

# JPIC REPORT



A publication of the OMI Justice and Peace/Integrity of Creation Office

**“In the millennium just past, immense progress was made in the areas of technology and science. Today we can dispose of vast material resources. But the men and women of our own technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements...”**

**- Benedict XVI**

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**From the Director:**

*Since the beginning of my papal ministry, I have repeatedly affirmed the importance of social solidarity as an instrument for building up the civilization of love for which humanity yearns. (Baltimore 1995)*

*- John Paul II*

One of the goals for the JPIC training session, sponsored by the Oblate General Administration, held in late July, in Bangkok, was to continue the process of building an OMI solidarity network. More than thirty Oblates from twenty different countries participated in the two-week-long JPIC event which was the first gathering of its kind in the history of the congregation. Ever since John Paul highlighted the concept of solidarity and invited us to explore, embrace and deepen our appreciation of the virtue of solidarity, greater attention has been given to developing and creating instruments and vehicles whereby this virtue can be realized in our lives. This invitation surfaced, as many people

and communities are wrestling also with the impact of globalization in their lives. Participants in Bangkok discussed how the increasing and rapidly evolving sense of connectedness, being realized during this period of globalization, makes opportunities for greater solidarity both more available and more challenging.

Through presentations and discussions on a variety of issues, participants deepened their appreciation of the numerous ways that events, activities and decisions affect and connect their lives and their worlds. Trade agreements, arms sales, immigration, food safety, debt cancellation, pollution, environmental destruction and human rights violations were among the many topics discussed and considered. How can our response to these challenging issues be sustained through an ever deepening commitment to solidarity?

Recognizing that there are still many obstacles to accessing the advances in

technology, modes of communication and travel that have developed in recent years, participants advanced a number of very practical steps toward building and taking advantage of a solidarity network. These included transmitting stories and images rapidly and accurately to increase awareness and disturb consciences; Activating a rapid response network that can protect lives by awakening international attention was also discussed.

For people of faith, building and using networks, both locally and globally, affords us new opportunities to be in solidarity and to deepen the virtue of solidarity in our personal and communal lives. What does it mean for us as Oblates, as Catholics and as citizens to deepen the virtue of solidarity? As we search for the images, words and stories that can sustain our vision of a people called and trusted by God to participate in the creation of a better world, how does the unfolding process of globalization offer all of us new avenues for solidarity?

**The OMI Justice and Peace/ Integrity of Creation Office** coordinates the advocacy efforts of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on behalf of the interests of the poor and abandoned in the U.S. and in the more than 65 countries where the Oblates are in mission. These efforts include serving as a resource for province membership, supporting the community organizing efforts of the Oblates in the United States, and coordinating the Corporate Responsibility Program to insist on just practices and policies by corporations in their worldwide operations. Our work also includes advocacy with the United States government and other international institutions on a variety of justice and peace issues.

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## News and Happenings



### **Kennedy Katongo, JPIC Summer Intern**

What is the role of a religious-in-formation in promoting a just world? From May 27<sup>th</sup> to August 11<sup>th</sup> 2007, Kennedy Katongo interned with the Justice and Peace office in Washington, DC to explore this question and be part of the Oblate community at the Provincial house. He focused on issues related to trade and debt.

Early on, Kennedy attended the annual conference of Bread for the World, an organization dedicated to ending global hunger. This focused on reform of the US Farm Bill, and culminated in a lobby day on Capitol Hill, reportedly an excellent experience. Throughout the summer, Kennedy attended meetings and talks to get a sense of the range of JPIC work done in Washington.

His research focused on vulture funds. (article pp 10-11) He hopes to continue this research, exploring further the threats posed by vulture funds to Congo DR.

The JPIC staff will miss his energy and good humor.

### **JPIC Training in Bangkok a Success**

More than thirty Oblates from 20 countries converged in Bangkok in late July for two weeks of training and sharing on a wide range of JPIC issues. One of the main goals of the session was to strengthen the global OMI solidarity network. Significant progress was made towards this end, with concrete proposals regarding future communication and action to promote solidarity.

### **African Synod Announced**

A second synod of African Catholic Bishops will take place on October 4-29, 2009 with a theme "Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace". The lineamenta (working document) was published in 2006 and is available at the Vatican website. The Oblate JPIC office, in collaboration with the Catholic Task Force on Africa, is discussing the lineamenta with a goal to engage and bring the attention of African issues to U.S Catholic communities.

### **Global Week of Action for Debt Cancellation + Economic Justice**

A planned 40-day "Cancel Debt Fast" ends with a

Prayer Breakfast (Oct. 16) and Lobby Day (Oct. 17) on Capitol Hill followed by protests and advocacy at the World Bank and IMF (Oct. 19-21).

*Events organized by Jubilee USA;*  
[www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org)

### **National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty**

The weekend of October 19-21, 2007 is scheduled for national actions on the death penalty by faith-based and human rights organizations.

**Death Penalty websites:**  
*U.S Catholic campaign:*  
[www.ccedp.org](http://www.ccedp.org)

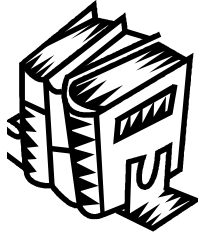
*Archives of executions:*  
<http://www.ncadp.org/>  
*State by state information & fact sheets:*  
[www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)

### **School of the Americas Annual Vigil and Protest**

Join the SOA vigil and protest Nov. 16-18. Activists from Colombia, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, U.S.A and other nations will gather at Fort Benning, Georgia for the annual vigil and to engage in non-violent direct actions to demand the close of the Army's School of the Americas. *For more details, call 202.234.3440 or register at*  
[www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)

## Book Nook

### *Human Trafficking:*



***Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It***, by David Batstone (Paperback; Feb., 2007)

***Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader***, by Kevin Bales (Paperback; Nov., 2005)

***Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy***, by Kevin Bales (Paperback - Nov., 2004)

All books are available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

### *Book Reviews:*

#### ***Climate Change: The challenge to all of us***

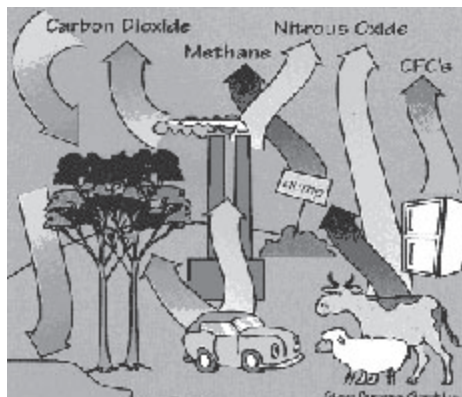
The Columba Press, October, 2006

In January 2006 three politicians, from different parts of the world, acknowledged that the consequences of global warming could be much worse than previously thought. In his address on Australia Day 2006 the Governor-General, Michael Jeffery, warned Australians that, 'one of the most daunting environmental challenges is global warming'. Former President Bill Clinton told the Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland that climate change was the most pressing threat which we now face. 'It has the power to end the march of civilisation as we know it.' The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in a preface in the book entitled *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*, wrote that, 'it is clear from the work presented here that the risks of

climate change may well be greater than we thought'.

In this book, Seán McDonagh, SSC, starts by describing the case for the threat of climate change and looks at the consequences of global warming. He then examines various responses to global warming and faces the question of whether Nuclear Power is the solution. This chapter on nuclear energy is perhaps one of the most illuminating of a highly informative book, revealing the practical limitations of nuclear energy as a substitute for fossil fuels. His fifth chapter reviews a wide range of energy-efficient measures and renewable energy technologies. Finally, Fr. McDonagh examines how the churches have responded to this threat to date, and offers practical suggestions for parishes and households alike.

Fr. Seán McDonagh is a Columban priest who has long been an activist in the field of ecological and environmental matters. He is a lecturer and a prolific author whose books include *The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction* (The Columba Press, 2004). *Climate Change* is available in paperback from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) (\$14.25)



## DVD Resources:



### ***Strangers No***

***Longer***, a new DVD on immigration and the response of the U.S Catholic Church. (22minutes) The DVD and accompanying study guide are available in English and Spanish at: [www.justiceforimmigrants.org/snldvd.html](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/snldvd.html)

***Lives For Sale***, a one hour documentary DVD on human trafficking, one side of illegal immigration. A co-production of Maryknoll and Lightfoot films, Inc. Available at [www.livesforsale.com](http://www.livesforsale.com)

***Coming to Say Goodbye: Stories of AIDS in Africa***, a 30- minute DVD about the personal and structural aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. Order your copy at: [www.olddogdocumentaries.com/vid\\_ctsg.html](http://www.olddogdocumentaries.com/vid_ctsg.html)

***Water For Life***, a DVD production of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in conjunction with National Council of Catholic Women. Water scarcity in many developing countries is threatening peace and security. Find it at: [http://education.crs.org/stewardship/water\\_for\\_life/](http://education.crs.org/stewardship/water_for_life/)

***Water for All*** is a major campaign of Church World Service, an ecumenical coalition of some CWS has a great series of materials on water in downloadable pdf versions at: [www.churchworldservice.org/Educ\\_Advo/water/index.html](http://www.churchworldservice.org/Educ_Advo/water/index.html) You can also order printed versions on-line for a modest amount.

## Modern-Day Slavery

By: Mary O'Herron

**T**here are more people enslaved today than at anytime in history – over 27,000,000.

To address this growing problem, the International Working Group (IWG) of the Social Investment Forum hosted a special event on human trafficking during its annual symposium in Washington, DC, May 2- 3. A three-person panel and keynote speech by David Batstone, author of *Not For Sale*, revealed that this multi-billion-dollar industry is both vast and tragic for millions of people around the world.

Those caught in the human trafficking web usually do not consent to their situation, or if they initially agree, the agreement is meaningless to the traffickers. They may be kept nearby or transported thousands of miles, but they are always exploited for labor or prostitution, and generate massive profits for their abusers.

### *Activists Speak Out*

**Linda Smith**, a Washington state Congressperson from 1994 to 1998, is the founder of **Shared Hope International** ([www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)), an organization that rescues girls, especially those who have been sexually exploited. Ms Smith focused her talk on commercially exploited children in the USA, especially children involved in pornography and prostitution, often victims of trafficking. She began her work in this area by looking into trafficking rings and focusing on the buyers, without whom there would be no trafficking. She says we make it too easy for buyers and pimps who often are not prosecuted to the full extent of the law while the victim/prostitutes, often in their teens, are arrested and jailed. One court in Las Vegas dealt with 181 cases: all of the prostitutes were convicted; only two pimps were arrested. There is a culture of tolerance for the buyers

but not for the victimized prostitutes who receive little help.

**Bradley Myles** is with the **Polaris Project** ([www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org); [www.HumanTrafficking.com](http://www.HumanTrafficking.com); [www.SlaveryStillExists.com](http://www.SlaveryStillExists.com)), an organization based in the USA and Japan that brings together community members, survivors and professionals to fight human trafficking and slavery.

Mr. Myles explained that trafficking is often done within a country's border, and the USA is not exempt. At times, no physical force is used, but threats, deception, debt, and manipulation of law enforcement are common. Victims stay out of fear; they are told if they go out or tell anyone, they will be arrested and harmed by the authorities. Sometimes they are beaten to keep them in line.

Situations in the U.S. in which slaves might be found include: domestic servitude (work as a nanny or au pair – usually women); small “mom&pop” businesses, especially restaurants; street sales; sweat shops; farm laborers; massage parlors; escort services; kids selling magazines door-to-door for points who are harmed if they don't make their daily quota.

Mr. Myles talked about the sex industry in US, in which victims are typically from Eastern Europe, Korea, or Latin America, but also from the US. Places where they work charge high prices for food and drink; the girls are kept for the use of the patrons. The business skirts the law by not overtly offering sex for pay; patrons pay the high prices and get a girl in the deal.

**Jolene Smith**, the final panelist, is with **Free the Slaves**, ([www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)), a group that focuses on slavery around the world – how and where it happens, offering help to those assisting slaves.

Ms Smith said that while poverty and slavery go hand in hand, poverty is not the only factor determining slavery. Asia has far more slaves (20 million) than Africa (1 million), which she said was due to a cultural difference, that Asia is more open to the exploitation of people, especially women and children. Slaves are used in the making of hand-knotted rugs, jewelry, and cotton clothing. They are also found in the mining and timber industries, rice mills and forced sex businesses, and as child soldiers. Certainly the ease of air travel to Asian capital cities explains some of the booming sex tourism.



'Free the Slaves' has developed strategies for freeing slaves by helping whole groups/communities/workforces move toward simultaneous liberation. The planning of employment for freed people after they gain freedom is critical for success lest they end up back in bondage or worse.

**The Keynote speaker was David Batstone**, a professor of Ethics at the University of San Francisco, and the author of **Not For Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade—and How We Can Fight It**.

Slave labor can be found in many unexpected places. David Batstone told a story about a restaurant he and his wife frequented in San Francisco. Eventually they learned that the employees had been brought to the US under false pretenses and held captive in order to work both there and at other businesses controlled by the owner. When Mr. Batstone learned about this, he was astounded, and began strong efforts to reveal the scope of human trafficking/slavery and to combat it.

He told of how some slaves are born into slavery: He met a little girl working in a rice mill, then met her mother, her grandmother and great-grandmother who were all working off a \$10-debt incurred by the great-grandfather during a time of famine. The owner claimed that the debt only increased as time went by because of interest on the loan, food and shelter given to the family, etc.

Through his talk, Mr. Batstone revealed the breadth and heart-breaking nature of this problem. He ended by urging everyone to join him in abolishing human trafficking.

***Corporations can be part of the solution:***

Since many in the audience were financial advisors or socially responsible investors active in corporate dialog, the speakers

offered ideas for corporate activism on this issue. They suggested urging corporations to start with their own work force and create clear, forceful guidelines that holding out prosecution according to the law. With such guidelines in place, their employees know they will be in trouble if they are found to be buyers of sex in the US or abroad.

Corporations can make sure their global supply chains and stores where their products are sold are free of slave labor. Boycotts as a strategy were not encouraged. Companies are sensitive, though, to being tagged as slave users, so it is effective to ask them to lead the way in preventing slavery in their operations.

Consumers and investors should urge corporations to sign and abide by the Athens Ethical Principles to End Human Trafficking. For details, please visit:

[www.endhumantraffickingnow.com/](http://www.endhumantraffickingnow.com/)

***Church Communities are urged to lead the way:***

Conference speakers urged religious communities to lead the way against this scourge. Some practical suggestions were made.

- ◆ Religious could make their congregations aware of this issue.
- ◆ Churches/Parishes can make it clear that their spaces are a safe-haven for trafficked people.
- ◆ Churches might help build small economies, i.e., have a store that sells items made by freed people.

***Missionary Oblate Involvement:***

The Missionary Oblate JPIC Office has joined the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking to work with other Catholic groups to eliminate trafficking.

The office is also active in the **Interfaith Center on Corporate**

**Responsibility (ICCR) Working Group on Human Trafficking.** At the moment, ICCR's efforts against trafficking are focused on child sex tourism. Members of ICCR are contacting corporations in the tourism industry, with special emphasis given to hotels, and are asking these corporations to adopt a Code of Conduct drawn up by ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes).

The Board of Marriot International has approved a change in their Human Rights Policy to include a section on Protection of Children and will train their personnel. It plans to meet and report to ICCR on how it is being implemented. Host Hotels and Starwood Hotels and Resorts are also cooperating, having agreed to address the sexual exploitation of children in their Human Rights Policies and to train employees. Four other companies have been contacted about the issue.

As Oblates, in addition to the above, we can keep chipping away at these and other evils through our prayers and by continuing to bring the message of Jesus to the world.

If you suspect a situation involves **human trafficking**, call the Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. This will help you see if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will help you find local resources to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit the US Department of Health and Human Services website: [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)

*For more information, please contact Mary O'Herron in the Oblate JPIC Office, [maryoh@omiusa.org](mailto:maryoh@omiusa.org) or by calling 202-529-4505*

## The World Social Forum : A Six-Month Reflection

John Lasseigne, OMI

In late January I attended the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. More than 50,000 people from all over the world attended the Forum, including about twenty-five Oblate priests and seminarians.

During the Forum's four days we took part in talks, prayer services, panel discussions, marches, rallies, movies, dances and theatrical performances. Through all these activities, the Forum's organizers and participants tried to bring attention to issues severely affecting the world's poorer countries, issues such as hunger, AIDS, unfair trade practices, and worker abuse, to name a few.

Six months later, I was asked what the long-term consequences of attending the Forum might be for me. That's a good question. Immersed, once again, as I am in managing a busy parish, I wonder if the trip and the issues it raised have not been shoved into some dark corner of my consciousness, like photos in an old album.

"Life is too busy, and Africa just too far away for me to become involved in such large international justice issues," I tell myself. "Let me prepare my next homily well, and if I am lucky, I might rouse at least a few people to think about issues facing our local school district or county."

I believe, however, there have been some long-term consequences of the trip. I returned to South Texas wanting to share what I had learned with others. Within a month of my

return I had given Power Point presentations at all the parish weekend masses; to our local Oblate Associates, a group of lay Catholics who identify with our congregation's charism; and to a meeting of all the Texas Oblates.

I also shared my experiences in conversations with individuals and smaller groups. Few people with whom I spoke had heard of the Forum, even though there have been several since the late 1990s, held in different locations around the world. Everyone was impressed with the Forum's size and scope. One common response was: "Fifty-thousand people! Where did they find so many people outside of a sporting event?"

A religious sister I know asked the best and most challenging question: "Did you spend your time acting, or only talking?" More on her question in a moment.

One effect of my trip was to challenge people's pessimistic stereotypes about Africa, including my own. When we hear "Africa," too many of us think of a continent-sized slough of poverty, warfare, corruption, and sickness, a place of great suffering and little hope. I was surprised by the vibrancy of African life and culture that I witnessed at the Forum. Others have also been surprised to hear how, even with its slums, Nairobi is a prosperous and bustling capital, as impressive as many cities in the United States.

I often quoted talks by Archbishop Tutu and an AIDS activist from



Chad, who both essentially said the following: "Allow us Africans to solve our own problems. We don't need handouts from the West. We just ask that Europe and the United States, when they deal with us, to speak a bit more humbly and not to put obstacles in our way."

At a few Masses I ended my presentation by inviting those who desired to become foreign missionaries to speak to me later. A woman and a divorced man expressed such an interest. After making a few calls on their behalf, I had to share with them the unfortunate news that the Oblate U.S. Province no longer sponsors a lay missionary program. No one expressed interest in becoming an Oblate priest or brother, even though foreign missionary work is still available to us.

Returning to the sister's question, though; I do sometimes think of the things I have not done after the trip. I have not stayed in touch with the non-U.S. Oblates whom I met in Kenya. I have not shipped the computers that I promised to the middle school, although I did place

an announcement in our church bulletin asking for donations. Maybe someone will donate the computers in the next few months. I have not sent \$500 for tuition to the Ugandan girl who wrote me after I returned from the Forum. But I do still speak about Africa sometimes in homilies and other presentations. And I continue carrying the heavy workload of my parish. In the area of social justice, I work mostly on local issues, such as increasing state funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, supporting fair immigration policies, and opposing the proposed fence along the U.S.-Mexican border.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe and Darfur, where things hardly seem capable of becoming worse, somehow manage to do so, from week to tragic week. And when I think about Africa, I think of those great senior Oblates—men such as Ron Carignan, Paul Waldie, and David Kalert—who accepted assignments to Africa after spending most of their priesthood in the United States.

Who knows? Perhaps one day the same outcome might become for me the most significant consequence of the 2007 World Social Forum.

*For information on the World Social Forum and follow-up to the Conference, please go to:*  
<http://wsf2007.org/>



## 6<sup>th</sup> U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**F**our Oblates participated in the May 2007 UN Forum on Indigenous Issues: **Joseph Gomes** from Bangladesh, **Daniel LeBlanc** as OMI representative to the UN, **Nicanor Sarmiento**, currently studying at the University of California at Berkeley, and **Seamus Finn** as acting OMI Justice, Peace and Integrity General Service Chair for the Congregation.

The central theme of the UNPFII (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) for the 6th Session was: "Lands, Territories and Natural Resources". This annual forum provides a platform for indigenous peoples to voice their demands and dialogue with governments and the UN system about their concerns.

This year's high level meeting attracted some 1500 indigenous peoples' representatives and a host of interested representatives from governments, NGOs and academe.

The Oblate representatives both established new and developed existing contacts with Indigenous Peoples from many countries. There was a close working relationship throughout the sessions, especially with representatives from Bangladesh and Central and South America.

Through the Congregation's Associate Membership in VIVAT International, an ECOSOC-recognized NGO which can participate officially in these sessions, the Oblates held a side-event at the Forum titled: "Land: An Essential Resource for Indigenous Peoples – A Tale of Loss and Recovery." Joseph Gomes, OMI and Mr. Sanjeeb Drong of Bangladesh were two of the four speakers on the panel.


At the conclusion of the Session clear recommendations were issued in a range of areas considered critical for the physical, cultural and spiritual



survival, identity and well-being of the more than 370 million indigenous people worldwide. The Forum urged States to take measures to halt land alienation in indigenous territories, through for example, a moratorium on the sale and registration of land - including the granting of land and other concessions - in areas occupied by indigenous peoples.

"One of the key reasons why indigenous peoples are being disenfranchised from their lands and territories is the existence of discriminatory laws, policies and programmes that do not recognise indigenous peoples' land tenure systems and give more priority to claims being put by corporations – both state and private," said Ms. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the Permanent Forum.

The Forum reaffirmed the central role of indigenous peoples in decision-making concerning their lands and resources, referring to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 29 June 2006, which emphasizes the need for free, prior and informed consent."

Next year's forum will take place in New York, with the theme being Climate Change, the Pacific Region and Indigenous languages. 

## Glittering, Ghastly Gold

*Christina C. Herman*

The Chinese and Indian economies are booming, and there has been a concomitant increase in mining around the world, mostly in developing countries. Mining results in severe environmental and health problems, with the overuse and pollution of local water sources being among the most serious consequences of this under-regulated industry.

Large open-pit mining is the method most commonly employed to mine commercially useful minerals or rocks found near the earth's surface. Many mine sites contain several large pits – some a mile across. The rock mined from them is crushed and often mixed with cyanide or other toxic chemicals to extract the desired minerals.

Once the minerals are removed from the ore, the mine waste is mixed with water. This slurry – or tailings - is stored in large containment ponds which should be well lined to prevent leakage. The water eventually evaporates, leaving behind the contaminated soil and rock.

In island countries, mining companies say there is no room for tailings ponds, and they prefer to dump the waste directly into nearby rivers or bays. In countries like Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, for example, where environmental regulation and enforcement are lax, this practice has resulted in massive pollution. River life and aquatic breeding grounds near the coast have been destroyed, and local communities have suffered



debilitating health problems. The dumping of tailings in rivers and bays is illegal in the U.S., but many developing country governments opt for the investment and overlook the negative impacts, which occur far from capitol cities and affect primarily the poor.

Buyat Bay in Indonesia is a good example of the problems associated with ocean dumping of tailings. The Minahasa Gold Mine operated for only seven years, yet poured more than 4 million tons of contaminated waste into the local bay, resulting in heavy metal contamination, destruction of fisheries, and serious health problems for the residents. The community brought legal action against Newmont Mining Corporation, the mine operator. While refusing to admit there was a problem, the company agreed to a \$30 million settlement.

Even when mine tailings are contained in ponds, disastrous leakage can occur. Toxic tailings have leaked out of and overflowed their containment ponds, wreaking devastation on local rivers and ground water. At two mining sites in Bolivia, where Oblates are active, Kori Chaka (in Oruro,

south of La Paz) and Kori Kollo, (125 miles southeast of La Paz in the Andes Plain), unlined tailings ponds have leaked and those that are lined are feared to be inadequate. The Oblates have been

working with local community leaders to press the mining companies concerned to address the consequences of their operations on local populations and the environment. Newmont Mining Corporation holds a majority share in both mines.

Acid mine drainage (AMD) is the other potentially serious threat to water supplies from mining. Once sulfide ores are mined and exposed to air and water, they give off sulfuric acid. When this happens, the acid must be neutralized with chemicals, in perpetuity. **Sulfuric acid production can last as long as ten thousand years.** The Peruvian gold mine, Yanacocha, in operation for only 13 years, has five big pits, all of which are generating acid. The AMD drainage from the Yanacocha will contaminate the entire water supply in this primarily agricultural area.

Unconstrained acid mine drainage damages ecosystems when it finds its way into waterways and groundwater alike. It can further pollute waterways with potentially toxic metals leached from the rock through which the acidic water flows. These can include arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, zinc, iron, copper, aluminum,



manganese, and chromium. AMD is a time bomb waiting for countries anxiously courting foreign investment through mining. The only solution to this problem is to force companies not to build mines in areas where sulfides are present in the rock.

People in developing countries - especially the poor - lack both information on the negative impacts of mining and the ability to force decent environmental regulation of large mining corporations. Often, local communities are opposed to the mining, but corruption paves the way for their operation.

In Ghana, the recently developed Ahafo mine, also operated by Newmont Mining, has displaced 10,000 poor farmers from a region of Ghana that produces 30% of the country's food. An outstanding question is whether affected farmers will be granted replacement farmlands. The company has dammed the local river for its use, taking water previously used by people to irrigate their cocoa crops, and for which the company pays nothing.

Prior to the vote on this World Bank-funded project, NGOs pushed for an independent analysis of the operation. In response, the US EPA sent a mining expert to Ghana to look at Newmont's testing, and found it seriously lacking. Concerns center on the location of the tailings pond, which threatens the integrity of the surface and ground water, and whether the mining will generate Acid Mine Drainage. The company claims it wants to do the right thing, but refuses to allow access to its data and does not use peer-reviewed testing.

The loan was approved, although the US abstained, and the mine has started operation.

A number of groups are involved in responsible mining campaigns. Oxfam America and Earthworks have launched a "No Dirty Gold" campaign, calling on retailers and manufacturers of gold jewelry, electronics, and other goods to work



to ensure that the gold they use was not produced at the expense of local communities, workers, and the environment. Campaigners are calling for the global mining industry to provide retailers and consumers an alternative to dirty gold. As of February, 23 jewelry retailers, including Tiffany's and Walmart, had endorsed the No Dirty Gold campaign's Golden Rules criteria for more responsible mining.

Increasingly, campaigners are putting pressure on companies directly to stop their harmful practices. The Missionary Oblates, through the US JPIC Office, are coordinating with other members of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) in a campaign involving Newmont Mining and other companies. They are asking the mining companies to change both their template for engaging local

communities and to employ better and safer ways of extracting the metals and minerals from the ore and rocks that are mined.

During 2007, ICCR shareholders are meeting with Newmont Mining Corporation to review and critique the company's efforts to respond to a shareholder resolution calling for "free, prior and informed consent", a

resolution that received 91.6% of the vote at the April Annual General Meeting. In a four-hour discussion with the company in June, shareholders provided suggestions and feedback on the company's plan of

response to the resolution. They are waiting to review the next draft of the plan and hope to meet with the company throughout the process. This report will have to be completed and presented to the shareholders by the next AGM in 2008. It is hoped that insights from this report will lead to significant changes in existing as well as future Newmont sites.

In the long run, given the harmful impacts on people and the earth, there needs to be less mining overall. This will be hard for the industry to swallow, but in the meantime, it is urgent to develop a broad acceptance that certain practices are simply unacceptable.

*Interested in more information?*

*See: [www.nodirtygold.org](http://www.nodirtygold.org);*

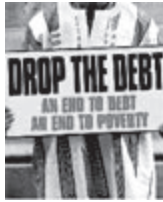
*[www.iccr.org](http://www.iccr.org);*

*[www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org)*

## Vulture Funds: Preying on the Poor

*Kennedy Chalwe-Muma Katongo, OMI*

As the famous saying goes, ‘when two elephants are fighting, it’s the grass that suffers’. When governments and commercial creditors or financial institutions are ‘fighting’ it’s the poor majority that suffers the consequences of their decisions. Our world today is hard-hit by societal evils. Corruption, poverty, unjust wars, lack of proper health and education facilities, HIV/AIDS and the continuing burden of unjust debt make the goal of sufficiency for all remote at best. Vulture Funds are a particularly insidious aspect of the international debt burden. While legal, these are highly immoral financial mechanisms that prey on poor countries.



by eliminating taxes on profits. A number of vulture funds are owned or managed by large, often US or UK-based financial institutions like hedge funds. There is little or no information available about who owns and manages them. As the trend has shown, most of them are established to pursue one debt and then shut down. For instance, Donegal International Limited (DI), the company that sued Zambia for \$55 million, is registered in the British Virgin Islands, and its only business is to pursue the Zambia debt.

In 1999, as Zambia was in negotiations to clear the debt they owed to Romania, Donegal International swooped in and bought up the debt – then valued at around \$30 million, with accrued interest – for a knockdown price of \$3.3 million. Donegal then sued Zambia in a London court for the full amount of the debt, plus compound interest, demanding a staggering \$55 million in total! The court has ordered Zambia to pay \$15.5 million. For Zambia, this is money that could train doctors and nurses, pay teachers, and build hospitals. Donegal’s director Michael Sheehan, who owns a company called Debt Advisory International, is



*What are these vulture funds?*

They are companies seeking to maximize their investments by buying heavily discounted debt belonging to countries facing serious financial difficulties. Once the debt of a heavily indebted poor country (HIPC) is reduced by external creditors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or creditor governments the remaining debt increases in value. The vulture funds then try to recover the full amount and more of the discounted debt they had previously bought, often by suing through the courts.

*Who are these vulture funds and how do they operate?*

The vulture funds in most instances tend to be secretive and operate ‘underground’. Many of them are based in tax havens, countries that invite financial activity and investments

based in Washington, D.C. and was an important contributor to the Bush presidential campaign.

When a poor country owes debt to a commercial creditor, or an indebted government has not yet been restructured according to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) deal or the Multi-lateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) – there is a greater chance that a financial firm will seek to buy that debt at a deep discount and then seek repayment of the original amount of the debt, often via litigation. Many companies call these acts ‘Capitalizing’, but debt campaigners and others with a moral conscience call them vulture activities. Neil Watkins, Director of Jubilee USA explained: “Vulture fund activity has increased in the past three years with the provision of debt cancellation, as these funds seek to take advantage of resources being freed up by debt relief. Vulture fund activity has resulted in a large and growing number of lawsuits being brought against HIPC [countries].” At present there have been at least 40 lawsuits by commercial creditors against HIPCs with many still outstanding. The timing of these lawsuits in most cases coincides with the multilateral debt relief from the World Bank and IMF. The companies generally win their lawsuits; making huge profits on their initial “investment”.

Vulture funds are quite legal. The fund buys the loan from the creditor, not the debtor, enabling it to claim payment of the full amount, even if the debt was bought at only a fraction of the face value. The vulture fund then

negotiates with the debtor, and is careful to ensure their agreement includes a provision allowing the fund to sue for the full amount of the debt, including interest and penalties, in case of non-payment or any other deviation from the agreement. Hence the vulture funds are able to purchase a debt often worth next to nothing, then turn around and sue the debtor for its full face value once the value of that debt increases following debt cancellation by other creditors.

*What countries are at risk?*



The case of Zambia has been well-publicized, but it is not the only country victimized by vulture funds. There have been at least 40 lawsuits by commercial creditors against HIPC countries; more than half of these are with African countries. According to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the IMF's HIPC Initiative's 2006 report, some of the countries currently being pursued by vulture funds include: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia.

Probably the hardest lesson these nations have learned is that the poorest of the poor, who are the majority, have to suffer at the hands of past corrupt activities and present vulture greed. Tragically, funds that

should be spent on poverty eradication, health, education, and unemployment services will now be spent on servicing these odious vulture debts. Greater transparency, accountability and responsibility in borrowing are necessary to avoid this scalping in the future.

*What is the moral dimension of vulture fund activity?*

I come to these debates with a long tradition of Catholic social teaching that examines ways to organize and structure social and economic life to liberate rather than oppress people. We are all created in the image and likeness of God. The goods of the earth are intended for everyone and people have the right to participate in decisions which affect them in fundamental ways. From what my Catholic faith informs me, 'the global economy has a moral dimension and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid, and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on the globe'. As a Christian, I mourn the suffering and difficulties that the poor majority has to endure from the greed of the vulture funds. They are draining scarce resources from needed development, which is immoral.

Debt campaigners are pressing for a better and more effective framework to deal with this problem. They are urging the G-8 governments to crack down on vulture funds by passing legislation declaring illegal the practice of buying "bad" debt cheaply and using wealthy countries' courts to demand full payment. In addition, a stronger, and more transparent and

responsible mechanism for the contracting and management of debt in poor countries is needed. This calls for legislation that would, at the least, allow national parliaments to scrutinize and approve new loans. The recent World Bank President, James Wolfensohn described the case against Zambia as "appalling" and said, "I'm hoping that... increased attention on this issue may enable the international community to come up with some effective legal remedies that protect poor countries from this unfair dealing and in time sustain an effective credit system for poor countries."

As Christians, we have a moral obligation to seek the common good and well-being of all, acting as a voice with the voiceless, especially the poor and vulnerable. I invite all to take action against the activities of the vulture funds and all activities that promote and perpetuate societal evils and 'structures of sin'. As Samir Amin an African economist says, "In a world of plenty, poverty can and must be eliminated by changing the structural imbalances that create and maintain impoverishment in Africa and around the world."



**Action**

**Suggestion:**

**Call now to ask your Congressional Representative to co-sponsor the Jubilee Act, H.R. 2634, which contains provisions to prevent future vulture fund activity. For details of the legislation and more information, see: [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org) for details.**

## Eco-Tips: Practical Ideas for Earth-Friendly Living



**What happens to my old cell phone after I upgrade? Do the stores really recycle them or give them to the poor, or are they just ending up in landfills? Where can I take mine to ensure that it is dealt with properly?**

As cellphones proliferate they are competing with computers and monitors for the dubious distinction as the largest contributor to the world's growing e-waste problem. Indeed, toxin-laden electronics are clogging landfills and polluting air and groundwater supplies from coast to coast in North America.

The average North American gets a new cellphone every 18 to 24 months, making old phones—many of which contain hazardous materials like lead, mercury, cadmium, brominated flame retardants and arsenic—the fastest growing type of manufactured garbage in the nation. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Americans discard 125 million phones each year, creating 65,000 tons of waste.

Luckily, a new breed of electronics recyclers is stepping in to help. Call2Recycle, a nonprofit organization, offers consumers and retailers in the U.S. and Canada simple ways to recycle old phones.

Consumers can enter their zipcode on the group's website and be directed to a drop box in their area. Most major electronics retailers, from Radio Shack to Office Depot, participate in the program and offer Call2Recycle drop-boxes in their stores. Call2Recycle recovers the phones and sells them back to manufacturers which either refurbish and resell them or recycle their parts for use in making new products.

The CollectiveGood organization takes used cellphones, refurbishes them and then re-sells them to distributors and carriers for use primarily in developing countries, providing affordable communications to poorer citizens while helping to “bridge the digital divide.” They also recycle all non-functioning batteries through a partnership with the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation. When you donate your phone to CollectiveGood you can direct the profits from the sales to a charity of your choice.

Another player is ReCellular, which manages the in-store collection programs for Bell Mobility, Sprint PCS, T-Mobile, Best Buy and Verizon. The company also maintains partnerships with Easter Seals, the March of Dimes, Goodwill Industries and other nonprofits that undertake cellphone collection drives as a way of funding their charitable work. According to ReCellular vice-president Mike Newman, the company is trying to change attitudes about used cellphones, to get consumers to “automatically think of recycling cellphones just like they currently do with paper, plastic or glass.

Neither the U.S. or Canada mandates electronics recycling of any kind at the federal level, but a few states and provinces are getting into the act at their own initiative. Last year, California passed the first cellphone recycling law in North America. Other U.S. states considering similar legislation include Illinois, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Vermont and Virginia, while the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick are likely to jump on the mandatory cell phone recycling bandwagon soon.

*To re-cycle your old cellphone, please contact:*

*Call2Recycle [www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/](http://www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/);*

*CollectiveGood [www.collectivegood.com/index.asp](http://www.collectivegood.com/index.asp);*

*ReCellular <http://wirelessrecycling.com/home/index.html>*

*Information for this article came from E-The Environmental Magazine, Earthtalk, Week of 06/06/07, [www.emagazine.com](http://www.emagazine.com)*

*A free on-line emagazine newsletter is available.*



## Zimbabwe: A Deepening Crisis

George K. Ngolwe



**M**r. John Moyo, a school teacher in the Zimbabwe's capital city Harare, holds his breath each time he stands in line to buy corn meal, salt and cooking oil because the price of these items will have doubled by the time he reaches the cashier. Shortage of basic goods has forced three million Zimbabweans into exile in search of a better life, many of them highly educated. Zimbabwe was once called the breadbasket of Southern Africa. Today its economy is out of control, with unemployment at 80% and an annual hyperinflation rate of over 4,500%.

Robert Mugabe, 83, is one of the Africa's longest serving Presidents, having taken power on a wave of popular support in 1980. Mugabe, a Catholic, received scholarships in his youth from the church to study. He has honorary doctoral degrees in law from the University of Massachusetts (1986), Michigan State University (1990) and Edinburg University in Scotland (1984). Mugabe critics have petitioned the university boards for the recall of these degrees because their sanctity has been compromised by Mugabe's poor human rights record.

### *State Sponsored Repression*

Mugabe was a beloved liberator from British colonial rule at the time of independence in 1980, and a good son in the eyes of the IMF and World Bank in the 1990s. Like many African leaders, he turned to these

financial institutions for help with his declining economy. Mugabe implemented structural adjustment programs as mandated by the IMF and World Bank with the view of obtaining capital to service the national debt. However, Mugabe's relationship with the IMF and World Bank was short-lived because of "unrealistic demands" of these institutions on Zimbabwe.

In 1998, Mugabe deployed troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo to support a rebel faction at the expense of a declining economy, a move totally opposed by the IMF and the World Bank. The economy started to decline faster as the IMF withheld aid, resulting in a lack of foreign exchange and escalating food prices. The declining economy angered many Zimbabweans who rioted against the Mugabe regime.

Mugabe responded to the riots by declaring the IMF, the World Bank, Britain and the United States to be conspirators trying to overthrow his regime. Mugabe lost popularity as more riots continued. To regain popularity, Mugabe turned to the emotional issue of land reform, an



issue that had been unresolved since independence.

White farmers who did not align with the Mugabe regime were evicted and their farms given to Africans who supported Mugabe. Opposition to the regime has been met with brutality, torture and detentions.

### *Voices of Justice in Zimbabwe*

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007 the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference issued a pastoral letter entitled "God hears the cry of the Oppressed" which examined the situation in light of Catholic social teaching. This pastoral letter affirmed the suffering of the people of Zimbabwe, the crisis in government and its leadership, and offered a message of hope to the nation.

Ecumenical groups, labor movements, student groups and civil society welcomed this pastoral letter. However, President Mugabe interpreted the bishops' letter as a confrontation and retaliated with threats, labeling the bishops enemies of the regime.

The Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo, Pius Ncube, is a popular leader who has constantly challenged Mugabe's brutal regime. Bishop Ncube, with whom the Oblates in Bulawayo work closely, protests the torture and criticizes Mugabe for allowing Zimbabweans to starve for political reasons. Because of his criticism, Bishop Pius Ncube has received many death threats from Mugabe supporters. A number of foreigners, including Oblates from South Africa, have not been able to

*continued on p. 14*

## Parish Environmental Committee Starts Small, Sells Big!

*John Lasseigne, OMI*

**H**ow can a parish start a revolution?

In early 2007 the members of the environmental group at St. John the Baptist Parish in San Juan, Texas asked themselves that question. They knew it would take a revolution of values for the town's residents to stop contributing to Earth's destruction and to start living environmentally responsible lives.

The group heeded the advice of Fr. Darrell Rupiper, OMI, who just had given the parish several ecological talks: "Do something small, so you have a feeling of accomplishment." The small thing the members chose was to sell compact florescent light bulbs (CFLs) to parishioners after the masses for two weekends in March.

CFL bulbs produce light with less heat than incandescent bulbs, and so use less energy. By replacing one incandescent with a CFL bulb, a homeowner can save \$30-45 a year. And CFL bulbs last up to eight years.

Fr. Joseph Dowling, OMI, a seminarian interning at St. John's Parish at the time, struck a deal with the local Lowe's hardware manager: the parish would buy two hundred CFL six-packs for \$9 a pack, \$1 off the regular price. The environmental group then sold the six-packs to parishioners for \$10 per box.

As they sold them, the members preached an environmental message. "We made people aware of the [greenhouse gases] they could prevent by using less electricity," said Gloria Morales, co-coordinator of the group. "These bulbs have been



around for a long time. But people did not see how beneficial they were. They saw them only as a sales gimmick."

Satisfied with the first sale, the group then decided in June to sell reusable denim shopping bags, purchased at Hobby Lobby for \$2.50 a piece. Alma Castillo gave a demonstration at mass on how many more grocery items a denim bag can hold than a typical plastic bag. She also noted the hundreds of years that a plastic bag remains in the Earth before decomposing. Again, St. John's parishioners responded to the environmental appeal: in two weekends they bought all 250 denim bags.

Parishioner Connie Champion showed Fr. John Lasseigne, OMI, how a friend had embroidered her bag with the words, "Connie's Shopping Bag." "I told the clerk [at the local supermarket] to expect to see a lot more of these in the future," Champion said.

So how does a parish start a revolution?

Apparently, by one bag and light bulb at a time.

*continued from p. 13*

renew their visas because they are accused of working against Mugabe.

Regional African countries are both concerned and fatigued by Zimbabwe's crisis, and their leaders are quietly trying to negotiate a deal between the Mugabe regime and the main opposition party. They have, however, failed to condemn Mugabe for his egregious human rights violations. South Africa President Thabo Mbeki is the chief negotiator of the Zimbabwe crisis.

The U.S. government has openly criticized Mugabe's political and economic management. U.S. officials predict a regime change soon, due to the hyperinflation and high unemployment which is putting tremendous pressure on the regime.

The Mugabe regime is also systematically brutal. Special police and militia on the government payroll raid offices and homes, detaining and torturing opponents of the regime. Workers and religious leaders are terrorized when they demand better salaries or denounce government policies resulting in food shortages.

This political and economic crisis has a heavy impact on Zimbabweans. President Mugabe seems determined to hold onto power until the end of his term in 2008. Whether the people of Zimbabwe will allow him to do so is the question.

*For more information, please visit:*  
[www.zimbabwesituation.com](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com)  
[www.sokwanele.com](http://www.sokwanele.com);  
[www.kubatana.net](http://www.kubatana.net)



## Congressional Updates

### Immigration Reform



The U.S. Senate has failed the American people by not acting on a much-needed immigration reform. Senate Democrats failed to win over enough Republican votes to pass a proposed immigration reform bill despite this being a key domestic agenda item for President Bush.

This failure to deal with the immigration crisis is morally unacceptable; migrants continue to risk death crossing the border and millions of undocumented families and workers live in fear of raids, detention and deportation.

The status quo fails to address problems raised by unchecked immigration for U.S.-born workers and local communities, the strains on immigrant families or address economic realities. While the bill was not perfect; it was a good starting point to fix the current broken immigration system.

Let us hope this broken system does not have to wait for repair until after the 2008 elections.

*For the most recent immigration update:*

[www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)  
[www.cirnnow.org](http://www.cirnnow.org)

### Haiti Debt Relief Bill Needs Co-sponsors



*Contact your representative in the House today about co-sponsoring the Haiti Debt Cancellation Resolution (House Resolution 241) urging the World Bank, IMF, Inter-American Development Bank, and other financial institutions to immediately cancel Haiti's debt.*

The Haiti Debt Relief Bill, introduced by Rep. Maxine Waters last March in the U.S. House of Representatives has 61 co-sponsors but needs more to make its way to a floor vote. The bill calls for complete and immediate cancellation of Haiti's multilateral debt. Haiti sends \$56 million in debt service payments each year to international financial institutions that were founded to fight poverty. This is money that would be better spent on providing clean water, education and healthcare to Haiti's poor.

Please call your Representative in Washington through the House Switchboard (202-224-3121), or at his/her district office. A sample script could be: "My name is \_\_\_\_, I live in \_\_\_\_ and I support debt cancellation to release resources to fight poverty in Haiti. I am calling to urge Rep. \_\_\_\_\_ to co-sponsor House Resolution 241, which would immediately cancel Haiti's debt." Co-Sponsors can sign up with Kathleen Sengstock in Rep. Waters' office.

*For more information, check our website: [www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org) under Global Justice.*

### Keep Up the Pressure for Children's Health Care

The US House and Senate recently passed separate bills that would significantly improve the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a state-federal partnership that covers children from low-income families that do not qualify for Medicaid. The two chambers now need to agree on a compromise version of the legislation, which would then go to the president. The legislation aims to expand health care to some of the nine million children without health insurance in the US.

Please call your Congressional representatives in the House and Senate to urge support for a strong reauthorization of SCHIP, resembling the House-passed bill. The members of the House and Senate conference committee that will craft compromise legislation need to hear a groundswell of support for key provisions. The House bill includes several elements that the Senate bill does not, including \$15 billion more in funding (for a total of \$50 billion in new funding), increased flexibility for states to use innovative approaches to reach more eligible people, the option for states to cover children up to age 24, and health care for legal immigrant women and children. These provisions will give states the option to provide more health care coverage to vulnerable populations.

September is a key month for voicing your support for a strong reauthorization of the SCHIP bill. Call now to protect the health of all our children.

*For more information visit:*  
[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

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“Be the change you  
want to see in the  
world.” - Gandhi



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*“Preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary.”  
St. Francis of Assisi*

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