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OPINION *Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer*



Disasters Leave Enduring Legacies

Human suffering unmasked

BY REV. SALA W. J. NOLAN

2005 was a year of much suffering and it came as the tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004 still reverberated throughout the world.

The worst hurricane season in U.S. history has damaged the Gulf Coast in ways that will extend to generations. And an earthquake has devastated Kashmir, where relief is terribly complicated by Indian and Pakistani political claims.

These events were life-shattering and will leave enduring legacies. They are especially notable because of the human suffering that was unmasked. We saw Aging and African American citizens in the wake of Katrina, without food and water or medical care, left abandoned on bridges and in nursing homes and sports arenas. The visible poverty among so many citizens of the richest country in the world – and their

isolation for 15 months without cause. He was given poor medical care, which often occurs in prison. He died last month at the age of 58, and we remember him.

Remember Marilyn Buck, Leonard Peltier, Oscar Lopez and others who languish in prison. Remember Assata Shakur, who has a price on her head. In June, 10 environmental and animal protection activists from the San Francisco Bay area were subpoenaed to a grand jury after police raids failed to produce evidence of criminal wrongdoing.

Since the Patriot Act passed, our government has acquired vastly broadened authority to monitor, arrest and detain citizens. We have learned that freedoms not protected will erode.

Recently, I traveled to the Gulf Coast after the hurricane carrying supplies and assessing what we could do to help. I met a little boy, about 10 or 11, collecting toys for his younger brother and sister. When his turn came, there were no appropriate toys in the van for him. He turned away, dejected. Then I remembered that my 5-year-old niece had given me

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utter abandonment by the institutions obligated to serve them – shocked the planet.

But everyday there are unseen tsunamis, floods and earthquakes. They take place in U.S. prisons, which house one fourth of all the prisoners in the world. They happen among immigrants in the housing projects of France. They occur in Darfur, where there is politically-induced famine.

These unnatural disasters also occur among the farmers of Vieques and fishers of the Marshall Islands whose livelihoods and health have been damaged by years of bomb testing; with school-aged children in broken neighborhoods; with Afghan nationals in the cells of Guantanamo and, in secret prisons in East Europe and Saudi Arabia.

All over our world, where government institutions fail to protect their citizens or actively harm them, unnatural disasters happen. And when those who suffer are forgotten, the devastation is terrible.

Consider the political activists who were imprisoned in the 1960s and 1970s. Richard Williams was one of them. Following 9/11, he was placed in

her most precious rubber frog and told me to give it to somebody special. I pulled the frog out of my pocket and gave it to the boy. His face lit up and he ran off with it, laughing and teasing his little brother. In that moment, the disaster was forgotten and he was just a boy again.

The prisons of the U.S. hold fathers and mothers whose children, more likely than not, will grow up in an earthquake of poverty chaos. You probably know some of them, because the invisible flood of incarceration is enormous, but you may not know the secrets they keep because discrimination is a powerful force in their lives. Remember them. What could you do for the children? What could you do for someone who is ill? How much could be done by remembrance and a well-place word for political prisoners and indigenous people of contaminated lands.

Remember those who suffer from the secret non-natural tsunamis of our world today, and consider what is in your hand. Will you do with what you have?

Sala W. J. Nolan is minister of Criminal Justice and Human Rights for the United Church of Christ.

Letter to the Editor

Boycott Schwarzenegger

California Gov. Schwarzenegger has shown where he stands when it comes to the black community of Los Angeles.

When he refused clemency for Stanley "Tookie" Williams on Dec. 13, Schwarzenegger carried out an execution for a murder that Williams said that he did not commit. Was it because Williams was the co-founder of the Los Angeles Crips gang?

Did Schwarzenegger take in consideration that Williams put out nine anti violence books for children and incarcerated adults; that he was nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize; and that he single handedly made peace treaties between rival gangs across the country, resulting in a big drop in the

murder rate.

Williams has even mentored many Chicago Public School principles and students. He also was awarded a 2005 Presidential Call to Service award by President Bush. The only Christmas present that the governor was willing to give to the people of Los Angeles was the death of Stanley "Tookie" Williams. Did Schwarzenegger really think that he was a terminator, like the role he played in the movies, when it came to Mr. Williams life?

Thanks to the Freedom Socialist Party of Portland, a local group that's trying to make a change for the better when it comes to the poor and working class people, I was able to come across the phone number to the Governor's office and

obtain background information on the Williams case.

Not only did I called Schwarzenegger's office and urge clemency for Williams, I went door-to-door letting my neighbors read the background on Williams and even use my phone to make additional pleas to the governor.

I call out to the people of Los Angeles to boycott Gov. Schwarzenegger. I feel that he should have spared Mr. Williams life.

Even in a case like this, when someone goes out of their way to help others, we live in a system where that person always ends up being murdered.

Rest in peace "Tookie."
Gary Clay Sr.