons that reflect the domination of white power in America.

Several individual bread slices with printed messages and images are especially significant and especially telling. Directly under “whitey world,” for example, is the name “Obama,” deliberately with a line drawn through it. The implication is clear: millions of white Americans refuse to accept the legitimacy of a black president and commander-in-chief. Other bread slices reference “projects,” an allusion to substandard housing for millions of American minorities;





*It Is What It Ain't*  
by Derrick Maddox.  
Acrylic on white bread  
and mixed media.

a noose, the historic symbol of lynching and violence against African Americans; a \$100 bill, a telling symbol of American capitalist priorities over human values; a widely reproduced image of a slave with visible scar tissue on his back, a reminder of the perverse cruelty of slavery and its violent heritage; and others. Additional images that do not appear in the accompanying illustration include Trayvon Martin and a helicopter—the ubiquitous police “ghettobird” that flies incessantly over black neighborhoods in Los Angeles. On the second floor of the exhibition, Maddox’s work places bread slices that spell out the letters W, A, and R, a grim reminder of the military adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan that have cost the nation thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

Another young artist, Moses Ball, focused on the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in his contributions to the exhibition. *Looters Will Be Shot* starkly reveals the merciless response of the New Orleans Police Department, the National Guard, and other armed “defenders” of civil order. These men and women protected private property and gunned down desperate civilians, primarily blacks, seeking to survive in the face of monumental governmental negligence and indifference.

The artist positions a strong African American woman, a powerful symbol of strength in the face of unspeakable adversity, in front of the Confederate flag, the longtime, inarguable signifier of racism and white supremacy. Pinned to the woman’s shirt are actual photographs of African Americans from New Orleans—the real victims of institutional neglect and callousness during the George W. Bush administration.

Ball’s works put a compelling human face on one of the major catastrophes of the early twenty-first century. Venerable Los Angeles artist William Pajaud, a New Orleans

native, also contributed a Katrina artwork to this exhibition, entitled *Eureka’s 2nd Cornet Silenced*. His poignant depiction of an African American musician playing his horn, but slowly and inexorably sinking into the Katrina flood, metaphorically invites audiences to consider the deeper cultural tragedy of the Katrina debacle, which can only be reversed with a combination of American national will and African American resilience. The tragic neglect of that city by the Bush administration during the catastrophe itself (and well beyond 2005) included the destruction of magnificent elements of its musical legacy.

## Looking Back to Africa

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many African American artists have linked their efforts with the African motherland, viewing the continent as a powerful source of their visual creativity. *BAILA con Duende* included several works that continue this thematic tradition. Sculptor, painter, and multi-media artist Toni Scott contributed *African Roots—Human Beginnings*, *Conceptions of Race*, which identifies Africa as the origin of all human life. This sculptural work features a multi-rooted tree emerging from the head of a female figure, revealing the maternal nature of African nurturing. The tree’s branches extend upward and outward, like the African Diaspora itself. This work pays homage to her African ancestors and invites viewers of all races to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of African history and culture, a focus that is sadly lacking in most conventional educational institutions.

Any artwork addressing African subject matter is deeply political in the United States, where most people are still fundamentally ignorant of African history, culture, and politics.



*Eureka's 2nd Cornet Silenced* by William Pajaud.



*Fela Lives* by Michael Massenburg. Mixed media: drawing, painting, and collage.

Michael Massenburg, another veteran artist working in Los Angeles, contributed *Fela Lives*, a powerful African-themed mixed media work to *BAILA con Duende*. Massenburg's work focuses on the iconic Nigerian musician and human rights and political activist Fela Kuti, whose music became political, reflecting his contact with the Black Panther Party and black nationalism in 1970s Los Angeles.

Back in Nigeria, Fela pioneered music called Afrobeat and increasingly used political lyrics that attacked the brutal Nigerian military. This made him a popular figure among millions of Nigerians and throughout Africa, but an enemy of the Nigerian regime. He was jailed and beaten, yet he continued to resist. He also produced anti-Apartheid music as part of the worldwide protests against the racist South African government. His early death at fifty-eight from AIDS brought an end to a brilliant and tumultuous career. More than a million people attended his funeral.

A Fela revival has since occurred, including new bands that reflect his Afrobeat musical influence, the reissue of his albums, and a successful off-Broadway production of a play entitled *Fela*. Massenburg's artwork augments that revival and adds another artistic dimension to its vigor. Positioning the musician/activist with his back turned to the viewers, the title *Fela Lives* occupies the central space. Massenburg does here what many African American artists have done for well over a century: he uses his art to serve as an educational corrective, informing audiences of major black figures, especially African figures, who are largely ignored in conventional educational settings.

African American musical heritage has itself been a major theme in African American visual art for well over a century. *BAILA con Duende* features a veteran contemporary Los Angeles artist who continues this vibrant tradition. Dale

Davis's *Horn Section*, a 40" × 50" × 8' assemblage, combines genuine silver, copper, and brass instruments imaginatively constructed into an artistic whole. This work, like many of his related musical-themed efforts, links him to the West African sources of African American musical creativity. Davis's use of actual horns in this artwork underscores both the seriousness and the impact of the work. Viewers with an abstract notion of black musical heritage often pay closer and more affectionate attention to Davis's works when they encounter the actual instruments. The way in which two of the instruments transcend the formal boundaries of the rectangular enclosure highlights how black musicians in Africa and the Diaspora constantly transcend their boundaries and their socially prescribed limitations, a metaphor for the African American population as a whole. Like many of the other works in the exhibition, *Horn Section* conveys a deeper social message even without the more overt content of such efforts as those of Lili Bernard, George Evans, Derrick Maddox, and Joe Lewis.

## Exclusion from the Mainstream Media

*BAILA con Duende* was just one of several powerful art exhibitions that have featured multicultural artists in Southern California since the end of the *Pacific Standard Time* initiative—exhibitions that have attracted little critical attention from mainstream media sources in the Los Angeles area. This paucity of coverage, in turn, raises deeper, more troubling issues about the major gatekeepers of the art world and the continuing barriers that artists of color endure well into the twenty-first century.

Since its opening on September 9, 2012, *BAILA con Duende* has had only one brief television mention in conjunction with a broader neighborhood festival at the Watts Towers. The *Los Angeles Times*, which routinely reviews exhibitions



in local, national, and even international venues, has also been absent from this massive show. Even during *Pacific Standard Time*, this major area newspaper covered the exhibitions at the mainstream venues and reviewed *Now Dig This* at the UCLA Armand Hammer Museum while omitting the parallel African American show at the California African American Museum. It did not go unnoticed among many African American residents and artists that the Hammer Museum is located in affluent white Westwood and the California African American Museum is located adjacent to a large impoverished Latino and black populace.

Too often, newspaper art critics ignore art exhibitions in alternative African American (and Latino and Asian American) cultural institutions and venues. The omission of hundreds of gifted painters, graphic artists, sculptors, and photographers of color in mainstream communication sources of all forms reflects the deeper structural problems perpetuating racial exclusion in the arts. A typical rationale is that such art exhibitions are narrowly tailored to specific racial and ethnic communities and would be of little or no interest to the “majority” population.

At times more blunt than their academic counterparts, newspaper and art journal reviewers often dismiss artists of color with condescending remarks about multicultural fads, racial hypersensitivity, and social and political content in art. This is a national phenomenon that goes far beyond the local media invisibility of *BAILA con Duende*. In New York, for example, a *Wall Street Journal* reviewer disparaged a major exhibition of the internationally respected African American artistic group Spiral at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2011 by writing that the exhibition “flourished as an exhibition about black history and racial, social, political, and artistic issues, but not really an art exhibit.” The critic continued by asserting that “art is made primarily by individuals alone in the studio; that a group mentality can hinder artistic development.”

This archaic nineteenth-century romantic individualism privileges a white male vision of the arts. It ignores the indisputable historical fact that artists express what is central to their lives, emotions, and personal histories. African American, Native American, Asian American, and Latino artists bring, and *should* bring, their lived historical experiences into their artistic productions. Many of those experiences involve oppression, discrimination, and struggle. Those creative productions deserve far greater exposure to the wider American public.

## Academic Gatekeepers and Institutional Racism

Lack of media coverage is only one of the institutional barriers facing multicultural artists today. The culture of exclusion also involves the academic gatekeepers in the art world. It has increasingly become the norm for artists seeking entry

into prestigious gallery representation, museum exhibitions, grants, and teaching positions in front-rank colleges and universities to earn a terminal Master of Fine Arts degree from an elite college or university studio art program. That objective is far more difficult even for accomplished artists of color. African American faculty in fine arts MFA programs are underrepresented, as they are more generally in elite faculty settings. Although exceptions exist, many black faculty members are those whom conventional white critics and scholars “anointed” as racial representatives, while others, many with comparable or superior talent, languish in obscurity.

The experiences of some of the artists presented in the *BAILA con Duende* exhibition are instructive and disconcerting. Lili Bernard’s MFA applications were rejected by both UCLA and the University of Southern California. UCLA told her that it was not interested in figurative art—a bizarre response to thousands of years of art history and a disrespectful attitude toward many African American artists who employ the human figure precisely to express their vision of life in a continually racist society. The California Institute of the Arts told Bernard that it was not interested in expressions of race. Fortunately, she obtained admission, with substantial financial support, to the Otis Art Institute MFA program.

Another artist featured in *BAILA con Duende* completed the Cal Arts MFA program but reported constant stress throughout his studies, during which he struggled constantly to justify his thematic focus to his faculty superiors. And another featured artist, who completed her undergraduate studio art program at UCLA, said she was regularly met with faculty hostility, even questioned why she was “forcing her culture” on her colleagues. White artists, rarely if at all, are questioned about forcing their culture on anybody, because whiteness is the norm. Another artist described how his studio art department at the University of Southern California gave him a list of local museums that failed to include the



*African Roots—Human Beginnings, Conceptions of Race* by Toni Scott.  
Hydrostone and wood.



California African American Museum, a two-minute walk across the street from the school.

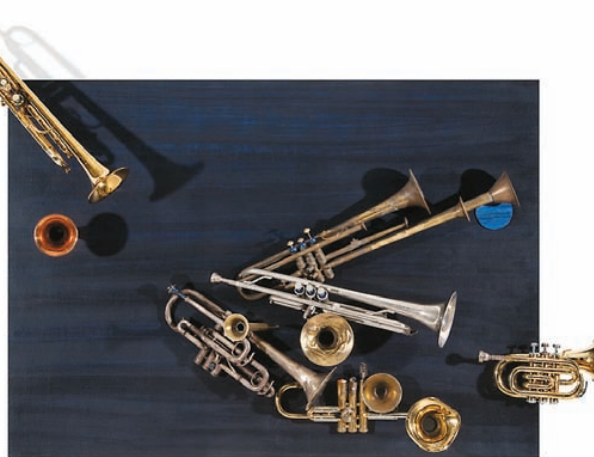
None of this is intentionally racist. The art scene in Southern California is hardly the Jim Crow South of a few generations ago. But these examples reflect a pervasive ignorance rooted in a deeper institutional racism that many white people are nervous to admit or discuss. When the University of Southern California art faculty distributed its list of art venues, no one intentionally decided to omit the art museum across the street. When professors teach American art history and fail to include Lois M. Jones, Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White, and John Biggers in their twentieth-century surveys, they do not maliciously exclude these iconic black artists from their syllabi. Rather, their incomplete knowledge of their own discipline reflects America's profound educational deficiencies and reinforces its malignant racial history.

This multifaceted institutional racism affects artists of color throughout the nation. The road ahead remains long and hard. Although substantial progress has been made in the past thirty years, it still remains more difficult for artists of color to succeed in a society that is far from discarding the heritage of its racist and sexist past. There is a profound need for more exhibitions like *BAILA con Duende* and more ethnically specific museums, galleries, and other spaces. Equally important, a new generation of art historians and critics must supplant the conservative stranglehold that continues to prevail. It is high time for artists of color to receive recognition commensurate with the quality of their efforts.

Finally, it is important for us all to candidly acknowledge the role and limitations of the arts in the broader struggle against racism. The men and women represented in this essay are superb representatives of a longer tradition of socially conscious African American art. But art alone cannot feed the hungry, clothe and shelter the poor, or eliminate the scourge of racism in America or anywhere else.

## Art's Role in Social Struggle

Artworks such as the ones featured in *BAILA con Duende* are useful catalysts in encouraging audiences to examine the deeper structural racism in America, a task that may ironically be more difficult after the November 2012 reelection of President Barack Obama, which reinforced the widespread but inaccurate view that racism in America is dead and gone. One key element of this institutional racism has been the massive racism in the criminal justice system. Legal scholar Michelle Alexander, in her groundbreaking 2010 book *The New Jim Crow*, provides a devastating critique of the United States' grotesque incarceration rates (U.S. prisoners make up 25 percent of the world's prisoners) and of the disproportionate presence of African American men in federal, state, and local prisons and jails. Alexander details the horrific social and political consequences of this arrangement, which reinforces the historic Jim Crow laws and practices that



*Horn Section* by Dale Brockman Davis. Assemblage of silver, copper, and brass instruments.

dominated the national legal and political landscape from the nation's inception through most of the twentieth century. These realities on the ground reveal an intractable institutional racism and are far more significant than the political success of President Obama and the high profile of a few African American entertainers, entrepreneurs, and athletes.

Alexander's treatment of the criminal justice system is merely one aspect of a more depressing landscape of institutional racism. American education too remains largely segregated by race. Almost 60 years after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, equal educational opportunities remain more theoretical than actual. School boards, state courts, lower federal courts, Congress, local and state political leaders, parents, real estate brokers, and the media have all, in different ways, ensured that most African Americans (and Latinos) still attend inferior schools. The dismal realities of the current political and economic systems, with their continuing disparities of wealth and power, have muted the earlier glowing promise of school integration. Moreover, in 2013, the conservative majority on the United States Supreme Court is poised to end affirmative action in higher education, reinforcing racial inequality and lack of opportunity throughout America.

Likewise, structural racism in housing, health care, and numerous other features of society remains a glaring reality for millions of people in this country. The arts can play a powerful role in highlighting all of these issues and in educating more privileged citizens about the problems that require urgent redress. The deepest importance of these creative works, however, lies in their contribution to the realization that only through political awareness, organization, and mobilization can racism and other evils be reduced and eventually eradicated. These works are a testament to that goal and to a more humane vision of social and political life. ■

PAUL VON BLUM is a senior lecturer in African American studies and communication studies at UCLA and author of a new memoir, *A Life at the Margins: Keeping the Political Vision*.

## BOOKS

# The Criminal Caste

*The New Jim Crow:  
Mass Incarceration in  
the Age of Colorblindness*

by Michelle Alexander  
The New Press, 2010

REVIEW BY BEN BLOCH

I BEGAN working in the California prison system in 2008, the year Barack Obama won his first election. In the prison, the response to the news of his victory was quiet. About two-thirds of the men in the outpatient program where I work are African-American, and about as many have spent or will spend much of their adult lives locked up, many of them serving terms of twenty-five years to life for nonviolent crimes. Asked how they felt about the election, inmates in the program answered that it didn't matter. The response wasn't skeptical—it was bitter. Now, in Obama's second term, their attitudes toward Obama continue to be ambivalent: they express a clear sense of the irony of their position at the present historical moment—a moment in which the laws of this country continue to deny equal protection to a large segment of its minority population.

Readers of *The New Jim Crow* may be familiar with some of the facts about imprisonment in the United States. In California, where prison overcrowding has officially been recognized as constituting a human rights crisis, voters approved a measure reforming the state's three-strikes law in November 2012. Other states' biased law enforcement practices, for example those authorized under New York City's stop-and-frisk program, have recently come under closer scrutiny. The fact remains that the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world—a rate six to ten

times greater than other industrialized nations—although our crime rates fall below the international average. No other country in the world imprisons its racial or ethnic minorities so disproportionately.

In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander—a professor at Ohio State University and former director of the Racial Justice Project of the ACLU of Northern California—takes the rise of incarceration over the last thirty years as her starting point, and discusses the increase in numbers, as well as the disparity in rates of incarceration between races, as a direct consequence of the “war on drugs.” She asks, in effect, how we can account for this war without a concurrent rise in drug crime, and how we are to explain its dramatic racial disparities, which have been shown to be unrelated to the rates of using and selling among blacks and whites.

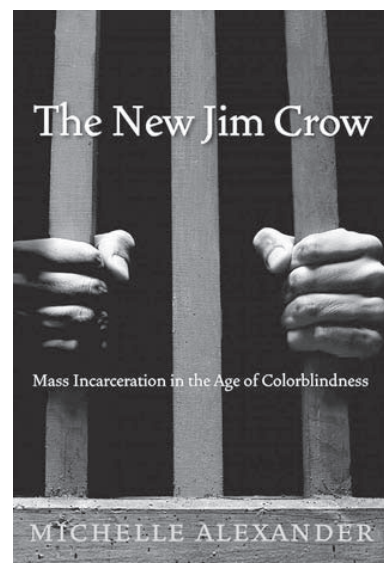
## The Criminalization of Black Men

Alexander's book addresses the known facts about mass incarceration—and also a more basic, if less recognized, prison problem, a different kind of life sentence being served by millions of Americans. This is the story not only of the locking up of a huge part of this country's population, but also, in Alexander's phrase, of its “locking out.” By this she means the closing of our justice system to every individual who has at one time or another entered a prison: how the justice system strips members of this group of their basic rights, resources, and protections, and brands them permanently as members of a criminal caste.

In the early chapters of the book, Alexander traces the criminalization of young black men that began in the

1950s to the dissolution of the Jim Crow laws—the state and local laws enacted between 1876 and 1965 that enforced racial segregation throughout the South. Opposition to the broad changes of the Civil Rights Era, she demonstrates, went hand-in-hand with the design of new crime legislation. A new law-and-order rhetoric replaced the more explicitly racial terms of the older caste system. One hundred years earlier, the creation of Jim Crow laws had helped consolidate poor and working-class white opposition to the end of slavery; now, with the end of Jim Crow, the leaders of a conservative New Majority sought a new way of realigning white voters. Alexander's account of the evolution of America's caste system, starting with slavery, through Jim Crow and to our present-day aspiration to colorblindness, reveals a series of such parallels.

The historic parallels she draws to Jim Crow are by no means overstated. Since the inception of the war on drugs in the 1980s, U.S. drug policies have increasingly erased equal protections at every stage of contact with the



penal system, leading to discretionary stops and warrantless searches at the point of entry, and affecting prosecution in the courtroom, where plea-bargaining and a lack of meaningful representation basically ensure a felony conviction. The effects extend to a severe infringement of the rights of ex-felons, who are permanently barred from voting, from serving on juries, and in many cases from working or receiving public assistance. And drug-war policy continues to reward law enforcement for the energy with which it pursues small-time drug abusers and pushers. That this war is framed through a language of “colorblindness,” and understood by many as a response to crime, makes it destructive in ways that Jim Crow was not, since its effects are often seen as a consequence of poor choices made by individuals, rather than as a consequence of deeply entrenched structural racism.

## Racial Segregation in U.S. Prisons

Life inside correctional institutions is the only stage of contact with law enforcement that *The New Jim Crow* does not discuss. This is not part of Alexander’s subject, since, in prison, segregation is an openly established fact. Here race can’t be overlooked, not only because of the hugely disproportionate size of the non-white population, but because jails and prisons are our last openly segregated institutions. In most California correctional settings, the different races aren’t housed together and do not come in contact with each other during any part of their daily routine—an order established both from within, by prison gang rules, and from above by custody.

On many yards inmates spend months at a time locked down in their cells twenty-four hours a day because of interracial violence. As soon as one lockdown is over, another incident takes place and a new lockdown begins. The lockdown’s purpose is

punishment, but it also functions as an aggressive form of preventive segregation. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s recent efforts at integrated housing have met with mixed results and in most cases have been abandoned. Those who visit California prisons are often struck by the thoroughly and openly racialized existence here, as if, amid our public disavowal of race politics, we’ve allowed ourselves this one instance of sobering self-appraisal. For the time being, at least, in the general population setting of California’s prisons, racial segregation is explicitly the law.

This is somewhat less true in the mental health setting, where patients are admitted based on factors other than race, and where they are expected to leave behind race politics and to participate in a nonsegregated daily program. In this setting, patients of different races attend mental health groups together, eat dinner together, and in some (rarer) instances, occupy cells together. For many inmate-patients, the most valuable thing the mental health setting provides, more than its clinical services, is a break from the chronic stress of race relations that exists in the general population units. Here there are only reminders of the war in progress on the next yard, and mental illness is allowed the role of a racial equalizer for the months that an inmate is in our program. That is, if the observer puts aside the fact that the clear majority of inmate-patients are African-American—at any given time about twice the number of Caucasians or Hispanics.

But life in the relatively race-neutral mental health setting occurs in the shadow of the other yards. If patients do, for example, accept a cell-mate of another race, they do so knowing that the information will in all likelihood travel with them when they return to the general population. The stigma of mental illness in prison is itself largely



U.S. crime rates fall below the international average, yet the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Inmates stand in a Texas prison in this photograph from *Inside the Wire: Photographs from Texas and Arkansas Prisons* by Bruce Jackson (University of Texas Press, 2013).

political, since once inmates have been part of the mental health system, it can be assumed that they have come in contact with a racially mixed population. And the promise of future violence is itself a trauma that becomes part of the mental health picture. Most of our patients will spend a majority of their time in that state of violence. In our program, a patient’s readiness to return to the general population yard is assessed every three months. It is one of the harder tasks of the prison clinician to negotiate the process of ending therapy and sending an individual back to the “mainline.” Working with patients toward an understanding that they have gained the necessary skills to return to hell can be very difficult, and assurances often sound hollow.

For those inmates in our program who do have a parole date, the idea of going back to society rehabilitated and with the promise of opportunity often sounds equally hollow. Freedom, as Alexander shows, is another kind of besieged situation for ex-felons,

Bruce Jackson (brucejackson.us)



whose history makes rebuilding a life extremely difficult. California's recidivism rate has dropped slightly in the last five years, but the figure is still at around two-thirds. The understanding of these odds creates a widely accepted sense among prisoners that the parolee will be coming right back. Only an understanding of these long

odds, however, and of the strictures of second-class citizenship that prisoners return to, can be the basis of any kind of rehabilitation. We can hope that now, as the fiscal costs of the war on drugs has begun to be assessed in more sober terms, Alexander's penetrating analysis of its human costs, its origins, and the ways it has

been sustained, will continue to be looked to as a guide. ■

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## Physics Through a Jewish Lens?

### *Einstein's Jewish Science: Physics at the Intersection of Politics and Religion*

by Steven Gimbel

Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012

REVIEW BY DONALD GOLDSMITH

**H**OW WAS Albert Einstein's approach to science inflected by his Judaism? Steven Gimbel's provocative new book takes on the chief accusation of Einstein's Nazi opponents: the claim that relativity somehow expresses a Jewish sensibility.

Gimbel, the chair of the philosophy department at Gettysburg College, decries the anti-Semitism associated with the Nazis' attempt to frame Einstein's theories as "Jewish science," but he simultaneously identifies a grain of truth in the claim, citing

parallels between practices of tal-mudic interpretation and Einstein's approach to science.

To understand Gimbel's argument about the Jewish quality of Einstein's approach—and to perceive the boldness of Gimbel's decision to re-examine twentieth-century, anti-Semitic ideas about "Jewish science"—it's necessary first to understand the historical moment out of which the theory of relativity emerged.

### A Counter-Manifesto and a High-Stakes Eclipse

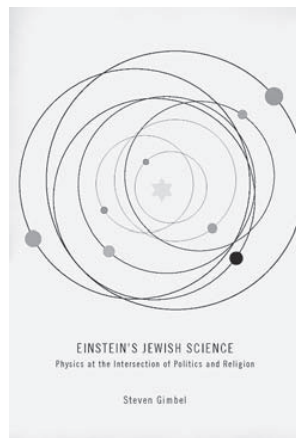
In 1919, British astronomers' observations of stars seen near the sun at the time of a solar eclipse made Einstein the world's most famous scientist by confirming his general theory of relativity. Photographs from the eclipse showed slight deviations in the positions of these stars, compared with times when the sun was nowhere in their vicinity. These deviations matched Einstein's prediction of how much the sun's gravity would bend space, and thus alter the trajectories of starlight passing close to the sun.

Among physicists, Einstein was already famous, predominantly for his special theory of relativity, published in 1905, which asserted that apparently constant entities such as mass, length, and the flow of time depend on the relationship between observer and observed. These counterintuitive

results, not confirmed by direct experiment for a decade or more, had nevertheless succeeded in providing a unified view of electricity and magnetism and thus gained widespread acceptance among scientists. The theory also provided the basis for Einstein's most famous equation, which describes the relationship between a particle's "rest mass" and its energy content. Max Planck, the dean of Germany's physics community, had quickly grasped the importance of Einstein's work; his support played a role in leading others to study and to understand it—as best they could.

The success of Einstein's special theory of relativity ("special" because it deals with unaccelerated motion) catapulted him from the Swiss patent office to academic appointments in Zurich, Prague, Zurich again, and then Berlin, the center of German research and government, where he arrived in April of the pivotal year 1914. Einstein's dislike for authority, especially the kind visible in Germany, soon manifested itself. As his recent biographer Walter Isaacson said, "Einstein . . . often displayed a natural inclination *not* to go along."

In October 1914, two months after World War I began, ninety-three German intellectuals signed a manifesto declaring that "were it not for German militarism, German culture would have been wiped off the face of the earth," and that "we shall wage this



fight to the very end as a cultured nation, a nation that holds the legacy of Goethe, Beethoven, and Kant no less sacred than hearth and home.” Conservative scientists such as Phillip Lenard (a physics Nobel prize-winner in 1905 and a future rabid opponent of Einstein) signed this document, but so too did luminaries such as Max Planck, Max Reinhardt, Gerhart Hauptmann, Paul Ehrlich, Engelbert Humperdinck, and Ernst Haeckel, not known for their militaristic sympathies. In opposition, Einstein and a doctor friend circulated “Manifesto to the Europeans,” a counter-manifesto that attacked the hostile spirit of the “Manifesto of 93” while appealing for a transnationalistic attitude.

No one signed. Nevertheless Einstein’s “Manifesto to the Europeans” gave him the freedom of the ignored: He went to the office and worked on the general theory of relativity. By 1917, his general-relativity theory was complete, awaiting only the observational verification that a total solar eclipse could provide. A German expedition for this purpose had been sent to the Crimea for the eclipse of August 1914, but the outbreak of war led to the arrest of the scientists with their suspicious telescopes and cameras (furthermore, it was cloudy on eclipse day). At the next opportunity, in May 1919, two British expeditions obtained the proof, published in September, that Einstein had hoped for. The press, delighting in the conjunction among scientists from recently warring nations, trumpeted the news: Gravity bends light! Thrown into the spotlight, Einstein adeptly invented the now-familiar role of the scientist as media hero.

The eclipse results arrived as Germany struggled to accept defeat in the war. Economic and political upheaval marked the beginnings of the Weimar Republic; in 1920, armed revolt would have succeeded had not the German Army decided to support the new regime. Amid this turmoil,

anti-Semitism gained new strength, as it does when times grow worse. Anti-Semitism, of course, had never vanished in Europe, but the decades before World War I had seemingly put it on the road to slow disappearance. As anti-Semitic governmental restrictions declined during the long era of European peace, social restrictions remained strong, but Jews attended universities in large numbers, often emulating their Gentile colleagues.

## Talmudic Interpretation and the Theory of Relativity

Serious assaults on Einstein’s theories began in 1920. Those who arraigned Einstein’s relativity theory for its “Jewish nature” argued that Jews have no fixed moral views, instead regarding everything as “relative.” In all these attacks, and in almost every attempt to prove Einstein wrong throughout the past century, the special theory of relativity, not the general theory, is what aroused his opponents’ ire: How can time proceed differently for different observers? Impossible! As for gravity bending space, well, that might possibly be correct. . . but all of Einstein’s thought still seemed suspect to these opponents.

Hostility to special relativity underlay the notion of “Jewish science” that appeared in the early twentieth century. Initially, Einstein’s opponents naturally contrasted Jewish science with “real science,” a term which Nazi propaganda later changed to “Aryan science,” inadvertently implying that neither type of science had a special claim to reality. A 1931 anti-Einstein diatribe, *A Hundred Authors Against Einstein*, only elevated the scientist’s status through its number of contributors and the varied arguments presented. As Einstein remarked, had he truly been wrong, one author would have sufficed.

Nearly a century later, Gimbel now asks, just how Jewish was Einstein’s science? After offering an excellent

summary of the science that led to Einstein’s breakthroughs, Gimbel surveys passages in the Talmud and Gemara that appear relevant to Einstein’s theory of relativity, noting that in their study “the goal is not merely to arrive at a single truth but also to create multiple insights that inspire better behavior.” He concludes:

There is an analogy to draw between Talmudic interpretation and the theory of relativity. The heart of the Talmudic view is that there is an absolute truth, but this truth is not directly and completely available to us. We can only see it through our experience, which is limited to a context. . . . It turns out that exactly the same style of thinking occurs in the relativity theory and in some of Einstein’s other research in the period. . . . The problem isn’t in the science, it is in the interpretation. If we see the different accounts [of electricity and magnetism] as contextualized glimpses of the same bigger underlying truth, problem solved.

Gimbel’s assertion of the resonance between Talmudic interpretation and the theory of relativity seems plausible, but it must always be paired with a caveat about the limited nature of Einstein’s exposure to Judaism: although similarities between Talmudic interpretation and Einstein’s theory may exist, they don’t appear to be a direct result of substantive engagement with Jewish thought.

According to Gimbel, Einstein was the only Jew in the Catholic elementary school that he attended in Munich. Records indicate that he excelled in all his classes and even helped some of his classmates, many of whom were openly hostile to Jews, with their Catholic studies. Later, at the Luitpold Gymnasium where he attended secondary school, Einstein was assigned a Jewish teacher for religious instruction—evidence that Jews, though treated separately, were hardly repressed there. During this period Einstein underwent a pre-adolescent

Jewish religious phase, possibly as a youthful rebellion to his parents' lack of interest, but that phase passed quickly: he could hardly have learned much about Jewish modes of discussion and reasoning during that time.

Gimbel is careful to acknowledge the limited nature of Einstein's exposure to Jewish thought in his book. He does not claim that Einstein followed anything so straightforward as applying his own understanding of Judaism to scientific questions, asserting rather that instead of seeking an absolute answer in the Christian tradition, Einstein tended to employ a Jewish style, in which different perspectives give different answers to the same question. Intriguingly, Gimbel contrasts this approach to understanding the world with Sigmund Freud's, whose psychoanalytical style he finds much more "Christian" than "Jewish."

### A "Jewish Style" of Science?

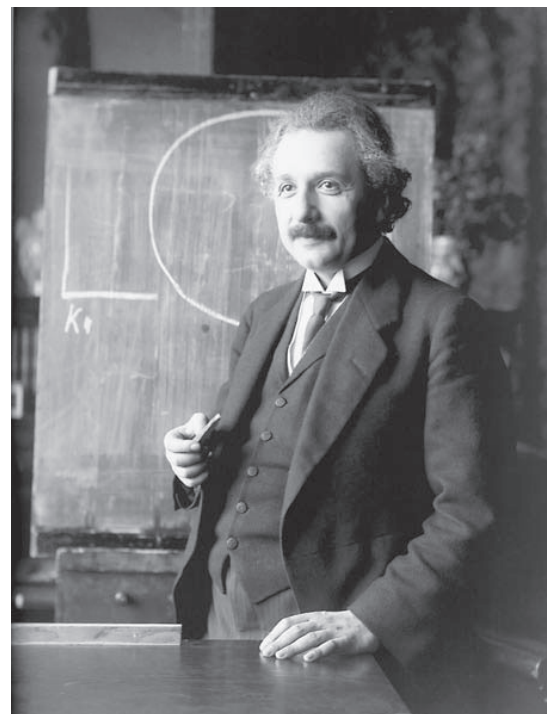
I'm intrigued by Gimbel's idea of a Jewish style of science but also somewhat skeptical. Does any such Jewish style actually exist among scientists? Can we discern any difference in approach between twentieth-century Aryan and Jewish physicists, and, more precisely, do Jewish scientists show a greater inclination to see all sides of a question, or a deeper recognition that our understanding must be incomplete and context-dependent? Two approaches to answering this question suggest themselves: we can look for Jewish sources of influence that affected Jewish scientists more than the others, and we can examine many scientists' work to determine whether the work of the Jews among them seem more in line with what Gimbel describes as a Jewish approach to science (an approach in which the perspective of the observer affects the answer to a question).

In this effort, we may naturally turn to the theory of quantum mechanics, the prime conceptual breakthrough in physics achieved during the first half

of the twentieth century. Quantum mechanics began with Max Planck's seminal paper in 1900 and received a great boost from Albert Einstein's work in 1905 on the photoelectric effect. If historians of science were asked to name the twenty leading figures in the development of quantum mechanics, they would start with Planck and Einstein, and would, I believe, reach agreement on all but perhaps two or three names at the tail end.

The list of these pioneer physicists would include about ten Jews, along with two men who had Jewish mothers (Niels Bohr and Hans Bethe), two non-Jews who married Jews (Enrico Fermi and Paul Dirac), and two (Wolfgang Pauli and Eugene Wigner) whose families had converted from Judaism to Catholicism (in Wigner's case, this was apparently a reaction to the Hungarian Communist government of 1919). Five physicists with no Jewish connection were Max Planck, Werner Heisenberg, Louis de Broglie, Erwin Schroedinger, and Max von Laue. Intriguingly, none of the twenty, so far as I know, had any serious religious beliefs in later life, though Pauli was said to be a deist. The sole entrant on the list with an orthodox Jewish education was Isidor Rabi, who grew up on New York's Lower East Side. The other Jews—Einstein, Max Born, John von Neumann, Edward Teller, J. Robert Oppenheimer, Emilio Segre, Otto Stern, and (by my classification) Pauli and Wigner—received, so far as I can discern, no more Jewish education than Einstein himself, i.e., the most rudimentary knowledge of Jewish religion, history, and tradition. It is not at all clear how or where any of these scientists would have imbibed any notable aspect of how Jews view the world, except for the most fundamental of Jewish aspirations, the thirst for learning, and the desire to understand our surroundings.

What about the contributions that these heroes of science made to



Albert Einstein delivers a lecture in Vienna in 1921.

quantum mechanics? Although I cannot claim expertise in the history of physics, I have spent a lifetime as an astrophysicist and popularizer of science; drawing on what I know, I see no difference between Jewish physicists and others. Schroedinger, de Broglie, Dirac, and Heisenberg gained fame for discovering different ways to formulate and to apply the basic equations of quantum mechanics; along with their peers, they quickly recognized that these alternatives all led to the same conclusions. None of these non-Jewish scientists claimed that quantum mechanics explained everything; all of them recognized that quantum mechanics insists on a dual approach (waves and particles) to explaining the behavior of elementary particles. This fact pushes against Gimbel's claim that non-Jewish scientists were more invested in a kind of absolutism or single approach, calling into question Gimbel's idea that Jewish scientists were more likely than non-Jews to embrace a dual or perspective-based style of science.



Einstein spent his last three decades seeking an explanation of how gravity and quantum mechanics could be seen as part of a single “unified field” theory, without success; he could do so, as he gladly stated, because he was already famous and had no need to produce results to assist his career. This work hardly distinguished him from his fellow theorists in the way that he perceived the physical universe. If I were to search for something particularly Jewish in Einstein’s attitudes, I would focus, as many have, on his ability to see our planet as a whole, with an attempt to include all people in his worldview. Einstein was one of the first German intellectuals to emphasize that the Jews of Eastern Europe belonged to the same family as those in Western Europe, he supported Jewish settlement in Palestine but held no brief for the creation of Israel (when offered Israel’s first presidency, he

wisely declined), and he became what was once scathingly called a “one-worlder” after World War II ended with the bombs that proved the accuracy of his theories.

At the present time, rejections of Einstein’s special-relativity theory continue unabated on sites such as Conservapedia. Two types of attack predominate: scientific assaults (comparatively rare), in which assailants attempt to demonstrate the failure of special relativity to match observational data, and rejectionist assaults, which argue that Einstein’s theory fails the common-sense test.

The Nazis’ “Aryan science” approach embodied both the scientific and rejectionist attacks on Einstein. But in comparison to contemporary attacks on scientists and their results, the Nazis’ attacks showed much more deference to science, which had become, after all, one of Germany’s

glories. In America today, a new Einstein would, I think, far more readily be rejected not for doing bad science, or Jewish science, but just plain science. Denial trumps detail: climate change deniers have apparently decided that scientists simply don’t understand what they are talking about, or, worse, are cooking the books to satisfy their own agendas. One may say of Einstein’s Jewish science that he was lucky not only to be a Jewish genius but also to live in a time when a scientific theory could set the world on its ear. ■

DONALD GOLDSMITH is an astronomer and science writer in Berkeley who also works on documentary television programs. Among his sixteen books are *Einstein’s Greatest Blunder? The Cosmological Constant and Other Fudge Factors* (1995) and *The Ultimate Einstein* (with Robert Libbon, 1997).

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## Does Zionism Have a Future?

### *The Making and Unmaking of a Zionist: A Personal and Political Journey*

by Antony Lerman  
Pluto Press, 2012

REVIEW BY SVI SHAPIRO

**I**N THIS disturbing but fascinating new book, Antony Lerman reveals the extraordinary lengths to which powerful figures in a Jewish community go to prevent the expression of views contrary to their assumptions about Zionism, anti-Semitism, and the role of diaspora Jews in relation to Israel. Lerman, who for more than forty years has been at the leading edge of facilitating intellectual life in the British Jewish community, has chosen this moment to reveal with candor and great honesty his own

professional and personal journey as he progressed from being the national secretary of Habonim, the Socialist-Zionist youth movement in Britain, to becoming the head of the most important think tank in the Anglo-Jewish community. Much of the tale is of demeaning, intolerant, and sometimes downright sordid politicking aimed at Lerman and others like him who had the temerity to question core assumptions of the contemporary Jewish establishment. It is a story that can easily be told concerning those in the United States who violate what are held to be the indisputable tenets of Jewish belief as these relate to Zionism and the Israeli state.

Lerman’s book tells the story of how his ideas about the meaning of Jewish identity gradually evolved. It begins with his life in the Zionist youth movement, where he came to believe that

the fulfillment of Jewish life can take place only with one’s *aliyah*, or emigration to Israel. Within Israel, membership in a kibbutz represented the highest calling of those who believe in the need to transform the bourgeois life of middle-class diasporic Jews. Lerman’s struggles to square his Zionist ideals with the hard reality of a society in which his Zionist ideology no longer seemed meaningful began during this period, as he grappled with the realities of Israeli life, military service, and the day-to-day experience of work in the small kibbutz community. The widespread anti-Arab discrimination and prejudice he encountered there seemed to mock the dreams of a socially just and pluralistic democracy.

From these beginnings Lerman traces an intellectual odyssey in which, over a period of several decades, he has reached conclusions that have placed

him at odds with conventional Jewish opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. He came to believe, for example, that much of the anti-Semitism that can be found in Europe today must be seen as a product, at least in part, of Israel's own policies and actions toward the Palestinians over whom it now rules. Lerman argues that instead of being the protector of Jewish interests, the state is now the leading catalyst for fomenting anger toward Jews in Europe. Lerman is in no sense justifying this anti-Semitism or denying that anti-Zionism can also indeed be a mask for anti-Semitism. He demands only that we see how Israel's policies of military occupation, confiscation of land, denial of Palestinian human rights, etc. have fueled, however misguided, anger at Jews. He has taken issue with the belief held by many British Jews that the media and especially the BBC are biased in their depictions of Israel, suggesting that the bias is often in the eye of the beholder. Lerman contends that such a stance conveniently allows the Jewish community to avoid a critical position in regard to Israeli military behavior, the growing colonization of Palestinian land, and the harsh nature of the Occupation. Moreover, he asserts that there is no unqualified solidarity between the Israeli state and Jewish diasporic communities; that like all states, Israel has its own interests that are not necessarily identical with those of Jewish communities in other places.

Most contentiously, Lerman came to reject his own Zionism, believing that democracy and human rights are simply incompatible with a state that privileges an ethnic majority culturally, politically, and economically at the expense of the 20 percent of its Arab citizens. He argues that peace in that land requires, in the immediate sense, the end of the current military occupation of Palestinian land on the West Bank. And in the longer term, he argues, peace will require a change much more fundamental than the

present Zionist ideology of the Jewish state allows—a change that guarantees the full recognition of both Palestinian and Jewish national rights.

## Challenging the Jewish Establishment from Within

What makes this book so fascinating is that these assertions come from someone who moved in the elite intellectual and cultural circles of the Jewish mainstream. For more than twenty-three years, Lerman worked for and subsequently directed the premier Jewish policy research institute in Britain, one that was well funded and deeply ensconced in the established institutions of that country. Its governing boards included leading figures in business, academia, politics, and religious life. He was editor of the *Jewish Quarterly* until forced to step down and a sometime columnist for the *Jewish Chronicle*, the most influential and comprehensive newspaper for that community in the UK. He also spent six years as director of a subsidiary of the billion-dollar Rothschild foundation based in Geneva.

To each of his roles Lerman brought his creative energies, obvious intellectual breadth and thoughtfulness, as well as deep devotion to the invigoration of Jewish life in Europe. It is clear that these roles offered the possibility of a professional life lived comfortably and meaningfully doing work that contributed in valuable ways to the regeneration of Jewish communities in the post-Holocaust and later the post-Communist world. Yet Lerman never prioritized such comfort above his insistence on raising fundamental questions about Jewish identity and commitments within the context of the disturbing moral challenges posed by Israel's relationship to its own Palestinian citizens and to the Palestinians who have lived for more than four decades under Israeli military occupation. His work constantly sought to raise the difficult questions

of how the Jewish diaspora should respond to Israel's actions and, more profoundly, what obligation Jews outside of Israel bear to support that country's oppressive, often brutal, and discriminatory treatment of Palestinians. He wrote at one stage:

The real crises [for the Jewish people] are in Zionism, in the nature of the Jewish state and in relations between what should be an independently-minded and assertive Diaspora and Israel. It is because these issues are so troubling and so difficult to confront that the source of anxiety is sought in the age-old common enemy: antisemitism. . . . Rather than concede that the Arabs have an ideological case, we treat their anti-Zionism as prejudice. Rather than admit that Israel's mistakes fuel anti-Zionism, we prefer to brand critics as antisemites.

Not too surprisingly, his tireless efforts to promote a deeper intellectual and moral engagement with these disturbing questions drew him into continual battle with those powerful forces within the Anglo-Jewish community who resented and resisted such questioning. His courageous willingness to ally himself with Jewish individuals and groups, outside the mainstream of Jewish opinion, who challenged Israel's right to "speak on their behalf" and who asserted that the commitment to universal values of social justice, pluralism, and human rights should never be sacrificed on the altar of a narrow and fearful nationalism added fuel to his opponents' ire. In time, he became a focus for angry debate not just within the Jewish media but also in the broader public domain. He once commented:

I believe that this affair has brought to the surface the very worst aspects of Jewish life in this country: the inability of the self-styled establishment to allow the free expression of views on issues of Jewish importance . . . allowing an unrepresentative handful of reactionaries

to determine the nature of political debate within the Jewish community.

Lerman's views have been published and broadcast in important news sources such as the *Guardian* and *Independent* newspapers, BBC radio, and the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*. He has been indefatigable in bringing together a diverse range of intellectual and political voices in Britain, Europe, and Israel to discuss and engage the most difficult contemporary issues concerning Jews. He has faced constant attempts to misrepresent him as someone who hates Israel and is motivated by "Jewish self-hate." Of course, this is a canard that is frequently aimed at any Jew who asks troubling questions about Israel's moral behavior—something very familiar to those of us in this country who refuse to toe the AIPAC line on support for Netanyahu and his right-wing government. Lerman himself has described well the nature of this kind of dismissal of Jews who speak and act in ways that are critical of Israel and its government, who insist that it is traitorous for Jews to do anything but support and justify the actions of the Jewish state:

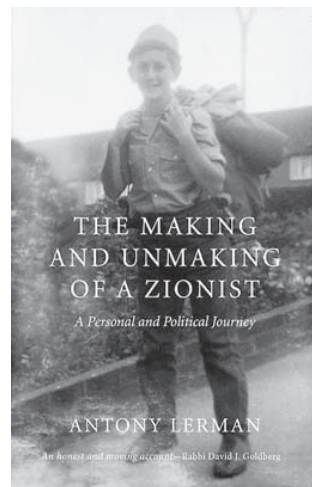
The concept of the "self-hating Jew" strengthens a narrow, ethnocentric view of the Jewish people. It exerts a monopoly over patriotism. It promotes a definition of Jewish identity which relies on the notion of an eternal enemy. . . . It plays on real fears of antisemitism and at the same time exaggerates the problem by claiming that critical Jews are 'infected' by it too. . . . How much easier to dismiss the arguments of dissenting Jews by leveling the charge of self-hatred than by engaging with them.

Of course, the notion that Lerman is a self-hating Jew is simply absurd. He is someone who has devoted forty years of his professional and public life to regeneration of Jewish life in the communities of Europe, whose intellectual

life centers on Jewish scholarship and research, who continues to hold Israeli citizenship, and who passionately embraces his Jewish identity and consciousness. If there is any naiveté here, it can be only in his belief that raising fundamental questions about the nature and relevance of Zionism, Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, the rights of Palestinian-Israelis, and the extent to which Jewish identity is or should be defined by anti-Semitism would be received in a spirit of tolerance by the Jewish establishment. He has stood his ground in refusing to allow any litmus test that would qualify one as a "true" and loyal member of the Jewish community, insisting that the Jewish community has always been a community that represents a wide diversity of religious, political, and cultural perspectives.

### Anti-Semitism in Europe

Another controversial topic that Lerman takes on is the extent and nature of anti-Semitism in Europe. Israel's official statistics, he argues, have tended to exaggerate the level of anti-Semitism because it has always been in Israel's interest to stoke the fear and insecurity that augment Jews' solidarity and support for Israel and encourages immigration to that country. In this Lerman follows others like Avraham Burg, former speaker of the Israeli Knesset, who has attacked the Holocaust mentality of fear and suspicion of the non-Jewish world that has come to define so much of Jewish identity and consciousness and that has been harnessed by right-wing Israeli governments in their uber-militaristic and aggressive policies. Like Burg, Lerman has argued that the ideas that "the whole world hates us" and that only we, through our militaristic power, can defend ourselves from the *goyim* produce a negative and damaging siege mentality in which compromise is seen as weakness and internal criticism the stab in the back of a fifth



column. It is not too hard to see how such thinking led to the assassination of an Israeli prime minister who came to recognize the importance of compromise and concession in the process of peace.

Lerman acknowledges that sitting with those with whom one has sharp disagreements is no easy matter when each person carries the painful weight of history, persecution, exclusion, and loss. Dialogue across very real and often bitter differences, he argues, is an inescapable part of a process of reconciliation, justice, and peace. In this he rejects those who see a monolithic Islamic world and an inevitable "war of civilizations."

Of course, the most divisive outcome of Lerman's shifting worldview is his rejection of Zionism. He concludes that his early Zionist education obscured the consequences of Jewish colonization of Palestine and the effects of the creation of the Jewish state on the indigenous Palestinian population, and claims that Zionism has now become nothing more than the "ideological arm of the State of Israel." He courageously shares his growing doubts about the moral legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, one that, as he sees it, gives hegemonic cultural, political, and social power to a particular ethnic group. A state that is predicated on this



kind of “ethno-religious homogeneity” and dedicated to a Jewish majority in perpetuity is, he argues, simply incompatible with the universal values of a pluralistic, multicultural, democratic society. In this he breaks with many on the liberal end of the spectrum who believe realizing a more democratic Israel would not necessarily require calling into question the particularistic character of the Israeli state.

## A One-State or a Two-State Solution?

It is no surprise that Lerman’s public positions have drawn the wrath of many within the British Jewish world, some of whom describe claims such as Lerman’s as aiding anti-Semitic forces and even abetting a new genocide. It is certainly understandable that for most Jews an independent Jewish state is more than justified by our history of oppression leading up to the catastrophe of the Nazi-inflicted genocide. For most within the Jewish community, the right to a “state of our own” is an answer to the generations of insecurity, suffering, and discrimination. Yet Lerman, speaking within the powerful tradition of Jewish ethics, asserts that there is never a time when we can dismiss the claims of social justice and the dignity and value of the Other (“for you too were once a stranger in the land”). Such claims mean we must struggle to find another path through which all competing claims to justice can be reconciled, even when this means dismantling a Jewish state in favor of some kind of confederal political structure in which both peoples have fully equal rights. Here Lerman is reviving thinking that was once espoused by luminaries in pre-state days, such as the philosopher Martin Buber and the first chancellor of the Hebrew University, Judah Magnes, who argued for a non-exclusivist, binational state that recognized the claims of both Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Lerman writes:

I am convinced that [peace and reconciliation] will only come when Israel realizes that the ethnocentric path, the path of ethno-religious homogeneity, which can only be followed at the expense of human rights and universal values, is the wrong one. It’s a realization that the Palestinians must reach too, but it’s not something that can be achieved simultaneously or negotiated to occur at the same time. . . . Israel must begin its own journey beyond Zionism. There is nothing to wait for.

One may ask, “What is the relevance of Lerman’s arguments today?” It is certainly hard to imagine Israel giving up its status as a Jewish state. The argument for a two-state solution seems to be the only practical path forward. Yet this will not resolve the subordinate social status of Palestinian Israelis. And the possibility of redrawing the map so as to give Palestinians a meaningful contiguous state of their own on the West Bank seems increasingly improbable with half a million Jews now settled on that land and with the ever-increasing growth of settlements and occupied land. Perhaps those like Lerman who have risked the opprobrium of their fellow Jews for “delegitimizing” Israel represent instead prophetic voices that are calling for a radical reimagining of a possible future for both Jews and Palestinians that provides dignity, security, and justice for both peoples.

It should be added here that among progressives there is disagreement on whether a one-state solution is feasible, given the long traumatic history that characterizes relations between Palestinians and Jews. Notable among these is Rabbi Michael Lerner who argues in *Embracing Israel/Palestine* (Tikkun Books, 2012) that single states that force together communities with strongly opposed factions do not have a great track record. Lerner does suggest that a one-state solution might become plausible after the two-state solution

works long enough to create good relations, and he foresees an eventual federal structure or political union along the lines of the European Union. In the immediate future he envisions a solution in which “full and equal rights will be afforded to all minority communities living within each of the two states, and independent institutions will be funded in each state to vigorously enforce minority rights.” He also calls for an agreement to allow Jews living in the newly independent Palestinian state to remain there as law-abiding citizens. And he calls for reparations to Palestinian refugees and their descendants, as well as for significant numbers of Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to the pre-1967 borders of Israel. But Lerner insists that any real solution must also promote a deep understanding of the pain inflicted on each community and a reconciliation process to transform each community’s deeply embedded hatred and distrust. The need for such a transformation of understanding and empathy certainly echoes Lerman’s own call for deep change in how our communities view one another.

In the end I believe that Lerman’s journey is one shared by many in our increasingly global world. He has remained true to those moral dreams nurtured in his youth by his Habonim experience—the commitment to a world of social justice, human equality, and shared community. But he has done so in a context which now more than ever calls into question an identity that finds its belonging in one separate and singular community. Rather, he sees his own self as consisting of many parts—Jewish, British, Israeli, European, global. Sensitivity borne by this hybrid sense of who we are generates a greater attention to the competing claims of human lives and experience and to the sometimes-conflicting demands for justice and recognition of others. His struggle—and ours—is to find ways in which we can satisfy

our own particularistic concerns and needs, albeit those that have emerged from great pain and suffering, without doing harm to others who share our world. In this sense Lerman's book provides a powerful personal narrative of the price that must sometimes be paid for taking this path. ■

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#### GOLDBERG (continued from page 14)

Classes in science, instrumental music, African dance, drama, visual art, video production, photography, creative writing, and Ki-Aikido were held at various locations on Chicago's South and West Sides. Teaching organizations included DePaul University, Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago, the Piven Theatre Workshop, and the Chicago Academy of Sciences. Ballet classes taught by Ballet Chicago were held at its downtown studio. In 2000 there were a total of forty-two classes. Some program participants sang in the Chicago Children's Choir. A summer program at the Chicago Botanic Garden combined science and visual art classes. Transportation to and from classes was provided for many of the students.

Performing arts students' regular attendance, together with their parents and foster parents, at professional performances was possible because of complimentary tickets that we diligently sought. In particular, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was extremely generous in this regard.

The program held three events each year for participants and others. Meant to inform them about and familiarize them with the purpose of the program and to build a connection to it, every event included professional

performances, guest speakers, and an elaborate buffet. At year's end we held a dinner at the Hyatt Regency, where Pathways students performed and showed their work; in 2000, the late famed bass-baritone William Warfield performed.

Pathways students' art was displayed at several locations including the State of Illinois Building and at Whole Foods Market.

I made ongoing efforts to inform and educate child welfare personnel, parents, and foster parents about the significance of interest development and about the program. I spoke to groups of foster parents and eventually we had an instructional video about Pathways.

I attempted to recruit volunteers for the Pathways mentorship project but was only minimally successful in doing so because of the difficulty in finding people willing to do this. The idea was to connect Pathways students with adults who, through a wide range of activities within the context of a developing relationship, would help them learn more about their current interests and facilitate exploration into additional interest areas.

The purpose of the Pathways to Development Program has been to provide a means for foster children to identify at least one interest area to pursue over a long period of time and that would allow them to forge direction and purpose in their lives. Pathways' relatively small enrollment allows a child with a particular talent to receive encouragement.

In 1988, the Illinois ACLU filed a class-action lawsuit against the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. As the lead attorney on this lawsuit, *BH v. DCFS*, Ben Wolf represents all foster children in that state. The suit addresses broad systemic problems, including extremely large caseload size, the lingering and lengthy time children spent in foster care, and the poor quality or lack of "health care, education and other essential services" these children received while there. The

BH consent decree, originally entered in 1991, has led to significant positive changes in these areas and continues, under Wolf's oversight, to be a driving force for additional improvements.

Wolf told me that although the BH consent decree has not led, until now, to any specific policy changes regarding foster children's access to the opportunities I have been discussing, he credits, in part, their talks with the department in having created a favorable environment for The Pathways to Development Program. Wolf says that they "have consistently endorsed a focus on interest development" and that Pathways' "effect on our clients was remarkable." He says that "Children not only told us how much they looked forward to [the program's offerings], they often seemed transformed by the opportunity to focus on something interesting and fun. Pathways gave many of them, for the first time in a long time, something to organize their hopes around, something to live for."

What's more, as an eleven-year-old Pathways visual art student happily related, "You find out things about yourself that you never thought you could do, until you do it."

### Expanding to New York City

In 2000, after having moved to New York City, I began efforts to establish the program there. With a \$25,000 grant from the Child Welfare Fund the New York Pathways to Development Program got under way. The program was initially housed at the New York City Public Advocate's office and in 2002 began offering music and dance classes in Central Harlem.

A year later the program had expanded to Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx with classes in science, instrumental music, dance, New York City history, and healthful cooking. The Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, the New York Hall of Science, and the Natural Gourmet Cookery School were among the teaching organizations. The New York City Administration for Children's

Services, with whom I had been collaborating, was interested in Pathways and wanted it housed at their downtown headquarters.

Toward the end of the second year, a foundation we had approached offered, with the city agency's approval, a large grant. But in order to increase the number of participants, the program would be unable to continue to contract with the teaching organizations already working with Pathways. The foundation's proposal, or more to the point, their ultimatum, was that future classes would be taught by college students, who could be paid a fraction of what we were paying the teaching organizations.

That would have amounted to nothing more than a farcical mishmash with just the opposite outcome from the one we sought. But as an Illinois division head had once admonished me, "These children do not need such good quality."

Once it became apparent that there would be no way of changing this bureaucratic mind-set, I had no choice but to close down the New York program.

Pathways Chicago has also come to an end, a victim of Illinois's budget woes. This has not prevented Ballet Chicago from continuing to provide instruction to thirty-four of the fifty Pathways dance students. Run by its founder, Daniel Duell, a former longtime New York City Ballet principal dancer, and Patricia Blair, who danced with the Eglegsky Ballet, Ballet Chicago is now also paying for the children's ballet shoes and clothes. Blair told me that some of these students have studied with Ballet Chicago for ten years and are quite talented, and that all of them love dancing. She said many of the children have shown positive social changes, improved schoolwork, and better all-around focus. Ballet Chicago has begun to seek foundation funding to replace what it previously received from the state.

I recently spoke with an eleven-year-old girl who lives in foster care and has

been a Ballet Chicago student for eight years. She told me that her life would not be complete were she not able to study ballet; being a ballerina has been her dream since age four. She said she has been learning to express herself and show how she feels through the ballet technique of George Balanchine, and that ballet study has taught her to keep on trying until she succeeds. For example, she told me that sometimes when she is having difficulties with her regular studies, she reminds herself how well she dances in order to keep going without giving up.

Another student, a ten-year-old who lives in foster care and has studied at Ballet Chicago for eight years, told me she is looking forward to advancing to the next level and receiving her point shoes—a confirmation of her hard work. She has performed in several performances of Ballet Chicago's *Nutcracker* and said she likes to make audiences happy.

## Bringing Care into the Child Welfare System

The child welfare system is certainly no stranger to change—the appearance of change, that is. From the self-professed experts peddling their latest best practice miracle, to the changing of the guard at city and state agencies in response to media attention following a recent brouhaha, promises of change and reform abound. But this window dressing obscures the absence of real change, while keeping in place the current system, which many value not for its transformative potential but for the ways in which it's a cash cow. Making small changes that maintain the status quo protects the many high-level positions and big-dollar contracts. At the same time, the more sincere crowd can feel good in the mistaken belief that efforts to correct bad practice are under way. Real change would require a fundamental transformation in the way child welfare system employees think about and intervene with families. Such

change can be achieved when child welfare personnel "care about and have faith in these children's (and their parents') ability to improve the quality of their lives," as Jerome Kagan has said. The bottom line is that all services—all interventions—must evolve from a caring mind-set.

We are accustomed to hearing the idea of care bandied about by those who claim to care while behaving in an uncaring manner. So, what does it mean to care and what should be expected of the child welfare system and its personnel?

*The American Heritage Dictionary*, fifth edition, defines caring as "a concerned or troubled state of mind, as that arising from serious responsibility" and "close attention, as in doing something well or avoiding harm." These simple definitions express the essence of what we need in order to achieve substantial change in the child welfare system.

The knowledge and belief that child welfare intervention constitutes a "serious responsibility" toward the involved families means that close and critical attention to what is really going on and to what is really and truly the best means of intervention is a must. In that way parents and children will receive the help they need to truly improve their situation and will certainly not be the recipient of misguided and superficial services that usually lead to further harm. And the expectation is that child welfare personnel will maintain a "concerned or troubled state of mind" so that ongoing contemplation, weighing and evaluating the particulars, will maximize appropriate assistance and minimize harm.

In doing so, a person will ask herself if what is or is not being provided is something that she would accept for her own family, her own children. These are not techniques or modes of intervention, but rather constitute the framework within which everything occurs.

Though the expectation is that people working in the child welfare system will be inclined toward a desire to help others, thereby making the caring mind-set



an imperative, as inhabitants of this planet we all also had better subscribe to the idea that at times this philosophy translates into caring action.

This mind-set highly values empathic understanding of others' situations, places great importance on opportunities for building a satisfying life through the desire for and the love of life-long learning, the exploration, pursuit, and development of interests, and the conviction that kindness and caring for one another are basic to the way we want to live. People newly arriving for work in the child welfare system with this mind-set will strive to do the right thing.

## Policy Proposals

What needs to be done to achieve real and substantial change?

First, we need to implement an education system that, starting in early elementary school through college, focuses on the value of treating one another in a deeply caring way. This is certainly a difficult and uphill battle since, as Andrew Delbanco points out, most colleges are "unwilling even to tell [students] what's worth thinking about."

Second, colleges or community organizations should offer a two-year program exploring what it would mean to work and act out of an ethic of care. Included in the curriculum should be discussions about good parenting skills. This program should be made available to everyone, including those whose formal schooling has ended or who have never attended college.

Third, all child welfare personnel should participate in the above two-year program.

We can no longer tolerate a child welfare system that *does things to people*. It is not only that simplistic and very wrong interpretations of parents' behavior must stop. This very mind-set, this very approach, to dealing with families as if they were somehow lesser individuals just waiting to receive their diagnoses is just not the way to help parents and children.

It takes knowledge, flexible and critical thinking, and sufficient time to work correctly with families. Why not hear from clients, present and former, about what their experience has been like and their ideas for change?

All families must be treated in the same manner as caseworkers themselves would wish to be treated. We also must differentiate between the majority of families in which no problems or less serious problems exist, and the rarer situations in which evidence points to the necessity of another kind of intervention, though still within a humane and caring context.

Child welfare has long been seen as the purview of social work. At first blush some may dismiss the idea that psychologists with doctorates in developmental psychology, for example, could or should make home visits and work with families. But, when we approach our work from a caring and noncompetitive perspective, this seems like a positive development.

Some state child welfare agencies have recently made the master of social work (MSW) degree a requirement for direct service positions. But this often only exacerbates the already mistaken and disrespectful approach child welfare clients are forced to endure. Many MSW holders view their clients as nothing more than a collection of symptoms to which they must apply interpretation and treatment. Making matters worse, most of these MSW social workers have not received training in behavioral science, do not keep up with research, nor do they have actual counseling skills. The MSW has often meant the semblance of additional authority and provided the rationale to treat families in a disdainful manner.

It is the absence of caring, as it has been described above, that has been responsible for the long-standing pattern of ineffective interventions, removal of children from their parents' custody with insufficient reason, and the absence of the necessary opportunities for interest exploration and develop-

ment for children living in foster care. Instead of spending time getting to know family members and trying to understand what has been going on, trying to determine if in fact child maltreatment does exist and if so, gaining an understanding of its true nature, what has usually occurred is that *the family has been pathologized*. Again, the addition of the MSW usually has only reinforced this approach.

## The Child Is Not the Problem

A University of Chicago study entitled "Underperforming Schools and the Education of Vulnerable Children and Youth" discusses behavioral problems of maltreated and foster children. The study, which was based on interviews conducted by Chapin Hall, includes this assertion:

Social service professionals shared the view that some of the children with whom they work react to their life circumstances or changes in these circumstances with anger, aggressiveness, shame, or depression. These feelings lead to school-related problems such as skipping class, absenteeism, and acting out.

Here we witness the traditional and pervasive attitude I have been speaking about. These social service workers believe that children are presenting problems at school not because of anything related to school itself but rather because of their reaction to what has happened to them in the past. This mind-set does not rely on evidence and fails to consider more than one factor. In fact, Kagan points out that there is not one cause of this sort of behavior. First, he asserts, many of the children who tend to act out

have no motivation to act civilly because of a failure of family socialization. Second, they see that they are less competent than many others and are angry and anxious. Third, they do not see the reason for school. Finally, they recognize that they are [members] of

a social category that is viewed as “undesirable” . . . if school provided some activity that was gratifying to them, they would behave better.

The child welfare worker must acknowledge and commit to the idea that the nature of his work entails a serious responsibility to proceed with the utmost care and caution so that only the most appropriate intervention will occur. While he should have an ever-expanding knowledge and understanding of behavioral science, he should not begin with the assumption that any pathology exists. An understanding that there may be no problem at all, that the problem may be tied to parental insufficient knowledge of one kind or another, or that the problem may involve one or a combination of factors, existential or economic, for example, is imperative. One must interact with families with the compassion necessary to provide help when help is genuinely needed and to refrain from doing so when it is not.

## Changing the Certification and Training Process

It is no secret that many social work students view the MSW as a fast track to setting up shop as a therapist. Once they receive their degree and a license or two, they're ready to go. Usually, though, unless they have received additional training, they lack the most basic counseling skills. Some find jobs in child welfare to bide their time until they become licensed. For many, social work school, as long as they focus on passing their exams, is merely another way to make a fast buck. In place of the current exams, emphasis should be placed on students' demonstration

of the capacity for altruistic caring, the ability to interact respectfully with clients, and a steadfast commitment to lifelong study of research-based and other related literature.

A new approach to acceptance to social work school should include a full semester of work during which potential students learn about the merits of dedicated and altruistic helping within a caring framework. Before their acceptance to the degree program they must demonstrate an understanding, sensitivity and commitment through discussion and actual hands-on work.

Not only must schools of social work adjust their curricula to focus on this caring approach, but they must show that they mean business by holding students accountable to this mind-set. Only students who have shown both the theoretical understanding and, even more important, the ability to interact with families in a caring mode, should be awarded an MSW.

Perhaps a strong argument can be made that it is not the pool of people with MSWs, psychologists, or even holders of any college degree at all from which we will find those best qualified for child welfare work. Perhaps we should consider an entirely different approach.

## Freestanding Child Welfare Schools

To achieve real change the establishment of freestanding child welfare schools may be the way to go. These schools should be open to anyone, including former child welfare clients, who can commit to the caring approach and to ongoing critical study and contemplation of relevant fields of thought.

Their curriculum must include developmental psychology; an ongoing review of neuroscience; in-depth and ongoing discussion of what constitutes child maltreatment and what does not; modes of intervention; social, educational, economic, and existential factors in actual maltreatment and in situations that often are mistaken for maltreatment; cognitive behavioral/Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy methods; the ethics of child welfare work; and practical training in the development and use of empathic understanding. Students must learn that techniques are important but are not to be parroted or used mechanically, out of context, and without reason. Rather, a down-to-earth, sincere, warm, and honest manner is essential. Students must become committed to the ideal that the less intrusion, the better.

Child welfare personnel and state, city, and federal elected officials must be invited to discussions with students and faculty, and great effort must be undertaken to educate these visitors about the caring approach. Various forms of political action by students, faculty, and parents must be employed to gain the necessary support for the acceptance of the caring approach by government and private agencies. While waiting for larger, systemic change, students might seek employment as child welfare workers and independently proceed according to their training.

Transforming the child welfare system and our broader society in these ways will require backbone, persistence, and courage, but I believe it is possible. Moving forward with conviction will ease the process. It's time to see how remaking the child welfare system—and all our institutions—around a central ethic of care can transform our society. ■

**KAUFMAN** (continued from page 16)

## Moving Day

At the apartment the next day, I got the first of several phone calls from

the Palestinian moving crew from Al-Quds—they had never traveled to this side of town and were utterly lost on the Israeli side. There was something comic and tragic about our directing the four movers and Randa

Kamal, the Director of the Al-Quds Library, through the streets of Rehavia. In a moment such as this, one remembers yet again how the separation between the two sides of the city can be profound. Although one increasingly

sees younger Palestinians on the west side of town—speaking Arabic, in hijab, shopping, eating, and socializing—I realized that, in the thirty-eight years I'd been coming to visit my mother here, I'd never seen a single Palestinian on their street. There's a kind of Jim Crow atmosphere in many Jerusalem neighborhoods, and I was worried the movers would be stopped, harassed, or worse.

After finding their way through the narrow streets, the emissaries from the east finally arrived, safe and sound. It was a hot July morning, and librarian Kamal and I sat at the dining room table chatting as the movers boxed the books and loaded the cartons one by one, neatly in tight rows, onto the giant flatbed truck. The shelves were now empty. The truck was full. Nothing more was said. In the blazing light, my husband and I waved good-bye to Kamal and the movers as their rickety flatbed began its journey, now loaded with precious cargo, back across the divided city. The whole process of disassembling my mom's collection of a lifetime had taken only an hour.

Not long after, I got a letter from the president's office at Al-Quds, thanking my family for the poetry collection. Nusseibeh wrote that the collection "will be used by students and faculty for many years to come," and he invited the family to come visit the library in the future. Then he closed his letter: "This

is the first significant contribution of books the university received from an Israeli family. We are very appreciative of this gesture, which we look upon as a sign of goodwill and hope."

How could it be—with so many books and so many personal libraries—that this was the first significant contribution of books from an Israeli family? It appears to be a sad fact that Palestinian intellectual life and culture—with its universities, libraries, scholars, and students—remains invisible to most Israelis, and many Americans, whose vision of Palestinians are badly clouded by prejudices and stereotypes.

### A Small Gesture in the Wake of Violence

A year has passed. My mom is happy—if forgetful—in Berkeley, but her disease has progressed and she barely remembers her life in Israel. Sometimes we sit together with a cup of tea and I'll read aloud poems sent from old friends. When I read one sent to her recently from Alicia Ostriker, I asked her what she thought of it, and she answered that she could no longer understand the words, but she liked it a lot anyway, and then she beamed, "That's the beauty of poetry!"

During the year, Professor Nusseibeh wrote an essay titled "Why Israel Can't Be a Jewish State" and published a provocative book that questions his own

earlier commitment to a two-state solution. We exchanged emails about the book and about the recent documentary film my husband and I made about the American Jewish culture wars, *Between Two Worlds*. Al-Quds librarian Kamal sent an email inviting the family to visit Al-Quds, where students have been reading mom's books.

In an act of synchronicity, Benny Brunner, an Israeli filmmaker and friend who lives in Amsterdam, sent me a preview copy of his latest documentary, *The Great Book Robbery*. It is a searing exposé of the systematic "collection" of tens of thousands of Palestinian books, rare collections, and valuable libraries during and after the 1948 war by the newly born state of Israel, a story of theft and the erasure of a culture. It is a damning indictment of the "People of the Book" and a plea for some kind of justice. It was an ironic counterpoint to my own tiny effort to bridge a divide. I watched the film at home with a lump in my throat.

The news from Jerusalem is worse than ever. I still contemplate what it means to have given my mom's poetry collection to a Palestinian university—for them, and for us. What is the meaning of such a small gesture? I wonder what memories will remain of the scattered books—theirs and ours? And what, if anything, will the students in the libraries of tomorrow absorb from my mother's books of poetry? ■

#### GABEL (continued from page 22)

alienation taken as a collective totality that creates and reproduces the worldwide socioeconomic system.

Were the populations of the world not infected with this legacy of fear of nonrecognition and humiliation by the Other, we would really without great difficulty solve the material problems that generate so much unnecessary suffering and pain. In other words, the world is the way it is not because people want power or wealth or control

over material things, but because they cannot experience their deeper longing for love, for authentic vulnerability and recognition, and for the coming-into-presence that would be the healing of this legacy and the transcendence of it. It is our alienation that causes material injustice rather than the converse, and it is in giving birth to a new politics that overcomes our alienation that we will overcome material inequality and injustice. But such a new form of politics can emerge only from a new way of seeing that makes our social-spiritual

alienation visible in perception, thought, and reflection.

### The Divided Self

Take a moment to consider the roles and masks that we feel compelled first to don and then to permanently inhabit—think of the newscaster, the weatherman, the president of the United States, this man dressed in one uniform or that woman dressed in another, the father, the therapist, the lawyer, and so forth. Although of course we can embody these roles in a way that is infused with



our authentic presence, insofar as we are alienated from each other, or in a kind of flight from each other's recognition, these roles become artificial holograms of being, pseudo-manifestations of our sociality in which we seek to master and deflect the other's presence by "playing the role" from a conditioned outside that we are continually monitoring from within with an anxiety signal when we veer from it. In this mode of what the psychiatrist R.D. Laing called the "divided self," we deny our own desire for authentic intersubjective connection by throwing up the role or mask that we have been over a lifetime coerced into identifying with on pain of loss of what social connection there is, while threatening the other with a comparable erasure should he or she seek to become present as a Thou. Why do we constantly threaten each other so? Because any other course of action requires a vulnerability to the other that risks the ontological humiliation of not being recognized, of not being loved and accepted and affirmed in our existence when we are utterly laid bare as longing for that recognition and love and affirmation before the other's power to grant it or withhold it.

This leads me to five additional core insights produced by the spiritual way of seeing that I am proposing:

1. The denial of the desire for mutual recognition is not merely something that is transmitted between two persons—between you and me as we pass each other on the street—but is rather a vast, rotating social field, in which every furtive glance and blank gaze and nonpresent (elusive) role-performance is taken as what's real by each of us as we experience it. Or to put this slightly differently, every such act of flight from each other, every false way of being designed to conceal our true longing, is coupled with an implicit meta-statement that "this is who I really am" and "this is who you must recognize me as and who you really should and must be yourself." Pre-reflectively and more or less instantly, we are each perpetually

internalizing the social reality and necessity of what the other is transmitting to us, and we then—in what I am calling a "rotating" fashion—re-externalize toward others as real what we have internalized from the others passing us or surrounding us emerging in and out of our social field, from infancy forward, because the social field of the whole of existence, of the life-world in which we coexist, forms a mutually influencing circle that is our conditioning. I call this aspect of our social reality the "circle of collective denial" that keeps us spiritually imprisoned in our separation, a circle that each of us co-creates because as social beings actually constituted by each other, we cannot but externalize what we have internalized even as we long to and struggle to transcend it.

2. Seen in this light, all of social life as we have inherited it thus far is a legacy of social alienation that separates us, rotating through the circle of collective denial and manifested in an infinite number of historical forms, but that we are constantly simultaneously seeking to transcend in the fullness of mutual recognition, in the simple completion of love that every newborn child anticipates at birth and manifests in the pure joyful, anticipatory presence in his or her eyes. History is, therefore, not a straight developmental process, but rather a spiral of social being, in which up to this time the desire for mutual recognition has occasionally broken through the constraints of denial of that desire that seek to contain it, erupting into social movements that ricochet across the globe often very rapidly in a great spirit of hope and optimism. At these moments the spiral whirls upward and forward and a true revolution of our social existence becomes possible, the word "revolve" referring in reality to the turning outward of our withdrawn state toward finally grounding each other in the fullness of our reciprocal presence. And at every moment, in every interaction and social encounter, this breakthrough subtends the moment as a potentiality. But the weight of the past, and its claim on our loyalty to past patterns

of safer and more impoverished forms of recognition, also at every moment work to keep us sealed in what I elsewhere have called "The Pact of the Withdrawn Selves." We have formed vast hierarchies of disciplinary control of our social presence that we call the class system, or the legal system, or family values, or an infinity of other macro and micro examples from the schools to corporations, whose limiting, unconscious spiritual aim is to contain the impulse toward the social fulfillment of mutual recognition and the vulnerability and threat of humiliation attendant to it.

3. Insofar as we each experience this internal conflict between the desire for mutual recognition and the need to deny this very desire, for fear of nonrecognition by the other and the vulnerability attendant to it, we collectively conspire to form imaginary group identities that simultaneously provide us with a sense of substitute connection or community and serve to reinforce our collective denial—or better, to seal off our longing for the authentic mutuality of I and Thou in community by an allegiance to an imaginary community that both substitutes for and encloses/represses that authentic longing. Here I am speaking of the "inflated balloon" variety of patriotism, nationalism, ethnic purity, sexual or gender identity, profession-ism—really any form of imaginary group cohesion that conceals—or more accurately, *reveals by concealing*—an inner absence of presence, a hole at the center of the imaginary group's collective being.

In my book *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning*, in the essay entitled "The Meaning of the Holocaust: Social Alienation and the Infliction of Human Suffering," I show the way this type of imaginary identity emerged within Nazi Germany as an inflation of an illusory imago of community concealing an inner terror of humiliation, the goal of which was precisely to conceal the vulnerability to that anticipated threat that existed *inside* the puffed-up, grandiose Nazi imago of unity and connection. And I show in historical context how each person given over to the illusory bond of

the imago makes allegiance to this false unity compulsory on all others, in the service of sealing off the deeper longing for and fear of true recognition—in such a manner that no one is allowed to see the bond's illusory nature because it is manifested as "real." Even more, when the collective imago is inflated to this extent, it is also manifested as "perfect" to prevent any challenge to it—not to maintain the validity of the imago as such, but to seal off the vulnerability to the longing that underlies it. While the Nazi situation was the extreme and perhaps limiting example of what I am describing, this impoverishment of social being is manifested also in the way, say, boys in my childhood behaved in the locker room in aspiring to their male identities, or the way the corporate lawyer carries his briefcase and speaks too loud at the meeting ("We lawyers" speak as if we're in charge)—in other words, in all forms of false social unity in which we as social persons co-construct a carapace or shell of ungrounded or artificial social connection that both covers over and seals off the true being that underlies and also unconsciously observes and monitors it.

4. Accompanying the giving over of our social being, in alienation, to the false group is always what is commonly called the demonization of the Other, in which the always-experienced threat of dissolution of the false group, which is at every moment unstable because it is in fact illusory and sustained by the requirement of compulsory allegiance only, is channeled into a projection out on to some Other that supposedly is the true source of the threat to the group's artificial unity. Whether it is the Jews, the gays, the blacks, the women, the students, the unions, or, to use the Dr. Seuss example that I use in one of the essays in my book, the people who butter their toast on the bottom instead of the top, these Others are sacrificed not because they are actual human beings who are rejected and expelled for their true nature, but because they are turned into carriers of the threat that inhabits and corrodes the false group itself, the threat of its own

unmasking. The false group, an illusory unity of communion, always defends itself against exposure by pretending that some projected Other is a threat to its solidity and infinite continuation, when the true threat is exposure of the underlying vulnerability to a longing too painful to acknowledge. The choice of the particular carrier of this threat is always shaped by historical conditions—like the legacy of anti-Semitism in Germany in the case of the Nazis—but the underlying dynamic is a characteristic of social alienation itself: an imaginary group cannot sustain itself without a demonized Other because it must by its very nature as imaginary, as illusory, as false, have a projected outlet to enable it to continually master and conceal its own artificiality.

5. Finally, and this is of central importance to the optimism and moral direction—let me call it the moral optimism—that I hope comes through in what I write here, this entire description of the process of social alienation that accounts for so much human suffering is at every moment countered by the desire to transcend it, by the inherent goodness of every human being that codetermines and transcends the way each of us manifests our presence in every moment of our existence. Here again please recall the presence of every newborn child during the first years of life, the full presence of the child's radiance and life-force as it is manifested in the child's whole way of being, in the full eyes, in the spontaneity of its gestures and reaching out, in the search for the other's loving gaze and embrace and its willingness to make whatever meaningful sounds we make ("language") to be *with* us. This new-born being we always remain, underneath the legacy of our alienated conditioning. What my friend Michael Lerner and I (and now many others) call "spiritual activism" is collective activism for social change that seeks through practical, present-day actions to make manifest our deep longing for spiritual connection and to partially realize that connection through a new form of spiritual politics. For example, the Network of Spiritual Progressives that

I am a part of aspires to and presses for universal health care not simply because we need doctors to care for our bodies, but because universal health care is a necessary manifestation of our universal longing to recognize and care for each other's well-being and that of each other's families and loved ones, as well as to be similarly cared for ourselves: health care means *caring about each other's health*. Social Security is important not simply because older people need financial help as they age, but as a manifestation of intergenerational love and solidarity that elevates the communal self-presence of the entire society. In these senses, as I say in the early essays on law in *Another Way of Seeing*, I embrace Martin Luther King's definition of justice as "love correcting that which revolts against love."

As I hope the last two brief examples demonstrate, the theory of social being and social existence that I am summarizing here is therefore not a theory that is "merely psychological" and divorced from the real world's problems and struggles. It is as fully engaged with the socio-economic and political struggles of the world as, say, Marxism itself. What is different about it is that it is based on a way of seeing human reality—in every social interaction between two people and in the unfolding and development of human groups as a whole—that places the spiritual dimension of social existence at the center of our understanding of social phenomena and at the center of our effort to transcend the problems that continue to limit and constrain us. While these problems certainly also have a material and economic dimension to them—the reality of children dying of starvation around the world, the lack of adequate food and housing for so many in the United States and around the world, and the vulnerability of the large majority of the world's population to having to face such material and economic difficulties mean that it is obvious that the material dimension of existence and the risk of scarcity impinges



immensely on human life—this material, economic dimension is a context of the body rather than an essence of the consciousness-in-action that is social-being-in-the-world. Social existence is constituted out of the spirituality of social consciousness-in-the world, within the intersubjective flow of recognition, of love and the denial of love; and as much as the survival and well-being of the physical body is central to the context of the unfolding of this social inter-experience, across history and in the present moment, any theory or way of seeing that focuses primarily on this material element as the central descriptive or explanatory factor is missing the essence of social being itself as a manifestation of the human spirit and its struggle to fully realize itself, always in social form.

## Real-Life Applications of Spiritual-Political Theory

In my upcoming book, which will be published this May, I expand on how the theories I have just laid out can be applied to particular circumstances: law and justice; politics as the human co-creation of the world through elections and other forms of group formation; public policy in the context of how to think about war and peace, gay rights and sexual identity, the labor movement and social change, and the spiritual foundations of science; and finally the meaning of cultural phenomena, from the work of one great philosopher influential to me (Jean-Paul Sartre), to baseball, to photography, to living with illness as a cultural reality. The essays, in other words, are applications of the theory to a wide variety of real-life examples rather than explications of the theory itself. It is in the nature of the intersubjective, spiritual-political theory that I am proposing that its truth-value to you depends upon whether you can recognize it as true rather than any analytical proof or capacity to explain diverse facts that is the measure of the truth of more scientific ways of seeing and thinking.

All phenomenological or descriptive theory depends not upon a theory's ability to explain facts from premises or theoretical postulates, but rather upon its self-evidence, upon its capacity to produce an experience of recognition in the reader. Since the theory itself begins with a social-spiritual understanding of the very thing that the theory is addressing and talking about, the only claim to validity that it can make upon the reader is the extent to which the reader can recognize it as adequate to fully *reveal* what is being described. While a descriptive theory can be true even if nobody understands it or recognizes it as true, it can become a valid form of social knowledge only through its capacity to generate an experience of recognition in a reader who him- or herself shares the very being of the "object of the investigation," of the thing being talked about.

That is why, in both *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning* and *Another Way of Seeing: Essays on Transforming Law, Politics, and Culture*, I have written essays about very practical matters like (in the former) a bank teller caught in a corporate hierarchy, the relationship between imaginary forms of community and the holocaust, the limitations of Darwin's theory of evolution, the relationship of the 60s to the rise of Ronald Reagan, the meaning of a Maalox commercial—and in *Another Way of Seeing*, the constitution and the legal system, John Kerry's and Barack Obama's "presence" (or the lack of it), the war in Iraq, sexual fear and gay marriage, opening day at a Giants-Dodgers game. Each essay is meant to illuminate a world that I "see" through the lens of the theory—the way of perceiving and then thinking and describing—that I have presented in summary form above.

In the two books taken together, I am seeking to trace the historical development of the vicissitudes of mutual recognition—its social flow and blockage in the context of a quite volatile, ongoing, historically specific struggle

of hope against fear—as this struggle has unfolded from the 1950s through the present moment in 2012, from JFK through Barack Obama as embodied expressions of precisely these spiritual-political flows-in-tension as they have been manifested through political leaders, and in the area of public policy from, for example, the rise of creationism as part of the New Right to the emergence of other more emancipatory spiritual approaches to science some twenty years later and the relationship of both (as reaction-formation in the case of creationism, as continuation of the liberatory impulse in the case of the sacred biologists) to the breakthrough of recognition that actually was the 1960s.

In my lifetime, it has been primarily the movements of the 1960s that have generated the upward spiral of hope and authentic mutual recognition in the historical process, just as the 1930s did so for the generation that preceded mine. During the period from roughly 1965-1974, a parallel awareness emerged in the United States and ricocheted across the world very rapidly, a propulsion of spiritual presence that provided people like me with a new ground to stand our lives on. For precisely this reason, because of the threat posed to traditional and more alienated forms of connection that nevertheless were also conditions of social membership and spiritual safety, the 1960s and the parallel ontological universe it gave birth to also have generated a powerful defensive social reaction—in Freudian terms, the reaction that the superego, in defense of the ego, always has to the transcendent longings of the id. Within the social-spiritual way of seeing the world, the upward movement of history is carried forward by such breakthroughs, or to recall the Doors, by breaking on through to the other side of the system of blocked connection. And these breakthroughs are never fully forgotten in historical consciousness, even as they are resisted through coerced deference to artificial conditioning, disciplinary observation, cooptation, flight





into irony, and direct violence, among other expressions of the legacy of our alienation from our true loving selves.

My work is an effort to help preserve the spiritual insight afforded to my generation by an upsurge of the human spirit more powerful than the force, existing not in Them but within each of us, that is trying to contain it. One expression of that spiritual upsurge, that outbreak of social connection, is the way of seeing social being and historical social life that I try to give voice to here. Like Marxism and liberalism, I believe that the descriptions in my work fit the facts of the realities they describe, but in a way that I hope is truer to the social reality that they describe because of the inclusion of the spiritual-political dimension that the 1960s made visible in my lifetime and that may prefigure the kind of seeing and thinking that will provide a basis for the next movement upward to change the world. ■

**DUCHROW** (continued from page 30)

This leads to the question of justice. Justice is about safeguarding the natural cycle of human life. This is why “life in just relations” is the key concept for a new culture of life capable of overcoming the ambivalence of modernity.

### The Role of Religion in Rediscovering the Commons for a Life-Enhancing Culture

What does all this mean for a realistic vision and practice of this new culture, as well as for the question of how religions can contribute to both? There is a good chance for the vision of a new life-enhancing culture convincing majorities. Even Western sciences, starting with physics a century ago, have started to abandon the Cartesian dualistic paradigm and adopt relational approaches. This is particularly true of brain research, biology, and psychology. A relational political economy has also started to emerge: there are networks

of solidarity economy, common good enterprises, and cooperatives. Life in dignity is the guiding metaphor. This is seen in the movement of *Los Indignados* in Spain protesting against the austerity policies of the European Union, which makes the people pay for the losses of the speculators. A crucial part of this struggle is the rediscovery of commons, and to rediscover the commons we need a vision of a new money and property order guided by public interest. In other words, the democratization of economy can serve as the basis for real political democracy. The latter has to complement its traditional representative character with direct and participatory democratic elements to become an integral democracy. Enrique Dussel, in his *Radical Philosophy Review* article, “Six Theses toward a Critique of Political Reason,” asserts that political reason (*ratio politica*) “has as its foundational content the imperative to produce, reproduce and develop human life within a community.”

The hope for a new vision is grounded on social movements as the historical subject of the necessary changes. Engaging in social movements can enable individuals from all classes to join in solidarity and shake off the fetters of fetishism. It is here where the faiths of the Axial Age as well as non-Western cultures can experience a genuine revival in contributing to the vision of a new culture of life in just relationships. This indeed is already happening. For example, the Network of Spiritual Progressives is formulating this vision in the form of a New Bottom Line: the proposal that every institution, government policy, economic arrangement, social policy, and corporation be judged not according to whether they maximize money and power but to the extent that they maximize our capacities to be caring, kind, ethically and ecologically sensitive, and able to see other human beings as embodiments of the sacred. There are a host of other examples, as well, including the special contribution of ecofeminism.

What about the transformation strategy and practice for the implementation of the new vision? Building on proposals of David Korten, a multiple approach can be followed. It combines the withdrawal of energy from the dominant system with ways to nurture social and ecological life. Withdrawing from the dominant system requires defiance, resistance, and the demystification of the system. Nurturing social and ecological life, on the other hand, deals with post-capitalist alternatives at the local-regional level, as well as struggles to reappropriate stolen resources at all levels, aiming at the transformation of economic macro-systems. State institutions have to be subjected to the criteria of social, economic, ecological, and cultural human rights from the start and not only as a sideline. In order to build up the countervailing power necessary to implement this multiple strategy, divisions in the labor, women's, social, ecological, and peace movements must be overcome and broad alliances formed.

The broad-based protests that have recently emerged in Arab countries and in Israel, as well as in some European countries, are a hopeful sign of the times. To some extent, thanks to the persistent work of the social and labor movements, there have already been basic changes in the economy and politics after the disaster of neoliberal policies in some Latin American countries. Consumers also have to contribute to change. After all, they are the ones who are keeping the accumulation machine running by satisfying their desires for transcendence through the surrogates of capitalism. This leads back to the necessity of simultaneous personal and collective transformation. So what is the role of religion in the process of implementing the new vision? First of all, a critique of religion is necessary if we want to make a credible contribution to bringing about a life-enhancing culture. Why? Religion in history has been deeply ambivalent itself. It has such tremendous power over people's hearts and minds that the powers that

be have always successfully co-opted religion in order to use it for their own legitimacy and support. Unless religion sees through and overcomes this mechanism, religion has no power and operates as opium.

There is an antidote against the abuse of religion in the original religious traditions themselves. It is the

criterion that God elected the poor, the marginalized, and the excluded. With that yardstick, all religions, particularly those of the Axial Age, can be tested to see whether they embody their authentic faith or represent a perversion in the service of the powerful. In all faith communities, there are growing minorities who are recovering the

original liberating character of their religions. They practice it in cooperation with the old and new social movements. This is a sign of hope in times of growing dangers for humanity and the earth. A renewal of Axial Age religions is necessary, and it might just become possible—not bringing paradise, but stopping hell on earth. ■

#### ABILEAH (continued from page 35)

vowed to divest from Ahava, a company that manufactures beauty products in an illegal Israeli settlement. We Divest, a campaign to get the largest U.S. pension fund (TIAA-CREF) to divest from Occupation profiteers, won a victory when a branch of the company dropped stock in Caterpillar, a company that sells the weaponized bulldozers that the Israeli military uses to demolish Palestinian homes and farms. Several major church denominations, including the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Methodist Church, passed resolutions to boycott settlement products. And fourteen major churches signed a letter calling for the United States to withhold military aid to Israel until it complies with international law.

But is it enough to simply call out injustice, yell fire, and go home? Macy would say no. She reminds us that this tactic alone is “insufficient to bring that [sustainable] society about.” So what else will it take?

### Changing the Structure

The second pillar of the Great Turning is about structural change. “This is where we actively work to build new societal forms, new economies, new ways of being together and organizing,” writes environmental blogger and chef Trevor Malkinson. This is the realm of the famous Buckminster Fuller quote, “To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” Or as one of my activist mentors, climate justice organizer Kevin Danaher speaks about it, we’re

not going to succeed by shaking people on the metaphoric Titanic and hoping they’ll “see the light” about the sinking empire. We’ve got to build the party boat that is so fun and attractive that people want to jump ship into it regardless of how aware (or not) they are that the current paradigm is sinking.

This structural change is already happening all around us. It’s happening in community gardens like Urban Adamah in Berkeley, California, which grows food while teaching kids to farm and gives all the food away to the needy. It’s in the People’s Grocery that delivers fresh food to inner city neighborhoods where vegetables usually don’t grace the corner store shelves. It takes root in transition towns, new economic systems like “feminomics” and the debt jubilee, schools of nonviolent thought and training like Shomer Shalom and the Metta Center for Nonviolence, and in women’s empowerment institutes such as Kohenet and We Got Issues. It takes shape in visions such as the Global Marshall Plan put forth by the Network of Spiritual Progressives, which offers concrete proposals for how to shift away from a world based on militarism and toward a world based on ecological and political sanity.

The Occupy Movement has somewhat straddled both the first and second pillars, primarily engaging in fists-in-the-air protest of the broken system, but also delving into new paradigms with the people’s libraries, collective living tent cities, free meals that characterized the encampments, and new models of leadership, organizing, and facilitating. Occupy also gave a big

boost to the Move Your Money movement, which transferred over \$80 billion dollars from “too big to fail” banks to local, sustainable branches or credit unions. Beyt Tikkun organized an “Occupy Rosh Hashanah” action to demonstrate outside a Wells Fargo bank branch in Berkeley, California, on the Jewish New Year.

Before Yom Kippur last year, I gathered with an interfaith group in the most unlikely of places: Las Vegas, Nevada. We gathered in Sin City to cast our sins into water in the ancient *tashlich* ritual. The site of our ritual? The Venetian Casino (it *is* Vegas, after all). The casino is owned by Sheldon Adelson, a fellow Jew who has made his fortune on predatory gambling and infused over \$100 million dollars into the 2012 election to support pro-war and pro-Occupation candidates, one of whom said Palestinians were “an invented people.” We wanted to bring healing and reconciliation into Adelson’s casino, so we took our prayers and repentance there.

Our interfaith group read a service prepared by Jewish Voice for Peace and acknowledged our collective responsibility for the ongoing Israeli Occupation of Palestine. Here’s an excerpt from the list of sins for which we atoned:

Allowing fear, instead of compassion, to dictate our actions. Not speaking out against anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia. Allowing violence against Palestinians to be committed in our name. And hardening our hearts instead of remembering what it means to be oppressed and dispossessed.

We ended with the song “Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu,” rocking in a circle, singing as one. At the center of Sin City, amid greed and big military bases, we found friendship, transformative ritual, and vision. I was inspired to help organize this ritual action after years of reading *Tikkun*’s “High Holiday Guide,” in which Rabbi Michael Lerner skillfully and poetically lists our modern-day sins and offers fresh prayers for forgiveness.

My generation, it seems, is tired of solely negative messages. What will invigorate us folks in our twenties and thirties is a movement that embodies its values and offers a clear vision of a path forward.

### Shifting Consciousness

The third pillar of the Great Turning—shifting consciousness—is the most profound and hardest to quantify. Wilderness Torah festivals are a beautiful example of this area of social transformation. Started in 2007, Wilderness Torah seeks to reconnect Jews to the earth, building community and new rituals that rejuvenate ancient Jewish teachings about stewardship for the land. Six years later, the organization now reaches 1,400 people each year and hosts four annual holiday pilgrimage festivals, including my personal favorite, a Passover camping trip near the Mojave Desert. Wilderness Torah also runs B’chootz, a children’s nature connection program, and B’nature, a coming-of-age teen program that builds self-reliance and deep connections to Judaism through nature-based skills development, personal challenge, and group experience through the lens of Torah. Its wilderness quests take inquiring adult Jews out into the *midbar*—the wilderness and the personal narrow spaces—to seek truth and insight. The organization is increasingly asked to create earth-based Jewish programming and curricula for synagogues and Jewish institutions around the world.

“Just Jewish,” I check on the Wilderness Torah festival application that

asks me which denomination of Judaism I belong to. Just. Jewish. I like the sound of that. Though I grew up with Reform Judaism, I can feel at home at Renewal, Reconstructionist, and occasionally Orthodox services. I belong not to a single denomination but to all the kinds of Judaism that inspire my work for a more just world, my pursuit of *tikkun olam*. Zelig Golden, a cofounder of the Wilderness Torah festival, offers inspiring words about his efforts to shift consciousness:

There came a time when I realized that I needed to shift from my activism as an environmental lawyer focusing on stopping the negative forces of the world, namely GMOs and ecological destruction, to engaging in *tikkun olam*, healing of the world through building resilient Jewish community in powerful relationship to the natural world. We are reimagining what healthy, resilient community feels and looks like, moving from hierarchy to collaboration, from teaching people things to mentoring people into their gifts, and re-forming a healthy relationship with the natural world.

Shifting consciousness is the difficult work of the artists and cultural workers among us. This is the work of poet Josh Healey, whose words weave a new emotional awareness of our personal and political realities. This is the work of Ariel Luckey, a Jewish hip-hop artist and social justice activist whose new show, *Amnesia*, connects narratives of Jewish migration from shtetls to immigrant-rights issues in Arizona.

This is the work of artist Saria Idana, whose solo show, *Homeless in Homeland*, cracks open our hearts and invites us to imagine a new way forward in Israel and Palestine. Using a documentary theater aesthetic, spoken word, and dance, she portrays seventeen characters based on people she spoke with during a trip to Israel and the Occupied West Bank.

“My solo show was created out of my propensity toward asking a lot of

questions—about justice, about Jewish identity, about home,” Idana says. “In one scene, I re-appropriate Jewish tradition, lighting Shabbat candles ‘as an umbilical chord of light coiled in the belly of a self-determined future for all people.’” Idana’s play has helped me to question and redefine my Jewish identity with respect to my relationship to Israel, Palestine, Zionism, and white privilege.

My great-uncle, the Israeli violist Joseph Abileah, would be proud of these cultural artists, I think. Music inspired him to become the first conscientious objector in Israel and a lifelong pacifist. In *Israeli Pacifist: The Life of Joseph Abileah*, biographer Tony Bing writes:

The life of Joseph Abileah reveals a commitment to a dream of reconciliation that shines with a clear and steady flame through all these years of darkness. First there was music, and with music came dreams. As the harmonies expanded, the dreams became visions. Because the visions contained harmonies, they were of peace.

This third sphere of the Great Turning—the shifting of cultural paradigms—is perhaps the most crucial because it weaves the “holy no” and our efforts at structural change together, dismantling old structures that no longer serve us and building new ones through art.

Make no mistake. This is not easy work. My great-uncle and his family were ostracized by many of their fervently Zionist neighbors. And modern-day, self-aware, justice-seeking Jewish artists who dare to speak out about racism, classism, and other forms of injustice, particularly in Israel and Palestine, often face a lack of support from the broader mainstream Jewish community, making it difficult to make their lives as artists sustainable.

### A New Paradigm for a New Era

All too often I see our institutional Jewish community choosing to silence dissent rather than embrace it, even



though dissent has been a defining feature of Judaism throughout the ages. After interrupting Netanyahu, I became more publicly known for my critique of Israeli human rights abuses and the Occupation, and for my support of nonviolent resistance strategies such as boycott and divestment. I was shocked when the San Francisco Jewish Federation blacklisted me and then threatened to pull its funding for the San Francisco Jewish Library because I was invited to speak on a panel there. The library caved to the pressure and cancelled the event. In the end a nearby synagogue hosted the event, which received great local press attention because of the controversy. Many more people turned out than expected, illustrating the total backfire of the Jewish Federation's McCarthy-era-style attempt to silence me.

The chasm between the Jewish establishment (groups such as the Jewish Federation and AIPAC) and Jews

like me illustrates a divide between the old guard and the rise of a new paradigm within Judaism. It also shows how there are repercussions for speaking aloud the “holy no”—for daring to question the status quo—and imagining a new paradigm, a cultural shift. The young Jews I mention in this article are carving out new spaces. They are the edge walkers of our community, and not all of their work is embraced by institutional Judaism. My hope is that the shining stories of this new generation of activists and artists will draw many more of us out of the dark. It's time for all of us to stop seeking assimilation within a culture that condones colonization in the modern-day Middle East. It's time to start speaking, acting, painting, and writing our truths, too.

Elements of the Great Turning are happening within every faith, region, and age group on the planet. But focusing on my own particular faith tradition has given me new insight into how

a new paradigm can arise. Judaism is a religion of argumentative questioning, utopian visioning, a wild affair with change-making that propels us to seek the divine within and throughout. For Judaism to continue to create vibrant, resilient community, Jews will need to reimagine what Judaism's role is in these changing times and return to the ancient wisdom of our lineage.

While I didn't think the world would end on December 21, 2012, I did mark the importance of this date in Mayan calendar systems, where it is described as a time of transformation and the start of a new age. Like Macy's idea of the Great Turning, this idea of a new era calls us to turn from ways that are no longer working, reexamine our lives, and reimagine how we could be living in more harmony with each other. Judaism, indigenous traditions, and other faiths have much to inform this visioning. What will your teshuvah look like this year? ■

#### KNAPPENBERGER (continued from page 40)

this factionalizing influence. In the book *In Dubious Battle*, John Steinbeck describes a disconnection between unionized combat veterans on strike and strike-busting noncombat veterans he calls “garritroopers.” This distinction between combat vets and noncombat vets is nothing new. It can be found throughout the Old Testament in stories like that of King Saul. The military community is rife with these artificial rivalries: Navy/Marines, Army/Air Force, combat/noncombat, infantry/armored—all designed to disenfranchise soldiers from the natural justice that is their due.

### Resisting Imperial Theology

In many ways, the evils of sociopolitical oppression are still inscribed on the collective consciousness of the veteran community, making veterans and soldiers more likely to accept the spiritual idolatry characteristic of imperial theology.

The task of imperial theology is simple: to maintain the status quo by any means necessary. The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps has, in recent years, been utilized in roles that conflict with fundamental Judeo-Christian values of peace and reconciliation. Chaplains in my Army unit, for example, were seen as “readiness maintenance” officers whose job was to keep soldiers on the rosters instead of at home, pregnant, AWOL, or unwilling to kill. My own experience of military theology was that “spiritual readiness” is considered just another tool in the command arsenal. Rather than addressing the spiritual needs of human beings, Army chaplains are focused on keeping up appearances, both to the soldiers under them and to the system over them. Serious questions of theological importance are pushed aside, ignored, or glossed over in the imperial system. It is little surprise that many of the soldiers I served with have since suffered terrible bouts of depression and chronic psychiatric

ailments—symptoms of the spiritual poison of war and militarism, and the false salve of a superficial imperial theology.

It is crucial that the anti-war and pacifist communities learn to see the world through veterans' eyes, and to understand their victimhood and spiritual oppression. Many veterans yearn to refuse to accept the meaninglessness of empire and militarism. If war is ever going to end, it will not be at the hands of pacifists alone. It will be at the hands of an empowered and educated veteran community built on sound theological foundations. We must realize that the pacifists-versus-veterans dynamic is a false one, foisted upon us and encouraged by militarist and right-wing ideologues. When the language of the military community can be properly understood and interpreted by pacifists, the myth and cycle of resentment can be broken. Having dispelled the illusion of a fundamental divide between traditional peace communities

and military ones, a dialogue can begin and a coalition can be created that transcends the ideologies of the domination system. Scripture is one experiential means toward understanding and unity. A number of theologians have recently begun to intuit an antidote to imperial theology. For example, passages such as the story of Uriah can serve both to illuminate the veteran perspective for pacifists and to illustrate the oppression of the imperial system.

### Uriah: Dupe, Victim, or Exemplar?

Uriah, the cuckold husband of Bathsheba, was the quintessential model of a good soldier. According to the books of Samuel, King David seduced Uriah's wife and made her pregnant while Uriah was serving on a military campaign. In an effort to conceal his sin, the king then tried to persuade Uriah to return home and sleep with Bathsheba so that Uriah might thereby believe himself to be the father of Bathsheba's child. Uriah, however, chose to remain with the palace troops rather than return to his home during the campaign. Seeing the inevitability of his being discovered, King David then ordered his generals to betray Uriah to the enemy in battle, in such a way that he might be disposed of without drawing political scrutiny. After Uriah's death, King David cemented his sin by marrying the widowed Bathsheba.

By stepping into the shoes of King David's elite fighter and seeing Uriah's story through a soldier's eyes, we can expose the internal contradictions of the "warrior ethos" that is supposed to uphold honor, discipline, community, sacrifice, and service. We can also expose the nature of militarism as it relates to lust, power, and objectification. We can effectively drive a wedge into the assumed connections between service, violence, and the oppression of those who serve, awakening in them a conscientious force of liberation and an interest in nonviolence.

Civilians might look at Uriah as a kind of dupe. As an elite warrior, he is easily categorized as the kind of blindly obedient person who walks into his own death out of ignorance or worse. A foreigner, Uriah must have been exceptionally loyal to earn the trust of King David. It is David who breaks this trust and ultimately murders Uriah through a proxy. Uriah remains, almost like Forrest Gump, completely unaware of his precarious situation, at least until the last moments before his death. This is one traditional civilian interpretation of Uriah, popular especially among American Christians. This interpretation glosses over the deeper psychological and spiritual drama that is surely playing out in the text.

Uriah, in other words, may not be as simple and blindly obedient as he seems. Seeing him from the perspective of the oppressed veteran, we can say that Uriah's actions leave open the possibility of his being a man of deep spiritual passion and conviction. Uriah, to a veteran, is perhaps more righteous even than God's anointed, David, the son of Jesse; surely many warrior ideals—commitment, discipline, and personal integrity—can be seen in his actions. Uriah's blind obedience may also be interpreted as a strict sense of self-discipline, rather than unthinking subservience. Uriah certainly exercises a rigorous self-control when David offers him special privileges, such as "unearned leave" from the front lines of the war.

Neither does Uriah lay with his wife in the interval after his audience with David. As any soldier on leave can attest, it is unusual for a soldier to pass up sexual intercourse with a spouse after a prolonged abstinence. Perhaps there was a ban on intercourse for soldiers during times of war, an extension of the Mosaic cleanliness laws of the army camp (Deut. 23:9-14). On a more nuanced reading, we might suggest that Uriah was aware of his wife's duplicitous infidelity, the probability of his commander's betrayal, and the losing

proposition of playing along with the farce to the detriment of his personal spiritual integrity. If we assume for a moment that Uriah was aware of his predicament, his refusal to accept unearned privilege takes on a moral quality familiar to most veterans—it seems to reflect a righteous, radical trust in the justice of his convictions.

God sees Uriah's plight. Though Uriah is not saved from an inglorious death, the injustice of it is remembered, and God ultimately punishes David. Uriah's faith, in this sense, transcends the imminent likelihood of his violent death. Had he been willing to play along with being cuckolded, he might have lived. Had he been willing to undergo the humiliation of breaking the honor taboo and leaving his comrades, he might have lived. In his crisis, Uriah affirms himself by adhering to his adopted code of conduct, even delivering his own death warrant to his commander, Joab. We can imagine the last look of despair on Uriah's face, his confusion as he is abandoned in battle. Alternately, we can imagine a grim-faced Uriah, aware of his plight but unflinching in his abiding faith in the ultimate justice of God. For their part, Uriah's comrades might have had qualms about so ruthlessly leaving their battle buddy to die, but they failed to act on those qualms, breaking the warrior's code of honorable conduct at the instigation of agents of the system of oppression.

By locating the failures of justice within Uriah—by emphasizing the stupidity of his blind obedience—and then by concluding that good soldiers are uncritical perpetrators of political violence, we miss the deeper critique of the system of militarism. By being willing as pacifists to put ourselves in the shoes of a warrior, however alien and senseless that may feel, a more profound critique of militarism can be explored. God takes issue with the system of oppression, even from within it.

Like David, we could draw the conclusion that those who live blindly by

the sword often suffer violent and pointless deaths, that unthinking loyalty to a king and to codes of honor is a stupid and meaningless exercise. It is slightly better to draw the conclusion that God is the quintessential battle buddy, the one who will do justice to a loyal servant, even if it means bringing judgment upon God's "beloved" king. This interpretation should resonate with veterans, demonstrating the presence and memory of a personal God. It is not, however, a complete explanation of the multifaceted story of Uriah. There is a kernel of truth here: the lust, dishonor, and betrayal at the center of the imperial system of domination. Veterans should resist concluding here that Uriah's willing participation in his own murder makes him a martyr. Does not the portrayal of King David—who was once as upstanding as Uriah himself—as embodied corruption also fall flat? The lesson here is that the moral corruption of war and domination is not located in the individual soldier (Uriah) or his boss (David). The moral corruption of war, brutality, dominance, sexual exploitation, and oppression is its own entity altogether, and has the power to destroy even God's anointed.

To soldiers and veterans, this lesson can be deeply moving. As Walter Wink asserts in *Engaging the Powers*, the nations and their martial institutions are not naturally evil; these powers were created good, are now fallen, and will be redeemed by God. Veterans tend to focus on the redeemable aspects of the military that still oppresses them: the selfless service, discipline, and commitment that are admittedly part of the experience. If pacifists can sometimes be blind to these redeemable qualities, then the military community is equally guilty of failing to engage politically in opposition to military campaigns that it knows to be morally wrong. They are in this case equally as guilty as Uriah's comrades and commanders, who knowingly collaborated in his murder.

If there is any place in the world for the military community, it must first and foremost be an active rather than a passive body politic. Soldiers and veterans must exercise the same self-discipline in questions of collective moral and ethical discernment that they do in areas of personal fitness and mental toughness. In the nuanced story of Uriah, it should be clear to soldiers that there is a slippery slope from "good

powers" and "honorable institutions" to unchecked lust, deceit, and outright murder. What is being communicated to veterans here is not "keep your head down and stay in your lane." It is the opposite: *engage the evil and corruption that has disfigured the system you cherish*.

Through close scriptural interpretation, dialogue becomes possible on an experiential level between noncombatant victims of war, civilian objectors to militarism, and the military community. Gandhi was a veteran as much as he was a visionary of peace and nonviolence. It is high time that theologians, peace workers, and pacifists broaden the scope of their engagement of the powers. We must not only confront the mythos of redemptive violence that lies "coiled at the tree of Western Civilization" as Wink said, but we must also engage the entire imperial theology and all that it attempts to justify in the name of the God of Redeeming Peace. Only then (together!) will the soldiers, the *satyagrahis*, and the families of the earth receive God's blessing of *shalom*. ■

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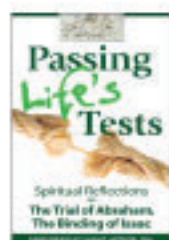


## Blossom Road

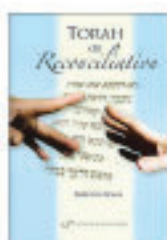
I don't know why I pulled over, idling, right before Christmas, two months of snow and salt  
plowed onto the shoulder, each squat Rambler aglow, a life-size baby Jesus reborn in the  
DiPasquale's front yard,  
why everything looked different, the way the woods you got lost in as a kid seem small  
and disappointing when you return to them older,  
because I hadn't been out of there that long, less than a year, and as far as I could tell in  
the December blur,  
beyond the slight expansion of the motherhouse infirmary, where the sick nuns, most of  
them retired teachers,  
convalesced or passed, where I'd volunteered during study hall changing bed pans and  
pouring Hawaiian Punch into paper cups,  
they hadn't renovated the spired building I'd entered day after day, my plaid jumper  
becoming more ironic with each curve.  
How selfish it is after you leave a place to doubt that it could function without you.  
That it all goes on was enough to make me crack, facing the grotto  
I'd stood around with my class, a hundred of us, in Easter white in another season,  
singing as the May queen and her court offered flowers to the stone Virgin or just  
pretending to sing.

—Lindsay Bernal

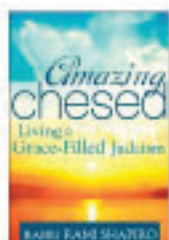
# Tikkun RECOMMENDS



**Passing Life's Tests**  
Bradley Shavit  
Artson  
Jewish Lights,  
2013



**Torah of Reconciliation**  
Sheldon Lewis  
Gefen Publishing,  
2012



**Amazing Chesed**  
Rami Shapiro  
Jewish Lights,  
2013



**Holy War in Judaism**  
Reuven Firestone  
Oxford University  
Press, 2012

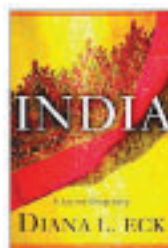
Noting that rabbinic literature describes God as a teacher, Bradley Shavit Artson's *Passing Life's Tests* encourages us to approach Bible stories by asking "what aspect of holiness, what cluster of insight, they mean to transmit, to symbolize, to embody just beneath the surface." Rabbi Artson, dean of rabbinical studies at the American Jewish University, shows how a wide variety of lessons can be learned from the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Among other things, he argues, the near-sacrifice reveals a transformation of God, as God realizes that one should not test love: "God retreats from the demand of full or exclusive devotion. . . . There are limits to what one can demand of others, no matter how close they may be." Artson's creative book is filled with insights about life and God. This openhearted and psycho-spiritually sensitive reading of the Bible's stories is a true masterpiece of contemporary Jewish wisdom and Torah-based spirituality.

If you value careful readings of the Torah to inspire new understandings of the world, Sheldon Lewis's *Torah of Reconciliation* deserves your attention. Rabbi Lewis presents us with new insights about each Torah portion as he plows through the weekly readings. Among the lessons he draws: No one is complete without the Other. God's essence is mercy. There are limits on human vision. Peace is the dearest of all God's treasures. Lewis is famous for his openhearted approach to Judaism, and this book captures much of his wisdom.

*Amazing Chesed* by Rami Shapiro challenges the notion that grace (*chesed* in Hebrew) is a Christian, not a Jewish, ideal. Grace, writes Rabbi Shapiro, is "God's unlimited, unconditional, unconditioned, and all-inclusive love for all creation." He adds that there is no one outside the reach of grace—"not the sinner, the heretic, the unbeliever, or the differently believing believer," arguing that "there is nothing one can do to merit grace, earn grace, or even avoid grace. . . . Grace is unlimited and all-encompassing." Shapiro then goes on to draw the implications of this approach for contemporary theology as well as to outline what a life lived graciously would entail. This is a fabulously important book.

Reuven Firestone, a professor of medieval Judaism and Islam at the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, presents a masterful rereading of the concept of "holy war" and how it has been appropriated at different times in Jewish history for strikingly different purposes. Holy wars may have had some relevance in the ancient Jewish world, but while hotly debated in theological circles in the Middle Ages, the idea of holy war had no immediate relevance then. The concept became central only after the emergence of Zionism and the outcome of the 1967 war in which Israel conquered the West Bank and Gaza. Firestone details how the idealism of religious Zionists before

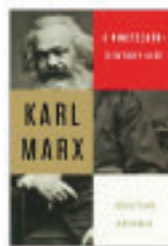
the creation of the State of Israel eventually morphed into an ultra-nationalist force heavily influenced by right-wing, secular, national ideologies. This shift, he argues, forged the path to a Judaism that sees the settling of the West Bank (and for some the displacement of Palestinians) as part of a holy war sanctioned by Torah and God. Firestone stops short of drawing any ethical or political conclusions, but his careful analysis, particularly when read in conjunction with Aviezer Ravitsky's classic 1997 study *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, provides a solid understanding of the Jewish religious ideologies that have led many otherwise decent and ethically sensitive Jews to become oblivious to the cruelty and robbery inherent in the Occupation of the West Bank and the suppression of the Palestinian people.



## India: A Sacred Geography

Diana L. Eck  
Harmony Books, 2012

India is "a great network of pilgrimage places," writes Diana Eck, a professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University who offers insight into the sources in ritual and tradition that make these sites holy. The diversity of these stories and traditions gives a sense of the complexity of the religious alternatives in India's society, shattering for the reader the notion that there is such a thing as a singular "Hinduism": Eck's book suggests that many Hinduisms survive side-by-side in the vast Indian subcontinent. Even as she explores the holiness of place within these various Hinduisms, she emphasizes elements of various Hindu traditions that acknowledge the presence of holiness all around us and wherever we are.



## Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life

Jonathan Sperber  
Liveright Publishing Company, 2013

Karl Marx remains one of the most influential thinkers of the past two hundred years. This new biography is startling in part because it roots Marx so squarely in his own time, neither as a prophet nor a devil, but as another flawed human being like the rest of us: "patriarchal, prudish, bourgeois, industrious, independent (or trying to be), cultured, respectable, German with a distinct patina of Jewish background." Sperber portrays Marx as largely conventional, with a private life that hardly reflected his revolutionary views, but he notes that "the demonstration of public commitments in private became a measure of individual authenticity in the twentieth century, as it never was during Marx's lifetime." Sperber's presentation of Marx's anti-Semitism as a conventional nineteenth-century attitude understates the way that German Jews had systematically sought to distance themselves from their own heritage. It forgives Marx too quickly for formulations that were at best disrespectful if not outright hate-filled—formulations in which he identified Jews with selfishness and a hunger for money. Yet Sperber offers a real service by bringing readers more fully into the context of Marx's nineteenth-century reality, rather than letting communists and anti-communists' twentieth-century appropriations and distortions of Marx's message cloud his biography.



# WHY Was the 2012 Election So Close?

Nearly all people crave loving community—a world of generosity and caring that is imbued with a higher meaning beyond materialism and selfishness. Why then, are voters so reluctant to elect politicians who share this vision of a world based on care and generosity? The close margin in the 2012 presidential election and the election of many conservatives to the House of Representatives underscore this reluctance.

This conservative entrenchment is in part a result of progressive politicians' inability to speak to most voters' spiritual hunger for meaning in life and to live in a caring society based on caring for each other and caring for the earth. For the past forty years, most liberal politicians have bought into the notion that what people really want are material goods and political rights, particularly "the right" of equal opportunity to compete for the accumulation of power and wealth. The Right has thus had no competition when it talks about family, community, and religious values. No liberal politicians use their access to large constituencies to educate people about the central contradiction of the Right: that the values that the Right claims to believe in are undermined by the capitalist system and the values that capitalism infuses into the minds of most people, to the detriment of family, community, and religious values. Until liberals and progressives can focus their discourse on what we at *Tikkun* call "meaning needs" or "spiritual needs," too many people will continue to cast ballots for the Right, despite the Right's support for an economic order at odds with the depth of meaning that most people seek, as well as at odds with the economic well-being of most Americans.

That's one of the reasons why we at *Tikkun* talk so frequently about the need for a society based on love, generosity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur and mystery of the universe. In this way we are very different from other liberal and progressive voices. Our approach to spiritual truth is interfaith and welcoming to those atheists who understand the importance of building a caring society. We invite you to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives and help us transform Western societies by popularizing this new progressive voice. We need your support, both political and financial. Please join now at [spiritualprogressives.org](http://spiritualprogressives.org). Members also get a free subscription to *Tikkun*.

