



SHEPHERD'S SPEAK

VOICES THAT CHALLENGE

Volume 5 issue 2

THE NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice.

Isabel Allende

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National Advocacy Center Hosts First Conference Call With Good Shepherd People

By Anne Montesano

On July 12th, the National Advocacy Center had the first of what we hope will be a series of conference calls to bring Good Shepherd agencies and sisters together to strengthen our advocacy efforts. The purpose of the first call was to begin a discussion on the types of advocacy in which Good Shepherd agencies and communities engage, the challenges and successes they face and how the National Advocacy Center can be a resource to Good Shepherd advocates.

The conference call's speakers, Sr. Paulette LoMonaco, director of Good Shepherd Services in New York, and Sr. Sharon Rose Authorson, a contemplative sister in Florissant, Missouri described their involvement in advocacy from the agency and community perspectives. Sr. Paulette explained that advocacy is an integral part of the work of Good Shepherd Services because it is part of their mission statement, which empowers each staff member to advocate, though the advocacy may take on different forms depending on their role. Because Good Shepherd Services is so well-known and is a respected voice in the community, Sr. Paulette also views advocacy as a responsibility and moral obligation. Some of the advocacy efforts in which Good Shepherd Services is engaged include: developing relationships with local, city and state elected officials, informing staff of who elected officials are, participating in meetings with elected officials, and writing letters, mak-

ing calls and developing sample letters for staff to send to elected officials.

Sr. Sharon Rose spoke of her belief in the direct connection between advocacy and justice and how the spirit of jubilee enables her to engage in this kind of work. She discussed the many ways she, as a contemplative, participates in and spearheads advocacy efforts,

"Charity and justice bind us to each other and to the whole institute."

St. Mary Euphrasia

through prayer, participating in vigils, fasts, and call-in days, collecting signatures for petitions, emailing members of congress, and encouraging others to do the same.

She explained that her advocacy stems from Good Shepherd charism and has grown as her understanding of injustice has deepened.

Our second call will be in September and will focus on how non-profit organizations and religious communities can be engaged in the upcoming November elections. To participate in the calls, please contact Alison Prevost at aprevost@gsadvocacy.org. The National Advocacy Center wants to make these conference calls as meaningful as possible to Good Shepherd staff and sisters. We welcome suggestions for future conference call topics. Questions to consider are: How can the National Advocacy Center be a resource to your advocacy work? How can we strengthen each other's advocacy efforts and how can the National Advocacy Center's conference calls aid in this?

National Advocacy Center Hosts International Visitors

By Sr. Gayle Lwanga

This spring Sr. Shalini Podimattam the Coordinator of the Good Shepherd International Office For Justice, Peace, and Solidarity in Mission, arrived in the United States to participate in educational sessions offered by the United Nations and connect with Sr. Clare Nolan who is the Good Shepherd NGO Representative to the United Nations.



Sisters Mau Catabian, Vandana Lobo, Shalini Podimattam

Good Shepherd delegation. Congressman Smith has been very active in the fight against human trafficking by introducing legislation and working on the international level to bring this modern day slavery to an end. Representative Smith invited Good Shepherd Sisters to apply for funds that are available for prevention programs in certain target areas. His office also provided a tour of the Capitol for our visitors.

Sr. Shalini also visited the National Advocacy Center and was accompanied to the Washington, DC area by Good Shepherd NGO interns Sr. Mau Catabian from the Philippines, and Sr. Vandana Lobo, from India and missioned to Nepal. Although the sisters missed the cherry blossoms they were still able to partake of the beautiful springtime flowers and warm springtime temperatures and what can only be described as

We were very fortunate that Sr. Shalini's visit also coincided with the quarterly meeting of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking. Sr. Maria Riley, OP, Coordinator of the Global Women's Project at the Center for Concern discussed the human trafficking problem from a macro-economic perspective. Germany was also a focus of the meeting because of concerns about sex trafficking during the World Cup as prostitution is legal in Germany.

The sisters were also able to spend time with Sr. Helene Hayes who has been working to document the experiences of women who have been trafficked all over the world.



NAC Staff with Sisters Vandana, Shalini and Mau

perfect weather.

The sisters were oriented to the National Advocacy Center by Sr. Gayle Lwanga and staff, which included our lobbyist, Alison Prevost, and Good Shepherd Volunteer, Anne Montesano. We tried to give a general overview of how our national government operates and how the National Advocacy Center engages in the process.

We are very grateful to Representative Christopher Smith, R-NJ and his staff who also met with our



Sr. Gayle, Alison, Rep. Chris Smith, Sr. Shalini, Sr. Vandana, and Sr. Mau (from left)

From The National Coordinator Sr. Gayle Lwanga

There is an international prayer for peace that is prayed by many people around the world at noon.

Lead me from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.

Lead me from hate to love,
from war to peace.

Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.
Peace, peace, peace.

(Adapted from the *Upanishads* by Satish Kumar.)

During this troubling time of more and more war let us redouble our efforts to beg God to bring peace to the world.

I would like to say goodbye to our Good Shepherd Volunteer Anne Montesano. It doesn't seem possible that another volunteer year has come and gone. Anne reminds me that God provides for us even before we know we have the need. We thank her for her service and we thank her for be-

ing a life bearer with and for the poor.

Anne has expertise in immigration and has been a valuable resource for our office. It has been a good year working with her, and we wish her well as she moves on to grad school and other opportunities.

I also want to direct your attention to the article below, which is reprinted from AlterNet and about child soldiers in Uganda. Sister Helen Hayes and I were chatting after the last meeting of the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, saying how easy it is to lose sight of the other forms of human trafficking and focus narrowly on sex trafficking.

I thought this was a good time to shift our consciousness to other forms of trafficking. In Uganda, children are kidnapped, made to commit murder, then conscripted into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). I hope this article helps to broaden your prayer as we continue to pray for those who are caught up in this web of evil.

Human Trafficking Excerpts reprinted with permission By Zack Pelta-Heller, AlterNet. Posted May 19, 2006

Every night in northern Uganda, thousands of children trek from their bush villages to cities in search of refuge. If they stay at home, they risk being kidnapped, abused and forced to fight in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group led by Joseph Kony that has abducted more than 30,000 children and displaced 1.6 million people in the past 20 years.

Most of the world has failed to notice this harrowing situation. Now it's the subject of a powerful new documentary called "Journey Into Sunset", which recently premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival. Directed by Rick Wilkinson and starring Don Cheadle, the film chronicles

the plight of these brave children, also known as "night commuters."



Since 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army has terrorized the Acholi people of northern Uganda in an attempt to create an "ethnically pure" state, based on Kony's distorted interpretation of the Old Testament. Despite the Ugandan military's best counter-efforts -- and an investigation by the International Criminal Court --

the LRA's brutality has recently spread into eastern Congo and southern Sudan, where Kony moved his training camps.

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Human Trafficking Excerpts reprinted with permission By Zack Pelta-Heller, AlterNet. Posted May 19, 2006

Continued from page 3

"Journey Into Sunset" follows actor Don Cheadle, his wife and their two daughters through overcrowded urban shelters like Noah's Ark, where between 3,000 and 4,000 children sleep every night to avoid the LRA.

"The film is filled with haunting images of night commuters, ages 5-16, crammed into congested tents in cities plagued by AIDS and malaria. Cheadle conducts chilling interviews with children fortunate enough to have escaped the LRA's clutches. Clearly affected by post-traumatic shock, these kids recount - in lurid detail -- how the LRA brainwashed them, then trained them to murder their own family members and friends.

Cheadle became closely acquainted with the region last year as a correspondent for "Nightline," reporting from the Sudan. It was there, during his visits to Internally Displaced Persons camps, that he decided his family needed to see what was happening around him. "Journey Into Sunset" is all the more poignant because it's told through the eyes of a contemporary American family, witnessing the horrors of life in northern Uganda.

The day after the premiere of "Journey Into Sunset," I discussed the film with director Rick Wilkinson in Manhattan.

Rick Wilkinson: I had never heard of them, actually. Don and his family had been invited to Kampala, Uganda, for a fundraiser screening of "Hotel Rwanda" to raise money for the night commuters. One of the guys from an NGO called the International Crisis Group asked if I wanted to do another story. But when Nightline couldn't come up with the money, we had to find someone on the outside to finance the travel and the shoot.

I ended up doing a Nightline piece out of that material anyway, but I really wanted to create a longer version. This is an important story, one people need to know about.

ZPH: The shocking predicament of night commuters has been going on for nearly 20 years. Why hasn't more attention been brought to this issue before now?

RW: We haven't heard about it because it's not something where you're looking at a starving baby; it's not something where you're watching a dead body; it's not

dramatic enough to grab our attention. There's so much stuff going on that we don't even hear about.

ZPH: The United Nations called this crisis one of the worst to afflict children around the world.

RW: Yeah, but who listens to the U.N.? I'm not going to say they're powerless, but when the U.N. releases a press release, what do you think will get covered, the press release or some lacrosse guys accused of rape?

ZPH: Now that "Journey into Sunset" is done and more awareness has been brought to night commuters, do you think it will compel the U.S. or the U.N. to intervene?

RW: Well, that's interesting, because last night after the premiere, a whole lot of people -- more than I ever would have expected -- came up to me and said, "I've never heard of this. From a political standpoint, what can I do?"

And I said, "You know what? Forget the politics. Send your money to World Vision or Noah's Ark, a place that supports these kids." Because the political intervention might never happen. It's been 20 years so far. What you want to do is send your \$20 or \$30 to some place that can do some immediate good.

The world pays attention to things when it wants to. I mean, the secretary of state called what's going on in the Sudan genocide, and how much has the U.S. done? How much has anybody done? Here is a country that can make things happen, and yet things have gotten worse there in the past couple of months...

...**ZPH:** How many children did you interview?

RW: We interviewed three former soldiers, and we also met a kid from Noah's Ark. That's the place where night commuters come every night to sleep in safety. That child was 15, and he'd actually been kidnapped, but got away shortly after his abduction. He comes to Noah's Ark every night, but he knows that he's going to be OK because he's on the outer edge of being safe. If these kids can make it to the age of 15 or 16 without being abducted by the LRA, they'll be safe from them. The problem is that they're prime targets until then.

(Full article at <http://www.alternet.org/story/36283/>)



The Fight for Comprehensive Immigration Reform Continues by Anne Montesano

You may recall the mass rallies and demonstrations for immigration reform that took place in numerous cities across America earlier this year and wonder what's come of it. Those rallies demonstrated peoples' rejection of the House immigration bill, known as the Sensenbrenner bill or H.R. 4437, which was passed last November. The Sensenbrenner bill increases fencing and border enforcement, and would criminalize those who are undocumented and those who aid the undocumented, among other punitive provisions. It is solely an enforcement bill and does nothing to address the 12 million undocumented people who are in the U.S. or the many more who will come.

In May, the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill, which is vastly different from the House bill. The Senate bill creates a guest worker program with a path to citizenship; would allow a portion of the estimated 12 million undocumented people in the U.S. to, after many years, apply for legal status; and increases border and internal enforcement, among other provisions. Since both chambers of Congress have passed immigration reform bills, members from the House and Senate must come together to work out the differences in the bills.

This process has been delayed because the House decided to hold hearings on immigration reform in various cities across the U.S. The House hearings are being used as a vehicle to advance their enforcement-only agenda, rather than to promote productive discussion on immigration reform. The House is very reluctant to compromise and approve a comprehensive bill, de-

spite the fact that President Bush supports comprehensive immigration reform.

History has demonstrated that an enforcement-only approach to immigration reform is unworkable. Over the last 20 years, the budget for the border patrol has increased tenfold and the number of hours agents spent patrolling the border increased eight-fold. Despite the increase in border enforcement, the U.S.

saw the greatest rise in undocumented migration in the past 15 years and more than 3,000 migrants have died trying to cross the border, due to U.S. enforcement policies which push migrants into more dangerous desert areas.

By creating legal channels through which migrants can enter the U.S., as the Senate bill does, undocumented migration would decrease and border patrol could more easily focus on those migrants who might actually be a threat

to the country. In addition, focusing on enforcement only and doing nothing to bring the 12 million undocumented immigrants out of the shadows actually undermines national security, the issue that underpins support for an enforcement only approach.

Clearly, comprehensive immigration reform is the way forward. While anti-immigrant groups are sending bricks to members of Congress to demonstrate their support for building a wall along the U.S./Mexico border and immi-

grant rights' groups are sending work gloves to Congress to demonstrate the hard work that immigrants do in this country, the National

Advocacy Center, together with its coalition partners, continues to advocate for comprehensive reform that is just and compassionate.



In solidarity, we will continue to advocate on your behalf for just and fair migration policies. We commit ourselves to animate communities of Christ's disciples on both sides of the border so that yours is a journey of hope, not despair.

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey, US Catholic Bishops and Conference of Mexican Bishops, 2003.

The Moral Imperative for Raising the Minimum Wage

By Alison Prevost



The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “There is nothing but a lack of social vision to prevent us from paying an adequate wage to every American [worker] whether he is a hospital worker, laundry worker, maid, or day laborer.” Part of building such a vision is clearly articulating its moral basis. In the case of work and wages, Christian tradition and Catholic social teaching provide a solid foundation for the vision of a just and “living” wage for all workers.

Throughout the Bible there are strong moral critiques of economic injustice and mandates to ensure that workers are not exploited and that the most vulnerable are cared for. The “economic” laws meant to guide the Hebrew people and the kingdom of Israel followed from God’s gifts of abundance in creation and God’s continuing provision for God’s people and included jubilee years of land redistribution (Deut. 15), requirements that portions of harvests be set aside for the poor and the stranger (Lev. 19), and demands for just treatment of needy workers (Deut. 24).

A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice.

-Gaudium et Spes, #67, Vatican Council II

workers and special concern for those who are poor. The principle of human dignity affirms the inherent value of every person and his/her labor, upholds the right of all to wages adequate to meet basic needs, and denounces the treatment of workers as simply market commodities. The option for the poor demands that economic decisions be viewed in light of their impact on the poorest in society and makes the treatment of the most vulnerable the litmus test for justice. The principle of economic justice pulls declares that the economy is meant to serve people (not the other way around) and affirms the need for limits to the market system to ensure safe working conditions and just wages for workers.

This moral foundation has led the Catholic church to support stronger labor laws, the right of workers to organize, and just wages and it also informs the advocacy of our office on behalf of a minimum wage increase in our country now. This moral foundation is further strengthened by the insights of other faith partners, particularly the *Let Justice Roll Campaign*, (www.letjusticeroll.org), and reinforced by the “Golden Rule”, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by traditional American values of justice and equality.



From these principles and values, the moral im-

When Israel failed to live up to these obligations, strong condemnation came from the prophets. Jeremiah addressed the treatment of workers specifically saying, “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages (Jer. 22:13).”

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus opened his public ministry by invoking the words of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming “good news to the poor” and “the year of the Lord’s favor (jubilee year).” In his parables and interactions he criticized of abuses of wealth and power and in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20), he offered a vision of God’s generosity, demonstrating how workers are to be treated. The early Christian community struggled to live into this vision by “holding all things in common (Acts 4:32)” and continuing to denounce injustice and the excesses of the wealthy (Jam. 5).

Drawing from this biblical tradition, key principles of Catholic social teaching reaffirm the call for just treatment of

perative and vision for a just and living wage become clear—no one who works full time should live in poverty



and all people deserve a fair share of the resources that God provides.

Yet, despite our nation’s great wealth, millions of working Americans are falling further and further behind and the income gap is widening. With the minimum wage frozen at \$5.15 an hour for the past 10 years, a full-time minimum wage worker only earns \$10,700 per year—\$5,000 below the poverty line for a family of three and less than some corporate CEOs make in one day. Health care aides are unable to afford health insurance for their own families, food service workers have to use food pantries for groceries, and with rising gas prices it now costs more than a full day’s wages for a minimum wage worker to fill up a family car.

A minimum wage that fails to provide for the basic needs of individuals and families is inadequate and unjust and an increase is a moral necessity. But beyond that, we need a broader conversation about how work is valued in our society and a sustained vision for organizing economic life in such a way that all people can have lives of dignity, sufficiency and full community participation.

Legislative Update

By Alison Prevost

Appropriations Delays

After passing most of its annual appropriations bills fairly quickly, the House appropriations process hit a bit of a snag with the Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education appropriations bill (H.R. 5647). Because an amendment was added to raise the minimum wage, House Republican leaders, who oppose increasing the minimum wage, have kept the Labor-HHS bill from a floor vote as they try to find a way to remove the amendment from the bill without losing support from moderate Republicans who support the minimum wage increase. In addition, because of significant and unpopular cuts to programs such as the Community Services Block Grant, Head Start, job training, and mental health services, there has been speculation that the House may not vote on the Labor-HHS bill until after the election in November.



In the Senate, appropriations bills are moving much more slowly and face similar funding problems. None of the Senate's appropriations bills have been brought to the floor yet and, like the House, the Labor-HHS bill will likely be the most difficult. Although Senators overwhelmingly voted back in March to add \$7 billion to Labor-HHS programs, the Labor-HHS bill that the Senate Appropriations Committee will take up the week of July 17th falls \$ 2 billion short of that amount because of a spending cap that was tacked on to the supplemental spending bill for Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf Coast. This funding level will leave many critical programs underfunded and will likely delay the Senate floor vote until at least after the August recess.

Troubling Budget Process Bills Moving in House and Senate

A number of so-called budget process "reform" bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate and are being touted as a means to restore fiscal sanity. Unfortunately, these proposals would do little to reduce the deficit and raise a number of other concerns. One of the "reforms," the line-item veto, has already passed the House and may be voted on in the Senate before the August recess. The line-item

veto would shift power from Congress to the President; even after Congress has carefully negotiated spending decisions, the "line-item" veto would allow the President to rewrite the legislation by eliminating or reducing funding for particular programs—overriding one of the important check and balances outlined in the Constitution. Another proposal under consideration would create a sunset commission that

would subject federal programs to review by an unelected panel, which could recommend eliminating or revising a program with opportunity for public or congressional input.

Rather than addressing fiscal irresponsibility with reasonable budget rules that have worked in the past, these proposals remove public accountability by taking important spending decisions away from Congress and placing them in the hands of the President or a commission appointed by him/her. Such a shift in power reduces the openness of

government and threatens the democratic process by severely limiting who can participate in critical government decisions regarding funding and the structure of programs.

Estate Tax Repeal Stymied—For Now

Despite a strong push from Republican leadership, the effort to repeal the estate tax in the Senate fell short of the votes needed. Estate tax opponents are now trying to negotiate a compromise "reform" package, similar to one passed by the House, which would be nearly as expensive as full repeal—adding further to our already large deficits and increasing pressure to cut vital programs. While it appears that "reform" proposals still lack enough support in the Senate, they are only a few votes short and pro-repeal groups have shown willingness to spend a lot of money to pressure wavering Senators. Supporters of the estate tax continue to argue for the fairness of the tax and offer reasonable reform proposals that would ensure that the overwhelming majority of Americans would never pay the estate and that would protect legitimate family farms and small businesses.



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St. Mary Euphrasia (Foundress, Sisters of the Good Shepherd)

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Voice for the voiceless

Handcrafting Justice

By Marilyn Riffkin—Handcrafting Justice Ambassador

Handcrafting Justice is a network of women helping women in less developed countries make and then sell handmade crafts, jewelry, clothing, tote bags and more. These amazing items must be seen to be appreciated. In the National Advocacy Center we have a boutique of these handcrafts that we offer for sale. Please call 301-622-6838 to set up a visit. These crafts can also be purchased from www.handcraftingjustice.org.

The boutique is also available to go on the road. We would be happy to arrange a sale in your parish, retirement home or workplace. This is a great social justice event.



Marilyn Riffkin

Some of the countries that our wares come from are; Haiti, India, Madagascar, Paraguay, Peru and Thailand. We hope that this recognition of our partners on three continents, eighteen countries & twenty seven projects will bring them the visibility and support they deserve. The proceeds of the sales go directly back to the women who made them and provide an opportunity for the

women to earn a living wage and improve their families' lives.

Please keep Handcrafting Justice in mind when you have a gift to give, we are a Fair Trade Company.

