

Stirrings



Clifford Harper

A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Fall 2014

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Entrapped in a Cycle of Hatred ... and the Way Out

A Statement from Sami Awad, founder and executive director of Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem, and Other Palestinians Committed to Nonviolence.

Fear, anger, hatred, demonizing, and dehumanization have for decades been boiling like hot lava in the belly of the Holy Land. This lava has been concealed and restrained from full eruption by a thin layer of illusions made by the political elite in both the Palestinian and Israeli communities. We have been told year after year that that our conflict is mostly a political conflict between two



nation-states and that all that is needed is to reach a political agreement through a diplomatic mechanism referred to as a “peace process.” Once an agreement is reached, two independent states will be established and peace will prevail.

This illusion not only concealed the underlying issues mentioned above but also concealed the power dynamics of the conflict by presenting it as a symmetrical one. Even referring to it as a “peace process” (a process of peacemaking between two equal parties) negated the reality of what was happening on the ground. The world began to ignore the fact that there is a stronger power that controls everything it wants to control and a weaker one that is only allowed access to what is granted by the stronger. The world forgot that every individual who lives in the Holy Land has to adhere to laws issued by the State of Israel and within that there are two different sets of

laws: one for Israeli citizens (civil laws) and one for non-Israeli Palestinians (Israeli military orders and regulations). The world also forgot that

there is something called the “occupation” in this conflict, which means there is an occupier and an occupied and this practically translates into land confiscation, detention of individuals without trial, uneven distribution of water, denial

of self-determination, restrictions on freedom to movement, denial of freedom to worship, etc.

The political rhetoric of “peace making” remained on the surface but was limited from progress within Israeli society through the calculated infusion of that lava (fear, hatred, anger, demonizing, etc) by the establishment itself. The occupation was justified, the denial of human rights was neglected, and the recognition of Palestinian historic wounds and/or fighting for Palestinian rights became treason. Through indoctrination and public responses to Palestinian actions (violent or not) “security” became for the most part the only language spoken. Mistrust, fear, demonizing, and hatred became the mechanisms to lead Israeli public opinion and discourse.

Within the Palestinian community, the political elite continued to insist on the negotiated process as the “only way” to attain Palestinian

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Do We Dare Dream of Peace?



Sami Awad at Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem has been working hard to understand the obstacles to peace in the (un)Holy Land and points the way forward in the lead article of this edition of *Stirrings*.

Mitri Raheb, also of Bethlehem, helps us understand the long view of successive imperial occupations and suggests a theological lens which can enable us to dream of peace. His small book is a must read.

Matthew Behrens reminds us that barbaric actions can be perpetrated from 30,000 ft. as well as on the ground and helps us realize that the dream of peace requires a rejection of violence at home as well as abroad.

Walter Brueggemann encourages prophetic action to expose the causes of fear and terror, to grieve the present vulnerabilities and raise hope for a true God-given peace. His small book is also worth the read.

Pax Christi Toronto and Camp Micah expressed their hope with their feet on the Peace Walk celebrating the International Day of Peace.

Neil Hibberd shares his commentaries on movies which explore ways folks in many countries and cultures walk their talk as they seek to realize their dreams of peace.

And Carolyn Gray reminds us poetically who we really are on the cosmic scale. Happy reading!

Bob Holmes CSB

Entrapped in a Cycle of Hatred...

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rights; the Palestinian public began to perceive this as continuous compromise by the victim to the victimizer. At the same time focus by most political leaders was on fighting over leadership of the Palestinian Authority or maintaining it rather than putting everything on the line for resisting and ending the occupation (despite the rhetoric). The repeated failures of the peace negotiations made the community lose its trust and the occupation itself continued to deepen its roots and aggression. All this led to greater infusion of the lava (fear, hatred, mistrust, etc.) into talk about Palestine. Of course we cannot ignore Palestinian voices that also perpetuated hatred, revenge, and retaliation toward the other.

The recent violence has once and for all shattered all illusions. The volcano has erupted exposing the reality that many have denied and did not want to acknowledge let alone confront. The reason why we have not been able to reach a “political peace agreement” in over two decades of negotiations and over sixty years of conflict—and may never reach it—is due to the continuous, systemic process of building settlements, indoctrinating, manipulating and multiplying fear and hatred, as well as inciting a sense of superiority, racism, victimization, demonization, and dehumanization of the other.

The sad reality is that it is far easier to motivate people by fear and hatred than by peace, compassion, and love. We have history (selective or not) that we can refer to that proves that the other is to be feared, mistrusted, hated, and even retaliated against—but when it comes to peace, respect, equality, etc., we have very little to show regarding the intentions and actions of the other. Worse, we have lots of rhetoric that has not only abused, but has even deformed these words and their meaning. Palestinians and Israelis, for the most part, have now fallen into an uncontrolled downward spiral of hatred towards the other.

As the volcano erupts, it is upsetting and angering to see what is happening in this land, especially to our own beloved community and families in the Gaza Strip who are facing the brunt of it all. There is no doubt that we must all stand strong against the killing of any human being, despite his or her identity, wherever they live, whatever their affiliation, or even their past actions.

We can easily and justifiably go into blaming, complaining and analyzing: “Who started it and who is responsible,” but there are other options. . .

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Stirrings

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Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity

...And the Way Out

- **First:** all acts of violence and aggression must cease, as well as the language of incitement and hatred used by the political, religious, the economic elite and the media (locally and internationally). Peace, security, and freedom will never come from killing or terrorizing others. No matter how just a cause might be, violence undermines it.

- **Second:** Leaders (no matter what party they represent, what nation they belong to, and what ideology or religion they adhere to) must acknowledge their failure to bringing any sense of peace to the land or to its people (even their own). If they were true leaders – with courage and vision – they would repent publicly to their peoples and then to others for having failed all these years and decades.

- **Third:** Civil society organizations need to acknowledge our own entrapment in the “political illusions” and thus our inability to create any real change at the grassroots level. For years, millions of dollars have been spent in programs, training, and activities that have barely scratched the surface. We have convinced ourselves that we have been creating change by highlighting the few (but limited) activities that take place but have never reached (for whatever reason) the masses on both sides who continue to be swayed by the language of victimization, hatred, and fear. Grassroots organizations now need to develop programs to address these issues—rather than looking into “political solutions” only. Politicians need to follow their communities and not the other way around.

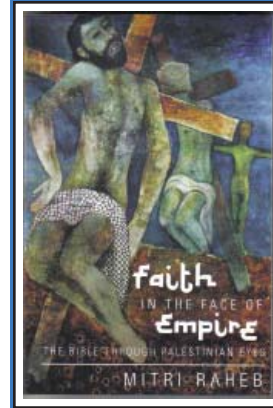
- **Fourth:** It is time for a nonviolent movement to emerge that transcends political processes and illusions: a movement of Palestinians and Israelis as communities addressing

all aspects of injustice in this land; to work together in building a new vision and model for what peace, justice and equality mean in the Holy Land (socially, economically, environmentally, spiritually) and link it with a strategy that breaks down all the physical and psychological barriers that perpetuate hatred, anger and thus separation and violence – even if the removal of such barriers challenges the core political assumptions and ideological beliefs we carry and whose existence we think we need for our own survival.

- **Finally:** a core component of the movement will need to focus on working internally and separately within each community in order to create the space for healing and transformation: to address the challenges from within. Peace work is not what happens between two as much as what happens within one.

This is a call to action, a call to create a new paradigm in understanding and addressing the challenges facing the communities of the Holy Land, from within and in relation to others. It is a call for a new leadership to emerge that breaks ties with old patterns, assumptions and expectations, and creates new and viable alternatives and models that bring true peace, justice, dignity, and equality to all.

Holy Land Trust stands committed to such a vision. Even in the midst of violent atrocities and incitement to hatred. The peace we seek is not about political solutions and frameworks; it is not about compromising for the sake of agreement; it is not seeking the peace that neglects to address the core issues and challenges of the oppression and the suppression of communities based on their ethnic, religious or national background. It is that peace whereby all the rights of all the communities of this land are recognized and honored as being equal and respected despite whatever political framework is created.



Faith in the face of Empire

by
Mitri
Raheb

Mitri Raheb, born in Bethlehem and Pastor of the Lutheran Christmas Church, states that his hope is to create a Palestinian Christian narrative that is both politically relevant and theologically creative.

Taking the “long view” that understands Palestinian history as enduring successive imperial occupations - Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Crusader, Ottoman, British and now Israeli - Mitri calls for a new lens, a post-colonial theology.

When Jesus came to establish the Kingdom of God, he didn't go to Rome, or start a political party or become a religious leader, Jesus went to the periphery, to those who felt powerless in the empire and empowered them with a vision, God's vision, which is stronger than empire.

Hope doesn't wait for the vision to appear, it needs to be lived now, which requires creative nonviolent resistance to the violent culture of empire - a creative resistance which liberates even the enemy from its violence.

ISIS: Their Barbarism... and Ours

By Matthew Behrens

The incessant drumbeat of war, accompanied by the harsh propaganda of “barbarism” and “brutality” directed at individuals in Syria and Iraq, is

as wearily familiar as that used to demonize the German “Hun” a century ago and dozens of other “enemies” in the interim. The PR industry, which is the landing pad for many politicians from the Conservatives to the NDP, is having a field day, from allegations that “Islamic militants” are murdering seniors in hospital rooms to claims that a group with no air force, weapons of mass destruction, overseas military bases, aircraft carriers, and hundreds of billions in other war infrastructure presents the greatest threat known to our generation.

Needless to say, many of the actions of the group known as ISIS, ISIL and IS are reprehensible, from the targeting of specific groups based on their identity (i.e., Shia Muslims) to gross violations against women. And while members of this group should be condemned for their actions – which, combined with the major gains they have made over the summer, do raise significant questions about the future of the region – it is important to note that they are no different from the actions of NATO and its members whenever they go to war, with perhaps the difference that much of the “West’s” brutality is conducted from afar, whether 30,000 feet in the air or 10,000 miles away.



Afghan Lives Have No Value

Indeed, as Amnesty International reported in August, thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed

since 2001 by NATO forces in everything from bombing strikes to night raids, almost always without follow-up investigation and accountability. Richard Bennett, Amnesty’s Asia Pacific Director, said, “Evidence of possible war crimes and unlawful killings has seemingly been ignored.” That endless reign of terror was added to last week with yet another U.S. air strike that killed 14 civilians in the eastern part of the country, with Bennett concluding, “The lack of accountability for killings of civilians by U.S./NATO forces in Afghanistan sends a message that foreign troops have free rein to commit abuses in Afghanistan and that the lives of Afghan civilians have little or no value.”

Ordering atrocities from afar has long been standard operating procedure for western governments, including the torture by proxy that Canada’s intelligence agencies have engaged in with Egypt and Syria, and Barack Obama’s curt, callous comment, “We tortured some folks,” an attempt to soften the impact of a U.S. Senate report on complicity in torture due out soon. One source who has seen the report told the London Daily Telegraph in early September that the CIA took some detainees “to the point of death,” noting that the “waterboarding” euphemism was not simply dropping drops of water on

a facecloth, but instead, “They were holding [detainees] under water until the point of death, with a doctor present to make sure they did not go too far. This was real torture.”

Such criminality is given the executive stamp of approval when Obama says he will not prosecute Bush or Clinton-era officials for such policies; similarly, no one in Canada has ever been charged, much less prosecuted, for high-level Canadian complicity in torture over the same time period. As reported here last month, Canada’s official policy is to trade information with torturers, in flagrant violation of all international legal norms.

Acknowledging such home-grown violence is important in contextualizing (though certainly not condoning) the actions of ISIS and related groups.



Meanwhile, the boys from ISIS know the value of a gruesome video, which tends to dramatize and inspire fear far beyond their actual capacity to do damage to people halfway around the globe. And so the beheading videos have become a focus for incessant condemnation from countries like the U.S. (which regularly executes people via lethal injection) and Canada (which until 1962 murdered over 700 people by the equally brutal means of hanging, a slower version of beheading).

Long-Distance Beheadings

The beheading mania sheds a light both on what is patently and obviously barbaric and what is barbarism conducted from the comfort and safety of North American bunkers. The latter are located in places like New York and California, from which soldiers operating unmanned aerial drones are able to launch Hellfire missiles against schools, weddings, and other gatherings, especially those which include what Barack Obama views as “military-age males” who are likely up to no good, all of which are justified “unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.” When the Hellfires explode, they create what they were named for: severed bodies, including heads, lie scattered about the towns and villages where thousands have been murdered from afar on Obama’s direct orders, emerging from his “Terror Tuesday” morning meetings, during which he approves his kill lists. Indeed, the Assassinator-in-Chief was quoted during one of these meetings as stating: “Turns out I’m really good at killing people. Didn’t know that was gonna be a strong suit of mine.”

The late Gloria Emerson is a former war correspondent whose elegy on the American invasion and war against Vietnam, *Winners and Losers*, is a deeply felt *cri de coeur* against a society that makes war and carries on as if no slaughters are committed with our tax dollars and in our name. Emerson noted in the 1970s a growing trend in which “our military technology is so advanced that we kill at a distance

and insulate our consciences by the remoteness of the killing.”

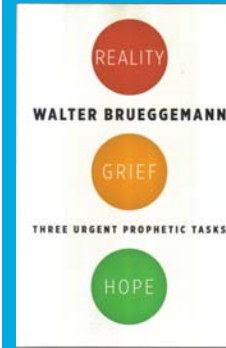
So our barbarism is a few steps removed, but it remains no less stomach-churning. We don’t see the bloodied and dismembered victims on the ground after Canadian and U.S. bombers drop cluster bombs, “daisy cutters,” napalm, white phosphorous, and 1,000-pound bombs on villages with thatched huts, but our fellow citizens show up by the hundreds of thousands for annual war shows in which these same killing machines are flown above our heads to great applause and appreciation. We rightfully condemn anyone cheering on scimitar-based beheadings, yet think nothing of our neighbours clapping for a B-52 bomber back from the mass beheading of whole villages.

Questioning the roots of violence

As ISIS proves itself the latest boon of weapons manufacturers the world over (another crisis to spur arms sales!) and offers macho photo-ops for politicians of all stripes, it does provide Canadians with many opportunities to question and act upon the roots of violence in our own society, from the despair and destruction wrought by our centuries of colonial domination of First Nations to the thousands of workers in London, Ontario who churn out military equipment for one of the globe’s worst human rights pariahs. Our distance from most of this becomes that insulating blanket Emerson wrote about; our willingness to do anything about it is a true reflection of our values.



Matthew Behrens is a freelance writer and social justice advocate who co-ordinates the Homes not Bombs non-violent direct action network. He has worked closely with the targets of Canadian and U.S. ‘national security’ profiling for many years.



Reality
Grief
Hope

3 Urgent
Prophetic
Tasks

Walter
Brueggemann

Ancient Israel trusted in the ideology of chosenness, denied that it was failing and despaired in reality of exile.

The tasks of the prophets were to expose the ideology proven false by the reality, help them grieve the loss and articulate a God-centred hope.

Today, US society is committed to an ideology of exceptionalism, but shaken by 9/11, is in denial that the ideology is not sustainable and has morphed to a deep militarism to maintain it.

Today’s prophetic tasks are to counter the governing ideology with the military and economic domination it has spawned, to help folks acknowledge and grieve their real losses and present vulnerabilities, and to declare and enact hope for a buoyant future secure in God’s good governance of the universe.

We Are Stars

Did you notice?
We are stardust.
Did you know?
We are stars

The twinkle in your eye
reflects the universe to mine;
eternity in our gaze ..
our eyes make the day
while lighting up the night.
We make, we create,
we re-unite life; it radiates
from our fingers,
from our breath,
from our death.
You bring out the starlight
in me ...

Did you notice?
We are stardust.
Did you know?
We are stars

White fire from before
the black hole
danced us into being.
A sun sacrificed so that we may live
to bring light:
death gave us - paved us
the path to life
so we may gaze
at the blaze
in each others eyes
after thirteen billion years
and an instant it's taken me to say,

Did you notice?
We are stardust.
Did you know?
We are stars

I fantasize
about the night skies and
how you and I dance within it
like the day's rays
we light the way
with life
there's fire in our eyes -
the galaxy gazing
at itself, smiling
in the twinkle of our skies.
You bring out the star light
in me ...

Did you notice?
We are stardust.
Did you know?
We are stars



By Carolyn Gray

Carolyn is on the staff of Camp Micah and is currently on team with the International Women's Peace Service in Palestine.



Building a Border Free World Without War Under One Blue Sky



**PAX CHRISTI TORONTO
& CAMP MICAH**

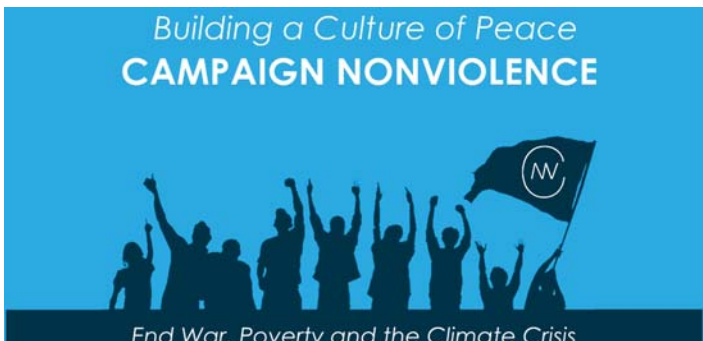
WALK FOR PEACE

**ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE
21 SEPTEMBER 2014**



*In Solidarity with the
Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers'
Blue Scarf Movement*

*In Collaboration with the
Franciscan Pace e Bene
Campaign Nonviolence*



Walking the Talk

by Neil Hibberd CSB

Walking the Camino: Six Ways

to Santiago is, sadly, a movie without a soul, one which could reasonably be expected to have one. It follows the “adventures,” relationships, struggles and semi-triumphs of a fairly bland group of walkers, who are largely innocuous and boring. Or, is it the director, who managed to make a trivial movie in a remarkable setting, the travelling of which has rejuvenated folks’ lives, many of whom, all unawares, are gently renewed and restored by the journey? This group are not engaging, no matter how many of their blisters are spot-lighted. Except to take in the camera’s superb capturing of the magnificent scenery, give this one a miss. It is remarkably uninspiring.



Pride is an absolute “hoot” of a movie, and, presents considerable matter for reflection, until it slips into a mess of sloppy conventional portrayals of gays, coal miners, welsh folk, lesbians, ‘haters’

steeped in inherited prejudice, and an occasional, scarce-to-be-found, quite rightly, “normal” person. “The Iron Lady,” Maggie Thatcher’s campaign to crush Britain’s coal miners’ union is in full march, 1984. Along comes a small group of London queer activists who call themselves, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners; they are mistakenly invited to visit a town in South Wales to which they have contributed funds and other help. The encounters following are sometimes wonderful and sometimes downright nasty, as could be expected. The rest of the movie plays out in a pretty predictable manner, with quite a few legitimate laughs and some very touching encounters. This alone makes it worth giving Pride a look. A strong cast and a powerful story – based on real events makes it a film worth recommending.

Frontera is a well- written, well-acted and well-directed film, set in the tumultuous border area of Arizona and Mexico. After a former sheriff’s wife is killed while riding on their ranch property, it seems a Mexican man crossing into the U.S. illegally is at fault. This is a solid drama, raising legitimate questions about illegal immigrants, the wickedness of conscienceless “jackals” who exploit those seeking to cross the border, good folks wanting to help, and the most evil, those steeped in murderous hatred. It has mo-



ments of great insight and invokes powerful feelings of loathing and compassion. It is puzzling that this fine film is not receiving wider release. I wonder whether or not it hits too close to the truth and has been deliberately, officially stifled.

The Good Lie, directed by a gifted Canadian, Philippe

Falardeau, is an intimate account of how a band of Sudanese orphans, some of whom walked over 1000 miles to survive a bloody civil war in 1983, were interred in a camp for years, and, after being sponsored by families, managed to forge a fresh start in America. The depiction of their early years as orphans in the war is heart-breaking, to the point that I witnessed viewers weeping openly; some left the theatre. This is really two movies. The second phase, in the U.S.A., comes dangerously close to being drenched in Hollywood, ham-fisted, emotional excess, allowing a few “cheap” laughs; it manages to stay outside of this thanks to some remarkable performances, especially by the main characters who are played by actual refugees, two of whom were child soldiers; their clear, uninflected, authoritative performances are simply mesmerizing. Reese Witherspoon is fine as the woman who is at first, unwittingly, pulled into being their key caregiver, and who is transformed by those with whom she becomes joined. Their customs, bondedness, simplicity of needs and sheer love of life are affecting; it is genuinely, deeply touching.



Calvary is among the most shocking movies of many



years. In the opening scene, a penitent in an Irish confessional informs the priest confessor that, as a boy, he was abused for years by a parish priest. He tells the confessor, to whom he is speaking, that he knows that the priest listening to him in the confessional, is a good man and an innocent priest, and, that he is going to kill him next Sunday evening. What’s the point of killing guilty abusers? No one will pay attention until an innocent priest, like the innocent, abused boy, is killed. A prelude to the priest’s ‘Calvary,’ consisting of chastisements, beatings, debasements, burnings and abuse is heavy to watch. This priest was a late vocation, ordained after his wife died. His daughter, suicidal and depressed, seeks out her father for affection and compassion. The townsfolk, and ‘laird of the castle,’ are a mishmash of wounded, sick souls. It seems the Church is totally irrelevant and that, perhaps it is true, that “God is dead.” See it. Be shocked.