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El Salvador and India: After the devastation

Hope amid the ruins



PHOTOS: TRINIDAD SANCHEZ

It was hard. It was heavy. It left our whole country in shambles, literally on its knees. Complete towns fell to the ground.

—Marta Benavides

a Salvadoran and former committee member of AFSC's Third World Coalition



THE E-MAIL from Marta Benavides came days after the first, devastating earthquake shook El Salvador on January 13. A month later, she was writing again about a second quake that "...[de]stroyed] what little had been left standing" in her homeland.

Half a world away, the people in the Indian state of Gujarat faced similar scenes of chaos and destruction after a January 26 quake left tens of thousands dead.

The people of El Salvador and India will be dealing with the aftermath of these disasters for years to come, and AFSC will be there to help rebuild their lives. AFSC responded quickly to both disasters and continues to assess the long-term relief and reconstruction needs.

El Salvador Just under a third of El Salvador's six million people have been hit hard by the two earthquakes and countless aftershocks. To date, AFSC has raised more than \$165,000. The money is being used by local partner agencies in El Salvador to purchase emergency supplies and temporary housing for survivors. AFSC staff in Honduras also assembled six truck-loads of foodstuffs, medicine, and construction materials for delivery to El Salvador, and the Philadelphia office sent nearly 2,000 hygiene kits, which included soap, adhesive bandages, and candles. In addition, AFSC recently shipped several containers of mattresses, clothing, and medical supplies donated by various corporations.

India AFSC thus far has received more than \$100,000 for its India Earthquake Fund. AFSC is working with partner agencies, in particular Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, to determine how best to respond to those whose needs may not be met by larger agencies.

The loss in both countries is tremendous. But as a recent e-mail from Marta in El Salvador indicates, hope endures amid the ruin. She writes: "The people are surviving, and we are taking care of our lives. We are learning that we are El Salvador; that we'll dig it [out] with our fingers and nest it within our souls."

PHOTOS (top, left): With AFSC support, supplies were trucked from Honduras to El Salvador. **(top, right):** A survivor in El Salvador sifts through the rubble.

Bringing the reality of Africa to U.S. audiences

F AUSTIN TWAGIRAMUNGU is a man of vision and hope; an incredible fact when you consider that he lived through an era in Rwanda when one million people were massacred, including members of his family.

Faustin, the former prime minister of Rwanda, played a key role in bringing the Rwandan government to the peace table with the Rwanda Patriotic Front in 1993.

He was one of eleven speakers in the sixteenth annual Africa Peace Tour,



Faustin Twagiramungu

which began as this issue of *Quaker Service Bulletin* went to press in April. The Peace Tour, sponsored by the AFSC Peacebuilding Unit's Africa Program, aims to prompt discussions about U.S. policy toward Africa among students and concerned citizens. This year, the tour traveled to college campuses in five Midwestern states.

Other speakers included Rebecca Wakuteka from the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, Akuei Malwal from Southern Sudan, and Bakary Tandia from Mauritania.

"It's very important for me to be here," Faustin said before the Peace Tour began. "It is important for Americans to understand what happened in 1994, about the massive massacres of innocent lives. We have to tell others why it happened and how to prevent it from happening in the future."

"I hope [the Africa Peace Tour] will open the eyes of some people and they will learn more about what



Rebecca Wakuteka

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Re-examining our role in turbulent times

FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS the American Friends Service Committee has worked for a just peace in the Middle East through programs in the region and the United States. Now, in light of the seriously deteriorating situation in the Middle East, AFSC is faced with two difficult questions: As a U.S.-based Quaker organization, should our role change in relation to Middle East issues? What steps can AFSC take to contribute to peacebuilding in the Middle East and the United States?

As this issue of Quaker Service Bulletin goes to press, we witness a Middle East in great turmoil and increasing uncertainty, and a U.S. public that mostly remains confused and ill-informed about the situation in the region.

Many Palestinians and Israelis hoped that the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DoP), also known as the Oslo agreement, by Yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin on September 13, 1993, would pave the way for peace, economic development, and prosperity.

As an established state with a relatively strong economy and infrastructure, Israel was able to take advantage of the economic opportunities brought on by the peace process. Also, the extensive political and economic support from the United States and other western nations, along with the financial and political support of the Jewish Diaspora, has raised the Israeli standard of living to the level of many western European countries.

But for Palestinians still living under Israeli military occupation, economic, social, and political development has been virtually impossible. Palestinians expected that a negotiated peace with Israel would result in a viable Palestinian state — in control of its borders and occupying all or almost all of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem — which would have allowed them

to develop their country and the institutions needed for a state to flourish. Many Israelis, for their part, hoped that a negotiated peace with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab countries would pave the way for normalization — and true security — with and within the Arab world.

These hopes were shattered in September 2000 with the beginning of the uprising initially called the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* — now known as the Independence Intifada — although many observers had seen the crisis coming even as the DoP was being signed on the White House lawn.

Throughout, the negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis increased rather than decreased the imbalance of power. For negotiations to succeed, the two parties must be brought into a more equitable power dynamic, which the United States has not been able to do. What is needed is the active involvement of the international community to advocate for an equitable solution to the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts.

What role is there for an organization such as AFSC at this time? While we are still refining specific areas of program work and developing new ones, we envision four possible means of involvement: creating ways to reduce the power imbalances, advocating for economic justice, working for regional demilitarization, and encouraging nonviolence as a means of bringing about a just peace.

One way of creating a climate for change is through the mobilization of grassroots constituencies. With years of experience working closely with the Palestinian community, AFSC is in a position to respond creatively to pressing economic needs and social issues in the West Bank and Gaza. The Quaker Palestine Youth Program and Quaker International Affairs Program are two examples of AFSC work that address such issues in innovative ways. (Please see related stories on pages four and five.)



Kathy Bergen

As one of the few faith-based peace and justice organizations working in the Middle East and in the United States that has disarmament as part of its mandate, the AFSC must work toward the cessation of U.S.

arms sales to the Middle East. The United States sells weapons to many Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. These arms sales contribute to the risk that the violence may escalate rather than, as some claim, being a guarantee for security and stability in the region.

AFSC's role in the current Middle East situation should follow in the tradition we've established and shown to be effective. Namely, we can advocate for nonviolent action as a tool for change and support those who are using nonviolent methods.

In a *New York Times* article (Feb. 22, 2001), Bassem Eid, the founder and director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, wrote that Yasser Arafat "must shift the focus of the uprising from armed resistance to unarmed, civil protest — from clashes to demonstrations....Unarmed resistance stands a better chance of influencing international and Israeli opinion, which is the only way to convince Mr. Sharon to return to the negotiating table."

Bassem Eid's call for unarmed resistance is one that AFSC, with its more than 80-year history of effective nonviolent social change, can fully support.

Kathy Bergen

Kathy Bergen
Coordinator, Middle East Program
Peacebuilding Unit

ONE VOICE

Mary Ellen McNish

'...to envision what we are being called to do in the world.'

I have been AFSC's general secretary for a little more than six months. In that time, I've gained valuable insights and helped develop plans for action that I'd like to share with you.

As part of my orientation, I traveled widely among AFSC staff, committee members, and volunteers. Throughout my travels, I kept getting an important message: *We have spent time in the past couple of years planning, but we really have no vision for the organization...we are spread too thin...we have no focus.*

This surprised me because I was visiting extraordinary programs and meeting talented and committed staff and volunteers. But, after I visited the nine U.S. regional offices and several in other countries, I came to believe this message was true, and the AFSC Board of Directors agreed with me.



Mary Ellen McNish

As a result, the Board approved a series of five retreats that began in April and will run through June 2001. The retreats are bringing together members of AFSC's corporation, board, regional and program executive committees, administrative committees, and some staff to "meet in worship to envision what we are being called to do in the world."

Information from the retreats will be forwarded to the September 2001 Board of Directors meeting. At that meeting the Board, again in worship, will discern what we are being called to do as an organization.

Please keep us in your prayers as we begin this important discernment and visioning process. I will be sure to keep you informed as we move forward.

Mary Ellen McNish

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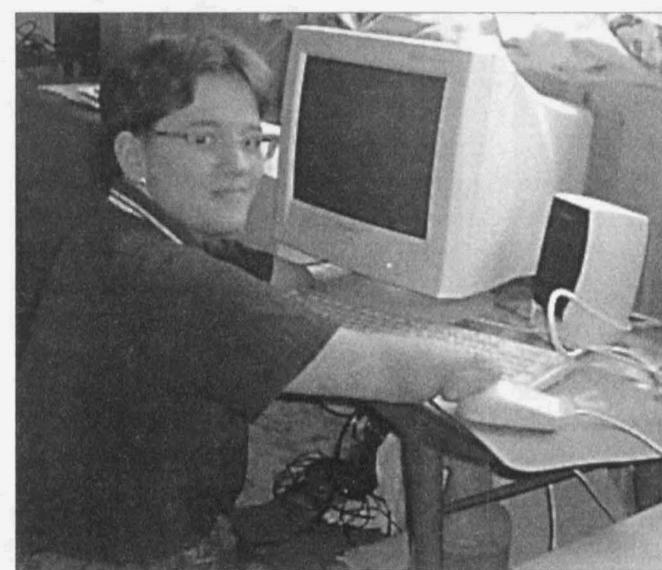
When AFSC relief and development programs work with people with disabilities, the focus is on decreasing their isolation and helping them become more independent. Below, various International Programs staff have collaborated to write about three recent projects that demonstrate AFSC's methods.

Bosnia-Herzegovina Mersiha Mehmedovic was born without forearms or hands and has only one withered leg. She lives in the village of Memici, outside of Tuzla. Although she was an excellent student, she was unable to complete secondary school due to her family's transportation limitations and the lack of outreach from the school system and the local government.

AFSC met Mersiha through Lotosice, an organization that promotes education, training, and outreach as keys for people with disabilities to live richer and more independent lives.

After hearing about Mersiha's special needs, AFSC's Balkan staff obtained a computer, printer, and a year's access to the Internet. The presentation of the computer equipment to Mersiha was broadcast on one of the most widely viewed news programs in Sarajevo, as well as an interview with Enisa Bratanovic, director of Lotosice, regarding key issues of independence and communication for the disabled.

Gaza Staff for the Palestine Youth Program identified a significant number of visually impaired and blind youth who felt extremely isolated. Understanding the potential for communication through the Internet, AFSC and the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) held a special two-



JAMES WHOLEY

Mersiha Mehmedovic

week training program last fall for fourteen Palestinians — including blind and low-vision students — who will train others in the use of accessible, Arabic-based computer equipment. The IUG's Accessibility Center will allow vision impaired students to pursue educational and vocational goals previously closed to them. Also, the center will serve as a resource to visually impaired

persons and their families. AFSC staff is exploring a similar project with Bir Zeit University in Ramallah in the West Bank.

Cambodia As part of the Community Work with Disabled Persons program, AFSC staff — themselves women with disabilities — brought together deaf people living in Sihanoukville. Despite the lack of an official Cambodian sign language, the event was a huge success. AFSC staff worked with other groups to develop a Cambodian sign language and then began teaching it to the deaf. A craftsman, who had volunteered for the CWDP making prostheses and chairs for the handicapped — and was himself deaf — was hired to teach classes in the new Cambodian sign language. The students, teacher, and curriculum have since been supported by another American NGO.

These three examples of being responsive, creative, and flexible show how "the way opens" in the midst of AFSC programs.

UN CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

A galvanizing event for justice

by Bahiya Cabral

Program Associate

UN Conference Against Racism

IT HAS THE POTENTIAL to galvanize racial justice activists and create momentum for change.

From August 31 to September 7, 2001, the UN will hold the Third World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa. The conference will be preceded by an NGO forum and, together, these meetings will be the largest ever devoted to discussing the struggle against racism and developing short- and long-term strategies to eradicate racism.

The AFSC recognizes the conference's potential impact and the need for those most affected by racism and xenophobia to have a voice in Durban. That's why, for the past year, AFSC coordinated the Global Voices Project as one way to guarantee grassroots input at the conference.

The project's centerpiece was a series of more than 100 Listening Projects in the United States, South America, and Africa. (Listening Projects are open-ended surveys in which trained listeners conduct in-depth interviews with a variety of people in order to find ways of solving social problems.)

The results and analyses of the Listening Projects are being assembled into a document on racial justice that

will be submitted to the UN and distributed to all government and non-governmental organization delegates at the conference.

Some initial results hint at the complexity of the problems.

"Since independence, we [in Africa] have relationships that look like racism, but they're not," says Ahmed Shariff, the AFSC's Quaker International Affairs Representative for Central/Eastern Africa, who helped coordinate the ten Listening Projects in Africa. "People feel that discrimination [in Africa] is based on ethnicity and tribalism."

The Listening Projects are just one facet of AFSC's activities leading up to the conference. Other efforts include the following:

- The AFSC's African American Community Empowerment Program in Chicago, Illinois, orga-

nized a youth caucus and planning meeting to ensure that young people's voices are included at the conference.

- The Peacebuilding Unit's Africa Program supported the participation of eight antislavery activists from Mauritania to the Africa preparatory meeting, one of four worldwide preparatory meetings leading up to the conference.

While all these activities are important, it's the long-term projects developed during and after the conference that will matter most.

"What we feel we achieved was raising consciousness," Ahmed says of the African Listening Projects. "We want to continue talking about these issues even after the conference."

Likewise, AFSC plans to continue this critical work long after the delegates have left Durban for home.

Africa Peace Tour

Continued from page 1

happened," he added. "We who are the witness of these events give others the opportunity to ask questions so they better understand how people could take knives and machetes and hack other people within their own country."

Jerry Herman, coordinator of the Africa Program, noted that certain themes have evolved from past Peace Tours, including the issue of who profits from Africa's crippling debt, western responses to human rights abuses and natural disasters on the continent, and whether foreign aid benefits the people of Africa. Tour speakers also will address topics such as slavery in Mauritania and Sudan, arms transfers, and genocide.

"We want to give people a sense of the size and diversity of Africa and how they can organize at the local level to make an impact on U.S. policy," Jerry said.

"The Peace Tour is about how our government's policies disable the continent of Africa and our responsibility to make sure that does not happen. The cliché that all politics are local is real. Going to college campuses and into different communities does make a difference."

For more information, log onto <http://www.afsc.org/africa/ptour01.htm>.

You can still participate

If you are interested in going to Durban, it is not too late to have your organization accredited for participation. Also, a shadow conference in New York City will run parallel to the Durban meeting. And stay alert for news of "report-back" meetings and other follow-up activities. For more information, log onto www.ngo-world-conference.org.

You also may contact the following people:

Bahiya Cabral (AFSC)
(215) 241-7179
Bcabral@afsc.org

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(Quaker United Nations Office)
(212) 682-2745
Npuffer@afsc.org

Jane Bai (Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence)
(212) 473-6485
Jbai@caaav.org
(For information on the shadow conference)

The power of nonviolent defiance

by Peter Lems

Program Assistant for Iraq
Middle East Peace Education Program

The power of the Campaign of Conscience for the Iraqi People lies in its nonviolent defiance of U.S. law.

The American Friends Service Committee and Fellowship of Reconciliation launched the campaign in December 1999 to pressure the U.S. government and the United Nations Security Council to end the economic sanctions that have severely restricted the availability of food, medicine, and clean water in Iraq. During the past ten years, sanctions have led to an almost complete breakdown in economic, medical, social, and educational structures.

More than 90 organizations/faith communities — including 65 Friends meetings — and 1,500 individuals have joined or supported the campaign, and Pax Christi USA has become the third major partner.

Last fall, campaign participants began shipping badly needed water purification equipment to Iraq. This action defied U.S. law, since the Treasury Department, which oversees the sanctions, never approved the license application to ship the equipment.

The decision to send the equipment with or without government approval accomplishes the following goals:

- demonstrates to policymakers that campaign participants object to the embargo and are seriously committed to ending the humanitarian crisis in Iraq
- gives participants an opportunity to take direct action against U.S. policy
- provides a "news hook" for education through the mass media

The next shipment will be sent in June. To lead up to that event, we encourage people to write letters to or visit their elected officials, ask their faith communities and organizations to call for the lifting of economic sanctions, and hold educational events. We also are requesting organizational and individual support for the Campaign.

This is an advocacy and educational effort. It will only succeed with your help and support.



Campaign of Conscience demonstration (Philadelphia, August 2000).

A time for action

It has been ten years since the beginning of economic sanctions against Iraq. With a new U.S. Congress and administration in the White House, now is the time to contact elected officials to again call for the immediate lifting of economic sanctions.

For more information on how to participate in the campaign, visit our web site at www.afsc.org/conscience, or contact Peter Lems, AFSC Peace Building Unit, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19102; phone: (215) 241-7170; e-mail: Plems@afsc.org.

The search for peace

by Melissa Elliott

Director, AFSC Publications Unit



HE LEFT FOR THE MIDDLE EAST with a satchel full of hard questions and returned with a heart full of wrenching answers — and a new set of questions.

Four months into her new job as general secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, Mary Ellen McNish visited the Holy Land in December with a delegation of Christian church leaders.

She says the experience gripped her with the question of how to work for peace in a place of deep-seated conflict and all the hurts and injustices that go with it. "It's a difficult dilemma for the AFSC, whether to be the reconciler or the prophetic voice that points out the underlying causes of conflict."

Several Jewish members of Mary Ellen's extended family have told her that the AFSC is perceived as pro-Palestinian. She has heard the arguments on both sides of the conflict: the urgent need for security to protect the Israeli state, the Israeli justification for using strong measures to contain Palestinians who live in Israel, and the painful and dehumanizing effect those measures have on Palestinians.

The AFSC's commitment to the area goes back more than fifty years. The AFSC and other Quaker organizations have worked together on peacemaking on all sides, providing support to Palestinian refugee camps in the 1940s and 1950s, supporting behind-the-scenes diplomacy at the United Nations, operating many service projects throughout the years, and studying evolving conditions.

The delegation in which Mary Ellen participated was organized by Churches for Middle East Peace, invited by the Middle East Council of Churches to witness events firsthand, talk with key players on both sides of the conflict, and bring the story back to people in the United States. Twenty-six delegates made the trip, with leaders representing Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Apostolic churches,



Confronting in the Mi



MIKE DUBOIS/UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE



JAMES MATLACK

the United Church of Christ, Church World Service and Witness of the National Council of Churches, Mennonite Central Committee, and the AFSC.

During the first half of their trip, the delegates visited with Palestinians and toured Palestinian areas. In the second half, they met with Israeli organizations and representatives of the Israeli government.

Since September of last year, a new intifada, begun by Palestinians in response to a visit by Ariel Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque area, brought a crackdown by the Israeli government. Palestinians cannot leave their designated areas without special permits, and more than 400,000 lost their jobs. This caused disruption in the Israeli economy, as well as personal hardship for the Palestinians. The government maintains that Israel is under siege and in a state of war. Officials believe it is not only justified but essential to demolish Palestinian homes, build more Israeli settlements and roads to restrict Palestinians' movements, and to use military force, financed by the U.S. government.

The effect on Palestinians is brutal, causing more anger and retaliation. Although members of the delegation did not condone this response, they came to understand it after seeing homes, family businesses, and olive orchards — some of them many generations old — destroyed to make way for roads and settlements. At one point, they were shocked into silence by the sight of a mortar shell labeled "Made in U.S.A." lying in a mangled kitchen.

Mary Ellen and Jim Matlack, director of AFSC's Washington, D.C., office, attended meeting for worship at Ramallah Friends Meeting. After meeting, Friends living in that besieged city spoke of deplorable Israeli rules of occupation.

Then, full of questions and ready to listen, the delegates met with Israeli officials but did not re-

a dilemma Idle East



peaceful coexistence. . . for all who will live in this land."

After all the conversations, members of the delegation crafted a statement, calling for changes to be made by all sides, including the U.S. government. Delegates agreed to hold discussions and raise awareness among their denominations, continue to work together, and bring the truths they saw to public attention.

Mary Ellen says the challenge she brings back to the AFSC goes much deeper, however, and involves the very core of how we work in the world and our hopes for bringing love and reconciliation into areas of conflict. "It is the fundamental Quaker conviction that all lives — both those of the oppressed and the oppressors — are sacred. That is the belief that keeps us going."

Parts of this story are based on an article in Friends Journal, March 2001, and used with permission.

For more about the delegation's visit, log onto <http://www.loga.org/delegationhome.htm> or <http://www.umns.umc.org/Jerusalem>.

- ① Candlelight vigil for peace in Bethlehem
- ② Jean Zarou (left), clerk of Ramallah Meeting, and Mary Ellen McNish
- ③ Bulldozed home of Palestinian family in Gaza
- ④ Israeli roadblock entering Bethlehem
- ⑤ Delegation member Rev. Brian Grieves (left) and Yehzekel Landau of Rabbis for Human Rights



MIKE DUBOIS/UNITED METHODIST NEWS

ceive convincing or satisfying answers. So, they were particularly touched by a meeting with Rabbis for Human Rights, politically liberal Israelis whose courageous views have isolated them in their own communities.

Mary Ellen says discussions with the rabbis went to a deeper level than those with government officials, examining why the two peoples fear each other so much. The rabbis talked about the grinding, daily effect on people who live every moment with fear that a child, a loved one, or oneself may be blown up on a bus or while shopping for groceries. Creation of the Israeli state in 1948 dealt a huge blow to Palestinians, whose families had lived there for years. This unhealed wound is aggravated by fear, anger, and retaliation on both sides.

The rabbis said such patterns must be broken. "We must make space for another identity, one of

Palestine Youth Program moves in new directions

Editor's note: The following article has been adapted from a recent field report by Youth Program director Mona Ghali.

Just as AFSC's Quaker Palestine Youth Program (QYPY) celebrated its fourth year, the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* began in late September 2000. Since then, QYPY, like other organizations, has struggled to carry on under extremely difficult circumstances.

The intifada stems from a popular dissatisfaction among most Palestinians with the negotiation process. Whatever its underlying causes, the intifada has turned Palestinian life upside down and inside out.

Closures by Israeli authorities have restricted movement between cities, towns, and villages in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, leading to great economic losses and increasing unemployment levels. The closures and restrictions also have affected the movement of staff and program participants. In addition, some program activities in the West Bank and Gaza have either been slowed or completely shut down. For example:

- The start-up for the Green Schools Project, originally planned for October 2000, has been delayed. The project will promote active learning by helping to plant an organic garden in a local school in Rafah.
- The pool of available trainers and resource people necessary for several ongoing projects, such as the Assistive Technology and Architectural Conservation projects, has been significantly reduced due to the restrictions on travel and access to project sites.

In spite of such difficulties, the program has redirected its work into three areas: accessibility for youth with disabilities, protecting and improving the environment, and helping Palestinian youth connect with their cultural roots in a variety of ways, such as oral history, performing arts, and architectural conservation projects.

In its next phase, the QYPY (Gaza) plans to focus on a broad-based community renewal project that will include architectural conservation, vocational training, urban planning (with an emphasis on green areas), and community murals activities.

As such innovative projects indicate, what sets the QYPY apart from other organizations and keeps it relevant even in these difficult times is its capacity to move away from the path of least resistance, search for new ideas, and help provide alternative experiences for young people that encourage creativity, empower them with skills and knowledge, and reinforce their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Behind-the-scenes diplomacy



Lilian Peters

Based in Amman, Jordan, Lilian Peters continues the AFSC tradition of informal diplomacy and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. She is the Middle East Quaker International Affairs Representative, often known as a QIAR (pronounced "choir"). Her assignment covers the area of the southern Mediterranean and the Arab world, with special emphasis on Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Lilian works with nongovernmental organizations, other activists, and, as appropriate, government officials in the region to extend full civil and political rights to women and address issues of economic restructuring and reform. She also raises the concerns of Palestinian refugees living in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

With the failure of the Camp David summit in July and August and the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in September (see accompanying article), peacemaking activities in Lilian's program came to a halt. Instead, she visited areas in conflict, monitored human rights, and provided information and analysis to the AFSC and other groups in the United States.

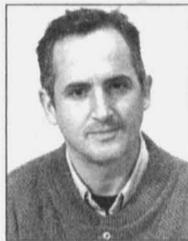
This change in plans gave rise to a new initiative: Lilian is organizing the Regional Conference Against the Use of Child Soldiers in April. The aim of the conference, set to be held in Amman, is for states in the region to sign and ratify the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. This would raise the age for participation in armed conflict from 15 to 18.

Lilian was asked to organize the conference by a steering committee that grew out of an unsuccessful attempt to hold a similar conference in Lebanon.

Markers & Milestones

New EMAP director joins staff

Carlos Esteban Mejia has joined AFSC as the director of the Emergency and Material Assistance Program (EMAP). Originally from Medellin, Colombia, Carlos most recently served in various positions with the Jesuit Refugee Service, working primarily in Colombia, Kosovo, and the former Yugoslavia. He has a master's degree in theology. EMAP provides support and rehabilitation to people experiencing hunger, disease, or exposure that occur during emergencies. Carlos's goals for the program include continuing to link relief efforts to longer-term reconstruction/rehabilitation and expanding volunteer opportunities, especially within the Quaker community.



Coordinator named for Global Economy project

Maureen Heffern Ponicki is the new coordinator of the Democratizing the Global Economy project, part of the AFSC's Peacebuilding Unit. Maureen previously worked for the Jesuit volunteers in Peru, and she has experience in nonprofit program development, fundraising, and community organizing. She also has a master's degree in international economics and social change and development. The Democratizing the Global Economy project aims to protect human rights in trade agreements. Currently, the project is facilitating democratic and informed participation in the development of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a proposed trade agreement for the Western Hemisphere, as well as promoting alternatives that promote human rights and social equity.



Committee member profile Taylor Brelsford: Searching for justice

By Jonis Davis

Development Officer/Pacific Northwest Regional Office (Seattle)

Throughout his years as an activist, AFSC committee member Taylor Brelsford of Anchorage, Alaska, has a history of searching for justice and listening to the experience of other people.

Taylor, an anthropologist who spent nine years in Yup'ik villages in western Alaska, has long asked himself how Alaska natives could hold onto their culture and their subsistence hunting and fishing rights, and how nonnatives could help.

In large part through Taylor's efforts, AFSC initiated the Alaska Listening Project: Alaskans Listening to Alaskans About Subsistence (ALTAS) in 1999, which gathers small groups of Alaskans to learn about the experiences and values at the heart of the subsistence debate.

Taylor, a member of the Pacific Northwest Regional Executive Committee, traces his activist roots to Denver, Colorado. There, as a teenager in the 1960s, he wore a black armband as a form of free expression and went to meetings "where the only adults seemed to be Quakers." After high school, he volunteered to go from church to church with an AFSC slide show opposing antipersonnel weapons.



He also refused to register for the draft and got into prison work.

He arrived in Alaska in 1974 via Europe and Canada.

Once there, he saw laws arising from social movements that protected subsistence, but many native people saw government as the enemy. Taylor had maintained his AFSC connections, and in 1998 the AFSC regional director at the time, Judith Kolokoff, attended the Alaska Yearly Meeting.

It was then that the idea for the Alaska Project was born.

"We talked about the growing tension and mean-spirited debate about subsistence. She [Judith] knew about compassionate listening as it had been done in the Middle East, saw how it might apply," Taylor says. "It seemed like a perfect fit. This was an extraordinary example of spiritual, Quaker process — a special moment when a way opened on things we had agonized about."

"For the past year we've been listening to Alaska Natives and urban hunters. Now they are listening to each other," he says. "Every time it worked I was amazed. This guy had screamed at us in public meetings, but we listened to each other, and I'll never be able again to reduce him to a cardboard stereotype."

Welcome Judith McDaniel

Former AFSC Board member Judith McDaniel has joined the staff as director of the Peacebuilding Unit based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Judith, a member of the Albany (N.Y.) Monthly Meeting, is a writer, teacher, and activist who has published many books and articles on peace and justice issues. Her involvement with AFSC began in 1965 when she was part of an AFSC and Quaker Peace



and Service (Britain) work group in the former East Germany. Since then, she has served on the Nationwide Women's Program (NWP) committee and was an AFSC/NWP representative to the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing. Judith also was on the Arizona Area Program Committee for the Pacific Southwest Region. The Peace Building Unit educates and organizes in the United States on issues related to peace, with particular reference to the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa. A major effort has been to counter the growth of military influence in U.S. public schools.

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- reduced her taxable estate by \$25,000

Gift Annuity Rates Chart			
Age	Rate	*Charitable deduction	*Forgiven Capital Gain
60	6.6%	\$8,193.50	\$4,160.10
65	7.0%	8,864.50	5,318.70
70	7.5%	9,736.75	5,842.00
75	8.2%	10,661.75	5,397.05
80	9.2%	11,684.25	7,010.55
85	10.5%	12,869.00	7,721.40
90	12.0%	14,337.00	8,602.20

*Based on a \$25,000 gift funded with stock, cost basis \$10,000, funded 2/15/2001

One sentence in your will by your attorney can help promote AFSC work and Quaker principles: *"I give and bequeath to the American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 the sum of \$_____ to be used for general purposes."*

For information call toll free 1-888-588-2372, ext. 3
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Name (2) _____ Birth date _____

Address _____

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Phone _____ E-mail _____

Type of asset: Securities Cash

Conference spurs nationwide antideath penalty efforts

PHOTOS: KURT ROSENBERG



by Kurt Rosenburg

Death Penalty Project Assistant
Criminal Justice Program

When the death penalty is abolished in the United States, activists may view this past November's antideath penalty gathering in San Francisco, California, as the catalyst that pushed the movement to the next level.

"Committing to Conscience: Building a Unified Strategy to End the Death Penalty" was one of the largest antideath penalty events ever. Eleven organizations hosted the gathering, and more than a thousand individuals from diverse constituencies attended. The conference was sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the Community of Sant'Egidio, Death Penalty Focus, and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

For many, the heart and soul of the conference

was the presence of murder victims' family members opposed to state-sanctioned killing and several men and women freed from death row. These included William Nieves, who was released from Pennsylvania's death row three weeks before the conference.

Having promised those he left behind on the row that he would advocate on their behalf, William stirred the crowd with his harrowing story of injustice and his commitment to work for abolition. Since then, AFSC has helped fund a position for William, who will be working against the death penalty as a community organizer in Pennsylvania.

The conference also

ABOLISH
THE
DEATH
PENALTY



Class reunion

Nearly 60 former and prospective participants from the AFSC's Mexico summer projects gathered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, this past February for a reunion, fund raiser, and celebration of this long-running program. The afternoon featured presentations from Summer 2000 and other former participants, a video, and an update on the current projects carried out by AFSC's Mexi-



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PETER UNGER IS A BUSY MAN—and an enthusiastic supporter of AFSC and its programs around the world. Awhile ago, to make his hectic life easier, he asked about options for giving. He wanted an automatic plan that would eliminate the time and expense of writing a check on a regular basis.

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spurred renewed efforts to establish a moratorium on the death penalty at the state level.

North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Arizona, New Jersey, and Maryland are among the states where moratorium initiatives are emerging. In addition, moratorium organizing will be highlighted this year through legislative campaigns in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Texas, and North Carolina; public opinion polling in Pennsylvania; and more moratorium resolutions.

Furthermore, AFSC will continue to take the lead in efforts to make New Hampshire free of the death penalty.

Finally, the Religious Organizing Against the Death Penalty Project, coordinated by AFSC, held a series of forums at the conference that reflected the diversity of faith-based antideath penalty work. The project is working closely with activists in a number of states, including Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Texas, and Illinois.

"This conference has brought together abolition, civil rights, and faith-based organizations and other groups who share a desire to ensure justice for all Americans," Wisconsin Sen. Russ Feingold said in his keynote address. "Yes,

the road to abolition may be uphill all the way. And there will be thorns. There will be stones in the road. But let us resume our climb."

Conference participants demonstrate outside San Quentin, California's death row prison.

Mexico summer projects

can partner organization, SEDEPAC (*Servicio, Desarrollo, y Paz AC* – Service, Development, and Peace). If you're a former participant and wish to reconnect with the program and/or others from your year, please write to Mexico Summer Programs, AFSC, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, call (215) 241-7295, or send an e-mail to mexsummer@afsc.org.