

Stirrings



Clifford Harper

A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Summer 2013

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Basilian Peace & Justice Pilgrimage

Conflicting Narratives in South Hebron Hills

by Warren Schmidt CSB
Pilgrimage Blog 15 July 2013

Every story has two if not multiple perspectives. Today, the 15 Basilian Peace and Justice pilgrims were offered a wider view of the complexity of the quest for peace and justice in the Holy Land.

The day began with a visit to a home in the Palestinian town of At-Tuwani that also comprises the At-Tuwani Craftworks Cooperative. At-Tuwani appeared to me to be more established than many of the Palestinian villages of the West Bank that our pilgrimage has visited so far. Its stone houses offer more stable shelter than the tents in other Palestinian villages. However, At-Tuwani faces similar problems to those of the other villages: grinding poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, and threats of settler violence and home demolitions to make room for Israeli settlements.

These rapidly expanding settlements are illegal under both Israeli and international law yet tacitly accepted by the Israeli government. Hafez, a resident of At-Tuwani, spoke to us of these problems affecting his village, while many pilgrims perused and purchased craftworks from the At-Tuwani Cooperative's shop, which assists and advocates for women in need in Palestinian villages.

At-Tuwani in particular waited several years for a water cistern and built a medical clinic and school without (unattainable) permits.



Background: Israeli settlement of Susya
Foreground: Palestinian village of Susya

Israeli soldiers escort children of At-Tuwani to school through a nearby settlement so that settlers will not attack them. One wonders if having been ordered by the Israeli government to escort "the enemy's children" through the settlement to school might begin a re-

assessment by some Israeli soldiers of just who is considered "the enemy."

Friend and enemy are not easily defined in the Holy Land. Our pilgrims continued to find this out as we moved to one of the settlements, Susya. There, we met Aryel Tsion, an Israeli settler. I and other pilgrims in our group had been concerned about what Aryel would say to us of the settlers' side of the quest for peace in the Holy Land, and more concerned about *how* he would say it. Would he be angry at Palestinians and pro-Palestinian "activists" for opposing the growth of settlements like Susya?

Our concerns were quickly alleviated as Aryel welcomed us and began his talk from the perspective of the primacy of relationship with God. The trouble is that he was too at ease with his side of the story, and many of his assertions were factually incorrect. While the

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Palestinians of Susya demonstrating against demolition of their village while the Israeli settlement continues to expand.

Conflicting Narratives

continued from page 1

presence of both Jews and non-Jews for hundreds of years in the Hebron hills and recent settler attacks on residents of nearby Palestinian villages (such as one on a shepherd of which Hafez also spoke) are well-documented, Aryel categorically denied both facts. Nevertheless, Aryel's spirit and hospitality impressed us.

Afterward, we went to the Palestinian Susya (yes, there are two Susyas!), The original Palestinian village of Susya was destroyed by the Israeli army and today we visited a collection of ragged tents put up between demolitions. Hospitality here was especially disarming. The poor and oppressed, as in Palestinian Susya, give everything out of their nothing. The same was true of At-Tuwani, where we went for lunch after visiting the two Susyas.

There are two Susyas. And there are at least two narratives to the struggle for peace and justice in the Holy Land. Yet there is only one path that leads to this peace: recognition not of the "other" as the "enemy," but recognition of our common humanity.

Warren is a Basilian seminarian who was a member of the Basilian Peace and Justice Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Stirrings

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The Story of St. Basil Coffee

A group of Basilians were recently discussing how Colombia produces coffee and North America consumes it by the barrel. Could we Basilians in Colombia not get into the market? Export problems stood in the way. A friend in Houston, Jim Boyles, a retired businessman, latched on to the idea and made it work. The last time I asked, the amount distributed to Basilians for projects for the poor was about \$335,000.

St. Basil Coffee Company is, in effect, a one man operation. Jim is the founder, director, sales promoter and staff all in one. And he is the sole owner of the company. He deals with two companies, one in Houston and one in Windsor - the latter to to make sales possible in Canada. These companies import from abroad. They follow a "Fair Trade" system which guarantees that the small farmer/producer, receives a fair price for his product.

People usually order St. Basil Coffee by e-mail but also by telephone (see below). Jim passes the order on to the larger companies. They take selected beans, grind them, package them and immediately mail them to the buyer. The latter can have fresh ground top quality coffee on the breakfast table within a day or two.

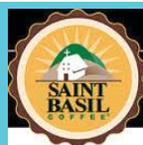
Basilian priests who are working among the poor in Latin America inform Jim of projects in need of financing and Jim sees to it that the needed funds reach them through St. Joseph Mission Center in Sugarland, Texas. This Basilian center is able to transfer funds across national borders. All the profits of St. Basil Coffee Company are passed on to the poor in this manner. Jim works virtually full time on this project and sees it as his vocation to helping the poor in the fashion of Matthew 25. He does not take a salary for himself.

The buyer of St. Basil Coffee helps the poor in two ways: helping the farmer make a living through the "Fair Trade" system and by helping fund the projects for the poor through the profits from sales.

Who buys the coffee? Mostly parishes throughout the US and Canada. Basilian parishes? A few, for which we are grateful. Most Basilian institutions do not. We profess a preferential option for the poor but in buying major brands of coffee we contribute to systemic injustice that helps to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

So... enjoy a delicious cup of "Fair Trade" coffee and support our Basilian brothers in Colombia in their projects for the poor.

Fr. Vince Thompson CSB



To Order:
www.saintbasilcoffee.com
phone: 713-880-9090



Leadership, Power and Authority

*What does leadership mean
and what makes a good leader?*

By Sr. Joan Chittister

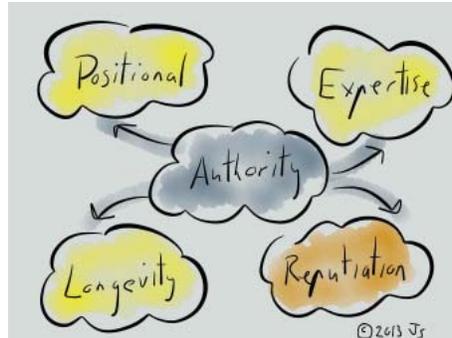
Every time we get into this conversation—and I find it at the root of a number of issues, especially about women—it occurs to me that we seldom make clear distinctions between leadership, power, and authority. We squeeze them as if one needs the others and they're all the same thing.



Power is the assurance that I have the resources to expect that what I want done will be done. Parents have power. Teachers have power. Policemen have power. It covers, actually, a pretty limited thing that says, "If you don't do what I tell you to do, I have the means to make you suffer for it."

Authority on the other hand, comes in two flavors: One is "ascribed authority." I have a position—I am the elevator operator in this building. I have been made the 14th vice president of this company. That's an appointed or elected position. I have a gold plaque on my door. Nobody may listen to me, but I have it.

The second type of authority is "achieved authority," and that comes from two important elements that



have a lot to do with women: charisma, meaning personal gifts or presence—a personal, internal power of a person. When she comes into the room, everybody stops and listens. The second type of achieved authority comes out of basic expertise. You may not want Stephen Hawking at your party for some reason or other, but if you want to know about black holes, you had better have his telephone number.

What is leadership? It is the ability to mobilize a group of people to manage their resources in their best interests. It often comes with great charisma, and charismatic people often become leaders. It certainly comes with some kind of personal skills, such as the person who can go to A and Z and make them see M together.

Leaders inspire a group to meet its own goals and stretch its own vision. A good leader collaborates. This is not power or authority for its own sake—this is somebody who comes out of the heart of the group and will give attention not just to big issues but also to the development of individual members.

I used to talk a lot in religious communities about following the

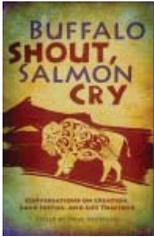
gifts of the members. I was in a community one day where the group told me they used to make wine. Apparently, making wine was very important in supporting the group. I said, "What happened to the wine-making project?" They said, "We suddenly realized that we were no longer crushing grapes; the grapes were crushing us." They had to give up this group project because it was killing individual members. A good leader allows that to happen so that individual members can grow. If our individual membership in the group is not honored, developed, and respected, we will never enable that group to realize its common goals.

Now, when you use those distinctions as a filter over any position, you begin to see it differently. When you hold up the filter of leadership and look at Congress, you say, "Are we getting leadership, or are we getting power, or are we getting authority?" And then you know pretty well what's going on and the dynamics of the institution.



The Leadership Jigsaw

Sister Joan D. Chittister, O.S.B. is a Benedictine nun, author and speaker. A member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania, where she served as prioress for 12 years, Sister Joan is an author and lecturer



Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry, edited by Steve Heinrich, is a book that deeply engages the question: *How can North Americans come to terms with the lamentable clash between Indigenous and settler cultures, spiritualities, and attitudes toward creation? It offers up alternative histories, radical theologies, and subversive memories that can unsettle our souls and work toward reconciliation. It showcases a variety of voices—both traditional and Christian, Native and non-Native.*

Following are 3 edited excerpts to lure you to delve deeper.

. . . in my own land

I am a ghost in my own land
 you look through me
 as looking into frozen water
 I exist in your imagination
 as a strong warrior
 as a silent elder
 as a thing to be admired and respected
 but I persist in your mind
 as a drunk
 as a thief
 as an enemy to be feared or despised
 I am a ghost in my own land

you fear me
 because you do not know me
 only when I look like you
 can you tolerate me

but
 do not presume that the warrior is dead
 do not assume that the wisdom
 is buried and gone
 I am not a ghost
 I live and breathe and love this land
 where Creator placed us long ago
 the land that recognizes me
 I am good
 I am clean
 I have a strong voice
 I have good words to share
 I am not a ghost in my own land

*Cheryl Bear
 of Yinka Dene, Bear Clan*

We need unsettled settlers

I'd like to take you back about 200 years ago to my homeland in what is now known as central Ontario. It was idyllic. The knowledge systems, the economic systems and the political systems of Indigenous peoples were designed to generate life - not just human life, but the life of all living things.

Over the past 200 years, without our permission and without our consent, we have been systematically removed and displaced from most of our territory. We have watched as our homeland has been cleared, subdivided and sold to settlers from Toronto. We have watched our waterfronts disappear behind monster cottages. We no longer have old-growth white pine forests.

The land, our Mother, has been taken from us. And so have our children. Our young were stolen from us and sent to residential schools, day schools, and child welfare and are now placed in an education system that, on the whole, refuses to acknowledge our culture, our knowledge, our histories, and our Indigenous experience.

None of this had to happen. None of this was inevitable. Colonialism was and is a choice that Canadians make every day. It is a choice to uphold a system that is based on the hyperexploitation of the land and of Indigenous peoples. It is a choice to maintain a system that overwhelmingly promotes greed over creation.

Throughout Canada's colonial history there has always been a small group of settlers that refused to uphold this system, that have chosen not to follow the inherited mandate of their forefathers. They have chosen to "unsettle the settler within." We need many more unsettled settlers.

*Leanne Simpson
 of Mississauga Nishnabeg ancestry*

Unsettled

Whose lands are these?
 Yours? God's? Settler? Indigenous?
 Every division is a fragile line . . .

Ashamed of skin and story,
 every identity a sorry embarrassment
 I carry guilt, anger, a muted voice,
 claiming: this is not my story.
 This was not my choice.

But these were my people.
 My ancestors: settlers.

I'm unsettled.
 Listening
 to creation's moans and groans
 to the violence in silence
 sifting
 through broken pieces
 molding, shaping, holding a new story
 of home
 of land shared
 of people who dared
 to reconcile.

We are connected.
 We all fall down, ring around the roses
 pockets full of poppies,
 bleeding hearts, forget me nots,
 arms outstretched
 bodies to earth
 listening
 sharing our stories of loved-lands,
 lost and found
 hearing
 knowing
 living
 another story

Create in me a clean heart, O God.
 Unsettle my soul
 and renew a right spirit within me.
 Unquiet me
 to shout this story's whispers
 so that I won't settle for less
 than your kingdom come
 on earth as it is in heaven.

*Rebecca Seiling
 of Waterloo, Ontario*

Christian Peacemaker Aboriginal Justice Team

A week with the Mi'kmaq in New Brunswick Resisting Fracking for Shale Gas

by Bob Holmes CSB

In November 2010 Canada finally signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which declares, "States will consult and obtain free, prior and informed consent for any project affecting the land, territory or resources of indigenous peoples." (Art.32-2)



Elsipogtog, a Mi'kmaq First Nation in New Brunswick, was not consulted and certainly does not consent to the seismic survey of their land in preparation for fracking for shale gas. They have joined with equally concerned non-aboriginal residents in the area to stop the exploration. Canadian police arrested thirty-three protestors in June.

On **Sunday 30 June**, Chris Sabas and I, representing the CPT Aboriginal Justice Team, arrived in Elsipogtog at the invitation of John Levi, leader at the Sacred Fire camp. Colourful flags, abundant signage and a community of Indigenous, Acadian, and Anglo folk, welcomed us to their tent-city and the sacred fire.

Monday 1 July, we met with the Elsipogtog Peacekeepers, who invited us to join their ranks, a neutral liaison team between the protestors, Band Council, and police. As CPTers, "neutral" was not a good descriptor of our anticipated role, so we declined. The group celebrated Canada Day with a "No Fracking Way" march to the Sacred Fire Camp.

Tuesday 2 July, we listened to some of the thirty-three arrestees who had stood in front of the "thumper" trucks in June tell stories of their experiences. The RCMP officers were neither respectful of aboriginal ceremony nor gentle in their arrest processes.

Wednesday 3 July, Chris, a lawyer in her pre-CPT life, offered a workshop for Elsipogtog arrestees on expectations and possible



consequences in their upcoming legal encounters with the Canadian/New Brunswick justice system. They are heroes following in the footsteps of Gandhi and Martin Luther King and joining a long line of native protectors of Mother Earth.

Thursday 4 July, police arrested an independent journalist with charges based on one of the June actions. He believes this harassment is due to his refusal that day to become a police informer.

In the afternoon, a community busload of "berry-pickers" attempted to approach the current seismic testing now deep in the bush. The RCMP met the bus on a back road and after long negotiation allowed the group to proceed eight kilometers further to pick berries—but not beyond. When requested to do so, the police moved well away so the group could drum and pray before leaving the area.



Friday 5 July, police ordered Elsipogtog leader, John Levi, to appear in the Moncton court. Thirty-seven people stood with him as he was charged with obstruction relating to the June arrests and with breach of parole because of these activities.

He had a previous conviction for fishing in Elsipogtog territory even though the Mi'kmaq have a treaty right to fish. People involved with the anti-fracking campaign believe the arrest is harassment aimed at deterring further protest.

Saturday 6 July, was a day of celebration and festival—groups from all over New Brunswick, native and non-native, arrived at the Sacred Fire Camp to show solidarity and unity in the struggle for a "Fracking Free" New Brunswick.



Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

The Business of Mass Incarceration

By Chris Hedges

Truthdig 29 July 13

The murder of a teenage boy by an armed vigilante, George Zimmerman, is only one crime set within a legal and penal system that has criminalized poverty. Poor people, especially those of color, are worth nothing to corporations and private contractors if they are on the street. In jails and prisons, however, they each can generate corporate revenues of \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year. This use of the bodies of the poor to make money for corporations fuels the system of neoslavery that defines our prison system.

Chris Hedges will be among those fasting Wednesday in solidarity with the California prison hunger strike. For information about how to become involved in this week's protest.

Prisoners often work inside jails and prisons for nothing or at most earn a dollar an hour. The court system has been gutted to deny the poor adequate legal representation. Draconian drug laws send nonviolent offenders to jail for staggering periods of time. Our prisons routinely use solitary confinement, forms of humiliation and physical abuse to keep prisoners broken and compliant, methods that international human rights organizations have long defined as torture. Individuals and corporations that profit from prisons in the United States perpetuate a form of neoslavery. The ongoing hunger strike by inmates in the California prison system is a slave revolt, one that we must encourage and support. The fate of the poor under our corporate state will, if we remain indifferent and passive, become our own fate. This is why on Wednesday I will join prison rights activists, including Cornel West and Michael Moore, in a one-day fast in solidarity with the hunger strike in the California prison system.

In poor communities where there are few jobs, little or no vocational training, a dearth of educational opportunities and a lack of support structures there are, by design, high rates of recidivism—the engine of the prison-industrial complex. There are tens of millions of poor people for whom this country is nothing more than a vast, extended penal colony. Gun possession is largely criminalized for poor people of color while vigilante thugs, nearly always white, swagger through com-



munities with loaded weapons. There will never be serious gun control in the United States. Most white people know what their race has done to black people for centuries. They know that those trapped today in urban ghettos, what Malcolm X called our internal colonies, endure neglect, poverty, violence and deprivation. Most whites are terrified that African-Americans will one day attempt to defend themselves or seek vengeance. Scratch the surface of survivalist groups and you uncover frightened white supremacists.

The failure on the part of the white liberal class to decry the exploding mass incarceration of the poor, and especially of African-Americans, means that as our empire deteriorates more and more whites will end up in prison alongside those we have condemned because of our indifference. And the mounting abuse of the poor is fueling an inchoate rage that will eventually lead to civil unrest.

The United States has spent \$300 billion since 1980 to expand its prison system. We imprison 2.2 million people, 25 percent of the world's prison population. For every 100,000 adults in this country there are 742 behind bars. Five million are on parole. Only 30 to 40 percent are white.

The intrusion of corporations and private contractors into the prison system is a legacy of the Clinton administration. President Bill Clinton's omnibus crime bill provided \$30 billion to expand the prison system, including \$10 billion to build prisons. The bill expanded from two to 58 the number of federal crimes for which the death penalty can be administered. It eliminated a ban on the execution of the mentally impaired. The bill gave us the "three-strikes" laws that mandate life sentences for anyone convicted of three "violent" felonies. It set up the tracking of sex offenders. It allowed the courts to try children as young as 13 as adults. It created special courts to deport non-citizens alleged to be "engaged in terrorist activity" and authorized the use of secret evidence. The prison population under Clinton swelled from 1.4 million to 2 million.

Incarceration has become a very lucrative business for an array of private contractors, most of whom send lobbyists to Washington to make sure the laws and legislation continue to funnel a steady supply of poor people into the prison complex. These private contractors, taking public money, build the prisons, provide food service, hire guards and run and administer detention facilities. It is imperative to their profits that there be a steady supply of new bodies.

Chris Hedges, whose column is published on Truthdig, was a foreign correspondent for The New York Times for 15 years.

The Zimmerman Verdict and the Resurrection of the Old Jim Crow

by Lisa Sharon Harper

The acquittal of a person who is not black for the murder or beating of a black person is nothing new: Remember Yusef Hawkins. Remember Rodney King. Remember Amadu Diallo. Remember Alex Moore. Remember Latasha Harlins. Remember Sean Bell. Remember... remember... remember.

Many of us can recall these names without much effort. So, why is the death of Trayvon Martin so different?

It's different because of the law — and the timing.

First, the law. This may have been an unavoidable verdict, under a three-part set of unjust Florida laws.

Before 2005, Florida's self-defense laws mirrored those of the rest of the country. A person had no duty to retreat if being attacked inside their own home, but outside the home they had the duty to get the heck out of Dodge, if possible, before using deadly force.

In 2005, Florida became the first state to expand its self-defense laws to include any spaces outside the home and encouraged people not to retreat, but to "stand their ground."

Ta-Nehisi Coates broke down the irony of Florida's "stand your ground" principle:

"I don't think the import of this is being appreciated," he said. "Effectively, I can bait you into a fight and if I start losing, I can legally kill you, provided I 'believe' myself to be subject to 'great bodily harm.'"

So, it follows, Zimmerman's jury was given deliberation instructions that used language from the "stand your ground" principle verbatim: "Zimmerman... had *no duty to retreat* and had the right to *stand his ground* and meet force with force, including deadly force, if he reasonably believed that it was necessary to do so." (Italics mine.)

Juror 37 said this principle imbedded within the instructions played a key role in the jury's verdict.

Since 2005, more than 20 states have followed Florida's lead and enacted their own versions of expanded self-defense laws. That means nearly half of the country lives under the legal authority of "stand your ground."

Now, couple these expanded self-defense laws with the proliferation of concealed carry laws, which legalize the carrying of guns in public. Today, every state in the union has passed some degree of concealed carry laws.

Add this to the fact that there is no precedent for the prosecution of racial profiling by ordinary citizens. It has always been assumed that racial profiling is something that happens under the authority of those who have broad permission to "carry and kill" — an authority which until recently rested squarely on police officers and the military. Now, in states with stand your ground and concealed carry laws, "authority" comes in the form of "immunity from prosecution."

Broad self-defense laws, more guns, and immunity from prosecution for profiling are the proverbial Molotov cocktail that brought us the murder of Trayvon Martin and Zimmerman's subsequent acquittal under the law.

Now, for the timing.

last weekend, George Zimmerman was found "not guilty" and black America realized that a web of laws have been hacking away at our civil rights to live and expect equal protection under the law.

The old Jim Crow is back.

Not to be confused with Michelle Alexander's New Jim Crow, the old Jim Crow was a web of laws designed

to affirm and reinforce the spiritual lie of colonial and antebellum antiquity: that some people were meant to be slaves and others were simply meant to be masters, and only whites are fully human. In today's terms, we might understand it this way: The lives, souls, and livelihoods of white Americans are worthy of protection more than others.

When I listened to the verdict in the Trayvon Martin case, that is what I heard the state (through its application of law) telling me about my life, my soul, my livelihood—my father's life, my father's soul, my father's livelihood—my brothers' lives, my nephews' souls, my grandfather's livelihoods. We are not as worthy of protection as white folk.

I was in shock. I have never lived in that reality. I have watched Eyes on the Prize countless times with distant wonder at how black people living in a sepia-toned world could bear it. I woke up on Sunday morning, July 14, 2013, and realized: Now I am bearing it.

I wept and couldn't stop weeping on and off throughout the day.

This is why Trayvon Martin's death and Zimmerman's acquittal are such a big deal.

The verdict may have been lawful, but it was absolutely unjust. There is human law and there is higher law. Man's law may require an acquittal for a man who provokes a

fight and kills an unarmed child because he presumably didn't belong there, but God's law says "Thou shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13), and Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." (Mark 9:37a)

And like me, many of the nearly 66 million people of African descent and many others of non-European descent in the U.S. woke up from a dream on Sunday morning and realized we were living in a nightmare. We are living in a pre-1964 world. We are no longer protected by the law.

Lisa is a staff member and writer for Sojourners magazine.



The Great Gatsby



The unremitting effusions of glitz poured out in the first half hour of this movie showcases the obsolete opulence of the grotesquely rich and “well-born,” who are idle beyond comprehension, unmitigatingly bored, jaded to the nth degree, and are enough to suggest to the poor that their lot is preferable to the pathetic, pusillanimous lives of the wealthy Wasps whom sad, little Gatsby aspires to emulate and to whom he desires above all else to belong. Oh, yeah, this is supposed to be a love story. Did we miss something about which or whom we might be remotely stirred to care? Surely not the flighty, flimsy Daisy, hardly worth a second thought.

Lore

Set in Germany at the end of the Second World War, this film asks questions about how some “innocent” survivors of the Nazi regime cope with their crumpling world. Left to fend for themselves after their SS Officer father, and staunch Nazi believer mother, are interred by the victorious allies. Five German children undertake a harrowing trek many miles across a defeated Germany to their grandmother’s house. Lore, the eldest at 14, leads her siblings with a sullen, stoic courage. She is helped by a young man who carries the papers of a Jewish Death Camp survivor; she is attracted to him and hates him as she has been taught. The inherent conflicts of adolescence are savagely intensified. Hunger, indifference, murder, rape are all encountered; most everything that once stood as certain, solid ground is falling away, crumbling to dust.

While the children’s journey is marked by horror and tragedy, it is filmed against a backdrop of the beauty of an



The overtly flamboyant pace makes the viewer squirm and twitch. *Gatsby* is not bad from the outset on. Leonardo DiCaprio comes close to making a few scenes interesting; the rest of the cast is ungainly luggage, ill-packed, lumpy, wasted, best left behind.

At the risk of being dismissed as a Philistine, I declare that the import, significance, cachet of *The Great Gatsby*, book or film, escapes me, always has, even to my senior years. I’m with “THE POOR” on this one; watch this film regularly to feel healthy, worthwhile and even a mite superior to the lost, little, ‘well-born’ rich kids. That such shallow, ghostly, gilded glamour may have once actually been around and possibly envied, is a disgrace to human poverty wherever it was found and still is found.

So far, this movie is reported to have made over \$100 million. What a disgrace!

indifferent nature, green and verdant, everlasting, unchanged; the same before, during and after the destructive fulminations of a world in a chaos of cataclysm. It is strikingly, “A nature walk amid a catastrophe.” It is all the more powerful for this brilliant transposition.

At the core is the inexorable, gradual unravelling of the Nazi brainwashing and the boiling adolescent rage of Lore. The things that are learned in adolescent ‘extremis’ do not equip one to join society; they only complicate an already difficult transition towards adulthood. This is rendered in a small-scale but powerful act of childish rebellion at the film’s end.

This is a stunning film well worth seeing; it would be nearly impossible not to be moved by it. Its brilliance rests in the juxtaposition of violence, prejudice and the decay of a wicked system against the innocence and play of children, adolescent angst and the backdrop of the intransigent beauty of nature.

Man of Steel

Man of Steel stars Henry Cavill as a sombre, charisma-challenged Superman, still Clark Kent, in fact, in tights and cape, in a humorless depiction of Kal-El’s origin on Krypton and identity struggle on earth. Russel Crowe, cast as Kal-El’s Krypton father, doggedly portrays Russel Crowe, as in, “Isn’t that Russell Crowe playing Kal-El’s father?” When Kevin Costner came on screen as Clark Kent’s earth father, I heard voices in the audience, “Isn’t that Kevin Costner playing Clark Kent’s father?” Yawn. Amy Adams is wasted as Lois Lane. She seems to be wondering, “What am I doing in this mess?” My thought was that the only thing that might have salvaged something for viewers, from this huge disappointment of a movie, would be to have handed out loot-bags of chunks of crippling Kryptonite

which could then have been hurled at the screen in faint hope of ending the boredom. Skimpy on humor, fun, interest and characterization, *Man of Steel* randomly splashes



a surfeit of computer-generated violence on the screen, wanton destruction and a melodramatic mess of explosions, so overdisplayed that tackiness and “seen-it-all-before” are the results. “Will it ever end?” Several of us ticket-buyers walked out before the climax, if there was one, calculating in our heads the count of civilian casualties’ collateral and the vast extent of ubiquitous urban destruction in the agonizingly extravagant battle between Superman and the villains, General Zod and his “Never-Named Henchgirl.” Yawn. It’s a shame. Skip it.