

"This is Where I Love..."

Appalachian Women Create 1996 Journal

Assistant Editors Anita Armbrister and Sharon Stacy Blackwell have been creating the 1996 Common Ground journal with ten powerful women from southwestern Virginia. For the past year and a half, they have been interviewing and transcribing these interviews. Davida Johns has taken portraits of these women at work in the coal mines, on the dairy farm, at home with their families, working in their communities, playing their music.

In this journal, entitled "This is where I love....," Appalachian women of different generations and ethnic backgrounds invite us to listen. They cherish their homes and family teachings, share down-home wit and wisdom. They speak boldly about job safety, environmental and domestic violence, educational oppression and opportunities.

The love of homeplace, issues of survival and struggles for justice shared by grassroots people across the Appalachian region emerge, as well as the creativity of individuals in the garden, around a quilt, singing "old timey" music. As we seek fullness of life in what some call a deranged society, these women help to ground us with some human roots we can call home. For more about the women creating this journal, see page 28. To order copies, see page 15.



Evelyn Farmer wins ribbons playing her autoharp.



Sue Green is strong like her mom.



Linda Lester explains her job in the coal mine.

Photo top left by Sharon Stacy Blackwell; photos center and bottom by Davida Johns (see pgs. 18-19)

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Story, Argument, Prayer

GROUNDINGS

A Publication of Common Ground

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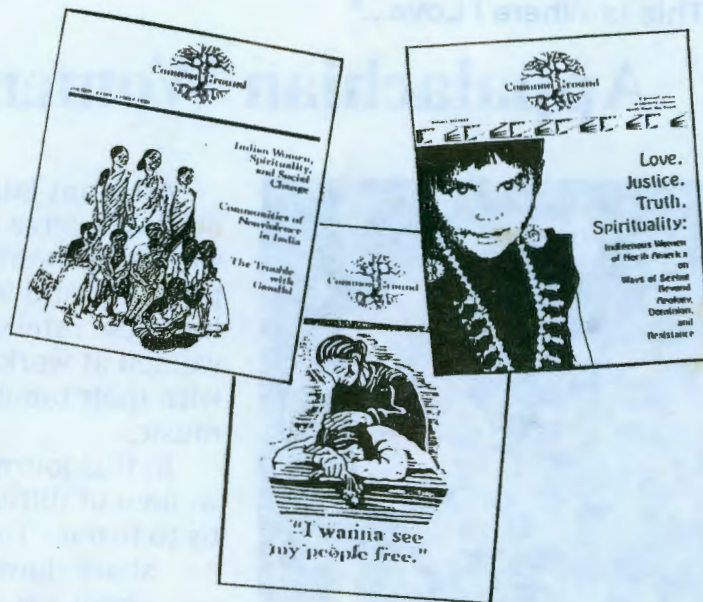
Common Ground is a community of people of faith committed to experimenting in nonviolent ways of living and doing justice. Our priority is to cherish the contributions and healing powers of grassroots women. Grassroots women are poor women of any race or culture who are survivors of racism; of economic, sexual, or cultural subordination; or of domestic or international violence. We encourage men to contribute their learning, gifts, and efforts.

Common Ground is our annual, thematic grassroots women's journal. This newsletter, "Groundings," offers space for members of our network to share stories, arguments, prophecies, and prayers which focus on spirituality as a force for justice.

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Single copies of Common Ground's 1996 journal by Appalachian women cost \$12 for individuals and \$15 for organizations, schools, libraries, and stores. Orders of 15 or more copies cost \$5 each for individuals and grassroots organizations. Other Common Ground journals: honoring African-American People's Prophet Annie Smart (1994); created by farmworker women (1993); by Native American women (1992); and by grassroots women from India and the United States (1990) are available for \$5 per copy. See page 15 for postage and handling charges.

printed on recycled paper



You Can Build Bridges to Justice

Common Ground journals contribute to systemic change in several ways. The envisioning and creation of the last three bound volumes of *Common Ground* have been based in community organizing. They are being used for literacy, and leadership training in community-based organizations.

In the mid-80's, during our work with children from violent homes and with refugees from Central America, we began to receive invitations from grassroots friends in the U.S. to publish their voices. In response, we developed a cooperative process—the foundation of our publishing in support of the power of the poor since 1987.

We have had successes: Our 1993 journal by farmworker women in Florida (see page 16) is in its second printing. A few university and seminary libraries subscribe. Some professors use articles for classroom teaching; a number of peace and justice groups use journals for discussion and training groups. Individual grassroots women use their stories in *Common Ground* to empower themselves through public speaking and to get their stories into other media.

However in our divided society, distribution is difficult. We need financial support to get copies of these journals into the hands of community-based organizations and to send more copies into libraries and classrooms. You can build bridges to justice by contributing to our "Voices of the People Fund," (pages 14 and 15), established to honor our former board member, Sister Gay Redmond.

Looking for the Next Job

Sister Gay Redmond often challenged other members of the Common Ground board to ask the deeper questions: Are we flowing with the river of the wider movement for peace and justice? Are we meeting a need for prophetic leadership?

She understood our calling as a community to be that of peacemakers: trying to put ourselves out of a job while realizing that there will always be peacemaking to do. She gave me a sign which sits next to our Common Ground computer: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall never be unemployed."

We are still "employed" as our publishing work continues. Subscriptions are still valid, both for this double edition of "Groundings" and for the 1996 Appalachian women's journal. Your donations are still supporting our ministry of solidarity and connection.

*Honoring
a People's Prophet:*



*Annie
Armstead
Smart*

However, our relative silence over the last two years does reflect some hard times: In order for us to continue for the next couple of years, our board decided to sell Common Ground's office/

house/ printshop on Bienville Street in Baton Rouge. This will pay for publication of this "Groundings," the 1996 Appalachian women's journal, and for their distribution.

Also, although it was tough to leave friends in the Deep South, Hoyt and I —after almost three decades of following the Spirit's lead into flatlands—decided to move back closer to our families and into the mountains we love.

For Common Ground folks, it is time to ask Gay's questions again: What is our next challenge? What is the prophetic need? And does Common Ground as an organization serve that need, that challenge?

In order to distribute copies of back issues on hand and to reprint a limited number of journal sets for libraries and schools, we are establishing the "Voices of the People Fund" in Gay Redmond's memory. Please see pages 14 and 15 for more about Gay's ministry and ways you can contribute to this fund.

Beyond this distribution work, we seek your prayers, support, and vision-sharing as we discern this winter over Gay's deeper questions.

...Lilith Quinlan
Founder and Editor



Dessie, "Granny," Moore

Photo by Davida Johns

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We have several hundred journals honoring Annie Smart in stock. Members of the African-American community in Baton Rouge created this journal to teach leadership and African-American history, and to bring hope to broken communities. To order, see page 15.

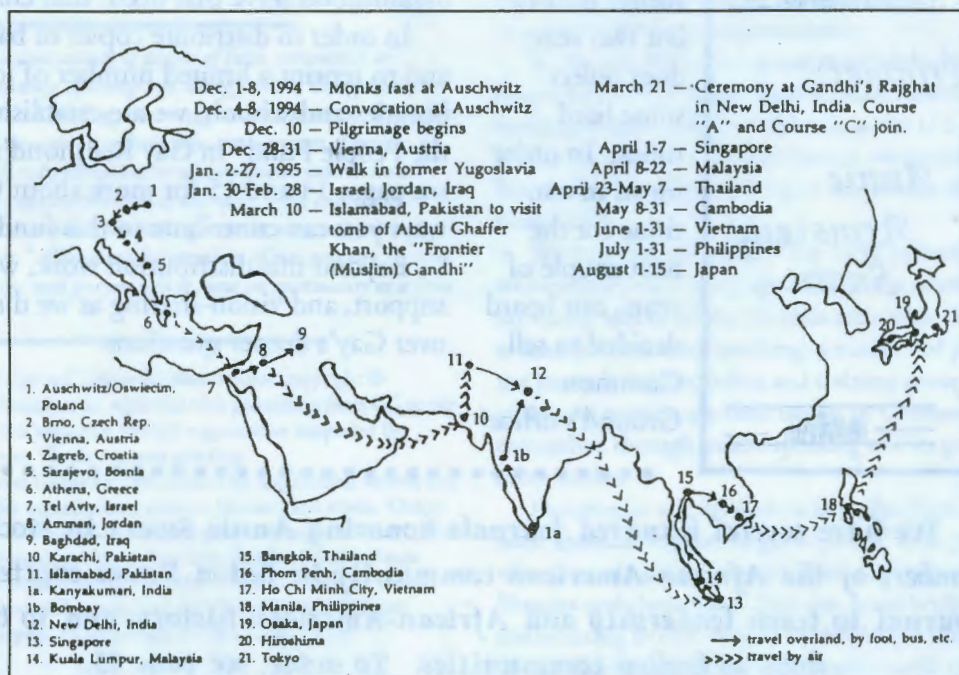
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Walking to Heal the Family's Soul

Martha Penzer has been walking around the world for peace—peace in the world and in the souls of her family. During fall 1994 and spring 1995, she was on pilgrimage through Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Croatia, Bosnia, Greece, Israel, Jordan, and India. This Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace & Life—from Auschwitz to Hiroshima—was organized by Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Religious Order. Martha traveled as a representative of Cambridge Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Massachusetts.

The pilgrimage points to two anniversaries in 1995: the final liberation of Nazi camps and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Averaging 20 miles a day, the pilgrims also walked and prayed with people at scenes of present-day suffering to: awaken memory, renounce war, offer solidarity to today's victims, say no to continuing injustice, and affirm nonviolent resolution of conflicts. The walk concluded in Hiroshima this past August.

This journey has special significance for Martha. Her mother is a survivor of the massacre of the Otwock Jewish community in Poland, her father a survivor of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Her account is both personal and profound:



Poland: A lifetime of longing to see for myself my parents' origins is fulfilled: the birch forests; the pine forests; the filigree woodworking on cottages; the mists and magic of Cracow, my father's hometown. No wonder his implacable sense of loss. I am plunged into the culture of the first language of my consciousness. This enchants me.

Yet, I know my mother must be seeing spectres. She has returned for a week to Poland at the beginning of the pilgrimage. It is the first time since her escape in August 1942, during the liquidation of the Otwock Ghetto. She doesn't explain much; shadows pass through her eyes. She says she feels like Rip Van Winkle.

The pathos of a people can be read in its monuments. A rough-hewn stone slab is lost from public view in a small Polish town, down a labyrinth of back streets: "5,000 Jews...19 August 1942...murdered in the time of Hitler terror." My mother explains that as she ran away 52 years ago, she heard the gun fire and knew her parents must be among the dead. Is this the actual site of their mass grave? We are uncertain.

One of the greatest risks to human life is breach of conscience. "I pay with guilt for having held my tongue in many circumstances," a former Waffen SS man admits through a German translator. He addresses close to 200 people—from Bangkok, Boston, Australia, Austria—convened at Oswiecim, Poland, site of the Auschwitz concentration camp established in 1940. He impresses upon us the cost to the soul when we avert our eyes and don't ask questions, when fear rules our responses. The dicta and analyses of government must always be challenged no matter how benign or righteous-seeming. We are morally

responsible for public policy.

Polish guides fluent in our various mother tongues lead us through the grim red brick confinement of Auschwitz I and the eerie vastness of the satellite camp, Birkenau. By 1944, Birkenau alone reached a population of 100,000 "Haftling" (prisoners) on 425 acres. In stables designed for 52 horses, up to 1,000 people came to be bivouacked. 1,500,000

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citizens from all over Europe are estimated to have perished in the 5 crematoria—four at Birkenau; one at Auschwitz I. For 30 years after, the stench of burnt flesh and excrement lingered.

As we walked south from Auschwitz-Birkenau, we saw many plaques commemorating the forced-march routes of prisoners who were evacuated from the camp in January 1945. After six years of war, my father didn't know how much longer he could endure or even if he wanted to. In the final months of the Third Reich, my father was transferred from Auschwitz-Birkenau. I find his name in alphabetical order and other vital statistics in the transport roster.

A woman in Pszczyzna, then a little girl, recalls for us the shock of their spectral appearance and how townspeople tried to throw them bread without provoking camp guards. My father remembers that town. I have been retracing his journey. He and other camp prisoners trudged through deep snow and merciless cold, five prisoners abreast. Over three days, they were marched on to Cieszyn. No rations. No shelter. At Cieszyn, they were loaded in cattle cars that arrived at Mauthausen Concentration Camp west of Vienna, five days later...

The Czech Republic: The walk is seven days in progress, advanced 178 kilometers beyond the death gates at Auschwitz-Birkenau to Prerov in Moravia, Czech Republic for the first rest day. We've received hospitality from churches and municipalities along the way that gives new depth of meaning to the word....

It's hard to describe the exhaustion and exhilaration of walking all day long, every day. I exult at the many steep hills we've traversed. Towns that beckon ahead eventually pass behind us. I walk with awareness of the Nazi prisoner evacuations across Czechoslovakia fifty years ago. Outside Pohorelice, a towering cross with a thorny crown by the roadside memorializes 800 people who died from exposure and duress.

Germany: ...an invitation to the ceremony at the sub-camp of Mauthausen where my father was liberated 50 years ago. May 4. I don't remember the first time I heard about the unseasonably late snow in spring 1945, followed by the ineffable succor of freedom. Gunskirchen—concentration camps bear the names of the neighboring towns. I am the guest of the community.

The young woman who drives me to the lager site, less than 5 minutes from the town hall, explains that local people had been told it was a pencil factory by the authorities. Yet, the 71st Infantry Division of the United States Third Army, which discovered the camp, claims the stench of decaying bodies permeated the air for miles. According to American testimony, "...The buildings, the woods, the roads near Gunskirchen Lager were choked with bodies... 'atrocious' is a mild word."

As we arrive, I cry. The forest grove is innocent. The camp in its stone massiveness presides over a fecund valley. It's

hard to conceive of 18,000 people in an area smaller than a K-Mart. There were seven wooden barracks with 2,700 prisoners packed in each. 20 holes in the ground for latrines. I imagine my father here at age 26.

I attend the official ceremony. It's polyglot—all the languages of Europe...the atmosphere of a college reunion with a macabre core curriculum. Former prisoners file into the Appellplatz to a brass band arrangement of Chopin's, "Marche Funebre." Many are wearing scraps of their old uniforms. They identify themselves by number. P 48639. I 135478. J 27489. My father was P 119164 with a star of David. This is where my father was freed. Freed? Memory serves a life sentence.

I weep with admiration for the contingents of Austrians, Germans, Italians, and Spaniards—dissidents in their homelands—antifascists. I weep for "J's"—Jugoslawiens. Though they suffered together here, today they live in warring countries and walk under separate flags: Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia. And the "Sowjetische Kriegsfegegene"—"Soviet P.O.W."s. Of all the nationalities, they sustained the highest casualties. Their flag, anthem, boundaries have changed; they are now Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians entering the Appellplatz independently.

We—survivors and former members of the 71st Infantry Division—are received with the greatest graciousness of all. Our Austrian hosts listen. High school students attend the ceremony and luncheon following. They gather with survivors to talk, to understand.

At the end of the afternoon, I am driven the distance my father walked with his two buddies to the town of Wels their first morning of freedom. The headlines about massacres in Rwanda, reports about a Pal-

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estonian man shaken to death while in Israeli custody, and the resumption of fighting in Croatia have been screaming inside my head. What is my responsibility in my own time?

Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia: Three year-old Adriana climbs into my lap and demands I read to her. It's a Slavic tongue like Polish; I have some affinity for the sounds but understand little. She corrects my pronunciation. Maybe cherishing the weight of a child is a prayer for peace.

In the rubble of Mostar, we fast and pray—one day on the Muslim East side, the next on the Christian west. The lingering shock expressed by one young woman that neighbors betrayed each other reminds me of my mother's enduring grief.

In Croatia and Bosnia, we've met refugees and women who were raped. We've walked in towns ravaged by shelling. Serbia has been accused. The Serbian inspectors have turned away our advance team at the border; they are hostile to our mission.

We will apply as individuals ("peace tourists?"). I wonder if our prevarication will have consequences. Collectedness. Succinctness. Fearlessness. My father's war stories have trained me to contend with these authorities.

At Subotica, a separated group of us is motioned off the train and detained without explanation. We insist we're in transit.

I have a ticket to Athens to prove it. The guards are bullying. It takes discipline not to be defensive. I've never had my papers rifled through before. We purged evidence of the pilgrimage from our belongings as the organizers suggested. Even so, there are incriminating traces —watercolors of Mostar (in Bosnia), my personal calendar with penciled-in itinerary.

Phones ring. Words are exchanged in Serbian, a language I cannot decipher. Our visas are stamped "canceled." There is no appeal. As the hours stretch on, I consider that we are treated with distrust because we are behaving in a less than forthright way. One of the ingredients of peacemaking is respect. Is defying governments moral or presumptuous? I am appalled; I was docile, following the organizer's orders to obtain a visa deceptively...then I remember that my mother and many others would not have survived without false papers.

We are not manhandled. We are not separated. We are not locked up. But... it's not hard to imagine the possibilities. I pray for people in detention the world over. Loving God—verb and adjective. A person of faith has resort. This trust composes me.

We're locked into a compartment on the next train back to Budapest. On returning, we discover the rest of the group has been deported, too. Are there repercussions for our hosts? We do not know.

Israel: I realize the challenge to a society where the Muslim holy day is Friday, the Jewish is Saturday, and the Christian is Sunday. How do you devise a civil calendar that respects everyone? We hear grief and grievances of many people. Often I feel



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is a prayer for peace.**

harangued. The deep, still voice within murmurs: "Listen. Love; do not judge."

The School for Peace at Neve Shalom/Wahat as-Salam (Oasis of Peace) has conducted programs since 1979 to promote communication and understanding for Jews and Arabs from around the country and occupied territories. When Father Bruno, the founder, greets me at his residence, I am struck by his beatific countenance. He has dedicated his life to loving God. This is the source of his vision of reconciliation. This is how I would like to look at his age, past 80.

...Guard towers at the prison in Jenin, where Palestinians from the West Bank are kept, bear an eerie sameness to the ones I have seen at Auschwitz.... We are told at least 80% of Palestinian men have been in Israeli jails since the Intifada.... Israelis recoil at equating Zionism with Nazism as some Palestinians claim. Its aims are not to annihilate a people but to create refuge for another.

We meet an Israeli who explains his refusal to serve in the occupied territories. After the birth of his daughter, he could no longer see "enemy" through a gun sight. In Gaza, now under Palestinian authority, multitudes of children welcome us as we walk. Their teeth are rotten. The squalor reminds me of ghettos in Washington, D.C. and New York.

**After the birth of his daughter,
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through a gun sight.**

Is it any surprise people erupt with frustration?

At the Jordan River Border control, newly opened since the peace with Jordan was signed, we request the exit stamp separate from our passports. Although this is com-

mon practice (any evidence of being in Israel jeopardizes entry into Iraq and other Arab countries), the Israeli official refuses categorically. There is no dissuading him—even with copies of our friendly press in Israel about our interfaith prayers for peace and commemoration of the Shoah.

"What kind of peace is this (that Iraq denies our existence)?" he rages. This is a glimmer of the pathos of the Middle East. Without that stamp on my passport, I cannot continue with the pilgrimage to Iraq...to see for myself the consequences of the Gulf War on the Iraqi people.

We are bused from Gaza to Jordan where we arrive at night to a resplendent home—palm tree gardens, goldfish pool, tiled swimming pool, servants. I have only seen such wealth in movies. Our orientation speaker's view is corroborated: The commitment of Palestinians to democratic rule is a threat to the monarchies of Arab states.

India: On arrival in New Delhi, I encounter the twelfth language of this odyssey. One of our hostesses explains there are 1,652 languages in India; the government recognizes 18. Polish, German, Croatian, Bosniac, Hungarian use the Roman alphabet like English; Serbian is Cyrillic like Russian. Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic have their distinctive systems. Japanese uses characters. English is the lingua franca of the pilgrimage. Sometimes complaint arises against this monopoly, but no better solution is found. No one speaks Esperanto.

It is March; we join the walk, "Padayatra," which began in October from the tip of India. The 50th anniversary of the end of WWII coincides with the 125th anniversary of Gandhi's birth. I am impressed by Gandhi's devoutness but find many of his attitudes self-scourging. Veneration demands examination. God's authority does not rest in other persons; no one else's inward-turning should supplant our own.

At first, I consider warnings about hygiene and water to be Western patronizing. I am not discriminating about what I ingest. I succumb. As I writhe with dysentery, I identify with the dislocation of concentration camp inmates. In that state of revulsion, I find I have to embrace myself as never before—reminded that an essential ingredient of peace is peace with oneself.

I welcome the rigor of walking. My heart is raw from the grief and grievance we've witnessed. I yearn for a better way with every stride, drum beat, and syllable of our chant: Na-Mu-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo. I am humbled by these travels. Maybe this is their purpose; maybe this is how prayer

Delhi, The Hague, Brussels. Although the governments of Serbia and Singapore did not welcome the pilgrimage mission for peace, we found that people everywhere deplore war. Why are we so impotent in averting it?

I am led to visit my own capital, Washington, DC. I lobby dutifully with my representatives, urging appropriations that favor social programs over the bloated Pentagon budget....Aides listen to me politely, but I feel as though it's all a charade. We live in a plutocracy. How do we re-invigorate our democracy?

Many may wonder what value there is in simply walking, honoring, and praying.

"I yearn for a better way with every stride, drum beat, and syllable of our chant:

'Na-Mu-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge-Kyo'

**"Trust and peace are the values of time yet to be fully uncovered.
This is our task now and in our century to come'."**

begins. Unless I find compassion for those I reflexively condemn, I become part of an ever-escalating antagonism.

Part of the privilege of pilgrimage is being privy to how people understand themselves. In Hindi, there's a word—"darshan"—for God's presence manifest through people. No reconciliation comes through accusation. It requires admitting wrongs, asking forgiveness, making reparation. Part of the privilege of pilgrimage is realizing my own presumptions.

This year of remembrance brings me to many capitals of the world: Warsaw, Vienna, Zagreb, Budapest, Athens, Jerusalem, New

Surely more value than sitting back and detachedly deploring the 6:00 news. We never know whose hearts are touched. In every case, our own.

During the war, my mother recalls the Jewish people felt terribly abandoned by the world. I can not—we can not—abandon people again. "Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo" is the Buddhist chant to which we walked on pilgrimage: "Trust and peace are the values of time yet to be fully uncovered. This is our task now and in our century to come." ♦

Female Circumcision Decried

by Hannah Edemikpong

Hannah Edemikpong lives in Nigeria, where she helps run a shelter for battered and abandoned women and where she campaigns with other women to stop female genital mutilation.

Female circumcision is the popular but medically incorrect name for a variety of mutilating genital operations to which female children and young girls are subjected in many parts of Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and America where immigrant African populations exist. Circumcision is the cutting of the hood of the clitoris. Excision is the cutting of the clitoris and of all or part of the labia minora. But the worst of all these is infibulation, the cutting of the clitoris, labia minora, and at least the anterior two-thirds, and often the whole, of the medial part of the majora. The two sides of the vulva are stitched together except for a small opening left for the passage of urine and menstrual blood.

These young girls are mutilated to dampen sexual desire, thereby ensuring virginity until marriage, a condition still valued in many cultures. Uncircumcized women are considered to be unclean and promiscuous. Their chances of marrying are non-existent. Thus, the roots of female genital mutilation lie in the male desire to control women's sexuality.

A host of other superstitions and beliefs have sustained the practice. Some Muslim groups mistakenly believe that it is demanded by Islamic faith. A Muslim Sheik, Abdul Rahman, in the Malian town of Mopti says, "Excision is a religious requirement; if a woman has a clitoris, she is impure, and her prayers are unacceptable to Allah." Some Christian denominations in Africa also lend their support to the practice. According to Reverend Augustine Peters of the God Reformed Mission in Nigeria, "Circumcision was a command of God to the Israelites. Therefore, true Christians must practice it." Reverend Uzodima Eze of the First Century Mission in Nigeria affirms, "His church cannot preach against the practice because it was one of the commands given by God to Abraham" in Genesis 17.

Short- and long-term health risks associated with the practice range from hemorrhage, tetanus, and septicemia

infections from unsterile and often primitive cutting implements, such as a traditional knife, razor blade, or broken glass; to shock from the pain of the operation, which is carried out without anesthesia. Loss of sexual feelings, chronic urinary tract and pelvic infections, coital difficulties, and problems during childbirth also occur.

Elizabeth Inyang Etuk of Ikom in Nigeria tells her story. "I was infibulated at the age of six. I remember every bit of it.... The terrible pain and lying tied up for several weeks. It hurt terribly, and I cried and cried. I could not understand why this was done to me. When I was 13, my aunts examined me and declared that I was not closed enough. They took me to a traditional midwife who lived a few streets away. When I noticed where they were taking me, I tried to escape, but they held me firmly and dragged me to the midwife's home. They held me down and covered my mouth so that I could not scream. They cut my genitals again, and this time the traditional midwife made sure that I was closed.

"With terrible pain, I was carried home. I was tied up and could not move. I could not urinate, and my stomach became swollen. Some few days later the midwife came. I thought she wanted to operate on me again. I screamed and lost consciousness. I woke up in a private hospital's ward. There were moaning women all around me. I did not know where I was and was in terrible pain. My legs and my genital area were all swollen.

"Later the doctor told me that reinfibulation had been performed on me to let urine and puss pass out so that my swollen stomach could subside. I was terribly weak and wanted to die. Why would my mother do this to me? What had I done to be hurt so terribly? It has been years now; the doctors told me that I can never have children because of infection. Therefore no one will marry me, for no one wants a wife who cannot have a child."

Another survivor, 30-year-old Arit Etim from Eniong

Abatim in Nigeria, said, "I was infibulated at the age of eight, and my vagina was closed by sewing amidst terrible physical pain. At 18, I was married and became pregnant. At childbirth, the scar was split to let the baby out. The tough, ablated vulva had lost its elasticity, and the head of the baby was pushed through the perineum (which tears more easily than the infibulation scar during the second stage of labor). However, the baby I delivered died, and since then my vagina has been ruptured, leading to a continual dribbling of urine. Although my husband has married a second wife, the shame and the embarrassments that I have been subjected to are greater than if I had been divorced. I rarely attend public gatherings because my apparel around my buttocks would always be wet as if I am menstruating."

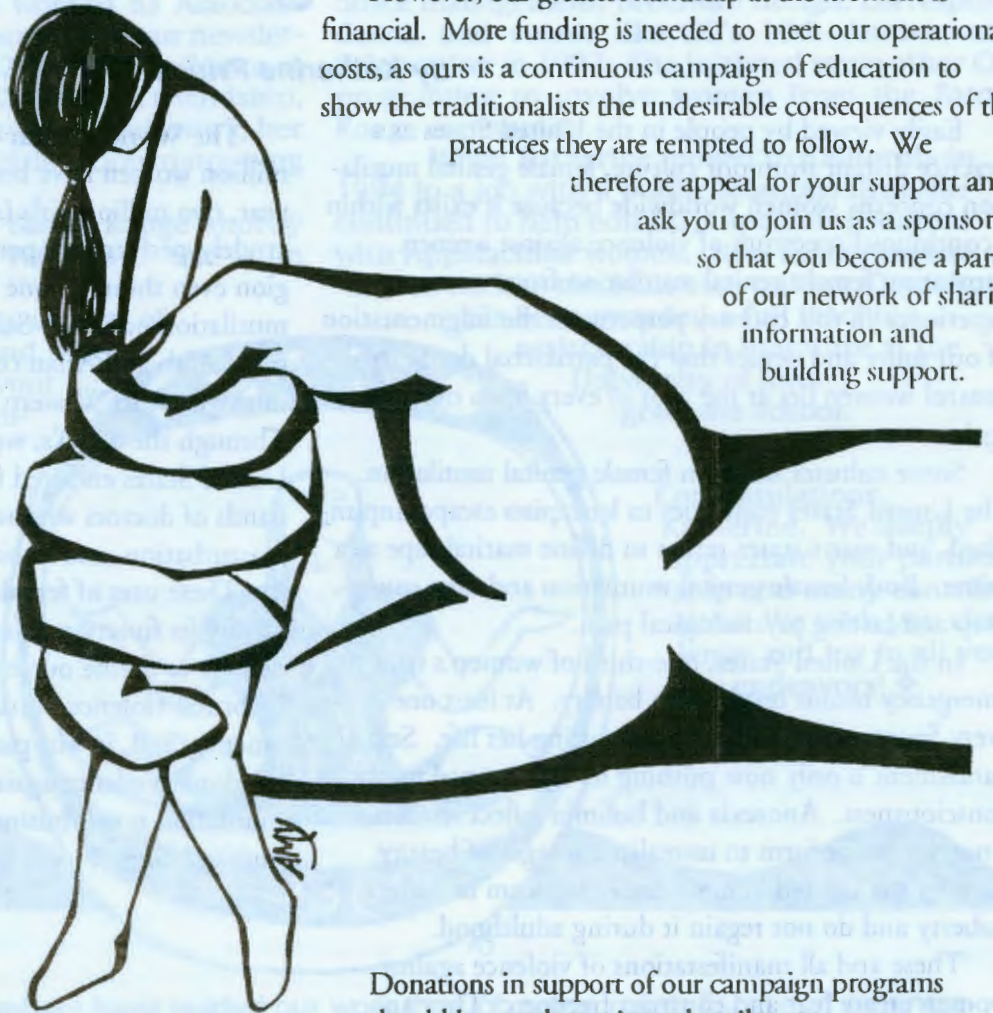
Our women's shelter is now actively engaged in organizing public awareness campaigns in our community through radio and television jingles and newspaper advertisements. Our field counselors spend a lot of time simply talking to women about these issues, which have been shrouded by secrecy and myth and supported by strong social pressure. By talking to women, we have begun to break the silence and expose the oppressiveness of female genital mutilation.

A letter from Nnena Jumbo of Opobo Nigeria reads, "I met your campaign team one market day, discussing circumcision and its effects on women's health. It was my first time hearing women discussing circumcision.... It was my first time hearing [about] sex issues in public, since sex is not even discussed with one's own husband.... I have since then been told to break this silence by discussing my sexual problems with my husband...."

While legislation is one tool to be used in fighting genital mutilation, we don't consider it the best, especially since it cannot be translated into firm commitment or action. It might simply drive the practice underground, making it even more difficult to eradicate. Our strategy is to mobilize women to fight this oppressive practice.

However, our greatest handicap at the moment is financial. More funding is needed to meet our operational costs, as ours is a continuous campaign of education to show the traditionalists the undesirable consequences of the practices they are tempted to follow. We

therefore appeal for your support and ask you to join us as a sponsor so that you become a part of our network of sharing information and building support.



Donations in support of our campaign programs should be sent by registered mail to:

**Hannah Edemikpong
Box 185 Eket
Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
West Africa**

On The Spectrum of All Violence against Women

by Katherine Prince

Easily viewed by people in the United States as a practice distant from our culture, female genital mutilation concerns women worldwide because it exists within a continuous spectrum of violence against women. Separating female genital mutilation from women's experience in this country perpetuates the fragmentation of our unity and denies that the patriarchal desire to control women lies at the root of every form of violence against women.

Some cultures sanction female genital mutilation. The United States continues to let rapists escape unpunished, and many states refuse to define marital rape as a crime. Both female genital mutilation and rape cause deep and lasting psychological pain.

In the United States, one-third of women's trips to emergency rooms result from battery. At least one in every four women will be raped during her life. Sexual harassment is only now pushing its way toward public consciousness. Anorexia and bulimia reflect females' struggles to conform to unrealistic images of beauty. Girls in the United States lose self-esteem in early puberty and do not regain it during adulthood.

These and all manifestations of violence against women create fear and constrict freedom. They announce to women that it is not safe to be our full selves and suggest that we lack sovereignty over our own bodies.

Cultures that practice female genital mutilation regard it as both a necessary rite of passage and a prerequisite for marriage and ostracize uncircumcised women. Because the practice is deeply ingrained, women perpetuate it by mutilating girls in their care. Likewise, women in the United States help teach girls the ideal of being thin. Some women protect themselves from the fear of rape by claiming that other women bring it upon themselves by dressing provocatively or walking alone at night.

The World Health Organization estimates that 90 million women have been genitally mutilated. Each year, two million girls (six thousand per day) suffer the crudely-performed operation. Often justified by religion even though none mandates it, female genital mutilation occurs in Sahelian (central) Africa and in some Arab and Asian countries and continues among immigrants to Western Europe and the United States. Through the 1950's, women in England and in the United States endured female genital mutilation at the hands of doctors who sought to "cure" nymphomania, masturbation, and lesbianism.

These uses of female genital mutilation illustrate vividly its function as a tool of social control. Women deserve to define ourselves, not to be limited and hurt by brutal violence. Human rights transcend cultural sanctity, and, in our patriarchal world, every country condones violence against women. Female genital mutilation is our business. It is the business of every human being. ❖

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Katherine Prince & CG Board Members:

People Who've Kept CG Moving

Katherine Prince has worked as Associate Editor of *Common Ground* journal and our newsletter, "Groundings" from 1992 to 1995. Common Ground has been blessed by Katherine's friendship, her understanding and dedication to this work, her gifts of creativity, intellect, and devotion to stopping violence against women.

Katherine moved to Baton Rouge shortly after graduating from Ohio Wesleyan. She is an outstanding editor who has been responsible for many aspects of publication at Common Ground. She worked on organization, layout and press preparation for Common Ground's 1993 journal with farmworker women, our 1994 journal honoring people's prophet Annie Smart, and issues of "Groundings."

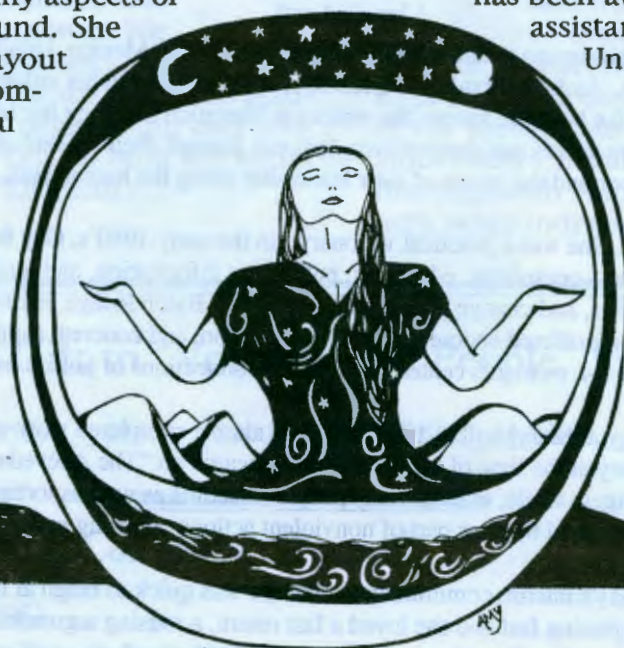
Katherine worked with assistant editors, artists, photographers, and interns. She pitched in with

office management, brochure design, correspondence, and events like CG's 10th Anniversary Celebration in 1992. She initiated some other CG programming to involve women from the Baton Rouge community.

When Katherine moved to California in 1994 to a job with a public relations firm, she continued to help edit CG's upcoming journal with Appalachian women. Now Katherine has moved back to the Midwest—to Iowa City; she

has been awarded a full teaching assistantship in literature at the University of Iowa graduate school.

Congratulations, Katherine. We deeply appreciate your partnership and many contributions. We wish you challenge and joy in all your new endeavors! ♦



Common Ground board members have guided our work through some rough fiscal and organizational seas these last several years. Recognition and thanks to these friends: Barbara Barrett, who has a private practice counseling women in Denton, Texas; Cora Lee Johnson, a national grassroots leader and founder of a sewing center in her home town of Soperton, Georgia; Sister Madeline Gianforte, Director and CG liason with Connective Ministries, an interfaith grassroots network in the Southeast; Hoyt Oliver, professor and printer, who has served as Treasurer and printer for CG; Sister Jacque Roller, who works in vocation and spiritual formation for her religious order in Milwaukee and has done grassroots work in Mississippi.

Sister Gay Redmond, a devoted supporter, good friend, and a CG board member since 1987, died in 1993. Please see page 13 for more about Gay's commitments and the fund we are establishing to honor her memory. This fund will pay for distribution of Common Ground journals to more community-based organizations, churches, synagogues, libraries, and classrooms. ♦

Practical Dreamer:

Gay Redmond Devoted to Solidarity, Spirituality, Justice

Gay Redmond, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille, served on the Common Ground board from 1987 until her death in 1993. New Orleans was her home town; she was devoted to its people and to their ethnic diversity; she loved chicory-blend coffee. Gay's razor-sharp intellect was insistent on analysis whether following a Saints game, organizing, or teaching. She taught Spanish, Latin, and religion at her Alma Mater, St. Joseph's Academy. Her fluency in Spanish and a sense of mission led Gay to work from 1964 to 1967 with three other Sisters of St. Joseph in Veraguas, Panama. There, she said, she learned more about the causes of poverty, the role of the church, and the oppression of women. She returned to teaching, also ministering in the New Orleans Parish prison, and in literacy programs in Southeast Louisiana.



Gay Redmond

Courtesy Sisters of St. Joseph

However, Gay's great love was pilgrimage to and with the people of Panama, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia, and Chile. As Janet Franklin expressed it so beautifully in her eulogy: "The people became her people, the orphaned teenagers in Tegucigalpa like her little sisters, the writers in liberation theology her inspiration and strength." Gay prophetically called others to include different voices and perspectives, to break through their naiveté about the evil of the national security state, to heed both the cries of the poor and the power of their leadership along the human path.

Social justice was Gay's mission. She was a practical visionary. In the early 1980's, Gay founded the Center of the Americas in New Orleans. She was a powerhouse—organizing, educating, publishing information, and leading delegations to Latin America in order to save lives, expose political lies, and change public policies. When Baton Rouge Friends Meeting declared public Sanctuary for refugees from Central America, she offered encouragement, information, and concrete support. When she joined the Common Ground board, she shared her dream—a women's center teaching the connections of justice and spirituality.

Gay earned a Masters in Theology at Maryknoll in 1987. She had almost completed work on chapter one of her doctoral dissertation at Drew University in New Jersey at the time of her death. Her research on "The Aceveda Movement in Pinochet's Chile" included her courageous interviewing, in Chile, of over thirty people—victims as well as torturers of the Pinochet regime. She was deeply moved by the powerful use of ritual there as part of nonviolent actions opposing evil.

A deep, strong faith sustained Gay's intense commitments. Yet she was quick to laugh at herself and others who even bordered on being pompous. Her dry wit was lightning fast and she loved a fast return, a rousing argument. Gay respected people who stood up for themselves—and, at times, stood up to her. Her last note to us was gracious—and tragic. For the esophageal cancer which she fought with her great strength had literally taken her voice.

We ask you to honor Gay's memory and commitments by contributing to Common Ground's "Voices of the People Fund" and by sharing this opportunity with others. We hope that people who contribute will also carry the story of her life and voice to others. Gay accompanied people who were suffering, people trying to change their lives. Her life and spirit challenge those of us who inherit privilege to keep the faith, to listen for the call from our sisters and brothers, to walk farther along paths of solidarity and justice.

...Lilith Quinlan
Founder and Editor



by Martha Vidrine

"Voices of the People" Fund

Honors Sister Gay Redmond

"Voices of the People" Fund: This fund is established to honor the memory and life-commitments of Gay Redmond, a Sister of St. Joseph and a member of the Common Ground board from 1987 until her death in 1993.



Gay Redmond *

Use of Contributions to the Fund: We seek to find spaces for Common Ground journals in university, seminary, church, and synagogue libraries and classrooms, in schools and community-based organizations. These spaces, these sanctuaries, make the powerful voices of the marginalized part of the written record and may touch the hearts of the "overclass" who read them. Contributions to this fund will be used only during 1996 and will pay for:

Mission of the Fund: The voices of marginalized people and their moral leadership need to be read and heard by more people across the U.S. and beyond our borders. People empower themselves by telling their stories and organizing to speak truth to power. We believe that when the hearts and minds of the "overclass" are touched by the struggles and leadership of the "underclass," partnership and solidarity—common ground—can be built for social change, for human rights, for justice.

- 1) copies of *Common Ground* to be given or sold at low cost to grassroots groups; and
- 2) postage and contact brochures for distribution of CG journals to educational institutions, religious orders, libraries, and centers. Please return this page with your gift and by copying it to share with other individuals and organizations.

* Photo Courtesy Sisters of St. Joseph

My/Our Gift to "Voices of the People" Fund:

\$1000 ___ \$500 ___ \$250 ___ \$100 ___ \$50 ___ \$30 ___ Other ___

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Appalachian Women (1996)

Single copies: \$12 per copy for individuals (\$10 plus \$2 postage and handling)
 \$15 per copy total for libraries, stores, or schools (plus \$2 p & h)

Multiple copies: \$ 5 per copy for 15 or more copies ordered by individuals or grassroots groups
 (add \$7 for postage and handling for 15)

Other Journals: \$ 5 per copy plus postage and handling as above. Circle titles and put # of copies each:

- Annie Smart: Honoring an African American People's Prophet (1994)* _____
Farmworker Women (1993) _____ *Indigenous Women in North America (1992)* _____
Grassroots Women in the U.S. and India (1990) _____



by Martha Vidrine

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Common Ground is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

"Common Ground's Farmworker Journal Changes Lives!"

by Margarita Romo
Director, Farmworker Self-Help

For us farmworker women the journal we created is priceless. It's as if we were to go to Mexico and dig up something from before Cortez came and destroyed all of our history. Now we can begin to build our history again because it's in writing.

Fifty per cent of farmworkers are women, and almost nobody's ever thought about that. I've had women write from all over saying, "I cried when I read this book. I never knew."

The journal has made us more visible. It's so much easier for me to tell people about farmworker women and their struggles using this journal:

A lady who's on the Hillsborough County School Board put the journal in the library of the elementary schools. The Commission on the Status of Women invited me to make a presentation. I also did a workshop about farmworkers for a conference on hunger at the University of South Florida. Davida (see pages 18-19 for photos) had a show and reception at the TECO Plaza in Tampa.

The journal has raised people's consciousness: We farmworker women have read that book over and over. Now we value ourselves more because our lives are in black and white.

We feel very proud that the journal was put together. It's not something that we would ever have thought could happen. It has opened doors: Guadalupe and Maria Isabel spoke at a NOW group. They have had problems with having one foot in Mexico and one in the United States. The book has caused them to speak out so that their lives will be stronger.

The journal also has caused us to make friends with folks whom our lives probably would have never touched: One woman told me she read the book to her mother as they were driving. Pretty soon they couldn't see the road for crying.



Margarita Romo *

Another lady and her husband read the book on the way to Michigan. The journal is changing the lives of the people who read it.

A lot of people in our community see these women were willing to tell their true stories. So they say, "We have permission to talk about what happened to us." The women in the book have given them courage to change their lives.

We have recommended the journal to churches as a guide to study how women can help other women, and they're using it. Foundations have put pictures from the book in their stories about us. The *St Petersburg Times* did a tremendous article called "Stories from the Fields;" the *Tampa Tribune* did one called "Women of the Fields."

I spoke at the Rotary. The lady who invited me has become a good friend and a champion for us. When she presented me, she said, "Every woman at this Rotary meeting is going to get one of these books. When you get this book, you'll understand."

Our representatives have gotten it too. I gave copies to a lady who works in the Department of Labor—and to Mrs. Clinton and Mrs. Gore.

If we're going to bring healing to our land, it'll take many women working together. I went to Honduras and talked to the women in the coffee bean and sugar cane fields. I saw women in India working in the fields with no shoes. I learned that their stories and ours are not that different. I realized that we women are keepers of the soil.

This journal can bring about real sisterhood. It can be a guide, encouraging women to write their stories. We need for its words to get out to more people. These stories can open more hearts. Then maybe one day there'll be more peace because we'll understand each other. ♦

* Photo by Davida Johns

What Do Men Want?

by Tony Abbott

"Drums, sweat, and tears," says *Newsweek* Magazine, telling of wild-man weekends in the woods and tales of missing fathers in the sweat-house. It's not so simple.

In my fifteenth year my mother died. Embarrassed not to cry, I tucked my head under the sheets and feigned tears for my older sister's eyes and ears.

In my thirtieth year on the Monday after Easter my daughter went to bed and never woke. Strong men carried her out. Her arm hung down below the stretcher's

side. Dry-eyed I picked it up and put it back. At thirty-five I struck a boy for stealing from my son. I spun and spun, darkly off balance,

hearing my voice, as if a stranger's, ringing in distant ears. By forty I learned the stepping stones of grief and how the smallest things are joined.

Bach and the Beatles and "Amazing Grace," the quaking aspen leaves and sugar maples in the fall could set me off on cue. At fifty I fake colds instead of tears,

blowing my nose at "Thelma and Louise." What do men want? I don't know. The right to grieve and not be mocked, to touch and be touched, to walk

beyond the porch steps of the soul, to have dreams and speak them without fear. To lie under the willow tree of love. To seek truth in whispers not in shouts.

I like that better than drumming.



Photo courtesy of Davidson College

Tony Abbott

Tony Abbott is Professor of English and Chair of the English Department at Davidson College in North Carolina. He is the author of two books of poems: *The Girl in the Yellow Raincoat* (1989) and *A Small Thing Like a Breath* (1993), both published by St. Andrew's Press, Laurinburg, North Carolina. "What Do Men Want?" is reprinted here with permission of the author.

Several years ago, when Tony Abbott wrote this poem, he was responding to a *Newsweek* article describing men in search of themselves. Fall 1995 book reviews in the same publication explore the same subject. As Tony says, "The question and the issues remain the same."

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Her Art Elicits Responses To Women's Courage, Endurance, Beauty

Davida Johns got up at 3 a.m. on weekends and her days off. She and Margarita Romo, director of Farmworker Self-Help in Dade City, Florida (see page 16) wanted to be in the fields as farmworker women began their daily work. Davida was taking photographs for Common Ground's 1993 journal by farmworker women in Central Florida. This past year she has traveled through the mountains of southwest Virginia as the photographer for our 1996 journal by Appalachian women.

We chose Davida because of her skills with the camera and in the darkroom. We also share a philosophy: Davida understands the dangers of objectification for women. She gets to know people as she takes their pictures. In an article in *Florida Magazine*, August 27, 1995, featuring Davida and her farmworker photographs, Bill Belleville describes Davida as: "...not just a photographer who records what she sees. She is a woman who makes a point to record what she feels. It's a strong, visceral vision, uncompromised by the market whims of art show patrons or publications driven by the trendy or chic or demographically correct." Davida says, "I believe the purpose of art is to make an impression or elicit a response. Otherwise it's just a couch-compatible decoration. I want to make people laugh or cry or be happy or sad. I love it when people see one of my photos and it makes them stop and look at things differently.

Davida devotes her work to bringing about equal rights and justice for women. And in contradiction of some current backlash, her career as a self-proclaimed "feminist photographer" is taking off. She has exhibited throughout Florida and as far away as Boston at galleries, women's conferences, art centers, the Florida State Capitol and Governor's Mansion. In April 1993, Davida won 1st Place Photography in the juried competition for the state-wide Women's Caucus on Art.

However, her path to doing more of this work she loves has not been easy or straight: Raised northwest of Atlanta,



Davida Johns

Davida joined the Navy at age 18, was sent to Florida and has lived there since. She was married twice, mother to a son and to a daughter who died of heart disease in her teens. In 1989, she went to Eckerd College to finish an art degree begun 20 years earlier. Now she does computer programming to help support her photography.

Davida's "Women at Work" series celebrates women working in non-traditional occupations. These photos express both her passion for equal rights for women and her confidence in women's progress: "As an

Observer/Plotter in the Fleet Weather Service in the U.S. Navy in the mid '60's and a Letter Carrier in the U.S. postal Service in the late '70's, I speak from experience. Women are endowed with the ability to perform in any capacity we desire."

Her photographs of farmworker women, Davida says, make visible, "hope for their children's future and commitment to each other....Through the adversities these women face shines a resolve, not only to survive but to succeed. All of us can be inspired." Davida Johns is part also of what she hopes to share: "a vision of women's courage, endurance, and beauty." ♦



Photo by Davida Johns

Peacemaking in Sarajevo

A Conversation
with Jim Douglass

Headlines in the mainstream U.S. media now wonder if peace accords are finally at hand for Bosnia-Herzegovina. During the four-year horrors of ethnic cleansing, mass rapes, and cities held hostage by snipers, peacemakers have made constant efforts to bring an end to the violence as well as to bring hope and healing to those living in the midst of it. The courageous acts of most of these peacemakers have been invisible to even the minority of U.S. citizens who have followed the war.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation reports on sixteen such efforts during the first year and a half of the war. There have been individual acts of courage: Vedran Smailovic, a cellist in the Sarajevo orchestra, played Albioni's *Adagio* for 22 days following the 1992 bakery massacre in memory of his brother and the 21 other victims. Joan Baez gave concerts and other artists have kept hope alive. There have also been workshops on conflict resolution, a Listening Project with multiethnic groups, transport of humanitarian aid, peace caravans of up to 500 people, a rally in Belgrade by thousands of Serbian opponents of the war. Some fifty communities across the U.S. have held regular interfaith prayer services for the people under siege.

On May 28, 1995, 35 women and three men from 10 countries, ranging in age from 22 to 72, rallied at the initiative of Croatian and Bosnian women. They demanded the closure of armament factories and decommissioning of weaponry. The visitors descended Mount Igman on foot by night and went into Sarajevo—bent double, through muddy trenches and sniper fire. This "Through Heart to Peace" initiative was started in Samobor near Zagreb in 1993 by a Croatian woman, Ema Miocinaovic, and a Bosnian, Emsuda Mujagic, in conjunction with Hazelwood House in England. The second initiative called for a ceasefire in this "war against women and children," freedom of movement for supplies and people in besieged cities, closure of armaments factories, decommissioning of weaponry, removal of snipers, and inclusion of women in negotiations at all levels of leadership.

"Speeches were made, music and poetry shared, a communique written. A tree of peace was planted and a foundation stone for a House of Peace was presented. This stone from Kozarac was joined with one from a powerful mountain in Wales—carried all the way by one of the women." One of the speakers reminded those gathered: "Sarajevo has stood for tolerance, peace, celebration of our different religions and ethnic backgrounds."

In the spring of 1994, we talked with Jim Douglass, a teacher of nonviolence, peace activist, and author living in Birmingham, Alabama. Through his pilgrimage and fast for Sarajevo, he was trying to bring religious leaders into the midst of the suffering in former Yugoslavia, to have them embrace and pray for peace. Some of the seeds Jim planted bore fruit, as his story here shows. Other efforts did not flower: Danger turned away the Pope; this past August 28, another market in Sarajevo was bombed, killing 37 people and leading to NATO air strikes. The healing work of the courageous Women in Black—who are now listening to the stories of thousands of women raped during this war—will need to continue for many years.

We publish this conversation with Jim to lift up his work and that of these many peacemakers—especially the Women in Black. We hope this will encourage our readers to seek out ways to make contributions to peace and reconciliation—which require far more than an end to hostilities.

CG: During the interfaith fast and pilgrimage for Sarajevo last year, you tried to bring leaders of the Muslim and Orthodox Serb and Catholic Croatian faiths together. What was the seed from which the pilgrimage for Sarajevo grew?

Jim: I had visited the four major religious communities in Sarajevo, which include a small but significant Jewish community as well as the Serbian Orthodox, the Croatian Catholic, and the Muslim communities. I discovered that their leaders believed strongly in living together. I sought a way to respond

to the genocide. I came across an appeal written by the head of the Islamic community in Bosnia-Herzegovina, asking religious leaders around the world to come to Sarajevo. He had despaired of political leaders' responding.

CG: This fast and pilgrimage corresponded to the sacred times of fast—calls to remembrance and repentance—by several world religions.

Jim: I began the fast in Rome immediately after leaving



Photo Courtesy Jim Douglass

Vigil in Piazza San Pietro on February 13, 1994, the third day of Ramadan. Pictured left to right: Sister Mary Anne Faucher, Sister Mary Littell, Fabrina Truini, Sister Henrietta Frost, Jim Douglass, and Sister Marietta Miller. The banner was made by Shelley Douglass.

Sarajevo on February 11, the first day of Ramadan. Then came Shabbar Zachor, the Jewish day of fasting in preparation for Purim, and Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. In the middle of March, the great fast of the Serbian Orthodox liturgy began. My fast lasted 51 days.

Every day in Rome, I went with the leaders of women's congregations to Piazza San Pietro and stood fasting and praying in front of the obelisk at the center of the square facing the basilica. There were ten or twelve people every day, roughly 90 percent of whom were women religious from Rome.

CG: You also sent an Easter letter to the Pope.

Jim: I gained an appointment with Cardinal Roger Etchegaray through Sister Mary Littell of the Franciscan Sisters' headquarters. Cardinal Etchegaray is the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. We met several times. He told me that the Pope supported my fast, and he asked me to prepare a report on all my conversations with Serbian Orthodox church leaders, including Patriarch Pavle.

On late Holy Saturday night, he called to ask if he could celebrate the final Easter mass with Gianni Novelli, a priest friend of mine, at the Franciscan women's headquarters on Sunday night. I woke early on Easter morning and started scribbling final thoughts regarding the interfaith pilgrimage. That was my letter to the Pope, and it became the homily for

the mass. Gianni translated it into Italian.

CG: You sent with the Easter letter a rock from the bomb crater at the Sarajevo market. What did that rock signify for you?

Jim: The entire time that we were vigiling in Piazza San Pietro, I was carrying that rock next to my heart. The day the bomb exploded, I was in downtown Sarajevo. I had a meeting with Mirko Pejanovich, one of the two Serb representatives on the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He let me know that he was giving the official support of the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina for the pilgrimage. Then he started crying and told me about the terrible massacre.

I went from there to the market. It had been raining that afternoon, and the blood and the water were coming across my boots. The bodies had just been removed. I walked to the crater and picked up four pieces of rock from the

center. I gave one to the Pope with the Easter letter.

CG: You also encouraged the Pope to involve other religious leaders?

Jim: In the letter, I said, "If your pilgrimage is to be seen as truly representative of the church, please invite Catholic women leaders to walk the streets of Sarajevo with you and pray alongside you. Such women as Mother Theresa, Sister Mary Littell, and Sister Mary Evelyn Jegen of Pax Christi International."

I mentioned that Metropolitan Spyridon of Venice, a leader from the Orthodox church, had written to me saying that he would join such a pilgrimage. I also said that I hoped the Dalai Lama and Elie Wiesel would be invited.

Patriarch Pavle is the other major figure. He is the leader of the Serbian Orthodox church in Belgrade. Jim Forest, the secretary of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship, and I met with him; he said, "I will go to Sarajevo with Pope John Paul II, provided my bishops support me".

This would be the first time in the history of the thousand-year division between the Eastern and the Western churches that a Patriarch from the Serbian Orthodox Church met with a Pope. It would be an act of healing in this terrible war and in the schism between the churches, which is a factor in the war itself.

CG: You mentioned some of the horrors going on in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We petitioned national and international agencies to stop the mass rapes [see box next page]...

Jim: Women in Black have done the most to respond. They did not want the rape of women to be used as a justification for political stands by any of the parties in the war because women were being raped by all sides in large numbers, and a lot of the publicity about it was political manipulation. Women in Black have a project called "I Remember." They go to refugee camps and work with the women who have suffered the killing of their family members. The women make cards on which they draw pictures and write poems and reflections about things they feel they should remember and work through.

The Women in Black are not identified with any particular faith. Their black stands for mourning. Like Women in Black in Jerusalem, they vigil once a week in the center of the city, which takes great courage and integrity.

Women in Black maintains foreign currency accounts into which donations may be deposited. Contact:

**The Magyar Kulkereskedelmi Bank
Rt., Szent Istvan ter Branch,
Budapest, Hungary**

**USD account: 401-4039-844-99; DEM account:
407-5039-844-99. Account name: Interchurch
Aid, Clearly Designate for Women in Black.**

They have no address. They keep moving around the city. When Jim Forest and I went to Belgrade, they gave us hospitality in their office. We were moved by their helping two men whom they had never seen before and who were working with patriarchal structures with which they weren't particularly sympathetic. They thought what we were doing was valuable in terms of seeking the repentance of religious leaders who had been involved in the war.

CG: Such a story of courage. You also tell of a cellist in Sarajevo who played an adagio each day for 21 days at the scene of the bakery massacre. I hadn't seen or heard anything about that. Is the mainstream media in our country covering war but not peace?



Photo Courtesy Jim Douglass

Women in Black vigiling in Belgrade's Republic Square (Wednesday, March 16, 1994). They vigil in black and silence for an hour every Wednesday afternoon. They are also seeking funding for a healing project: listening to the stories of women who were raped during the war, publishing both the suffering and the courage of these women, and offering support.

Jim: Yes. That's the usual way our media covers everything. They also simplify to an extraordinary degree. For example, you probably would not know unless you went to Belgrade that the sanctions are creating enormous, indiscriminate suffering across Serbia and are supported by virtually no one in the peace movement there. The sanctions are deadly to hundreds of thousands of innocent people, especially the infirm and wounded. Leaders have used them to excuse their own economic exploitation and destruction and to gain a stronger hold on the electorate.

CG: Where do you see hope for peace in the midst of such suffering?

Jim: The people in Bosnia not only want peace; they want a justice which will enable them to have a country again. 30 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which includes enclaves separated from one other, is not a country. The Palestine of Europe has been created, and it's predominantly Muslim. That's no accident. It was created largely through an attitude almost never said publicly, "We must not allow a Muslim beachhead in Europe." Many leaders of government said that quietly.

CG: What is at stake in Sarajevo and for the U.S. as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic society?

Jim: Sarajevo is a more profoundly united Jerusalem. If you

walk the streets of the old city, you encounter within a few steps of one another the Catholic cathedral, the old Muslim mosque, the old synagogue, and the Orthodox church. They're only a few meters away from that market that was bombed, where people of all those communities were shopping together.

In Sarajevo, we have a model for the rest of the world as to how people from those great religious traditions can and must live together in mutual support. We even have an example of an interfaith community that is supported by both Muslims and Jews from beyond Sarajevo. That city is a key to the Middle East. We must not let it go under.

Those who have been trying to destroy Sarajevo are saying, "These people cannot and must not live together." But the Muslim and Croatian communities have agreed not only to live together, but to work together and to govern together. That's a very important step towards reconstituting Bosnia, but it still leaves out 70 percent of the country.

CG: What were your moments of greatest horror and greatest hope on your pilgrimage?

Jim: I became very close to a man named Jagger. He was my guide last August, and I stayed with him in Sarajevo. When I returned to Sarajevo in February, his sister-in-law, Renata, told

me that he had become a deserter. He didn't want to kill any longer. He had been hiding out from the army, and they discovered him and took him off. Renata didn't know where he was, and she feared for his life.

He returned to the apartment while I was there. He had decided, rather than go to jail for two to ten years, that he would return to the front lines. I took a letter from him to his wife, Ljeela, and four and-a-half year old son, Dado, and was able to be with them for a very beautiful and painful day. Like many families, Ljeela's is of a different national origin than Jagger's. He's Muslim; she's Serb. At his urging, she and Dado went to live with her parents in Serbia.

Jagger's life is in danger. He's an outlaw to the Bosnian army because he won't kill. He's regarded as a Muslim terrorist by the Serbian government, which has been scouring Ljeela's mail and asking questions. As a Muslim, he's not welcome in Croatia either. This man is an outlaw everywhere in the former Yugoslavia.

I saw him for the last time two days before I left Sarajevo. He kissed me on both cheeks and said, "Good-bye, Jimmy," and disappeared into the Sarajevo night with a canteen that I had given him and my father's fishing knife. I remember and pray for my good friend Jagger. I hope he is alive today. ❖

Will U.S. media cover the trial – as rapists and murderers of an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 women and children in Eastern Europe are held responsible for these war crimes? Friends for a Non-violent World in Minneapolis, Minnesota joined Common Ground and Bienville House Center for Peace and Justice in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in circulating a petition against the systematic rape of women as a weapon of war in Bosnia. Signers addressed the United Nations, U.S. Department of State, and International Red Cross, urging actions to: 1) get immediate medical care and counseling to women and girls who have been raped; 2) hold perpetrators accountable by prosecuting them in international war crime tribunals.

A letter from the U.S. Department of State reminded us that "with strong U.S. support," the United Nations Security Council has decided to establish an international tribunal with jurisdiction over atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. Article 27 of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War provides that women shall be "especially protected...against rape." The Department of State reported sexual assaults to the U.N. as "grave breaches" of these Conventions, requiring trial or extradition for trial, along with names of individual leaders responsible for upholding the Conventions. Public pressure is needed to pressure media to cover this process!

Great Compassion, Great Soul

Ellen Klemperer, a donor and constant encourager of Common Ground's work died early this year at the age of 83. Months before, Ellen called to say that she had been reading our 1994 journal honoring Annie Smart and understanding its purpose "as if it were my own work."

Ellen's life was spent working for justice and spiritual empowerment across racial and cultural barriers. Publishing and correspondence were her two most powerful vehicles.

A Quaker by conviction, Ellen offered her Indiana farm as a place of retreat for African-American ministers. A close friend of Black theologian/mystic/preacher/writer Howard Thurman, she worked for the Thurman Trust, setting up over a hundred listening rooms for spiritual nurture and spreading Thurman's teachings across the U.S. and abroad. She traveled to Nigeria, and to Crossroads, South Africa during apartheid as an ambassador of hope.

During the last several years, Ellen was helping her Quaker friend Anna Pierce. They met when Anna was a member of the

Black Sash women's organization opposing apartheid in South Africa. Anna has been trying to produce and distribute a "wonder box" and solar cooker for poor women in the two-third world to fix nutritious meals with less fuel.

Last year, Ellen wrote to us: "Wonder Boxes Still Cooking: I had a two-day visit with Anna Pearce in London. She wants so much to find a manufacturer and distributor for her latest cooking creation, which could lift the lives of millions of women and their families.

"Anna went to an assembly in London where...she was asked for copies of my article in the April 1993 'Groundings,' which she made on the spot. Her reaction to the assembly, and theirs to her, was very positive."

We were blessed by Ellen's love—the wonderful energy of her great compassion and her great soul. ❖



Ellen Klemperer

Photo Courtesy of Ellen's family

Pray for Our Friends the Yoders in Burundi and Rwanda:

Suzy and Buzz Yoder left their home in North Carolina this summer to supervise Mennonite Central Committee workers in Rwanda and Burundi. The Yoders have lived in Africa before for a number of years; their son was born there. They are both fluent in French and Buzz speaks Swahili. The Yoders are living in Bujumbura, Burundi and traveling from there to refugee projects in the region. Relief workers are trying to bring healing in the wake of genocide and to plant seeds for future stability. Suzy writes of Burundi: "This country is too beautiful for self-destruction. Terror, vengeance and greed are the main spiritual struggles." Mennonite theology supports living simply so that others may live. Suzy notes that "Even Burundian bishops and other church leaders drive big cars like Mercedes."

Hope in such circumstances can become a rare medium of exchange. Please join us in praying for these courageous friends, for their co-workers, and for peace among the divided and struggling people of Burundi and Rwanda. ❖

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A Night in an Uncomfortable Inn

by Betty Gifford
Denver, Colorado

Dorothy Day was fond of quoting St. Teresa of Avila, who said, "Life is a night spent in an uncomfortable inn." Do you and I lay our heads down at night in comfortable beds, or do we spend our lives in an uncomfortable inn?

Many of God's poor and unfortunate people live St. Teresa's words. Every person who considers herself or himself a Christian should spend a week in the lower east side of Manhattan or in the slum area of any large town in the United States. There people know no other life than that of an uncomfortable inn.

The inn has roaches, rats, filth from factories, and garbage in the streets. Dope addicts and drunks pass out on the sidewalk. Prostitutes walk to the sounds of



quarrelling, fighting, violence, and loud noises of frustrated trucks, cars, and motorcycles. The heat of summer and the cold of winter are unrelieved by air conditioning or adequate heating. This inn lacks adequate medical care, so people of 40 look 50, and people of 50 look 60. Many people there are toothless. Because we "comfortable Christians" can't even imagine this discomfort, we need to experience it. Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day experi-

enced it and cried out for houses of hospitality to serve Christ's poor and outcast people. They realized that not everyone can witness for Christ as they did. Yet they believed that everyone can extend Christ's love and hospitality.

One way to do this is to designate a room or part of one's home as a "Christ room," available to someone who has no place to live—a relative, friend, or anyone, for every person is Christ. If all homes called Christian took in one homeless person, there would be no people without homes. Can we serve Christ, sleeping in our comfortable inns and ignoring our brothers and sisters who live in life's uncomfortable inn? ❖



One way to do this is to designate a room or part of one's home as a "Christ room," available to someone who has no place to live—a relative, friend, or anyone, for every person is Christ.



Networking

A banyan tree, sending out shoots and putting down roots.

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Sharon Stacy Blackwell *

Anita Armbrister and Sharon Stacy Blackwell are Assistant Editors of Common Ground's 1996 Journal by Appalachian Women. The voices on this page are those of the women in this journal.

"My grandmother...she played the claw hammer banjo and the fiddle, so she taught my uncles to play. That's where my music roots come from."

"...it's important for our kids and grandkids to come along and say listen, you know, we got family. We've got a background. We've got somebody there that cares about us..."

"I think the mountain people are survivors. Especially the old people that's got a lot of age on em, got a lot of wear and tear. They're survivors. They've been through it all."

"...the creeks are all going dry, the river's going dry, people's wells are dry. People's houses, the foundations of their homes, is totally destroyed....And long-wall mining has done all of this."



Anita Armbrister *

"I tell 'em, like Jackie Robinson was first in Baseball, I had to break the barrier in FHA. So I was the first black person ever got a loan in Grayson County."

* Photos by Davida Johns



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February 1996

Dear Feminist Bookstore Friends:

I am sending you this most recent issue of Common Ground's newsletter, "Groundings" to update you on our work, on our upcoming 1996 journal by women in Appalachia, and on the availability of back issues.

I hope you will help us to distribute some of these journals by selling copies in your store. Each journal is based in community organizing, in women's shared experiences and dreams. In the process of creating the journals, poor women have helped to heal each other by stepping into the light. They have also chosen to provide leadership—in an even-crazier-it-seems society—with their courage, determination and wisdom.

Please see page 15 for details about ordering both the 1996 journal and back issues. Your selling on consignment is an option with an order of 15 or more copies of any issue. Some prefer to buy copies outright. Either way, we need to clear \$5 per copy plus postage and handling costs to us.

The stories, testimonies, and struggles of the women in Common Ground's journals are still current; the perspectives are needed!

With appreciation for your work and in hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Lilith Quinlan'.

Lilith Quinlan
Editor

P.S. Some of you have asked: The name is not "taken" but given. I was named—in 1947—for my two grandmothers, Lily (south Georgia) and Edith (Philadelphia). Born into conflict resolution and muticultural work!

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