



NETWORK
Connection

PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

Vision and Leadership

dear members

This fall the NETWORK staff has been all over the country speaking on voting for the common good. We are so heartened by the response that we have received. Everywhere we go we meet committed individuals, families and groups working together to make sense of our world by putting our faith into action. Also, all over the country more people are signing up to be part of our e-advocacy program. This is great as we get ready to participate in the 111th Congress. We are poised to be more effective than ever.

So at this time of Thanksgiving and Advent, I want to express my personal gratitude to you for helping to make NETWORK the wonderful organization that it is. I am so proud and grateful to know that I lobby with all of you around the country who care about the common good. It gives such meaning to my life and prayer to know that we are in this together. THANKS!

And now, let us embrace in this Advent of 2008 a sense of waiting and acting. We are waiting for the new Congress and Administration, but we are also striving to embrace our faith more fully. We await the birth of God in our lives too. Let us celebrate together this renewal of our willingness together to be the one Body of God. Your faith sustains us!

May we be support for each other during the challenging days ahead!

Simone Campbell, SSS



Act justly, love tenderly
and walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

Advent Blessings to All

Contents

3 **envisioning**

Our World Hungers for New Leadership

Simone Campbell, SSS, sees the economic crisis as yet another call for new ways of leading.

4 **cover story**

Leadership: More Integrity than Politics

Joan Chittister, OSB, calls our nation's leaders—and each of us in turn—to rebel against injustice and to move our nation and world into a hopeful future.

8 **focus on the hill**

As the 110th Congress Draws to a Close

Congress grapples with an unprecedented economic crisis and much unfinished business.

10 **toward a global community**

I Teach about Women in This Global Economy

Dr. Shyamala Raman teaches her college students to question traditional views of women in this evolving world.

12 **highlighting people**

Justice in this New Millennium

Dr. Bernard J. Offerman helps us understand the meaning of social justice.

13 **spread the word**

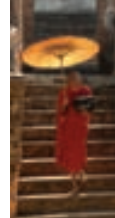
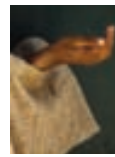
Advent Reflection: Leadership Starts With Us

Copy, distribute and reflect on this look at how we can all become leaders for justice.

15 **making a difference**

Vision and Action for Advent

The Rev. John Price, an Episcopal priest and NETWORK's Major Gifts Coordinator, tells us how the season of Advent invites us to support NETWORK in new ways.



NETWORK

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Our World Hungers for New Leadership

By SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

TOBIAS HELBIG



We have just come through a grueling two-year election process to choose a leader for our country. We are in perilous economic times where the question often is, “Whose leadership should we follow?” The public skepticism of the Bush Administration has made it more difficult to believe that Secretary of the Treasury Paulson has an effective antidote to the economic crisis. It is challenging domestically to find a leader we can trust.

But there is an added complexity to this search for leadership. When I was in the Middle East in January of this year, many people urged us to remember that when we elect a president of our country we are also electing a leader for the world. They begged us to remember the world when we vote. This insight was heightened when the world economic markets responded so quickly to the U.S. economic troubles. Europe had difficulty responding because while they had an integrated economy, their system of governance was separate.

An additional complexity emerges when we think of the existing global structures. The United Nations has seen its greatest policy successes in health and development as well as peacekeeping activities. It is the institution favored by progressives in the U.S. and not supported by conservatives. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have as their policy agenda

the spread of free market capitalism as the way to shared prosperity. This “liberal” economic policy is favored by the economic conservatives in the U.S. and demonized by the left. There is no middle ground. There is no institution or policy that provides leadership for an integrated world that can balance trade and development, peacekeeping and open markets. All of this polarization works effectively as long as there is cooperation and expanding markets. No one needs a leader...until there is a crisis.

Now we face a crisis of huge proportions. In the 1990s and the early part of this decade, we instituted policies that dismantled the U.S. market’s oversight mechanisms. We urged other nations through the G-7 to embrace a “free market” approach (meaning no restraints). We ensured that the IMF and the World Bank required nations to open their markets and remove constraints in order to participate in the global economy. Now we wonder: where are the leaders to bring us out of this chaos?

As I ponder this dilemma, I realize that something new is called for. It is what we at NETWORK have been working for over the last few years. We need more than smart politicians and economists who are willing to blend formerly polarized views. Instead, we need smart, engaged people who are willing to chart a new course. We are being called to come together to insist on the common good and create something new. We are challenged to step away from our fear-based individualism and toward a sense of society as a whole. We are challenged to step away from measuring success as personal wealth in a consumption-based

society and toward a sustainable society for all. We are challenged to step away from militaristic nationalism and toward a sense of nation that embraces diplomacy and cooperation. In short, we are challenged to be the leaders we need.

It will not be easy. It requires quiet listening hearts to hear the suffering around us and the nudges to respond in new ways. It also requires the brazenness to speak out for new policies and a new balanced economy that includes new regulation. But most important of all, this call to leadership means that we must let our lives proclaim our faith and solidarity with the whole human family. This is what it means to live our faith in the twenty-first century. The time is now. Let us together make this an Advent practice—our nation and our world are hungry for our presence.

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK’s Executive Director.



DRA SCHWARTZ

Leadership: More Integrity than Politics

By JOAN CHITTISTER, OSB

At the end of WWII, the dark time remembered everywhere still—a time of defeated peoples, and destroyed nations—commentator Walter Lippman said: “The final test of a leader is someone who leaves behind themselves in others the conviction and the will to carry on.”

Today we are attempting to choose leaders in an era when we have never needed leadership more.

There are fewer wars now than in generations past—but more deaths.

There are a greater number of independent nations—but fewer economically developed ones.

The world for which we seek leaders now is unbelievably affluent for some but unmercifully impoverished for others.

It is a world reeling with new galaxies and pulsing with the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

It is a world that holds quarks in one hand and clones in another.

It is a world tethered by computers, but disjointed by political conflicts.

It is a world dependent on one another economically, but suspicious of one another politically; more powerful technologically, and more endangered militarily; never more strong and never more weak.

What new leaders inherit now is a world dying of AIDS, starving from desertification and sucked dry of resources in one part of the world in order to create wealth for another part of the world.

It is a world where women are bought and sold, where men become soldiers as children, where women’s bodies are men’s latest weapon of mass destruction; where, in the richest time in history, young men join armies because there are no other jobs.

It is a cruel, unkind, glorious and grand world.

One right step and the whole world can become new again. One more wrong step and the globe itself is in irreversible danger.

And it needs leaders who will lead it through what Paul Kennedy describes as the six major problems facing the 21st century:

1. The population explosion and its strain on resources.
2. The communication revolution and its power to drain money from one nation in order to deposit it instantaneously into the coffers of another.

3. The biotechnological revolution, which now promises the west and its laboratories a monopoly even on world food supplies.
4. Robotics and its effect on the laboring class.
5. Environmental degradation and its effect on the sustainability of the planet itself.



There is more international commerce but still more grinding poverty than ever before in history.

What will we and our leaders inspire in this kind of world? What convictions will we ourselves leave behind?

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6. The future of the nation-state in a world where nation-states now lack the capacity even to control their own fate and power is more and more vested in the hands of a few.

The implications of those things are already among us, eating away at the foundations of our lives:

- 200 million animals a year are being wantonly destroyed—for “research.”
- 2/3 of the hungry of the world are women. 2/3 of the illiterate of the world are women. 2/3 of the poor of the world are women.
- The ozone layer—the placenta of the earth—has been ruptured, the polar ice cap is melting and raising the water levels of the world while,

- Shipping non-biodegradable materials and toxic waste by garbage barge from New York to Mexico has become big business because weak nations have no way to combat becoming the garbage dumps of the capitalist world.
- Chemicals which once activated the soil are now depleting it and fertilizers used to energize our land are now polluting our rivers and lakes.
- Nuclear weaponry threatens the very existence of the planet and they have the effrontery to call it “defense.”

The question is, then, How shall these new leaders lead so that the errors of the last generation do not simply become even more death-dealing?

What will they need to do, to be, to stop this breakneck rush to exploitation of the globe, economic disaster for the masses, medical disregard of the many, the new control of the poor of all nations by the rich of all nations and the political

disregard of most of the people of the world?

If the leaders want to lead a world such as this down a different path than leaders before now, there are three stories we and they must remember, I think. They may say more about what it takes to lead a people beyond such madness than anything leadership manuals like to talk about.



In the first story, a village is awaiting a visit from the emperor: every year he came regally dressed, resplendent in velvet and gold, to demonstrate how great an emperor he was.

People lined the streets for miles and shouted as the emperor strode by.

“You are the greatest emperor of all.”

But one year a small child in the crowd, shocked by what he saw, shouted even louder: “No. No,” he said. “Look! The emperor has no clothes at all.”

Then the farce was over. Then the crowd went silent. Then everyone snuck away ashamed of what they had allowed to go unchallenged. And then the emperor resigned the throne.



“Look! The emperor has no clothes at all.”



at the same time, the lands of the poor are turning to dust and stone while the industrialized world goes on choosing short-term profits over long-term global warming treaties.

Point: if we want to lead this world through bad times to good, we must be truth-tellers.

“If you want to save the age,” the poet Brenda Kennelly writes, “betray it. Expose its conceits, its foibles and its phony moral certitudes.”

There will be those among the powerful who try to make us say what we know is clearly not true because, if everyone agrees to believe the lie, the lie can go on forever.

The lie that there is:

- nothing we can do about AIDS,
- nothing we can do about world poverty,
- nothing we can do about fair trade,
- nothing we can do to end war,



- nothing we can do about equality and justice,
- nothing we can do to provide education and health care, and housing and food, and roads and water and just wages for everyone in the world.

If we want to lead this world, we, too, must refuse to tell the old lies.

We must learn to say with certainty and clarity: those emperors have no clothes!

We must, like the child in the story, see what we're looking at and say what we see!

The second story is about a Buddhist monk who wanted to

translate the scriptures into Japanese. He spent years begging for the money it would take to print them. Just as he was about to begin, however, a great flood came that left thousands homeless.

So the monk took the money given him to publish the scriptures and built houses for the homeless.

Then he collected the money again. This time, before he could start the printing a great famine came and thousands of people faced starvation.

This time, the monk took the money and bought food for the hungry.

Then, he collected the money again. And began his printing project all over.



... the first two editions of those scriptures—the new houses and the well-fed people—were even more beautiful than the third.

When the scriptures were finally published they were enshrined for all to see. But, they say, when the people take their children to view the books, they tell them that the first two editions of those scriptures—the new houses and the well-fed people—were even more beautiful than the third.

The second lesson of leadership, then, is that no personal passion must come between the leader and the needs of the people.

People are the subject matter of leadership. Not personal ambitions. Not personal passions. Not personal profit. Not personal power.

“If you want to smell sweet, stay close to the seller of perfumes.”



The third lesson of leadership comes from the Sufi master who says, “If you want to smell sweet, stay close to the seller of perfumes.”

The people we follow are the measure of our own test of character. They demonstrate and concretize, they manifest and institutionalize our own ideals of leadership, our own commitment to leadership, our own legacy to the world.

If we want to lead the world to compassion, we must choose for ourselves leaders who embody the compassionate, rather than the uncaring face of the power.

If we want to lead the world to wholeness, we must follow the peacemakers, not the warmongers.

If we want to lead the world to freedom, equality must mean more to us than domination, than control, than double standards that treat men one way, women another, the rich one way, the poor another, whites one way, people of color another, majorities one way, minorities another.



Justice must mean more to us than power.

Ideals must mean more to us than public approval.

If we want to inspire those we leave behind with the conviction and the will to go on doing good, doing justice, doing right, like the child in the village, like the wise old monk, like the Sufi saint: We choose leaders who are more real than their image. Who choose people over projects.

But that can only happen if we choose our own heroes wisely. If we always,

always, always see what we're looking at and say what we're seeing. If we ourselves become the compassion we talk about.

The great leaders of history have always been those who refused to barter their ideals for the sake of their personal interests and who rebelled against the lies of their times.

Real leaders don't live to get to the top of a system. They live to save the soul of it—and they will go on doing that whether they are elected or not.

“As long as the world shall last there will be wrongs,” Clarence Darrow warns us. “And if no leader objects and no leader rebels, those wrongs will last forever.”

If we really want to lead, we must inspire the world to go on



struggling to rebel so that what obstructs us from being fully human together may be seen for what it is, be converted into good, and become the sweet sound of justice heard in every corner of the world.

To save the age we must choose leaders who will rebel—rebel against the lies, rebel against the violence, rebel against anyone or anything that leads us to believe that either self-service or force can save us now.

We must choose leaders who will lead us and the world back to our best selves. And inspire us again!

If we want to lead now we must forswear the past. We must rebel, rebel, rebel.



Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Sister of Erie, Pennsylvania is an award-winning author and international lecturer on behalf of peace, human rights, women's issues, justice, and church renewal. Her latest book, *The Gift of Years*, has been a bestseller since its release last spring. She is the founder and executive director of Benetvision.org. Article © Joan Chittister, OSB.



As the 110th Congress Draws to a Close

By MARGE CLARK, BVM, CATHERINE PINKERTON, CSJ, SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

The 110th Congress has succeeded in passing some legislation for the common good, including bills that raised the minimum wage, increased funding for such domestic human needs as home energy assistance and nutrition programs, and offered some relief to victims of natural disasters. Congressional efforts to expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) failed, however, and many other important tasks remain unfinished.

As this issue of *Connection* went to press, congressional leaders were still considering another package of spending intended to spur the economy. It is possible that such a package would be considered during a lame-duck session after the election.

As we prepare for the 111th Congress, NETWORK will continue to advocate for the most vulnerable people at home and around the world by supporting legislation that serves the common good.

Addressing the Economic Crisis

The 110th Congress passed and the

president signed into law the "Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008" (H.R. 1424). The law creates the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), which includes efforts to stabilize the financial system and a provision for mental health and substance abuse parity. TARP provides the U.S. Treasury Department with up to \$700 billion and the authority to purchase from banks and other financial institutions troubled mortgage-related securities. It also requires a plan to mitigate foreclosures and to encourage mortgage lenders to modify loans via the HOPE for Homeowners Program, and it raises FDIC coverage on deposits to \$250,000 per account. It further limits the amount CEOs of participating companies can deduct from their taxes for income over \$500,000.

Tax provisions include extensions of credits for renewable energy and energy-efficient buildings and appliances; a reduction in the income threshold for those eligible for the child tax credit to \$8,500; and tax relief for areas affected by floods and hurricanes, including low

income housing tax credits, an increased rehabilitation tax credit, and education and housing tax benefits.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction and Equity Act section provides parity in coverage for mental health and substance abuse with other medical conditions.

Economic Stimulus

On September 26, the House passed a \$60.8 billion economic stimulus package, but a companion \$56.2 billion Senate measure failed to get the 60 votes necessary for floor consideration. Both bills would provide additional funding for food stamps and state Medicaid programs, money for infrastructure projects, and additional unemployment insurance benefits.

The House version (H.R. 7110) that passed includes such job-creating and common good provisions as the following:

- Transportation funding, including money for highway infrastructure projects, public transportation and

Need up-to-date information about legislation in Congress? Check out NETWORK's Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/bills/>. ★ To learn what happened to legislation you followed in the past, go to <http://capwiz.com/networklobby/issues/votes/> and enter your zip code in the "Key Votes" field.



Amtrak upgrades and funding for water resource infrastructure such as drinking water and sewer projects

- Grants for “green” modernization, renovation and repair of public schools.
- Additional funding for the Public Housing Capital Fund, and energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Extension of Unemployment Insurance benefits and funding for job training and employment services
- Temporary increase in the federal Medicaid matching rate to states and temporary increase in food assistance.

NETWORK is urging the Senate to act on an economic stimulus bill when they briefly reconvene in November, as is currently expected. Should it pass, the president has threatened to veto both the Senate and House versions. We urge the administration to reconsider this threat for the good of the country.

Budget

The 110th Congress passed none of the 12 regular appropriations bills for fiscal year 2009, and instead passed H.R. 2638, which provides full fiscal 2009 funding for military construction and the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs; contains a Continuing Resolution to keep the rest of the government funded through March 6, 2009, largely at fiscal 2008 levels; and provides

disaster relief to the victims of floods, wildfires and hurricanes. Common good highlights from the massive spending bill include:

- \$5.1 billion to fund the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—\$2.5 billion more than in 2008
- \$22.9 billion supplement to 2008 funding for families and communities devastated by natural disasters, including disaster relief, and community development and social services block grants
- Increased funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program and for Pell Grants for higher education.

Housing Trust Fund

The source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund (HTF), established to increase and preserve the supply of housing for extremely low and very low income families, was based on the volume of new business done by the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs) Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Now that both are in federal conservatorship, the funding source for the trust fund is in peril. A bill (H.R. 6955) was introduced in the House to suspend contributions by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to the trust fund and to the HOPE for Homeowners Program while they are in governmental conservatorship. It was referred to the House Financial Services Committee.

Iraq

We were pleased that the United States met its very low goal of admitting Iraqi refugees to our country. We accepted slightly more than 12,000 refugees in great part thanks to the advocacy and pressure from our members and other concerned citizens around the country. Congratulations on this success.

There is an increasing awareness of the magnitude of the Iraq war refugee crisis. In the coming months, NETWORK will be working on developing policies and programs that will support the admission of refugees to our country and for Iraqis who wish to return to Iraq.

The Trade Act

The “Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment Act” (TRADE) introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME) aims to reexamine and reshape U.S trade policy. The Interfaith Working Group, of which NETWORK is an active member, is in the process of submitting a critique of the legislation to the bill’s authors. We welcome the opportunity because the legislation calls

for a review of all existing agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the various agreements negotiated by the Bush Administration under Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), now expired.

The Colombia Free Trade Agreement

The administration hopes for passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement before the president leaves office. Should Congress return for an expected “lame duck” session after the election, a vote on the Colombia FTA could be called, thus disposing of the last big item on this president’s trade agenda.

President Uribe of Colombia would welcome such a development. President Uribe in mid-September launched a strong lobbying effort in Washington. Seventy representatives from various sectors of Colombian society—business leaders, elected officials, students, trade unionists and Afro-indigenous representatives—descended on Congress to meet with members of both parties and pressure them to approve the U.S.–Colombia FTA.

Colombia’s major trade unions were not represented in the delegation, indicative of the fact that 17 unionists were murdered in Colombia in the first quarter of 2008—double the number murdered during the first quarter of 2007. Four hundred thirty-four unionists have been murdered in the first six years of Uribe’s presidency, maintaining Colombia’s record of murdering more trade unionists annually than any other nation in the world.

Across Colombia, there is significant opposition to the trade agreement from business groups, agricultural workers, the country’s largest unions, and others.

Meanwhile, the Panama and South Korea Free Trade Agreements languish without a vote, pending action on the Colombia trade agreement.

Marge Clark, BVM, and Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, are NETWORK lobbyists. Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK’s Executive Director.



Want timely information about key issues in Congress? NETWORK members can sign up for our weekly email legislative hotline. Send your name, zip code and email address to jsammon@networklobby.org.

I Teach about Women in this Global Economy

By SHYAMALA RAMAN

The sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a fitting occasion for reflecting not only on the document per se, but also the extent to which it reminds us to keep up the perpetual, urgent task of raising world consciousness about issues concerning women's rights and wellbeing. As activists and scholars, we need to have ongoing public dialogue in order to keep these issues in the forefront. Given that the leading light of the UDHR was a marvelous woman leader, Eleanor Roosevelt, what can we do to maintain a focus on women's issues?

Let me briefly introduce my vantage point, which I consider to be simultaneously a point of mission and a vocation. All of my education from kindergarten through my Master's degree was at women's institutions. The palpable need to inquire, interrogate and examine women's lives has become second nature to me because of the inspiration and values inculcated in me by my teachers and parents.

Today, I am grateful for my involvement in the ministry of education at

Connecticut's only women's college and New England's only Catholic women's college.

My doctoral degree is in economics, and during my early years of teaching, I was awakened by my students to the cognitive dissonance in this discipline. The questions they asked forced me to examine how economics studies women, work and families. That led me to focus on the role of women in the economy, and to design courses on women in the global economy as well as women, work and family in the Global South. In short, I set out to demystify economics and economic thinking for my students.

Questions were planted in their minds, which is "mission accomplished" in a small way. It is this mission that I would like to share—how one can build a global community through questioning and understanding the roles of women in the global economy.

How I Teach

I will begin by sharing how I teach about women's roles in our domestic economy and the challenges women face

in an integrated global economy.

The changing nature of work, new family configurations, and the related issues of economic empowerment of women are some of the challenging consequences of the integrated global economy. The changing nature of work created by the transition from industrialism to "post-industrial informationalism" has led to new occupational structures, flexible employment, and the "end of work" as we knew it. While these changes provide many opportunities, it is important to explore those issues that lead to fissures and fractures. Some of these are:

- The extent of the global division of labor and its encroachment into employment opportunities for U.S. women just entering the labor force;
- Access issues in education and technology as women seek to integrate themselves into the information economy;
- Public policy issues related to education and training;
- The extent of women's participation in new occupational structures. For example, what is the percentage of women involved in the burgeoning biotechnology industry in Connecticut? Are they in low-skill jobs or in research and managerial positions? How do we address the multiple issues of earnings and racial/ethnic and gender segmentation in the industries of the "new economy"?

The conceptualization of the family and household must take into consideration new realities. The imaginary family of Ozzie and Harriet has been replaced by single parent families, same sex partners, blended families, grandparenting and extended families.

Economic necessity fostered by global competition has made it mandatory for women to work in waged jobs while non-waged work such as that in the household or informal economy has

International Studies students conduct workshop on genocide for high school students.

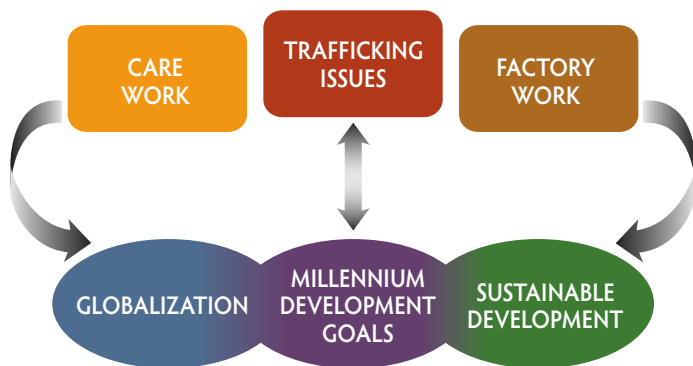


not decreased significantly. Means-tested transfer programs of recent years (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or “TANF”) have led low-income women to assume more responsibility for generating their own incomes while creating their own family-based care and/or local infrastructure. Examples include arranging for the care of their children while they are working, whether by extended family or in affordable child care centers.

The bargaining power of women in the workplace has weakened in a neoliberalist, “stockholder capitalistic” environment. The responsibility of the nation state to provide care and education services has suffered in the name of privatization. This trend is worldwide although its various manifestations in the Global North are very different than in the Global South.

When integrating issues faced by the women in the U.S. with those of the women in the Global South, it is important to disaggregate the issues. I make it clear to my students that “essentialism” in thinking about the “two-thirds” world uses the perspective of “othering” those about whom we do not know while exoticizing and objectifying them into categories of scholarship in the West.

How It All Connects



I try to build an overarching schematic in my classes and fill in the content with not only the latest scholarship but also with multiple perspectives. The schematic illustrates major issues relating to women by looking at three sectors—care work, human trafficking, and factory work. I give my students multiple perspectives on each of these sectors and then tell them that in our study we



College students attend the 52nd Meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women held at the UN in February 2008. (Visit arranged by Sr. Ann Howard.)

should not forget some of the underlying systemic causes and issues that affect the roles of women in the global economy. As shown in the schematic, these can be summarized as the impact of globalization on women, the ongoing discussion of the Millennium Development Goals and their treatment of gender issues, and the role of women in bringing about environmental change that might address some of the damaging effects of globalization. All three topics as well as the systemic issues are interconnected, with feedback loops.

Looking to the Future

We, as women, may “hold up half the sky,” to use the phrase of the late Chinese revolutionary leader, Mao Tse Tung. It is better, however, to use Maria Mies’s expression: “Women are the last colony.” We are still colonized in the palpable presence of patriarchy, by public policy, and by many more inequities.

Does this mean that the future for working women in the emerging global economy is dismal? I do not believe it is so. If this period of globalization is symbolic of the “rise of the network society” (Manuel Castells, 1996), the very metaphor of the network catalyzed by information technology has the ability to mobilize women towards weaving a quilt of a women-centered, equitable and sustainable economy.

It is heartening to note the rise of formal and informal networks created by women locally, regionally and glob-

ally. In some cases, the movements are advocating voluntary delinking from the corporate ethic of profit and promoting “provisioning” that can be defined as thinking of economic activity enveloped in humanity, ethics and sustainability. One fine example of this activity is the growth of local currency systems, which use local instead of national currency to pay for goods and services in a limited area.

In other cases, where globalization has forced the loss of jobs, women’s groups have worked to provide education and training. Our task is to build solidarity that addresses public policies linked to these momentous changes.

While all of us know that we cannot completely change the world and rid it of its injustices and asymmetries, we can still wipe away a tear from a woman who has been affected by injustice and inequity; we can still educate one more student and one more grassroots activist about the impact of human trafficking, migration, and horrors of war; and we can still tell the world, every minute of the day, that we are in this together via our circles of connections, without ever forgetting that we walk in the footsteps of our pioneering foremothers.

Dr. Shyamala Raman is a professor of economics and international studies and Director of International Studies and Programs at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut. All photos courtesy of the author.



Justice in the New Millennium

BY BERNARD J. OFFERMAN

Justice often is thought of in Old Testament terms as a stubbornly just and “no nonsense” God calling the people back to fidelity—faithfulness to the original covenant and fairness and equity in dealings among the people. This Biblical justice is expressed eloquently in Exodus:

You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. (Ex 22:20-22)

It is often difficult to write of an earlier society of mainly personal relationships and individual acts of justice and make a useful transition to the structured and more complex society of today. Herein lies the value of the distinction between person-to-person justice in a simpler era and the virtue of “Social Justice” in our time.

Social Justice today has been defined as the virtue of “organizing or re-organizing systems or institutions with the goal of advancing the common good”—i.e., the temporal welfare and preservation of individual dignity within the network and moral reach of individuals, organizations, civic life in general, or the overall society.

Quite often, “justice” is thought of as giving a person what is his or her due—a cold arms-length virtue of being fair in our dealings—no more, no less. In this vein, it has been called “the primary regulator of human activity.”

But it is much more than that, and it is warmed by a movement of the heart as well as the mind.

The Act of Social Justice

The act of Social Justice can mean that you care deeply about people whom you may not know or ever meet. They



may well live in a future generation. They may live in a distant country or continent. Because there are usually no final victories on the road to “justice,” you will often not see the fruits of your handiwork or witness the gratitude of a people helped or empowered.

Social Justice can be called the “public form of love” in that it reaches beyond personal relationships and the familiarity of friends and associates who would be there to thank you.

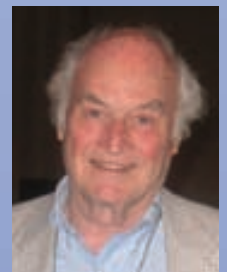
These are examples of activities that represent acts of Social Justice:

- Work for a just law or a morally responsible budget;
- Promoting a public or private policy that includes people in the shaping of their own lives and screening them into (instead of out of) participation and opportunity in the workings of society;
- Work for solidarity and just relations within our community and our neighborhoods; and,
- Advocacy of a living, family wage in our worklife, or a more equitable distribution of wealth and income in our society.

A successful act of Social Justice, then, removes a condition that contradicts the God-given dignity of the person—whether the condition is poverty, unemployment, lack of affordable housing, discrimination, educational deficiency, environmental harm, or an unfair or inadequate healthcare delivery system. In removing the dependency that often accompanies these social or economic conditions, Social Justice enables people to claim and live the dignity inherent in being a creature of God.

Justice is foundational to the virtue of Charity. Charity responds to and treats breakdowns in society, often on an individual basis. Social Justice coalesces people to organize and change the more basic condition or causes of the breakdowns.

Bernard J. Offerman, Ph.D. is a retired Duke Professor at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina.



Advent Reflection: Leadership Starts With Us

This Advent season coincides with a critical transition in our country's political leadership. It is a perfect time to resolve anew to bring our own visionary leadership to the communal challenge of forging a more just world.

Sr. Joan Chittister describes truth-telling as a foundation of visionary leadership: "The great leaders of history have always been those who refused to barter their ideals for the sake of their personal interests and who rebelled against the lies of their times." ("Leadership: More Integrity than Politics," *Connection*, Nov.-Dec. 2008)

A visionary leader speaks frankly about injustices overlooked in popular discourse and perpetuated by the status quo. As Sr. Joan says, we speak truth about the ills of our world "so that what obstructs us from being fully human together may be seen for what it is, be converted into good, and become the sweet sound of justice heard in every corner of the world." (ibid.)

Speaking truth to power is integral to visionary leadership, but our mission does not end at naming the injustices. As we

illuminate what is wrong with the current social, political, and economic order, we must also present an alternative vision and work toward its fulfillment. To be true to this call to action, we must challenge ourselves to ground our critiques in a clear understanding of the nature of the "good" we seek. We must faithfully consider the ingredients we need for transformations and the instruments we have around us—or may need to fashion—in order to see our vision realized.

What possibilities for pursuing justice do we see in the next year and beyond? How can we hold ourselves and our political leaders accountable to that vision? On the back of this page, we present a basic blueprint each of us can use to reflect upon our own visions of justice and what we can do to make them a reality.

"If tackling critical problems seems a fool's errand, it's only because we're looking at life through too narrow a lens. History shows that the proverbial rock can be rolled, if not to the top of the mountain, then at least to the successive plateaus and, more important, simply pushing the rock in the right direction is cause for celebration. History also shows that even seemingly miraculous advances are in fact the result of many people taking small steps together over a long period of time" —Paul Rogat Loeb

"It would appear that this country is adrift right now; that the Ship of State is bobbing and weaving, and the words of Seneca come to mind: If a man does not know to what port he sails, no wind is favorable. You ought to know where you are going; you ought to know to what port you sail, and perhaps the winds will favor your direction. You must know that. It is the confidence of your knowledge; it is the sureness of your knowledge which may perchance nudge this country in the right direction." —Barbara Jordan, Commencement Speech, Howard University, 1974

"Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lay defeat and death" —Nelson Mandela

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.

An Advent Calendar to Ignite Your Own Visionary Leadership

Week 1 — Reflect

What are your desires for the future of your family, your community, our country, our world? What is your vision of a just world? Based on your personal experiences and interests, what piece of that vision most ignites your passion?

Do you feel most strongly about...

- achieving broader access to a particular need, like quality and affordable health care?
- supporting the struggle for social and economic justice of a particular community or group?
- transforming a system or institution such as “free” trade policies or immigration laws that, in their current form, impede the construction of a more just world?

Week 2 — Brainstorm

What needs to change in order for that piece of your justice vision to become a reality? What effects would that change have on the surrounding institutions and people? Is the piece too big to change at once? Which pieces can be changed now?

Which people, communities and/or institutions hold keys to advancing your vision? What kinds of coalitions already exist or could be constructed to work toward it?

Can you think of people whose perspectives are missing from your own vision? How might you connect with them in order to strengthen your own vision and advance common goals?

Week 3 — Gather Your Resources

What specific steps can you take to move your vision forward? Are you focusing on change in your community, in your state, in national policy?

What resources do you have or can you find...

- to help you understand the issue?
- to help you make a plan? (organizational skills, toolkits and materials from other groups)
- to help you spread your message? (networks you are involved with, upcoming meetings or events, media skills)
- to support and encourage you? (friends, cohorts, organizations)

How can your resources help you to lead others along with your vision?

Week 4 — Take Action

How and when can you implement your plan?

- How and when will you connect with those who will create justice?
- When are the best windows for action? How can you spread the word about your action/event?
- How can you communicate your vision to different people?

Gather materials to make your action/event successful. And now, live your faith by acting for justice in the weeks and the months to come!

As you begin to ignite your own visionary leadership, remember that NETWORK is here to be a resource to you. We are here for emotional as well as educational support, and we are anxious to see how you will continue to lead us to the better world we all envision.

By Katrine Herrick and Kelly Trout, NETWORK Associates

We encourage the reproduction and distribution of this back-to-back fact sheet.



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Vision and Action For Advent

By JOHN PRICE, D.MIN.

I recently arrived at NETWORK to serve as the Major Donor Coordinator, and I want to use this opportunity to explore with you the relationship between the spirituality of giving and the call to leadership that is the focus of this issue of *Connection*.

Joan Chittister suggests in her lead article that leaders are those “who will lead us and the world back to our best selves.” This sounds very much like the Christian season of Advent, a time heavily shaped by the clear-eyed vision of the Hebrew prophets.

Advent’s anticipation of being led into a time of dramatic social transformation is deeply tied to the Hebrew writings we associate with Isaiah, Jeremiah and others from the 8th century BCE. The vision of hope on which the Hebrew community staked its life is a time when God’s love will scatter the proud, humble the mighty, feed the hungry, send the rich away empty, and bring good news to all who suffer. And coupled with this hope for the future is always a call to faithful action toward the vision’s goal. This is the Biblical paradigm of faithful leadership.

These same Scriptures also tell of a leader whose coming is “good news” and whose self-giving will lead us and our world back to our best selves, back to the shalom (peace or social wholeness) of God.

Did you know that originally, the Biblical term for “good news” (gospel) was not

even a religious term, but a secular one? This civic gospel told of a good news that impinges on life on a communal level, transforming not just individual life, but more importantly, transforming the character of the whole community. It is a word that speaks about the people’s welfare, the common good, a new vision that shapes all lives for the better. And in the person of Jesus, we see just how global is this call for social and economic justice.

As followers of Jesus, we are given an invitation to new ways of using our possessions and power in a way that aligns life with this Christian call to social justice.

I see this generosity of spirit in many whose lives are shaped by the human

*“Without poverty of spirit
there can be no abundance of God.”*

longing for justice of which Advent speaks, and who then share what they have for the sake of the promised reign of God. Think of people like Francis of Assisi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, Oscar Romero and countless others who have given generously of their lives, whether meager or great, so that the coming of God’s shalom will be empowered through their own acts of kindness, compassion and generosity.

All of us are called to be leaders when it comes to speaking the truth to power in our own generation.

We are called to be leaders in the ways we invest our resources of intellect, prayer, shared labor and our financial resources on behalf of the Good News.

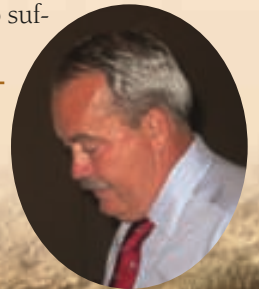
And we are all called to a heart-felt humility, for as Archbishop Romero once wrote, “Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.”

For Christians in every place and time, leadership is about following, following the Christ as He leads us back to our best selves in our communities, in our nation, and in the world.

It is in this Advent paradigm of vision and faithful action that I invite you to imagine how you will support NETWORK in new and more generous ways. I also invite you to participate actively in our shared advocacy through NETWORK.

Together, we will bring good news to the oppressed, bind-up the broken hearted, feed the hungry and bring good news to all who suffer in God’s Creation.

*The Rev. John Price,
an Episcopal priest, is
NETWORK’s Major
Gifts Coordinator.*



November 6, Milwaukee, WI

Jean Sammon and Marge Clark, BVM, will facilitate a discussion on "Post-election Work for the Common Good" with NETWORK members and friends at the Henke Lounge on Level Two of the Marquette Alumni Memorial Union located at 1442 W. Wisconsin Avenue, 7:30 to 9 PM.

November 8, Milwaukee, WI

Marge Clark, BVM, and Jean Sammon will facilitate a caucus on "A Platform for the Common Good & How We Can Hold Our Newly Elected Officials Accountable for Our Common Good." 11:30 - 12:15 at the Call To Action Conference.

November 13, 2008, Romeoville, IL

Sara Dwyer, ASC, will facilitate a session on "Legislative Advocacy—Transforming Social Structures through Public Policy" at the St Charles Pastoral Center.

November 18, Denver, CO

Simone Campbell, SSS, will lead the LCWR workshop on "Canon and Civil Law 101" for new congregational leaders and treasurers.

November 22-23, Columbus GA

NETWORK staff and board will have a table on Ft. Benning Road during the School of Americas (SOA) Watch vigil.

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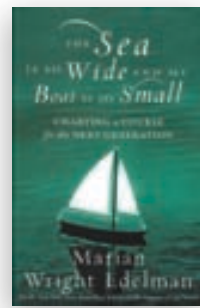
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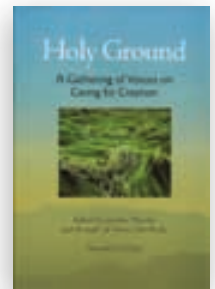
NETWORK recommends



I'd Rather Teach Peace by Colman McCarthy, Orbis Books. <http://www.maryknollmall.org/description.cfm>
 ISBN=978-1-57075-762-4



The Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small; Charting a Course for the Next Generation by Marian Wright Edelman, Hyperion. <http://www.hyperionbooks.com/titlepage.asp?ISBN=9781401323332>



Holy Ground; A Gathering of Voices on Caring for Creation ed. by Lyndsay Moseley and the staff of Sierra Club Books. <https://secure2.convio.net/sierra/site/Ecommerce?>

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