

The Souls Shot Portrait Project in Philadelphia

(Barbara Sheehan, a member of the CPF Newsletter Committee, received permission to use these photos, which were provided by Laura Madeleine, Executive Director of the Souls Shot Portrait Project <https://www.soulshotportraitproject.org/>)



Jas (Jasmine).

Portrait of Jasmine Cruz
by Janine Lieberman,
prismacolor colored pencil on
charcoal paper 8" x 12" 2019.

*Photo courtesy of the Souls Shot
Portrait Project*

This **Souls Shot Portrait Project** matches families and friends of victims of gun violence with fine artists in order to make portraits of their loved ones. The diverse approaches of the artists emphasize the individuality of the victims and present a truly moving tribute. The project offers traveling exhibitions, and is currently on view at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Chestnut Hill, 8000 St. Martin's Lane, Philadelphia, PA. Exhibition hours are Monday to Friday 9-5 and Sunday mornings.

Sebree "Roc" Johnson.

Portrait of Sebree Johnson
by Anna Kocher,
oil on canvas 20" x 24" 2019.

*Photo courtesy of the Souls Shot
Portrait Project.*



Protector, Warrior, Peacemaker.

Portrait of Moses McMillian
by Keisha Whatley, oil on canvas
11" x 14" 2019.

*Photo courtesy of the Souls Shot
Portrait Project.*

Wide Open: George.

Portrait of George Benton
by Nancy Mulloy Bonn,
oil on canvas 17" x 21" 2019.

*Photo courtesy of the Souls Shot
Portrait Project.*



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Innocent Blood

by Fr. Michael Doyle

The following is an excerpt from a pastoral letter written in 2008 by Fr. Michael Doyle, a lifelong activist for peace and justice. Fr. Doyle has retired from his long tenure as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Camden, New Jersey. He has given CPF permission to share his letter with our readers. Sadly, the letter is as relevant for our situation today as it was when Fr. Doyle wrote it.

The Mater Dolorosa. The Mother of Sorrows. At the foot of the Cross, she is, at the head of the coffin, the limb-strewn sidewalk of Baghdad, the limp child on the breast of a milkless mother in Darfur, the young mother in Camden bending to lift her child shot dead in front of her eyes as they both ran to each other in a hail of bullets that killed him. Monday, August 4th, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. The sun was shining brightly on the laughter of children at their play.

It is the 36th murder on these killing streets in the 31 weeks since January 1, 2008. On Monday, August 11th, I stood dazed in a way, looking at the little body for a long time at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church in Delran, just outside this City. Brandon Thompson. Four years old. Still as a stone in a milk-white suit and shoes and socks and laces. A snow-colored coffin. His finely formed face was black and beautiful...but the lids were frozen shut on the eyes that lit his way. His little hands cold as ice. The soul gone....banished by a bullet in his head from a Tec 9 semi-automatic monstrous weapon with a capacity of nearly forty rounds of ammunition. A little lamb is slaughtered. Innocent as an angel. Twenty-nine shells were scattered on sidewalk and street where people walked and children played. Mad gunmen venting rage and deadly violence on each other. No care for anyone. Even a child.

America's infatuation with guns, and the money to be made thereof, has consequences in streams of human blood across this land. Camden's proximity to Philadelphia has many advantages, but one deadly disadvantage in the fact that Camden criminals get their guns in Philadelphia because Pennsylvania has insanely easy regulations in reference to the purchase of guns by anybody. One of the shooters in this recent Camden murder arrived with his big gun in a bag on his bicycle.

If we all were perfect, guns wouldn't be much of a problem. But nobody is. People are prone to uncontrollable rage at times, to moments of insanity, to periods of despair. More than 85 people a day die by guns in the United States and that amounts to 31,000 per year. Suicides, murders, accidents. Of the 36 richest countries in the world, the United States is the worst in terms of death from guns. It is six times higher than Europe or Australia. Thirty-four times higher than England or Wales. Something is terribly wrong here because little four-year old Brandon was dead when his mother bent to lift him.

In Camden, the open-air drug markets are the battlegrounds in this insane scene of drugs and guns and blood. The law enforcement approach to drugs is a failure and will not get any better. Sixty per cent of the Camden City budget goes for public safety and the public is not safer.

The water that washes the blood from the sidewalk, or the cleanser that cleans the floor scene of murder, does not cleanse the soul of the killer, or comfort the heart of those who love and are left. So we grieve and go on as best we can. Last week, a little child was registered for Sacred Heart's kindergarten and while every year, sad and glad feelings fight for flow in young mothers' emotions as they present their little lambs, this was different. The mother, away from her son for a moment, burst into tears. "Brandon Thompson was his best friend. He doesn't understand." None of us do. Behold the Lamb of God. It is beyond us to comprehend. Somehow, like Jesus, the innocent save the guilty. God is love and love never fails. Beyond us to comprehend the way it is...that the lambs soft as cotton wool absorb the corruption of the world. No other way.

As I think of Brandon's mother and the brutal scene as she bends to pick up her dying child, my mind goes immediately to my sense of good motherhood as "bending love" in joy and in sorrow but always in generosity. That thought has haunted me for twenty-five years, since my brother and I lifted our mother's body dressed in an ankle length habit of blue and placed her in her coffin. Her dear generous body was in death prone as a two by twelve. It would bend no more and like all mothers it bent so often.

Oh how often she bent it, to care for our needs / the shock to discover it bends no more / The ease of elbows, hips and knees is locked like ice is on an Artic stream / No more she stoops to tie my shoe or plant a rose by the garden wall / Will set no coals on the oven lid or bathe a bruise when the toddlers fall / Oh the tide is blocked and can't come in, / The moon's unable to hug the sea / The cosmic curves are straightened out / And stiffened love can't bend to me. / It's on curves and circles that life depends / Motherhood's dead when nothing bends.

Israelizing the American Police, Palestinianizing the American People

Part Two by Jeff Harper

This is a continuation of Jeff Harper's article in the April 2021 CPF Newsletter

Crowd control is yet another 'niche' in policing coming out of Israel's suppression of innumerable Palestinian demonstrations and uprisings. Beit Alfa Technologies (BAT), located in northern Israel, specializes in riot control vehicles sold to more than 35 countries. The vehicles are equipped with crowd control gear including a Jet Pulse Water Cannon capable of shooting water, pepper spray, tear gas, chemical additives and dye, which can be used to mark out individuals for later identification and capture. BAT's water cannons also shoot 'Skunk', a non-lethal malodorant riot control 'solution' that is a nauseating sewage smelling liquid that lingers on bodies, clothes and in homes for weeks. It has been sold to the St. Louis Metro police.

Much police violence towards civilians is justified by the use of 'non-lethal' or, more accurately, 'less lethal' weapons. Water cannons sound innocuous, but a pulse jet cannon system such as BAT employs turns small quantities of water into shells or bullets of water as they are shot out at high pressure. Israel also produces and exports alternative bullets, 'blunt impact projectiles.' Metal bullets coated with either rubber or plastic and fired from launchers mounted on rifle-barrels intended to cause suspects excruciating pain but stop short of killing. They are currently being tested in more than 20 North American cities.

The combination of high-tech surveillance with a readiness to serve governments at the expense of human rights and individual liberties reflects a reality in which 'security' trumps all else. Protections against arbitrary arrest or imprisonment—habeas corpus in particular—are lacking in Israel. Although the Israeli Supreme Court banned torture in 1999, it is still practiced within the loopholes provided, such as labelling suspects as 'ticking time bombs' or finding non-visible ways of torturing. The Israeli Human Rights organization B'tselem lists seven key elements of the Shin Bet's interrogation regime: isolation, the use of the conditions of confinement as a means for weakening the detainees' physical state, tying up prisoners in painful ways, beating and degradation, threatening and intimidation. Israel has been accused of training American military personnel in torture techniques in Iraq and elsewhere; whether that trickles into the police through counterterrorism doctrines is an open question.

Israeli police encourage their American counterparts to consider the public- especially 'problematic' publics like inner-city blacks, dissatisfied workers, youth protestors – as potential terrorists rather than civilians to be protected.

Such a militarized approach was evident in Lafayette Square at the height of the George Floyd protest when President Trump called on the National Guard and certain federal police forces. But the reaction of the Pentagon was equally telling. It turned out that Trump would have had to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1802 in order to deploy troops, another brick in the wall – like the Posse Comitatus Act - intended to protect civilian society. None other than Trump appointed Mark Esper, the Secretary of Defense, went on air to refuse outright to deploy the military, a rare case of resistance to the President by his own Cabinet.

The police attack on Breonna Taylor in Louisville, by contrast, shows the dangers of a militarized police in a Security State. The 'No Knock' warrant itself stands in stark contrast to the notion of protecting the civil rights of anyone suspected of a crime. The readiness of the police for deadly engagement as judged by the time of the attack [the middle of the night] the method of entry [a battering ram] and the amount of violence employed [the killing of Breonna Taylor and the 'wanton endangerment' and assault charges against one of the officers] bespeaks less the seriousness of the crime – a relatively minor drug charge – than the racial profiling of the people inside the apartment, a profiling that led to the violence regardless of how the innocent people attacked had responded. Again, while 'security' is a prime concern of the Security State, it is not a neutral term. Particular populations – racial, class, of certain political persuasions – are targeted. For them, de facto, due process is suspended, and unless the harm is egregious and too visual to ignore, as in the George Floyd case, the enforcers of the capitalist order are excused.

The Israeli approach also employs two other tactics adopted from the world of counter-terrorism – interactive intelligence and ethnic profiling – both of which are illegal in the US. So far. In his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump said: 'I think profiling is something that we're going to have to start thinking about as a country...you look at Israel and you look at others, they do it and they do it successfully.'

This all falls into what I call Global Palestine. The American police are not merely a stand-alone localized police agency anymore. They have been fully integrated into a global MISSILE Complex as part of an interwoven military/security/police/prison system. What I call a perpetual War Against the People, William Robinson calls 'The Global Police State....'

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This is Global Palestine. Your police and security forces, together with your military, are purchasing Israeli weaponry, technologies of repression, tactics of population control and its Security State structures all perfected on the Palestinians, in the laboratory that is the Occupied Territory....

So connect the dots. As the US police become 'Israelized,' you, the American people, become 'Palestinianized.' How this is happening should be a main focus of your BDS [boycott, divestment, sanctions] campaigns. For the weaponry and tactics being developed on the Palestinians in far-off Gaza, Hebron, Jenin, Nablus or, for that matter, Jaffa and the Negev, are in fact intended for your community. The slogan 'We are all Palestinians,' it turns out, is literally true.

Jeff Harper's article is from 'The Link' December 2020 issue published by Americans for Middle East Understanding, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 245 New York, NY 10115-0245. The entire article is available at www.ameu.org. Harper, an American born anthropologist, has lived in Israel since 1973. He is the former Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and a co-founder of the People Yes Network. In 2006 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Blue Souls Matter

by *F. Zampetti - Catholic Peace Fellowship*

I have been horrified by the fury of the response from the "Support the Police / Blue Lives Matter" folks toward the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. How ahistorical and heartless some can be toward the simple idea that people with deeper complexion would like to live without the fear of being falsely identified and shot by the police or by those who use the 2nd amendment to justify "stand your ground" killing. But being ahistorical and heartless has been a trend in America for a long time.

History is not a strong suit for most Americans and even though I enjoy and pride myself on knowledge of American history with all its glories and horrors, I was shocked at what I learned over this last year in the context of BLM. While I have known the general concept for police departments in the USA can trace their origins to hunting down folks fleeing slavery, I learned recently that slavery in the ancient world (as bad as it was) was not the horror practice in the Confederate South, where intense violence was used to maintain the system with the cruelty of systematically separating parents from their children and each other. Maybe this, along with Native American removal, is the origin of the heartlessness of our national psyche. It is certainly the origin of the social construct of "race," which was invented to excuse the brutality of chattel slavery. So of course, I believe that the Blue Lives Matter movement in response to Black Lives Matter is founded in part on racist thinking and behavior.

The implied meaning of Blue Lives Matter was even more troubling and outrageous to me when I heard on an NBC online show that more unarmed African-Americans are killed by police than police are killed in the line of duty. In my limited research to confirm this, I learned more police died of COVID-19 than for any other reason in 2020. Isabel Wilkerson, in her book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, points out that being killed by police is a leading cause of death for young African American men and despite decades of declining crime rates, the rate of unarmed African Americans being killed by police has increased since the election of Barack Obama.

I also looked up the top most dangerous jobs in the USA; police did not make the top 20! But police and Black men do have one deadly thing in common - the elevated chance of being killed by a police officer. More police officers kill themselves than are killed in the line of duty. According to FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin of February 1995, *The Mystery Within: Understanding Police Suicide* by J. M. Violanti and other sources, this trend began to be systematically noticed as early as the 1980s. Very recently suicide among police seems to be declining slightly; possibly due to the reforms mandated by the Obama Department of Justice police department reorganizations. (Camden, NJ is a recent example of such reforms).

In the context of this high suicide rate, I can understand "Blue Lives Matter," but I would argue so do "Blue Souls." Maybe there is a connection between power, corruption, and self-destruction. A group of mostly men with guns, civil forfeiture, and special immunity, along with a police union with political influence to bully politicians, gives rise to a kind of power: of course, not the real power of the

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ruling class, but still police have dangerous power over the lives of those seen with less power in our racist society. Unaccountable power corrupts and the greater the power, the greater the corruption.

All of this is complicated by the fact that police must deal with the results of violence and criminal activity in their work lives and certainly is another factor leading to their emotional state. They are often exposed to the worst-case scenarios in the lives of the poor and the mentally unstable, which I believe makes their call to "serve and protect" a nearly impossible mission. Add to this the bully culture found police departments (and men in general) and particularly of unenlightened white men and the result is a toxic cocktail of abuse. Violent and aggressive attitudes toward citizens being policed and fellow officers must be a grave emotional burden for many officers and can lead to substance abuse, domestic abuse at home, divorce, and finally, self-destruction. "Support the Police" compels us to care about how our police officers are put into the emotionally draining task of policing in our society with all of its structural injustices, including criminalization of poverty, and given little more than guns and a narrow violent training in their use.

If folks say they support their police, then I say also support their souls. Our society needs to provide understanding, moral support, and funding on all sides of this tragedy. We need to confront our national racism and remediate those forces that perpetuate structural injustices. We need to stop criminalizing poverty and focus more police attention where the greater amount of crime is being done to the environment and our financial systems. With this there must be accountability. As Pope Francis points out in papal encyclical "Fratelli Tutti," the need for society to incarcerate those who would harm others is a form of mercy for the guilty (this should include any police officers who recklessly kill) as accountability is spiritually needed for anyone with any form of power over others.

Let us endeavor to help our police exorcise the "demonic" stain put on them by enforcing slavery and our nation's "antichrist" system of racism and criminalizing poverty. We need to defund the perverse militarization of our local police and instead, give them more training in conflict resolution. And yes, we should give them more pay to take a greater risk to ensure that no innocent people are killed, along with far less killing in general.

Philadelphia Police Chaplain's and Community Prayer Walks



Police Chaplain Walter T. Arthur Sr., (with megaphone) Pastor of the Hashem Christian Worship Center, leads participants in prayer at a stop on the Prayer Walk on a Thursday evening in May in East Germantown. Rev. Frank Crangle is the President of the 14th District Police Chaplains, the group that organized the Prayer Walk, typically held in areas designated by police as "hot spots" where gun violence has been a serious problem. The Police Chaplains reinstated their monthly prayer walks in May, on hold during the pandemic.

"We pray for everything," said Crangle, 62, a lifelong Germantown resident. "Our central focus is to pray for love, unity, peace, and end to violence."

The 22 volunteer Police Chaplains of the 14th District work with police officers and members of the community to bring spiritual and emotional support during periods of crisis. Also in attendance last week, were citizens from the Police District Advisory Council, 14th District Police Captain Nicholas Smith, Community Relations Officer Dennis Smith, and Crime Prevention Officer Raubert Hicks, as well as other officers, police chaplains, and community residents who joined in prayer and song to promote an end to violence. For notification about future prayers walks, residents may contact Frank Crangle at Frankgc08@verizon.net.

Photo and caption by Barbara Sheehan.

Dissolving the Taproot of Violence: JUST Listening

by *Fred Magondu and Sharon Browning*

Fred Magondu and Sharon Browning are listeners and facilitators with the JUST Listening Program at SCI Phoenix, and both serve on the project's Core Team.

JUST Listening is a program that fosters personal, organizational, and social change and transformation. It is premised upon the belief that being heard empowers the speaker. It also believes that people hold the solutions to their own problems.

In 2018, 2,648 men were moved from SCI Graterford, a maximum-security prison in Collegeville, PA, to SCI Phoenix, the new prototypical detention facility located four hundred yards away on the same property. Even before the move, high levels of anxiety and uncertainty prevailed in the old prison, heightened by the intimidating presence of black-clad special security guards brought in months in advance to facilitate the move. Tension and fear, both precursors of violence, permeated the place. When the move finally happened in July, the staff tasked with searching the two boxes each man was allowed for moving their personal possessions, vandalized, destroyed, and discarded many items. Religious books, keepsakes, and pictures of family, including one man's sole photo of his daughter, taken as her still body lay in her coffin, were defaced with sexual, racial, and hateful images, symbols, and epithets. To make matters worse, the administration initially refused to acknowledge the violations. Even after devising a compensation scheme, there was never an official apology or acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and the perpetrators were never sanctioned. During that time, everyone in the prison was emotionally traumatized.

For some of the men, practicing nonviolence skills learned over many years was spiritually and emotionally salvific: meditation, yoga, Alternatives to Violence skills. Among these tools, JUST Listening (JL) became a saving grace.

Plans to implement the JL program at Graterford began in 2014 and were fully implemented in January of 2017.¹ JUST Listening is a transformative communication program premised on the belief that Listening is an act of justice: social interactions are just when they embrace mutuality, respect, fairness, and honor our common humanity. At the root of JL is the belief that people need to feel heard for their dignity to be affirmed: when this does not happen, unresolved grievances fester, self-esteem plummets, and interpersonal tensions escalate. A cascade of stress hormones floods our bodies and pushes us into primal flight/fright/freeze and fight behaviors. Incipient violence is the poison in this toxic stew.

The events surrounding the move were merely an exacerbation of the normative level of dignity violations found in prison environments: daily experiences of being ignored, belittled, and discriminated against are wounds to human dignity. Here, people generally feel undervalued. Many dignity violations originate from interactions with staff, whether words or tone of voice interpreted as disrespectful, or a request not honored or even acknowledged. Among prisoners, it can be as simple as stepping in front of someone in line for the phone, or not respecting someone's property or space. Some violations, like those surrounding the move, are worse than others; over time, these violations can escalate into violence. Experts suggest that at the root of every conflict, whether interpersonal or corporate, is a real or perceived violation of dignity.² If we are to transform conflict and promote peace, unity and harmony in our communities and society, a simple place to begin is with ourselves and our interpersonal interactions. JUST Listening is a foundation on which to build this essential work.

Both before and after, the harshness and intensity of the move created an opportunity for all of us on the JL Core Team to Walk the Talk, forming bonds of love and community that none of us expected. During our first session after the new prison was open for outside volunteers, it quickly became apparent that our usually-brief circle "check in" would not be a simple one. Hearts were heavy and all the listeners knew there would be no other business for the day. We quickly agreed to, in one member's words, "...take time and share what's on our hearts". Just as contained steam pressure must be released before there's an explosion, we "vented". As each person shared what they had been experiencing, we could almost feel the weight being lifted from burdened shoulders. A sense of safety, acceptance, recognition, and empathy slowly filled the room and our spirits. It is an understatement to say the session was therapeutic. It gave those of us on the "inside" strength and resilience to go on even though we knew the indignities might continue. It helped many of us deal with bitterness. Most importantly, to know that we were heard, acknowledged, and accepted meant that we could regain our dignity in a significant way. There had been thoughts and even verbalizations of violence and retaliation. JUST Listening sessions

JUST Listening - continued from page 6 provided an opportunity for us to visualize a different outcome, mitigate potential escalation and carry this peacefulness with us when we left the meetings.

The move story is just one example of the ways in which JUST Listening is seeding peace and nonviolence within the prison. Despite enrolling voluntarily and being personally oriented about what to expect, those who attend our workshops for the first time come with a lot of skepticism, often viewing other participants with suspicion and mistrust. We address this from the onset with a curriculum and activities designed to break the ice, affirm the dignity and value of each person, and build community. We also address power imbalances by making clear that all facilitators, both inside and outside team members, are not teachers and do not impart knowledge, but are there to serve the group. Everyone's input is critical and no point is insignificant.

This initial groundwork produces amazing results, and a single session is usually enough to build community and ease tension. At the end of one training, Omar³, an especially reluctant participant, approached Co-Author Fred and said, "I didn't know what to expect. I always looked at some of these guys as phony but that exercise we did together made me realize how deep they are. I want to keep coming to this."

Such comments are common. JL offers something that people in prison find refreshing: a no judgment zone where they can feel safe enough to be themselves. We have learned that when we feel valued and heard, we are more open to seeking life affirming, rather than violent solutions. We feel empowered to be creative rather than reactive and have more faith that these solutions can work. We are more able to visualize the good not only in ourselves, but in others.

If nurtured, this tremendous change in perspective can lead to transformation, and we have witnessed such changes in many of the participants who keep coming back and want to be included in more workshops. Fred sees this regularly in observations of men on the block who participate in JL. Jake, a young man who was hanging out with the wrong crowd, is an example of this. He finally accepted an invitation to a JL workshop, reported that he loved the skits and promised to come to the "alumni" meetings: skills reinforcement workshops held monthly. He came once, then stopped, but periodically sent men to tell Fred what he had learned and shared with others. He began distancing himself from the old crowd and joined other groups. Over time, he has matured and attributes his change to JL. He told Fred: "That group changed me. I realized I'm in jail because I never listened to anyone before. And the crazy thing is I didn't even notice until I learned about listening filters in your class."

The JL approach has worked well in prison, an inherently violent environment where tensions are high and violent escalation is the rule rather than the exception. But it is also potentially transformative in any place or circumstance where human dignity is violated, whether interpersonally or communally.⁴ This work is not flashy, requiring only two ears, a willing heart, some training, and caring, dedicated people who love their communities and are willing to take the time needed to build relationships at the grassroots level.

When we look at the prevailing level of violence throughout our social structures, we can be tempted to despair. But radical listening goes to the root of the problem by addressing the underlying taproot of dignity violations. We do this by bringing the community together, creating a space where everyone feels safe, valued, and listened to. The solution lies not within one person or viewpoint, but in our collective minds and hearts. All are encouraged not only to air their grievances and hurts as they perceive them, but also to share their hopes, dreams, and vision for the future. Not only does each of us hold the solutions to our own issues within, but together, we hold the vision and transformative capacities for humanity.

¹ For further reading:

[Can Radical Listening Transform Prison Culture?](#) Philadelphia Inquirer, November 9, 2019

[Strategies and Tips for Incarcerated Persons: How to Thrive During Covid 19](#)

² *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict.* Donna Hicks, Ph.D., 2013

³ Other than Co-Author Fred Magondu, names have been changed for this article.

⁴ For more information on the work of JUST Listening, visit www.justlistening.net

Fred has been in prison since 2008 where he is serving a 12 ½ to 25-year sentence. He hopes to be released on parole this September. Fred leads various groups focused on issues of personal responsibility and transformation. On release, Fred plans to return to his native Kenya and establish JUST Listening Africa (JULIA), a nonprofit providing JUST Listening skills training and services in marginalized communities.

Sharon serves as coordinator of the [JUST Listening project](#).

Tenderness: A Spiritual Practice for Activists

by *Sharon Browning*

Early in the morning on the day Derek Chauvin was convicted of murdering George Floyd, a friend closed an email note to me with this:

"Let's keep our tender world in our prayers and good wishes today."

As soon as I read these words, inexplicably and surprisingly, I began to weep. Our. Tender. World. I was flooded with a profound sense of the world's suffering, vulnerability, and capacity for tenderness. This tiny phrase utterly moved me, cracked me open to a deeper sense of connection to every striving form of life on the planet.

All of it.

Our Tender World. I have been captured by this phrase, and so offer a brief reflection on what wisdom may be waiting for us in the concept of tenderness.

I love the word 'tender'; it moves something in me, or more accurately, when I am moved at certain times, I consciously register tenderness as the movement/response. Anything can elicit this response: a man limping through an intersection, seeing a work-weary Mom struggling with her toddlers while waiting for the bus, the frailty and desperation of someone mentally ill, the bravado and certainty of fearful politicians. Or innumerable encounters with the natural world: A spider on a glistening web, a fiddle fern about to unfold, the song of a bird.

I took this photo while visiting a Hermitage one cold March a few years ago when my soul felt torn and troubled. Not yet Spring, it was that liminal season of brown, grey, black...all the subtle, muted shades of winter. As I walked in the woods by a thawing stream, I saw a thin, fragile, vulnerable, winding vine with a few tiny, sprouting new-green leaves on it. It took my breath away. My heart expanded in my chest and I felt overwhelming love and, yes, tenderness for this tiny harbinger of Spring. Fragile, vulnerable, a survivor of tempests, this little shoot had endured, resurrected, lived to manifest its exquisite beauty. Like suffering humanity, like our Planet Home.

I find myself feeling tender about all sorts of things, and so when my friend wrote "Our Tender World," it leapt up as a Truth of some sort. Cornel West has paraphrased the philosopher Theodor Adorno to say "the condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak." Are we listening? We are surely noticing all of the suffering around us, but are we deeply listening to it, letting it resonate deep within us, allowing it to tenderize and transform our own weary, hardened hearts? Or are we allowing our sense of outrage and urgency to hook our egos into a frenzied need to DO Something?

We are in the midst of massive, rapid paradigm shifts: the old world is falling away, and a New Earth is being born, in and through Us. Barbara Marx Hubbard described our era as a chaos-driven explosion of consciousness, the "birthing of humanity" into fully conscious participation in our collective evolution. Like the imaginal cells activated in the caterpillar's cocoon, we are becoming the butterflies we have always had the potential to be. But this requires the dissolution of old ways of thinking and being. The New Earth that is emerging is one characterized by collaboration, altruism, compassion, and empathy, and tenderness is an essential, integral dimension of empathy. To practice tenderness is to move our awareness beyond ego's relentless demands for separation...to be "I", to unitive consciousness, the embrace of "we".

The true condition of our Earth Home is this: we humans and all life here are tender in multiple senses of the word. We are bruised, sore and wounded, tender-fleshed and spirited, vulnerable to all manner of illness, loss, and grief. As counterweight to this, we also have vast capacity for compassion, kindness, gentle concern and loving care for each other. We are hard-wired for empathy, but can only activate it if we deeply identify with and embrace "the other" as ourselves.

There is no more important work in these times of chaos and division: I suggest that cultivating tenderness is an essential element of our activism in any of the infinite, unique forms that can take. James O'Dea has observed: "Immature activism gets caught in us vs. them scenarios and ancient versions of the good guys against the bad guys...Activists who have not done the work to tame ego can demonstrate arrogant attachment to their own ideas as well as a self-righteous superiority about their mission."

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Tenderness: A Spiritual Practice for Activists - continued from page 8

Too often we prioritize doing over being, the primacy of the head over the heart. Conscious Activism is characterized by what O'Dea calls "activist equipoise". This is the marriage of head and heart, recognition of the rigorous inner work of the spiritual journey as a necessary partner to the outer work of planning and action. Without it, our activism is toxic.

Here are two small steps we can all take, spiritual tenderness practices to enlarge our hearts and empathy, expand our consciousness, and inform our activist impulses from the core of our being.

One: Recall a moment in your own life when you were gifted by the tenderness of another: The touch of a mother, or a lover. An unexpected kindness, or comment. The breathtaking beauty of small and vulnerable living creatures. Don't move away from the memory, but let it settle into and fill your whole Self. FEEL it. Then shift your awareness to some especially troublesome aspect of your life, your relationships, your circle, your neighborhood, our world, and bring the tenderness with you. Reflect on how this awareness changes your relationship to the individuals and situation, and how this greater insight and empathy changes your response, because it surely will.

Two: Set a mindfulness bell on your phone to ring periodically as you move through your day (There are free apps for this). When it chimes, summon your spirit of tenderness and use it as the lens through which you filter wherever you are and whatever you are doing at that moment. Stay in this awareness for as long as you can.

With practice, this becomes our default response. Rather than judgment of others, we develop "relentless compassion for unskillful behavior." Be a tender activist. This is how transformation happens, one small shift of consciousness at a time.

Sharon Browning works with the JUST Listening project. [JUST Listening project.](#)

A Week at the Border: We Are All Part of Christ's Body

by *S. Maryanne Zakreski, SSJ*

Sr. Maryanne Zakreski is a Sister of Saint Joseph, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia and a member of the CPF Newsletter Committee. Last May she traveled to San Antonio to assist with the emergency placement of refugee boys who were temporarily housed at the Freeman Coliseum. The Governor of Texas ordered the coliseum to be vacated.

Freeman Coliseum, normally a sports and concert venue located in San Antonio, Texas, was rented by the Federal Government to house around two thousand refugee boys aged 13-17 until the end of May of 2021. The ultimate goal was to place the boys quickly into a new family.

I did not know what to expect upon my arrival. I found the sheer size of the operation at Freeman Coliseum overwhelming. There are probably as many workers as there are boys. Hundreds of folks, paid workers, come in daily shifts. There are pod leaders, security, doctor's counselors, supervisors, case workers and more. Because they have worked there for weeks they are vulnerable to the emotional ups and downs of daily transitions and loss of the guys for whom they have cared so much.

The day I was assigned to pod 30A which included 23 boys was among the most personal experiences for me. We roused them from sleep around 7:30 and lined them up immediately for breakfast, from there directly to the bathrooms. Pod Leaders needed to escort the boys everywhere from bathrooms, to showers, to calls, etc. What deepened that impression is that fact that most of the boys were dressed in gray. It reminded me of Eichenberg's image of "Jesus in the Breadline."

<https://www.reliefjournal.com/blogposting/2015/04/10/fritz-eichenberg>

Stories that made an impact on me include: a woman who was a federal employee relayed that some parents in Central America put their children out on the street to fend for themselves. Another that surprised me is parents selling their homes to give money to smugglers to transport their children to America, while they consequently made themselves homeless.

The process for a safe release can be very challenging. It is relatively easy for family reunification if the relationship can be easily proven. The process becomes more complicated with friends and sponsors. They might give up on the process because they are

A Week at the Border - continued from page 9 afraid. Consequently, the immediate future of those boys will be a trip to another center and perhaps eventually be placed in the foster care system.

On Tuesday when I left to return to Philly I was waiting in the San Antonio airport terminal when some teenage Spanish guys came into my area. I recognized one who had sat at my table making God's eyes. He came and sat beside me. Even though I could not talk to him, nor he to me, I got the distinct feeling that just sitting there beside me was in some way comforting. I realized then that in my limited capacity to really interact with the boys that whatever I could do was enough. Sitting beside them and they to me we could sense the presence of God, and that was enough.

During my time at Freeman Coliseum I met many people. Everyone was devoted to the well-being of the refugee boys. The boys, too, were amazing in their resilience, in their ability to play, create, and interact in spite of all that had happened to them. There was a sense of unity, with a focus on compassionate care. I sensed that we are all part of Christ's Body.

Sr. Maryanne currently ministers at St. Helena's Outreach Ministry (sthoc.org) associated with St. Helena Church located at 5th and Godfrey, Philadelphia. The Outreach also includes Health Services provided by S. Anna Marie Lesutis, RSM.

CPF to Co-sponsor Virtual & In Person Fall Retreat: "Sisters and Brothers All"

This Fall CPF will co-sponsor of virtual and in person retreat which will continue the theme of the CPF Annual Retreat of Spring 2021 through using an Ignatian Examen format to reflect on a Papal Encyclical of Pope Francis. The retreat "Laudato Si – Examen" was held virtually on April 17, 2021 and led by Fr. George Bur S.J with the introduction by Angie and Phil Berryman. Father Bur, a Jesuit priest for sixty years, guided an online gathering through an Examen format drawn on the Papal Encyclical "Laudato Si." This Fall on the day before the first anniversary of Pope Francis signing 'Fratelli Tutti' in Assisi, Italy, Angie and Phil Berryman will lead us through this latest Papal Encyclical with an introduction by Fr. Bur and Ava Murray-Z. Angie and Phil Berryman are academics, authors, and activists, who among many activities worked for the American Friends Service in Latin America. Additionally, Phil is the author of several books on both liberation theology and the Christian experience in Latin America. Angie and Ava both serve on St. Malachy's Parish Anti-Racism Committee which along with St. Malachy's Jesus Caritas group are co-sponsors of this retreat.

Sorelle e 'Fratelli Tutti' – Examen - October 2

"Sisters and Brothers All"

October 2, 2021 - Saturday Morning 9:30 to 12 noon at St. Malachy's Parish Hall 1429 North 11th Street Phila, PA 19122
For Zoom Link / call-in number go to www.CPFphila.org or email: catholicpeacefellowship.phila@gmail.com

With introduction by Ava Murray-Z. and Fr. George Bur S.J., Angie and Phil Berryman will lead us through key issues and reflections using the Examen format for the Papal Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti." The retreat will be both in person and virtual.

RSVP encouraged but not required, please email or see our website / facebook for in person meeting updates / criteria:

<https://www.facebook.com/catholicpeacefellowship.phila> http://www.cpfphila.com/CPF_Meetings_And_Events.html

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/97055451178> (The session will be recorded and post for later viewing)

Or Dial +1 929 205 6099 then enter when prompted the Meeting ID: 970 5545 1178 #

For additional detail on the Fall retreat as well as the CPF Annual Retreat of Spring 2021 please follow the above links.

Is it anti-Semitic to NOT criticize the actions of State of Israel?

This additional article will be available on the CPF website and Facebook. For those who do not have access to email or the internet please feel free to send a postcard with a request for the article; please include your mailing address otherwise email us at CPFnewsletter@gmail.com. We also welcome your respectful posts: <https://www.facebook.com/cpfnewsletter.cpfnlwsc/>

Mercy-O.T.- A Word Search by Loni Krick

Loni Krick, SCI Muncy, began her life sentence at the age of 29 on November 22, 1992.

The following is Loni's reflection on the Women Lifer's Resume Project <https://www.wlrppa.org>,

THE WOMAN I AM NOW The woman I am now has much stronger morals and can handle responsibilities better. I have persevered and grown from many physical problems and recovered from several surgeries. I appreciate every day and assisting others. I am closer to God than ever before, and try to live every day being more and more like God's child. I appreciate what my mind can do and love to continue learning all new things. I am humble, with the awe and wonderment of a child. I can do things like crochet, build things, work on lawns, work on cars, repair and rebuild computers, work in a greenhouse, do braille and sign language. I want to learn so much more and go fishing

Word Search: Play this puzzle on line: <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/2148756/mercy-ot/>

...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion whom I will have compassion. Exodus 33:19b

...Let us all fall in the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great.... 2 Samuel 24:14

Remember Lord, our great mercy and love, for they are old. Psalm 25:6

...We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Daniel 9:18b

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

...And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8b

...You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. Micah 7:18b

This is what the Lord Almighty said: Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Zechariah 7:9

Mercy-O.T.

L	E	I	N	A	D	R	A	D	C	C	L	L	E
C	Z	S	E	H	I	R	C	Y	E	M	A	I	E
L	E	U	M	A	S	I	M	E	S	E	H	L	I
O	C	O	T	H	A	G	P	D	O	R	A	P	V
I	H	I	O	O	E	H	E	D	E	C	L	S	H
C	A	U	U	S	X	T	A	E	S	Y	O	A	H
Y	R	P	M	E	O	E	S	L	E	O	R	L	R
T	I	I	M	A	D	O	C	I	V	S	D	M	D
H	A	C	I	A	U	U	C	G	O	C	I	S	S
G	H	E	C	C	S	S	X	H	L	R	S	R	S
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M	R	A	H	C	O	M	P	A	S	S	I	O	N
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ALMIGHTY
DELIGHT
COMPASSION
SAMUEL
RIGHTEOUS
MICAH
LOVE
PSALM
MERCY
HOSEA
DANIEL
JUSTICE
SACRIFICE
LORD
ZECHARIAH
EXODUS

78th Anniversary of
Franz Jägerstätter's
Martyrdom
August 9, 1943
Remembered through the
Art of
Robert McGovern



Jagerstatter Statue
at St. Malachy
Carved wood sculpture by
Robert McGovern



Franz Jagerstatter and
Franciska Jagerstatter
Woodcuts by Robert McGovern



<http://www.cpfphila.com/FranzAndFranciskaJagerstatter.html>

Catholic peace FELLOWSHIP



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If you would like to submit an article for inclusion in future issues and or online, please send to CPFnewsletter@gmail.com. Articles should be limited to 1,000 words or less and please include a brief one-line bio. Photographs and/or graphics submissions are also encouraged. We are looking forward to continuing the respected tradition established by CPF, as well as adding timely content. Thank you for your interest, CPF Newsletter Editorial Committee

If you are interested in attending Catholic Peace Fellowship monthly zoom meetings or future retreats, please email us at catholicpeacefellowship.phila@gmail.com. A summary of Catholic Peace Fellowship and CPFNL expenditures: Membership in Pax Christi USA, website maintenance, meeting center / mailing address (St. Malachy's), event costs/ refreshments, honorariums and reimbursements for guest speakers in addition to the cost of newsletter USPS mailings to incarcerated and other subscribers who need this continued service. Reminders: donations are NOT tax deductible and see website / Facebook for virtual / in-person events status. Thank you for your interest, recent and past support, Catholic Peace Fellowship - Philadelphia

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by Robert McGovern
tribute to
Blessed Franz Jagerstatter

deliver to:

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