

# *Integrities*



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*Cover: Tarahumra Mother and Child Photo by Artura Rosette*



*Photo above by Karen Cane*

## **Work of Christmas Begins**

"When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and princes are home,  
when the shepherds are back with the flocks,  
then the work of Christmas begins:

to find the lost,  
to heal those broken in spirit,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the oppressed,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among all peoples,  
to make a little music with the heart...

And to radiate the Spirit of Giving,  
every day, in every way, in all that we do and in  
all that we say.

Then the work of Christmas begins.

-- Howard Thurman, adapted

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*Illustrations and photos within Integrities by Karen Cane unless otherwise noted.*

# Integrities

“Integrity” is usually pictured as personal. “That person has integrity,” we say, meaning that he or she has values and lives according to them despite the costs involved.

But for some people, integrity has grown beyond the personal to include the trees and the oceans, the way nations relate to each other, and the very fabric of life on earth. Such people feel overwhelmed and lonely at times, but they are the ones who are capable of sowing seeds for an integral culture. Their work is done in a cloud of uncertainty and often without institutional support or approval.

Our purpose is simple. We wish to further the sense of integrities which is taking shape in our time, and we wish to communicate the stories of people who are struggling to live their lives in an integral fashion.

— *Bill Cane*

## Keeping at It

When historian Page Smith pondered history, he saw “a dark story.” But the darkness was not all that he saw. Against this dark background people kept rising up, taking on difficult causes and against all odds changing history for the better. It cheered Page and gave him hope for the future.

Hannah Arendt, a philosopher and historian, had this to say about light rising up amid the darkness:

*Even in the darkest of times we have a right to some illumination and that illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering and weak light that some men and women will kindle over the time span given them on earth.*

We are always contending with the darkness in which we live. But as Jane Goodall declared in a recent Bill Moyers interview, the fact that we can light up the darkness of history is a marvel in itself.

## Can Our Actions Change the World?

It would seem that only within a worldview of grace or karma could our small actions resonate throughout the universe.

But wait—now for the first time we are seeing glaciers crash into the sea and melt. Massive climate change is taking place because of ordinary human actions.



*Icebergs floating near coast New Zealand  
Photo from New Zealand website*

Simple everyday things like driving a car and drawing electricity from coal-powered plants are melting the glaciers and heating the planet.

Human action also brought the entire world economy down. Men in financial institutions kept placing large gambling bets and buying and selling riskier packages. Politicians who shouted about deregulation and the “magic of the marketplace” helped them bring the economy down.

So we're getting a good look at how human action changes the face of the earth for the worse. But what about for the better? Can acts prompted by faith and hope and love circle the globe also?

## *Faith in Human Action*

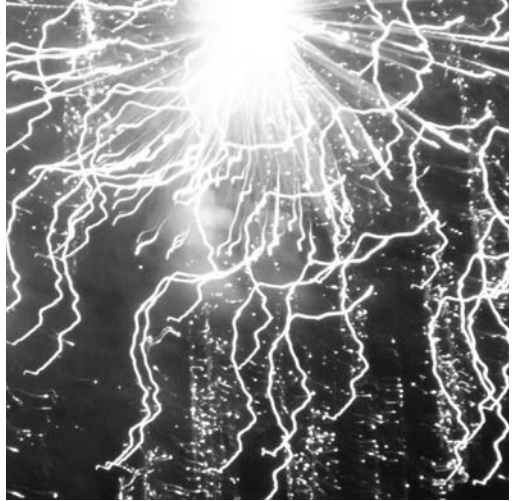
Albert Einstein maintained that we live in a friendly universe where our problems can be worked out—we live in a world where can pull together and survive and even prosper.

Myles Horton saw the grim side of history, but he lit up the darkness with joy and humor. Once when he was passing out leaflets as a young union organizer, the police stopped him and said, “You cannot pass out those leaflets.” There was a strong wind blowing, and Myles immediately shifted to brain-damaged speech: “No, you *can* path them out if you hold eath one between yur thumb and fingers *real tight*. See, it workth. That way, you *can* path them out!” The police stood dumfounded as Myles ran on ahead continuing to pass out leaflets!

Once, after we had visited a family living in a small hut with a dirt floor, Myles remarked, “This isn't *decent*. All we're asking for is decency.” What impressed me was that when Myles touched that small hut and talked about decency, he was touching the pain and possibility of the world.

Lewis Sinclair and Myles and I spent some time in a war zone together, where we had drinks and told stories and laughed and celebrated small victories—the victories of Life over Death, light over darkness.

## VICTORIES OF LIFE OVER DEATH, LIGHT OVER DARKNESS



Pop Philipps was an old man when I knew him—an Alsatian priest who identified himself with poor farmers and farm laborers during the Great Depression. He had been accused of being a Communist, of being crazy, of being un-American. But he persisted in fighting for justice and a living wage and sane working conditions. His advice as an old man looking back at life was priceless: “When first you take a difficult stand, they say you are crazy. But when others join you, you are not so crazy anymore— you become a threat, and they attack you. But when you get as old as I am, you can do as you damn well please and nobody bothers you!”

### *Political Action – the Built-in Darkness*

We struggle against a dark political background in the United States because Big Money controls elections. The Healthcare Bill is a case in point. Those who oppose all healthcare bills usually have

both eyes on Corporate Profit (and campaign contributions), but many of those who support the bills have at least one eye on Big Pharma. The problem is built into US politics. Robert Johnson, Director of Economic Policy at the Roosevelt Institute calls the political power Big Money wields a “structural sickness”:

***“Obama and Congresspersons rely on contributions for reelection. They cannot afford to offend large moneyed interests which are able to retaliate not only by withholding funds but also by using money to defeat the candidate. Thus we have a structural sickness in our government.”***

This structural sickness helped lead to the recent financial collapse. Government kept bowing to Big Money, reciting: “The marketplace is magic—it regulates itself. *De-regulation* is what's needed!” The Bush-Cheney administration mouthed these phrases continually, until, at the very end, President Bush came out with one of his more memorable statements about the economy, “The whole sucker could go down!” And it was largely the unregulated market in derivatives that helped bring things down.

## *What's a Derivative?*

Derivatives are not “things.” You can't hold them in your hand as you can hold a head of lettuce. Derivatives are a complicated system of placing big leveraged bets. On Wall Street placing calculated bets is known as hedging (as in the gambling phrase “hedging your bets”).

In the early 1900's a contract that guaranteed a certain amount of corn at a certain price at a date in the future helped reduce the risk the trader faced, since he would have protection if prices rose. But that “future” then had a value of its own that derived from corn. So corn *futures* began to be sold and traded as avidly as if they were real corn!

Many “interests” began to be traded not for what they were worth but for what someone thought they might be worth now or in the future. Bets were leveraged—a little money down for a big bet. The bundles of dicey mortgages which helped trigger the recent economic meltdown were derivatives. Their value “derived from” the value of the mortgages, which depended on how many of them were likely (or not likely) to be paid off.

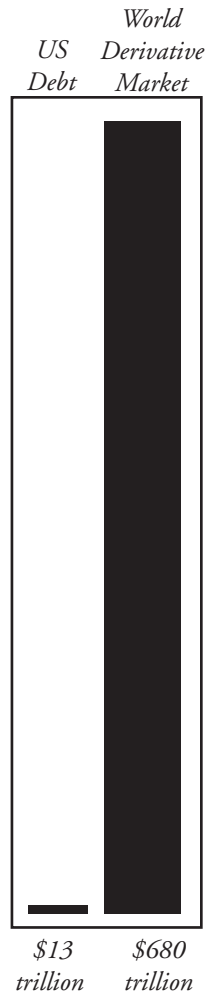
## A Courageous Woman Took on the Derivative Game – 10 Years Ago!

At the end of 2008, the Bank for International Settlements in Switzerland estimated the face value of all derivative contracts across the world to be \$680 trillion. (The entire US debt is about \$13 trillion!)

Brooksley Born, former chair of the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission, tried to address the derivatives problem 10 years ago but was squashed by Alan Greenspan, Larry Summers, Robert Rubin and others in the Clinton administration.

**The following are excerpts from PBS's *Frontline* interview with Brooksley Born:**

“When I was chair of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission [CFTC], I became aware of how quickly the over-the-counter derivatives market was growing, and how little any of the federal regulators knew about it . . .



“There were some major fraud cases. There was use of over-the-counter derivatives to manipulate the price of commodities. And there were some spectacular failures by institutions that were speculating in the over-the-counter market with little or no restraint. For example, in 1998 Orange County in California was brought down and went into bankruptcy because of its speculation—gambling with public money in the over-the-counter derivatives market on interest rate swaps.

“I became very concerned. This market had been under the jurisdiction of my agency and had been expanding for about three years when I came into office. It had grown to something like \$25 or \$30 trillion in notional value . . . And the astonishing thing, at least for me as I began to learn about this, was nobody in government knew how much, how big, where, who the parties were, at all . . .

“We did know that our biggest banks and investment banks were the dealers in the market, and that they were being very profitable in their dealing . . .

“So our Division of Trading and Markets... began, at my request, to prepare a list of questions that we needed answers to . . .

“I thought asking questions couldn't hurt, and I was shocked that there was a strong negative reaction to merely asking questions . . .

“There was no impulse to regulate; there was an impulse to deregulate. Everything was going just fine, thank you very much.

*There's an extraordinary statement from Greenspan, Rubin and [former SEC head Arthur] Levitt that says Congress should pass legislation to prevent your organization from oversight . . . It was an extraordinary moment. What did you think?*

“I was very surprised, because we were an independent federal agency, and we were acting within our jurisdiction. And ordinarily, the tradition has been and the understanding has been that independent regulatory agencies should be permitted to do their job as they saw fit. But obviously, the other financial regulators thought that this was terribly important for them to step in and condemn . . .

“One thing we have to remember is that the financial services industry was the largest campaign finance contributor then—and perhaps even now, I'm not sure—and it was very effective in lobbying both the Executive Branch and Congress.

“So the market continued to grow, with even less oversight and regulation, until it reached more than \$680 trillion in notional value; an enormous potential for disaster...

*So we're the losers. Who were the winners?*

“I think the profits made by the over-the-counter derivatives dealers, by our largest banks and investment banks, were... It was short-term benefit for a few major institutions at the expense of all the people who have lost their jobs, who have lost their retirement savings, who have lost their homes.

*If this moment passes again, the consequences are what from your perspective?*

“I think we will have continuing danger from these markets and that we will have repeats of the financial crisis. It may differ in details, but there will be significant financial downturns and disasters attributed to this regulatory gap over and over until we learn from experience.

*And the lesson you learned from your government experience?*

“I think the lesson is that a public servant has to do what she believes is right and carry her responsibility even if there are very adverse consequences in terms of criticism and other difficulties. That's one's job.

“My parents were both public servants, and I think I learned from them. My father was the director of public welfare in San Francisco for 35 years, and my mother was a high school English teacher. They felt that public service was the highest calling, that this was the way to give back to the society for all we enjoy every day. And one of the things you have to do is put aside self-interest, put aside ambition and do what's right for the people. And that's what I tried to do . . .”

## Update

In October 2009, 11 years after Brooksley Born tried to attack the problem, a key House committee finally voted to regulate derivatives. The 43-to-26 vote by the Financial Services Committee was mostly along party lines and was



*Brooksley Born Photo from "Global News"*

a big step in President Obama's proposed overhaul of rules covering the nation's financial system. Whether it will be strong enough remains to be seen.

## ISRAEL—TWO WOMEN LIGHTING UP THEIR CLASSROOMS

We recently met two women from Israel who are Waldorf school teachers—one a Jew, the other a Palestinian. Tally Bat Ami Zahor and Lana Nasrallah spoke to us about their efforts to build bridges between Jewish and Arab children in Israel. They bring both Jewish and Palestinian children together in their classrooms. I was very moved by their courage. They face suspicion, misunderstanding and hostility simply because they want to work for understanding and peace. But in teaching the children they find joy.

They were buoyed up by all the encouragement they received from groups in the US. And groups here were inspired by them. By simply coming together, all of us found new energy. Jewish Renewal in Santa Cruz sponsored the event (IF was a co-sponsor). It was a real celebration of hope—a slim hope—for the world.

(Salaam Shalom Educational Foundation. [www.ssefoundation.org](http://www.ssefoundation.org))



*Children are the greatest future resource for peace in the Middle East.  
Photo from brochure by Salaam Shalom Educational Foundation*

## AND A NEW ISRAEL LOBBY RISES UP

AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), the pro-Israel lobby, has had a major influence on US policy toward Israel for many, many years. The Israeli government has been the largest

annual recipient of direct U.S. economic and military assistance since 1976 and the largest total recipient since World War II. Prominent Jews who have questioned Israeli government policy have been labeled by AIPAC members as “self-hating Jews.”

But as of last year there is a new Jewish lobby—“J Street” - which is taking a different approach:

J Street represents Americans, primarily but not exclusively Jewish, who support Israel and its desire for security as the Jewish homeland, as well as the right of the Palestinians to a sovereign state of their own - two states living side-by-side in peace and security. We believe ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the best interests of Israel, the United States, the Palestinians, and the region as a whole.

Daniel Levy, one of the founders of J Street and an organizer of the Geneva Peace Initiative, has this to say:

"What we had a hunch about, and was proven when J Street was launched, is that there is this very large constituency of Jewish Americans who do care about Israel and who are cool identifying themselves as pro-Israel. But their pro-Israelness is about the need for Israel to be at peace with its neighbors to gain security, not by being an ongoing expansionist presence. In fact, that endangers Israel."

"We're trying to say we can still embrace Israel, have a constructive critical dialogue to try and advance our vision of what Israel needs to be. And I think there are Israelis who are strategically far sighted enough to understand that if you alienate J Street you're setting Israel up for a huge problem."



Michael Tomasky, writing in *The Guardian*, summed up the impact J Street is having:

“The (recent) conference announced that J Street had arrived as a force . . . US National security adviser Jim Jones spoke at an afternoon session, and he pledged that he or someone from the administration would attend 'all other future events,' a phrase you can bet echoed around Jerusalem. Several members of Congress attended the dinner . . . Jeremy Ben-Ami has succeeded in creating (despite many right-wing and neocon attacks and constant monitoring) a credible and safe place for people who want change and progress toward peace to congregate and make their case. Given the lock AIPAC has been thought to have on Washington, it's quite an accomplishment. As one group leader put it to me that night, the feeling could be summed up in one word—1,500 people saying collectively, 'Finally.'”

## **WENDELL BERRY — A VOICE FOR THE LAND**

Wendell Berry advocates—and practices—working to protect farm land and the farm communities around the land. He recently taught his grandchildren how to plough his Kentucky farmland with horses (as his father had taught him). Pop Philipps, whom we mentioned earlier, pre-dated Berry. When asked why he was sending pregnant cows and goats to the poor of Europe after World War II, instead of sending tractors, Pop replied, “Tractors don't shit!” Both Pop and Berry advocated farms with farm animals as a source of fertilizer.

Berry is a teacher and a writer who keeps his hand in farming. We went to San Francisco recently to hear him talk. The real riches, he said, are not in Wall Street derivatives or hedge funds, but in the land. The land is our real source of sustenance. You can run your fingers through the soil!

Berry was writing about organic farming and sound ecological practices forty years ago. So he has seen changes which encourage him, such as the birth of community-supported agriculture (local organic farmers distributing their produce directly to households) and even the symbolic organic garden which now exists at the White House! You don't have to be a farmer, he told us, to take care of a little home garden. Even a tomato plant in a pot will give you a connection with the soil. I had this image of being in touch with the whole earth by holding a tomato plant in a pot!

Berry was asked about wilderness, and he replied that yes, he believes in preserving wilderness but he believes more in enriching the farmland which sustains us—improving the soil, deepening the ties of people to the land and of people to each other.



He bemoaned the destruction of the land by coal mountaintop mining operations, which have done much more damage in his state of Kentucky than any so-called “enemies,” foreign or domestic!

Wilderness, he said, is largely taken care of by Nature, by the animals and plants which form an ecology. It's the rest of us who need to learn how to take care of land, because in truth, we're the ones doing the damage, we're the *wild* ones!

In one of his poems, Berry tells us how he deals with darkness and despair:

*When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake*

*rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.  
I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

—Wendell Berry

And elsewhere Berry gives us this fabulous piece of advice:

So, friends, every day do something that won't compute. . . Give your approval to all you cannot understand . . . Ask the questions that have no answers. Put your faith in two inches of humus that will build under the trees every thousand years . . . Laugh. Be joyful though you have considered all the facts. . . . Practice resurrection."

## KEEPING GOING

People who struggle against the darkness which surrounds us never really win definitively. "Everything good," as Lord Acton reminds us, "must be done over and over again forever!" So "kissing the joy as it flies" and encouraging each other along the way are crucial to keeping the faith and not throwing in the towel.

We try to play tennis doubles every week. Bill Leininger recently attended a tennis camp that the University of California sponsors. There was a tennis pro there, a woman coach, who told everyone how important it is after each shot to encourage your partner. Even if someone misses a shot, you still give them a bit of encouragement. A pat on the back really helps. And in life it really helps too.

## SAVING LAKE FREEDOM — A LOCAL DIFFICULT CAUSE

Wendell Berry, commenting on the phrase, “Think globally, act locally,” once wrote that he prefers to *think locally and act locally* because “people who think globally have done an awful lot of damage in our world!”

We have been involved recently in trying to save a small local lake called “Lake Freedom” which is infested with water hyacinths, one of the fastest growing plants in the world and a notorious plague of waterways. At times, our efforts seem hopeless. Santa Cruz County, which owns Lake Freedom, first became aware of the water hyacinth problem in 2005, but did nothing. As the hyacinth grew, it deprived the lake of oxygen and killed all the fish; water birds stopped coming to the lake. The lake overflow now threatens to infest other waterways with hyacinth. About twenty homes will be flooded if continual strong rains come.

During recent fires, planes were unable to scoop up water from the lake.

Willow trees have recently taken root in the lake and make flooding more likely.



*Left: Can see reflections in water in 2000    Right: 2009 Lake looks like a meadow*

In 2007, then County Parks Director Maria Hurtado, declared that “imminent action” would be taken (cited in the Watsonville

*Register-Pajaronian*). But no action followed. The cost of cleaning up the lake has risen dramatically each year.

The Board of Supervisors finally gave the County Parks Department the task of seeking grant money to clean up the lake. Parks has hired a consultant, received contract bids for cleanup and secured necessary permits. But the supervisors have not been proactive. No federal stimulus money was requested. Nor have the supervisors been interested in selling adjacent unused County property to secure funds to clean up the lake.

People are disappointed by the non-responsiveness of the Board. In July of 2008 a petition with 250 Signatures was sent to the Board, urging them to take action on cleaning up the lake. The Board of Supervisors did not even acknowledge the petition.

At the present time, *Save Lake Freedom* members have been circulating new petitions urging the Board of Supervisors to act, and has over one thousand signatures to date. People are very disturbed by the the threats to Health, Safety and Welfare caused by the County's inaction. The County's position now is that it wishes to do something, but it deems the cleanup too expensive and the County has no money.

Our hope is to keep going despite the difficulties involved. But the temptation to give up is always a nagging presence. It is a great help to feel the presence of others in the world who, when life and death are set before us, act in favor of Life!

If you can help with expertise, advice or funding sources, or by joining the *Save Lake Freedom* effort, contact Bill Cane:  
bcane@baymoon.com. 160 Sunflower Lane, Watsonville, CA 95076

Or write a letter to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 701 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, advocating action.

## RECENT IF INITIATIVES:

### TONS OF CORN AND BEANS



*Right: Sam Ramos helping with distribution*

*Left: The Tarahumara (Rarámá) picking up their corn and beans*

*Photos by: Arturo Rosette*

A group from Apoyo Tarahumara just completed another journey to Mexico to distribute tons of corn and beans to the Tarahumara Indians who are suffering hunger from continued drought. Apoyo announces its presence by cellphone and over the radio. Soon runners (the Tarahumara are world class runners) arrive to pick up sacks of dried corn and beans and run them back to their little communities.

### HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PROTECT THE AMAZON

Peggy and John Law recently visited Equitos, Peru, where young environmental activists are getting together and inspiring young students to help protect the amazing Amazon ecosystem where they live.

The Amazon basin is a treasure trove of animal and plant diversity. Its vast forests are often referred to as the lungs of the world.

The ecological balance is severely threatened by corporate interests trying to appropriate indigenous lands; police/military activity protects corporate rather than indigenous interests.

The group of young people trying to save the forests and forest-dwellers is very poor, so IF is sending money to help them come together, train and take on the task of protecting the crucial Amazon Basin.



*Young volunteers build their own dwellings.  
Photo by Peggy Law*

## **SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DEFENDING DEMOCRACY IN HONDURAS**

A military coup brought down President Zelaya, who had taken the courageous step of doubling the minimum wage in Honduras!



*Photo from Quixote Center website*

The Organization of American States continues to press for a return of democracy in Honduras, but the US has basically caved in to the leaders of the coup. IF has supported Quixote Center, which has sent people down to accompany those who oppose the coup and to witness the government's

retaliation against them. Many of them have paid dearly for their courageous action.

## IF / WHEN

IF/WHEN continues to support about 45 different social justice and charity groups with a widespread range of activities. The requests for support keep coming in and we keep reexamining our priorities. With the down economy the direct charitable needs are increasing as we endeavor to keep our justice issues up front.

Hands on, we are directly involved in helping hotel workers exercise their right to organize and achieve a living wage.

We struggle with the issue of immigration and seek ways to assist our undocumented sisters and brothers until some sort of legislation can be enacted.

\* \* \*

## DONATING TO IF

In these very difficult economic times, your donations are especially appreciated. Thank you for your support and generosity.

Leave a legacy by mentioning IF in your will. This is a wonderful way to stay active and have a continuing impact on the world. If you wish to know more about donating, contact Judy Barry, IF board member at 831.662.0577.

## EMAIL UPDATES

Make sure we have your current email. We still get returned emails that either have incorrect names or servers will not accept email from IF. This especially happens with AOL, so be sure to let your email carrier know that email from [if.integrities@gmail.com](mailto:if.integrities@gmail.com) is not spam. If you do not wish to receive email, please notify us.

# 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.

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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