

our developing world's voices

Fall, 1999 — Vol. 5, No. 3

South Africa: Crisis and Hope

Newly elected President Thabo Mbeki faces many major crises:

- Forty percent unemployment;
- Highest rate of HIV⁺ and AIDS worldwide;
- Eight million living in shacks (informal settlements);
- Crime seemingly out of control;
- Sixty percent illiteracy;
- Striking teachers, health workers, and police facing downsizing who are demanding cost of living increases.

The government is pleading that they have no money though during Mandela's term they allocated the Rand Corporation ZAR 30 billion (\$5 billion) for new weapons because they were offered offsets of industry inputs that theoretically would create jobs! So far this weapons allocation has been suspended. (See "Rainy Skies, Sunny Headlines" on page 4.)

Terry Crawford Brown of the Coalition for Defence Alternatives and Jeremy Routlidge, Director of the Quaker Peace Centre, are among those from churches and NGO's who lobbied against the weapons allocation citing no foreign threat existed. The real threat to this fledgling democracy: *POVERTY*.

Terry: "the South African Constitution gives priority to human security, declaring: 'national security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life."

Voices of Hope

All over South Africa, rural township and city women are standing up to abuse and helping other women to do the same. Fatima at NISSA (woman in Arabic), a multiethnic, racial & religious organization with a focus on domestic violence and rape, told us how even some men have come to volunteer.

Women's Institute for Leadership, Development & Democracy (WILDD) has vibrant women both young and old without formal education, who are determined that no woman they know will stay unwillingly in an abusive situation. They breath confidence and actual phrases into those women. Cecily Palmer, the director, models this in her way of engaging the workers in the rural areas.

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This mural in Capetown, South Africa symbolizes the peoples' commitment to build just communities.

A Different Perspective from Mitch Survivors in Honduras

The Honduras school we sent \$900 to chose to use some of the money for an oven so that mothers could bake bread for the students making them more energetic for their lessons! They also bought a sewing machine for mothers to use to learn to make school uniforms and to teach students to sew as well. Community is vital to their thinking. Families and community are part of the thinking of the school.

Maybe we have something to learn from these poor people!

More Help Is Needed!

The principal of that school has moved to an even poorer school. Already we have fifty dollars from the change box that a fourth grade set up by the snack machine at Adelante Bi-lingual School in San Francisco. Let's find some more schools, bilingual or not, who want to help a poor school in Honduras. Maybe find pen pals!

Special thanks to American Airlines for donating excess baggage space!



(continued from page 1)

Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) published a book of stories by South African young women telling their own stories, not just of abuse but of the difficulty getting an education, building self-esteem rather than identity from their father or husband.

Women's Leadership Training Program (WLTP) works with young women in Kliptown, the home of the FREE-DOM CHARTER. After three years as a volunteer, Sarah and her colleagues are being paid a stipend of almost minimum wage. Excitement in her voice and body, she took us to see the community garden that they got started, working with elders, while the younger women visit weekly the grannies who are shut-ins. The creche (a day nursery), the soup kitchen which feeds 400 daily, and the sports groups for kids are all projects the young women initiated and got this poor community to volunteer for.

The Street Children's Forum in Durban recently opened a first-of-its-kind shelter with a school. The teachers are doing their second stint of student teaching, having chosen to go there to work one teacher to two learners, some of whom have never attended school. Such a challenge! In three weeks they've won the kid's trust and made a real learning center —a beehive of activity!

The big change at the Muslim Araya Benevolent Centre in Durban's Indian township of Chatsworth is that elderly residents are now of all races and creeds, as are the children in the newly built creche. The Ayurvedic Clinic, the physiotherapy center and the Small Claims Court are open to the public.

Jeremy Routledge, Director of the Quaker Peace Centre (QPC) in Capetown, felt one of the major reasons for their work is *to give hope to others* to work in their own communities . . . that happened with Ismael. Three years ago he drove us round on our study tour. He was so impressed, not only with the projects but with all the volunteers, so last year when unemployed he volunteered to work with the elderly of his mosque. When he found a job he told his



Jeremy Routledge

future employer that he was committed to drive us for a week and he really wanted to do it! His employer agreed. And we profited from his perspective when he drove around his township of Mitchell's Plain (one million inhabitants), and District 6 where his family's home was among the last to be bulldozed (he was nine).

The Conflict Handling & Mediation Training given by the QPC has made a difference in many lives, including the trainees. Martin confessed that his ugly past included gang involvement and imprisonment. His way of coping involved a gun or knife. Now he knows how to find real solutions. He wants to work with gangs, and feels he can reach them because they know him who he used to be! He's proud to be a certified Mediator.

Nokwanda was dynamic when she translated for the grannies who came in from the community garden. They blossomed when she added examples to give them a context for better understanding. This empowered them to join the conversation.

The two mediators from Guguletu have already benefited the community. One works at the Family Court where she assists those filing for a divorce. She asks enough questions to see if they need a referral to a counselor (conflict handling) or if they have a plan for the children.

The other mediator is part of the Street Committee. She gets referrals when police give citations. She helps people recognize their responsibility and offers a different perspective that allows a better solution, eliminating the necessity of police intervention.

Working with Trauma

Fr. Michael Lapsley, a letter bomb survivor now with two hooks for hands, was a counselor for the Trauma Centre and founded the Institute for the Healing of Memories which works with the Centre for Ubuntu. "I've been able to leave victimhood behind."

"This government remains a sign of hope . . . it wants to deal with needs and expectations but the scale is enormous. Greed remains an appeal to be dealt with. In '94 we got the country but not the economic power."

What can we do in the U.S.? "Become economically literate, fight racism in our own country, support reparations for South Africa, and remember —solidarity is a two-way street."

Yvette Rogers at the Centre for Ubuntu explained *ubuntu* as an indigenous African philosophy that feels the person or individual is a person through other people, reaching out to others, rebuilding a better community.



Fr. Michael Lapsley



A couple of stories from their workshops

A woman's husband returned from exile as an ANC soldier was just sitting for four years, not looking for a job or for counseling, doing nothing in the home. After she told her story her group urged her to demand that her husband either take a first step or get out of the home in 24 hours. He didn't believe her because they'd been married for 30 years and she'd never asserted herself. So after he did nothing she had her oldest son throw him out.

The husband sought out some of his comrades and found that some had coped by attending a workshop. He

decided to attend the same workshop. The husband has since rejoined his wife in their shared home.

Another exiled soldier left the workshop before the weekend was over. The facilitators wondered if he'd changed. At a once-a-year party for everyone who has attended workshops, this fellow attended all dressed up. He came up to say thank you. He realized he could show tourists around the townships and talk about what happened there, and share that reality to help both the township and himself. So he has a business that's doing well. He thanked those who gave him back his self-esteem so that he could take the risk to try.

Globalization Can Mean Death to Poor People: South Africa, a Case in Point

Clive Bruzas of Valley Trust outside of Durban in Kwazulu Natal, in addition to their model organic gardening, vented latrine and other demonstrations, showed us their seed bank.

Why? Most subsistence farmers have their own seeds saved from the past harvest . . . only in a drought are they eaten. The explanation is that Monsanto produced seeds that require more pesticides, fertilizer (which they sell) and water. Then they made them terminator seeds so they won't reproduce, and the last version they've engineered is sick to begin with so they need all kinds of fertilizers to even begin to grow. A seed bank of diverse seeds is available also in villages for farmers to buy or barter to keep diversity.

Without seed banks food security would be impossible. For the poor rural folks it would mean death.

Another prescription for death is the attitude of U.S. pharmaceutical companies not wanting to honor international law that allows countries to produce and buy generics.

South Africa has the fastest growing rate of HIV⁺ in the world and has the capacity to produce generics . . . will greed by multinationals be allowed to rule? If South African NGO's with our solidarity can be successful, greed won't win!

Terry Crawford Brown of the Coalition of Defense Alternatives briefed us on the attempt of European powers to further militarize the country in the guise of creating more jobs. Investigations showed that the fishing program Spain was to put in if they got a contract to sell weapons systems would reap a net loss of jobs. The Swedish deal was rife with corruption and the resultant stainless steel plant would be sold at a loss on the world market. Now the new Deputy Minister of Defense, Nozizwe Routledge, the Quaker pacifist, has this information, and the decisions are on hold.

Ismael said of Nozizwe, "She has such a monumental vision it was equivalent to his moving Table Mountain with one hand." Terry Crawford Brown said, "those billions of dollars could go a long way for development and create jobs in the process." May the Navy have to hold a bake sale and the funds allocated to the Rand Corporation (South African arms procurement agency) be diverted to develop housing and education!











Rainy Skies, Sunny Headlines: South African Defense Budget May Be Slashed!

The Defense Ministry is reviewing the information from Terry Crawford-Brown (see "Globalization Can Mean Death to Poor People" on the previous page). Nozizwe Madlala Routledge, as the first Quaker pacifist Deputy Minister of Defense, will have that information and allies to support her.

Nozizwe is working to transform the military to bring equity in race, culture, and gender. She is also researching the role of the military in the development of a civil society. This includes reviewing the military's role as a peace keeping force. Since South Africa's military force is being downsized, Nozizwe is also responsible for developing job training programs for former Defense employees.

During the first democratically elected Parliament, Nozizwe organized the Women's Caucus, was on the Land



Nozizwe Routledge

Committee, and the Gender Committee. She was very committed and hard working and took many controversial stands, and therefore didn't expect even a committee chair for the second term of Parliament. So to be Deputy Minister was a surprise. The women deputies held a briefing for her so she would not have to go through what they did. They wisely suggested

that she get her tasks not only in writing but review them to be sure that they couldn't be sidelined. South Africa was and still is not only racist but very sexist. She feels very supported both from the women and by those who have the same vision she has for the transformation of the Ministry.

Some of the realities of serving in the new South African Parliament: sharing a secretary with seven other parliamentarians or paying for one out of your salary; paying your own airfare from Capetown to Pretoria and accommodations whenever you must go to the seat of the bureaucracy, or to visit your constituents. There is no per diem pay, there is no office budget, and no travel budget. Some of the parliamentarians are in debt because housing is so expensive in Capetown.

The Challenge of Recognizing White Skin Privilege

More Thoughts on Why System of White Privilege Is Wrong

By Robert Jensen, excerpted from the Baltimore Sun

After being criticized for his article last year, the author ponders more deeply the realities of racism in America.

Last July, ('98) I wrote an article about white privilege for The Sun, and every week since, I've received at least a dozen letters from people who want to talk about race.

I've given a lot more thought to who I am, and I've learned a lot more about why many white people can't come to terms with my premise: whites, whether overtly racist or not, benefit from living in a mostly white-run world built on the land and the backs of non-white people.

The reactions have varied from racist rantings, to deeply felt expressions of pain and anger, to declarations of solidarity. I'm white and I mentioned that in the article.

Someone in Minnesota sent me a can of black shoe polish. I think I get the message.

But the most significant response I got was from nonwhite folks, predominantly African-Americans, who said something like this: "Of course there is white privilege. I've been pointing it out to my white friends and co-workers for years. Isn't it funny that almost no one listens to me, but everyone takes notice when a white guy says it."

Those comments forced me again to ponder the privilege I live with. Who really knows more about white privilege, me or the people on the other side of that privilege?

Me, or a black inner-city teenager who is automatically labeled a gang member and feared by many white folks?

Me, or an American Indian on the streets of a U.S. city who is invisible to many white folks? Whose voices should we be paying attention to?

My voice gets heard because I am a white man with a doctorate who holds a professional job with status.



In most settings, I speak with the assumption that people not only will listen, but will take me seriously. I speak with the assumption that my motives will not be challenged; I can rely on the perception of me as a neutral authority, someone whose observations can be trusted.

Every time I open my mouth, I draw on, and in some ways reinforce, my privilege, which is in large part tied to race.

Right now, I want to use that privilege to acknowledge the many non-white people who took the time to tell me about the enduring realities of racism in the United States. And, I want to talk to the white people who I think misread my essay and misunderstand what's at stake.

The responses of my white critics broke down into a few basic categories, around the following assertions:

- 1. White privilege doesn't exist because affirmative action has made being white a disadvantage. The simple response: Extremely limited attempts to combat racism, such as affirmative action, do virtually nothing to erase the white privilege built over 500 years that pervades our society. As a friend of mine says, the only real disadvantage to being white is that it so often prevents people from understanding racial issues.
- White privilege exists, but it can't be changed because it is natural for any group to favor its own, and besides, the worst manifestations of racism are over.
 - Response: This approach makes human choices appear outside of human control, which is a dodge to avoid moral and political responsibility for the injustice we continue to live with.
- 3. White privilege exists, and that's generally been a good thing because white Europeans have civilized the world. Along the way some bad things may have happened, and we should take care to be nice to non-whites to make up for that.

 Response: These folks often argued the curiously contradictory position that non-whites and their cultures are not inferior and white/European culture is superior. As for the civilizing effect of Europe, we might consider five centuries of inhuman, brutal colonialism and World Wars I and II, and then ask what "civilized" means.
- White privilege exists because whites are inherently superior, and I am a weakling and a traitor for suggesting otherwise.

Response: The Klan isn't dead.

There is much to say beyond those short responses, but I am more interested in one common assumption that just

about all these correspondents made —that my comments on race and affirmative action were motivated by "white liberal guilt."

Well, they are wrong about a couple things. I am white —but I'm not a liberal. I'm a radical; I don't think liberalism goes far enough to address problems based on race, gender, sexuality or class.

And I don't feel guilty. Guilt is appropriate when one has wronged another, when one has something to feel guilty about.

In my life I have felt guilty for racist or sexist things I have said or done, even when done unconsciously. But that is guilt I felt because of specific acts, not for the color of my skin. Also, focusing on individual guilt feelings is counterproductive when it leads us to ponder the issue from a psychological point of view instead of a moral and political one.

So, I cannot, and indeed should not, feel guilty or proud about being white, because it is a state of being I have no control over.

But as a member of a society—and especially as a privileged member of society—I have an obligation not simply to enjoy that privilege that comes with being white, but to study and understand it, and work toward a more just world where unearned privilege is eliminated.

Some of my critics said that such a goal is ridiculous; after all, people have unearned privileges of all kinds.

Several people pointed out that, for example, tall people have unearned privilege in basketball, and we don't ask tall people to stop playing basketball nor do we eliminate their advantage.

The obvious difference is that racial categories are invented; they carry privilege or disadvantage only because people with power create and maintain the privilege for themselves. Violence is the tool creating the privilege and it is maintained through the threat of force and other more subtle ways.

whites benefit from living in a mostly white-run world that has been built on the land and the backs of non-white people

I can't change the world so that everyone is the same height, so that everyone has the same shot at being a pro basketball player. In fact, I wouldn't want to; it would be a drab and boring world if we could erase individual differences like that.



But I can work with others to change the world to erase the effects of differences that have been created by one group to keep others down. Not everyone who wrote to me understood this. Clearly, the person in Clement, Minn., who sent me the can of black shoe polish did not understand. No correspondence accompanied the shoe polish, so presumably the sender's message was if I felt so bad about being white, I ought to paint myself black.

But I don't feel bad about being white. The only motivation I might have to want to be black —to be something I am not— would be pathological guilt over my privilege.

What matters is what we decide to do with the privilege. For me, that means speaking about white privilege and it means listening to those who don't have it. Listening to people like the elderly black man who saw it on the bulletin board outside my office and stopped to chat with me. This man, who has experienced decades of racism, told me: "White privilege, yes, good to keep an eye on that, son. Keep yourself honest. But don't forget to pay attention to the folks who live without the privilege."

It doesn't take black shoe polish to pay attention. It only takes a bit of empathy to listen, and a bit of courage to act.

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Speak Out on Poverty: THE PEOPLE'S VOICES

The Speak Out on Poverty Hearings held between April and June of 1998 in South Africa gave hundreds of individuals and organizations an opportunity to describe their experiences of and responses to poverty.

If the question, "What is poverty?" were posed to different groups of South Africans, in different parts of rural or urban South Africa, the responses would differ also, by gender, race, age, and other characteristics of the of respondents. But a central theme emerges: That poverty is not only about lack of money, but more centrally about a dearth of opportunities and choices that allow people to build decent lives for themselves.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), and the South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) convened a series of ten hearings held in each of the nine provinces. Over 1,000 participated. Nearly 600 people presented oral evidence over the 35 days of the hearings. The piles of written testimony and stories made it clear that current problems were a result of past discrimination and disadvantage, and that there is still a long way to go before Apartheid's distortions are straightened out. Some of those who spoke acknowledged the improvements that had come since 1994, but most spoke about ongoing poor service and delivery by government.

In the poorest provinces, the severity of poverty was clear when people spoke and wrote about lack of food.

Unemployment was the strongest theme, particularly acute in rural areas, and retrenchments from the mines as well as from other workplaces. In some provinces there was strong evidence of antagonism to foreign immigrants, who were seen as taking the jobs of local people. It was clear that, to date, the Growth, Employment and Redistri-

bution (GEAR) strategy has been anything but successful in creating jobs. The Hearings included evidence from vulnerable workers such as fisher people, casual and seasonal workers, domestic workers, farm workers, and those doing piece jobs, such as laundry, for neighbours. Despite poor wages and conditions, people were said to be reluctant to resign as they are desperate for even the smallest amount of money, and know there are too many others willing to take their place. Many people without waged jobs engaged in survivalist activities, either alone or in groups. In all provinces women, in particular, were organising in small groups to try to address their struggle to earn income collectively. However, both individual and group initiatives were often unsuccessful.

Youth faced particular difficulties in obtaining jobs because of their lack of experience, even when they had the formal education and training. In the informal sector too, problems such as access to credit were exacerbated for youth. Young women are even more disadvantaged than their male counterparts. Many people spoke and wrote about young women selling their bodies in order to survive. Similarly many youth spoke about their engagement in crime to survive.

In rural areas the importance of land for their survival was clear but they needed resources such as seeds, fertiliser, water; implements and tools with which to work the land. There were repeated stories of how rural people had been dispossessed of their land, livestock and other possessions. In KwaZulu-Natal, many lost everything through political violence. In "white" commercial farming areas dispossession was still occurring. There were repeated stories of abuses of rights by those living on farms from farmers, police and magistrates. Those who had tried to access government land grants or bureaucracy and inaccessible offices were common complaints. Those who had access to land, often lacked the resources to use it. Some had used up all their resources in acquiring the land.



The housing and urban development hearings, held in the Western Cape, bore testimony to the suffering caused by Pass Laws, the Group Areas Act and other spatial planning initiatives that served to separate white and black, and in particular, to ensure that black people lived far from the wealthy, economic centre. Poor black people continue to bear the costs of inequitable distribution of space, and of safe, secure and serviced dwellings. Those who had accessed the government housing grants complained about the size of the grant, and about the size and quality of houses provided. They also told stories of developers delivering less than they had promised, charging more than agreed, and not completing their contracts according to specifications. Many also complained that while the grant had helped with the house, they were now unable -because they were unemployed- to pay for services.

In several provinces there were inspiring stories of how (mainly women) members of affiliates of the South African Homeless People's Federation had come together to save money, and ultimately build houses.

Inadequacies in relation to water featured prominently in virtually all the hearings, in both rural and peri-urban areas: delivery, breakdown of the infrastructure, or communal rather than on-site provision, unaffordability. Almost every hearing spoke about the importance of water —for the health of the family and for productive purposes.

Transportation infrastructure was at fault. Poor roads restricted access to schooling, health facilities, shops and

markets for goods. Where roads existed, transport was expensive.

Poverty-related illnesses such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, diseases caused by impure and inadequate water supplies, and health problems caused by pollution from nearby mines and industries were documented. All too often, self-help activities were simply group engagement in survivalist and informal activities, and suffered from many of the same drawbacks. Community or non-governmental organizations had clearly given people a better idea of their rights, and had assisted them in trying to better their situation. The stories about the private sector were, on the other hand, very unflattering.

Many who came forward provided concrete evidence of their solutions in describing their survival strategies. Often, however, they were clear that these solutions would not be successful without some outside assistance. They showed that resourcefulness is not enough. Many people clearly wanted to be independent. In a situation of extreme poverty, it is difficult, if not impossible, for people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps without an enabling environment. As Violet Nevhri of Elim in the Northern Province concluded her testimony: "We want to be taught and resourced to fish. We don't just want fish to eat."

Excerpted from APIC, Africa Policy Information Center, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, #509, Washington, DC 20002. Phone: 202-546-7961. Fax: 202-546-1545. E-mail: apic@igc.apc.org.

The Importance of Reflection

Time for reflection on our Study Tour was not enough, but hopefully each person individually and then at the reunion will have a chance for gaining more perspective.

Happily Vic and Barby were able to combine reflection and conversation with South African friends about perceptions of our Study Tour experiences. Often our experi-



Seiska Rensburg

ences were hopeful because they were with people making a difference. This was appreciated by South Africans who sometimes are so close to the enormous challenges that they can't see the progress of small steps being taken in so many areas.

Sizeka, an economist with concerns about job creation in the context of development, was in government and now is outside so her perspective is reflective. Ihron, the Director General in the Education Ministry has held that post from the first democratic government (Spring '94). He's been so feverishly immersed in the task of developing new curricula, outcome based education, and new standards that he has not had a vacation much less time to reflect. And he's probably one of the majority.



Ihron Rensburg

The task of addressing as quickly as possible hundreds of years of lack of development for the poor . . . the vast majority, mostly black and others of color, when the economic power is still in the same hands as under apartheid and most of the debt is internal as well, is overwhelming.

It's hard to pull yourself up by your bootstraps if you don't have boots!

Welcome George!

How delighted we were to get a phone call from George Clark, whom we've been in touch with since he was a volunteer many years ago.

"Are you still looking for a layout editor?"

"Are we ever!"

He's just perfectly suited. Has the same Mac, and knows PageMaker. He's very patient and is so helpful teaching us how to use our new Mac, and he's got a scanner and is looking up more clip art!

We hoped Marilyn would never leave, but when she wanted to spend more time on her poetry we didn't ever think we'd find anyone to take her place.

Now join us in welcoming George. Let's hope we don't wear him out!

More Volunteers to Thank!!

Ruth was with us until she needed surgery. Many thanks for all your help.

Les has been with us for more than a year. He's been ready to do any task. So helpful. Thanks so much.

Hiro comes every Tuesday aftenoon after school. A wiz at all our equipment. Thanks again.

Think About a Special Summer 2000 . . .



Would you like to help Hurricane Mitch victims in their long struggle to rebuild?

A week in Nicaragua, a week in Honduras

and a week of Study Tour in Guatemala. If you can't be away three weeks pick the two that are best.

Contact us for more details!

Please Join Us — Upcoming Events

OCTOBER 3 2 p.m.

Listen to the just heard stories of South Africans from the beginning of the post-Mandela era. What are the hopes and dreams of the poor? What have they accomplished?

NOVEMBER 13 2–5 p.m. 147th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Come to the first 147th celebration! For Barby, her twin sister Joan and Ava, Vic & Barby's grandchild! You figure out the ages!



Pot luck Peace Chorale Vic's Octet Piñata for kids . . . lots of fun

No gifts, please tax-deductible donations to odw always gratefully received!

Birthday cake and beverages provided.

NOVEMBER 20 and 21 ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL HANDCRAFT SALE

Lots from Africa! Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala

Carvings, baskets, textiles, and more.

Come early and come often!

Saturday 11–4 p.m. Sunday 1–4 p.m.

Moving? Dont' miss an issue of voices! Please notify us of your new address.

We are now asking \$8 per year from our readers to support the publishing and broader circulation of this newsletter. This issue is volume five. Have you sent your donation for the last year to the address below? *Thanks*

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