

PEACEWEAVERS

The best way to escape from a problem is to solve it!
Alan Saporta

Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland

September, 2011

Social Justice Office

News from Mary Ellen

In the spring a large group of Religious filled with the Spirit and positive energy from the *Women & Spirit Catholic Sisters in America* exhibit at the Maltz Museum met at Magnificat High School. If a small group of dedicated, courageous and innovative women of faith could help shape the nation's social and cultural heritage in the 1800's, we could do the same today. The name of the group was collaboration. Several small sub-groups were formed with various ideas and goals in mind. One sub-group is focusing on providing a place for assistance, presence, and support for those in need similar to the facilities present on the near west side at the Westside Catholic Center.

This group consists of OSU's, ND's, CSA's, CSJ's, SC's, HM's and a couple of lay people. We have met a few times with the goal of establishing an **Eastside Catholic Center**. East Cleveland with its dire poverty was suggested as a place to research the possibility for such a presence. There is an empty school building at St. Philomena (which was saved from being demolished) and an already established Ozman Center (food and clothing) in the Rectory, which is too small for the program which serves approximately 100 people every Saturday.

We recently had a very successful meeting with the Social Concerns Group of *Communion of Saints Parish*. We agreed that the following sequential steps were needed for us to begin our project.

- to tour the school building
- to meet with the Director of the Westside Catholic Center
- to begin the process of acquiring the school building from the Diocese
- to make plans for the renovation of the building itself
- to write for grant money to support the project

Presently, your prayers for this project would be deeply appreciated. In the near future (we hope) we would like to be able to count on your physical presence as well.

I Was Blind

Go and wash in the pool of Siloam. John

The blind person follows the instruction of Jesus and then he sees.

Everywhere we look we see both references to and consequences of wealth disparity in our nation. Much of the mainstream media has mentioned the issue, but they really have not talked about causes and remedies. Having had this insight, we are sent to *proclaim the message* and work for solutions.

A significant reason for this wealth shift is the way that capital gains are handled. A capital gain is the difference between the purchase price of an item (e.g., investments or real estate) and what it is sold for. Rather than taxing capital gains at the regular income rate (35% for the top bracket), most are taxed at 15%. Thus the wealthy pay only a 15% interest rate on much of their income. This allows them to accumulate more wealth.

Another factor is the *mortgage interest deduction* that allows homeowners to deduct from their taxable income the amount they pay on interest on mortgages up to \$1 million for one or more homes. Such a deduction is called a *tax expenditure* and there are MANY types of expenditures that benefit wealthy people more than the middle class or the working poor, who are more likely to be renters or have smaller mortgages.

If we are to address the wealth gap, we need to make sure that workers can bargain for fair wages for their hard work. After all, it is the workers who have allowed the CEO's and shareholders to accumulate wealth.

Tax and labor laws, as well as many other laws, have gone into creating the great wealth gap in our country. This gap undermines our health as a nation, our morale, our education system, our neighborhoods and our infrastructure.

The faith challenge is to have our eyes opened to *inconvenient truths*. These are truths that are not popular, but that mandate change. We must speak out for a new vision for our nation.

Simone Campbell, SSS
Network Connection

Mind the Gap

Catholic Social Teachings state that each of us has a right to live in dignity and that our government must serve the common good. That means that society has a moral obligation to ensure that all people, especially those living at the economic margins, have access to the necessities of life, including food and a safe place in which to raise a family. The extreme wealth inequality plaguing our nation today is inconsistent with these values.

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner. Caritas in Veritate (2009) Pope Benedict XVI

Picture This:

One Somali family walks across cracked earth and carcasses for two months in search of food. They outsmart bandits, thugs, and rapists. They arrive at a refugee camp in eastern Kenya only to find cholera and measles sweeping through the malnourished and immune-suppressed camp.

Picture This:

The U.S. House of Representatives votes on a proposed budget of FY 2012 that would cut emergency food aid by **75%** compared to FY 2008 levels.

Now Picture This:

A woman walks into her neighborhood church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, one of the richest zip codes in the U.S. She leans in close to the person working the front desk and whispers, *I have no food.*

The Washington Post recently posted the results of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's most recent study on hunger in America. The 1st myth was, *No one goes hungry in America.* As of November, 2010, more than 14.7 million American families struggled to put food on the table. This is approximately 15% of all U.S. households.

HeartBeat Bill

On June 28th, 2011, the Ohio House passed the Heartbeat Bill to protect babies with beating hearts. Now, if 17 of Ohio's 33 State Senators vote for the bill, it will go to Governor John Kasich to be

signed into the most protective pro-life law in the nation!

There will be a Heartbeat Rally on Tuesday, **September 20th** inside the Ohio State House Atrium. The rally will begin at 7:00 am with corporate prayer

September 20th will signal the beginning of the end of abortion on demand in Ohio and the nation!

* Roe vs. Wade is about to come crashing down. Not only do we get to live to see it, we can be a part of it. Fill a bus, van or car and head for the State House.

The NFL and Sweatshops

Women at the *Ocean Sky* sweatshop in El Salvador are paid just eight cents for each \$25 National Football League (NFL) T-shirt they sew.

Surveillance cameras monitor the workers' every move. Overtime is forced. They earn 72-92 cents an hour, one quarter of what a family needs to survive. Each of these accusations is backed with research and facts.

The *U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement* has ended in a race to the bottom, with workers stripped of their rights and trapped in poverty.

Consumers must demand that the U.S. Government implement the worker rights provisions in the US-Cafta. Currently, only corporations have rights. The workers want to be treated like human beings, also. Sign the petition: <http://salsa.democracyinaction.org>

Clean Water ?

A full-on congressional attack in Washington is underway to strip the *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) of its power and funding to keep our water clean. House Resolution 2018 would block the EPA's authority to set minimum water quality standards. It would also eliminate a state's ability to control pollutants surging in through waterways shared with bordering states.

The arcane definition of what is a waterway could have profound implications for Ohio's wetlands and small headwater streams.

The U.S. Senate is our last hope to stop this attack on clean water.

* Calls are needed to Senator Brown (202-224-2315) and Senator Portman (202-224-3353) urging them to vote no on dirty water bills that weaken the *Clean Water Act*.

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