



Janice L. Connelly is a member of the Tohono O'odham Nation, a WHEEL supporter, an artist, and an activist for women and Native Peoples.

My Poverty & My Dream

Janice L. Connelly

12:00AM—Almost, every night before falling asleep I dream of the day I'll live in my own place again. I'll feel free again; free to make my own choices. Silent, absorbed in my exhaustion, I slip into a heavy exhausted sleep, oblivious to the sound of the forty other women snoring, scattered around me on the floor.

5:30AM—Ooh morning comes too soon. I painfully crawl out of my hard bed. I repack my backpack and I walk the ten blocks to the labor hall. I'm so glad I found this warm work jacket at Goodwill yesterday. The sky is clear and cold—it gives me strength to face the day.

6:30AM—I try to be early, first-

in, first-out to work. I am sure glad I can store my backpack here while I'm out working. Too bad I don't have a permanent address, phone number, or valid driver's

I am grateful for this community of women that helps me survive the daily stress of living in poverty.

license. I like working hard, makes the day go by fast. My favorite jobs are setting up for shows at Qwest Field Events Center and construction clean up, because I can make up to \$63 a day for six to eight hours of work. Please Lord let me get a repeat ticket today so I don't have to wait for an assignment tomorrow. I can just pick up my borrowed work gear and go straight to work.

8:00AM—I didn't get sent out to work today—there were too many ahead of me. I save most of my earnings, but I can't stick around here any longer, must get out there and check other sources of work at several day drop-in centers where I sometimes get paid work. Oh no, again nothing. Well at least I can do my laundry at Women's Wellness and visit the Central Library. Later I will pick up some papers to sell.

10:00AM—Laundry is done.

Now I can go check my spot on the waiting list for housing—the usual wait is 14-months. I wish I had gotten out working today. Without steady cash I can't refill my prescriptions, or renew my I.D. or even ride the bus.

11:00AM—Lots of homeless people in the library. We all carry our meager belongings everywhere. I can lose myself reading or doing job searches on the internet. When I had a job, a husband, I had friends. I never thought about tomorrow. I never thought about sickness or about accidents. I worked a lot; and money was plentiful. I just didn't know how lucky I was. And now? Everything is different now. The worst part is that it all happened so suddenly when I lost my job because the company was involved in a merger and downsized. I got by until I went completely broke; it was like falling into a big hole.

12:00PM—I leave to eat lunch at the drop in center on Columbia. I see many women, some with children here for lunch. It is Monday. I will attend WHEEL's (Women's Housing, Equality and Enhancement League) weekly meeting. I'm alone, without means. I am grateful for this community of women that helps me survive the daily stress of living in poverty.

2:00PM—I'll spend a couple
continued on pg 3

GROUND ZERO



I've learned Life is too short—to disrespect another human's dignity.

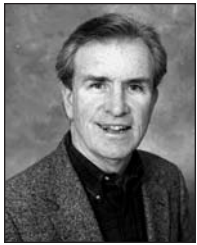
In recognizing this, I became able. Able to respond to the hardships I, and many of us face day in and day out.

I learned to utilize the many resources that the wonderful city of Seattle has to offer.

I found strength and courage I didn't know I possessed. I received help and direction, and a way out of my own way.

I want to thank all my sisters for every little thing good that is now.

— Janice L. Connelly



Pat Higgins works with the Rauschenbusch Center at the Church Council of Greater Seattle. He and his wife Elizabeth are parishioners at St. Mary's, Seattle.

Preferential Option for the Poor: An Update

Pat Higgins

Santos Sué (soo-AY) and his family were *campesinos*, living in the Amazon jungle of northern Bolivia. Santos was a lay leader for the *campo*, trained by Maryknoll. As a Maryknoll associate stationed in Riberalta, I had met Santos, a charismatic participant in the annual Vicariate conferences. As we became friendly, I schemed to travel out to see his region and home.

Borrowing a small motor launch, Rafael Barreto and I headed far west to where Santos met us in his hand-hewn canoe. We paddled up the tea-dark waters of a rain-swollen stream, escorted by curious albino dolphins. Beaching the canoe, we hiked several kilometers to the Sué homestead. Santos's wife and daughters welcomed us and we all took shelter from the rains under the palm-thatched roof of their handcrafted house.

*Alone, each would be in danger;
as companions, we would survive.*

Inside the swept and spotless home, clean, pressed clothing—irons heated over coals—hung from pegs. Outside, a fresh stream ran by their yard, where water was fetched, upstream, and wash done, downstream.

We ate game, greens, and local fruit juices, and after the evening's conversation, slept well in interior netted hammocks. Fresh banana and papaya chunks, roasted yucca, and coffee were ready in the early morning. We toured the area with Santos, he ferried us to our boat,

we said "Adios" and returned to Riberalta. That was the last time I saw Santos; that memory, though, replays itself endlessly for me.

Later, at work in inner-city New York parishes, I thought of Santos and our different contexts. Geography, environment, culture, language, and resources were distinct. I knew that, had I been alone in

his environs, I would have probably died for lack of competence in the jungle, victim perhaps of starvation, malaria or a venomous snake. And Santos, had he been set down in the middle of my "hood," would have faced different but equally dangerous challenges.

Alone, each would be in danger; as companions, we would survive.

In a sense, Santos "saved" me in the jungle, as I would him in my urban surroundings. I have

deeply felt that our fates—our salvations—were and will always be entwined. My memories of Santos and his family, with their accompanying emotions and lessons, continue to save me, and I am grateful.

Three years after I met Santos, I read an article in *America* magazine by Thomas E. Clarke, SJ that reminded me of my experience with Santos.¹ "Theologically," Clarke wrote, "preferential option for the poor' renders the very mystery of salvation." Liberation

theology was still a topic of hot discussion, and Clarke's opening statement rang true: "'Option for the poor' is a phrase that, in



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a relatively short time, made its way from a suspect periphery to the established center of church language." Sadly, it seems now to have made its way back to the periphery, at least of public discussion. But it remains essential doctrine, affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI.²

This doctrine deserves—demands—a renewed public prominence, a church revival! Clarke claimed audaciously that the principle "cuts more deeply than mere pastoral strategy in socioeconomic and political spheres...It is a way, perhaps *the* way, of naming the church's mission and the coming of the reign of God in our times."

A preferential option for the poor is foundational Christian spirituality, situated in the individual, based on the person, spirit and actions of Jesus and Judeo-Christian scripture. Fostering deeper understanding and accomplishment of the mystery of salvation, it counsels a right disposition of a believer before God and creation, in response

to the first Judeo-Christian commandment: "I am God; you are not." The reward for those of this disposition and initiative is told in the Beatitudes; "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

A preferential option is not divisive, not classist, and does not aim a direct accusation at the rich. Rather, it is a principle of justice—right relation—that emphasizes the concern and healing tendencies of Jesus toward *all* persons, a vision and tendency that should animate all Christian practice. The story is told of Fr. Damien de Veuster—now Saint Damien—preaching for years to his community, the lepers of Molokai, with the salutation, "You lepers." Until one day, after he too had contracted Hansen's disease, he greeted the congregation, "We lepers." That spirit of solidarity inspires our preferential option for the poor..."*we* lepers, *we* mortals, *we* equals, *we* sisters and brothers, *we* poor before God." Memories and feelings for Santos Sué and his family, from entirely different surroundings and circumstances, call me often, I hope, to the spirit of "*we*."

Solidarity should be the hallmark of attention to the poor. The spirituality and social solidarity of the option for the poor must result in action and social change. It must suffuse the vision of persons and institutions, and influence policy and strategy. If equality in God's eyes is a certainty of Christian faith, equality in our eyes should be the divine vision spread and shared among us.

A preferential option for the poor must be nourished to be compassionate and enthusiastic. Prayer, scripture, reflection and community provide sustenance and initiative. An experiential component, though, is a major grace in conversion to this spirit and practice. Clarke offered five-fold advice here: know the poor, walk with the poor, act for and on behalf of the poor, preach the good news to the poor, and be evangelized by the poor—"...the culminating point...is reached when the church, especially in local realizations of the Gospel, becomes a poor and evangelizing church, so that the Gospel now goes forth *desde los pobres*, as Latin American Christians like to

say—from the poor."

The church—we poor before God—must harness "the power of the poor in history" for change in business, politics, government,

A preferential option is not divisive, not classist, and does not aim a direct accusation at the rich.

finance, education, health care—and in the Church—so that their power permeates and evangelizes culture from within individuals, groups and institutions. The "preferential option for the poor" can never be relegated to the periphery of Christian understanding; it is a doctrine for personal and institutional Christian spirituality and practice. Our personal Santos, by love and example, help guide and save us in our lives and world. ~

1. Clarke, SJ, Thomas E. "Preferential Option for the Poor: A Reflection." *America* January 30, 1988.
2. Documents of CELAM Conference, Brazil, 2007 and Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009.

"My Poverty" continued from pg1 of hours, selling Seattle's street newspaper *Real Change*. A few bucks are better than none. I'm glad it's not raining today. Who wants to buy a slightly damp newspaper? I've made enough to treat myself to a \$5 meal.

6:00PM—Time to get in line at the Women's Referral Center at Opportunity Place. I like that

name, it gives me hope. I realize I am no longer desperate, something deep down inside of me has

When I became homeless I didn't become less but more human than before.

changed. I will never be the same again. When I became homeless I didn't become less but more human than before. I have so many

brothers and sisters out there that I care about.

10:00PM—Thank God I have been selected as one of the forty women who will sleep here nightly. I no longer have to do the nightly shelter shuffle, being sent to parts unknown all around Seattle.

11:00PM—Time to sleep and dream about the future when I will be in my own place once again. ~



Sharon Goodremote is a Franciscan Sister of St. Joseph and Public Policy Coordinator at Catholic Charities of Buffalo.

High Cost of Being Poor

Sharon Goodremote, FSSJ

Last year, I took part in a 3-day Poverty Challenge sponsored by the Western New York Coalition on Homelessness. Participants attempted to keep to a poverty budget, based on federal poverty guidelines. This wasn't an exercise in "playing poor," but rather to experience some of the hunger, anger, and fears of people who live in poverty in Buffalo—the third poorest city in the nation.

My daily budget was \$7.87 (see box). After subtracting money for transportation, health care, TV, and phone I was left with \$1.37 for

She "chastised a co-worker for living in a motel room when it would be so much cheaper to rent an apartment. Her response: Where would she get the first month's rent and security deposit it takes to get an apartment?"

Banks & Loans

The reality is that there are few bank branches in low-income areas. To cash a paycheck or assistance check, many low-income people find it necessary to go to a check cashing store, which may charge as much as \$25-50.

Often, payday comes *after* bills are due. Low-income persons turn to payday lenders, who demand high interest and a short amount of time to re-pay the loan. They need the money now to pay rent, food, bills, etc. Yet, they are paying two to three times more than their original bill.

unhealthy food on the table, few vegetables or fruits—paying more yet getting less.

Cost of Caring

The cost of being a caring person is even higher for low-income persons. When I was taking part in the challenge, I had to choose

Visit the legislative action center—www.ipjc.org to ask Congress to modernize poverty guidelines for the first time since the 1960s.

between helping a friend in need and having money for a meal. Yet, those who live in poverty are very generous with their time and resources. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, the poorest fifth of Americans give more than twice as much to charity (4.3% of income) as the wealthiest fifth (2.1% of income).

As we reflect on the reality that there is a high cost to being poor, we may ask "What can I do?" Educating ourselves about how expensive—financially, emotionally, spiritually—it is to be poor is a very important step. By working in soup kitchens and food pantries, we can learn the stories of the people being served. When we tell people's stories we put a face on poverty, and people are willing to listen with a more open heart and more likely to become involved in changing unjust systems. Poverty is a systemic problem. Charity is important because it takes care of the immediate need, but in order to "fix" a system that keeps people in poverty each of us needs to work for justice. ~

POVERTY CHALLENGE BUDGET	
Rent & Utilities	\$602/month
Other Expenses	\$301/month or \$10.03/day
Monthly Budget	\$903/month
Cost of clothing was predetermined at \$2.16/day leaving participants with \$7.87/day	

the day—which included my need for food. If I were to stop to buy a cup of coffee on the way to work, I would have nothing left for the rest of the day.

According to the Brookings Institution, prices for people living in low-income areas are higher than in middle and upper-class neighborhoods. What is the reality for those who live in poverty?

Housing

Most low-income families don't even think about buying a house. In *Nickled and Dimed*, author Barbara Ehrenreich shares her story of living on minimum wage.

If I were to stop to buy a cup of coffee on the way to work, I would have nothing left for the rest of the day.

Food Stores

Grocery stores that offer healthy food at reasonable prices are usually not located in low-income neighborhoods. Instead, corner convenience stores sell mostly processed foods, few if any fresh produce and all at higher prices. Low-income families end up with

Effects of the Economic Crisis on Global Poverty

Deirdre Mullan, RSM

Poverty is more than low income. It is a multi-dimensional reality: vulnerability to disease, exclusion from education, chronic hunger and under nutrition, lack of access to clean

water and sanitation, and environmental degradation such as deforestation and land erosion. All these threaten lives and livelihoods.

The United Nations recognizes three agreed degrees of poverty:

Extreme or absolute poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to access healthcare, clean water or sanitation. They cannot afford education for their children and lack rudimentary shelter.

Moderate poverty refers to conditions of life where the basic needs are met, but just barely.

Relative poverty is generally constructed as a household income below a given proportion of national average income.

The global financial crisis, which originated mainly in developed countries because of unsustainable greed and over production, is affecting billions of people worldwide. While the crisis is working its way through every level of society, its impact is by far being felt by people in the poorest regions of the world.

Human Rights

Amnesty International's 2009 annual report documents the ef-

fects of the crisis on the world's poorest people. It highlights three ways the crisis is undermining poorer people's human rights:

most and bear the least responsibility for the downturn. ... We need a 21st century architecture to support a 21st century global

economy that is at once dynamic, inclusive, safe for all participants, and just."

I believe that we can find the solidarity to work with those governments that cannot print their way out of this crisis.

1. More people have been driven into absolute poverty. According to the World Bank, around 150 million people were pushed into poverty in 2008—forced to live on less than \$2 per day—because of soaring food and fuel prices.
2. Social and political tensions, created by food shortages and increasing poverty, have led to protests.
3. World leaders are distracted from giving needed comprehensive attention to many critical and ongoing issues.

Global Response

It is increasingly evident that the global crisis needs a global response. In his opening remarks at a UN conference on the crisis, the President of the UN General

Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, reminded all of us: "I believe that we can find a new spirit of universal solidarity that can meet this challenge

and lead us to recovery. I believe that we can find the solidarity to work with those governments that cannot print their way out of this crisis. And, I believe that we can find the solidarity to look out for those people who are suffering

...150 million people were pushed into poverty in 2008...



Dierdre Mullan is an Irish Sister of Mercy and director of Mercy Global Concern at the UN.

The current crisis signals the imperative of analyzing the prevailing global financial and economic structures in terms of the common good. How can we each play our part in supporting a global economy that is at once dynamic, inclusive and safe for all?



People gather food scraps during food crisis in Argentina.

- ⌘ Are we willing to adapt the way we live so that those who have less can have a more equitable share?
- ⌘ Poverty alleviation needs to be de-politicized.
- ⌘ Educate yourself on what is happening. Watch the movie *The End of Poverty? Think Again* when it opens in your area. www.theendofpoverty.com
- ⌘ Learn what is happening in other parts of the world. Remember that every statistic is a person with the tears washed away. ~

Photo by Adam Jones adamjones.freesevers.com



Building an Equitable World

Fatima Rodrigo, PBVM

Editor's Note: Sister Fatima Rodrigo was born in a coastal village in South India. She trained as a nurse before becoming very involved in promoting neighborhood participatory forums in India. Today she represents the International Presentation Association, an NGO at the United Nations. Her life experiences give her a unique lens from which to view our global economic reality.

“We must find a way to impact the choices of corporations which continue to exploit the resources of this planet.”

I have drawn inspiration from valiant Mahatma Gandhi who reportedly stated “Nature has enough for everyone’s need and not for everyone’s greed.” These words invite us to examine the structural underpinnings of poverty, buttressed by greed, as we work to build a more equitable world. Often, governments and corporations prefer a top-down approach in efforts to promote development, peace, security and good governance. I would like to highlight another more people-centered, bottom-up approach where people living in poverty themselves become agents of change.

The neighborhood parliament movement in South India is a good example of “placing people at the centre of our concerns for development.”¹ People at the grassroots in Tamilnadu and Kerala are organized into small groups of around 30 neighborhood families to facilitate participatory dialogue

in a sustained manner. In this small forum, people have a say in the matters that affect their lives and pressure government to support people-centered development. This challenges the stranglehold of the corporations who can manipulate the system for their own ends out of greed.

We cannot deny that corporations have tremendous possibilities for fostering the eradication of the poverty which prevents so many human beings from realizing their full potential. In my mind, this is a matter of justice, not charity. Those with wealth have an obligation towards those without.

However, we see today that the economic wealth of this planet increasingly serves the greed of a few. Our planet earth is being impoverished by the unsustainable ravaging of her resources, while 1.4 billion of her people live in poverty. The journalist Chris Hedges has written:

“The reason the ecosystem is dying is not because we still have a dryer in our basement. It is because corporations look at everything, from human beings to the natural environment, as exploitable commodities. It is because consumption is the engine of corporate profits.”²

Though it is of great impor-

tance that individually and collectively we change our life style, this is not enough. We must find a way



Neighborhood Parliament Participant.

to impact the choices of corporations which continue to exploit the resources of this planet. Again, quoting Chris Hedges:

“We remain addicted, courtesy of the oil, gas and automobile industries and a corporate-controlled government, to fossil fuels. Species are vanishing. Fish stocks are depleted. The great human migration from coastlines and deserts has begun. And as temperatures continue to rise, huge

part of the globe will become uninhabitable.”³

We are aware of how corporations lobby in Washington D.C. to influence policy favoring their

own interests. A good example today is how the health and drug industry are trying to defeat efforts at health reform. We of civil society have the power to critique and make a social analysis of what is driving policy discussions. When we identify groups manipulating the system, we need to call them to account and expose their tactics

“These grassroots efforts are an innovative means of eliciting people’s participation in overcoming poverty...”

and intentions. In this way we will call our legislators to accountability.

In the Indian state of Kerala, the neighborhood parliament movement provides just such a vehicle for accountability. The government ensures that 40% of the State budget is used for planning, implementation, and evaluation by these grassroots neighborhood groups and their federated structures at different levels. These grassroots efforts are an innovative means of eliciting people's participation in overcoming poverty at the local and State levels. This has created a partnership to build up an equitable world

of economic, political, social and cultural rights.

Because of this experience I had in India, I can readily identify with the words of David C. Korten in his book *Agenda for a New Economy*:

"My greatest source of joy comes from my awareness of the vitality of the human spirit as expressed by the millions and millions of people who are working to realize their shared vision of a just and sustainable world that works for all."⁴

Global problems require global solutions. Macroeconomic policies need to be reformed so that economic justice takes precedence

over corporate wealth of the few. Now is the hour for the people of good will across the world to unite our hearts and minds to confront the corporate wealth that exploits Planet Earth, her People and the Whole Community of Life.

For more information about Indian neighborhood parliaments visit: www.ncnworld.org and www.kudumbashree.org ~

1 Basic principle set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action of the World Summit on Social Development in 1995.

2 A Reality Check from the brink of extinction, October 19, 2009 by <http://www.truthdig.com>.

3 Ibid

4 Chapter 3 "Life in a Real-Wealth Economy."

Resources

WEBSITES

www.americanpoverty.org

Multimedia examination of the daily struggles of impoverished Americans.

www.endpoverty2015.org

Global campaign to end poverty.

www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu

Calculate the living wage for your community.

www.mdgmonitor.org

Track progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

www.povertyusa.org

Resources for parishes and teachers from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development.

www.sdinet.org

Transnational network of the urban poor.

MOVIES

The End of Poverty? Think Again

Narrated by Martin Sheen, explores the roots of global poverty. 2009. www.theendofpoverty.com

The Power of the Poor

Documentary about hard-working poor entrepreneurs. 2009. www.thepowerofthepoor.com

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

January is Poverty Awareness month. As a community or individual consider prayerfully reading this issue and reflecting on the following questions.

"Memories and feelings for Santos Sué and his family, from entirely different surroundings and circumstances, call me often, I hope, to the spirit of 'we.'"

—Pat Higgins

☞ Who are the people in my life who have called me to a spirit of solidarity? How have I been present to others in their economic, emotional or spiritual poverty?



"I realize I am no longer desperate, something deep inside of me has changed. I will never be the same again."

—Janice L. Connelly

☞ How have I been changed by my awareness of the reality of local and global poverty? Am I called to make changes in my personal habits or lifestyle?



"Charity is important because it takes care of the immediate need, but in order to 'fix' a system that keeps people in poverty each of us needs to work for justice."

—Sharon Goodremote, FSSJ

☞ How can I be a leader in my church, neighborhood, or local community on behalf of economic justice?



Lauren Herzer is a Program Assistant in the Comparative Urban Studies Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Giving Voice to the Urban Poor

Lauren Herzer

For many Americans, the living conditions depicted in the Oscar winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* were their first exposure to life in urban slums. But for over one billion urban dwellers worldwide, a lack of adequate housing, basic sanitation, public services, and a constant struggle to survive are their daily reality.

For the first time in history, half of the world's population of nearly 7 billion lives in cities. By 2050, the urban population of the developing world alone is projected to

contend with higher rates of crime and violence, a lack of schools, health clinics, public transportation, and basic sanitation. Without formal ownership of their land, residents are susceptible to the whims of political will and private development. Eviction is a perpetually looming threat.

While this new era of urbanization poses significant challenges, opportunities for innovative solutions abound. All over the globe there are individuals, whole communities, and organizations working to develop harmonious cities with strong foundations of equity and sustainability.

One such organization is Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), an international network of federations of the urban poor. SDI facilitates cross-boundary exchanges between poor urban dwellers so that they might learn from one another's experiences and support efforts to gain access to adequate land, infrastructure and housing. SDI Board

member Rose Molokoane was one of more than twenty practitioners, policy-makers and scholars from five continents who attended a conference on community resilience co-hosted last year by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the Fetzer Institute.

Ms. Molokoane shared her personal experience at the conference. Born in an informal settlement in South Africa, she

began helping her father care for her nine siblings at the age of ten, with her father earning just three or four dollars per week. By organizing with her community, she fought eviction and achieved secure ownership of the land she had lived on her whole life. At the conference, she stressed the importance of cross-boundary exchanges and connections like those facilitated by SDI. "Communicating to each other as communities raises our voice," said Molokoane. "When I speak alone people see me as an individual, but when we are organized as a community and speak with one voice then people see change within the people themselves."

The challenges of cities are not limited to developing countries. In my own neighborhood in Washington, D.C., I've seen firsthand the impact of gentrification on a population that has experienced rapid demographic changes. While there are benefits to regenerated storefronts and access to public transportation, the rising cost of living associated with a wave of investment by young professionals

moving into the neighborhood has posed both social and economic challenges to native residents.

Regardless of

the location or size of a community, it is imperative that the *voice* of community members be heard; that their needs be met; and that policies be adopted that promote inclusion of both native residents and incoming migrants. ~



Credit: UN Photo/Yann Gamblin

Shanty town in Cape Town, South Africa.

swell to 5.3 billion. Most of this growth will occur in unplanned and underserved city slums that are least able to provide basic life necessities. Rapid urban expansion is overwhelming ecosystems, infrastructure, and the capacity of local governments.

While slums vary in their level of deprivation and challenges, these "informal settlements" are commonly marginalized both geographically and socially from the cities' formal economy and public services. Lacking government services and often precariously situated on hazardous land in the urban periphery, residents must

Rapid urban expansion is overwhelming ecosystems, infrastructure, and the capacity of local governments

No Cushion to Fall Back On

Caroline Skinner

The collapse of Lehman Brothers sent shockwaves around the world. In subsequent months, media and public attention has shifted from the impact of the crisis on the financial sector, to its impact on the real economy, and now to possible signs of recovery. In the process, the “real economy” has been defined very narrowly, as constituting firms and workers in the formal economy.

Most of the world’s working poor do not have formal jobs. In developing countries, 60 to 90% of all workers are informally employed; 25 to 40% in developed countries. And the numbers are growing. With the notable exception of a small entrepreneurial class, most who work in the informal economy are poor—trying to survive on \$2 per day or less.

To address the information gap about the impact of the crisis on the working poor, partners in the *Inclusive Cities for the Working Poor* project interviewed three categories of informal workers in ten developing countries—home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers. The study, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and completed in mid 2009, assessed changes over the previous six months in work activities and household coping strategies.

The research shows that informal enterprises and informal wage workers are affected in many of the same ways as formal firms and formal wage workers—declining

demand, shrinking consumption, and volatile prices. Informal wage workers are often the first to be laid off. Moreover, informal enterprises and workers face increased competition as more jobs are informalized. Nearly 80% of participants (of the over 160 interviewees) reported that their weekly profits had declined in the last six months.

Unlike their formal counterparts, informal workers have no cushion to fall back on. Respondents reported being forced to overwork, take on additional risks, cut back on expenditures such as food and health care, and still see their incomes decline. “If I got thirty thousand pesos before,” noted a waste picker from Bogota, “now I have to kill myself—wake up earlier, go to bed later, be on the streets for longer periods—still to get thirty.” The evidence strongly suggests that the global recession is pushing informal workers and their families further into impoverishment.

Reduced incomes for informal workers affect their families and dependents, as their earnings are often a matter of household survival. Households are adapting, but the strategies they are forced to use are putting strain on their economic, social and emotional resources. In Latin America, a quarter of the study respondents said they had eliminated breakfast from their household meals. Many reported they had taken ‘luxury’ foods such as meat and milk off

the family diet. Substitutes for meat, such as eggs, are also being rationed. This is especially hard on children, whose nutrition today is essential to their health tomorrow. “When the work was good my children had all their vitamins, they had cereal, milk,” one mother noted. “Not anymore.”

The global economic crisis has hit the world’s working poor particularly hard. Respondents recommended measures to alleviate the immediate effects of the crisis and improve their long-term prospects:

- ∞ emergency measures such as soup kitchens
- ∞ a moratorium on government actions—like evictions or slum clearances—that make their livelihoods even more vulnerable
- ∞ greater legal recognition and protection for informal workers.

Most strenuously, informal workers called for having a voice in policy dialogues regarding how to respond to the crisis and stimulate recovery. As one South African street trader noted, “We must not be excluded or left behind.”



Caroline Skinner is on the staff of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and the African Centre for Cities.



Women & children search for cans to sell.

For more information on this study, visit www.wiego.org and www.inclusivecities.org.



Thank You!

Annual Giving

As we begin the New Year we are grateful for your support, prayers, participation and donations to sustain our ministry. You have made it possible for our programming to go global! There are multiple ways to make a financial contribution:

- ⌘ Enclosed Envelope
 - ⌘ Online: www.ipjc.org
 - ⌘ Company Matching
 - ⌘ Stock
 - ⌘ Living Trust
 - ⌘ United Way
- Write in: Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center



Michael Crosby, OFM Cap.

200 people joined us for our Advent retreat on December 12th in Seattle. Michael invited us to consider a deeper way of connecting and rediscovering our call to compassion.



Schedule a Parish Workshop Today

Immigration: Creating Caring Communities

A two hour parish workshop:

- ⌘ Consider immigration in light of Scripture & Catholic Social Teaching
- ⌘ Examine history and trends
- ⌘ Participate in an interactive story sharing
- ⌘ Review the Bishops' recommendations
- ⌘ Receive practical tools and resources

High School Just Video Contest

- ⌘ Entries are due by **February 1, 2010**
- ⌘ Cash prizes: \$500, \$200, \$100
- ⌘ Topics: human trafficking, water as a human right and immigration



IPJC staff with Holy Apostle's parish in East Wenatchee.



Immigration workshop participants at St. Charles' Parish, Burlington.

peace & justice center

Catholic Advocacy Day 2010 Compassion & Courage for the Common Good

BY JANUARY 15TH To register: Contact IPJC, ipjc@ipjc.org or 206.223.1138

**Tuesday
Feb. 9th
9:00am—3:00pm
Olympia, WA**

Be a Faithful Citizen!

- ✚ All parish members and staff, parish leadership, and Catholic service and justice organizations are invited to join us to ensure that the Gospel message to care for our brothers and sisters is heard loud and clear in Olympia.
- ✚ Travel with us or meet us at the State Capitol (Columbia Room) for our program and a legislative briefing before scheduled appointments with your state legislators.
- ✚ 2 FREE chartered buses for registered participants (departing from Seattle & Tacoma) on a first come, first serve basis



2009 Participants



*Catholic Advocacy Day is sponsored by: Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center • Washington State Catholic Conference
Catholic Community Services • Archdiocese of Seattle • Pierce County Deanery*



IPJC Justice Café Experience

- ☞ Meet other young adults at a Justice Café held in your community during the 3rd week of the month
- ☞ Visit the web hub before and after your Justice Café to reflect and explore the topic
- ☞ Interact online with other Justice Cafés in your region and nationwide
- ☞ Join a growing national movement of young adults acting together for justice

Check it out: www.ipjcJusticeCafe.ning.com

“The format—with an opening reflection, ice breaker activity, small group and big group conversation, and then closing—all flowed with ease!”

—Hilda, Seattle Justice Café Host

**COMMUNITY BUILDING
JUSTICE
SPIRITUALITY
YOUNG ADULTS**

**Next Opportunity
Third Week of January
Topic: Environmental Justice**

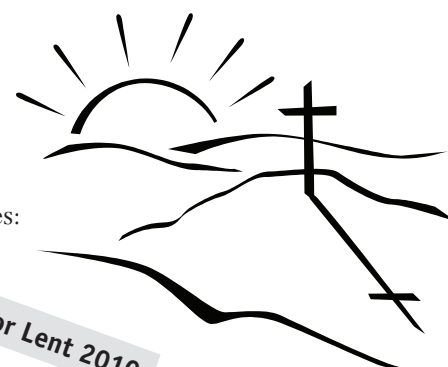
Stations of the Cross with All of Creation

These Stations provide an opportunity to reflect on Jesus' journey and the suffering of people and Earth today. Each Station includes:

- ✚ Scripture
- ✚ Stories of the Cross in Creation
- ✚ Reflection Questions

Cost: \$2/copy (quantity discount available)

Order at 206.223.1138; ipjc@ipjc.org; www.ipjc.org



New for Lent 2010

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Classism Quiz

Could you survive in poverty?

1. I know which churches have the best rummage sales.
2. I know how to access thrown-away food from grocery stores.
3. I know how to keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat.
4. I know how to live without a checking account or credit card.
5. I know how to live without electricity and a phone.
6. I know what to do when I don't have money to pay my bills.
7. I know how to move in half a day.
8. I know how to get and use food stamps or an electronic benefits card.
9. I know how to access free medical clinics.
10. I can get by without a car.

Could you survive in middle class?

1. I know how to get my children into Little League, piano lessons, soccer, etc.
2. I know how to properly set a table.
3. I know how to order in a nice restaurant.
4. I know how to use a credit card, checking and savings accounts.
5. I understand the difference among the principal, interest and escrow statements on my house payment.
6. I know how to help my children with homework and do not hesitate to call the school if I need information.
7. I know how to decorate the house for the different holidays.
8. I repair items in my house almost immediately when they break, or know a repair service I can call.

Could you survive in wealth?

1. I can read a menu in French, English and another language.
2. I have several favorite restaurants in different countries of the world.
3. I know who my preferred financial advisor, legal service, designer, domestic-employee service and hairstylist are.
4. I have at least two residences.
5. I know how to enroll my children in the preferred private schools.
6. I know how to host the parties that "key" people attend.
7. I am on the boards of at least two charities.
8. I know local artists and support or buy their work.
9. I know how to read a corporate financial statement.

A Matter of Spirit is a publication of the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

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