



# GLOBAL EXPRESS

Vol 3, No 1

## MOVING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

AN INTERACTIVE QUARTERLY FOR THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE



## EDITORIAL

### Move, move, move!

*Global Express* is doing precisely that:

- \* Moving into its third volume with this, the ninth issue.
- \* Moving some aspects of the operation to the UK, including layout (see new Oxford address below).
- \* Moving into the British highschoools from October '97 with a team of international young adults who will dialogue with 16-18 year olds about what exactly 'moving out of your comfort zone' entails.
- \* Moving into full colour for *this* cover, to mark our biggest ever print-run. From 1500 we're leaping to 5000, thanks to Howard Grace, initiator and facilitator of the aforementioned Schools Program.

The Editors

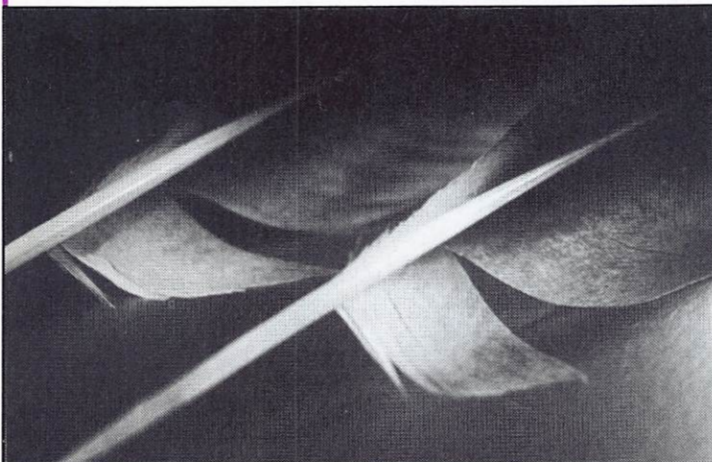


Photo: Michael Mullan

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## ETHOS

### GLOBAL EXPRESS

#### seeks to:

- be an independent media service
- establish and support a global network
- be culturally inclusive
- respond to a rapidly changing world
- connect personal and global issues
- encourage personal integrity and responsible attitudes
- encourage people to act on creative inspiration

#### believing that:

- you matter
- you can make a difference
- goodness has an image problem and spirituality is marginalised
- sincere communication at every level is essential
- peace is possible if we face the causes of division and injustice in our own lives and communities
- time for reflection is essential to find direction

### Why Global Express?

*Global Express* (GE) was started to link up young people who care about the future. Dissatisfied with what we were being offered by the media, we felt an alternative was needed.

Our aim is to inspire and encourage people to fulfil their potential. In GE you can question the way things are, and search for solutions. It is also a great opportunity to make contacts outside your 'comfort zone'.

Most of the GE team met through MRA (Moral Re-Armament), which is a world-wide network of people working for personal responsibility and conflict resolution. Ideals of integrity, unselfishness and love, together with a search for inspiration from a higher source are central to this way of life. MRA is a Non Government Organisation recognised by the United Nations. For more information visit: <http://www.mra.org.uk/>

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#### Global Express goes to:

**Africa:** Kenya and South Africa; **Asia/Pacific:** Australia, Cambodia, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Western Samoa; **Europe:** Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Scandinavia, Serbia, Switzerland and UK; **Americas:** Brazil, Canada and USA.



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## HOT SPOT

I love words. And I love people. So editing *Global Express* is a real privilege. The great thing about *Global Express* is the way it belongs to everyone - readers, subscribers, contributors, editors... That's how I began. I read it. Then I wrote for it. Then I wrote some more. Then I offered to help edit it. And here I am two years later - an Editor with a big 'E'!

It can be hard work being a dreamer in this mixed up world. Hard work believing things can change for the better, that little old you or little old me can make a difference to the world. That's why *Global Express* is so special - the people in these pages *have* changed things. Perhaps only seemingly small things. Perhaps only themselves - but then that's the best place to begin. Even the biggest mountain can be moved if we do it a bit at a time.

The group of young people in Australia who brought *Global Express* into being have given us, around the world, a special gift - the chance to create something global. It might be trendy now to *imagine* the world as a global village, but it isn't *real* unless another person in another part of the world comes alive for us. *Global Express* is a chance to make that happen.

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Not all opinions in GE are shared by the editors!

Janet Gunning, New Zealand/UK



MOVING  
OUT  
OF  
YOUR

*Comfort Zone*

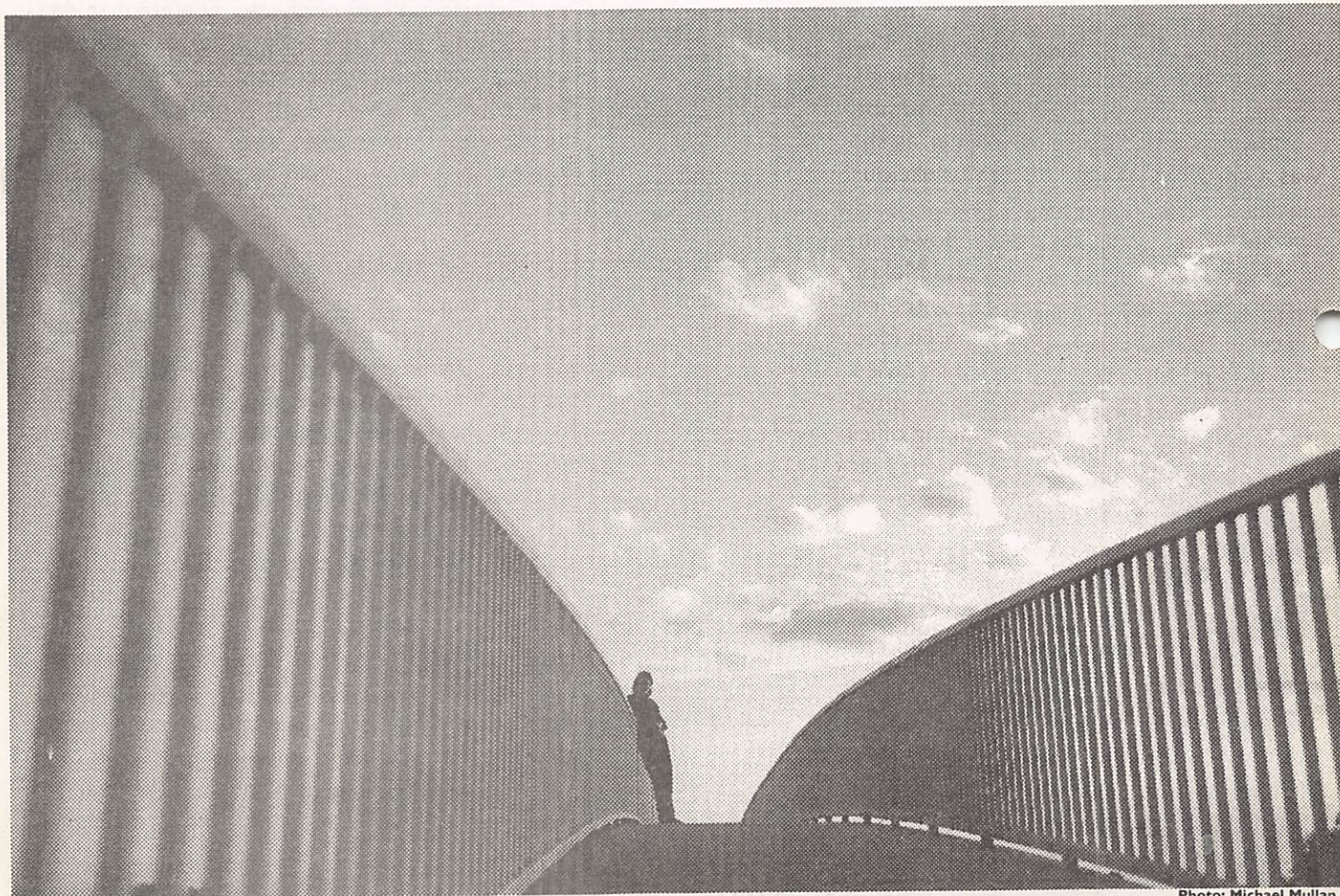


Photo: Michael Mullan



**Our comfort zone** is the environment in which we feel safe - the big 'comfy sofa' of our lives. It is physical, emotional, cultural, intellectual and financial. It is made up of the expected and the accepted - the edges are defined by our assumptions and prejudices, by our fear and laziness.

There are two good reasons for moving out of our comfort zone: for our own growth and well-being, and for the growth and well-being of others. Sometimes we are forced to move out by circumstances beyond our control. Sometimes we choose to step out and discover the world beyond our assumptions.

A geographical move is the most obvious way of moving out of our comfort zone, when we must take on a new way of life, make new friends, learn a new language etc. But there are many other ways in which we can leave our comfort zone, such as: letting go of a hurt, making a sacrifice or changing our attitude. It is uncomfortable, for example, for white people to understand the reality of racism as experienced by a black person. Likewise, it is uncomfortable for the privileged to understand the problems of homelessness and poverty - especially when they are on our doorstep.

Our comfort zone often shields us from uncomfortable truths - it enables us to 'look the other way'. It can also encourage us to live with what we know to be lies, because to admit the truth would be too humiliating. Just as our big 'comfy sofa' protects us from the world outside, so it hides the parts of ourselves we don't want others to see.

Moving out of our comfort zone can be embarrassing, frightening, painful, traumatic. But it is probably the single most important step we can make towards creating peace and understanding in our hearts and in the world.....

**My** days as a refugee will remain in my memory as one of the richest experiences of my life. I was only nineteen years old. More than anything I feared not seeing my beloved parents and grandmother again. I like to remember my grandmother as she was when I was a child. She made the most delicious bamboo soup.

With the communist seizure of power in Laos in 1975, thousands of refugees crossed the Mekong River from Laos to Thailand. The Pathet Lao, the communist regime, organized assemblies for the ideological instruction of the population, while civil servants and students were sent for weeks to do physical labour in the countryside. Some high-ranking officials were sent to re-education camps. As a student I didn't have much time to concentrate on my studies.

I had no hope, no future... and I feared I would be forced to join the army. There was no option but to leave my beloved country, family and friends. I fled to Thailand as a refugee.

The Thai authorities considered refugees as illegal immigrants for entering the country without a visa. Most refugees there experience the anxiety of not being protected by any law and try to reach a refugee camp as quickly as possible. There they become 'Displaced Persons'. I spent almost four and a half years in a

refugee camp before being accepted by the Australian Government. But life in the refugee camp taught me a lesson of great value. Life becomes more valuable if you experience hard times - fear, loneliness, pain.

Living in Australia has changed my life immensely. I have come to a country that has a different culture, language and way of life. I have learnt to integrate even when it has been uncomfortable to do so.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity of living with an Australian family who I adore as much as my real parents and family. I've learnt to live with two cultures. It has meant accepting the Australian way of life and learning to speak another language. It has forced me to move out of my comfort zones of language and culture. But my life has changed for the better. I can't believe how much warmth and love I have received from my Australian family. They have restored my confidence and enabled me to live in this adoptive country - I don't feel a stranger anymore.

It's a challenge to move out of your comfort zone, but there is always someone or something waiting to help you - as long as you are prepared to help yourself.

**Phonephet Chantharasy, Laos/Australia**



## moving out of your comfort zone. . .

**For** the past thirteen years, I have been employed as a military engineer in the Air Force. This profession required me to develop abilities that did not utilize my natural skills.

I wonder why I have stayed so long - why am I still here?

For fear of moving out of my comfort zone, I have convinced myself that fringe benefits have somehow compensated for my lack of interest in my work. I have placed too much emphasis on the benefits of materialistic gains. As a result of my urge to maintain financial security (and my comfort zone), I have sacrificed my prospects of a career better adapted to my personal needs and interests.

Lately, I have been questioning how 'comfortable' my comfort zone really is, when it means spending ten hours a day doing a job I don't find fulfilling. It is time to overcome my fears. In spite of family pressures to maintain financial security at all costs, I feel the moment has come to redefine my 'comfort' zone. I have decided to finish my two year contract in the military, and to pursue an education and a career in psychology.

**Lucie Monet, Canada**

**The** very first time I stepped out of my comfort zone must have been when I was born. I'm sure it was rather an unpleasant experience.

Since then I've gone through less significant stages of moving from one zone to another: getting out of bed every morning, breaking up with a boyfriend, or the first time I blew someone else's child's nose for instance.

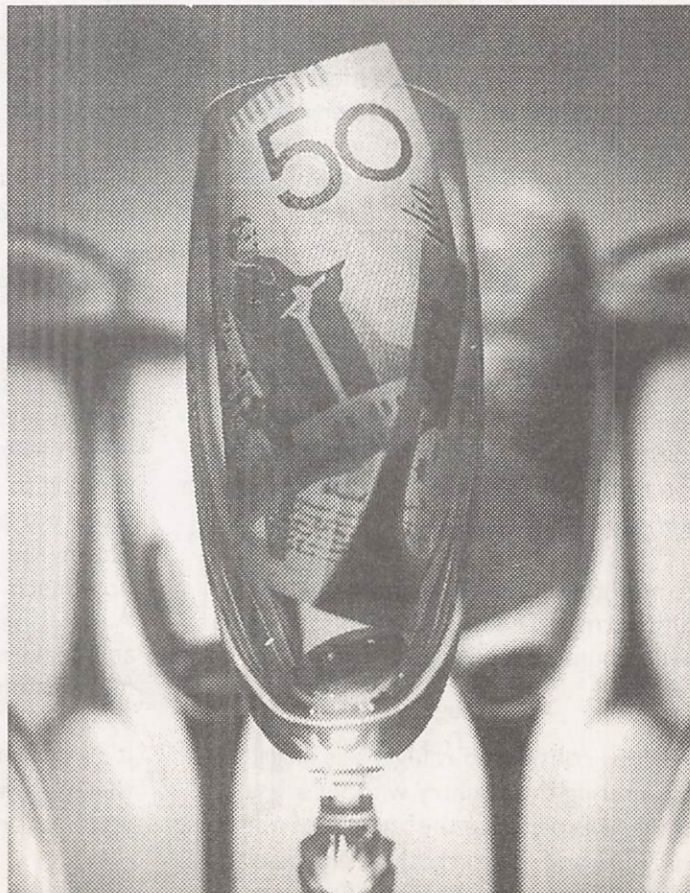
The next big move, however, was when I

gave up cigarettes. I'm sure dying of cancer would be much more uncomfortable than this, but I found the process very difficult.

I think the point and the problem with comfort zones is that you actually have to get out of them to see how good or bad they are. Withdrawing for a period of time maybe? Once you've moved out of one comfort zone (this is a process that can be both long and painful), the next move is easier to make.

I guess it's like a toothbrush - a new one feels too hard and hurts your mouth, then it becomes more comfortable with use.

**Astrid Eskeland, Norway**



Photos: Michael Mullan





We've been in Melbourne for eight months now, and we know it was the right decision for us to come. If you don't try, you will never know.

**Yeon-Yuk Joun, Korea**

**Travelling** or working overseas literally distances you from your family, friends and country. A different country and culture means that you have no choice but to take chances.

Visiting secondary schools in Britain, as part of a visiting program, I learnt how getting out of my comfort zones, and talking about issues that I would ordinarily be uncomfortable talking about in public, could be used to help people who may one day be in a position similar to my own.

By offering friendship or an insight into another way of life, thinking or feeling, you touch the lives of others. Listening is an undervalued skill that builds trust between people. Never underestimate the importance of this quality. Any small personal contribution, where you give emotionally or spiritually of yourself, may help, or even prove inspirational, to those struggling with similar problems. Showing your vulnerability makes you human and weak. But everyone identifies with this, whether they admit it or not.

A supportive environment in which to be yourself is not always available. But if you start by changing yourself or by offering support to others, in time they will reciprocate.

I believe there is a real need amongst young people for positive role models. Teenagers appreciate people who speak honestly about their emotions and thoughts and, like most of us, they need to be listened to - not just spoken to.

**Jean Roberts,  
Papua New Guinea/Australia**

I am 28 and a civil engineer. Two years ago I got married to Joun-Suk. I worked for my company for two and a half years in Korea. And then my wife and I resigned from our jobs to go to Australia for two years to do voluntary work in Melbourne.

It was not easy for us to give up our settled, material life. One night after our decision to go to Australia, I asked myself, 'Why don't we just stay in Korea and take it easy?' It might be alright for me to go - but what about my wife? I realized that going to Australia meant a very uncertain future. For several nights I couldn't sleep. I thought, 'If you don't go, won't you regret it?' The answer was, 'Yes, of course, and I know if I don't go this time, I will definitely want to go at some other point.' I found what I was really looking for was inner freedom.



*Once upon a time, twins were conceived. Weeks passed in the womb and the twins' awareness grew, "Isn't it great that we were conceived? Isn't it great to be alive?"*

*Together the twins explored their world. When they found their mother's cord which gave them life, they sang, "How great is our mother's love that she shares her life with us!"*

*As weeks stretched into months, they noticed how each one was changing. "What does it mean?" asked A. "It means that our stay in this world is drawing to an end," said B. "But I don't want to go," exclaimed A. "But maybe there is life after birth!", said B. "How can that be?", replied A, "We will shed our life cord and how is life possible without it? Besides we have seen evidence that others were here before us, and none of*

*them have returned to tell us that there is life after birth. No, this is the end."*

*So A fell into deep despair saying, "If conception ends in birth, what is the purpose of life in the womb? It's meaningless! Maybe there is no mother after all!" "But there has to be," protested B, "How else did we get here? How do we remain alive?"*

*"Have you ever seen the Mother?" said A, "Maybe she lives only in our minds. Maybe*

*we made her up because the idea made us feel good."*

*The last few days in the womb were filled with deep questioning and fear. Finally the moment of birth arrived. When the twins passed from their world, they opened their eyes and cried. For what they saw exceeded their fondest dreams.*

*(Anonymous)*

### FOUR LITTLE FEET

In December 1989, a rumour spread throughout Liberia, West Africa. It warned that on Christmas Day there would be rain. If the rain touched you, you would die.

On December 25th, rebel soldiers invaded Liberia from the north in an attempt to overthrow President Samuel Kanyon Doe. The so-called rain was a rain of bullets; the rumour had been the rebels' way of warning people. Seven years later, Liberia lies devastated by a brutal civil war as various rebel groups continue to vie for power. That Christmas Day changed the lives of Liberians forever; it also changed mine.

I first set foot on African soil at the age of four. My father was a dentist who came from a poor background and had lived his life in pursuit of money. Having reached this goal by the age of thirty-two, he felt a deep void, realizing that if he had experienced all that life offered, perhaps there wasn't much point in living. Through a friend, he found a personal relationship with Jesus that brought the peace and purpose he had been searching for. Out of gratitude to God and a desire to help others, he sold his thriving dental practice, large house and two cars to embrace a new and uncertain life as a dentist in West Africa. Thus, my family made Nigeria our home.

After eight years in Nigeria we moved to Liberia. As a teenager, I quickly grew to love my new home. My international school provided a safe 'bubble' and weekends were spent at the beach with friends. Life was easy, comfortable, predictable.

Then in March 1990, my world fell apart. Since December, the rebel soldiers had slowly been taking control of the country and by March controlled all except the capital city, Monrovia, where we lived. Tensions were high. One night, as my family sat huddled around a shortwave radio, the news came: the US embassy was 'strongly advising' all US citizens to leave immediately. I arrived at school the next day to find half the students already gone. Many of my friends left before I could say goodbye. To this day I have not seen them again.

My family carefully packed three suitcases and put the rest of our belongings in large steel drums for safety. We all thought the war would end in a matter of months; I expected to be back in Liberia by the end of the summer. Our flight, however, was the last to leave before the rebels took over the airport, destroying buildings and blowing potholes in the runway. It has remained closed since.



We never returned to Liberia. By the end of the summer, the country was in complete anarchy. Our home had been looted and ransacked, and the twelve square mile compound where we had lived now housed over 10,000 refugees, many on the verge of starvation. We heard horrific reports of brutal ethnic murders, of parents killed in front of their children, of terrifying massacres.

I was devastated. Angry and bitter, I questioned God. How could he let this happen? How could he take away everything I loved? Our Liberian friends didn't deserve this. Where was the justice?

It wasn't until a year later, when we moved to Ivory Coast, that real healing began in me. My father was assigned to work with Liberian refugees. Hearing their testimonies of God's unfailing faithfulness in the face of death, pricked me. All I had lost was material possessions, yet I had turned against God. They had almost lost their lives but never their faith. I remember one girl of about fifteen describing walking across a river during her escape from Liberia and feeling dead bodies bump against her legs. She had also seen a desperate mother dump her baby into a river, unable to provide food for her child. Yet this fifteen year old's trust in God remained strong; she was grateful her family had survived. What a challenge to my own weak and faltering faith! I only trusted God when things were comfortable; thrown out of my comfort zone, I began to hate God.

God allowed the evacuation experience to force me out of my safe net and to teach me greater dependence on him. Ironically, my sense of calling in life grew out of my pain and bitterness. Four years later while at university in Chicago, I worked with Bosnian refugees who were trying to make a new life in a strange, unwelcoming city. My job was to buy and deliver relief supplies for newly

arrived families, many of whom had experienced deep trauma. To my surprise, I discovered that I could relate to many of the emotions they were bombarded with: anger, confusion, despondency, grief and loss. My own experience became an entry point into their experiences. Being unwillingly torn from a beloved country and losing everything because of war was something I could understand.

I became very close to a young woman who had not seen her husband in three years as he was still fighting in Bosnia. Her five year old son did not remember his own father. She showed me photographs of her friends and relatives, many of whom had been killed or severely injured. I shared my experience with her and a deep bond developed.

I began to wonder how to prevent such tragedies and how to rebuild countries that have undergone terrible ethnic conflict. Many years in international schools had shown me that, when channelled, diversity can be a tremendous asset. I vowed to spend my life helping victims of ethnic conflict and to learn all I could about peace building. Soon I will start my master's degree in International Peace and Conflict Resolution and I hope eventually to work with an organization that seeks to bring healing to conflict areas.

I can now look back on all I experienced with gratitude; gratitude that God used a brutal and ugly war to show me that nothing is out of his control; that he can bring growth and healing in the midst of suffering. For me, it took an evacuation experience to learn to continually step out of the comfortable and to embrace risks. I once heard the saying, "A ship is safe in harbour but that's not what ships are for." I believe that with my whole heart.

**Kristen Tiedje, USA**

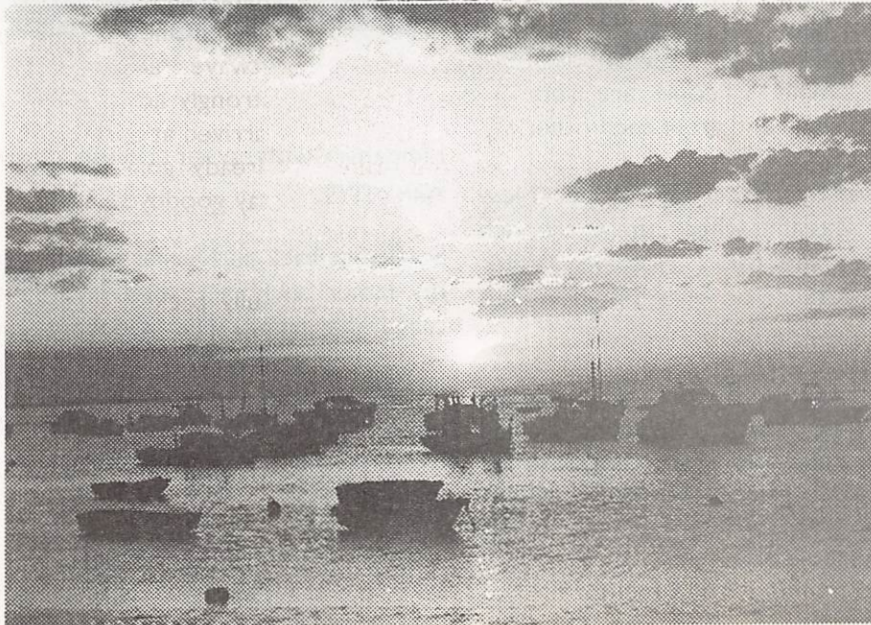


Photo: Christine Karrer



## moving out of your comfort zone. . .

I'm one of those friendly 'checkout chicks' in an average Sydney supermarket. Six months ago I wouldn't have known one end of a cash register from the other, nor wanted to. I was cosy with my life in South Africa; I had my family, friends and a place at university. All was mapped out as I wanted it. God, however, seems to have had other ideas.

My parents were offered a year's sabbatical in Australia and I felt to take a year off and go with them. It wasn't until we arrived in Sydney that I realised how out of my depth I felt in the situation I had so naively jumped into. Moving out of the known and into the unknown has its pros and cons. Mentally I am able to see all the pros but emotionally I often feel the cons. By moving out of my usual parameters, I was forced to grow and reach out to others. I have learnt to smile when I feel like screaming, the customer always being right, and also to be tolerant. I have had to make friends and not rely on family. But often I feel aimless and without purpose. It is easier to look back and see the path that God has led you along, but all too often the present looks foggy and it seems you've lost the blueprint of your future. This is a lesson in trust which I am still to learn.

Moving out of your comfort zone is a chance for growth... take it if you dare.

*Michelle Horn, Republic of South Africa*

**When** I was 18 my family decided I should go to New Zealand. You may not understand what it's like, coming from an island like Samoa to places like New Zealand and Australia. We have very few modern comforts - our life is simple. People are very friendly. We take time to smile and greet each other.

The evening of my farewell, my father said to me, "Now you are going to New Zealand where there are rich people with fancy houses and cars. However, never judge people by their appearance or what they have, but by their hearts."

The next morning I left for New Zealand. It struck me what a beautiful place it is. I was amazed at the tall buildings, the houses, the traffic and all the electric lights. But it wasn't long before I began to feel very unhappy. Even with all the comforts and beauty, I felt there was something missing. I missed the simple, warm, smiling faces. So I decided to go home. I didn't tell my family; I

just turned up in Samoa. My mother and family were pleased to have me home. My father was out but when he came back he just asked me if I was sick. I told him I was homesick and lonely and that I hated the people in New Zealand.

My father was silent for a while, then he said that I was a very selfish girl. "Did it ever occur to you that some of those people might also be lonely? Who's going to take the first step to make friends? People only get lonely because they build walls instead of bridges." He also said, "The hate you have in you will poison you bit by bit. Only through love will you find happiness."



I felt angry with myself because I knew he was right, and I was wrong.

So I went back to New Zealand. I tried to live the way my father said, but when I came across people who called me names like 'Coconut', and said, "Go back where you belong!", it hurt. I felt unwanted and began to feel ashamed of being Samoan. Then I thought of my life at home and how happy it was. And I realised that if I was ashamed of being Samoan, I would be ashamed of my own family.

I had to sit down and think about the good things from my home and country. I realised we have so much to be



proud of, and that I needed to accept who I am. When I accepted it I felt at peace.

I would like to apologise to any New Zealanders for my bad feelings.

**Fetu Paulo, Western Samoa**

**Embarking** on a visit to Syria in 1994, I felt nervous of my first real taste of the Arab world - so different from my comfortable Western existence. Television images of religious fanaticism, violence, anti-Western feeling and

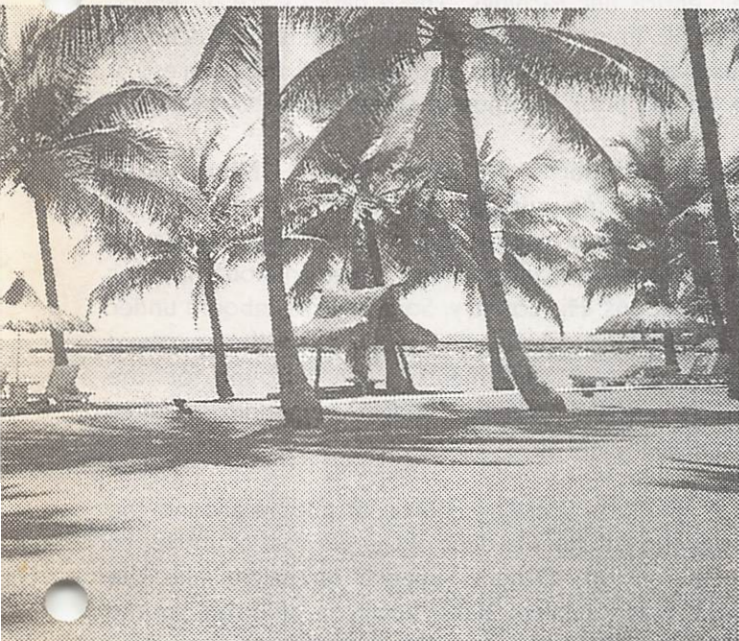


Photo: Duc Tran

human rights atrocities were all too prominent in my mind.

But I was exposed to a picture of the Muslim world which differed greatly from the one I was half expecting. The people we encountered, none of whom we had met before, were extremely friendly, really opening their hearts when they heard my Dad speaking Arabic. I was struck by a level of religious devotion which I had never encountered before, and a much less materialistic culture than in the West.

The most important lesson I learnt was that the Arabs are just as human as we are. They have their faults, but

then so do we. I had come to regard my Western lifestyle as the only true way of life; everything else was foreign and alien. I realised that it was this attitude, in both the West and the East, that was pushing the two cultures further apart. In an attempt to help bridge this crucial divide, I have decided to learn more about the Arab world by studying History and Arabic at university.

I honestly do not know where my studies will take me, I just know that what I am doing is right, and it will take me where it will.

**John Everington, UK**

**My** comfort zone became a discomfort zone when I realised I was willingly surrendering to the mediocrity of life. From week to week I shuffled along like a conveyor belt. Like many inquisitive minds with lagging decisiveness, I heard myself opening or closing casual chatter with 'there must be more to life'.

I have been given many gifts, including freedom of choice and mobility, in the quest for personal 'happiness'. I left my job, family and friends and set off for England. As the eldest girl in a Vietnamese family, my parents did not approve of my decision. Somewhere over the Pacific it hit me that I had to make a life for myself in a foreign country, and there was no turning back. Feeling alienated would exacerbate my homesickness and become a 'two in one' knockout. One by one, I faced my fears.

I found a place to live and a work contract within a week. Very soon I had a library subscription, became a member of a church congregation and found the cheapest pint of milk around town.

A seemingly ordinary moment captures the essence of my spirit. I was strolling through Hyde Park, surrounded by the chaos of London. I was walking by myself. No companion. No chance meeting of friends on this Sunday afternoon. With dark skies above, light rain and wind, the odd passerby may have seen a lost child or a brokenhearted girl. Miserable? ...I was as happy as a pig in mud! I was 12,000 km away from home - alone, but definitely not lonely!

The richness of life is yours to claim. Take a long, deep breath and come to life!

**Goretti Nguyen, Vietnam/Australia**



# Time to write off

In Piccadilly Circus, London, a clock is ticking down the number of days to the new Millennium. It was placed there by the Jubilee 2000 campaign, to draw attention to the need for a substantial remission, or 'forgiveness', of the international debt of the world's poorest nations.



'Sea of poverty' - the never-ending cycle of debt repayment

Jubilee 2000 calls for this to be achieved by the Millennium.

Debt forgiveness hardly features in Western political debate, yet it affects the lives of more people on the planet than almost any other issue. Over a billion people in the developing countries suffer from the burden of debt repayments to the West, for loans incurred during the heady days of the 1970s when Western banks were awash with petrodollars.

So great is the debt that, today, many African countries pay three times as much in debt remission to the West as they receive in aid. The net flow of funds is from the South to the North, from the poor to the rich. In the twelve years from 1980 to 1992, developing countries paid off US\$1.3 trillion. Yet the total debt of all developing countries is still estimated to stand at over US\$1.3 trillion.

Each year India, whose international debt stood at US\$94 billion in 1995 (the latest available figure), pays back some US\$13 billion, of which US\$4.5 billion goes to multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. India's annual debt repayment is more than a quarter of her entire export earnings.

In Africa, the figures for individual countries may be smaller. But their situation is dire. The debts that some sub-Sahara African countries owe are as great as their entire net earnings. These nations are, in effect, bankrupt. In practical terms this means that schools, houses and hospitals are not built, and the poorest of the world's poor continue to suffer in abject poverty.

The Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane, points out that individuals or businesses can have their debts written off when they go bankrupt. But no such mechanism exists in international law for whole nations. His country, South Africa, labours under a US\$70 billion debt burden, incurred by the apartheid regime. Interest repayments alone account for the nation's second highest budget expenditure after education.

He is one of a growing chorus of people around the world who call for the debt of the poorest countries to be written off. Others support campaigns like the British based Jubilee 2000, which is affiliated to the Debt Crisis Network, a coalition of aid agencies which sees the millennium as an appropriate deadline for debt remission.

To his credit, Kenneth Clarke, Britain's former finance minister, was one of those who pushed hardest for the world community to take action. Yet multilateral organisations like the IMF and the World Bank, and donor nations such as Japan, one of the largest creditors, have dragged their feet.

Meanwhile children starve.

Verah Chiluba, wife of the Zambian President, was among those who attended a recent public forum in London on debt forgiveness, organised by *For A Change*



# the developing world's

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magazine. Martin Dent and Bill Peters, the co-founders of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, called for 'a fresh start for a billion people'. They outlined the argument for writing off the unrepayable debt of the poorest countries, on a case by case basis. 'Our business is to create the political will,' said Mr Dent, a Fellow of Keele University, who has spent many years in Nigeria. It was a question of 'justice, compassion and solidarity', he said.

Mr Dent, whose ancestor was the antislavery campaigner Thomas Fowell Buxton, compared debt forgiveness with the liberation of slaves in 1834. What was needed now was the same public opinion to turn the tide.

Some 50 nations, most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, were still burdened by debt, he said. African countries were paying US\$6 billion annually on the interest alone, and the total debt of African and Latin American countries amounted to £500 billion.

Bill Peters, Britain's former High Commissioner in Malawi, stressed that there was a 'palpable advantage to creditors' in abolishing debt. He outlined several reasons why creditor nations and multilateral bodies should abandon their 'rigid financial rectitude'. Acute poverty contributes to conflicts within developing countries; poverty accelerates emigration and turns people into refugees; farmers are forced to grow cannabis and poppy cash crops in order to survive, contributing to the world's drugs trade; rain forests are

being cut down to meet the debt, increasing global warming and environmental damage; and, above all, 'a global economy cannot be healthy if two fifths of it are not functioning'.

With the removal of debt a 'beneficent cycle could begin', he continued. Shared blame for the creation of debt in the 1970s, due to credit oversupply, 'should require shared sacrifice. So far the sacrifice has been carried

entirely by the debtors,' said Mr Peters. When a questioner from Africa asked what responsibility remained with the debtor countries, Mr Peters acknowledged that conditions for debt remission should be placed on countries.

The argument against debt remission has been that the original loans were misappropriated by corrupt regimes. But as Archbishop Ndungane points out, the ordinary people of these countries 'were unaware that they were being dragged into a mire of foreign debt that would lead them into a sea of poverty'. It is their

plight which demands a positive response from creditors.

The Jubilee 2000 campaign is mounting an international petition to gather signatures of support from across the world. They hope it will be the world's largest ever petition. For the sake of the poorest, it deserves to be.

**Michael Smith, Managing Editor,  
'For A Change', London**



Photos: Jonathan Lancaster





## NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

You won't often catch Duc Tran in this position! In fact, you won't often catch him at all.

Duc began risk-taking early. Aged three, he left Vietnam where he was born, as a refugee. In a camp in Indonesia he waited with his mother until they were sponsored by the Australian Government to take up residence here. The eldest of four children, people have clearly played an important part in his life.

He claims to have been fortunate. But the migrant experience is surely never easy. His understanding of the difficulties faced by young Vietnamese in contemporary Australian society points to twenty-one years which have held a number of traumas.

Consistent with Vietnamese culture, Duc was expected to do well academically. His study was a pleasant escape from family circumstances which were sometimes tense. His first 'mentor' was a highschool teacher. Together they explored various approaches to spirituality. Duc was brought up a Catholic but is also interested in Buddhism, Indian Mysticism and the lives of people such as Gandhi.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen monk from Vietnam, has been an ongoing source of inspiration for Duc - advocating peace and encouraging spirituality in a Vietnamese population which has been scattered throughout the world, and which has inevitably been influenced by the material culture of the West. There are many people that Duc admires, but none whose life he tries to mirror. And it is

### FAX-THINK-LINK

The Fax-Think-Link is a gathering of ideas and opinions. Next issue we look at:

**Do you think the study of history is important? Why?**  
Contact [globalexpress@gunning.clara.net](mailto:globalexpress@gunning.clara.net) or fax the editors at +44-1865-311950, by 15th October, 1997.

**This issue: What do you like and dislike about your country?**

**Mary Winstanley, France/UK**

'J'ai deux amours', sang Josephine Baker, 'mon pays et

Paris'. I don't know whether I am patriotic enough to describe a country as a love of mine, partly because I 'have' two countries, France and England. And like most people with parents of different nationalities, I feel 'half-half' (please don't ask me which half is which!), or maybe 60% French, 40% English... not to mention my Welsh and Portuguese ancestors.

Paris is one thing I dislike about France. Now that my studies in Paris are over (with three hours' daily commuting in the ugly and claustrophobic metro), I think I would find some charm in some parts of Paris, eg. the area around Notre-Dame. But there is something about the atmosphere there



his very 'Duc-ness' - the lack of attempt to resemble another - that humours, sometimes irritates, but often inspires those around him.

He is now nearing completion of a Bachelor of Science (majoring in Psychology) at the University of Melbourne. A major activity in Duc's life over the past three years has been the establishment of *Australian Vietnamese Youth Today (AVYT)*. In response to a perceived lack of recognition of the difficulties facing young Vietnamese Australians, AVYT organised a seminar in 1995 which addressed the themes of identity, responsibility and unemployment. A core of young people remained, attracted others and were soon holding another event - a *Cultural Identity* workshop - attended by over 200 young people.

A third workshop was recently held, entitled *Unity In Diversity: Tackling Race Issues*. As chairperson, Duc has had to put all his trust in the committee - sometimes people he has not known well. But he has been rewarded. The day brought together people from many backgrounds: Australians (indigenous, white and other communities), Vietnamese, Cambodians, Burmese, Chinese etc.

More than eight months in the planning, the *Unity In Diversity* workshop occurred at a crucial time in Australian history - when race relations are at the fore. The recent *Australian Reconciliation Convention* addressed the possibility of genuine healing and co-existence between Aboriginal and white Australians.

Duc is not content with present government policies and practices on the race issue, but these do not deter him from doing whatever he can to move further towards reconciliation. AVYT's role is to encourage leadership by young people who will take responsibility beyond ethnic boundaries and uphold universal values. Duc believes that

ethnic communities, such as the Australian Vietnamese, can learn from the struggles of Aboriginal Australians, share their difficulties and work together towards reconciliation. "Young people must be given the opportunity to have a say in this country's future relations. But also," he says, "they must take the initiative. Whatever our government leaders may be doing, it is individuals and communities who have the potential to make a real difference."

In 2050, Duc expects to be living in an Australia that recognises and embraces its diversities. Inevitably, there will be conflict arising from such diversity - but with groups, such as AVYT, he believes we can not only cope with the conflict, but find a workable partnership through it.

When Duc has an idea, he doesn't lie around in a hammock. He jumps out, takes a risk and - rest assured - something always happens.

**Nicci Long, Australia**



## **FAX-THINK-LINK**

that would remain: a feeling of constraint and uneasiness due to the clash between people of very different origins, the lack of tolerance on the part of white Parisians, who think they are at the centre of the world, and the resentment of immigrants.

I now live in London and it seems to me that people coexist here much better. There is a sense of being in one big melting-pot, with an enjoyable cosmopolitan atmosphere. I think the British are less tense and more optimistic. However, I find it very difficult to judge the people of a country or city; our perception is tinted by the individuals we meet and by our frame of mind.

One of the things I like about France is its geographical openness. There is only a border to cross to enter Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany, which gives me an impression of freedom... that I am at the gateway to Africa and even to Asia.

In Britain, I find this openness in the spirit of its people. They are more ready to listen, and accept difference and eccentricity more easily. And I like the greenness of Britain, which colours the landscape nearly the whole year through, whereas in France any green there is, always gets scorched in the summer.



**For** fourteen years I had been smoking dope. It had become both a mental and physical addiction. I took every opportunity to have a 'bong'; more and more I was out in the back shed smoking. My wife didn't approve and it was starting to put a strain on our marriage. In fact, I was glad when she went out as I could then satisfy my habit without her getting on my back about it.

Realising things couldn't go on as they were, I consulted a drug counsellor. I managed to cut down for a while but it went back up. Next I went to a good friend. We took time to reflect in silence on how to deal with the problem. Each week we met, and after five meetings it struck me that, while I knew I needed to give up dope,



Richard and his wife Julia

Photo: Marion Williams

deep down I didn't have 'the want' to give it up. So I prayed to God that this would change and that what I knew with my head would become my desire.

It was at this time I was introduced to a 12 step program of recovery. First you must admit that you have no control over your habit. Step two is believing that you need a power greater than yourself. Deciding to turn your will and life over to the care of God (whatever you believe him to be) is the third step. So I prayed for God to help me.

After several days I decided to stop - but only after a final binge with a friend in the country. The day after returning to the city I suddenly found myself in tears, something very unusual for me. For twenty minutes I cried. Those tears represented a change that was happening in me and I no longer felt the same need to smoke. At this stage the plants were still in the back garden; I knew I had to get rid of them.

It took seven weeks to get over the withdrawal symptoms - mood swings, blinding headaches, irritability, sleeplessness and anxiety. In the past the drug had relaxed my body, now I had to employ other techniques and means to compensate - including eating well.

But it has been infinitely worthwhile. My quality of life is so much better. With improved health I am functioning well and with a return of the power to concentrate I've been able to take up some courses of study. Best of all, my relationship with my wife is altogether different. Now I have real hopes of our young son growing up in a more stable, secure, and peaceful environment.

**Richard Blik, Australia**

## FAX-THINK-LINK

Don't misunderstand me, I don't favour Britain. My roots are probably in Burgundy, where I grew up. Besides... all that rain!

### Ma Ma Gyi, Burma

I like my country and my people. My country is very beautiful and has pleasant weather. And it is rich with natural resources. Our people are very hospitable and willing to help others. They respect each other and have humility. The young people are modern but they keep their own culture. They are willing to listen to their parents and elders. The only

thing our country needs to change is the government. If we had a government which really cared for the people and promoted a good economic system, our country would be more beautiful and rich.

### Conor McKevitt, Republic of Ireland

What I like about Ireland is that it is part of an international network of peoples. In 1603 'The Flight of the Earls', followed soon after by 'The Flight of the Wild Geese' opened a new chapter in, not only Irish History, but everyday life for its people and culture. Emigration became a national habit which



The separation between Mainland China (People's Republic of China) and Taiwan (Republic of China) started in 1949. My parents followed Chiang Kai-Shek's Kuoming Tang government to Taiwan with little support from their family who were left behind in Fujian, across the strait from Taiwan. Although the strait is only 150 miles wide, our link with relatives was cut off.

Both governments have adopted a similar policy; anticommunist in Taiwan and anticapitalist in China. Many of my generation of Taiwanese, including me, were once very nationalistic and hated communist China. Our education on ideology was very much propaganda - creating a stereotype about China.

The massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989 drew the attention of the world. Watching the news on television, I was completely shocked. And I was frightened by my ignorance of China - our nearest neighbour, with the same official language (Mandarin) and cultural roots. One morning I had a clear thought to quit my job and seek a better understanding of the world. This drew me in 1990 to a year's voluntary work with Moral Re-Armament (MRA) in Britain. I also accompanied my mother on a visit to our family in China after forty years apart.

My experience of China was one of panic. As a Chinese, I had a deep compassion for the people of China. But as a Taiwanese, I was very suspicious of the Mainland Chinese government and afraid of their 'despotic' attitude towards Taiwan.

Whilst at an international conference in Europe, I was asked to draw a small Chinese flag to welcome a delegate from Shanghai. Out of passion and loyalty for my own country, I was reluctant to do so. Did it mean I had to



Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, Taipei

Photo: Christine Karrer

betray my country? Did it mean I accepted communists? My suspicion and fear nearly wore me out. I prayed to God to show me the way and a clear voice spoke: 'Love your enemy and you'll reveal the truth.' I realised that if I wanted Mainland China to respect us, I had to respect them first. I was almost in tears as I finished drawing the national flag for the Chinese representative, Mr Ma. The barrier of fear cracked. I had the strength to care for this new friend and we quickly built a friendship based on our common concerns for the Chinese world. In 1993 Mr Ma invited me to accompany a group of students from Taiwan Normal University to visit Shanghai, which turned out to be a great opportunity for developing mutual understanding and respect.

Drawing the Chinese flag was a milestone in my faith. I am now able to reach out and care for China without fear and prejudice, and can help Taiwanese students to open their hearts too.

**Dinger Chen, Taiwan R.O.C.**

## FAX-THINK-LINK

was further promoted by The Great Famine, and continues today. Emigration has played a huge role in the lives of many Irish People. In fact, it would be fair to say that every Irish family has relatives abroad.

There are Irish people in almost every corner of the world, and I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the work they have done to promote Ireland and our culture.

*Slán agus Beannacht (Goodbye and God bless).*

**Lucia De Angelis, Italy**

*I've been away from my country for ten months and I'm*

*glad. It made me realise how much I love my country - its loudness, its antiquity, its friendliness. In fact, there's no place like home!*

**Ricky Poon, Hong Kong**

*I like Hong Kong because it is special. Although it is small, it plays an important role in the world.. It has a mixed culture where people can be open-minded whilst keeping their traditions. However, things are changing.. On the 1st of July, Hong Kong was handed over by the British and became part of China again, so our future is full of uncertainty.*



## exploding the myth

In February, ten popular magazines in the UK had cover stories about sex. The titles ranged (or should we say, didn't range) from *Sex and passion*, to *Sex appeal - how hot are you?* Four months later, on the other side of the world, Australia's equivalents range from *Your secret sex games*, to *I've slept with over 300 men - a supermodel tells*. On one level this is very bad marketing, and on a



Art: Lisa Kesby

deeper, more important level it is sad. Sad, because young people are being seduced into believing that sex is the ultimate experience in life. This invariably leads to confusion and despair because:

- ◆ they feel abnormal if they are not in a sexual relationship
- ◆ they may not have a boyfriend/girlfriend (and may never have had one)
- ◆ they hate the way they look (and do not believe themselves to be lovable)
- ◆ they feel disillusioned about love and intimacy
- ◆ they are frightened of being themselves
- ◆ they just want to be 'normal'.

Here are six statements from various sources which we disagree with and why:

1) *Flirting is as natural as breathing and sleeping... and much more fun!* Flirting can be selfish and very hurtful.

2) *Dare to bare.* Nothing is left to the imagination. Some photographs in young women's magazines verge on being pornographic.

3) *There is nothing wrong with infidelity.* Unfaithfulness in relationships and marriage is one of the major contributors to the heartache, unhappiness and problems of the world.

4) *If it feels so good, how could it be wrong?* The 'feel good' syndrome has numbed people to the point where

they have no concept of right and wrong.

5) *The more relationships you have, the better.* The more relationships you have, the greater the emotional and psychological baggage you bring into a lifelong partnership or marriage.

6) *Sex is the most important part of a relationship.* Sex is not the be-all and end-all. It is part of the great-all.

We seem to be living in an era where nothing is sacred, nothing is pure. It requires each of us to reverse this trend. Consider the following:

- ▶ An honest, clean, and loving relationship with yourself is the blueprint for success in all relationships.
- ▶ Beauty has very little to do with looking like supermodels, and everything to do with the values you have, the words you speak, and the way in which you care for people.
- ▶ People are at their most attractive when they are being themselves.
- ▶ It is our minds that make our bodies acceptable or not.
- ▶ Honesty has clout, integrity is attractive, trust is essential.
- ▶ There is nothing more boring than someone who is trying to be who they are not.
- ▶ Dare to commit. That is where long-term satisfaction lies.
- ▶ Just because someone is famous does not mean they are right (or that their lifestyle is right). Are your idols really worth idolising?
- ▶ Never do anything because you think others expect it of you. Outlive them, outlaugh them, outlove them!

In the words of Australia's well-loved cartoonist Michael Leunig, "We shall rescue the entombed heart. We shall bring it to the surface, to the light and the air. We shall nurse it and listen respectfully to its story. The heart's story of pain and suffocation, of darkness and yearning. We shall help our feelings to live in the sun. Together again we shall find relief and joy."

Laura Trevelyan, UK  
(with Maria Lancaster, Australia)



# RISK IS FREEDOM

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental

To reach out for another is to risk involvement

To express feelings is to risk exposing your true self

To place your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss

To live is to risk dying

To hope is to risk despair

To try is to risk failure

But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing

The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing

He may avoid suffering and sorrow but he cannot learn, change, feel, grow, love, live

Chained by his certitude he has forfeited his freedom

Only a person who risks is free

Anonymous



Photo: Jonathan Lancaster



# SCATTERED THOUGHTS

Worry is a misuse of my imagination.

It is not our darkness, but our light that frightens us the most. That we are powerful beyond measure... - Nelson Mandela

Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present.

Always forgive your enemies.  
Nothing annoys them more.

Strip away the tinsel and glitter and what do you get?  
More tinsel and glitter. - Groucho Marx on Hollywood

The problem with building fences is that you fence out more than you fence in.  
- Indian proverb

Cliches often exist because they work.

When all else fails, read the instructions.

The major way to conquer fear is to make a decision. - Reshad Feild

There are never any excuses, only priorities.

If I have no purpose, I have no power.

You cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening your own.

I dreamt that life was joy. I woke up, and realised that life was service. I served, and I realised that service was joy.  
- Rabindranath Tagore

This is a non-profit making organisation. It wasn't meant to be that way but that's the way it's turning out.

Why be normal when you can be yourself?