



Peter Byrne has been a Maryknoll priest for 50 years. He has been working in Peru since 1962, and with the human rights of children since 1990.

## “Does She Know Me?”

B. Peter Byrne, M.M.

His name was Pepito. I first met him on the streets of Lima, Peru, on a blustery winter day. He had no shoes, wearing only torn, baggy pants and a tattered red T-shirt. He was an abandoned, homeless pup in the pack of boys that made up his street gang, all of whom were hooked on sniffing glue. Pepito was only about nine years old and had already been on the streets for more than four years. I did not know it then, but he had inherited HIV/AIDS from his birth mother.

A few days after that first meeting, I found him again and gave him a sweatshirt and pair of sneakers. As he was lacing up the sneakers, I told him, “A lady named Yolanda went down to the market and bought those things for you.” He paused, looked up at me and, with a mixture of hope and curiosity in his eyes, asked, “Padre, does she know me?” I

*“The condition of children in our world is the measure of both our humanity and our faith.”*

—Pope John Paul II

was tempted to answer yes, but I simply responded, “No, Pepito, she doesn’t.”

Pepito is dead now, but I still

live with his question—the personal desire of a child looking for identity: “Does she know me?”

What a haunting question! It has been part of my own spiritual journey for a number of years. I’m sure each one of you has your own

Rights of the Child, ratified and adopted by the United Nations in 1989.

As we reflect on children and their human rights, we must open our hearts to the questions they raise about the children whose



Some of the boys at Home Santa Maria, Lima, Peru

story of children in your family or neighborhood who suffer and die before their time. Do they not raise the same kind of haunting questions in your own hearts?

Is it unreasonable to ask if Pepito and others like him have a right to responsible, mature and loving parents? A right to nutrition, health care and a safe environment? To an adequate education? To protection from exploitation by adults? These most reasonable rights, as we all know, are part of the Convention of the

stories are being told. We need to know these children and understand not only who they are, but also who they are *for us*. In our common humanity as well as our faith, we must recognize them as *our* children. They define us. They tell us who we are.

This is not my definition. It is the statement of Pope John Paul II in his pastoral letter on family life. “The condition of children in our world,” he declared, “is the measure of both our humanity and our faith.” In other words, the Pope is

identifying how the inhumanity of the lives of millions of children touches our own humanness and our Christian belief. The reality of the worldwide situation of children can be overwhelming, but it needs to be brought together and faced in light of the Pope's teaching.

The pandemic of HIV/AIDS is leaving a long trail of orphans, with only children to care for the children. Across our world there is a new slavery—the horrendous sex trafficking of children and the brutality of child labor. Millions of children are displaced persons who know only the violence and exploitation of refugee camps or, like Pepito, the physical, sexual and emotional cruelty and de-

struction of homeless life on the streets. Children and their mothers are the first victims of war and its devastation, where the terror of smart bombs and human destruction mark their daily existence. Other boys and girls hardly old enough to be out of grade school are yet armed and brutally trained to be soldiers. And added to this are the millions of youth who know only human destructiveness and death from hunger, lack of health care, and environmental contamination.

The above realities deny the sacredness of children and their humanity. They also provoke us to ask who we are as a people and as a Church. The most important question might well be: what does the inhumanity of life for so many millions of our children say about our own humanity and our faith? This question should lead us to a spiritual sense of our own need for a change of heart—a conversion that will move us to alter our lives and embrace the moral/ethical values that can change our social, ethical and economic priorities as a people.

The United Nations Convention on the Human Rights of the Child established a fundamental legal standard for respecting the rights of children. It speaks of the responsibility of society to respect and promote the wellbeing of all children. From the beginning, the UN has appealed to religious leadership and worldwide faith communities to pledge partnership in order to make the dignity and well-being of all children a reality.

After 18 years of the proclama-

tion of this worldwide-accepted declaration on the rights of children, the UN still struggles to get the moral support, religious backing and concrete actions needed to move our world towards the political and economic changes that affirm the dignity and sacredness of our children. As is too often the case in our religious institutions, the struggle to overcome our sectarianism, our cultural and racial prejudice and our own exclusive concepts of God leave the well-being and sacredness of the children abandoned.

We might ask what has been the follow-up to the Pope John Paul's words. As we reflect, we become aware of the profound silence of the Catholic Church and other venerable religious institutions about children. If we were to name a sin of violation of the children in our world today, it would be the sin of silence. Is that silence already coming to haunt us? We might also ask, was that what the prophet meant in Proverbs (29:18) when he proclaimed to the religious community of his day, "When there is no vision, the people will perish!"

We would do well to turn our hearts to Jesus in the Gospel. There Jesus changed forever the status of children, both by his words and his actions. "Children were brought to him," the Gospel says (*Luke 18: 16*), "so that he could place his hands on them in blessing. The disciples began to scold them and hinder them. Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. The Kingdom of God belongs to them.'" ~

*If we were to name a sin of violation of the children in our world today, it would be the sin of silence.*

#### THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

1. The right to equality regardless of race, color, sex, religion or nationality.
2. The right to a name and nationality.
3. The right to adequate housing, nutrition and medical services.
4. The right to free primary school education.
5. The right to be protected from work and anything that may stop them from going to school and be harmful to health.
6. The right to rest and play.
7. The right to love, understanding and protection.
8. The right to special care and treatment if disabled.
9. The right to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and abuse.
10. The right of children to have all the help they need to recover from neglect, cruelty or abuse and return to a safe place.
11. The right of Indigenous children to enjoy their own culture, religion and language.
12. The right to be protected in times of war & conflict.
13. The right to be among the first to receive aid and relief in times of disaster.
14. The right to seek refugee status and receive appropriate protection and assistance. Efforts should be made to reunite the family.
15. The right to freedom. No child shall be imprisoned unlawfully.

—Caritas, Australia

**U.S. & Somalia are the only two countries to not ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

# Nobody's American Dream

Mary Ann Smith, MM & Carol Smolenski

**S**he was only 11 when she was sold by her mother to the trafficker. She ended up in the United States, seeking to live "the American Dream." Instead, she was locked in a house cleaning, cooking, and being used as a sex slave by the trafficker and his family.

Fortunately, she was one of the lucky ones. Her story ends with her being rescued, but not before her childhood had been ripped from her. Today, she is no longer a victim; she is a survivor. She lives the life of a typical American teenager: going to the beauty shop, listening to rock-and-roll music,

left to your own devices after you arrive. When you are trafficked, you are held against your will to do work you didn't expect to do and are not paid for, or you are used in prostitution.

The increase in human trafficking in recent times is driven by criminal elements, economic hardship, corruption, social disruption, political instability, natural disasters, and armed conflict. Traffickers are motivated by their ability to make large profits due to high demand, combined with minimal risk of prosecution.

Trafficking of persons is the shadow side of globalization.

It is believed that 50 percent of international trafficking victims are children. Estimates of people trafficked into the United States range up to 18,000, and about one third are children. Children are the most vulnerable victims of trafficking. Poverty, neglect and desperation often make them easy prey for criminal elements. Some children run away, others are sold by parents or other family members, and some are kidnapped. Commercial sexual exploitation of children takes place in multiple settings, including street prostitution, closed brothels in residential homes, massage parlors, spas, and strip clubs. Children are exploited in pornography, sex tourism and on or near military bases.

Sometimes children are trafficked to the U.S. for both labor and sexual exploitation.

Since 1990 when the increase in the numbers of children trafficked for sexual exploitation in Asia was unveiled, significant progress has been made in raising awareness of the issue locally and globally. In 2006, ECPAT-USA



Mary Ann Smith, MM is a Maryknoll Sister who has worked with ECPAT-USA on trafficking of children since 1991.



Carol Smolenski, the Executive Director and one of the founders of ECPAT-USA, has been working in the field of children's rights for fifteen years.

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**Children are the most vulnerable victims of trafficking. Poverty, neglect and desperation often make them easy prey for criminal elements.**

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and talking to her friends. She was robbed of the carefree childhood that was her birthright. But today her traffickers are in prison and, with the help of caretakers, advocates, and law enforcement personnel, she has broken the chains of slavery.<sup>1</sup>

Each year an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 women, children and men are trafficked across international borders, and an even larger number are trafficked within countries. Trafficking, a \$10 billion dollar enterprise estimated to be the fastest-growing industry in the world, is nothing short of modern-day slavery.

Trafficking is different from smuggling. When you are smuggled into a country, you may have crossed borders illicitly but you are

Advances in technology, communications and transportation have contributed to the easy movement of people and capital around the world. There are many advantages to this, including cheaper products, easier travel and, in some countries, a reduction in poverty. But the demand for ever cheaper products has fed a demand for cheap and vulnerable labor. When we buy cheap clothing, food and goods of many kinds, we could be inadvertently contributing to the demand for slave-like conditions in work settings. As for sex trafficking, if men (who are by far the majority of the abusers) did not provide a lucrative market for illicit sex with women and children, there would be no commercial sexual abuse.

## CHILD TRAFFICKING

- 1.2 million children are trafficked every year.
- 1,000 to 1,500 Guatemalan babies and children are trafficked each year for adoption by couples in North America and Europe.
- Girls as young as 13 (mainly from Asia and Eastern Europe) are trafficked as "mail-order brides."
- Children are being trafficked in West and Central Africa for domestic work, sexual exploitation and to work in shops or on farms.

Source: [www.unicef.org/protection/index\\_exploitation.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_exploitation.html)

(End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of  
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Lynn Herink is an elementary school teacher and coordinates IPJC's Parenting for Peace and Justice program.

# Parenting for Peace and Justice

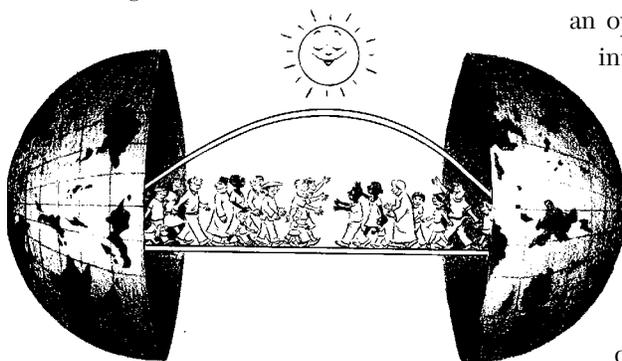
Lynn Herink

*This group helps me know that I am not totally crazy about the kind of world I want my child to grow up in, because sometimes it can feel that way.*

—Sandra Matthews, PPJ member

It isn't easy being a parent. It's a challenge to live out values of peace and justice in the face of commercialism, busy lives, and other pressures—let alone to actively parent in a way that teaches these values! The new Parenting for Peace and Justice (PPJ) program, sponsored by the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, is a hopeful response to this challenge.

The PPJ program provides support by gathering other parents who share similar values and face similar challenges. The program goals are to:



- Learn and reflect upon peace and justice issues relevant to family life.
- Give and receive support as parents committed to peace and justice.
- Support a spirituality that promotes justice.
- Build community.

The values we explore together and strive to engender in our children revolve around five themes: 1) diversity 2) global awareness 3) simplicity 4) environmental

stewardship and 5) peace/non-violence. These themes are interrelated and address many of the issues of injustice in our world today.

Parents have a variety of reasons for belonging to PPJ. Andrea Chorney is a member because she wants to learn how to deepen her values and pass them on to her child. Sandra Matthews wants resources to help her make decisions about issues. Jon Gordon says, "Through our group, we make ourselves aware of injustice and support each other to counteract it."

Each meeting begins with a shared potluck meal, followed by an opening prayer or ritual that introduces the theme. There is a short presentation on the theme, with questions to discuss in small groups. We are each other's best resource, so the time for discussion is very rich with the sharing of ideas. We often have a simple activity that helps bring the issue to life. Next, we learn about one or two children's books that explore the theme. We close with a prayer or ritual inviting participants to consider how they might incorporate something they learned at the meeting into daily life.

The meetings are a sacred time set aside from our normally harried lives. Hillary says, "You get so busy as a parent, you're running from one thing to the next...and where is the time for thinking about the

people around you who are struggling? PPJ helps me to consciously think about how I am contributing to a better community."

The most exciting part is that we carry ideas from the PPJ meetings into our life. For example, the

"Diversity Checklist for the Home" was a tool that helped Hillary take a close look at the movies she watches and the books in her home. "If you want your child to see people of other colors, or be exposed to other religions, you have

to actively seek out those resources, so I think it (PPJ) is definitely making me a better parent because it's inspiring me to actively pursue the goal I have to make my child a global thinker."

Together we hope to build an alternative vision for family life, different from what is offered by mainstream society. By coming together to discuss, reflect, and pray about values of peace and justice related to parenting, we strive to make decisions that teach our children how to be justice-doers and peacemakers. And the idea is catching on! PPJ groups have begun at St. Joseph Parish in Seattle and at St. Joseph Parish in Yakima. If reading this has made you curious and excited, we invite you to contact IPJC about starting a PPJ group in your parish or community.

It isn't easy being a parent, but the PPJ program is one way to help create a more just and peaceful world today—and tomorrow. ~

*Together we hope to build an alternative vision for family life, different from what is offered by mainstream society.*

# Mario's Story: Surviving the Juvenile Justice System



Mario Rocha and Sr. Janet Harris were interviewed by AMOS editor Jean Anton.

**a**rrested at age 16 in East Los Angeles, Mario Rocha spent ten years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Convicted of murder with no physical evidence and one eyewitness identification (despite the testimony of five witnesses that he was not involved), he was tried as an adult and sentenced to life in prison. His story is both a devastating indictment of a juvenile justice system failing our youth and our society at the most fundamental level, and a testament to the faith, courage and perseverance of the human spirit.

Sr. Janet Harris, PBVM has worked as an advocate for juvenile offenders for over 30 years and has spent the past decade fighting for a retrial for Mario. In April 2006, the California Supreme Court ruled that Mario had not received a fair trial. He was released from prison in August, 2006. The L.A. District Attorney is deciding whether to retry him.

While in Juvenile Hall, Mario became involved with a writing

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*I see kids only marginally involved in crimes getting life sentences, sometimes for their first offense.*

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program founded by Sr. Janet. Mario says, "...my pleasure in writing came from a comfort in knowing that deep inside I was free; and no matter what I was going through, I could find peace and redemption through writing."

Sr. Janet and Mario were interviewed for this issue of AMOS.

**How do you view the U.S. juvenile justice system?**

**JH:** It is in deep trouble. Young people are getting sentences not proportional to the crimes. Prosecutors can decide whether they will be tried as adults. The "gang enhancement" laws allow prosecutors to add up to 25 years to their sentences. I see kids only marginally involved in crimes getting life sentences, sometimes for their first offense.

I know a 16 year-old Latina girl whose abusive boyfriend committed murder and told her about it later, threatening to kill her and her mother if she told. Fear prevented her from cooperating with the D.A. Sylvia is now in prison on a life sentence, while another girl from a wealthy, white family was tried for the same offense and never spent a day in jail.

**MR:** I have hopes that the juvenile justice system will shift back to being a more rehabilitative and reform-oriented structure, as it was designed to be—to provide a refuge for young people. When you send a juvenile to the adult system, you're not solving a problem, you're creating a more criminalized generation. When we make activities like graffiti and hanging out in the neighborhood skateboarding crimes...by criminalizing

the acts of young people, we're criminalizing their characters.

**What was your experience of prison like?**

**MR:** It was a path that led to my growing consciousness and deepened my decision to be part of a movement of people who are not afraid to speak up for the rights of young people, people willing to walk in solidarity with those in prison.

**What helped you get through the 10 years of imprisonment?**

**MR:** The many, many visits from my mother were key. I was able to remain her son and not just be that abandoned boy that I sometimes felt like. I was robbed of my childhood, but I tried to find as many ways as possible to stay young and curious, rather than becoming an angry person.

The other piece was my belief that what I was going through was

"Freedom. A powerful word. Surely the majestic mountains and the clouds of the sky give a sense of freedom, but the freedom I have learned to cherish comes from within. And it is a freedom of greater value than the freedom beyond these bars. This freedom will not perish nor decay with the body when it is buried in the ground. This freedom will not wither with the wind as the years go by. This freedom will not fade away as the sun penetrates the earth. This freedom will live and endure. It will persevere. It will grow."

—From "Unfit" by Mario Rocha, L.A. Juvenile Hall, 1998

happening for a reason. When something like this happens to you, it's critical to know, "I'm suffering so that others won't have to suffer." And it has worked out to be true. Everywhere I go now, I meet people who know about my case, people who celebrate with me. It's really a community victory.

**How did writing impact your time in prison?**

**MR:** Writing helped me find my voice. My identity as a writer sustained me. When things happened (for example, a riot in the prison courtyard), I was able to go into observer mode, to use my creativity to turn the situation into art.

*continued on bottom of page 9*



Gregory Acar, a former child soldier, works in Northern Uganda combating exploitive child labor through education. In his own words, this is his story of being forced to serve in the Lord's Resistance Army.

## Children Abducted into War

Gregory Acar

It was a quiet Thursday morning. Normal class lessons were going on, when we heard a gun shot in the neighboring girls' school.<sup>1</sup> The whole peaceful seminary community was plunged into chaos—priests, seminarians, and teachers all running in different directions. I remember the rector trying to make a radio call and the vice rector requesting students to remain calm. This impasse took about twenty minutes, only to end in the abduction<sup>2</sup> of 11 seminarians and 23 girls. No sooner had we settled in to resume class, than a student sighted a huge soldier. He approached us through the rector, assuring us that he was the government army commander and that security was guaranteed. By the time we realized they were rebels, we were surrounded. The vice-rector was the last to escape. We were ordered to get back to the classrooms, sit on the floor,

get out, one-by-one, go take your belongings, we go for training").

We were tied with ropes round the waist, linked to each other. Reaching the dormitory, we were given three minutes to pack our belongings. I had a suitcase of clothes. By then I was sixteen years old. When I had left home for school, my parents had helped me put it in the car. But now, I was forced to carry it. The three months' journey with the rebels, as abductee who after two weeks training became child soldier, had begun.

As we moved on, the rebel military training drills started. Carrying the heavy luggage, walking long distances without food, sleeping outside in bushes, gang raping of Aboke girls—this was all part of the dehumanization training. The rudimentary training took two weeks. The rebels used all kinds of means to create fear in us. They gave many rules, one of which was that if one tries to escape, the punishment is death. As part of the training, we were forced to kill more than fifteen people who tried to escape, as brutally as possible—maiming, mutilating parts of the body, clubbing the head, cutting both limbs and leaving a person to die, inserting the person's head in the hole

schools by the Lord's Resistance Army and forcibly conscripted into the rebel force.

Veronica was forced to be a child soldier for three years. We share a similar escape experience, but different reintegration stories. We both escaped in battle. I remember June 30, 1989, the day I escaped. We had abducted about

*A similar story is shared by...more than 30,000 children, abducted from their houses and schools by the Lord's Resistance Army and forcibly conscripted into the rebel force.*

40 villagers and the government came in pursuit. Our camp was overrun, we ran in disarray. When I found myself with another child soldier and one more-than-70 year old man captive, we all resolved to escape. We moved for two weeks. Reaching home on Sunday, July 16th, I was received by Sr. Rachele Fasera, MCCJ. My family was contacted, I was reintegrated, and my family arranged for my counseling, which took more than six months. I resumed studies in the seminary, later went to the university, and am now serving in a humanitarian organization,<sup>3</sup> with a passion to help abused children.

Veronica returned home in 2003. She was lucky to escape during a battle that took place in her own district. She was left in the battlefield and hid among dead bodies for two days. On the third day, she heard some people passing by, calling her mother's name. Since she had been abducted when she was only 12, when she heard her mother's voice she could



Image courtesy of International Rescue Committee.

Drawing by former child soldier in Uganda—age 15.

remove our shirts, shoes and belts. I can still hear echoes of the orders that sent shivers down my spine: "Jal okat woko, acel acel, ocet okwany tee, wa cet i-training" ("You

and blowing in smoke.

A similar story is shared by Veronica (not her real name) and more than 30,000 children, abducted from their houses and

not differentiate very well. But she was determined to declare herself, come what may! When she came out, her mother immediately recognized her and broke down. The village received her with mixed feelings, some pitying her for her experiences in the bush—raped, miscarried, HIV-infected. But to her mother, she had received her back alive! Veronica was taken to the police and army for interrogation and later to Rachelle Rehabilitation Centre. After six months of counseling, the U.S. Department of Labor KURET Education Initiative (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia Together) Project under the International Rescue Committee helped Veronica to receive tailoring skills. After gradu-

ation, she hopes to resume her secondary education. “KURET has helped me so much; I can earn a living with the training and the tailoring machine they have given me,” Veronica said.

Interventions by individuals like Sr. Rachelle Fasera and organizations like Rachelle Rehabilitation Centre and IRC KURET project have made a difference in the lives of many abductees forced to become child soldiers. Child soldiering is a human rights abuse. All such abuses need to be ended, and all victims deserve as much support as possible to give them hope in life. ~

*Editorial note: Fr. Gary Smith, SJ, who worked with Greg at a refugee settlement in Northern Uganda,*

*reports that Greg is married and has four children. Gary describes Greg as a “resilient guy who nurtures his spirituality and considers himself blessed to have escaped.”*

The UN estimated that in 2006 more than 250,000 children were involved in armed conflict.

- 1 St. Joseph’s Seminary Aboke, Lira Diocese, Uganda, neighbors St. Mary’s College Aboke
- 2 Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony has inflicted massive atrocities in Northern Uganda for the last 20 years.
- 3 Am working with International Rescue Committee (IRC) as the Education Program Manager of USDOL funded Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia Together (KURET) Education Initiative in Lira and Dokolo Districts.

## Tsepo—A Word of Hope in Lesotho, Africa

Catherine Endicott

Clean clothes, a hearty meal and a bath—while we take these basic needs for granted for our children, they may mean the difference between desperation and hope for the children in Lesotho, Africa who have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Srs. Gisèle Foucreault, Laurentina Motseki, and Florence Tsepo are Holy Names sisters working in education and health care ministries in Lesotho. Although the need for housing, food and medical care for so many children can seem overwhelming, these

sisters offer an inspiring example of how—one day at a time—giving the basic necessities of life and an opportunity for education to children in need can make a meaningful difference.

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate<sup>1</sup> in Lesotho is the third highest in the world (28.9%). One of the most disturbing features of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the disproportionate effect it has on children. As one or both parents become sick or die, children increasingly have to become caregivers to sick parents and younger siblings. This threatens

their prospects for attaining quality education. It is estimated that 73,000 children of Lesotho under the age of five have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. In 1990 the average life span was 57 years of age; it is now 35.<sup>2</sup> This greatly affects the traditional extended family system, which offers care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children. In the absence of support and care, these children often turn to the streets, increasing the likelihood of their eventually contracting HIV/AIDS.

There are multiple factors that contribute to the HIV/AIDS



Catherine Endicott spent two years as a lay missionary in Cameroon, then returned to the U.S. to complete her Master’s in Theology at Catholic Theological Union.

### HIV/AIDS AND CHILDREN

- 40.3 million people worldwide were infected with HIV by 2005; 2.3 million were children under age 15.
- More than 3 million people worldwide died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2005; over 500,000 were children.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has over 90% of the world’s children living with HIV, and about 80% (12 million) of the children orphaned by AIDS.

Sources: [www.childinfo.org/areas/hiv/aids](http://www.childinfo.org/areas/hiv/aids) & [www.avert.org](http://www.avert.org)

pandemic in Lesotho, including limited health care, political instability, food shortages, lack of employment opportunities resulting in men living away from their families, and persistent levels of poverty. While this situation may seem insurmountable, the Holy Names Sisters will tell you that their ministries carry hope in an otherwise desperate situation.

Sr. Florence has been most successful in her collaboration with the village health workers. The workers, trained in basic primary health care, have critical access to the elders and children living

providing eight new houses for families with AIDS; managing two orphanages that serve 74 children; assisting farmers who sell bread, flour, and eggs; and establishing housing cooperatives for the elderly. All school-age children in the orphanage enroll in the Holy Names Sisters' school. This is a great benefit, given the lack of education for many Lesotho children. Sr. Gisèle shares her concern that at

times the children's sadness causes her to wonder if anything will help overcome their tremendous suffering. Yet once their basic needs have been met, she notices that they are transformed in spirit, with renewed motivation for life.

Sr. Laurentina finds that simply showing love and compassion to an orphaned child can make the difference between that child's choosing life over death. Orphans come to her school, frequently believing that no one cares if they live or die. How does this simple gesture of love and compassion make a difference? It is because the children open up. Once they realize that they won't be abandoned or taken advantage of, they feel safe enough to start telling their stories. The telling of these stories lays the groundwork for healing the memories of sadness and suffering. And it is in this healing process that the children can discover their self-esteem and take the preliminary steps necessary for succeeding in school, and in life.

Public policy in Lesotho is beginning to address the tremendous need created by the

HIV/AIDS pandemic. In 2005, the Lesotho government passed a bill establishing the National AIDS Commission and National AIDS



Children at St. Rose School—Lesotho, Africa

*The telling of these stories lays the groundwork for healing ....it is in this healing process that the children can discover their self-esteem.*

in remote villages. Their success stems from:

- Teaching the parents how to use protective gloves when treating other family members' open sores.
- Providing expectant mothers HIV-positive identification

cards to show the nurses upon their arrival at the hospital. With this information, the mother and the baby are given the appropriate



Sick mother with children, Lesotho, Africa

medication to reduce the probability of AIDS transmission to the child.

- Helping families properly administer antiretroviral drugs. Sr. Gisèle's ministry includes

Secretariat. Lesotho has committed itself to the World Health Organization's goal of having 55,000 people on retroviral therapy by the end of 2005.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, they are far from reaching their goal. As of June 2005, an estimated 3,000 people were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), only 4-5% of those in need.<sup>4</sup> The key challenge is to put the fight against HIV/AIDS at the core of all development plans and activities at government, non-government and community levels.

The Holy Names Sisters embrace this core approach by providing education, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS in their various ministries. By meeting basic needs and instilling hope to orphans and children infected with HIV/AIDS, their work is making a difference for future generations in Lesotho. ~

1 Among adults ages 15-49.

2 <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/africa/lso/statistics.htm>

3 UNAIDS, 2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, July 2004

4 WHO, Progress on Global Access to HIV Antiretroviral Therapy, June 2005.

continued from page 3

Children for Sexual Purposes) and ECPAT International published two reports measuring how far we have come. Together, they give an overview of where we must focus our efforts to further protect children. Both reports identify a number of important needs, including: eliminating demand; increasing resources for public education and awareness; ensuring education, protection and rehabilitation of survivors; continuing to strengthen legislation; and monitoring the use of emergent technologies in the proliferation of child pornography.<sup>2</sup> The Traf-

*Trafficking of persons is the shadow side of globalization.*

ficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, revised and reauthorized in 2003 and 2005, has facilitated significant improvements in both national and international awareness of the problems of trafficked children and adults.

As we work to find ways to end trafficking, let us listen to the children, whom we all so glibly refer to as “our future,” and let us

respond to their call for a world fit for children. ~

*We are the world’s children.*

*We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.*

*We are street children.*

*We are the children of war.*

*We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.*

*We are denied good-quality education and health care.*

*We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.*

*We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.*

*We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone.<sup>3</sup>*

—Children’s Forum, UN General Assembly, May 2002.

1 Based on a case from the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, [www.stophumantrafficking.org](http://www.stophumantrafficking.org)

2 ECPAT-USA News, January 2007. [www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org)

3 *A World Fit for Children*, p.9, UNICEF, July 2002.

continued from page 5

**What activities are you involved with since your release?**

**MR:** I volunteer at a local charter elementary school teaching poetry. And I’m part of a group working to get programs implemented at L.A. Juvenile Hall—martial arts, meditation, and a Criminal and Gangs Anonymous group. I’m also working with a mentor and attending writing classes at UCLA. I’m working on a 10-year collection of my writings titled, *Young Lifer: A Prisoner’s Quest for Justice and Freedom*.

**What would you recommend to prosecutors and judges?**

**JH:** Act with moral courage, which is very difficult in an institution that supports conformity.

**MR:** It shouldn’t take courage to make the right decision, because it’s your job to administer justice and not just convictions and more punishment. The people win when justice prevails.

**What words of advice and**

**encouragement do you have for youth in the juvenile justice system today?**

**MR:** Don’t give up. As long as you believe there’s a possibility you can make your situation into something you’ll look back on as instrumental in your choice to better yourself...you have to believe it and really visualize it in detail,

**science do to help change the juvenile justice system?**

**JH:** Anything you do for young people will help. If you can keep one kid out of jail by getting them involved in sports, every small step helps. And don’t just get your information from the media. Look deeply; do some serious reading and reflection and praying. I’m

**JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- There are over 100,000 prisoners in juvenile facilities.
- Youth of color are overrepresented and receive disparate treatment in the juvenile justice system. Nationwide, the estimated rate at which black youth receive life without parole sentences (6.6 per 10,000) is ten times greater than the rate for white youth (0.6 per 10,000).
- An estimated 59% of children who receive sentences of life without parole received the sentence for their first-ever criminal conviction; 16% were between thirteen and fifteen years old at the time they committed their crimes.

Sources: [www.juvenilejusticefyi.com](http://www.juvenilejusticefyi.com); [www.buildingblocksforyouth.org](http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org); [www.hrw.org/reports/2005/us1005/2.htm#\\_Toc114638379](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/us1005/2.htm#_Toc114638379)

visualize your future, your freedom and never, ever returning to Juvenile Hall or prison again.

**What can people of con-**

grateful for this kind of article and journals like AMOS. You are the bridge-builders, you are the voice for these young people. ~



## Women's Justice Circles: The Bus Stops Here!



Public transportation is a modern marvel. But what if you had to cart your baby, toddler, groceries and purse several blocks to access it? Not so marvelous, is it?

A group of Spokane women found a solution: locate a bus stop closer to them. The Women's Justice Circle at St. Margaret's Shelter for Women and Children recently celebrated this success.

Within a month of petitioning the Spokane Transit Authority, a new bus stop was placed a stone's throw from their home. While this bus stop shortens the commute for many of the women at St. Margaret's, it also represents a far more significant accomplishment. The women raised their voices to a powerful community

institution. The Spokane women gained first-hand experience of a small group of concerned citizens making a difference, even if those citizens happen to be homeless. The sense of empowerment was invaluable to the women of St. Margaret's.

The Women's Justice Circle had such a profound impact on the women that they are eager to begin a new Circle. It is our hope that the Circles will be a permanent program for women's empowerment at St. Margaret's Shelter.

Author: Katie Kaiser, Jesuit Volunteer

## IPJC Welcomes...



Rebecca Szper, our new Women's Justice Circle Coordinator. She is bilingual and has been a community organizer as an AmeriCorps

Intern. Rebecca worked in Ecuador on reforestation and habitat restoration, and was an advocate in a shelter for women who have experienced domestic violence. Contact Rebecca @ 206.223.1138 if you would like to be part of a Circle of change for women.

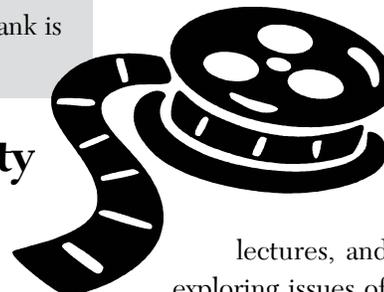
## In Loving Memory: Ray Malonson 1926-2007

This man of justice "went off with God" on the morning of January 25. Ray lived to fish, literally and figuratively. His dedication to and love of people in prisons and in the pews was remembered by the community that gathered to celebrate his life. We are grateful to Ray and his wife, Marian, for designating IPJC as a recipient of his memorials.

## FilmFaith&Justice2007

April 12-15

University of Washington, Kane Hall



Four days of films, lectures, and discussion panels exploring issues of human rights and the theology of social justice.

[www.filmfaithandjustice.com](http://www.filmfaithandjustice.com)

## Thank You!



To each of you who has contributed to IPJC through AMOS or our annual appeal, "Thank you." If you have not had an opportunity to make a donation yet this year, the bank is still open and the needs are great!

## The Power of Microcredit to Reduce Poverty

With Terry Provance, Director of Oikocredit USA

Tuesday, March 27th, 7:00 pm

Leffler House Living Room at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral

Information: 206.323.0300

# peace & justice center

## Journey to Justice Retreat Day: Charity & Justice

Linda Haydock, SNJM led 120 JustFaith participants from eleven parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle in prayer, Scripture reflection, Catholic Social Teaching, and an immersion experience with empowered low-income groups. In the words of one of the participants, a highlight of the day was “to



meet people who have had the opportunity to make change not only with charity but by doing the work of justice.”



## Catholic Advocacy Day 2007

### Seeking Justice: Together on a Journey of Hope

IPJC organized the annual trip to the Washington State Legislature:

- More than 200 participants
- Meetings with 111 legislators in 37 districts
- Advocacy for life issues, children, health care, housing, economic justice, environment
- Meeting with Governor Gregoire

## Campaign to Ensure that Children are Not a Travel Destination

In 1999, Costa Rican courts sentenced a man to eight years in prison for aggravated pimping of minors in a child sex tourism (CST) network that included receptionists at the Marriott. The company was unresponsive to shareholders' attempts to address the issue until a shareholder resolution was filed in 2006. Marriott responded immediately by forming a Human Rights Task Force, and within a year approving a change in its Human Rights policy to specifically include a section on the Protection of Children.

The strengths of Marriott's policy include partnering with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in addressing CST; training employees to recognize warning signs of potential CST activity; and including a brochure on CST in the 20 million pre-arrival messages it sends guests globally each year.

David Blackstone, author of *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight it*, 2007, is enthused about Marriott's commitment. “Taken in isolation, corporate policies...will not deliver the total solution to child slavery, but each advance in policy and public awareness builds an environment wherein kidnapping children from their homes and forcing them to heinous acts will not be tolerated.”

In June 2006, the **Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment**, in collaboration with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, launched a campaign to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Success with Marriott has encouraged shareholders to approach hotels, cruise lines and airlines requesting that they join in the effort to protect our children.

**Action:** When you stay in a hotel, ask the management if the facility has a code protecting children from exploitation.



# A Prayer for Children

Marian Wright Edelman

We pray for children  
Who sneak popsicles before supper,  
Who erase holes in math workbooks,  
Who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those  
Who stare at photographers from behind  
barbed wire,  
Who can't bound down the street in a new pair  
of sneakers,  
Who never "counted potatoes,"  
Who are born in places we wouldn't be caught  
dead,  
Who never go to the circus,  
Who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children  
Who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls  
of dandelions,  
Who hug us in a hurry and forget  
their lunch money.  
And we pray for those  
Who never get dessert,  
Who have no safe blanket to drag  
behind them,  
Who watch their parents watch  
them die,  
Who can't find any bread  
to steal,  
Who don't have any  
rooms to clean up,  
Whose pictures aren't on  
anybody's dresser,  
Whose monsters are real.

© SW PA Symod of ELCA



We pray for children  
Who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,  
Who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick  
at their food,  
Who like ghost stories,  
Who shove dirty clothes under the bed and  
never rinse out the tub,  
Who get visits from the tooth fairy,  
Who don't like to be kissed in front of the  
carpool,  
Who squirm in church or temple and scream  
in the phone,  
Whose tears we sometimes laugh at and  
whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those  
Whose nightmares come in the daytime,  
Who will eat anything,  
Who have never seen a dentist,  
Who aren't spoiled by anybody,  
Who go to bed hungry and cry  
themselves to sleep,  
Who live and move, but have no  
being.

We pray for children who want to be  
carried and for those who must,  
For those we never give up on and  
for those who don't get a second  
chance.  
For those we smother...and for  
those who will grab the hand of  
anybody kind enough to offer it.

*A Matter of Spirit*  
is a publication of the  
**Intercommunity Peace  
& Justice Center**

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