

Integrities

www.integrities.org



**“WE NEED TO BE ON THE
SIDE OF LIFE”**

Volume 31 No. 1 2018

Board • Editorial Team • Office

Board of Directors

Judy Barry
Karen Cane
Adrienne Frisbee
Monika Hassler
Pamela Law

Bill Leininger
Lucia Lopez
Phil McManus
Linda Wallace

Integrities Editorial Team

Bill Cane, Editor (bcane@baymoon.com)
Peter/Betty Michelozzi, Peggy Law,
Karen Cane, Art Editor

IF Office

Lauren Moody, Office Manager
if.laurenmoody@gmail.com
leave message (831) 724-4108

Publishing, Format and Design
MMPublishing™ Janet Martinez

website: www.integrities.org
Like us on Facebook
IF:People Seeking Possibilities

**2018 Events to be announced at a later date.
Call 831-724-4108 for any questions.**



*Photo by Karen Cane
Even the birds' nests are cold this winter.*

S

Cover artwork by Karen Cane

CURSES AND BLESSINGS

Well, here we are, one year into the Trump presidency.

Big Money runs the country: the new tax law benefits corporations and the super-rich. The Administration's denial of climate change threatens all of life on earth.

These issues are not just a matter for disagreement. They are a matter of greed and mass murder.

A TIME TO CURSE

“Those who have no power to curse,” wrote Rosenstock-Huussy, “have absolutely no power to bless.” Those who advocate death for planet earth, death for the poor, and more weapons to destroy the people of the earth deserve to be cursed.

They advocate abominable things, which bring death not only now, but death for our children and their descendants.

“The sins of the fathers,” the Hebrew Scriptures tell us, “shall be visited upon the children down to the third and fourth generations.”

BLESSING

As for blessings—we need to bless and join those who are struggling to preserve life on earth, to bless advocates for the poor, to bless those who struggle to abolish nuclear weaponry.

In short, we need to be on the side of life, in large things and small. To bless life, to bless peace and to bless the poor and unfortunate.

There are many people who keep doing very positive things: Sorting food to give to the poor. Working on rent control. Protecting immigrants. Influencing elections. Fighting to keep the world (and our little worlds) as sane as possible.

They are among the happiest people on earth because they are living from their hearts.

Their lives are of immeasurable value! They are a blessing upon the earth and upon all living beings.

PIETRO THANKS IF

IF continues to support our friend Pietro Ameglio in his efforts to strengthen active nonviolence as a force for social change amid the violence and corruption in Mexico. An important focus for him these days is strengthening the relatives of the disappeared in their search for answers regarding the fate of their loved ones and justice



Doris and husband Carlos, longtime members of IF join others from the Grey Bears as volunteers for their community.

Photo courtesy of Santa Cruz Sentinel

for the crimes of which they were victims. At the same time, Pietro continues his constant efforts to nurture the next generation of leaders in the teaching and practice of nonviolence.

Recently Pietro wrote Phil McManus to share a link to an Indian publication, The Hitavada (see <http://thehitavada.com/Encyc/2017/11/17/Mexican-youths-explore-Gandhian-ideology.aspx>) that reported on the experience of three of his students who traveled to India to study Gandhian nonviolence. They visited Gandhian educational centers and places of historical significance in Gandhi's life and practice.

Pietro explained that some of the support IF has sent was used for the travel costs of the students, and he thanked IF for supporting his work with students over the years and for helping to make this educational pilgrimage to India possible.



Photo of Pietro Ameglio courtesy of the Internet

No doubt the students learned practical lessons that they can apply in their organizing and educational work in Mexico. But is it possible to challenge effectively the coaptation, repression and impunity that keep the Mexican political-economic system in place? Probably not without the depth of vision and commitment

that Gandhi manifested in his life and that continues to inspire many, including our student friends, today.

AFRAID TO LEAVE THE HOUSE

Ann Lopez recently told us about Mexican families who are afraid to leave their houses to go to the local Food Bank for groceries—for fear of being picked up by ICE and deported.

It is hard for those of us who are “white” to imagine that kind of fear. We come and go as we please.

Peggy Law recently sent us an article which reflects on “being white,” and on the privileges that “being white” afford us. Her reflections raise our consciousness. . .



*Families afraid to leave their homes
Illustration by Karen Cane*

EXPLORING WHITE PRIVILEGE

by Peggy Law

“White Privilege” is a term that often comes up these days.

But what does it really mean?

“*White People Are Trapped in a History they don't understand,*” wrote black author James Baldwin.



*Photo of James Baldwin
courtesy of the internet.*

I recently started to explore this complex, fascinating and challenging territory. There will undoubtedly be many things that I will never really understand. But the journey is already beginning to shift what I notice as I go through each day and retune how to respond to many encounters.

“**White Privilege**” refers to the special rights conferred on any individual or group that is **considered** to be white.

In a deeply racist society which assumes white is the preferential norm and builds that perspective into most of its major institutions, these special rights amount to a whopping amount of un-earned privilege!

But who's white? Since white literally means “the absence of color or pigment”, very few of us are really white.

Those born with low skin pigmentation are considered white—unless there are social, economic or cultural reasons to classify them as “other” than white. Historically, many light-skinned people

(Jews, Palestinians, Asians, Irish, Muslims, Mexicans, to name a few) have been considered non-white.

Then, as norms and economic requirements changed, some (for instance Irish and Italian) become reclassified as legally white. . . or “honorary whites.” Some are considered white for some purposes and not for others. Under Jim Crow laws Asian children went to whites only schools but did not enjoy full white status in the larger society. The legal designation of gradated whiteness does not, of course, wipe out prejudice!

Being designated “white”—when you clearly are not white—has also been used as a way to keep people ‘in their place’. Mexican-Americans in the southwest were designated white but were discriminated against almost as severely as blacks. In 1954 they successfully went all the way to the US Supreme Court to change their status to neither black nor white—but “A Class Apart”.

Sometimes individual African Americans become “honorary whites” but African Americans as a group never do, no matter what their hue.

So “white” is essentially a color-coded term that is used in order to reflect and maintain dominant class distinctions and prejudices.

Skin color counts for a lot when applying for a loan, seeking to rent or buy housing, etc. I am white, therefore privileged in these and many other arenas. I don’t like this fact. But do I really notice the very *deep* ways in which this privilege shapes and colors each day?

How often do I think about how privileged I am to be able to avoid the hassles and danger of being stopped for driving while black or brown? The risks and humiliation of being stopped and frisked for no apparent reason. The potentially large consequences for a minor infraction like jaywalking or forgetting to turn on the car blinker? The insult of being constantly watched when I enter a high-end store? The pervasive fear that, at any moment, immigration officials might sweep me away from my family?

If you identify as white, you might want to try making a list of the large and very small ways that being white has been an advantage in your life. How being black or brown might have made the details of each day very different.

Within a week your list is apt to be quite long. And revealing.

So, What's the Point of Delving into all this? To avoid unintentional racism.

Many who carry the privileges of whiteness deeply abhor racism and prejudices of all kinds—and have devoted significant portions of their lives towards dismantling institutionalized racism and all other forms of injustices.

But at the same time, there is a chance that we may, in small ways, also be unintentionally contributing to racial misunderstandings and divisions.

“It’s the difference between black and white” is commonly used to describe the ultimate contrast. . . often with the conventional

assumption that white is good or desired. How does that fall on the ears of those who are black?

Do we notice? Do we ask?

How often do we consider that well-meaning phrases such as “I’m color-blind” or “We are all alike” might not be received as positive comments?

An increasing number of people of color are trying to tell whites that they consider “colorblindness” insulting.



Illustration by Carol Bowie

For starters, it’s not true. Of course we notice color! More importantly, many **want** their color to be noticed—and given its full weight and value and importance. They are proud to be black or brown—and want that pride noticed and celebrated, not dismissed.

In our society, color differences have profound effects on who we really are and how we experience life. Many people of color want those facts to be noticed, not glossed over; acknowledged, not pushed into the shadow of our conversations.

Are we listening? Checking it out with folks?

Will struggling with the pervasive, overlapping layers and effects of white privilege really change anything? Maybe.

James Baldwin reminds us that, “Not everything that is faced can be changed. . . but nothing can be changed unless it is faced.”

I accept this as a challenge to do something. . . and keep at it.

I notice a bit more each day. I work on carefully weaving new knowledge into my language and the nuances of my interactions. I try to listen carefully even if what is said is uncomfortable to hear.

Baby steps, really. But history tells us that baby steps can have powerful cumulative effects—especially if shared with others.

So Onward!

A FEW BILL CANE STORIES

When I think of white privilege, I think of two stories from long ago which still delight me, and which I have told often.

The first concerns a friend, Lewis Sinclair, who was a friend of Myles Horton and of Highlander Center, where so many of the leaders in the Civil Rights movement spent time. (Rosa Parks attended a session at Highlanders before she refused to step to the back of the bus, and credited Highlanders with her summoning the courage to do that.)

Well, Lewis, who was black, was driving his car on a Georgia road, when he saw flashing lights behind him, and a police officer motioning him over. Lewis could feel the antagonism as the police officer approached his car. The officer looked him over and looked the car over (it was a nice car), and said in a threatening voice, “Whose car is this?” Lewis replied in a humble voice, “This is Mr. Sinclair’s car, but he lets me drive it.”

The officer was taken aback by this, and concerned about doing something that might offend “Mr. Sinclair”, let Lewis go!

The second story is about Rollie Jones, who lived at St. Benedict’s Center in San Francisco, where I worked for seven years. The Center was a church and meeting place for the deaf, as well as a place where four-day Cursillo retreats were held. It was in a mixed but predominantly black neighborhood.

At times, people from rather affluent places would visit the Center regarding Cursillo matters. Some of these people would be nervous and would remark about worrying if their car would be safe. Rollie would tell them, “Oh, I can help you there,” and he would instruct them to take a large piece of paper, write St. Benedict’s CHURCH on it, and place it on the dashboard of their car. “Black people never touch anything belonging to a church or associated with a church,” he would tell them.

They would be very relieved, write CHURCH in large letters on a piece of paper, and leave to place it in their car. But Rollie would catch them as they went out the door to give them one more admonition: “You have to remember that piece of paper won’t help you with white people though!”

CELEBRATING LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Around Solstice (December 21st), IF had its 43rd annual Light and Darkness celebration. The celebration begins in darkness with a short time for silent meditation. We recall how very early humans noticed the days getting shorter and darkness descending on the earth, without really being sure that the light would come back! So they held very early ceremonies to try to bring the sun back to the Earth!

In modern times, we presume that the sun will return, but as we look at climate change and nuclear weaponry, we see a different kind of darkness threatening us. And like very early humans, we are not sure that the Light is coming back!



Photo by Karen Cane

So we celebrate those who are trying to bring light into the darkness. We light the Hanukkah candles, and we share the light and darkness in our own lives. Then we light the Yule Log, and we dance and sing Christmas carols.

We also do a few readings:

*“I said to my soul, be still, and let the darkness come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God. As in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished for the scene to be changed...
Or as, when an underground train in the tube, stops too long between stations
And the conversation rises and slowly fades into silence
And you see behind every face the mental emptiness deepen
Leaving only the growing terror of nothing to think about;*

*I said to my soul, be still and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the hope and the love are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.*

T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot put it out.” *The Gospel of John*

Membership Form

LET INTEGRITIES BRING NEW POSSIBILITIES TO YOU, TO YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY.

Your tax-deductible donation includes a one-year Integrities subscription and IF membership.

Please send Integrities to:

Subscriber Name and Mailing Address
(please print clearly)

This is for myself _____ This is a gift* _____
(please check one)

First Name

Last Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Phone Number

Email

I would like to give a gift subscription. Enclosed is \$15 (or more) donation. Please write the following message on my gift card:

Yes_____ Please send me the email version of Integrities. (Please be sure your email account is not blocked and that you have printed your email address legibly .)

Yes_____ Please send me the printed version of Integrities

Yes_____ Please send me both the Email and Printed version of Integrities.

Feel free to duplicate this page for as many subscriptions as you need.

***Please tear out this page and mail with check made payable to
IF • 160 Sunflower Lane • Watsonville, CA 95076 • Thank you!***



Integrity's

www.integrity.org
160 Sunflower Lane
Watsonville CA 95076

Current Resident or Addressee

