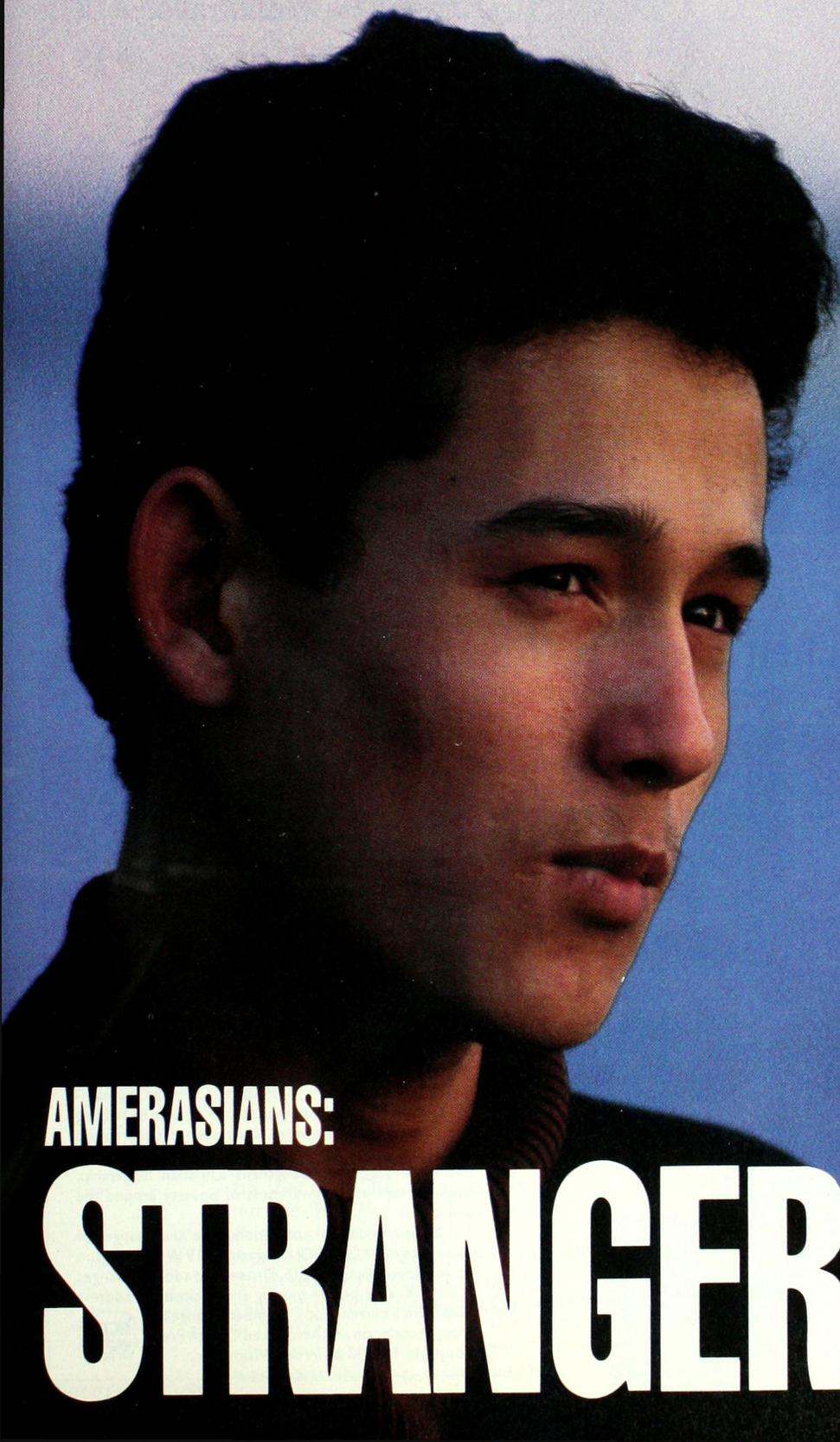


WORLD VISION®

August/September 1990



**DON'T
THROW
BREAD
FROM THE
TRUCK**

*Violence in
Latin
America:* **SOME-
BODY
HAS TO
PAY**

AMERASIANS:

STRANGERS

**IN THEIR
FATHERS'
LAND**

In Huancayo, Peru, an Indian woman passes a government soldier. Peru's 10-year war with the Maoist rebel group Shining Path has contributed to Peru's 17 billion dollar debt and hyper-inflation that totaled 2,775 percent in 1989. The poor and innocent have paid the highest price. (story on page 18)

Volume 34, Number 4



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More than two years ago we developed a new magazine format through which to "inform, educate, prod and promote the church to its task of reconciliation." If mail or phone calls are any indication, you approve.

Recently we received other votes of approval. The Evangelical Press Association honored us with 5 awards, including its 1989 "Award of Excellence." Earlier, we received 7 awards from the Associated Church Press, including its 1989 "Award of Merit." Such affirmations have made our year!

Terry Madison

5 Strangers in Their Father's Land

Some of the American blood left behind in Vietnam is flowing through the veins of Amerasians, the children of American men and Vietnamese women. As they come of age, many Amerasians are coming to America—poorly equipped to adapt to life here and in need of someone who will finally claim them. For Christians, it's an opportunity to welcome the stranger among us.

12 Don't Throw Bread From the Truck

As a young migrant child trying to learn how to become one of the "real people," Billie Davis was already a sociologist-in-training. From the cotton fields to the gospels to the university, here's what she's learned about the kind of help that really helps people.

18 Somebody Has to Pay

As political and drug-related brutality persists in half a dozen Latin American countries, thousands of innocent people are paying dearly—just because they live there. Yet many Latin Americans testify that the plague of violence has stimulated hunger for God, and many Christians there are applying a potent salve to the raw wounds of fear and loss.

WORLD VISION

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COVER PHOTO: JON WARREN

UNDOING A FASHIONABLE GRUDGE

It was late in 1972. The city of Hanoi was under the most intense bombardment in the history of modern warfare. Wave after wave of B-52's discharged their deadly cargoes on a terrified city. The Paris Peace Talks had ruptured, and only a show of force would demonstrate our resolve to get our prisoners home.

That was Nixon's Christmas Bombing, a horrible punctuation mark to a most difficult chapter in American history. But within a month, our prisoners were home, the war for us was over, and the nation intentionally began to turn its collective conscience away from Indochina.

While we came home, Louang Tan remained—although he wasn't sure at times he'd have even that option. When the first bombs fell, he ran to a cave hollowed out beneath his home, and he stayed there, frozen in fear, until the eleventh day when a B-52 was shot down outside his home.

A quiet, reflective man now 76 years old, Louang Tan painstakingly told his story to a group of us on a recent visit. As he talked we gathered around the remains of one of the last planes shot down in the war, a twisted black hulk of an aircraft that came crashing down on December 27, 1972. It was obvious that the end of our war was not the end of his.

It was interesting how he fused the present with the past, almost as if the victims were still being created. He was also sensitive to the victims on both sides. "The war was meaningless. It only created victims—both American and Vietnamese. Vietnamese people are just like American people. We all suffer because of war."

Louang Tan encouraged us not to be silent. "The innocent people continue to cry out. There are more than we realize."

I thought of all the tears shed before The Wall, our monument to the war, grown men crying for something they couldn't articulate in any other way, the incredible sadness for innocence irreparably lost, the intensity of a deep pain that has yet to be reconciled. "Yes," I agreed, "there are more than we realize."

As a country we came home, but we were never allowed reconciliation with the small country that had claimed so much of our energy and our life. We offered no Marshall Plan this time. Graciousness is for winners. A grudge is more fashionable when you finish second. Diplomatic and economic isolation of Indochina became the order of the day.

For the American veteran, this was a devastating psychological blow.

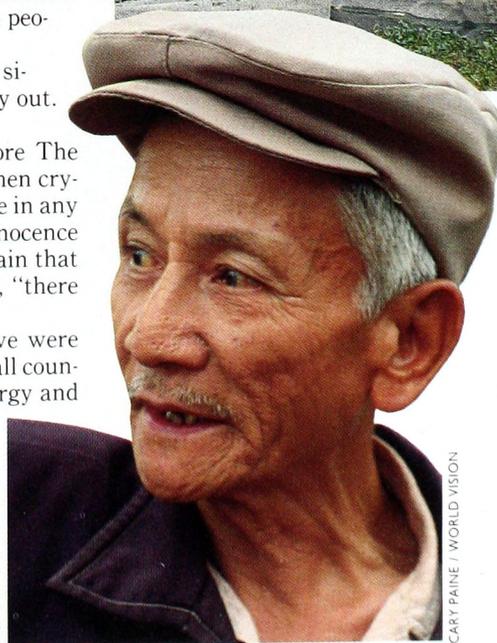
Healing comes from reconciliation. But those who returned from Vietnam learned that a war not worth winning is also a war not worth bringing to an end. The pain they brought home only increased in broken marriages, drugs, alcoholism, withdrawal, etc.

Louang Tan's words made so much sense: "We must relieve the pain of the victims."

As we stood there that day, Vietnamese children played around the crash sight. Their joyous young faces reflected the health of happiness. They had heard the story of the B-52 many times. They were reconciled to it and to the war that brought it. They held no animosity, not even any social sanctions. Strange, the innocent always seem to be first at reconciliation.

Would that we all could have a healthy outlet for the pain of war. Given the amount we sacrificed and the wounds that needed healing, we deserved a better ending. We earned a better homecoming.

We have been reconciled with many former enemies around the world. Why not Vietnam? Anything less continues to hurt the innocent on both sides of the Pacific. And they have already absorbed so much pain. □



"The innocent continue to cry out," said Louang Tan (left). "There are more than we realize."

CARY FAINE / WORLD VISION

We have been reconciled with many former enemies. Why not Vietnam?



As Amerasian
war babies
come of age,
some of them are
coming
"home."

STRANGERS

When the last American helicopter pulled out of Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the end came quickly. **IN THEIR**

So quickly, in fact, that much was left behind. Personal belongings, war machines—and **FATHERS'**

American **FATHERS'** blood; sunbaked on the stained courtyard of the Temple of Harmony at Hue. Diluted in the **LAND**

rivers of the Mekong Delta. Shrouded beneath the brush of the Annamese Cordillera. But that is



PHILLIP JONES GRIFFITHS/MAGNUM

the blood of the dead, the blood of American men who are mourned and memorialized on a granite wall in Washington, D.C. Less remembered is the blood left behind in more than 30,000 living memorials called Amerasians: the children of American men, including servicemen and civilians, and Asian women.

For 20 years, many of them were the war's refuse, abandoned to the streets in Vietnam, unwanted in the

lish, and few job skills—most are ready to call the United States home.

In 1987, Congress adopted The Amerasian Homecoming Act. The act established a two-year period in which Amerasians born between Jan. 1, 1962 and Jan. 1, 1976, and their immediate families could enter the United States with immigration and refugee status.

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their family members were expected to leave Vietnam by the deadline of

March 1990.

Actual resettlement figures, however, fell far below those estimates.

The deadline has since been extended until October 1990, although no additional funding has been allocated for the program.

While many hail the Amerasian Homecoming Act as long-overdue compassion, others criticize it for being too little, too late.

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"All too many of the Amerasians we are working with are poorly equipped—socially, educationally, and psychologically—to make the kind of adjustment and eventual adaptation to life in America that most of us would judge to be adequate," says J. Kirk Felsman, a Dartmouth Medical School professor and one of the foremost authorities on Amerasian resettlement.

Without additional support to help Amerasians achieve a reasonable degree of economic and emotional self-sufficiency, many may fall into a cycle of poverty, gang membership, and welfare dependency," Felsman says. "The Homecoming Act remains myopic, being almost exclusively focused on expediting emigration. It contains little balance of attention and virtually no fiscal allocation to address the hard human issues of actual resettlement."

Indeed the legislation seems inadequate to facilitate healthy, positive resettlement. After undergoing a six-month crash course in American living at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Bataan, 75 percent of Amerasians and their families are assigned to one of approximately 50 "cluster sites" in cities across the country.

The State Department selected the cluster sites based on local agencies interested in helping resettle the refugees, as well as access to special ser-



United States. While this country sought the remains of its MIAs, it ignored the lives of its children.

But no more. Today Americans are slowly embracing almost 6,500 Amerasians, and thousands more are expected to immigrate. And despite substantial barriers—emotional scars, limited education or knowledge of Eng-

INNOCENT VICTIMS

When the American presence in Vietnam ended, thousands of half-American, half-Asian children did not follow their fathers home," states a report issued by the United States Catholic Conference. "The American public wanted to forget Vietnam; in the process, we also forgot the 'Amerasian' children."

Three-fourths of those children are now 17 years old, just one year younger than the age at which many of their fathers were drafted into military service. For most of those years, while Americans struggled to reconcile their personal and corporate ambivalence over Vietnam, Amerasians waged a war of their own.

Born into one of the most ethnically pure societies in the world, many

Amerasians are burdened with a double stigma. Not only do they have tainted blood—seen in their distinctly American physical features—they are also a living reminder to the Vietnamese of their own painful losses in the war.

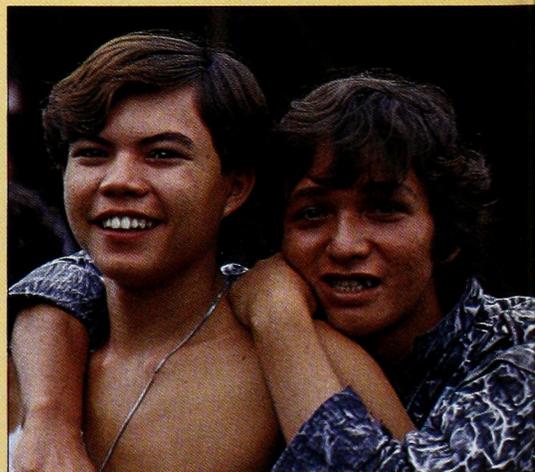
Once Communist forces seized control of the country, mothers of Amerasian children feared reprisals from the Viet Cong for having slept with the enemy. There were whispers of torture, mass executions, and labor camps called New Economic Zones.

Many of the mothers wanted to flee with their children, but because of severed diplomatic ties with the West, emigration was impossible. And clandestine flight to another country was too risky. More creative survival tactics became necessary. "I dyed my daugh-

ter's hair black, put soot on her face and cut off her eyelashes," the mother of one Amerasian child recalls. "And I kept her hidden under a blanket all the time in the house."

Despite the rumors, however, the Communists never enacted an official

TERRY MADISON / WORLD VISION



vices, such as after-school tutoring programs, counseling, job training, employment opportunities, and affordable housing.

The government, however, only allocates \$525 per Amerasian to cover food, rent, clothing, and other living expenses for the first three months. Another federal agency has earmarked \$1.5 million for resettlement assistance, but that money must be divided among the 50 cluster sites. And after 90 days, the Amerasians and their families are on their own, most of them ending up on welfare.

Lack of funding is just one of the obstacles the Amerasians face. When they arrive in this country, they are also ill-equipped for success in school or in the marketplace.

"As many as 15 percent of the Amerasians we have sampled have had no formal education and up to 75 percent have had less than four years of schooling," Felsman says. "The majority are virtually illiterate in Vietnamese and arrived with no transferable job skills."

In some cluster sites, the dropout rate among Amerasian students is as high as 60 percent. While teens undergo an intensive training program called

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their families could immigrate to the United States by the October 1990 deadline of The Amerasian Homecoming Act.

policy of retribution. But unofficially, many Amerasians were scorned. "My Amerasian daughter was terribly sick, vomiting blood," one mother said. "The hospital refused to treat her, saying, 'She is American. Let the Americans cure her!'"

Many mothers of Amerasians were blocked from decent-paying jobs and had to resort to street vending to keep their children alive. Teachers and classmates often taunted the Amerasian children with *my lai* ("half breed"). Some Amerasians lived as destitute street urchins, whom the Vietnamese call *bui dai* ("the dust of life"); they have grown up begging or rummaging through trash for discards to sell.

"I think if anyone can be viewed as truly innocent victims of that war, it would be the kids who face terrible discrimination simply because their faces are a painful reminder of that bitter and devious war," says Rep. Robert Mrazek, co-sponsor of the Amerasian Homecoming Act in 1987.

Preparation for American Secondary Schools at the Philippine processing center, it cannot compensate for their educational deficiencies.

Their difficulty in adapting to U.S. culture is further underscored in a 1984 survey (updated in 1988) by the United States Catholic Conference, the largest resettlement agency in the United States. Almost one in five Amerasians had been in trouble with the law or had other serious disciplin-

ary problems, such as truancy, prostitution, and fighting.

Though the Amerasians' plight in the United States may be discouraging, their difficulties are an opportunity for the church to welcome in the stranger.

Every pastor gets anxious to be involved in missions at one time or another," says Paul Bullard, pastor of the Grace Evangelical Methodist Church in Phoe-

JON WARREN



nix, Ariz., and one of about 25 Christian mentors to local Amerasian teens. "I give money and pray, but I've never been overseas. For me this was an opportunity to get involved in cross-cultural missions without leaving home."

In late 1989, World Vision and Christian agencies in Phoenix and Portland, Ore.—both designated cluster sites—began pairing Amerasians with Christian mentors like Paul Bullard. In 1990, World Vision has expanded the Amerasian Mentor program to 25 cluster sites and expects to have 1,000 matches by year's end.

The goal of the program is four-fold: to expose Amerasians to the positive aspects of U.S. life and culture; to provide encouragement and moral support; to provide help in learning the new language; and to reveal Christ to the Amerasians and their families.

Having a mentor helps save an Amerasian four or five years in understanding what's going on in the culture," says Welch Hill of Catholic Social Services, World Vision's primary partner agency in Phoenix. "They get beyond the fear barrier that naturally comes from being thrust into a new culture. This program helps build their confidence that they can make it."

LOOKING FOR FATHER

I don't know who my father was," says Trang Thi Thuy Lam, 17-year-old Amerasian girl living in Phoenix. "I went to Alabama and asked a friend to help me, but we didn't find him. The United States is very big."

Fewer than 2 percent of Amerasian children are ever reunited with their fathers. A 1987 survey conducted at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center revealed that 60 percent of the Amerasians hoped to reunite with their fathers. Only 8.4 percent, however, had any information about them, and sometimes that was nothing more than a yellowed photograph.

Lack of information is not the only

obstacle. According to the Amerasian Registry and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, which assists children of mixed American and Asian heritage, fewer than 500 American G.I.s have made



© JEFF TOPPING

Mentors in the program are recruited and trained members of local churches. "There's not been any problem in finding mentors. Churches in the area are crying out for opportunities to minister," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program

JON WARREN

coordinator in Phoenix. "We can turn people on to the ministry quickly. But helping them understand cross-cultural differences—that's a challenge."

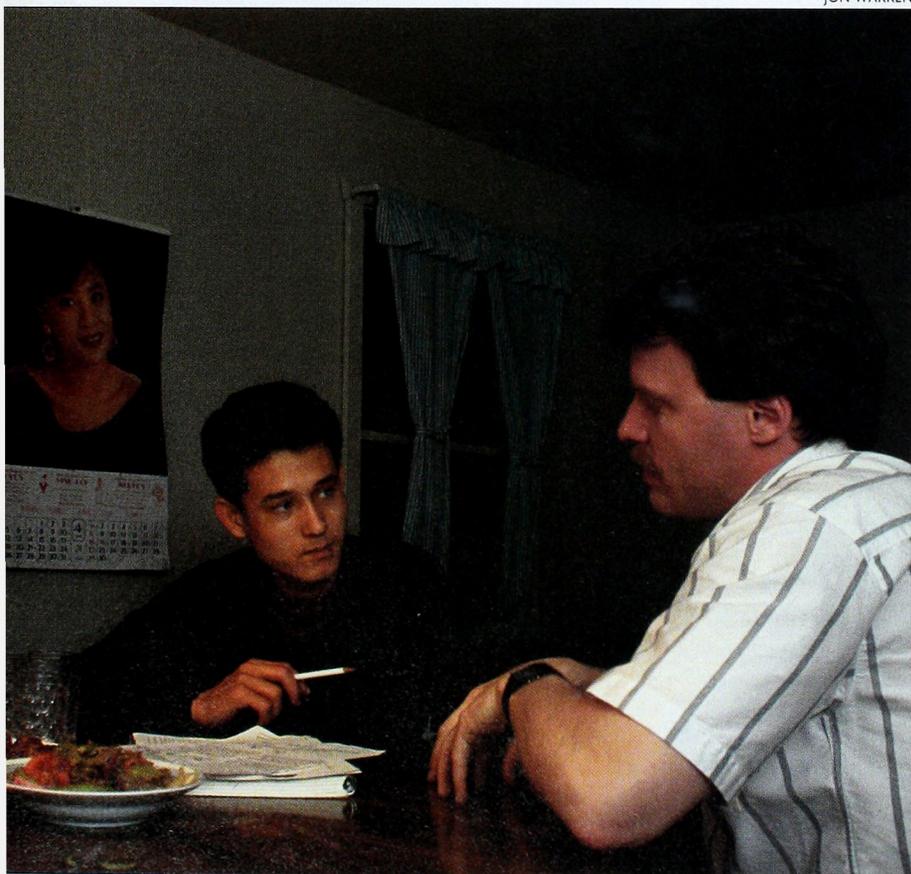
Amerasian behavior can seem peculiar to Americans. When a reporter in Seattle approached 17-year-old Vu Mau Nguyn Bang, the teen locked himself in his bedroom, terrified of answering any questions. Later, Vu's stepfather explained that, for years, Vu's family had been harassed and interrogated by Communist officials.

One person Vu does not shy away from is his mentor, Roy Atwood, a legislative aide for Sen. Slade Gorton. Usually the two spend several hours together on Sundays. They review English lessons, kick around a soccer ball, or visit places like the local aquarium. (Mentors are asked to invest two hours each week with their Amerasian friends, for a period of six months.)

"I have to have patience and not give up," Roy says. "I made a six-month commitment to Vu. It will take more time for him to feel comfortable. I want Vu to see that someone really does care. I pray that he will see God's love in action."

Recently two other American sponsors, Paul and Lois Lindberg, took Cuong Van Nguyen out boating in Washington's Puget Sound. At one point, the engine refused to start, and Cuong's heart sputtered. Three years ago he

The four goals of the Amerasian Mentor program are to expose Amerasians to U.S. life, encourage and support them, help them learn English, and reveal Christ to them.



official inquiries about their Amerasian children.

"For most Amerasians, the search is very frustrating," says E. Glenn Rogers, international program director for the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. "Few are able to find the father, and those who do may be in for a disappointment because the father does not love them."

"The father figure is very strong in Vietnamese culture," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program coordinator in Phoenix. "Amerasians need to find out who their father is to help them establish some sense of identity. They need the contact to give their lives credibility."

That's the case with Trang. "It's been 18 years already. A lot of people have fathers. Not me. I don't want him to give me money or help me. I just want to know who he is."

was one of 65 Vietnamese refugees packed in a 28-foot boat. The prop broke en route to Malaysia. Once adrift 500 yards from the Vietnamese shore, Cuong swam to temporary safety. Eventually he was arrested and held prisoner for almost two years, alternating between solitary confinement and hard labor.

Today Cuong lives with the Lindbergs and their three children in Renton, Wash. Cuong helps in the garden and repairs family bicycles.

How do his mentors help Cuong look at the future realistically? "I try to go step by step with him so he can see what his decisions about things, like where to live and how much to spend, will really mean in a culture that's still foreign to him."

"Because of the time limit on the Amerasian Homecoming Act, World Vision's Amerasian mentoring program will be phased out in a few years," Mark Thompson says. "But the world climate dictates that we monitor and refine this program very carefully. Each day there are refugees coming to America from every part of the world. We have to become good at this."

World Vision President Robert Seiple underlines the need for Christians to help refugees in the United States, particularly Amerasians. "Vietnam doesn't need new missionaries,"

World Vision and Catholic Social Services support a job training and placement effort for 30 Amerasians in Phoenix, Ariz.



Seiple says. "They just need an affirming worldwide church.

"If [the Amerasians'] orientation is not sensitively done and does not carry a strong Christian component, they have the potential to be the homeless, the jobless, the hungry of the very near future.

"I see this particular group of refugees as a living bridge of reconciliation between the United States and

Vietnam. Vietnamese and American blood exist together in these people. Our two countries are inextricably linked and, as we reconcile the Amerasian issue, perhaps we have a chance at a larger reconciliation between people and before God." □

John Wierick is a screen writer in Montrose, Calif. Mark Cutshall is a freelance writer in Seattle, Wash.

WORLD'S LONGEST

The phone call from Colombia, South America, came at 5:30 in the morning. Jack and Mary Anne Voelkel, missionaries in Colombia, were calling to ask for prayer. A young woman named Amy had come to them on the brink of suicide, full of self-hate and anger. They were going to fast and pray for her healing. Would we join them?

The room seemed charged when I relayed the request to a group who met weekly to pray at my church in Minneapolis, Minn. Sensing the urgency of the need, we were soon on our knees. Although it was taking place 4,000 miles away, we felt involved in this life-and-death battle for a woman we had never seen.

In the days that followed we continued to pray. Others joined us. Some fasted, some prayed over the telephone, others prayed around the breakfast table or before bed.

A week later another call came. Amy was free! God had broken through the pain of her bitterness and hurt. She was a new woman. In Bogota and Minneapolis, Christians on two continents rejoiced in the answered prayer.

Amy's healing came through a critical partnership: missionaries facing spiritual conflict head-on, and an army of intercessors supporting them in prayer. "If two people agree on earth about anything they ask," Jesus promised, "it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

The people who prayed for Amy are part of a support team that has backed the Voelkels for five years. Besides praying daily for this missionary family, they are "on call," ready to pray for emergency requests such as the one for Amy.

This is just the kind of support team the Voelkels asked for. The kind of prayer they had in mind was not casual or occasional—a sentence or

two when a missionary's photo tacked on the refrigerator happens to catch an eye—but active participation.

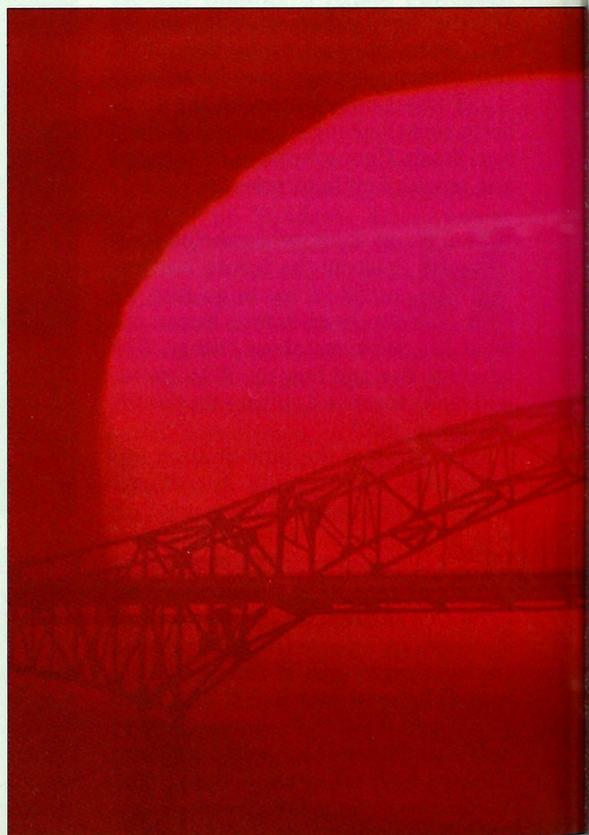
"I wanted to pick up the phone and ask for prayer at a moment's notice," Mary Anne says. After 20 years as missionaries, the Voelkels knew they needed supernatural help to overcome the resistance that thwarted their work. Spreading the gospel and healing the deep wounds in people's hearts was work that called for deep spiritual resources.

When the Voelkels asked me to head the team, I had just finished reading Evelyn Christianson's book *What Happens When Women Pray* and I was eager to test what I'd read. Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Could you actually pray for specific answers? Is it really possible to pray relevantly from such a distance? The Voelkels' prayer support team was a chance to find out.

Jack and Mary Anne felt the impact of our prayers immediately. Burdens that used to crush them suddenly seemed lifted. They felt strength-

Matters for Prayer

- ◆ **Remember the children** of American G.I.s left behind in Vietnam after the war, and the hard life that is their legacy (pages 5-9).
- ◆ **Praise God** for bringing about spiritual renewal amid widespread violence in Latin America (pages 12-15).
- ◆ **Ask God** to teach you more about helping the needy in a way that respects them as persons (pages 18-20).
- ◆ **Thank God** for the way Pastor Bao and the Saigon Christian Reformed Church (page 21) make refugees welcome, not refusing anyone.



BRIDGE

BY BETSY LEE

Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

ened, energized; their work grew more effective. Obstacles that once seemed insurmountable disappeared or were circumvented.

"I can feel the difference when people pray," Mary Anne says. "It's the difference between living in freedom and living under siege."

We saw answers to prayer unlike any we had experienced before. Once, we prayed for protection for the Voelkels' co-workers and their families in terror-torn Colombia. In 1985, one co-worker's family member was among a dozen judges gunned down by terrorists. Miraculously, this one man survived. He had a wooden leg, and a bullet hit that leg and knocked him down. The attackers assumed he was dead. When the siege was over, this man was the only judge rescued as the building went up in flames.

Not many of our answered prayers were as sensational as that one, and not many requests were as urgent as the early-morning phone call. Usually our prayers were quiet and persistent. Many of them involved families torn by conflict, marriages close to divorce, individuals such as

Amy lashing out at themselves.

We all knew people struggling with the same things. What we learned praying for the Colombians, we began to use to help bring healing to our own families, neighborhoods, and church. People's prayer lives deepened; spiritual gifts were developed. Empowered by what we experienced, our church of stiff, reticent Presbyterians began to share our faith. Missions, which had been distant and vague in our minds, became real and relevant. We became personally involved in missionaries' lives.

Besides growing to ten times its original size, the Voelkel team spawned four more prayer groups for other missionaries. More than half the congregation is involved.

Now I have some answers to my experimental questions about prayer. Can you pray for specific answers? Without a doubt. Again and again Mary Anne said, "Your prayers were answered word for word." Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Yes. A team of intercessors is more complete. Each person has certain gifts, such as the ability to discern what to pray for, or the persistence to keep praying, or the ability to encourage, affirm, and promote unity.

Is distance a barrier? Not to God. Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

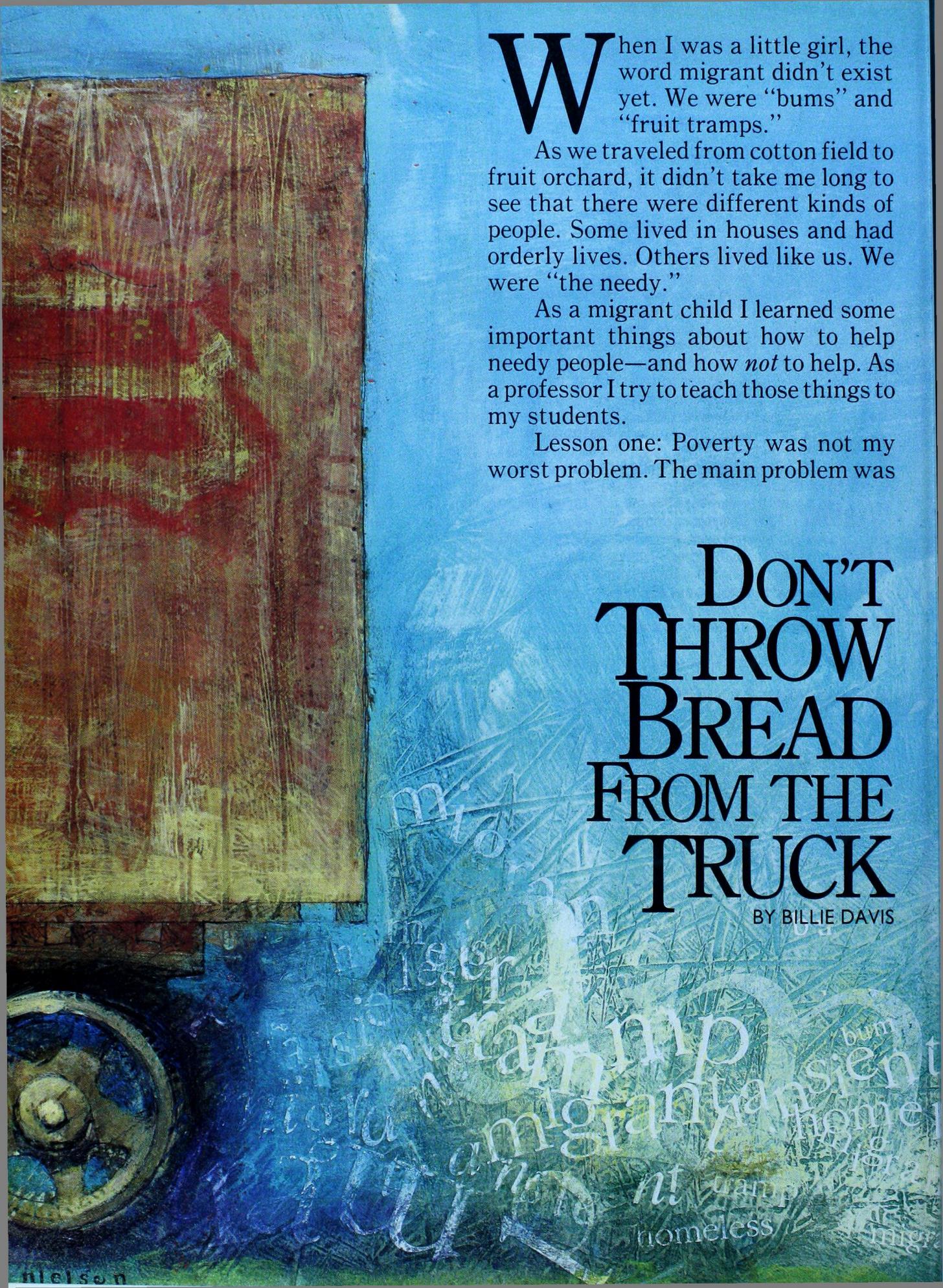
James Fraser attributed the success of his ministry in China to the persistent prayers of friends in England: "I am feeling more and more that it is, after all, the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field." □

Betsy Lee is a free-lance writer in Bloomington, Minn.

Most of our problems with prayer arise from our tendency to turn spiritual growing into a set of laws or a gymnastic exercise. For it is a relationship and not primarily a discipline.

Flora Slosson Wuellner
in *Prayer, Stress, & Our Inner Wounds*

SUPERSTOCK



When I was a little girl, the word migrant didn't exist yet. We were "bums" and "fruit tramps."

As we traveled from cotton field to fruit orchard, it didn't take me long to see that there were different kinds of people. Some lived in houses and had orderly lives. Others lived like us. We were "the needy."

As a migrant child I learned some important things about how to help needy people—and how *not* to help. As a professor I try to teach those things to my students.

Lesson one: Poverty was not my worst problem. The main problem was

DON'T THROW BREAD FROM THE TRUCK

BY BILLIE DAVIS

not belonging—not belonging anywhere or with anyone. I didn't even consider myself a real person.

Searching for clues about how to become a real person, I discovered the Sunday school. I wandered into a church one day and sat down in a little red chair. The teacher may not have been a trained theologian, but she did one thing for me that changed my life. She told me I was a child of God. That pleased me so much I decided not to let her know I was just a bum.

She could have called me a sinner on that first encounter, but she didn't. She could have blamed me or my parents for our problems. She could have kept her distance, lumping me together with all the poor. Worst of all, she could have pitied me, but she didn't.

There were plenty of people who pitied us. Once during the Depression we were literally starving. I had a little brother who died of malnutrition. One of the bakeries in a town near our camp felt sorry for the poor migrants, so they loaded all their day-old bread into a truck. The truck drove slowly through the dusty rows of shacks while a man stood in the back of the truck throwing bread out onto the ground.

I ran up behind the truck with the rest of the people and got my bread. It had some nutrition, and I'm glad there were people compassionate enough to feed the poor. But how I hated that bakery! I despised the man who stood up there and threw me bread. I despised him because I had to trade my dignity, *myself*, for a loaf of bread.

So when I sat in that little red chair in Sunday school and heard that

it was more blessed to give than to receive, I understood it differently from the other children: It is blessed to be the one standing in the truck tossing out bread, rather than the one running behind scooping it up.

People who are poor, sick, and hungry need more than money, health, and food. Like us all, they need meaning in life—a sense of order, a reason for living. This is where Christians have so much to offer. If you help people find the meaning of life while helping them find a home or get a job, you are helping them at the deepest level.

People need relationships

People also need to belong. They need relationships. We were created that way: "Let *us* make man in *our* image."

And God and Adam cooperated. God brought out the animals one by one, and whatever Adam called them, that was their name.

Jesus reminded us of our need for relationship when he taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father," not "My Father." That whole prayer says that people belong together. How can I say, "Give *us* this day our daily bread," and not care if someone is starving? How can I pray, "Lead *us* not into temptation," and not care about what teenagers are facing on the street? That prayer is plural. It binds us together with the purposes of God and with all other people.

That's why altruism, or caring for the well-being of others, is part selflessness and part selfishness. Because we are all bound together, it is in my interest to help other people.

To give people the help that really helps, then, we must see their problems as symptoms of unmet needs.

Now, I'm not a liberal or soft on sin, but everything I've learned, from the cotton fields to the university, tells me that people's environment—their

i
am
a
child
of
God .

and other lessons
I've learned about
helping people.



H

*ow can I pray
"Give us this day our
daily bread," and not
care if someone is
starving?*

circumstances and upbringing—strongly influences their behavior.

Most churches believe the same thing, although they may not realize it.

In a Sunday school class I visited, someone mentioned a recent horrible crime. The teacher got on his soapbox.

"The sociologists will try to blame this on the deprived environment of the assailants," he said, "but those young people were monsters. It was nothing but sin."

A few minutes later I went to the worship service in which the church dedicated several infants. The congregation promised, "We'll keep these babies in the ways of our faith. We'll harbor them and raise them for the Lord."

Now that's a contradiction. In Sunday school I heard that environment didn't matter, and in the worship service the church took responsibility for the destiny of those babies.

I don't mean we should blame

society for personal sin or excuse people because of their background. I mean that if we took six babies out of the inner city and put them side by side with the six babies in the dedication service, we would know which babies had a greater chance to have problems as adults.

To me, it's exciting that environment greatly influences people. It means there's so much we can do! It means that each child, depending on the guidance and care we give, has a good chance to develop well and choose to follow Christ.

When I was 8 years old, selling baskets on the street, one of my customers told me I should be in school. She told me it was free. I couldn't believe it, because nothing was free—not a movie, not a grocery store, not anything.

But I walked right into a public school and said, "I heard there's a law that kids have to go to school, and I want to go." They signed me up and gave me a desk, and I learned something profound. I learned that I could actually learn. I wasn't any different from the real people when I had the same opportunities and treatment.

How Jesus helped

When Jesus called his disciples, he knew they had needs. But he didn't define those needs for them. "What do you want?" he asked two who started following him.

Before we start "throwing bread from the truck," we would do well to ask the same question.

Jesus also enjoyed each person's individuality. When Nathaniel first heard about Jesus, he asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

"Now there's an honest man," Jesus said. He didn't require absolute agreement before Nathaniel could join

the group. In fact, Jesus complimented him for expressing his doubts. He saw all his disciples as people capable of learning and developing.

Jesus openly expressed his confidence and expectations. "I see in you a solid rock," he told Peter. My own experience in the little red Sunday school chair, where I learned I was a child of God, was like that.

In the gospels the disciples go everywhere Jesus goes. I don't think that's incidental to the story. It was like one long field trip. The disciples tagged along with Jesus and often didn't understand what he said. Jesus had to explain many things and sometimes he had to scold or rebuke. But he always took them along.

And he trusted them. He adopted new disciples on the recommendation of Andrew and Philip. He trusted his friends with intimate, personal confidences. When it was time to make the greatest pronouncement of all time, Jesus let one of his followers make it: "You are the Christ!"

Finally, Jesus expected his followers to give themselves away just as he did. He taught them to help in the same way he helped—not by making people "ministry beneficiaries" or "clients" but by drawing them into the ways of the kingdom of God. He gave them his own values and goals.

Now it's our turn to give ourselves away. As a young girl in school, I badly needed eyeglasses to continue my studies. One of my teachers bought them for me, and I was determined to repay her. I have never forgotten what she told me.

"Those glasses were paid for before you were born," she said. "When I needed glasses and had no money, someone bought them for me. Now the debt is yours." □

Billie Davis is professor of sociology and social psychology at Evangel College, Springfield, Mo.



*The church
being the church
among the poor*

BY BRENDA SPOELSTRA

A CHURCH THAT WON'T SAY NO

Saigon Christian Reformed Church

PETER SHAIR / WORLD VISION



Pastor Nguyen Bao

Trankhi Trieuong paid a high price to leave Vietnam. As he tried to escape a prison camp, soldiers shot both his legs so he could never try again. When Trankhi was later released, he made it to Thailand—minus two legs, and with little hope of emigrating to a Western country.

No one wanted to sponsor a Vietnamese prisoner who could not walk. No one, that is, until Pastor Nguyen Bao heard about him. "I don't care if he has one leg, two legs, or four legs. If he needs help, we'll help him," Bao said.

The Saigon Christian Reformed Church of Westminster, Calif., where Bao is pastor, found Trankhi a wheelchair and a home, and helped him learn to live with his disability. Today he drives a car and works full time.

Located in the Little Saigon area of Los Angeles, Saigon church has helped hundreds of refugees. In 1989 the church sponsored 180 refugees, and over the next two years, the church expects to help over 1,000 more.

"I shall not refuse anybody," Bao says, "even if the number comes to the thousands, because that's the spirit of Jesus Christ. He said, 'If I am a stranger, you welcome me in.' Who are we to refuse those who are suffering?"

The church's job begins when the refugees arrive in Los Angeles. Pastor Bao arranges for someone to meet the newcomers at the airport and helps them find a place to live. Volunteers help the new arrivals apply for a social security card, register their children for school, learn English, and find jobs. Within two months, most refugees are living on their own and working. Pastor Bao estimates that about half of them continue attending church.

"After we help them, they can go anywhere they want," he explains. "But during the time we help them we have a chance to tell them about the love of God."

And not only to tell them, but to show them. "Christianity is *visible*," Bao says. "That's the difference between Jesus Christ and Buddha. We want people to see the presence of God in our lives."

Bao, like every refugee, has his own story. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in the mountains of Vietnam. He attended seminary and was a pastor until 1975, when communists occupied Saigon. Bao escaped by boat with his 5-year-old son to a refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia,

where he started a church and school.

Bao lives simply, much as the newly arrived refugees do. Although his wife and four children make for a full house, he often offers his couch and living-room floor to recent arrivals until housing can be found.

"When refugees come here," Bao explains, "they have lost everything. They need a friend. That's why we want to live like them—not because we can't do better, but so the refugees won't feel like they can't sit down because they will make the chair dirty."

"At the Saigon church," he says, "we've created the atmosphere of one family in Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the family and all of us are brothers and sisters."

One Czechoslovakian refugee, Nicola, wasn't looking for a new family. He expected the American life—the way he had seen it on television. He envisioned a sponsor who would "provide, provide, provide," Pastor Bao recalls; a sponsor who would provide a big house and a car. After arriving in Los Angeles, Nikola felt cheated, and he shook his fist in the faces of his sponsors.

"Explain to him," Bao told an interpreter, "that I love him and I want to help him resettle and have a better life here. But he must remember that life here isn't like you see on television. He must come back to reality."

Three hours later, Nikola understood more about the church that doesn't say no to anyone. He thanked Pastor Bao with a long hug.

As the only full-time staff member at Saigon church, Bao shoulders most of the work. His commitment reflects his keenly felt awareness that he is living on borrowed time.

"I consider myself dead already," he explains. "Bao already dead in jail in Vietnam. Bao dead on the way to escaping. Two hundred thousand people died at sea, but I survived. For what? For Christ. We live today for Jesus Christ and for our neighbor."

A lot of people have asked how he has kept up this work for so long. "The more you are close to the poor people," he answers, "the more you are close to God. I look at the refugee people and see Jesus Christ in them. I pray that God gives me a blind eye and a deaf ear in order that I may not see anything else, or listen to anyone else, but see only Jesus Christ and listen only to his voice." □

Brenda Spoelstra is a writer and editor in Pasadena, Calif.

For more
information contact
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10321 Bolsa Ave.,
Westminster,
CA 92683

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
HELPING OTHERS
IN THE NAME
OF CHRIST

Compiled and written
by Ginger Hope

THE URBANA AGENDA

Urbana means missions. Such is the renown of InterVarsity's biennial student mission convention that the word Urbana, like the word Woodstock, is no longer just the name of a town. It's a loaded word symbolizing a whole set of shared experiences. Car-, van-, and busloads of students stream to the Champaign/Urbana campus of the University of Illinois during their Christmas break, and few leave without pondering their



role in Christian missions. God only knows—literally—how many missionaries look back to Urbana as a turning point.

High on the Urbana '90 agenda are global trends that will dictate missions methods into the next century: urbanization, Third World population growth, and an increasing number of "creative access countries" (countries where traditional missionaries are denied visas).

For information on Urbana '90, to be held December 27-31, contact InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 7895, 6400 Schroeder Road, Madison, WI 53707-7895; (608) 274-7995.

CAN THE WORLD AFFORD ITS CHILDREN?

Almost 40,000 children around the world die each day from easily preventable causes: diarrhea, malnutrition, common childhood diseases for which vaccinations are available. In the 1990 edition of *The State of the World's Children*, the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF estimates that most of these deaths could be prevented at a cost of \$2.5 billion a year.

How much is \$2.5 billion a year?

- As much as the world spends on the military *every day*.
- Only 2 percent of the Third World's own yearly military spending;
- As much as people in the Soviet Union spend on vodka in a month;
- As much as U.S. companies spend in a year to advertise cigarettes;
- As much as the Third World pays

each week to service its debt.

It's strange to think that the world cannot afford to prevent the deaths of its young children, writes UNICEF's executive director, James P. Grant.



THE EYES HAVE IT

Optomist Jeffrey Allgeier and his wife, Marianne, saw with their own eyes the need for corrective lenses among the poor in Zaire. They started an eye clinic in Karawa, Zaire, in the mid-1980s, training Zairean nurses to do simple eye surgeries and fit eyeglasses. Now the Allgeiers collect used eyeglasses in the United States and send them to their successor at the clinic, who says he sometimes gives out 1,000 pair in a month, especially when a mobile optometry



team goes out to surrounding villages.

Used eyeglasses, especially sturdy ones in good condition, may be shipped to the Allgeiers at 1385 Wimbledon Drive, Auburn, CA 95603.

Last night these young Americans came closer to starvation. And closer to God.



They were stretched by a 30-hour weekend fast. Together with planned activities. Games. Films. Discussion. Prayers. Bible study. And songs.

These young Christians felt what it's like to be hungry. And they raised money to help feed hungry families around the world.

They shared an unforgettable night and day of fellowship and fun. Hunger and joy. They shared an experience that brought them closer to each other. Closer to a starving world. And closer to God.

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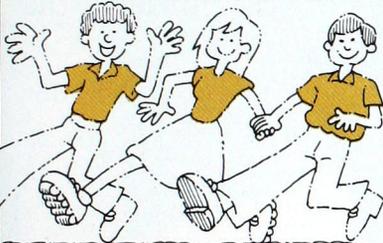


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ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SAKAI

SEEDY CHARACTERS, STEP FORWARD!

Applications are available for the second annual Mustard Seed Awards, celebrating innovative Christian ministry among the poor. One of the \$5,000 awards is earmarked for an individual church and the other for a joint venture of two or more churches.



The judging committee will look for good use of church members as volunteers and a focus on causes of need rather than symptoms. Last year's winner was the Noon Day Ministry, a day shelter for the homeless run by the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

For applications contact LOVE INC., P.O. Box 1616, Holland, MI 49422; (616) 392-8277. Collect calls are accepted.

“Christians are called to a love that is universal. All people, rich or poor, are entitled to our love, but those whose need is the greatest, namely the poor, have a preferential claim on our love. We must help them first.”

Gregory Baum in
*Compassion & Solidarity:
The Church for Others*



For a rambunctious few, weekends meant party time in my college dormitory. Liquor gushed in torrents. Intoxicated students sometimes bashed in doors, burned holes in the carpet, or demolished furniture in the study lounge.

When the semester ended, the residence hall director would figure the damages and charge each of us equally, whether we had been responsible or not. We innocents complained.

"Well, *somebody* has to pay," the dorm director said, "and you guys live here."

In many ways, that is what is happening to the poor in Latin America today. As political and drug-related brutality persists in at least half a dozen Latin countries, somebody has to

pay. And thousands of innocent people, people with no intentional role in the conflict, are paying dearly—just because they live there.

Several years ago I visited a refugee family in a dusty squatter settlement outside Lima, Peru. The Quechua (native Indian) woman with three young children told why she had left her home in Ayacucho, one of the poorest regions in Peru.

Maoist Shining Path terrorists had arrived in Ayacucho, using fear and savagery to recruit followers. Next

came government troops, zealous to squash the guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers.

Like many others, this woman fled with her children from the unprotected rural area to the relative safety of a bigger city. In Lima the

Latin American
violence is a hungry
villain, and ...

SOME BODY HAS TO PAY

BY JOHN MAUST

These Nicaraguan women demonstrate against the disappearance of family members. Disappearances related to political violence are common in many Latin American countries. In 1987, 587 people disappeared in Colombia alone.



the family started over in a one-room hut with newspaper for wallpaper. There are few people poorer than those in Ayacucho, where Andean peasants farm arid mountain plots for about \$50 a year. But somehow the violence impoverished this family even more.

The rural poor in northern Colombia face a similar dilemma. "They either have to cooperate with guerrillas or the drug mafia, or they have to move out," says missionary Nick Woodbury. "If they leave for the city, they have no place to live, no job, nothing but what's on their backs. Their problem doesn't get any better—it is just transplanted from one place to another."

The violence leaves many families fragmented. Conflict between guerrillas and the government in Guatemala during the late 1970s and early 1980s killed so many men in the highlands that much of a generation was wiped

out, says William D. Taylor, co-author of *Crisis in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective*. "The results are hundreds, maybe even thousands of widows and fatherless children," he says.

In Peru's Ayacucho region, where Shining Path began its prolonged "people's war" in 1980, there may be 26,000 orphans and 100 more every month, according to one service agency.

Refugee families are also often divided when parents must separate to find work. The children may be forced to live on the streets.

Another way the violence exacts a price from the poor is in economic damage. In the guerrillas' efforts to destabilize governments, they have destroyed oil pipelines, farms, factories, bridges, roads, and power plants.

Shining Path guerrillas in Peru demolished almost 200 high-tension

The violence sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity.

electrical towers during the first 10 months of 1989, shutting down factories and causing more than \$400 million in damage. Peruvian Senator Enrique Bernalles warned that because of the country's terrorism, "we are reaching a truly ruinous situation, which may result in business closings, massive layoffs, and paralysis of exports."

Violence has so destabilized the economies of many Latin countries that banks and multinational firms will no longer risk heavy investments in them. Similarly, tourists stop going. Who's vacationing in El Salvador these days? In all, lack of foreign invest-

LATIN HOTSPOTS

El Salvador: The 10-year-old civil war between FMLN rebels and government forces continues, with the death toll at 70,000 and still rising.

Nicaragua: Fighting between Contra forces and the Sandinista government (claiming 50,000 to 60,000 casualties) ended, but it is still unclear whether lasting peace is within reach.

Guatemala: Thousands died in the late 1970s and early 1980s in left-wing and right-wing political violence. The killings, which declined after the 1985 election of President Vinicio Cerezo, began increasing again in 1989.

Panama: The U.S. military invasion in December 1989 achieved its goal, ousting Manuel Noriega, but it also left thousands homeless, scores dead, and an estimated \$1 billion in damages. Economic sanctions imposed by the United States in 1987, in an effort to bring down Noriega, succeeded only in devastating the country's economy, according to Ambler Moss, former U.S. ambassador to Panama.

Colombia: Guerrillas from several leftist groups (M-19, FARC, ELN) use violence and terrorism in efforts to change their society. But the drug mafias are largely to blame for making homicide the leading cause of death among adult males in Colombia.

Peru: An estimated 15,000 died in the 10-year conflict between Maoist Shining Path guerrillas and government forces. *John Maust*

KEVIN MC KIERNAN





ments and tourism means fewer jobs. And when rural peasants flee for their lives, leaving behind homes, property, and livestock, land goes uncultivated and cities feel the shortage of agricultural products.

Then there's the brain drain of professionals and skilled workers who flee their countries for safer and richer pastures. Almost 150,000 Peruvians moved out during 1988, and emigration from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Colombia is also heavy.

Many of these Latin American emigres come to the United States, where things don't always get much better. In a conversational English class I teach at a church in Miami, one night I asked for prayer requests. Almost every student began to weep.

The class includes a young Nicaraguan veterinarian whose husband was killed in the Contra war. Now she works as a housekeeper. With two small sons to support, she recently remarried—mostly out of necessity, she says. She suffered added trauma when her 10-year-old son was abused by a janitor at his school.

Another student fled her village in Guatemala when guerrillas tried to force her to join them. A Colombian man at the church sold his business in Barranquilla when the drug mafia threatened him for not allowing the use of his factory dock as a shipment point. The man's business ventures in the United States have failed.

These emigres left behind the widespread violence of Latin America, and they left behind much that they loved. But one thing many of them couldn't shake off at the border was deep insecurity.

Violence is a hungry villain. Not only does it rob people of life and property, it sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity. In some places this insecurity means never going to the corner store without an ID card, because police suspect anyone without documents. It means making every trip downtown with the fear of bombs and shootings. It may mean not stopping at a red light for fear that hit men will pull alongside and let loose a machine gun burst. It means parents keeping their sons off the streets or sending them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

Latin America is no stranger to violence. Throughout the region's history, oppressive regimes have used torture and repression to intimidate and control their people. In Colombia, for example, an estimated 200,000 people

died during a brutal 14-year period known as *La Violencia*, touched off by the assassination of a presidential candidate in 1948.

Unjust economic systems and a wide gap between the very rich and the very poor have given rise to many violent revolutions in Latin America. Before being ousted in 1979 by the Sandinistas, former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was regarded as Central America's richest man. He reportedly owned one-fifth of all Nicaraguan farmland, and he was part owner of 168 factories—one-fourth of the national industrial economy.

Yet as poverty has given rise to violence, violence has also aggravated poverty. Leftist guerrillas often launch violent campaigns with the professed intent of helping the poor. But typically the poor suffer most.

There is a common pattern: Guerrillas arrive in an area and command the population to join or support them.

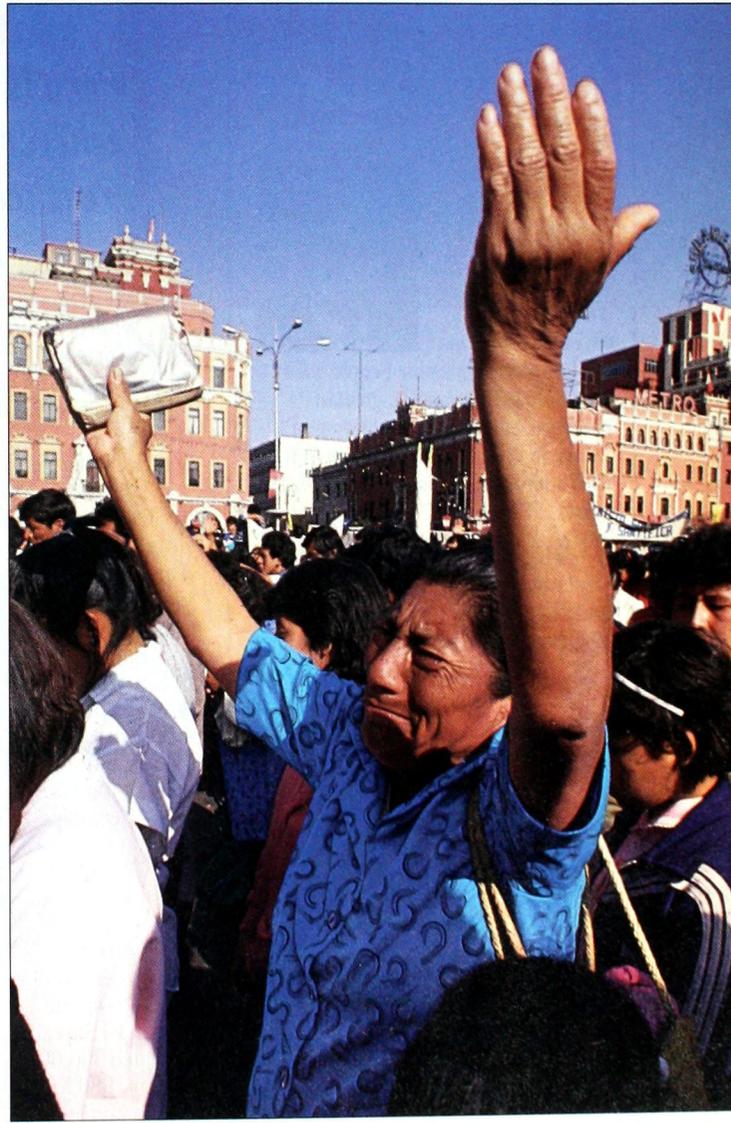
Left: Parents must often keep their sons off the street or send them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

Below: The evangelical church has spread rapidly throughout Latin America. Hundreds of Christians recently met in the San Martin Plaza in Lima, Peru, to pray for an end to that country's terrorism and violence.

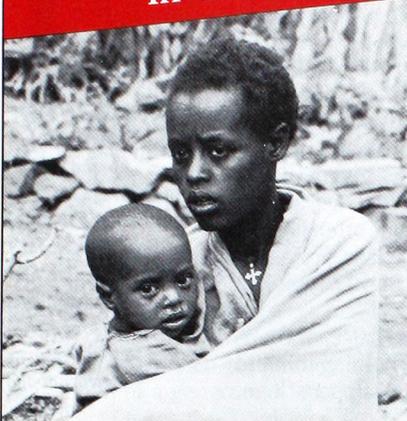
Three people died in this Nicaraguan village following a battle during that country's civil war. The war helped ruin Nicaragua's economy and impoverish its people, considered among the poorest in the hemisphere.



SAMUEL NIEVA / LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELIST



Your people need to know more about Ethiopia's famine than what they read in *Time*



Ethiopia's people are in crisis, and while *Time* and *Newsweek* often describe their plight, they don't tell your people what they can do to help them.

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They burn out, run out, or wipe out anyone who doesn't.

Then government soldiers arrive hunting for terrorist sympathizers. Suspects are hauled away for such "crimes" as feeding a guerrilla, even if it was done at gunpoint. In Latin America, detainees are guilty until proven innocent. Suspects often wait months or even years for trial—or simply "disappear."

Guillermo Diaz (not his real name) ran a small business in Hunacavelica Department in Peru, an area of intense conflict between the Shining Path and government troops. In an apparent case of mistaken identity, police one day hauled Diaz, a devout Christian, to jail as a suspected terrorist.

Diaz says the police ransacked and looted his house looking for evidence, then repeatedly beat and interrogated him. His wife paid a fortune in lawyer's fees and lost money to corrupt police, who suggested bribes would obtain her



Peru is so desperate that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond.

husband's release.

Later Diaz was taken to the capital city, where he was thrown into Lurigancho prison. During his years in prison, Diaz saw his house mortgaged, his business ruined, and his possessions pawned. His wife left him, and he lost contact with his five children.

Diaz says he lost everything except his faith in God. Countless other victims lack even that. Yet many Latin Americans testify that the plague of violence is stimulating new interest in spiritual matters and hunger for God.

Reynaldo Aragon, Jr., a journalist in Lima, Peru, was chatting with a colleague about Peru's dismal economic and political situation. The friend half-asked, half-demanded, "How can you be so happy all the time?"

"Because I know Jesus loves me," Aragon said, "and he loves you too."

Tears formed in the other journalist's eyes. He asked to know more.

Aragon says, "There's so much desperation in Peru right now, that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond."

In El Salvador, evangelical churches added 300,000 new members just between 1980 and 1985—the early years of the civil war. There had been only

100,000 new members in the entire previous decade.

In Nicaragua, more than 20,000 people said they received Christ during a recent nationwide evangelistic effort, according to the Costa Rica-based International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth.

Bible sales have soared in places like Peru's Ayacucho region, where terrorism is rampant. Within six weeks of the September 1987 release of the Ayacucho Quechua-language Bible, all 10,000 copies were sold. People wept and pled for more copies, so the United Bible Societies ordered a second printing of 20,000. These too ran out in a matter of weeks, and a third printing of 20,000 was ordered.

Many Latin American Christians, despite their own limited resources, are also increasingly meeting the physical needs of victims of violence.

In 1984, Peru's Peace and Hope Commission helped relocate more than 25 refugee families from Ayacucho to San Martin Department, where they started a new colony.

A founding member of the Peace and Hope Commission, Donato Palomino, felt drawn to a 6-year-old Ayacucho boy who had watched terrorists murder his parents and was found

trembling in a hole. Terrified of adult strangers, the boy never-the-less warmed up to Palomino. The Palomino family eventually adopted Jorge.

A missionary in Lima, Peru, recently described in a prayer letter the seemingly hopeless poverty and violence around her. Then she noted that church members, rather than being demoralized, were out feeding the poor and evangelizing.

It's amazing to see the strong spirit of the Christians—not bending or giving in to depression in the face of these overwhelming difficulties," she wrote. "In contrast, they are doubling their efforts to give out the news of hope. What a great transformation Christ makes in a life!"

For the open wounds of Latin America's poverty and violence, the church is proving to be an increasingly potent salve. But the wounds still seem overwhelming, the suffering insurmountable. And until the violence ends, the poor will continue paying the price for Latin America's violence. After all, somebody has to pay. □

John Maust is editor of Latin America Evangelist magazine in Miami, Fla.

THE COLD FIST OF LOVE

They could have kicked him out of town. Some of them wanted to, after what he did. But where would he go? San Bernardo, a town of 600 people south of Quito, Ecuador, was the only home he knew. In a community that small, adultery is hard to hide.

The incident nearly crushed him. It could have, if it hadn't been for his own resolve to reassemble the fragments of his life. But it took something more. It was that extra something that helped him put his life back together, and started him on a course that would renew and deepen his commitment to God.

"Three things touched my heart during that time," Jose Manuel Quishpe Pilamunga says. Draped in a red poncho, he's sitting in the tiny wood-frame home he built eight years ago for his family of seven. "The first was the forgiveness and dedication of my wife. I would not have made it without that. Second, the commitment of my pastor. He was available for me any time. If I needed to pray and hear Scripture at 4 a.m., he would be there.

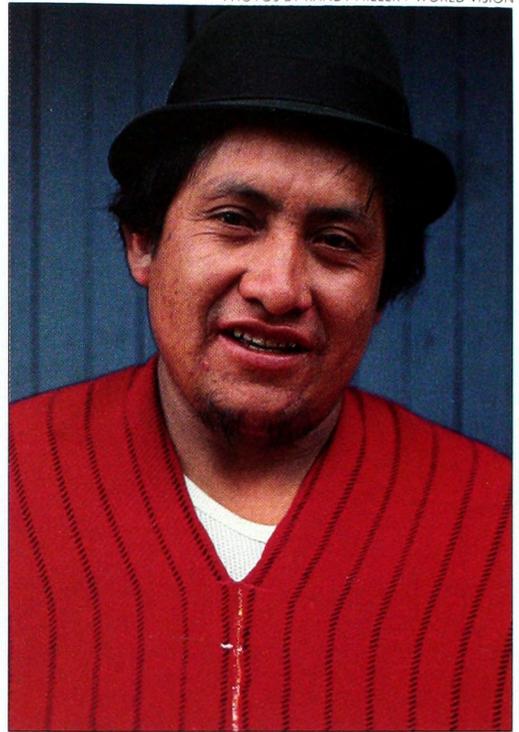
"The third thing was the support of my church and my community. I don't know if I would be here today if it had not been for that."

At first, the community's support felt more like a cold fist than a loving embrace, especially in light of his history with the church. Jose's parents were evangelical Christians, and he had been raised in the church. He received Christ at age 12 and was active in the church most of his life. He



had even been a deacon. So the severity of the church's action was sobering.

"The deacons and the pastor disciplined me," Jose says. "I resented that very much. I resented their actions and I resented the church and community. But looking back, I now realize that even



PHOTOS BY RANDY MILLER / WORLD VISION

though their response was severe, it was done out of love. During that time of discipline, when I felt so resentful toward them, they were praying for me, hoping that I would come back to the Lord and ask forgiveness. They were open to me."

A year after the incident, Jose recommitted his life to the Lord. Then he began to understand the depth of his community's support for him. A year later, he was offered the job of church treasurer. The year after that, he was named secretary for the community council. The following year, vice president. Then, at last, president of the community council.

God worked through my pastor, my wife, my brothers in the church, and the community people who helped me," Jose says. "That was unconditional love. Through that experience I came to realize how much we all need to feel God's love and forgiveness.

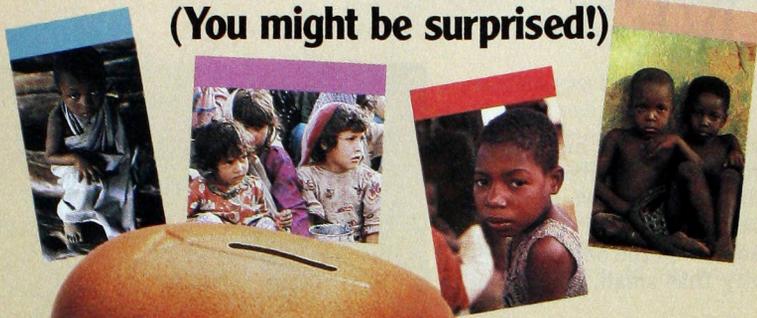
"For me, this incident is buried," he adds. "Each day that I speak to God, it's as though it never happened. I don't have any grudges or resentment. My wife and daughters don't say, 'Look what you did.'"

"But this thing has changed me. I now have a deeper understanding of the power of God, but also the love of God, and how that love is shown through my church and my community. It has really opened my eyes." □ *Randy Miller*

The church disciplined me, and I resented it. Now I know they did it out of love.

What Can These Little Loaves Do for Your Church and Its Members?

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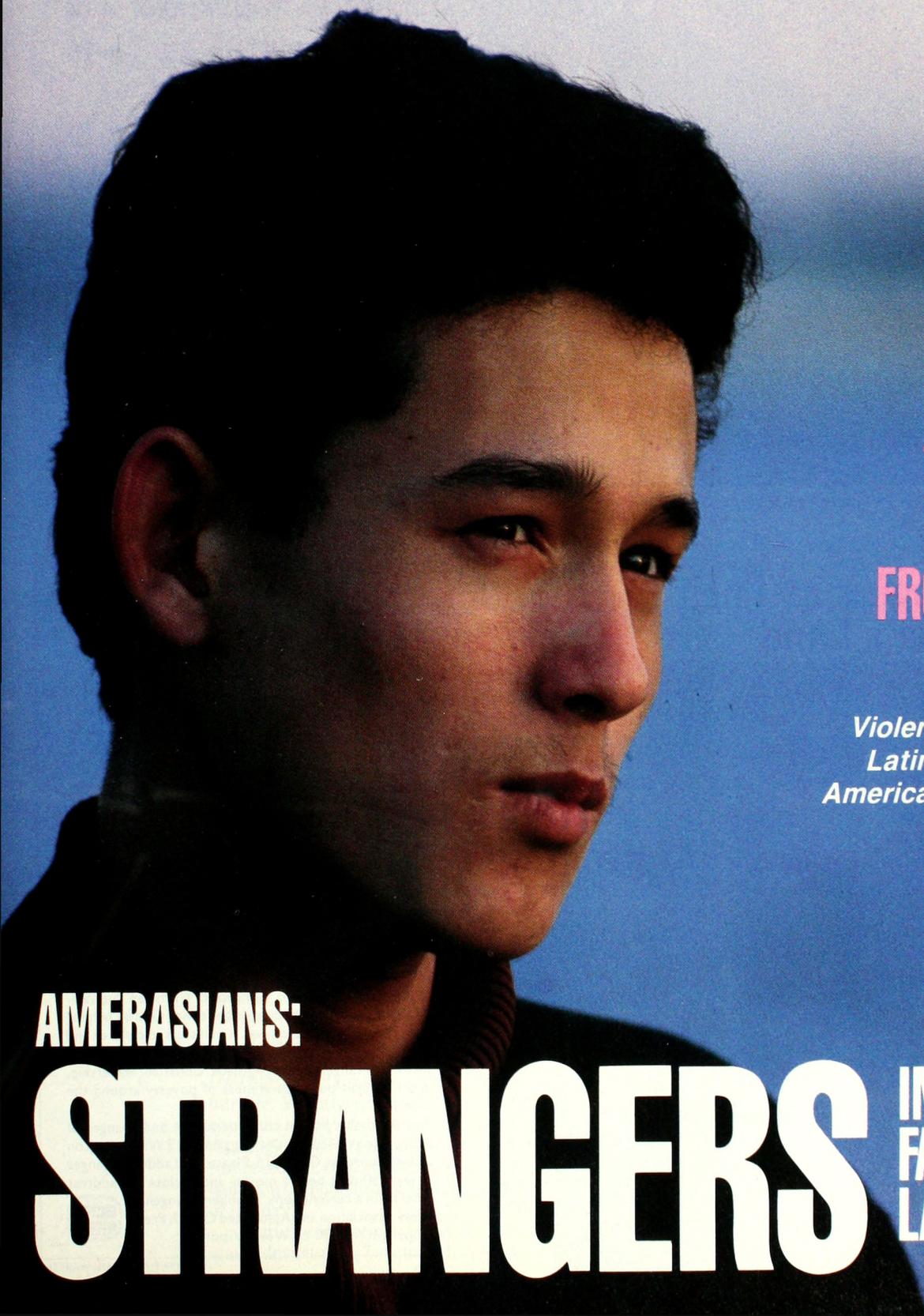
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August/September 1990



**DON'T
THROW
BREAD
FROM THE
TRUCK**

*Violence in
Latin
America:* **SOME-
BODY
HAS TO
PAY**

AMERASIANS:

STRANGERS

**IN THEIR
FATHERS'
LAND**



As Amerasian
war babies
come of age,
some of them are
coming
“home.”

STRANGERS

When the last American helicopter pulled out of Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the end came quickly. **IN THEIR**

So quickly, in fact, that much was left behind. Personal belongings, war machines—and American **FATHERS'**

blood; sunbaked on the stained courtyard of the Temple of Harmony at Hue. Diluted in the rivers of the Mekong **LAND**

Delta. Shrouded beneath the brush of the Annamese Cordillera. But that is



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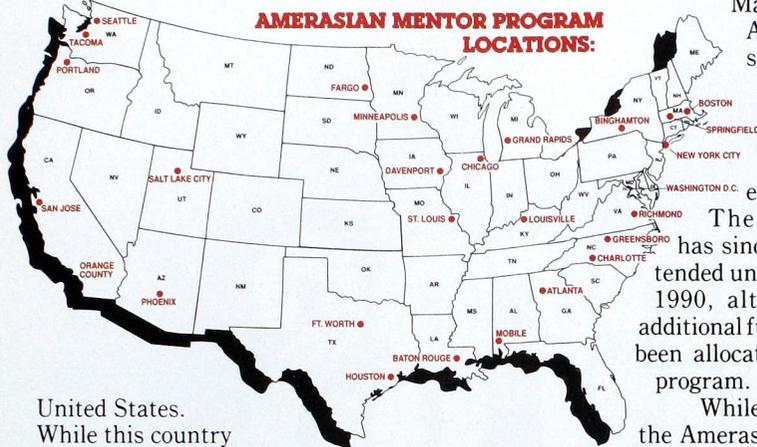
the blood of the dead, the blood of American men who are mourned and memorialized on a granite wall in Washington, D.C. Less remembered is the blood left behind in more than 30,000 living memorials called Amerasians: the children of American men, including servicemen and civilians, and Asian women.

For 20 years, many of them were the war's refuse, abandoned to the streets in Vietnam, unwanted in the

lish, and few job skills—most are ready to call the United States home.

In 1987, Congress adopted The Amerasian Homecoming Act. The act established a two-year period in which Amerasians born between Jan. 1, 1962 and Jan. 1, 1976, and their immediate families could enter the United States with immigration and refugee status.

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their family members were expected to leave Vietnam by the deadline of March 1990.



United States. While this country sought the remains of its MIAs, it ignored the lives of its children.

But no more. Today Americans are slowly embracing almost 6,500 Amerasians, and thousands more are expected to immigrate. And despite substantial barriers—emotional scars, limited education or knowledge of Eng-

lish, and few job skills—most are ready to call the United States home. Actual resettlement figures, however, fell far below those estimates.

The deadline has since been extended until October 1990, although no additional funding has been allocated for the program.

While many hail the Amerasian Homecoming Act as long-overdue compassion, others criticize it for being too little, too late.

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“All too many of the Amerasians are working with are poorly equipped—socially, educationally, and psychologically—to make the kind of adjustment and eventual adaptation to life in America that most of us would judge to be adequate,” says J. Kirk Felsman, a Dartmouth Medical School professor and one of the foremost authorities on Amerasian resettlement.

Without additional support to help Amerasians achieve a reasonable degree of economic and emotional self-sufficiency, many may fall into a cycle of poverty, gang membership, and welfare dependency,” Felsman says. “The Homecoming Act remains myopic, being almost exclusively focused on expediting emigration. It contains little balance of attention and virtually no fiscal allocation to address the hard human issues of actual resettlement.”

Indeed the legislation seems inadequate to facilitate healthy, positive resettlement. After undergoing a six-month crash course in American living at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Bataan, 75 percent of Amerasians and their families are assigned to one of approximately 50 “cluster sites” in cities across the country.

The State Department selected the cluster sites based on local agencies interested in helping resettle the refugees, as well as access to special ser-

INNOCENT VICTIMS

When the American presence in Vietnam ended, thousands of half-American, half-Asian children did not follow their fathers home,” states a report issued by the United States Catholic Conference. “The American public wanted to forget Vietnam; in the process, we also forgot the ‘Amerasian’ children.”

Three-fourths of those children are now 17 years old, just one year younger than the age at which many of their fathers were drafted into military service. For most of those years, while Americans struggled to reconcile their personal and corporate ambivalence over Vietnam, Amerasians waged a war of their own.

Born into one of the most ethnically pure societies in the world, many

Amerasians are burdened with a double stigma. Not only do they have tainted blood—seen in their distinctly American physical features—they are also a living reminder to the Vietnamese of their own painful losses in the war.

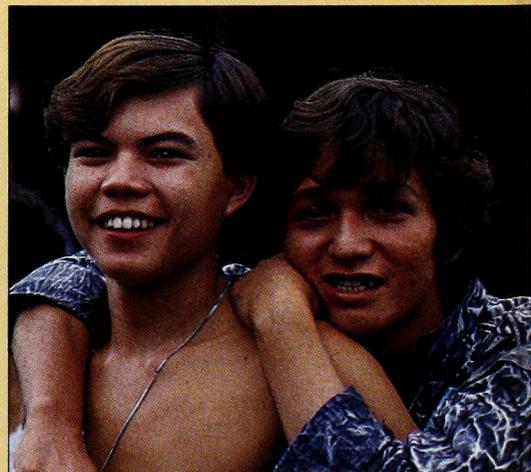
Once Communist forces seized control of the country, mothers of Amerasian children feared reprisals from the Viet Cong for having slept with the enemy. There were whispers of torture, mass executions, and labor camps called New Economic Zones.

Many of the mothers wanted to flee with their children, but because of severed diplomatic ties with the West, emigration was impossible. And clandestine flight to another country was too risky. More creative survival tactics became necessary. “I dyed my daugh-

ter’s hair black, put soot on her face and cut off her eyelashes,” the mother of one Amerasian child recalls. “And I kept her hidden under a blanket all the time in the house.”

Despite the rumors, however, the Communists never enacted an official

TERRY MADISON / WORLD VISION



vices, such as after-school tutoring programs, counseling, job training, employment opportunities, and affordable housing.

The government, however, only allocates \$525 per Amerasian to cover food, rent, clothing, and other living expenses for the first three months. Another federal agency has earmarked \$1.5 million for resettlement assistance, but that money must be divided among the 50 cluster sites. And after 90 days, the Amerasians and their families are on their own, most of them ending up on welfare.

Lack of funding is just one of the obstacles the Amerasians face. When they arrive in this country, they are also ill-equipped for success in school or in the marketplace.

"As many as 15 percent of the Amerasians we have sampled have had no formal education and up to 75 percent have had less than four years of schooling," Felsman says. "The majority are virtually illiterate in Vietnamese and arrived with no transferable job skills."

In some cluster sites, the dropout rate among Amerasian students is as high as 60 percent. While teens undergo an intensive training program called

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their families could immigrate to the United States by the October 1990 deadline of The Amerasian Homecoming Act.

policy of retribution. But unofficially, many Amerasians were scorned. "My Amerasian daughter was terribly sick, vomiting blood," one mother said. "The hospital refused to treat her, saying, 'She is American. Let the Americans cure her!'"

Many mothers of Amerasians were blocked from decent-paying jobs and had to resort to street vending to keep their children alive. Teachers and classmates often taunted the Amerasian children with *my lai* ("half breed"). Some Amerasians lived as destitute street urchins, whom the Vietnamese call *bui dai* ("the dust of life"); they have grown up begging or rummaging through trash for discards to sell.

"I think if anyone can be viewed as truly innocent victims of that war, it would be the kids who face terrible discrimination simply because their faces are a painful reminder of that bitter and devious war," says Rep. Robert Mrazek, co-sponsor of the Amerasian Homecoming Act in 1987.

Preparation for American Secondary Schools at the Philippine processing center, it cannot compensate for their educational deficiencies.

Their difficulty in adapting to U.S. culture is further underscored in a 1984 survey (updated in 1988) by the United States Catholic Conference, the largest resettlement agency in the United States. Almost one in five Amerasians had been in trouble with the law or had other serious disciplin-

ary problems, such as truancy, prostitution, and fighting.

Though the Amerasians' plight in the United States may be discouraging, their difficulties are an opportunity for the church to welcome in the stranger.

Every pastor gets anxious to be involved in missions at one time or another," says Paul Bullard, pastor of the Grace Evangelical Methodist Church in Phoe-

JON WARREN



nix, Ariz., and one of about 25 Christian mentors to local Amerasian teens. "I give money and pray, but I've never been overseas. For me this was an opportunity to get involved in cross-cultural missions without leaving home."

In late 1989, World Vision and Christian agencies in Phoenix and Portland, Ore.—both designated cluster sites—began pairing Amerasians with Christian mentors like Paul Bullard. In 1990, World Vision has expanded the Amerasian Mentor program to 25 cluster sites and expects to have 1,000 matches by year's end.

The goal of the program is four-fold: to expose Amerasians to the positive aspects of U.S. life and culture; to provide encouragement and moral support; to provide help in learning the new language; and to reveal Christ to the Amerasians and their families.

Having a mentor helps save an Amerasian four or five years in understanding what's going on in the culture," says Welch Hill of Catholic Social Services, World Vision's primary partner agency in Phoenix. "They get beyond the fear barrier that naturally comes from being thrust into a new culture. This program helps build their confidence that they can make it."

LOOKING FOR FATHER

I don't know who my father was," says Trang Thi Thuy Lam, 17-year-old Amerasian girl living in Phoenix. "I went to Alabama and asked a friend to help me, but we didn't find him. The United States is very big."

Fewer than 2 percent of Amerasian children are ever reunited with their fathers. A 1987 survey conducted at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center revealed that 60 percent of the Amerasians hoped to reunite with their fathers. Only 8.4 percent, however, had any information about them, and sometimes that was nothing more than a yellowed photograph.

Lack of information is not the only

obstacle. According to the Amerasian Registry and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, which assists children of mixed American and Asian heritage, fewer than 500 American G.I.s have made



© JEFF TOPPING

Mentors in the program are recruited and trained members of local churches. "There's not been any problem in finding mentors. Churches in the area are crying out for opportunities to minister," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program

coordinator in Phoenix. "We can turn people on to the ministry quickly. But helping them understand cross-cultural differences—that's a challenge."

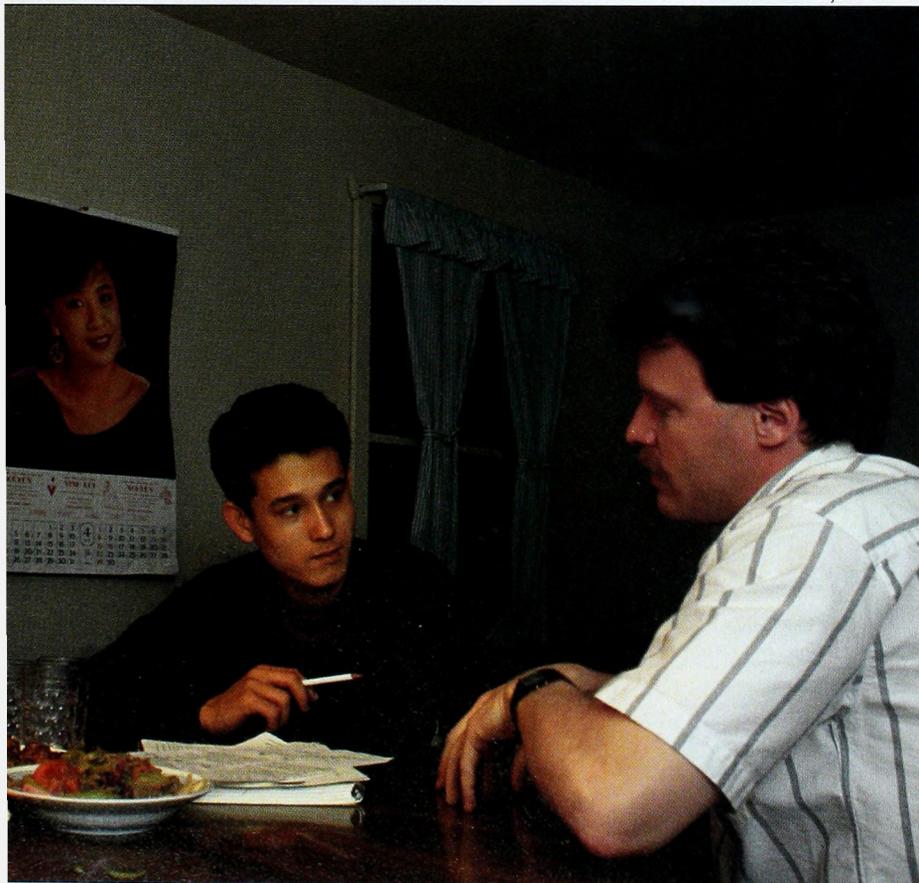
Amerasian behavior can seem peculiar to Americans. When a reporter in Seattle approached 17-year-old Vu Mau Nguyn Bang, the teen locked himself in his bedroom, terrified of answering any questions. Later, Vu's stepfather explained that, for years, Vu's family had been harassed and interrogated by Communist officials.

One person Vu does not shy away from is his mentor, Roy Atwood, a legislative aide for Sen. Slade Gorton. Usually the two spend several hours together on Sundays. They review English lessons, kick around a soccer ball, or visit places like the local aquarium. (Mentors are asked to invest two hours each week with their Amerasian friends, for a period of six months.)

"I have to have patience and not give up," Roy says. "I made a six-month commitment to Vu. It will take more time for him to feel comfortable. I want Vu to see that someone really does care. I pray that he will see God's love in action."

Recently two other American sponsors, Paul and Lois Lindberg, took Cuong Van Nguyen out boating in Washington's Puget Sound. At one point, the engine refused to start, and Cuong's heart sputtered. Three years ago he

JON WARREN



official inquiries about their Amerasian children.

"For most Amerasians, the search is very frustrating," says E. Glenn Rogers, international program director for the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. "Few are able to find the father, and those who do may be in for a disappointment because the father does not love them."

"The father figure is very strong in Vietnamese culture," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program coordinator in Phoenix. "Amerasians need to find out who their father is to help them establish some sense of identity. They need the contact to give their lives credibility."

That's the case with Trang. "It's been 18 years already. A lot of people have fathers. Not me. I don't want him to give me money or help me. I just want to know who he is."

was one of 65 Vietnamese refugees packed in a 28-foot boat. The prop broke en route to Malaysia. Once adrift 500 yards from the Vietnamese shore, Cuong swam to temporary safety. Eventually he was arrested and held prisoner for almost two years, alternating between solitary confinement and hard labor.

Today Cuong lives with the Lindbergs and their three children in Renton, Wash. Cuong helps in the garden and repairs family bicycles.

How do his mentors help Cuong look at the future realistically? "I try to go step by step with him so he can see what his decisions about things, like where to live and how much to spend, will really mean in a culture that's still foreign to him."

"Because of the time limit on the Amerasian Homecoming Act, World Vision's Amerasian mentoring program will be phased out in a few years," Mark Thompson says. "But the world climate dictates that we monitor and refine this program very carefully. Each day there are refugees coming to America from every part of the world. We have to become good at this."

World Vision President Robert Seiple underlines the need for Christians to help refugees in the United States, particularly Amerasians. "Vietnam doesn't need new missionaries,"

World Vision and Catholic Social Services support a job training and placement effort for 30 Amerasians in Phoenix, Ariz.



Seiple says. "They just need an affirming worldwide church.

"If [the Amerasians'] orientation is not sensitively done and does not carry a strong Christian component, they have the potential to be the homeless, the jobless, the hungry of the very near future.

"I see this particular group of refugees as a living bridge of reconciliation between the United States and

Vietnam. Vietnamese and American blood exist together in these people. Our two countries are inextricably linked and, as we reconcile the Amerasian issue, perhaps we have a chance at a larger reconciliation between people and before God." □

John Wierick is a screen writer in Montrose, Calif. Mark Cutshall is a freelance writer in Seattle, Wash.

WORLD'S LONGEST

The phone call from Colombia, South America, came at 5:30 in the morning. Jack and Mary Anne Voelkel, missionaries in Colombia, were calling to ask for prayer. A young woman named Amy had come to them on the brink of suicide, full of self-hate and anger. They were going to fast and pray for her healing. Would we join them?

The room seemed charged when I relayed the request to a group who met weekly to pray at my church in Minneapolis, Minn. Sensing the urgency of the need, we were soon on our knees. Although it was taking place 4,000 miles away, we felt involved in this life-and-death battle for a woman we had never seen.

In the days that followed we continued to pray. Others joined us. Some fasted, some prayed over the telephone, others prayed around the breakfast table or before bed.

A week later another call came. Amy was free! God had broken through the pain of her bitterness and hurt. She was a new woman. In Bogota and Minneapolis, Christians on two continents rejoiced in the answered prayer.

Amy's healing came through a critical partnership: missionaries facing spiritual conflict head-on, and an army of intercessors supporting them in prayer. "If two people agree on earth about anything they ask," Jesus promised, "it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

The people who prayed for Amy are part of a support team that has backed the Voelkels for five years. Besides praying daily for this missionary family, they are "on call," ready to pray for emergency requests such as the one for Amy.

This is just the kind of support team the Voelkels asked for. The kind of prayer they had in mind was not casual or occasional—a sentence or

two when a missionary's photo tacked on the refrigerator happens to catch an eye—but active participation.

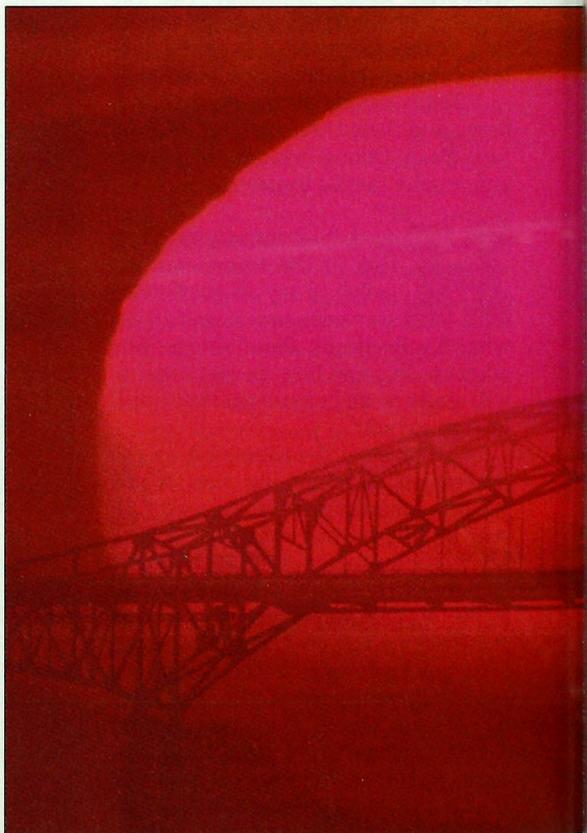
"I wanted to pick up the phone and ask for prayer at a moment's notice," Mary Anne says. After 20 years as missionaries, the Voelkels knew they needed supernatural help to overcome the resistance that thwarted their work. Spreading the gospel and healing the deep wounds in people's hearts was work that called for deep spiritual resources.

When the Voelkels asked me to head the team, I had just finished reading Evelyn Christianson's book *What Happens When Women Pray* and I was eager to test what I'd read. Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Could you actually pray for specific answers? Is it really possible to pray relevantly from such a distance? The Voelkels' prayer support team was a chance to find out.

Jack and Mary Anne felt the impact of our prayers immediately. Burdens that used to crush them suddenly seemed lifted. They felt strength-

Matters for Prayer

- ◆ **Remember the children** of American G.I.s left behind in Vietnam after the war, and the hard life that is their legacy (pages 5-9).
- ◆ **Praise God** for bringing about spiritual renewal amid widespread violence in Latin America (pages 12-15).
- ◆ **Ask God** to teach you more about helping the needy in a way that respects them as persons (pages 18-20).
- ◆ **Thank God** for the way Pastor Bao and the Saigon Christian Reformed Church (page 21) make refugees welcome, not refusing anyone.



BRIDGE

BY BETSY LEE

Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

ened, energized; their work grew more effective. Obstacles that once seemed insurmountable disappeared or were circumvented.

"I can feel the difference when people pray," Mary Anne says. "It's the difference between living in freedom and living under siege."

We saw answers to prayer unlike any we had experienced before. Once, we prayed for protection for the Voelkels' co-workers and their families in terror-torn Colombia. In 1985, one co-worker's family member was among a dozen judges gunned down by terrorists. Miraculously, this one man survived. He had a wooden leg, and a bullet hit that leg and knocked him down. The attackers assumed he was dead. When the siege was over, this man was the only judge rescued as the building went up in flames.

Not many of our answered prayers were as sensational as that one, and not many requests were as urgent as the early-morning phone call. Usually our prayers were quiet and persistent. Many of them involved families torn by conflict, marriages close to divorce, individuals such as

Amy lashing out at themselves.

We all knew people struggling with the same things. What we learned praying for the Colombians, we began to use to help bring healing to our own families, neighborhoods, and church. People's prayer lives deepened; spiritual gifts were developed. Empowered by what we experienced, our church of stiff, reticent Presbyterians began to share our faith. Missions, which had been distant and vague in our minds, became real and relevant. We became personally involved in missionaries' lives.

Besides growing to ten times its original size, the Voelkel team spawned four more prayer groups for other missionaries. More than half the congregation is involved.

Now I have some answers to my experimental questions about prayer. Can you pray for specific answers? Without a doubt. Again and again Mary Anne said, "Your prayers were answered word for word." Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Yes. A team of intercessors is more complete. Each person has certain gifts, such as the ability to discern what to pray for, or the persistence to keep praying, or the ability to encourage, affirm, and promote unity.

Is distance a barrier? Not to God. Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

James Fraser attributed the success of his ministry in China to the persistent prayers of friends in England: "I am feeling more and more that it is, after all, the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field." □

Betsy Lee is a free-lance writer in Bloomington, Minn.

Most of our problems with prayer arise from our tendency to turn spiritual growing into a set of laws or a gymnastic exercise. For it is a relationship and not primarily a discipline.

Flora Slosson Wuellner
in *Prayer, Stress, & Our Inner Wounds*

SUPERSTOCK



When I was a little girl, the word migrant didn't exist yet. We were "bums" and "fruit tramps."

As we traveled from cotton field to fruit orchard, it didn't take me long to see that there were different kinds of people. Some lived in houses and had orderly lives. Others lived like us. We were "the needy."

As a migrant child I learned some important things about how to help needy people—and how *not* to help. As a professor I try to teach those things to my students.

Lesson one: Poverty was not my worst problem. The main problem was

DON'T THROW BREAD FROM THE TRUCK

BY BILLIE DAVIS

not belonging—not belonging anywhere or with anyone. I didn't even consider myself a real person.

Searching for clues about how to become a real person, I discovered the Sunday school. I wandered into a church one day and sat down in a little red chair. The teacher may not have been a trained theologian, but she did one thing for me that changed my life. She told me I was a child of God. That pleased me so much I decided not to let her know I was just a bum.

She could have called me a sinner on that first encounter, but she didn't. She could have blamed me or my parents for our problems. She could have kept her distance, lumping me together with all the poor. Worst of all, she could have pitied me, but she didn't.

There were plenty of people who pitied us. Once during the Depression we were literally starving. I had a little brother who died of malnutrition. One of the bakeries in a town near our camp felt sorry for the poor migrants, so they loaded all their day-old bread into a truck. The truck drove slowly through the dusty rows of shacks while a man stood in the back of the truck throwing bread out onto the ground.

I ran up behind the truck with the rest of the people and got my bread. It had some nutrition, and I'm glad there were people compassionate enough to feed the poor. But how I hated that bakery! I despised the man who stood up there and threw me bread. I despised him because I had to trade my dignity, *myself*, for a loaf of bread.

So when I sat in that little red chair in Sunday school and heard that

it was more blessed to give than to receive, I understood it differently from the other children: It is blessed to be the one standing in the truck tossing out bread, rather than the one running behind scooping it up.

People who are poor, sick, and hungry need more than money, health, and food. Like us all, they need meaning in life—a sense of order, a reason for living. This is where Christians have so much to offer. If you help people find the meaning of life while helping them find a home or get a job, you are helping them at the deepest level.

People need relationships

People also need to belong. They need relationships. We were created that way: "Let us make man in *our* image."

And God and Adam cooperated. God brought out the animals one by one, and whatever Adam called them, that was their name.

Jesus reminded us of our need for relationship when he taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father," not "My Father." That whole prayer says that people belong together. How can I say, "Give us this day our daily bread," and not care if someone is starving? How can I pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and not care about what teenagers are facing on the street? That prayer is plural. It binds us together with the purposes of God and with all other people.

That's why altruism, or caring for the well-being of others, is part selflessness and part selfishness. Because we are all bound together, it is in my interest to help other people.

To give people the help that really helps, then, we must see their problems as symptoms of unmet needs.

Now, I'm not a liberal or soft on sin, but everything I've learned, from the cotton fields to the university, tells me that people's environment—their

I
am
a
child
of
God.

and other lessons
I've learned about
helping people.

bum
migrant



H

*How can I pray
"Give us this day our
daily bread," and not
care if someone is
starving?*

circumstances and upbringing—strongly influences their behavior.

Most churches believe the same thing, although they may not realize it.

In a Sunday school class I visited, someone mentioned a recent horrible crime. The teacher got on his soapbox.

"The sociologists will try to blame this on the deprived environment of the assailants," he said, "but those young people were monsters. It was nothing but sin."

A few minutes later I went to the worship service in which the church dedicated several infants. The congregation promised, "We'll keep these babies in the ways of our faith. We'll harbor them and raise them for the Lord."

Now that's a contradiction. In Sunday school I heard that environment didn't matter, and in the worship service the church took responsibility for the destiny of those babies.

I don't mean we should blame

society for personal sin or excuse people because of their background. I mean that if we took six babies out of the inner city and put them side by side with the six babies in the dedication service, we would know which babies had a greater chance to have problems as adults.

To me, it's exciting that environment greatly influences people. It means there's so much we can do! It means that each child, depending on the guidance and care we give, has a good chance to develop well and choose to follow Christ.

When I was 8 years old, selling baskets on the street, one of my customers told me I should be in school. She told me it was free. I couldn't believe it, because nothing was free—not a movie, not a grocery store, not anything.

But I walked right into a public school and said, "I heard there's a law that kids have to go to school, and I want to go." They signed me up and gave me a desk, and I learned something profound. I learned that I could actually learn. I wasn't any different from the real people when I had the same opportunities and treatment.

How Jesus helped

When Jesus called his disciples, he knew they had needs. But he didn't define those needs for them. "What do you want?" he asked two who started following him.

Before we start "throwing bread from the truck," we would do well to ask the same question.

Jesus also enjoyed each person's individuality. When Nathaniel first heard about Jesus, he asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

"Now there's an honest man," Jesus said. He didn't require absolute agreement before Nathaniel could join

the group. In fact, Jesus complimented him for expressing his doubts. He saw all his disciples as people capable of learning and developing.

Jesus openly expressed his confidence and expectations. "I see in you a solid rock," he told Peter. My own experience in the little red Sunday school chair, where I learned I was a child of God, was like that.

In the gospels the disciples go everywhere Jesus goes. I don't think that's incidental to the story. It was like one long field trip. The disciples tagged along with Jesus and often didn't understand what he said. Jesus had to explain many things and sometimes he had to scold or rebuke. But he always took them along.

And he trusted them. He adopted new disciples on the recommendation of Andrew and Philip. He trusted his friends with intimate, personal confidences. When it was time to make the greatest pronouncement of all time, Jesus let one of his followers make it: "You are the Christ!"

Finally, Jesus expected his followers to give themselves away just as he did. He taught them to help in the same way he helped—not by making people "ministry beneficiaries" or "clients" but by drawing them into the ways of the kingdom of God. He gave them his own values and goals.

Now it's our turn to give ourselves away. As a young girl in school, I badly needed eyeglasses to continue my studies. One of my teachers bought them for me, and I was determined to repay her. I have never forgotten what she told me.

"Those glasses were paid for before you were born," she said. "When I needed glasses and had no money, someone bought them for me. Now the debt is yours." □

Billie Davis is professor of sociology and social psychology at Evangel College, Springfield, Mo.



*The church
being the church
among the poor*

BY BRENDA SPOELSTRA

A CHURCH THAT WON'T SAY NO

Saigon Christian Reformed Church

Trankhi Trieuong paid a high price to leave Vietnam. As he tried to escape a prison camp, soldiers shot both his legs so he could never try again. When Trankhi was later released, he made it to Thailand—minus two legs, and with little hope of emigrating to a Western country.

No one wanted to sponsor a Vietnamese ex-prisoner who could not walk. No one, that is, until Pastor Nguyen Bao heard about him. "I don't care if he has one leg, two legs, or four legs. If he needs help, we'll help him," Bao said.

The Saigon Christian Reformed Church of Westminster, Calif., where Bao is pastor, found Trankhi a wheelchair and a home, and helped him learn to live with his disability. Today he drives a car and works full time.

Located in the Little Saigon area of Los Angeles, Saigon church has helped hundreds of refugees. In 1989 the church sponsored 180 refugees, and over the next two years, the church expects to help over 1,000 more.

"I shall not refuse anybody," Bao says, "even if the number comes to the thousands, because that's the spirit of Jesus Christ. He said, 'If I am a stranger, you welcome me in.' Who are we to refuse those who are suffering?"

The church's job begins when the refugees arrive in Los Angeles. Pastor Bao arranges for someone to meet the newcomers at the airport and helps them find a place to live. Volunteers help the new arrivals apply for a social security card, register their children for school, learn English, and find jobs. Within two months, most refugees are living on their own and working. Pastor Bao estimates that about half of them continue attending church.

"After we help them, they can go anywhere they want," he explains. "But during the time we help them we have a chance to tell them about the love of God."

And not only to tell them, but to show them. "Christianity is *visible*," Bao says. "That's the difference between Jesus Christ and Buddha. We want people to see the presence of God in our lives."

Bao, like every refugee, has his own story. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in the mountains of Vietnam. He attended seminary and was a pastor until 1975, when communists occupied Saigon. Bao escaped by boat with his 5-year-old son to a refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia,

where he started a church and school.

Bao lives simply, much as the newly arrived refugees do. Although his wife and four children make for a full house, he often offers his couch and living-room floor to recent arrivals until housing can be found.

"When refugees come here," Bao explains, "they have lost everything. They need a friend. That's why we want to live like them—not because we can't do better, but so the refugees won't feel like they can't sit down because they will make the chair dirty.

"At the Saigon church," he says, "we've created the atmosphere of one family in Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the family and all of us are brothers and sisters."

One Czechoslovakian refugee, Nicola, wasn't looking for a new family. He expected the American life—the way he had seen it on television. He envisioned a sponsor who would "provide, provide, provide," Pastor Bao recalls; a sponsor who would provide a big house and a car. After arriving in Los Angeles, Nikola felt cheated, and he shook his fist in the faces of his sponsors.

"Explain to him," Bao told an interpreter, "that I love him and I want to help him resettle and have a better life here. But he must remember that life here isn't like you see on television. He must come back to reality."

Three hours later, Nikola understood more about the church that doesn't say no to anyone. He thanked Pastor Bao with a long hug.

As the only full-time staff member at Saigon church, Bao shoulders most of the work. His commitment reflects his keenly felt awareness that he is living on borrowed time.

"I consider myself dead already," he explains. "Bao already dead in jail in Vietnam. Bao dead on the way to escaping. Two hundred thousand people died at sea, but I survived. For what? For Christ. We live today for Jesus Christ and for our neighbor."

A lot of people have asked how he has kept up this work for so long. "The more you are close to the poor people," he answers, "the more you are close to God. I look at the refugee people and see Jesus Christ in them. I pray that God gives me a blind eye and a deaf ear in order that I may not see anything else, or listen to anyone else, but see only Jesus Christ and listen only to his voice." □

Brenda Spoelstra is a writer and editor in Pasadena, Calif.



Peter Shair / World Vision
Pastor Nguyen Bao

For more
information contact
Saigon Christian
Reformed Church,
10321 Bolsa Ave.,
Westminster,
CA 92683

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
HELPING OTHERS
IN THE NAME
OF CHRIST

Compiled and written
by Ginger Hope

THE URBANA AGENDA

Urbana means missions. Such is the renown of InterVarsity's biennial student mission convention that the word Urbana, like the word Woodstock, is no longer just the name of a town. It's a loaded word symbolizing a whole set of shared experiences. Car-, van-, and busloads of students stream to the Champaign/Urbana campus of the University of Illinois during their Christmas break, and few leave without pondering their



role in Christian missions. God only knows—literally—how many missionaries look back to Urbana as a turning point.

High on the Urbana '90 agenda are global trends that will dictate missions methods into the next century: urbanization, Third World population growth, and an increasing number of "creative access countries" (countries where traditional missionaries are denied visas).

For information on Urbana '90, to be held December 27-31, contact InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 7895, 6400 Schroeder Road, Madison, WI 53707-7895; (608) 274-7995.

CAN THE WORLD AFFORD ITS CHILDREN?

Almost 40,000 children around the world die each day from easily preventable causes: diarrhea, malnutrition, common childhood diseases for which vaccinations are available. In the 1990 edition of *The State of the World's Children*, the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF estimates that most of these deaths could be prevented at a cost of \$2.5 billion a year.

How much is \$2.5 billion a year?

- As much as the world spends on the military *every day*.
- Only 2 percent of the Third World's own yearly military spending;
- As much as people in the Soviet Union spend on vodka in a month;
- As much as U.S. companies spend in a year to advertise cigarettes;
- As much as the Third World pays

\$2.5 BILLION
A
YEAR



each week to service its debt.

It's strange to think that the world cannot afford to prevent the deaths of its young children, writes UNICEF's executive director, James P. Grant.

THE EYES HAVE IT

Optomist Jeffrey Allgeier and his wife, Marianne, saw with their own eyes the need for corrective lenses among the poor in Zaire. They started an eye clinic in Karawa, Zaire, in the mid-1980s, training Zairean nurses to do simple eye surgeries and fit eyeglasses. Now the Allgeiers collect used eyeglasses in the United States and send them to their successor at the clinic, who says he sometimes gives out 1,000 pair in a month, especially when a mobile optometry



team goes out to surrounding villages.

Used eyeglasses, especially sturdy ones in good condition, may be shipped to the Allgeiers at 1385 Wimbledon Drive, Auburn, CA 95603.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SAKAI

SEEDY CHARACTERS, STEP FORWARD!

Applications are available for the second annual Mustard Seed Awards, celebrating innovative Christian ministry among the poor. One of the \$5,000 awards is earmarked for an individual church and the other for a joint venture of two or more churches.



The judging committee will look for good use of church members as volunteers and a focus on causes of need rather than symptoms. Last year's winner was the Noon Day Ministry, a day shelter for the homeless run by the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

For applications contact LOVE INC., P.O. Box 1616, Holland, MI 49422; (616) 392-8277. Collect calls are accepted.

“Christians are called to a love that is universal. All people, rich or poor, are entitled to our love, but those whose need is the greatest, namely the poor, have a preferential claim on our love. We must help them first.
*Gregory Baum in
Compassion & Solidarity:
The Church for Others*



“And they all lived happily ever after.”

This story has a happy ending. But it began as a headache for John Franklin. When his father died it took years to settle the estate. And it cost a lot in taxes and probate fees. So just as soon as his father's affairs were settled, John and his wife placed most of their assets in a Revocable Living Trust.

It was a smart move. He'll save money for his loved ones and keep them from the same kind of headache he had. For them it will be simpler, quicker, and cheaper.

So, as we said, “they all lived happily ever after.”

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YES please send me information on how a Revocable Living Trust can help me.

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FMG005

For a rambunctious few, weekends meant party time in my college dormitory. Liquor gushed in torrents. Intoxicated students sometimes bashed in doors, burned holes in the carpet, or demolished furniture in the study lounge.

When the semester ended, the residence hall director would figure the damages and charge each of us equally, whether we had been responsible or not. We innocents complained.

"Well, *somebody* has to pay," the dorm director said, "and you guys live here."

In many ways, that is what is happening to the poor in Latin America today. As political and drug-related brutality persists in at least half a dozen Latin countries, somebody has to

pay. And thousands of innocent people, people with no intentional role in the conflict, are paying dearly—just because they live there.

Several years ago I visited a refugee family in a dusty squatter settlement outside Lima, Peru. The Quechua (native Indian) woman with three young children told why she had left her home in Ayacucho, one of the poorest regions in Peru.

Maoist Shining Path terrorists had arrived in Ayacucho, using fear and savagery to recruit followers. Next

came government troops, zealous to squash the guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers.

Like many others, this woman fled with her children from the unprotected rural area to the relative safety of a bigger city. In Lima the

Latin American
violence is a hungry
villain, and ...

SOME BODY HAS TO PAY

BY JOHN MAUST

These Nicaraguan women demonstrate against the disappearance of family members. Disappearances related to political violence are common in many Latin American countries. In 1987, 587 people disappeared in Colombia alone.



the family started over in a one-room hut with newspaper for wallpaper. There are few people poorer than those in Ayacucho, where Andean peasants farm arid mountain plots for about \$50 a year. But somehow the violence impoverished this family even more.

The rural poor in northern Colombia face a similar dilemma. "They either have to cooperate with guerrillas or the drug mafia, or they have to move out," says missionary Nick Woodbury. "If they leave for the city, they have no place to live, no job, nothing but what's on their backs. Their problem doesn't get any better—it is just transplanted from one place to another."

The violence leaves many families fragmented. Conflict between guerrillas and the government in Guatemala during the late 1970s and early 1980s killed so many men in the highlands that much of a generation was wiped

out, says William D. Taylor, co-author of *Crisis in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective*. "The results are hundreds, maybe even thousands of widows and fatherless children," he says.

In Peru's Ayacucho region, where Shining Path began its prolonged "people's war" in 1980, there may be 26,000 orphans and 100 more every month, according to one service agency.

Refugee families are also often divided when parents must separate to find work. The children may be forced to live on the streets.

Another way the violence exacts a price from the poor is in economic damage. In the guerrillas' efforts to destabilize governments, they have destroyed oil pipelines, farms, factories, bridges, roads, and power plants.

Shining Path guerrillas in Peru demolished almost 200 high-tension

The violence sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity.

electrical towers during the first 10 months of 1989, shutting down factories and causing more than \$400 million in damage. Peruvian Senator Enrique Bernalles warned that because of the country's terrorism, "we are reaching a truly ruinous situation, which may result in business closings, massive layoffs, and paralysis of exports."

Violence has so destabilized the economies of many Latin countries that banks and multinational firms will no longer risk heavy investments in them. Similarly, tourists stop going. Who's vacationing in El Salvador these days? In all, lack of foreign invest-

LATIN HOTSPOTS

El Salvador: The 10-year-old civil war between FMLN rebels and government forces continues, with the death toll at 70,000 and still rising.

Nicaragua: Fighting between Contra forces and the Sandinista government (claiming 50,000 to 60,000 casualties) ended, but it is still unclear whether lasting peace is within reach.

Guatemala: Thousands died in the late 1970s and early 1980s in left-wing and right-wing political violence. The killings, which declined after the 1985 election of President Vinicio Cerezo, began increasing again in 1989.

Panama: The U.S. military invasion in December 1989 achieved its goal, ousting Manuel Noriega, but it also left thousands homeless, scores dead, and an estimated \$1 billion in damages. Economic sanctions imposed by the United States in 1987, in an effort to bring down Noriega, succeeded only in devastating the country's economy, according to Ambler Moss, former U.S. ambassador to Panama.

Colombia: Guerrillas from several leftist groups (M-19, FARC, ELN) use violence and terrorism in efforts to change their society. But the drug mafias are largely to blame for making homicide the leading cause of death among adult males in Colombia.

Peru: An estimated 15,000 have died in the 10-year conflict between Maoist Shining Path guerrillas and government forces.

John Maust

KEVIN MC KIERNAN





ments and tourism means fewer jobs.

And when rural peasants flee for their lives, leaving behind homes, property, and livestock, land goes uncultivated and cities feel the shortage of agricultural products.

Then there's the brain drain of professionals and skilled workers who flee their countries for safer and richer pastures. Almost 150,000 Peruvians moved out during 1988, and emigration from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Colombia is also heavy.

Many of these Latin American emigres come to the United States, where things don't always get much better. In a conversational English class I teach at a church in Miami, one night I asked for prayer requests. Almost every student began to weep.

The class includes a young Nicaraguan veterinarian whose husband was killed in the Contra war. Now she works as a housekeeper. With two small sons to support, she recently remarried—mostly out of necessity, she says. She suffered added trauma when her 10-year-old son was abused by a janitor at his school.

Another student fled her village in Guatemala when guerrillas tried to force her to join them. A Colombian man at the church sold his business in Barranquilla when the drug mafia threatened him for not allowing the use of his factory dock as a shipment point. The man's business ventures in the United States have failed.

These emigres left behind the widespread violence of Latin America, and they left behind much that they loved. But one thing many of them couldn't shake off at the border was deep insecurity.

Violence is a hungry villain. Not only does it rob people of life and property, it sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity. In some places this insecurity means never going to the corner store without an ID card, because police suspect anyone without documents. It means making every trip downtown with the fear of bombs and shootings. It may mean not stopping at a red light for fear that hit men will pull alongside and let loose a machine gun burst. It means parents keeping their sons off the streets or sending them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

Latin America is no stranger to violence. Throughout the region's history, oppressive regimes have used torture and repression to intimidate and control their people. In Colombia, for example, an estimated 200,000 people

died during a brutal 14-year period known as *La Violencia*, touched off by the assassination of a presidential candidate in 1948.

Unjust economic systems and a wide gap between the very rich and the very poor have given rise to many violent revolutions in Latin America. Before being ousted in 1979 by the Sandinistas, former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was regarded as Central America's richest man. He reportedly owned one-fifth of all Nicaraguan farmland, and he was part owner of 168 factories—one-fourth of the national industrial economy.

Yet as poverty has given rise to violence, violence has also aggravated poverty. Leftist guerrillas often launch violent campaigns with the professed intent of helping the poor. But typically the poor suffer most.

There is a common pattern: Guerrillas arrive in an area and command the population to join or support them.

Left: Parents must often keep their sons off the street or send them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

Below: The evangelical church has spread rapidly throughout Latin America. Hundreds of Christians recently met in the San Martin Plaza in Lima, Peru, to pray for an end to that country's terrorism and violence.

Three people died in this Nicaraguan village following a battle during that country's civil war. The war helped ruin Nicaragua's economy and impoverish its people, considered among the poorest in the hemisphere.



SAMUEL NIEVA / LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELIST



WILL SPONSORSHIP MAKE HIM DEPENDENT?

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■ It also means helping the child's community—because if the community's cycle of poverty remains unbroken, a child may never escape it.

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■ When we meet those goals, a child is dependent on only one thing: love.

■ Please share yours by becoming a sponsor today.

A CHILD CAN DEPEND ON MY LOVE!

Please send me a photo and story today of a boy girl from Africa Asia Latin America where the need is greatest.

Enclosed is my first monthly \$24 payment.

I can't sponsor a child right now, but would like to contribute \$ _____ 1700 A80WSM

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Please make your check payable to World Vision.

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WORLD VISION Childcare Sponsorship
Pasadena, CA 91131

They burn out, run out, or wipe out anyone who doesn't.

Then government soldiers arrive hunting for terrorist sympathizers. Suspects are hauled away for such "crimes" as feeding a guerrilla, even if it was done at gunpoint. In Latin America, detainees are guilty until proven innocent. Suspects often wait months or even years for trial—or simply "disappear."

Guillermo Diaz (not his real name) ran a small business in Huncavelica Department in Peru, an area of intense conflict between the Shining Path and government troops. In an apparent case of mistaken identity, police one day hauled Diaz, a devout Christian, to jail as a suspected terrorist.

Diaz says the police ransacked and looted his house looking for evidence, then repeatedly beat and interrogated him. His wife paid a fortune in lawyer's fees and lost money to corrupt police, who suggested bribes would obtain her

Peru is so desperate that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond.

husband's release.

Later Diaz was taken to the capital city, where he was thrown into Lurigancho prison. During his years in prison, Diaz saw his house mortgaged, his business ruined, and his possessions pawned. His wife left him, and he lost contact with his five children.

Diaz says he lost everything except his faith in God. Countless other victims lack even that. Yet many Latin Americans testify that the plague of violence is stimulating new interest in spiritual matters and hunger for God.

Reynaldo Aragon, Jr., a journalist in Lima, Peru, was chatting with a colleague about Peru's dismal economic and political situation. The friend half-asked, half-demanded, "How can you be so happy all the time?"

"Because I know Jesus loves me," Aragon said, "and he loves you too."

Tears formed in the other journalist's eyes. He asked to know more.

Aragon says, "There's so much desperation in Peru right now, that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond."

In El Salvador, evangelical churches added 300,000 new members just between 1980 and 1985—the early years of the civil war. There had been only

100,000 new members in the entire previous decade.

In Nicaragua, more than 20,000 people said they received Christ during a recent nationwide evangelistic effort, according to the Costa Rica-based International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth.

Bible sales have soared in places like Peru's Ayacucho region, where terrorism is rampant. Within six weeks of the September 1987 release of the Ayacucho Quechua-language Bible, all 10,000 copies were sold. People wept and pled for more copies, so the United Bible Societies ordered a second printing of 20,000. These too ran out in a matter of weeks, and a third printing of 20,000 was ordered.

Many Latin American Christians, despite their own limited resources, are also increasingly meeting the physical needs of victims of violence.

In 1984, Peru's Peace and Hope Commission helped relocate more than 25 refugee families from Ayacucho to San Martin Department, where they started a new colony.

A founding member of the Peace and Hope Commission, Donato Palomino, felt drawn to a 6-year-old Ayacucho boy who had watched terrorists murder his parents and was found trembling in a hole. Terrified of adult strangers, the boy never-the-less warmed up to Palomino. The Palomino family eventually adopted Jorge.

A missionary in Lima, Peru, recently described in a prayer letter the seemingly hopeless poverty and violence around her. Then she noted that church members, rather than being demoralized, were out feeding the poor and evangelizing.

It's amazing to see the strong spirit of the Christians—not bending or giving in to depression in the face of these overwhelming difficulties," she wrote. "In contrast, they are doubling their efforts to give out the news of hope. What a great transformation Christ makes in a life!"

For the open wounds of Latin America's poverty and violence, the church is proving to be an increasingly potent salve. But the wounds still seem overwhelming, the suffering insurmountable. And until the violence ends, the poor will continue paying the price for Latin America's violence. After all, somebody has to pay. □

John Maust is editor of Latin America Evangelist magazine in Miami, Fla.

THE COLD FIST OF LOVE

PHOTOS BY RANDY MILLER / WORLD VISION

They could have kicked him out of town. Some of them wanted to, after what he did. But where would he go? San Bernardo, a town of 600 people south of Quito, Ecuador, was the only home he knew. In a community that small, adultery is hard to hide.

The incident nearly crushed him. It could have, if it hadn't been for his own resolve to reassemble the fragments of his life. But it took something more. It was that extra something that helped him put his life back together, and started him on a course that would renew and deepen his commitment to God.

"Three things touched my heart during that time," Jose Manuel Quishpe Pilamunga says. Draped in a red poncho, he's sitting in the tiny wood-frame home he built eight years ago for his family of seven. "The first was the forgiveness and dedication of my wife. I would not have made it without that. Second, the commitment of my pastor. He was available for me any time. If I needed to pray and hear Scripture at 4 a.m., he would be there.

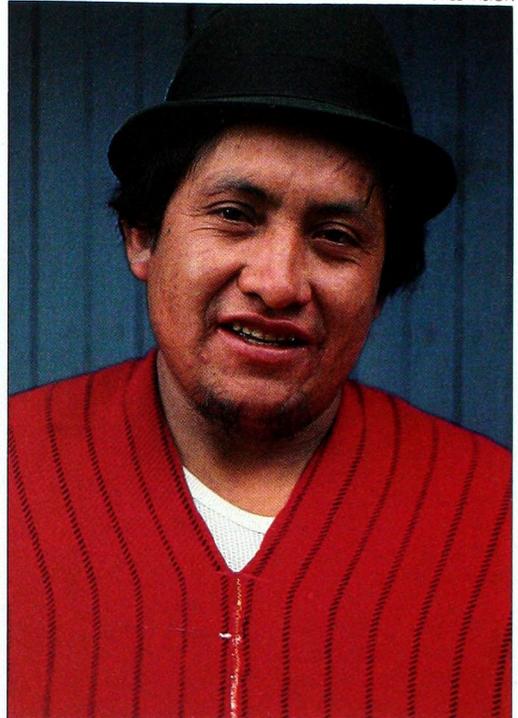
"The third thing was the support of my church and my community. I don't know if I would be here today if it had not been for that."

At first, the community's support felt more like a cold fist than a loving embrace, especially in light of his history with the church. Jose's parents were evangelical Christians, and he had been raised in the church. He received Christ at age 12 and was active in the church most of his life. He



had even been a deacon. So the severity of the church's action was sobering.

"The deacons and the pastor disciplined me," Jose says. "I resented that very much. I resented their actions and I resented the church and community. But looking back, I now realize that even



though their response was severe, it was done out of love. During that time of discipline, when I felt so resentful toward them, they were praying for me, hoping that I would come back to the Lord and ask forgiveness. They were open to me."

A year after the incident, Jose recommitted his life to the Lord. Then he began to understand the depth of his community's support for him. A year later, he was offered the job of church treasurer. The year after that, he was named secretary for the community council. The following year, vice president. Then, at last, president of the community council.

God worked through my pastor, my wife, my brothers in the church, and the community people who helped me," Jose says. "That was unconditional love. Through that experience I came to realize how much we all need to feel God's love and forgiveness.

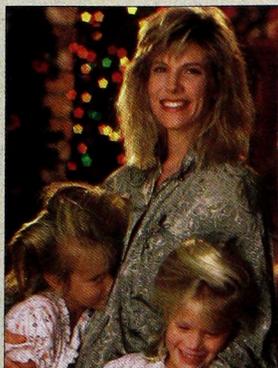
"For me, this incident is buried," he adds. "Each day that I speak to God, it's as though it never happened. I don't have any grudges or resentment. My wife and daughters don't say, 'Look what you did.'"

"But this thing has changed me. I now have a deeper understanding of the power of God, but also the love of God, and how that love is shown through my church and my community. It has really opened my eyes." □ *Randy Miller*

The church disciplined me, and I resented it. Now I know they did it out of love.

IS THERE ROOM AT YOUR TABLE FOR ONE MORE?

When we have big family get-togethers there are so many loved ones around the dinner table it's hard to find enough room for everybody! But it's so good to see everyone that it really doesn't matter how crowded it is...we can always find the extra space!



I've found that sponsoring a child is a worthwhile experience for my family — it teaches my children how to share and give to others.

Right now, there's a child waiting for someone like you to bring them the loving care they so desperately need.

Often, I look at my own four children sitting around the table, happy, healthy and well-fed, and I wonder how suffering children around the world can survive — children who face hunger, despair and hopelessness every day.

That's why I'm so grateful for World Vision — their Childcare Sponsorship program is providing hope for suffering children around the world.

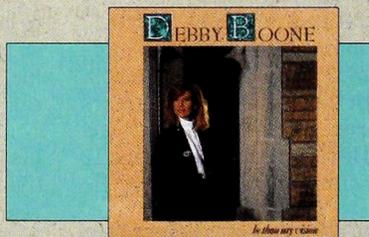
Each Childcare Sponsor gives a needy child things like food, medical care, clothing, shelter, and a Christian education. And the sponsor's support also helps the child's family and community. Best of all, a needy child is given the opportunity to know more about the love of Jesus Christ.

Childcare Sponsors also have the joy of developing personal relationships with their children by exchanging letters.

I invite you to join me in becoming a World Vision Sponsor today... and make "room at your table" for a suffering child.

*God bless you
Debby Boone*

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I Want to Make Room for a Needy Child!

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 - I understand that in appreciation for my sponsoring a child, I will receive Debby Boone's recording, "Be Thou My Vision." MAIL TODAY TO: 
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WORLD VISION®

August/September 1990

DON'T
THROW
BREAD
FROM THE
TRUCK

Violence in
Latin
America: **SOME-
BODY
HAS TO
PAY**

AMERASIANS:

STRANGERS

IN THEIR
FATHERS'
LAND

In Huancayo, Peru, an Indian woman passes a government soldier. Peru's 10-year war with the Maoist rebel group Shining Path has contributed to Peru's 17 billion dollar debt and hyper-inflation that totaled 2,775 percent in 1989. The poor and innocent have paid the highest price. (story on page 18)



©DAVID LEESON / DALLAS MORNING NEWS

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More than two years ago we developed a new magazine format through which to "inform, educate, prod and promote the church to its task of reconciliation." If mail or phone calls are any indication, you approve.

Recently we received other votes of approval. The Evangelical Press Association honored us with 5 awards, including its 1989 "Award of Excellence." Earlier, we received 7 awards from the Associated Church Press, including its 1989 "Award of Merit." Such affirmations have made our year!

Terry Madison

5

Strangers in Their Father's Land

Some of the American blood left behind in Vietnam is flowing through the veins of Amerasians, the children of American men and Vietnamese women. As they come of age, many Amerasians are coming to America—poorly equipped to adapt to life here and in need of someone who will finally claim them. For Christians, it's an opportunity to welcome the stranger among us.

12

Don't Throw Bread From the Truck

As a young migrant child trying to learn how to become one of the "real people," Billie Davis was already a sociologist-in-training. From the cotton fields to the gospels to the university, here's what she's learned about the kind of help that really helps people.

18

Somebody Has to Pay

As political and drug-related brutality persists in half a dozen Latin American countries, thousands of innocent people are paying dearly—just because they live there. Yet many Latin Americans testify that the plague of violence has stimulated hunger for God, and many Christians there are applying a potent salve to the raw wounds of fear and loss.

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UNDOING A FASHIONABLE GRUDGE

It was late in 1972. The city of Hanoi was under the most intense bombardment in the history of modern warfare. Wave after wave of B-52's discharged their deadly cargoes on a terrified city. The Paris Peace Talks had ruptured, and only a show of force would demonstrate our resolve to get our prisoners home.

That was Nixon's Christmas Bombing, a horrible punctuation mark to a most difficult chapter in American history. But within a month, our prisoners were home, the war for us was over, and the nation intentionally began to turn its collective conscience away from Indochina.

While we came home, Louang Tan remained—although he wasn't sure at times he'd have even that option. When the first bombs fell, he ran to a cave hollowed out beneath his home, and he stayed there, frozen in fear, until the eleventh day when a B-52 was shot down outside his home.

A quiet, reflective man now 76 years old, Louang Tan painstakingly told his story to a group of us on a recent visit. As he talked we gathered around the remains of one of the last planes shot down in the war, a twisted black hulk of an aircraft that came crashing down on December 27, 1972. It was obvious that the end of our war was not the end of his.

It was interesting how he fused the present with the past, almost as if the victims were still being created. He was also sensitive to the victims on both sides. "The war was meaningless. It only created victims—both American and Vietnamese. Vietnamese people are just like American people. We all suffer because of war."

Louang Tan encouraged us not to be silent. "The innocent people continue to cry out. There are more than we realize."

I thought of all the tears shed before The Wall, our monument to the war, grown men crying for something they couldn't articulate in any other way, the incredible sadness for innocence irreparably lost, the intensity of a deep pain that has yet to be reconciled. "Yes," I agreed, "there are more than we realize."

As a country we came home, but we were never allowed reconciliation with the small country that had claimed so much of our energy and our life. We offered no Marshall Plan this time. Graciousness is for winners. A grudge is more fashionable when you finish second. Diplomatic and economic isolation of Indochina became the order of the day.

For the American veteran, this was a devastating psychological blow.

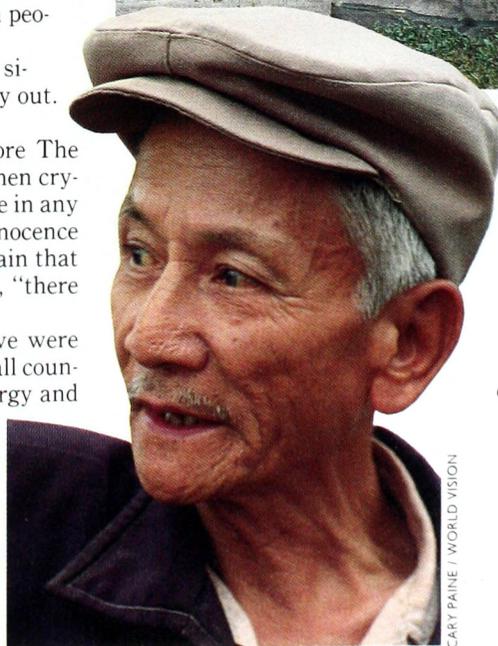
Healing comes from reconciliation. But those who returned from Vietnam learned that a war not worth winning is also a war not worth bringing to an end. The pain they brought home only increased in broken marriages, drugs, alcoholism, withdrawal, etc.

Louang Tan's words made so much sense: "We must relieve the pain of the victims."

As we stood there that day, Vietnamese children played around the crash sight. Their joyous young faces reflected the health of happiness. They had heard the story of the B-52 many times. They were reconciled to it and to the war that brought it. They held no animosity, not even any social sanctions. Strange, the innocent always seem to be first at reconciliation.

Would that we all could have a healthy outlet for the pain of war. Given the amount we sacrificed and the wounds that needed healing, we deserved a better ending. We earned a better homecoming.

We have been reconciled with many former enemies around the world. Why not Vietnam? Anything less continues to hurt the innocent on both sides of the Pacific. And they have already absorbed so much pain. □



"The innocent continue to cry out," said Louang Tan (left). "There are more than we realize."

CARY PAINE / WORLD VISION

We have been reconciled with many former enemies. Why not Vietnam?



As Amerasian war babies come of age, some of them are coming "home."

STRANGERS

When the last American helicopter pulled out of Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the end came quickly. **IN THEIR**

So quickly, in fact, that much was left behind. Personal belongings, war machines—and **FATHERS'** American

blood; sunbaked on the stained courtyard of the Temple of Harmony at Hue. Diluted in the **LAND** rivers of the Mekong

Delta. Shrouded beneath the brush of the Annamese Cordillera. But that is



PHILLIP JONES GRIFFITHS/MAGNUM

the blood of the dead, the blood of American men who are mourned and memorialized on a granite wall in Washington, D.C. Less remembered is the blood left behind in more than 30,000 living memorials called Amerasians: the children of American men, including servicemen and civilians, and Asian women.

For 20 years, many of them were the war's refuse, abandoned to the streets in Vietnam, unwanted in the

lish, and few job skills—most are ready to call the United States home.

In 1987, Congress adopted The Amerasian Homecoming Act. The act established a two-year period in which Amerasians born between Jan. 1, 1962 and Jan. 1, 1976, and their immediate families could enter the United States with immigration and refugee status.

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their family members were expected to leave Vietnam by the deadline of March 1990.

Actual resettlement figures, however, fell far below those estimates.

The deadline has since been extended until October 1990, although no additional funding has been allocated for the program.

While many hail the Amerasian Homecoming Act as long-overdue compassion, others criticize it for being too little, too late.

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"All too many of the Amerasians we are working with are poorly equipped—socially, educationally, and psychologically—to make the kind of adjustment and eventual adaptation to life in America that most of us would judge to be adequate," says J. Kirk Felsman, a Dartmouth Medical School professor and one of the foremost authorities on Amerasian resettlement.

Without additional support to help Amerasians achieve a reasonable degree of economic and emotional self-sufficiency, many may fall into a cycle of poverty, gang membership, and welfare dependency," Felsman says. "The Homecoming Act remains myopic, being almost exclusively focused on expediting emigration. It contains little balance of attention and virtually no fiscal allocation to address the hard human issues of actual resettlement."

Indeed the legislation seems inadequate to facilitate healthy, positive resettlement. After undergoing a six-month crash course in American living at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Bataan, 75 percent of Amerasians and their families are assigned to one of approximately 50 "cluster sites" in cities across the country.

The State Department selected the cluster sites based on local agencies interested in helping resettle the refugees, as well as access to special ser-



United States. While this country sought the remains of its MIAs, it ignored the lives of its children.

But no more. Today Americans are slowly embracing almost 6,500 Amerasians, and thousands more are expected to immigrate. And despite substantial barriers—emotional scars, limited education or knowledge of Eng-

INNOCENT VICTIMS

When the American presence in Vietnam ended, thousands of half-American, half-Asian children did not follow their fathers home," states a report issued by the United States Catholic Conference. "The American public wanted to forget Vietnam; in the process, we also forgot the 'Amerasian' children."

Three-fourths of those children are now 17 years old, just one year younger than the age at which many of their fathers were drafted into military service. For most of those years, while Americans struggled to reconcile their personal and corporate ambivalence over Vietnam, Amerasians waged a war of their own.

Born into one of the most ethnically pure societies in the world, many

Amerasians are burdened with a double stigma. Not only do they have tainted blood—seen in their distinctly American physical features—they are also a living reminder to the Vietnamese of their own painful losses in the war.

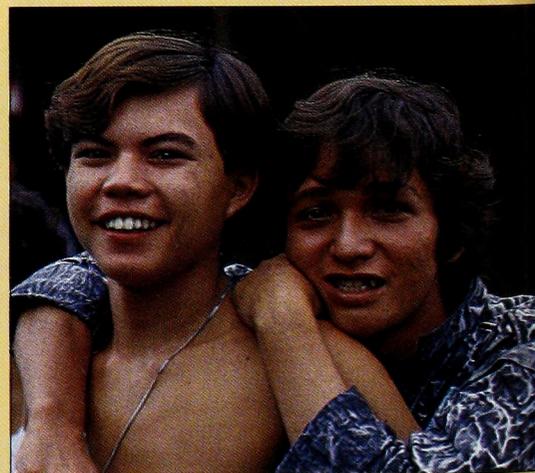
Once Communist forces seized control of the country, mothers of Amerasian children feared reprisals from the Viet Cong for having slept with the enemy. There were whispers of torture, mass executions, and labor camps called New Economic Zones.

Many of the mothers wanted to flee with their children, but because of severed diplomatic ties with the West, emigration was impossible. And clandestine flight to another country was too risky. More creative survival tactics became necessary. "I dyed my daugh-

ter's hair black, put soot on her face and cut off her eyelashes," the mother of one Amerasian child recalls. "And I kept her hidden under a blanket all the time in the house."

Despite the rumors, however, the Communists never enacted an official

TERRY MADISON / WORLD VISION



VICES, such as after-school tutoring programs, counseling, job training, employment opportunities, and affordable housing.

The government, however, only allocates \$525 per Amerasian to cover food, rent, clothing, and other living expenses for the first three months. Another federal agency has earmarked \$1.5 million for resettlement assistance, but that money must be divided among the 50 cluster sites. And after 90 days, the Amerasians and their families are on their own, most of them ending up on welfare.

Lack of funding is just one of the obstacles the Amerasians face. When they arrive in this country, they are also ill-equipped for success in school or in the marketplace.

"As many as 15 percent of the Amerasians we have sampled have had no formal education and up to 75 percent have had less than four years of schooling," Felsman says. "The majority are virtually illiterate in Vietnamese and arrived with no transferable job skills."

In some cluster sites, the dropout rate among Amerasian students is as high as 60 percent. While teens undergo an intensive training program called

As many as 50,000 Amerasians and their families could immigrate to the United States by the October 1990 deadline of The Amerasian Homecoming Act.

policy of retribution. But unofficially, many Amerasians were scorned. "My Amerasian daughter was terribly sick, vomiting blood," one mother said. "The hospital refused to treat her, saying, 'She is American. Let the Americans cure her!'"

Many mothers of Amerasians were blocked from decent-paying jobs and had to resort to street vending to keep their children alive. Teachers and classmates often taunted the Amerasian children with *my lai* ("half breed"). Some Amerasians lived as destitute street urchins, whom the Vietnamese call *bui dai* ("the dust of life"); they have grown up begging or rummaging through trash for discards to sell.

"I think if anyone can be viewed as truly innocent victims of that war, it would be the kids who face terrible discrimination simply because their faces are a painful reminder of that bitter and devious war," says Rep. Robert Mrazck, co-sponsor of the Amerasian Homecoming Act in 1987.

Preparation for American Secondary Schools at the Philippine processing center, it cannot compensate for their educational deficiencies.

Their difficulty in adapting to U.S. culture is further underscored in a 1984 survey (updated in 1988) by the United States Catholic Conference, the largest resettlement agency in the United States. Almost one in five Amerasians had been in trouble with the law or had other serious disciplin-

ary problems, such as truancy, prostitution, and fighting.

Though the Amerasians' plight in the United States may be discouraging, their difficulties are an opportunity for the church to welcome in the stranger.

Every pastor gets anxious to be involved in missions at one time or another," says Paul Bullard, pastor of the Grace Evangelical Methodist Church in Phoe-

JON WARREN



nix, Ariz., and one of about 25 Christian mentors to local Amerasian teens. "I give money and pray, but I've never been overseas. For me this was an opportunity to get involved in cross-cultural missions without leaving home."

In late 1989, World Vision and Christian agencies in Phoenix and Portland, Ore.—both designated cluster sites—began pairing Amerasians with Christian mentors like Paul Bullard. In 1990, World Vision has expanded the Amerasian Mentor program to 25 cluster sites and expects to have 1,000 matches by year's end.

The goal of the program is four-fold: to expose Amerasians to the positive aspects of U.S. life and culture; to provide encouragement and moral support; to provide help in learning the new language; and to reveal Christ to the Amerasians and their families.

Having a mentor helps save an Amerasian four or five years in understanding what's going on in the culture," says Welch Hill of Catholic Social Services, World Vision's primary partner agency in Phoenix. "They get beyond the fear barrier that naturally comes from being thrust into a new culture. This program helps build their confidence that they can make it."

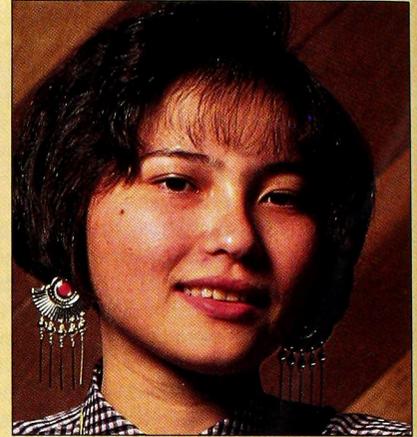
LOOKING FOR FATHER

I don't know who my father was," says Trang Thi Thuy Lam, 17-year-old Amerasian girl living in Phoenix. "I went to Alabama and asked a friend to help me, but we didn't find him. The United States is very big."

Fewer than 2 percent of Amerasian children are ever reunited with their fathers. A 1987 survey conducted at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center revealed that 60 percent of the Amerasians hoped to reunite with their fathers. Only 8.4 percent, however, had any information about them, and sometimes that was nothing more than a yellowed photograph.

Lack of information is not the only

obstacle. According to the Amerasian Registry and the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, which assists children of mixed American and Asian heritage, fewer than 500 American G.I.s have made



© JEFF TOPPING

Mentors in the program are recruited and trained members of local churches. "There's not been any problem in finding mentors. Churches in the area are crying out for opportunities to minister," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program

JON WARREN

coordinator in Phoenix. "We can turn people on to the ministry quickly. But helping them understand cross-cultural differences—that's a challenge."

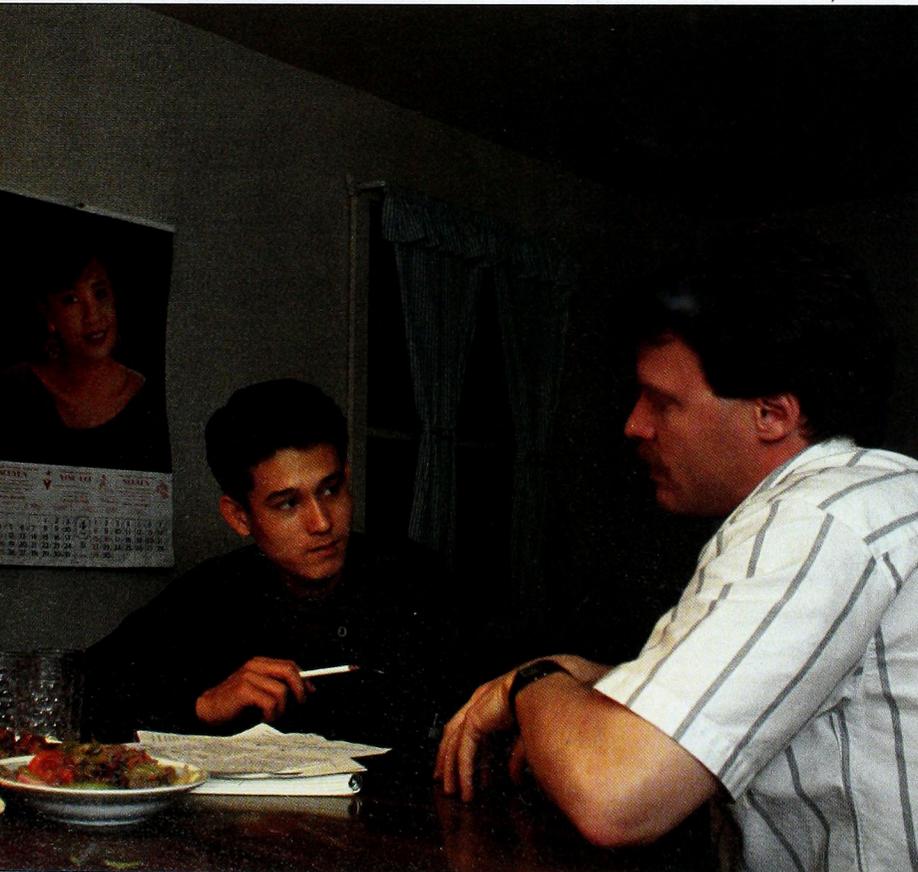
Amerasian behavior can seem peculiar to Americans. When a reporter in Seattle approached 17-year-old Vu Mau Nguyn Bang, the teen locked himself in his bedroom, terrified of answering any questions. Later, Vu's stepfather explained that, for years, Vu's family had been harassed and interrogated by Communist officials.

One person Vu does not shy away from is his mentor, Roy Atwood, a legislative aide for Sen. Slade Gorton. Usually the two spend several hours together on Sundays. They review English lessons, kick around a soccer ball, or visit places like the local aquarium. (Mentors are asked to invest two hours each week with their Amerasian friends, for a period of six months.)

"I have to have patience and not give up," Roy says. "I made a six-month commitment to Vu. It will take more time for him to feel comfortable. I want Vu to see that someone really does care. I pray that he will see God's love in action."

Recently two other American sponsors, Paul and Lois Lindberg, took Cuong Van Nguyen out boating in Washington's Puget Sound. At one point, the engine refused to start, and Cuong's heart sputtered. Three years ago he

The four goals of the Amerasian Mentor program are to expose Amerasians to U.S. life, encourage and support them, help them learn English, and reveal Christ to them.



official inquiries about their Amerasian children.

"For most Amerasians, the search is very frustrating," says E. Glenn Rogers, international program director for the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. "Few are able to find the father, and those who do may be in for a disappointment because the father does not love them."

"The father figure is very strong in Vietnamese culture," says Mark Thompson, World Vision's Amerasian program coordinator in Phoenix. "Amerasians need to find out who their father is to help them establish some sense of identity. They need the contact to give their lives credibility."

That's the case with Trang. "It's been 18 years already. A lot of people have fathers. Not me. I don't want him to give me money or help me. I just want to know who he is."

was one of 65 Vietnamese refugees packed in a 28-foot boat. The prop broke en route to Malaysia. Once adrift 500 yards from the Vietnamese shore, Cuong swam to temporary safety. Eventually he was arrested and held prisoner for almost two years, alternating between solitary confinement and hard labor.

Today Cuong lives with the Lindbergs and their three children in Renton, Wash. Cuong helps in the garden and repairs family bicycles.

How do his mentors help Cuong look at the future realistically? "I try to go step by step with him so he can see what his decisions about things, like where to live and how much to spend, will really mean in a culture that's still foreign to him."

"Because of the time limit on the Amerasian Homecoming Act, World Vision's Amerasian mentoring program will be phased out in a few years," Mark Thompson says. "But the world climate dictates that we monitor and refine this program very carefully. Each day there are refugees coming to America from every part of the world. We have to become good at this."

World Vision President Robert Seiple underlines the need for Christians to help refugees in the United States, particularly Amerasians. "Vietnam doesn't need new missionaries,"

World Vision and Catholic Social Services support a job training and placement effort for 30 Amerasians in Phoenix, Ariz.



Seiple says. "They just need an affirming worldwide church.

"If [the Amerasians'] orientation is not sensitively done and does not carry a strong Christian component, they have the potential to be the homeless, the jobless, the hungry of the very near future.

"I see this particular group of refugees as a living bridge of reconciliation between the United States and

Vietnam. Vietnamese and American blood exist together in these people. Our two countries are inextricably linked and, as we reconcile the Amerasian issue, perhaps we have a chance at a larger reconciliation between people and before God." □

John Wierick is a screen writer in Montrose, Calif. Mark Cutshall is a freelance writer in Seattle, Wash.

WORLD'S LONGEST

The phone call from Colombia, South America, came at 5:30 in the morning. Jack and Mary Anne Voelkel, missionaries in Colombia, were calling to ask for prayer. A young woman named Amy had come to them on the brink of suicide, full of self-hate and anger. They were going to fast and pray for her healing. Would we join them?

The room seemed charged when I relayed the request to a group who met weekly to pray at my church in Minneapolis, Minn. Sensing the urgency of the need, we were soon on our knees. Although it was taking place 4,000 miles away, we felt involved in this life-and-death battle for a woman we had never seen.

In the days that followed we continued to pray. Others joined us. Some fasted, some prayed over the telephone, others prayed around the breakfast table or before bed.

A week later another call came. Amy was free! God had broken through the pain of her bitterness and hurt. She was a new woman. In Bogota and Minneapolis, Christians on two continents rejoiced in the answered prayer.

Amy's healing came through a critical partnership: missionaries facing spiritual conflict head-on, and an army of intercessors supporting them in prayer. "If two people agree on earth about anything they ask," Jesus promised, "it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

The people who prayed for Amy are part of a support team that has backed the Voelkels for five years. Besides praying daily for this missionary family, they are "on call," ready to pray for emergency requests such as the one for Amy.

This is just the kind of support team the Voelkels asked for. The kind of prayer they had in mind was not casual or occasional—a sentence or

two when a missionary's photo tacked on the refrigerator happens to catch an eye—but active participation.

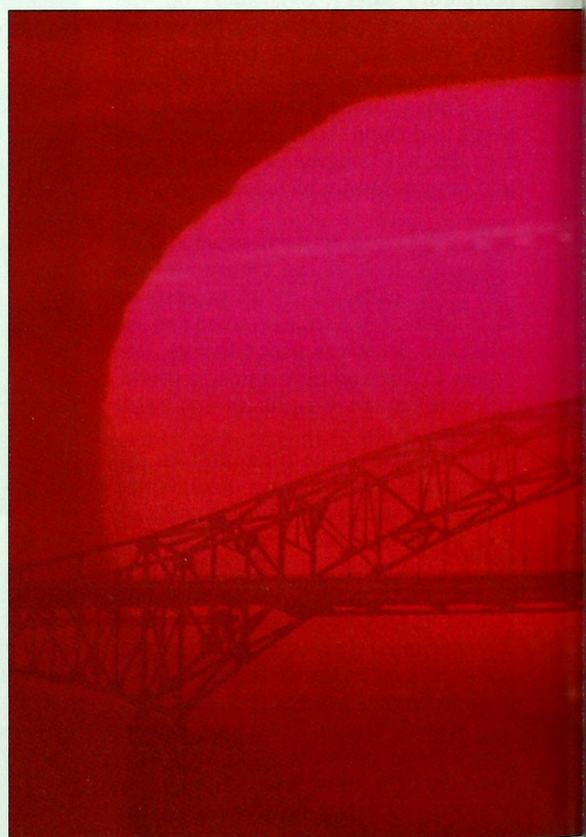
"I wanted to pick up the phone and ask for prayer at a moment's notice," Mary Anne says. After 20 years as missionaries, the Voelkels knew they needed supernatural help to overcome the resistance that thwarted their work. Spreading the gospel and healing the deep wounds in people's hearts was work that called for deep spiritual resources.

When the Voelkels asked me to head the team, I had just finished reading Evelyn Christianson's book *What Happens When Women Pray* and I was eager to test what I'd read. Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Could you actually pray for specific answers? Is it really possible to pray relevantly from such a distance? The Voelkels' prayer support team was a chance to find out.

Jack and Mary Anne felt the impact of our prayers immediately. Burdens that used to crush them suddenly seemed lifted. They felt strength-

Matters for Prayer

- ◆ **Remember the children** of American G.I.s left behind in Vietnam after the war, and the hard life that is their legacy (pages 5-9).
- ◆ **Praise God** for bringing about spiritual renewal amid widespread violence in Latin America (pages 12-15).
- ◆ **Ask God** to teach you more about helping the needy in a way that respects them as persons (pages 18-20).
- ◆ **Thank God for** the way Pastor Bao and the Saigon Christian Reformed Church (page 21) make refugees welcome, not refusing anyone.



BRIDGE

BY BETSY LEE

Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

ened, energized; their work grew more effective. Obstacles that once seemed insurmountable disappeared or were circumvented.

"I can feel the difference when people pray," Mary Anne says. "It's the difference between living in freedom and living under siege."

We saw answers to prayer unlike any we had experienced before. Once, we prayed for protection for the Voelkels' co-workers and their families in terror-torn Colombia. In 1985, one co-worker's family member was among a dozen judges gunned down by terrorists. Miraculously, this one man survived. He had a wooden leg, and a bullet hit that leg and knocked him down. The attackers assumed he was dead. When the siege was over, this man was the only judge rescued as the building went up in flames.

Not many of our answered prayers were as sensational as that one, and not many requests were as urgent as the early-morning phone call. Usually our prayers were quiet and persistent. Many of them involved families torn by conflict, marriages close to divorce, individuals such as

Amy lashing out at themselves.

We all knew people struggling with the same things. What we learned praying for the Colombians, we began to use to help bring healing to our own families, neighborhoods, and church. People's prayer lives deepened; spiritual gifts were developed. Empowered by what we experienced, our church of stiff, reticent Presbyterians began to share our faith. Missions, which had been distant and vague in our minds, became real and relevant. We became personally involved in missionaries' lives.

Besides growing to ten times its original size, the Voelkel team spawned four more prayer groups for other missionaries. More than half the congregation is involved.

Now I have some answers to my experimental questions about prayer. Can you pray for specific answers? Without a doubt. Again and again Mary Anne said, "Your prayers were answered word for word." Is there greater power in praying together rather than alone? Yes. A team of intercessors is more complete. Each person has certain gifts, such as the ability to discern what to pray for, or the persistence to keep praying, or the ability to encourage, affirm, and promote unity.

Is distance a barrier? Not to God. Prayer spans distance, time, culture, and language.

James Fraser attributed the success of his ministry in China to the persistent prayers of friends in England: "I am feeling more and more that it is, after all, the prayers of God's people that call down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. If this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field." □

Betsy Lee is a free-lance writer in Bloomington, Minn.

Most of our problems with prayer arise from our tendency to turn spiritual growing into a set of laws or a gymnastic exercise. For it is a relationship and not primarily a discipline.

Flora Slosson Wuellner
in *Prayer, Stress, & Our Inner Wounds*

SUPERSTOCK



When I was a little girl, the word migrant didn't exist yet. We were "bums" and "fruit tramps."

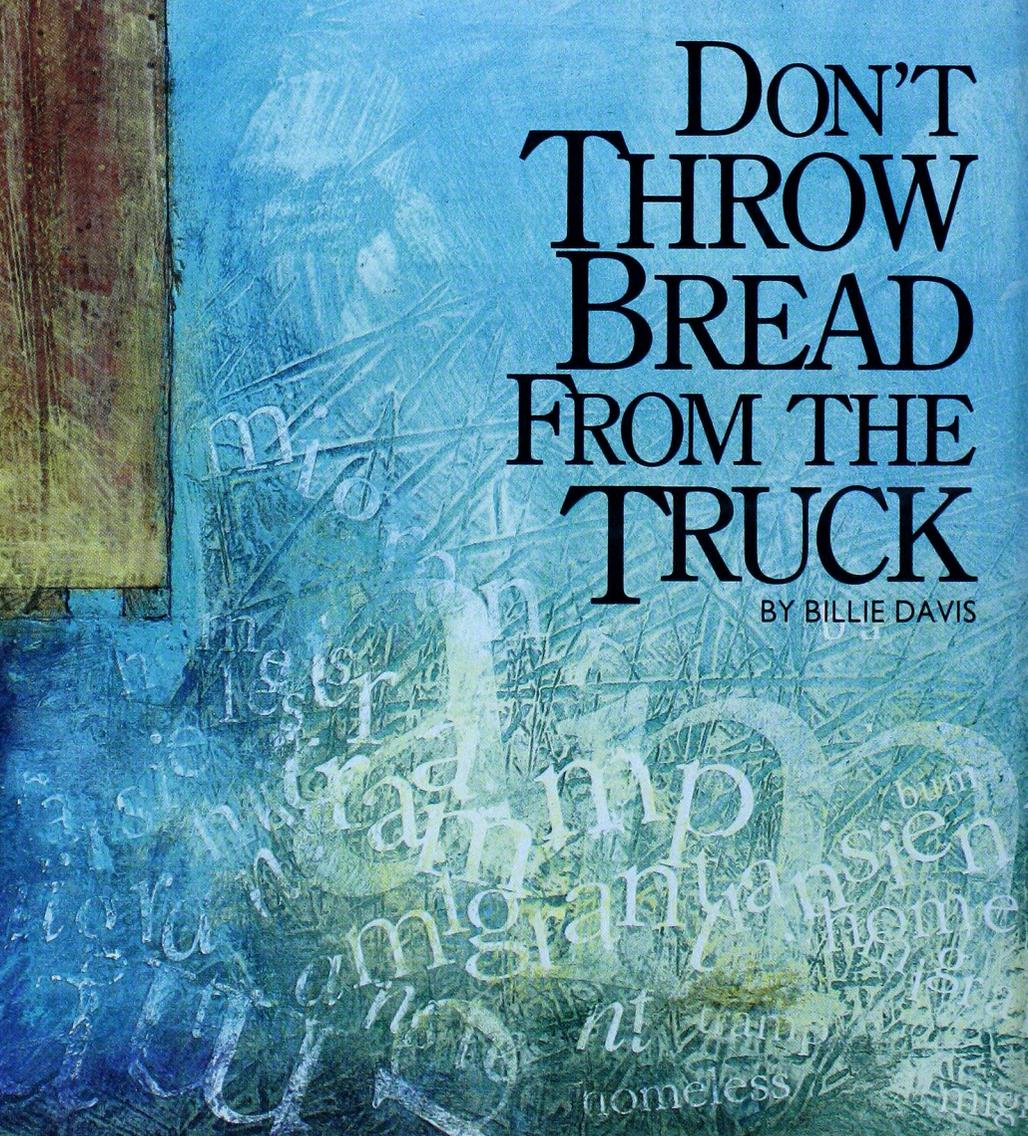
As we traveled from cotton field to fruit orchard, it didn't take me long to see that there were different kinds of people. Some lived in houses and had orderly lives. Others lived like us. We were "the needy."

As a migrant child I learned some important things about how to help needy people—and how *not* to help. As a professor I try to teach those things to my students.

Lesson one: Poverty was not my worst problem. The main problem was

DON'T THROW BREAD FROM THE TRUCK

BY BILLIE DAVIS



not belonging—not belonging anywhere or with anyone. I didn't even consider myself a real person.

Searching for clues about how to become a real person, I discovered the Sunday school. I wandered into a church one day and sat down in a little red chair. The teacher may not have been a trained theologian, but she did one thing for me that changed my life. She told me I was a child of God. That pleased me so much I decided not to let her know I was just a bum.

She could have called me a sinner on that first encounter, but she didn't. She could have blamed me or my parents for our problems. She could have kept her distance, lumping me together with all the poor. Worst of all, she could have pitied me, but she didn't.

There were plenty of people who pitied us. Once during the Depression we were literally starving. I had a little brother who died of malnutrition. One of the bakeries in a town near our camp felt sorry for the poor migrants, so they loaded all their day-old bread into a truck. The truck drove slowly through the dusty rows of shacks while a man stood in the back of the truck throwing bread out onto the ground.

I ran up behind the truck with the rest of the people and got my bread. It had some nutrition, and I'm glad there were people compassionate enough to feed the poor. But how I hated that bakery! I despised the man who stood up there and threw me bread. I despised him because I had to trade my dignity, *myself*, for a loaf of bread.

So when I sat in that little red chair in Sunday school and heard that

it was more blessed to give than to receive, I understood it differently from the other children: It is blessed to be the one standing in the truck tossing out bread, rather than the one running behind scooping it up.

People who are poor, sick, and hungry need more than money, health, and food. Like us all, they need meaning in life—a sense of order, a reason for living. This is where Christians have so much to offer. If you help people find the meaning of life while helping them find a home or get a job, you are helping them at the deepest level.

People need relationships

People also need to belong. They need relationships. We were created that way: "Let *us* make man in *our* image."

And God and Adam cooperated. God brought out the animals one by one, and whatever Adam called them, that was their name.

Jesus reminded us of our need for relationship when he taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father," not "My Father." That whole prayer says that people belong together. How can I say, "Give *us* this day our daily bread," and not care if someone is starving? How can I pray, "Lead *us* not into temptation," and not care about what teenagers are facing on the street? That prayer is plural. It binds us together with the purposes of God and with all other people.

That's why altruism, or caring for the well-being of others, is part selflessness and part selfishness. Because we are all bound together, it is in my interest to help other people.

To give people the help that really helps, then, we must see their problems as symptoms of unmet needs.

Now, I'm not a liberal or soft on sin, but everything I've learned, from the cotton fields to the university, tells me that people's environment—their

I
am
a
child
of
God.

and other lessons
I've learned about
helping people.

bum
migrant



How can I pray "Give us this day our daily bread," and not care if someone is starving?

circumstances and upbringing—strongly influences their behavior.

Most churches believe the same thing, although they may not realize it.

In a Sunday school class I visited, someone mentioned a recent horrible crime. The teacher got on his soapbox.

"The sociologists will try to blame this on the deprived environment of the assailants," he said, "but those young people were monsters. It was nothing but sin."

A few minutes later I went to the worship service in which the church dedicated several infants. The congregation promised, "We'll keep these babies in the ways of our faith. We'll harbor them and raise them for the Lord."

Now that's a contradiction. In Sunday school I heard that environment didn't matter, and in the worship service the church took responsibility for the destiny of those babies.

I don't mean we should blame

society for personal sin or excuse people because of their background. I mean that if we took six babies out of the inner city and put them side by side with the six babies in the dedication service, we would know which babies had a greater chance to have problems as adults.

To me, it's exciting that environment greatly influences people. It means there's so much we can do! It means that each child, depending on the guidance and care we give, has a good chance to develop well and choose to follow Christ.

When I was 8 years old, selling baskets on the street, one of my customers told me I should be in school. She told me it was free. I couldn't believe it, because nothing was free—not a movie, not a grocery store, not anything.

But I walked right into a public school and said, "I heard there's a law that kids have to go to school, and I want to go." They signed me up and gave me a desk, and I learned something profound. I learned that I could actually learn. I wasn't any different from the real people when I had the same opportunities and treatment.

How Jesus helped

When Jesus called his disciples, he knew they had needs. But he didn't define those needs for them. "What do you want?" he asked two who started following him.

Before we start "throwing bread from the truck," we would do well to ask the same question.

Jesus also enjoyed each person's individuality. When Nathaniel first heard about Jesus, he asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

"Now there's an honest man," Jesus said. He didn't require absolute agreement before Nathaniel could join

the group. In fact, Jesus complimented him for expressing his doubts. He saw all his disciples as people capable of learning and developing.

Jesus openly expressed his confidence and expectations. "I see in you a solid rock," he told Peter. My own experience in the little red Sunday school chair, where I learned I was a child of God, was like that.

In the gospels the disciples go everywhere Jesus goes. I don't think that's incidental to the story. It was like one long field trip. The disciples tagged along with Jesus and often didn't understand what he said. Jesus had to explain many things and sometimes he had to scold or rebuke. But he always took them along.

And he trusted them. He adopted new disciples on the recommendation of Andrew and Philip. He trusted his friends with intimate, personal confidences. When it was time to make the greatest pronouncement of all time, Jesus let one of his followers make it: "You are the Christ!"

Finally, Jesus expected his followers to give themselves away just as he did. He taught them to help in the same way he helped—not by making people "ministry beneficiaries" or "clients" but by drawing them into the ways of the kingdom of God. He gave them his own values and goals.

Now it's our turn to give ourselves away. As a young girl in school, I badly needed eyeglasses to continue my studies. One of my teachers bought them for me, and I was determined to repay her. I have never forgotten what she told me.

"Those glasses were paid for before you were born," she said. "When I needed glasses and had no money, someone bought them for me. Now the debt is yours." □

Billie Davis is professor of sociology and social psychology at Evangel College, Springfield, Mo.



*The church
being the church
among the poor*

BY BRENDA SPOELSTRA

A CHURCH THAT WON'T SAY NO

Saigon Christian Reformed Church

Trankhi Trieuong paid a high price to leave Vietnam. As he tried to escape a prison camp, soldiers shot both his legs so he could never try again. When Trankhi was later released, he made it to Thailand—minus two legs, and with little hope of emigrating to a Western country.

No one wanted to sponsor a Vietnamese prisoner who could not walk. No one, that is, until Pastor Nguyen Bao heard about him. "I don't care if he has one leg, two legs, or four legs. If he needs help, we'll help him," Bao said.

The Saigon Christian Reformed Church of Westminster, Calif., where Bao is pastor, found Trankhi a wheelchair and a home, and helped him learn to live with his disability. Today he drives a car and works full time.

Located in the Little Saigon area of Los Angeles, Saigon church has helped hundreds of refugees. In 1989 the church sponsored 180 refugees, and over the next two years, the church expects to help over 1,000 more.

"I shall not refuse anybody," Bao says, "even if the number comes to the thousands, because that's the spirit of Jesus Christ. He said, 'If I am a stranger, you welcome me in.' Who are we to refuse those who are suffering?"

The church's job begins when the refugees arrive in Los Angeles. Pastor Bao arranges for someone to meet the newcomers at the airport and helps them find a place to live. Volunteers help the new arrivals apply for a social security card, register their children for school, learn English, and find jobs. Within two months, most refugees are living on their own and working. Pastor Bao estimates that about half of them continue attending church.

"After we help them, they can go anywhere they want," he explains. "But during the time we help them we have a chance to tell them about the love of God."

And not only to tell them, but to show them. "Christianity is *visible*," Bao says. "That's the difference between Jesus Christ and Buddha. We want people to see the presence of God in our lives."

Bao, like every refugee, has his own story. The son of missionary parents, he grew up in the mountains of Vietnam. He attended seminary and was a pastor until 1975, when communists occupied Saigon. Bao escaped by boat with his 5-year-old son to a refugee camp off the coast of Malaysia,

where he started a church and school.

Bao lives simply, much as the newly arrived refugees do. Although his wife and four children make for a full house, he often offers his couch and living-room floor to recent arrivals until housing can be found.

"When refugees come here," Bao explains, "they have lost everything. They need a friend. That's why we want to live like them—not because we can't do better, but so the refugees won't feel like they can't sit down because they will make the chair dirty.

"At the Saigon church," he says, "we've created the atmosphere of one family in Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the family and all of us are brothers and sisters."

One Czechoslovakian refugee, Nicola, wasn't looking for a new family. He expected the American life—the way he had seen it on television. He envisioned a sponsor who would "provide, provide, provide," Pastor Bao recalls; a sponsor who would provide a big house and a car. After arriving in Los Angeles, Nikola felt cheated, and he shook his fist in the faces of his sponsors.

"Explain to him," Bao told an interpreter, "that I love him and I want to help him resettle and have a better life here. But he must remember that life here isn't like you see on television. He must come back to reality."

Three hours later, Nikola understood more about the church that doesn't say no to anyone. He thanked Pastor Bao with a long hug.

As the only full-time staff member at Saigon church, Bao shoulders most of the work. His commitment reflects his keenly felt awareness that he is living on borrowed time.

"I consider myself dead already," he explains. "Bao already dead in jail in Vietnam. Bao dead on the way to escaping. Two hundred thousand people died at sea, but I survived. For what? For Christ. We live today for Jesus Christ and for our neighbor."

A lot of people have asked how he has kept up this work for so long. "The more you are close to the poor people," he answers, "the more you are close to God. I look at the refugee people and see Jesus Christ in them. I pray that God gives me a blind eye and a deaf ear in order that I may not see anything else, or listen to anyone else, but see only Jesus Christ and listen only to his voice." □

Brenda Spoelstra is a writer and editor in Pasadena, Calif.



Peter Shair / World Vision
Pastor Nguyen Bao

For more
information contact
Saigon Christian
Reformed Church,
10321 Bolsa Ave.,
Westminster,
CA 92683

SAMARITAN SAMPLER

RESOURCES FOR
HELPING OTHERS
IN THE NAME
OF CHRIST

Compiled and written
by Ginger Hope

THE URBANA AGENDA

Urbana means missions. Such is the renown of InterVarsity's biennial student mission convention that the word Urbana, like the word Woodstock, is no longer just the name of a town. It's a loaded word symbolizing a whole set of shared experiences. Car-, van-, and busloads of students stream to the Champaign/Urbana campus of the University of Illinois during their Christmas break, and few leave without pondering their



role in Christian missions. God only knows—literally—how many missionaries look back to Urbana as a turning point.

High on the Urbana '90 agenda are global trends that will dictate missions methods into the next century: urbanization, Third World population growth, and an increasing number of "creative access countries" (countries where traditional missionaries are denied visas).

For information on Urbana '90, to be held December 27-31, contact InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 7895, 6400 Schroeder Road, Madison, WI 53707-7895; (608) 274-7995.

CAN THE WORLD AFFORD ITS CHILDREN?

Almost 40,000 children around the world die each day from easily preventable causes: diarrhea, malnutrition, common childhood diseases for which vaccinations are available. In the 1990 edition of *The State of the World's Children*, the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF estimates that most of these deaths could be prevented at a cost of \$2.5 billion a year.

How much is \$2.5 billion a year?

- As much as the world spends on the military *every day*.
- Only 2 percent of the Third World's own yearly military spending;
- As much as people in the Soviet Union spend on vodka in a month;
- As much as U.S. companies spend in a year to advertise cigarettes;
- As much as the Third World pays

each week to service its debt.

It's strange to think that the world cannot afford to prevent the deaths of its young children, writes UNICEF's executive director, James P. Grant.



THE EYES HAVE IT

Optomist Jeffrey Allgeier and his wife, Marianne, saw with their own eyes the need for corrective lenses among the poor in Zaire. They started an eye clinic in Karawa, Zaire, in the mid-1980s, training Zairean nurses to do simple eye surgeries and fit eyeglasses. Now the Allgeiers collect used eyeglasses in the United States and send them to their successor at the clinic, who says he sometimes gives out 1,000 pair in a month, especially when a mobile optometry



team goes out to surrounding villages.

Used eyeglasses, especially sturdy ones in good condition, may be shipped to the Allgeiers at 1385 Wimbledon Drive, Auburn, CA 95603.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STAN SAKAI

SEEDY CHARACTERS, STEP FORWARD!

Applications are available for the second annual Mustard Seed Awards, celebrating innovative Christian ministry among the poor. One of the \$5,000 awards is earmarked for an individual church and the other for a joint venture of two or more churches.



The judging committee will look for good use of church members as volunteers and a focus on causes of need rather than symptoms. Last year's winner was the Noon Day Ministry, a day shelter for the homeless run by the First Baptist Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

For applications contact LOVE INC., P.O. Box 1616, Holland, MI 49422; (616) 392-8277. Collect calls are accepted.

“Christians are called to a love that is universal. All people, rich or poor, are entitled to our love, but those whose need is the greatest, namely the poor, have a preferential claim on our love. We must help them first.
Gregory Baum in Compassion & Solidarity: The Church for Others



“And they all lived happily ever after.”

This story has a happy ending. But it began as a headache for John Franklin. When his father died it took years to settle the estate. And it cost a lot in taxes and probate fees. So just as soon as his father's affairs were settled, John and his wife placed most of their assets in a Revocable Living Trust.

It was a smart move. He'll save money for his loved ones and keep them from the same kind of headache he had. For them it will be simpler, quicker, and cheaper.

So, as we said, “they all lived happily ever after.”

To learn more about a Revocable Living Trust, complete the coupon below and send it to:

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FMG005

For a rambunctious few, weekends meant party time in my college dormitory. Liquor gushed in torrents. Intoxicated students sometimes bashed in doors, burned holes in the carpet, or demolished furniture in the study lounge.

When the semester ended, the residence hall director would figure the damages and charge each of us equally, whether we had been responsible or not. We innocents complained.

"Well, *somebody* has to pay," the dorm director said, "and you guys live here."

In many ways, that is what is happening to the poor in Latin America today. As political and drug-related brutality persists in at least half a dozen Latin countries, somebody has to

pay. And thousands of innocent people, people with no intentional role in the conflict, are paying dearly—just because they live there.

Several years ago I visited a refugee family in a dusty squatter settlement outside Lima, Peru. The Quechua (native Indian) woman with three young children told why she had left her home in Ayacucho, one of the poorest regions in Peru.

Maoist Shining Path terrorists had arrived in Ayacucho, using fear and savagery to recruit followers. Next came government troops, zealous to squash the guerrillas and their suspected sympathizers.

Like many others, this woman fled with her children from the unprotected rural area to the relative safety of a bigger city. In Lima the

Latin American
violence is a hungry
villain, and ...

SOME BODY HAS TO PAY

BY JOHN MAUST

These Nicaraguan women demonstrate against the disappearance of family members. Disappearances related to political violence are common in many Latin American countries. In 1987, 587 people disappeared in Colombia alone.



the family started over in a one-room hut with newspaper for wallpaper. There are few people poorer than those in Ayacucho, where Andean peasants farm arid mountain plots for about \$50 a year. But somehow the violence impoverished this family even more.

The rural poor in northern Colombia face a similar dilemma. "They either have to cooperate with guerrillas or the drug mafia, or they have to move out," says missionary Nick Woodbury. "If they leave for the city, they have no place to live, no job, nothing but what's on their backs. Their problem doesn't get any better—it is just transplanted from one place to another."

The violence leaves many families fragmented. Conflict between guerrillas and the government in Guatemala during the late 1970s and early 1980s killed so many men in the highlands that much of a generation was wiped

out, says William D. Taylor, co-author of *Crisis in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective*. "The results are hundreds, maybe even thousands of widows and fatherless children," he says.

In Peru's Ayacucho region, where Shining Path began its prolonged "people's war" in 1980, there may be 26,000 orphans and 100 more every month, according to one service agency.

Refugee families are also often divided when parents must separate to find work. The children may be forced to live on the streets.

Another way the violence exacts a price from the poor is in economic damage. In the guerrillas' efforts to destabilize governments, they have destroyed oil pipelines, farms, factories, bridges, roads, and power plants.

Shining Path guerrillas in Peru demolished almost 200 high-tension

The violence sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity.

electrical towers during the first 10 months of 1989, shutting down factories and causing more than \$400 million in damage. Peruvian Senator Enrique Bernalles warned that because of the country's terrorism, "we are reaching a truly ruinous situation, which may result in business closings, massive layoffs, and paralysis of exports."

Violence has so destabilized the economies of many Latin countries that banks and multinational firms will no longer risk heavy investments in them. Similarly, tourists stop going. Who's vacationing in El Salvador these days? In all, lack of foreign invest-

LATIN HOTSPOTS

El Salvador: The 10-year-old civil war between FMLN rebels and government forces continues, with the death toll at 70,000 and still rising.

Nicaragua: Fighting between Contra forces and the Sandinista government (claiming 50,000 to 60,000 casualties) ended, but it is still unclear whether lasting peace is within reach.

Guatemala: Thousands died in the late 1970s and early 1980s in left-wing and right-wing political violence. The killings, which declined after the 1985 election of President Vinicio Cerezo, began increasing again in 1989.

Panama: The U.S. military invasion in December 1989 achieved its goal, ousting Manuel Noriega, but it also left thousands homeless, scores dead, and an estimated \$1 billion in damages. Economic sanctions imposed by the United States in 1987, in an effort to bring down Noriega, succeeded only in devastating the country's economy, according to Ambler Moss, former U.S. ambassador to Panama.

Colombia: Guerrillas from several leftist groups (M-19, FARC, ELN) use violence and terrorism in efforts to change their society. But the drug mafias are largely to blame for making homicide the leading cause of death among adult males in Colombia.

Peru: An estimated 15,000 have died in the 10-year conflict between Maoist Shining Path guerrillas and government forces.

John Maust

KEVIN MC KIERNAN



ments and tourism means fewer jobs.

And when rural peasants flee for their lives, leaving behind homes, property, and livestock, land goes uncultivated and cities feel the shortage of agricultural products.

Then there's the brain drain of professionals and skilled workers who flee their countries for safer and richer pastures. Almost 150,000 Peruvians moved out during 1988, and emigration from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Colombia is also heavy.

Many of these Latin American emigres come to the United States, where things don't always get much better. In a conversational English class I teach at a church in Miami, one night I asked for prayer requests. Almost every student began to weep.

The class includes a young Nicaraguan veterinarian whose husband was killed in the Contra war. Now she works as a housekeeper. With two small sons to support, she recently remarried—mostly out of necessity, she says. She suffered added trauma when her 10-year-old son was abused by a janitor at his school.

Another student fled her village in Guatemala when guerrillas tried to force her to join them. A Colombian man at the church sold his business in Barranquilla when the drug mafia threatened him for not allowing the use of his factory dock as a shipment point. The man's business ventures in the United States have failed.

These emigres left behind the widespread violence of Latin America, and they left behind much that they loved. But one thing many of them couldn't shake off at the border was deep insecurity.

Violence is a hungry villain. Not only does it rob people of life and property, it sucks out hope and puts back fear and insecurity. In some places this insecurity means never going to the corner store without an ID card, because police suspect anyone without documents. It means making every trip downtown with the fear of bombs and shootings. It may mean not stopping at a red light for fear that hit men will pull alongside and let loose a machine gun burst. It means parents keeping their sons off the streets or sending them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

Latin America is no stranger to violence. Throughout the region's history, oppressive regimes have used torture and repression to intimidate and control their people. In Colombia, for example, an estimated 200,000 people

died during a brutal 14-year period known as *La Violencia*, touched off by the assassination of a presidential candidate in 1948.

Unjust economic systems and a wide gap between the very rich and the very poor have given rise to many violent revolutions in Latin America. Before being ousted in 1979 by the Sandinistas, former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was regarded as Central America's richest man. He reportedly owned one-fifth of all Nicaraguan farmland, and he was part owner of 168 factories—one-fourth of the national industrial economy.

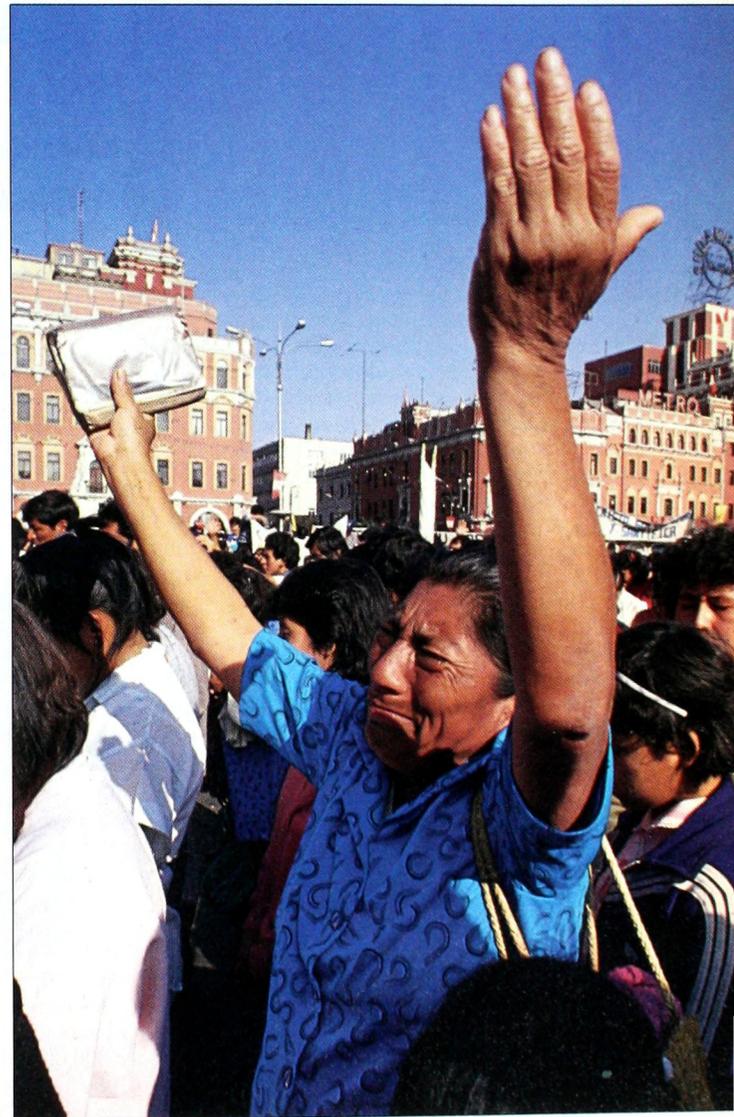
Yet as poverty has given rise to violence, violence has also aggravated poverty. Leftist guerrillas often launch violent campaigns with the professed intent of helping the poor. But typically the poor suffer most.

There is a common pattern: Guerrillas arrive in an area and command the population to join or support them.

Left: Parents must often keep their sons off the street or send them overseas, for fear they will be forced into army or rebel forces.

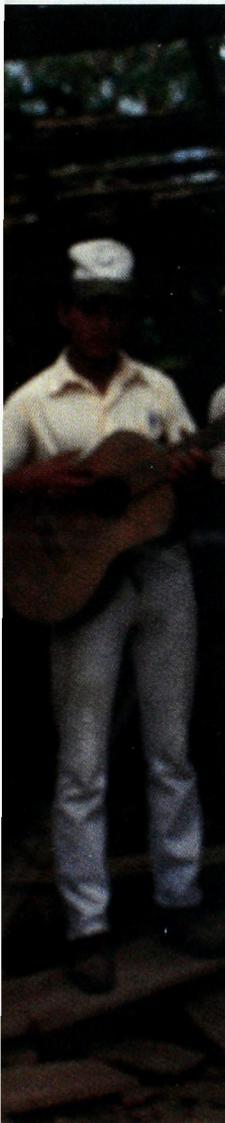
Below: The evangelical church has spread rapidly throughout Latin America. Hundreds of Christians recently met in the San Martin Plaza in Lima, Peru, to pray for an end to that country's terrorism and violence.

SAMUEL NIEVA / LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELIST



Three people died in this Nicaraguan village following a battle during that country's civil war.

The war helped ruin Nicaragua's economy and impoverish its people, considered among the poorest in the hemisphere.



WILL SPONSORSHIP MAKE HIM DEPENDENT?

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■ It also means helping the child's community—because if the community's cycle of poverty remains unbroken, a child may never escape it.

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WORLD VISION Pasadena, CA 91131 

They burn out, run out, or wipe out anyone who doesn't.

Then government soldiers arrive hunting for terrorist sympathizers. Suspects are hauled away for such "crimes" as feeding a guerrilla, even if it was done at gunpoint. In Latin America, detainees are guilty until proven innocent. Suspects often wait months or even years for trial—or simply "disappear."

Guillermo Diaz (not his real name) ran a small business in Huna-cavelica Department in Peru, an area of intense conflict between the Shining Path and government troops. In an apparent case of mistaken identity, police one day hauled Diaz, a devout Christian, to jail as a suspected terrorist.

Diaz says the police ransacked and looted his house looking for evidence, then repeatedly beat and interrogated him. His wife paid a fortune in lawyer's fees and lost money to corrupt police, who suggested bribes would obtain her

Peru is so desperate that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond.

husband's release.

Later Diaz was taken to the capital city, where he was thrown into Lurigancho prison. During his years in prison, Diaz saw his house mortgaged, his business ruined, and his possessions pawned. His wife left him, and he lost contact with his five children.

Diaz says he lost everything except his faith in God. Countless other victims lack even that. Yet many Latin Americans testify that the plague of violence is stimulating new interest in spiritual matters and hunger for God.

Reynaldo Aragon, Jr., a journalist in Lima, Peru, was chatting with a colleague about Peru's dismal economic and political situation. The friend half-asked, half-demanded, "How can you be so happy all the time?"

"Because I know Jesus loves me," Aragon said, "and he loves you too."

Tears formed in the other journalist's eyes. He asked to know more.

Aragon says, "There's so much desperation in Peru right now, that wherever God's Word is preached, people respond."

In El Salvador, evangelical churches added 300,000 new members just between 1980 and 1985—the early years of the civil war. There had been only

100,000 new members in the entire previous decade.

In Nicaragua, more than 20,000 people said they received Christ during a recent nationwide evangelistic effort, according to the Costa Rica-based International Institute of Evangelism-in-Depth.

Bible sales have soared in places like Peru's Ayacucho region, where terrorism is rampant. Within six weeks of the September 1987 release of the Ayacucho Quechua-language Bible, all 10,000 copies were sold. People wept and pled for more copies, so the United Bible Societies ordered a second printing of 20,000. These too ran out in a matter of weeks, and a third printing of 20,000 was ordered.

Many Latin American Christians, despite their own limited resources, are also increasingly meeting the physical needs of victims of violence.

In 1984, Peru's Peace and Hope Commission helped relocate more than 25 refugee families from Ayacucho to

San Martin Department, where they started a new colony.

A founding member of the Peace and Hope Commission, Donato Palomino, felt drawn to a 6-year-old Ayacucho boy who had watched terrorists murder his parents and was found

trembling in a hole. Terrified of adult strangers, the boy never-the-less warmed up to Palomino. The Palomino family eventually adopted Jorge.

A missionary in Lima, Peru, recently described in a prayer letter the seemingly hopeless poverty and violence around her. Then she noted that church members, rather than being demoralized, were out feeding the poor and evangelizing.

It's amazing to see the strong spirit of the Christians—not bending or giving in to depression in the face of these overwhelming difficulties," she wrote. "In contrast, they are doubling their efforts to give out the news of hope. What a great transformation Christ makes in a life!"

For the open wounds of Latin America's poverty and violence, the church is proving to be an increasingly potent salve. But the wounds still seem overwhelming, the suffering insurmountable. And until the violence ends, the poor will continue paying the price for Latin America's violence. After all, somebody has to pay. □

John Maust is editor of Latin America Evangelist magazine in Miami, Fla.

THE COLD FIST OF LOVE

PHOTOS BY RANDY MILLER / WORLD VISION

They could have kicked him out of town. Some of them wanted to, after what he did. But where would he go? San Bernardo, a town of 600 people south of Quito, Ecuador, was the only home he knew. In a community that small, adultery is hard to hide.

The incident nearly crushed him. It could have, if it hadn't been for his own resolve to reassemble the fragments of his life. But it took something more. It was that extra something that helped him put his life back together, and started him on a course that would renew and deepen his commitment to God.

"Three things touched my heart during that time," Jose Manuel Quishpe Pilamunga says. Draped in a red poncho, he's sitting in the tiny wood-frame home he built eight years ago for his family of seven. "The first was the forgiveness and dedication of my wife. I would not have made it without that. Second, the commitment of my pastor. He was available for me any time. If I needed to pray and hear Scripture at 4 a.m., he would be there.

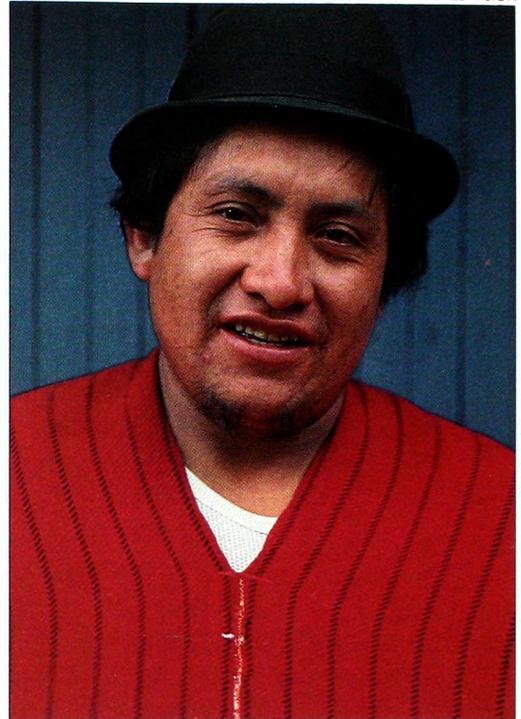
"The third thing was the support of my church and my community. I don't know if I would be here today if it had not been for that."

At first, the community's support felt more like a cold fist than a loving embrace, especially in light of his history with the church. Jose's parents were evangelical Christians, and he had been raised in the church. He received Christ at age 12 and was active in the church most of his life. He



had even been a deacon. So the severity of the church's action was sobering.

"The deacons and the pastor disciplined me," Jose says. "I resented that very much. I resented their actions and I resented the church and community. But looking back, I now realize that even



though their response was severe, it was done out of love. During that time of discipline, when I felt so resentful toward them, they were praying for me, hoping that I would come back to the Lord and ask forgiveness. They were open to me."

A year after the incident, Jose recommitted his life to the Lord. Then he began to understand the depth of his community's support for him. A year later, he was offered the job of church treasurer. The year after that, he was named secretary for the community council. The following year, vice president. Then, at last, president of the community council.

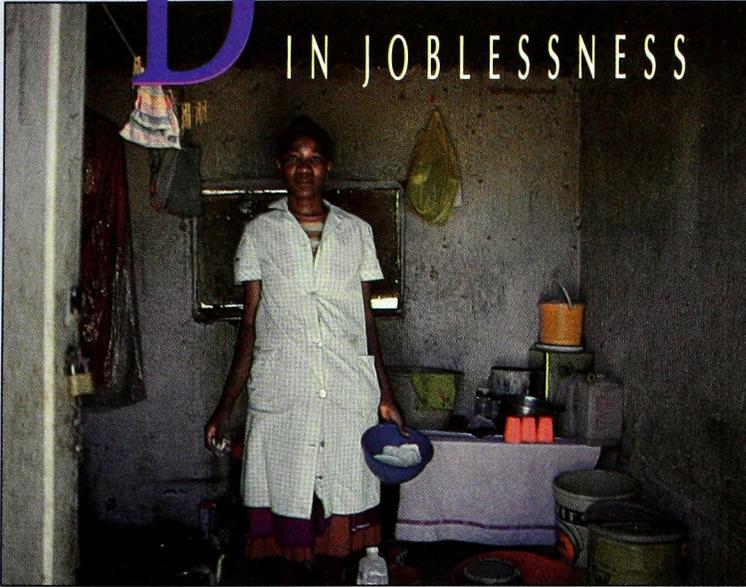
God worked through my pastor, my wife, my brothers in the church, and the community people who helped me," Jose says. "That was unconditional love. Through that experience I came to realize how much we all need to feel God's love and forgiveness.

"For me, this incident is buried," he adds. "Each day that I speak to God, it's as though it never happened. I don't have any grudges or resentment. My wife and daughters don't say, 'Look what you did.'"

"But this thing has changed me. I now have a deeper understanding of the power of God, but also the love of God, and how that love is shown through my church and my community. It has really opened my eyes." □ Randy Miller

The church disciplined me, and I resented it. Now I know they did it out of love.

THERE'S NO DIGNITY IN JOBLESSNESS



Poverty and disease do not build self-esteem.

Nations in recovery—nations like South Africa—need to increase their overall health and living standards. Until people can stand on their own, support themselves and their families, real change has not occurred. Until people feel that someone cares, that God cares, nothing has been accomplished.

World Vision has worked in developing nations for over 40 years. And in those 40 years, we've learned that one of the secrets to human dignity is giving people a practical knowledge of God's love through such basics as health care, vocational training, and education.

Our highly skilled staff in South Africa supervise each project. The people of the community help to plan and operate each stage of the project...because they are the ones who will ultimately be responsible for their own success.

Your generous gifts can make the difference between success and failure. You can help bring a renewed sense of dignity to the people of South Africa...along with the knowledge that a loving God is at work.

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