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## What Witness Can New England Friends Make in Times Like These?

~Martha Yager~

Weare NH Monthly Meeting, Coordinator of the American Friends Service Committee's program in Southeastern New England

*As I was preparing to give a talk on this subject I was bemoaning the assignment to a friend who has little use for organized religion. I expected some sympathy but instead heard "Oh, that is really important. The Quakers, they always are so committed and act with such integrity. I always look to them to kind of show the way."*

I suspect most of us have heard similar sentiments before. They are humbling. But the reality is the larger community does look to Quakers as some sort of moral compass in troubling times. So what do we have to say in this time and place?

The other day I sat and made a list of the ills of the world that many Quakers are responding to: war (both ongoing and threatened), eroding civil liberties, torture, the prison industry, global warming, the need

to shift federal budget priorities to strengthen the common good (universal health care, adequate housing, education, food security, infrastructure, etc), racism, the glorification of violence, immigration.... It is a long list and it is easy to be overwhelmed by the urgent need to make some huge changes in the ways we live in



*Immigration raid demonstration outside Immigration & Customs Enforcement office, Providence RI, photo by Martha Yager*

this country and how this country lives in the world. I suspect that Quakers are almost as vulnerable to paralysis in the face of such urgent need as anyone else. Yet I draw my inspiration from both my Quaker elders, who have an astonishing capacity to keep working for peace and justice well into their eighties (and more!) and from young Quakers who have taken what they

were taught to heart and are out there on the front lines of many of these challenges.

But if we are honest, we will also listen to some of the young voices and voices from our larger communities that are chiding us to do more, to be more willing to sacrifice the comfortableness and the privilege we are hardly aware of having slipped into enjoying. At

what point will we say that rallies and vigils and letter writing are not enough (though they are important) and move from challenging the symptoms of a destructive system to address the fundamentals of the system itself? We may have to admit that the system has provided many of us with fairly comfortable lives and ask

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*...resistance as spectacle has cut loose from its origins in genuine civil disobedience and is becoming more symbolic than real. Colorful demonstrations and weekend marches are fun and vital, but alone they are not powerful enough to stop wars. Wars will be stopped only when soldiers refuse to fight, when workers refuse to load weapons onto ships and aircraft, when people boycott the economic outposts of Empire that are strung across the globe.*

*—Arundhati Roy*

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ourselves what we are willing to give up. When will we decide that the more socially acceptable activism of letter writing and demonstrations are not enough, that other forms of non-violent direct action may be called for? Or that we may need to move to a smaller home on a transit line? Or, instead of retiring, volunteer for



*Rachel Corrie, killed in the Gaza Strip while witnessing, 2003, courtesy of the Corrie Peace Center, Rafah, Gaza Strip*

a year in New Orleans or some other troubled place? I think the question may not be so much one of faith (at least the words are there as we speak of believing in the power of light overcoming the ocean of darkness) but one of faithfulness, of what risks we will take, of what we might be called to let go of if we are to truly challenge the forces that sustain the system and live deeply into the testimonies of peace, integrity, equality and simplicity.

I think part of what Quakers bring to these times that the larger community hungers for is precisely that faith, that belief in the power of the light in the face of the evil we face so starkly these days, that gives courage to act and that names the spiritual dimension of the struggle. Lived faith, that insists on acting with integrity, respecting the dignity of every person and is therefore



*Mothers' Day Walk, Boston, May 2008, photo by Skip Schiel*

non-violent in nature, is such an aberration in a culture of violence and ostentatious wealth that it inspires those we work with.

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*Our we willing to risk friendships and our own comfort to refuse to be complicit in perpetuating myths about immigrants, to give assistance to wounded Iraqis at the risk of being targeted for giving money to "terrorists"... , to organize a group of faith leaders to sit in at the state house over budget cuts to critical state programs?*

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But we must not expect people to come to us. In Rhode Island there have been 12 soldier deaths in the war in five years and we are rightly working to end the war. But last year alone there were over 25 deaths of young people in gun violence in Providence. Where are the peace activists on our troubled streets and on the issues at the root of that violence? People are disappearing in the night from their homes or the streets, picked up in frightening ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids. [Please see Mary Hopkins' article about immigration on p 7.] Whole communities are terrified at the hate speech and citizen's arrests unleashed by the RI Governor's blaming immigrants for the state's budget woes. What is needed of us in the face of this violence? How can we use our privilege in solidarity with vulnerable people in our community? The list of communities,

in this country and around the world, that are being crushed by a system designed to benefit only a few is extensive and growing. Are we willing to risk



Mothers' Day Walk, Boston, May 2008, photo by Skip Schiel

friendships and our own comfort to refuse to be complicit in perpetuating myths about immigrants, to give assistance to wounded Iraqis at the risk of being targeted for giving money to "terrorists" (i.e. a charity sponsored by a Muslim organization), to organize a group of faith leaders to sit in at the state house over budget cuts to critical state programs? We make the connections between budget cuts and war in our conversations – yet often fail to recognize

that this community work is also peace work. And we are needed there.

I suspect we understand on some levels that the forces of evil are very strong right now, though we often don't use that language. We need to tend our spirits to engage in this work on a deep level. Grounding ourselves in our history and in the ways of engaging "the powers and principalities" is important – but it is only the beginning. As we think about how to "live peace" on a personal level we find another set of ways to bear witness to Quaker faith and values in ways that go beyond our own search for peace. I think that part of what Quakers are called to do at this time is to speak of a vision of what might be and to begin, in the way we live every day, to live into that vision. Exploring alternative living arrangements (co-housing, downsized housing), working for better public transportation (and using it), building community gardens not only in our neighborhoods but at inner



Ringwood Community Garden, Australia, [www.ringwoodcommunitygarden.org.au/?page=about](http://www.ringwoodcommunitygarden.org.au/?page=about)

city schools or parks, serving on town planning and zoning committees with a commitment to sustainable development – the opportunities abound. The flip side of so many things seeming to go wrong at once is that there is an opportunity to offer alternatives. What Quakers may bring to these moments is the insistence that these opportunities are also a chance to address the racism and class issues that are deep in our culture.

The local food movement is a good example. It isn't quite enough to make an effort to eat locally grown food ourselves, important though that is. Access to affordable food, not to mention quality and/or locally grown food has long been a challenge in many low income communities. Additionally, higher density housing and often contaminated soils makes gardening more difficult. Creation of community gardens at schools or in parks, with care about soil issues, can be a great way to build community, bridge communities and address food quality and cost – but it may mean moving out of our regular orbit, making new connections and being willing to listen to what that community would like to accomplish in such a project. Responding to issues facing others in the garden (immigration, quality of nearby schools, environmental racism, etc.) can grow naturally out of these relationships. And should there be a need to substantially expand the project in the face of spiraling food costs, the relationships are in place to take on zoning boards, absentee landlords and others.

The opportunities and challenges are boundless, which can be a bit overwhelming. But the world needs people who not only oppose war but who have a vision of what a more peaceful world looks like. The world

needs people who not only are panicked about the fate of the planet but whose core values offer some clues about how to go about living differently. They are watching. I hope we don't let them down.

*Martha prepared this article prior to giving a talk to the NEYM Spiritual Transformations Program retreat at The Meeting School, co-sponsored by the school and the Quaker*

*Peacebuilder Camp, May 31, 2008. She also published "Stories from a Siege: A Peace Delegation Reports from the West Bank," in Peacework, Issue 382 - February 2008. [www.peaceworkmagazine.org/stories-siege-peace-delegation-reports-west-bank](http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org/stories-siege-peace-delegation-reports-west-bank).*

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# Editor's Reflections

## ~Skip Schiel~

### Editor of *The Freedom & Justice Crier*

#### Friends Meeting at Cambridge

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Editing this edition of *The Freedom and Justice Crier*, published continuously since 1999, I've noticed the call to action in many of our articles. For instance in this issue Martha Yager pleads for moving beyond privilege and toward challenging the system—"Are we willing to risk friendships and our own comfort to refuse to be complicit in perpetuating myths about immigrants, to give assistance to wounded Iraqis at the risk of being targeted for giving money to "terrorists" (i.e. a charity sponsored by a Muslim organization), to organize a group of faith leaders to sit in at the state house over budget cuts to critical state programs?" Mary Hopkins writes about the genesis of her activism with

*To know is not enough.*  
 —Motto of Hampshire College

immigration issues—"A dozen family members from Central America applied for tourist visas to attend our wedding; all were denied. I am able to visit there, and I had the sad task of explaining to my stepchildren why their father couldn't come with me..."

Dipping back into history, Horace Seldon, founder and former director of the Boston based anti-racist organization Community Change, has created a stunning portrayal of the writings of one of the leaders of the abolition movement in this country, William

Lloyd Garrison. We might ask, what's changed? More than 150 years ago, racial, social and economic injustice was prevalent, as were those opposing, challenging, and putting their lives on the line to transform this nation.

Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye offer us more perspective on the struggles against racism, pinpointing Quaker involvement—and lack of involvement. In this issue of the *Crier*, Donna brings us up to date on their book project.

And Byron Parrish, long time clerk of the Friends for Racial Justice committee at Friends Meeting at Cambridge, prods us to look into our beloved communities, at institutional racism.

Crossing the Atlantic—because racism, and social and economic injustice span the planet—the noted Israeli Jewish writer, scholar, speaker, and activist, Nurit Peled-Elhanan, provides perspective from that region. As some of you might know, the Levant is of special concern for me, thus, whenever possible, especially for comparisons, I try to include at least one article and some pictures relevant to that region.

I call on you to not only examine this *Crier* issue carefully, but to respond: think about what we offer, write us, take action. In the words of the slogan of Hampshire College: "To know is not enough."



*Courtesy of the internet*

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# Quakers and Institutional Racism

~Byron Parrish~

## Friends Meeting at Cambridge, clerk of FMC's Friends for Racial Justice

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*Galileo's theory that the sun is the center of the solar system completely changed our understanding of the universe. Before, people believed that everything in the universe revolved around the earth.*

*Afterwards, we came to understand that the earth is not the center of the universe but is part of a system with the sun as a center of gravity. Many planets and other objects are part of the system. All objects in the solar system affect each other to some extent, but the whole system orbits around the Sun.*

Currently in 21st Century USA, there is another theory that people are coming to understand that is equally revolutionary and equally useful. This new understanding is about the institutional nature of racism. The previous understanding was centered on individuals: as individuals, we have thoughts and prejudices about other races, and these thoughts and assumptions are the cause of racism. If we want to stop racism, then we need to stop our negative thoughts about others. If we could all just become color-blind, then racism would end. In the new understanding of racism as institutional in nature, we understand that all individuals are part of a larger cultural system, which includes all of the institutions within US society. We interact as individuals, but we are all in orbits within our larger society. The center of gravity is not within the individual. Racism is imbedded within our society and affects all of us as part of the system.

Galileo's theory takes some work to understand, and it doesn't exactly match what we think we see when we are standing on the Earth. There was resistance to his new ideas because it shook up people's worldview. However, the theory explains many things that could not be explained under the previous theory and led to a deeper understanding of our universe. Likewise, it takes some real work to understand the institutional nature of racism, and many people feel resistance to the ideas involved

because they contradict things we were taught growing up. Understanding what institutional racism means really can shake up your worldview. This new understanding can lead to liberation and joy, so it is worth the work it takes. It is not just a dry theory, and it will make a difference in your life.

In recent decades, an increasing number of scholars and social justice workers have come to view racism as an institutional problem. In this view,

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*...racism is understood as a system of advantages and disadvantages based on race that is built into our social structure. These advantages and disadvantages are not the sole result of intentional acts of individuals but are part of the system that we are all participating in.*

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racism is understood as a system of advantages and disadvantages based on race that is built into our social structure. These advantages and disadvantages are not the sole result of intentional acts of individuals but are part of the system that we are all participating in. Furthermore, careful scientific study has shown that there is no biological validity to categorizing humans into racial groups. In other words, race does not exist as a biological category, but it certainly does exist as a social category. Race is a social construct, and racism



New England Yearly Meeting sessions, 2005, photo by Skip Schiel

is a system of advantages and disadvantages that permeates our society based on this social construct. Historians can trace how race as a concept and racism -- social injustices based on the concept of race -- developed and grew over the course of American history.

**M**y argument is that we as Quakers and Americans should do the work necessary to understand the institutional view of racism, because it will make a difference in our individual lives and help us corporately take steps towards the social justice that we have always said that we want. Our Quaker principles should help us do the work, because we know by experience that the support of the Light Within can help us see the Truth. Understanding our participation in institutional racism is a journey that must be grounded in the Spirit. Knowing some of the implications of the institutional view of racism can help us do further work, because it can liberate us from the guilt that many white Americans feel when talking about racism.

One result of the color-blindness view is that racism is viewed as being the intentional mean acts of individuals towards people of color. It is felt that our mean thoughts cause racism. If one has a negative thought about people of color then that thought should be suppressed, because we shouldn't have such thoughts. Feelings of guilt also occur, because, no matter how hard we try, such negative thoughts seem to keep happening. It is also difficult to talk about race or racism when acting under the color-blindness view, because we are not supposed to notice these differences. A common reaction to someone bringing up the topic of race is that such talk is divisive, because it focuses on our differences. It would be better if we could ignore our differences and focus on what we have in common. Another common reaction is that anyone talking about racism is just trying to make us all feel guilty. It is easy enough to feel guilt when you believe that your negative thoughts are the cause of racism.

**U**nderstanding the institutional nature of racism leads us to realize that our negative thoughts about people of color are the result of growing up in a

racist system, not the cause of it. We have grown up in a system permeated with assumptions and hidden messages about the superiority of white people and the inferiority of people of color. This worldview has surrounded us like water around a fish, and we swim in it without realizing what it does to us. It is not surprising that we would have negative thoughts. White people have negative thoughts about people of color, and people of color can have negative thoughts about themselves or about other people of color. There is no reason to feel guilt about these thoughts. We are not inventing them ourselves and thereby causing racism -- they have been inflicted on us by the racist system we live in. We have been freed from guilt, but now we have to accept responsibility: We can no longer repress such thoughts -- we must examine them, hold them in the Light, and understand where they come from. When we understand how the racist system we live in affects us, then we can begin to break free from it. It seems easy enough to understand the concept that racism is institutional rather than individual, but it takes some work to integrate this new understanding into our daily actions and reactions. It takes practice to switch from trying to be color-blind to becoming truthfully race aware. Reading books and articles, discussing them in groups, and attending a workshop can help. In several recent exchanges at Monthly Meetings and at NEYM, some people have said they think racism is involved in a given situation, and others have felt insulted, feeling that they have been accused of being racist -- of intentionally doing mean things when they had no such intention. Understanding institutional racism would lead us to consider without blame how the racism in the structure of our society has affected the various people in the given situation. If we work together in the Light to respond to the institutional racism that we are participating in, we can make our Society more open and affirming.

*Information about the white privilege placards seen in the the photo on p 5 are available from NEYM's Working Party on Racism, [music1@charter.net](mailto:music1@charter.net).*



*Quaker meeting, courtesy of the internet*

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# Some Thoughts on the Land of Egypt: A Short History of a Leading ~Mary Hopkins~

## Friends Meeting at Cambridge

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*My leading to work on immigration issues came to me in several steps, none of which I particularly welcomed at the time.*

In 1997, someone from my monthly meeting attended a Friends World Committee on Consultation function, ran into an acquaintance from Latin America, and heard that there was an Evangelical Friends Church in Boston – and had been for some years, unbeknownst to us. Worse yet, they had tried to find us, but Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC) is in an area that’s off the map for many immigrants, and our sign was hard to see.

We invited the Amigos (Hispanic Friends) to a Saturday Bible study group, and a couple of us went to visit their church that evening. I didn’t expect to like it. I had some stereotypes about “Richard Nixon

Quakers” – and the music was very loud, and the pastor preached about how the Bible was the Word of God. I didn’t visit again for some months. Eventually, Friends pointed out to me that I did speak Spanish and that the church was meeting in my neighborhood, and it would be only civil to go and visit. I did, and for a good many years attended weekly. I remember at first feeling a vague unease about the fact that some of the congregation were almost certainly undocumented.

However I quickly came to love them, and it was very clear that my calling was to pray with them, not to sit in judgment.

I started hearing prayer requests, and they brought some very hard understandings of migrant life. I remember young men offering prayers of thanks for the birth of their children in Central America. There were prayers for elders dying back home, their children and grandchildren unable to go to their funerals. Most of all, I was struck by prayers for people who were on the way here. Often there were complications: a child lost in Mexico for several days, a *coyote* [migrant smuggler] arrested leaving travellers far from home and without a guide. I never encouraged anyone to make the journey, but I found I could pray wholeheartedly for their safe arrival.

My first response was to shut

up. I stopped keeping a journal, concerned that I might inadvertently cause problems for someone. I made a discipline of never asking anyone about their immigration status. Eventually I sought cealrness from



*Children, photographed for uncles in the US who had not met them yet, photo by Mary Hopkins*

my meeting about my relationship with the Evangelical church, and they wrote me a minute clarifying my membership (Cambridge), role (prayer) and responsibilities (help out as needed). There was also, for some years, a committee of Salem Quarter that concerned itself with supporting the Iglesia Evangélica and maintaining appropriate boundaries.

In 2003, I married a member of the Iglesia Evangélica. As I became part of a migrant family, I was told some of the things I’d been careful not to ask. I learned that I really hadn’t been able to tell who had papers and who didn’t. There were people who spoke near-perfect English and wore neckties, who turned out to be undocumented. Others seemed very dislocated in North American culture, or faced mistreatment of various kinds, and turned out to have legal status.



*Dona Tila misses her grandchildren, who are in the US, photo by Mary Hopkins*

Marriage gave me an even closer and more uncomfortable look at the US immigration system. My husband and I knew before we were engaged that our marriage would not get permanent papers for him. A



*Pictures from home, photo by Mary Hopkins*

Temporary Protected Status, so he's temporarily legal, but cannot travel freely). I promised to do everything possible to let the kids see their father. I was envisioning letter-writing, perhaps doing volunteer work; I looked around for what I was meant to do, and for some time couldn't seem to find my place. **T**he call to speak came the year after we were married, on Passover. I had wanted to go to a seder at FMC, but instead was called to visit a family from the Iglesia Evangélica who were going through some bad times. A downstairs neighbor didn't like foreigners, and was harassing them. The mother of the family told us stories about the police being called when she chopped vegetables in her kitchen, of the neighbors' television blaring at 3 a.m., of the lady downstairs following them rapping on her ceiling with a broomstick as they padded around upstairs in sock feet. The children were so stressed and sleep-deprived that they were falling asleep in school, and the mother was falling asleep at her factory workstation. She had found herself nodding off and almost falling into a saw blade. I listened to this and

Travelling under concern among Friends is a slow and careful process. I and a travelling companion (Diego Low from San José meeting, a

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*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*  
—Hebrews. 13:2

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sojourning member at Cambridge) went through clearness, and carry a travel minute. We continue to be supervised by a committee, one or another of whose members comes with us as accompanying elder when we go to speak outside our meeting. I have some calling to write in unFriendly environments, but have an agreement with committee members about observing Friends disciplines as to language. I often let Friends know where and what I'm writing, so that they can observe and contribute if so moved. All of this structure sounds cumbersome – and sometimes it is – but it is also a great support, and a source of calm in an area where it's badly needed.

*“Some comments on immigration reform (to be updated)” by Mary Hopkins –*

<http://theworld.com/~mhopkins/immigration.htm>

*Friends Concerned with Immigration Justice:*

[immigrationjustice@googlegroups.com](mailto:immigrationjustice@googlegroups.com)

*Mary and Diego are open to converse with Friends and Friends meetings:*

[mhopkins@theworld.com](mailto:mhopkins@theworld.com)

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*A dozen family members from Central America applied for tourist visas to attend our wedding; all were denied. I am able to visit there, and I had the sad task of explaining to my stepchildren why their father couldn't come with me...*

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dozen family members from Central America applied for tourist visas to attend our wedding; all were denied. I am able to visit there, and I had the sad task of explaining to my stepchildren why their father couldn't come with me (he has

thought about the seder that I hadn't gone to, and kept hearing over and over the words, “Remember you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” That was when I knew that I had to talk.

### **Resources for Activists**

**Hal Weaver's China Film Project (including the Black Film Project):** [www.chinafilmproject.org](http://www.chinafilmproject.org)

**“Traversing the Devil's Terrain,” by Suzanne Shanley:** [www.agapecommunity.org/2007/05/17/traversing-the-devils-terrain/](http://www.agapecommunity.org/2007/05/17/traversing-the-devils-terrain/)

**James Douglass's new book, JFK & the Unspeakable-Why He Died & Why It Matters:** [www.wunc.org/tsot/archive/sot0513c08.mp3/view](http://www.wunc.org/tsot/archive/sot0513c08.mp3/view)

**The Interfaith Coalition for Transgender Equality:** [www.transgenderrights.org/ICTE/](http://www.transgenderrights.org/ICTE/)

**Skip Schiel's photographic witness about Palestine & Israel:** [teeksaphoto.org](http://teeksaphoto.org)

**The Compassionate Listening Project:** [www.compassionatelistening.org](http://www.compassionatelistening.org)

## *The Face on the Envelope (excerpt)*

*by Martin Espada*

*For Julia de Burgos (1914-1953)*

*Julia was tall, so tall, the whispers said,  
the undertakers amputated her legs at the knee  
to squeeze her body into the city coffin  
for burial at Potter's Field.*

*Dead on a street in East Harlem:  
She had no discharge papers  
from Goldwater Memorial Hospital,  
no letters from Puerto Rico, no poems.  
Without her name, three words  
like three pennies stolen from her purse  
while she slept off the last bottle of rum,  
Julia's coffin sailed to a harbor  
where the dead stand in the rain  
patient as forgotten umbrellas...*

*A monument rose at the cemetery in her hometown.  
There were parks and schools. She was memorized.  
Yet only the nameless, names plucked as their faces  
turned away in labor or sleep, could return Julia's name to her  
with the grace of a beggar offering back a stranger's wallet.  
Years later, a nameless man from Puerto Rico,  
jailed in a city called Hartford, would read her poem  
about the great river of Loíza till the river gushed  
through the faucet in his cell and sprayed his neck.  
Slowly, every night, as fluorescent light grew weary  
and threatened to quit, he would paint Julia's face  
on an envelope: her hair in waves of black, her lips red,  
her eyelids so delicate they almost trembled. Finally,  
meticulous as a thief, he inscribed the words: Julia de Burgos...*

*from The Republic of Poetry (reviewed on p 22)*

### **Prejudice & Poverty Grant Guidelines**

Our charge is to help New England Friends and their allies in the wider New England community attend closely to poverty and the many forms of prejudice, examine and remove root causes, and alleviate effects. Our grants rarely exceed \$1,000 and are usually given only once to a particular project. We favor enterprises with a large share of the design and implementation provided by diverse communities whose lives have been adversely impacted by prejudice and poverty. We look for ideas that feature cooperation between Friends' groups and people affected by poverty and prejudice. We require that projects be concordant with the Friends testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, and community. We review applications periodically throughout the year; hence, there are no deadlines. We ask for a report within one year of making the grant and encourage ongoing contact between the project and us.

Please mail or fax completed applications with supplementary materials to  
James Varner, 207-827-4493, 531 Brunswick St, Old Town, ME, 04468-1926.

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# A Preview of *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship*

~Donna McDaniel~  
Framingham Friends Meeting

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To be published by Quaker Press of FGC early in 2009:

*Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship:*  
*Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*  
By Donna L. McDaniel and Vanessa Julye

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Donna McDaniel

*Writing a book is one thing and difficult enough. Ah, but finding a title to encapsulate it all in a few words? That's the real challenge! Fortunately, we found what turned out to be a good name—Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship—nearly at the start. The more we learned, the more we knew that*

*that title represents our Quaker history well. The subtitle, essential to making the content a bit more specific, came much later—“Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice.”*

**F**it for Freedom is divided into two parts—the first up until 1900; the second the twentieth century. Many of you will find familiar people and events in the first part. There we have brought to one place many materials already available and highlight some that are lesser known. The work on the 20th century was much harder because, while there are books about the some leaders like Bayard Rustin and organizations like the American Friends Service Committee and Friends Committee on National Legislation, information about what Friends were doing as meetings or individuals during that time are harder to find. Yearly meeting minutes and records are of some help, but Friends were more often working in small informal groupings or as members of other organizations or individually; these “records” exist primarily in the minds of the participants, not on pieces of paper in library boxes. We did read lots of records and talk to some of those who participated in the Civil Rights movement but in the main, the twentieth century is a project of large proportions yet to be thoroughly

researched. We give only a sense of the institutional work and a sampling of what a few individuals were doing on their own—from integrating lunch counters or neighborhoods or Quaker schools. We also suggest



Vanessa Julye. [photo by Steve Livingston]

## Sixth National Conference of Friends on Race Relations

Black Mountain, NC, July 5-7th, 1967

**Black Power—White Power—Shared Power**

The Conference Message

**Motivations & Methods of White Power**

Address by Martha Ragland

**The Gift of Blackness**

Address by Vincent Harding

that Civil Rights activists felt unsupported by meetings unable to find unity on how much they could/should do to improve conditions for an oppressed people and create better relations between the races. The activist Friends spent a great deal of time and energy

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*The mix of valiant efforts for racial justice and bafflingly inconsistent moves towards and away from human community seems still to describe Quaker response to Jesus' second statement of the law “Love thy neighbor”.*

—Gordon Browne in March 1999  
issue of Quaker Life

encouraging—with little success—other Friends to join them in their work.

In this preview, I want to introduce you to a few of my favorite lesser known Friends in New England of the 1700 and 1800s. (I'll leave the 1900s till another time.) Some names of abolitionist New England Friends are familiar—Abby Kelley Foster, Arnold Buffum, and Moses Brown. Less familiar are Buffum's daughter, Elizabeth Buffum Chace, William Bassett, James Munro, and Elihu Coleman.

The earliest—Nantucket Friend Coleman—published the first antislavery paper to be officially approved by a Quaker meeting. In 1720 this young carpenter wrote "A Testimony Against the Unchristian Practice of Making Slaves of Men," which rather unexpectedly was approved for publication by New England Yearly Meeting. Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting could only minute that "the practice of keeping slaves is a matter of uneasiness to many concerned Friends."

James Munro of East Greenwich may not be a name we've heard but he should be recognized for deciding he had to resign from the Society of Friends in 1843 because of what he perceived as Friends' "almost total apathy to the miseries of three millions of the great brotherhood of man, deprived of every right that humanity can claim, and subjected to every outrage that humanity can suffer."

William Bassett of Lynn (Lynn and Salem were the focus of Quakerism around Boston; often there was no meeting in the city itself) offended some Friends when he referred to enslaved people as "brethren" and "fellow-countrymen" in a letter he wrote on behalf of New England Yearly Meeting to Friends in Virginia. He was ordered to remove the offending descriptions from the letter. Chastised for being a member of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, in 1839 Bassett asked,

"How can it be that [belonging to an anti-slavery society] is considered disorderly by many of our most influential members? I have not hesitated to remonstrate with Friends for their inconsistency and to bear my testimony against such measures as I have conceived to be wrong.... how can one keep silence, when corruption threatens to overwhelm even the fairest portion of the visible church? If we should hold our peace, would not the very stones cry out?"

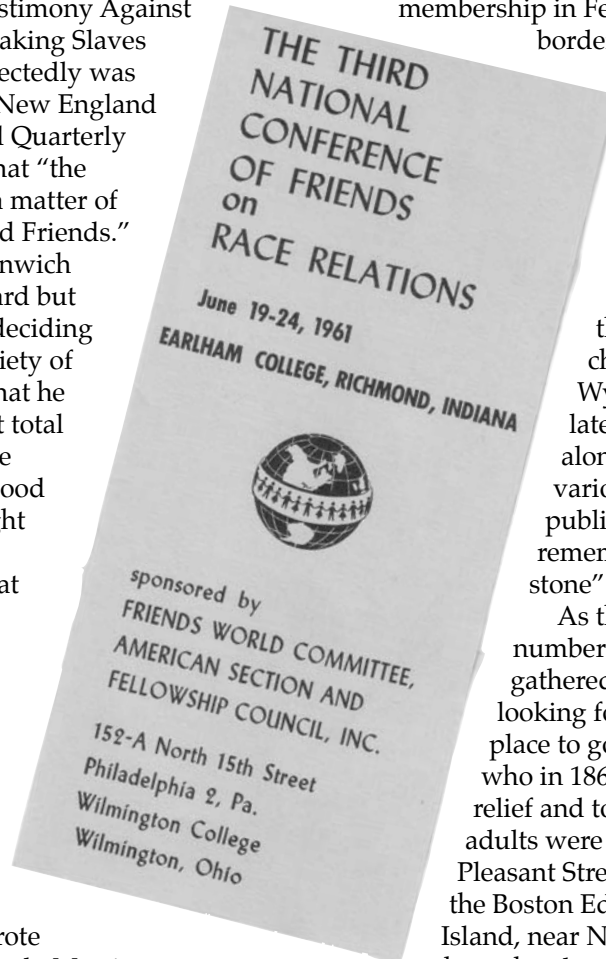
In Vermont Friend Rowland Thomas Robinson resigned when three prominent Friends, Isaac Hopper, Charles Marriott, and Hopper's son-in-law, James Gibbons, were disowned by New York Friends in 1845 for publishing a controversial article "calculated to excite discord and disunity" among Friends in the *Anti-Slavery Standard*. The three outspoken abolitionists protested that, while they were on the committee that oversaw publication, they had not seen the article. But thorns in the sides of New York Friends that they were, sufficient reason had been found to rid the meeting of them. The disownments provoked many letters of protest. Robinson's protest was to resigning his membership in Ferrisburgh Meeting (right over the border in New York).

Elizabeth Buffum Chace, daughter of Arnold Buffum, set about creating "a household that lived, breathed, ate and slept abolitionism" for her seven children. Like other abolitionist mothers, she "believed that every mother in the country should convert her children to the cause." Lillie Chace Wyman, her oldest daughter, wrote later that the children were taken along to hear lectures and perform in various anti-enslavement pageants and public protests in Rhode Island. Wyman remembers being proud to be "hit by a stone" during one such event.

As the Civil War progressed, large numbers of now-free African Americans gathered around Union encampments, looking for aid and work since they had no place to go. Two of the hundreds of Friends who in 1863 began to go south to provide relief and to open schools for children and adults were Lucy and Sarah Chase from Pleasant Street Meeting in Worcester, sent by the Boston Education Commission to Craney Island, near Norfolk. The hospital blankets and shoes they brought fell far short of the need.

"All the charity of the North could be judiciously expended there; of the absolute poor there were enough to absorb it," they wrote.

You may notice that all the people mentioned so far have been of European descent. There have been but a few African American Quakers in New England (even up to today). Paul Cuffe, son of a Native American mother and African American father, is the best known. Henry Cadbury found only a few in his 1936 study, "Negro Membership in the Religious Society of Friends." Apparently a woman of African descent whose name we do not know became a member of the meeting in Greene, Maine, in 1794. Meeting member



Henry Hull remembers her as “the first of the African race I had taken by the hand as a member of our Society.”

According to the records of Dover Monthly Meeting, on November 23, 1774, African descendants Caesar Sankey and Sarah Sharp of Dover were married. While marriage in the meeting does not necessarily indicate membership, another entry for February 1777 does—Sankey was disowned for “going into the war.” Almost a hundred years later, Sarah Antone, a woman of African descent, was a member New Bedford Meeting.

**T**he question remains today—why have there been and still are so few people of color in the Religious Society of Friends in North America? Our chapter on membership offers some possible answers which we hope will provoke discussion among Friends and, in the end, lead us to a far better witness to our testimonies of justice and equality.

Articles related to *Fit for Freedom* in the *Crier* at:

[www.neym.org/PrejudiceAndPoverty/](http://www.neym.org/PrejudiceAndPoverty/)  
**Spring 2008: “Abby Kelley Foster: An Outrageous, Courageous, Fearless, Undaunted New England Quaker”**

Summer 2007: **“Social Justice: Corporate and/or Individual Action, Yesterday and Today”**

Summer 2005: **“Perpetuating Racism: Propaganda and the ‘Black Scare’”**

Summer 2004: **“New England Quakers and the End of Enslavement of African Americans in the 1600s and 1700s”**

On the web: [teeksaphoto.org/Writing/Chronicle.pdf](http://teeksaphoto.org/Writing/Chronicle.pdf)

**“How We have Responded to Racism & Poverty, Within New England Yearly Meeting and More Widely: A Chronicle of New England Yearly Meeting Actions 1965-2004”** by Skip Schiel

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## Ideas for Learning About and Countering White Privilege and Racism

*From the NEYM Working Party on Racism and the Framingham Friends Meeting Working Group on Racism*

*Postcards, electronic or hard copies, are mailed 10 times a year to contacts in each monthly meeting. If you would like to receive a copy for yourself and/or for your meeting, write to [music1@charter.net](mailto:music1@charter.net). Below are samples of recent mailings.*

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**Grandmama’s Pride**, by Pendle Hill staffer Becky BIRTHA, is the story of Sarah Marie, an African American girl who visited her Grandmama in the South every summer, and learned about segregation when she read signs in town that said “White Women” and “Colored Women.” Find out how things became different another summer. See [bookstore@pendlehill.org](mailto:bookstore@pendlehill.org).

**Invite Quaker abolitionist Abby Kelley** to your meeting! The Worcester Women’s History Project (WWHP) traveling one-woman play based on Kelley’s letters and speeches that viewers have described as “thought-provoking” and “heart-wrenching.” For more info and fees see [www.wwhp.org](http://www.wwhp.org) or e-mail [info@wwhp.org](mailto:info@wwhp.org). Kelley, born in western Mass, grew up and later lived in Worcester. Also see other interesting WWHP programs.

**Years of progress? The 1968 Kerner Commission Report** blamed the violence that flared in dozens of U.S. cities on the devastating poverty and hopelessness. Forty years later Bill Moyers interviews Newark Mayor Cory Booker, an African American who defeated the city’s imbedded political machine. A fascinating conversation that can give one hope that the problems are not unsolvable. From Moyers’ Frontline. Click on: [www.pbs.org/moyers/](http://www.pbs.org/moyers/) or video. [yahoo.com/watch/2273429/7147845](http://yahoo.com/watch/2273429/7147845).

**African American heritage in Massachusetts:** a coloring book tells the story of courageous people of African descent in the Commonwealth, one of whom is Quaker Paul Cuffe, the successful ship-owner who was a member of Westport Meeting. Among others who should be known to all of us (not just our children!) are “Mum Bett” Freeman, Sarah Roberts, and Robert Hayden. The book is written by Rosalyn Elder and illustrated by Laurence Pierce. You can buy it online at [www.jamaicawaybooks.com](http://www.jamaicawaybooks.com) or visit the Jamaica Way store on Centre Street in Jamaica Plain. The website and store have many excellent multicultural offerings; check them out and sign up for e-mails about new books or of events at the store. First Day School Committees take special note!

**Conversations on Racism are featured in the January 2008 issue of SPARK**, the New York Yearly Meeting newsletter which is online at <http://www.nyym.org/spark/2008.1.shtml>. Articles include “Undoing Racism with Love,” “Racism Is a Spiritual Issue,” “Stages in Growing an Antiracist,” and “Listening to Our Experiences of Racism.” Many are written by Friends active in work to end racism for many years. One article, “An Extra Effort,” by a Pacific Yearly Meeting Friend, tell us of a meeting challenged by trying to welcome African American visitors and becoming aware of the need to look within themselves to better understand the lack

*Continued on next page*

of diversity so common to all but a few Friends meetings. Write NYYM at 15 Rutherford Place, NY, NY10003 for a hard copy.

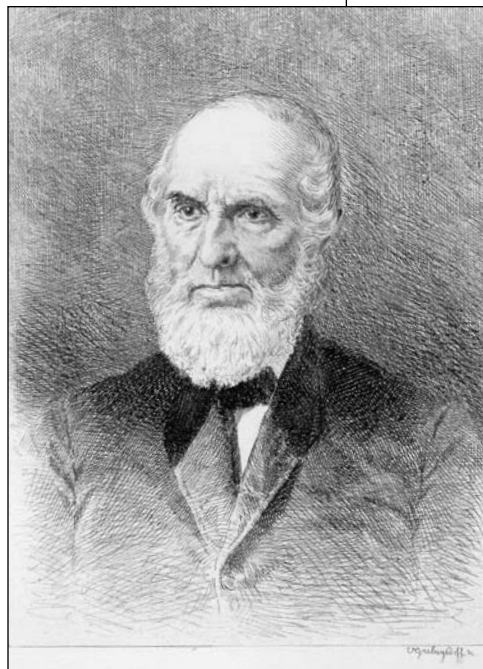
**An "Apology to Afro-descendants:"** One of the articles in the issue of SPARK mentioned just above carries that title. Signed by 12 members of various monthly meetings in NYYM, this short statement declares that those Friends "apologize to Afro-descendants everywhere, for Quaker participation in the terrible acts of enslaving your ancestors, and for the effect this has had on succeeding generations." It refers to the fact that Friends benefited in specific ways from slavery, from trading "In human beings from Africa" to enslaving people in the 17th and 18th centuries. The signers wrote of their abhorrence for "the decades of terror and legalized racial segregation that followed" and pledged themselves "to discern what we as Quakers are called to do, beginning with exploring reparations."

### *Forgiveness*

*by John Greenleaf Whittier*

*My heart was heavy, for its trust had been  
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;  
So, turning gloomily from my fellowmen,  
One summer Sabbath day I strolled  
among  
The green mounds of the village  
burial-place;  
Where, pondering how all human love  
and hate  
Find one sad level; and how, soon or  
late,  
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with  
meekened face,  
And cold hands folded over a still  
heart,  
Pass the green threshold of our common  
grave,  
Whither all footsteps tend, whence  
none depart,  
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,  
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,  
Swept all my pride away, and trembling  
I forgave!*

*Living from 1807 to 1864, most of the time in  
Haverill Massachusetts, Whittier is probably the most  
loved Quaker poet. More: [www.famousamericans.net/  
johngreenleafwhittier/](http://www.famousamericans.net/johngreenleafwhittier/)*

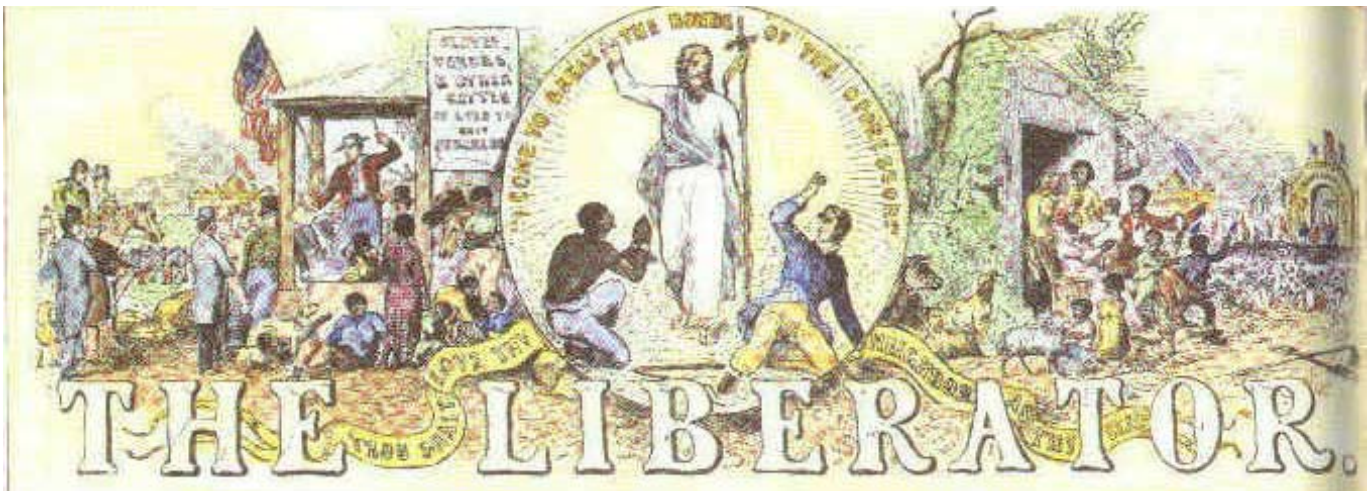


# The “Oughtness” of Life was Primary for William Lloyd Garrison

~Horace Seldon~

Founder and former director of Community Change and author, researcher, collector  
and web founder and manager of *The Liberator Files*

www.theliberatorfiles.com



*Garrison was not the first to call for the immediate abolition of slavery. In his first public address he urged the establishment of chapters of the American Colonization Society, an agency which adopted a “gradualist” approach to emancipation. The influence of colored citizens in Boston, and later in Baltimore, led him to reject “gradualism” and the ACS*

One context of these changes is the religious vision of what life “ought” to be. The Christian evangelical roots of his Mother and early mentors can be seen at work on the abolitionist conscience. Garrison’s discontent when contemplating that “most atrocious villany” of slavery would not let him be satisfied with a “gradual” or partial emancipation. The seeds of his discontent grew toward “immediatism.”

The English Quaker, Elizabeth Heyrick, was among the earlier

people to call for “immediatism.” She wrote in 1824 a pamphlet that Benjamin Lundy printed in his *Genius of Emancipation*. A later speech by W.C. Nell refers to Heyrick in a manner that increases



William Lloyd Garrison, 1865

the probability that Garrison was affected by her pamphlet.

Heyrick wrote of the manner in

which slave holders had “cajoled” abolitionists into the idea that emancipation could come only gradually, and they should be discouraged from asking for anything more. Slave holders knew that a call for gradual emancipation “would beget a gradual indifference to emancipation.” Such “meddling” with human virtue and happiness, is the “very masterpiece of satanic policy.” Heyrick feared that “if public justice and humanity, especially if Christian justice and humanity could be brought to demand only a gradual extermination of the enormities of the slave system; if they could be brought to acquiesce, but for one year, or for one month, in the slavery of our African brother, — in robbing him of all the rights of humanity, — and degrading him to a level with the brutes; that then, they could imperceptibly be brought to acquiesce in all this for an unlimited duration.”

Heyrick insisted that the abolitionists must “enter the lists.... with more of the spirit of Christian combatants, and less of worldly politicians.” She used language about “an holy war,” “an attack

upon the strong holds, the deep entrenchments of the very power of darkness; in which, courage would be more availing than caution." The "great business of emancipation" cannot be converted into "an object of political calculation." Disappointment or defeat will be the inevitable consequence if abolitionists withdraw the struggle from its "Divine patronage." "Truth and justice make their best way in the world when they appear in bold and simple majesty with more the spirit of Christian combatants, and less of worldly politicians."

**B**old and combatant might well be adjectives for Garrison. His call for an immediate end to slavery opened him to the charge of irrelevance. Fear of being called irrelevant in the call for an immediate end to slavery might easily have persuaded him to call for less than what "ought" to be. That Heyrick would not do; that Garrison would not do.

Garrison charged listeners to consider the example of the threat of a fire in their homes. "You do not 'gradually' call for the firemen to come 'gradually,' to 'gradually' put out your fire ... you want it immediately extinguished." In a public venue, someone challenged him with the fact that surely "immediate" was not going to happen. Why then advocate it? Garrison's response: "We have never said that slavery would be overthrown by a single blow, that it ought to be we shall always contend."

"Oughtness" dominates much of Garrison's motivation. In an early edition of the *Liberator*, in 1832, Lloyd began judging actions on the grounds of conscience rather than expediency, and he specifically rejected the latter. "Nor does immediate abolition mean that any compulsory power, other than moral, should be used in breaking the fetters of slavery ... there are three modes in which slavery can be overthrown ... by physical force on the part of the free states... by the

same force on the part of the slaves (we should visit those words later when we speak of nonresistance)... and by an enlightened and benevolent public opinion."

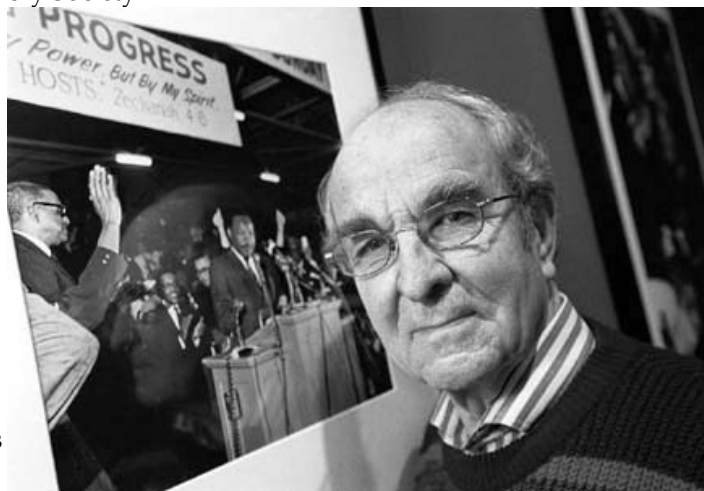
The last was Garrison's choice. In the very paper from which I quote, written actually after the beginning of the New England Anti-Slavery Society, Garrison calls for a "National" Anti-Slavery Society. Its purpose should be to "concentrate the moral energies of the nation. The people everywhere want light on this subject ... nothing but light. Their hearts are all right, their heads are all wrong."

There must be a "revolution of moral opinion." "Oughtness" becomes a central urgency. Garrison did not say it in the magnificent cadence of Martin Luther King, Jr., but he knew that "the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Garrison knew that; he called for an immediate implementation of the arc's goal.

Where does the arc begin? At that immense 1855 celebration of the ending of separate schools for colored children in Boston, Garrison said, "societal reform begins in the heart of a solitary individual,...grows strong among 'humble men and women....having faith in what is just and true, they engage in the work...."

If this emphasis on moral "oughtness" sounds to be the edge of irrelevance, and before we succumb to expediency, consider these words from Abolitionist Hannah Webb: Think of "A world in which there would be no slavery, no king, no beggars, no lawyers,

no doctors, no soldiers, no palaces, no prisons, no creeds, no sects, no weary or grinding labor, no luxurious idleness, no peculiar Sabbath or temple ... no restraint but moral restraint, no constraining power but love. Shall we judge such a man because he may go a little further than we are prepared to follow?"



Horace Seldon, photo courtesy of the internet

**From *The Liberator*, edited (and largely written) by William Lloyd Garrison:**

*During my recent tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in*

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*Heyrick [a British Friend] wrote of the manner in which slave holders had "cajoled" abolitionists into the idea that emancipation could come only gradually, and they should be discouraged from asking for anything more.*

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*public sentiment was to be effected in the free States -- and particularly in New-England -- than at the South. I found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave-owners themselves. Of course, there were individual exceptions to the contrary. This state of things afflicted, but did*

not dishearten me. I determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birthplace of liberty. That standard is now unfurled; and long may it float, unhurt by the spoliations of time or the missiles of a desperate foe -- yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble -- let their secret abettors tremble -- let their Northern apologists tremble -- let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.



Lewis Harden, abolitionist



Lucretia Mott, Quaker abolitionist

For information about **Convictions About Racism In the United States of America: Essays by Horace Seldon**, please visit: [horaceseldon.com](http://horaceseldon.com)

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or to write, with moderation.

No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen;

—but urge me not to use



Expulsion of Negroes and abolitionists from Tremont Street Temple, Boston Massachusetts, December 3, 1860

moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest— I will not equivocate— I will not excuse— I will not retreat a single inch— AND I WILL BE HEARD. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue

leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.

—William Lloyd Garrison, inaugurating *The Liberator*, 1831

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# Racism in Israel?

## A Speech by Nurit Peled-Elhanan

### Marking 40 years of Occupation

Originally published by *Gush Shalom* November 6, 2007  
zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/archive/1181567125

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*It is a great honour for me to stand on this stage beside my friend and brother Bassam Aramin, a man of the Palestinian peace camp, one of the founders of the Combatants for Peace movement of which two of my sons, Alik and Guy, are members.*

Only last week, on Tuesday in Anata and on Thursday in Tul

Karem, the Combatants for Peace movement succeeded in organizing two massive gatherings and recruited ten thousand Palestinians to their goal – a joint non-violent struggle against the occupation through close cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. If not for the racist laws of the State of Israel all those of thousands of people could be with us here this evening to prove once and for all that we have a partner.

Bassam and I are both victims of the cruel occupation that has been corrupting this country for forty years now. The two of us came this evening to lament the fate of this place that has buried our two daughters – Smadar – the bud of the fruit (1) and Abir – the perfume of the flower (1), who were murdered at an interval of ten years, ten years during which this country has filled with the blood of children, and the underground kingdom of children on which we tread day by day and hour by hour has grown to overflowing.

But what unites Bassam and me is not just the death that the Occupation sentenced us to. What unites us is principally faith and a willingness to raise the children that have been left to us so that they will never again allow corrupt, greedy and power-hungry politicians and generals who thirst for blood and conquest to rule over their lives and set them against each other. No more will they allow the racism that has spread over this country to lead them off the path of peace and brotherhood that they have paved for themselves. Because only that brotherhood can bring down the wall of racism that is being built before our very eyes.

For forty years now, racism and megalomania have dictated our lives.

Forty years during which more than four million people do not know the meaning of freedom of movement.

Forty years in which Palestinian children are born and raised as prisoners in their homes that the Occupation converted into a prison, deprived at the outset of all the rights that human beings are entitled to because they are human. Forty years during which Israeli children are educated in racism of the type that has been unknown in the civilized world for decades.

Forty years during which they have learned to hate the neighbours just because they are neighbours, to fear them without knowing them, to see a quarter of the citizens of the State as a demographic danger and an enemy within, and to relate to the residents of the ghettos created by the policy of occupation as a problem that must be solved. Only sixty years ago Jews were residents of ghettos and seen in the eyes of their



Warsaw ghetto



Separation Barrier/Apartheid Wall, Bethlehem, 2007, photo by Skip Schiel

oppressors as a problem that needed to be solved. Only sixty years ago the Jews were enclosed behind ugly concrete and electrified walls topped with watchtowers manned by erect armed figures, and deprived of the ability to make a living or to raise their children with dignity. Only sixty years ago racism exacted its price from the Jewish people. Today racism rules in the Jewish state, tramples people's dignity underfoot and deprives them of liberty, condemns all of us to lives of hell. For forty years now the Jewish head has

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*Today racism rules in the Jewish state, tramples people's dignity underfoot and deprives them of liberty, condemns all of us to lives of hell.*

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unceasingly been bowed in worship of racism while the Jewish mind is devising the most creative ways to devastate and demolish and destroy this country. That is what remains of the Jewish genius, which has become Israeli. Jewish compassion, Jewish mercy, Jewish cosmopolitan-ness, love of humanity and respect for the other have been long forgotten. Their place was claimed by racism. It was only racism that motivated a Border Guard soldier to pull the trigger from inside his armoured vehicle and to shoot at the head of little Abir as she huddled by the wall of her school in fear of the military vehicle that was plopped down in the schoolyard as if it owned the place. It is only racism that motivates the drivers of bulldozers to demolish houses on top of their occupants, to destroy vineyards and fields, to uproot centuries-old olive trees. Only racism can invent roads on which circulation is classified on the basis of race, and it is only racism that motivates our children to humiliate women who could be their mothers and to abuse old people at the evil checkpoints, to strike young people their own age who, like them, want to drive with their families to bathe in the sea, and to look on impassively as women give birth on the road. It is only pure racism that motivates our best pilots to drop one-ton bombs on residential buildings and it is only racism that permits those criminals to sleep well at night.

**B**ecause racism eliminates shame. This racism has



*Israeli colony or settlement, Har Homa, in distance, Bethlehem in foreground, 2007, photo by Skip Schiel*

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*It was only racism that motivated a Border Guard soldier to pull the trigger from inside his armoured vehicle and to shoot at the head of little Abir as she huddled by the wall of her school in fear of the military vehicle that was plopped down in the schoolyard as if it owned the place.*

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erected for itself a monument in its own image – the monument of an ugly, rigid, menacing and invasive concrete wall. A monument that proclaims to the whole world the banishment of shame from this country. This wall is our wall of shame, it is testimony to the fact that we have turned from being a light unto the nations to “an object of disgrace to the nations and a mockery to all the countries” (2).

**A**nd this evening we must ask where we take our shame? How will we remove the disgrace? But first and foremost, how is it that the shame does not keep us from sleeping at night? How do we consent to have half our salaries be used for the execution of crimes against humanity?

How did it happen that we succeeded in



*Israeli only roads and tunnels thru the West Bank, with the separation wall, 2007, photo by Skip Schiel*

restricting the shame to two columns in the newspaper, and to devote to it no more than the minutes that we devote to a cursory reading of the articles of Gideon Levy and Amira Hass [columnists for Ha'aretz newspaper who often report from the Occupied Territories], as one reads a report on a scenario that was known in advance?

How did it happen that we succeeded in packing endless daily suffering, hunger, malnutrition, children's trauma, disablement, orphanhood and bereavement into one alienating word: "politics"?

How is it that our children continue to strut and swagger in the uniforms of brutality that they wear when they serve in the army of slaughter and destruction?

How is it that all the splendid institutions of the world stand aside and cannot do a thing to save one child from death or to remove one concrete block from the wall of shame? How is it that all the peace and human rights organizations are not able to stop the jeeps of the Border Guards that come to terrify schoolchildren and to kill them, are not able to stop one bulldozer on its way to demolish a house on top of its occupants, to rescue one olive tree from destruction or one schoolgirl who lost her way to school and found herself in the gunshots of the soldiers of the Occupation?

One of the answers to these questions is that the State of Israel is able to silence and paralyze the entire world because there was a Holocaust. The State of Israel has acquired a permit to abuse an entire nation because there is anti-Semitism. The State of Israel is bringing existential disaster – economic, social and human, on its citizens and on its subjects and no one dares to stop it because once there was Hitler. And all that while the survivors of the Holocaust are suffering the ignominy of hunger in this country.

This evening we must appeal to the world for help in ridding ourselves of the shame. This evening we must explain to the world that if it wants to rescue the people of Israel and the Palestinian people from the imminent holocaust that threatens all of us it is necessary to condemn the policy of occupation, the dominion of death must be stopped in its tracks. All war criminals who put away their uniforms and set out to travel in the

world must be arrested, tried and imprisoned instead of being allowed to enjoy the pleasures of freedom while they are still dragging behind them a jingling cashbox full of war-crimes.

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*How is it that all the splendid institutions of the world stand aside and cannot do a thing to save one child from death or to remove one concrete block from the wall of shame?*

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And the time has come for us to stop handing our children over to an educational establishment that plants in them false and racist values and teaches them that their contribution to society is summed up in the abuse and killing of other people's children. The time has come for us to explain to them that the local population of this place is not divided into Jews and non-Jews as is written in their school-books, but into

human beings who want to live in peace and quiet in spite of everything, such as Bassam Aramin and many others like him, who if not for the racial laws that restrict their movements would be standing with us today, and people who have lost their humanity and take pleasure in destruction and devastation. And the time has come for us to tell our children where they are living.

Today, while the entire civilized world enjoys slandering and smearing the Palestinian

education system, there is no school-book in Israel that presents a picture of a Palestinian as a modern ordinary person. There is no school-book in Israel that presents a map that shows the true borders of the State. There is no school-book in Israel in which the word "occupation" appears. Our children are conscripted into the army of occupation without knowing the place in which they are living and without knowing its history and its people. They join the army imbued with hate and fear. Our children are educated to see everyone who is not Jewish as the Goy, the Other, who generation after generation seeks to destroy us. This education makes it easy for the military establishment to turn children into monsters.

Therefore the only way to prevent our children from becoming tools in the hands of the machine of



Gaza, after an attack by an American-made F-16 fighter jet, 2008, photo by Skip Schiel

destruction is to teach them the history of this place, to draw for them its borders, to help them to know the neighbours, their culture, their customs, their courtesy and their rights on the land where they live and lived for many generations before the Zionist Pioneers arrived at the Promised Land of Israel. And above all to teach them not to submit to the State, not to respect its authority, because the State is ruled by petty thieves and base opportunists who do not control their sexual and other impulses even in the most dire times and run this country according to the laws of the Mafia. You killed one of mine - I'll kill a hundred of yours. You threw a home-made bomb at me - I'll drop on you a hundred of the most elaborate and destructive bombs in the world that will leave no trace of you or your family or your neighbours. You burned one of my cars so I'll burn one of your cities. That is the logic of the criminal world.

This evening we must think about those who are condemned to death in the next year, and of those who are condemned to fall into crime under the cover of the law and the uniform. We must rescue all of them. We must teach all of them not to obey orders that, even if they are legal according to the race laws of this State, are manifestly inhuman.

And above all, this evening we must stop for a moment, all of us, and look into the face of little Abir Aramin, her head shot from behind, whose

murderer will never face judgement in this country and will never be punished in any way he deserves, and ask ourselves, Why does that streak of blood rip the petal of her cheek? (3).

*July 9, 2007 at a rally in Tel-Aviv, Israel*

1. The literal meanings of the girls' Hebrew and Arabic names
2. Ezekiel 22:4
3. Anna Akhmatova

*Nurit Peled-Elhanan is laureate of the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament for Human Rights and Freedom of Thought*

**"A Speech to Women in Black":**

[www.nimn.org/Perspectives/international/000132.php?section=](http://www.nimn.org/Perspectives/international/000132.php?section=)

**Profiles in Peace, AFSC, Nurit Peled-Elhanan:**

[www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/profiles-of-peace/nurit-peled-elhanan.htm](http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/profiles-of-peace/nurit-peled-elhanan.htm)

**"The Bereaved Parents for Peace":**

[www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/11199](http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/11199)



**Not So Sweet**

*Why Dunkin' Donuts shouldn't have caved in the controversy over Rachael Ray's 'kaffiyeh' scarf.*

[www.newsweek.com/id/139334](http://www.newsweek.com/id/139334)



*Band of Brandeis University students, Waltham MA*

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# A Few Books I've Read Recently

~Skip Schiel~

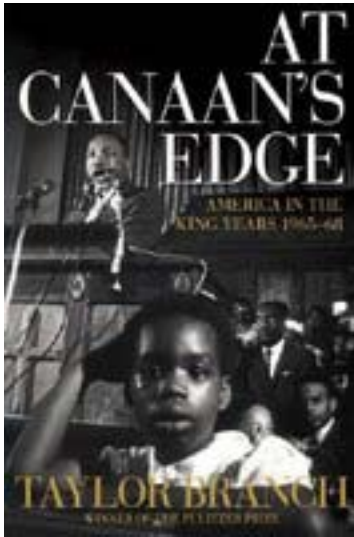
Friends Meeting at Cambridge

Written for the Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights

www.myerscenter.org

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## ***At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965-68*** **Taylor Branch** **Simon & Schuster, 2007**



### *About what?*

Mostly the freedom struggles of the period in question, plus a broad US context, notably the war in Vietnam.

### *For whom?*

A general audience, but with detail perhaps most appealing to activists, scholars, and people specially interested in the Civil Rights Movement or US history.

### *Distinctives?*

Abundant detail, presumably from extensive research plus the author's previous experience writing two related books, much applauded, about King during 1956-1963.

### *Main points*

The war in Vietnam seriously eroded momentum for the Civil Rights Movement.

King and President

Johnson worked closely on the voting rights legislation but then broke apart over Vietnam.

King was constantly beset with problems such as the rise of the more militant SNCC freedom movement and the question of whether to shift the movement's thrust to Northern cities. Vietnam reigned over much of this period, causing crises of consciousness for King.

### *Specifics for agents of change*

The book considers—without fully answering—the

questions, "How can elements of the movement work together?" and "What is to be done when another issue, even if closely related, begins to overshadow the movement's main direction?"

### *Innovative or traditional*

Traditional—a careful, composed history oriented toward the general audience.

### *Recommendation? And, if so, why?*

The topic is crucial, the author has respectable credentials, but I found the book awkwardly written. Intricate locutions often left me puzzled. It is a slow read, the story frequently mired in what seemed unnecessary detail. Not his best, therefore not given my highest recommendation.

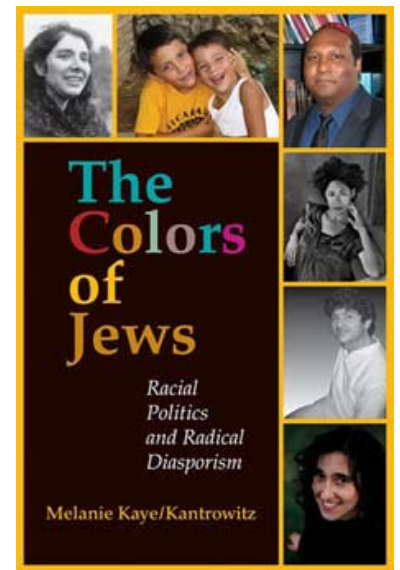
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## ***The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics & Radical Diasporism*** **Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz** **Indian University Press 2007**

### *About what?*

Raciality among the many diverse Jewish communities, meaning how skin color, national origin, language, tradition, and ethnicity function in Jewish groups. With a plea for "diasporism," i.e., recognition that the homeland for Jews is not "ingathering" to one central place, like Israel, but celebration of where Jews now happen to be, "putting the margin at the center of a circle that includes but does not privilege Israelis...

Imagine a history where differences in Jewish experience and aspiration were articulated and pondered; where Sephardi [Jews from southern Europe] and Mizrahi [Jews from Arab-Islam regions and Turkey] voices were audible and respected; where Yiddish was neither dead nor kitsch; where



masculinist state power was not the only model.” (All quotes are from the author.)

**For whom?**

Jews and those interested in Jewish dynamics: racism, diversity, Israel-Palestine, and multiculturalism. Probably only adults, altho smart high school students should be able to follow the stories and arguments.

**Distinctives?**

The topic, one I’ve not seen addressed elsewhere, and the particular perspective the author brings to this topic, grounded in Jewishness, yet able to move beyond the more conventional and constraining points of view.

**Main points (2-3)?**

Jews are diverse, more so than common wisdom supposes.

The prevailing image of Jews, Ashkenazi, from western and central Europe, dominates the media and common attitudes.

This needs to change—because it is false, and because it weakens and further marginalizes the entire Jewish community.

**Specifics for agents of change**

Many—she devotes an entire chapter to Jewish organizations fostering change. The chapter is titled, “Praying with our Legs,” with subsections, “Fighting Slumlords, Building Coalitions,” “Confronting Power in the Jewish Community,” “Trying to Change Congregational Life,” “Bringing Our Bodies to the Picket Line,” and “The Place to Go for a Progressive Jewish Voice.” Thus she gives many examples: education, advocacy, direct action, non-violent intervention—the entire gamut of social change techniques.

**Innovative or traditional**

Innovative, because 1. the writer tells a good story, 2. she offers many examples that usually do not surface in the commercial media, and 3. she herself is a model of diversity and anti-racist work. Altho a university press published the book and altho I usually find such books arid and vapid, this is an exception: a lively academic treatise.

**Recommendation? And, if so, why?**

Definitely. For reasons mentioned above. One caveat: my special interest is in Israel-Palestine relations so I jump at any book offering insight and hope. This book does that.

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**The Republic of Poetry**  
**Poems by Martin Espada**  
**W. W. Horton & Company 2006?**

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**About what?**

By a Puerto Rican-American poet, a wide swath of imagined ground: resistance poetry in homage to Pablo Neruda and Dennis Brutus, painful invocations of the dictator Pinochet, elegies bringing together Robert Creeley and Thoreau, evocations of the conscientious objector Camilo Majia, and more.

**For whom?**

This is accessible poetry, of interest to people of color and white people, from age 15 up.

**Distinctives?**

His presence at the Neruda centenary in 2004, his travels in South and Central America, his background as a Latino-Americano, his skilled use of language, and his dedication to social activism.

**Main points (2-3)?**

As Dostoevsky is rumored to have written, “Beauty will save the world,” and Espada’s work demonstrates how poetry can contribute to social change.



Martin Espada

Dictators like Pinochet are fated to fall.

Artists can rise again among the people, even if suppressed like Neruda or murdered like the Chilean singer/songwriter Victor Jara, who was executed after singing to his fellow prisoners.

**Specifics for agents of change**

Hope springs eternal through acting true to our convictions and singing our own songs.

**Innovative or traditional**

Powerful poetry, accessible, reflecting popular themes. Novelist Sandra Cisneros calls Espada “the Pablo Neruda of North American authors.”

**Recommendation? And, if so, why?**

Yes. Because of its exquisite language, and because it sustains hope. One example:

*Did you know, slamming the hammer into the rock’s  
stoic face,  
that a police state is nothing but a boulder  
waiting for the alchemy of dust?*

—from “Stone Hammered to Gravel,”  
for poet Dennis Brutus, at 80

## *When I'm Gone (excerpts)*

*Phil Ochs*

*There's no place in this world where I'll belong when I'm gone*

*And I won't know the right from the wrong when I'm gone  
And you won't find me singin' on this song when I'm gone  
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here*

*And I won't feel the flowing of the time when I'm gone  
All the pleasures of love will not be mine when I'm gone  
My pen won't pour a lyric line when I'm gone  
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here*

*All my days won't be dances of delight when I'm gone  
And the sands will be shifting from my sight when I'm gone  
Can't add my name into the fight when I'm gone  
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here*



*And I won't be laughing at the lies when I'm gone  
And I can't question how or when or why when I'm gone  
Can't live proud enough to die when I'm gone  
So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here*

J Cronk sings "When I'm Gone"

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=-L3dhUf0hDI&eurl=http://www.last.fm/music/Phil+Ochs/+videos/+1--L3dhUf0hDI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-L3dhUf0hDI&eurl=http://www.last.fm/music/Phil+Ochs/+videos/+1--L3dhUf0hDI)

# The Racist Stairs: Which step are you on? Are you going up or down?

(thanks to Rachel Carey-Harper)

Overly thinks people of color are sub-human

Either a resource to be exploited or exterminated

Able to participate or enjoys fantasizes about lynching or cross burning

Overly thinks people of color are less than human

Should be kept separate (and not equal) to whites

Family willing to attend, but not participate in a lynching or cross burning

Overly thinks whites are superior

Because of kindness promotes separate but equal treatment but wants no contact

Family would never attend a lynching or cross burning but not publicly condemn it.

Overly comfortable with "natural order" of one group on top

White culture is the only civilized group, others are pollution, blacks naturally more violent,

Assume person of color is worker, not management

Covertly feels white culture superior, more intelligent and moral

Are afraid whites will become extinct due to lower birth rates, "blacks are taking over"

Views diversity, political correctness, liberal bias or lack of class as the problem

Subconsciously feels white culture is better, feels "more equal than others", resents "advantages" of affirmative action as "reverse racism," often assigns success of person of color to this.

Admires blacks who are "articulate," has black friends, race is a myth perpetuating victim mentality

Overly uncomfortable with white privilege but "That's just the way things are"

Racism is "not their issue," feels they have a right to be comfortable, everyone has bias

Assert they are not racists, that class is an equal or greater problem, Supports Obama for Pres.

Subconsciously accepts white privilege justified by stating that it should be everyone's right.

Is surprised when expressions surface in mind like "pot calling kettle black," supports people of color who are actively working against oppression as long as they aren't too radical

Consciously resists white privilege fully. Carries unconscious attitudes of white culture but

attempts to work on them, supports people of color who are active even if so radical that

other anti-racists are uncomfortable, is willing to be present and hear the anger of people

of color

Totally beyond being racist

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