

SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN

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Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

Reflections on Rage and Rebuilding

by *The Rev. Gilbert Caldwell*

Gil Caldwell, pastor in Denver, long-time social activist and friend and supporter of MFSA shares his reflections on the recent unrest in Cincinnati after an unarmed Black man was shot to death by a police officer.

As a sixty-seven-year-old African American minister, it is my prayerful hope that candor about the issues that prompted the rebellion in Cincinnati, will move this nation to confront, correct and cleanse ourselves of the residual racial, cultural and economic insensitivity that still afflicts us in the 21st century.

I, like many of my ministerial colleagues, am not a stranger to the anger, violence and looting that has taken place in Cincinnati. I was in Chicago at a meeting of the National Committee of Black Churchmen, when Martin King was killed. I saw the flames and felt the heat as that city exploded. The next day I returned to Boston, where I was a minister at that time, and immediately went to the streets with my colleagues to attempt to ease the tensions and re-direct the anger. As I walked up and down Blue Hill Avenue in Roxbury, I still remember the sound of sirens, the shattering of store windows and the anger and frustration and pain that so many felt.

My words, as an old, African American preacher-activist are these for Cincinnati:

1. Begin now to plan the rehabilitation and restoration of those businesses in the

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MFSA Welcomes New Field Organizer

Welcome to Amy Rebecca Stapleton as she begins work this month in the position of MFSA Field Organizer. Currently living in Denver, Colorado, Amy is originally from South Carolina where she helped to found the South Carolina MFSA Chapter.

Amy is a person of deep faith and passionate commitment to justice and peace. Her broad knowledge and experience within the United Methodist Church will prove very valuable in her work with MFSA. She is very much committed to the mission and ministry of MFSA and energetic and enthusiastic about working with MFSA chapters across the country.

Amy received her B.A. in Psychology and Women's Studies in 1996 from Columbia College in Columbia, South Carolina and a Master of Divinity degree from Iliff School of Theology in Denver in 1999. While in seminary, Amy focused on Justice and Peace Studies and served as the Justice and Peace Program Student Coordinator. Other experience includes an internship with Denver Urban Ministries and an assignment as a community outreach worker at a UMC in Denver. Most recently Amy has been working as a campus minister at the University of Denver Wesley Foundation and as a chaplain at St. Anthony Hospitals.

Amy is an ordained probationer in the UMC and is in the process of transferring her conference membership from South Carolina to the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference. While making her home base

in Denver, Amy will spend substantial time in the national MFSA office in Washington as well as considerable stretches "on the road" working with chapters.

Speaking about joining the staff of MFSA, Amy says: "A passion for social justice is at the core of my religious faith. In the United Methodist Church I have been nurtured as well as challenged. In the same way I hope to both nurture and challenge the institutional church in coalition with local MFSA chapters." ❖

Amy Stapleton

Visit to the Seat of Corporate Power

by Kathryn Johnson

I suppose some might find it seductive. I found it merely surreal. Joining a number of church leaders, students and community activists connected with INFACT, I recently attended the annual shareholders' meeting of the Philip Morris Corporation in Richmond, Virginia. We had been given "proxy votes" by Philip Morris shareholders who agreed that the tobacco giant must be challenged on corporate practices related to the marketing of tobacco. INFACT, a national corporate accountability organization, is conducting a very effective campaign demanding that Philip Morris withdraw its use of the Marlborough Man, arguably the world's leading source of youth tobacco addiction.

Philip Morris does a masterful job at public relations (witness their heartwarming television commercials about the corporation's charitable giving) and the annual shareholders meeting was no exception. Streaming by the huge cigarette-carton-shaped corporate sign in front of the headquarters building, hundreds of shareholders passed through metal detectors and other screening processes before entering massive white tents on the lawn.

Upon entering the tents, ones senses were bombarded by colorful displays of the many subsidiaries of Philip Morris, free literature (advertising), sample products,

tables laden with food and air thick with cigarette smoke. The meeting itself was impeccably choreographed as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Geoffrey C. Bible, spoke to the shareholders about corporate expansion and growing profits.

INFACT protestors witnessed to shareholders both inside and outside of the meeting. Dressed in black and wearing masks, protestors outside of the meeting held a giant 12-foot-by-12 foot banner showing the Marlboro Man as a skeleton, and urging shareholders to take action to rid the world of an ad icon described by its creator as "the right image to capture the youth market's fancy." Inside the meeting, several of us approached the corporation's top leadership, calling on them to use their leadership and influence to move Philip Morris away from its abusive practices.

During the meeting itself, several persons were able to challenge the practices of Philip Morris during a question and answer session. Among those who spoke was Tami Gold, one of the filmmakers who produced *Making a Killing: Philip Morris, Kraft and Global Tobacco Addiction*. Lois Clinton of the UM General Board of Church and

Society also spoke and expressed the Board's concern that the burden of tobacco-related death and disease is rapidly shifting to developing countries.

An integral part of Philip Morris' massive campaign to improve its public image with consumers and policymakers has been to highlight its ownership of Kraft and its charitable contributions. For this reason, INFACT has initiated the Kraft Boycott (Kraft Macaroni and Cheese in particular) to bring pressure to bear on Philip Morris to stop addicting new young customers.

MFSA has supported the Kraft Boycott for some time. At its Spring board meeting, the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) voted to join INFACT'S Kraft Boycott as well. Lois Clinton of GBCS explained the board's action as follows: "Philip Morris is a corporate wolf preying on the children of the world cloaked in the sheep's clothing of Kraft. The Kraft Boycott is a constructive way to stem the tide of the global tobacco epidemic."

For more information about the boycott and ways to support the work of INFACT visit www.infact.org. ❖

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Filmmaker Tami Gold (l) and Patricia Lynn (r), National Outreach Director for INFACT, and other INFACT activists prepare to enter the Annual Shareholders meeting of the Philip Morris Corporation.

MFSA Chapter News

Chapters Prepare to Witness at Annual Conference Sessions

MFSA members and supporters in **Nebraska** will enjoy an organic meal, prepared by organic farmer and UM layperson David Vetter, when they gather at annual conference. The chapter is encouraging churches in the conference to purchase and serve Equal Exchange coffee at church functions and to purchase at least 10% of the food they eat from local farmers.

In the **New York** Annual Conference, Jim and Laura Veatch will be presented with the Gwen and Dale White Social Justice Award and plans are underway to spend time at annual conference organizing a delegation to travel to Washington, DC in the fall for the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The **Central Pennsylvania** MFSA chapter will hold the Heilman Award Dinner on the eve of Annual Conference with Ann Van Dyke, the executive director of the Pennsylvania State Human Relations Commission as the speaker.

In **Western Pennsylvania** the MFSA chapter is a co-signer for proposed legislation supporting the Bishop's Initiative on Racial Inclusion and declaring opposition to all forms of racism -- personal, institutional, and cultural -- and establishing a conference emphasis on eliminating institutional racism from all conference boards, agencies and local congregations.

The **Wisconsin** MFSA chapter will be joining forces with the Conference Board of Church and Society to sponsor an event entitled "*The Prison Issue USA - Why?*" Speakers will be the Rev. Bruce Fenner, Chaplaincy Services, Federal Bureau of Prisons, and Gerhard Fisher, Milwaukee Christian who recently spent three months in a Federal Minimum Security Prison. Perry Saito Awards for contributions to peace, justice and the integrity of creation will be presented to Mr. Lee Schaal and Rev. Dave Steffenson.

Several MFSA chapters will be voicing their concerns about the death death penalty during upcoming annual conference sessions.

The **Florida** MFSA chapter will feature retired Bishop Lloyd Knox as the speaker

at their MFSA dinner and will be introducing a resolution opposing capital punishment to the conference.

The newly reorganized **Missouri East** MFSA chapter plans to host a breakfast gathering where a representative of the *Coalition Against the Death Penalty* will speak.

The **Virginia** MFSA chapter will welcome Bishop Leontine Kelly as the speaker at their annual MFSA banquet and will sponsor three resolutions. The first of these calls for study and action on the death penalty in Virginia. The second resolution calls on churches and church-related institutions in the Virginia Conference to pay employees a living wage. The third resolution calls for the annual conference to go on record calling for the restoration of voting rights to persons who have already completed punishment for felonies committed previously.

The **Baltimore-Washington** MFSA chapter plans to have water bottles available at their display table sporting the saying, "For Those that Thirst for Righteousness -- Methodist Federation for Social Action." Barbara Ricks Thompson, past General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, will be the speaker at the MFSA dinner. The chapter has also prepared a devotion booklet for distribution to those attending.

The featured speaker at the MFSA breakfast of the **New England** Conference will be Marilyn Alexander, Executive Director of the Reconciling Ministries Network. The chapter will also be making use of the *Shower of Stoles* as a witness calling the church to become fully inclusive.

The **Troy Conference** (New York/Vermont) will display parts of the *Shower of Stoles* and has rented a room in the hotel where conference will be held as a place of respite and hospitality.

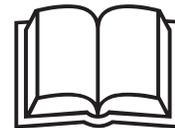
The **Desert Southwest** Conference will welcome Peggy Hutchinson of the General Board of Global Ministries as the speaker at their Annual Conference luncheon and will display the *Shower of Stoles* as well.

Economic Justice will be the focus of the **Rocky Mountain** Annual Conference

MFSA gathering as a speaker from *Jobs for Justice* addresses their chapter.

Liberato Bautista from the General Board of Church and Society will be the featured speaker at the MFSA banquet in the **Iowa** Conference.

The **Detroit** Conference MFSA chapter, along with other conference groups striving for social justice, sponsored a successful one-day educational, networking, and legislative awareness event prior to Conference entitled "Engaging the Powers," (reference Walter Wink's book of the same title). From this event, MFSA has submitted seven pieces of legislation to Annual Conference dealing with a wide range of topics from Missile Defense to Affirmative Action. At the chapter's annual conference event, the 4th Annual Jesse and Annamary DeWitt Peace and Justice Award will be presented to the Rev. Marjorie Munger for her vital work with Detroit's Reconciling United Methodists. The speaker at the event will be Rebekkah Warren who will address women's reproductive rights. ❖



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This loose-leaf Action Guide (ready to be placed in your own notebook) is available for \$10 plus \$2 shipping and handling.

UM Bishops Oppose National Missile Defense

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (UMNS) – United Methodist bishops are calling upon President Bush and the U.S. Congress to refrain from development and deployment of a national missile defense system, which they call “illusory, unnecessary and wasteful.”

On May 4, during the closing hours of their week-long meeting, bishops from the United States, Africa, Europe and the Philippines agreed that each would send a personal letter to Bush and members of Congress expressing concern for the missile defense system and would include a copy of a two-page resolution adopted by the council. The bishops approved the statement with no negative votes.

In their resolution, the bishops are adamant about the defense system but commend Bush for his commitment:

- “to persuade Russia to join the United States in reducing nuclear arsenals to the lowest number of nuclear weapons consistent with our present and future national security needs and to lead by example by making substantial unilateral reductions, if necessary;

- “to take a large number of missiles off hair-trigger alert, especially in light of the dangers inherent in the deterioration of the Russian military infrastructure.”

Each bishop is asked to work with leadership in his or her respective area and with United Methodist and ecumenical groups to “resist development and deployment of the defense system.”

The church’s top legislative body, meeting in Cleveland last year, condemned the development and deployment of antimissile defense systems and called on the bishops and the churchwide Board of Church and Society to provide leadership, guidance and educational materials to assist United Methodists in “understanding and working for the goal and objective of nuclear abolition.” The General Conference meets every four years and is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.

Story by *United Methodist News Service*, May 4, 2001 ❖

Religious Right Achieves Top Access At White House

After eight years of outsider status at the White House, Religious Right leaders are relishing their new role as allies of President George W. Bush.

Paul Weyrich, president of the Free Congress Foundation and a long-time Religious Right leader who helped create the Moral Majority, is jubilant. “I’ve been through five Republican administrations, and the effort to communicate with conservatives and to understand our concerns and address our concerns and involve us in the process is the best of any of the Republican administrations, including Ronald Reagan,” Weyrich told *The New York Times*. “In fact, far superior to Ronald Reagan.”

Observed Grover Norquist, the president of Americans for Tax Reform and an influential right-wing operative, “There isn’t an us and them with this administration. They is us. We is them.”

In fact, the Bush administration appears to have been going all out to secure a close relationship with its Religious Right kin. At an annual “Washington Briefing” hosted by the Family Research Council in March, the White House sent two cabinet officials, a senior aide and a taped message from the president.

Norquist hosts weekly get-togethers of over 100 conservative groups and the administration has sent at least one representative to every meeting.

Religious Right influence has been particularly noteworthy in personnel decisions, culminating in the nomination of John Ashcroft as attorney general. Meanwhile, Kay Cole James, who served as a dean at TV preacher Pat Robertson’s Regent University, now heads the Bush Office of Personnel Management. A similar influence can be seen at the departments of Interior and Justice, the Office of Management and Budget and the White House counsel’s office.

Story from publication of *Americans United for Separation of Church and State* ❖

Rage and Rebuilding

Continued from page one

Black community that have borne the brunt of the angry violence of my young brothers and sisters. Too many of our cities still carry the scars of the rebellions/riots of the 60’s and 70’s of the 20th century. I have read that downtown businesses, understandably are upset over lost revenue, but their loss is economic, while the losses in the African American community are economic and psychic.

The empty lots and building shells that still exist today in city after city, seem to communicate: “You were foolish enough to destroy businesses in your own community, now let your community suffer.”

2. Let us as an American people, beginning in Cincinnati, discuss and seek to understand the “culture of poverty.” Poverty inflicts pain and pathology in all people regardless of their race or ethnicity. Too many people, many white and some black, will openly or quietly determine that there is something intrinsically undeveloped or warped within young men and women who “use” the killing of Black men in Cincinnati to fuel activities of destruction and theft. Persons who reach these conclusions are unable or unwilling to grasp the hopelessness that prevails in a nation that spends so much time patting itself on the back for economic good times, or moving to the brink of depression when a hint of recession occurs.

Affirmative Action, the visibility of African American super-stars, and the over-publicized salaries of Black athletes, seduce the White and Black middle-class into complacency and fuels the fires of frustration for those whose only contact with economic “good times” is through television. Although there are gaps in responsible activity, by parents and others of us in the Black community, Black poverty today, has inextricable linkage to our history of slavery and the ever-present reality of segregation.

3. There are no quick fixes to the “American Dilemma” (Myrdal). We thought a Supreme Court decision outlawing public school segregation, a voting rights bill, affirmative action, the war on

continued on next page

Aches as I Pray

by Rev. Alex Awad
Palestinian Missionary
Bethlehem Bible College

I pause and pray before my fingers hit the letters on the keyboard. I pause and seek the Almighty because I can't find the right words and phrases with which I can express the suffering and anguish of my friends and neighbors. I lift my eyes to heaven because the injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people and their leadership is becoming unbearable while the world seems to care less. In my frustration I turn to God in an attempt to understand why, when it comes to Palestine, the United Nations seems so inept, Europe largely indifferent and the rest of the world incapable to put an end to injustice.

As I write, I pray again, because the United States, the alleged champion of democracy and the defender of human rights, continues to stand with the oppressor and with those who steal and occupy rather than with those who are wronged. I seek God because our representatives in Congress are ever eager to please the rich and powerful in keeping with their tradition of blaming the victim and empowering the arms of the destroyer. They finance those who steal the land of the weak and demolish the homes of the poor to build their own mansions in their places.

My heart aches as I pray when I think of the way the United States constantly and shamefully uses its clout in the United Nations to stand against the human rights of all Palestinians, but especially against the legitimate rights of all Palestinian refugees; denying them the right of return to their homes. I knock at the doors of God's mercy and pray because Pharaoh, the messiah of modern Israel, is hardening his heart and the leaders of the Western world are clasp-

ing their hands in his bloody hands. I seek God as I pray to understand why the Church is so indifferent to the suffering of a whole nation and why so many in the Church opt to stand with aggression while others are paralyzed by the fear of confronting the aggressor.

I ask God as I pray when will this injustice end and the violence stop? When will the Holy Land dry out from the shed blood and tears of both Palestinians and Israelis? When will the siege of all Palestinian towns and cities be lifted? When will the Palestinian people realize their dream of an independent state? When will Israel let go of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side as good neighbors in peace and security? When will the international community join forces with Israelis and Palestinians to put an end to the suffering of Palestinian refugees? And when will Jerusalem be an open

sanctuary for all who seek the God of Abraham? And when will Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities cease to bear the brunt of Israeli mortar shells and rocket attacks?

I plead before the throne of God's grace as I write my last few lines that God may grant sanity to the leaders of this land to "Let justice flow..." I call on the God of Justice to give the leaders of the United States the spirit of fairness in dealing with the conflict that destroyed so many lives throughout the Middle East. Then I whisper a final prayer for God to stir up men and women in the Church and fill them with courage to be instruments of his peace in this wounded land and throughout the world.

I walk away from my keyboard with renewed confidence in my heart that Christ, the Prince of Peace, will not rest until "he leads justice to victory." ❖

The Assaf family (pictured here) recently hosted a meeting of MENUM (Middle East Network of United Methodists). In addition to an evening of good food and delightful fellowship, the the Assafs shared with the group their concerns about their homeland of Palestine.

Rebuilding

Continued from page 4

poverty, enterprise zones, and the like would "fix it." They have not.

We, within the Black community have thought a liberal Democratic party would "fix it." Despite the articulated and overt actions of Democrats, we have, as poet Robert Frost wrote, "miles to go before we sleep."

Positive responses to this nation's racial, cultural, economic nightmare, (that continue to violate Martin Luther King's "Dream"), must not just come from liberals. Conservatives and moderates have an opportunity to declare a moratorium on demonizing liberals and develop their own positive responses to the pain of Cincinnati, that is a pain that belongs to all of us.

4. Finally a personal word to my young African American sisters and brothers in Cincinnati. You have expressed your rage and frustration through your violence. You have reminded the nation that too many "Men/Women in Blue" have allowed their fear, insecurity and racial insensitivity, to obscure the professionalism that they

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profess to possess. The actions of a few police personnel have tarnished those policemen and women who believe and practice the honor and responsibility their badge represents.

But now, my young warriors, you have an opportunity to be as vigorous in assisting in the search for solutions as you have been in venting your rage.

I know that you will want to be able to say to your children and grandchildren and to all the children of our village, (that must become community again), "I have done more than confront and destroy, as I did in

April of 2001. I have moved from rage to responsibility; responsible truth-telling about the violations of our humanity, responsible acceptance of learning and teaching myself and others, responsible avoidance of the easy money and the destructive delusions offered by drugs."

You can become heroes and sheroes, not because of what you destroyed, but because of what you identified and what you helped to transform. "Old" brothers like myself, need your creative and courageous leadership to transform your community, which is my community, and this nation, which is our nation.

We are passing to you the baton of leadership. Please don't drop it! ❖

The Rev. Gilbert Caldwell

BECOME PART OF THIS EXCITING MOVEMENT AT THE HEART OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH!

Are you a member of MFSA? If not, now is the time to join! Working primarily through the ministries of the United Methodist Church, MFSA supports and augments peace and justice ministries at the local, conference and national levels. As an independent organization, we call our church to expand its understanding and embodiment of the radical call of the gospel to be the inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking Body of Christ.

MFSA has chapters in annual conferences throughout the country. Becoming a member of MFSA means you will be joining other activists who care about justice issues and actively work to make a difference.

At the annual conference level, chapters publish newsletters, work cooperatively with Boards of Church and Society and other conference agencies, introduce legislation at annual conference sessions, sponsor seminars and hold other events to inform, educate and motivate people to take action for justice.

JOIN MFSA!

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Name: _____

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Annual National Membership dues are \$35/individual, \$53/family and \$20 or less/low income and student. If you are in a conference with a local chapter you will receive information from the chapter soon.

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