

# Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

## What You'll Find Inside:

- 2 **Mercy Ships:**  
*Lives Changed Forever*
- 3 **Silence in Suburbia**  
*continued*
- 4 **Obesity Rate Drops among Low-Income Children**
- 5-8 **Food Security:**  
*A Casualty of War (Special Report)*
- 9-11 **Can Bill Gates Eradicate Disease in the World?**
- 12 **Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings**



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## Silence in Suburbia:

### *The Impact of Hunger on America's Middle Class*

by Chelle Samaniego

Suburban poverty is an ugly thing. It's secret and hidden. Like sin. It lurks in the darkness hiding from disapproving eyes. Echoing disdain with statements like "You live in the suburbs. How can you be hungry?"

The green pastures of suburbia are slowly becoming barren; no longer immune to the tortures of the lower class: unemployment, disease, divorce. It happens. It even happens in suburbia.

Teresa Green knows well what a life-changing event divorce can be. "I never went hungry, only because I had friends and family who would invite me to dinner." But when she'd returned home, she'd sit alone in the dark without hot water or air conditioning. Green was a stay-at-home mother. When she and her husband divorced after more than 20 years of marriage, her income went from six digits to zero. "I went from having housekeepers to being a housekeeper to survive. My customers had no idea I lived in a \$250,000 house in their same neighborhood."

From 2000 to 2011, the Brookings Institution estimates that the growth rate of impoverished families in the suburbs doubled that of those living in the inner city—for the first time in history. This brings the average number of families living below poverty level in the suburbs to 64 percent. Those manicured lawns and six-foot privacy fences are hiding empty bellies and anxiety about where the next meal will come from.

The inner cities have—for years—been equipped and able to serve the poor and hungry in their area: food pantries, missions,

*continued on page 3*



Photo by Susan Mullally

# Mercy Ships: *Lives Changed Forever*

by Jessica Foumena

For the past 35 past years, Mercy Ships crews—composed of health-care professionals in such fields as anesthesiology, orthopedic and reconstructive surgery, midwifery and eye surgery—have performed numerous acts of compassion. This is the case of Abel, a boy from the Republic of Togo in West Africa, whose normal childhood turned upside down after an injection at a local clinic.

Abel's parents noticed that he was having difficulty learning to crawl. Abel's muscles stopped growing, but not his bones; his legs failed to grow correctly due to the lack of musculature to direct them. His parents approached three doctors who were unable to help them. Even though Abel's physical deformity made him the center of ridicule among his peers, he and his supportive parents somehow maintained a positive outlook.

When Abel's father heard about the arrival of a Mercy Ship in Togo, he took his son to an orthopedic screening in Lomé. Three surgeries and three months later, Abel and his father, accompanied by a Mercy Ships team, returned home to the village of Homa in a Mercy Ships Land Rover. Abel, now standing on two straightened, normal legs, was welcomed with astonished stares and cheers.

"Bringing hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor by mobilizing people and resources worldwide, without regard for race, gender, or religion."

This is the mission of Mercy Ships, an international faith-based organization operating hospital ships to provide free health-care services, capacity building and sustainable

development to people without access to medical care in the developing world.

Now a well-established charity with offices in 16 nations, Mercy Ships' existence was born out of Don Stephens' vision of "a big, white, state-of-the-art hospital ship that delivers hope and healing to people around the globe living in dire circumstances." In 1978, the first ship was purchased, the first step in making Stephens' dream a reality.

*Mercy Ships medical crews have treated 539,000 patients in village clinics, including 109,000 dental patients with more than 278,000 dental procedures.*

Don and his wife, Deyon, along with their four children, lived onboard the first Mercy Ship for 10 years.

"We are shocked and distressed when we see the devastation and number of lives lost in natural disasters. But there's a tsunami of deaths in West Africa every day. People live in fear, hopelessness and desperation," Stephens said in an online statement.

The organization is primarily funded through private donations. Volunteers who serve on the ships and in the field also contribute through monthly fees. The largest of the four hospital ships operated by the organization was purchased in 2007.

"I was not only deeply impressed, but also touched by the care Mercy Ships was giving these poor people and how well [Mercy Ships teams] are organized. I am touched by the hope and courage given to those you are serving," Joseph Blatter recently said during a personal visit with a Mercy Ships team. Blatter is the President of FIFA, the international governing body of association football.

According to Mercy Ships, nearly 50 percent of the people in the world have no access to a hospital or a doctor. Therefore, medical care is an unattainable luxury to millions.

*continued on page 3*



*Left: A Mercy Ships crew member comforts a young patient. Photo © Mercy Ships*

## Suburbia

*continued from page 1*

federal-benefit providers, homeless shelters. They've all been "downtown." With the recent increase in suburban poverty, the outskirts of these thriving cities are ill equipped to serve the "new hungry."

As the Brookings Institution states,

*Today's landscape of poverty demands new policies and practices that confront barriers to opportunity not just at the community level, but at the regional scale of the economy. Only then can poverty alleviation become more productive, stretching limited dollars further to help more people in more places, and in cities and suburbs alike.*

I'm reminded of the movie *Fun with Dick and Jane*. Do you remember it? It came out in 2005 and was a remake of the 1977 comedy. Jim Carrey and Téa Leoni played Dick and Jane Harper. A happy, suburbanite couple, living the American dream: big cars, big TVs, big house. Until the day when Dick's Fortune 500 company dissolves in a reminiscent-of-Enron corporate scandal. With it, his income, pension and reputation are flushed down the financial tubes.

The scenario: Two affluent worker bees whose luck runs out are now penniless in their McMansion. The two resort to showering in their neighbor's sprinkler system, undergoing experimental medical treatments for money, and robbing coffee shops of money, lattes and baked goods—all to keep up with society's laws of success.

It's funny onscreen, but if all you had was taken away, what would you do? The realities of suburban hunger are not funny. Lack of services close to home, lack of public transportation and lack of financial safety nets are all contributing factors to the plight of the suburban poor.

Think about it. If you were suddenly without a car, what would you do? How would you get to work? Borrowing your spouse's car is out of the question. You had one car, and now it's gone. In the city, you'd opt for public transportation to get to work. But public transportation is rare in the suburbs. Bus lines do not run to the outskirts. Your best luck would be to live in a major metropolitan area with a train system. But, then, how do you get to the station?

According to a 2012 survey by the American Payroll Association, two thirds of those surveyed online live paycheck-to-paycheck. Incomes are not covering expenses. Many more are living in retirement with little-to-no extra income for food. Social Security covers basic utilities and rent, but when it comes to paying for medications or your lunch, which would you choose?

I recently came to the realization that suburban hunger and poverty hide under a blanket of ambiguity. How do you explain to people that you have a four-bedroom house and two cars in your garage, yet no food on the table? The plight of the middle class: You need the house for the family and the cars to get everyone to work or school. So where do you cut expenses for food?

Let's be real. People are hungry. Let's help them. Can your church host a food pantry? Even if only for its members? Can you open up your home to your neighbors? Learn about them. Could they be hungry? Did an illness deplete their savings and disable their income? Invite them to dinner. If you can feed people, feed people. Every little bit helps. All your neighbor may eat today is that loaf of bread or plate of cookies you brought over.

In a dialogue with the Apostle Peter, Jesus tells us what to do in John 21:

*After breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"*

*"Yes, Master, you know I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."*

*He then asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"*

*"Yes, Master, you know I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Shepherd my sheep."*

*Then he said it a third time: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"*

*Peter was upset that he asked for the third time, "Do you love me?" so he answered, "Master, you know everything there is to know. You've got to know that I love you."*

*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (From The Message)*

Suburban hunger is not only real, it's everywhere: your neighbors, your friends, your family. Odds are, they are hungry. What are you doing to help them?

—Chelle Samaniego lives in the suburbs of the Greater Waco area of Central Texas. She recently completed a term as a Vista volunteer with the Waco Homeless Coalition. She remains active in the work of that coalition and the McLennan County Hunger Coalition, and she chairs the local committee for National Homelessness and Awareness Week. Sources: Reuters, the Brookings Institution: *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America*.

## Mercy Ships

*continued from page 2*

The organization reports that it has performed more than 61,000 life-changing operations. These include procedures such as cleft-lip and palate repair, cataract removal, orthopedic procedures, facial reconstruction and obstetric fistula repair.

Mercy Ships medical crews have treated 539,000 patients in village clinics, including 109,000 dental patients with more than 278,000 dental procedures. The teams also trained more than 5,770 local health-care teachers, who have since trained others. The crews have trained 29,400 local professionals in their respective areas of expertise.

The story of the Togolese boy Abel is one of the thousands of lives changed forever by Mercy Ships crews, one surgery at the time.

—At this writing, Jessica Foumena is finishing her studies for Baylor University's Master of International Journalism degree and also finishing a semester as a Seeds of Hope intern. She hails from Cameroon, in West Africa.

# Obesity Rate Drops among Low-income Children

by Natalie Alas

Childhood obesity is an epidemic that has affected many families across the US for many years. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, childhood obesity is defined as a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile in comparison to children of the same age and sex in the centers' growth charts. Children who are obese are more likely to have health problems such as diabetes or cancer as adults.

Children in low-income families are seen as more at-risk due to the high costs of fruits and vegetables and the low costs of fast-food meals. But fortunately, a recent study shows a drop in the rate of childhood obesity in low-income families.

Big urban areas such as New York City have reported a decline in the number of obese schoolchildren from 2007 to 2011. Along with this, it has also been reported that the obesity rate among preschool children from low-income families fell in 19 states and US territories between 2008 and 2011.

Although the exact reason why rates in childhood obesity are falling has yet to be discovered, the implementation of healthier school meals, an increase in outdoor activities for children and an increased knowledge of nutrition in families may be significant factors.

Not only are schools giving their students healthier meal options than they did 10 years ago, but other places where students frequently buy food—such as corner stores—are

also stocking healthier snacks. With an increase in healthier food and drink options, children are now consuming fewer calories than they did in previous years.

Along with these factors, low-income communities are increasingly becoming aware of the epidemics of obesity and diabetes, and they are taking action by being more conscious of the types of food they consume.

National organizations and legislatures are providing new programs and tools such as the Nutrition Environment Assessment Tool (NEAT) to increase access to healthy foods.

Faith-based organizations are also working to deliver fruit and vegetables to residents who do not typically have easy access to these types of foods. Programs like SNAP now provide benefits to low-income families who choose to buy more vegetables and fruits as well, making healthier foods more affordable by offering coupons and incentives to SNAP participants.

Working together, programs, schools and families are making significant progress to reduce childhood obesity in the US. As the importance of eating healthy and exercise is continually being emphasized, the rates of childhood obesity should continue to drop in the upcoming years.

—Natalie Alas, a native of Pearland, TX, is a Professional Writing student at Baylor University and a Seeds of Hope intern. Sources: New York Times ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org)); Let's Move ([www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov)); Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ([www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)) For more information about these sources, email [natalie\\_alas@baylor.edu](mailto:natalie_alas@baylor.edu).



Left: A family stops to interact with photographer Susan Mullally. She took this photo and the one on page 1 at the Gospel Cafe in Waco, TX.

## Special Report

# Food Security: A Casualty of War

by Rev. Lucas Johnson

It was a beautiful, late summer morning and thousands were pouring in to the National Mall in Washington, DC, on August 28, trying to get as close as possible to the stage erected on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

The scene was a far cry from the original March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, but it was a noteworthy expression and a fitting opportunity to redress persistent grievances held by millions of Americans.

Admittedly, my expectations were low. There is a delicate dance between creating a spectacle and creating an event that could inspire, equip or encourage a movement. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) had brought five young activists from North Carolina, Georgia and DC to participate in an “intergenerational teach-in” sponsored by the Samuel Dewitt Proctor Conference.

While the event was planned around the commemoration of the 1963 march, I know that people were uncertain about what to expect. The 2013 march exceeded my expectations; genuine organizers were invited to speak, and the variety of voices heard from the stage were evidence of the interconnectedness of present struggles.

The single most surprising voice for me was probably that of the Harvard-trained economist (now at Columbia University) and internationally respected economic policy advisor, Jeffery Sachs.

Hunger was among the grievances wrapped up in the first march. It did not have to be named then. Everyone knew that “Jobs and Freedom” was intimately related to the fact that poor families throughout the country could not put food on the table. Sachs has been a champion for a fair and more humane economic system for many years, but I did not, for some reason, expect him to be on this stage.

I should have. Any march on Washington in 2013 to address the present blights of poverty, labor exploitation, bloated military spending and consistent cuts to social services would need to have someone who could explain where we are in history, and where war is in the history of struggle for “jobs and freedom.”

During his brief time at the podium, Sachs made passionate remarks. 2013, much like 1963, is a time of moral crisis, he told us all:

*America is mired in income inequality. America enslaves multitudes of black and Hispanic young men to feed the avarice of its privatized penitentiaries. America despoils the Earth by its heedless fracking and burning of fossil*

*fuels. And America sends drone missiles that kill innocent wedding-goers in a misguided war on Islam.”<sup>1</sup>*

Imagine all of this, coming from an economist! For me, the significance of that choice of speaker, and of his relevance to the topic of hunger, is that I know of Sachs as someone

*In other words, we can end hunger. What we lack is the political will. Children and adults go hungry in the world, not because we don't have enough food, but because alleviating world hunger has not ranked high among the list of priorities of the rich nations of the world.*

who has consistently decried the policies of world financial institutions that leave too many people unable to access means necessary to subsist, much less flourish.

In 2004, he made the case, in his well-known book *The End of Poverty*, that we already had the means to end abject poverty around the globe.

In other words, we can end hunger. What we lack is the political will. Children and adults go hungry in the world, not because we don't have enough food, but because alleviating world hunger has not ranked high among the list of priorities of the rich nations of the world.

This is not a human problem that we can't figure out; it is not a disease that would require a revolution in agriculture or science. Those revolutions have already occurred. What is needed, as Martin Luther King, Jr. so accurately expressed 50 years ago, is a “revolution of values.”

Disturbingly, what ranks high among the priorities of rich countries, particularly in the US, is the vast number of resources spent on the world's largest and most capable military. The justification of our military prowess is shocking when one considers the fact that famine and food insecurity are among the key ingredients to the instability of several African nations where extremist groups are on the rise.

It seems like common sense that a government that cannot ensure that its people are fed, is also not a government

*continued on page 6*

that can stand up to extremists that threaten its own survival. Yet the choice is all-too-often to offer military aid instead of the infrastructure and development support requested by African governments.

The United States either ignores or encourages policies by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank that prioritize the demands of lenders rather than the needs of countries trying to develop their own economic capacity.

*Colombia, the third most populous country in Latin America, has one of the highest rates of internally displaced people in the world—nearly 5 million. The end result is that, in a country rich with biodiversity and agricultural capacity, millions experience food insecurity.*

The US also has a reputation for propping up leaders that have been disastrous to their own people, but who meet some narrowly conceived security or economic interest of the United States. Jeffery Sachs has been among those articulating this concern most clearly.

In some countries where the US has been militarily engaged, there has been an acknowledgement by military commanders about the humanitarian needs pressing communities that the US is engaging in war.

However, the decision to provide limited infrastructure and food support while sending missiles from predator drones, or going door-to-door in night raids, terrorizing families in the hunt for suspected terrorists, does not bring us closer to a resolution to the problem of global hunger.

In fact, we will not effectively combat hunger unless we likewise challenge the increasing militarism of the United States and the decision to deal with conflict by threat or use of arms.

In working during the past year with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I have traveled to two active conflict zones where armed hostilities had a direct relationship to matters of agricultural production, food security and hunger.

The first is Colombia, a country that has been at war longer than I have been alive. In Colombia, paramilitary groups, working in the interests of multinational corporations, displace farmers from their lands by threat or massacre. There is forced recruitment into the Colombian military and a documented history of extrajudicial killings, where young men from cities are driven to the jungle, killed and labeled as insurgents.

Colombia is among the world's most biologically diverse countries, with breathtaking beauty and rich

agricultural capacity. Corporations want access to lands held by rural farmers, indigenous groups and afro-Colombian populations for the sake of things like mineral extraction, fruit and palm cultivation.

This reality is not only the source of conflict between guerilla insurgencies and the official military forces (with their paramilitary counterparts), but it is also the source of conflict between farmers and communities that want no part of the war and the economic interests of elites that threaten the stability of life throughout the country.

The US branch of the FOR has practiced the non-violent action called "protective accompaniment" in Colombia for nearly 10 years. The community of San Jose de Arpartado has refused to take part in any side of the war, and they have suffered greatly for that refusal. The presence of international activists provides a deterrent to paramilitary action against the community.

Colombia is the highest recipient of US military aid in the Western Hemisphere and is home to one of our largest embassy compounds. US foreign policies are interrelated with the conflict in Colombia.

The drug war, which is among the ways the US justifies its involvement, is said to finance the conflict. However, while that is partly true, the facts about who really profits from narco-trafficking are often misrepresented. This conflict has caused Colombia to have one of the highest rates of internally displaced people in the world—nearly 5 million. According to the World Food Programme,

*Colombia is the third most populous country in Latin America, with an estimated population of 44 million, 76 percent living in urban areas. Despite its middle-income country status, 21 million Colombians are poor and 6 million live below the extreme poverty line.<sup>2</sup>*

The end result is that, in a country rich with biodiversity and agricultural capacity, millions experience food insecurity. Hunger here is not the product of natural causes; it's the result of policies that encourage exploitation and a nearly 40-year-old war.

The second conflict zone where I have been engaged more recently is Palestine. Among the multilayered dynamics of the conflict, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has a direct effect on hunger in Palestine. The agricultural livelihood of Palestinian farmers, many of whose families have cultivated olive trees for centuries, is under constant assault.

Access to wells throughout the West Bank has been denied to Palestinians by Israeli settlers who have built communities there and claimed the wells for themselves. Soldiers, settlers and private security forces are known to have shot holes in water tanks above Palestinian homes. Hundred-year-old olive trees are destroyed to build settlements and the separation barrier, often referred to as the Apartheid Wall.

When an occupying army controls the means of one's livelihood and an entire population's agricultural

production, a different type of food insecurity exists. This is not a matter of drought or famine, pestilence or insufficient agricultural knowledge. Because of geopolitical realities, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are simply not in control of their ability to provide food or water to their families or communities. Every aspect of their lives is the product of a negotiation with the Israeli occupying army.

The situation in the Gaza Strip is far more dire than in the West Bank. According to the World Food Programme,

*In the Gaza Strip, food insecurity levels are on the rise. In 2012, some 71 percent of households in the impoverished strip were found either food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity.*

The WFP report continues:

*Restrictions by Israeli authorities on freedom of movement, access to natural resources, the right to pursue gainful employment, and on international trade and investment has left 27 percent of households, or 1.3 million Palestinians, unable to meet their basic food and households expenses, with a further 14 percent of households at risk of food insecurity. Although these numbers show a slight recent improvement, they remain at an alarming level.<sup>3</sup>*

The occupation has created a circumstance of food insecurity amid an environment where the legend and reality of Israel is that the desert was made to bloom.

When one juxtaposes these experiences alongside the persistent problems of hunger in the United States, one sees clearly the problem of mal-aligned priorities.

It is well known that childhood nutrition affects early childhood education. It is also known that private prison companies are said to calculate the number of beds they can count on filling by examining third-grade reading levels in certain communities.

The "War on Drugs" in the United States, in addition to militarizing our police departments (before the "War on Terror" justified their militari-

zation), has had devastating effects on poor communities, particularly Black and Latino communities—not because drug use is higher but because of the net affect of policies and targeted policing.

When someone is convicted of a felony charge of marijuana possession, the felon-disenfranchisement

***When an occupying army controls the means of one's livelihood and an entire population's agricultural production, a different type of food insecurity exists. This is not a matter of drought or famine, pestilence or insufficient agricultural knowledge.***

laws in many states not only strip one of his or her right to vote, but also his or her right to housing and SNAP benefits (Food Stamps).

*continued on page 8*

## ***Food Security and Conflict: A Vicious Cycle***

**I**n *Food Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages and Complex Feedbacks*, a report prepared for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Cullen Hendrix and Henk-Jan Brinkman wrote of the "circular link between food insecurity and conflict" and the "potential role of food security interventions in reducing the risk of violent conflicts."

The report states that, while there are many forms of political violence in addition to interstate wars and major civil wars, two things seem to stand out. First, food insecurity is often "a motivation for popular mobilization and a risk multiplier." The second is that "violent conflict itself is a major driver of acute food insecurity."

In studying the dynamics of urban unrest, Hendrix and Brinkman found that "higher consumer prices, particularly for food and fuel, are associated with increases in urban protest and rioting, which can have adverse effects for institutions and influence policy decisions that affect the whole country."

The report continues, suggesting that, if carried out correctly, efforts to improve food security can reduce tensions and contribute to more stable environments. The vicious cycle of food insecurity and conflict can be transformed into "a virtuous cycle of food security and stability that provides peace dividends, reduces conflict drivers, such as horizontal inequalities, enhances social cohesion, rebuilds social trust, and builds the legitimacy and capacity of governments."

—From *Food Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages and Complex Feedbacks*, prepared by Cullen Hendrix, Assistant Professor, Department of Government, College of William and Mary; and Henk-Jan Brinkman, Chief of Policy, Planning and Application of the Peacebuilding Support Office in the United Nations. (For more information, go [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org).)

The problem is not at all remote and not at all abstract. Yet, amid these incidents of hunger caused by the violence of war, there are examples of resistance, and I believe we are living in a time of great opportunity. The persistent inequalities in the United States are causing people to question not only what has been said about domestic policy, but also international policy.

As I speak to student groups in places like Gainesville, FL, Atlanta, GA, Louisville, KY, and elsewhere in the world, I see renewed engagement and a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of struggles.

The nonviolent struggles of courageous Palestinians and their Israeli allies have gained increasing amounts of attention. US student groups like Students for Justice in Palestine have sponsored boycott campaigns on university campuses, aimed at boycotting the institutions that profit from Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These students have also recognized that some of the same institutions are profiting from mass incarceration, immigrant detention and other inhumane systems in the US. In Colombia, while there is not yet cause to break out into celebration, there are peace talks between the government and leftist militias, and the Constitutional Court has handed down victories for the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado.

Communities in the United States, led in some ways by Detroit, where there is life and resilience amid the city's economic devastation, are addressing issues of nutrition and its link to early education in ever-more-creative ways.

The relationship between war and hunger is not simply that hunger from natural causes creates conflict, although that is certainly true. Today, however, the relationship between war and hunger is a matter of choices—choices that either prioritize human life and

flourishing, or choices that promise a false sense of security purchased through militarization and war.

We are living in a time of great opportunity. As I write, the United States stands ready to intervene militarily in Syria. There is little doubt that an already dire humanitarian situation will be made worse.

***Today, the relationship between war and hunger is a matter of choices—choices that either prioritize human life and flourishing, or choices that promise a false sense of security purchased through militarization and war.***

We have before us choices to make; we have before us opportunities to engage in the construction of a better world. We can't let up now! I'd like to echo the conclusion of Sach's speech at the March on Washington, as it was later printed in the *Huffington Post*:

*It was the genius of the generation of 1963 to recognize the indivisibility of morality. Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy and Pope John XXIII knew that racism, poverty and militarism all carry us away from human needs and aspirations.*

*It is our turn to bend the arc of the moral universe. We too must banish the moneylenders, not from the temple but from the lobbies of Congress and the White House. We too must beat swords into plowshares, joining together with Iranians, Egyptians, Palestinians and Israelis, to honor the prophets of peace. And we must end our assault on nature, leaving oil and coal in the ground and harvesting the sun and the wind instead.*

*In our age of greed and glitter, the work of justice often seems to be stilled. But do not be deceived. For the ancient cry still moves us today: Justice, justice shall you pursue, so that you may live in the Promised Land.<sup>4</sup>*

—Lucas Johnson is the Southeast & Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator/Organizer for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) in the United States. Born in Erlangen, Germany, he grew up in Coastal Georgia and studied at Mercer University, Emory University and the University of Goettingen. He wrote this report from London and Germany, while traveling to the Republic of Congo for an FOR event.

**Endnotes**

1. *Huffington Post* ([www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-sachs/march-on-washington](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-sachs/march-on-washington))
2. World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org/countries/colombia](http://www.wfp.org/countries/colombia))
3. World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org/countries/state-of-palestine/overview](http://www.wfp.org/countries/state-of-palestine/overview))
4. *Huffington Post* (see Number 1)



*Above: Lucas Johnson moderates a panel discussion. Photo by Richard Myers.*

# Can Bill Gates Eradicate Disease in the World?

by Alyssa Miller

Founded in 1997, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been working for 16 years to improve the lives of people in developing countries, and to ensure that United States citizens have access to the opportunities they need to succeed.

Through the efforts of its co-chairs—Bill Gates, his wife Melinda Gates and his father William H. Gates Sr.—as well as numerous benefactors and donors including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Rotary International, the foundation has distributed more than \$26 billion in grants, including \$15 billion in global health alone.

The foundation’s global health program strives to eliminate and/or eradicate several well-known and highly infectious diseases: Malaria, HIV, Tuberculosis, Polio, Pneumonia and diseases, such as leprosy and guinea worm, that have been neglected by many health organizations.

**1. Malaria** is caused by parasites that are spread through mosquitoes. Endemic in 108 countries, malaria kills 780,000 people per year, many of them children and babies in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Malaria can cause fever, chills, flu-like symptoms and anemia. Many children who survive the disease suffer lifelong mental disabilities.

Annual funding to fight malaria rose to \$1.5 billion in 2010 from \$100 million in 2003, and an experimental vaccine from GlaxoSmithKline, a company dedicated to creating new medicines and vaccines to treat diseases, has halved the risk of African children developing malaria.

WHO malarial experts say that one third of the affected countries are expected to wipe out the disease within the next decade, but critics have stressed that the vaccine is no quick fix for the eradication of malaria. A previous

global malaria eradication effort began in 1955, and the disease was eliminated in several wealthy countries. After the initial commitment and funding ceased, malaria was seen once more in Africa, Asia and South America.

However, despite criticism, Bill Gates still expects to see an end to the disease.

“The parasite has been killing children and sapping the strength of whole populations for tens of thousands of years,” he said. “Now we can chart a course to end it.”

**2. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)** infects more than 33 million people around the world and more than 30 million people have died from HIV-related complications since the 1980s, when the first cases were detected.

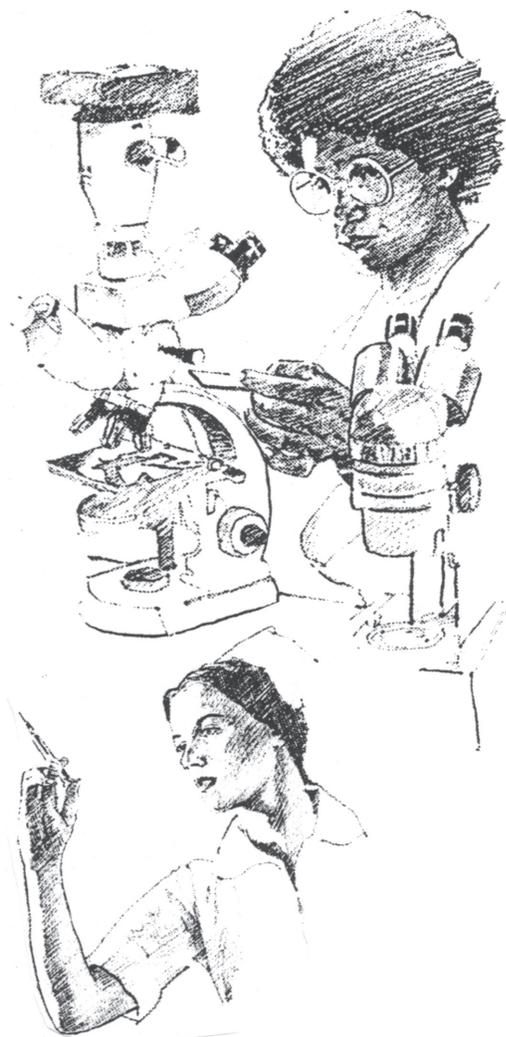
The virus is found in blood and sexual fluids, and after a person has been infected with the virus, the person develops immunodeficiency, which means that his or her immune system weakens and can no longer fight common germs and pathogens.

The number of newly infected people each year outnumbers those who get access to treatments by two to one. The Gates foundation—along with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund); the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); civil society organizations and communities affected by HIV—has made great strides in the fight against HIV.

Since the mid-1990s, HIV has declined by 20 percent and, according to the Gates foundation, half of the people who could benefit from anti-

retroviral therapy (ART), therapy that suppresses the virus, are receiving treatment. The foundation’s goal in the health area is to “support efforts to reduce the global incidence of HIV significantly and sustainably and to help people infected with HIV lead long, healthy and productive lives.” Its efforts are focused on the poorest countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. It has committed more than \$2.5 billion in grants to organizations across the globe.

*continued on page 10*



# Gates Foundation

*continued from page 9*

The foundation focuses on six major areas of HIV treatment and prevention efforts: vaccine research and development, anti-retroviral prevention methods, efficient and effective service delivery, voluntary medical male circumcision, improved diagnostic methods and demonstrating the scalability of HIV programs.

Presently no cure exists for HIV, but an article in *The Lancet* journal states that “reports of both sterilizing cure (elimination of all HIV-infected cells) and functional cure (long-term control of HIV replication after ART) have raised hopes that a cure for HIV can be achieved.”

**3. Tuberculosis (TB)** is an infection caused by slow-growing bacteria. Treatment of TB is a slow process and usually takes six to nine months.

In extreme cases, the infection may take two years to treat. Symptoms of TB include: coughing, tiredness, weight loss, fever, rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath.

According to the Gates foundation, significant progress has been made to treat TB. Between 1990 and 2009, TB mortality fell by 35 percent worldwide. Unfortunately, TB still remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide, with almost 9 million new cases reported in 2010.

Furthermore, due to the lack of healthcare workers in undeveloped countries, patients tend to stop their treatment prematurely and become more infectious as a result. In recent years, a new form of the disease has appeared that is resistant to medications. This new form of TB has been found in almost every country in the world and is extremely costly to treat.

The Gates foundation plans to increase funding for the development of new vaccines and shorter and simpler treatment regimes in an attempt to ensure that patients complete their treatment.

**4. Polio** is a virus that can cause severe paralysis and death. Symptoms of the virus include: difficulty breathing and swallowing, headaches, mood swings, muscle pains and spasms, and paralysis. Five to 10 percent of patients who develop paralytic polio die from respiratory failure because they are unable to breathe on their own.

Rotary helped launch the polio eradication initiative in 1988, along with the WHO, UNICEF and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since the initiative began, new polio cases have plunged by more than 99 percent worldwide—from 350,000 cases each year to 223 in 2012.

In 2007, the Gates foundation began a partnership with Rotary to continue the efforts to eradicate polio, which is still endemic in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Initially, the foundation gave Rotary a \$100 million challenge grant, but increased the grant to \$355 million in 2009.

In June of this year, the Gates foundation and Rotary announced an extension of their fundraising efforts. Under the new agreement, the Gates foundation will match two-for-one every new dollar that Rotary commits to polio eradication up to \$35 million per year through 2018.

These efforts by the Gates foundation and Rotary are part of a six-year plan, announced at the Global Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi in April, to eradicate wild poliovirus (polio) and the vaccine-derived virus. The expected cost of the eradication plan is \$5.5 billion. Global leaders and philanthropists pledged \$4 billion and called on other donors to commit to the remaining \$1.5 billion.

“We will combine the strength of Rotary’s network with our resources and together with the other partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative we will not only end a disease, we will change the face of public health forever,” Gates foundation CEO Jeff Raikes said in

June at the annual Rotary International convention in Lisbon, Portugal.

**5. Pneumonia** is an infection found in the lungs that can make patients very sick. Symptoms of the infection include: coughing, fever and difficulty breathing. Although most patients can be treated at home, older adults, babies and patients with other diseases can become extremely ill and may need medical treatment.

According to the Gates foundation, pneumonia was responsible for the deaths of 1.3 million children in 2011 and accounted for 18 percent of child deaths around the world. The majority of child deaths were found in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Although the tools necessary to prevent and treat pneumonia exist, availability, access and cost continue to be large obstacles in treating the infection in developing countries. The Gates foundation focuses on the causes of pneumonia, continues to invest in vaccine availability and delivery, and works to improve treatment and healthcare access for individuals.

**6. Neglected infectious diseases**, such as guinea worm and leprosy, affect more than 1 billion people in developing countries. These diseases can cause anemia, blindness, stunted growth in children, cognitive impairments and pregnancy complications.

In January of 2012, the Gates foundation partnered with the WHO and a group of global drug firms and government agencies in an effort to assess 17 neglected diseases that harm 1.4 billion people in developing countries. The goal is to eliminate five neglected diseases, control five more by 2020 and then come up with a plan for the last seven diseases.

The 17 diseases chosen by the partnership came from a list kept by the WHO. Together, the Gates foundation, the WHO and other donors offered to give \$363 million over five years toward eradication of these diseases, with governments and charities promising another \$785 million. The partnership’s goal is to eliminate guinea worm, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis

(elephantiasis), blinding trachoma and sleeping sickness and gain control over schistosomiasis, river blindness, soil-transmitted helminthes (intestinal worms), Chagas disease and visceral leishmaniasis.

Bill Gates strongly believes in the power of vaccinations to eliminate and eventually eradicate world diseases and believes that, one day, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV can be eradicated as long as public funding does not wane.

Unfortunately, although the WHO has successfully eradicated smallpox, declared officially eradicated in 1980 by the World Health Assembly, critics are skeptical. They wonder if the eradication of other diseases is anything more than a "fanciful notion" and fear that an emphasis on eradication may divert money and energy away from efforts to effectively control diseases and to bring down rates and the number of cases.

"There are many reasons to doubt the desirability of seeking to eradicate all infectious diseases," Arthur L. Caplan wrote in *The Lancet*. "If eradication is claimed to have been achieved for a disease, then efforts to prevent its recurrence will most probably cease.

"In addition to ending prophylactic efforts," Caplan continued, "a claim of eradication will also probably stop or greatly reduce efforts at training health care workers to recognize and treat the eradicated disease given other pressing educational needs. Eradication means replacing prophylaxis and vigilance with indifference and trust."

"I don't see eradication and control as two separate approaches," Gates said in a speech to delegates at the Malaria Forum conference. "To achieve elimination and eradication, we need to start with control, drive it up to very high levels and sustain it."

"Eradication is not a vague, unrealistic aspiration," Gates continued, "but a tough, ambitious goal that can be reached within the next few decades."

—Alyssa Miller is a senior professional writing major at Baylor University. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in book publishing and freelance writing. Sources: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation ([www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org)); The College of Physicians of Philadelphia ([www.historyofvaccines.org](http://www.historyofvaccines.org)); CNN News ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)); The Telegraph ([www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)); Philly News ([www.philly.com](http://www.philly.com)); the Huffington Post ([www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com)); Reuters ([www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)); Vanguard ([www.vanguardngr.com](http://www.vanguardngr.com)); Philanthropy News Digest ([www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org)); GlaxoSmithKline ([us.gsk.com](http://us.gsk.com)); The Lancet ([www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com)); WebMD ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)).

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# Who is my neighbor?



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—From the Seeds of Hope staff  
& Council of Stewards



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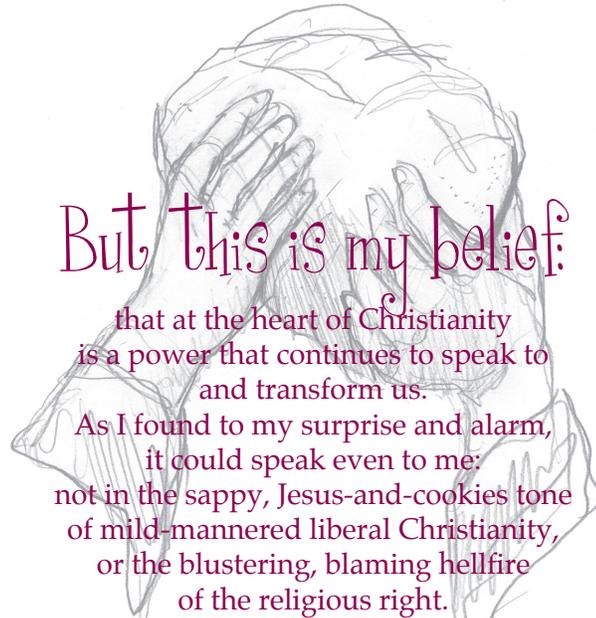
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### *Statement of Purpose*

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

## quotes, poems & pithy sayings



*But this is my belief:*

that at the heart of Christianity  
is a power that continues to speak to  
and transform us.

As I found to my surprise and alarm,  
it could speak even to me:  
not in the sappy, Jesus-and-cookies tone  
of mild-mannered liberal Christianity,  
or the blustering, blaming hellfire  
of the religious right.

What I heard, and continue to hear,  
is a voice that can crack  
religious and political convictions open,  
that advocates for the least qualified,  
least official, least likely;  
that upsets the established order  
and makes a joke of certainty.

It proclaims against reason  
that the hungry will be fed,  
that those cast down will be raised up,  
and that all things,  
including my own failures,  
are being made new.

It offers food without exception  
to the worthy and unworthy,  
the screwed-up and pious,  
and then commands everyone to do the same.

-Sara Miles,  
*Take This Bread*

art by Sally Lynn Askins

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 also produces *Sacred Seasons*, a series of worship materials for the liturgical year—with an economic justice attitude. These include litanies, sermons, children's and youth activities, bulletin art and drama.

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