

Tikkun

POLITICS + SPIRITUALITY + CULTURE

(tē·kün) To heal, repair, and transform the world.

WINTER 2014

SECULAR
BUDDHISM

Phil Wolfson

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MIDDLE EAST PEACE

WHAT TERMS
ARE SUSTAINABLE?



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When Liturgy Goes Wild | Kabbalah and Jungian Psychology
Transnational Feminism | Structural Evil | Earth-Honoring Faith
Multiracial Work to End Racism | The Great Mosque of Córdoba



DON'T **JAIL** THE WHISTLE- BLOWERS— **HONOR** THEM

The U.S. government is out of democratic control. The information we need to assess governmental policies is systematically hidden from us or declared “top secret” in order to ensure that the illegal activities of our military, national security apparatus, and other branches of government are not held responsible for what they are doing.

It took Daniel Ellsberg’s courage to reveal the systematic lies told by the White House and the military about Vietnam. Now Chelsea Manning—currently sentenced to thirty-five years in prison and being held in an all-male facility despite her transgender identity—has revealed the illegal and immoral activities of the military in Iraq. And Edward Snowden has forced our government to acknowledge that it was systematically lying to the U.S. public about its monitoring of millions of phone calls and its spying on emails sent by U.S. citizens who have no plausible connection to potential terrorist acts.

We will never know the extent of governmental misconduct unless we honor rather than punish those who risk their jobs and their future to reveal these acts. The law must change to build in rewards for these acts of heroism. In the meantime, President Obama should give pardons and rewards to Snowden, Manning, and many others who have been hunted out of their jobs for revealing information that was in the public’s interest to know!

Sign our online petition
at tikkun.org/whistleblowers.

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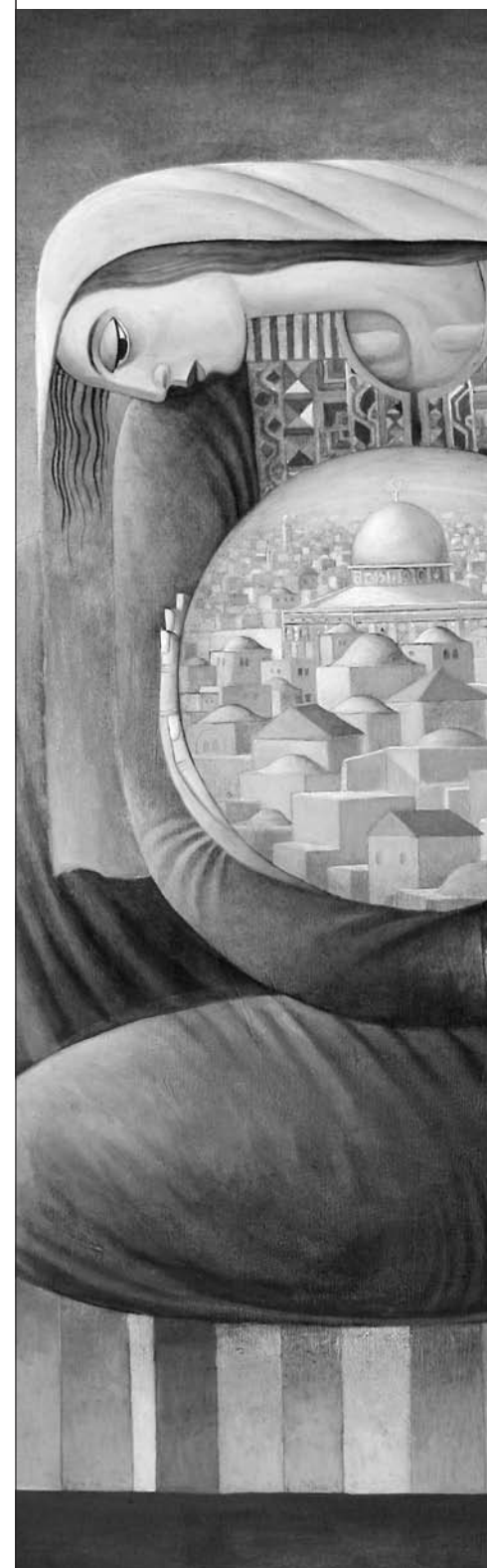
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Tikkun is not just a print magazine—visit our blog at tikkun.org/daily and our web magazine site at tikkun.org. Each has content not found here. Our online magazine is an exciting supplement to the print magazine, and the daily blog brings in a range of voices and perspectives.

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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. 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.

MENTAL HEALTH

A lot of work on brain function has been done recently; the brain is, after all, an organ in the body. It's just that until now it was hard to look at its functionality and see how that related to behavior. I think we need to look at the brain in new ways and start to break down the distinction between "health care" and "mental health care." Many of the problems that Phil Wolfson identifies with the DSM-5 in "Hark! The Psychiatrists Sing, Hoping Glory for that Revised DSM Thing!" (a web-only article on tikkun.org) are just as true of all of Western medicine, which is also driven by our distorted insurance/payment systems.

—Kate McClellan, *East Palo Alto, CA*

BUDDHISM AND DUALISM

David Loy's web article "Toward a New Buddhist Story" is in general a well-informed piece, but the depiction of Buddhism is true only for the Theravada School. Both Mahayana and Vajrayana have the Bodhisattva Vow, which is similar to vowing a lifetime of environmental activism.

—Keith Lampe, *Vilcabamba, Ecuador*

I have one little quibble with David Loy's thumbnail analysis of Protestantism: John Calvin, and much of Reformed Christianity, referred to the world as "the theater of God's glory" and saw God very much at work in and through it. That said, Loy has set up a really useful framework for the discussion of dualism in all of its subtle and not-so-subtle forms; it's much needed, and I appreciate his having raised the issue in a multifaith context.

—Stephen Simmons, *Allentown, PA*

The dualisms that David Loy's article cites as "Buddhist" come out of a modern interpretation of some passages in the Pali Canon that,

viewed from within this interpretation, may seem to prefigure or correspond to Western ideas like dualism and individualism. But Buddhism today is informed by long historical traditions of philosophizing like Mahayana that strive meticulously to erase the temptations of dualistic thinking from concepts like *nibbana/samsara* and strive thoroughly to explore non-self. The same is true in the Vajrayana and Theravada traditions. The discussion in this article takes place as though none of that has happened.

—Dean Mathiowetz, *Santa Cruz, CA*

TERRORISM

The festering sores that are Gaza and the West Bank, along with decades of U.S. military destruction of towns in the Middle East and Afghanistan, has given many Muslims and even Levantine Christians a sense of war being made against them. That there is "blowback" against the United States is hardly a surprise. But I wish a clear list of grievances could be published somewhere that shows our American atrocities and why Muslims have every reason to fear and hate us. What is also surprising is that the vast majority of Muslims do not participate in any acts of reprisal, which of course we call "terrorism."

—Barry Wright, *Gilroy, CA*

TRAYVON MARTIN

Where I respectfully disagree with Rabbi Michael Lerner's web article "Why 'Voting Rights, NO, Gay Marriage, YES' from the Supreme Court?" is in its assertion that Civil Rights leaders eschewed the training of new-movement activists for the sake of achieving wins in the legal system. As the born-in-1969 son of a former SNCC field organizer who was part of an effort to start a Black Panther Party chapter in the city of Boston, I witnessed

firsthand the real reason a new generation of activists was not forthcoming—many of the young mantle-inheritors were *simply gone*: murdered, imprisoned, or strung out on the narcotics surreptitiously smuggled into inner-city neighborhoods by extrajudicial operators.

The separation of human beings into allegedly differently abled color categories is a project that's been running for over 500 years, commencing roughly in 1492 with the final expulsion of Moorish rulers from Spain and Christopher Columbus's landing on Hispaniola, beginning Western European colonialism.

It's indisputable that the racial order has undergone significant changes for the better. And yet evidence that you can't legislate people's hearts, as the Right Reverend observed, can be found in the persistence of *structural* racism, an invisible reality pushing back on all the above-mentioned advancements and spawning appalling new twists on old problems. Black unemployment rates are consistently twice that of whites. African Americans endure a host of health care disparities as well. We were disproportionately targeted for subprime loans, and because home ownership is linked to financial liquidity, when the subprime lending market tanked, a generation of economic progress was wiped out, and mortgage lending to blacks and Latinos has since plunged precipitously. Privatization, neoliberalism, and penal populism have led to the prison-building boom, militarization of minority schools, and hyper-criminalization of youth culminating in the school-to-prison pipeline.

And these last developments in particular, combined with the recording-industry-enabled hijacking of hip-hop (the global phenomenon my peers and I came of age creating) by rapping minstrels, have aggregated into an exceptionally toxic cultural environment ultimately resulting in extrajudicial killings.

MORE LETTERS

We receive many more letters than we can print! Visit tikkun.org/letters to read more.

The murder of skittles-and-iced-tea-packing Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of his murderer George Zimmerman, which effectively sent the message that a black male life is expendable if any armed person happens to feel threatened by his presence, is only the most recent example of this toxic environment.

When I think back to why I started rapping in the first place, it's clear that hip-hop was the one and only way I could fully express my outrage at social inequity. Yet, for inasmuch I fancied myself in righteous opposition to "Western" conventions, my underlying belief in the improbability of the human condition was actually *thoroughly* Western. Under Gautama's tutelage, this fundamental assumption comes into question. Is it truly possible to transmute human nature in a way that is reflected in systems and institutions? What is absolutely possible is the transmutation of the self. Whether or not enough transmuted selves can achieve critical mass necessary for structural transformation remains to be seen.

—Kyva Holman (aka Bezi), *Oakland, CA*

Read the full version of Kyva Holman's important letter, plus many others, at tikkun.org/letters.

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.

Tikkun

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You Can Help Stop America's March to the Right

PROGRESSIVES HAVE systematically disempowered themselves by not presenting a unified challenge to the pro-corporate forces that continue to dominate Congress and the Obama administration. To reenergize the progressive movement, we need a new discourse in the public arena to pull public attention toward a vision of what this country could be like if the values of generosity, caring, compassion, environmental sanity, nonviolence, social justice, peace, and love for all humanity were to shape our schools, economy, media, and government. In short, the public arena needs a spiritual progressive voice. Shifting public discourse in this way will require many small, local interventions to happen simultaneously in neighborhoods, city councils, school board meetings, and living rooms across the country. A single person can't bring about such a change—it's a task that can only be accomplished by many people acting together. Will you join me in making a New Year's resolution to speak up for this vision in the public sphere?

I know that urging friends, neighbors, coworkers, and extended family to move beyond cynicism and apathy can be discouraging. Even people who agree with spiritual progressive ideas often say such ideas are too far in advance of the electorate. To get progressive lawmakers elected and progressive legislation passed, they argue, we need to focus on pragmatic strategies based on polling statistics and calculations about what seats are "in play."

The problem is, this approach is deeply mistaken. Why? Because its calculus requires the Democratic Party to put forward candidates who are so centrist that a mere twenty years ago their ideas would have been judged mainstream Republican. Once these centrist candidates are elected, they undermine the ability of the Democrats to put forward progressive legislation anyway. That's what happened in 2009 and 2010 when, despite controlling the Senate and the House, Democrats were unable to pass truly progressive legislation because of resistance from within their own party.

The wonderful gay and lesbian victories around marriage equality in 2013 suggest that the more effective way to build change is to root the articulation of a political position in a discourse not only of rights but also of love. The key is finding ways to understand what others fear in your spiritual

progressive vision, and then finding innovative ways to speak to those fears.

The Power of a Coherent Vision

The Republicans have long understood the power of offering a coherent vision to the public. That's why they adopted Newt Gingrich's ten-point "Contract with America" in 1994 as their central unifying message—a decision that enabled them to take back control of the Congress. Lacking a similar unifying vision, the Democrats are once again on the path toward self-marginalization, while progressives stew in their own sense of powerlessness.

Putting forward a larger worldview is both ethically appropriate and likely to be politically effective. The core values of love, kindness, generosity, and caring (caring for each other and the earth) must become the central focus of all who hope to heal and transform our world. A progressive political movement that does not prioritize love will never succeed in effectively challenging unbridled corporate capitalism and the toxic ethos dominating the global economy.

Most people have two voices in their heads. One voice says this is a world in which other people are out to advance their own interests at all costs, and they will exploit us unless we succeed in dominating them first. The other voice says our own security and success in the world is more likely to be achieved when others experience us as loving, caring, and generous toward them. Those who hold the domination worldview tend to vote conservative, whereas those who hold the generosity worldview tend to vote liberal or progressive. Swing voters tend to heed the fear-oriented voice unless the generosity voice inside them is supported by voices of hope, love, and generosity in the media or elsewhere in their lives. This struggle defines the outcome of most elections. It is why Obama won overwhelmingly in 2008 when he strengthened our belief that a world of caring is possible. And it's why the Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives once Obama moved toward pragmatic centrism.

We at *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives fully endorse attempts to fight for economic entitlements and political rights. However, we are aware that such attempts are often co-opted or defanged. Members of the capitalist

class (the 1 percent plus their minions in the media, policy institutes, foundations, universities, and management levels of large corporations) have recognized that they can retain their economic power even as they acknowledge various identity groups, appoint token members of those groups to some positions of power, and abolish legal discrimination against women, gays, and minorities. Even as they have acceded to these demands, they have upheld the fundamental inequalities that guarantee poverty and keep the workforce disciplined through a fear of unemployment. And this fear is intensified by the weakening (or in some cases dismantling) of the social support systems that in other advanced industrial countries cushion the worst impacts of the capitalist marketplace on working families. Once they dismantle government supports, the conservatives are then able to say, “See, government really doesn’t serve your interests, so why should you be paying so much in taxes—let’s further shrink down government to the police and the army!”

So we get the paradox of working-class, middle-income Americans voting for politicians who seek to dismantle the very government programs like Social Security and health care that the middle class depends upon. The research produced by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health—a facility dedicated to dealing with the mental health issues of working people that I directed in the 1980s—helped me understand how this happened. Liberals failed to fight for an alternative worldview, narrowing their public campaigns to “realistic” goals, rarely challenging the worldview of conservatives. The capitalist marketplace, with its structured competition of all against all, strengthened the individualism and mindset of “looking out for number one,” which in turn encouraged people to believe that economic class divisions are based on a meritocracy so that those who aren’t more economically successful should blame themselves for their own alleged failures. Class solidarity soon gave way to self-blaming and shame, and these, when brought home into family life, often contributed to a rising divorce rate and a fear that the family—the one institution set up to nurture people no matter how poorly they did in the marketplace—was itself being destroyed. And then the Right set itself up as the champion of family life, blaming the destruction of family values on liberals and progressives.

That’s why a progressive movement must become ideological, not only in explicitly challenging fantasies of meritocracy and the assault on government by the 1 percent, but also and most importantly by addressing the deepest deprivation in our society—a deprivation of love and community. This deprivation makes it hard for us to believe that people genuinely care for each other or to feel that our lives have some larger meaning than the endless struggle for economic survival.

To be successful, the progressive movement must position itself as the champion of reorganizing our economic and political lives so that they can promote rather than undermine

our capacities for love and generosity. And it must support people’s efforts to get back in touch with their deep aspiration to live in a caring society based on caring for each other and caring for the earth. In short, we need a progressive movement that is unabashedly committed to love, kindness, generosity, and environmental sanity—a movement that is willing to stand up to those who call such values “unrealistic” or even “utopian.” We need a movement that insists that only a society based on such values, rather than on the materialism and selfishness of the capitalist marketplace, can protect us from the increasing shift toward the Right and the triumph of the interests of the 1 percent, a shift that is now happening with the blessings (or at least the capitulations) of both the Republican and Democratic parties. And this means challenging the Left itself, which is rarely attuned to, much less willing to champion, the psychological and spiritual needs that a capitalist society systematically frustrates.

So we need to create a cadre or a spiritual progressive equivalent to the Franciscans or the Jesuits that can challenge both the ideology of the capitalist order and the one-dimensionality of the Left (even while supporting the economic and political rights agenda of liberals and progressives). And at this particular moment, we have to make clear that the Obama administration, while under ferocious assault from the Right, and defending itself from the most irrational attacks, is nevertheless partly responsible for this mess because it has neither fought for a coherent alternative to the worldview of the Right nor addressed the psychological and spiritual crisis that the competitive marketplace generates in our lives. This spiritual crisis undermines people’s belief in the possibility of solidarity or caring and leads them to despair and defeatism, which the Right then manipulates, often for nefarious purposes. If I thought that being progressive meant supporting the Obama administration’s mix of pro-Wall Street policies, drone attacks, militarism, jailing of whistle-blowers who expose domestic spying and other governmental wrongdoing, a health care reform that requires everyone to buy insurance but sets no restrictions on how much the insurance companies can raise their rates, an environmental policy that doesn’t come close to addressing the dimensions of the environmental disaster we face, and a willingness to reduce government social spending while giving carte blanche to Homeland Security, the National Security Agency, and the military, I wouldn’t want to be a progressive any more than do many Americans.

What makes me optimistic, despite my deep disappointment with the Obama administration and with the psychological and spiritual obtuseness of some liberal and progressive movements, is that love itself permeates the universe and continues to manifest itself in the aspirations of most human beings. No matter how successful the media and daily life in capitalist society are in generating despair, individualism, materialism, and cynicism, the desire for a world based on

love and generosity cannot be fully extinguished: it keeps on popping up and demanding to be heard. I call this Love's Rebellion—a refusal to accept the ethos of materialism and selfishness as the ultimate truth of our lives, an insistence on seeing the goodness and generosity in others, and a determination to replace “power over” with caring for each other and caring for the earth!

It's time now to give Love's Rebellion a political platform. And to make that happen, we need your help to push these issues into the public sphere. Here there is something to be learned from the Tea Party about strategy. Tea Party activists managed to push the discourse in the country to the right by mounting electoral challenges to Republican lawmakers who were seen by the Tea Party as too centrist. That same thing could happen if spiritual progressives were to launch campaigns against centrist Democrats, and simultaneously to challenge liberal and progressive movements to reframe their demands to include the issues we raise in our Spiritual Covenant with America (see tikkun.org/covenant).

What You Can Do

The most effective way to help introduce a spiritual progressive voice into the public arena is for you to be in the public sphere. You can start by creating a local study group to discuss *Tikkun* articles; forming a chapter of the Network of Spiritual Progressives; building a spiritual progressive caucus in your union, professional organization, church, synagogue, mosque, political party; or running for some sort of office. Many people who run for local school board, city council, or other posts have never been elected officials before—this is something that any of us has the ability to do. Being old, young, inexperienced, or poor cannot prevent you from going door-to-door to get the signatures you need to become a candidate. If your mobility is limited, it's possible to do outreach through the Internet.

The purpose is to challenge the current values generated by what we call the globalization of materialism and selfishness (though it is often known as the globalization of capital). Instead of simply reacting to every latest outrage, you can help put forward a whole different frame for politics. Together, we can raise consciousness about how a framework of love and generosity can manifest in concrete political programs: a Global Marshall Plan, an Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a more sensible health care plan (Medicare for Everyone), a ban against all forms of government spying on American citizens, protections for whistle-blowers, a tax on carbon, a ban on fracking, massive funding for clean sources of solar and wind energy, a huge program of building high-quality housing and environmentally sustainable mass transportation, universally available free child care and elder care, a ban on increasing the interest on student loans beyond the level necessary to keep up with inflation, the legalization

of marijuana and other non-addictive psychoactive drugs, a minimum wage set at the level of a living wage (today in California that would be approximately \$22 per hour for a family with two adults and two children), and a guaranteed annual income for everyone who is unable to find work or unable to do their work.

As we succeed in electing more spiritual progressives to public office, we will need to build a strong movement organization (the Network of Spiritual Progressives can serve as a starting place) to help sustain those people elected and keep them from being engulfed by the existing corruption of our government or from giving up in frustration. No matter whether you use a wheelchair, live in a retirement home, or are just starting college classes, you have the capacity to collect signatures to get a ballot initiative to back any of the progressive initiatives I've described. If you have children, bring them along—they'll love it if you get into it.

OK. I realize all of this might seem a little scary and overwhelming, and you'll need help to act on these ideas. We want to provide that. We can provide you with draft resolutions and other materials. We can give you materials to hand out at the next statewide or national gathering of your political party, professional organization, or religious institution, or at a local supermarket or bookstore.

We have a training for potential activists or leaders in a spiritual progressive movement that affirms Love's Rebellion. It is scheduled for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, January 17-20, 2014, in the San Francisco Bay Area (more info at spiritualprogressives.org/training) that we'd love for you to attend. Even at the last moment, signing up for the training might still be possible—send me an email at rabbilerner.tikkun@gmail.com. And if you are reading this after January 20, you can set up an event in your area and we can come and do another training there. Get us thirty people who want to do a two- or three-day training and can afford to subsidize our travel and staff time, and we'll be there. Contact me at rabbilerner.tikkun@gmail.com if you want to take on any part of this project.

Though it may be too late for the 2014 midterm elections, it's time to start building toward the 2016 congressional and

Join Our Movement

Through the work of the Network of Spiritual Progressives—the interfaith and secular-humanist-welcoming activist organization associated with this magazine—*Tikkun* is creating a movement with a positive vision of the world we want to create: a world of love, generosity, social justice, compassion, and caring for each other.



tikkun.org/join

presidential elections. To do that, spiritual progressives need to build groups of people who are willing to meet consistently to plan out a local strategy. Here are some possible activities that such groups could pursue:

1. Study the perspectives we've developed in *Tikkun* and create a monthly reading group that discusses the articles in the latest edition of *Tikkun* magazine. Encourage group members to go to spiritualprogressives.org and read about the Spiritual Covenant with America (tikkun.org/covenant), the Global Marshall Plan (tikkun.org/GMP), and the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (tikkun.org/ESRA). Role-play how to raise these issues in door-to-door encounters with your neighbors.
2. Run as delegates to the statewide and national conventions of your political party (even the Republican Party—you'll be surprised, but there are people in *every* political party who will respond to Love's Rebellion and be attracted to the core ideas of the Spiritual Covenant with America). Alternatively, get a petition to put your name on the ballot for some relevant public office and use the opportunity of running for office (any office) to spread new ideas that emanate from *Tikkun's* Network of Spiritual Progressives into the public arena.
3. Go to churches, synagogues, mosques, civic organizations, professional organizations, or the local city council to present these ideas. The goal is to generate a public debate about the ideals that lie behind the Network of Spiritual Progressives' programmatic focus—even if in doing so you lose some electoral support. Changing consciousness is the goal, and that can only happen if we are ready to lose and keep

coming back and showing why the worldview of love, generosity, caring for each other and the earth, compassion, and kindness is actually a far better framework to use than the narrow worldview of self-interest that the pragmatists and realists rely on to motivate supporters.

4. Go to constituent meetings of your congressional representatives and challenge them for being too narrow in their vision of what is needed.
5. Build a local chapter of the Network of Spiritual Progressives that will continue on beyond any election. *Tikkun* is barred from endorsing candidates in elections in order to retain our nonprofit status. You are not similarly barred, so our trainings and ideas can be very helpful to you and others who are ready to bring our visionary ideas into the public arena. A caring society—based on caring for each other and caring for the earth—is precisely what is needed now. People are hungering for it. So many people have always felt alone without anyone else to ally with in building a more caring world. You can be the spark that ignites the souls of others and enables them to finally have the confidence to fight for the world they believe in and yearn for.
6. Create a monthly potluck in your community for all social change activists, share food and stories of what people are doing, and encourage people to meet in small groups to share the problems that they've encountered so that they can learn from each others' experiences. Use the opportunity to present *Tikkun's* analysis and to celebrate Love's Rebellion!

So let's make a New Year's resolution we keep: to make significant steps toward this goal by the beginning of 2015. If not you, who? If not now, when? ■

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Protesters in Kolkata, India, decry violence against women following the death of a twenty-three-year-old woman who was gang-raped and beaten on a bus in New Delhi. Activists in India later criticized U.S. feminists for reproducing colonial discourse in their responses to the attack.

Violence Against Women

We Need a Transnational Analytic of Care

BY ELORA HALIM CHOWDHURY

WHEN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE occurs in the Global South, how should feminists in the Global North respond? Sometimes feminists in Europe and the United States say nothing, fearful that their attempts to speak out about gender violence in South Asia, Africa, Latin America, or other formerly colonized regions will reproduce colonial dynamics. At other times they do speak, and their language echoes imperial narratives about needing to “rescue” downtrodden women from “backward” cultural traditions. To move to a more constructive place, we need to foster a transnational analytic of care: one that is not defensive, reactionary, or silencing. We need an analytic of care that is cognizant of the local *and* global processes that create conditions of vulnerability for women and form the asymmetrical planes in which cross-cultural alliances and solidarity practices must happen.

The urgency of our need for more constructive forms of transnational feminist solidarity became particularly apparent in December 2012, when feminists across the globe took to the pen and the streets in response to the gruesome gang rape of a young woman in New Delhi, the capital of India. The twenty-three-year-old woman was returning home after watching the film *The Life of Pi* with a male friend in a shopping mall in South Delhi. She and her companion that night tried to hail public buses and auto-rickshaws to

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AP Photo/Bikas Das



A narrow focus on sexual assault can obscure how the structural violence of the global economy is also a central source of women's suffering in the Global South. This photo, *Death of Thousand Dreams* by Taslima Akhter, captures the final embrace of two workers killed by the April 2013 factory collapse in Bangladesh.

no avail. Eventually, a private chartered bus stopped to pick them up. There were six men on the bus, including the driver, his younger brother (who posed as the conductor), and four others who worked in various low-skilled jobs in the city and were economic migrants from neighboring states. The bus did not have a permit to be on the roads after-hours; investigations later revealed that the traffic police had been bribed in order for it to pass through security checkpoints. The men on the bus, apparently on a "joyride," beat the young woman and her friend. When the woman and her friend resisted, they dragged her to the back of the bus and took turns raping her. The assault lasted several hours as the bus plowed through the city streets, and involved the insertion of a metal rod into the woman's

body, which caused her intestines to spill out. Afterward, the couple was stripped naked and thrown off the bus. The driver tried to run over the woman, but her friend managed to pull her out of the way.

The young woman's ordeal did not stop there: for nearly half an hour, passersby ignored the pair's cries for help. When the police finally arrived, instead of transporting the woman and her friend immediately to the nearest hospital, they argued over jurisdiction. The woman fought for her life for two weeks and finally succumbed to her injuries in a hospital in Singapore. Even though the government ostensibly flew her to Singapore for better care, many in India were critical of the move as her condition was too fragile—they saw the move as a gesture by the government to dampen the public outrage and massive protests in Delhi and all over India. The men accused of this brutal crime are currently standing trial in a fast-track court.

In the face of mounting civil protests, the government set up a committee that brought representatives from diverse constituencies in India to put forth a set of legal and social recommendations to deal with violence and discrimination against women. Even though feminist groups found these recommendations inadequate, indeed a "mockery," some believe that the changes underway in legal and social policy may set the stage for transforming structures and attitudes around women's rights, access, and citizenship.

Feminist Responses

Amid the avalanche of feminist responses to this particular event, a debate ensued around the question of the appropriate terms of engagement with women's oppression in the Global South. Crudely speaking, many feminists in the West were either called out for not being critical enough of patriarchal social structures in India that contribute to violence against women or blamed for casting Indian men and culture within a colonial mindset that sees misogyny as an inherently Eastern phenomenon. By extension this mindset obscures a long history of using the status of women in a society as the measure of its progress, which aids colonial and imperial missions. At the same time, while many responses in the Indian media were powerful in pointing out apathy and misogyny in India's state machinery and public attitudes toward women's roles in society, some of these narratives also engaged in problematic class-based assumptions about the "natural link" between poverty and violent masculinity. These responses fell short of shining light on globalization and the structural inequalities that play a role in producing both victims and perpetrators of violence. Focusing on poverty in a narrow sense, they failed to discuss the global economic conditions that make poor women and men especially vulnerable to extreme violence and suffering.

This kind of skewed narrative supports the continuation of an imperialist feminism that seeks to "rescue" downtrodden women from backward cultural traditions and misogynist states and men. At the same time, it can obscure the fact that violence is not confined to any particular group in society but rather cuts across class, religion, ethnicity, and region. The imperialist baggage in feminist perceptions (*continued on page 55*)

Taslima Akhter (taslimaakhter.com)

Beyond Allyship

Multiracial Work to End Racism

BY JULIE GREENBERG



CHALLENGING RACISM IS KEY to creating a just world. Concerned activists already know which institutions and ideologies to target: the prison system, the urban education system, the distribution of wealth, and the value systems that privilege some and put others in peril.

What many of us haven't figured out is how to create powerful, sustainable, cross-race and cross-class movements for change. Speaking from a place of humility and yearning, I'd like to share some of my own reflections on where I feel stuck in challenging racism and some ideas on how that could change. My sense is that the stuck place for me and other white people in my community involves our activist relationships and our approach to working in multiracial settings to build this movement. How can we be more effective? What is stopping us? What old models need to shift for us to be in powerful coalitions working for change?

The Question of Allyship

The question I've been struggling with most is the idea of "allyship"—how to be an ally to people of color in the struggle against racism. Many anti-oppression and diversity trainers talk about becoming allies to people with less structural power in our society, retracting a bit of self to make room for the other, giving one's all to support the empowerment of people of color. Activists JLove Calderón and Tim Wise explain this idea of allyship in more depth in their "Code of Ethics for Antiracist White Allies":

As antiracist allies, we seek to work with people of color to create real multiracial democracy. We do not aspire to lead the struggle for racial justice and equity, but rather, to follow the lead of persons and communities of color and to work in solidarity with them, as a way to obtain this goal. We do not engage in the antiracist struggle on behalf of people of color, so as to "save" them, or as an act of charity. We oppose and seek to eradicate white supremacy because it is an unjust system, and we believe in the moral obligation of all persons to resist injustice. . . . It's not enough to be in contact with people of color as we go about our work. We also need to be prepared to change what we're doing if and when people of color suggest there may be problems, practically or ethically, with our existing methods of challenging racism. Although accountability does not require that we agree with and respond affirmatively to every critique offered, if people of color are telling us over and over again that something is wrong with our current practices, accountability requires that we take it seriously and correct the practice. And, all such critiques should be seen as opportunities for personal reflection and growth.

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"I've started organizing with imams, priests, and rabbis from PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) who are reaching across lines of race, class, gender, and geography nationwide," the author writes. Here, PICO members meet for a June 2013 gathering in California.

Klansmen murdered civil rights activists Andrew Goodman, James Earl Chaney, and Michael Schwerner in Mississippi, just one year before Julie Greenberg moved there. This art piece from Pamela Chatterton-Purdy's *Icons of the Civil Rights Movement* series memorializes the three young activists.



I'm not sure whether the problem is with this allyship framework itself or with the way in which I am engaging with it. I have found that my attempts to work within this model have left me silencing myself on issues that I have passionate strategic energy to address. My self-imposed silence deprives organizations of the experience, energy, and input I could bring to our critically important work. I also wonder whether my attempts to engage in allyship actually reinforce the feelings of superiority that I have been taught to have as a white person. Sometimes I wonder if I am basing my understanding of allyship in a condescending view of myself as more developed than the "other." If these attitudes limit our work, then they are counterproductive.

I grew up as the child of a white activist in the Civil Rights Movement. I witnessed firsthand the complex mixed messages involved with that work. "Maximum feasible participation of the poor" as an organizing principle coexisted with a dynamic of Northerners showing up to liberate the South. I'm noticing similar paradoxical dynamics in white activists' contemporary attempts to engage with the idea of allyship. In the pages that follow I will take an in-depth look at both the scenarios of the 1960s and of today, asking how we can break through the relational places in our organizing that keep us from being effective makers of change.

Growing Up in the Civil Rights Movement

In the summer of 1965, when I was almost eight, my mother piled her four little girls into the station wagon to drive three days from our home in Washington, D.C., to Mississippi. Clothes, toys, pets, and all other essential articles of life filled that station wagon until it was packed from floor to almost ceiling. Then we four little girls crawled into the space left at the top.

My mother, Polly Greenberg, had been in the Office of Education when ideas for Head Start started percolating, brewing links between grassroots activism and the massive resources of the Great Society. My mother had been part of the earliest meetings where a national, federally funded campaign to raise children out of poverty by giving them equal educational opportunity was taking shape. My mother's role was to accept applications from people who wanted to open Head Start programs in the South that very first summer.

At the time I didn't know how much violence civil rights workers had confronted. Only one year earlier, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Earl Chaney were murdered for inciting voter registration. The KKK was powerfully organized into Citizens' Councils and the police, prison system, media, public schools, and state and local governments were all run exclusively by whites.

Young as I was, I understood my mother and her co-organizers' strategy for change. They were creating a revolutionary version of Head Start in which poor parents were trained to do all the jobs in the program that enrolled their children. They became the teachers, administrators, cooks, bus drivers, and more, so that a huge economic infusion, in the form of wages, accompanied the early education offered by Head Start. The aim was comprehensive economic and educational social change and participation of the poor in decision making.

When we arrived in Mississippi, we landed in Edwards, a tiny town about an hour from the state capital. The ubiquitous "colored" sign hung over the dilapidated water fountain outside the town's general store.

We moved onto an abandoned college campus called Mount Beulah that had a dirt road running through its center, scrappy lawns, and some run-down, scattered buildings. We ate in the communal dining hall. The food was mostly white—mashed potatoes, grits, white bread, noodles—but the people eating it were a real mixture of skin tones. At that time, to sit with people of different races was a radical act in the

Pamela Chatterton-Purdy (chatterton-purdyart.com)

South. In the evening our racially mixed community gathered for long hours of freedom songs.

The heat on those hot Mississippi nights rose, making my top bunk swelteringly hot. The civil rights workers decided to build a swimming pool. Machinery came and dug out a swimming-pool-size hole; more machinery came and covered it with concrete. We waited for water from a spring to fill the pool. But that pool just wouldn't work right. The water was a rusty, mucky color with a strange smell. We never did swim in it.

Northern Activists in the South

When the local Head Start program opened on the Mount Beulah campus, its organizers had not yet found enough local teachers who felt qualified to teach. Somehow, my seven-year-old sister and I stepped up to fill the gap. We took on a Head Start classroom of our own with thirty children. There were official teachers who sat around watching, but we led all the activities. We taught the songs and games and activities that we had learned at our high-quality early childhood programs in the North.

After Head Start hours we played with the civil rights workers' children and with the local black girls. They spoke in a deep southern dialect that we could barely understand. But we understood how to build strollers for our dollies out of cardboard boxes and how to pull them on strings together. We understood how to make a fort on a landing under the staircase and another one up in a tree. We kids got chiggers, lice, and a scabby skin disease called impetigo. My mother consulted a doctor who assumed we were too poor, like everyone else in the county, to pay for the treatment of choice. The conditions lingered and lingered.

One day I was hanging out in the cool, air-conditioned office when bullets ricocheted through the walls of the building. The adults in the office herded everyone to the back of the office house, where we hid behind stacked cardboard storage cartons. More bullets rent the air. It turned out that a local racist was giving his young son shooting lessons and had decided to pay a visit to the mixed-race invaders at Mount Beulah. Later we learned that our people had called the local sheriff who said nothing could be done, and then had called the F.B.I. who arrested the shooter.

Another day a bunch of civil rights activists reported with hilarity how they had entered a whites-only swimming pool at a fancy hotel and integrated it by swimming together. Later some of them went back with ink bottles. They enacted the whites' worst fear by leaving a trail of black ink in the swimming pool, saying, "They're worried we'll pollute the pool, our black will rub off; well, we'll show them."

In the fall, when the school year started, my family moved to Jackson so we kids could attend the white, segregated neighborhood public school. Adults were called "ma'am" and "sir" and children were paddled if we didn't comply. In fifth grade, my class studied the civil war. Chapter by chapter, the textbook recounted glorious victories of the South. As an afterthought, at the end of the book, notice was made that the North had won the war.

On weekends we often visited rural counties where we witnessed debilitating poverty. We visited shacks with leaky roofs, caving floors, and no running water. We saw the radical Head Start movement emerge from the cotton fields and kudzu-laden trees: people built their children playgrounds, created classrooms, invented curriculum, met on hot, dusty evenings to plan, and stayed up all night with shotguns protecting their work from the KKK.

When the Office of Economic Opportunity withdrew funding for the program, my mother helped organize an action in Washington that involved taking a cohort of Mississippi nursery school children to protest the funding cuts on the (*continued on page 56*)



"I grew up as the child of a white activist in the Civil Rights Movement," Greenberg writes. "At that time, to sit with people of different races was a radical act in the South."

Trayvon Martin

Reflections on the Black and Jewish Struggle for Justice

BY YAVILAH McCOY

JEWISH ACTIVIST COMMUNITIES have historically been allies to communities of color in the fight for racial justice and equality in our country. Jews were among those who worked to establish the NAACP in 1909. In the early 1900s, Jewish newspapers drew parallels between the Black movement out of the South and the Jews' escape from Egypt, pointing out that both Blacks and Jews lived in ghettos, and calling anti-Black riots in the South "pogroms." Historically, Jewish leaders stressed the similarities rather than the differences between the Jewish and Black experience in America, and emphasized the idea that both groups would benefit the more America moved toward a society of merit, free of religious, ethnic, and racial restrictions. In more recent history, Blacks and Jews fought side by side in the Civil Rights Movement. The kinship and relationship between the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel has been regularly and continually celebrated.

What has been less often discussed is the relevance of the social circumstances that created and, in some cases, still sustains a rift between Black activists and white Jewish anti-racism activists. In the late 1960s, the birth of the Black Power movement shifted the emphasis in Black activist communities toward self-determination, self-defense tactics, and racial pride. While this shift was crucial to the evolution of Black consciousness and identity in America, the expansion from the singular nonviolence and racial integration approach espoused by King left many white Jewish activists with little input in the Black community and an anti-racism movement that seemed to be moving on without them.

Since the 1960s, efforts at coalition building and solidarity work for justice between white Jewish and Black communities have suffered and never reached the pinnacle that was reached during the early days of the Civil Rights Movement. The rapid decline of American anti-Semitism since 1945 (alongside the nation's continuing and pervasive anti-Black racism) and the increasing gap in accumulated wealth and education between Black and Jewish communities have widened the rift of perceived shared interests between Black and Jewish activists. Many of the civil rights struggles that joined Blacks and Jews in the middle of the last century—i.e., anti-lynching, desegregation, voter registration, etc.—were

"Blacks and Jews fought side by side in the Civil Rights Movement," the author writes. Here, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth march alongside Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965.



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AP Photo



Members of Beyt Tikkun Synagogue pray alongside Rev. Dr. J. Alfred Smith Jr. of Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer. Disappointingly few synagogues nationwide engaged in similar expressions of Jewish-Black solidarity.

typically organized around divisions in society that easily identified injustices between persecutors and their victims (a division in which Jews could also identify as victims). Between the late 1960s and the present, much of the anti-racism work that has galvanized Black activists has shifted and come to be concerned more specifically with disparities in access, privilege, and power between those with and without white skin privilege in our country.

A Weakened Coalition

In 2013, the lack of deep and abiding connections between Black and Jewish communities of activists became apparent to me in the disparate responses I encountered to the events surrounding the killing of Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman.

Here's a quick summary for any readers who need a reminder of what happened: in July 2013, after more than sixteen hours of deliberation, a jury of five white women and one Latina woman found George Zimmerman not guilty of second-degree murder and manslaughter. Previously, on a drizzly February night, Zimmerman had shot Martin, an unarmed seventeen-year-old, in a gated community in Sanford, near Orlando. Citing Florida's stand-your-ground law, Sanford police originally did not charge Zimmerman or take him into custody. Only after social media outrage and civil rights protests alleged racial profiling and discrimination did Governor Rick Scott appoint a special prosecutor, who brought the charges against Zimmerman six weeks after the shooting. In the July 2013 hearing, the jury found that while Zimmerman justifiably used deadly force in his struggle with Martin on the night of February 26, 2012, they also believed that such force was "necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm" to himself—Florida's definition of self-defense.

In the days following the verdict, I found myself inspired by the groundswell of activism that was led by young people of color across the United States and troubled by what appeared to be a great silence among many of the white Jewish social justice activists I know in regard to the events that transpired. There were the usual Jewish advocates for racial justice issues like Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, which organized groups in New York to attend rallies and continued to address and connect the issues in the Trayvon Martin case to New York's stop-and-frisk law and other pervasive issues of fear, safety, and control in New York's policing policies.

The Anti-Defamation League's public statement said it did not question the verdict but also argued that the case "raised serious questions about the wisdom of stand-your-ground laws and the easy access to concealed weapons permits," noting that "had neither been in place, this tragedy may have never occurred" and calling for "continued and much-needed discussion about the lingering impact of racism in society."

Tikkun and the Tikkun Daily blog published roughly twenty pieces about Trayvon Martin and Zimmerman's acquittal, including a piece by executive editor Michael

Jewish responses to the Trayvon Martin case were noticeably isolated “in comparison to the tremendous outpouring of passion and energy . . . among African American activists,” the author writes.



Lerner, as well as numerous pieces on stop-and-frisk. And congregants from Rabbi Lerner's synagogue in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as members nationwide of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (*Tikkun's* broader activist community), reached out to local Black churches immediately following the verdict and joined their church services that Sunday to express outrage at the verdict and physically stand in solidarity with the Black community.

There was also a smattering of editorial pieces that were put out mostly by individual members of the Jewish activist community who were not speaking on behalf of organizations, but thinking about the issues, attending rallies, and contemplating how they might be part of an anti-racism moment that was sweeping the country.

Despite how proud I was of each of these efforts, in the weeks that followed the verdict it was difficult not to notice how isolated these responses were in comparison to the tremendous outpouring of passion and energy that I was witnessing among African American activists who with minimal resources had successfully organized protests in over one hundred cities across the nation. Where were the abundant number of Jewish synagogues and agencies that regularly stated commitments to social justice when it came to standing in solidarity with these groups? How were we, as a Jewish community, standing in support of people of color and their leadership at this crucial moment? As an African American Jewish activist, with strong ties to both of the communities that I hail from, I was acutely aware of how, despite the active engagement of some Jewish leaders and activists, the Jewish community on the whole was not becoming energized around this issue.

On the day of the Zimmerman verdict, and in the weeks that followed, I watched diligently as organized protests erupted around the country. Fellow African American activists and I organized vigils and stayed close as we struggled to feel our way through the outrage, disappointment, and anger that was sweeping our African American families and our communities near and far. I had conversations, almost daily, with mothers who saw the safety of their own teenage sons threatened by the verdict in the Zimmerman case.

I spoke to Black men from a variety of class positions who felt compelled to revisit their own vulnerability to being guilty until proven innocent as a result of this case. I spoke to my own fifteen-year-old son, who feared the consequences of walking from friends' homes after dark in our Jewish but majority-white suburban community after having learned that Trayvon Martin—a seventeen-year-old boy walking home at night, unarmed, with only a bag of candy in hand—could be pursued and shot on the suspicion of being a threat. I watched our first African American president stand before media cameras himself and state before our nation that “Trayvon Martin could have been me.” I spoke to African American activists, young and old, who were not surprised by the failure of the Florida legal system to serve and deliver justice in the death of a young Black man, but who were duly outraged at current laws being used and upheld in Florida and twenty other states to support and encourage vigilantism and further extend the extrajudicial killings of people of color in the United States. Amid this swirl of righteous indignation among people of color and their white allies, I became puzzled by the absence of a more vigorous response among my beloved white Jewish activists and the broader Jewish community.

In previous months, when the Boston Marathon bombing occurred, many of the Jewish social justice agencies that I belonged to organized impromptu gatherings and “think and listens” to discuss our individual and communal responses to the bombing. At the time, the Newtown massacre and the Boston Marathon bombing seemed reason enough to galvanize Jewish activists and communities against insufficient gun control legislation in our country, and concern and conversation about these events seemed to abound everywhere. In the case of the Trayvon Martin killing and Zimmerman acquittal, it seemed strange that, among those same social justice agencies, (*continued on page 58*)

Creative Commons/David Shankbone (top) and Michael Fleshman (bottom)



What Terms for Middle East Peace Would Actually Work?

BY RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

HOPE FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE can be helpful if it creates pressure on both sides to take the steps in negotiations necessary for a viable peace agreement to be produced. But it can be destructive if it encourages either side to enter into agreements that it cannot sustain. Better no agreement than one that temporarily raises hopes only to dash them, as happened after the Oslo Accord in 1993 when neither side followed through in creating the changes in consciousness needed to make the accord viable.

No matter what agreements are worked out in negotiations such as those fostered by Secretary of State John Kerry, they are unlikely to succeed until a dramatic reconciliation of the heart takes place among the various parties to the conflict. Without such a reconciliation, even a globally popular settlement agreement (as the Oslo Accord was when it was first signed) has little chance of succeeding.

That transformation of consciousness could be facilitated if the United States, European countries, and the peace movements in Israel and Palestine were to help people imagine what a desirable settlement—an agreement that would satisfy the fundamental

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Olivia Wise (oliviawisestudio.com)



A peace treaty must begin by defining almost all of pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza as within Palestine's borders. Such a change would transform the lives of Palestinians such as these students, whose school in Hebron is located in a militarized zone surrounded by Israeli settlements.

needs of both sides—could look like. Especially if the extensive media power of the United States were used to popularize such a vision, it could be transformative.

There are two reasons why it is crucial that these terms be articulated by all who are genuinely committed to peace. First, doing so would help people understand why a peace agreement that neglects the key needs addressed in this proposal is unlikely to work and hence is less desirable than no agreement, since when that agreement fails an even deeper pessimism and despair would ensue. The failure of unsustainable agreements would only strengthen the “refuseniks,” those on both sides who are really against any lasting peace. Among Israelis, the refuseniks are mainly Israeli settlers and their champions in the right-wing secular and religious parties in Israel who want Israel to permanently dominate all of the ancient Eretz Yisrael; rather than agree to peace, they would prefer to

either chase Palestinians out of their land or impose a regime in which Palestinians live permanently as second-class citizens. Among Palestinians, the refuseniks include those who follow Hamas and believe that only armed struggle can achieve what they seek, which is a society in which Jews live as a tamed minority. And these Palestinians gain support from widespread despair among younger Palestinians about Israel's seemingly unending quest to build more settlements and Jewish-only housing in the West Bank.

Second, it's crucial to articulate viable peace terms because if the current negotiations fail, we may see a repeat of the scenario that followed the failure of the 2000 Camp David negotiations, when President Clinton joined Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in placing the blame for the failure on the Palestinians, and most people, not knowing the details of the terms offered, accepted the American-Israeli account of what happened. Americans must insist that we be informed of exactly what both sides are willing to settle for. Only if we have in our own minds a clear picture of what a sustainable agreement would look like will we be able to assess what is being offered and hence be less likely to fall into another round of false blaming (of either side).

Tikkun's Proposal for Two States at Peace

Below is what we believe a peace plan must involve for it to have any chance of swaying hearts and minds on all sides. Please keep this article and share it with your friends and on social media.

1. The peace treaty will recognize the State of Israel and the State of Palestine and will define Palestine's borders to include almost all of pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza, with small exchanges of land mutually agreed upon and roughly equivalent in value, historic meaning, and military significance to each side. The peace plan will also include a corresponding treaty between Israel and all Arab states; this treaty will specify recognition of Israel, promise full diplomatic and economic cooperation among these parties, and accept all the terms of this agreement as specified herein. It will also include a twenty- to thirty-year plan for moving toward a Middle Eastern common market and the eventual establishment of a political union along the lines of the European Union. This could entail building a federation between Israel and Palestine or between Israel, Palestine, and Jordan—a plan originally proposed by Israel's president Shimon Peres. (*Explanatory note:* Israel has never specified its borders. It must do so now. Palestinians and many in the Arab world have never accepted Israel's legitimacy. They must do so now. Everyone in the Middle East would benefit from a Middle Eastern common market if it were to operate within the most advanced guidelines for environmental sustainability.)

Andrew Larsen (andrewlarsenphotography.com)

2. Jerusalem will be the capital of both Israel and Palestine and will be governed for all civic issues by an elected council in West Jerusalem and a separate elected council in East Jerusalem. The Old City will become an international city whose sovereignty will be implemented by an international council that guarantees equal access to all holy sites. This council's taxes will be shared equally by the city councils of East and West Jerusalem. East Jerusalem and its residents will be part of the Palestinian state, and West Jerusalem and its residents will be part of the State of Israel. (*Explanatory note:* Much of the talk about Jerusalem being “the eternal capital of the Jewish State” is based on the historical memory of the Jewish people preserved in its religious texts and prayers. But that “Jerusalem” did not include much beyond the borders of the Old City—not West Jerusalem and not East Jerusalem. So those parts outside the Old City are reasonably allocated according to the Israeli and Palestinian populations as they were before the Israeli government started to encourage and fund West Bank settlements for ideological and military purposes. A plausible period upon which to base this assessment would be the late 1980s, before this massive effort to settle Jews in traditionally Arab parts of East Jerusalem had begun in full. On the other hand, there are parts of Jerusalem that were Arab villages before 1948 and were subsequently settled by Israelis before the last years in the 1980s, and these will likely remain as part of Israel.)
3. Immediate and unconditional freedom will be accorded to all prisoners in Israel and Palestine whose arrests are connected in some way to the Occupation and/or resistance to the Occupation. Those who have been convicted of murder by a jury of their peers will be turned over to the government of their own people. (*Explanatory note:* Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been arrested and often held without charges for weeks or months before being released, and some will remain in this condition until there has been a general release of all Occupation-related prisoners.)
4. An international force will be established to separate and protect each side from the extremists of the other side who will inevitably seek to disrupt the peace agreement. And a joint peace police—composed of an equal number of Palestinians and Israelis at all personnel levels—will be created to work with the international force to combat violence. (*Explanatory note:* The same reasoning that suggests that the Old City of Jerusalem should become an international city because of its central role in the history and religious beliefs of billions of people in the world also suggests that permanent peace in the Middle East is an international concern, so we should all play a positive role in guaranteeing that peace for the benefit of all residents of the area.)
5. Reparations will be offered by the international community to Palestinian refugees and their descendents, as well as to families who suffered measurable loss or incarceration in Israeli prisons during the Occupation. The amount should be generous so that Palestinians will be brought to an economic level equivalent to the Israeli median income within a ten-year period. The same level of reparations will also be made available to all Jews who fled Arab lands between 1948 and 1977.
6. A truth and reconciliation process will be created, modeled on the South African version but shaped to the specific needs of these two cultures. In addition, an international peace committee will be appointed by representatives of the three major religious communities of the area to develop and implement the teaching in schools of a) nonviolence and non-violent communication, b) empathy and forgiveness, and c) a sympathetic point of view toward the history of the other side. The adoption of this curriculum will be mandatory in every grade from sixth grade through high school. The committee should be empowered to ensure the elimination of all teaching of hatred toward the other side in schools, media, synagogues, churches, mosques, and any other consciousness-shaping institutions. It should also be empowered to stop teaching against the implementation of this treaty in any public, private, or religious educational institutions, media, or public meetings. (*Explanatory note:* A similar strategy was pioneered by the United States in Japan and Germany after World War II. These restrictions on free speech should be phased out

Peace will only persist if the international community finds ways to support new generations of Israelis and Palestinians in healing from post-traumatic stress. Here, an Israeli mother in Beersheba reflects on the trauma of a rocket attack during which she had to run for cover with her seven-month-old baby.



The settlements must stop expanding to make peace possible. This painting, *Bab Al Shams*, 2013 by Nabil Anani, depicts an encampment erected by Palestinian activists in January 2013 to protest the construction of more Israeli housing in the West Bank.



within fifty years if the hatred and anger on both sides has demonstrably receded in the consciousness of future generations.)

7. Palestine will agree to allow all Jews living in the West Bank to remain there as law-abiding citizens of the new Palestinian state, as long as they give up their Israeli citizenship and abide by decisions of the Palestinian courts. A resettlement fund will be created for the following purposes: a) to help West Bank settlers move back to Israel if they wish to remain Israeli citizens, and b) to help Palestinians move from the lands of their dispersion to Palestine if they wish to be citizens of the new Palestinian state. (*Explanatory note:* It is not reasonable to expel people from their homes if they are in fact willing to live as citizens of the Palestinian state and in accord with its laws. Former Israelis living in the new State of Palestine must give up all attempts to reinvolve the Israeli government or the IDF in protecting their perceived “rights.” Israel must accept that it has no right to interfere with the actions of the Palestinian government or court system. Israelis should remember that in the first decade of Israel’s existence, the vast majority of Palestinians were put under martial law and had none of the rights of the rest of Israeli society. Palestine will have the absolute right to disarm settlers who choose to stay as citizens of Palestine.)
8. In exchange for Palestine’s agreement to allow Israelis to stay in the West Bank as citizens of the Palestinian state, Israel will agree to let 20,000 Palestinian refugees return to the pre-1967 borders of Israel each year for the next thirty years and to provide them with housing. Israel will apologize to the Palestinian people for the Nakba in which so many Palestinians became refugees, and Palestine will apologize to the Israeli people for the acts of terror against Israeli civilians that created huge security fears for Israelis in the past decades. (*Explanatory note:* This number—20,000—is small enough to not change the demographic balance of Israel, yet large enough to show that Israel cares about Palestinian refugees and recognizes that they have been wronged.)
9. Full and equal rights will be afforded to all minority communities living within each of the two states, and in each state independent institutions will be funded to vigorously enforce minority rights. All forms of religious coercion, religious control over the state, or religious control over personal status issues like birth, marriage, divorce, and death will be eliminated. Each state, however, will have the right to give priority in immigration and immigrant housing—but not in any subsequent benefits—to its own leading ethnic community (Jews in Israel, Arabs in Palestine) for as long as either community faces substantial demonstrable discrimination or threats of violent assaults in other countries of the world.

Nabil Anani (nabilanani.net)

This agreement, while involving substantial compromises from both sides, provides the minimum terms to satisfy both Israelis and Palestinians who truly desire peace.

Yet it is important to emphasize that these terms will not generate peace in and of themselves. In my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine* I explore the post-traumatic stress disorders that continue to afflict both Israelis and Palestinians (and many of their Diaspora supporters), making it difficult for them to extend empathy to each other. I believe that presenting the plan above as the plan endorsed by the United States, Europe, and the United Nations can be an important step in helping people move beyond these traumas.

Another important step will be for the advanced industrial countries to launch a Global Marshall Plan based on the notion that homeland security can be achieved more effectively through generosity than through attempts at domination—a message that could eventually challenge the deep fear that by being “weak” either nation will subject itself to humiliation and domination by the other. The implementation of the Global Marshall Plan should rightly begin with the peoples of the Middle East, and it must be delivered in a generous spirit rather than a narrowly self-interested one.

A lasting peace will depend not only on the implementation of the terms specified above, but also on a systemic transformation of consciousness that enables the majority of people on each side of this struggle to recognize the humanity of people on the other side, to energetically and persistently convey respect for those on the other side, and to communicate deep regret for past hurts imposed on them. For peace to persist, each side must actually wish to live in peace and mutual respect with the other. It is this opening of the heart that is the indispensable condition for any agreement to last. To the extent that the politicians and diplomats do not understand this, it is unlikely that any agreement they reach will be viable in the long term.

This kind of change of consciousness is possible, and those who seek a lasting Middle East peace need to get together to design interventions in Israel, Palestine, and the global Diasporas of Arabs and Jews to develop a cadre to advance this kind of educational work to the level of society-wide interventions. Please copy and circulate this article, post it on websites and social media, and send it to everyone you can reach. ■



Palestinians line up at Checkpoint 300 in Bethlehem. More than 20,000 Palestinians commute from the West Bank to Israel every morning to reach their jobs, often facing long delays at checkpoints such as this one.

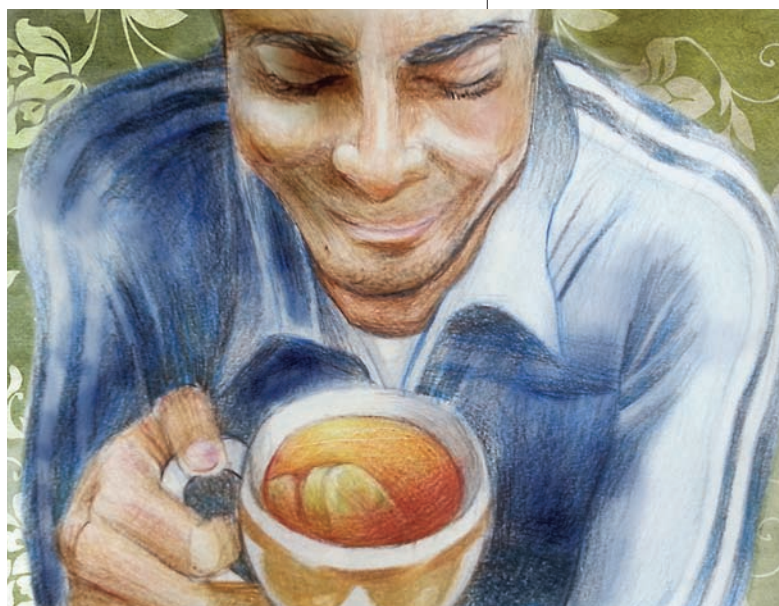
Andrew Larsen (andrewlarsenphotography.com)

Transformative Reconciliation

Meeting the Family of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill My Wife

BY DAVID HARRIS-GERSHON

Samar Odeh, the terrorist's brother, "spoke of how his younger sibling would sit before the television for hours upon end, watching the news, watching Palestinians being beaten . . . of how he must have snapped," the author writes.



WHEN MY WIFE AND I MOVED from the plains of Saint Louis to the desert hills of Jerusalem in the summer of 2000, we were newly married, giddy, and full of hope. Our intention was to spend a year studying talmudic texts, to absorb our bequeathed culture in the land whence it came.

Which is exactly what we did, dancing in circles on the sandy soil as doves circled high above Camp David, where Bill Clinton attempted to negotiate a peace agreement between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat, between Israelis and Palestinians. It was a peace we hoped was imminent. It was a peace that never came.

Two years later, in the summer of 2002, while we were pursuing graduate degrees in Jewish education, Hamas terrorists struck a cafeteria at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The blast tore open the building, threw my wife, Jamie, on the blood-streaked linoleum floor, and killed the two friends with whom she was sitting.

Amazingly, despite the shrapnel that pierced her body, Jamie survived. And after enduring an agonizing recovery in Israel, we returned to the States, where I—the secondary victim—became paralyzed by PTSD-like symptoms: Hyperventilating in public. Suffering panic attacks as a new, hyper-vigilant father. Becoming an insomniac as visions of terror kept me awake at night.

Compartmentalizing didn't help. Therapy didn't help. And so, struggling to live the life we'd been granted by chance, I decided to confront my trauma directly by researching the bombing, by learning everything I could about it. In doing so, I learned that the Hamas terrorist who placed the bomb next to my wife, Mohammad Odeh, had been captured by Israeli police. I learned that he had come from a moderate, middle-class family. And I learned that he had, astonishingly, expressed remorse. He had said the words, "I'm sorry."

And when I saw those words, "I'm sorry," I knew that I would go back to Israel/Palestine and try to confront him, try to ask him, "Why?"

Not because I wanted to seek my revenge, but because I was desperate to heal.

DAVID HARRIS-GERSHON is a day school teacher, blogger for *Tikkun*, and GrandSLAM storytelling winner for The Moth. The themes of this article are drawn from his new memoir, *What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife?* (Oneworld Publications, 2013).

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Making Contact

Five years later I did go back, for Mohammad Odeh's family had, remarkably, invited me to their home in East Jerusalem. The invitation availed itself after an intense, drawn-out correspondence between us, a correspondence conducted on my behalf by peace activists and Palestinian officials via ballpoint pens and lined paper.

The correspondence began when, in the summer of 2007, Leah Green of the Compassionate Listening Project traveled to the Odeh family's home in Silwan on my behalf. She arrived at their door with a letter I'd written in her hand. Mohammad Odeh's mother and brothers, after beckoning Green to a couch in their living room, sat and listened as my words were translated and read aloud. English becoming Arabic. The unknown becoming known.

And as they listened, they learned that I was not coming for revenge; that I simply wanted to understand them, to understand Odeh; that I wanted to know whether their son had truly expressed remorse.

Upon hearing such words, the family members all nodded and replied to the translator and activists, "Yes, please ask David to come." Then, they turned aside and said to a local Palestinian official and friend, "Please accompany him. You must ensure for us that he is not coming to exact his revenge."

Despite their reservations, the family wanted to break through all the barriers of fear that had been built up by decades of an asymmetrical conflict. They wanted me in their home, wanted this attempt at reconciliation—this attempt at a reckoning—to take place.

Refusing Fear

The Odehs weren't the only ones afraid, for several of my Jewish friends and colleagues spanning both sides of the political spectrum tried to convince me that this reconciliation quest of mine—a quest for personal healing that expanded to include the political as well—was not wise. They told me that I was not wise, that I should not go.

Among those trying to dissuade me was a prominent Israeli peace activist who had lost a child in the conflict and whose life was dedicated to reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, between Arabs and Jews. I had decided to call her after arriving in Israel, seeking support and advice. What I received instead shocked me, for when she learned that I would soon travel to the family's home with people I'd never met, and that no trained mediators would be helping me to negotiate this unpredictable and charged landscape, she balked.

"David, I'm going to ask you a question, and I want you to think about it seriously. Would it be the end of the world if you didn't meet with the Odeh family on this trip?" she asked.

My heart stopped as the refrain *Excuse me?* echoed silently. "I don't know. I haven't thought about this," I replied. "The visit is already planned, it's very soon."

"Because David, and I'm just being honest here," she said sternly, "I don't think you should go. You don't know how these things can go. Will you be visiting just the family? Or will the whole village be showing up to confront you?"

I didn't know.

"You might think you can do this on your own, but you're wrong. You can't. Promise me you'll think seriously about not going."

I shook my head, refusing to promise. Just as I would later shake my head when Israeli officials tried to thwart my visit to see Mohammad Odeh in prison—officials who were not keen on providing an American

"The family immediately disarmed me with their warmth," the author writes, remembering how Mohammad Odeh's mother put him at ease over steaming cups of tea.





For David Harris-Gershon and the Odeh family, the decision to sit down to tea together was difficult—and transformative.

writer with access to a perpetrator of terror who had, unprecedentedly, expressed remorse.

With obstacles facing me from multiple directions, I refused to allow fear to override hope, as it so often does in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I refused to succumb to the zero-sum view that it's not possible for both sides to simultaneously gain, that it's not possible that both sides deserve to live good, normal lives devoid of hatred and violence.

I refused to turn my back on the Palestinian family with their arms outstretched, asking that I step into their home.

The First Meeting

Moments before leaving for East Jerusalem, I felt an impending sense of dread, as though something terrible were crouching behind me, waiting to pounce. Everyone had made me afraid, which is why I hid a Swiss Army knife deep in a pocket, thinking, *just in case*.

But when I arrived, the family immediately disarmed me with their warmth, with their graciousness. I was led into their home by Odeh's mother, who directed me to a couch that traced the living room's three walls, its U shape a symbolic embrace, as though

guests were the thing this family cared about most.

I was served a steaming cup of tea, and once I had ceremoniously burnt my tongue, the conversation began. A Palestinian translator swiveled between us, as though watching a tennis match, as we spoke to one another at length. Odeh's mother talked of how they never knew of their son's actions—of how, if possible, they would have stopped it all. "If only we knew," she repeated. "If only we knew."

Odeh's brother, Samar, spoke of how his younger sibling would sit before the television for hours upon end, watching the news, watching Palestinians being beaten, arrested, expelled from their homes. Of how he must have snapped. Of how something must have gone horribly wrong.

I spoke of my pain, my rejection of revenge as a response to that pain. And I spoke of reconciliation, of peace, of how so many on my side—the Jewish side—wanted it, and how if our meeting could create just a bit, even on a microcosmic level, then, well, that would be something. They nodded in agreement. "Yes," several people in the room said, "we want it as well."

We talked and talked and—finally, when it was time for me to leave, Odeh's mother said that her son welcomed my efforts to meet him in prison. As I walked out the door, she asked that I promise to work towards a meeting. "I will," I said, shaking hands and waving goodbye to everyone. "I will."

Discovering Empathy

When I walked away from the Odeh family and made my way home, I knew that something had happened: a shift had occurred. Before the bombing, I had never tried to imagine life through Palestinians' eyes. They were simply my enemy, an enemy that needed to be defeated, an enemy personified by terrorism. I was ignorant of their rich history as a people, and of their suffering under the oppressive weight of an occupation that was invisible to me: the indefinite detentions, the home demolitions, the indiscriminate military raids in the middle of the night, rustling children out of their beds with semi-automatic rifles.

My inability to imagine Palestinians as actual people who lived actual lives was a blind spot that the various *hasbara* (Israeli propaganda) mechanisms had worked hard to create. But here's the irony: coming face-to-face with a radical, extremist element woven into the far fringes of Palestinian society—becoming a victim of (*continued on page 61*)

Earth-Honoring Faith

BY LARRY RASMUSSEN

THE CRISIS we face is not environmental, it's civilizational. There are far too many people consuming far too many resources for the planet to bear. As the climate changes, how do we undertake the hard transition from an industrial-technological civilization to an ecological-technological civilization? However we do it, it's a slog.

We may be on the cusp of a new geological age. The Holocene has hosted all human civilizations to date. Its salient mark has been a relatively stable climate. Now the Holocene is exiting, and ahead lies the "Anthropocene," an age of human-induced change in planetary processes, climate volatility, and uncertainty. The changes reach from the polar ice caps to the ocean depths, touching every ocean, landmass, and layer of the atmosphere. Human civilization is due for a rude awakening to the reality that the basic unit of human survival is not human society—it is the entire planet. We may soon be forced as a species to accept a truth that cosmologist Thomas Berry asserted: because "planetary health is primary" and "human well-being is derivative," the first law of economics is the preservation of nature's economy.

The impending ecological catastrophe is perhaps the greatest challenge humans have ever faced. Where are the leaders and where is the renewable moral-spiritual energy for tasks that will span generations? Might religious environmentalism contribute something essential?

Sacred Strangers

More than eight decades ago, sociologist Howard Becker undertook a study of leaders at inflection points in history, those moments when the future closed in around something quite different from the present. While Becker's study was provoked by secularization—rather than by the challenge of climate destabilization on a hot, crowded planet called home by more than 7 billion souls—his findings are suggestive. The most effective leaders, he discovered, were not the keepers of the reigning paradigm. Rather, the keepers of the conventional wisdom were so captivated by their own success that they failed to exit the mindset and institutions that had created wicked problems in the process of making their success possible.

Instead, the most effective leaders were "sacred strangers in secular society." Sacred strangers drew on traditions that anchored them in a place beyond the presently popular. At the same time these leaders undertook a revision and expansion of the very traditions

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Religious environmentalism "restores to human consciousness an understanding of nature as . . . the bearer of mystery and spirit," the author writes. *Walk Softly on the Earth* by Caitlin Ng.



Sadness sets in as we realize how much climate change and pollution have already altered our world. Might ritual practices help us mourn and also act? *Consider the Larger Implications of What You Do* by Caitlin Ng.

that anchored them. They were outliers and dissenters, yet they were not cynics about either social change or the reform of their cherished faith traditions. A compassionate retreat from the reigning culture and its gods was possible, and another way was attainable. Sacred strangers knew what the prophets knew: things can fall apart and new creation can arise.

The sacred stranger profile contrasted with two other leadership profiles. Some leaders abandoned ties to older traditions as they embraced the new. For them, the new displaced the old. They wanted nothing more than modernity's freedom, modern prosperity, and the pleasures of privilege. Other leaders held fast to the old. They engaged in long and bitter battles against encroaching secularization, only to find themselves with waning influence and deepened alienation. While they felt they had never left home, home had left them.

Distinct from both of these cohorts, sacred strangers sought new possibilities while drawing upon the values, meanings, and insights of older sacred orders. They drank deeply from the wells of their faith even as they recast inherited understandings. According to Becker, these sacred strangers were better grounded and more creative than either the religious persons who clung to a past they felt they were losing or the liberal humanists who assumed that modernity's well-worn paradigms still had a lock on the future.

Taking cues from Becker, might communities of sacred strangers aid the current quest for a durable way of life? Might communities of religious discipleship offer a sturdier place to stand, anchored to the good work of ancestors who, in their own time, broke old molds in favor of

new resilience? Might religious environmentalism in the hands of sacred strangers bring renewable moral-spiritual energy to the journey from industrial to ecological in the Anthropocene?

My answer is yes, but only if their faith is genuinely Earth-honoring and Earth-healing.

Earth-Honoring Faith

An Earth-honoring faith would be clear-eyed about six hard transitions in front of us:

A perspectival transition in which we understand ourselves as a species no longer inhabiting the same planet we have lived on for a very long while. This alteration in our perspective would involve a "reenchantment" to counter what Max Weber called the "disenchantment" of the world: the disenchantment by which nature was rendered little more than a repository of resources for human use. Reenchantment restores to human consciousness an understanding of nature as a community of subjects, the womb of all the life we will ever know, the bearer of mystery and spirit, and the ethos of the cosmos.

An economic transition in which economics and ecology merge to become "eco-nomics." Economics embeds all economic activity within the ecological limits of nature's economy and pursues a three-part agenda prioritizing production, relatively equitable distribution, and ecological regenerativity. Growth as a good is not precluded, provided it is ecologically sustainable and regenerative for the long term, reduces rather than increases the instability that large wealth and income gaps generate, and bolsters rather than undermines the capacity of local and regional communities to nurture their cultural and biological diversity.

A demographic transition in which the human population either levels off or slowly declines and, equally vital, the negative per-person impact on the rest of nature gives way to mutual enhancement with other life.

A polity transition in which the basic conception of democratic capitalism shifts, if indeed democratic capitalism continues to be seen as viable. This transition requires a shift away

from the use of short-term horizons (election cycles, quarterly reports, annual reports, etc.) to horizons that include the well-being of future generations of humans and others. This transition moves us away from a society in which the virtually unrestricted right to property and its uses is more basic than the role of government as an equalizing force. It moves us toward a society that fosters the common good by democratizing social, political, and economic power in such a way that the true primary goods of the commons—earth, air, fire, and water—are cared-for requisites of a shared good, a good for both present and future generations.

A *policy transition* in which policies are as integrated as nature itself. Climate change, poverty, energy, food, water, and biodiversity loss are all interlaced in the planetary economy. None is siloed in the natural world, so none can be siloed for analysis and solution, either. Integrated policies need to mirror the systemic character of nature's own integral functioning, just as human technologies must cohere with the technologies of the natural world. Because human poverty and the impoverishment of the Earth itself are increasingly interwoven, the societal and ecological must be addressed together.

And a *religious and moral transition* in which the ecosphere is the relational matrix of our lives and our responsibility. This transition relies on the realization that planetary health is primary and human well-being derivative, and that the common human good depends upon the health of the generative goods of the commons. Planet-keeping thereby becomes the common calling of all religions in the same moment that the moral framework of religious ethics is struck in a new key. Religious ethics now stretches beyond a fixation on the human species so as to include the biophysical and the geo-planetary. Social justice becomes creation justice.

What would it mean for religious ethics to stop fixating on the human species? *Goldfinch & Wild Rose* by David Lance Goines.

God-Talk

For their constructive responses to these transitions, what would the witness and habits of sacred strangers be?

Since revisions of their own traditions are included, transformation might begin at home, with God-talk. The God-talk of Earth-healing faith would take into account all 13.8 billion years of the universe. It would enfold all things great and small, bright and beautiful, in, under, and on the Earth. It would encompass all species come and gone, as well as those now leaving. Unless the arc of redemption matches the arc of planetary creation, religious faith is the worship of a human-species idol.

Earth-honoring God-talk would also express a fundamental “consent to being” as the overriding stance of Earth-healing faith. “Consent to being” is a trust that plants our lives in that arena apart from which we could and would not be: planetary nature together with the cosmos and its God. It also plants our lives in soil that is native to most religions: the soil of birth and rebirth, death and renewal, the phoenix shaking off its own ashes, creation and its redemption. “Consent to being” is a basic trust in the triumph of life, its continuation and renewal in God.

Justice and Transcendence

The spirit of creation justice that emerges out of the religious and moral transition I have described would center the generative elements of all life: earth, air, fire (energy), and water. Moral claims upon us for the health of these elements would follow. Such claims could result in a system of eco-systemic rights or new habits of respect and reverence that (*continued on page 62*)



Devil's Advocate

Building the Religious Counterculture

BY ANA LEVY-LYONS



Conservative lawmakers and business leaders continue to exalt *Atlas Shrugged* as a kind of right-wing Bible. Why does this book excite so many? Might progressives have something to learn from its call to uncage our creative desire?

TODAY'S FISCAL CONSERVATIVES have a gold mine in the twentieth-century philosopher Ayn Rand, who used her writings to legitimate the steely pursuit of self-interest and to dignify radical individualism. Many of the Republicans in Congress have read her novels, particularly *Atlas Shrugged*, and many admit to being deeply influenced. It's hard to overestimate the importance of this book in American politics. Rand's collective writings form a common language for conservatives—the canon of a kind of secular Bible, providing the sanction for the dog-eat-dog economic and social structures that the actual Bible inconveniently fails to provide. Rand is unapologetic in her ardor for “full, pure, uncontrolled, unregulated laissez-faire capitalism” and her rejection of laws promoting the collective good, including social safety nets, affirmative action, and environmental regulations.

Rand's philosophy, “objectivism,” at first glance seems harmless enough: it is simply the belief that there is an external, objective reality and that only our senses and our reason allow us to perceive it accurately. By this logic one's own existence is axiomatic and is the foundation for everything we know and do. From a spiritual progressive point of view, the problem comes when she extrapolates: she excludes from her notion of “objective reality” anything ineffable, mystical, emotional, or spiritual. These are simply unreal to her—they do not exist “out there” in the world; they are wishful concoctions of our own minds. As a result, they cannot possibly generate values, obligations, or meaning. To Rand, the only thing that generates values is real, concrete existence itself, particularly one's own personal existence. The only imperative she recognizes is that of making rational choices to further that existence, the realest thing in the world.

To those of us who do believe in a world bursting with dimensions unfathomable by the rational mind, Rand's philosophy is myopic and reductionist. And to those of us who experience the reality of love and Spirit propelling our obligations to one another and to the earth, her glorification of greed is morally repugnant. In liberal religious communities, most of us spend our time trying to temper greed, to contain it, to objectify it so that we can say, “this is not who we really

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Cassandra Conlin

are at core.” Jesus decried greed and wealth as obstacles to the spiritual life. The Buddha identified desire (of which greed is the outsized cousin) as the root of all suffering. The Hebrew exhortation of *v’ahavta l’reacha kamocha* (love your neighbor as yourself) is foundational in Jewish prayer life and ethical life. Rabbinic literature warns against the dangers of the *yetzer ha-ra*, translated as the evil inclination or the selfish desire or sometimes just *desire*. The seminal biblical story of Adam and Eve in which they eat the fruit of the forbidden tree is the first victory of the yetzer ha-ra, resulting in the fall from innocence and alienation from God.

Ayn Rand’s Worship of Motive Power

Why is it that Rand’s worldview, now echoed by the Tea Party and other conservative movements, still has a certain cachet in American culture beyond politics? Amazingly, even among some religious people, it seems to claim real moral standing among the competing ideologies of our time. There is something the general public finds compelling about it, despite its being obviously self-serving for the wealthy elites and systems of power. People are still buying *Atlas Shrugged*—over 1.5 million copies have been sold since President Obama was elected. This is virtually unheard of for a book published fifty-six years ago. And so, curious to understand the allure, I read the book myself. Predictably, as a progressive, I found the message abhorrent. And as a reader of literature, I found it vapid. And yet, I have to admit: I enjoyed it. Something about it felt true and exciting. Something about it resonated, even for me, on the far opposite end of the political and religious spectrum.

For those who haven’t yet had the guilty pleasure of reading it, here is the premise: *Atlas Shrugged* is set in New York City about ten years from whenever you happen to be reading the book. It describes a dystopian society in which the state is becoming increasingly anti-business, cranking up taxes and regulations and tightening government control over the economy. The business leaders, wealthy industrialists, and innovators—the “men of ability,” as Rand terms them—are fed up with feeling taken for granted and robbed of what they feel they have rightfully earned. So they go on strike. One by one, they abandon their businesses and disappear from public view. And, of course, everything falls apart in their absence. Businesses fail, the masses are unemployed, the transportation infrastructure breaks down, food can’t be transported or paid for, and finally it’s an apocalypse of mass starvation and riots. The moral of the story is that the human drive to achieve and succeed—the hunger for *more*—is good; it is the engine that keeps the world turning. Economic systems are like ecosystems. They are complex and delicate, and if you mess with them too much, they’ll backfire on you. But leave them alone and they thrive, to everyone’s benefit.

This book is essentially porn for conservative capitalists. A striking feature of this novel is that its language is sexually suggestive throughout. Specifically, it conjures masculine sexual energy in the thoughts and dialogue of both male and female characters. After achieving a business success, the female protagonist (who had been thinking about her own emotionlessness) notices that, “through the dry phrases of calculations in her mind . . . she *did* have time to feel something: it was the hard, exhilarating pleasure of action. . . . As the train plunged into the tunnels under the city of New York. . . .” Et cetera. This kind of sexual energy permeates the novel because Rand’s philosophy is not just about economics and business but about economics and business as an expression of the life force that drives everything—sex, creativity, all kinds of desire and aggression, and the will to live itself.

The novel glorifies characters who embody this kind of drive—they are painted as fast-moving, fit, smart, rational, efficient, and always willing to

Rabbinic literature warns against the dangers of the *yetzer ha-ra* (desire), but the Talmud itself notes that without this force, which “came forth from the Holy of Holies like a fiery lion,” the cycle of life as we know it would end.





We don't need to deny our aggression, passion, and desire in order to lead a spiritual life, the author argues. Rather, we can "deploy them . . . to change the world for the better." *Commit Yourself to Nonviolence* by Caitlin Ng.

take on responsibility. They get things done. They do things only for themselves, and only because they want to. The heroes in *Atlas Shrugged* take this oath: "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine." Rand was writing in the 1950s, but I don't think that's the only reason she uses "man" instead of "person." She's promoting a masculinist vision of the ideal human. By contrast, the characters representing what Rand sees as the downfall of the world embody the virtues of compassion and gentleness that have traditionally been seen as feminine. She portrays these compassionate characters as whiny, pathetic, inept, lazy, and invariably overweight. Their concerns are mainly about protecting people's feelings, giving incompetent people another chance, and not being blamed if something goes wrong.

I don't subscribe to this dichotomy, and I believe wholeheartedly in the divine feminine: the nurturing, compassionate, loving force of the universe on which our salvation as a species and global ecosystem actually depends.

And yet, playing devil's advocate, I'd like to argue that there is a deep dimension to Rand's philosophy that is very compelling and even spiritual: It's the worship of motive power, the kinetic, driving, impelling, propelling engine of the world.

Uncaging Our Creative Desire

We humans and the universe itself have within us a perpetual restless hunger for more. And it's this hunger that is responsible for *every creative act*. We want things that we don't already have. We want things that we don't need. We want to insert ourselves into spaces where we don't already exist. And we aggressively exercise our power to do it. It's why we have children. It's why we build things, learn things, try new things. It's why we try to crawl and walk, why we get married, why we get divorced, why we fight for freedom from oppression, break records, take risks. The yetzer ha-ra is so problematic because it is at the very root of the life force in every one of us. Without it, none of us would exist.

The Talmud includes a profound story about the yetzer ha-ra that, amazingly, has the same basic plot line as *Atlas Shrugged*. The story says the yetzer ha-ra was causing so much pain, so much mayhem and unhappiness, adultery and violence, that the people implored God to turn it over to them so they could destroy it. They fasted and prayed, and finally God relented and surrendered the yetzer ha-ra. The text says:

The Yetzer came forth from the Holy of Holies like a fiery lion. . . . At that moment the prophet declared, "This is the Yetzer . . . cast him in a lead barrel" . . . [The Yetzer] said to them, "Realize that if you kill me, the world is finished." So they held him for three days, then they looked in the whole land of Israel and not a [single newly laid] egg could be found."

In our attempts to do good in the world, we progressives are often trying to cage the yetzer ha-ra. And in trying to cage *evil* desire, energy, and power, we sometimes wind up caging desire itself, energy itself, and power itself. And then we come to resemble Rand's caricatures of over-sensitive, whiny, ineffectual liberals. With the very best of intentions, we often hold back our own drive and passion or try to control the drive and passion of others. This is especially so in the culture of nonprofits, including religious ones, where we are trying to build the Beloved Community. We reject the hard-edged, cold climate of the corporate world and our aesthetic becomes all yin and no yang. We become suspicious of strength and power, wary of efficiency and productivity, when in fact these are precisely the virtues we want if we want to get something done.

I believe that the religious counterculture can redeploy the teachings of *Atlas Shrugged* and of the yetzer ha-ra story to wonderfully powerful effect. If we are serious about achieving our goal of world community with peace and justice for all the creatures of the earth, we have to stop being afraid of our own strength. We need to unapologetically engage motive power in the service of our ideals. The difference will be partly aesthetic: We need to walk with a more muscular confidence. We need to (*continued on page 63*)

Caitlin Ng (caitling.com)

When Liturgy Goes Wild, Worship Happens

BY DONNA SCHAPER

WORSHIP IS MORE OFTEN formal than informal, boundary-making rather than boundary-breaking, controlled rather than free. When liturgy goes wild and abandons form and boundaries, it can tell us what free really means.

On Easter Sunday at my church we invited a performance artist named Lawrence Graham Brown. He danced in the nude, with braided, beaded, and dreadlocked pubic hairs. He also taught us a little more about what it means that they found Jesus's grave empty, with his clothes laid on the ground in the abandoned tomb. Here I want to speak some about Easter nakedness and worship, and to go on to name a half dozen other events in which worship left the tomb of formality, boundaries, and control. I want to rejoice in these wild liturgies that brought us to the true in the true.

I also want to talk about seeing Jesus and how seeing Jesus is the purpose of worship, at least for Christians like me. The purpose of worship may be to glimpse Spirit or Energy or Force instead of Jesus. Worship often feels like a long list of "have to do" rather than a short list of "must do." The poet Galway Kinnell says that our first task is to astonish, and then, harder, to try to be astonished. That is what worship is: it is the astonishment that we won't always be hungry or thirsty or locked up. Pain is normal. Pain is life. Trouble is tyrannical—and everybody has a little of it, and some have a lot of it. Jesus is the refusal to stop the ache and instead the permission to enter the ache. Jesus is the daring speech that we can see through and beyond injury (both our own injury and that of the world). Morning by morning, we see new mercies. Normal is not just a setting on the dryer, as many of us imagine. Instead, normal is misery, followed by mercy. There are so many pressures to tame the text of Jesus, as if it were about the afterworld or the next world, as if gunmen weren't shooting up movie theaters at midnight or as if global warming were some kind of fiction. When we seek out the wilder sides of liturgy, we are less likely to tame the seeing of Jesus. We especially want to see Jesus on a day like Easter.

Encountering a Naked Jesus

When Judson Memorial Church (the church in New York City where I serve as senior minister) invited Brown to be part of our Easter Celebration, we did so for five interrelated reasons. First, we had seen him perform a long dance piece called *Sacred Space*, which involved a Eucharist within itself, and the congregants who saw it were profoundly moved. The show, sponsored by the Gay Men of Color Alliance, took our breath away. Second, we had studied the 350 questions that Jesus asked, according to



Dancing in the nude during an Easter Sunday worship service, performance artist Lawrence Graham Brown (pictured above with his assistant Leon Dozier) challenged Rev. Schaper's congregation to see Jesus in a new way.

DONNA SCHAPER has been Senior Minister at Judson Memorial Church since 2005. Her life goal is to animate spiritual capacity for public ministry. As an elder, she is passionate about leaving the next generation well prepared for all they have to face.



Judson Memorial Church celebrates the use of provocative art to open churchgoers to fresher and deeper forms of worship. One Christmas, a congregant strung chili pepper Christmas lights from the church's roof to evoke the Virgin Mary's cleavage.

the Synoptic Gospels, and discovered, to our surprise, that about 20 percent of them were about clothing, nudity, nakedness, and being stripped down—questions such as, “Why do you worry so much about what you will wear?” Third, in studying the three primary accounts of the resurrection, we noted that one involved Jesus being stripped of his clothing right before he was murdered. Fourth, we decided we had a liturgical goal: to surprise people with a resurrected Jesus they did not at first recognize. Thus, Lawrence asked Jesus’s big question after his dance: “Have I been among you this long and you did not know me?” Fifth, and finally, we knew Brown’s performance would cause a stir. We believe in the stir. So did Jesus.

Have I been among you this long and you did not know me? Has there been hunger and thirst and sickness and nakedness and imprisonment this long and you did not see it? Have you been fighting strangers off your land this long and not seen me there, in them? Do I have to take off my clothes so you will see me? The Jesus you thought you knew would not ask such questions with anger, right? He would not be a man of color, asking a loud question, right? Right. I think you begin to see why I wanted to talk about Easter, Jesus, worship, and nudity. We need to stir ourselves to see Jesus.

The overwhelming response to Brown’s performance on Easter Sunday was positive. However, some congregants who had been in the presence of uninvited nudity before were upset that this happened without warning. Some people were scared. Some merely argued, “It didn’t seem appropriate on Easter.” Others argued that inviting a black man to dance before a mostly white congregation was a politically problematic move that exoticized Brown. These concerns each seemed so important to me that I decided to preach about them afterward and to use them as a doorway to discussion. I learned that, were we to involve nude dance again in worship, we would need to triple the contextualization and to triple the early warnings.

Brown’s performance on Easter was by no means the first performance art involving nudity that the church has countenanced. Longtime congregant Grace Goodman writes:

The first instance of nudity at Judson that I can recall was Yvonne Rainer’s 1956 duet with Robert Morris in one of the Judson Dance Theater’s pieces. They danced *Waterman Switch* to a Verdi aria; they were in a tight waltz position, so although they were nude, it was not “full frontal nudity,” as only their bare backs were really visible. However, the *New York Times* had sent a substitute critic that night who apparently was shocked and reviewed the piece with the sensational headline, “Nudes Dance in the Sanctuary of the Church.” Church folks all over the country phoned and wrote condemning letters (apparently envisioning a social dance by youth with no clothes or something equally outré); the conservative magazine *Christianity Today* editorialized that the minister should be defrocked and the church censored. In the end, the church board passed a resolution affirming that Judson was attempting to “encourage a new relationship between the church and the arts.”

The church board’s resolution continued with an even bolder defense of Judson’s experimentation with the arts: “The important thing is not so much whether the art forms are introduced into our church services or whether they are of enduring value, but rather that we are creating an environment where new forms of the arts can be active.” This resolution set the stage for decades of boundary-pushing art within the church.

Worship is the experience of a part of the Jesus story—it’s the experience of the Jesus we can never fully know or understand, just like we can never fully know or understand injury or death, liberation or resurrection. Worship is about God, about the beyond, about the great mystery in which we are held. It is the place people in Aurora, Colorado, were driven to after the mass shooting at their movie theater, even though all they really wanted was a Batman movie. Astonishment is the destination of worship. *Astonished* is a better word than its overused friend, *awesome*. It is a deeper, wider place that is more

real than reality, truer than truth, freer than freedom itself. As existential psychologist Rollo May puts it, “Neurotics and artists consciously live out emerging trends that others keep unconscious.” Dancers take us to a Jesus we can barely see. Worship is a way to make conscious what we have buried. Worship removes the rubble on religious experience. It de-clutters.

Daily we live in a world that is rigged against our better selves. We have future fatigue. We know we counted on the GPS and it got us lost. Then we get mad that we counted on it. Worship is a different kind of global positioning system, one that uses sacred texts, music, art, dance, and sacred space to bring us to something we can count on, even if it is only the experience of that hour as a pedicab to the divine. Nudity can either be a vehicle or get in the way. By itself it is nothing. Through its expression, it is something. Because we were trying to show a Jesus we might not know at Easter—the one who kept asking us why we care about clothing or raiment, the one who doesn’t go away when we are naked before each other—we turned to a certain kind of art.

Astonishing Worship

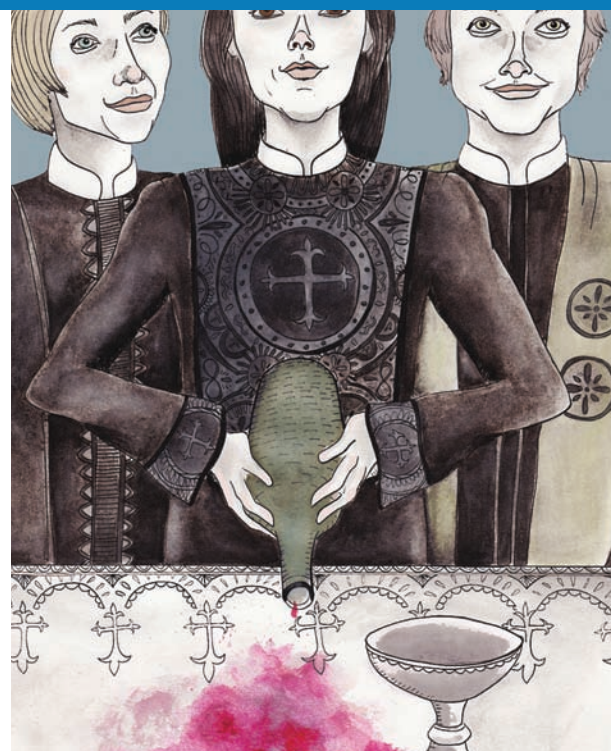
We use art in many ways in worship at Judson Memorial Church and in the wing of progressive Protestantism it represents. Over the years, we have experienced many astonishing things. We took our pews out in 1959 so our great meeting room space could be used for many different purposes. Our ritual “agape” meal, which replaces the formal communion on first Sundays, is meant to surprise people, at table, in an early Christian way. We eat food, drink wine, talk to each other, and “have” communion.

One Christmas, one of our members climbed onto our steep roof (totally verboten and do not tell the insurance company). From there he strung 1,865 red chili pepper lights down the front of the building so that they faced the Greenwich Village Washington Square Arch. Gently gathered, one string of lights slightly crossed the other. As seen from the arch, they constituted the Virgin Mary’s cleavage. I was not informed of this artistic adventure until greeted by a bill for \$586.00, which had, handwritten on it, “Christmas lights.” I didn’t see the exhibit until I was walking across the park, a little snow flying. I looked up only to realize that there was a two-story light exhibit on the front of the church. There was no doubt that it was a woman’s breasts. It didn’t occur to me till later that the artist was suggesting Mary, the mother of Jesus. I asked him if I was right about that, and he just smiled and said Merry Christmas. It was the softest and loudest suggestion of the Virgin I have ever imagined. Finally comes the poet to teach us how to see.

That artist died of a stroke the following year, but his partner has continued to string the red chili pepper lights around the sanctuary each Christmas. Last Christmas he added a centralizing Advent wreath, using the four pillars in our meeting room as candles. The children lit pillars and not just candles in his incredible evocation of light and fire. The wreath in the center of the sanctuary, which we set up in the round so we could be *inside* the wreath, was lit as well.

People have many different ways of using worship to astonish rather than to dull, to free rather than to bind or contain. I remember having communion with the first eleven women ordained, irregularly, in the Episcopal Church. We put the best linens and the most embroidered cloths on the table. And then, when the eleven practiced their first mass, they spilled wine all over the table—not exactly nudity in worship, but a kind of astonishment. Every Sunday at Gregory of Nyssa in San Francisco, the priest does something to bother people while doing the mass. He wants to make sure they are bothered and broken before they are comforted and solaced. Why? To show them a Jesus who is capable of anger and disappointment.

Once, during the installation of the new Roman Catholic bishop of Western Massachusetts, we Protestant officials were in the front row but were told we couldn’t take communion. Guards were posted. We climbed out when they (*continued on page 64*)



“People have many different ways of using worship to astonish rather than to dull,” the author writes. The first eleven women ordained irregularly in the Episcopal Church astonished churchgoers by laying out the best linens and then pouring the communion wine right onto them.



When Spanish Catholics seized Córdoba in 1236, they built a cathedral in the middle of its Great Mosque. Today, guards still enforce the centuries-old ban on Muslim prayer inside the mosque.

The Late Great Mosque of Córdoba

When Islam and the West Were One

BY HAROON MOGHUL

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD said dreams can be a kind of revelation: God speaks to us after He's ceased speaking to us. What then is a nightmare?

It began inside Córdoba's Great Mosque in Spain. I had a view from the ceiling, and far down below me was *me*, a sad and pathetic person-shaped smudge. The air tasted so old I thought I might be inhaling the exhalations of the mosque's final congregation, from whatever day in 1236 prayers were last held there. I was unclear how I'd gotten in, and equally uncertain how I would get out. Something pulled me toward the *mihrab*, the niche that shows the direction in which to pray; though I drew physically closer to Mecca, I was no closer to an explanation. Instead, a terrible hollowness seemed to turn me inside out. I was dead, I suspected; this wasn't Córdoba but some postmortem way station toward a more permanent destination. Perhaps I was to fester in piety until God made me move on.

HAROON MOGHUL is a senior correspondent for Religion Dispatches, and a doctoral candidate at Columbia University. He is the author of *The Order of Light* (Penguin, 2006).

Creative Commons/Timor Espallargas

I woke up, startled, in a pitch-black Spanish hotel room. I'd already spent my life chased by Islam and needed a break. Couldn't God give me the time to make sense of things on my own terms?

Being Muslim and Western

In his autobiography, *Out of Place*, Edward Said asserts what is probably academically uncontroversial today: the unitary self is a pious fiction. Once this horrified me. Now, the losses I've suffered and mistakes I've made have rendered the position considerably more persuasive, even reassuring. I tend to think of the self as a subway car, full of different people, going in and out at predetermined stops, hurtled toward some destination we have no choice in (but know very well all the same). But the world prefers binaries.

I am Muslim and I am Western. This is not a binary either/or, nor do I think it requires, in the manner of a scientific experiment, constant confirmation. That is not, however, how the world sees things—and it is not how many Muslims are made to see things, or would prefer we do. But conscious of how hard it is to communicate the unproblematic compatibility of Islam and the West, I am always eager for new approaches.

Hence my interest in Spain. I'd long read about and romanticized the Muslim heritage of Spain (and Portugal, which usually receives short shrift and will here, too). How wonderful it would be to take a bus full of American Muslims and, rather than say, "Islam and the West are not at odds," *show* them. But I would soon find a more personal stake in the process.

I took my first tour to Spain in 2011, when I inhabited the overlap between tourist and tour guide, discovering Spain as I explained it. The only downside was the supplementary nature of my role. In each city we had local guides. My work was largely correcting what we had heard after leaving a ruin, mosque, or palace. Wouldn't it be better to give the tour itself?

So when I was asked to lead a tour again, I jumped at the chance and vowed to do better. But what could I be a tour guide for? The Alhambra did not accept outside guides, so that was off the list. But one other site was nearly as spectacular—Córdoba's Great Mosque. I'd walk us through. I'd start us from the Roman bridge that Abd ar-Rahman had crossed, take the visitors into the surprisingly quiet courtyard, and show them every major feature of the mosque. I'd give them their money's worth and then some.

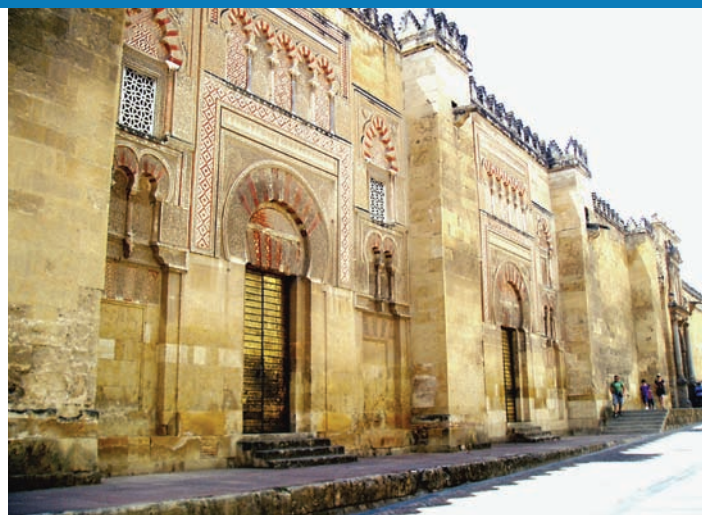
Making a Great Mosque

The first Umayyad Emir of Spain, Abd ar-Rahman, made Córdoba his capital. And of course a Muslim capital required a mosque. So, after sharing the local church for a time, the Muslims bought it out and repurposed it. The resulting mosque was a love letter to the Great Mosque of Damascus, which Abd ar-Rahman's ancestors built to recall the Prophet Muhammad's once modest mosque in Medina. Of late this has become a love triangle.

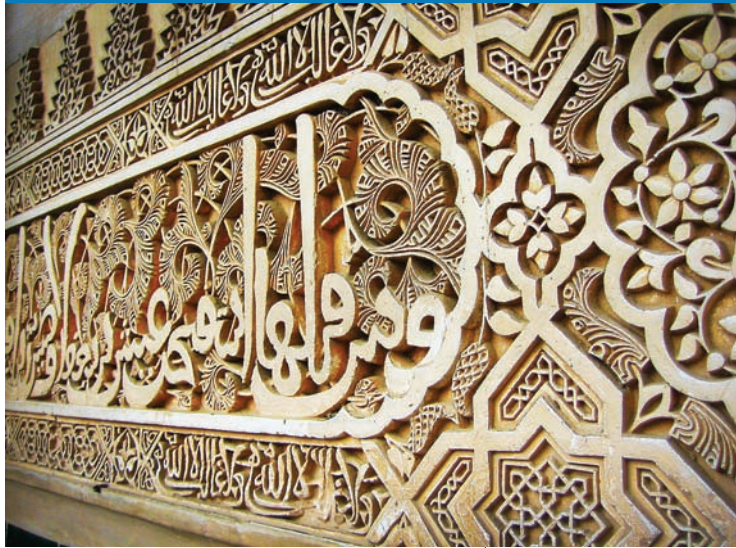
Saudi Arabian wealth has made Muhammad's once modest mosque nearly unrecognizable, though this same richness has made the Córdoba mosque inadvertently famous. You see, the Prophet's petrochemically enhanced megamosque in Medina draws very obviously on Córdoba's twelve-centuries-old masterpiece. When many Muslims see Córdoba's Mosque, they feel they've been there before.

This is kind of what Abd ar-Rahman had in mind; he'd made Córdoba the center of a new empire, which was also the resurrection of a lost Arab dynasty's domains, but in the south of Spain. His family—the Bani Umayyads—were Islam's Caliphs until they were overthrown (and massacred) in 750. An empire larger than Rome at its height was done in after ninety years by followers of the religion it ostensibly claimed to defend.

Abd ar-Rahman was apparently the only one to make it out alive. He found refuge in Morocco because, though his father was Syrian and Umayyad, his mother was



"At the Great Mosque, there are tourist brochures from which it seems clear that Spain would love to forget its Muslim (and Jewish) past," the author writes.



Ornate Arabic calligraphy decorates the Alhambra, which was built to resemble paradise. “Beauty is Islam’s answer to the world within and without,” the author writes.

North African Amazigh—Berber, colloquially speaking. By fateful coincidence, Spain, conquered only four decades before, was torn between Amazigh and Arab troops. During that time, Spain had cycled through some twenty governors, doing its best impression of postwar Italy. Abd ar-Rahman’s bloodlines made him an outstanding candidate to rally behind.

He seemed to have the genius needed to rule, too.

The Umayyads started over in Spain. For 250 years, their emirate was Europe’s wealthiest and most powerful state. It launched a revolution in agriculture, introducing new crops and the dry irrigation necessary to grow them. Its culture of patronage encouraged huge cities with lighted streets, magnificent mosques, private and royal libraries, bathhouses, and hospitals. Its navy maintained bases on the French Riviera, from which it regularly sent raiding parties into Italy and Switzerland. Everybody wanted a piece of it, even the Vikings. The Umayyads, unfazed, dropped chains on the Guadalquivir, trapped the invading fleet, and lit the river on fire. The Vikings didn’t come back.

A Ban on Muslim Prayer

I had a stupid grin on my face when I led our group into the mosque. I was a bit high on myself, sure, but who ever thought I’d have the chance to do this? No sooner had I entered, though, than a guard stepped in my path and nearly spat: “Muslim!” He sounded lost between recognition and regret. Then he jabbed his finger at my chest: “No pray!”

Back then houses of worship were aligned with political power, so when Spanish Catholics seized Córdoba in 1236, they built a cathedral in the middle of the mosque. To their credit, the new rulers preserved most of the original structure, which today is unused and unusable, an abandoned, haunted girdle. The same charity wasn’t extended to the city’s Muslims, though, who were eventually exiled, converted, or enslaved.

The point is, Muslim prayer in this mosque has been forbidden for eight centuries. The only Muslim I knew of who had gotten permission to pray in the former mosque was Muhammad Iqbal, who wrote a poem, “Masjid-e Qurtuba,” about the experience some eighty years ago. In the meantime, Spain has changed tremendously; for one thing, the Catholic Church’s role has declined precipitously. The state grants autonomy to its many regions. But still, no prayer.

As the years pass, Spain changes, but its relationship to Islam doesn’t—Islam remains the “other.” (Centuries ago, Islam was chastised for being too comfortable with sexuality. Now it is too prudish.) At the Great Mosque, there are tourist brochures from which it seems clear that Spain would love to forget its Muslim (and Jewish) past. One brochure assures tourists that the Moorish builders of this fantastic structure were *foreign* barbarians who adversely possessed Spain only until the Catholics got their act together. But what does it say about Spain that it suffered the rule of these Muslim “outsiders” for 700 years?

Spain Under Muslim Rule

After Muslim forces overthrew King Roderic of Visigoth Spain, it is revealing that Spain’s native population did not try to overthrow this new government. The reason? They experienced it as more tolerant than its predecessor. The Visigoths had persecuted heterodox Christians and tried to eliminate Spain’s Jewish community outright. The Muslim forces instead made an alliance, arming Jewish battalions and handing them key cities as they moved north. The alliance lasted until 1492, though it was not always on such solid terms. But an alliance it was.

The Muslim armies that ruled Spain were largely recent converts to the young faith and were small in number. They could never have held Spain had (*continued on page 64*)

Light Hidden in the Darkness

Kabbalah and Jungian Psychology

BY PAUL LEVY

WHEN SIGMUND FREUD was first introduced to the Kabbalah, he exclaimed, “This is gold!” Carl Jung expressed a similar excitement, going so far as to say that the kabbalistic writings of Rabbi Baer from Mesiritz “anticipated my entire psychology in the eighteenth century.” Freud and Jung’s excitement arose from a central paradox with which the Kabbalah wrestles: that evil, which by definition is diametrically opposed to good, is at the same time its very source.

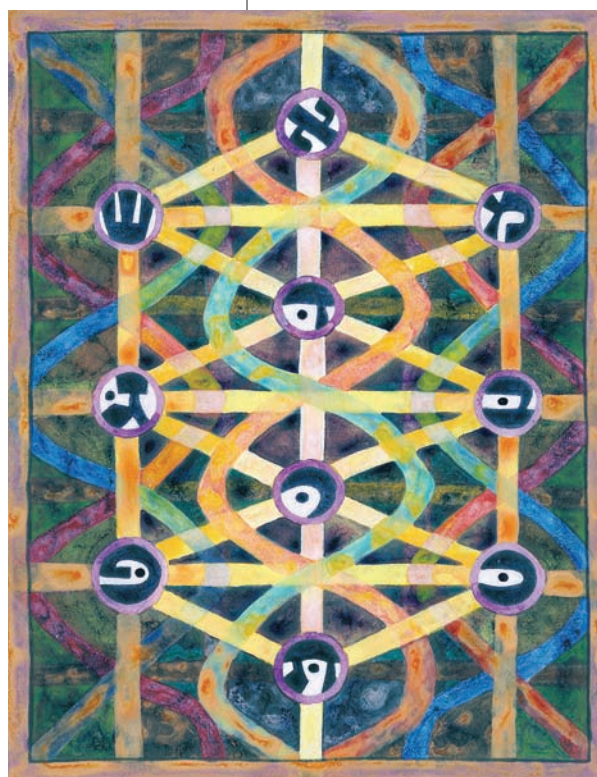
Creatively articulated by Isaac Luria, the sixteenth-century mystic whose writings form the backbone of contemporary Kabbalah, this idea of light hidden in the darkness is also a basic psychoanalytic idea, having to do with making the unconscious conscious, as well as connecting split-off complexes to the wholeness of the Self. If we don’t acknowledge and pay our dues to the darkness, it will take its due on its own terms—like the return of the Freudian repressed—with a vengeance.

Here’s one starting place for understanding what it could mean for evil to be the source of good: only a broken and disordered state of affairs such as we have in the world today can provide the optimal environment within which humanity can exercise the greatest spiritual, moral, aesthetic and intellectual virtues that truly make us a reflection of God. The discordant, unassimilated, and antagonistic effects of both our personal complexes and the evil in the universe call forth our highest potentialities. It’s similar to how a road test for a car involves being put under the most difficult conditions to push it to its edge and elicit the limits of its performance capabilities. This world is a perfect realm for the “road testing” of our souls. Humanity’s highest virtues are called upon when confronted by evil.

To glimpse the meaning of this paradox—and to grasp its relation to Jungian psychology—will first require a closer look at the creation story within the Kabbalah. Please note that as I retell and analyze this creation story, I am using male pronouns when referring to God merely for consistency’s sake, as both the Kabbalah and Jung do so.

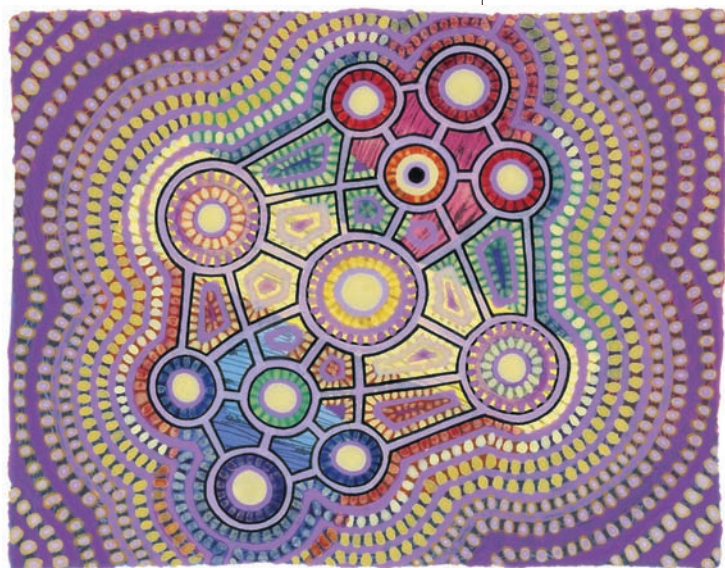
Divine Sparks Trapped in Dark Matter

According to the Lurianic Kabbalah (henceforth referred to simply as “Kabbalah”), at the very moment that God conceived the world and poured his infinite light into the “vessels” that he had prepared for this very event, the vessels were shattered by this influx of divine light. This catastrophic “Breaking of the Vessels” shattered the vessels into shards that



According to the Kabbalah, the universe came into being when God poured his infinite light into ten *sefirot* (vessels), causing them to shatter. In this painting, *Kosmic DNA* by David Friedman, the ten vessels appear within the double helix of DNA.

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Waves and Particles
by David Friedman.

fell through primordial space, the metaphysical void, while at the same time severing the previously united (and unconscious) opposites that constitute the underlying unified structure of the universe. Each shard entrapped a portion of divine light, seemingly separating this primordial light from its source.

These shards, known as the *kelipot* (pronounced k'lee-pote), represent malevolent constrictions in being, which, according to the Kabbalah, are the source of evil and personal suffering. The negation and mirror image of divine holiness, the *kelipot* are like envelopes that conceal holiness just as a peel hides the fruit within. The *kelipot* are likened to husks or shells that imprison within themselves the divine light of God, which, because of its estrangement from its source, becomes malevolent. The *kelipot* alter the appearance of the light, but don't, however, change the essence of the light itself. Infertile and lifeless, with no independent existence, the *kelipot* are vacuous apparitions sustained in their seeming existence only by the divine light that they have captured. Evil thus has no life of its own, as the very source of evil is both intrinsically connected to and parasitic in

relation to the divine light. Though parasitically dependent upon the light of God, evil seeks to destroy holiness, which is to ultimately destroy everything, including itself. By severing the primary reality from its source of being, the *kelipot* assume an illusory reality, becoming a lethal mirage that, though ultimately not truly existing, could potentially destroy our species.

The *kelipot* are also thought to imprison aspects of human souls as well, parasitically feeding on the divine light within them, which is to say that the Kabbalah's view of cosmic events is also a description of the dynamics within humanity's soul. The entrapped divine sparks of light symbolize each individual's essential but forgotten reality. The *kelipot* contain within themselves the source and very energy for their own undoing and, ultimately, the potential for their own redemption. For this reason the concept of the *kelipot* is very much akin to the Algonquian concept of *wetiko* (the spirit of evil that inspires humanity's inhumanity to itself), an idea I explore more in my book *Dispelling Wetiko: Breaking the Curse of Evil*. Encoded in the deepest evil of *wetiko* is a blessing in disguise: if we recognize what it is revealing to us about ourselves, it can help us to wake up. The same is true of the *kelipot*. (Note: it is particularly Sanford L. Drob's brilliant writings on the Kabbalah that opened my eyes to how the Kabbalah was, through its own divinely inspired creative imagination, describing *wetiko* in its own uniquely ingenious way.)

Like autonomous complexes within the psyche, the *kelipot* appeared to obtain a measure of independent existence, as if they had become separated from the light of God itself (something which is inherently impossible). For the kabbalists, evil emerged out of separating things that should remain united, a "splitting" of a deeper unity. It was as if the universe itself had been subject to a cosmic "dissociative reaction," in which its underlying unity had been fragmented into a multiplicity of selves. Both the *kelipot* and the affect-laden complexes became relatively inaccessible to consciousness, shrouded in the darkness of the unconscious. Becoming "exiled" from their source, these split-off complexes became the source of much suffering in the personal realm, just as the *kelipot* became the source of evil on the cosmic scale. Just as the divine light estranged from its source became evil, when our psychic energy becomes encapsulated through repression and severed from the wholeness of the psyche from which it arose, we develop all sorts of negative, neurotic, and self-destructive symptoms.

It was as if in the process of creation, God (or in psychological terms, "the Self") had become alienated from himself, as if Being was in exile from itself. And yet, according to the Kabbalah, this cosmic cataclysm was no accident, but was inherent in the overall scheme of things, built into the very design of the universe, as if God had to become

estranged from himself in order to become more fully himself. To quote Jung's book *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, "And where would God's wholeness be if he could not be the 'wholly other'?" In becoming concealed and eclipsed from himself, the infinite God creates the illusion of finitude, limitation, and separation. As if clothing himself in a garment that is our world, God creates a convincing illusion akin to a dream.

A Crisis in Creation

In the same way that God has to become estranged from himself in order to become who he is, according to the Kabbalah, it is only after the vessels break that humanity's evolutionary potential is set in motion. It is as if some form of destruction is a prerequisite for individuation and is necessary for the birth of the Self. Seen symbolically, the Breaking of the Vessels is an expression of the inevitable woundedness that everyone experiences during the course of a lifetime, a brokenness that initiates a deeper process of healing and transformation. This process of falling apart is an iteration of the same fractal—a recapitulation on the microcosmic scale of an individual psyche—that the Kabbalah describes as initiating the process of divine evolution on a cosmic scale.

One of the striking features of the Kabbalah's account of the origin of evil is its assertion that evil arose as an inescapable feature of cosmogenesis itself—not as a consequence of a human misdeed as described in the Garden of Eden story. Instead of seeing evil as existing outside of God, the kabbalists saw evil as an essential component of the deity, woven into the very fabric of creation. From the point of view of the Kabbalah, evil issues forth from God himself, originating in the very heart of divinity, and is a necessary consequence of the act of creation itself. The earliest kabbalistic writings say, "The Holy One praised be He has a trait which is called Evil." From the Kabbalah's point of view, to deny evil its rightful place in the cosmos is to do away with the good as well. To one-sidedly strive after good and reject evil would be like trying to grasp the container without taking hold of the boundary that defines it.

This crisis in creation was built into the molecular and subatomic structure of the cosmos itself. The dialectical tensions of the cosmos are mirrored in the psyche of each individual. This primordial rupture, a form of trauma on a cosmic scale, became the in-forming force behind human history itself, conditioning the experience of each individual as well as that of our species as a whole. It is as if our entire species is suffering from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Or as if the wholeness of the universe had split into cosmic multiple sub-personalities who are dissociated from each other, desperately in need of recognizing their connection so as to reintegrate.

Humanity's Cosmic Responsibility

In *Letters*, Jung expresses appreciation for the kabbalists' insight that humanity plays a crucial role of copartnering with God so as to complete the creative act of his Incarnation:

In a tract of the *Lurianic Kabbalah*, the remarkable idea is developed that man is destined to become God's helper in the attempt to restore the vessels which were broken when God thought to create a world. . . . Here the thought emerges for the first time that man must help God to repair the damage wrought by creation. For the first time man's cosmic responsibility is acknowledged.

Jung was struck by the Kabbalah's radical notion that humanity doesn't just depend upon God, but that God, as if to complete the circle, depends upon humanity as well. From the Kabbalah's point of view, God did not just create humanity, but humanity is reciprocally helping to create God as well, as if humanity is the vessel which God has prepared in order to complete and incarnate himself. According to the Kabbalah, divine sparks of light—psychic/spiritual treasures—are encoded within us and hidden throughout the physical universe. It is a quintessentially Gnostic idea that the forces of darkness imprison the light in such a way so as to have the light (*continued on page 67*)



The kelipot entrapped divine sparks of light within them, according to the Kabbalah. The white in this painting, *Ein Sof and the Ten Sefirot* by David Friedman, is meant to evoke God's divine light.

Secular Buddhism and the Quest for a Lived Ethics

BY PHIL WOLFSON



Summer Buddha
by Gonkar Gyatso.

BEING HUMAN HAS NEVER been more complex. Technology and information inundate us. Change has never been so intense or rapid. Nearly everything has been commoditized, and the dominant for-profit culture makes spiritual clarity and community belonging difficult to engender.

I'm interested in how secular Buddhism—a relatively new development in the world of Buddhist practice—can serve as a resource for people who are seeking to escape atomization and instead create loving connections with each other and nature. Offering a humanistic and pragmatic essence that eschews metaphysical absolutes, secular Buddhism suggests an approach to lived ethics without being sectarian or necessarily incompatible with religious practices from other traditions.

The primary Buddhist impulse was and is democratic: all humans have the same nature as a potentiality for personal and social understanding and loving behavior. All of us are equally deserving of happiness, awareness, and spiritual attainment. This democratic view, deeply personal and simultaneously communitarian, is the wellspring for Buddhism's relevance to our times. As a political activist, I also appreciate Buddhism's inherent tolerance, its respect for individuals' freedom to come to their own conclusions, and its profound insistence on our interdependency.

While dogmatization has occurred over the 2,500 years of Buddhist practice, there has also been an ongoing dynamic impulse to shed such dogmas and to create independent mindfulness. Seen in relation to the older Buddhist traditions from which it builds, secular Buddhism can be characterized as both restorative (in that it re-examines the original teachings of Gautama Buddha as a person living in his time) and modernizing (in that it attempts to remove all unprovable elements and metaphysical assertions from the tradition). What is left is a pragmatic praxis, or "Buddhism 2.0," as its principle exponent Stephen Batchelor has inelegantly characterized it. A closer look at secular Buddhism thus reopens for examination questions about Buddhism's boundaries and constitutive elements.

The Flesh-and-Blood Buddha

Our contemporary encounters with the Buddha are with imagery, symbols, and statuary that are meant to convey to us a being in a relaxed and contemplative state. Most of us are not acquainted with the meanings of the various postures and gestures (*mudras*) that are designed to trigger reminders for spiritual practice among the practitioners of

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Buddhism. In truth, the intention of these images is not to remind us of an actual person or resemblance, but rather to remind us of the teachings that were offered by that being—to remind us to return to our essential practice.

In the metaphysical lore of Buddhism, it is said that we cannot become the Buddha and be released from this wheel of rebirth save through lifetimes of earning merit, although each of us is said to have his nature. Each of the many strains that comprise religious Buddhism has its own view of how many lives are needed and what is to be done.

To pierce through to the historical Buddha in his actual existence is not really possible. We can do distant approximations at best. To regard the Buddha as an actual human being like all other human beings—of his time and also vastly ahead of it—takes an effort to bring him out of the metaphysical realm of religious Buddhism, out of the idealized god realm.

By appreciating the Buddha as a human, secular Buddhism breaks a metaphysical “absolute.” If it is not provable by rational means and experience that the Buddha himself transcended death—if the Buddha was in fact impermanent—it is not possible to assert reincarnation for anyone. It is an extraordinary feeling to make him one of us—a sense of breathtaking possibility. For the Buddha must have lived as a practical person, struggling to understand his context, considering his choices within the frame of limited personal freedom, and creating a lived ethics based on non-harm and positive benefits. He had a deep and complex understanding of the nature of this impermanent existence, of the truth that once we arise, we shall cease—that all creation inevitably engenders disintegration.

The Buddha was a human being! Knowing that as fact, he becomes approachable, although we know so little of him. Even the dates of his life are controversial. There are no portraits. Each culture that has embraced the Buddha has created its own vision of the man: he looks quite different in Laos, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc. There are no writings from the Buddha himself. We can only infer what he actually said and did from others who came significantly later. Personal details are scant, and imagining the Buddha stepping into his actual consciousness and emotional body is a lovely exercise in projection with no validation.

Perhaps no one has tried more intensely to envision the flesh-and-blood Buddha in recent times than the former monk and present-day teacher, writer, and practitioner Stephen Batchelor. Batchelor’s journey of exploration, translation, and interpretation has led him into a word-by-word examination of some of the earliest sutras in the “Pali Canon,” which contains the Buddha’s teachings in the no-longer-spoken Pali language. Batchelor’s quest has been to find the human Buddha and his discourse prior to his deification and incorporation in Buddhist monastic hierarchies and self-perpetuating religious organizations. In the past few decades, new scholarship has fostered the possibility of separating out later additions and modifications to the original sutras. This then has formed the basis of Batchelor’s radical claims about the Buddha’s interest in a lived praxis, as opposed to the later karmic concept of nirvana, which involves leaving the wheel of life and rebirth with its attendant suffering. In fact, religious Buddhism shares the idea of salvation from this life with its soteriological predecessors early Hinduism and Jainism.

For us to envision the Buddha as an ordinary human being seeking a new communitarian democratic experience freed of caste and the rule of the rich opens us to the recognition that he must have stumbled, fallen, and picked himself up. My personal experience tells me that all gurus have a bit of clay between their toes. When we become involved with the idea of the Buddha as one of us, we can approach our struggles to not do hurtful things to others and to search for clarity of mind knowing that the Buddha also had to struggle to find his clarity and path. Indeed, the Buddha put himself through extraordinary trainings, tasted many tastes, and was a person of consummate discipline and perseverance. He is a model for how we can be in our own precious lifetimes. In this sense, this personal relationship moves us away from the myth and into the “what to do” and “how to be.” The Bodhisattva paradigm thus becomes about making life on earth



Stephen Batchelor, a proponent of secular Buddhism, is examining some of the Buddha’s earliest teachings in an attempt to imagine the Buddha as a human rather than as a god.

A mural in Chiang Mai, Thailand, shows Siddhartha, the man who became the Buddha, witnessing death and disease for the first time.



rich and bearable, helping each other, and sharing and loving. It ceases to aim for escape from the wheel of rebirth, but instead directs our consciousness here—right to this rich, worm-filled loam of being. The Bodhisattva truly knows this is a difficult, bittersweet, uncertain existence, and he/she is here to share it with us.

The Core Teachings of Buddhism

Buddhism has experienced many schisms, yielded three major branches, and produced many different schools. Its original core affirmation was that eliminating in-the-moment craving/attachment to virtually any object we fasten upon leads to freedom of mind and freedom from affliction. In other words, eliminating craving opens us to the pleasure of originality and the emptiness following the cessation of clinging and needing, therefore leading us back to clarity of mind. Indeed, words cannot do justice to that sense of awakening, spaciousness, and renewal. When I am successful in letting go of my grasping, I feel ecstasy, spaciousness, vitality, compassion, and connectedness. That pleasure is the source of my volition to return to the state of nonattachment. That experience constitutes my notion of nirvana—a here-and-now experience that is beyond concepts.

As Buddhism evolved and the Buddha became a scripted legend within a monastic system, the dharma (teachings) evolved, leading to a conception of nirvana as an ultimate totality to be achieved by the rare practitioner. Nirvana was then seen as the exit from this particular life and the cycle of rebirth. Explanations for the suffering of this life came to focus on old age, sickness, death, and the sufferings we create from craving, desire, aversion, and reincarnation. Some teachings suggested that one could be freed from this suffering by meditative transcendence within a single life; others suggested that the process could take dozens of lives. The karma of past lives (the transgressions of the past moving somehow into this life) became an explanatory principle for our good and bad fortunes. As a result, what we do here and now came to be understood as the cause of our own future sufferings. Our states of mind and actions—the things we can do something about—lost some of their centrality. Nirvana morphed into the “absolute” of *rigpa/dzogchen* (names for the state of primordial awareness, which came to be posited as existing separately from the individual, immortal and unstainable), and this state could be accessed through secret practices known only to the monastic hierarchies. In truth, as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has argued in *Dzogchen Teachings*, dzogchen—luminosity, clarity, and spaciousness of soul—is available to all of us and is directly experienced, often without awareness and therefore unnamed as such.

Can awareness transcend itself? Can there be a state of awareness that lacks subject and object? Is that ascertainable to humans? This remains controversial in Buddhism and Hinduism and in the realm of consciousness research. And (*continued on page 69*)

A Cosmic Prayer

Realizing Our Interconnection

BY CAT J. ZAVIS

WHAT A MORNING! It began routinely enough: I awoke to the birds chirping outside my window, my cats and dog greeted me, and then I began a twenty-minute sitting meditation to calm myself before beginning my more mundane tasks of getting kids up and to school. Once my teenage son was on his way to school, and before waking my youngest son, I went for a walk with my dog. The day was exquisite. I began singing a Jewish prayer giving gratitude to the Goddess/God/Spirit of the Universe for returning my soul to me so I could be present and alive in this world.

As I sang and walked, I took in the depth of my gratitude—what an amazing gift to be here. I then began a prayer of gratitude for the workings of my body (“Blessed is Goddess who heals all flesh and does wonders”). In a Jewish Renewal community in the San Francisco Bay Area I learned to expand this prayer of gratitude for my body parts and the amazing miracle of life. Now, every time I say this prayer, I name all the parts of my body, visualize how they work, and give gratitude that they function properly and allow me to experience life the way I do.

From the Mundane to the Sublime

As I walked my dog, I focused first on the amazing gift of sight. When I thought about how my eyes let me take in the beauty and awe of the universe, I was quickly reminded that, without my brain, what my eyes see would elude my experience. And without my consciousness, I could not appreciate any of it.

As I went through this prayer, which seemed so simple in its original Hebrew, it took on a breadth and depth that for me captured the true miracle of life—and my small yet meaningful role in the whole. My compassion for others expanded as I realized that I see and experience the world in a particular way because I have *my* eyes, brain, and heart, and if I had someone else’s brain (even in combination with my eyes and my heart), I would experience and see the world very differently. This realization allowed me to appreciate how one has no idea how others experience their reality unless one is willing to really be present with and to them.

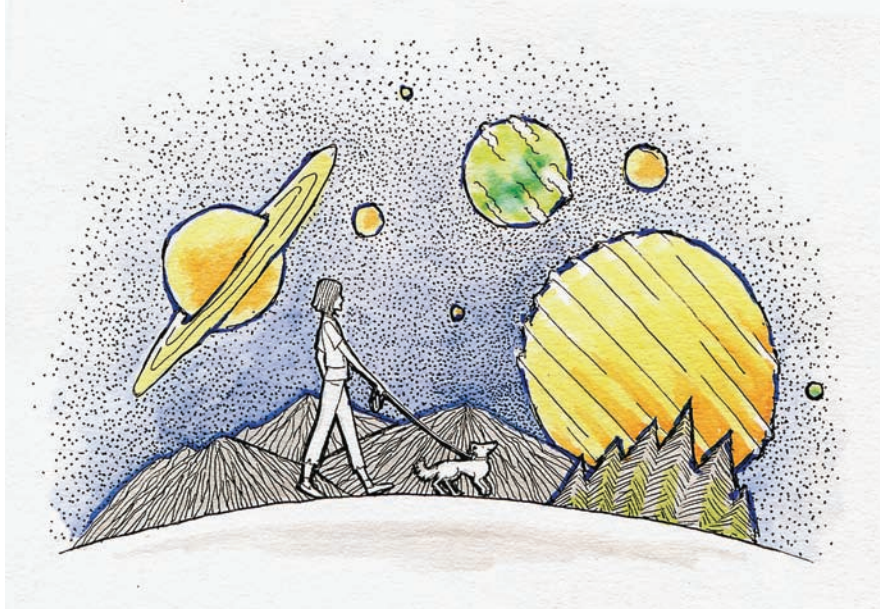
As I deepened even further in this prayer, I began to see myself as a star—one part of the whole of the universe. From there, my prayers expanded to express gratitude for the beauty of the universe, and I just flowed in and out, expanding and contracting, feeling gratitude for me as part of the universe and then experiencing gratitude for all the other parts of the universe that help make up the whole. That recognition helped me more fully understand how, just as the parts of my body make up a conscious whole not reducible to the sum of its parts, so too the consciousness of the universe cannot be reduced to the sum of its individual parts or manifestations.

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The sublime is closer than we realize! A simple prayer can transform a neighborhood walk into an experience of the divine.



I experienced a beautiful dance in this flow, and as I was dancing, I reflected on a conversation I had the other night. Friends and I were discussing what a tragedy it would be if humans destroyed the planet, seeing as we are a part of the planet—part of its transformative process. In other words, humans are not separate from or greater than a star, a planet, an animal, a tree, or any other part of the universe. We are a part of it. We are the part that has consciousness, that has the ability to see when we are doing harm and to make choices that are not harmful. We are the part that can take in the beauty and awe of the universe, see its glory, and celebrate and honor it. Without us, the universe would not be able to step back and witness her glory and greatness.

An Instant of Spiritual Clarity

In that moment, the words I have used for God/Goddess/YHVH—the Healing and Transformative Power of the Universe—transformed from mere words and abstract feelings to a deeply internalized experience. Even the intellectual belief I have held that we are all one took on a whole new meaning for me. The realization that we are in this together became integrated into my being in a whole new way such that now, when I say this prayer, my words elicit feelings within my body that resonate with my very core and shake me in profound ways. I gained a spiritual clarity that I had previously actualized only in words and intellect.

Goddess *is* the transformative power of the universe that has created this planet that all matter and all life-forms inhabit. She is not separate from us. We are a part of her. Goddess, just like each of us, is on a path to deepen her self-actualization and awareness, trying to be the best she can be, just as we all do in our lives. In this way, she is no different from those of us who are trying to heal, repair, and transform ourselves. Unfortunately for her, however, she does not have a bookstore where she can buy a self-help book. She does not have a spiritual teacher or counselor to turn to. Rather, she is creating and transforming herself as she goes by trial-and-error, and she is looking to us for help.

One of Goddess's transformations has involved the creation of human beings, who can help her evolve and transform into a deeper, wiser, more compassionate, fully awakened being. Humans have a unique capacity for self-reflection, consciousness, and deliberate choice and action. We can choose whether our behaviors and choices serve or harm others, enrich or destroy. In creating us and giving us consciousness, Goddess is saying to us: "Please help. I am doing all I can to transform and become the greatest universe I can be. Please use that which I have birthed through my own transformation—human beings with your wisdom, consciousness, teachers, guides, and souls—to help me."

With this awareness, my place on this planet at this time took on a new and deeper meaning to me. Now I will not just do my part to ensure the well-being of the planet and all beings on this planet, as we are all sacred parts of the whole, but I will also embrace my sacred role from the deepest recesses of my being. Why? Because that is my covenant and sacred commitment as part of this incredible universe. This is the part of the *tikkun* (healing and transformation) of the world in which I can participate with Goddess/God/Shechinah/Elohim.

Sitting in this awareness, I returned to my day ready to live with deepened commitment to caring for all beings with the same care that I give to myself. If we humans are to help the universe become the fullest embodiment of herself, she needs all the love and support she can get, just as each and every one of us does. ■

Culture

BOOKS

Doing Justice in an Unjust World

Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation

by Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda
Fortress Press, 2013

REVIEW BY THAD WILLIAMSON

CONSIDER THE following paradox: many of the everyday tools of engaged citizens and progressive activists—especially our various electronic gadgets—contribute directly to the suffering of other unseen human beings in ways that we scarcely realize.

Discarded electronic devices often become hazardous waste exports to developing countries, where they are dismantled by low-wage workers who risk their own health and that of their children to salvage materials for reuse in industrial processes. Likewise, the standard lifestyle of active participants in affluent societies typically involves consumption of energy and fossil fuel resources at a level that is simply unsustainable and will trigger rapid global warming, barring a massive reversal of that course. However, the harshest impacts of climate change will be felt first not by those with the largest carbon footprints but by residents in the developing world living in proximity to oceans and nearer to the equator.

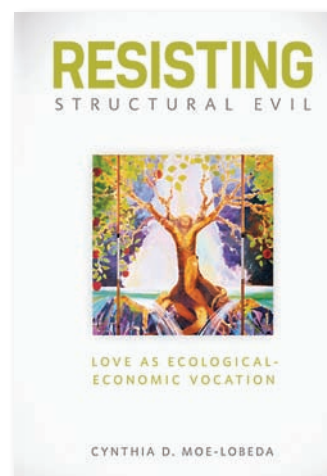
Nonetheless, to be an effective change agent in the United States and other “advanced” nations more or less requires use of these tools and participation in this lifestyle. Yes, individuals can become far more conscientious about their consumption, where their stuff comes from, and how it’s made, and they can use their consumer power to promote an alternative, more social economy. Yet, at the end of the day, even the most conscientious of us will still be using far more resources than most others on the planet, in ways that cannot be morally justified.

This is the kind of moral quandary that Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda’s magisterial volume *Resisting Structural Evil* places before readers. The claim at the heart of Moe-Lobeda’s book is that the everyday workings of global capitalism are endangering the survival of the planet and perpetrating structural economic violence on many people in the developing world. This in itself is a challenging claim, but it’s only the starting point for an extended ethical reflection that tries to answer honestly this question: how can flawed people like ourselves who are hopelessly entangled in practices and institutions that perpetuate injustice and violence against the earth (and ultimately our own children and grandchildren) possibly live an ethically responsible, justice-promoting life?

Acting Morally While Accepting Moral Ambiguity

The title of the book, highlighting resistance, is a bit misleading. For Moe-Lobeda, a religious ethicist operating in the Christian tradition, a moral response to structural evil has three components: “seeing” structural evil (i.e., recognizing the sometimes hidden ways in which institutional systems reinforce deep inequities and cause damage to human lives); resisting such evil; and building alternatives. There are significant obstacles at each stage of this process.

The key point is that it’s not enough simply to be aware in some vague sense that the world is riddled with injustice; instead, the morally engaged person and community must take





Climate change poses a serious challenge to Christian theology—how do we make sense of our role in this disaster while continuing to understand ourselves as an “abode of God’s active love”?

responsibility for building or creating alternatives to that injustice in whatever ways we can. What we can’t do is let ourselves off the hook by telling ourselves that resistance is futile, that this is just the way the world is, and that there are no alternative institutional possibilities.

Yet here things get tricky for most conscientious people. The “Serenity Prayer” attributed to the influential twentieth-century Christian theologian Reinhold Niebuhr asks for the ability to accept the things that cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference between what can and cannot be changed. For ordinary persons in rich societies, even conscientious ones, global inequality and the domination of the world economy by corporations may easily fall into the category of things that can’t be changed (and hence don’t need to be engaged). But awareness of alternatives expands the sense of what is possible—and hence what we are responsible for doing (or culpable for not doing). From fair trade networks to rolling back neoliberal economic

policies, there are many plausible ways to reorder the rules of the global economy to reduce or mitigate systemic injustice.

In another sense, however, Niebuhr’s admonition is still partly on target. What we (conscientious persons in privileged societies) cannot alter is our own deep complicity in benefiting from unjust global (and often, domestic) institutions. We have many political and economic privileges, but we do not have the privilege of claiming to be innocent of benefitting from these injustices—even if we are trying to be mindful of our own personal economic choices and generous in sharing excess resources with others.

One key contribution of Moe-Lobeda’s book is to show how Christian theology has resources to deal with this seemingly contradictory situation. Human beings are simultaneously flawed and caught up in structural evil *and* capable of generating love and acting in ways motivated by love and justice. As Moe-Lobeda puts it, drawing on the theological framework of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The call to resist evil is fraught with vexing ambiguity in a world in which all alternatives to an unjust situation may themselves be tainted with injustice.”

Indeed, while evangelism is not part of Moe-Lobeda’s agenda here, the book persuasively shows why the kind of moral anthropology offered in the best of the Jewish and Christian traditions may be essential to the formation and sustenance of activists who are in it for the long haul. To wit, movements that stake exaggerated claims to moral purity and too easily define good and bad, just and unjust, both ignore the ambiguity of our moral condition and are likely to, sooner rather than later, implode under the weight of competing forms of self-righteousness. A theological conception of humanity as inhabiting the “paradoxical state of being both ‘in bondage to sin’ and ‘abode of God’s active love’” has a much better chance of helping individuals

and communities simultaneously achieve both sharp moral vision and a healthy dose of humility.

At the same time, Moe-Lobeda is crystal clear that humanity—and hence theology—faces more severe challenges in the twenty-first century than at any other period in human history, headlined by the imminent and irreversible alterations to the climate and in turn the fragile ecosystems that sustain life as we know it. The wisdom of centuries is relevant and indispensable here, but it is not enough.

Here we might consider the wide gap between the sophisticated and demanding conception of Christian ethics endorsed by Moe-Lobeda and the characteristic ethical mindlessness of affluent American life (i.e., our lack of attention to the impact of our lifestyle on others)—and how it parallels the wide gap between the need for an urgent all-hands-on-deck approach to reorienting our economy in light of the climate challenge and the failure of the U.S. government to pass even the most basic initial policies to limit carbon emissions.

Making Moral Dialogue Mainstream

Moe-Lobeda’s book is certainly not one aimed at the median voter, in political science parlance. It is a book aimed at religiously informed activists who know something about the world, who are trying to get more engaged, and who could benefit from some clarity and wisdom in how to go about doing that kind of work. The dominant take-home message the book transmits to these readers is the need to get personally engaged in building alternatives, starting at the local level, with the aim of eventually influencing higher-order public policies.

This is eminently sensible advice—expanding the range of visible alternatives also expands the likelihood that the moral vision of those not already troubled by structural evils or the

climate crisis might be awakened. But at some point, the median voter has to come back in play: what does cutting-edge eco-justice theology have to say to the ordinary working person who barely can cope with the stress of his or her own life, let alone worry about big questions about how our social institutions are organized?

A standard response would be that savvy leadership and some creative policy thinking can bridge that gap by showing how alternative policies might simultaneously speak to the everyday economic concerns of millions of insecure Americans and also benefit the environment and/or workers abroad. But this is easier said than done, and recent prominent attempts to pull it off, such as the “Green Collar Economy” promoted by activist Van Jones, still have not gotten serious traction.

Indeed, there is a vast cultural divide between the moral universes of most people who care deeply and are knowledgeable about climate change, farmers in India, coltan mining in the Congo, electronic waste exports, and many of the other issues Moe-Lobeda tackles, and that of most other Americans, whether economically privileged or not. That cultural divide is severe enough to assure that most Americans can simply tune out, or never even hear of, messages like Moe-Lobeda’s.

Important strands of Christian theology have long been comfortable with

the idea of a faithful remnant, the remnant that holds firm to justice and the demands of the cross amidst a hostile culture. Alternatively, we might think of social justice theologians and social justice-minded congregations as part of a sort of moral elite: dedicated persons whose example rubs off on others and who provide a living counter message to society’s dominant values.

There is nothing wrong with either of these views, per se, but neither one accomplishes the goal of using the mechanism of democratic politics to take the actions required to sustain the conditions of human life on this planet as we know it. What will that take?

History shows that the best teacher of new, society-transforming ideas, the best way to move ideas from the margins to the mainstream, is the massive social movement. Social movements are also needed to challenge accumulated power, and they are creative sources of alternative institutions and practices.

But contemporary social movements, including most recently Occupy, tend to accentuate the cultural distance between activists and the mainstream (even to thrive on it), and hence are easily dismissed. The image of protesters gathered in a public park broadcast over television has become its own cliché, and even when it succeeds in attracting widespread attention, the image can easily be turned against the movement itself.

Protest activity ultimately falls flat if it is not coupled with a broad base of knowledge in the wider society about what is going on, as well as a widespread moral understanding of why what is going on is wrong.

To be sure, mass communications must be part of any movement, and part of the toolkit of theologically informed organizers. But it’s also true that the most important part of the revolution we need won’t be televised—it will instead take place through thousands of discussions in church halls and synagogues and mosques, and other forums that allow for serious moral dialogue to take place in ways conducive to the formation of moral communities. This is the hard, patient work that is urgently needed to prepare the way for dramatic change. Congregations that are already ready for that kind of serious conversation can do no better right now than to read and discuss Moe-Lobeda’s challenging book. ■

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Sifting Through Assimilation’s Wreckage to Offer Jews Redirection

Schtick

by Kevin Coval
Haymarket Books, 2013

REVIEW BY RAPHAEL COHEN

FOR OVER A DECADE, Chicago-based poet and educator Kevin Coval has wielded language as both cutlass and compass in the struggle for social justice. Coming to national prominence through multiple appearances on HBO’s *Def Poetry*, Coval has taken his place in

a pantheon of contemporary writers and orators whose work is informed by a conviction not only in art’s ability to make tangible the most pressing of social crises, but also in its capacity to inspire action for remedying those ills. Coval likewise belongs to a generation of U.S. poets whose aesthetics are



molded by a rich connection to their cultural heritage and an unbridled love and respect for hip-hop as community and creative form.

As a self-identified white Jewish participant in hip-hop, an artistic movement birthed and principally populated by people of color, Coval has forthrightly tackled issues of race, place, and responsibility in his writing. He's unpacked and interrogated his and other whites' identification with and personal empowerment through an arts practice that, at least in its infancy, offered a scathing criticism of structural racism and white American complicity in it. Along the way, and indeed as an essential component of the political project underscoring his literary practice, Coval has critically engaged questions of U.S. Jewish identity and collectivity, both celebrating the contributions of Jewish activists to U.S. civic discourse and calling the Jewish American body to task for what he sees as a far-too-frequent alignment with state power, a tragic abandonment of Jewish ethics and social consciousness.

Schtick, Coval's fourth full-length poetry collection, proves to be his most comprehensive engagement with issues of Jewishness to date. In it, he thoroughly explores his own family's relationship to the evolving status and perception of Jews in U.S. life,

the complex legacy of Jewish American artists and entertainers in the twentieth century, the charged terrain of black-Jewish relations, and, most prominently, the profound, often overlooked price of Jewish assimilation into America's so-called melting pot. Alternately hilarious and haunting, *Schtick* asserts in no uncertain terms that the U.S. Jewish community's seeming success at the dawn of the twenty-first century hides a history of surrender to the very power structures by which it was once outcast, and that this history is in need of rigorous review if Jews are to adequately understand their role in U.S. life and reclaim the spirit of resistance once so central to their shared identity.

Though Coval is occasionally derided by mainstream Jewish American establishments for his unabashed criticisms of Israel and its U.S.-based lobby, one could easily argue that his politics and poetic defiance in fact embody the best of the Jewish prophetic tradition. His own belief in the inherent Jewishness of his iconoclastic confrontations surfaces early on in *Schtick*, namely in the poem "ben," a clever yet painful skewering of his generation's Jewish elders. This poem plays on the Hebrew term for "son" to question the normalization of oppressive behavior among the literal and figurative descendants of formerly persecuted Jews. Transitioning from opening lines that explore his own father's entrapment in "american capitalism," Coval writes:

ben ascendance
into white-ness. ben skin
privilege and passing. ben
nation state. ben/t borders

.....
ben doctors
who refuse health care. ben
bankers who disallow self-
determination. ben jews
on beaches. the sun only
for ben passports. other
sons unable to pass ports

.....
ben fathers who were
pushed around themselves.
ben the bullied begat sons
who bully.

By structuring the poem around the repetition of the term "ben," Coval clearly conveys that his criticisms are being leveled from within a Jewish familial construct and are meant not simply to expose Jewish complicity with discriminatory practices, but also to understand its origins and redirect "ben" (as both son and father) toward a more just, egalitarian, *nonbullying* disposition. This sentiment is reflected in a prose poem about a Passover Seder that appears a few pages later in which Coval more straightforwardly cites the Haggadah's recognition that "the younger generation will push the older generation, challenge injustice, demand we grow a community to become more inclusive and humble." Here, as elsewhere, Coval conjures the rebellion against authority inherent in the biblical story of Isaac and Abraham, framing his own insurgency

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As a Jewish participant in hip-hop culture, Kevin Coval "has forthrightly tackled issues of race, place, and responsibility," the author writes.

against Jewish power as a modern-day remix of young Isaac's destruction of his father's idols.

While a recurring critical stance toward the Jewish community's participation in contemporary political abuses threads through the entirety of the collection, Coval's verse never devolves into mere polemics, largely because he grounds his analysis in deeply personal stories and regularly pays tribute to those aspects of Jewish family or community life in which he *does* find great value. A sense of celebration courses through several early poems that function as paeans to Jewish foods, customs, and family members. In "ode to gefilte fish," for instance, he honors his grandfather, who

would eat dozens
at a time out of jars like cookies.
gelatinous bone jelly dripping
from his fingers like honey.

He also contextualizes "this loaf of fish on a glass plate" as

the perfect food
for a wandering people, weaving
around
europe with sacks, scrounging scraps
seaside, a boatload of cuttings,
unwanted

In the following poem, "hamotzi on thanksgiving," readers are treated to a decidedly modern Jewish American family gathering, in which the traditional holiday meal's stuffing is "made with challah," the youngest family member on hand—"a blond, blue-eyed boy" adopted from a town in the Ukraine a mere twelve miles from where the family patriarch fled Cossack persecution in the early 1900s—plays "God Bless America" on a shofar, and, per the title, "the prayer for bread, the most frequently said / hebrew blessing" is recited. Writes Coval:

we are thankful for the integration
of our practice with the practice of
our hosts

for the first time, we can sing hushed
in a home not our own. we thank G-d
for challah in the stuffing
we thank G-d for hybrid.

The hybridity referenced here is, of course, one of the guiding motifs of the entire collection. But while this particular poem presents it in generally favorable terms, *Schtick's* marrow resides in Coval's assertion that assimilation in the United States has made for far more loss, longing, and dislocation than the economic gains and comforts of many contemporary Jewish Americans might at first suggest.

The Cost of Whiteness for American Jews

Echoing the piercing honesty of James Baldwin's *The Price of the Ticket* and the sociological precision of Karen Brodtkin's *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (the latter of which provides source material for the title of one of Coval's later poems), *Schtick's* purpose begins taking greatest shape in the third of its ten sections, "assimilation & its dis/contents." Here, Coval shines a light on the traumatic effects of the roughly half-century-long process through which Jews of European descent have managed to cast off minority status in the United States, meticulously unearthing the rejection of cultural traditions that access to American whiteness required.

Whether lamenting "how jewish boys get irish names" ("an irish / name might get us a Barbie, a spot / in a college with jew quotas") or "why jews celebrate christmas" ("it's the only time of year all my mom's people could get / off work"), or framing Hanukkah as a mostly manufactured Jewish American holiday devised to counter the "ginormity of jesus's bornday" and get Jews to celebrate "a story of war," Coval insists that, while the material privileges of entering the United States' dominant racial group may

have offered some semblance of protection to stateside Ashkenazi Jews in the twentieth century, the psychic and spiritual malaise that corresponds to that passage needs also to be accounted for.

Notably, the section is bookended by poems that depict moments of crisis when Jewish Americans are faced with unforeseen decisions to consume or reject food and drink that contain pork. Coval recounts the story of an elder cousin's wife discovering and announcing, at a Chicago gathering of conservative rabbis in 1956, that "THERE IS BACON IN THE BAKED POTATO!" whereupon a frenzied procession of rabbis and their wives flee the ballroom, looking for bathrooms "to stick fingers down their throats / and throw up / all that isn't kosher."

Placing himself in the same tense storyline of Jewish otherness vis-à-vis American dietary and social norms, the writer mirrors his elders' predicament in the closing poem of the section, describing his own panic when, at a friend's bar on the outskirts of Detroit some fifty years later, he's offered a whiskey "infused / with bacon smoke and vanilla" and promptly wishes he could run, lamenting that he is "always strange in this land / of milk and meat," that "the whole country is a Michigan bar" forcing him to choose "treif and profane."

This quandary—and the frequent, albeit distressing, choice to hide one's Jewishness—takes on even greater weight in the following section, a somber indictment of rhinoplasty's prominence among U.S. Jews. Expressing grief at the widespread internalizing of white Christian beauty standards among Jewish women in post-war America, Coval explores the history of nose jobs in his own family, essentially framing the crushing and cutting of one's most noticeably Jewish facial feature as a severing of ethnic roots, allowing for easier assimilation into whiteness, the unspoken pain of self-annihilation yet again shadowing

whatever social benefits are concomitantly gained.

As the book's title indicates, Coval is similarly invested in exploring the various forms of performance that Jews in show business in the United States have utilized to garner goodwill, or mere acceptance, from the dominant culture. He revisits the careers and several noteworthy routines of Jewish American comedic legends such as Lenny Bruce, Joan Rivers, and even Don Rickles, mostly paying homage to their use of Jewish cultural expression as a vehicle for poking fun at American empire. But while he clearly allies himself with these artists and their ability to mock institutional power while straddling the insider/outsider tightrope on which Jews who've resisted total submission to white American norms have long made home, Coval's own version actually reads more as a "meta-schtick," a critical comment on the extent to which entertaining non-Jewish whites in twentieth-century America proved the most dependable means by which Jews could be seen in positive, or at least nonthreatening, terms.

All the same, Coval implicates himself in this dynamic, calling his own "schtick" to task, most notably in a poem entitled "WWLBD," an acronym for the question "What Would Lenny Bruce Do?" in which Coval recounts dramatically shifting tones halfway through a performance at a variety show for a mostly suburbanite audience. After "a nice, easy round of nice jewish boy / who loves hip-hop poems," he can't help but feel on edge, pacing backstage during an intermission, recalling that it's "months / into the second intifada" and "months after the revisionist movie" (presumably Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, which he later rips to shreds in one of the book's most explicit and genuinely hysterical moments). He accordingly opts to forgo the relatively unthreatening stances of his first segment and instead delve into a much more

disquieting suite of poems attacking racial and economic oppression, for which he's treated to a rising chorus of boos and several interruptions from white audience members scorning *him* as a racist. Whether his act amounts to a dismissal of traditional "schtick" and its limitations or is in fact the writer's own, more expansive version of the concept, remains a question with which readers are invited—indeed required—to grapple.

A Study of Black-Jewish Interactions

The tribute offered to Jewish American entertainers whose careers proved to be a thorn in the side of power mongers expands into a probing study of black-Jewish interactions over the last half-century. Forgoing the flat, often rehashed tropes of black-Jewish alliances dissolving in the aftermath of the Civil Rights era because of increased black militancy or Jewish ascension into whiteness and its accordant advantages, Coval instead focuses on both the exploitative history of Jews appropriating black forms of cultural expression and the occasional, uneasy manifestations of solidarity across these minority communities. While maintaining the recalcitrant tone in which the entire book is steeped, this section offers perhaps the greatest level of nuance in the collection, as historical figures who have too often been discussed in simplistic terms are granted renewed attention.

Al Jolson, for instance, the early twentieth-century Jewish jazz singer and vaudevillian entertainer widely criticized for perpetuating the sort of blackface minstrelsy that today is understood as inexcusably racist, is simultaneously framed as having opened doors for black singers like Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. Coval names this reality as both "a badge and a charade," as "the world's greatest entertainer / took from the world's most pained,"

enacting "the confused / horrible hope of this new / country." Later, Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam figurehead widely condemned by Jewish leaders in the 1990s for his occasionally anti-Semitic rhetoric, is presented in far more complex terms: Coval recreates the scene of a stereotype-defying violin concert Farrakhan gave in North Carolina twenty years ago, playing the compositions of Felix Mendelssohn, the grandson of Reform Judaism's founder, philosopher Moses Mendelssohn.

Prominent in this section and throughout the collection are the hip-hop aesthetics through which Coval has woven so much of his creative work. The frequently misrepresented artistic movement has long prioritized cultivating counter-narratives to mainstream representation, and doing so in terms both accessible and urgent. Similarly, born as it was from a practice of repurposing previous generations' musical offerings, hip-hop emphasizes the notion of sampling, or borrowing past expression, in order to create something new and relevant to contemporary concerns.

Coval's poetry forcefully embodies these tenets, as he regularly quotes, questions, and reworks the written or spoken assertions of historical figures salient to his subject matter. One such example is evidenced in the title of the section "the secret relationship between Blacks & jews," itself the name of a 1991 book published by the Nation of Islam that dubiously purports that Jews dominated the transatlantic slave trade. In Coval's hands, the phrase actually hints at a much more layered relationship rife with instances of friction *and* kinship. Coval also ensures that the language he uses to comment on his cultural references (be they preeminent emcee KRS-One's still-contentious claim that "Abraham too was black" or celebrated composer Irving Berlin's lyric snippet "be white") remains true to that of everyday people. As such, his work inherently breaks

ties with academia-enforced notions that poetry need be written in esoteric, incomprehensible terms to be deemed valuable or deserving of longevity.

A Critique of the Occupation

Schtick concludes by coming full circle to some of the concerns with which the book opens and for which Coval has become most known, namely Jewish American support for the state of Israel and a parallel disregard for Palestinian suffering. Entitled “all the pharaohs must fall,” this section frames Jewish nationalism, in particular its emphasis on institutionalizing Jewish political dominance in Palestine/Israel, as a metaphoric cousin of Jewish assimilation in the United States.

Whereas becoming part of the white majority in America has ensured Jews a degree of previously unattainable power and prominence, principally through the process of suppressing overt expressions of Jewishness, Coval claims that Zionism has used different means, i.e., the elevation of a “new Jew” mythology that asserts Jewish birthright to the land while dismissing Palestinians’ historical presence there, to create an essentially analogous

result in the Middle East. Railing against the Israeli Army’s violent shut-down of the Palestine Festival of Literature in 2009 (and portraying it as a particularly egregious expression of ill will, given Jews’ historical connection to and love of books), blasting his former shul’s leadership for inviting an Israeli Consulate representative to advocate for the West Bank separation wall on Kol Nidre (“the holiest night of our calendar”), and penning an open letter to his dad, attempting to explain his “disagreeable” political stance as an outgrowth of the humanistic values father taught son, Coval alternates in tone from livid to dismayed, protective to vulnerable. Anyone who’s seriously engaged with the history and present of modern Israel can’t help but be moved by the sincerity of his critique and calls to action.

Though some might be tempted to frame Coval’s writing as mere deconstruction of the contemporary Jewish body politic, *Schtick*’s ultimate purpose seems to lie more in the insinuation that Jews today can and must learn from past missteps, both owning the extent to which self-eradicating assimilation tactics were an understandable response to

historical traumas *and* recognizing the ultimate inadequacy of survival strategies that led to collusion with all-too-familiar forms of domination. In the current era, Coval claims, Jews ought celebrate—rather than run from—a history of being “bridge people. red sea parters. translators / between the warring. [who] see connections. the i in i / the i in thou.” The collective evolution out of a protracted state of fear, isolation, and dis-ease will emerge, Coval insists, once Jews embrace their diasporic legacies, forge substantive bonds of solidarity with similarly uprooted and rerouted peoples, and insist on an expression of culture and religion that neither bows to nor adopts the ethos of historical oppressors, but instead lays loud and loving claim to the most progressive and holistic tendencies the Jewish tradition has to offer. ■

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To Know Us, Study Our Arguments

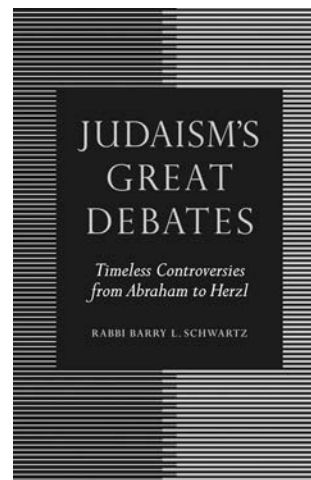
Judaism’s Great Debates: Timeless Controversies from Abraham to Herzl

by Barry L. Schwartz
Jewish Publication Society/University
of Nebraska Press, 2012

REVIEW BY EDMOND H. WEISS

RIGHT NOW, especially in New York, Los Angeles, and Israel, tens of thousands of Jews are arguing, sometimes at the top of their voices, about ethics and justice—and only a small percentage

is in the yeshivot. Jews have done this from the beginning, arguing even with God. This should come as no surprise for, as David Frank points out: “The God of the Hebrew Bible is, by nature, argumentative. Humans, made in God’s image are argumentative . . . and ‘thick-necked.’” But the most interesting arguments, historically, have been between and among Jews themselves: for example, Moses versus Korach (on the issue of aristocratic privilege) or Ben Zakkai versus the Zealots (on the efficacy of armed resistance).



Barry Schwartz's *Judaism's Great Debates* emerges from this rich and cacophonous tradition. A deceptively simple little book, it identifies ten crisis points in the history of Judaism and conceptualizes them as debates between two powerful persons or perspectives.

Schwartz's template permits contemporary students to stage or conduct the debates inherent in the discussions: to establish the burden of proof, to examine unexpressed warrants, and perform the basic tasks required of debaters and legal advocates. Although each unit is called a debate, they are better described as conflicts or disputes. Abraham's conversation with God about saving the "good" people in Sodom is more a negotiation than a debate. Further, when the prophet Nathan berates King David for his adultery (and murder?), David does not even argue back, even though inherent in this conversation is a profound debate: empire versus republic; man versus law; unitary presidency versus checks-and-balances. There is also a tributary debate about the ethics of punishing children for their parents' transgressions.

Each chapter not only provides insights into the meaning of the period in which they occurred, but also illustrates that nearly all these arguments are relevant today. (The Sodom controversy, for example, is about proportionality of response; Hillel versus Shammai is about strict construction of laws.)

Each of the ten units is startlingly short; Spinoza gets scarcely 300 words to lay out his theology! While my first thought (as a student of Spinoza) is that this is an unacceptably thin presentation, I now realize that it is better described as elliptical, in the tradition of Torah and Mishna. That is, it offers just enough to stimulate discourse and guide productive inquiry. For the book to achieve its full usefulness, the instructor or leader who uses it as a text must also know how to design and

moderate debates, lest the confrontation between Moses and Korach, for example, devolve into a Purim Spiel.

There is also an innovative thesis in this work. Schwartz suggests that an especially useful way to study Jewish history is to study Jewish intellectual history. In this view, the most important thing to learn about the Jews is their ideas, particularly their clashing and opposing ideas. Out of each great conflict comes innovative thinking, ethical progress, social mechanisms that protect the Jews from their enemies, methods for adapting to modernity, and principles that move the Jewish people and the world at large closer to *tzedek* (justice). To know the Jewish people, then, one studies their arguments.

Rationales and Rationalizations

The arguments at the heart of Judaism are not mere shouting matches or power plays. Judaism as a culture has preferred reason to force and argument to intimidation. Orthodox children study the disputes of the Talmud when still in their early teens; non-Orthodox Jews and secular Jews are over-represented in the legal professions, especially in such intellectually charged parts of the system as defending death penalty cases or representing detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Jews seem most Jewish when they are justifying, defending, or attacking an ethical proposition.

In the Jewish tradition codified by Maimonides, rationality is the human feature that constitutes the "image of God." So, a productive way to study the history of the Jews is to study their arguments and debates. In doing so, it's important to remember that reason and rationality are rarely used to *form* beliefs. Rather, they are far more often used to justify and defend our opinions after they have been formed. When advocates give the true reasons for their conclusions, it is called a "rationale."

When they give other reasons that are more attractive to the audience or adversary, it is called a "rationalization." Either is equally legitimate, so long as the statements are true and the logic is sound. For example, the eating of matzo is almost certainly an ancient rite of unknown origin. The bread baked on the backs of fleeing Israelites is the rationalization.

People who disagree with each other almost never debate. Even apparent debates in the Talmud are mostly reconstructed pseudo-debates, made by placing remarks spoken in different times and locations into a single paragraph of commentary, thereby creating the illusion that the protagonists are debating with each other. Argumentation, debate, and scientific proof are formal ways of discoursing about ideas, notions, and conclusions, with a view to winning assent or acceptance for the advocate's position. In most fields of study (including religious scholarship), hypotheses, conclusions, and even whole theories pre-date the inquiry. Typically, the goal is not to learn what is true or effective, but to confirm one's prior position. Very little inquiry is genuinely open to new findings. Indeed, these days, the money that pays for most research is vested in a particular outcome.

So, then, what is this faculty, rationality, that Maimonides tells us is in the image of God? What is this "discourse of reason" that Hamlet tells us separates human beings from beasts? Is it the ability to separate what is true from false, what is appropriate from inappropriate? Or, rather, is it the ability to make one's choices and actions *seem* reasonable and therefore convincing to others?

Maimonides, Spinoza, and Incorporal Thought

The contemporary Orthodox Jew is taught that some of the 613 commandments are understandable and serve a clear purpose, while others

are revelatory and beyond our understanding. That is, some can be defended to the doubter through rational argument, while some must be taken on faith (How many of us were taught that kashrut is good for your health? That the prohibition on pork protects Jews from trichinosis?). This, however, is not quite what the revered Moses Maimonides taught:

It is appropriate that one meditate, according to his intellectual capacity, regarding the laws of the Torah to understand their deeper meaning. Those laws for which he finds no reason and knows no purpose should nevertheless not be treated lightly. (*Me'ilah* 8:8)

In other words, Maimonides, whose well-known position is that the “image” of an incorporeal God is *intellect*, believes that there are reasons for *all* the commandments and that it is appropriate, even desirable, to reflect on those meanings. Later in this passage, he observes that all commandments have reasons in God’s intellect; when no reason reveals itself to study, then the fault is in the feebleness of our human intellects, not the capriciousness of the commandments. Maimonides’ intellect, to illustrate, argues that circumcision—a ritual whose origins are shrouded in primordial superstition—is commanded by God so as to lessen sexual pleasure and, thereby, focus the mind on better things.

Differences in intellectual capacity are central to Maimonides’ theology. High levels of intellect (along with “purity of behavior”) can elevate one to a prophet. Moses’ interaction with God, whatever incorporeal form it took, was an acknowledgment of the superiority of his intellect and rationality.

Of course, we must pause for a moment to remark that this core idea, the most widely discussed claim in the *Guide for the Perplexed*, is fundamentally flawed. We know today that thought is not incorporeal. Thought (reason, study, analysis, debate, knowing, understanding, rationalizing) all

entail “motion” in the brain and nervous system. One cannot think without a body and, therefore, since God has no body (*ayn guf*), God can’t think in the way we understand thinking. Indeed, thought is mainly electrochemical and therefore controlled by the laws of physics, a fact that undermines most claims about free will as well.

One memorable chapter of Schwartz’s new book explores Baruch Spinoza’s confrontation with the Synagogue Elders. Spinoza believed that God was best understood through the laws of nature and that, although nature affects every action, the Torah could not have been written or spoken by God. He believed that those *mitzvot* (commandments) justifiable through rational argument should be followed by all rational men. Therefore, that there is no need for divine reward and punishment. And he doubted—lacking evidence—the existence of the *olam habah*, or afterlife.

Spinoza, despite his many conflicts with Maimonides, also believed that thought was incorporeal. In his view, God was not the maker of the universe but the “substance” of which everything in the universe is made. This substance has an endless number of attributes, but the only ones that humans can perceive are “thought” and “extension” (reason and matter). Spinoza also did not appreciate that thinking entailed the “extensions” of the brain and nervous system, but in his case the error does not undermine his theology as badly as it does that of Maimonides.

Arguing with God

Judaism’s Great Debates is in the tradition of another classic on Jewish debate, Anson Laytner’s *Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition*. Laytner’s book calls readers’ attention to three particular disputes in the Tanakh: Abraham (defending Sodom); Moses (convincing God not to abandon the Israelites); and Job (protesting the injustice of his treatment).

In each argument, the human is clearheaded, clever, and rhetorically effective; in each case, God is emotional and vulnerable to obvious devices of persuasion. For Abraham (whose “debate” is also a chapter in *Judaism’s Great Debates*), God retreats from his rage with Sodom and negotiates a compromise. In Moses’s case, God is shamed into revising his angry first position. In Job’s case, God merely explodes at Job’s challenge, dismissing his complaint but eventually acquiescing.

While each of these disputes deserves at least a monograph of commentary, it is still important to highlight a phenomenon that is characteristic of all three, but especially of Abraham and Moses. Abraham asserts that a just God should act justly. Moses asserts that the Egyptians would delight in the failure of the God of Israel. These arguments, like nearly all those made in ordinary conversation, leave out the most controversial and relevant premise: that God should care what people think of him. But that premise is never uttered or debated.

People do not speak in syllogisms, but inherent in each argument is a syllogism, or chain of connected syllogisms, that constitutes the spine of the argument. Typically, the actual point of friction in a dispute is an unexamined premise (or warrant). Sometimes the warrants are truisms (self-evident), such as “good health is better than ill health” or “parents love their children.” These obvious and basic warrants, according to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, would, if stated specifically, weaken the argument and undermine the speaker’s credibility. But, to be fair, it may *not* be the case that God should care about his reputation, or that good health automatically trumps other values and pleasures, or even that parents automatically love their children.

When Nathan chides King David (yet another chapter in *Judaism’s Great Debates*), he uses an analogy

about a farmer with lots of livestock stealing from someone who has very little. David is immediately taken with this argument, not realizing that he has condemned himself. However, inherent in any argument by analogy is a hidden premise, in this instance, asserting that livestock are analogous to wives, that kings are analogous to farmers, and so forth. The unexamined and far more interesting question—never brought up in the debate—is whether kings are subject to the same laws as commoners. In a true debate, one of the tasks of the adversary is to extract the unexpressed premise and challenge its truth.

Talmud Debates

When “debate” and “Judaism” are uttered in the same sentence, most will think of the Talmud: the oral Torah and its commentaries, transcribed over several centuries after the fall of the second temple. *Judaism’s Great Debates*, like most Talmud courses, begins with an account of a famous argument among rabbis (*Bava Metzia*, 59a-b). The subject of the argument is arcane and interests almost no one: “If an oven is kosher, then broken, is the reassembled oven automatically kosher as well?” But the deliberation itself is central to an understanding of Judaism. The majority, led by Rabbi Joshua, decides that the oven is still kosher; the minority of one, Rabbi Eliezer, not only disagrees with the majority but also invokes a series of miraculous events to prove his correctness. The last miracle is a heavenly chorus, urging the group to agree with Eliezer, to which Joshua famously announces: “The teaching is not in heaven!” He adds, “We take no notice of heavenly voices, since You, God, have already, at Sinai, written in the Torah to ‘follow the majority.’”

This text declares that the Jews are fundamentally a rational, legalistic people who base their judgments *not* on miracles or divine interventions but on the received Torah(s), and that in

disputed matters the majority should prevail. (This effectively eliminates God from all halachic discussions, save for citations in Torah verses. Later in this part of the Talmud, God laughs and declares, “My children have defeated me.”)

Emmanuel Levinas observes that this elevation of Torah and Torah disputes, even above miraculous voices from heaven, is “protection against the madness of a direct contact with the Sacred that is unmediated by reason.”

The story captures a wonderful moment in Jewish history: the enshrinement of intellect as the engine of Judaism. But note how Rabbi Joshua “proves his point.” Using one of the standard forms of talmudic argument, he cites—or appears to cite—a line of Torah that tells us to “follow the majority.” The annotators tell us that the verse he has in mind is Exodus 23:2: “You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall you testify in a dispute to follow after a crowd to pervert judgment.”

The word translated as “multitude” is *rabim*, which should more accurately be translated as “mighty” or “powerful.” And, in any event, the instruction is *not* to follow the “majority” or “mighty.” One might argue that not following the majority to do evil is somehow equivalent to following the majority to do good. But how could such a far-fetched, tenuous connection provide the “proof” for one of the foundations of Judaism itself? The rationalization is unconvincing.

Talmudic proofs are not demonstrations. Moreover, they are not really debates; that is, there is rarely an assignment of presumption or burden of proof. Disputed conclusions are often so fragile that the “losing” opinion is given nearly as much respect and authority as the winner. (Some very observant Jews light two Hanukkah menorahs: one the Hillel way, one the Shammai way.) This is because the purpose of the proofs is to impress the majority, to satisfy those present that

the advocate’s case is consistent with the Torah (as well as what the majority wants to do anyway). The great inheritance Jews receive from the disputes in the Talmud, therefore, is the art of using all available means to prove that one’s position is for “the sake of heaven”—that is, consistent with the requirements of the Torah and advancing that combination of justice and compassion called *tzedek*. Once that case is made, the majority is not afraid to concur.

Arguments over Israel

There are cultures and religions that eschew debate and questioning. There are religions that encourage faith *despite* the evidence. (It would be relatively straightforward, for example, to determine whether the Communion wine actually turns into blood.) There are faiths that prefer the ignorance of innocence to the knowledge of worldliness. Judaism is not one of those religions.

I said earlier that Jewish culture has traditionally preferred argument to force. This is, of course, a simplification. I’m sure the zealots weren’t much for talking. The domain in which the decrease of reason is most apparent these days is in Diaspora discussions about Israel—a topic that is now a source of divisiveness rather than unity in most American synagogues. This divisiveness does not mean an intensification of heated discussion or a large-scale commitment to study and debate. Rather, it refers to the formation of hostile factions, wholesale departures of congregants, much “evil speech,” and the firing of clergy whose sermons are too far left or right of some powerful people in the community.

If our current arguments about Israel are studied by Jews in future generations, will they find us as charmingly reasonable as our ancestors? ■

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CHOWDHURY (continued from page 10)

about women in the Global South is further reflected in a policy task force entitled “Beyond Gender Equality,” which was set up at Harvard University following the New Delhi gang rape and is preparing to offer recommendations to India (and other South Asian countries). In response to this initiative, a group of prominent Indian feminists published a sardonic piece in the online publication *Kafila* detailing the decades-long, painstaking work of feminists in India advocating for justice for victims of sexual violence. These feminists, infuriated by the task force at Harvard, wrote, “Perhaps you will allow us to repay the favour, and next time President Obama wants to put in place legislation to do with abortion, or the Equal Rights Amendment, we can step in and help and, from our small bit of experience in these fields, recommend what the United States can do.”

Such patronizing U.S. attempts to offer guidance to women in India appear hollow when we consider that the United States is one of the few nations that have not ratified the UN Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (placing it in the company of states like Sudan, Somalia, and Iran—countries that the United States does not hesitate to condemn as part of an “axis of evil”). It is astonishing that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement calling on Indian government leaders “to do everything in their power to take up radical reforms, ensure justice and reach out with robust public services to make women’s lives more safe and secure” when no such statement has been directed toward the U.S. government, despite the fact that there is a reported rape in the United States every 6.2 minutes, and one in five U.S. women will be raped in her lifetime. Ultimately such posturing over moral ground also overlooks how first world neoliberal policies contribute to a climate of insecurity and vulnerability for women (and men) in the Global South.

Overlooking the consequences of neoliberal policies is, of course, not strictly a

Western phenomenon. Speaking to this point, social activist Vandana Shiva was critical of the Indian prime minister’s suggestion that “loose-footed migrants” are contributing to the problem of violence against women. Because the Delhi rape involved migrants on both sides (both the victims and the perpetrators were migrants), Shiva points out:

The rapists were all living in slums in hugely brutalized conditions, thinking that brutalization is the norm. The [young woman’s] father had sold his land because farmers aren’t being allowed to make a living. Two hundred and seventy thousand Indian farmers have committed suicide in recent decades. The rest are hanging on the margins of existence. He [the young woman’s father] moved to Delhi to load luggage at the airport to be able to survive and send his children to school. . . . Mr. Prime Minister, they are a product of your policies. They are refugees of your economic policies.

In another strand of the debate, political activist and author Arundhati Roy observed that there was nothing inherently exceptional about this case—it was made exceptional by the unprecedented nature of the citizens’ uprisings that it sparked. She criticized the response to the event as highly selective and drawing in mostly the middle and upper-middle classes because they could relate to the “victim,” to whom Roy mistakenly assigned a middle-class identity. Even though the young woman herself came from a family that had migrated to Delhi for better opportunities, and she worked at a call center at night to help finance her education as a physiotherapist, these facts were overshadowed in many readers’ minds by the choice of the movie she and her friend had seen, the location of the mall they had visited, and the initial reports about her career aspirations—all likely signifiers of a middle-class identity. Roy’s larger point perhaps was that rape is not exceptional but routine in most parts of India. Also her point that similar protests have not

been sparked by routine, everyday violence against minorities in India—for example, the rape of Dalit women by upper-caste men or the systematic rape of women in conflict zones by the Indian Army—is a point well taken. Roy was right to raise concern about selective empathy and the selective exercise of responsibility and care across borders.

Factory Collapse: Another Form of Violence

Western feminists often move from describing women’s suffering in the Global South as a consequence of patriarchal oppression to suggesting that women in the Global South can be empowered through neoliberal economic ventures that create opportunities for self-reliance. But the April 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh came as a powerful blow to the image of the “self-reliant” third world woman worker—the backbone of the national economy and the transnational supply chain. The factory collapse killed upward of 1,100 workers in the ready-made garments industry.

In the last three decades Bangladesh has become the second-largest supplier (trailing China) in the global apparel industry, employing nearly 4 million workers, most of whom are young women. Eighty percent of exports in Bangladesh are in this sector, constituting a \$19-billion-per-year industry. Despite being the “golden goose” of the economy, the workers in this sector face dismal working conditions and compensation. The flagrant disregard for their humanity could not be more apparent than when the owner of the Rana Plaza building and the supervisors of its factories forced the workers back into the premises the day after it was declared an unsafe construction. They were not going to be paid their monthly salary, the managers informed the workers, unless they went to work. In sharp contrast, the employees of the bank and shops also housed on the premises were asked by their employers not to report to work.

The flagrant disregard for the worth of workers' lives was further apparent in the government's decision not to accept external assistance in the recovery efforts, in order to project to the global community an image of "self-reliance." Equally shocking were the bizarre statements of government representatives who minimized the seriousness of the situation and many Western retailers' refusal to sign on to the building and fire-safety contracts. In the end it was ordinary civilians from all corners of Bangladesh who rushed to coordinate and carry out the monumental task of pulling out bodies of dead and injured workers, facing great risk to their own well-being in the process. The stories of Shahina Akhter, who remained buried alive for five days before finally succumbing to her injuries just as rescue workers were drilling to get her out, Kaikobad, a construction worker who toiled to pull twenty-six workers out of the rubble before dying from severe burns from trying to operate a drill machine, and Reshma Begum, the miracle survivor who was pulled out alive after seventeen days, will be forever etched in the minds of those who followed this entirely avoidable catastrophe.

No other image, however, has captured the gravity of the disaster as powerfully as Taslima Akhter's photograph *Death of Thousand Dreams* (see page 10), which was named the most haunting depiction of the tragedy by the photo editors of *TIME*. The photograph shows a man and a woman in a loving embrace in the last moment of their lives. We know neither who they are, nor whether the couple shared a relationship outside of their death embrace. Perhaps they sought comfort, feeling a profound connection to each other, humanity, and the divine, as the plaster, steel, and concrete came crashing down on them like a deck of cards.

The image defies a number of social and cultural norms in depicting physical contact between a young man and a woman in an ostensibly "public" embrace. The enormity of what was about

to happen perhaps made those considerations for modesty, shame, and honor immaterial. The man is seen to be covering the woman's torso in a protective embrace even as his own trauma is signified by blood—resembling a tear—trickling down from the corner of his closed left eye. While not minimizing the reality of male violence against women, I'd like to propose that this photo poses a visual challenge to Western feminist narratives of the "downtrodden third world female" and her "violent and oppressive" male counterpart. It expands our understanding of women's oppression beyond the lens of "male violence" to one of structural violence and encourages an analytic of connectivity as the root of deep solidarity.

Death of Thousand Dreams also draws our attention to the structural inequality of globalization, colonial relations between supplier and buyer nations, corporate greed, corrupt state machinery, and disregard for the poor workers—male and female—in each tier. All of these structures of power contribute to the exposure of certain populations in the Global South to extreme violence and suffering. And the image also illuminates the kin, community, and human connection that is at the base of all of our existence. At the very least it should urge us to rethink some of the outdated, tired, and prejudicial paradigms that continue to limit the scope of our understanding and inspiration to practice more egalitarian, just, dignified, and humane interactions with one another. ■

GREENBERG (continued from page 13)

steps of the Lincoln Memorial. They also set up a nursery school in Adam Clayton Powell's hearing room, becoming a magnet for media to mobilize support for further funding, which they did get.

I was aligned with this spirit of pride and possibility. Excitement filled my ten-year-old self. Even though it took courage for both Northerners and Southerners to defy the racist status

quo, what needed to be done for racial equality seemed so simple in those days. To sit with, learn with, play with, and organize with people across color lines was an obvious contradiction to segregation. Hope was high. The process and the product were the same: the action itself accomplished the goal.

My childhood within this inspiring movement for change helped me to imagine a world in which racism does not separate and violate people. It cemented the anti-racist commitments that I have carried with me throughout my life. But some of the lessons that I learned as a member of a Northern family working against racism in the South were not helpful messages. I learned that "they" needed to be rescued and that "they" needed "us" to empower them. The people we worked with in Mississippi in the 1960s were definitely not peers in the Northerner's eyes.

The truth is that these Southerners started and ran the local Civil Rights Movement and they changed their lives and their society. Northern activists added a useful catalyst to a process that had its own indigenous origins and momentum. Having been a child who absorbed the mixed identities of "savior" and "colleague" in the struggle to end racism, I am still seeking an authentic, effective way to work well in multiracial activist groups.

Anti-Racist Struggle in the Twenty-First Century

Today the manifestation of racism has morphed from separate water fountains and lynchings to racial profilings and genocidal incarceration. Challenging racism today means confronting the huge spread between haves and have-nots, changing a system that fails to make possible a life of dignity for great swaths of society, untangling the immigration crisis, and solving the conundrum of urban public education.

My experiences in Mississippi inspired me to carry anti-racist work into my life as a primary organizing current.

I partake in many different racially diverse organizations, some of which have a stated intent to challenge racism. I'm on the Board of the Jewish Multiracial Network. But anti-racist work feels so much harder today than it did when we had a powerful movement to make change. What are the next steps? What is my role? What can be done to end the destructive patterns of American racism?

This is what I notice: race is part of every social interaction across racial lines. It is not unimportant. If you can't read the racial subtexts, you are not socially competent. And if we can't be socially competent participants and organizers, we can't make a movement.

In her poem "For the White Person Who Wants to Know How to Be My Friend," Pat Parker writes, "first thing you do is to forget that i'm Black. / Second, you must never forget that i'm Black." That seems to sum up the paradox of relationships across race lines. I need help navigating the path toward racial justice. I am seeing the limitations of what I learned in Mississippi and I'm not sure how to move past the places where I feel stuck.

A Failed Allyship Effort

I am questioning the idea of allyship in part because I have not found a way to incorporate it into my practice while continuing to bring my full self to the table in multiracial activism. Materials on allyship like the "Code of Ethics for Antiracist White Allies" quoted at the beginning of this piece instruct white people to "not aspire to lead the struggle for racial justice and equity, but rather, to follow the lead of persons and communities of color and to work in solidarity with them." They also urge us to "be prepared to change what we're doing if and when people of color suggest there may be problems, practically or ethically, with our existing methods of challenging racism." While I realize that this does not mean simply agreeing with every proposal put forward by a person of color, I am struggling to incorporate

this framework as a practice that moves our collective agenda forward.

One memorable example of this dynamic took place in the winter of 2012 in a group of clergy called Occupy Faith, which grew out of Occupy Philly. Because of unaddressed racial concerns, I bumped up against a very stuck place, as did others in the group, and we weren't able to accomplish what we meant to accomplish.

When Occupy Faith emerged, there had already been various religiously oriented outgrowths of Occupy Philly. Prior to this group's launching, Occupy Philly had decided to focus its work on the homeless population. Clergy of color had formed their own caucus called Occupy the Dream because they didn't want to support gay marriage. Some other outgrowths didn't want to commit to nonviolence, and another faction had decided to concentrate on voter registration. The remaining clergy were invited by some Quaker organizers to become Occupy Faith. Most of us did not know each other yet and naturally there was not yet a clear mission or purpose. As we brainstormed together about how to proceed, the pastor of our host church suggested that we take a position of radical inclusivity, that we do "asset mapping" of the needs and resources in the city of Philadelphia, before moving forward. I looked at the group of clergy, maybe twenty of us, and I thought about what asset mapping involves: labor-intensive door-to-door interviews and outreach. I thought, we're in a big city, this is a huge project, and it is likely that some kind of assessment like this has already been done by a local foundation. Most members of this group were overworked leaders of busy congregations. I did not think this task was an appropriate focus for this particular group.

However, the whites in the group wanted to work in an interracial coalition, and this idea had come from a working-class African American woman who was well respected and liked. No one, including me, wanted to speak against her. It was like being in

elementary school and not wanting to defy the "cool kid." So for months we broke into small groups to discuss asset mapping. But there was no energy or interest around that activity and eventually the Occupy Faith group fizzled into dissolution. I considered this a systems failure with unspoken issues of race relations at its core. In our effort to be anti-racist allies, the white clergy in the group had in many ways set up this African American leader to fail by outwardly endorsing her proposal even though we lacked the enthusiasm necessary to implement it. This experience left me discouraged, wondering what I needed to change to find a way forward in anti-racist, interracial work.

A Turbulent Attempt at Integration

I had a similar experience at an annual Jewish feminist retreat that I've been part of for thirty years. The group consists of wise, creative leaders in a diverse range of fields, with shared commitment to Jewish feminism.

Years ago, the members of this group committed to growing as a multiracial Jewish community. Most American Jews don't realize that large populations of Jews are and have always been people of color. This unrecognized truth about our own community felt like a good place to grow our anti-racist work both as Jews and as feminists. Our group has a limited membership of thirty-four people, which meant that moving from being an all-white Jewish group to being inclusive of racial diversity required a targeted, conscious process of change. Many hours were spent reaching agreements about how to diversify with the intention of forging ourselves into an anti-racist support system for challenging racism in the Jewish world and beyond.

By now, this group has a smattering of racial diversity that aims toward overcoming tokenism and begins to move in the direction of healthy diversity. There are Jews from Syria, Iran, Guatemala,

and for the second year in a row there is one African American Jewish feminist. We have achieved this even though there is always a contingent that wants to expand only once every five years in order to “protect the culture” of our community. I’ve always been on the opposite end of that continuum, believing that the group’s well-being depends on integrating new members regularly. We work by consensus.

The integration process has been both successful and challenging. In the spring of 2012, a cluster of members of color opposed a proposal to invite two new members of color into the group. They said they were hurt coming into the group as fairly isolated tokens in the untenable position of having to educate people about racism even while bonding as new members of the group. “The whole idea of categories is really suspect,” they argued. “We should spend a year examining our own process for welcoming new people.”

I disagreed with this argument, believing strongly that the best way out of tokenism and isolation was to expand the numbers of people of color. Yet I did not want to speak against the position of the women of color who made it. I let their proposal for waiting to include new members of color achieve consensus without blocking it. Did my silence in this situation help the cause of racial justice, or did it hurt it? This was another moment in which the frame of allyship did not feel wholly helpful.

Yearning for Collaboration with Peers: Is Co-Resistance Possible?

I have started to question whether there might be an anti-racist position beyond being an ally—not instead of being an ally but in addition to it. Or perhaps the problem is with my understanding of allyship: I’ve struggled to see allyship as something other than a way of subtly one-upping a person whom one sees as “in need” by withholding one’s own best offerings. I know that most materials

on allyship describe it as grounded in radical notions of solidarity, not charity, but I am still struggling to break free of the idea—planted during my childhood in Mississippi—that being an ally involves helping people whom one sees as “less than.” Is being an ally in this way keeping me in a position of not having to engage fully because my role is just to support the other person, hard as that can be? Is it limiting my work against racism?

I am yearning for an anti-racist stance that embodies a deep sense of respect and equality between peers. But is it even possible to be a peer when there is objectively unequal power? And is it possible to attain the mutuality of the peer relationship when working in white-dominated settings rather than in groups that are truly co-led by a robustly interracial group? What does it mean for both me and a colleague of color to let our light shine fully, powerfully, as human beings when the world endorses and privileges one and not the other?

I am looking for peers who, within the context of a mutual effort to end racism, can cross race and class and other lines of difference to join as partners. I am inspired by people such as Bernice Johnson Reagon, Audre Lorde, Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, and Cherie Brown, who have furthered our understanding of coalition work with peers. The best term that I’ve heard for this work, coming from the Israel/Palestine justice movement, is “co-resistance.” With shared goals to dismantle the “isms” and to create a society of caring and justice, I don’t want to stop at being an ally. I want to be a peer.

Anti-oppression and diversity activists now teach about intersectionality—how people simultaneously hold pain and power in different arenas of identity, e.g., someone may have white skin privilege but be disabled, or someone may be upper class but have experienced gender discrimination. Even people who are privileged in multiple arenas were once powerless as infants. Every human being carries both pain and power.

Understanding intersectionality is crucial for forging effective movements for change. As the pastor Rev. Alvin Herring teaches, “We have to speak truth *and* flood our hearts with generosity.”

Being in touch with my yearning for peer collaboration melts a substratum of despair for me and rekindles optimism. I’m charged up for further work in anti-racist coalition, energized with a new direction to break through the inner barriers to this work. I’ve started organizing with imams, priests, and rabbis from PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) who are reaching across lines of race, class, gender, and geography nationwide. I have high hopes that this coalition of multiracial peers will effect significant change in my city and beyond. I still have so many questions, but I also have a personal recalibration for continuing the mission: I am seeking to grow into a peer. We each need to hang in there—refusing to settle for a society that tolerates racism, poverty, and injustice, and continuing to seek strategies for change—for the grand mission to have a chance. I have found a growing edge that allows me, for now, to keep moving forward. ■

McCOY (continued from page 16)

there was not similar outrage and Jewish organizing being called for regarding gun control again, or more importantly, the existence of stand-your-ground laws in Florida and other states.

It seemed odd to me, given the uproar that I saw sweeping African American communities across the nation, that the majority of our national Jewish social justice leaders did not seem to see the need to organize or deliver a means for our Jewish community to take advantage of the historical moment posed by a national call for racial justice. Why were so few Jewish leaders calling for a more rigorous soul-searching among Jews on the nature and context of racial inequality in our country? As an Orthodox Jew, it was evident to me that the verdict was released just two days before Tisha

B'Av, the Jewish holiday of mourning. While leaders like Michael Lerner immediately seized upon the opportunity of the holiday to speak out against the hatred that has consistently targeted and destroyed Jews and many other minority groups in our world, it was disappointing not to find more Jewish leaders adopting a similar stance of solidarity with the African American community in the name of our Jewish ethics, values, history, and understanding.

One major question that plagued many of us throughout the weeks that followed the announcement of the Zimmerman verdict was whether the outcome of that tragic evening and ensuing trial might have been changed if the race or ethnicity of Trayvon Martin and/or George Zimmerman had been different. Given the historical relationship of allied struggle between the Black and Jewish communities of our nation, I additionally wondered whether the Jewish leadership response might have been different if the assailant were white and Christian and the young man who lost his life white and Jewish. If nothing else, would there not have been more solidarity and empathy expressed by Jewish leadership in support of the pain and suffering endured by the victim's family?

In the numerous conversations I pursued with members of my liberal synagogue and Jewish community, I encountered a very crude reality indicating that it indeed did seem to matter that it was Trayvon and not Tuvia who was shot. The members of my synagogue who would openly engage the topic with me seemed to walk carefully around the hedges of the case, claiming that they couldn't possibly judge the outcome of this case since the facts will forever remain obscured. Others defended the right of Jewish leaders to expend their limited attention span and political capital judiciously by not involving themselves in every issue of potential injustice that came their way. Given the loss of life, stereotyping, and discrimination that so blatantly permeated this case, and given the deep

sorrow and anguish that I had personally witnessed in communities of color, I found myself astounded by the increasing sense of disaffection that I encountered in my fellow Jewish brothers and sisters. I began to wonder about the consequences of a growing lack of relationship between my two beloved communities, and the prospects of the two communities finding some future platform for standing together for justice.

Jews, Whiteness, Power, and Privilege

According to a *Washington Post* survey taken and released just over a month after the verdict, 86 percent of African Americans said they disapproved of the verdict, with almost all of them saying they strongly disapproved; 87 percent went so far as to say the shooting was unjustified. In contrast, 51 percent of whites said they approved of the verdict, while just 31 percent of whites disapproved. The poll also surveyed the partisan divide among the whites that were polled and found that 70 percent of white Republicans and 30 percent of white Democrats approved of the verdict. Among all whites, the poll revealed that one-third felt that the shooting was unjustified, one-third felt it was justified, and the other third felt that they didn't know enough to have an opinion. In light of this data, efforts to build a broad and deep movement of engaged white people to work in partnership with communities of color for real racial justice in the United States and everywhere continue to be challenged.

How do Jews relate to this picture? The survey's statistics did not include a breakdown to indicate whether white Jews' opinions on the verdict lined up with the opinions of the white community as a whole. Among Jewish activists of color whom I polled personally, there seemed to be considerable agreement that the overwhelming public silence of white Jewish leaders and activists on this issue—in contrast to their work on other issues of justice that did not

directly involve race or the robust activity of national leaders and activists in communities of color—did leave room for continued reflection on the current state of alliance between Black and Jewish activists in regard to anti-racism work. While published polls regarding the two-term election of Barack Obama have revealed meaningful and significant differences between Jewish voting/opinion patterns and (non-Jewish) white voting/opinion patterns, the disparity in affective and political responses to the Trayvon Martin case between the Jewish community and the Black community reveals questions regarding the depth of the relationship and underlying connections that support this and other voting alliances.

As white Jews aim to effectively examine Jewish identity and activism in the context of race, power, access, and privilege, there is a particular challenge that is bound to emerge. It is an ever-present challenge faced by those who carry white skin privilege, alongside other racial and cultural complexities, in a white supremacist system that has consistently denied racial nuance for the purpose of granting privilege along the imaginary racial extremes of Black and white. Many white Jews do not self-identify as white but have assimilated enough into the dominant culture to pass as white and benefit from the privilege and power associated with whiteness. The challenge that emerges is in finding ways to simultaneously acknowledge privilege and access (as they have been granted and sought) while decrying a system that has historically denied human complexity for the purpose of unequally and unfairly distributing power and equity.

An awareness of the history of anti-Semitism and its culmination in the Holocaust has made it difficult for many white Jews to explore the concept of being oppressed and being the oppressor simultaneously. Yet, in order for white Jewish efforts at anti-racist activism to be successful and authentically received by communities of color, there must be

evidence of Jews' deep grappling with their relationship to race, class, privilege, and identity in this country. Activists who are willing to openly and honestly explore the challenge of ways that Jews hold white privilege and collude with systems of white supremacy daily will be most successful in standing with communities of color to decry systemic racial inequities and in taking stands against them.

Because I have deep roots in both African American and Jewish circles, I have had many occasions to consider how best both Black and Jewish activist communities might work together to respond to instances of acute racism in our society. Despite the stark socioeconomic differences and racial disparities that continue to separate the on-the-ground realities of activist communities in both groups, there is hope that the efforts in both communities to create identities and activism that reach beyond our distinct oppressions will prevail.

What has emerged for me, in the disparity of responses that I encountered to the Trayvon Martin verdict, is an underscoring of the fact that U.S. history has taught Blacks and Jews two very different lessons. In the Jewish experience of the United States, education and hard work eventually paid off and thus the future appears full of possibility. Blacks, however, have faced a legacy of three-and-a-half centuries of racism on American soil and thus know, especially given the outcomes of judicial cases such as Trayvon Martin's, that something more than dedication is required.

Currently there exist huge disparities between Jews and Blacks in terms of vulnerability to crime, family breakdown, drug addiction, alcoholism, and systemic inequities in educational achievements. The "culture of poverty" that exists in today's inner cities is incomparable to anything in the contemporary American Jewish experience. As Black and white Jewish activists struggle to fight together toward racial equality and justice, it seems important that existing differences between our

communities in terms of access, privilege, and power continue to be explored and not taken for granted.

The Power of Authentic Relationships

As I encourage people to keep reaching for authentic and integrated relationships with one another, despite the senseless loss of life associated with this tragedy, I realize that there is a great deal of work that needs to be done to make authentic and integrated relationships between my peer activists in Black and Jewish communities a reality.

Reflecting on this, I think back to 1991 when Gavin Cato, a young African American boy, was struck and killed by a white Jewish man who was illegally running a red light in order to follow the Lubavitcher Rebbe's motorcade. The Crown Heights riots that ensued erupted on the corner of the block I lived on. At the time, in my young life, I learned firsthand how powerful and important nurturing relationships across racial lines can be in bringing communities together to stand for justice. In a community being torn apart by anger, frustration, hatred, and violence, I watched African Americans and white Jews find ways to come together in the face of the death of a young African American child and the subsequent vengeful murder of a white Jewish man. I learned lifelong lessons watching those, white and Black, who had been able before the riots to pass each other on the street and greet each other lead the way to healing and understanding.

It was the fact that my father had for years said "Good Morning" and "How are you?" and listened to hear the answer from both our African American and Jewish neighbors in Crown Heights that served him when he came out of the subway in a kippah and tzitzit into a full-scale riot, with people overturning cars and chanting "Jew, Jew, Jew": he was able to pass through the riot safely and remain unharmed. It was these same relationships that helped him to stop the

attack and beating of one of our white Jewish neighbors and that subsequently enabled him to save this neighbor's life.

The ability to stand in the chasm of hatred and violence and call for justice often relies on the memory of a shared history of respect. It was the white Jews who did speak regularly to their Black neighbors on our block and treat them kindly who could speak with integrity and be heard following the violence in Crown Heights. It was these consistently caring human beings who helped lead us toward healing the inequities that sparked the hurt, anger, and frustration that erupted in violence in our community. It was in Crown Heights that I learned that efforts to build justice and equality across racial lines must always be supported by an investment—before fires begin to burn—in ongoing and enduring relationships of respect and solidarity.

In the recent events surrounding the death and acquittal of George Zimmerman, I have been forced to look more closely at the "ongoing and enduring" state of relations between my equally beloved African American and Jewish communities. It has been difficult to see so viscerally how distant both communities seem to have grown from one another in terms of personal relationships and understanding of our differing struggles. But my experience, if nothing else, has made me a humble student of history and a bold advocate of the decision to choose over and over again not to be satisfied with the notion that what has been must remain.

Moving Beyond Personal Politics to Systemic Change

The disparate responses to the Trayvon Martin case that I encountered on the whole from activists and individuals in Black and Jewish communities clarified for me the difference in our country between choosing to act for justice because we are morally compelled and feel it's the right thing to do versus acting for justice because our loved ones' survival and our own survival are at

stake. Poverty, crime, addiction, and enduring inequities within the education and criminal justice systems of our country increasingly affect the daily survival of people of color in this country. The stakes for ending enduring injustice are often therefore visceral as opposed to hypothetical for people of color.

For those who are not heavily targeted by oppression themselves, it is often the experience of seeing, hearing, and empathizing with the personal stories of individuals struggling against oppression that inspires them to find their own entry points into the work of justice. This being true, it is important to note that personal experiences and identification with particular struggles against oppression do not always translate into a decision to enter the realm of political action as a means for affecting society as a whole.

The decision to connect personal experience to political action involves an intentional and specific choice—the choice to analyze oppression as a means for developing a social movement to end it. While personal identification with a struggle—for example, the struggle to end the oppression of the poor, of people of color, of women, of targeted religious minorities, of people with disabilities, or of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people—is meaningful for both members of the oppressed group and those who would ally themselves to support them, this personal identification only becomes political activism when it moves beyond the realm of a subjective life experience and becomes a strategy for fighting inequality. The best activists I have known did not engage in organizing as a matter of expanded self-perception but as a means of addressing concrete, material, and systemic realities of injustice that they knew were a part of a world they needed to change.

In my work with young activists, I have found that consciousness of a personal identification with the work of justice (or, in other words, the telling of our justice stories) tends to support and

even galvanize interest and participation in political action. Yet this telling of personal stories of connection does not serve anyone when it becomes an end unto itself—especially in cases where assumptions around access, privilege, and power have not been adequately troubled. The unaltered assumption of an interchangeable relationship between one’s “personal” identification with the struggles of the oppressed and a political identification that is based in a substantive understanding of and commitment to systemic change can be counterproductive.

In the disparate responses of white and Black communities to the case of Trayvon Martin, the politics of personal identity seem to have, to some degree, thwarted the ability of Black and Jewish social justice activists to share a common cause in working together to end racial profiling, unjust gun laws, and other systemic racial injustices that were called to the forefront by this case. It seems that an overemphasis on the exploration of personal identity without the next and important step of that personal identity being properly contextualized within the politics of power bears the danger of creating a toothless form of activism that salves the conscience but may not essentially mitigate the causes of suffering.

There are many things that have been and still need to be said about the tragedy of the Trayvon Martin case. Half a year later, the context of this case still looms with deadly force before us—the access to guns, the laws that protect people with property by encouraging them to use deadly force to protect it, the mass incarceration and disenfranchisement of a tenth of our country’s population, and the related structural racism that one young man’s murder and the resulting trial exposed for the world to see.

In the wake of the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington, there are several questions that I hope will remain on all of our minds: How, when, and where can we work in solidarity with

others to support, celebrate, and protect young black men from being targeted for death in our country? Where do we have (and where are we missing) relationships that can inform and bolster our approach to activism and our ability to work in solidarity with communities of color? How can we increase our relationships across racial lines so that we need not develop our feelings of collective responsibility in “the moment” and in reaction to others’ violent protests of injustice? How can we invest proactively in relationships that will fuel solidarity and see us through the storms of racial divides that must not be sustained? What is the distance between today and the days in our lifetimes when change will truly and finally come? In hope, vision, and commitment to this cause, I stand with you. ■

HARRIS-GERSHON *(continued from page 24)*

terrorism—led me to consider the dehumanizing violence of my own worldview in ways I had never previously done. It led me to academically explore the Palestinians’ history and personally witness their humanity.

Before the bombing, the Odehs were a faceless foe. But leaving their home, I understood that something powerful had occurred—that we were now friends, that I would expand the definition of friendship to include them within it. And I knew that this singular meeting, held under charged circumstances, also held a key to national reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, between Muslims and Jews. I knew that only by meeting the other side could enough empathy be generated to override decades of conflict and pain—an empathy capable of flooding public opinion and influencing those politicians sensitive to such shifts.

It’s a view Ifat Maoz and Clark McCauley present in their masterful study, “Psychological Correlates of Support for Compromise: A Polling Study of Jewish-Israeli Attitudes toward Solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

The study analyzes the psychological obstacles keeping Jewish Israelis from wanting to compromise with Palestinians—obstacles that cause the conflict to be viewed as a zero-sum game, that prevent people from accepting political compromises to solve the conflict. Moaz and McCauley reveal that the generation of sympathy and empathy can remove psychological barriers caused by years of fear and hatred, and that such sympathy and empathy can be generated by meeting “the other side.”

This is why so many peace activists focus on encounters between Palestinians and Israelis, on meetings between Muslims and Jews, as a way toward achieving what has long been an elusive and difficult reconciliation. On a microcosmic scale, meeting in person works, as it did for me and the Odeh family. Theoretically, such encounters could work on a macrocosmic scale as well—as happened in South Africa—toward this idea of a national reconciliation. It’s with this hope in mind that I have written a book-length memoir (*What Do You Buy the Children of the Terrorist Who Tried to Kill Your Wife?*) about all that followed from my attempts at reconciliation with the Odeh family. If my book can move just one person in Israel/Palestine toward seeking such a reconciliation, then the story’s telling will have been worth it.

Obstacles to Peace

There are those who are threatened by this story. My book, as well as my writing on Israeli-Palestinian issues, has prompted some on the conservative edges of the American Jewish community to cast me as an “anti-Semitic Jew” interested in nothing more than the destruction of Israel. Such politically motivated slurs, bombastic as they are, represent real, existential fears about our fate as a people, about our traumatic history, our continuously being on the brink. However, such efforts to delegitimize my experience by characterizing me as “self-hating” also represent real obstacles to actual peace. For in reconciling

with the Odeh family and in recognizing Palestinians’ humanity and suffering, I put a face on a very real victimhood that exists in the occupied territories—a victimhood some in the Jewish community find threatening to acknowledge.

Which is why illuminating the fact that—yes—there are victims on both sides of the conflict is tantamount to treason for some. Why? Because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is too often viewed as a zero-sum game in which only one side can win and only one side *should* win: those who are the real victims. This view, though, is rejected by the (relatively) silent majorities on both sides of the divide, which is what makes stories of dialogue, reconciliation, and peace so vitally important. It’s certainly not a view the Odeh family shares. I can still hear the words of Odeh’s mother ringing in my ears: *I believe you*.

As I sat on the family’s couch, a cup of tea still resting in my palms, we talked of the conflict, of how we were all tired of the violence. When I spoke up and told them that there were so many like me on the other side, on my side, who wanted peace, they were surprised.

“I don’t think there are,” Samar Odeh said.

“We don’t see them,” his mother echoed.

“Trust me, there are many like me who want both sides to just be able to live in peace, who want for all this to end already,” I replied.

His mother nodded. “I believe you,” she said. “If you say there are, then I believe you.”

“We want peace too. Many of us do,” her son added.

“We’re tired of the fighting, of the soldiers. We just want to live,” the mother said.

We just want to live. It’s what so many want, both inside and outside Israel/Palestine. It’s what so many continue to work toward, often behind the scenes, under the backdrop of a conflict that must end, a conflict that reconciliation—both personal and national—can help to end. One story at a time. ■

RASMUSSEN (continued from page 27)

make a daily difference. Creation justice would measure all impulses by these stringent criteria: Do they contribute to Earth’s preservation and restoration? Is life and what it requires the better because of them? Has the shift from ego to ecosphere as the matrix of responsibility been made? Does the arc of redemption coincide with the arc of creation?

Earth-honoring faith in the hands of sacred strangers would also promote change marked by a certain quality of transcendence. This is transcendence that resists the drag of normalcy and possesses sufficient freedom and creativity to nurture possibilities not imagined in present habits of thought. The moral heat of social-justice-become-creation-justice would be one example, as would economics and ecology merged as eco-nomics.

Pan-Religious Traditions to Draw Upon

What do the shared faith traditions of sacred strangers bring to religious environmentalism and the Anthropocene? Let’s call them the “deep traditions” of religion, since they span time and cultures and have lived within and across religious communities for as long as human records have existed. Mysticism, prophetic-liberative practices, asceticism, sacramentalism, and the cultivation of wisdom are pan-human and pan-religious. They have sometimes been Earth-honoring but often not. The present work of sacred strangers is to develop their Earth-healing talent so as to counter the Earth-destructive forces that presently put the planet in jeopardy at human hands: consumerism, utilitarianism, alienation, oppression, and folly. A broad-brushed sketch looks like this:

- Traditions of asceticism are traditions of saying “yes” and saying “no” in a disciplined way of life that emphasizes spiritual richness and material simplicity. Ascetic

traditions that love the Earth fiercely—through a simple way of life—offer an alternative to global consumerism. These traditions counter the world of consuming passions through their disciplining of desire and their richness of spirit.

- Traditions of sacramental imagination regard all material reality (creation) as sacred. Material reality thus carries a value humans fully share but do not create. For Earth-honoring faith, the planet is viewed as a “sacramental commons.” This counters the habits of modern living that treat all nature as market commodities for exclusive human use. Nature so valued and treated is another version of the master/slave ethic, with us as master and the rest of nature as slave. By way of contrast, when sacramental ethics confront master/slave commodity ethics, the community of all life is viewed as a shared commons in which the elements of earth, air, fire, and water have standing. Their requirements for their own regeneration and renewal become part of eco-nomics.

- Mystical experience is a third pan-religious experience and tradition. An oceanic feeling in which the human self belongs to “the All” prevails. When Earth-honoring faith attends to mysticism, however, it attends specifically to the kind of renewable moral energy that accompanies this experience: Where does immersion into a transcendent mystical reality lead for *tikkun olam* (repair of the world)? If the world is a communion of subjects, as mystics claim, rather than a collection of objects, what follows for the way nature is treated? The brief answer is that alienation of the human self from the rest of nature is overcome in the experience of all things communing in God.

- The heart of prophetic-liberative traditions is justice-centered faith. Its key is shared power and an

unquenchable thirst for life. With justice for creation viewed as the center of religious faith and morality, Earth-honoring faith focuses on shared, largely decentralized power as the means to oppose the oppression that follows from race, class, gender, or cultural privilege. A restructured ethic of power counters the structured oppression of nature, including its human communities.

- Wisdom traditions are those universal religious and cultural traditions in which creation is the teacher. Measured human responsibility follows from creation’s disclosures of its ways. Wisdom takes the form of varied genre—didactic sayings and stories, puzzling parables and probing questions, poetry and meditation, ritual practices of all kinds, treatises on the mysteries of life and death. In some religious traditions, wisdom is identified as a feminine companion and partner of divinity. Accessible moral instruction is always part of wisdom, as is an awareness of standard human folly. An awareness of moral tragedy may be present as well, together with the grace of new beginnings.

The sweep of the deep traditions brings holistic orientations and moral substance for a different way of life to the Earth crisis. Rather than environmentalist campaigns that only latch on to specific causes—the preservation of wilderness, opposition to a dam or the Keystone Pipeline, water conservation, or local alternatives to agribusiness food production—religious environmentalism provides a powerful source of motivation and energy for these causes and more *within* a comprehensive effort to fashion a different manner of living.

Not least, communities of religious environmentalism are keepers of hope in the face of what theologian Erin Lothes Biviano calls the “green blues.” Our very sense of profound interconnectedness, what Buddhists call “interbeing,” deepens rather than denies our unavoidable

complicity in the destruction of life systems. Sadness sets in as we realize that climate change cannot simply be dialed back but will be visited upon generations to come. Communities that know how to grieve and lament as well as offer grace for new beginnings, all with ritual practices that have a purchase on the soul, will be needed more than ever.

A Song of Songs

Song is a motif of Earth-honoring faith and a way to hear religious ethics in a new key. The song of Earth-honoring, Earth-healing faith can never be expressed through a single melody line. Its music is via innumerable songs, the songs of the world’s faiths and cultures in every locale.

A story about Elie Wiesel nicely makes this point. Wiesel was invited to speak to Protestant pastors in Detroit. As he prepared to speak, he opened his Hebrew Bible, paused, looked up, and said: “Let me be clear about something. I’m not going to try and convert anyone here to Judaism, and I would appreciate it very much if you didn’t try to convert me to Christianity. What I am trying to do is to be the best Jew that I can be, so that you can be the best Christian that you can be. Let’s study together.”

Let’s study together—in order to rally living traditions for Earth-honoring faith on a planet made strange by its most intelligent species. ■

LEVY-LYONS (continued from page 30)

speak more crisply, write more boldly with fewer caveats and qualifications. The difference will be partly organizational: In our nonprofits and social justice groups, we need to extend less patience to people who are underperforming. We need to start running meetings that stick to agendas, generate specific outcomes, and end on time. We need to become less focused on process and more focused on results. The difference will be partly philosophical: We need to promote solutions that are (imperfect) syntheses of the best of our

ideas rather than a watered-down common denominator expressing everyone's voice. We need to oust those who are more concerned with preserving our institutions than with realizing their missions. We need to entertain ideas of radical departure from cultural norms with less concern about changing too much too fast.

The biggest difference, however, will be spiritual. The medieval Jewish commentator Rashi taught that encoded into the Sh'ma prayer is the exhortation

to love and serve God not only with our good inclination, but also with our yetzer ha-ra. He believed, as I believe, that all parts of ourselves are beautiful and given by God, including our aggression, passion, and desire. We don't need to deny those parts of ourselves in order to lead a spiritual life. Rather, we can deploy them to build lives of integrity and strength and change the world for the better. The challenge is to accept the messiness of living with the yetzer ha-ra in our hearts, knowing that

it is something with which we should struggle and negotiate but never cage or kill. When we (as individuals and as a counterculture) can embrace our full selves—our softness along with our strength, our gratitude along with our driving hungers, our yielding selves along with our asserting selves—we will grow in spiritual muscle until, like Atlas, we have the power to hoist this aching world onto our shoulders and walk. ■

SCHAPER (continued from page 33)

weren't looking, got in line, and received the bread and wine. When we moved a cross in and out of Temple Israel in Miami on Good Friday and the first night of Passover, it mattered a lot to me. Why? We wanted to make sure that a certain movie about Jesus that was coming out that day did not represent all Christians. There was something that was more than real going on. That is what worship does; it moves us to the more-than-real. Worship deeply engages the usual.

Does all worship need to be spectacular? No. In fact, one of the ways we see Jesus is to be very quiet and very

normal, almost pedestrian. You can be normal and pedestrian and still cause a stir. The word *regularity* comes to mind. Anything you do over and over, like prayer at table, has a chance to finally shake you up. The day you do the familiar prayer after a loved one has died—a loved one who was with you through all the regularity—on that day you will cry. You can be normal and free, uncontained and unbound, informal as well as formal. Spirituality is not just something we have on vacations or at retreats. Spirituality is a drumbeat, a daily touch of life below and within the usual.

During worship our moral compass is reset. We move to the deep causation

of just how rigged things are. We reset our global positioning system. We come to our senses and believe more deeply what our eyes and ears tell us. Worship keeps us from ordinary senselessness and moves us into a magnificently common sense. Wild liturgy opens to a deep and dense simultaneity of experience. Do we always have to stir? No, but sometimes we do. It is our intention to be in-tension sometimes. Wild liturgy goes for tension in order to tame and frame it. In both ordinary and extraordinary worship, we hold open the possibility that this will be the day that Jesus breaks our hearts so wide open that injury and death are overcome. ■

MOGHUL (continued from page 36)

it not been for its persecution of Jews and heterodox Christians. In other words, Spain was conquered by force, but it was not held by force. By the tenth century, a majority of Iberia was Muslim—meaning that its locals chose Islam until it became the largest religion.

They chose Arabic, too, as did many Jews and Christians. Meanwhile the Spanish Umayyads, so proud of their noble Arab lineage, were described as having red hair and blue eyes—an outcome of serial intermarriages with Iberian, Visigothic, and Basque elites, because premodern Muslims often behaved like the Romans: anyone could

become Muslim and, once converted, could rise to a position of great influence, even sitting on the throne or commanding armies.

Medieval Christian Europe, on the other hand, demanded purity of religion, which the Spanish would confuse with bloodline, to genocidal effect. This poses a problem for those of us who are Western and Muslim and would like to keep it that way.

“Bosnia Feels Like Spain Before 1492”

About two months after my first tour of Spain, I went to Bosnia to prepare the way for a second tour. (The historical

connections between southwestern and southeastern Europe were enough to justify the dry run.) But just as reading about Spain did not prepare me for Spain, knowing about Bosnia would not ready me for it.

When Spain's Jews and Muslims were expelled, many found refuge in Ottoman territories, especially in places like Bosnia. Throughout the Balkans, there are huge Muslim communities, largely ethnically indistinguishable from their neighbors, converts like many of the Spanish. (The European Union member state with the highest percentage of Muslims is Bulgaria.) But these Muslims were blamed for being “Turks,” as if their foreignness justified their obliteration.

In the previous decades, hundreds of thousands of European Muslims were slaughtered, from Kosovo to the Caucasus. They were raped, starved, driven into camps, or forced from their homes in huge exoduses. For them, Spain was not distant history, but an awful prologue.

At a shisha café one night in Sarajevo, I met a man my age. In his tight jeans and a fitted, iridescent pink polo, he looked like a man who'd been born in a club. But the Bosnians around me stood in respect when he approached, and stooped to kiss his hands. At fourteen, an age at which I was putting up Pearl Jam posters in my room and hoping this would make me popular, he had taken up arms to defend his family.

"Bosnia feels like Spain before 1492," he revealed to me, unprompted. His face darkened. "Eventually they will kill us all. But we will stay until the end."

His father and mother were killed, and his brother was shot through the heart during the Serbian siege of Sarajevo—the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern war.

The Necessity of Western Islam

When I returned to Spain, I could not help but see every part of the country through Bosnian eyes. Spain went from a Muslim museum to a mausoleum in which I feared the possibility of Western Islam had perished. We didn't visit the Great Mosque so much as—allow me to channel Malcolm X here—the Great Mosque landed on us. After my lecture, a Houstonian doctor shook her head, apparently admiring but really mourning the building. "It hurts too much," she whispered, and then she walked out.

None of us, as it turns out, lingered very long at all. We felt it as our loss. Was it really *ours* though? Were Spanish Muslims Westerners, and, if so, were they our ancestors? And what happens if your ancestors are expelled, killed, derided, and erased? I'd wanted to stress a shared heritage—by existing, we disproved the

assumption of civilizational incompatibility; by flourishing, we mocked it. But time and again, the binary was rebuilt, from the deliberate screenings at the airport as we traveled in either direction, to this moment, as we came to terms with Spain's cleansing of its own Jews and Muslims.

Merely upon spending a few days here, you begin to feel that Spain and Semitism were made for each other—intelligently designed, geologically evolved, destined and fated. But the past is another country, and it is terrible to live there. I walked back to our hotel alone, realizing that I didn't know if I wanted to give another tour, or even finish this one. What was the point of these depressing and terrible histories, tempered by the AC Córdoba Palacio's thunderous double-barreled showers, provided one could figure out how to turn them on?

A History of Purges and Forced Conversions

The last recorded case of a Spaniard practicing Islam—then a crime in the country—in Catholic Spain was prosecuted by the Inquisition in 1728. It is highly unlikely the man was Muslim or knew anything about Islam. How could anyone after all hold on to Islam for so long without contact with the Muslim world, without books or teachers, without mosques or madrasas—without any other Muslims? In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella had taken Granada, which meant that all of Spain was under their rule.

The Muslim-Jewish alliance was honored even then. Darkly so.

The absence of Spanish Muslim power meant Catholic Spain was free to persecute minorities with new confidence. Spain's Jews were given mere months to leave, while the much larger Muslim population, whittled down over the centuries since its tenth-century peak, was shown a bit more tolerance. But by 1501, hard-line elements in the Catholic Church issued a decree of forcible conversion. Muslims who did not want to change faiths could leave, but they had to leave their children

behind to be raised Catholic. Most converted and stayed.

But the arrangement didn't work. For (former) Muslims, conversion was deeply resented and resisted, usually passively but occasionally in great and violent rebellions. The old Catholics never trusted the Muslims—there was no baptism strong enough to cleanse Muslim blood of its Semitic ways. After all, how could you know who was genuinely Catholic and who only pragmatically? Then, as now, there was no way to prove a negative. With the rise of Ottoman power in the Mediterranean, the Catholic Spaniards feared former Muslims might be a fifth column.

The solution was a purging. Between 1609 and 1614, the remaining former Muslims, several hundred thousand in all, were deported. The more enterprising founded democratically governed pirate city-states, likely influencing the birth of representative government in northern Europe. They allied with Protestants and seized any Catholic ship they could find. Others worked as Ottoman spies, keeping tabs on Spain's transatlantic territories and smuggling maps of the Americas to Constantinople.

But many were not so good at reinvention. A fair number were robbed, raped, or sold into slavery, or starved on the shores of North Africa, so that Spain could become what it wished to be: Catholic, whole, unitary, and strong. Except it wasn't. With huge areas of Spain uncultivated, agricultural production suffered. Former Muslims turned their rage on their former home, beginning pirate campaigns that helped bleed an already terribly mismanaged Spanish economy to bankruptcy.

Annihilation, Immortality, and Endurance

The last stop of my Spanish tour was the Alhambra in Granada. The Alhambra is three sites—a castle, a palace, and the gardens. The castle is what we spotted far away, squares and rectangles crowning the highest mountain in the city. But it's

the palace and the gardens that make you wonder. This all dated from the twilight of Spanish Islam. If only more remained from its brilliant youth—more than descriptions, conjecture, and allusion.

As I stood pondering, the walls behind me changed color, glowing like dim pastel panels, the light on them dying so slowly it seemed they were falling asleep. There were high mountains far beyond; the Alhambra towered over the city, but distant peaks loomed in the distance. Fountains attracted birds, who sounded as if they had found their paradise. Which was the point: the Alhambra was built to resemble paradise.

Beauty is Islam's answer to the world within and without. Because beauty can transport us away from ourselves, it brings us to God. The Prophet Muhammad put it more starkly: "God is beautiful," he said, "and loves beauty." There is perhaps no image more evocative of how Muslims long practiced Islam than that of the moth that falls in love with the flame and disappears in it. For Sufis, that's called *fana* (annihilation), and it is Islam's nirvana. Being a monotheistic faith, Islam would have us see that the flame is necessary. Enduring. Perfect. We are contingent. God is necessary. Throughout the Alhambra you'll find the motto of the Granadan dynasty, "And there is no conqueror but God," apparently repeated endlessly.

There are those who argue that civilization is our search for immortality. Even in places no longer popularly associated with Islam, beautiful structures created by Muslims endure. When we think of Jerusalem, we cannot help but see the Golden Dome of the Rock; India, the Taj Mahal; and Spain, often the Alhambra. Upon leaving Córdoba, Iqbal faced the absurdity of human existence, the question of why we should confront our mortality. He found his answer:

Love brings music to the strings of life
By love life has fire, life has light
O Shrine of Córdoba! By love you came
to be
Love eternal, love which suffers no end

Iqbal preferred an alternate Sufi ideal: *baqa*—"endurance," in all its senses. We are born and enter the world. We die, and we enter another. In the meantime, we endure. A Nietzschean might impiously capture it as that which does not kill you makes you stronger—though that's not quite it. We may be broken down, battered, and bruised, but we continue. We would be presumptuous to claim to know whether something is a blessing or a trial—sometimes, what is apparently good is actually harmful, and sometimes hardship is liberating. We cannot know.

Baqa demands courage in the face of whatever life presents, coupled with an insistence on our individuality, no matter how tempting the idea of obliterating ourselves in God, a people, history, or rage might be. Because God is terrifying—the idea that each of us will stand naked and alone in His presence should be enough to make the sane person reasonably insane. But this is what Islam wants. This is what Islam demands. As a colleague once said to me over a coffee at Starbucks, God speaks to individuals; we call them prophets, and they pass the word along.

An Islam that shrinks from the world or lashes out at it in fury—and what is the difference?—in this there is no promise. An Islam that is trapped in its glorious past, weeping at one lost achievement and then another, consumed by the refusal of the world to sit still—that, too, has nothing of the spiritual solace a faith should offer. For, by definition, the world must change. Indeed, change is what distinguishes this life from the next. Perfection is for the next world, not this. That was the lesson I shared at the end of our tour, discovering in our despondency a kind of healing.

Together, the participants in my tour reflected on the Muslim pirates governed by parliaments of equals, suggesting another etiology for democracy. We reflected on the Spaniards who settled in Tripoli, Libya, in a neighborhood named for their homeland. For a

group of immigrants and their children, these stories made sense; we too were nomads. We could understand how history pushed us on and how we might find better things, no matter that we were far from home and scattered. This awareness is necessary for Muslims today: Islam can survive only if it is an Islam that accepts loss and change, and finds strength in the moral steadfastness of humans in trial.

The possibility of renewal and the necessity of it. I went, alone, one night, back to the Alhambra. From across a ravine, from deep in old Granada, I heard a muezzin's voice. To understate things, I had not expected this. But it was time for the fourth of the five prayers, *maghrib* (the west)—the prayer is named for where the sun sets. I waited until the *adhan* (call to prayer) ended, did my best to guess which way Mecca was, and then found a place that might be out of the way, a hedgerow, which I planted myself a few feet behind to pray.

I should add that I didn't know whether it was legal to pray in the Alhambra.

But the only other people were a crowd of Spanish teenagers who, beers in hand, sounded like they were having the time of their lives. Until I began praying. How my cheeks burned as they hushed, and especially when I prostrated. If it is possible, they became even quieter. Maybe they couldn't understand why I had put a perfectly good forehead on the ground. Maybe they would ask about this while I was still praying. But then I thought: maybe this was illegal.

Maybe, in fear that a police officer might notice and stop me, they had stopped talking. Their silence was meant to protect me—and so, with wordless complicity, they cheered me on. ■



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under a magical spell. This notion is quite remarkable, considering that the darkness parasitically requires the light in order to maintain its seeming existence and appear real. As if casting a spell on itself, the light has used its own creative energy to constrain its infinite radiance, which symbolically reflects how we entrance ourselves via the reality-creating genius of our own minds.

Seen as a reflection of a process happening within each of us, this expresses how we can fall under the spell of a non-existent phantom appearance that arises from the immense creativity of our own minds and come to believe that this illusory specter of darkness is more powerful than the light that we are. These apparition-like “darker forces,” the result of an insidious, timeless, acausal, and nonlinear feedback loop within our own minds, only have power over us to the extent that we do not see through their illusory nature. The powers of darkness cannot take our intrinsic power from us; rather, they can only take on seeming reality by tricking us into giving our power away to them.

According to the Kabbalah, humanity plays a key role in the repair and restoration of the world, called *tikkun ha-olam* (henceforth “tikkun” for short). To the kabbalist, it is humanity’s divinely appointed task to find, extract, and free the light that is hidden in the darkness of the material realm, thereby helping this light return to its divine source. It is the mission of each one of us to raise the sparks hidden within the kelipot that reside within our souls or that fatefully come our way so as to fulfill our part in the healing of the world. Tikkun is a project in which humanity, the world, and God himself become more fully themselves, as if humanity plays a vitally important role in the completion and actualization of the universe and—if we can talk in such human terms—of God, as well. This is analogous to how, on an individual level, the unconscious manifests itself in a reflective ego in order to

complete and know itself as a conscious “Self.” The profound viewpoint of tikkun reveals that the purpose and significance of evil in God’s plan is to provide a context for humanity’s redemption, which is to say that the vision provided by tikkun puts evil, humanity, and God himself in their proper places within the cosmos.

Dreaming of Individuation

The cosmic process of tikkun is mirrored in humanity through the process of individuation, of becoming an indivisible unity or whole, which entails a gathering, recollecting and remembering of all of the split-off, projected parts of the psyche. To quote Jung’s *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, “Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to oneself.” And in *Letters*, Jung writes, “Everything living dreams of individuation, for everything strives towards its own wholeness.” Just as each one of us dreams of individuation, can’t we say the same of the universe itself: that it too dreams of individuation, of gathering its nature to itself, and re-membering all of its split-off parts? Are we all just playing roles in a cosmic process of individuation—a universal awakening—that is mysteriously being revealed and catalyzed through our darker half?

In *Aion*, Jung comments that “not only darkness is known through light, but that, conversely, light is known through darkness.” According to the Kabbalah, the extraction of the light requires a descent into the unconscious and coming to terms with our base desires, what in Kabbalah is referred to as a “descent on behalf of the ascent.” This descent always involves a coming to terms with the “shadow” of ourselves: our totality must include a dark side if we are to be whole. In *Visions*, Jung writes, “Where there is no shadow, there is no light.” If we fail to take into account the shadow aspect of ourselves, we are unwittingly feeding it; if we don’t acknowledge and see our darkness, we deliver ourselves into its hands.

The entire process of tikkun proceeds out of what the Kabbalah refers to as “The Other Side,” a nether realm of evil inhabited by and composed of the kelipot. In other words, kabbalistically speaking, there is no liberated light except that which issues forth out of the evil realm. The *Zohar*, the key kabbalistic text, makes this point when it says, “There is no light except that which issues from darkness . . . and no true good except it proceed from evil.” Thus, evil, at cross-purposes to the good at its core, is at the same time, paradoxically, its foundation and the very condition for its realization. It is only by attending to the darkness within ourselves and making the darkness conscious, however, that we become secure in the attainment of the good. Along these same lines, in Jung’s personal journal, the recently published *The Red Book*, Jung writes, “He who comprehends the darkness in himself, to him the light is near.”

The Holiness of Evil

From the kabbalistic point of view, evil brings into the world the possibility of choosing between sin and virtue. Freedom of choice is necessary for responsibility, morality, and the creation of values. Evil becomes the condition for free choice, and hence, the condition for the full realization of good. As if the revelation of everything is through its opposite, an idea is only complete when it reveals its opposite to be inextricably linked to its very significance. Thus, the evil impulse can’t be banished, but needs to be harnessed for the good. To quote Jung, “You can’t reject evil because evil is the bringer of light.”

Evil, according to the Kabbalah, arises reciprocally with the possibility of humanity’s freedom. Freedom and evil are thus two aspects of the same process. It is as if the Breaking of the Vessels made possible the process by which humanity can attain its autonomy and potential freedom. Only in an evil and tragic world can compassion and kindness be most fully realized. Jung succinctly expresses this realization when

he writes in *The Red Book*, “The evil one is holy.” This is not to condone evil, but rather to contextualize it. The chaos and negativity that resulted from the Breaking of the Vessels was the inevitable result of the infinite taking on finite form, individuality, and freedom. From the kabbalistic point of view, evil is created by and for freedom, and only freedom can overcome it.

There is an intimate relation and deep interconnection between the forces of light and dark; at a certain point the dark and the light become indistinguishable from one another, a *coincidentia oppositorum* (co-incidence of opposites). The idea of the interpenetration, interdependence, and coming together of the opposites animates and informs the Kabbalah’s entire cosmology. It is also the cornerstone of Jung’s psychology. In *The Red Book*, Jung refers to the *coincidentia oppositorum* as producing the “supreme meaning.” The part of us that can realize, in Jung’s words, the *mysterium coniunctionis* (the mystery of the conjunction of things typically conceived of as being opposites) is the Self, the wholeness of our personality. The Self—who we are—is simultaneously the sponsor and result of this realization.

In *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung writes: “The self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them; it is a *coincidentia oppositorum*. Hence the way to the self begins with conflict.” Conflicting energies exist relative to, by virtue of, and at the expense of each other. Reciprocally co-arising, they belong together precisely insofar as they oppose each other; their antagonism is the source of their essential oneness. The conflict that results from the Breaking of the Vessels can create separation, hurt, and misunderstanding—producing more trauma—or, just as friction potentially creates light, it can create the light of consciousness. From this metaperspective, the shattering of the vessels potentially allows for more light to be revealed. To quote Jung’s *Civilization in Transition*, “that which brings division ultimately creates union.”

Though the kabbalists envision the Breaking of the Vessels as a cosmic event that happened back in the dawning of time—at the very moment of the creation of our universe—this process is also atemporal: it happens outside of time and is happening in this moment. The Breaking of the Vessels is a symbolic articulation of a process that is active in us right now and is informing our human condition in each and every moment.

Choosing the Path of Tikkun

Like the prototypical Adam, whose situation in the Garden is a metaphor for the archetypal human dilemma, each of us stands at a fork in the road—a place of great opportunity—between the paths of tikkun (and life) on the one hand, and the paths of evil (and death) on the other. Adam’s sin was catastrophic precisely because it was an act of free choice, and for this reason it strengthened the kelipot and the power of the “Other Side.” Similarly, whenever we are *unconsciously* taken over by evil in the form of compulsive, addictive behaviors (rather than acting out our compulsions in a way that makes us become conscious of them), we are unwittingly investing in the grip of the kelipot over our soul. When we are able to choose differently, however, and redirect our psychic energy so as to return to the true spiritual home within ourselves, the energy that was bound up in the compulsive re-creation of our habitual patterns becomes liberated and available for the expression of love and creativity (which, in religious language, would be to serve God). To turn away from the destructive evil impulse within ourselves and to reorient ourselves toward the good is to genuinely “repent” (a word that is etymologically linked to “re-turn”).

Repentance is the highest expression of humanity’s capacity to choose freely—it is a manifestation of the divine in humanity. In repenting, we extricate ourselves from the binding power of the kelipot, from the chains of endless causality that otherwise compel us to follow

a path of no return. As Jung points out in *Aion*, “The sin to be repented, of course, is unconsciousness.” When we snap out of our self-created spell and become conscious, the holy sparks imprisoned by the kelipot, like iron filings drawn to a magnet, fly back to their divine source. The kelipot, which had been parasitically feeding on this sacred light, are then deprived of their vitality and vanish as though they had never existed, as if a dream that had seemed real vaporizes into the light of awakening consciousness, reabsorbed into the very divine light from which it arose. By our very choices, we either feed the kelipot and their resultant evil or deny them their food by feeding awareness instead. Once we cultivate the compassion that is at the root of this process, the evil impulse (*yetzer ha-ra*) within us is not merely redirected while leaving the underlying drive unchanged; rather, our compassionate awareness alchemically transforms the evil urge into the impulse for good (*yetzer ha-tov*). It is the creative tension between these two primordial urges within us that supplies the energy for humanity to connect with our true power and exercise the divine gift of genuine freedom. Thus, the greater our evil impulse, the greater our potential for good.

For the Kabbalah, the act of creation itself is a mere opening act, a preparation for tikkun. In this kabbalistic myth, the mystic process of tikkun is the true coming of the Messiah, which, psychologically speaking, is the birth of the Self through humanity. This savior does not come to unite humanity with God, but to unite humanity with itself; individuation means becoming who one is. The process of tikkun involves seeing through the illusion of the imaginary “separate” self and recognizing our true self, a self which is interdependent with all beings. This insight isn’t meant to remain solely within our own minds, but requires us to carry its compassion into the world at large. Tikkun doesn’t have to do with leaving the world behind and entering our own personal nirvana, nor does it have to do with transcending the

world. The vehicle for tikkun's realization is our world.

When we truly become living representatives for the process of tikkun, we realize the synchronistic dialectic between the outer world and the inner landscape of our minds, which, just like a dream, are reflections of each other. This is to recognize that the outer world is the medium through which our inner realizations are made manifest and given form. Thus one very powerful way to "work on ourselves" is to be of service to the world. The psychological redemption that is at the heart of tikkun involves a simultaneous turning inward and outward. As practitioners of tikkun we seek to discover the core of divinity that resides within ourselves as well as within the world at large. From the perspective of the Kabbalah, it is incumbent upon humanity to recognize, call forth, and sanctify the sacramental value of the material world—we ourselves become transformed in the process. The process of tikkun will only be complete when the last spark has been raised and the universe, suffused with the inviolable primordial radiance of the divine, reveals itself to be the dream that it is. As we collectively connect with each other in the profound process of tikkun, we can restore the world to a state of harmony undreamed of previously. ■

WOLFSON (continued from page 42)

if the answer, as I am proposing, is negative, that in no way diminishes the extraordinary experience of expanding our ability to stay as much as possible in the clarity of nonattachment.

The Buddha takes up this issue frequently as an essential focus. To give a flavor of the original sutras, here is an excerpt from the Sutra with the Fisher-man's son, in which the Buddha shows that his view of consciousness is that it itself is conditioned. He upbraids Sati:

Misguided man, in many discourses
have I not stated consciousness to

arise upon conditions, since without a condition, there is no origination of consciousness? Monks, consciousness is reckoned by the particular condition dependent upon which it arises. When consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye-consciousness etc. . . . Just as fire is reckoned by the particular condition on which it burns—when fire is reckoned by the particular condition on which it burns—when fire depends on logs, it is reckoned as log fire, etc. . . . Then monks, it occurred to me: When what exists does consciousness come to be? What conditions consciousness? Then, monks through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: When there is name-and-form, consciousness comes to be; consciousness has name-and-form as its condition.

Secular Buddhism's Take on the Four Noble Truths

As we are aware from our own difficult times, sometimes adopting ancient practices—or adapting and modernizing them—leads to a strange and rigid fundamentalism seemingly out of sync with the contemporary, unfortunately serving to reinforce regressive, male-dominated hierarchies. Other times it leads to a situation where wraiths of the original religious sources are applied piecemeal for authentication of the new views.

Is modernized but revisionist secular Buddhism—or in other words, Buddhism stripped of its "absolute" truths and its unprovable metaphysical assertions about everlasting nirvana—still Buddhism? Traditionalists from Buddhism's various branches all argue that secular Buddhism goes too far. Critics such as B. Alan Wallace, who published a vitriolic critique titled "Distorted Visions of Buddhism: Agnostic and Atheist" in *Mandala Publications*, claim "you can't pick and choose" and that secular Buddhism's re-examination is based on shaky scholarship of limited sources. In

truth, there is a limit on the project to tease out what can be regarded as the Buddha's actual words and teachings. There is just too much intervening discourse between the Buddha in life and the contributions that have created and enriched this pile we call Buddhism. And, in truth, developing secular Buddhist forms of community, ritual, meditation, practice, scripture, and study is a large and looming process.

The most accepted criteria for the defining boundaries of what can be considered Buddhism per se involve what are known as the Four Seals. Secular Buddhism does fit into that framework with the proviso that the four propositions, or seals, are understood as pertaining to the here and now—this life. In the end, secular Buddhism agrees that all things that arise are impermanent, that emotions tainted with ego/craving are ultimately painful, that there is no intrinsic self, and that the experience of nirvana is based on non-attachment.

The Four Noble Truths are also constitutive of Buddhism. Batchelor—in an act of "heresy" to mainstream Buddhism—reconfigures the Four Noble Truths into the Four Noble Tasks or, to be consistent with recent retranslations and reexamination of the original sutras before religious elaboration was inserted, *the four tasks*: a pragmatic action format to be accomplished. We who struggle to understand and accept the propositions of Buddhism in accord with its tenet of purposeful examination often have ended up adopting its "inexplicables" as beliefs based on the contradictory tenet of the necessity for faith and devotion as acceptance. This leads to confusion along with rationalization. It leads us to take shelter in the comfort of our own palpable ignorance and assume that our lack of development makes us insufficient to comprehend or question the teachings. As Batchelor states in a recent essay in which he reiterates the Four Noble Truths and goes on to demolish their "Truths":

From the very outset of one's engagement with the dharma, one finds oneself playing the language game "In Search of Truth." The unstated presumption is that if you believe these propositions to be true, then you qualify to be a Buddhist, whereas if you regard them as false, you do not. One is thus tacitly encouraged to take the further step of affirming a division between "believers" and "non-believers," between those who have gained access to the truth and those who have not. . . . Each of these propositions is a metaphysical statement, no different in kind from "God is love," [or] "creation arose from the breath of the One". . . . Perhaps because of Buddhism's more psychological-sounding and non-theistic terminology (not to mention the widespread perception of Buddhism as "rational" and "scientific"), you may not notice the blatantly metaphysical nature of the claims of the four noble truths until you start trying either to prove or refute them. "Craving is the origin of suffering." How then is craving the origin of old age? How is craving the origin of the pain of a baby born with cystic fibrosis? How is craving the origin of being accidentally run over by a truck?

The fulcrum concept is that of *dukkha*, usually translated as "suffering," from which has arisen the common misunderstanding, especially among non-Buddhists, that Buddhism affirms that *life is suffering*. This thrusts the entire exegesis into transcending this painful life and preventing future miserable rebirth. It throws into confusion motivational views of pleasure and happiness and makes the avoidance of the inevitability of pain the primary incentive. In the traditional interpretation of the Buddha's First Discourse, craving/clinging is said to be the origin of suffering and what causes us to commit actions that lead to being born, sickness, aging, and dying.

Batchelor presents another view. In the First Discourse, he writes, the Buddha defines *dukkha* as birth, sickness,

aging, and death, and the "five bundles of clinging themselves—in other words: the totality of our existential condition in this world." Remarkably, he demonstrates that in the original work (Buddha's "actual" presentation), what is articulated is that it is suffering that actually causes craving, not the other way around. This fruitful reversal of structure and concept allows for a reformulation that changes praxis fundamentally. The reformulation moves us away from fatalism and toward a conscious, active, embodied, and socially engaged way of being in the world.

"Craving" describes all our habitual and instinctive reactions to the fleeting, tragic, unreliable, and impersonal conditions of life that confront us. If something is pleasant, we crave to possess it; if something is unpleasant, we crave to be rid of it. The practice of mindfulness trains us to notice how this reactive pattern arises from our felt encounter with the world in such a way that we cease to be in thrall to its imperative and are thereby liberated to think and act otherwise.

The core emancipating truth is that "craving," like all other aspects of living, inevitably *arises and ceases*. If we foolishly carry our obsessions to the edge of our death, those cravings certainly will cease with our end. If we crave perfect health, immortality, having too much, competing to be above others, dominating, and living out of balance, all of that craving will cease at our culmination and drain into an ocean of meaninglessness. Such craving—our attachments to "I am" or "I am not," or "it is" or "it is not" (dualistic thinking)—are the dead ends that lead to all of the problems of too much "self." When this reorientation is understood, it is an opening into the "complete view" that is the first step of the Eightfold Path. For "view" is discernment of our condition and the transcendence of our ordinary experience of reality.

"Right view" (or following other translations of the Sanskrit term, "appropriate, wholesome, wise, skillful, or correct view") is free from craving and opens

us to being in the ever-moving, contingent process of our life and the lives of all things. Truly living mindfully in this process, in the fluidity of a self that forms and dissolves, generates a pleasure of clarity, presence, and flexible maneuvering. Craving is just not that much fun! I am sure you have noticed. Letting craving go opens us to that instant of silent possibility for nearly anything to happen, a moment of liberation before the next installment. And in that moment we are able to reorient ourselves to the demonstrable truths of our lives and those of others, to open our senses to new experience, and to experience the glory of the absence of prejudiced judgments.

Updating Buddhism's Noble Eightfold Path

Roughly 2,500 years ago, the Buddha told a story in which he described the Noble Eightfold Path: an ancient path trodden by "awakened" people of former times. It is a timeless guide to living this life. Some schools have divided the path into three sections: wisdom, ethical conduct, and concentration. The ethical conduct section contains right action, right livelihood, and right effort. Each part of the path has liberating and restrictive aspects, and much of the path's discourse is aimed at monastics and is renunciative in orientation.

There is a sense of obligation within secular Buddhism's developing movement of contemporary practitioners to integrate into Buddhism new elements that reflect our time and its concerns, opportunities, and dilemmas. To not integrate new elements would reflect enmeshment in a fear of transgression. But this effort to make Buddhism contemporary needs to be done carefully and with recognition that transformations of refined practice—dharma—can miss the point and distort what is precious in the original teachings.

For us to draw a secular pragmatic praxis out of Buddhism, even the Noble Eightfold Path needs reevaluation. In our time, lay people predominate as

practitioners, and the Noble Eightfold Path needs to address without prejudice or hierarchical distinctions the lives, aspirations, and problems of those who are not choosing monasticism. I'd like to offer a few tentative offerings to the discussion about how this path may be adapted within secular Buddhism.

First, I'd like to propose that we reconceptualize the Noble Eightfold Path as an illuminated path rather than a noble one. The word "noble" comes from a time of aristocracy: kings, queens, gilded brocaded elephants, and parasols sheltering royalty from the sun. "Illuminated" is more appropriate because paths that are outlined by light are easier to discern. Stepping off them puts one in murk and darkness. Better to look for more light.

Second, I'd like to propose replacing the path's call for "right" action, livelihood, and effort with a call for "awakened" action, livelihood, and effort (as in awakened view or awakened action). "Right" conjures images of authoritarian teachers and parents admonishing a child for an action that is wrong, inappropriate, or incorrect. But it is on our own initiative that we come to desire an illuminated path. We are drawn by its clarity and appeal, by our happiness in following it, and by our inner certainty about the benefits of treading its path, not by fear and external authority.

Third, I'd like to propose that *awakened sharing* be added to the path. In these times of unprecedented possibilities, eliminating hunger and providing the core necessities of life (clothing, shelter, safety, decent health care, and the rule of civilized law) for all humans is an imperative addition to the illuminated path.

This addition—awakened sharing—is the antidote to greed, war, overconsumption, and the destruction of our planet. Awakened sharing is the exertion of the commitment necessary to build a world culture that equalizes access to core human needs and shares surplus with those who do not have enough. Its values and methods include persuasion, dialogue, and negotiation of different needs. It is just and egalitarian. It recognizes that a world culture of peace and love is achievable. It requires each of us to consider sharing our surpluses—of money, time, labor, skills, creativity, and things—with others who have too little. It is implemented through community-building, social forums, service, art, and near constant self-observation to assess our personal shifting and evolving ecological balances.

The process of global sharing will require patience, fortitude, and the engagement of as many of us as possible in an ongoing, nonviolent, participatory, and democratic cultural forum. Anxiety about its possible failure does not alter the time frame. The climate is changing in difficult ways as a result of human activity. There is a great and urgent need to rein in our impact, but there is still no clear commitment to do so from nations or the general populace. Instead, we continue to consume selfishly without regard for the future. Frustrating as it is to those of us who are alarmed and wanting to nurture future generations, our only true hope lies in generating awareness. Awakened sharing—in concert with "awakened view" and "awakened action"—offers a personal and social guide, a bit of light for our feelings and actions.

Finally, I'd like to propose that we add *awakened love* to the path. In this age of surplus, much of our life energy has come to center on romantic love. Almost nothing else in our lives consumes as much of our energy. Thus, adding awakened love seems necessary as part of this effort to come up with a modernized secular Buddhist path. The ingredients of awakened love include consideration and respect for others, avoidance of exploitation, consent, full disclosure, treating the other as Buddha, and protecting oneself from possible exploitation and disrespect.

These additions and changes result in a new version of the Noble Eightfold Path: *the illuminated tenfold path*. The lack of capital letters in this new name reflects the understanding that this path meanders and lengthens, is adjusted to reflect its present circumstance, and is malleable. The illuminated tenfold path is not meant to be a document like the Ten Commandments, a what-not-to-do handed down from a higher, external authority. Rather, it is a self-reflective guide to a practical, joyous, self-liberating, and communitarian practice.

The Buddhist tradition is so rich in the arena of self-examination, emancipating us from craving and attachment! Craving, clinging, and discontent are at the core of our suffering. If discontent ceases even for a moment, we are free—we discover a spaciousness that makes room for creativity and love. We are on earth to engage, and following a guide such as the illuminated tenfold path can help us do so as better friends, relatives, and lovers. ■

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Winter Commute

Dear friend, asleep
upright in a seat
when I boarded the train
goat-stepping over
your legs outstretched
why didn't I wake you
but instead watched
you sleep, watched over
you two seats away
but, no, merely
watched, still
life, face
no longer fresh
but a peach
sweet even
as skin loosens from
flesh flesh
from pit those little
wrinkles you can make
with a thumb-press
kissing the outer
orbit of your eyes
the longer lines
charted
down crescent cheeks
your jaw relaxed
lips parted neat
compact woman's
body buttoned up
in business darks
foggy gray
starched contrasts

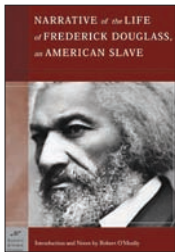
at neckline & cuff
what reprieve here
shuttling underground
before the courted
client you must meet
is met you're floating
somewhere where
the car's cold rays
can't reach, absorbed in
other versions, in-
version of a life
as when we watch
children sleep
so far from us
we don't dare wake them
in the uncontrollable
uncontrolled
are you back there now
in your own deep new
episode without
pillow or comforter or
parent standing over
you at night but for
a few minutes at peace
with stolen rest
hurtling motionless
forgive me for not
sitting down beside you
placing a hand
softly on your tailored
arm to call you back
when all I could have

offered: weak pleasantries
phatic discharging
of routines impositions
variegated surfaces
of elected obligations
what does one
owe another
in common
what comfort what
welcome release
rehearsed in
the dark, dark clad
friend, foe,
Proserpina or Pluto
shape-shifting
roles all play
haphazardly
in false fundament
decked out in
eye-open finery
embroidered so
elaborately it's ripped
right off our backs.
That afternoon
when my stop came
I left you suspended
in your frail respite
and haven't seen you since.

—Joshua Weiner

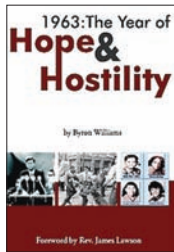
(From *The Figure of a Man Being Swallowed by a Fish* by Joshua Weiner. Copyright © 2013 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.)

Tikkun RECOMMENDS



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave

Frederick Douglass
Sterling Publishing,
2012



1963: The Year of Hope and Hostility

Byron Williams
Byronspeaks,
2013



Hate Thy Neighbor

Jeannine Bell
NYU Press,
2013

The acquittal of the man who killed unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin, the release of the film *Fruitvale Station* dramatizing the murder of Oscar Grant (another young black man) by police, and a federal judge's August 2013 ruling that the NYPD's stop-and-frisk policy has resulted in millions of incidents of blacks being unjustly harassed by police have all contributed to a broader awareness of America's ongoing racist treatment of African Americans.

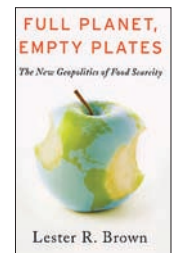
Perhaps it's time to think more deeply about how we expose each new generation to the history of slavery, segregation, and their consequences. We could start by requiring every middle school child to watch the televised version of Alex Haley's *Roots*. We would also do well to share the essays of Frederick Douglass and national columnist Byron Williams's reflections on the year 1963, when southern police set their dogs on peaceful anti-segregationist blacks. Williams's book recalls Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech, the Kennedy assassination, and much more.

Another new book to share with the younger generation is Jeannine Bell's *Hate Thy Neighbor*, a sobering reminder of how the legacy of the past lives on. Bell's book documents the persistence of racial segregation in American housing—segregation enforced by violence against Blacks who try to move into predominantly white neighborhoods. Anti-integrationist violence often persuades African Americans and other people of color to stay out of those neighborhoods, thus guaranteeing the persistence of a racially segregated America. Bell's book offers an important reality check for those who believe that racism is no longer a problem.



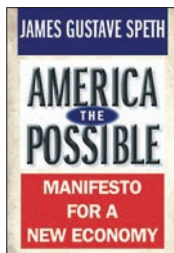
The Approaching Great Transformation

Joel Magnuson
Seven Stories Press,
2013



Full Planet, Empty Plates

Lester R. Brown
W. W. Norton &
Company, 2012



America the Possible

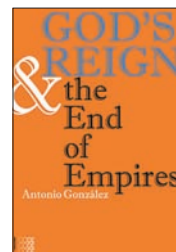
James Gustave Speth
Yale University Press,
2012

By this point it's old news that the world is entering an age of environmental catastrophe that will totally alter the way most of us live. The problem is that most Americans don't believe they can do anything to avert the tragedy and consequently drown their half-conscious worries in accelerated consumption, thereby fueling the catastrophe. Joel Magnuson, Lester R. Brown, and James Gustave Speth join the community of rigorous theorists who have concrete ideas on what to do in the coming decades.

Magnuson's subtitle, "Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy," makes clear that carbon-emitting fuel is at the heart of the problem. Magnuson shows how the culture of consumption, which has such deep roots in American society, is doing its best to distract us so that we continue to consume fast-disappearing resources, to the detriment of our own futures. Magnuson envisions a new economy based on reverence for natural beauty, renewable energy, resource stewardship, craft traditions, localization of production, financial cooperatives, land conservation, local health care systems, and much more.

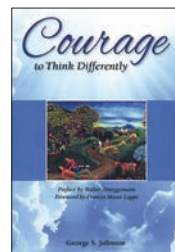
Speth looks more toward a national transformation, recognizing that environmental progress is unlikely until there is real progress on issues of social justice and political reform. As long as there is pervasive economic insecurity, he argues, the economic will continue to trump the environmental. Speth recognizes the need for marches, protests, demonstrations, direct action, and nonviolent disobedience.

Lester Brown's jeremiad, subtitled "The New Geopolitics of Food Scarcity," shows how the increasing number of people worldwide—coupled with water shortages, heat waves, and a land rush in which countries are buying up land in other countries to grow food—is creating a situation in which food will become unavailable to the economically marginal people of the lands being sold to foreign interests for food production. Brown encourages us to have smaller families, consume less meat, and tax carbons so that the cost of climate change is incorporated into market prices.



God's Reign and the End of Empires

Antonio González
Convivium Press,
2012



Courage to Think Differently

Edited by
George S. Johnson
Adventure
Publications, 2013

Environmentalists in the United States have often avoided linking their ecological concerns to a critique of the competitive marketplace and the way that capitalism requires a constant growth in consumption in order to persuade the wealthy and the corporations to invest and create jobs for the working class. This error is increasingly being challenged by liberation theologians and spiritually sensitive social change activists, who will welcome Antonio González's *God's Reign and the End of*

Empires, George S. Johnson's collection of essays *Courage To Think Differently*, and Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda's *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (reviewed in this issue on page 45).

González emphasizes that our environmental and ethical/spiritual crisis is the result neither of human stupidity, nor of conscious decisions of the 1 percent elite. Rather, he argues, the crisis has emerged from centuries of development of a capitalist empire that "is forced to expand by its very nature" and "possesses within itself no mechanism to palliate the environmental consequences of growth." Yet González draws hope from a biblical vision of an alternative society whose highest allegiance is to a God whose message is an assault on the logic of empire. Though framed primarily as a Christian project, the building of a new world from the grassroots up can be an important element in the strategy of any spiritual progressive.

That project will be aided by the cultural, spiritual, ecological, and political wisdom of the thirty-five essayists George Johnson has included in this remarkable collection, including John B. Cobb, Walter Brueggemann, Frances Moore Lappé, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Vandana Shiva, David Korten, James Cone, Leonardo Boff, Brian McLaren, and *Tikkun* editor Rabbi Michael Lerner.



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