

Integrities



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Pamela Law
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Caitlin Brune
Alice Godfrey
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Kathleen Lynch

Emeritus, Alan London

Executive Director
Bill Cane

bcane@baymoon.com
831.724-5526

Administration
Janet Martinez

ifoffice@cruzio.com
831.724-4108

*Editorial Team - Bill Cane,
Barry Covington, Betty and Peter
Michelozzi, Karen Cane*

*Publishing, Format and Design -
MMPublishing™ - Janet Martinez*

Cover: Flower Bud

All illustrations inside by Karen Prestegaard Cane unless otherwise noted.



LISTENING TO PROPHETIC VOICES

SEE PAGES 3-8 INSIDE

Gregory Bateson, referring to “*Alice in Wonderland*” told that tale in the 1960's. He felt even then that we had entered an historical cul-de-sac, a dead end. And our only hopeful option was to turn around and find another way.

DINNERS / EVENTS 2009*

May 16 (Saturday)	7:00 p.m.	Latin America Dinner
Sept. 19 (Saturday)	7:00 p.m.	Peru Programs Dinner
Dec. 12 (Sunday)	4:30 p.m.	Light & Darkness (followed by potluck)

**held at 160 Sunflower Lane, Watsonville*

Suggested donation for dinners \$50, low-income \$35. Reservations can be made by mailing check and number in party to IF, or email ifoffice@cruzio.com or phone 831.724-5526 or 831.724-4108.

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That Kind of Hope

April casts her mantle
of amazement on the yard.

O say, can you see
ought to be about Spring, not war.

And yet how little I can see
in this dark space I'm renting.

Does blindness cling to me
or I to blindness?

At least I planted peppers
in the garden, red pumpkin seeds

that kind of hope—
buried deep.

Marilyn Robertson

Listening to Prophetic Voices

What we are living through has been a long time in coming. And it will take a long time to get resolved. We have had decades of irresponsible economic activity, decades of insane arms spending and decades of ecological degradation. The yearning for a magic wand to get us back to where we were is an illusion. There is no magic wand to wave.

But there may be an opportunity for a radical change in our ways—similar to the alcoholic who hits bottom, wakes up and begins a new way of life. To wake up would mean to realize that greed, massive military spending and world domination are not only addictive behaviors but also are ultimately self-destructive.

Over the years, we have often meditated upon Gregory Bateson's cautionary tale of the little beings in *Alice in Wonderland*—the beings with sugar cube heads. Alice asks the little beings how they sustain themselves. They answer, “By dipping our heads into weak tea.” Alice replies, “Doesn't that dissolve your heads?”



“Precisely,” commented

Bateson. The way we have been sustaining ourselves is dissolving our heads! Our customary ways of production and consumption have slowly been consuming us.



Bateson told that tale in the 1960's. He felt even then that we had entered an historical cul-de-sac, a dead end. And our only hopeful option was to turn around and find another way.

Bigger is Better?

In the very first issue of *Integrities* (almost 25 years ago) we quoted Bateson regarding what he called “self-maximizing entities”—enterprises that keep trying to make themselves bigger. Such entities are not unlike the alcoholic who is in continuous need of more “fixes.” Among them Bateson listed military establishments, big corporations, governmental entities—and he claimed that their primary purpose was to make themselves more powerful. Such entities, if not controlled, inevitably destroy vast amounts of the earth's available resources and endanger the entire world.

Bateson always wondered when we would hit bottom and wake up. When the nuclear tragedy at Three Mile Island occurred, he shook his head and muttered, “Not enough.”

In 1972 Bateson concluded an article on Alcoholics Anonymous and addiction with these sobering thoughts:

“. . .the non-alcoholic world has many lessons which it might learn from systems theory and from the ways of AA. If we continue to operate in terms of a Cartesian dualism of mind versus matter, we shall probably also continue to see the world in terms of God versus man; elite versus people; chosen race versus others; nation versus nation; and man versus environment. It is doubtful whether a species having *both* an advanced technology *and* this strange way of looking at its world can endure.”

Prophetic Voices

There have been prophetic warnings along the years. Phrases like “Small is Beautiful” and “Muddling toward Frugality” and the findings of the Club of Rome echo in our memories.

The prophet is looking backward, from a point in the future. “The prophet,” wrote Rosenstock-Huessy, “is at home in the

future. . . speaks from the end of time backward into today. And that's why the prophet can judge today and see how wrong today is and why part of today has to be destroyed before the real future can take place.”

The Establishment does not take prophetic warnings seriously, just as the kings did not listen to the prophets of Israel. History keeps repeating itself: “You have stoned the prophets and rejected those who were sent to you. . . .”

In the United States, both the prevailing ideology of extreme capitalism and the sense of ourselves as an exception to History have kept us from facing a number of realities. Extreme capitalism has been more than an ideology—it has been an unquestionable Religion. Although we have had the freedom to choose a religion in this country, we have not had the freedom in our recent history to choose anything but extreme capitalism as our major belief system.

Extreme capitalism has had a number of “code names” that have been used very effectively: “freedom,” the “free world,” “free enterprise”—all were code words for capitalism and imperialism. Many of the US military interventions in Latin America to shore up horrible dictators were covered by code words like freedom and democracy but were motivated by money and empire.

What Really Keeps Us Secure?

The US now has over 100 military bases in other people's countries. One of the great code words for maintaining world-wide imperial power has been “national security.” Why is it that once someone says “national security,” everyone maintains a reverential silence?

Why do governments have to keep telling their people that spending billions on “national security” is absolutely necessary? And

that serving mega-corporations and their lobbyists is really the best thing for “the economy?” In the article that follows, historian Howard Zinn tells us that governments have to hide behind lies and platitudes because their interests are different from the people's interests. If governments told the truth, it would become clear that they do not have the people's interests at heart.

When people start losing their jobs and their homes, phrases like “national security” begin to ring hollow and “security for people” takes on a new meaning.

The hope is that we will begin reaching for an economy that serves people and life on earth instead of Big Money, that we will cut our military



budget drastically and stop imperial wars and weapon-building. That is the hope. But it is a long journey from our present situation.

We Begin Where We Can

After the local earthquake here in 1989, Ken Johnson appeared, waded into our kitchen amid a foot and a half of debris and began clearing the wreckage. “We gotta help each other out,” he said. And that is one of the certainties in periods of uncertainty: “We gotta help each other out.”

After the earthquake of 1989, we also had to let go of a lot of broken things. And we had to re-evaluate things. After the economic earthquake we have just experienced, we have to re-evaluate and let go of a lot of broken ideologies.

Historian Howard Zinn lists some for us:

- American “exceptionalism”—the belief that we as a nation are right, are good and are chosen by God, and that our “enemies” are bad.
- The ideology of patriotism which says that we are unpatriotic if we oppose our government. Actually, we are at our most patriotic when we oppose government actions that are wrong.
- The ideology of extreme capitalism that worships the almighty dollar.



Zinn enlightens us about previous eras in US history (pre-Stalin) when socialism (or a mix of systems) was a prominent and respectable political choice.

Responding to Life

In other words, we have to get beyond rigid ideology and respond to reality, to what is there, not to what we might like to believe is there. Rosenstock-Huessy's motto for life and wisdom was, “I respond, even though I may be changed.” That is what life is—a series of responses to reality without fully knowing the repercussions. What we respond to keeps changing, and our responses keep changing us!

Such a way of living means getting beyond scripted responses and taking steps toward wisdom. Wisdom is not mechanistic

or ideological; wisdom does what is necessary and timely at each moment.

It is not a time for caution. It is a time for daring. What both history and the prophets tell us is that the way of the Establishment has been horribly wrong.

There is no instant magic change. Historical change is a slow process, taking years and generations. So we cannot expect immediate results. But now is the time to begin—to begin to live not by ideology but by responding to change—even though it will change us.

Historical change always begins with a relatively small group of people addressing a situation that most people wish to ignore (e.g., slavery, segregation, the Vietnam War, climate change). Our individual choices always involve beginning to respond to what is there—responding even though it will change us.

Do we have any hope of success? The answer may depend on how much hope we have in ourselves. “God’s specific quality in us,” wrote Rosenstock-Huessy, “is the power to break away from the established order of mind and body and create a new future.”

That is the idealistic hope. Too idealistic? Perhaps. But without that sort of idealism and courageous action, there is little or no hope. There is an added incentive, as Zinn points out in the following article: when we do break away and begin to create a different future, it tends to lift our spirits and deepen our sense of connection. As though the Universe itself is trying to tell us something. . .



LEARNING FROM HISTORY

*Howard Zinn is one of this country's most celebrated historians. His classic work **A People's History of the United States** changed the way we look at history in America. First published a quarter of a century ago, the book has sold over a million copies and is a phenomenon in the world of publishing—selling more copies each successive year. After serving as a bombardier in World War II, Howard Zinn went on to become a lifelong dissident and peace activist. He was active in the civil rights movement and many of the struggles for social justice over the past forty years. He recently spoke at Binghamton University a few days after the 2008 presidential election. What follows is an edited and condensed version of his talk.*

“SOCIALISM” IN PERSPECTIVE

Here in the United States, before there was a Soviet Union to spoil it, socialism had a good name. Millions of people in the United States read socialist newspapers. They elected socialist members of Congress and socialist members of state legislatures. There were fourteen socialist chapters in Oklahoma. Really. Who stood for socialism? Eugene Debs, Helen Keller, Emma Goldman, Clarence Darrow, Jack London, Upton Sinclair. Socialism had a good name. It needs to be restored.

The government needs to create jobs. Private enterprise is not going to create jobs. Private enterprise fails, the so-called free market system fails, fails again and again. When the Depression hit in the 1930's, Roosevelt and the New Deal created jobs for millions of people. And there were people out there on the fringe who yelled “Socialism!” It didn't matter. If people need something badly, and somebody does something for them, you can throw all the names you want at them, it won't matter. . .

WHAT STANDS IN OUR WAY?

So what stands in the way of Obama and the Democratic Party really going all out for a social and economic program that will fulfill the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? I can think of two things that stand in the way. One of them is simply the great, powerful economic interests that don't want real economic change. Powerful interests are making lots of money from the healthcare system as it is—that's why the costs of the healthcare system in the United States are double what the healthcare costs are in countries that have the single-payer system, because there are powerful interests that are siphoning off this money.

Roosevelt did challenge those economic interests boldly. He called them economic royalists. He wasn't worried that people would say, "Oh, you're appealing to class conflict," as if there hasn't always been class conflict. And so there are these interests standing in the way, and, unfortunately, the Democratic Party is tied to a lot of corporate interests.

The other factor that stands in the way of a real bold economic and social program is the war—a \$600 billion military budget. Now, how can you call for the government to take over the healthcare system? How can you call for the government to give jobs to millions of people? How can you offer free education, free higher education, which is what we should have really? How can you double teachers' salaries? It all costs money.

WHERE WILL WE GET THE MONEY?

Where's that money going to come from? Well, it can come from two sources. One is the tax structure. And here, Obama has been moving in the right direction. When he talked about not giving the rich tax breaks and giving tax breaks to the poor, he is moving in the right direction, but not far enough, because the

richest one percent of the country has gained several trillions of dollars in the last twenty, thirty years as a result of the tax system, which has favored them. And, you know, you have a tax system where 200 of the richest corporations pay no taxes.

The war, \$600 billion, we need that. We need that money. And we're going to need to increase taxes on the super rich, much more than Obama has proposed—and believe me, it won't make those people poor. They'll still be rich. They just won't be super rich. I don't care if there are some rich people around. But we don't need super rich, not when that money is needed to take care of little kids in pre-school, and there's no money for pre-school. No, we need a radical change in the tax structure, which will immediately free huge amounts of money to do the things that need to be done, and then we have to get the money from the military budget. Well, how do you get money from the military budget? Don't we need \$600 billion for a military budget? Don't we have to fight two wars? No. We don't have to fight any wars.

NO MORE WARS

We have to speak what we believe is the truth. I think the truth is we should not be at war. We should not be at war at all. These wars are horrible, and they're absurd. You know, the deaths and the mangled limbs and the blindness and the three million people in Iraq losing their homes, having to leave their homes, three million people—imagine?—having to look elsewhere to live because of our occupation, because of our war for democracy, our war for liberty, our war for whatever it is we're supposed to be fighting for.

I'm giving advice to Obama. If enough people speak up, he will listen. There's much more of a chance of him listening than those other people. Obama could possibly listen. We have to change our whole attitude as a nation towards war, militarism, and violence.

We have to declare that we are not going to engage in aggressive wars. We have to renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy.

MILITARY BASES IN 100 COUNTRIES—WHAT FOR?

In a hundred different countries, we have military bases. That doesn't look like a peace-loving country. What do we need those bases for? We have to declare ourselves a peaceful nation. We don't have to be a military superpower. We can be a humanitarian superpower. We'll still be powerful. We'll still be rich. But we can use that power and that wealth to help people all over the world. Instead of sending helicopters to bomb people, send helicopters when they face a hurricane or an earthquake and they desperately need helicopters. There's a lot of money available once you fundamentally change the foreign policy of the United States.

There isn't a public demanding that we have bases in a hundred countries, but there is economic advantage to corporations that supply those bases and build those bases and make profit from those bases.

I believe that the American people would welcome a president who said, "We are not going to wage aggressive war anymore." The American people are not a war-minded people. They become war-minded when a president gets up there and creates an atmosphere of hysteria and fear.

CHANGING OUR MINDSET

Here are some of the elements of the mindset that stand in the way for Obama and the Democratic Party, in the way for many Americans, in the way for us. One of the elements in our mindset is the idea that the United States is exceptional. In the world of social science, there's actually a phrase for it. It's called *American exceptionalism*. And what it means is that the United States is unique

in the world, that we are different—not just different, better. We are better than other people. Our society is better than other societies. This is a very dangerous thing to think. When you become so arrogant that you think you are better than other countries, then that gives you a *carte blanche* to do nasty things. So we have to divest ourselves of the idea that we are somehow better and are the “City on the Hill.” No, we’re an empire, like other empires.

There was a
British empire.
There was a
Russian empire.
There was a
German empire
and a Japanese
empire and a
French and a
Belgian empire, a



Dutch empire and a Spanish empire. And now there’s the American empire. When we look at those empires, we say, “Oh, imperialism!” But our empire, no.

WE WANTED THE LAND


Our history does not show a beneficent country doing good all over the world. Our history shows expansion. Doubling our territory with the Louisiana Purchase. “Oh, there’s all that empty land, and now we have it.” It wasn’t empty! There were people living there. Hundreds of Indian tribes were living there. And if it’s going to be ours, we’ve got to get rid of them. And we did. And we instigated a war with Mexico in 1846 to 1848, and at the end of the war we took almost half of Mexico. And why? Well, we wanted that land. We want things. There’s a drive of nations that have the power and the capacity to bully other nations, to expand.

We expanded into the Caribbean. Then into the Pacific with Hawaii and the Philippines. And in the twentieth century, expanding our influence in Europe and Asia and now in the Middle East. An expansionist country, an imperialist power.

We have to see ourselves honestly for what we are. We're an empire like other empires. We're as aggressive and brutal and violent as the Belgians were in the Congo, as the British were in India. We have to face it.

IS CRITICISM UNPATRIOTIC?

But when you start criticizing, when you start making an honest assessment of what we have done in the world, some people say you're being unpatriotic. If we start really thinking about what it is, then we will reject these cries that you're not patriotic: When the government does bad things, the most patriotic thing you can do is to criticize the government, because that's the Declaration of Independence. That's our basic democratic charter. The Declaration of Independence says governments are set up by the people—they're artificial creations. They're set up to ensure certain rights, the equal right to life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. So when governments become destructive of those ends, the Declaration says, "it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish" the government. That's our basic democratic charter. People have forgotten what it is. It's OK to alter or abolish the government when the government violates its trust. And then you are being patriotic. If the government violates its trust, the government is being unpatriotic.



. . .it is the
Right of the
People to alter
or abolish . . .

WHOSE SECURITY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

We have to redefine words like “national security.” What is national security? Lawyers say, “Well, this is for national security.” And that takes care of it. No, it doesn’t take care of it. National security means different things to different people. For some people, national security means having military bases all over the world. For other people, national security means having healthcare, having jobs.

We need to redefine “terrorism.” Otherwise, the government can throw these words at us: “Oh, we’re fighting against terrorism.” Wait a while, what do you mean by “terrorism”? Well, we sort of have an idea what terrorism means. Terrorism means that you kill innocent people for some belief that you have. 9/11, that was terrorism. But if that’s the definition of “terrorism,” killing innocent people for some belief you have, then war is terrorism.

We have to stop thinking that solutions to problems are military solutions, that you can solve problems with violence. You can’t really. You don’t really solve problems with violence. We have to change our definitions of “heroism.” When people think of heroism, they think of military heroes. To me, the great heroes are the people who have spoken out against war. Those are the heroes.

WHOSE INTERESTS DO GOVERNMENTS SERVE?

And so we have to change our mindset. We have to understand certain things that we haven’t thought about enough, like that the government’s interests are not the same as our interests. No, there’s no one national interest. There’s the interest of the president of the United States, and then there’s the interest of the young person he sends to war. They’re different interests, you see? There is the interest of Exxon and Halliburton, and there’s the interest of the

worker, the nurse's aide, the teacher, the factory worker. Those are different interests. The government has its own interests, and they're not the interests of the people. Not just true in the United States, it's true everywhere in the world. Governments generally do not represent the interests of their people. That's why governments keep getting overthrown, because people at a certain point realize, "Hey! The government is not serving my interest."

That's also why governments lie. They have to lie, because their interests are different from the interests of ordinary people. If they told the truth, they would be out of office.

We have to get into a mindset about renouncing war, period, which is a big step.

One reason I've come to take this step is my study of history, the history of wars, the history of governments, the history of empires. That history helps a lot in straightening out your thinking.

And the other is my own experience in war. I was in World War II. I was an Air Force bombardier. I dropped bombs on various cities in Europe. I wanted to be in the war against fascism, the "good war," right? But at the end of the war, as I looked around and surveyed the world and thought about what I had done—and learned about Hiroshima and Nagasaki and learned about Dresden and learned about Hamburg and learned things I didn't even realize while I was bombing, because when you're involved in a military operation, you don't think. You're not questioning, not questioning why. "Why are they sending me to bomb this little town? When the war is almost over, there's no reason for dropping bombs on several thousand people." No, you don't think.

Well, I began to think after the war—and I was thinking now about the good war, the best war, and I was thinking, "Oh." And then I began to see, no, this good war is not simply good. This best of wars, no. And if that's true of this war, imagine what is true of all

the other obviously ugly wars about which you can't even use the word "good."

WAR CORRUPTS US ALL

So I began to realize certain things, that war corrupts everybody, corrupts everybody who engages in it. You start off, they're the bad guys. You make an interesting psychological jump. The jump is this: since they're the bad guys, you must be the good guys. No, they may very well be the bad guys. They may be fascists and dictators and really bad guys. That doesn't mean you're good, you know? And when I began to look at it that way, I realized that wars are fought by evils on both sides. One is a little more evil than the other. But even though you start in a war with sort of good intentions, you end up being corrupted, you end up being violent, you end up killing a lot of innocent people, because you've decided from the beginning that you're right, and then you don't have to ask questions anymore. Once you have made that decision, you don't have to think anymore. Then anything you do goes. Anything you do is OK. War corrupts everybody who engages in it.

THE OUTCOME OF WAR IS NEVER PREDICTABLE

So what else can I say about war?... The thing about war is the outcome is unpredictable. The immediate thing you do is predictable. The immediate thing you do is horrible, because war is horrible. And if somebody promises you that, "Well, this is horrible, like we have to bomb these hundreds of thousands of people in Japan. This is horrible, but it's leading to a good thing." Truth is, you never know what this is leading to. You never know the outcome. You never know what the future is. You know that the present is evil, and you're asked to commit this evil for some possible future good. Doesn't make sense, especially since if you look at the history of wars, you find out that those so-called future goods don't materialize.

The future good of World War II was, “Oh, now we’re rid of fascism. Now we’re going to have a good world, a peaceful world. Now the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Fifty million people died in World War II, but now it’s going to be OK.” Well, you’ve lived these years since World War II. Has it been OK? It may give you a feeling at the time that you’ve accomplished something, but it’s unpredictable in its ends. And because it’s corrupting, the ends are usually bad.

And so, what is there to do? We need to educate ourselves and other people. We need to educate ourselves in history. History is very important. That’s why I went into a little history, because if you don’t know history, it’s as if you were born yesterday. If you were born yesterday, then any leader can tell you anything, you have no way of checking up on it.

DISOBEDIENCE IS ESSENTIAL

We have an educational job to do about our relationship to government and to realize that disobedience is essential to democracy. And it’s important to understand democracy is not the three branches of government. It’s not what they told us in junior high school. Those structures are not democracy. Democracy is the people. Democracy is social movements. That’s what democracy is. And what history tells us is that when injustices have been remedied, they have not been remedied by the three branches of government. They’ve been remedied by great social movements, which push and force and pressure and threaten the three branches of government until they finally do something. That’s democracy.

And no, we mustn’t be pessimistic. We mustn’t be cynical. We mustn’t think we’re powerless. We’re not powerless. That’s where history comes in. If you look at history, you see people felt powerless and felt powerless and felt powerless, until they organized, and they got together, and they persisted, and they didn’t

give up, and they built social movements. Whether it was the anti-slavery movement or the black movement of the 1960's or the antiwar movement in Vietnam or the women's movement, they started small and apparently helpless; they became powerful enough to have an effect on the nation and on national policy. We're not powerless. We just have to be persistent and patient, not patient in the passive sense, but patient in the active sense of having a kind of faith that if all of us do little things, at some point there will be a critical mass created. Those little things will add up. That's what has happened historically. People were disconsolate, but they kept doing, doing, doing, and then something important happened.

And I'll leave you with just one more thought, that if you do that, if you join some group, if you join whatever the group is, a group that's working on, you

know, gender equality or racism or immigrant rights or the environment or the war, whatever group you join or whatever little action you take, it will make you feel better. It will make you feel better. And I'm not saying we should do all these things just to make

ourselves feel better, but it's good to know that life becomes more interesting and rewarding when you become involved with other people in some great social cause. Thank you.



“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

Martin Luther King

UPDATES

In the second issue of *Integrities* in 2007 we ran an article about **Frank Adamson**, who with his wife **Fran** and other dedicated residents of Felton, California, waged a several-year fight against a German company, RWE, that had bought up Felton's water system. We are happy to report that the fight has been won, that the Feltonians have gotten back their water supply! It eventually became a court case, and in the end the locals were successful. Now Frank can devote his energy and time to the library and affordable housing. Little Felton's fight has been an inspiration to others who find their water supplies threatened by big water companies, but Frank cautions them that "Unless your local government supports you, you can't do it." Stockton, California has also won their fight, and some cities in Germany are becoming wise to the predations of the water-takover companies.

Congratulations to **Bill Leininger**, founder and director of IF/WHEN, who received a Lifetime Achievement award from the Santa Clara County Human Relations Commission in February of 2009.

BELOVED REBEL - BOOK AVAILABLE

Actor Martin Sheen tells the story of an anti-nuclear weapons demonstration that he and Father Bill O'Donnell participated in. The police line stood well back until Bill O'Donnell started rushing towards it. Sheen sensed trouble and gasped as the police struck O'Donnell and knocked him down. Then the police line started moving toward the crowd. As they approached, Sheen was amazed to see Bill get to his feet and rush into the nuclear facility alone. It was typical Bill O'Donnell.

Father Bill, Reflections of a Beloved Rebel, a book about Bill's exploits for peace and justice is now available from Mary O'Donnell PO Box 99844 Emeryville, CA 94662

Membership

HOW CAN I HELP?

90% of the money donated to IF goes directly into programs, because many volunteers donate their labor and personal expenses for IF's work. Here are some examples of what your donation can do:

- \$20 provides 50 lbs. of rice or beans to families in Mexico.**
- \$40 enables 80 meals served at a communal kitchen in Peru.**
- \$100 gives a child a scholarship to go to grammar school.**
- \$150 installs a passive solar panel in Peru for heating water.**
- \$500 buys the land for an IF/Habitat home in Guatemala.**

Each gift makes something happen which won't happen in any other way. Thank you, on behalf of the families who receive these gifts. Your tax-deductible donation continues your subscription to *Integrities* for a year.

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