



our developing world's voices

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All Things are Connected

The only National Guard Unit with amphibian equipment and training is Louisiana's; and it is currently stationed in Iraq. Mississippi's National Guard Unit is also there. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, these folks with the best local knowledge of where the neediest people would be are were thousands of miles away. Some of them whose homes have been devastated were brought home. They have 14 days leave and then the possibility of discharge.

The disaster in the wake of Katrina is one that has been years in the making,. One ingredient is the diversion of the funding for the repair of the levees to fund the Iraq war. Another factor is the widening gap between the rich and poor. Income inequality is now wider in America than anywhere else in the industrialized world and is on par with that of a Third World country. As Greg Tarpinian, President of Labor Research Association puts it, "Under the Bush administration, the US is leading this race to the bottom in wages, benefits, working conditions & social protections." Tarpinian also clarifies that our unemployment rate is actually the same as Europe's 9% when it includes, as Europe does, the underemployed & the discouraged. Under Eisenhower we stopped counting them for official statistics. As Steven Rattner writes in Business Week, "The top 1% take a fatter slice now than at any time since the 1920's."

What's to blame for this sorry situation? Certainly globalization has played a role, as cheaper labor overseas has put downward pressure on U.S. wages. We need more education and training for workers at home for those jobs that remain here, as well as more

protections such as better wage insurance. But Bush is still pressing for removing the estate tax that helps only the rich. *And* he just rescinded the rule that employers pay the prevailing wage for reconstruction of the devastation by Katrina. The folks employed need the money even more because they have their lives to put back in together. In addition, while asking NATO for help the government turned away Venezuelan and Cuban offers of assistance though they're experienced in this kind of catastrophe and are much closer to the damaged areas.

Hurricane Katrina affected oil extraction in the

Continued on page 6



Devastation left in Hurricane Katrina's wake.



Human Rights in South Africa A World Model

“I believe in miracles...our democracy is quite strong. The initial institutions are established. People are aware of their rights. Implementation is slow in many cases but an active citizenry keeps up the pressure.” So spoke Pious Langa, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court who generously shared an hour with *our developing world's* reality tour this summer. Indeed, the county of South Africa has put in place several structures to assure human rights that make it a model for other nations.

The Constitutional Court has a strong role in the government. Early in its history, the court declared one of President Mandela's proclamation unconstitutional and Mandela complied, thus setting a tone to honor court decisions. Several years later, public protests against President Mbeki's failure to address the AIDS crisis led to a lawsuit heard before the Constitutional Court, which resulted in Mbeki's being compelled to offer free government treatment. Eleven judges serve on the court—presently 9 men (3 White) and 2 women (1 Black). Judges serve for a maximum of twelve years and must retire by age 75. Justices are nominated by an independent Judicial Commission, then appointed by the President.

Equality Courts are second only in importance to the Constitution Court. They are easily accessible to ordinary people, especially the disadvantaged. Women are guaranteed inheritance rights, can sign for loans, and receive equal pay. The Commission for Gender Equality investigates and challenges laws, practices and customs that discriminate against people because of their gender. It offers conciliation, mediation and arbitration. It also deals with restitution of land rights. (More on that next issue)

South Africa's Bill of Rights is all encompassing; including socio-economic rights

such as the right to education and a healthy environment, and access to housing, health care, food, water and social security. Access means the government must do things to make it possible to get these things. Another important right is that any member of the public can have access to corporate records.

Because the promotion and protection of human rights cannot be left to individuals, the courts or government alone, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) was established as an independent organization, separate from government, to make sure human rights are respected.

The Independent Complaints Directorate investigates all cases where the police have acted wrongly or have violated people's rights. The criminal system is being revised. Alternatives to incarceration for petty crimes such as community service or work programs are offered.

Unfair labor practices or violation of labor rights are handled by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration. A recent case involved South Africa Air Lines refusing to promote a man who was HIV+. The Court ordered him to be promoted because his health didn't impair his job performance. Finally, if the Court finds legislation that is faulty, they give Parliament a proposal and 6 months to remedy it.

Human Rights is considered so important that curricula written by the Human Rights Commission is available to schools. The integration of such learning is cross-disciplinary, not isolated, and is even included in mathematics courses. We were invited to peruse the curricula and were very impressed. Check our website soon to see some of these lessons and a link with their website. www.magiclink.net/~odw.
(Thanks to Meiyu Chen, our marvelous web volunteer!)



Reflections on a visit to Khayalitsha

This photo shows children from the village of Khayalitscha, three young women from the *odw* reality tour and the taller young man in the back is Anele Nunu, the organizer of this inspiring visit. What follows are reflections upon the visit from more than one perspective.



As a young person who grew up in the old South Africa I was taught that white people were the cause of destruction, poverty, oppression and all these negative things in this vibrant country, but today I assure you that I've got incredibly different perceptions.

More than 10 white people were sitting inside my place. (*odw's* group during the reality tour) I just can't believe that ... it became so successful. They were very kind, generous and vivacious. We even visited a nearby township school where three young tourists accompanied by their mother shared a lot with the pupils. They even sang a song for them and this was something remarkable especially in this poverty stricken township. The tourists felt very welcomed in Khayelitsha as the residents emerged in large numbers to disseminate ideas with the tourists. I even prepared food for them, I mean the kind of food we eat in the township on a daily basis. I thought they were not going to relish the food, but they

eat my food with great enjoyment. They all eat the food and we even exchanged contacts to prove the food was nice and palatable.

I have never experienced this in the whole of my youthful life but I am telling you today I am even looking forward to occasions like these consistently. I've learned a lot about the culture of the Americans and how they do everyday things. My community supports the process (reality tours) vehemently and we even took a long walk around the community. All in all we had such a great time with the tourists and as a community we are looking forward, or dying to see tourists visiting our disadvantaged community.

-Anele Nunu

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Today, we went to a high school in a township called Khayalitsha (in Capetown, South Africa.) I walked into a normal-seeming school, but there was barbed wire everywhere, and a huge barred gate to get in. When we entered the building and began our trek through the hall, many of the students stared at us as if we where from another planet. In one of the classrooms, the kids wanted to talk to us, so we scattered around the room. I got nervous because everyone was expecting something from us, but when we started talking, I started to feel more comfortable. Everyone asked about celebrities, except one girl. She spoke 7 of the 11 national languages and said she wanted to be a doctor. She continued to ask me about how to get to America to study and get a degree. I told her it would be a lot of work and asked why she felt so strongly about it? She answered, "I want to help people and make a difference." Now I realize how lucky I am to be born here and I've decided to try to get the girl I spoke to a scholarship, because I too want to make a difference.

13-year old Talia Trozzo-journal excerpt

Continued on page 7



Signs of Hope:

A Report on HIV/AIDS in South Africa

HIV/AIDS is having a devastating impact on South Africa's children. Funerals seem to occur all the time, frequently leaving children orphaned. Countless grandmothers are taking on the task of raising these children. One granny we met in the poorest part of Soweto, Kliptown, is taking care of all 20 of her grandchildren. She does receive a stipend for each child, but that is hardly enough, nor is there any respite care. Yet on *odw's* most recent reality tour, we saw some hopeful signs.

Perhaps the young people who were being trained by the Salvation Army to do HIV/AIDS education and give respite care will help. Mostly young women from 18-29, these dedicated people were staying at the Soweto Lutheran Centre, where we engaged them in conversation. Their enthusiasm at the prospect of giving some real help to people in need was inspirational. These Salvation Army workers explained that the government program was

ABC: Abstinence, Be faithful & Condom use. (Condoms are available free in restrooms for both men and women.) They feel that abstinence is extremely important, yet has not been emphasized enough, so they're determined to push for that among their peers.

On our visit to the Soweto Salvation Army Orphanage we met a child who came there as an infant the first time we visited 12 years ago. She's doing well! The matron said with an abundance of love, good nutrition and medications there is a new sense future for these children which wouldn't have been dreamed of in the past. The orphanage is involved in the community, inviting neighborhood children to their preschool. The staff also serves local seniors and mothers with HIV with have a community garden and outreach care.

Thanks to Charlotte Fuller, we had a meaningful visit at the Makaphutu AIDS Orphanage in the rural area of a Thousand Hills in Kwazulu/Natal. Their children attend nearby schools. A transport vehicle is in use for most of the day delivering children and bringing them home to Makaphutu, a lovely area of many cottages, each with a devoted house parent and volunteers who play with the children.

Another place of hope we visited was the Valley Trust an agency geared to help people lead a sustainable life with organic gardening and a seed bank to preserve share indigenous seeds. It also has a clinic, maternity and birthing center and VCT: Voluntary Counseling & Testing for HIV/AIDS. It was there we saw (and brought back) a video on the stigma of AIDS. In people's own words we learned of the misconceptions and consequent ostracism of those thought to have AIDS.

We visited agency's clinic in Alexandra, and its hospital, Groote Schuur in Capetown. A program called KIDZPositive at the hospital was eye-opening. Doctors noticed the mothers of HIV positive children seemed to distance themselves from their children as a way to soften the blow, because they believed their children would die soon. The doctors believed that by



Umzumbe Village women's support group at their garden



changing the attitudes of the mothers of HIV positive children, they could reduce the amount of time those children would need to be hospitalized. And they were right, doctors began setting appointments a month in advance and doing other things to help the mothers believe that their children's death was not imminent, the number of days the children spent hospitalized dropped substantially.

The KIDZPositive bead project brings women together in fellowship, gives them income to better provide for their children. We will have beadwork from KIDZPositive with the explanation & contact information on the back at our handcrafts sale. For those who'd like to support the work but are too far from *odw* you may check it out at www.kidzpositive.org.

At our craft sale we will also have a doll from the Naledi Angel Project, Empowering Women to help themselves. These women with AIDS make dolls for which sponsors pay \$15. The sponsored dolls are given to children with HIV/AIDS, are involved with programs at the Chris Hani/Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, children who have never had a doll. Tax-deductible donations to *odw* will be passed on to them. We thank Lyn Collyer for putting us in



odw reality tour members with director of Naledi

touch with Linda Black, who heads up this admirable project. Beadwork by the Umzumbe Village Women's Support Group is also exceptional. These AIDS or HIV + women have sworn to be celibate, to support each other and their families with a community garden, beadwork & sewing. They meet every week, most of them walking many miles. Their spirit and hope is staggering.

One major difficulty in the fight against HIV/AIDS in South Africa and throughout the developing world is the exorbitant cost of medications. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has made efforts to stop cheaper production. For example, India is able to produce the drugs at a much lower price than most western countries, but the WTO has forced India to accept the same standards for patenting as the western countries. So even though Indian medication was arrived at by a different method it is not recognized as viable for a patent now. This means that they can't export their cheaper medications to poorer countries who desperately need them. US pharmaceutical companies were forced through a lawsuit in South Africa to lower their prices. That has helped a bit in South Africa.



One of the leaders of the women's community groups we met on our reality tour.



Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Triennial Congress

Barby and Vic have been members of the league for 50 years so Barby attended the Congress while Vic was at his high school/ elementary school reunion. The conference was energizing, hopeful and fun, just like our reality tour. A new guard of leadership has emerged, giving great hope that the organization will continue; of course, it would happiest of all if the need of a league of peace and freedom would disappear. Unfortunately that's not likely. What attracted us to the WILPF initially remains true today, its insight into the interconnectedness of issues. For example, water is a human need & human right, the misuse of it through pollution or for profit is an environmental issue. This in turn connects to the issue of corporate "personhood" that began in California through a suit by Southern Pacific.

As the WILPF's website explains,

"Water is the earth's most precious resource. Access to safe and affordable water is a human right. Local, democratic control of water is essential for food security and peace. Everywhere accelerating privatization threatens public control over access to water while scarcity

Continued from page 1

gulf and may lead to higher gas prices. Meanwhile, California's governor to temporarily drop vehicle emission standards for gasoline so the price could come down. This will lead to the escalation of greenhouse gases, causing more asthma and other health problems, which also cost money. This "solution" to rising gas prices is contrasted by the course chosen by Portland, Oregon. Over the course of several years, the city has reduced their carbon emissions to below the 1990 level the Kyoto Treaty set. The city increased public transit, offered city employees monthly bus passes or carpool parking, (and urged private employers to do the same), gave financial incentives to build green buildings with built-in energy efficiency. All traffic bulbs were replaced with light emitting diodes, reducing electricity used by 80% and saving \$500,00 a year. Decreased traffic congestion has been a welcome by-product. The experience of Portland shows that addressing global warming doesn't have to hurt the economy and can improve peoples quality of life. You can get more information on the Portland project at www.sustainableportland.org.

For giving to the poorest survivors of Katrina we suggest checks to:

Continued on page 7



Some of the many thousands affected by Katrina

NAACP Crisis Fund c/o Congresswoman
Barbara Lee

1301 Clay Street, St., Suite 1000-N Oakland,
CA 94612 (510) 763-0370 (510) 763-6538

or

American Friends Service Committee Crisis Fund
AFSC, 65 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103.
To contribute via Visa or MasterCard, call 1-888-
588-2372, ext. 1, or through the AFSC website
at www.afsc.org.



Continued from page 6

looms from overuse and pollution. WILPF's campaign starts with developing water literacy and awareness that the protection and use of water is a community issue. WILPF-fostered local water research and planning groups empower communities to take responsibility for their own water quality and availability. The campaign seeks to be a catalyst for a national mobilization to "take back the water" and move this vital resource for all life into the Public Trust."

Check the WILPF website www.wilpf.org for more information.

odw has given interactive presentations on water in Murphys & Monterey. We welcome invitations to do so for your community group or organization. We're also geared to presenting: Learning from South Africa, with a focus on Human Rights.

Continued from page 3

More thoughts on the Khayalitsha visit:

Cameron & Jessica both said their main interest for going to South Africa was to meet the people. And they felt they did, not just in the townships where it was rough, but in the cities and posh areas and tourist places, too. That was important to both of these remarkable young women.

Attention All Nurses!

Did you know that **odw** has BRN number for credit for RN tour members? Thanks to Susan Vieira RN we can now offer 30 hours continuing education credit for RNs & possibly other health care workers.

Our next reality tour is to Nicaragua in July 2006. Call us for more information.

Too Close to The Truth to be Funny?





SAVE THESE DATES TO JOIN US

A pot luck & report back: Learning from South Africa

Friday, October 21 6:30 pm after the vigil at 2nd & San Carlos

From the poorest black township of Kliptown, where the Freedom Charter was signed to meeting the first black chief justice of the Constitutional Court it was indeed an energizing tour of hope.

our developing world thanks all who gave donations for South Africa and those who designed squares for the three quilts we gave to three South African AIDS orphanages. Everything was greatly appreciated!

Moving? Don't miss an issue of voices. Please notify us of your new address.

We are now asking \$10 per year from our readers to support the publishing and broader circulation of this newsletter. Thank you.

Annual International Fair Trade Sale

Saturday, November 19 11am-5pm

Sunday, November 20 1pm-4pm

Handcrafts, coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate bars
13004 Paseo Presada, Saratoga. 95070 Corner Paseo Lado. One block west of Quito, one block south of Cox. 408-379-4431

odw's Next Reality Tour: Nicaragua

Three energizing weeks in July 2006. We'll be returning to Nicaragua. We'll stay at the special CANTARA Training Center where we'll interact with trainees who will be there for various workshops. These comfortable accommodations with a spacious dining room & delicious food will be a pleasure to come home to after our excursions to communities, clinics, Fair Trade Coffee farms, schools, women's centers, green medicine clinics, etc. Check your calendars & sign up. We already have some folks on the list. \$200 deposit will hold your space. More details coming.

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*Teacher Staff Development * Presentations in the Community

*Study Tours * Videos, posters & simulations for purchase

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