Race and repentance

More than 30 years after the death of Martin Luther King Jr, America is still divided along racial lines. Why?

Two thirds of black Americans have achieved middle-class status, but one third remain in poverty—many seemingly trapped in the social pathologies of the urban underclass. At the same time, the increase in the number and profile of other racial minorities is dramatically changing the country's demographic landscape and enormously complicating America's increasingly colourful racial picture. And while many whites are still poor, poverty continues to be disproportionately the experience of people of colour, especially among the millions of their children who have been abandoned by society.

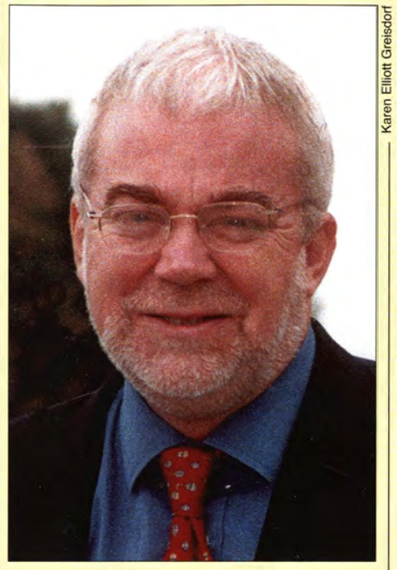
But racism is more than poverty. In 2001, middle-class African American, Latino, Asian and Native American parents are still able to tell personal stories of racial prejudice and discrimination directed at them or their children. Most white people, on the other hand, seem tired of talking about racism, are opposed to affirmative action, and want to believe that their country has now become a level playing field for all races. Few people of colour believe that.

Most significantly, the United States is still a very segregated society—from residential patterns to cultural associations to church attendance. The number of stable, racially integrated neighbourhoods across the country is still pitifully small. And after school or work, people of different races in America spend precious little time together.

New century

Have we made progress since the end of legal segregation? Undeniably. But have we come as far in the 30 years since the civil rights revolution as most of us expected we would? Obviously not. Most people today would probably agree that the hopes that followed the passage of the historic 1960s civil rights and voting rights legislation have yet to be fulfilled. As we enter a new century, America is still a racially divided society, where diversity is widely perceived as a cause for conflict more than for celebration.

Clearly, we underestimated the problem. Since the 1960s, we have learned that racism goes deeper than civil rights and, indeed, has survived the civil rights movement. Many social analysts and commentators have persuasively argued that racism goes deeper than mere prejudice and personal attitudes, and is rooted in institutional patterns and structural injustices. At the end of his life, Dr King was himself more



Karen Elliott Greisdorf

By Jim Wallis

focused on the issues of poverty, which, he believed, were the next front in the battle to overcome racism.

The depth of racism in the cultural and psychic history of the United States has seldom been fully comprehended. The impact and enduring legacy of the institution of slavery have been especially underestimated. Perhaps we have yet to get to the heart of the problem because we have failed to perceive its fundamental spiritual and theological roots.

> **"White racism is America's original sin."**

In biblical terms, racism is an idol that enslaves people and nations in its deadly grip. An idol is simply a lie that people believe and worship. The idol of 'whiteness' and the assumptions of white privilege and supremacy have yet to be spiritually confronted in America, and even in the churches. White racism truly is America's 'original sin'. Building a nation on land stolen from indigenous people, with the use of slave labour from kidnapped black Africans, has left us with a legacy we have yet to deal with fully. The lack of true repentance for that sin still confounds our efforts to overcome it.

There is more to do than educating, organizing, advocating, changing consciousness and changing policies. In addition to the hard work of personal relationships, community building and political and economic change, other responses may be required—like confession, prayer, conversion and forgiveness. White privilege is hard to give up, and racial oppression is hard to forgive.

Our goal must be to view America's growing racial diversity more as a gift to be embraced than as a problem to be solved. That's a fundamental attitude that all of us can commit ourselves to. The old notions of a 'melting pot' must give way to a healthy cultural pluralism supported by an underlying national unity. Racial justice and reconciliation must be taught to our children as non-negotiable principles, and the best way to do that is for adults to act on those principles. Children learn what they see.

Overcoming divisions

Overcoming our racial divisions is crucial as we begin the new century. Whether we are brought together or further divided must become a moral criterion for evaluating our political goals and processes. The leadership being offered by a new generation of black and Hispanic urban leaders is winning respect across the political spectrum. If the young leaders of America's diverse minorities can forge a common interest in breaking down the walls of white privilege instead of fighting each other, they will accomplish significant social victories—especially if they can form effective alliances with young whites who find the old racial privilege more a burden than a blessing.

We must move beyond dialogues and presidential commissions and commit ourselves to the personal relationships, institutional transformations, and social and political policies that move us from soft multiculturalism to a racially pluralistic democracy.

Jim Wallis is Editor-in-chief of 'Sojourners' magazine and Convenor of Call to Renewal, a US federation of churches and faith-based organizations working to overcome poverty. This article is adapted from 'Faith Works' (Random House, 2000).

NEXT ISSUE

Lead story: Muslim/Christian journeys.
Profile: Bedan Mbugua, Editor of *The People*, Kenya
Guest column: Jehangir Sarosh, Moderator of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, Europe

Healing history • Transforming relationships • Building community

FOR A CHANGE

Volume 15 Number 1 February/March 2002

US race relations

The city that dares to talk

EAR TO THE GROUND

from Neil MacKay in Peru

Highest, driest, longest

Any introduction to Peru is akin to reading a geographical Guinness Book of Records. Of the world's 100 or so micro-climates, 82 can be found within Peru's boundaries. She boasts the world's highest mountain range outside the Himalayas, the starting point of the world's greatest river, one of the driest deserts, the deepest canyon, and for fans of the white stuff, the longest surfing wave in the world.

Most travellers understandably link Peru with the ancient site of Machu Picchu. Yet so many of Peru's cultural treasures—like Kuelap, whose combined stonework is triple that of Egypt's pyramids—lie hidden in the mists of jungle, waiting to be discovered.

No escape

With all these natural and cultural treasures, Peru has been described as 'a beggar sitting on a golden bench'. Yet perhaps her greatest hope for a better future comes from her people. From the shy folk of the Sierra and jungle, to the bolshy, party-loving Limeñans and laid-back criollos, all share a huge pride in their country.

In this heady mix of races, everyone acquires an affectionate nickname: Gringo, Negro, Chino. Or for physical characteristics: *flaco* (thinny), *gordo* (fatty), *chato* (shorty)—none of which are offensive, and nobody escapes.

Volunteers

Living, as I do, in one of the richer suburbs of Lima, it is easy to forget that the majority of the country lives in crushing poverty. The will of locals and outsiders to respond is enormous. When I first came here, I met two Irish nuns, Marg and Eileen, who had come to a shanty area six years ago. It had originally been a rubbish tip.

After the locals had concreted it over, the nuns set about creating a community centre, which now provides workshops, education and a place of worship for young and old. This is merely one example of how inspired individuals can affect the most depressing of environments in the most positive of ways. Incredibly, 30 per cent of Peruvians are said to be involved in some form of voluntary work.

Earthquake

Last June, the south of Peru suffered a huge earthquake. The response from the rest of the country, as well as outside agencies, was immediate. I visited the area a month later and my most vivid memory, apart from the piles of rubble which lined the streets, is the resilience of the locals who were determined to rebuild and simply get on with the next day. Links were soon made between schools in Lima and Moquegua, perhaps the worst affected of all the southern towns, and already schools are being rebuilt on firmer foundations.

Football and faith

The two great beliefs here are Catholicism and that Peru will one day win the football World Cup. Even the smallest village has a church and a football pitch in front of it.

Devotion to faith is perhaps most vividly demonstrated by ruthless taxi drivers who cross themselves whilst ploughing through stop signs, with the words 'Jesus light my way' emblazoned on the windscreen. A working set of headlamps might do a better job! Indeed, crossing any street in Lima is a step of faith.

Football is a slightly different matter. Whilst the majority are convinced of God's existence and guiding hand, many are of the opinion that the Almighty may have given up on the current team's World Cup campaign.

Yet hope springs eternal. When Peru beat Paraguay in the opening game of the qualifiers, the joy of the locals was such that you would have thought we had won the final in Japan with six players missing.

I'll be back!

Celebrating is one of the things Peruvians do best, whether it be greeting a goal (when commentators sound like vacuum cleaners choking on carpet), sharing the wicked local brew, Pisco, or the graceful swoops of the Marinera dance.

And so it is with the heaviest of hearts that I leave Peru having completed my teaching contract and the richest four years of my life. But as the taxi drivers say—*'A la vuelta, grandote, a la vuelta!'*—'I'll be back, biggy, I'll be back!' ■

Published six times a year by Initiatives of Change, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7798 6000, Fax: +44 (0)20 7798 6001 Reg. Charity No: 226334 **ISSN** 0959-311X. **Price:** £2.25 **Subscriptions:** 2 The Orchard, Acomb, Hexham NE46 4SZ Tel: 01434 608055 **(Giro No** 504 1759) **Editors:** Mary Lean, Kenneth Noble, Michael Smith **Regular contributors:** Alan Channer, Michael Henderson, Anastasia Stepanova, Laura Trevelyan, Robert Webb, John Williams, Paul Williams **Promotion:** Tony Hazell **Distribution Manager:** Chris Sayers **Design and Layout:** Sloane Design Associates, Faversham, Kent. **Printing:** BBH Colourprint Group, Leicester. Indexed with Canadian Periodical Index. Printed on TCF (total chlorine-free) paper.

Cover:
The Arthur Ashe Monument in Richmond, Virginia
Photo:
Steve Helbur, AP

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

All cities need hope

In this issue we carry a lead story about an American initiative to unite racially diverse communities. Hope in the Cities (HIC), based in Richmond, Virginia, has a well established track record of helping people of different racial and cultural backgrounds and diverse political views to engage in 'honest conversations' with a view to understanding each other and overcoming historic divisions. At the same time HIC is working with other organizations to address economic and social needs—also an essential part of building community solidarity.

It is a story that has great relevance to many parts of the world. Last summer there were serious riots in three northern English towns and cities. A Home Office sponsored report, published in December, paints 'a devastatingly frank picture of racial segregation in inner cities', in the words of *The Independent*.

The report, drawn up by the Community Cohesion Review Team (CCRT), comes up with 67 recommendations, some of which are highly controversial. They call for an oath of allegiance for new immigrants; the universal acceptance of the English language; a greater role for young people in policy making; and faith-based schools to offer at least a quarter of their places to other, or non-, faith children. In an echo of the 'honest conversations' theme, the report says that the 'statement of allegiance' should be preceded by 'an honest and open national debate'.

As in the US, racial prejudice needs to be confronted in schools, places of work and wherever it occurs. But just as urgent is the need to address the economic exclusion that means that a disproportionate number of people from the ethnic minorities lack jobs, prospects, educational opportunities and decent housing. Britain will never be a truly multiracial society until effective action is taken on both these fronts.

Political measures, such as banning racist behaviour and providing jobs skills programmes, clearly have a part. But governments need great wisdom. The CCRT report points out that funding many 'separate and distinct community interests' tends to reinforce cultural differences. But some have accused the CCRT of falling into a similar trap in that some of its proposals would in practice apply mainly to minority ethnic groups.

No government has the power to ban prejudice. Building a just society for all needs the commitment of many ordinary citizens. And, as HIC demonstrates, the first step may be to learn the art of honest conversation—where we create spaces in which it is safe to expose our deepest feelings as well as to listen to those of others.

http://www.forachange.co.uk

Volume 15 No 1 *February/March 2002*

FOR A CHANGE

- closes the circle between faith and action, action and faith. It is for anyone, anywhere, who wants to make a difference to the world.

FOR A CHANGE believes

- that in a world torn by ancient hatreds, the wounds of history can be healed.
- that in the family and the workplace, relationships can be transformed.
- that in urban jungle or rural backwater, community can be built.
- that peace, justice and the survival of the planet depend on changes in attitudes as well as structures.

FOR A CHANGE

- draws its material from many sources and was born out of the experience of MRA, now Initiatives of Change.

CONTENTS

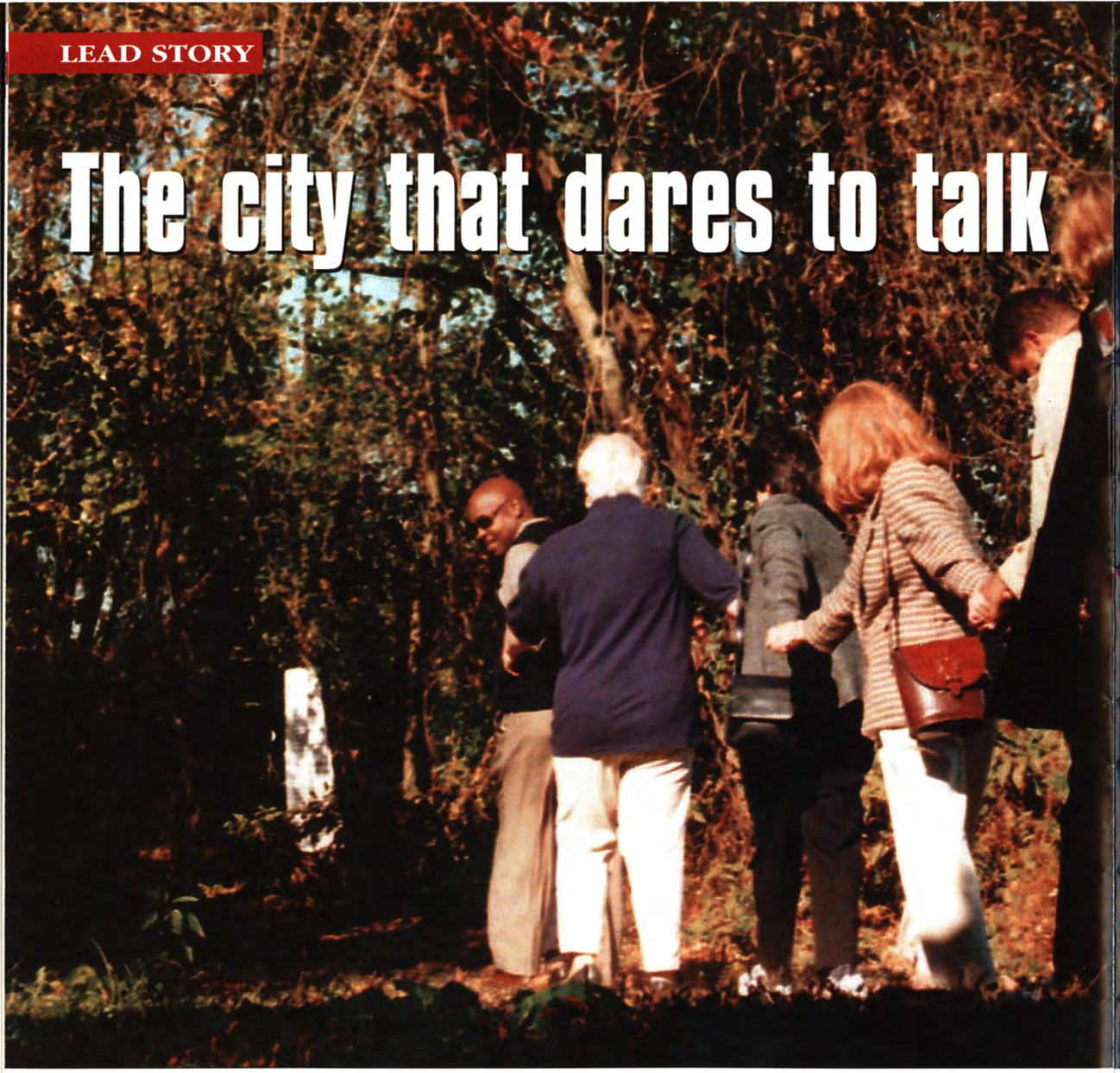
A NOTE ON INITIATIVES OF CHANGE

Initiatives of Change (formerly Moral Re-Armament) works for moral and spiritual renewal in all areas of life. It was born out of the work of Frank Buchman, an American who believed that change in the world must start with the individual.

Initiatives of Change is open to all. Its starting point is the readiness of each person to make what they know of God and eternal moral values central in their lives. This personal commitment to search for God's will forms the basis for creative initiative and common action: standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love help to focus the challenge of personal and global change.

These ideas have given rise to an international community of people at work in more than 70 countries in programmes which include reconciliation; tackling the root causes of corruption, poverty and social exclusion; and strengthening the moral and spiritual foundations for democracy.

The city that dares to talk



Cricket White

Richmonders trace the steps of slaves along the banks of the James River.

Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the southern states which seceded at the time of the American Civil War, has a chequered racial past. Today it is becoming known for the radical approach to racial dialogue pioneered by its residents. Karen Elliott Greisdorf reports.

They walked along the banks of the James River quietly, deliberately. Two hundred and fifty years ago, they were enslaved Africans, brought to Richmond, Virginia, for the economic gain of whites. Today, their descendants and other African Americans are walking together with white Richmonders, retracing the same steps in search of a new path toward relationship.

Ben Campbell, Pastoral Director of the Richmond Hill ecumenical retreat centre, sees the city as 'ground zero' for race relations in the US.

Richmond was one of the world's wealthiest cities in the mid-1800s, thanks to its income from trading slaves to other southern states. In 1857 alone, this trade grossed $4 million. After the Civil War, the city erected monuments to the defeated Confederate leaders in a fashion usually reserved for victors. Several decades later it led resistance to school integration.

And yet episodes in recent history whisper of a change in Richmond—the election of the US's first African American governor and the erection alongside the Confederate heroes of a statue of tennis legend Arthur Ashe, who was once banned from playing on certain courts in the city.

Richmond has always taken a quiet approach to its racial history and relationships. After the civil rights movement of the Sixties, life in Richmond returned to what John Moeser, Professor of Urban Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, calls a 'velvet glove approach'. Some Richmonders refused to talk about the city's racial past or present. Others had grown weary of talking and seeing no change. And others, both in the black and white communities, had come to accept a status quo.

In 1977, Henry Marsh became the first African American mayor and held out a vision for Richmond as a model city. Susan Corcoran, who works with Initiatives of Change (formerly MRA), remembers a group going to ask him what they could do to support this vision. That type of care for the city, and the individuals who lead it, became a hallmark of the work now known as Hope in the Cities.

Hope in the Cities (HIC) was launched nationally in 1993 through a conference in Richmond titled, 'Healing the Heart of America' (*FAC* August/September 1993). It was the first time the city had held a public gathering which addressed both the city's racial history and the need for new relationships to redefine a course towards prosperity for the city and the surrounding counties. The effort to hold 'an honest conversation on race, reconciliation and responsibility' drew people who had been involved with MRA over the years into partnership with other organizations and individuals.

There are three key elements in HIC's approach, as it has developed over the last nine years. First, everyone with a stake in new community relationships must be invited to the table and be actively encouraged to participate in the process of transformation. Second, there must be an honest acknowledgement of a shared racial history. This can lead to forgiveness and a new level of understanding, so that all can work for change. And third, each individual must take personal responsibility for the change process.

Today, says Virginia's Lieutenant Governor, Tim Kaine, 'people realize that Hope in the Cities has a track record. When there are racial sensitivities in the city or region, Hope in the Cities is now asked to come in and advise.' For example, in the last year, an HIC member was called in to mediate a dispute over the decision of Chesterfield County, south of Richmond, to declare a Confederate Heritage Month.

Paige Chargois, Associate National Director of Hope in the Cities, believes its credibility is a product of its staying power. 'In the work of racial change and healing, people expect you to leave it alone after a while, because people get tired of talking about it or do not really stay with it. We've said this is what we're going to do and we've stayed with it no matter what. And we knew so well what we were about that we refused to be pulled into other issues.'

The conference in 1993 drew participants from 50 US cities and 20 foreign countries and put Hope in the Cities on the map. 'Prior to 1977, there was a lot of activism,' says Collie Burton, a community organizer. 'Between 1977 and 1993, that got diffused. The organizations became ineffective or nothing happened. In 1993, the conference pulled all of those people back together again and those few became the catalyst for what has happened so far.'

What has happened so far includes: the launch of two dialogue programme formats and an annual breakfast celebrating Metropolitan Richmond Day; the development of history walks including that along the slave trail; the establishment of a not-for-profit organization providing job training to African American fathers; the offering of programmes on reconciliation for the staff of the daily newspaper and for the region's premier leadership programme; the development of several HIC-affiliated programmes in other cities and countries; and participation in national programmes, including the President's Initiative on Race, convened by Bill Clinton.

At a national level, the result of HIC's work is that 'honest conversation' has become a catchphrase for racial dialogue across the US. It also provides the national model for communities attempting to reconcile their racial history.

Since 1993, HIC has continued to garner the support of the Richmond community, including elected officials, representatives of all faith groups, and educational, business and community leaders. This has sustained its basic dialogue programme—a six-part series covering race, community, forgiveness, atonement and the building of hope for the future, with an emphasis on the individ-

The city that dares to talk

ual's role and responsibility.

'HIC provides a safe forum that enables people to speak openly and honestly,' says Moeser. 'There are instances of individuals being deeply moved by listening to people from very different backgrounds recount their own stories. These sessions have been life-changing for some.'

The programme has endured because of its openness to people. 'People are invited together in a non-judgmental way, so that they are able to be themselves,' says Rob Corcoran, National Director of Hope in the Cities. 'It's significant that we have conservative business leaders who feel equal ownership of HIC here in Richmond. They don't have to somehow be somebody else.' One of these, Jeff Williams, is now a co-chair of the local HIC steering committee, and says that traditional business thinking has often found it hard to address something so subjective as race.

HIC's second dialogue programme, launched in 2000, is the Metropolitan Richmond Dialogues on Race, Economics and Jurisdiction, co-convened with Richmond Hill. These 48-hour residential sessions aim to develop a clear understanding of issues affecting the city which have previously proved impossible to address, and to explore the advantages of accepting Metropolitan Richmond as a single, vibrant community. Twenty people, representing all sectors of the community, take part in each weekend event. They are then invited to a public 'report back' convocation and to develop strategies to affect public policy.

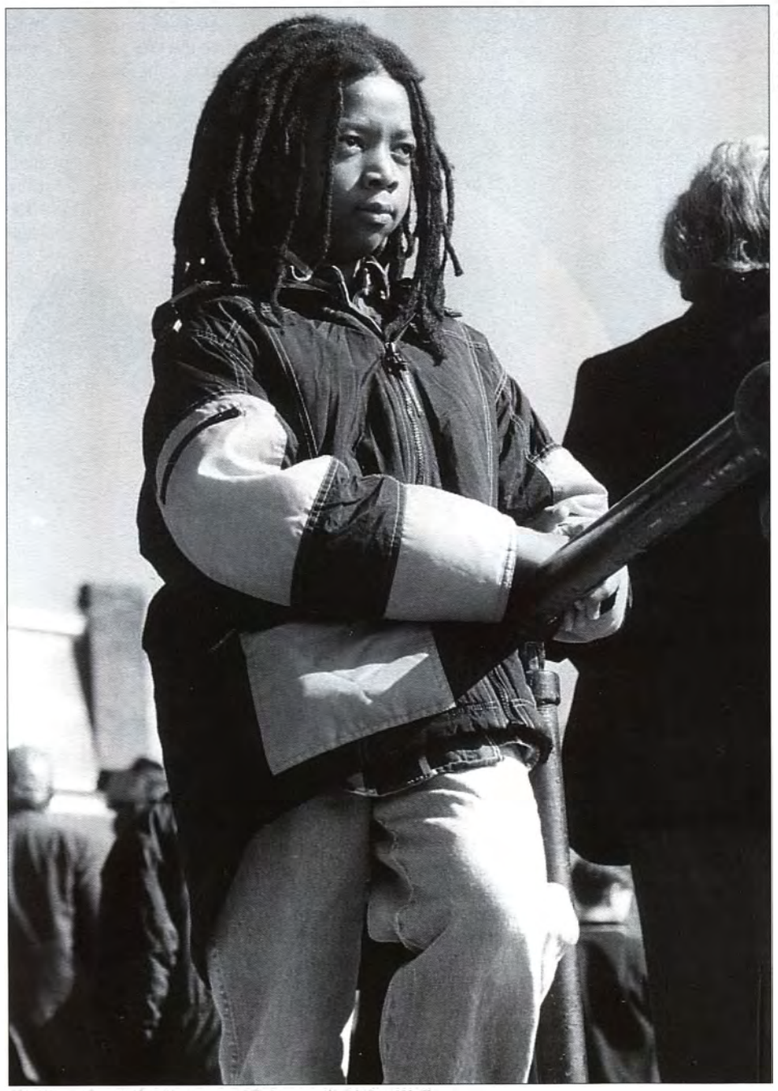
For Robert Bolling, a senior programme manager with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, the greatest challenge of taking part in the Metropolitan Richmond Dialogue was 'the fear of exposing personal beliefs' without this openness being reciprocated by non-African Americans. 'On the flip side, there was intrigue in exploring my beliefs about race and economics in my birth-city with a group of persons willing to do the same.'

The 'epiphany' for Bolling came after a session in which participants had been divided into racial groups for discussion. 'During a break after the groups had shared, a white male approached me and told me that the whites had not been truthful in what they had shared for fear of offending the blacks. After a short discussion, we agreed that he would reconvene the white group to discuss the matter. In the end, the white group not only shared its issues, but also its reservations about saying those things.' Although the conversation was 'heated and caused much anger, discomfort and resentment', it enabled them to get through to each other on a much deeper level.

Bolling and others say that Richmond is already reaping the benefits of the dialogues. Workgroups have been formed to address such topics as education, regional governments, sharing of economic prosperity, and exploring culture. The real goal is not just to generate working groups, but to provide impetus for a genuine reform movement in the public policy area and to empower participants with the tools and knowledge to take action.

'HIC has gone to a deeper level of community conversations,' says Viola Baskerville, a Virginia State Delegate. 'In the past dialogues were helpful, but now the conversations seem to be stripping away years of unwillingness to talk earnestly about race, politics and economics. It's about time!'

What distinguishes Hope in the Cities' dialogue programmes from those of other organizations is their emphasis on acknowledging racial history. A centrepiece of the 1993 conference was the Unity Walk, a two-mile route through Richmond that highlighted the city's untold past. Since then, with the official involvement of the City of Richmond, signs have been placed at such sites as the docks where the slaves were landed and the market where up to 350,000 people were sold. Richmond has continued to host Unity Walks and Baltimore and Philadelphia have held similar events. Hope in the Cities is now further developing its use of the slave trail along the James River as a 'walk through history'.



Tony Anthony

Walking through history on Richmond's Unity Walk

Addressing historical issues is probably one of the greatest points of risk-taking within Hope in the Cities' work. This is especially true for African American members who may be misunderstood by their own community, for instance in honest discussions about African participation in the slave trade. Paige Chargois has courageously defended the right of Confederates to publicly commemorate their history and played a pivotal role in reaching out as an African American to the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV). Her step built a bridge of trust for others to walk upon, including a black bishop and the SCV regional commander who were pictured embracing on the front page of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

While Hope in the Cities has received numerous local, national and international endorsements for its work, the real secret of its success is the people involved.

The Burtons and Corcorans are neighbours in the Carillon district of Richmond. When the Corcorans moved in over 20 years ago, Audrey Burton wasted no time in crossing the street to welcome them. 'Rob said Susan was upstairs bathing the baby and I just went right upstairs without any hesitation or reservation,' she recalls. 'The longer I live, [the more] I believe that nothing in my world is accidental. There are things that God really does. There's something about drawing like people together that has nothing to do with the colour of the skin. We couldn't ask for better neighbours, better friends or for better colleagues.'

Rob Corcoran clearly shares this sentiment. He also identifies a professional growth point, when the Burtons got involved with the work to which he and Susan had long been committed. 'The engagement of Audrey and Collie in MRA in the early Eighties was very important,' he says. 'Audrey and Collie encountered a largely white organization. They were not intimidated by it and were prepared to challenge it, mould it and to help break the old and to move towards something new. Which is of course how we met Paige and many others. Sometimes it was a little confrontational and that was good. Up to that point, although we had had black Richmonders involved in MRA, largely they had remained polite and not challenging to the culture.'

Karen Elliott Greisdorf

Walter Kenny, former mayor of Richmond, and Cleiland Donnan—members of HIC's core team

Karen Elliott Greisdorf

Audrey (left) and Collie Burton (right) and Sue and Rob Corcoran: 'There's something about drawing like people together that has nothing to do with the colour of the skin.'

Cleiland Donnan, a native Richmonder and retired dance instructor, had been part of MRA's outreach team in Richmond. She describes how her desire to be a bridge builder between black and white Richmonders was inspired by meeting people from South Africa, while it was still in the grip of apartheid. 'That was the first time I thought that anything I did at home could influence or encourage someone somewhere else in the world. I simply had a weak desire, that was honoured by other people. All I had to do was whisper to God and boy did he throw it at me.'

While some Richmonders had been active with MRA for many years, Susan Corcoran identifies a 'key moment, when we thought about who we were meant to work with in the city. Then you find out that there are a lot of people who want to work for change and are already working for change.' This led to the birth of Hope in the Cities.

Miriam Davidow first came into touch with HIC through her work at the Jewish Community Federation and is now a member of its steering committee. She sees its work as providing a face and a focal point for the issue of reconciliation. 'My job and that of others would be much harder if there were no foundation already laid and nobody to provide counsel regarding the wisdom and viability of a given proposal.'

The relationships that Hope in the Cities has established with other organizations in the community are also unusual, says Cricket White, HIC's Director of Training. She talks of its 'non-proprietary sense'. 'We are committed to solving the problem, not necessarily getting all of the credit for having done it. That means that sometimes we are absolutely silent partners. We don't ask that our name be on it, but we are willing to work hard. The result has been that people like having our name on things with them and, of course, we appreciate that. But the bottom line is we are all very committed to a solution, not the claim.'

'HIC provided an outlet for our desire to integrate our work into the work of the community,' says Davidow. Introductions from HIC enabled her organization to include people from outside the Jewish community in mutually beneficial initiatives. 'HIC was a wonderful "match-maker" allowing us to achieve some of our goals.'

One point of connection with other groups has been HIC's faith-based foundation. According to Moeser, 'HIC's strength comes from the moral leadership that it exercises. While it eschews dogmatic positions and self-righteous assertions, it does not hesitate to base its positions on values that are central to all people of faith regardless of religious tradition.' This has been particularly critical following the terrorist attacks of 11 September after which, for

The city that dares to talk

better and worse, a greater lens has been focussed on the Muslim community.

'My work with HIC and my participation in the dialogue programme presented the Islamic Center with an open door to the community in Richmond,' says Muhammad S Sahli, former president of the Islamic Center of Virginia. 'It also convinced the members of the Muslim community that it is important to communicate with other religious groups. This work and the relationships it is generating demonstrate to the faith communities that there are more commonalities between us than differences.'

Rob Corcoran feels strongly about the importance of HIC's spiritual base. 'A lot of the racial justice movement in this country has steered clear of overt references to spirituality, because they feared being lumped into the religious right. But you can't yield that ground to the religious right because spiritual values are essential.'

While Miriam Davidow notes that HIC contains people with deep religious convictions, she welcomes its lack of 'religious fervour'. 'This actually was a plus for our involvement and an inducement to participate. It also allowed for the opportunity to include understanding of our religious diversity and varying belief structures.'

HIC's partnerships with other organizations are rarely for one-off occasions, but are the building blocks for long-term relationships. HIC has also developed partnerships on the national level. One such partner is the Network of Alliances Bridging Race and Ethnicity (NABRE), a programme of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington DC.

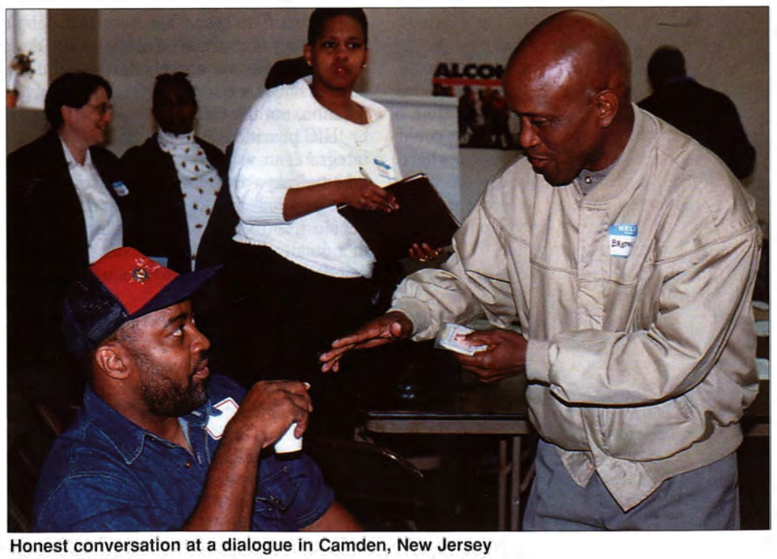
'HIC has been a vital partner as a member of the initial NABRE Planning Committee and now as a member of the Steering Committee,' says Mike Wenger, NABRE's Director. 'The fact that Rob [Corcoran] co-chairs the Program Development Subcommittee is indicative of the importance of HIC's support and involvement. Even before NABRE was launched, HIC provided an opportunity for us to discuss the concept and get feedback on it at a conference at the Initiatives of Change international centre in Caux, Switzerland.' HIC and NABRE were co-hosts of last summer's Connecting Communities conference at Howard University, Washington DC.

Hope in the Cities' work does not pay for itself. But from the very beginning its leadership has turned the need for funding into an opportunity to expand its team in the community. Before the conference in 1993, they raised $20,000 from individuals and businesses in the region. Those who invested their money were also asked to invest their time and thinking, and many did.

Five years later HIC received a $240,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation. This enabled HIC to expand its programmes to other cities, including Portland, Oregon; Selma, Alabama; Baltimore, Maryland; and Dayton, Ohio.

Each new locale is expected to develop its own base of funding and community involvement, so each has developed differently. A model is the work of Portland's Oregon Uniting, a not-for-profit organization seeded by Hope in the Cities, which organized a 'Day of Acknowledgement' at the State Capitol in Salem in 1999. This is thought to have been the first such instance of a state government acknowledging its racial history (www.oregonuniting.org).

Rob Corcoran



Honest conversation at a dialogue in Camden, New Jersey

Charles Price

When Tony Brooks joined DadsWork he was living in a shelter. He hitchhiked 35 miles twice a day to attend classes. Now he drives tractor-trailers and is able to provide financial support for his two children.

Since 1998, HIC has had a funding partnership with the Community Foundation in Richmond. The Foundation made its first grant to DadsWork, which offers job preparation, job placement and job maintenance to men of colour trying to reunite with their families. In 2000, the Foundation made a grant in support of the Metropolitan Richmond Dialogues and continued this grant for a second year last October.

Susan Brown Davis, Director of Programs for The Community Foundation, describes HIC as a 'natural fit' with the Foundation's mission to help strengthen families and build sustainable communities. And while the Foundation has provided grants, HIC has contributed to the partnership by organizing—with Richmond Hill—two racial history bus tours to raise awareness among the Foundation's donors, board and staff.

The partnership started when Rob Corcoran was asked to represent the Foundation at one of six regional meetings aimed at raising the visibility and strength of community foundations to support bold and effective anti-racism initiatives.

The Foundation chose Corcoran, says Davis, because HIC was the 'resident expert' on bringing together disparate groups to address such issues. 'Rob's value was evident when he returned and reported that there was a high level of interest in the work of Hope in the Cities and that during the breaks he was surrounded by participants from various cities wanting to learn more.'

Chargois sees HIC's 'sense of openness' as something that is rare in similar work. 'As long as a person wants to be involved we have helped them find a place to do that. Another unique aspect is being unafraid to step up to the challenge. Fear and faith cannot occupy the same space.' Walter Kenney, a former mayor who is now a member of the HIC steering committee, uses a baseball metaphor to take that sentiment one step further. 'I don't think we ever went to the plate and struck out (missed the ball),' he says.

And what of the future? With national and local needs for Hope in the Cities programmes, participation and counsel increasing, the organization is at a crossroads. 'There is a need for more people who are totally committed,' says Rob Corcoran. 'The folks involved at the core of this work have made some pretty hard, clear choices. A movement like this only goes forward when you have a sufficient number of people ready to set new priorities in use of time, resources and relationships.'

And there is no lack of opportunities, both on the national and the regional level, since 11 September. 'The current national climate provides an opportunity to teach people about the dangers of profiling, scapegoating, and negative racial and ethnic stereotyping,' says Mike Wenger of NABRE. 'HIC's voice will be vital to ensuring that we do not sacrifice civil liberties and justice in the current wave of consciousness about our security.'

John Moeser, whose academic work focuses on urban relationships and structures, sees unfinished business for HIC on the public policy front. 'Many of the inner city neighbourhoods as well as working class neighbourhoods in the older suburbs are experiencing severe decline. Those areas tend to be characterized by growing racial/ethnic populations. The city is landlocked and shrinking in political and economic importance. We need strong political leadership at all levels of government in Virginia to speak to these issues, but unfortunately most leaders benefit from the status quo and, consequently, have little desire to change course.

'What HIC is trying to do is to mobilize citizens. As the bumper sticker says, "When the people lead, the leaders will follow." ' ■

Tony Anthony

Metropolitan Richmond Day 2001: (l to r) three of the five co-chairs—Dick Du, TK Somanath and Muhammed Sahli—with Rev Benjamin Sparks who gave the invocation.

To learn more about HIC's work in Richmond and elsewhere and to identify key points of action in your own community, read 'Connecting Communities', a 128-page handbook on building and sustaining diverse teams working for reconciliation and justice. Available at www.hopeinthecities.org. A case-study on HIC's six-week dialogue series, written by Karen Elliott Greisdorf, appears in 'Intergroup Dialogue: deliberative democracy in school, college, community and workplace', edited by David Schoem and Sylvia Hurtado, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001.

Talking teamwork

Susan Corcoran (third from left):
We've been on a journey and some of the path has been very tough. But I can't think of a time when we've kind of given up on each other.

Cricket White (left):
No, we have, but we come back.

Susan Corcoran:
We've come back. We have hung in together. I don't know any HIC team that's succeeded in being superficial with each other.

Collie Burton (second from left):
The core team is really too small to do what we are talking about. Too small even to grapple with the idea.

Paige Chargois (right):
You could say that about the 12 [apostles].

Collie Burton: Well, at least there were 12!

Karen Elliott Greisdorf

PEOPLE

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Edited by Anastasia Stepanova

Fuel for learning

Carmel McConnell, 'a social activist with a strong track-record in business leadership' as she describes herself, is passionate about child poverty in Britain—and about enlisting businesses to fight it. She has no problem in approaching such huge corporations as Walt Disney to ask for their help. 'We have to help companies to become more socially responsible through real experience with local communities.'

The Magic Sandwich Project, McConnell's baby, evolved in September 2000 after she had read a shocking article on child poverty in the UK on the BBC website. 'School meals are the only hot meal received by one in four children in the UK,' the article said.

The story was vividly illustrated for McConnell when a friend, who teaches in East London, told her that the staff brought in bananas to give to children who asked to leave the class because they had tummy aches. 'Children are too hungry to concentrate on learning,' says McConnell. 'Where there is no learning there's no earning.'

'In Hackney, where unemployment reaches 62 per cent, 25 per cent of children are not eating anything in the evening,' says McConnell. 'The society we live in has lots of money but we haven't worked out the right distribution.' According to the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, child poverty in the UK is among the worst in the developed world.

In her recent book *Change Activist—make big things happen fast*, McConnell shows how 'success, profit and principles are mutually achievable'. She is a living example of that. She juggles lots of responsibilities at the same time—business meetings, change management consultation and voluntary work in her one-woman project, the Magic Sandwich.

About £1 from every book she sells goes to buying bagels, juice and muffins for five Hackney primary schools, to which she delivers each morning. Rachel Stock, McConnell's publisher, says that some 5,000 books have been sold so far—'which equates I believe to 15,000 bagels!'

The project has got two sides—to feed and to educate. Kids spend their pocket money on Mars Bars and cola. 'Most of them don't know what is nutritious to eat: at home they eat chips, crisps and pre-cooked food,' says McConnell. Within the Magic Sandwich she wants to set up nutrition groups to consult parents and educate kids.

Research is taking place at the five primary schools involved to assess what effect the provision of breakfast has on academic performance. There are no figures yet, but the improvement is already visible. 'It has improved kids' attendance and their ability to participate in lessons. And there are no more late-comers,' says McConnell.

Now she is trying to involve businesses and food providers in supplying food or other support. 'These kids are the companies' future employees. We have to take care of them and their education.' Most companies have a charity scheme or policy. 'Companies can be persuaded to add social goals to their objectives. In fact they will get a nice feeling of doing something really worthwhile as well as ethical branding.'

Public awareness has started to grow. 'Two people from Walt Disney phoned to offer their help if needed,' says McConnell. One e-business company did a sponsored walk recently for the Magic Sandwich as a team-building event.

McConnell does everything for the project from buying and delivering bagels to fundraising and PR. She would welcome any helpful ideas from *FAC* readers. 'There's plenty of room in this campaign to offer their good ideas.'

'I believe this project is part of my destiny,' says McConnell. 'It would be great to wake up one day and know that we haven't got hungry children now and that every child going to classes is able to learn and grow.'

Anastasia Stepanova

'Change Activist—make big things happen fast' by Carmel McConnell published by Momentum at £15, author profits go to charity. You can contact the Magic Sandwich Project via email at: carmelmcconnell@hotmail.com

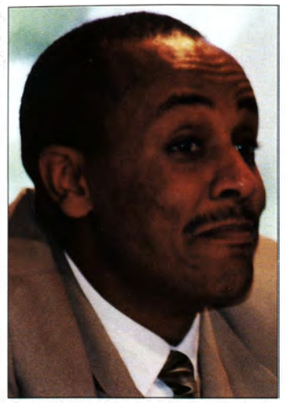
Atlantic Syndication

Carmel McConnell giving children of the Thomas Fairchild Community School bagels for breakfast

Radio wave on human rights

Getachew Hailu Wolie is Head of Programmes for Radio Fana in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Fana means 'light' and the independent station which he helped to found broadcasts in four languages.

Getachew is enthusiastic about what he sees as the station's mission. For him it is very much bound up with the quest for good governance in Ethiopia. He sees one of the radio's principal tasks as educating people to know their human rights. 'These rights,' he says, 'are not a gift from the government that people have to beg for. They are the inherent property of the people and the government should be protecting them.'



Tony Hazell

Getachew Hailu Wolie: 'Human rights are not a gift from the government.'

Programmes explain the content and the spirit of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the specific rights incorporated in the Ethiopian constitution which were put into effect after 1995. He believes that when these rights are properly understood, the people themselves will safeguard good governance.

Because Ethiopia is multicultural, multifaith and multilinguistic, he sees building bridges between communities and traditions as another way in which Radio Fana can make an important contribution. 'Parts of the country are still governed by traditional leaders under traditional law,' he explains. 'This sometimes means that females are not treated equally under customary law and children are subjected to many kinds of corporal punishment. We therefore try to promote the concept of equality before the law and the rights of children.'

One way the radio is able to do this is by working with traditional elders and then letting them convey the message over the air themselves. 'They are more credible than anyone else,' he says. 'In this way we try to harmonize the traditional law with the modern. It is not always easy, but we have to make the effort.'

Paul Williams

There or nowhere

Nearly 200 young people a week pop into St Andrew's Wharf Youth Project, in the east of London, intrigued by the variety of events and programmes run by its volunteers and social workers. Anyone from eight to 25 years old comes here from all over Docklands.

As soon as you enter the project centre, which is built in the shape of a boat with the mast in the middle, you see a wall covered with press cuttings and certificates. Members of the project have become London champions, regional champions, national champions in sports—great role models for others. 'When young people come with a sceptical attitude they see that they can become one of these kids too,' says Edwin Lewis, the project coordinator.

The project's outdoor and indoor activities are reflected in the long patchwork of photos along the walls. Girls' football training, homework clubs and discussion forums on current issues (drug problems, social misbehaviour) take place weekly. There is also a 'learn to drive' programme.

As well as encouraging young people to be proactive in life, the project creates multicultural awareness. For instance, international meals, arts and crafts events and face painting accompany soccer or pool finals. It also runs a summer programme, which provides a whole list of exciting activities: trips to Disneyland in Paris and to theme parks, go-karting, bowling, cinema and theatre. The selection criterion is good behaviour. 'There are no free trips around here,' says Lewis.

'Be there or be nowhere' is one of the club's mottoes. Over 50 per cent of club members come from socially vulnerable family backgrounds. Parental participation is very low. 'Some parents don't even know where their kids are,' says Lewis.

The building, which is only large enough for two pool tables, started out as a workout facility for two people at a time. It was part of the community strategy of the London Docklands Development Corporation, a government organization, which came to regenerate the area. Later, at the local residents' request, it was turned into a youth centre and in its second year Lewis was employed by the borough to run it.

Lewis, 44, already had experience of working with young people. In his previous job, he had created a girls' football team who are now well-known as the Arsenal Ladies. 'Initially it was a youth club team I was coaching.' When he moved to Docklands, the girls gave him all their trophies to take with him. 'It's a good push for guys to see what their female peers have achieved, and for girls too for it undermines a common stereotype about them,' says Lewis.

His strong motivation was to turn that empty and dull place into 'a cheerful venue, collaborating with young people'. Recently they have redecorated everything in bright colours. 'It's good to work somewhere where you create the agenda together with the young people.'

They have started to issue a newsletter, *St Andrew's News*, which is circulated among the locals to keep them informed. Eventually Lewis wants the young people to produce it on their own initiative so that 'it's not about me doing it but them doing it'.

The centre is equipped with a couple of computer game machines, a video and two small internet rooms—all of them, like everything else on the site, paid for through fundraising.

There are six staff currently involved in the project and a couple of volunteers. 'They could be any age but we tend to attract mainly young people, maybe ex-members, university students,' says Lewis. When they do specific projects they call on former club members to share their skills.

Although physically the place is too small to do the things they would like to do, it's blooming with creativity and fun. 'We are small in size, but we've got big ideas,' says Lewis.

Anastasia Stepanova

Edwin Lewis

Two participants in the St Andrew's Wharf Youth Project football competition

Douglas Tanner set up an institute to inject faith values into the US House of Representatives—and to make sure that Members are up to speed on their country's racial history. Bob Webb tells his story.

Lana R. Lawrence

Making space for faith in the House of Representatives

As dawn breaks in Washington, six members of the US House of Representatives arrive at a Congressional office where coffee and juice await. There, too, is the Rev W Douglas Tanner Jr, President of the 10-year-old Faith and Politics Institute. After exchanging pleasantries, the six take seats as Tanner begins reading an excerpt, 'Blaming never helps', from *Peace is every step: the path of mindfulness in everyday life* by Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh. The atmosphere contrasts sharply with that of the sometimes-raucous processes of lawmaking. It's time for an hour's reflection.

The legislators centre down and focus on the deeper currents in their lives. Tanner, who turns 55 in February, is their facilitator. Such 'reflection groups' are held several times weekly. Some 40 House members attend regularly, though more than 100 of the 435 House members have done so at some point. One active participant is Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, of San Francisco, the new House Democratic whip—the highest House office ever attained by a woman.

Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson, Republican from Missouri, says of Doug Tanner and the Institute, 'By giving us opportunities to share our personal and faith-related beliefs, barriers which would otherwise exist are removed, and we're able to cooperate for the common good.'

There are also facilitated reflection groups for Congressional spouses, staff members, lobbyists, public interest advocates and political professionals. The aim is to inject more faith values into the political process.

Doug Tanner did not always have such an aim. Growing up in a small town in North Carolina, he dreamed of attending the US Naval Academy. That dream began to slip away, however, after his high school history teacher, Clarene Robertson, assigned him to read *Black like me*, an explosive book by a white Southerner, John Howard Griffin, documenting his life as a 'black man'. Griffin had managed to darken his skin chemically to learn what it was like to be African American in the South, and his book exposed the rank indignities and cruelties he suffered. This was emotional dynamite for Tanner but he continued to cling, if more lightly, to his moorings in the segregated society into which he was born. Nevertheless, Griffin had planted a seed that was eventually to sprout and change him radically.

That seed was nourished when Robertson, at the brink of her 100th birthday as these words are written, assigned him to be part of a project team on 'The American Negro'. 'I didn't want to be on that team!' Tanner told me in his office near the Capitol.

He said his first experience of a racially integrated meeting came later in a United Methodist youth fellowship group in 1963. In the church where that group met, he was deeply shaken by the words of an African American Methodist minister from Mississippi. 'He was talking about the murder of Medgar Evers (the African American Mississippi civil rights leader who was slain 12 June 1963),' Tanner recalled. 'He didn't speak with any bitterness but was opening up on what it was like and the sadness of it. At the end of his talk, a lot of stuff began turning around in me.'

Yet another soul-searching experience was in August 1963 when he heard Martin Luther King Jr. 'The National Methodist Human Rights Conference was in Chicago the same week of the March on Washington,' Tanner said. 'King spoke to us the day before the march... and gave us some of his "I Have a Dream" speech.'

By the time Tanner received his high school diploma in 1964, it was clear he wouldn't become a naval officer. Instead, he enrolled in Pfeiffer College, later transferring to Duke University where he received a degree in psychology, 'then remained for divinity school'. He also interned at the Virginia Episcopal Seminary. With his Master of Divinity degree, he was ordained a United Methodist minister. But he never lost his interest in another field—politics. 'In the eighth grade I was handing out (Presidential candidate) John F Kennedy bumper stickers at county fairs,' he said. Even then he could 'see the connection between politics and faith'.

Along with ministerial assignments Tanner 'became acquainted with the Church of the Saviour in Washington DC'. He enrolled in its Servant Leadership School and came under the influence of the World War II chaplain, Gordon Cosby, who founded the church and its internationally acclaimed outreach ministry to the poor. The church is also known for its rich variety of programmes to help Christians apply their faith more effectively. Tanner was struck by its mission and began thinking, with others, about how to strengthen the links between faith and politics. One friend he consulted was Robin Britt, a Democratic lawyer who shared his convictions.

The upshot was that in 1982, with Tanner as his campaign manager, Britt won a House seat from Illinois. 'I became his chief legislative aide and then his executive assistant,' Tanner recalled. 'We spent a day with Gordon Cosby talking about how to make ours a faith-filled office.' But strive as they did, Tanner said that in the hurly-burly of House activities, 'we failed'. In 1984 Britt narrowly lost his seat. Tanner's congressional experience taught him that to deepen the spiritual elements in political life requires structure and time 'set aside for members to reflect'. He became pastor of two churches on the eastern shore of Virginia. But ordinary pastorates weren't his main interest.

He was soon back in Washington. As deputy director of Project Vote, he campaigned to energize minority-group voters. He formed another key friendship in 1989, with newly-elected Democratic Congressman Glenn Poshard of Illinois. 'Poshard came from the Southern Baptist church,' Tanner said. 'We began having meetings together with members and [American University] Chaplain Joe Eldridge, a United Methodist minister who was active in human-rights work. We searched for spiritual discernment. It was kind of like a modified Quaker meeting—we sat still and quiet until something bubbled up.'

Tanner took off in 1990 to work for the African American Mayor of Charlotte, North Carolina, Harvey Gantt, in his unsuccessful bid to unseat Republican Senator Jesse Helms.

Next, plans for a Faith and Politics Institute quickly consumed Tanner's interest. Although its pattern was set with those Quaker-type meetings in 1989, the official start of this non-profit organization was in 1991. With a staff of six, it runs on an annual budget of about $600,000 from tax-deductible contributions.

Congressmen John Lewis, Democrat, Georgia, who headed the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the 1960s drive for civil rights, and Amo Houghton, Republican, New York, co-chair the Institute board. It also includes two rabbis and several clergy.

The Institute also works with the Catholic chaplain of the House. Tanner says the Institute has participated in some events with Muslims and expects to reach out more to that group. It also partners with such organizations as Hope in the Cities in helping implement their mandates for racial reconciliation.

One of the Institute's major goals is to ensure that lawmakers grasp the racial history of the 1960s. They lead periodic pilgrimages to Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. There on 7 March 1965 law officers blocked and brutalized many of the 600 voting-rights marchers heading for the state capital, Montgomery. The national revulsion was such that Congress swiftly enacted the Voting Rights Act to ensure all Americans unfettered access to the ballot. Lewis says the Institute takes lawmakers there 'not as Democrats, not as Republicans, but as Americans—men and women who believe... that we can find a way to create... the American community.'

After a pilgrimage he and Lewis led, Houghton said, 'We are trying to encourage others to get involved in this enormous experience we had down in Selma.' With its history and Voting Rights Museum, Selma offers a unique slice of American history. And with its new African American mayor, James Perkins Jr, it symbolizes how much the South—and nation—have changed.

The Institute also helps with the bipartisan House 'civility retreats' in Hershey, Pennsylvania. And it brought General (now Secretary of State) Colin Powell and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu to Capitol Hill as part of its Congressional Conversations on Race. The move to reach out more actively to Muslims will put another item on the Institute's agenda.

Clearly Tanner is up to the task. 'This is an unusual man—decent, fair, always reaching out to people and sensitive to the core issues of faith and politics,' says Houghton. E Terri LaVelle, the Institute's programme director, says Tanner has a 'very strong work ethic'. At the same time he occasionally breaks his pace: 'Sometimes in the middle of the afternoon, he belts (out) a bluegrass song... The first time he did that I thought, "This guy is having a nervous breakdown," but now we all expect it, especially after working on some long-term projects.' Obviously Tanner is no stranger to stress.

For all his energetic commitment, Tanner knows he'd be lost without his staff, board and volunteers. 'He's learning to share and solicit ideas,' says LaVelle. And he believes in nurturing his staff. Every other Monday, for example, he and his co-workers have a reflection time. Once or twice a year he takes them on a staff retreat. At root, his faith shines through. 'As a Christian he knows that we've been given the ministry of reconciliation, and that conviction shapes his strong desire to be in word and deed bipartisan and have events that bridge and build across divides,' comments LaVelle. ■

In the dying days of the apartheid era, the inhabitants of Stutterheim, South Africa, took their future into their own hands. William Smook visits a town which has undergone a remarkable transformation.

CITIZEN POWER IN SOUTH AFRICA

Nestling at the foot of the Amatola mountains in South Africa's Eastern Cape, Stutterheim looks like any of the country's 500-odd rural towns. But its people have wrought something the politicians only promised in 1994's democratic elections: new infrastructure, job creation, education programmes and new dignity for a population targeted by the worst of apartheid policies.

This almost miraculous progress was achieved by quietly determined local folk, not by career politicians brandishing rhetoric and legislation in a faraway parliament. Perhaps that's why it's been so effective.

Stutterheim was a product of a pioneering spirit and of conflict. When white settlers first staked their claim on the land, there were bloody wars with local black tribes. More than a century later, in the 1960s, apartheid legislation decreed that black residents of the area should be relocated to the 'homeland' of the Ciskei. Forced removals ensued and no new infrastructure was built for blacks outside the homeland.

By the late 1980s, this policy had borne bitter fruit. Stutterheim was a microcosm of South Africa: white and black communities were physically divided and mutually suspicious. Conditions in black townships were appalling: in one area there were three taps providing water for 8,000 residents.

Unemployment and crime were rife. Stutterheim was a hotbed for political activity and with no avenues open for blacks to voice their grievances, tension and political unrest grew. There were clashes between township youngsters and police.

In 1989 a nine-month consumer boycott against white businesses began. Stutterheim became like a ghost town. Fourteen businesses closed. The boycott was a double-edged sword, bringing hardship on the black residents, who had to travel 50kms to King William's Town, the nearest town.

With political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) still banned, Stutterheim had a strong civic movement.

Left to right: Stutterheim Development Forum Director Nico Ferreira, Stutterheim Business Advice Centre Manager Tom Dyantyi and SDF Manager Max Judy

Vukani executive member Lungani Madikane demonstrates bricklaying.

This effectively ran the townships. The black town councillors, while elected, were not recognized by the township residents.

Township youngsters rigidly enforced the boycott, recalls Tom Dyantyi, now Manager of the Stutterheim Business Advice Centre. 'They'd check your cash slips and see where you'd bought your stuff. Life was cheap. It was pretty tense.'

In response to the crisis, the mayor of the day, Nico Ferreira, organized a town meeting with the civic leaders. The fact that the meeting took place is astonishing, given the mood of mistrust and hostility. It helped that Ferreira and his fellow councillors weren't political appointees—all had stood as independent candidates. He recalls: 'We made it known that we weren't interested in party politics and we had opposition, from left and right.'

There were several covert meetings in isolated venues, as the black residents established whether Ferreira was sincere. He was told: 'You can't know who our true leaders are, because they'll be locked up if you do.' But eventually he was taken to meet Chris Magwangqana, a political activist (since then mayor and now Chief Executive Officer of the Amahlati district, under which Stutterheim falls).

Those who brokered and attended the meeting were risking their lives. Ferreira later learnt that a neo-fascist white supremacist group had planned to assassinate him. Black participants in the meeting faced similar threats. The house of Max Judy, one of the organizers and now Manager of the Stutterheim Development Forum (SDF), was firebombed. One meeting to introduce Ferreira to black leaders had to be aborted when an angry group of black hotheads gathered outside the house. The police didn't look favourably on the idea either.

But the meeting went ahead on 6 May 1990, with Magwangqana presenting a list of demands, both national—such as the release of all political detainees—and local—such as the consolidation of local government structures.

It's acknowledged that the town meeting was a turning point for Stutterheim, with both sides showing willingness to compromise in the interests of progress.

Magwangqana said later: 'I took a risk. Many people did not want to talk. We made a conscious and realistic choice to focus on development—we wanted to couple will with reality.'

In her book on the Stutterheim story, *Making a difference* (Vivlia, 1997), Barbara Nussbaum writes: 'The profound power of the simple act of listening (has emerged) as a theme worthy of note.'

The councillors and civic leaders resolved to develop dialogue and work on solutions to problems. They conceded that they couldn't solve the national issues, but committed themselves to working on the local ones. The consumer boycott was lifted, catching the beleaguered shopkeepers off guard.

The group worked on the basis of good faith, rather than developing an exhaustive constitution and protocols. The focus was on meeting needs, rather than hammering out definitive blueprints.

Funding was secured from the Independent Development Trust (a non-government organization) to provide services to 900 residential stands. International funding has since become available.

The Stutterheim Development Forum was founded, aimed at expediting the development of infrastructure, jobs and education. Its leadership was chosen by the community and it ran as a non-profit organization, working with the municipality to ensure that projects made it through the red tape.

Instead of contracting big corporations, the residents were taught to do the work themselves. Once the residents had learned a trade, they were taught business skills. Ferreira says: 'Skills without entrepreneurship won't work. If you're a plumber or a builder you need to know how to tender for a contract and so on.' They could then make a living as bricklayers, plumbers or carpenters.

Training was provided by skilled artisans, many of whom could only help at night. The white townsfolk helped by teaching skills or raising funds.

'It meant that people who had never been employed before were able to provide for their families,' Judy says.

'Once people saw what could be achieved by working together and that they were driving the development themselves, not some authority, then there was no time to dwell on the past.'

Judy notes that now, 12 years later, the government is trying to foster community forums: 'You can't legislate unity. It must be in the hearts of the people, whether you're dealing with Afghanistan or Stutterheim.'

Photos: William Smook

Amahlati District CEO Chris Magwangqana

The SDF set up action committees to address planning, education, works, economic development, health, agriculture, tourism and recreation.

One particular area of success has been education. South Africa's migrant labour system spawned a system where the men are away for most of the year and the women work in the fields or the towns. As a result small children are cared for by their grandparents and later left to their own devices.

The SDF set up a programme to involve mothers in the education of their children. Some have opened their homes to about 25 pre-school children, and nearly 3,000 children are involved. Lois Kleyn, head of the Stutterheim Education Trust, says: 'We try to provide basic materials such as paints and crayons, but the mothers generally provide their own furniture and whatever else they need from recyclable materials.'

Apartheid bequeathed an education system that was utterly skewed, with black schools politicized, run-down and understaffed. But the area now has an educational system aimed at giving school leavers an opportunity to earn a living. Kleyn says the Education Department doesn't interfere: 'If we waited for the go-ahead we'd still be in a quagmire of red tape. In the meantime we have to meet the needs of the people. We also have to try to bridge the huge divide between the community and school.'

Of every 100 kids finishing school this year, she says, three will find formal jobs, three will go on to further education and 94 will be unemployed. 'So we have to ensure not only that they have a good education, but that they have the skills to become self-employed.' With 50 schools in the area using the education trust's system, thousands of youngsters are being given a better chance at a proper education.

The teachers themselves are learning new skills, particularly in how to teach science. Stutterheim's education trust has become a satellite campus of Rhodes University and this year will offer a Further Diploma in Education.

Stutterheim already has the highest number of technologically literate teachers in the country. Each has completed a 300-hour, part-time course in computer literacy. Kleyn says the classes have a 98 per cent attendance rate and zero per cent dropout rate. The trust's computer centre also teaches computer skills to 900 rural youngsters each year.

Another benefit of Stutterheim's cooperation with Rhodes University is the counselling service offered by psychology masters students in the area. It provides much-needed access to skilled counsellors and valuable experience to the students.

Other programmes under way include Thunga-Thunga, a tourism authority that includes the Mgwali Cultural Village, township tours and home-stays with families. A tour route will incorporate scenic coastal roads and national parks. Those participating in the scheme will be able to buy shares in it and own it.

Connie Kekana, who runs Thunga-Thunga, says of the changes in Stutterheim: 'It reached a point where we could either fold our arms and wait for someone to help, or we could do it ourselves and improve the lives of those around us.' And the experience is spreading—so far 140 South African towns have begun implementing guidelines drawn up by the SDF, with workshops subsidized by the Open Society Foundation.

Magwangqana says the emphasis in the area is on clean governance, new infrastructure and the alleviation of poverty on farms through cooperation with farmers. 'It's not about black and white anymore, but about what we can achieve.' ■

Residents of sheltered accommodation buy fruit at wholesale prices from the Cleadon Project Cooperative.

Giving Cleadon its confidence back

An award-winning charity in England's north east has helped over 3,000 people in five years, discovers Anastasia Stepanova.

The remarkable thing about the Community Regeneration Trust North East is the way it enlists the people of one of Britain's most deprived areas in helping their communities. The National winner for 2000 of the British Urban Regeneration Association Charitable Trust Awards, it operates in an area of north-east England with third generation unemployment and a high level of crime. Some of its volunteers have a history of court appearances and antisocial behaviour.

The charity, formerly known as the Cleadon Community Project, started out in 1996 as a second-hand charity furniture shop, run by four volunteers. Up till now over 200 volunteers have gone through their programmes and the charity now has 63 core members and one member of staff, from all over South Tyneside and surrounding areas. In the year up to August 2001, the Trust served 3,064 people in need.

'We have established a means by which we can give people work experience and build their confidence, while serving vulnerable people in need in their own communities,' says Joseph Main, the Chief Executive Officer.

Set up by a church group in Cleadon Park, the project aims to provide for those who are socially excluded. 'It was a desperately needy area with very little investment in housing renovation,' says Main. 'There were risks of violence, drugs and youth disorder. It wasn't only the young people who were committing disorder in the streets—we also had 50-year-olds smashing windows and fighting.' In daylight the Cleadon Park area looks quite decent. The only signs betraying its problems are houses whose windows and doorways are covered by metal shields and which have been left by inhabitants who couldn't put up with the street violence and decline in the neighbourhood. 'It took a long time to develop the project—to employ people, to put together the volunteering structure,' says Main. 'Having been unemployed for so long, people lost confidence in their skills and had diminished hope for the future.'

In response to these needs, the Trust set up its Training Programme for Volunteers. 'The most important aim of this programme is to encourage and respond to volunteers' personal aspirations, not just to make them job-ready.' The training department works with each volunteer to create a personal development plan. It looks at training needs, existing skills and new skills necessary to achieve personal goals. The plan is realized through work experience with the Trust and formal accredited training.

Currently there are 29 trainees. 'Since we were accredited by City and Guilds [certification system], volunteers have shown more interest in training,' says training coordinator Mark Bennett. 'They've gone through so many state-provided training programmes in the past without receiving any certificates and couldn't find jobs afterwards.'

The Trust coordinators feel happy when volunteers go further. 'Lots of them move on to local projects, jobs or go into study,' says Main.

Now there are five programmes, mainly delivered by volunteers. One of them provides gardening, household maintenance, transportation and recycling services to people in the area.

Another programme, the Food Bank, delivers food parcels containing enough fresh and tinned food to keep a family for two days and provides for breakfast clubs at local schools. Last year over 500 people benefited from this service and over 150 local children participated in breakfast clubs, which increased school attendance. 'An emergency food parcel is a turning point of many people's lives,' says Mark Dunne, the food programme manager. 'We've just received a letter from a former prisoner that clearly shows the impact this effort has.'

Fresh fruit and vegetables are also sold at wholesale prices to elderly people living in sheltered accommodation. But where does the food come from? 'We get more food for our food bank from corner shops than from supermarkets,' says Dunne. 'But donations don't cover the demand and we have had to search for money to buy food.'

Recently they took on some derelict land to grow organic vegetables. 'People didn't want to use it because it was not secure,' says Dunne. The volunteers had to get rid of tons of rubbish, fertilize the land and fence the area. 'This year we had the first crop—a large amount of vegetables.' Security increased and people started to come back to work on their allotments. 'It really has regenerated that area.'

The Trust has received lottery funding to help them buy an abandoned church in South Shields. 'When we entered the church we were struck by the presence of God, by the tranquillity reigning there, in spite of its really run-down state,' says Main. The building is currently being converted into a community centre and a decorating course has helped to speed up the conversion work.

Although the renovation is still in process the venue is already being used. They run a cooking course, where young mothers learn to make healthy meals for their kids, and a children's programme. A youth maturity project has also been set up to involve young people at risk of disaffection in voluntary work. The community centre also provides a 'drop-in centre' for asylum seekers living in South Tyneside.

'There's a definite synergy between what's going on in the church and the Trust,' says Main. Every morning the staff and volunteers gather together to focus on their day's agenda in shared quiet and prayer. 'We are Christianity-based but we don't evangelize to our volunteers or our social clients,' says Main. There are 22 non-Christians who find it easy to work side by side with them.

Children benefit from the schools' food programme

The Trust finds support from the local authority. 'The Trust is respected because many people have benefited from it,' says Main.

Bringing volunteers and clients together in a genuine relationship of support and service-delivery has proved to be a successful response to the core issues in the area. 'It's got a circular structure: the volunteers' personal development helps to meet the clients' immediate needs and all together it meets the Trust's needs,' says Main.

The Trust members come from different professional and academic backgrounds. Joseph Main learned about the project through the pastor in the local church he goes to. At that time he was a senior administrator in a company, but was unhappy there. The pastor, Bob Parnaby, is the finance officer and has been with the Trust since its beginning. The training coordinator, Mark Bennett, joined the project after deciding against a career in accountancy; his colleague, Jim Morris has been in the training field for many years. Ian Stimpson, a graduate in theology, is in charge of the Centre for the Community and Anne-Marie Willows, who is responsible for the community volunteer initiatives, has a degree in engineering and used to work for British Aerospace. Mark Dunne, a media studies and management graduate, manages the food support services and Jill Donaldson, who runs the youth project, has a degree in geography and youth work and worked for various voluntary organizations before joining the project.

The Community Regeneration Trust North East is winning not only national and local awards for 'best practice in the community' but also people's hearts. 'Word of mouth has brought more people and more volunteers,' says Main. 'And still we've got so much to do for the community.'

To find out more visit www.crtne.org.uk

BOOK REVIEW

Eric Liddell—pure gold
by David McCasland
Discovery House Publishers,
Grand Rapids, 2001

David McCasland's appealing book tells the story of the 1924 Olympic champion made famous to later generations in the film, *Chariots of fire*. Liddell was born of missionary parents in China and returned there in 1925 to teach at the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College.

Liddell was a runner of extraordinary speed and determination. In a British 440 yards final in 1923, he was knocked off the track at the start of the race by another runner. It took him precious seconds to realize he had not been disqualified, and he was 20 feet behind when he rejoined the race—only to go on to win it.

As a committed Christian and Sabbatarian, Liddell refused to compete in the 100 metres at the Paris Olympics in 1924, because the heats would be run on a Sunday. Instead, he trained for the 200 and 400 metres—and took bronze in the 200 and gold in the 400.

His Olympic medals made Liddell a huge star, capable of pulling large crowds at Christian revival meetings. He told one such meeting in 1925 about the 'biggest problem' of his life so far—not, as one might expect, his controversial Olympic decision but his response to his first invitation to speak in public about his faith, a prospect which terrified him.

'I was very reluctant about accepting the invitation,' he said. 'The morning after being invited, I received a letter from my sister in China and it contained this text: "Fear not, for I am with thee; do not dismay, for I will guide thee." Those words helped me make that decision, and since then, I have endeavoured to do the work of my Maker.'

During these years in Scotland—and on a visit home in 1932—Liddell was greatly influenced by the Oxford Group (MRA's precursor). He wrote in a brochure for an Oxford Group event in 1932: 'The Group has brought to me personally a greater power in my own life, discipline without thought of discipline, and a greater willingness to share the deepest things in my life.'

McCasland's intimate biography draws on interviews with those who knew Liddell and on his correspondence. It gives a touching account of Liddell's family life, both as a child and a young father, with the frequent separations demanded by missionary work at that time. It describes the darkening clouds as World War II approached and as the Japanese occupation of China intensified, and his last years in Weihsin internment camp, where he died, aged 44, just a few months before the end of the war.

Mary Lean

A contemplative in action

Irish nun and social worker Sister Stanislaus Kennedy believes that spiritual discipline and practical caring can enhance each other, writes Kenneth Noble.

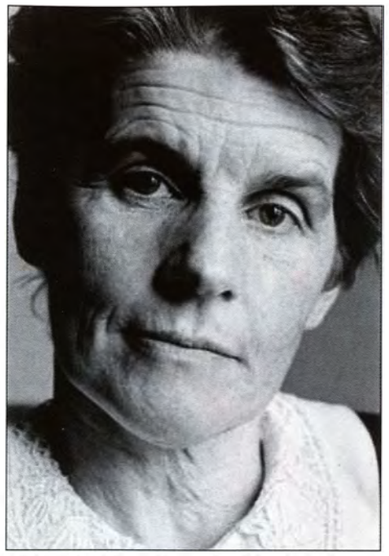
Sister Stanislaus Kennedy wanted to work with poor people from the time when she was growing up on the family farm in Dingle, Co Kerry in the Republic of Ireland. As there were no opportunities to study social work when she left school in 1958, she joined the Irish Sisters of Charity, an order of nuns founded in Ireland in the early 19th century to help the poor.

Today Sister Stan, as she is affectionately called, is well-known in Ireland. She was the first religious sister ever to receive an honorary Doctorate in Law from Trinity College, Dublin; in 1974 she was appointed by the Irish government as the first chair of the National Committee to Combat Poverty (now Combat Poverty Agency); and in 1985 she was chosen by the European Commission to be co-ordinator of the European poverty projects within the EU.

She has written several books, including *Now is the time* which last year reached third in the Irish best-seller lists. When we met in November she was in London to launch her latest book, *Gardening the Soul*.* In this 'spiritual daybook' she provides for each day of the year both a reflection of her own and a quote from a surprisingly disparate range of writers.

One of Sister Stan's best known projects is Focus Ireland, a charity that 'aims to advance the rights of people out-of-home to live in a place they can call home through quality services, research and advocacy'. Today it has a turnover of Irish£5 million, of which 80 per cent comes from the government, and a paid staff of 180. It provides accommodation for 300 at any one time, and is building another 300 housing units. Although Sister Stan retired from an executive role in 1995 she is Life President and is often the 'public face' of the charity.

Its roots go back to 1983 when, after some pioneering social work in Kilkenny, Sister Stan went to Dublin to carry out research into homeless women. 'People thought there weren't any,' she says. But her team's comprehensive six-month study found that there were over 500.



Jaydee Putterman

Sister Stanislaus Kennedy: 'We started exactly what we said was needed.'

In an effort to understand homelessness better, Sister Stan rented the top floor of a building in Dublin and spent a year living with eight homeless young women. 'Their worst experience was the way they were treated—the lack of respect and the rejection,' she says. 'There was a perception that they were no good, lazy, or on drugs, and they became what they were perceived to be.'

She found that little was being done to help homeless people. 'There was no-one on the streets at night to reach out to young people, so they were open to all kinds of exploitation; no drop-in centre where the homeless could get information and advice; no restaurant where they could get good food at a reasonable price; nowhere they would be safe that was a nice place to be.' So in 1985 'we started exactly what we said was needed, Focus Ireland, or Focus Point as it was then'.

The three objectives of Focus Ireland are:

- to respond to the needs of people out-of-home and those at risk of becoming homeless, through a range of appropriate high quality services;
- to provide emergency transitional and long-term accommodation for people out-of-home;
- and to campaign and lobby for the rights of people out-of-home and the prevention of homelessness.

In Focus Ireland's annual report for 2000, their Chief Executive, Declan Jones, explains that the economic boom of 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland has had a downside for many of the most marginalized sections of society. Rising property prices and rents have led to more people on local authority housing waiting lists, and made it necessary for more families to live in emergency and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. 'Worse still is the significant increase in the number of people, often our most vulnerable, who are living on our streets.'

Sister Stan says that Focus Ireland aims to give homeless people pride and dignity by providing 'a continuum of care'—from the point of crisis, through to the home settlement stage. For her, the most important thing is 'the way we treat them. How we do something is as important as what we do', a principle that is also enshrined in the annual report.

In 2000 Sister Stan founded the Sanctuary, a holistic spirituality centre in the heart of Dublin. The aim was to provide a beautiful, harmonious, quiet place for people who live in stressful situations. There are three rooms and three walled gardens devoted to dance and movement, the arts, and 'sacred space'. It is open to anyone who wants to come, she says. Courses are held for people in the locality, and there is a day-time course for those in the caring professions.

Sister Stan sees no conflict between her vocation as a nun and her social work. 'Time for solitude, stillness and prayer is an essential part of my day and my life,' she says. 'I carry that reflective mode into what I do; then I move from action to reflection again. They enhance each other.'

This is also a main theme of her daybook. It is alive with thoughts and insights linked to the changing seasons in a garden. 'In winter it looks as if nothing is happening,' she tells me. 'But everything is happening. During that time the seeds are being nurtured, and without that they could not blossom. Unless we take time to be nurtured in our mind, body and spirit, we'll not be as fruitful as we might be.'

'Lots of people have difficulty with the autumn of life,' she ventures. 'But it should be a time of harvesting and of great wisdom. It's a wonderful time in life.' In the past, older people were wisdom people; but now they are trying to be young.

The purpose of the Sanctuary, as of *Gardening the Soul*, is to show people that life can be different if they build a time of reflection into it. 'But there has to be a consistency about it—you have to be faithful to it,' she warns. 'We can all find our quiet space, if we really want to.'

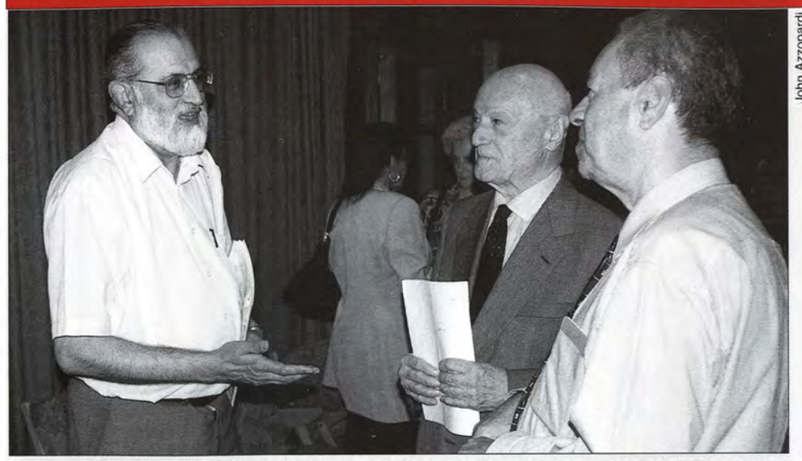
Ever the activist, as well as the contemplative, Sister Stan is already at grips with a new challenge—one that she admits she's hardly begun—to work with the economic migrants and asylum seekers who have recently started to come into Ireland. 'It's a whole challenge to us to provide for our visitors as good a service and possibilities as we do for our own citizens,' she insists.

Kenneth Noble

**'Gardening the Soul—a spiritual daybook through the seasons', published by Simon and Schuster UK, ISBN 1-903650-05-4, price £10 hardback.*

Philip Carr

Homelessness is a growing problem in Ireland.



John Azzopardi

Imam Abduljalil Sajid, UK, (left) talks with Senator Bersani from Italy and Neophytos Christodoulides from Cyprus (right).

Mediterranean Dialogue in Malta

Dialogue is the key to finding common objectives across the divide between the Western and the Muslim worlds. And sincere listening is the key to dialogue. It means being as concerned about the injustices suffered by the other side as about our own. This was the overriding conviction of a diverse mix of people gathered in Malta at the Mount St Joseph retreat and conference centre last October. Twenty-five from nine Mediterranean countries or with close links to the region and 20 from the host country met for a week-long 'Dialogue for the Mediterranean, Agenda for Reconciliation'.

The acts of terror of 11 September, the war in Afghanistan and the escalation of violence in the Middle East set a dark background to the dialogue. As George Vella, Deputy Leader of the Malta Labour Party and former Foreign Minister, said at the opening: 'Dialogue itself is healthy because it keeps the channels open and kindles hope.'

Malta's Prime Minister, Eddie Fenech Adami, attended a lunch with the participants at the invitation of Senator Bersani from Italy. Fenech Adami described Malta as 'a crossroads of civilizations'.

Later delegates were invited to speak at the University. They were also received by the President of Malta and the Auxiliary Bishop.

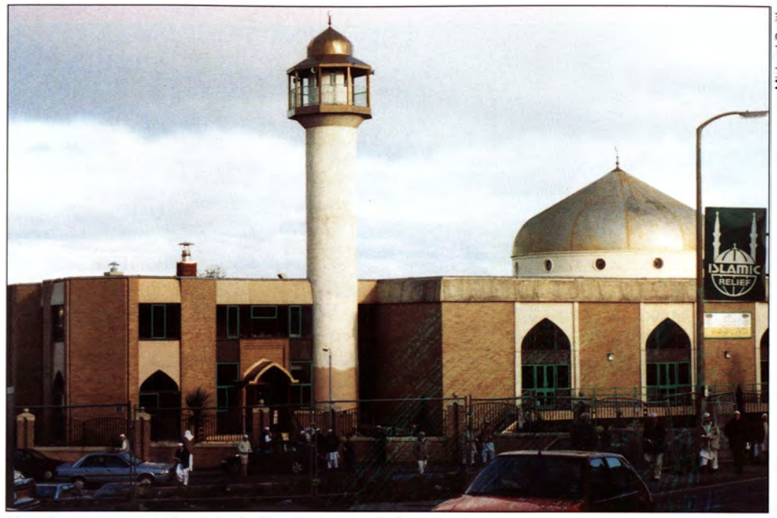
Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross until 1999 and now President of the Caux Foundation in Switzerland, stressed: 'Let us avoid horrible simplifications that emphasize divisions! Let us be critical of the information that the media is giving. We have to avoid getting into a non-justified panic.'

Latifa Fahmy, Assistant Professor of Business Studies at the American University of Cairo, passed on a message to the participants from Sheikh Sayed Abu El-Waffa, Secretary General of the Islamic Research Assembly, on behalf of Sheikh El-Azhar Mohammed Sayed Tantawi. She also warned of the dangers of predicting clashes between civilizations and of equating Islam with fundamentalism and hostility to human rights.

The participants explored four broad themes: dialogue, hope, forgiveness and justice—not in a theoretical manner, but with an eye for what each person can do. Lebanese participants told of decisions to forgive and to seek forgiveness after the civil war. Assaad Shaftari asked: 'Have we as individuals, as a group or a larger tribe harmed any other party? Are we ready to ask forgiveness? Have we decided to make amends for our wrongdoings?' After the first dialogue of this kind in Malta, two years earlier, this former militia leader had returned to Lebanon and written a public apology in a newspaper asking forgiveness of his victims in the civil war.

Justice and forgiveness may appear to be opposites. In the minds of most participants they seemed to be intimately linked, providing the foundation for true and lasting reconciliation. 'A victim of injustice can become infected by hate and become a perpetrator of injustice,' said Fr Edgar Busuttil SJ in his introduction to the theme of justice.

On the Sunday evening some of the participants shared their convictions at a public meeting attended by 130 people. Malta's Ambassador to Greece, Evarist Saliba, who took part in the dialogue in his private capacity, said: 'Malta's potential as an important player in bringing together people of the Mediterranean to cooperate in harmony stems from its strategic position. Any approach in fulfilling such a role must be accompanied by a sense of humility, though not timidity. Malta may be the centre of the Mediterranean, but it is not the voice of the Mediterranean. Malta can play the role of a host, a mediator, a moderator between disagreeing parties.' *Bjørn-Ole Austad*



Michael Smith

Hanafia Mosque in Bradford's Manningham district

SMALL BUSINESS ROLE MODELS

An Asian business support group is helping Bradford's young Muslims into jobs. Michael Smith reports:

When a minority of young Asians, provoked by the extreme right wing British National Party, rioted in Bradford, Yorkshire, last June, an unusual full-page advertisement appeared in the local paper four days later. It was placed by Asian Trades Link (ATL), a business support group for Asian businesses, and aimed to distance the Asian business community from the rioters. 'The Asian Community is appalled and horrified by the scale and intensity of the violence which occurred,' ATL wrote. 'We strongly condemn the destruction and carnage caused by a small group of hooligans who by no means represent the Asian community. We are committed to working together with all the communities living in Bradford to build a city which is at peace with itself and one we can all be proud of.'

Bradford's *Telegraph and Argus* hailed the advert as an 'unreserved apology' from the Asian business community, though ATL co-ordinator Ashad Javed is quick to admit that ATL didn't have the mandate to apologize for the actions of unemployed youngsters who burnt down a BMW car show room. 'We never saw it as an apology but as a message of sympathy for the citizens of Bradford,' Javed says. 'We did it to condemn the riots which were setting a bad example of the Asian community and of Bradford as a venue where businesses can invest.'

With recession in the Yorkshire textile industry leading to mill closures, unemployment in Bradford is running at over 10 per cent, but among the Asian Muslim community it is much higher. Even among Asian graduates unemployment is 'significantly higher', says Javed, who puts this down to racism and 'postcode discrimination'. If you come from a deprived area such as Manningham, Bradford's Muslim inner-city heartland—'which is always in the news for the wrong reasons'—then you are much less likely to get a job.

'We would like to see more Asians running their own businesses,' Javed says. ATL's project manager, Tariq Sadiq, points out that young British Asians don't want to work for their fathers' grocery shops or newsagents. 'They have aspirations of their own'—such as information technology, e-commerce, accountancy, law, fashion retailing, graphic arts and media agencies. 'There is a drive among young Asians for self-employment,' he says.

ATL gives free advice and support—from accountancy and IT skills to marketing and exporting—to the growing number of Asian businesses in West Yorkshire. There are an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 of them, though ATL is still compiling its database and no one yet knows how many Asians are employed in their own businesses. Javed himself owns a chain of three restaurants, called Shabab, with a turnover of £1.5 million, employing 30 full-time and part-time staff.

ATL, founded in 1998 as a member association, recently received government funding to the tune of £250,000, through the Department of Trade and Industry's Business Link network. ATL became a Business Link concession last April.

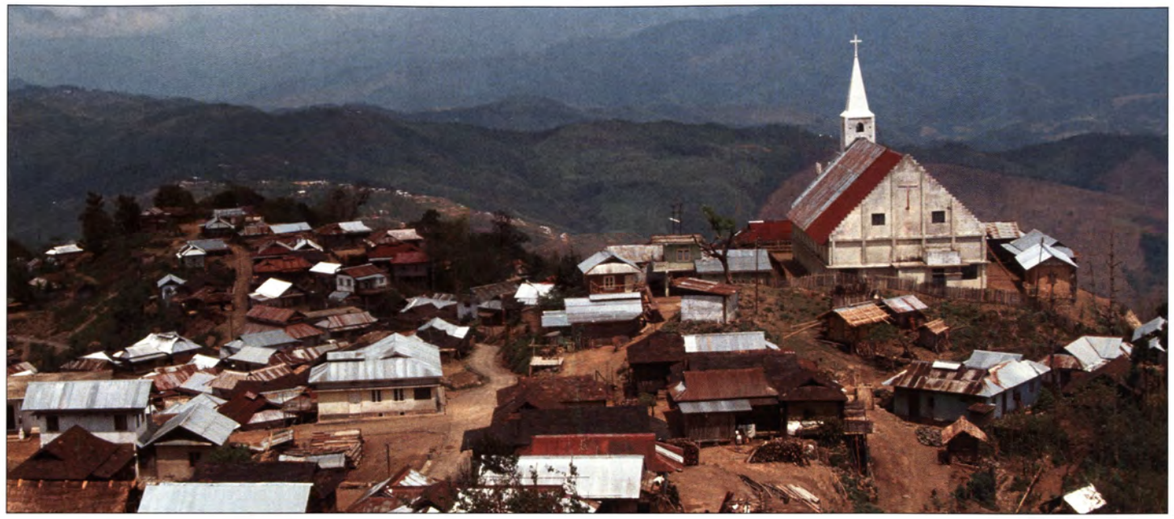
There are downsides in Bradford. While ATL is proactive in offering its services, too many of the first generation of small Asian businesses 'are very insular and not receptive to external advice', Sadiq says. And too many of Bradford's young Kashmiri Muslims are underachieving in schools, compared, for instance, with their Sikh or white counterparts.

Philip Lewis, the Bishop of Bradford's adviser on interfaith issues, worries that, with high Asian unemployment, Bradford is sitting on a 'demographic timebomb' that could explode in further violence. But Sadiq points out that West Yorkshire benefits from the financial hub of Leeds, and there are 'almost daily' announcements of new investment programmes.

Javed believes that if the timebomb is to be defused, community initiatives such as ATL will play a vital part. Muslim leaders have also been in dialogue with the Anglican Bishop of Bradford, David Smith, about setting up a 'youth parliament', to give a voice to unemployed youngsters of all ethnic backgrounds. And Javed sees ATL's work also affecting the social, cultural and unemployment scene. 'If the youth, aged 16-24, are inactive this sets out a shoddy foundation for them to build on,' he says. 'Our job,' adds Sadiq, 'is to find high growth Asian businesses—a few role models.' ■

Michael Smith

Tariq Sadiq (left), project manager, and Ashad Javed, coordinator, Asian Trades Link, Bradford



Corbis

Kohima, Nagaland

INVESTING IN THE REGENERATION OF NAGALAND

by Neichu Angami

A group of young first-generation entrepreneurs from Nagaland, in India's volatile north-east region, recently won a prestigious award for their work in helping fledgling businesses get off the ground. The aim of Entrepreneurs Associates (EA) is to 'kick-start a process of social change through entrepreneurship' and to create stability in Nagaland which suffers from a weak economy and an excess of government regulation.

EA received India's first ever Citizens' Base Award from the Ashoka Innovators in December at Taj Palace, New Delhi. They were one of seven NGOs, all involved in social entrepreneurship, shortlisted for the prize, and one of three winners. They were chosen mainly because they are funded by private citizens.

Supported by the Ford Company, the award carries a cash prize and also a training course in 'resource mobilization' with participants from all over the corporate world.

EA's leader and founder, Neichute Doulo, has made sacrifices to forward his vision for Nagaland. The first ever post-graduate from his village, he gave up a much coveted job as a lecturer in economics to start EA. He told the *Indian Express* that he grew up in rural Nagaland where people carried firewood on their heads and worked in the fields. 'There is no shame in doing such work but when I came to Kohima I was quite shocked to see the snooty behaviour of the students,' he said. 'They would not do any work as they thought it was beneath their dignity.' He and some other students started a scholar self-help project, and after college worked as labourers, loaded trucks and sold ice-cream. 'We wanted to prove that no work is bad when done with enthusiasm,' he explained.

After college he spent some months in Australia taking part in an Initiatives of Change study course on 'effective living'.

EA was formally launched in September 2000 although it has existed under various banners since 1988. It provides 'micro finance' loans at 16 per cent annual rate of interest to young people with a business vision. This is comparable with bank rates and much lower than the 120 or more per cent demanded by loan sharks.

EA has more than 500 members including people from all walks of life, both urban and rural. Membership is not confined to Nagaland. Doulo, who is an Ashoka fellow, travels extensively and has exchanged ideas with other fellows in Thailand and Indonesia.

EA tries to support would-be entrepreneurs through motivational workshops. These provide a platform for first generation entrepreneurs to share their experiences and skills with interested, often unemployed, youths as well as among themselves. The workshops aim to build up customer-care skills and managerial techniques.

EA also helps young business entrants to build up a market by introducing them to its members and its circle of friends through pamphlets and newsletters.

Funding comes from core members, people who share EA's vision and a network of investors who put a minimum of Rs1,000 (£15) into the Micro Fund.

Since the beginning of 2001 EA has enabled more than 40 young Nagas to become economically independent and set up their own businesses.

EA's long-term goal is to see a shift from today's easy-money lifestyle—a result of more than half a century of political conflict—to a renewed culture. 'Unless we control our own resources and utilize them ourselves, we cannot survive as a people,' they say. 'Economic development can only come when there is honesty, creativity, hard work and unselfishness.'

One who has benefited is Wetso Mero. Five years ago he had a dream of starting a Christian literature and music shop. His friends who, like him, are now core members of EA, encouraged him and gave him a loan of Rs50,000 (£900). Today 'Bible House' is a popular bookshop with a public telephone booth attached. The business is worth one million rupees.

When I heard about the Citizens' Base Award I visited the EA office to check out the news. In just a few moments there I saw mentoring going on between EA core members and those who came seeking financial help. I heard stories that gave me hope for our people and I felt a strong yearning to be part of such an important venture. I paid Rs100 and signed the membership form straight away. My membership card gets me an eight to ten per cent discount in eight popular shops in Kohima. But a greater incentive is knowing that my membership fee will allow someone to make their dream a reality. ■

Karen Elliott Greisdorf

WEBBSITE

by Robert Webb

Cincinnati's past informs its future

The scenes, televised globally, were ugly—rioting, looting, young African American men hauled to jail.

That was Cincinnati, Ohio, last April after a policeman shot and killed an unarmed 19-year-old African American youth he said he thought was reaching for a gun.

It was a scene not unlike those in Cincinnati and other cities in the 1960s' battle for civil rights for all Americans. That struggle brought a host of new federal, state and local laws. Gains came across the spectrum of interracial relationships—in jobs, education, housing, voting and elective office-holding. Doors long closed swung open. Nevertheless, the struggle is far from won. Racism remains unconquered, if more subtle, in today's America.

Situated on the Ohio River as a gateway between the South and North, Cincinnati could yet become a beacon for improved race relations. The spark promises to be the $110 million National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, which is set to open on the city's historic riverfront in 2004.

The Freedom Center will capitalize on Cincinnati's past as a pivotal point on the 19th century 'Underground Railroad', as the system of secretly shuttling slaves away from the plantations of the South was known. It will utilize the latest multimedia technology to trace the history of the Underground Railroad and strive to cultivate a new sense of the precious gift of liberty and how to expand and protect it. It will also have links with the National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

'We are using history to connect to modern-day issues,' says Ernest Britton, the Center's director of external affairs. 'The Center will be highly interactive and invite the participation of visitors in dialogue to connect with lessons of the past—the interracial cooperation, perseverance and desire for freedom [which marked the Underground Railroad].'

A glimmer of what we may expect was evident in the interactive exhibit, 'Civil unrest in Cincinnati: voices of the community', at the Cincinnati Museum Center last summer and fall. The Museum's Vice-President, John Fleming, was formerly chief operating officer and director of the Freedom Center project.

'Civil unrest in Cincinnati' was conceived both to educate Cincinnatians of all races on the past and to point them toward a brighter, more cooperative future. The aim was not finger-pointing but helping to define and reduce the causes of violence. One feature addressed 'Ways to fight hate'. Another was a 'graffiti wall' on which visitors, including children, could answer the question, 'What can you do to ensure a fair society?'

'The exhibit was up three months,' Fleming told me. 'We wanted to give everyone a voice and promote understanding so [all] could understand those with differing views.' One novelty was a 'whispering tunnel' through which visitors could walk and hear recorded voices typifying remarks of African Americans and whites about each other.

The exhibit's advisory board was widely inclusive. Fleming said it comprised, among others, 'people from public housing, from Over-the-Rhine (the heavily African American neighbourhood that was once the enclave of German settlers) and from the police department'. Thus board members from differing backgrounds learned to work together on a project that won wide acclaim.

More than ten thousand people visited the exhibit. Eighty-five per cent of the 400 who responded to an opinion survey reacted favourably. 'Seventy-five per cent said they thought it contributed positively to race relations,' says Fleming.

Britton and Fleming are African Americans, but whites are also involved in both centres. For example, the three co-chairmen of the Freedom Center's fund-raising drive are former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, entertainer Harry Belafonte—both African American—and John Pepper, Chairman of Procter & Gamble, who is white.

Meanwhile, interracial dialogues are underway aimed at replacing Cincinnati's riot-torn image. The road ahead may not be easy, but giant steps have been taken. They may point the way up for many other cities too.

Robert Webb is a former columnist and editorial writer for the 'Cincinnati Enquirer'. He lives in Alexandria, Va, USA.

REFLECTIONS

by Mary Lean

Extravagant love

Tony Stone

I trace your love, oh m
from the first day, wh
the globe in splashes
fired up the furnace o
rolled planets into pla
the delicate web of ce
dreamt up the species
the filigree of their D
down through the age

I see your love, oh my
for all creation, every
your eye for landscape
passion for beetles, bu
delight in taste and te
extravagance in the de
economy in the contou
compassion for the fat
of sparrow and of star

I know your love, oh m
for me, your maddenin
Since birth, you've po
my cup, my pots and p
with the excesses of y
my flaws and talents,
are dear to you, who c
who knew, when time
what I was worth.

I take your love, oh m
to green my life, and l
What do I give you in
Only the tapestry of m
my tangled freedoms a
all that I am, and have
pitching my hopes, my
on you, as you risked
everything for me. ■