

The Face of Oppression in ...Canada?

This fall, I found myself in a small town, New Brunswick jail. Shocked and soaked with Atlantic Ocean water, I tried to digest what had been a very un-Canadian day.

At about eleven that morning, I had been in a boat on the waters of Miramichi Bay, and the RCMP had rammed the boat, sending the four of us into the water. This was not the first time boats had been rammed on Miramichi Bay this fall, but the other rammings had been by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The Burnt Church First Nation, Esgenoopetitj, was harvesting lobster for their traditional fall fishery. With treaties signed 250 years ago, the British crown guaranteed the Atlantic coast First Nations access and harvesting rights to natural resources. On September 17, 1999 this right was reaffirmed with the Supreme Court of Canada Marshall Decision. The response to the Marshall Decision was not a good one by the federal government and also by many non-native fishers. The Supreme Court, in response to the uproar, released a clarification, something never done before. The clarification only served to make the situation more difficult as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans claims that it gives them the right to regulate the native fishery, while the Mi'kmaq feel that to regulate their own fishery means they can implement their own management plan. The clarification does assert that the DFO can intervene for issues of conservation or public safety but the burden of proof lies upon them, as they must justify their reasons for intervening. They must justify themselves through a negotiation process where they can say how their management of the fishery would be more effective.

The Esgenoopetitj First Nation has been met on the waters of Miramichi Bay by DFO boats arresting fishers for their "illegal" fishing.

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A JUST STRUGGLE

The individual somewhere chooses to rebel against unjust norms and practices obnoxiously perpetuated by dominant societal values and structures. Individual and collective experience has produced inner urges for transformation that linger. Sometimes suppressed for long periods of time, their presence then peaks, willfully.

Thousands of years ago, the people who would become the Jews chose liberation. They journeyed into the desert, defying death, the pharaohs and other plagues.

It has often been assumed that Jews were chosen by god. But our teachers tell us that Jews in fact chose god, embracing principles presented in the form of laws, foundations in justice.

The traditional Jew appreciates an inscription in the book of a life. To repent, in the Jewish faith, means to accept the principle of justice (possible even in those final instants before death). It is a challenge of awe and mindfulness, in a world organizing itself along hegemonic market principles and values, which allow for arms sales to groups which hand them out to children, along with new and misguided warrior-turned-combatant identities.

Accepting justice is perhaps a way of framing the challenge that the global community grapples with. Groups around the world, including Palestinians and Kurds and Southern Sudanese, express their interpretation of justice as the freedom from coercive power structures which demolish homes and close schools, narrowly quantify the life-blood of water systems,

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Eid ul-Adha

Remembering the Sacrifices of Abraham and his Family (peace be upon them)

When I was young, I remember anticipating the arrival of the Islamic celebrations called 'Eid'. I was too young to stay up and see if the new crescent had been sighted (Muslims follow a lunar calendar), so I had to wait until the next morning to see if my mom had put up decorations in the house and cooked the traditional sweet dishes. The first Eid follows the month of Ramadhan, when Muslims fast from dawn until dusk, and is called Eid-ul-Fitr. The second one, Eid-ul-Adha, was recently celebrated and commemorates Abraham's (peace be upon him) willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael (p.b.u.h.) in order to show his faithfulness to God. It also happens at the same time as Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia that Muslims, who can afford to do so, are required to perform at least once in their lives.

The morning of Eid, my family would dress in their best clothes and we would head for a large hall where the whole community offered congregational prayer, and then to the homes of family and friends to celebrate. Yet, it always seemed that the two Eids were different, and that the first was more festive and exciting, while the second was more calm. However, in the last few years, I have come to appreciate the significance of Eid-ul-Adha and it has become just as important a spiritual time for me.

(continued on page 3)

('Oppression' continued)

The DFO has rammed Esgenoopetitj boats, run over their boats, sprayed tear gas, dumped people into the ocean, beat them with batons, and arrested them. The community has requested the RCMP do an inquiry into the actions of the DFO, asserting it has been using "excessive force".

I went to Esgenoopetitj with the Aboriginal Rights Coalition Atlantic Observer Project. I went to the community to observe. In the event that something should occur there would be another voice, aside from the word of the government or Esgenoopetitj, to say, "this is what I saw...". Projects such as these take place around the globe where there is conflict. Other people come in to demonstrate that the world is watching.

Canada is a country that is reputed to be fair and just, and this could make it difficult to recognize state oppression in its own communities. While one observer was in Esgenoopetitj he met a group of Korean reporters. They said that their editor had seen footage of the ramblings on the news and was able to relate to what they saw, what they recognized as state oppression.

On September 12th, 2000 I was in a Listiguj Rangers boat that was responding to a call that two native fishing boats were being harassed by the DFO. We headed out, along with one other boat. The other boat got ahead of us and when we caught up to them they were all kneeling, handcuffed at the back of the boat with RCMP officers in full SWAT gear lined up behind them. Two helicopters were circling overhead, about four RCMP Zodiacs were speeding around us, telling us to slow down so that we could not get to the fishing boats. They circled us, cut us off spraying us with water, and eventually rammed us from the side, sending us into the water. With video camera in hand, I fell into the cold water.

Prepared to retrieve us from the water, divers were immediately beside us. Shane Francis, one of the Rangers and I, were taken onto one boat while the other two were taken to another. In total 16 people were arrested. For some reason, Shane and I were taken on an hour and a half boat ride, while the others were taken to the wharf 15 minutes away.

It's difficult to explain how it felt that day. The handcuffs were too tight, and my thumb was numb for the next two months. My handcuffs were removed, while Shane had his removed because they were too tight and then put back on three times.

The RCMP seized my video camera and film as evidence, which I expect will never make it to any courtroom. The RCMP went on national news the next day saying that they had not rammed us, while the ramming is on the film. ARC members and I have tried to retrieve the film but so far we have been met with various reasons as to why we cannot get it back. Namely that it's in a locked cupboard and one key is in Montreal and the other has been lost.

Everyday I think about how this experience felt more Hollywood than Canadian, and it takes an effort to remember that this oppression is part of our reality as Canadians and it must change.

by Tracy Sinclair
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The Aboriginal Rights Coalition is a national organization of churches, church bodies, Aboriginal peoples and community organizations that builds alliances and solidarity for Aboriginal and social justice in Canada. Through action and public education, ARC supports Aboriginal peoples toward recognition of land and treaty rights.

The Tatamagouche Centre is an adult education centre owned by the United Church of Canada and has been working with ARC-Atlantic, in efforts to bring educational opportunities around the Aboriginal context and needs to non-Aboriginal people.

ARC-Atlantic and Tatamagouche Centre have been working together to develop and sustain a group of Observers, to be available to First Nations communities as they exercise their legal rights to natural resources. During the 2000 fishing seasons, 20 people were trained as Observers, and were a peaceful presence while the First Nations people of Esgenoopetitj exercised their right to fish. Observer training for the 2001 fishing season begins in early April. If you are interested, call McGill Chaplaincy at 398-4104 for more information or drop by our office for an information booklet (Brown Building, Suite 4400).

From *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*
(Classic Mahayana Buddhist text)

By Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Zen master

In Buddhist meditation we do not struggle for the kind of enlightenment that will happen five or ten years from now. We practice so that each moment of our life becomes real life. And, therefore, when we meditate, we sit for sitting; we don't sit for something else. If we sit for twenty minutes, these twenty minutes should bring us joy, life. If we practice walking meditation, we walk just for walking, not to arrive. We have to be alive with each step, and if we are, each step brings real life back to us. The same kind of mindfulness can be practiced when we eat breakfast, or when we hold a child in our arms. Hugging is a Western custom, but we from the East would like to contribute the practice of conscious breathing to it. When you hold a hold in your arms, or hug your mother, or your husband, or your friend, breathe in and out three times and your happiness will be multiplied by at least tenfold. And when you look at someone, really look at them with mindfulness, and practice conscious breathing.

At the beginning of each meal, I recommend that you look at your plate and silently recite, "My plate is empty now, but I know that it is going to be filled with delicious food in just a moment." While to be served, or to serve yourself, I suggest you breathe three times and look at it even more deeply, "At this very moment many, many people around the world are also holding a plate, but their plate is going to be empty for a long time." Forty thousand children die each day because of the lack of food. Children alone. We can be very happy to have such wonderful food, but we also suffer because we are capable of seeing. But when we see in this way, it makes us sane, because the way in front of us is clear – the way to live so that we can make peace with the world. When we see the good and the bad, the wondrous and the deep suffering, we have to live in a way that we can make peace between ourselves and the world. Understanding is the fruit of meditation. Understanding is the basis of everything.

Each breath we take, each step we make, each smile we realize, is a positive contribution to peace, a necessary step in the direction of peace for the world. In the light of interbeing [i.e. the interconnectedness of all beings], peace and happiness in your daily life means peace and happiness in the world.

*Regard all men as equal,
since God's light is contained
in the heart of each
~ Guru Nanak*

('A Just Struggle' continued)

generally claiming moral superiority. Marginalized peoples who struggle contextually for Chosen become part of the justice system. No peoples can monopolise liberation.

I remember once reading about the ways humans torture one another. The threat of boiling lead under the tongue and burning through the chin is one expression of this mad inclination. The rack sits at the Tower of London. The empire is grand, in theory, until dissent is intolerated.

The global community's conscience is starting to be heard, hesitantly, fearful of the manipulation that corrodes vehicles of human rights which we call states. All human beings have the same humanity, though rights are interpreted differently by structures seeking to perpetuate the exploitation of a debased otherness, perceived as unstable and threatening. Appreciation, or at least, recognition of Other is a premise of Passover, which tells of the story of a peoples discovering itself, *ad infinitum* it wailed.

We enter into a time of questioning, wandering through delicate, perceptible pangs of conscience and their impact on ourselves and our collective space, deciding on the answers they betray for the year ahead. This time of year raises questions of sacrifice, prompting deliberations about the roles we blindly play out which undermine the deeper expressions for which we may have a suppressed affinity.

And the *haggadah* narrative is read through the night, under pressure of sunrise, to stimulate and internalize a curiosity for the possibilities of interpretation, wondering how long you can stay awake. The story, in one night, of a peoples' liberation.

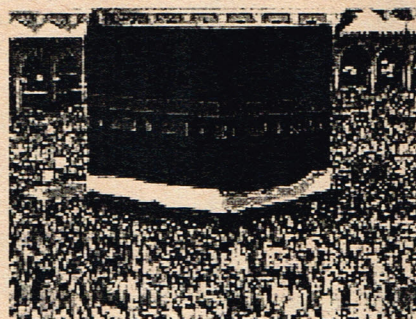
I can recognize the frustration and cynical hope that propels a suicide bus bomber, (still) condemning the act, with caveat; there is a need for an honest peace process wherever a peoples asserts the need for such, particularly when it is rooted in claims of a human dignity violated.

The peoples' struggle for justice may be expressed in human rights and humanitarian law. With the blood of Passover, it spends eight days rekindling its spirit.

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('Eid' continued)

About two years ago, before my father went to perform Hajj, my family and I spent hours watching videos and reading information about it. I remember watching a crowd of over 2 million people from all different countries heading for the Kaba (the first house built for the worship of God) chanting "*Labbaik Allahumma Labbaik*", which means "Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am" and then performing the rites of Hajj to remember the sacrifices and trials of Abraham (p.b.u.h) and his family.



The
Kaba in
Makkah,
Saudi
Arabia

Then together, the pilgrims spend the day of 'Arafa on the Mount of Mercy, standing in prayer, supplication and thankfulness to God, and finally they celebrate Eid-al-Adha by sacrificing an animal and distributing its meat among the family, friends and the needy.

That year, I became more conscious of the rites Muslims observe at this time and began to feel a sense of unity with my brothers and sisters at Hajj. We fasted on the days they were performing the pilgrimage rights, spent more time in prayer and devoted more time and effort to good action. We also sacrificed an animal and distributed its meat, and for the three feast days of Eid we recited the takbeer: "*Allaahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, la-ilaha il-Allaah, Al-laahu Akbar Allaahu Akbar wa-lilaahil-hamd*", which means "God is Great, God is Great. There is no God but Allaah. God is Great, God is Great. All praise belongs to God".

Since then, I still feel that the two Eids are different, but that one is no less important than the other. As Ramadhan comes to an end, I appreciate the festive nature of Eid-al-Fitr. But at the same time, Eid-Al-Adha reinforces a sense of connectedness with my brothers and sisters from all over the world. and with each year increases by resolve to one day be standing on the Mount of Mercy in praise and gratitude to God.

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*If you would like to contribute an article, drawing
or poem to an issue of Radix,
please call or e-mail*

*Laurel at the Chaplaincy Office at
398-4104 ~ Lmccos@po-box.mcgill.ca*

Holy Week Celebrations At the Newman Centre

Palm Sunday

Procession with palms

April 8th ~ 11am

Holy Thursday

April 12th ~ 7 pm

Good Friday

April 13th ~ 3 pm

Pascal Vigil

Joyful anticipation of the Lord's
Resurrection

April 14th ~ 8 pm

Easter Service

April 15th ~ 11 am

Upcoming Muslim Student Association Events

- Last Sisters' Study Circle and dinner
March 30th, 4 - 6 pm
all women welcome
contact Sister Tasima for more info
at tasima29@hotmail.com
- Brothers' Study Circle every Friday
all men welcome
Contact Brother Isam
at ifaik@po-box.mcgill.ca

Sheikh Samza Yusuf visiting school from California.

Will be giving a talk

April 6th at 8 pm

For more details, e-mail

simam@po-box.mcgill.ca

Or call the MSA

At 398-8323

McGill Ecumenical Chaplaincy's



St. Martha's in the Basement

Share in a weekly informal wor-
ship and discussion followed by a
vegetarian supper.. A place to form meaningful
friendships, explore faith in an inclusive, progres-
sive way and bring sacredness to our lives.

Friends of Christians also welcome.

Wednesdays at 6 pm

In the basement of the

United Theological College

3521 University - just north of Milton

Call Gwenda Wells for more info

398-4104

Show the world what you believe, April 21-22 outside the

Summit of the Americas in Quebec
City. Help plan or participate in a
peaceful expression of your spiritual tra-
dition and what it has to say about
building a more humane world. All tra-
ditions are welcome; an open heart is
required. **Contact Gwen at 938-
8239 or begwenagain@yahoo.ca**

Jewish Meditation Wednesdays

at 11:30 am

At Chabad House

3629 Peel St.

For more info,

contact Rabbi Mahn

at 288-3130

Or just show up!

Passover Seder at Chabad

Sat. April 7th and Sun. April 8th

RSVP required

Cultivate your Soul

Traditions and techniques to tune you to
the presence and grace of God in your life.

Thursdays 12 - 1 pm

Brown Student Services

Suite 4400

Bring a lunch - drinks provided

April 5 The Examined Life: Explorations
on the Book of Job

April 12 Fasts, Feasts and Passion

For more information, contact

Gwenda Wells 398-4104

PEACE IN THE WORLD BEGINS WITH PEACE IN OUR HEARTS



Join the McGill Chaplaincy Team
(Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh)
In prayers and reflections for peace

12:15 - 12:45 pm

Wednesday, April 4

At McGill Chaplaincy

Brown Building

West Wing, Suite 4400

Passover Seder at Hillel

Sat. April 7th and Sun. April 8th

At 8:30 pm

New Earth Voices Concert

Music by Schütz, Willan, Imant,
Raminsh and more

Free Admission, (voluntary charitable
donations welcome)

Refreshments will follow

Sunday, April 8th

Diocesan Theological College

3473 University St.

Call 398-4104 for time

Spirit Circle

Brief gatherings to re-centre
will continue through April.

Meet Tuesdays at 11 am in the
Student Lounge, 4th floor Shatner.

For more information, e-mail

scmmcgill@yahoo.ca

Meditation Mornings

Take some time for a quiet moment be-
fore the

hustle and bustle of daily life.

Join us in the

Birks University Chapel

(Religious Studies Building, 2nd floor)

Mon, Wed, Fri at 7 am - Foundations of
Mindfulness with Prof. Richard Hayes

Tues, Thurs at 7 am - Zazen
with Prof. Victor Hori

And Fridays at noon - Inter-religious
with Prof. Richard Hayes
and Rev. Gwenda Wells

(for those of us non-morning people!)