

Integrities

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IF:People Seeking Possibilities



*“even as we read the
depressing news about what
our government is doing, we
still have possibilities all
around us.”*

IN MEMORIAM

Marie Conroy Salibi and Mary
Peattie, friends of IF for many
many years;
You will be missed.

*Cover and inside cover
photographs by Karen Cane*

WHAT DOES "IF" STAND FOR?

A man phoned the IF office recently, and said that his tax preparer wanted to know what "IF" stood for. I told him that IF meant simply "if." It didn't stand for anything other than *possibility*, for what we may be able to do in our lives.

When we founded IF, we didn't have a set agenda. We simply wanted to pursue hopeful possibilities, by which we meant trying to serve life rather than death, and trying to help those who were in need.

In other words, we didn't know exactly what we were going to do or how we were going to do it! But we knew that there were hopeful possibilities all around us, and that new ones would keep presenting themselves.

Looking for these possibilities gave us a new focus in life—much more exciting than just living our lives, doing our jobs, taking care of things and trying to save money!

FIRST STEPS

We began with a small group of people that made up an IF Board, and soon other people joined us.

A friend had planned to build raised planter boxes at a local rest home so that the elder residents, including those in wheelchairs, could raise flowers and vegetables. He got sick. So IF took over and began building planter boxes at one rest home, and then at a number of others!

We went to a meeting for people who could teach English to foreigners, where we discovered that people from El Salvador and Guatemala were living in Santa Cruz County, having escaped from those very dangerous countries.

We invited some of them to come and talk to us. The refugees described soldiers killing people, cutting off their heads and placing them on stakes around their villages. We made a video of refugee testimonies and showed the video to a lot of people. We realized that sending the refugees back to their countries would mean sending them back to their deaths.

So IF began to help find places for them to live here. When the federal government tried to send the refugees back to their countries, a number of us became part of a Sanctuary movement to protect the refugees. This was our first “international” involvement even though it started right here at home.

Don Ramon, one of the refugees, had been a religious leader in El Salvador. When twelve of his fellow catechists were beheaded by the military, he escaped from El Salvador hidden under the bed of a pickup truck. We took Ramon to many places to give talks about what was really happening in El Salvador. Little by little, the Sanctuary movement grew, and it eventually prevailed.

FROM ONE MOVEMENT TO ANOTHER

During a visit to Nicaragua, some of us met Myles Horton, who, in the 1930s, had started bringing blacks and whites together

at Highlander Center in Tennessee. Many of the black children he helped train later became Civil Rights leaders. Myles was old when we met him, but he had a dream. As he looked at the poor in Central America, he told us how he yearned to do something to help them, as he had helped the poor of the southern United States decades before.

Myles died not long afterwards, but I kept mentioning to people how he had dreamed of helping the poor in Central America.

I didn't think anything would come of it, but one day Phil McManus told me that he thought he knew where we could get money to help make Myles' dream a reality. We did get the money and were able to bring several leaders from poor Latin American countries to the US. We toured the US with them, met with many activists here and visited Highlander Center. And we were able to give them some money to help with their ongoing work in Latin America.

The test of our progress
is not whether we add more
to the abundance of those who have much;
it is whether we provide enough
for those who have too little.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Second Inaugural Address
January 20, 1937

MORADIA (DWELLING PLACES)

One of the Latin Americans, Ticao, was a leader of the Moradia Movement in Brazil. Brazil's Constitution had a clause which permitted poor people to settle on government-owned land if the land had not been used for a number of years. The Moradia leaders would secretly train up to 2,000 poor people for a whole year. Then, at night, all 2,000 would secretly move onto unoccupied government land. Ticao stressed that the numbers really mattered. The Brazilian army could easily disperse 20 or even 200 people, but could not do so with 2,000! Once the 2,000 had occupied the land, Ticao and others would negotiate with the government, while people who had previously occupied other land would bring food for the new group. Many thousands of poor people acquired land this way.

It was a marvelous example of people seeking possibilities, and IF was able to give the Moradia Movement a grant to help them with their work.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN GUATEMALA

In the 1970s, there was a meeting of labor union leaders from all over Guatemala in Guatemala City. Once the meeting started, the leaders were surrounded by security forces, and none of them was ever heard from again. Rodolfo was late for the meeting and saw the security forces charging in. He fled.

Rodolfo became the head of the Coca Cola Union in Guatemala. He led a strike in which many Coca Cola workers lost

their lives, but because of international pressure from Coca Cola, the workers eventually won the strike—the only strike that had been successful at that time in Guatemalan history. We resolved to try to help the

little group of union leaders in Guatemala City. We brought computers and provisions to Guatemala, and set up support groups in the US. We were present in Guatemala when young union leaders were killed, and we met with a number of Mayan communities who had many members slaughtered by the Guatemalan military.

HOMES IN GUATEMALA

While in Guatemala, we encountered some very poor people who were being kicked off a hillside where they lived in little shacks. We resolved to get homes for them. And we did. While we were working on their homes, Peter and Betty Michelozzi made contact with Habitat for Humanity, and forged a bond which was to last fifteen years.

IF began raising money to buy land for homes in



Homes being built in Guatamala.

Guatemala. Peter and Betty would use these funds to buy land, and Habitat for Humanity would provide easy-payment loans for poor families to build their own houses on the land. Peter and Betty would then take groups from the US down to Guatemala to help the families build their homes.

FRIENDS HELPING OUT

Little by little, we made contact with additional groups in Central America, and we began to try to help them. Two friends who were engineers went down to use their skills. One built solar showers for the garbage workers, who spent all day going through garbage to find things that they could use or sell. The garbage workers had no real homes, so we began supporting a group that helped garbage workers build modest little homes.

We kept learning of more groups that needed help. We didn't plan the projects. We simply helped the local people with the projects they had planned or had dreamed of.

Some years ago, a man who died left IF \$500,000 for the poor of Mexico. This enabled IF to help many groups in Mexico who had wonderful ideas but just needed funding to make them a reality. Rafael Landerreche, who died recently and is memorialized in this issue of Integrities, put us in touch with many wonderful groups.

TRAINING THE TRAINERS

One of the most satisfying ways IF has been able to open up new possibilities has been by helping people who empower others.

IF helps support Pietro Ameglio, who works in Mexico with all kinds of groups—families of the disappeared, rural communities, human rights defenders—helping them develop nonviolent strategies to pursue justice and build peace. Perhaps the most hopeful work he is doing is nurturing many young college students in active nonviolence. A number of those students have gone on to start new social justice projects.

Very recently we visited Watsonville Wetlands, where trained high school students teach grammar school kids about the environment, and help them do hands-on work in the wetlands

area. IF provides stipends for the student teachers, and the



student teachers influence many younger children. Some of us were able to accompany groups of children recently, as their

Photos courtesy of Adrienne of Watsonville Wetlands Watch

mentors took them around the wetlands area to teach them about the environment.

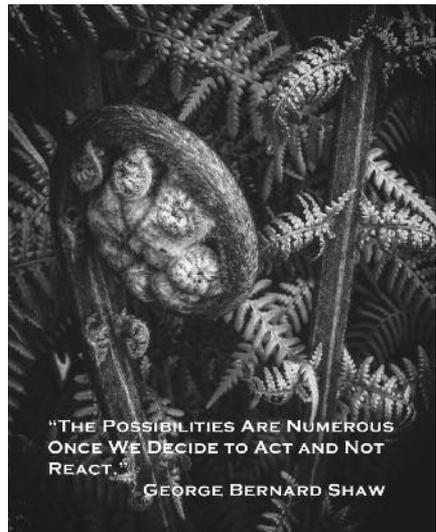
THERE ARE ALWAYS POSSIBILITIES

One of the things we have learned over the years is that, in the direst of circumstances, there are still possibilities. The present situation in the United States can certainly be called dire. We are tempted to bemoan the situation, and feel paralyzed by it.

But paralysis stops us from pursuing new possibilities.

The movement to find housing for thousands of poor people kept going, even when Brazil was under the control of a military dictatorship. People kept pursuing possibilities. And that thought keeps us going when we feel like giving up. Even as we read the depressing news about what our government is doing, we still have possibilities all around us. And pursuing those possibilities can help lead us to a different society.

Photo by Karen Cane



"THE POSSIBILITIES ARE NUMEROUS
ONCE WE DECIDE TO ACT AND NOT
REACT."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

REGENERATION

At a time when climate change looms over us, we can either become paralyzed or begin to move. *Regeneration* in Watsonville, a group that has very little money, but still goes at it with all their hearts, began to move.

We recently attended a gathering hosted by *Regeneration*. It was a wonderful coming together of people who are trying to do something about the environment. *Regeneration* has gathered together many people and many groups that are doing something to heal our environmental sickness. Some farmworkers spoke about the heat that makes people fall over and faint while picking berries. And how they need to keep working in the heat in order to sustain their families.

We came away inspired. . .

REGENERATION

by Linda Wallace

Regeneración, IF's newest grantee, presented the results of its Community Environmental Survey at a bilingual event in Watsonville on Thursday May 3, 2018. Bill Cane and Linda Wallace



*Children dancing at the Event in Watsonville
Photo by Linda Wallace*

attended on behalf of IF. The study identified the effects of climate change on Watsonville residents and revealed its disproportionate impact on local farmworkers. The study also identified ways the local effects of climate change can be reduced.

Concerns identified by the residents taking the survey ranged from pesticides and poisons to car exhaust. Survey respondents favored greater access to organic agriculture and less polluting forms of transportation, including rail and bike, along with clean energy as ways to reduce the impacts of pesticides and pollution from car exhaust.

One of the most potent presentations of the evening was given by women working in agriculture who testified



*Maria Elena at Podium and brave women who testified about climate change conditions
Photos courtesy of Linda Wallace*

about how climate change affected their health and their livelihood. The women told the audience how the increasingly hotter weather causes workers to suffer: a number faint in the fields; many have to start work very early in the morning to avoid the heat and are sent home when temperatures exceed 95 degrees (a legal requirement).

The plastic-roofed greenhouses where berries are grown create even hotter (by about 10 degrees) and more difficult conditions for workers. Being sent home means workers (who already have very low incomes) earn less, which in turn affects their ability to feed, clothe and house their families. Starting work earlier can create childcare issues which in turn can increase monthly expenses. Heavy winter rain, also associated with climate change, causes its own suffering. Workers have to work in mud that leaves them cold and wet with reduced resistance to illness. When heavy rains continue for extended periods of time, as they did in the winter of 2016/2017, work in the fields becomes impossible and workers may be unemployed for weeks at a time reducing their already low incomes.

Regeneration keeps contacting people, asking them how climate change affects them, and what solutions they envision. Its grassroots method of interviewing of people not only gets at what is really hurting people, but also draws more and more people into the search for solutions.

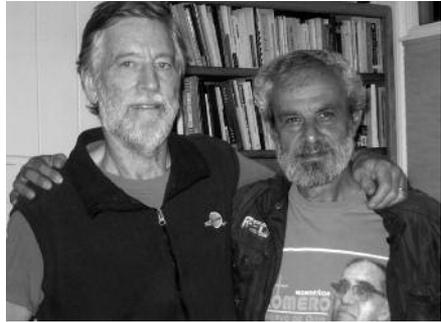
¡RAFAEL LANDERRECHE, PRESENTE!

by Phil McManus

IF lost a good friend in March with the passing of Rafael Landerreche due to an aggressive cancer. Rafael spent the last 15 years of his life running an alternative high school for indigenous youth in Chiapas, Mexico, and working with *Las Abejas*, the nonviolence community that was the target of the 1997 massacre in which 45 people were killed—precisely because of their peaceful

resistance in a highly polarized and violent context. In a rare honor indicative of the degree to which he was committed to and accepted by the community, Rafael was buried in the same mausoleum as the “martyrs”, those killed in the massacre, in the tierra sagrada (sacred land) of Acteal.

I first met Rafael in 1984 in a Christian-base community outside of Mexico City. I immediately recognized a kindred spirit with a lively intellect and a deep understanding of active nonviolence rooted in his Christian faith. The grandson of Manuel Gómez Morín, a prominent conservative intellectual and activist in post-revolutionary Mexico, Rafael imbibed the values of his grandfather and an



Phil McManus (left) Rafael Landerreche (right)



The Pillar of Shame in Acteal commemorates the 1997 massacre of 45 members of the Abejas (Bees) indigenous group who were gathered in a prayer vigil for peace.

intellectual tradition in which G. K. Chesterton and Jacques Maritain figured prominently. He applied them to contemporary Mexico in the light of his own experience and studies, including the lives and work of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The result was his deep commitment to work for social justice through active nonviolence. He gave up the career and opportunities for wealth provided by his family background to live and work with the poor and marginalized. And he did not shy away from the need to organize nonviolent protests, even when the result was repression and beatings at the hands of police and thugs.

Along with our friend Pietro Ameglio and others, he was a founder of the *Servicio Paz y Justicia* (SERPAJ) chapter in Mexico in the 1980s. When IF co-organized the program “Signs of Hope, Seeds of a New Order” in 1991, we invited a dozen social movement activists from all over Latin America to meet with U.S. activists at the Highlander Center in Tennessee and then to do the same with West Coast activists in California. We got Rafael involved in organizing and shaping the program early on, and several of the Latin American activists we invited were at his suggestion. When IF organized a delegation to Mexico in 2013, Rafael was there to take us to Acteal and introduce us to the Abejas community and their work. In between Rafael was an important reference and advisor for my work. We maintained a long and fruitful relationship with ongoing communication, occasional visits and different forms of collaboration. We were fortunate to have hosted Rafael for a few months in our home as recently as 2015

while he did some deeper writing not possible in the midst of demanding work in Mexico.

Rafael wrote a blog (Laudato Si: <http://laudatosi.blogspot.es/>) and an occasional opinion column for *La Jornada*, a national newspaper. After his death, tributes poured in from around the country. One national columnist called him “a key figure in the reinvention, dissemination and practice of nonviolent civil resistance in Mexico and in the defense of indigenous rights.” And he recalled how Rafa used to say that “the solution is with *los de abajo* (those on the bottom of society), with their creativity, solidarity and generosity.” For their part, *Las Abejas* considered him one of their own, saying in their tribute: “Dear brother Rafa, there is no doubt that you did what God asks of us, you lived with the poor and you were an authentic brother...you were and you are part of our family and our people.”

PROTESTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

by Larry Purcell

Nuclear weapons continue to threaten our planet, continue to contaminate all life on earth, and continue to steal resources from priorities that are life-giving.



Our dear friend Fr. Steve Kelly, S.J., has been imprisoned in the past for protesting against our country’s nuclear madness. Four times, Fr. Steve and our own Susan Crane (a full time live-in Catholic worker in Redwood City for the past

six years) have been part of a non-violent, civil disobedience that tries to transform nuclear weapons of death into instruments of life. Susan and Steve have both spent over 6 years in federal prison for their past “Plowshare Actions.” As they and others have protested nuclear weapons, the USA has expanded expenditures on upgrading these threats to our species.

Now, Steve and six others (including 5 Catholic Workers) are in a Georgia jail for another Plowshare act of resistance to the Trident Nuclear Submarine system. The USA has 15 Trident Subs. Each sub carries 192 separately targeted missiles that are many, many times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed the people of Hiroshima. One submarine can annihilate any country in the world. One sub could kill 100 million people or more... This is insanity. This is immoral. These subs and their bombs threaten all of life on earth...

TAKE ACTION

FROM THE NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION

On July 7, 2017, at the United Nations, 122 nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In addition to banning use and threat of use, this new treaty also bans possession, stockpiling, transfer, development, testing, production, manufacturing, and acquisition of nuclear weapons, among other important prohibitions.

This treaty is an important step toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. The majority of the world's nations consider nuclear weapons to be illegal, immoral, and prohibited.

We were dismayed that the United States actively boycotted this process and responded to it in a hostile manner. Responding to the newly-adopted treaty in a joint statement, the U.S., UK, and France stated, "We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it."

This is yet another example of the U.S. ceding its leadership role in the world. While the majority of the world has negotiated in good faith to ban nuclear weapons, the U.S. and other nuclear-armed nations stubbornly continue to cling to the concept of nuclear deterrence.

The U.S., for example, is in the process of upgrading its nuclear arsenal and production infrastructure at a cost of over \$1 trillion over the next three decades.

Please take a moment today to send a message to your elected representatives in Washington, DC, letting them know about the new nuclear ban treaty.

Ask them to consider this emerging legal norm prohibiting nuclear weapons as they make decisions on funding nuclear weapons programs in next year's budget.

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