

Consistent Life News

An international network for peace, justice, and life



Issue # 11

December 2009

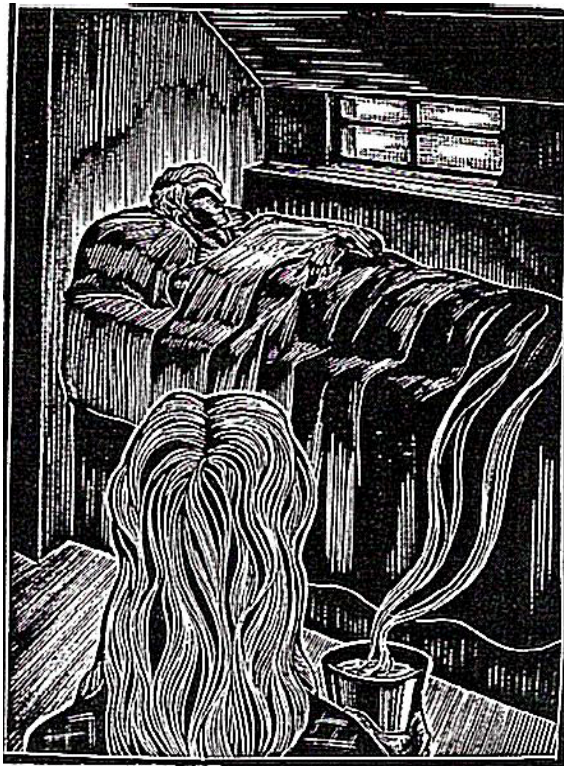
Respect Life versus Assisted Suicide

by Veronica Whitty

Editor's Note: Respect Life is the United Kingdom's branch of Consistent Life. Its members are involved in many peace and justice activities, and Respect Life urges them to unite as public signatories of the Consistent Life Mission Statement, which "will encourage and strengthen us in our work against the forces which diminish respect for life." Veronica Whitty (with Dan & Carmel Martin and Noreen McAllen) is one of the Directors of Respect Life. She has expressed Respect Life's concerns about recent attempts to change UK law on assisted suicide. The following is from a recent letter she wrote to Keir Starmer, the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I read that you have been asked to draw up guidelines concerning assisted suicide. In considering the question, for which you have my sympathy, I would like to suggest the following for your consideration. Uppermost in my mind are the consequences of setting guidelines for assisted suicide. How will you frame such guidelines so that they protect the weak, elderly, infirm, and disabled from feeling that they are a burden and should avail themselves of assisted suicide for the sake of their families? How will you safeguard a conscience clause for medical professionals who cannot in conscience administer a lethal dose?

No doubt you will scrutinise what has happened where assisted suicide has already been permitted, i.e. the Nether-



Lynd Ward

lands and Oregon. You will have discovered that in the Netherlands elderly people have been given lethal doses to make their beds available in hospital for other patients. You will be aware that in Oregon poor people with terminal illnesses have been offered lethal doses where they cannot afford medical treatment. You will have discovered that 50% of those who have asked for lethal doses have not taken them. Belgium has legalized euthanasia. In all three places safeguards have proved useless and the media is not reporting the troubling aspects of information about the issue.

Accountability in the Netherlands has
(Continued on Page 2)

Jim McGiniss a Splendid Teacher of Nonviolence

We are saddened to report that Jim McGiniss, who along with his wife Kathleen are endorsers of our Mission Statement, died of a heart attack during his morning walk, on Thursday, August 13. Consistent Life, and the whole peace and justice community, deeply regret the loss of this remarkable, gifted, and dedicated servant of peace.

Jim and Kathy co-founded and ran The Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ). In 1973, they wrote *Educating for Peace and Justice, a Manual for Teachers*, which went to eight editions and was used in both public and religious educational settings. This was followed by the *Parenting for Peace and Justice* tapes and book. These were enormously popular and influential. The book was translated and republished in Spanish, German, and Hindi. Kathleen and Jim then founded the Parenting for Peace and Justice Network and Program. These programs extended to Canada, Australia, Ireland, the Philippines, and Nicaragua.

With the rash of school killings in the 1990s, IPJ worked with schools, congregations, parishes, youth groups, and prisons to promote the Pledge of Nonviolence. The IPJ expanded the Teens Acting for Peace program from St. Louis to ten other communities. IPJ also worked with the Violent Offender Program and other ex-offender programs. In 1995, Jim and Kathy were recognized for their work as Pax Christi USA Teachers of Peace.

Jim's books covered a wide range of peace and justice issues: He wrote *Solidarity with the People of Nicaragua*, *Journey Into Compassion*, *Bread and Justice: Toward a New International Economic Order*, *Journey Into Compassion: a Spirituality for*

(Continued on Page 2)

Jim McGiniss

(Continued from Page 1)

the Long Haul, A Call to Peace and many more.

Asked what led him to his peace and justice work, Jim said, "in Memphis, when Dr. King was killed, I saw and challenged overt racist acts that night and felt I was being called, along with my wife Kathy, to a life that included working for racial justice. After Robert Kennedy was assassinated... I sensed that God was calling me to step up to the plate and do what I could to end the war in Vietnam and promote racial and economic justice."

Jim's latest book is *Praying for Peace Around the Globe: a Resource for Prayer and Action*. It is a loving and thoughtful

In the face of
escalating violence,
escalate love.

Jim McGiniss

collection of prayers for those suffering in different parts of the world. Each prayer is prefaced with background on the problems people face in that part of the world.

Jim's commitment, "In the face of escalating violence, escalate love."

"We have lost one of the true lights of our movement," stated Dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA Executive Director. "Jim, in his work with Kathy, helped all of us in the peace movement to see that our commitment to nonviolence did not only mean working for peace at the national and international levels, but that we were called to act for peace and practice justice at home within our families, our churches, and our local communities." ∞

Messages of sympathy and support can be sent to:

Kathleen McGiniss
The Institute for Peace and Justice
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Consistent Life

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info@consistent-life.org <http://www.consistent-life.org/>

CafePress store: <http://www.cafepress.com/lifecounts>

Action Alerts: We send out occasional e-mail Action Alerts with things you can do for this cause. Subscribe to them by sending an e-mail to action-request@consistent-life.org with "subscribe" in the subject line.

Respect Life vs. Assisted Suicide

(Continued from Page 1)

been hampered by the under-reporting of assisted suicide. A doctor who fails to report a suicide remains unaccountable. Legislation there has not made euthanasia transparent. Patients must make it clear they do not want to be allowed to die or to be put to death in the event of becoming incompetent.

Following the 2009 Law Lords [Britain's highest court] ruling [that could remove the fear of prosecution for people who travel abroad to help others in assisted suicide], Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the Multiple Sclerosis Society said, "Debbie Purdy's victory has pushed MS into the spotlight, but there is far more to living with MS—even in its more severe form—than planning how to die. There are 100,000 people with MS across the UK and most will live about as long as any of us. The key to living well with MS is access to the right care and support, including palliative care when it is needed. Most palliative care resources are focused on cancer and cases like this show why the government's end of life care strategy is so important." [Pro-life advocates objected that the Law Lords had changed the law without reference to Parliament. Disability rights groups objected to any change in the law.]

I hope you will call for more hospices to be opened and existing ones to be expanded so no one needs to fear death without proper palliative care in a compassionate surrounding. There are stages

of dying necessary for the dying and those close to them which allow acceptance of this inevitability. We live in relationship with others and suicide and assisted dying violate that relationship....

We live in a Britain which is now relativist so that the ground of our ethics shifts according to our current opinions and judgments. Because this issue has been shifted into the area of privacy it has been removed from its true area: ethics. This is borne out by the shift shown by the Law Lords. Certainly private life should be respected but the Law Lords said in the Diane Pretty case in 2002 that Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights "related to the manner in which a person conducted her life, not the manner in which she departed from it." Seven years later, in the Debbie Purdy case, they have stated the opposite—that assisted suicide is "part of the act of living" and therefore related to privacy. Judges have stretched the meaning of words. They are merely expressing their own opinions.

When debated in the House of Lords, two attempts to introduce legislation in favor of suicide have been resisted via debate and voting on the issue. The House of Lords is made up of articulate, older citizens. They have shown the way. We should heed their wisdom.

I hope earnestly that you will not change the current approach to suicide, assisted or otherwise. ∞

Maafa 21: Black Genocide in 21st Century America

reviewed by Rachel MacNair

It's been clear for a long time that the lethal effects of racism include the killing of unborn children, especially those targeted by living in a racial-minority neighborhood where the abortion clinics disproportionately go. The thesis of this two hour and 17 minute documentary is the historical development from the end of U.S. slavery through eugenics to current abortion policy. "Maafa" is the Swahili word for major catastrophe. The documentation is extensive and presented in a way that is engaging and primarily factual. It's a smooth and professional-looking presentation. This is easily the best film I've seen for connecting racism, as well as poverty, to abortion.

Maafa 21 is produced by Life Dynamics, so no sympathy to the consistent life ethic is to be expected. Other material from this group has asserted that the purpose of the ethic is to water down the abortion issue and to scold proliferators for not taking a stand on other issues. The "Life Talk" talk-show DVDs they put out every month are normally quite strident, including exceedingly valuable content mixed with commentary that would be best edited out were we to wish to use any of the material. Yet these flaws are for the most part absent from this documentary. Inasmuch as there is stridency, it's the kind of fuming against racists and large corporations and shocking behavior of politicians that anyone active in the peace movement would be accustomed to and comfortable with. Yet the tone is primarily one of presenting documentation, which of course is more effective than mere ire.

Partisan politics are treated in a manner consistent-life audiences would appreciate. Republicans Eisenhower, Nixon, Kissinger, and Ford are all quoted in ways that will startle (especially Nixon, with his voice on tape). Democrats Johnson and Clinton are only briefly mentioned for what they actually did, without polemic. A commentator at the end states outright that he's independent because both Democrats and

Republicans have been problematic.

The film first makes the case that slavery's end led to the eugenic philosophy. This is well-established long before the topic of abortion is even mentioned. Specific individuals, organizations, and actions are presented in such a forthright



manner that some watchers have reported needing to stop the film in the middle and recuperate from their anger before going on with the rest. Even those of us who have been familiar with much of the history of racism have an ample amount to learn and become upset about.

Religious language is minimal, and the arguments are not based on religion at all; no scripture is ever quoted. There is a sermon presented at the end, but it is more like summing up the case in a common African-American art form, intended to

be inspirational. That section is an add-on and can easily be skipped in a presentation if conditions warrant. The film is in this way suitable for both religious and non-religious audiences.

One weakness of the film is that some of the history at the beginning starts talking about Darwin in a way that I can just barely hear the criticism of evolution being made. Actually, the information is factual—Darwin really did make a horrifying comment about the "savage" races being displaced—and with the film's thesis, this part of the history did fit. I can just see abortion defenders with heavy stereotypes jumping to conclusions here.

Another thing to watch out for is that in the later parts of the film, birth control is often mentioned in the same phrase with abortion, and is stated as being a euphemism for a genocidal agenda. Some of the points made are quite valid—for example, in Haiti, 90% of the women have access to birth control, but only 20% have access to clean water, and what does this say about what aid really means and what motivates it? The film never engages the question of any positive and non-racist uses for family planning techniques, nor does it mention natural family planning. Some people will hear an implication that Black women are supposed to be churning out baby after baby—that implication is not actually there, but it's not guarded against either.

All in all, I think it's an excellent resource we'll want to be using in some way. Life Dynamics reports that sales are flying, and I've seen excitement elsewhere as well. African-American media outlets are picking up on it, and word is that bootlegged copies are circulating in Harlem. It's proven to be quite convincing to people who have not otherwise understood the pro-life message.∞

Editor's Note: To see a trailer or to order Maafa 21: Black Genocide in 21st Century America see www.maafa21.com.

Consistent Life Approves New Financial Team

by Bill Samuel, President

At its November 1 Board meeting, Consistent Life elected Mary Rider as Treasurer and approved Debbie Biesack serving as Bookkeeper. Mary Rider, a co-founder of Consistent Life, earlier served as our Executive Director and has served on our Board since stepping down from that position. During Mary's time as Executive Director, Debbie served as volunteer Assistant Director, and performed the same duties she will now perform as our Bookkeeper. Debbie has a degree in accounting, and currently serves as Treasurer of People of Faith Against the Death Penalty. The Consistent Life Board is delighted to have this proven team of dedicated supporters serving us in this way. ∞



Debbie Biesack (left) and Mary Rider (right)

Adventures of Our Research Arm

Editor's Note: The following is a report on the activities of the Institute for Integrated Social Analysis, Consistent Life's research arm.

As reported in our last issue, the "Heated Debates" survey asked people to rate the persuasiveness of various arguments that connected issues. Results showed that the Consistent Life Ethic was rated as persuasive toward opposing violence on an issue that the respondent had previously favored—but only if they opposed it on another issue. That is, people who favored the war in Iraq, capital punishment, and abortion availability were basically unimpressed, but those who already held an anti-violence view on one issue (such as peace-movement pro-choicers and pro-war pro-lifers) did rate the CLE as persuasive on another issue. Thus, we have empirical evidence that the CLE is useful with those who aren't consistently in favor of

killing as a problem-solver.

The full study has been presented in two different conferences. One was University Faculty for Life (UFL), where attendees were naturally interested in how the CLE helps to make the pro-life case. The other was the Peace & Justice Studies Association (PJSA), where the presentation was sub-titled "Evidence for Pro-Peace Arguments that Help Convince Pro-Lifers." The same PowerPoint was used in both.

Of the five arguments that respondents were to rate, one was the idea that crimes have decreased because babies who would have grown up to commit crimes have instead been aborted, thus making abortion admirable in the same way the death penalty is. This brought highly gratifying gasps from the PJSA audience, many of whom were likely of the pro-choice philosophy and had never heard this viciously-phrased argument before. There had been no such gasps in response to this argument at the

UFL conference, but of course active pro-lifers have already been upset by this argument in the past.

This was an audience in which several people had stereotypes of pro-lifers as the right-wingers that Bush kept in office, and therefore having pro-war views. The concept that pro-lifers were more open to anti-violence arguments was a new idea to them. One person said so outright, and that she would require some time to get her mind around this information. She asked for a copy of the PowerPoint, and I noted her name as one that is quite active in PJSA.

A more full report of the study has been accepted to be published in *Life and Learning*, the journal of University Faculty for Life. Other conference presentations and publications are in the works. Anyone who would like a copy of either paper or the PowerPoint can request it by e-mail attachment from Rachel MacNair at drmacnair@hotmail.com. ∞

Join Us at the Annual March for Life!

We try to have a presence each year at the annual March for Life held in Washington, DC on or near the anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v Wade* decision, which legalized abortion in the United States. The main organizer of the march is not sympathetic to us, and has threatened several of our member groups with arrest in the past, but we definitely receive much more positive than negative vibes from fellow marchers. We need to show the pro-life community and the watching world that many who are pro-life on abortion are *not* anti-feminist, far-right people.

Join us on **Friday, January 22, 2010** between 11:30 A.M. and noon in front of the Sculpture Garden, on Constitution Avenue near 7th Street NW. The location is across from the National Archives and about two blocks from there to the rally and march. ∞



Sarah and Paul Magno at the March for Life

Creative Ways to Support Consistent Life

by Bill Samuel, President

Recently, a couple of supporters have found new ways to provide financial resources for Consistent Life's program. You too may be able to take advantage of them.

Monthly Giving

One supporter recently arranged with his bank to give a monthly donation automatically through the bank's bill program. Most of these programs started with utilities and other vendors with large numbers of customers in mind. Now, however, they allow making payments to almost any business or organization, sending them by mail if they don't have an electronic connection to the payee's account. Most have provisions for recurring payments. Monthly donations are a way to contribute more than you could in an annual gift by spreading a donation out over the year.

If a bank bill payment program doesn't work for you, you can set up a recurring payment using a credit card or PayPal through the Ammodo service. You can join Ammodo for free. You can make single gifts without membership, but recurring

gifts require membership. To make a gift recurring, set up a donation, and the system will then give you the option to make it recurring. Ammodo is also a good alternative (for one-time gifts as well as recurring ones) for our supporters in nations other than the United States, as they accept more than 30 currencies, and allow us to avoid the large fees normally associated with converting a donation in a foreign currency. See: <http://www.ammodo.com/nonprofit/consistent-life>.

Birthday Giving Program

Recently, I had a birthday. Through the Facebook Causes application, I let my Facebook friends know I would appreciate being remembered on my birthday through donations to Consistent Life. The total amount donated was \$392, which included some new supporters. Consistent Life's Facebook Causes page is at <http://apps.facebook.com/causes/52624>.

The Causes application routes donations through Network for Good, a service to facilitate giving to charities.

Use of Facebook isn't required to have

birthday donations. At this writing, we have received hundreds of dollars in donations in honor of the 40th birthday of Robert Gelinas, and we might receive more. These have come through both on-line and mail donations. Gelinas describes himself as a jazz theologian, and is Lead Pastor of Colorado Community Church, an interdenominational, intercultural, multi-campus church. He tells us that he prays for us frequently. ∞



Robert Gelinas



Consistent Life

Mission

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment, and euthanasia. We believe that these issues are linked under a "consistent ethic of life." We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.

Purpose

We serve the anti-violence community by connecting issues, building bridges, and strengthening the case against each kind of socially-approved killing by consistently opposing them all.

Voices of Peace and Life

When we allow abortion, we are punishing the women—who must abort their children because their men have run away—and we are punishing the children whose lives are terminated.... I want us to step back a little bit and say: why is this woman and this child threatened? Why is this woman threatening to terminate this life? What do we need to do as a society? What are we not doing right now as a society?

Wangari Maathai, of Kenya, Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 2004

If we want to reap the harvest of peace and justice in the future, we will have to sow seeds of nonviolence, here and now, in the present.... We have really got to create a culture in our world today where we recognize that every human life is sacred and precious and we have no right to take another human life.

Mairead Corrigan Maguire, of Northern Ireland, Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 1976

My stance on abortion is a matter of public record. I stand morally opposed to killing: war, executions, killing of the old and demented, the killing of children, born and unborn. As I have stated publicly many times, I stand squarely within the framework of "the seamless garment" [now called "consistent life"] ethic of life. I believe that all of life is sacred and must be protected, especially in the vulnerable stages at the beginning of life and its end.

Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*

Both the military ethic and the abortion ethic are grounded in the same belief: Life is cheap. Iraqi life. Fetal life.... The language of the war lobby and the abortion lobby is from the same glossary of evasions. No one likes war, say the generals. No one likes abortions, says NOW. But let's keep the killing option, just in case. And cases keep coming. If Iraqis are causing trouble, or Libyans, Grenadans, or Panamanians, bomb them. If fetuses pose problems, destroy them.

Colman McCarthy, columnist, peace studies educator

Seamless Garment

by Daniel Berrigan, SJ

The beauty of the “seamless garment” image!
 No one, not one
 exposed to the rude winds of the world,
 No one, however lorn or lost, out in the cold.

No one rejected, no one unwanted!
 the unborn, the aged, ill, condemned,
 the expendable, “lives of no worth”-
 no matter the tag,
 everyone matters!

If these are expendable, who is precious?
 No one is expendable!

Everyone wrapped in a vast enfolding embrace,
 a garment designed by God
 bequeathed to us-
 we wear it proudly, tend it, repair it,
 cherish it, design it anew,
 yes, lend it , offer it everywhere!
 a baptismal robe for the twice-born,
 the woof and warp of our humanity!+



Rita Corbin

SIGN US UP! We want to become members of Consistent Life of to renew our membership.
 Our contribution of \$_____ is enclosed.

Organizational Member Individual Member

Name: _____
 Organization and Contact Person, or Individual Member

Address: _____

Phone Number: () _____ - _____ FAX: () _____ - _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Organizational Member Dues

- \$50 Groups under 100 members
- \$100 Groups 100-500 members
- \$200 Groups over 500 members
- \$___For Communities living in voluntary poverty

Individual Member Dues

- \$25 Individual members
- \$40 Household membership
- \$75 Supporter
- \$15 Low Income membership

To donate in other than American currency, please go to: <http://www.ammado.com/nonprofit/consistent-life>
 for on-line and other giving options, please go to: <http://www.consistent-life.org/join.html>

Send to: **Consistent Life**, P.O. Box 9295, Silver Spring, MD 20916-9295, Telephone: (866) 444-7245
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Consistent Life Member News

Calling All Member Groups and Organizations

Thanks as always for your ongoing support of the Consistent Life Ethic and of our organization. In this, our quarterly newsletter, one of our important aims is to keep Consistent Life Ethic (CLE) supporters apprised of events, publication, and activities that may be of interest to them. Has your organization recently published a book, new online content, etc.? Are you sponsoring, or do you know about, an important or interesting conference, rally, or other event? Let us help you get the word out! Publications and activities that we announce do not have to be about the CLE itself, as long as they are related to at least some part of our mission statement and are not “inconsistent” with it. We look forward to hearing from you. ∞

Consistent Life Series

A series of talks on the Consistent Life Ethic began on October 14 at Our Lady, Queen of Peace Catholic parish in Arlington, Virginia. The main speaker was Marie Dennis, co-founder, with former Consistent Life President Joe Nangle, of the Assisi intentional community in Washington, DC, and director of the Maryknoll Office of Global Concern, a CL member group. Marie’s talk provided a general introduction to the CLE from a scientific and theological perspective, offering Old and New Testament support for the philosophy, and referencing a number of theologians who have drawn inspiration from the concept of needing to strive for “right relation-



ship with [the] beauty” that is human life, and all life on Planet Earth.

Future talks in the series will cover life and justice issues, including predatory lending and homelessness. Consistent Life board member Carol Crossed will give a presentation on abortion in January 2010. Other installments in the series are in the works as well. ∞

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