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## HOW OTHERS SEE US

### “Better an Open Rebuke . . .”

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

**We in the United States must try harder to understand the reasons for anti-Americanism.**

Remember the intriguing rhyme by Scottish poet Robert Burns? “O, wad some power/the giftie gie us/to see ourselves/as ithers see us.” In a tragic way, Sept. 11 can be viewed as giving us such a gift. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, many U.S. Americans were astonished to learn that some people in the world literally hate the United States and millions view U.S. global policies with hostility. This was not our self-image.

For this issue of the *Washington Memo* we asked MCC partners in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and communities of color in the United States to help us see ourselves as others see us. In response they have written articles on U.S. support for dictators in sub-Saharan Africa, damaging economic policies in Latin America, biased foreign policies in the Middle East and mean-spirited U.S. immigration laws. Finally, David Whettstone writes on the perspectives of people of color within the United States, who have often been viewed as the “others.”

The U.S. policies and actions mentioned in this *Memo* may not by themselves result in violence against the United States. But they do nourish the soils of poverty, humiliation and desperation. Mixed with other ingredients, these policies can erupt in anti-U.S. violence.

None of this excuses or justifies acts of terror. But we in the United States must try harder to understand the reasons for anti-Americanism. When U.S. policies harm millions of people and create enemies, justice and our own security as a nation requires that we make changes. Though not all anti-American feelings arise from selfish and harmful U.S. policies abroad, this is the part of the problem that we can do something about.

The Bible tells us that the open rebukes of our friends can help us to make needed changes (Prov. 27:5). Let us hear the words of the Psalmist: “Do not be like a horse or a mule without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle . . .” (32:9). ■

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#### Pontius' Puddle



BY J. DARYL BYLER

**The United States is the country that promotes freedom, democracy and human rights around the world, isn't it?**

## Shadow Side

**A**t the World Trade Center, co-workers carried disabled colleagues down 50 flights of stairs. Firefighters ventured into a blazing inferno looking for survivors. Search and rescue workers logged endless hours without sleep.

Since Sept. 11, we have seen and heard many stories of ordinary U.S. citizens who took extraordinary risks or made immense sacrifices for the benefit of others. Other reports have highlighted the U.S. liberation of Afghan women and outpouring of support for Afghan refugees.

Such accounts fit our national self-image: courageous, generous and filled with good will. While some of these stories may be slightly embellished in the retelling, there is no reason to doubt their basic veracity. They represent a positive part of our national character. And it is the part we prefer to see. After all, the United States is the country that promotes freedom, democracy and human rights around the world, isn't it?

But there is a more unseemly side to the United States. In its zeal to sustain and expand the "American way of life," the United States has too often acted in dominating, controlling and hurtful ways. U.S. economic, political and military policies—supposedly tools to foster free trade, democracy and human rights—have too often become blunt instruments of control and suppression.

This shadow side does not fit our preferred U.S. image. Indeed, the United States often seems to deflect awareness of its own faults by shining the spotlight on the foibles and failures of other nations—human rights abuses, dictatorial leaders and efforts to accumulate weapons.

But because many U.S. policies cast such a long shadow, U.S. criticism of others is often viewed as two-faced.

Jesus offered a candid, but constructive, solution for those who would seek to call others to account: "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? . . . You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye" (Matthew 7:45).

By focusing only on our virtues while denying our vices, we also deny ourselves the possibility of change. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung—a pioneer in the shadow side of the human personality—writes: "One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light but by making the darkness conscious."

The writers in this *Washington Memo* help to make the darkness conscious. They bring our national shadow into the light by helping us see ourselves as many around the world see us. In so doing, they offer us a wonderful gift—the possibility of transformation.

Recognizing and owning our shadow side does not diminish or negate the positive aspects of our national personality. Rather, it offers us the possibility of becoming a truly good neighbor in the community of nations. ■

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Staff: J. Daryl Byler (Director), Elisabeth T. Harder, Rachele Schlabach (Managing Editor), Martin Shupack, David Whettstone.

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# Race, Faith, and Policy Divided?

Post-Sept. 11 militarism and patriotism, closely related to U.S. policy, trigger long-term pains and frustrations for Anabaptist persons of color. Along with their communities, their loyalty and citizenry are questioned. Many U.S. actions harm related people across the globe. And, they wonder about the church's response to U.S. policy. Their thoughts engage identity, self, faith, community and the church. This has much to offer to the Body of Christ.

The United States sees itself as a peacemaker. But from the perspectives of history and people of color, this self-image is a distortion.

The establishment of our nation suggests that people must be conquered, coopted, or eliminated. Colonization and Western Expansion have created an idolatrous sense of superiority. Genocide of Native Americans, displacement of early Latin presence in North America, slavery of Africans, forced labor and maltreatment of Asians; and exportation of military assistance have been grand strokes of U.S. policy. Government complicity and inaction have done a great deal of violence to people of color. Broken treaties, riots, lynchings, bombings, experimentation, sanctions, and internment are embedded in the conscience of people of color and affect their perception of current U.S. policy.

Particular suffering and sadness is borne by people of color when we are asked to forget ourselves, history, and empathy for others and participate in a policy of domination. The Buffalo Soldiers (black troops from the Civil War) were used to subdue "hostile" Mexicans and Indians. Other historical personages have been used for purposes of militarism. Crispus Atticus, Marshall Bernardo de Gálvez, black WACs (nurses), and Navajo code breakers are figures invoked for the recruitment of youth and public opinion.

Dr. W.E.B. DuBois believed that black participation in World War I could earn respect and acceptance from American society. He later recanted this position. The evolution of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's convictions led to strong condemnation of war and the Vietnam conflict. Both positions have caused considerable reflection in the black community.

Families, communities, and individuals of color, can and will navigate the tensions caused by U.S. policy demands. The church can collectively walk with persons of color to develop an adequate, engaging peace theology that: creates peace alternatives and opportunities for young people; hears and respects the peace tradition of others (Black Elk, Gandhi, King, Howard Thurman, etc.); confesses entanglement; and amplifies the experience and voices of those on the receiving end of policy.

Many in the Body of Christ confess and seek peace. Through Christ we have hope and know liberation and transformation from sin and oppression. We seek to bless others with the same fruit, the same gifts. Such commitment is deeply crucial for people of color and the cause of peace. ■

BY DAVID M. WHETTSTONE

**"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."**

—HEBREWS 10:23-25

## CAPITAL QUOTES

*"My feeling is that until we catch him—which we will—we won't know exactly where he was."*

—Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, speaking about Osama bin Laden (Washington Post, Dec. 18, 2001).

*"Are these Taliban shoes?"*

—Afghan resident Bai Jan, picking up a pair of little girl's plastic shoes, while walking through a neighboring village that was bombed by the United States. As many as 100 civilians were killed in the incident (Washington Post, Jan. 10, 2002).

*"Perhaps, above all, we should see [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.] as a minister of the gospel. That faith gave Dr. King the grace to forgive, and the strength to love. He refused to answer hatred with hatred or meet violence with violence."*

—President Bush, on Martin Luther King Day, as U.S. military forces continued their activities in response to the events of Sept. 11 (The New York Times, Jan. 22, 2002).

# U.S. Foreign Policy Breeds Anti-American Sentiments

BY GEORGE N. RISHMAWI

George N. Rishmawi, a Palestinian Christian, works for the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between People, a long-term MCC partner agency, in Beit Sahour.

**Palestinian families see the words “Made in the USA” on the fragments of Israeli missiles that hit their homes.**

The friend of your enemy is also your enemy.” This is what many people believe, and is the basis for their judgments of and relations with other people and countries. U.S. involvement in other people’s conflicts, although viewed by the Americans as a humanitarian mission, reflect negatively on the way other nations look at the United States. America is seen as the enemy, just as Palestinians are viewed as terrorists in the West.

U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the current unprecedented level of U.S. support for Israel play a large role in creating anti-American sentiment among Arabs and Palestinians in particular.

Although Palestinians do not see the U.S. army in their towns and villages, they experience the American effect on and presence in the Middle East on a daily basis. They feel it through the U.S.-made weapons that the Israeli soldiers are using. They also see it in the Israeli-biased diplomacy of the United States at the United Nations and at other forums. The United States is seen as neither neutral nor objective in its role as sole sponsor of the Middle East peace process.

Many Palestinians had hope for the peace process because the United States was the sponsor, and the only country that Palestinians felt could put some pressure on Israel to accept the U.N. resolutions and international legitimacy. However, this soon proved not to be the case.

Support of Israel is not a new U.S. policy. It is as old as Israel itself. By contrast, the first direct encounter between the United States and Beit Sahour in the West Bank, my hometown, was in 1989. When the people of Beit Sahour refused to pay taxes to

the occupying Israeli government, the United States vetoed a U.N. resolution condemning the subsequent Israeli reprisals against Beit Sahour.

A major reason for the Palestinians to distrust the American people is their tacit—and sometimes vocal—approval of their government’s policies. It is not just an issue outside the United States, but has had its effect within the country—most obviously and tragically on Sept. 11.

Their impression has not altered due to America’s ongoing support of Israel. Indeed, it has been reinforced during the current *intifada* (uprising). Palestinian families see the words “Made in the USA” on the fragments of Israeli missiles that hit their homes.

Add to that the fact that the United States is supporting the cruel attacks that Israel is launching against the Palestinians and calling it “an act of self defense.” Meanwhile they regard the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation as “terrorism” and equate Mr. Arafat with the terrorists. With American policies as they are, it is impossible to convince many people that the United States is not the cause of their suffering and fear. In a nutshell, as a way of blocking American objections, Israel equates its deeds with the current U.S. actions against terrorism.

My personal experience in Harrisonburg, Va. in 1998 during the Summer Peacebuilding Institute at Eastern Mennonite University was enough to make me believe that the American people are victims of their own government’s policy.

I spent the last two months of 2001 in the United States, living with an American family. Despite the major differences between American culture and my own, I felt the warmth and kindness of people there as if I were at home. I believe that the American people could change their international image if only they came into direct contact with people in other parts of the world. ■

# The Incompatibility of U.S. Foreign Policy and Nation-State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, many of our friends in the United States have begun to show more interest in knowing how the rest of the world lives and why there is animosity towards the United States. What must be emphatically stated is that most Africans do not have any animosity against U.S. citizens, but rather against U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. practice of rewarding allies who did not embrace either communism or post-independence nationalism, and punishing those who did, was damaging for nation-state building in Africa. Angola is a tragic example. By supporting Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, U.S. foreign policy has done enormous harm.

During the Cold War, U.S. arms and money to Savimbi's rebels were flown in via the Congo (then called Zaire) with the approval of Congo's late president Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu's strong anti-communist rhetoric was rewarded with much ill-fated aid. His embezzlement of most of these funds failed to provoke any concern in Washington. His regime—however corrupt, undemocratic, unpopular and guilty of human rights abuses—was propped up by Washington.

The United States identified leaders "friendly" towards U.S. interests and confused these leaders with the nation-state. This did nothing to help in the task of nation-building in Africa or the creation of a viable, democratic state apparatus. As a result Africa's landscape became dotted with failed and failing states.

After the Cold War, we in Africa had hoped for a major shift in U.S. foreign policy. We have been disappointed to discover that the promotion of democracy, defense of human rights and poverty alleviation were empty slogans.

The United States has continued its policy of "personalizing" power by focusing on individual African leaders. Former President Clinton cited African presidents who represented "a new breed of leader . . . who will bring about an African Renaissance." They were rewarded with economic and military aid. Within four years each of these leaders was engaged in a bloody and unjust war. For example, Rwanda and Uganda unlawfully invaded the Congo, resulting in over three million civilian deaths.

In addition, the contrast between U.S. peacebuilding in Kosovo and now in Afghanistan, with U.S. disengagement from Somalia and the Congo, rankles many Africans and makes us wonder if racism is not also a key factor in U.S. foreign policy formation.

Perhaps most confusing to those of us who have grown up in the church is that we know America as the home of our missionaries, the place that created and nurtured people of love and compassion. This has created a cognitive dissonance for some of us, trying to harmonize these two conflicting experiences of the United States.

We Africans, likewise, bear some responsibility for Africa's problems. But there is a growing political consciousness and a strong and well-engaged civil society in Africa. We seek to learn from lessons of the past so as to build nations that work for African peoples. We need the United States to complement our efforts by pursuing a better foreign policy. And we look to U.S. Americans to hold their own leaders accountable to the same standards that we seek to hold ours. ■

BY FIDELE LUMEYA

Fidele Lumeya, a Congolese Mennonite, and his wife, Krista Rigalo, currently serve as MCC country representatives in Angola.

**The contrast between U.S. peacebuilding in Kosovo and Afghanistan, with U.S. disengagement from Somalia and the Congo, makes us wonder if racism is a key factor in U.S. foreign policy.**

## MARPECK CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK

What moral imperatives were generated by the 9/11 tragedy? How ought Anabaptists respond to Bush's popular "war on terrorism"? Is there theological footing for Anabaptist involvement in government action and policy?

On June 7-8, William Klaassen (historian) and A. James Reimer (theologian) will meet in the shadow of Ground Zero to consider these issues in the light of Pilgram Marpeck, the 16th century Anabaptist theologian, writer, and public official. For more information, see [www.marpecknyc.com](http://www.marpecknyc.com).

# You Cannot Serve God and Money

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BY HECTOR MONDRAGÓN

Hector Mondragón, an economist, is a member of Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá, Colombia. Translation provided by Janna Bowman, an MCC worker in Bogotá.

**The poor have become poorer and are growing in number, while a small minority grows richer.**

On Dec. 19, 2001 Argentina exploded. For a decade that nation was hailed a successful application of free-market “neo-liberal reforms” pushed by the United States. In 2001 the illusion fell away. Banks were emptied and hungry people pillaged supermarkets. Popular uprisings finally caused the government’s fall and suspension of foreign debt service payments.

Since 1997 many countries have fallen into crisis. First it was the “Asian Tigers”: Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. Later Japan, Russia, Eastern Europe, Ecuador and all of Latin America fell. Finally, in 2001, the crisis visited the United States.

What went wrong? The illusion that the money empire can produce the well-being of all, or even the majority, was shattered. Economists assure us that the economy can only function on the basis of profit, and they mock “utopian theories.” The Pharisees also loved money and mocked Jesus. The crisis is a result of this same lust for wealth.

The capitalist phenomenon of growth during economic ascension, followed by a recession, is a vicious cycle. The destructive phase lasts until it destroys as much capital as is needed for earnings to rise again. Companies go bankrupt; the strongest companies absorb the smaller, devalued ones.

Human capital is also destroyed by economic crisis. Employers take advantage of unemployment and buy human labor for less than it is worth. They exploit the desperate worker by imposing poor labor conditions. In south Asia, China and elsewhere, global companies are getting rich while paying miserable salaries. The exploitation of children has grown tremendously.

Free market “neo-liberal” economic theory, promoted by the United States, claims that pursuing individual wealth leads to collective well-being, but the opposite has occurred. The poor have become poorer and are growing in number, while a small minority grows richer. A November 2000 report of the International Labor Organization found that the global economy’s current direction leads to increased inequality. It noted that the theoretical benefits of free-market globalization for developing countries rarely corresponds to reality. For example, opening up markets can impose high “adjustment costs” such as high unemployment.

In Colombia, as in many other countries, globalization’s promises have not materialized. In my country poverty has grown from 51.5 percent to 59.8 percent in the last three years. This represents an increase of 4.3 million poor Colombians. Industrial production dropped in the last three years by 7.5 percent. The coffee harvest fell by half. Large landholders who controlled 32 percent of Colombia’s land in 1984 controlled 45 percent in 1997. Colombia’s foreign debt has increased 125 percent in the past nine years. Debt service payments consume more than half the country’s national profits.

Jesus taught that wealth’s domination should end. He came to pronounce Jubilee: return the land to those who have lost it, provide dignified work for everyone and allow the earth to rest. He instructed us to help the poor, the displaced and foreigners. Jubilee is a concrete alternative to globalization.

Jubilee is made real when indigenous people achieve recognition of their native lands, when the displaced return home or receive new land, and when poor landless farmers are given a piece of earth. Jubilee demands conversion—transformation of individuals, communities, businesses and the powerful international community. May the world shift from so-called “globalization” to solidarity—doing the will of God on earth as it is in heaven. ■

# Frontera Vida/Border Life

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Forget political boundaries. Forget north/south dynamics. Forget English only. The 2,000 mile U.S./Mexico borderlands are shaping and re-shaping cultural, political and linguistic realities on both sides of *la frontera*. “The border,” as Laredo, Texas mayor Betty Flores describes, “is not where the U.S. stops and Mexico begins; it’s where the U.S. blends into Mexico.”

The border is an area that has historically been etched out of the U.S. psyche, militarily patrolled beyond reason by new Texas Rangers disguised as Border Patrol agents and betrayed by the false hope of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas, NAFTA is rapidly changing the political landscape and cultural demographics. According to recent census data, the valley’s population grew by 48.5 percent between 1990 and 2000. The border area is growing at twice the pace of the national average. Directly across the border, in Mexican cities like Matamoros and Reynosa, the population has boomed by 600 percent since 1950.

Much of this increase can be attributed to the *maquiladoras*—U.S. companies that have moved across the border in search of cheap labor. From all across the interior of Mexico, people (mainly women) have come to the border in search of jobs.

In direct contrast to the population boom, income levels remain the worst in the nation. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Rio Grande Valley ranks last among all U.S. metropolitan cities in worker pay (\$13,339 per capita). *Maquiladora* workers in Matamoros and Reynosa earn an average of 350 pesos a week (about \$35 U.S.).

For Leticia Sanchez (not her real name), a member of a Mennonite church in south Texas, the personal impact of racist policies have destroyed any hopes of *el sueño Americano*—the American dream. “I came to this country 10 years ago in search of *el*

*sueño Americano*, but have come to learn the difficulty of being Mexican and living in this country. My son graduated from high school with good grades but because he is undocumented he cannot receive any kind of financial aid to make college a reality . . . he cannot do anything without a social security number.”

Though the country benefits from the labor immigrants provide and the taxes they pay, the United States makes it extremely difficult for immigrants themselves to benefit. They can’t simply go to the Immigration and Naturalization Service office and say, “I’ve worked in your fields, your hotels, your restaurants and I’m the reason prices can stay low, so now can my family also enjoy some of those benefits we help create?” Rather, Mexican immigrants are systematically prohibited from living a dignified life.

For Leticia and her son, the only other available option is one they do not want to consider: “Well, *el army* keeps calling and telling him that if he enlists for three years he can return home *siendo un Americano*—being American—with full, legal documentation. *Siempre* they call, promising that they can help and that if he doesn’t enlist he will soon run out of options,” says Leticia. “We have been in this country for 10 years now and there is no way we can get *los papeles*—papers . . . but we know that *Dios está con nosotros*—God is with us.”

Leticia’s story is by no means uncommon. It is the story of *los fronterizos*—the borderlanders—who are living a forgotten existence. The border continues to be the truck stop and chemical waste dump of NAFTA, the vacation spot for many rich *gringos* and the face of a new existence where borders cease to exist. ■

BY FELIPE HINOJOSA

Felipe Hinojosa is Regional Associate for the Southern Tier of MCC Central States. He lives in Edinburg, Texas.

**The Rio Grande Valley ranks last among all U.S. metropolitan cities in worker pay.**

## NEW STAFF MEMBER

We welcome Patrick Neri to the MCC Washington Office. Patrick, a participant in MCC’s International Visitors Exchange Program, will be in the Washington Office from March through July 2002. Patrick is from Cagayan de Oro City in the Philippines.



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**USEFUL ADDRESSES**



**MCC U.S. Washington Office**  
110 Maryland Ave NE  
Suite 502  
Washington DC 20002  
(202) 544-6564  
mccwash@mcc.org

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington DC 20510  
(202) 224-3121

Representative \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington DC 20500  
(202) 456-1111  
president@whitehouse.gov

**SOUND THE TRUMPET!**

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
<b>GLOBAL AIDS FUNDING</b>	Congressional budget committees are in the process of making key decisions on the amount of U.S. funding for addressing global AIDS in 2003. Forty million people worldwide are infected with the AIDS virus.	Urge your senators and representative to include \$2.5 billion in the 2003 Budget Resolution for prevention and treatment to help stop global AIDS.
<b>MILITARY SPENDING</b>	President Bush's budget calls for a \$45 billion <i>increase</i> in military spending for 2003—an amount larger than the military budget of all countries except Japan. The president's plan calls for U.S. military spending to grow from the current budget of \$350 billion to \$470 billion by 2007.	Ask the president and members of Congress to find more creative and constructive ways of building global security. Lament the growing U.S. commitment to militarism.