

# Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

## Why AIDS is a Poverty Issue

by Peter Mann

The latest AIDS news is terrifying. "The AIDS virus is surging like a prairie fire through black communities in the United States," writes *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert. One in every 50 African-American men may be infected with HIV, according to The Centers for Disease Control. Globally, more than 50 million people have been infected and more than 20 million have already died. 36 million are currently infected, says Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, a consortium of U.N. agencies fighting the pandemic. Africa, home to only nine percent of the world's population, has two thirds of current AIDS infections, and AIDS will claim the lives of around one third of today's 15-year-olds in Africa.

Yet the greatest risk of a new AIDS explosion lies in Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population. While the numbers are still small given the huge populations of India (more than one billion) and China (1.3 billion), high-risk populations of intravenous drug users, prostitutes, married male homosexuals, and professional blood donors are hot-spots of the infection, providing bridges into the general populations, according to *Worldwatch Magazine*, citing data from UNAIDS and Indian and Chinese health agencies.

Until now, almost all public responses have been to treat AIDS as a medical problem, and an issue of high-risk behavior—the sharing of infected needles by drug users and unprotected sex within at-risk communities. What is coming more clearly into view as the pandemic reaches into every region of the globe is that AIDS is more than a health crisis or a lifestyle issue. AIDS is also a crisis of poverty. Poverty spreads AIDS and, in turn, the widening AIDS crisis increases poverty. In fact, it would be even more accurate to say that AIDS is being spread by impoverishment, by deadly patterns of development which make people poor and place at risk whole sectors of populations.

In the United States, the alarming spread of AIDS within the African-American community has been concentrated within the inner cities, targeting the poor and the addicted. People in these inner-city poor neighborhoods are marginalized, often malnourished, in poor health and without adequate health care for prevention or treatment. While high-risk behavior in these communities directly spreads HIV/AIDS, urban poverty is clearly a contributing cause. And as AIDS moves through these communities, they become still poorer and more marginalized.

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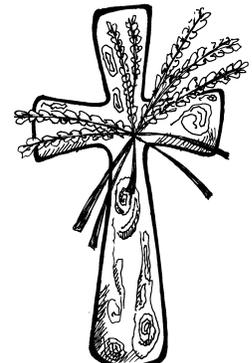
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# AIDS is a Poverty Issue

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The figures are startling. In 1999, African Americans were less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, more than 26 percent of the poor, and 37 percent of all reported cases of HIV/AIDS. By 2000, AIDS had become in the U.S. the leading cause of death for blacks between the ages of 25 and 44.

Yet these communities reflect the realities of global poverty, where 1.2 billion

responses to a social and economic system of development which deprives the poor of choices.

Public policy decisions deprive the poor also of treatment—India spends only about one percent of its GDP on health care, and China less than one percent. Zambia, where 1 out of 9 citizens are HIV-infected, spends more on debt servicing than on health care.

The AIDS news is frightening. Social collapse is an evident danger in countries whose doctors, teachers, farmers—and parents—are dying. It is, therefore, a sign of hope that U.N. agencies, as well as some governments, are beginning to respond to AIDS as a

***Until now, almost all public responses have been to treat AIDS as a medical problem, and an issue of high-risk behavior. What is coming more clearly into view as the pandemic reaches into every region of the globe is that AIDS is more than a health crisis or a lifestyle issue. AIDS is also a crisis of poverty.***

people live on less than one dollar a day, lack basic health care, education, adequate food and clean water, and are increasingly marginalized—impoverished—within the global economy. The status of women is a key indicator of vulnerability to AIDS.

Women and girls are a majority of the world's poor, and an increasing proportion of those infected by HIV/AIDS—55 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. Women in the developing world are often malnourished, vulnerable to infections and sexually transmitted diseases, without health care and lacking power inside the family, and thus placed in a high-risk environment for AIDS.

Rural impoverishment is a root cause of labor migration in West Africa which brings AIDS back into home communities; of commercial sex work in the cities of Thailand by which women support rural households; of professional donors in China who make a little extra money by selling their blood, yet into an unsafe blood system. All of these are high-risk behaviors which spread AIDS but they are also

crisis that intensifies poverty.

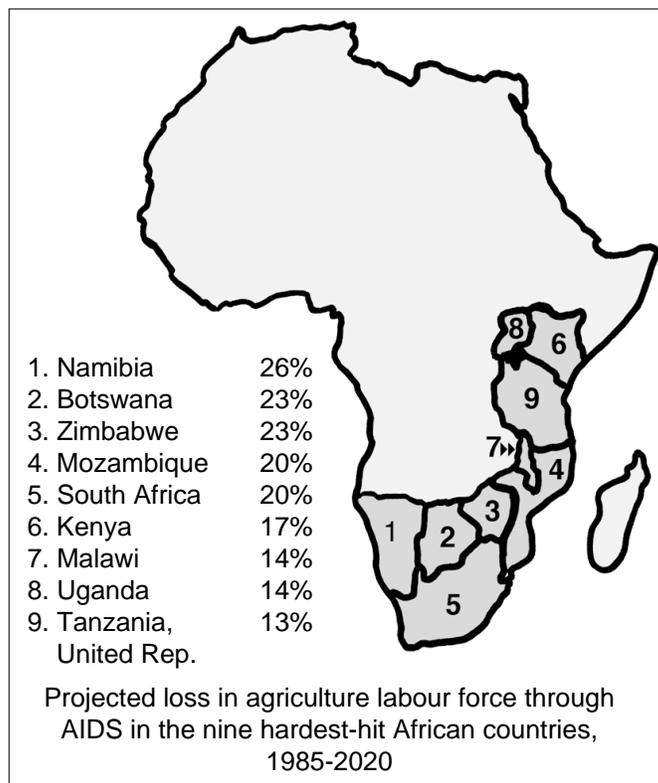
But governments are not yet responding to new research that poverty and inequality themselves are root causes of the AIDS crisis. Still less are they willing to change this development pattern. Yet AIDS is a poverty issue in every sense, and national policies are needed to rebuild communities and reform public health if this crisis is to be solved.

—Peter Mann is the International Coordinator for World Hunger Year (WHY). This article is reprint from the WHY web site, from a department called WHY Speaks. Below are resources recommended by Mann. For

more information about WHY, contact them at 505 Eighth Avenue, Suite 2100; New York, NY 10018-6589; Phone: 212 629-8850 x 126; Fax: 212 465-9274; Email: [peter@worldhungeryear.org](mailto:peter@worldhungeryear.org); Web: [www.worldhungeryear.org](http://www.worldhungeryear.org).

## Resources:

- Bob Herbert, "The Quiet Scourge: AIDS is ravaging blacks in America," (*The New York Times* OP-ED, Thursday, January 11, 2001, p. A31)
- Hanna Rosin, "The Homecoming: Paranoia and Plague in black America," (*The New Republic*, June 5, 1995, pp. 21-31)
- Ann Hwang, "Aids Has Arrived in India and China" (*Worldwatch Magazine*, January/February 2001, pp. 12-20.
- Joseph Collins and Bill Rau, "AIDS in the Context of Development" (2000, 70 pp.) This extensive report is available on the U.N. Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) web site: [www.unrisd.org](http://www.unrisd.org) as "Social Policy and Development Programme Paper 4."
- Other information on HIV/AIDS can be found at the UNAIDS web site [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)



## AIDS is a Rural Issue

AIDS is becoming a greater threat in rural areas than in cities of the developing world, contrary to conventional wisdom. Growing links between rural and urban areas through trade, migration and improved transportation networks have made HIV prevalence rates rise faster in rural areas. This fact summary summarizes some major findings about this devastating trend, using data for sub-Saharan Africa, home to the most-affected countries. The main conclusions apply to other developing countries as well.

- More than two thirds of the population of the 25 most-affected African countries live in rural areas.
- Information and health services are less available in rural areas than in cities. Rural people are therefore less likely to know how to protect themselves from HIV and, if they fall ill, less likely to get care.
- Costs of HIV/AIDS are largely borne by rural communities as HIV-infected urban dwellers of rural origin often return to their communities when they fall ill.
- HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects economic sectors such as agriculture, transportation and mining that have large numbers of mobile or migratory workers.
- People are dying before they can pass on knowledge and expertise to the next generation. A study in Kenya showed that only seven percent of agricultural households headed by orphans had adequate knowledge of agricultural production.
- In Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, 58 percent of all staff deaths are caused by AIDS, and in Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation at least 16 percent of the staff are living with the disease. One study found that up to 50 percent of agricultural extension staff time was lost through HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In the first ten months of 1998, Zambia lost 1,300 teachers to AIDS—the equivalent of around two thirds of all new teachers trained annually.
- The sale of productive resources to care

# AIDS in Africa AIDS in Africa AIDS in Africa

## A Fact Summary from FAO

for the sick and pay for funerals diverts funds away from long-term development.

### AIDS Threatens Food Security

- The loss of productive members of society is severely affecting household capacity to produce and buy food.
- Fostering AIDS orphans or hosting and caring for sick relatives reduces the amount of food available for each household member.
- Evidence from Namibia shows widespread sale and slaughter of livestock to support the sick and provide food for mourners at funerals. This jeopardizes the livestock industry and longer-term food security and survival options.

### AIDS Undermines Agriculture

- (because of its toll on the labour force)*
- AIDS has killed around 7 million agricultural workers since 1985 in the 25 hardest-hit countries in Africa. It could kill 16 million more before 2020.
  - More than a third of the gross national product of the most-affected countries comes from agriculture.
  - In contrast to other diseases, AIDS mostly devastates the productive age group — people between 15 and 50 years.
  - Up to 25 percent of the agricultural labour force could be lost in countries of sub-Saharan Africa by 2020.
  - AIDS reduces productivity as people become ill and die and others spend time caring for the sick, mourning and attending funerals. The result is severe labour shortages for both farm and domestic work.
  - Labour-intensive farming systems with a

low level of mechanization and agricultural input are particularly vulnerable to AIDS.

### AIDS Affects Women Disproportionately

- Women whose husbands are migrant workers are especially vulnerable to AIDS, as their spouses may have other sexual partners. The women themselves may engage in commercial sex in periods of economic stress.
- Some of the traditional mechanisms to ensure widows' access to land contribute to the spread of AIDS — for example, levirate, the custom that obliges a man to marry his brother's widow. Unfortunately, initiatives to stop these practices may leave widows without access to land and food.
- Biological and social factors make women more vulnerable to AIDS, especially in adolescence and youth. In many places HIV infection has been found to be three to five times higher in young women than in young men.
- In several countries, studies have found that rural women whose husbands had died of AIDS were forced to engage in commercial sex to survive because they had no legal rights to their husband's property.

—FAO is the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. For more information contact Marcela Villarreal, FAO's focal point for HIV/AIDS ([marcela.villarreal@fao.org](mailto:marcela.villarreal@fao.org)). For a good resource for responding to the crisis, see *the Church World Service Fact Sheet Aids in Africa: A Generation at Risk* (PO Box 968; Elkhart, IN 46515; 800/297-1516; [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org))

# Some Good News and Bad News about Hunger

*from Bread for the World*

Hunger has decreased somewhat in the U.S. and around the world, according to recent studies. But the good news in these reports is overshadowed by shockingly high estimates of the number of people who are still hungry.

The U.S. Census Bureau/Department of Agriculture reported 3.5 million fewer hungry people in 1999 than in 1995. Also, the number of children in hungry households dropped from 4.1 million to 2.64 million.

However, the U.S. Conference of Mayors annual survey of 25 cities reported that request for emergency food

assistance increased by 17 percent in 2000. Sixty-two percent of those requesting food were children; 32 percent of the adults seeking food were employed.

The Census/Agriculture study also found that 31 million Americans—including 12 million children—experienced hunger or were at risk of hunger in 1999. Nearly 17 percent of U.S. children still lived in households without food security.

Worldwide, the outlook is also mixed. The FAO reported that hunger declined steadily in the developing world—from 959 million undernourished people in 1969-71 to 792 million in 1996-98. But

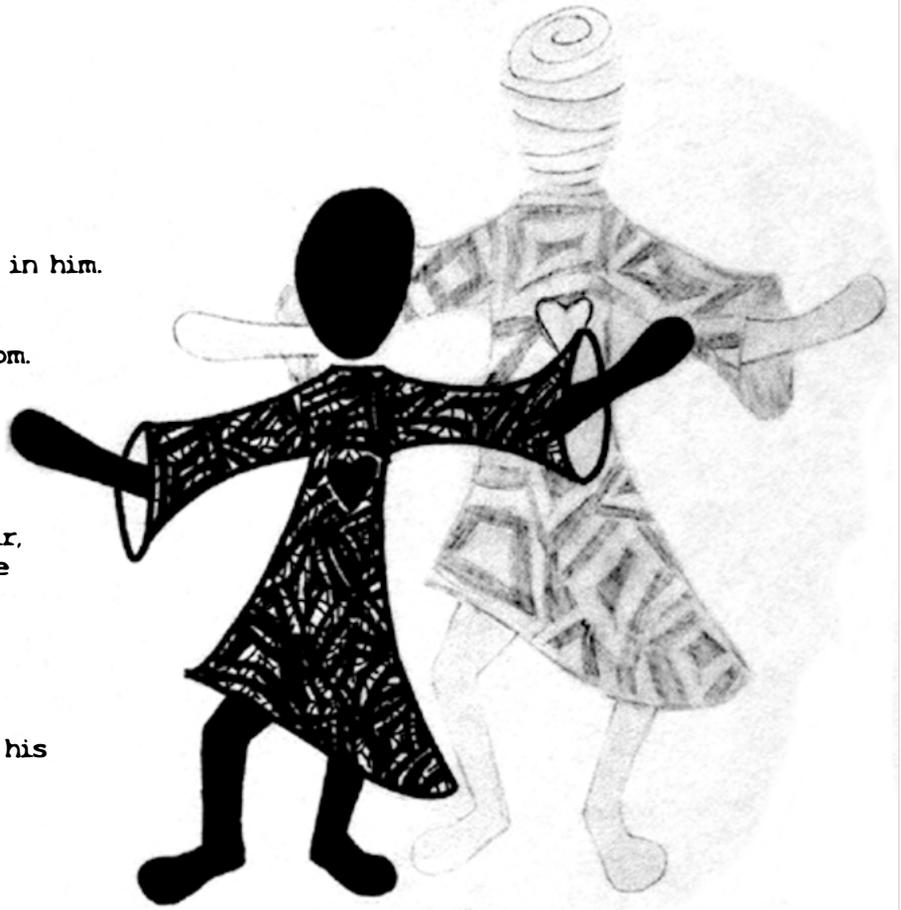
during those same years, the number of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa rose from 88 million to more than 180 million.

In the developing countries, the greatest reduction in hunger has been in East Asia, where the number of undernourished people dropped from 504 million in 1969-71 to 221 million in 1996-98—a result of the “Green Revolution” in agriculture and economic development.

—*from Bread for the World, 50 F. Street NW, Suite 500; Washington, DC 20001; 800/82-BREAD; www.bread.org.*

## Pooh, Age Eleven by Elizabeth Daniel

Pooh told me yesterday  
that his life will end in suicide.  
he said this as his laughing eyes  
surveyed mine.  
his carefully shaved head  
relaxed in relief I had never seen in him.  
he jerked unconsciously,  
and looked off into the distance  
that ended abruptly across the room.  
and I saw  
recognition twitching in his nose,  
as he  
stared at the brown walls  
surrounding the space.  
an easy irreverence hung in the air,  
like a storm that would never come  
but was always imminent.  
its angry thunder  
restlessly transformed itself  
into the foggy laughter  
of children.  
and the eleven-year-old Pooh lost his  
ancient  
expression  
and returned  
to himself.  
I watched  
as he smiled and walked away.



—Elizabeth Daniel, a senior at Vanguard Preparatory School in Waco, Texas, volunteers at an after-school program for at-risk youth near an urban development project. Pooh is one of the friends she made there.

—Rebecca Ward, whose art appears here and on several pages of this issue, is a senior at Midway High School in Woodway, Texas. Rebecca recently organized an art therapy project for a local retirement home.

## FAO Launches New Web Site on Ethics in Food and Agriculture

Major changes in the fields of food and agriculture in recent years, including accelerating technological development, have brought to the fore a variety of ethical questions of relevance to food security and sustainable rural development. As the lead agency within the UN system on matters relating to food and agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently designated ethics in food and agriculture as a priority area of interdisciplinary work.

A new web site, developed by FAO's Sub-Committee on Ethics in Food and Agriculture, reflects the organization's increased focus on the subject. The site includes information on a new series of FAO publications dedicated to these priority issues. Information on FAO's independent Panel of Eminent Experts on Ethics in Food and Agriculture is also available.

—The site, available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish, can be accessed from the FAO home page: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org).

## Three Hunger Specialists Examine Armed Conflict and Hunger

Ellen Messer, Marc J. Cohen, and Jashinta D'Costa recently created a vital new resource on the relationship between armed conflict and hunger. The paper discusses the extent of armed conflict, how conflict causes hunger, and the impacts of conflict on poverty. Other topics include the underlying causes of hunger and conflict and how development assistance affects conflict.

Several recent studies have proposed a significant link between environmental resource scarcity and violence. "Armed Conflict and Hunger" expands this proposition to consider significant linkages among environmental resource scarcities, conflict, food, and hunger. The paper argues that armed conflicts (those involving more than 1,000 deaths) or "food wars" constitute a significant cause of deteriorating food scenarios in developing countries.

Messer, formerly with the Brown University hunger program, has recently worked with the Tufts School of Nutrition Science and Policy and with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cohen is special assistant to the director general of the International Food Policy Research Institute and former editor of Bread for the World's World Hunger Report. D'Costa has been a consultant to the United Nations Development Program, Save the Children-U.S., and National Council for Agricultural Education, as well as research associate with Bread for the World Institute.

—For more information about this paper, see the *World Hunger Education Hunger Notes* web site: [www.worldhunger.org](http://www.worldhunger.org)

art by Rebecca Ward

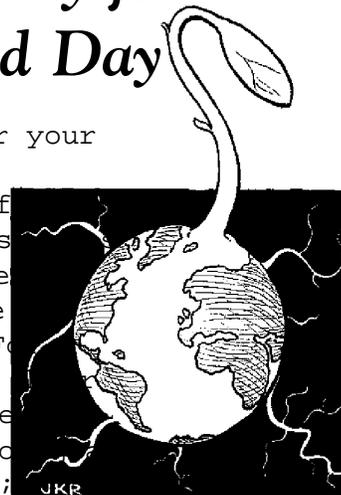


## Getting Ready for World Food Day

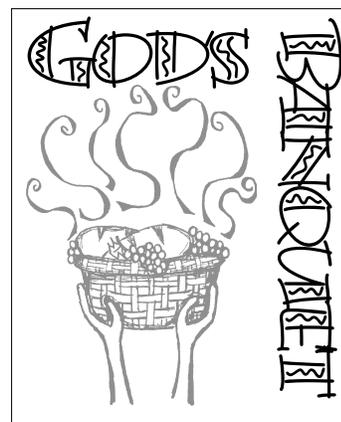
As you prepare for your World Food Day

activities, don't forget to check out the activities and resources available from the National Committee on World Food Day. For information about the annual teleconference, contact Patricia York

2175 K Street NW  
Washington, DC 20437  
202/653-2404.



## Also, Don't Miss the 2001 Seeds Hunger Emphasis Packet!



The 2001 packet includes a World Food Day calendar, bulletin insert, and placemat, as well as the regular 20-plus pages!

**Creative worship tools from people you've come to trust.**

Four 20-page packets each year filled with prayers, litanies, sermons, activities, art, and more. \$50 per packet or \$120 for all four. To order, call 254/755-7745; fax 254/753-1909; write 602 James, Waco, TX 76706; e-mail [seedshope@aol.com](mailto:seedshope@aol.com).

For samples of previous packets: [www.seedspublishers.com](http://www.seedspublishers.com)

## House Rejects Vouchers in Education Overhaul

WASHINGTON, DC (ABP)—The House of Representative rejected two amendments pushing for school vouchers before overwhelmingly approving a sweeping measure to change federal education policy.

The 384-45 vote on the full education package May 23 handed a major victory to President George W. Bush, who campaigned on linking school performance to tax dollars and instituting massive national testing standards.

But lawmakers rejected another key Bush proposal —providing education vouchers to allow students in failing schools to attend private and parochial schools with tax dollars. Bush had dropped his voucher bid in a compromise with Democratic leaders, but angered Republicans attempted at the last minute to add voucher provisions in amendments on the House floor.

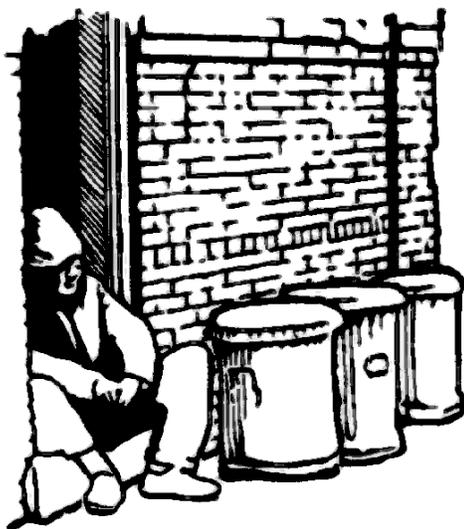
Rep. Dick Armey (R-Texas) offered the unsuccessful voucher amendments. Lawmakers rejected 273-155 a proposal to give students attending low-performing schools vouchers worth \$1,500 to attend private schools for three years. The second voucher proposal would have authorized pilot programs in five schools to determine the effectiveness of school choice in improving academic achievement. It failed 241-186.

The Senate has not yet taken final action on its version of the bill. Another attempt to add voucher amendments is expected there.

—from an article by Kenny Byrd, *Associated Baptist Press*

## DJ Lives in Box to Dramatize Life of the Homeless

WACO, TX—A Waco disc jockey trapped himself in a box for two days, demanding twenty-thousand dollars. As part of a fundraising campaign, Jay Charles, morning show host of a local radio



station, lived, ate and slept in a box outside the station in order to simulate the plight of the homeless. Charles allotted all contributions from listeners to Compassion Ministries, a Waco transitional homeless shelter.

Charles' interest in Compassion Ministries began in Fall 1999

when, following his on-air complaints of the city's intrusive panhandlers, Jill McCall, executive director of the shelter, phoned in a rebuttal against his berating. The fastest growing segment among the homeless population, she informed him, is women and children. Consequently, the average age is nine years old.

Inspired by their dialogue, Charles launched the "Jay in the Box" Program. Following a \$10,000 success in 2000, he volunteered to repeat his stint, living in the box for two days. All proceeds went to the nonprofit organization's efforts to help homeless people acquire necessary life skills and move toward financial independence, employment, and permanent housing.

Although the nearly \$15,000 raised fell short of Charles' \$20,000 goal, McCall said that the DJ successfully achieved the ultimate goal—to encourage "the community to be involved in helping solve the homeless problem in our city."

—by Elizabeth Walker, *Seeds of Hope intern*

## Mexico City Labor Board Provides for Secret Ballots, Elimination of Protectionism

CUIDAD MEXICO, MEXICO—On May 1, International Workers' Day, the labor board in Mexico City issued a proclamation which, among other things, provides that elections under its jurisdiction shall be conducted by secret ballot, and that contracts filed with the labor board will be made public "in order to protect interested parties while avoiding so-called protection contracts." International labor leaders are calling this a "tremendous accomplishment."

Organizers from international labor groups maintain that the elimination of protection contracts and the conduct of union elections by secret ballot have been the most urgent demands of democratic trade unionists and lawyers in Mexico over the past several years.

With Mexico City now being governed by the PRD, a center-left party—and the federal government being led (for the first time in seven decades) by the PAN, a "right-wing" party—organizers say that the actions of the labor board are pivotal at this point. Last fall Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the city's Chief of Government, appointed Jesus Campos Linas—a labor lawyer who has spent many years defending workers' rights—to head the labor board, which oversees a large number of industries and services in the city.

During the historic election campaign last fall, PAN candidate Vincente Fox (now Mexico's president) made a commitment to comply with the "Twenty Commitments for Trade Union Freedom." The previous government (PRI) had made a specific commitment to "promote secret ballot elections" in the Ministerial Agreement it signed pursuant to a case filed under the Labor Side Agreement of NAFTA. However, in a recent election at

Duro, which fell under federal jurisdiction, the Fox government failed to comply with either its campaign promises or the Ministerial Agreement.

Still, labor organizers are more optimistic about worker's rights in Mexico than they have been in many decades.  
—from Mexican Labor News and Analysis, a monthly collaboration of the Mexico City-based Authentic Labor Front (FAT), the Pittsburgh-based United Electrical Workers (UE) and AMERICAS.ORG. Contact: Editor Dan La Botz at danlabotz@cs.com or 513/861-8722, or Robin Alexander, UE Director of International Labor Affairs, at international@ra-nknfile-ue.org.

## Jubilee 2000 Supporters "Feel Let Down"

### Rock Singer Bono Speaks Out for Continued Effort

WASHINGTON, DC (ABP)—While supporters of debt relief for poor countries made gains in the last year, they "still haven't found what they're looking for," according to rock star Bono, lead singer of the group U2.

A key supporter of Jubilee 2000, an international effort to eliminate debt for poor countries, Bono told reporters that movement leaders "feel let down" by recent setbacks and—in language unintentionally reminiscent of a line from one of the group's biggest hits—"have still not received all they came looking for."

In a conference call with members of the media, Bono and other Jubilee 2000 leaders criticized the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for holding up progress.

Only 22 out of the 41 countries targeted for the relief have received any money, they said. One country that has had debts forgiven, meanwhile, is now able to send three times as many children to schools as it could previously afford.

"We have to get the World Bank and the IMF on board," said Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-Ala). "The United States has to lead the effort." Bachus became a leading sponsor of the debt-relief package last year and led the effort to enlist support among GOP lawmakers.

Last year, Congress approved all the funds necessary to fund the first year's portion of a three-year agreement between the leading industrialized countries to begin canceling the debt

facing poor countries. It earmarked \$435 million toward debt relief for countries where many people live on less than \$1 a day.

However, the Bush administration must continue to fund the initiative for debt relief to become a reality.

Also, while the leading industrialized countries are canceling the money owed to them by poor countries, the World Bank and IMF are not. And most of the debt facing these countries is owed to these two world organizations.

Bachus called the effort "the greatest moral and social issue of our time."

He said that even if the two monetary organizations did not do their part, the G7 countries could pay for the effort "for one dollar per person, per year."

Bono said he is encouraged by the new Bush administration and feels confident the president is committed to debt relief. "President Bush has a real chance to put a flag in the sand on this issue," Bono said.

—from an article by Kenny Byrd, Associate Baptist Press

## U.S. Congressional Budget Office Says Income of Wealthy Has Outgrown Taxes

WASHINGTON, DC (AP)—While the share of overall federal taxes paid by the wealthiest Americans has ballooned in the past two decades, the income of that richest group has grown even faster, a study by the Congressional Budget Office shows.

The report by Congress's nonpartisan fiscal analyst said that from 1979 to 1997, the portion of all federal taxes that are paid by the wealthiest one percent of households has grown from 15.5 percent to 23 percent. That means their share of total taxes grew by 48 percent over the period.

During the same time, the average after-tax income of that wealthiest one percent swelled from \$263,700 to \$677,900—a 157 percent increase that dwarfs the income growth of households making less money.

The lowest-earning one-fifth of Americans saw their average after-tax income drop from \$10,900 to \$10,800 during the period, the study showed. And the middle one-fifth of Americans by income distribution went from a \$33,800 average to \$37,200—a 10 percent increase.

"The distribution of income among households grew substantially more unequal during the 1979-1997 period," said the analysis, which the budget office quietly released during last week's tax debate in Congress.

The report covers the 19 years ending in 1997, the most recent year for which figures are available, and is based on data gathered by the Census Bureau, the Internal Revenue Service and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The budget office periodically issues reports on tax and income distribution.

—from an article by Alan Fram, Associated Press



## et cetera

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### Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

### Editorial Address

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Seeds of Hope Publishers also produce quarterly packets of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude.

Perhaps we all have a yearning for the new society deep inside of us. Often, out of fear, we step away.

—Marc Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker*

Whatever your life situation might be, find some way to be in immediate contact with the little ones, the nobodies.

Get in touch with the people who are of no account, who haven't made it into the great American mainstream.

Maybe they don't talk 'right' and smell 'right.'

They may not seem to be part of the 'in' group...

There is a reason we push all these people far away and far apart: They represent everything we fear and everything we deny about ourselves.

Yet to be touched by these people is to discover the deepest recesses of our our life.

—Richard Rohr

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And one who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth

has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

—Mahatma Ghandi

There is no greatness where there is not simplicity, goodness, and truth.

—Leo Tolstoy, *novelist and philosopher (1828-1910)*

Why indeed must "God" be a noun? Why not a verb?... the most active and dynamic of all?

—Mary Daly, *theologian*

The first freedom of man, I contend, is the freedom to eat.

—Eleanor Roosevelt



cartoon by Norma Young

These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art, and drama.

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