

# Hunger News & Hope

...a Seeds of Hope publication

## 10 Common Myths about Immigrants

from the Christian Reformed Church

### 1. Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes.

Immigrants pay many taxes: income, property, sales and FICA at the federal and state level. Undocumented immigrants pay these taxes as well, including income tax, as evidenced by the Social Security Administration's "suspense file" (taxes that cannot be matched to workers' names and social security numbers), which grew by \$20 billion between 1990 and 1998.

### 2. Immigrants Take American Jobs.

The largest wave of immigration since the early 1900s coincided with our lowest national unemployment rate and fastest economic growth. Immigrant entrepreneurs create many jobs for both US and foreign workers. Immigrant-owned companies generate millions of jobs and billions of dollars in sales.

### 3. Immigrants Come to Take Welfare.

Immigrants generally come to work and/or reunite with family members. Immigrant participation in the US labor force is consistently higher than that of native-born people, and immigrant workers make up a larger share of the US labor force (12.4 percent) than their share of the US population (11.5 percent). Moreover, the ratio between immigrant use of public benefits and the amount of taxes they pay is favorable to the US. In one estimate, immigrants earn about \$240 billion in public benefits. In another cut of the data, immigrant tax payments total \$20 to \$30 billion more annually than the amount of government services they use.

### 4. Immigrants Send All Their Money Back Home.

In addition to the consumer spending of immigrant households, immigrants and their businesses contribute \$162 billion in tax revenue to US federal, state and local governments. While it is true that immigrants remit billions of dollars a year to their home countries, this is one of the most targeted and effective forms of direct foreign investment.

### 5. Immigrants Drain the US Economy.

Foreign-born workers fill gaps left by native-born workers in both the high- and low-skill ends of the spectrum. The net benefit of immigration to the US is nearly

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\$10 billion annually. Additionally, 70 percent of immigrants arrive at prime working age, meaning they have received no US-funded education, but they still contribute to our workforce and—according to estimates—will contribute \$500 billion toward our social security system over the next 20 years.

## 6. Immigrants Don't Want to Learn English or become Americans.

Within 10 years of arrival, over 75 percent of immigrants speak English well; moreover, demand for English classes at the adult level far exceeds supply. Over 33 percent of immigrants are naturalized citizens; this figure is on the rise as more legal permanent residents become eligible for naturalization.

## 7. Today's Immigrants Are Different from Those of 100 Years Ago.

Approximately 11.5 percent of the current US population is foreign-born; in the early 20th century the figure was around 15 percent. Like today, immigrants 100 years ago often initially settled in mono-ethnic neighborhoods, spoke their native languages and built up newspapers and businesses that catered to their fellow émigrés. They also experienced the same types of discrimination that today's immigrants face and integrated into American culture at a similar rate. If we view history objectively, we remember that every new wave of immigrants has been met with suspicion and doubt and yet, ultimately, every past wave of immigrants has been saluted.

## 8. Most Immigrants Come Here Illegally.

Around 75 percent of immigrants today have legal permanent (immigrant) visas; of the 25 percent who are undocumented, around 40 percent are people who overstayed legal temporary (non-immigrant) visas.

## 9. Weak Border Enforcement Has Increased Illegal Immigration.

From 1986 to 1998, the Border Patrol's budget increased six-fold and the number of agents stationed on the southwest US border doubled to 8,500. The Border Patrol also toughened its enforcement strategy, heavily fortifying urban entry points and pushing migrants into dangerous desert areas to deter crossings. However, the undocumented immigrant population doubled in that time frame, despite the legalization of nearly 3 million immigrants after the enactment of the Immigrant Reform and Control Act in

1986. Insufficient legal avenues for immigrants to enter the US, compared with the number of jobs in need of workers, have significantly contributed to the current conundrum.

## 10. The War on Terror Can Be Won through Immigrant Restrictions.

No security expert since September 11, 2001, has said that restrictive immigration measures would have prevented the terrorist attacks on that day. The key is effective use of good intelligence. Most of the 9/11 hijackers were in the US on legal tourist visas. Since 9/11, the myriad of measures targeting immigrants in the name of national security has netted zero terrorism prosecutions. In fact, these measures could actually make the US less safe, as communities of immigrants who believe they are targeted for deportation are afraid to come forward with information when they are witness to or victims of crime and injustice.

—From the excellent 95-page curriculum resource *Church Between Borders: A Guide to Welcoming the Stranger*, produced by the Office of Social Justice and the Office of Race Relations of the Christian Reformed Church. Used with permission. For more information about the resource, go to [www2.crcna.org/pages/osj/churchbetweenborders](http://www2.crcna.org/pages/osj/churchbetweenborders).

## A Place at the Table: A Book, a Film & an Offering of Letters

Edited by Peter Pringle, *A Place at the Table* (the book, 2013: Participant Media, 301 pages) attempts to address, and even solve, "the crisis of 49 million hungry Americans." Incorporating information from prominent economists, food activists and advocates for hungry people (including Food Research and Action Center and Bread for the World), the book examines the front lines of hunger, how people are caught in the trap of poverty and what to do to end hunger in the US.

The book, along with the film by the same name, produced by Kristi Jacobsen and Lori Silverbush, are poignant and powerful complements of a story that everyone in the United States needs to hear.

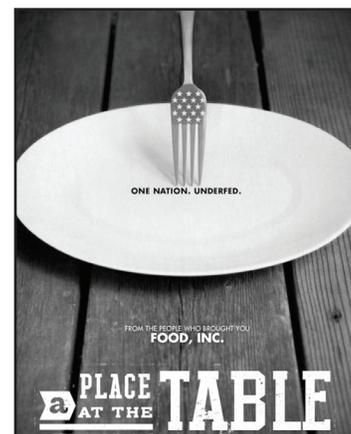
Fifty million people in the US, one in four children, don't know where their next meal is coming from, despite our having the means to provide nutritious, affordable food for all Americans. The film examines this issue through the lens of three people who live with food insecurity—a single mother in Philadelphia, a fifth-grader in

Colorado and a Mississippi second-grader.

Their stories are interwoven with insights from sociologists, ordinary citizens and activists. Both the book and the film show us the serious economic, social and cultural implications hunger causes, and how it could be solved once and for all.

The 2013 Bread for the World Offering of Letters is designed around *A Place at the Table*.

—Watch for more information about this in upcoming issues of *Hunger News & Hope*. Meanwhile, go to [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) and look for "Offering of Letters."



# The Orphan Master's Son

a review by Donna Maples Burney

Johnson, Adam, *The Orphan Master's Son*, Random House 2012

*Editor's note: Shortly before press time, "Orphan Master's Son" was awarded the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.*

If any place in this world seems alien to our imagination, that place must exist in the country of North Korea. Its unique isolation, propaganda—even paranoia—is noted by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman: "We live in an age of social networks in which every leader outside of North Korea today is now forced to engage in a two-way conversation with their citizens." North Koreans thus find themselves in a dual alienation: from their own government and from the rest of the world.

Yet Adam Johnson in his novel *The Orphan Master's Son* acknowledges the barriers to understanding this very different society even as he leads us to recognize human connections with his North Korean Everyman, Jun Do (think "John Doe").

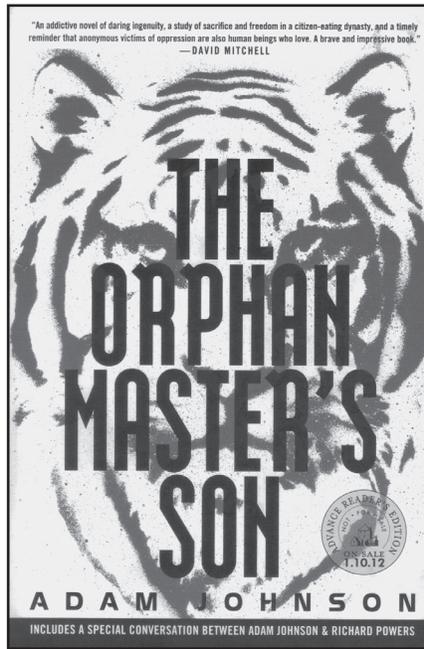
In a novel that moves from humor to brutality, Jun Do becomes a kidnapper, a surveillance officer under the cover of a fishing vessel, a hero, a prisoner, an imposter. His daily reality includes hunger, absurdity, corruption, and bureaucracy with the real-life face of Kim Jong-il, a strange and villainous character in the novel.

Jun Do may lack intimate human relationships, but he cannot avoid sympathy for the people he kidnaps or for fellow citizens trapped in fear and conformity. He helps us consider why he does not or cannot escape to freedom, even as he covers up the escape attempts of others, including one that he dramatically plans with the certain knowledge of the torture he will bring to himself.

We see Jun Do the surveillance officer listen through his headset every night to the yearnings of a female rower in the North Atlantic and encounter Americans for the first time on a naval ship. We watch Jun Do the imposter teach a small boy how to trap birds so he can survive in times of hunger.

Through a wide range of episodic encounters, Jun Do is shaped by what his government tells him about his own country and America, and by his own experiences that juxtapose isolation and community.

How does one shape his identity and view his place in the world in such circumstances? Jun Do's trip to a ranch in



Texas gives the context for a North Korean answer to that question:

"Where we are from, stories are factual. If a farmer is declared a music virtuoso by the state, everyone had better start calling him maestro. And secretly, he'd be wise to start practicing the piano. For us, the story is more important than the person. If a man and his story are in conflict, it is the man who must change. But in America, people's stories change all the time. In America, it is the man who matters."

We as readers find ourselves caring about the fate of the man Jun Do and see how strength of character and love can survive in a land where physical survival is paramount. North Korea becomes much more than a difficult and dangerous story in the daily news; it is a society of fellow human beings who find humanity in the midst of inhumanity.

Adam Johnson has written one of the best novels of 2012. *The Orphan Master's Son* shows how fiction can draw us to find links with a vastly different culture, even as we look at our own with new eyes.

—Donna Burney is a retired rhetoric professor living on a farm near Crawford, TX. External Source: Thomas Friedman, "Break All The Rules," *The New York Times*, Jan. 23, 2013.

## Seeds needs your help.

The Seeds of Hope staff and Council of Stewards are eternally grateful for the generosity of our partners and friends.

We try extra hard to make good use of your gifts of writing, art, photography or monetary sustenance. During this time of slow economic recovery, we especially need your financial support.

We will appreciate a gift of any size to nurture and further our mission. You can submit your donation online at [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org) (look for the Paypal button), or send a check to 602 James Avenue, Waco, TX 76706.

We thank you in advance.

# Poverty and Food Insecurity in Cameroon

compiled by Jessica Foumena

“The world is facing a hunger crisis unlike anything seen in more than 50 years,” the hunger advocacy agency Bread for the World recently posted online. There are 925 million hungry people around the world and 16,000 children die each year from hunger-related causes.

This is one child every five seconds, the agency estimated. In 2005, 1.4 billion people in developing countries lived in extreme poverty, with an income less than \$1.25 a day.

Located in Central Africa, Cameroon is home to more than 200 different linguistic groups and enjoys a relatively stable political environment. The nation has distinguished itself from other West African countries through the diversity of its economy, geography and cultures. However, some significant socio-economic disparities, such as persistent rural poverty, remain.

For the past 30 years, 80-year-old Paul Biya has been the Head of State in Cameroon. In a recent online article, BBC News Africa gave an overview of the country’s current political state.

The article reports that several Cameroonian high-profile political figures and one of the president’s doctors have been jailed for sentences as long as 25 years. The article reports that the army, well paid and loyal, has successfully extinguished protests—such as the 2008 food riots. In that same year, Cameroon’s constitution was changed to remove presidential term limits.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that enables rural people worldwide to overcome poverty.

According to IFAD, Cameroon’s most recent household survey (ECAM III), undertaken in 2007, revealed that poverty affected an estimated 39.9 percent of the population, compared with 40.2 percent in 2001, and that 55 percent of the country’s poor people live in rural areas.

Other international agencies post similar facts on their respective websites. The World Food Programme

(WFP), the food assistance branch for the United Nations, points to Cameroon as one of the eight countries whose populations are threatened by food insecurity throughout the Sahel region.

The Sahel region, the zone skirting the southern portion of the Sahara Desert, is known to be vulnerable to drought and desertification. The other eight countries are Niger, Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Gambia.

The WFP also states that 40.2 percent of Cameroonians live below the poverty line—that’s one US dollar per day. The number is 52.1 percent in rural areas. Over the last three decades, the North and the Far North regions of Cameroon, located between the Republic of Nigeria and Chad, have been affected by the Sahel drought.

Thus, natural and man-made disasters, paired by a growing impoverishment of the rural population, have contributed to food insecurity and poverty in the North and Far North regions of Cameroon. In an online report, the World Bank reports that poverty in Cameroon has stagnated between 2001 and 2007 at close to 40 percent, with 55 percent of rural households living in poverty, compared to 12 percent of urban households.

IFAD also stated that women and children are particularly hit by poverty in Cameroon; 52 percent of people in poor households are women and half of them are under 15 years of age.

Disparity in access to education is another major issue. The 2007 ECAM III report states that 83.3 percent of boys aged between 5 and 14 attend school, compared to 77.6 percent of girls of the same age; 18 percent of rural women have secondary-level education, and women in the North and Far North regions are the least educated (12 percent and 14 percent, respectively).

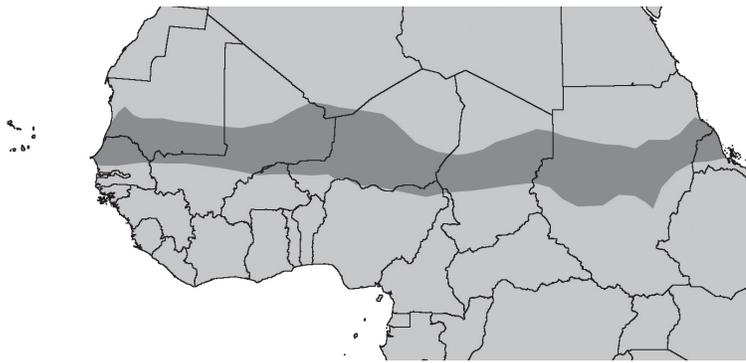
Many believe that a strong conservative Islamic influence could be one of the reasons behind the low level of education among Cameroonian women living in those regions. Even though the Cameroonian government has developed programs aimed to improve the lives of women and girls, some cultural ideologies keep the Cameroonian society from fully embracing the importance of female education.

SOS Children’s Village International, an organization that provides homes for children in need, confirms that the groups most affected by poverty in rural areas of Cameroon are women and children.

As a result, the organization reports that nearly one in four children is either moderately or severely



Left: Cameroon is located on the West African coast, just south of the Sahara Desert in the region known as the Sahel.



*Left: The nine-country Sahel Region of Africa, which skirts the southern Sahara Desert, is vulnerable to drought & desertification.*

underweight; young children often become the breadwinners for an entire family, especially in families that are affected by HIV / AIDS.

International organizations working in Cameroon have implemented programs for numerous disadvantaged groups. The WFP claims to have provided food assistance to malnourished children, pregnant women and mothers of young children.

SOS Children's Village International has also established several facilities in Cameroon, such as two SOS kindergartens, one SOS youth facility, two SOS medical centers and one SOS social center.

CARE, the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, is an international humanitarian agency whose goal is to help the world's poorest people find routes out of poverty. CARE has been helping families in the northern part of Cameroon by providing them access to savings and loans accounts.

The money provided helps families to make investments. The organization has also assisted local farmers of the same region in increasing their crop yields through the construction and the improvement of irrigation systems.

Despite the socio-economical challenges they face, Cameroonian women manage to be successful contributors in their society. This is the case with young social entrepreneur Jacqueline Kamsu Souba, who went from simple bead-making to global acclaim.

In a country where young people and women are frustrated by the acute lack of opportunities, the work accomplished by Souba is a true success story. In 2006, she started "Beads of Peace," a small nonprofit business based in the northwestern Cameroonian city of Bamenda.

According to Voice of America (VOA), an external US broadcast institution, Souba's breakthrough came after she attended a skills-building seminar for women in 2011. When she created her business, the Beads of Peace Founder and CEO was herself a single mother without a dollar, according to the Pan-African business magazine *Ventures Africa*.

After collecting different items, such as used plastic bags, old newspapers, outdated calendars and cardboard boxes, Souba recycles them into fashionable and colorful handbags, earrings and necklaces. Her company won the first prize at a national exhibition in Cameroon.

Later, Souba was one of the eight young entrepreneurs from five African countries that attended the 2012 "Mentoring Partnership for Young African Leaders" event. Organized by the US government, the event is a two-week professional development program that aims to give leadership training and mutual exchange to young African leaders in the fields of social and business entrepreneurship. Even though she now runs a separate fashion design business, Souba chose to keep Beads of Peace as a nonprofit to train other single mothers.

— Sources: *Bread for The World* ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)); *World Bank* ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)); *World Food Programme* ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)); *International Fund for Agricultural Development* ([www.ifad.org](http://www.ifad.org)); *CARE* ([www.careinternational.org.uk](http://www.careinternational.org.uk)); *All Africa* ([www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)). For more information about these sources, email [Foumena.Jessica@gmail.com](mailto:Foumena.Jessica@gmail.com).

## *War, Drought and Hunger in Mali*

compiled by Jessica Foumena

Ongoing turmoil in Mali, a country in West Africa, has recently intensified and come into the global spotlight. During a previous crisis, the international community—led by France and the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)—began to lend their support to the Malian Government. The crisis, caused by rebels associated with Al-Qaeda last December, has worsened the fragile humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel region.

In January 2012, ethnic Tuareg rebels and Islamist militants entered Mali's northern area and took control of some of the main towns. Located in the heart of the Sahel, Mali is a vast landlocked country of about 15 million people. The Sahel, the zone skirting the southern portion of the Sahara Desert, is known to be vulnerable to drought and desertification.

Even though French is the official language, the country recognizes 13 local languages. Prior to the

—At this writing, Jessica Foumena was finishing a Masters degree in International Journalism at Baylor University and a Seeds of Hope internship. She hails from Cameroon, which is located along the Sahel region in West Africa.

Where are people hungry?



recent uprising, Mali has enjoyed a steady economic and social progress, paired with a democratic governance. The country was in the final stages of the preparation for democratic elections when the last crisis began.

According to CNN, radical Muslims, in an attempt to impose *sharia*, the stricter form of Islamic law, have generated fears by compiling a list of unmarried mothers. These groups claim that Islamic law condemns relationships outside marriage. There are reports of rebels physically harming civilians who fail to follow the law, by means of executions, amputations and stoning.

As the members of the group Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continue to use northern Mali as a safe haven for their operations, Mali faces challenges including food shortages, population displacement and water scarcity.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), more than 200,000 Malians have fled from their homes and the same number have left the country altogether to become refugees in neighboring West African states such as Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

As of May 2012, a World Bank report stated that more than 17 million people are facing possible starvation in the Sahel. The report explained that the food crisis is the result of a combination of drought caused by poor rainfall in 2011—along with food shortages, high grain prices, environmental damage and large numbers of internally displaced persons.

Responding to the emergency food needs, the WFP has reached out to many Malian families in need. The food sent included cereals, cooking oil, and Plumpy'Sup, a ready-to-use nutrition product aimed at children under the age of five. The organization has partnered with other NGOs to boost nutrition among mothers and children.

*Right: Yemen is located on the southwest side of the Arabian Peninsula, just north of the Horn of Africa.*

At a press briefing held in Geneva, UNHCR (the United Nations refugee agency) spokesperson Melissa Fleming said that the countries of the Sahel region have faced severe drought conditions for years and they are among the poorest in the world. Fleming added that UNHCR only received 60 percent of the US\$123.7 million requested for its Mali crisis operations, which take care of food, shelter, clean water, sanitation, health and education. UNHCR and WFP stated on their respective websites that children represent the

most vulnerable group.

*Sources: United Nations High Commission on Refugees ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)); UN News Centre ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)); World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)); World Bank ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)); CNN News ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)); US Department of State (<http://travel.state.gov>); "Food Running Out for Refugees from Mali Conflict," by Williams Lambers, author of Ending World Hunger ([www.blogcritics.org](http://www.blogcritics.org)). For more information about the sources, email [Foumena.Jessica@gmail.com](mailto:Foumena.Jessica@gmail.com).*

## Yemen: the Poorest Country in the Middle East

compiled by Leslie Reiter

A surge in food and fuel prices and political instability have left Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, facing the worst hunger crisis of its history. Yemen has been plagued with conflict since the Yemeni revolution, which began in 2011. The uprising



*Right: Climate change and the global increase in food prices have made a drastic impact on food security in Guatemala.*

has brought on civil unrest and increased violence throughout the nation and has left many of its people displaced and hungry. A 2013 report from the UN states that over 431,000 people are displaced in Yemen.

The nationwide uprising happened amidst similar revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. Mass protests were launched against the Yemeni government and its president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had been in power for more than 30 years.

The revolt against Saleh was incited by issues such as unemployment, economic conditions and corruption. Though Saleh has since resigned from the presidency and Abd Rabbuh Mansur al-Hadi was elected in February 2012, there are still threats of violence from the Houthis rebels and armed militant groups such as Al-Qaeda.

High unemployment rates, along with the rise of food and fuel prices caused by a region in turmoil, have put over half of Yemen's 24 million citizens at risk for hunger. According to the World Food Programme, hunger in Yemen has doubled since 2009, and the country now has the world's third-highest rate of child malnutrition.

Since much of the land in Yemen is not suitable for growing food, its people rely mainly on imported food. As a result, people who are not able to keep up with the rising food prices are forced to go without.

Health conditions throughout the country have declined because of the increase in poverty rates. The result is more than 13 million people without a source of safe water or basic sanitation. These conditions leave many citizens susceptible to diseases such as malaria and bilharzia.

*Sources: World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)), Amnesty International ([www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)), BBC News ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).*

## *Climate Change & Food Prices Cause Hunger in Guatemala*

*compiled by Leslie Reiter*

**I**n the past two years, climate change and the global increase in food prices have made a drastic impact on food security in Guatemala. Guatemala has one of the highest levels of chronic malnutrition in Latin America

*—Leslie Reiter is a freelance writer in Austin, TX, and a former Seeds of Hope intern. She works with at-risk children in the Austin area and teaches violin.*



and the fourth-highest rate of malnourishment among children in the world.

The country is especially vulnerable to erratic weather due to its location in an earthquake and hurricane zone. Untimely rains, accompanied by violent storms, are often followed by periods of drought, resulting in the loss of many crops. An Action Against Hunger survey reported that harvests in 2010 were reduced by 60 percent because of climate change.

The East Pacific Corridor, known as the "dry corridor," and the highlands are the most affected by drought, leaving these areas at high risk for food insecurity. The production of maize and beans, staples on which many of the country's people rely for sustenance, has been drastically affected by these extended droughts.

Though Guatemala's 30-year civil war came to an end in 1996, many of its people are still displaced and lack clean water and sanitation systems. Over half of Guatemala's population live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for both food and income. Poverty is the most prevalent in these rural areas and among the indigenous population.

The way land ownership is structured in Guatemala is also problematic. A small percentage of the country's population is in control of the majority of its farmland, forcing many small farmers higher into the mountains where there is little cultivatable land. Underdeveloped countries such as Guatemala do not have access to more effective agricultural techniques that could be of assistance to those having to use less arable land.

*—Sources: World Food Programme ([www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)); Hunger Relief International ([www.hungerreliefinternational.org](http://www.hungerreliefinternational.org)); Action Against Hunger ([www.actionagainsthunger.org](http://www.actionagainsthunger.org)).*

*Where are people hungry?*

*Hunger News & Hope* is published quarterly by Seeds of Hope Publishers, in partnership with the following denominational groups:

- American Baptist Churches USA
  - Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
  - Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Reformed Church in America
- United Methodist Committee on Relief

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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**

### **Chaos or Communion** by David Sparenberg

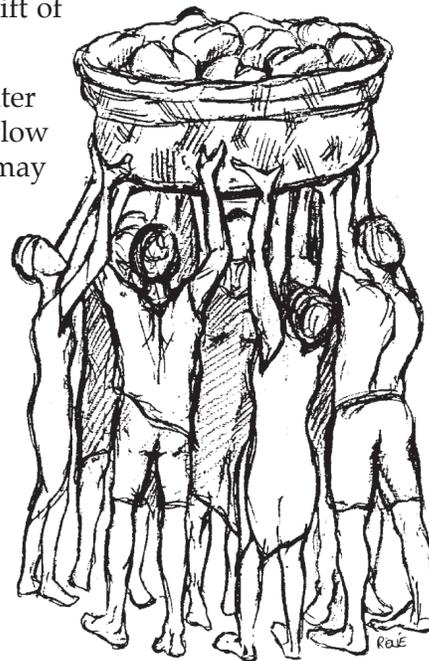
**M**ay there always be a loaf of bread fresh from the oven, a bowl of rice placed upon the table, a potato in the earth awaiting harvest. May the rain always fall in sweetness and gather in clean places. May there ever be a cup of water for parched lips, for the infant clinging in a mother's arms, and for the desert sojourn of the undefeated soul.

What is the nature of your repentance and what are you making—of chaos or communion—to give shape to tomorrow?

Shall the entire earth weep blood, shall the ground of every nation breed maggots, and dead birds by flocks drop in hailstones from the sky? Or are you preparing a return of sacredness—might the One Named be a presence among you—and the exchanges of kindness roll like a gift of waters, inviting one and all?

May there always be a light to shelter life: may the essence of an angel glow in the flame of your candle. And may every spark grow to seed in the field of creation: where none of hunger shall ever perish and none of thirst shall be no more. And no one of our family at the threshold of departing shall be resigned to abandonment or face their hour alone.

—David Sparenberg—a playwright, poet, storyteller, stage director, Shakespearean actor and novelist—lives and writes in Seattle.



art by Rene Bolot

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**

Seeds of Hope is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James Avenue, Waco, TX 76706; Phone: 254/ 755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: seedseditor@clearwire.net. Web: www.seedspublishers.org. Copyright © 2013; ISSN 0194-4495. Seeds

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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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