

Human Rights

Albuquerque's Community in Solidarity for Human Rights



Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower
President of the United States

Photocredits: Courtesy Amnesty International



Photo Credit: Amnesty International

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By Mazin Qumsiyeh

Newsletter

Human Rights News Letter

By Mazin Qumsiyeh

Dear friends:

I gave a talk at the NATO Defence College in Rome to some 82 officers and civilians from many NATO countries and affiliated or partner countries (including Egypt, UAE, Jordan, etc). An Israeli colleague who lives in London also presented his point of view and read on things and then we took questions. We also participated in small group meetings and discussions. I was pleased with the level of sophistication, excellent questions asked, and hospitality we received. The commanding officers and all others were very kind to us. We will not forget this visit. While in Rome for three days we got to visit the Vatican including seeing the magnificent Sistine Chapel paintings. We got to tour the museums and also

Editors note: Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh, a geneticist, moved his family from Connecticut back to Palestine and is a professor at the University of Gaza. He writes regularly from Gaza. Newsletter

visit the Roman Forum and the Palatine. There, I was interested to see for the first time Titus arch which was built after the death of this emperor. On one of its panels it celebrates its victory over the Jewish rebels in Jerusalem.

Most people today identify with the Jewish rebels and not with the Romans. Even the guidebook to the ruins we were using referred to “destruction of Jerusalem” (actually careful and unbiased historians disagree with such a description since the rebellion was rather small and narrow and its was contained rather quickly with Jerusalem flourishing later except for limited access by the Jewish community which was then still a minority of the population of Palestine). Historians also tell us that Jews continued to live in small communities throughout Palestine

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(later many of them converting to Christianity or to Islam). Before this rebellion, Jews in Palestine had full autonomy with their own King (e.g. King Herod who condemned Jesus). The Roman administration was until this armed rebellion rather liberal in its dealings with ethnic and religious minorities. Before and after the rebellion, Palestine remained a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community despite many efforts of many rulers who failed to change it by military force sometimes succeeding for a few decades) one of the crusader kingdoms lasted 110 years before Palestine was restored to have Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities living side by side). Let us hope that this is the last failed attempt to create a homogenous Palestine (aka Eretz Yisrael). I for one can never understand the desire to live in a homogenous state since variety is the spice of life.

Like Jesus who identified with and preached to Jew and gentile, I find myself identifying with both the Romans and the Jews of Palestine of that first century AD as I identify today with all communities in Palestine. This is first because they were human beings like all of us caught in a set of historical structures and machinations that left them in the situation they faced. I identified especially with the Jews who resisted Roman occupation non-violently. Jesus was to become the symbol of such power of such resistance. That the armed resisters ultimately failed (they ere called saccari because they hid their assassination knives in their cloths) while eventually the philosophy of Jesus spread like wild fire in the Roman Empire should be telling to us. It was three plus centuries and hundreds of thousands of martyrs before finally the Roman

After more than a year, echoes of the Israeli assault on Gaza are still ricocheting up and down the canyons of time.

An account of a United Nations investigation of the Gaza incursion, the Goldstone Report, noted that war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity were committed by both the Palestinians and the Israelis. The document is named for South African Justice Richard Goldstone, who headed the investigation. The UN General Assembly adopted it by a vote of 114-18, the United States and Israel leading the dissent. The Israeli government responded to the report ferociously. Any criticism of their actions is completely unacceptable. They labeled the Report "biased" in spite of the fact that they had launched an attack on a largely unarmed civilian population who could not flee to safety due to being walled in.

To mollify the American-Israeli lobby, Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) introduced H Res867, "calling upon the President and the Secretary of State to oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration of the 'Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (the Goldstone

Gaza Update

By Salie Alice Thompson



Report)...” In spite of impassioned statements by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and others condemning the resolution, it passed by a vote of 344-36, with 22 abstentions.

Two New Mexico representatives, Martin Heinrich and Ben Lujan, by abstaining, were among those courageous enough to stand up against the ongoing American policy of granting the Israeli government immunity for any crimes it chooses to commit, and denying any effort to make it accountable. However, they were not quite courageous enough to vote “no”. Our

southern representative, Harry Teague, voted “yes,” to help ensure the American message that anything the Israeli government does is legal. In the year following the assault, the Gaza residents have been under siege, unable to obtain food, medicine, or building materials to repair their devastated homeland. The only goods that have arrived there have been smuggled through underground tunnels.

To mark the anniversary of the assault on Gaza, a group 550 internationals, dubbed the Viva Palestina Convoy, laden with humanitarian aid, have repeatedly attempted to evade the barriers and enter Gaza. Included in the Viva Palestina Convoy are three New Mexicans: Lori Rudolf and Will Covert of Albuquerque and Ken Mayer of Santa Fe. They have been forbidden entrance to Gaza by the governments of Israel and Egypt. Egypt is complicit in the entrance refusal in order to protect the large grants it gets, courtesy of the America taxpayer. Members of Viva Palestina have been subject to beatings and tear gas attacks by Egyptian police.

As of now about one hundred members of the Convoy have been permitted to enter Gaza. None of the New Mexico members were included in that number

Empire decided itself to adopt Christianity rather than keep fighting it. Yet unfortunately as the Jewish theologian Marc Ellis articulated effectively, such a Constantinian (transformation of) Christianity in the form of state power would inevitably lead to the atrocities of the Crusades and far more (e.g. use of Christianity to justify colonization). Ellis further argues that the new Constantinian Judaism in the form of Zionism is equally damaging to Prophetic Judaism. One day I would like to

write more on this but for now, the sight of ruins of great empires AND visiting with great people descendent of oppressors and oppressed and getting along in equality always remind me that we all die someday and that great stone edifices, palaces, and statues are all equally ephemeral while people remain and in many cases improve. And as the song goes, “in the end only kindness matters.”

Sure enough, I saw so much

kindness, so much human beauty in Italy that trumps all other beauty. The last 24 hours we spent time in rural Italy among kind and generous farmers who remind me so much of Palestine (in the areas of Offida. San Benedetto, Ascoli). I think to myself that the hundreds of Palestinian villages (including my own of Beit Sahour) would have been just as nice, just as peaceful and tranquil as those villages if it was not for that Constantinian form of Judaism that decided to take on the crazy project of

Gaza Freedom March

By Iris Keltz

Historic events took place last week that received scant media attention in this country. Grass-roots activists are on the move. More than 1,400 people from 42

countries assembled in Cairo on the eve of the new year planning to bring humanitarian aid into

Gaza. This Freedom March included prominent authors, activists, educators, clergy, journalists, concerned citizens and interfaith groups including devout Jewish Pagans like Starhawk whose eye-witness blog was shared around the world. A separate relief convoy, known as Viva Palestina, left Britain on December 5 and would have met the Marchers on December 27 had Egypt not changed their demands for entry.

A group of concerned citizens, including myself, stood in front of the Federal Courthouse as part of the non-violent global mobilization of cities and countries across the world. They flew kites in Afghanistan, held vigils across Europe, Turkey, Canada, the US—and-Israel/Palestine. In Sderot, an Israeli town on the Gaza border, children tied letters of peace to white balloons and sent them south. Israelis and internationals stood in Bethlehem, Ramallah

and the Eretz Crossing. In Albuquerque, we read the names of children killed during the siege and recited prayers in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Icy hands were warmed by kindred spirits. Passing cars honked in support



Photo Credit: Palestine Center For Human Rights

but there was no TV, radio or newspaper to carry the story

December 27th marked the one-year anniversary of Israel's 22-day siege on Gaza. Horrifying

weaponry were used on an impoverished, mostly refugee population of 1.5 million, half under the age of seventeen, depriving them of power, water, food and access to medical care. Targeting hospitals and educational institutions including international and UN schools—effectively destroyed the infrastructure of civil society, leaving 1400 dead, a third of them children. Thousands of people live in tents or the ruins of destroyed homes which have not been rebuilt because reconstruction material remains barred from entering. Israeli tanks have left but the complete closure of Gaza's borders, airspace, coastline and access to the sea, continues.

Collective punishment of a civilian population is against international law. The fourth Geneva Convention requires all signatory governments, including Israel, Egypt and the US, to protect civilian populations under Occupation.

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transforming a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society into a Jewish state (maximum geography and minimum demography). Instead, hundreds of villages, most dating to millennia (2-4 thousand years old) were destroyed and those like mine that remained lost so much land and received so many displaced people that their character is no longer what it used to be or would have been.

While we were here we followed closely the travails of the Gaza Freedom March (finally denied entry to Gaza) and the Viva Palestina Convoy to Gaza (finally allowed entry after detours and clashes). It is an honor to call many of the people in both groups friends. Actually we might miss seeing some of our Italian friends who are still in Gaza. I spoke tonight at San Benedetto to 50 people. Tomorrow, I speak in Milano, then in Turino on the 9th, possibly Bologna on the 10th then in Roma again on the 11th. I will then travel to Amman on the 12th. But as always, you are welcome to visit us in Palestine-

PS: Just to be clear, thanks to Israeli restrictions, less than 3% of Palestinians are able to travel like I do and a smaller fraction can actually do it financially or logistically and the numbers in Gaza are closer to 0.001%.

Mazin Qumsiyeh

A Bedouin in cyberspace, a villager at home (and now on a nomadic trip in Italy) <http://qumsiyeh.org>



Photo Credit: Amnesty International

When the Egyptian government blocked activists from entering Gaza, eye-witness blogger-journalists, hoping to raise international awareness and support, described the subsequent chaos and spontaneous sit-ins that occurred outside the French and American Embassies and the United Nations building. Hemmed in by barriers and security forces, people chanted, drummed and shared energy bars. Hundreds tied notes to a bridge crossing the Nile. A Santa Fe Vet for Peace, wrote—"I am an American Jew who mourns the loss of 1400 brothers and sisters in Gaza." Other protesters crossed the Sinai Desert only to be placed under house arrest. At the last minute, the Egyptian government allowed

two busloads of internationals to enter the besieged Strip where they were welcomed by thousands, including the Hamas led Palestinian government. Will Covert, from Albuquerque, reported that the 50 teddy bears he'd brought as gifts to children living in an orphanage were onboard the scaled-down convoy. Among the 100 Freedom Marchers were four Orthodox Jews who celebrated the Sabbath in Gaza City. In an attempt to block the tunnel economy, a lifeline of food, medicine, animals, motorcycles as well as illegal traffic, the US is spending billions to erect a 50-foot steel barrier, sunk into the earth, under the border between Egypt and Gaza. Our government provides Israel with more military

Formerly the ABQ TRIal Balloon aid than any country in the world. Egypt is second.

The bulk of the international marchers may have been prevented from entering Gaza but before dispersing, they created a statement of solidarity, affirming their commitment to: Palestinian Self-Determination, Ending the Occupation of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, Equal Rights for All within historic Palestine and the Right of Return for refugees. They pledged to support the Palestinian call of July 2005 for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) to compel Israel to comply with international law."Yesterday, the blogs jubilantly reported that after traveling 5,000 miles across Europe, Turkey, Syria and Jordan, the Viva Palestina Convoy entered Gaza with medical aid and was greeted by a thousand cheers and people carrying flowers. Mission Accomplished! Breaking news today: Israel launched a midnight attack, flying F 16's over densely populated areas of Gaza spreading fear and panic among civilians who were asleep. The European, mostly Irish convoy is still there. Apparently Israel believes their mission is not accomplished.

Iris Keltz is an author, teacher, activist, and above all else a grandmother.

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www.vivapalestina.org/home.htm

www.occupation101.com A FILM ABOUT THE HISTORICAL AND ROOT CAUSES OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT AND THE US GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

When religion goes rancid, there will be hell to pay....

By John Shipley, B.A., M.Div.

Recent disruptions in the body politic have resulted in the question: "When did civil discourse become so uncivil?"

Answers vary but include things like: 1) The divisiveness was caused by the election of Barak Obama to President; 2) The origins lie within the contested election of George W. Bush to President; 3) Congressional hearings on the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court; 4) Watergate; and 5) Vietnam. The answer correctly lies in earlier historical events: *Engel v Vitale* in 1962 and *Abington School District v Schemp* in 1963.

Engel v Vitale was the Supreme Court decision which prohibited government written and mandated prayer in the public schools. *Abington School District v Schemp* prohibited forced Bible readings in public schools.

These two decisions were widely and wrongly interpreted to ban God from the public schools. In point of fact *Engel v Vitale* did not ban prayer from schools and *Abington School District v Schemp* did not ban the use of the Bible in the school curriculum. Such details were and are lost on Fundamentalists who continue to bemoan, in anger, what they interpret as hostility to religion.

To be precise, "Fundamentalism" is a 19th century invention wherein it was claimed that in order to be considered "Christian", five "fundamentals of belief were necessary. They include 1) inerrancy of scripture; 2) virgin birth of Jesus; 3) substitutionary death (atonement); 4) physical resurrection; and 5) the second coming of Christ.

Two other developments of the 19th century became a direct challenge to the fundamentalists. The first was the publication of Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" and the second was the development of a format for the study of scripture known as "form criticism" which sought to apply basic research techniques to the study of scripture.

The writing of Darwin called into question the accuracy of the two creation stories in Genesis, with expected hostility. It still angers many fundamentalists who opt for more compatible notions like what is called "creationism" or its more formal cousin, "intelligent design". As with the prayer case and the Bible reading case, the Courts have found the teaching of creationism and intelligent design to be unconstitutional use of religious doctrine in the public schools.

Religious leaders reacted to the *Engel* case and the *Abington* case with unmasked hostility and anger. Norman Vincent Peale, Billy Graham and Cardinal Spellman all issued statements openly attacking the Supreme Court. Whatever the actual meaning of the scriptural admonition to "render unto Caesar", the battle lines were drawn and remain today. In the view of the complaining religionists, the Ten Commandments were superior to and favored over the Ten Amendments known as the Bill of Rights, and any other part of our Constitution.

On the political side of the equation the battle was also joined. The John Birch Society publicly denounced the findings of the Court and erected billboards calling for the Impeachment of Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Other extremist political groups joined in this angry confrontation between the community of faith and our constitutional form of government.

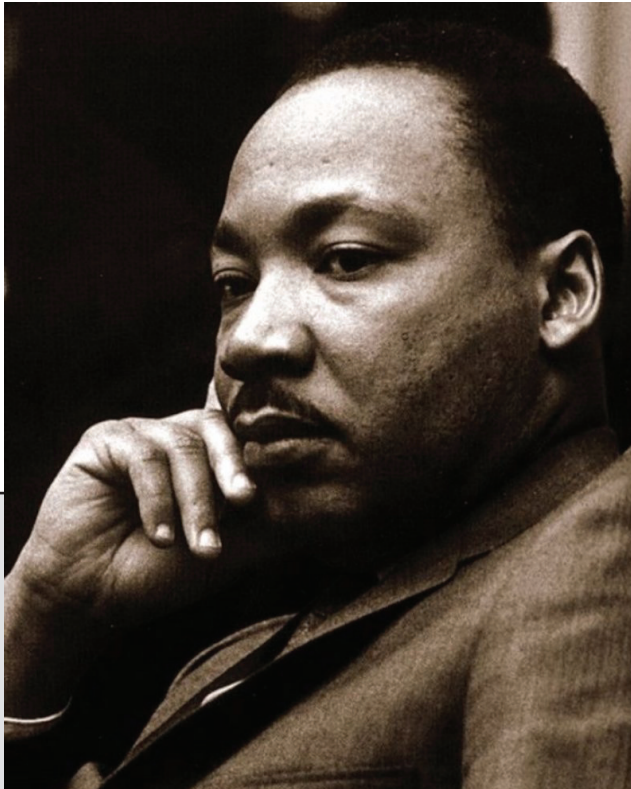
The reason Darwin was so hated is that his research and writing called into question the first of the

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five fundamentals, i.e., inerrancy of scripture. To see how the challenge presented take an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper. Draw a line from top to bottom in the center of the page. On the left side of the paper list the order of creation in Chapter 1 of Genesis. On the right side of the paper list the order of creation found in Chapter 2 of Genesis. It will become immediately evident that the two creation stories are different. Inerrancy is lost.

An example of why form criticism was so hated can be found in the New Testament. By turning to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John it can be seen that the fifth of the fundamentals is challenged. By reading the texts of each, beginning with the resurrection appearances, it will be seen that not once did Jesus say anything about returning...not one single word. The apocalyptic visions and the "Left Behind" notions all have their origins in texts other than those attributed to Jesus. Upon his reported resurrection Jesus never once mentioned he was coming back.

These open challenges to the authority and integrity of religious thought and teachings has left a lot of people really angry. When their fundamentalism is joined to conservative (reactionary) political thought they create a new being: the angry American. They leave mainline denominations and form mega-churches, all of which are non-doctrinal. They establish sectarian schools or home schools to displace public education. And they teach a kind of Protestant fundamentalist "Sharia". They place their belief above and as more important than science, the constitution, "activist judges" and all the other contemporary demons they think they are called to resist in the name of Christ. If you want to know where all the lack of civility has its origins you need only follow the words of President Harry S. Truman: "They need to read their history."



The State of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Dream in 2010

by Dedrick Muhammad

Over 40 years after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, his words still speak to the social conditions that so many Americans face. Our unemployment rate is hovering at 10 percent, and the wealthiest 10 percent of us control over 70 percent of the nation's wealth. Economic inequality remains a barrier to greater racial equality. The national commemoration of King's birthday, therefore, is more for reflection than celebration.

During one of the worst economic crises seen in this country, black/white economic inequality is still a vast and greatly under-recognized challenge for this country. Two generations past the 1960s civil rights movement, African Americans make less than 60 cents on every dollar of income for whites. Their unemployment rate stands at 150 percent of the national average.

As King fought to end this country's racial divisions, he recognized that economic inequality was as great

a barrier to his vision of a more racially inclusive America as Jim Crow segregation laws. Many forget that the March on Washington, where King delivered his famed "I Have a Dream" speech, was actually called the "March on Washington for Freedom and Jobs." When one of the last great symbols of political hope, President John F. Kennedy, was in the White House, King called hundreds of thousands to come to the nation's capital to fight for an America that would reflect its best values rather than its greatest fears. "We called our demonstration a campaign for jobs and income because we felt that the economic question was the most crucial that black people, and poor people generally, were confronting," he told *Look Magazine* in 1968.

In 2010, after the first challenging year of the presidency of another man who came into office riding a wave of hope, Americans can honor King's legacy by advancing a contemporary

Formerly the ABQ TRIal Balloon agenda of jobs, wealth building, and peace.

King and other civil rights leaders advocated progressive economic reforms with such proposals as the Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged and the Freedom Budget of 1966. A new report from United for a Fair Economy that I co-authored builds on that work by advocating bold and progressive economic reforms to meet today's challenges. Reforms proposed in this report, titled "State of the Dream 2010: Drained," include a major jobs creation program, strong investment in job training, an equity assessment of federal spending, and returning the tax system to one where those with the most concentrated wealth provide greater investment in the public good.

A rededication to King's vision can redirect the United States back to the path of greater equality, and a stronger economy for the middle and working classes. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't believe in the trickle-down philosophy that has run our economy for the past three decades. Instead, his "liberation theology" analysis called for siding with and addressing specifically the challenges of the most disenfranchised to advance society as a whole.

History witnessed this strategy's success with the results of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. All Americans—women, immigrants, the disabled, the elderly, the young and the poor—benefited from the vast social programs and protections that resulted from that struggle. As the nation continues to heal from an economic and financial crisis caused by unregulated greed, we'll find racial inequality unchanged and overall economic inequality at unprecedented heights. It's time to finally make a unified thrust to bridge racial and economic inequality.

Dedrick Muhammad is a senior organizer and research associate at the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank that transforms ideas into action for peace, justice, and the environment. He is a co-author of "State of the Dream 2010: Drained—Jobless and Foreclosed; Pulling the Plug on Communities of Color," a new report from the organization United for a Fair Economy.

Published in Minutemanmedia.org

The Earthquake That Triggered A Global Empathic Response: What The Haitian Crisis Tells Us About Human Nature

by Jeremy Rifkin

Author, 'The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis'

Frantic tweets and videos have been seeping out of Haiti, pleading for help from the rest of the human race in the aftermath of a devastating earthquake that leveled one of the poorest countries on the planet, spreading destruction and death.

The response by people all over the world has been immediate. Governments, NGOs, and individuals are mobilizing relief missions, and social websites are lighting up, as the collective human family extends a global empathic embrace to its neighbors in this small Caribbean nation. We saw a similar global response in the wake of Hurricane Katrina that devastated New Orleans and the gulf coast of the United States and the giant tsunami that struck Asian and African coastlines earlier in the decade.

In recent years, whenever natural disasters have struck, in what is increasingly becoming a globally interconnected and interdependent world, human beings have come together as an extended family in an outpouring of compassion and concern. For these brief moments of time, we leave behind the many differences that divide us to act as a species. We become *Homo empathicus*.

Yet, when faced with similar tragedies that are a result of human-induced behavior, rather than precipitated by natural disasters, we are often unable to muster the same collective empathic response.

For example, recall when oil hit a record \$147/barrel on world markets in July, 2008. Prices soared and basic necessities from food to heating oil became prohibitively expensive, imperiling the lives of hundreds of millions of human beings. Food riots broke out in more than 30 countries. Yet, the collective response of the human race was barely perceptible. Similarly, plagued with the real-time impacts of human induced climate change, which is already devastating ecosystems in countries around the world

and creating millions of environmental refugees, the global response has been weak.

The question is: why?

It's true that unexpected natural disasters quickly arouse our attention. But, my suspicion is that this is not the only reason that we are unable to respond to human induced suffering with the same emotional and cognitive focus. The problem lies much deeper. When human induced behavior results in suffering to others on a large scale, we tend to shrug our shoulders as if to say, "that's human nature and therefore, there's not much we can do about it." That's because we have come to think of human nature as essentially selfish. Our beliefs have become a self-fulfilling prophecy-- even if they turn out to be incorrect.

At the dawn of the modern market economy and the nation-state era, the philosophers of the Enlightenment argued that human beings are autonomous agents, and are detached, rational, and driven by material self-interest and utilitarian pursuits.

But, is that who we really are?

If so, then how do we explain the empathic response to natural disasters like the one that occurred in Haiti this past week. Perhaps our ideas about human nature merely reflect the operating assumptions of the modern market economy and provide those in power with an easy way to justify and explain the suffering inflicted on others, writing it off as a reflection of our species' aggressive, predatory and selfish behavior.

But, what if these age old assumptions about human nature are false? In the past 15 years, scientists from a wide range of fields, from evolutionary biology to neurocognitive research and child development, have been making breathtaking discoveries that are forcing us to rethink our long-held beliefs about human nature. Researchers are discovering mirror-neurons--the so-called empathy neurons--that allow human beings and other species to feel and experience another's situation as if it were one's own. We are, it appears, the most social animals and we seek intimate participation and companionship with our fellows.

It is only when our basic biological drive of empathic

engagement is repressed or denied that secondary drives like aggression, acquisitiveness, and selfish behavior come to the surface.

It turns out that empathic consciousness has grown steadily over history. Our forager/hunter ancestors only extended primitive empathic distress to their immediate blood relatives and extended family. With the rise of the world's great religions, empathic consciousness extended to those of like-minded religious affiliation. Jews empathized with Jews, Christians with Christians, Muslims with Muslims, etc. In the modern market economy and nation-state era, the empathic embrace extended to people sharing a common national identity. American empathized with Americans, Germans with Germans, Japanese with Japanese, etc.

Today, distributed information and communication technologies are bringing together the entire human race in an extended family. Is it so difficult, then, to imagine a leap to biosphere consciousness and the extension of empathy to our species as a whole and to the other creatures that cohabit this planet with us? Think for a moment, about the global empathic response when a young college pre-med student was gunned down in the protests that followed the flawed Iranian election. Within minutes, millions of college students around the world were viewing a cell-phone video of the killing and were extending their empathy to the young people in Iran. Or consider the release of the video showing a polar bear and her cub stranded on an ice floe in the arctic because of global warming. Millions of youngsters around the world instantly empathized with the plight of the mother and her cub.

Schoolchildren everywhere are learning that their everyday behavior--the food they eat, the electricity they use, the family car they drive in, and myriad other consumer habits intimately affect the wellbeing of every other human being and every other creature on Earth. This is the emergence of biosphere consciousness and the beginning of the next stage of our evolutionary journey as an empathic being.

Now we need to prepare the groundwork for an empathic civilization that is compatible with our core nature. This will require a rethinking of parenting styles, reforming our educational system, reinventing our business models, and transforming our governing

institutions so that the way we live our lives is attuned to and, in accord with, our fundamentally empathic nature.

Lest we think this is an impossible task, consider again the global empathic outpouring for the victims of the Haitian earthquake. Then ask, why we can't harness that same global empathic embrace, not only to rescue victims of natural disasters, but also to raise generations of empathic global citizens who can live together in relative peace and harmony in a biosphere world.

This appeared in Huffington Post.



Severe damage in a residential area of Port-au-Prince, Haiti after a major earthquake occurred on January 12, 2010. Over 150,000 people were killed and schools, hospitals homes and the presidential palace were destroyed.

**Reuters/ Eduardo Munoz,
courtesy www.alertnet.org and
Habitat for Humanity Haiti**



11th grade pupils in the Carmel-Zvulun Regional School in the north of Israel on parade in the Youth Battalions Training Week. Source: <http://www.carmel-zvulun.com/energy/gadnapics/default2.htm>.

Photo from, 2004, the New Profile Report on Child Recruitment In Israel page 34.

Israeli Feminists Decry Militarization of Israeli Education System

Press release, New Profile, 16 December 2009

The following press release was issued on electronicIntifada.net 13 December 2009 by New Profile following the group's exclusion by the Israeli Minister of Education from Israeli high school debates on civil rights:

New Profile, the feminist movement to civilize Israeli society, wrote Minister of Education Gideon Saar this morning, strongly condemning his recent instructions to prohibit its members' participation in high school debates convened by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) on questions of human rights and freedom of expression.

New Profile wrote the minister that his act had exposed the government's true stand on civil rights and freedom of expression, also belying the Education Ministry's professed respect for tolerance. "The minister's step was taken in tandem with the decision he took to send yet more military personnel into schools—a move designed to increase enthusiasm for fighting," New Profile advised in its letter. "For

over a decade now, our movement has been cautioning of the danger of ignoring the wishes of students, parents and teachers to freely and openly discuss these subjects prior to the students' induction into the military at age 18. The Minister's present steps increase the repression of voices seeking to frame and examine social responsibility in non-militarized terms."

New Profile's letter explained that, "The perceptions transmitted by the present educational system generate an acceptance of warfare as a sound national strategy. They encourage veneration for the use of force and aggrandize Jewish nationalism, while devaluing the lives of Palestinians. At the same time, they sow rampant fear and dread of a new Holocaust. Ongoing endorsement of the use of force in combination with the consistent enhancement of nationalism and constantly fanned fears, maintain a state of war and, also, of severe social stratification and inequality. The military has long since become a normalized, daily aspect of Israeli education and upholds war as the apparent, sole solution to Israel's political problems. The continuous

state of warfare serves as a pretext for prolonging the military occupation and seemingly excuses the State of Israel from its accountability to the Palestinian people but also, no less, its accountability to the young Israelis that it deploys to perform the occupying, policing, destruction and terrorization.” New Profile sharply criticized the abuse of authority evident in the minister’s ban, adding that his decision silences not only New Profile but also the voice of every individual striving for a free and open civil society discourse on relations of military and society.

New Profile members, the letter added—students, sisters, fathers, educators, citizens—welcome this moment of truth in Israeli education, clearly exposing it as an instrument of suppression, silencing independent thought and free expression among principals, teachers and students, who are barred from open debate on issues affecting the individual life, health and future of each and every student. All the above are officially forbidden to ask openly just who stands to gain or lose from compulsory conscription. New Profile “stand[s] by the many educators, parents and youngsters who are seriously troubled by the fact that 18-year-old boys and girls have been conscripted, for 60 years now, into years of near-forced labor, with almost no remuneration and harsh working conditions, due to a decades-old decision made in very different circumstances.”

Further, the letter notes that “military obedience and civil obedience are not one and the same. The military is an inherently hierarchical system operated through military commands. To avoid blindly obeying blatantly illegal orders, those serving in the military are left to rely on universal moral values potentially imbibed from their families or civil education. Students, however, are first and foremost citizens who should be guided to independent critical thinking. How can the education system and the educators who staff it faithfully perform their responsibilities when the head of this system openly dismisses their judgment, sending army officers to instruct them in love of one’s country, measured in force and bloodshed.

“Every instance of silencing stems from fear. A steadfast, confident position, a true respect for teachers and students, would allow these to listen, to discuss, and to choose their paths from the spectrum of available options. A Minister of Education who prohibits an open discussion of military and state by the very youths he designates to perform the orders of both, in fact impairs their ability to independent and complex thinking.

“New Profile has called consistently, for the past 10 years, for a thorough revision of Israel’s system of education; we demand its transformation into a system providing a democratic and civil education, an education compatible with peace, with negotiating resolutions to conflict, rather than mobilizing for organized violence.”

New Profile expressly calls on the Minister to address this core question: Why has he denied New Profile the inalienable right of every citizen to a freely expressed opinion and why should he deny students the right to decide on the type of society they wish to live in?



13-year old Muhammad Badwan from the Palestinian town Biddo near Jerusalem tied to a Border Police jeep to serve as human shield against stone throwing. 15 April 2004. Source: IMC Israel (http://israel.indymedia.org/zope/channels/imc_open_hebrew/111). Photo from, 2004, the New Profile Report on Child Recruitment In Israel page 48.



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