

Religious Consultation Report

Volume 7 No. 1

Strange Bedfellows — Chinese Communists and The Republican Party

By Daniel C. Maguire

The Republican Party and the Chinese Communists agree on this principle: when you are pregnant, the pregnancy is the government's business, not yours.

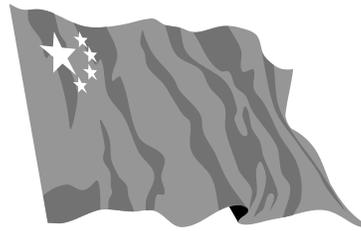
Working on this principle in China, the Communist government may order a pregnant woman to abort. However, in the US, if the Republicans have their way, if you are pregnant, the government will order you to carry the fetus to term, no matter what the circumstances. And it seems that the Republicans are having their way, as evidenced by the well advanced whittling down of *Roe v. Wade*.

The statist principle endorsed by the Chinese Communists and the Republicans is this: a pregnant woman is not in charge of her pregnancy, the government is, and the government will tell her what to do about it. So the word is: get pregnant, and you are no longer in charge of your body. The State is...the government is....and you will take orders either to deliver (the US) or to abort (China). After you deliver or abort, you will then resume control of your body, but only for as long as you are not pregnant.

Who's draconian around here?

The favored adjective for critics of Chinese birth policies is "draconian." But who is really more draconian, the no-choice Republicans or the Chinese Communists? What is worse — forced pregnancy or forced abortion? Which position shows the least respect for the personal rights and dignity of women?

Chinese birth policies are more accepted in China than Westerners imagine. Professor Luo Ping, sociologist and director of the Women's Studies Center at Wuhan University, cautions Western critics regarding China's family planning



goals: "Family planning must be implemented in a country like China where the size of the population puts too much pressure on the economy and on society...China is just like a small boat which can carry only 100 people but already has 110 in it."

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Strange Bedfellows

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In a recent analysis, Chinese demographers said that the “one child” program had reduced births by 338 million. They point out the contribution this makes not only to China but also to an overstressed world. Had those 338 million gotten born, China would be below self-sufficiency in food grain production. As of 2001, China has reached a below-replacement fertility rate of 1.8. (2.1 is considered replacement.) China is also offering help to poor nations facing population pressures.

Much of China’s progress is due to contraception, not abortion. In the United States, 65% of couples are estimated to use contraceptives. In China, the rate is over 85%. Abortion rates in China are actually declining — from 14 million in 1991 to 6.7 million in 2000.

The new Chinese law on birth planning and population incorporates many of the humane and feminist provisions of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 and the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995. Article 3 of that law insists on “increasing the opportunity of women for education and employment, improving women’s health, and raising women’s status.” What’s more, Article 19 says that contraception, not abortion, is the main family planning method, and the law “strictly forbids” unsafe abortions.

Simply put, there is much in China that is not at all draconian. China had reached a critical mass of population growth, more than its land could sustain. It deserves a fairer judgment than much of the West has given it.

Draconia, USA

Sooner than sitting in arch judgment of China’s policy, why not let conscience start at home? Isn’t the US attitude toward women and children just a tad draconian?

Item: In Wyoming, a pregnant woman beaten by her husband needed hospital care. She, not her husband, was charged when the police found she had been drinking.

Item: In Georgia, a woman delivered a stillborn child two days after a severe beating by her boyfriend; she was arrested due to the discovery of cocaine in her blood.

Item: In Montana, abortion is listed as a crime, but a man’s killing a fetus through violence against the woman is not.

As Professor Jean Reith Schroedel writes: “Until the 1980’s district attorneys would generally not file charges against a batterer unless the victim pressed charges.”

In a 2003 report of Save the Children, the United States with all its wealth ranks below Canada, Australia, and all the western and northern European countries in maternal mortality and infant mortality rates. Bush tax cuts, generous to the rich, leave poor children behind.

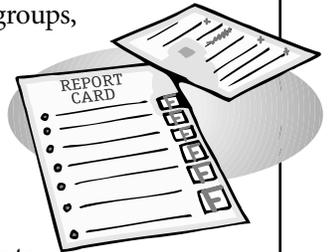
Of all the candidates who could sit in pious judgment of China, once again, the United States does not rank first.

Bush earns an F grade from women’s groups

Three prominent women’s groups, the **Feminist Majority, Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)**, and **Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)** have given the Bush administration an “F” for its failure to keep its promises on global women’s rights, health, and development issues, reported *OneWorld* on August 26th.

The groups cited the administration’s actions that have harmed women: AIDS, family planning, as well as support for women’s equality and security in Afghanistan.

From PlanetWire Media Summary, *Communications Consortium Media Center*, August 16–31, 2003.



RELIGIOUS CONSULTATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics is an international network of progressive feminist religious scholars and leaders who seek out the positive, renewable moral energies of their faith traditions to direct them to the interrelated issues of population, reproductive health, consumption/ecology and the empowerment of women. The Consultation accomplishes this by participating in international and governmental forums, by convening small symposia of theologians and religious ethicists, and by publishing both scholarly and popular materials.

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Rebellion forces Vatican u-turn in child rape case

An excerpt reprinted from *The Guardian*, Friday March 7, 2003
Giles Tremlett in Madrid and Rupert Widdicombe in Managua



The Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua has withdrawn its threat to punish the parents of a nine-year-old Nicaraguan girl who had an abortion after being raped. A rebellion of 26,000 people worldwide demanding to be excommunicated brought about the decision.

A Spanish Internet campaign gained 26,000 supporters —volunteers who demanded to be excommunicated in a gesture of solidarity with the Nicaraguan girl known as “Rosa.” The list of 26,000 names was handed to the Vatican’s representative in Spain, Monsignor Manuel Monteiro.

Faced with such a massive task, the Roman Catholic authorities in Managua backtracked on their excommunication threats against Rosa’s family.

“They have turned back. Our mission is accomplished,” said a spokeswoman, Angeles Alvarez. The petition read:

“I also want to be excommunicated in the face of the excommunication of Rosa’s parents in Nicaragua because all of us have contributed actively in making the interruption of Rosa’s pregnancy possible.” Nearly half of the signatories were Roman Catholic men, according to the organizers, an association of Spanish

feminist groups.

Rosa was raped in Costa Rica in November and infected with two venereal diseases. A 20-year-old man has been arrested.

The cardinal of Managua, Miguel Obando y Bravo, had declared that the girl’s parents and the doctors who carried out the abortion had excommunicated themselves *ipso facto* after they braved Nicaragua’s strict laws and went ahead with the operation.

Reverend Debra Haffner joins Consultation board

Ordained a minister by the Unitarian Church in Westport, Connecticut, last May, Participating Scholar Debra Haffner will be joining the Consultation’s Board of Directors this coming January.

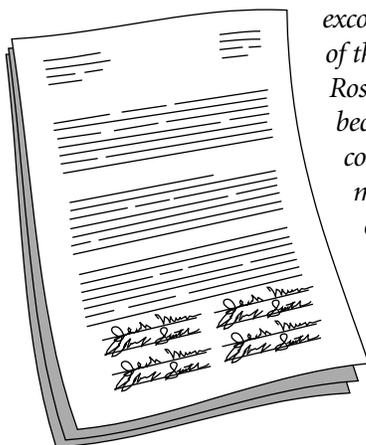
Debra is currently Co-director of the **Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing** whose full-page declaration appeared in the *New York Times* and many other publications. The declaration challenges the religious and political Right’s views on reproductive health.

Debra received a Master of Public Health degree at Yale University School of Medicine in 1979. She has also worked as a research fellow at Yale’s Divinity School. Her work experience includes offices related to public health issues:

- President/Executive Director, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States.
- Director of Information and Education, Center for Population Options.
- Director of Community Services and Public Relations, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington
- Special Assistant, Office of the Director, Bureau of Community Health Service, US Public Health Service.

An expert on adolescent sexuality, in 1999 Debra authored, **Beyond the Big Talk: Every Parent’s guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Teens**. In 2000, she co-authored a college text, **Exploring the Dimensions of Human Sexuality**.

With her extensive experience in public and government sectors, Debra will make a valuable addition to the Board.



In Brazil: Ulcer pills used for abortions

Thousands of poor Brazilian women are taking Cytotec, a prescription ulcer medication, as means of abortion. Unfortunately, when Viviane Borges Coutinho checked into a Brazilian state hospital suffering the ill effects of a Cytotec-induced abortion, the physician who saw her accused her of infanticide, a crime that can draw a 6-year prison term. The angry physician was reacting to the number of women he was treating in the aftermath of attempted abortions.

Coutinho, uneducated, unwed, and unemployed, was sent to Janeiro's infamous Bangu prison to await trial. However, her prosecution is not typical.

In Brazil, with its huge number of Catholics, women undergo an estimated 1 million abortions annually. The rich pay for sanitary abortions. The poor attempt their own methods. Brazil's Health Ministry reported that in 2001, 242,000 women sought treatment for the complications of self-induced abortions.

Yet Brazil views abortion as a moral issue, not an issue of public health — even though state-run hospitals are full of poor women who arrive every day, suffering the injuries of

their efforts. They've taken Cytotec or other home remedies. The number of women who seek post-abortion medical help is putting great pressure on the public health system.

The Brazilian problem is one that involves race, religion, wealth, and social class. Because rich women can afford to pay for abortions, they do not need any legal consent. Poor women require a judge's approval to obtain a low-cost legal abortion. Most judges order women who appeal to the law to carry their babies to term.

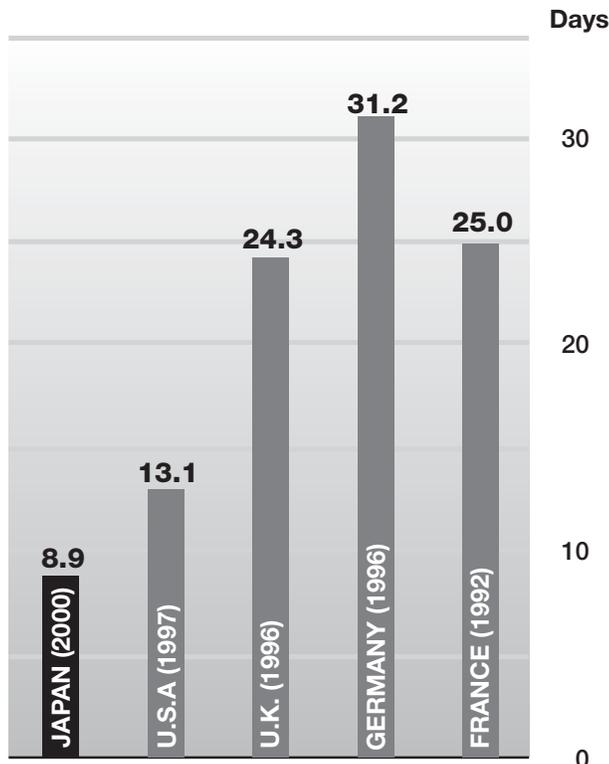
Dark-skinned Afro-Brazilians are the poor, who must seek out abortions any way they can — be it prescription drugs or unsanitary "surgeries" where women endure the procedure without the help of anesthesia. Brazilians with money can go to modern clinics where an abortion costs about \$300. Given the huge numbers of at-risk abortion attempts, women's advocacy groups have been pressuring Brazil's lawmakers not only to decriminalize abortion, but also to provide government funds for the procedure.



Who's Family Friendly?

Annual Paid Holidays – Comparison

Source: "General Survey on Work Conditions," and Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare estimates based upon data from EU and individual countries.



Stealth attack on women's rights

President Bush may have dodged service in Vietnam, but he never fails to stand tall in the war against women. As we go to press, it looks like he will smilingly sign into law a ban on what the Right wing has nick-named "partial birth abortion." This is part of the ongoing assault on *Roe v. Wade* and women's autonomy.

As Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist said wittily in his opinion in *Casey* (1992): "*Roe continues to exist, but only in the way a storefront on a western movie set exists: a mere facade to give the illusion of reality.*" The *New York Times* accurately brands the bill "deceptive." They note editorially: "*The measure's deceptively sweeping wording, would, in effect, overturn Roe by criminalizing many midterm abortions and by omitting any exception to protect the health of the woman.*"

It's a strategy that pleases the backers of the bill, including our brave president. Says the *Times*: "*Their actions show a troubling disrespect not just for the rights of women, but also for truth and the rule of law.*"

New York Times, September 19



Movies

The Magdalene Sisters

By Daniel C. Maguire

Who's to blame here?

Sometimes a movie Like *Schindler's List* or the newly released *The Magdalene Sisters* has the rare cinematographic power to bring an atrocity eerily back to life. *The Magdalene Sisters* personalizes the horror that befell as many as 30,000 women imprisoned in laundries run by nuns under conditions that constituted torture and unending debasement. The film is a fictional rendering of a horror begun in the 19th century in Ireland that ended only in 1996. In a conspiracy of church, state, family, and culture, women were incarcerated because

they were raped, molested, became pregnant outside of marriage, or simply because they were deemed by their families to be too flirtatious or even too attractive.

Director Peter Mullan did not exaggerate in this film. He didn't need to. Every day these women were insulted, overworked (at good profit for the Church), kept in silence, and at times, sexually abused by their keepers and by priests—with no possibility of recourse. They were “fallen women” whose word was worthless against their anointed religious jailors. Some stayed in these prisons until death. Some escaped but then returned, so stigmatized were they by having been “Maggies,” that there was no place for them in Catholic Ireland. The whole nation was their prison, and the laundries were their only cell.

When the laundries finally closed, some of the women did not know how to make a phone call or cope with life outside.

The chief demons of the film seem to be the nuns, or maybe Irish Catholicism that admittedly took sexual rigor to extremes. But such localized indicting is shortsighted. As paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin said, nothing is intelligible outside its history. In the light of history, the nuns were as much victims as their battered wards.

Healthy religion is powerful and has led to civilizing epics of compassion. Unhealthy religion seems even more powerful. The poet Alexander Pope said “*the worst of madmen is a saint gone mad.*” The real demon of the laundries' tragedy is the poison poured into Western culture by the Christian horror of sex and sexual pleasure — and those roots are deep.



Reprinted with permission from *Do Penance or Perish: A Study of Magdalen Asylums in Ireland* by Frances Finegan, Congrave Press, Piltown, County Kilkenny, Ireland.

An unidentified Magdalen Laundry in Ireland with its primitive equipment. This photo records the conditions in which girls and women labored unpaid — subjected to harsh discipline, silence, and prayer.

The shadow of the influential 5th century bishop, Augustine, hangs over *The Magdalene Sisters*. Augustine taught, and others followed, that the sexual pleasure of the parents transmits a moral blight — original sin — to the newborn. Small wonder there is talk of “ecclesiogenic psychoneurosis.” Sexual pleasure was itself a kind of moral pollution. It distanced you from all that is holy. St. Jerome and St. Thomas Aquinas both taught that in heaven virgins received a 100% heavenly reward, while widows and widowers got 60%, and people who died when married got only 30%.

The message was clear: sexuality is incompatible with spirituality. Sex is dirty, spirituality sublime. And in the male-dominated Christian history, women, especially attractive women, were to be blamed for the blight of sexual pleasure and its relentless draw. All of this poison seeped into Catholicism, and *The Magdalene Sisters* show it in full virulence. The Irish nuns and the Irish culture simply took this sick attitude toward sexuality to its logical and brutal extreme.

Sometimes a movie can be an event, in this case, a cathartic event. The pathology it starkly portrays is directly related to contemporary sexual scandals racking the Catholic Church. It partially explains the empty Catholic seminaries and convents and closed parishes. The long-tenured, poisonous miasma of sex-hatred and women-hatred is being blown out to sea by healthy currents today as new modes of Catholic living are being pioneered. *The Magdalene Sisters* is a jarring look back that can only encourage the reforming process.

Kenya's sexual *cleansers* spread HIV/AIDS

A “*cleanser*” is a man in a rural Kenyan village who sleeps with women after their husbands die to drive out evil spirits. Tradition dictates that widows must sleep with the cleanser before they may attend their husband's funerals.

The cleansing practices are believed to spread HIV/AIDS. Condoms are not used because the ritual calls for skin-to-skin contact. Unmarried women who lose a parent or child must also sleep with the ritual cleanser. The custom, which has always been unpopular among women, has taken on new meaning during the African AIDS pandemic. More than simply a painful or debasing ritual women must endure, cleansing has become life-threatening. Health care workers and human rights agencies are trying to curtail the practice, arguing for its abolition.



Asia's condom policy reduces HIV/AIDS

The World Health Organization is working with authorities in China, Myanmar, Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines to adopt a policy of 100% condom use in commercial sex establishments. The approach, which has dramatically succeeded in Thailand and Cambodia, has seen new infections plummet by more than 80% in these two countries in the last decade. WHO estimates that billions of condoms are needed to keep AIDS from escalating in Asia.



BOOK NEWS

More Humane Medicine: *A Liberal Catholic Bioethics*

More Humane Medicine (Edinboro University Press, 2003) once again gives the lie to the idea that the Roman Catholic position on abortion is a simple big *NO!* In this book, Professor James Drane, an internationally renowned Catholic bioethicist and award-winning author, moves beyond the myopic limits of Vatican theology. Instead, he shows the sensitive flexibility of Catholic ethics on a number of issues, including the overheated subject of abortion. Professor Drane writes as a Catholic, but produces an ethic that has broader relevance to many contemporary debates.

Professor Drane writes as a Catholic, but produces an ethic that has broader relevance to many contemporary debates.

Drane wrote this book to address the “*need for an alternative Catholic perspective*” on all the issues of medical ethics. For example, he asks: “*Are all Catholics obliged to accept the official position of Catholic Bishops on stem-cell*

research which aligns [the hierarchy] with the most extreme conservative moralists?” His answer shows that the bishops, who, after all, are not theologians or bioethicists, do not represent the best of Catholic thinking in this or other areas.

In a way that is not at all radical — indeed Drane proceeds cautiously in all his efforts to open up Catholics to the pluralism their religion allows — Drane shows, in his words, “*that even abortion in some situations can be pro-life and contribute to a more humane medical practice.*” He is conservative in the number of abortions he justifies, but it is instructive that even when one works out of a moderately liberal, almost conservative Catholic framework, one can move from no-choice to pro-choice on the abortion issue. Drane writes that, “*restrictive legislation which absolutizes fetal interests and prohibits every termination of pregnancy, no matter what the circumstances, creates a holocaust of women caught in tragic conflicts with their fetuses. It violates nature and reasonableness and humane medical practice.*”

As Catholics recover from hierarchical thought-control, and as reformist efforts led by Catholic scholars and laity develop, Drane’s **More Humane Medicine** points the way to a more humane Catholic moral theology.

The widespread problem of obstetric fistula in Africa

The United Nations Population Fund and EngenderHealth recently announced that current figures of 2 million African women living with fistula are too conservative because the numbers take into account only patients who seek treatment. The report on fistula — the combined effort of UNPFA and EngenderHealth — estimates that as many as 1 million women in Nigeria alone could be suffering from fistula. The countries studied in the report include Benin, Chad, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia.

Obstetric fistula is a pregnancy-related disability, the result of prolonged obstructed labor that continues for days without medical aid. Such labor renders women incontinent, constantly leaking urine and/or feces.

The report, which hopes to raise awareness of the problem of fistula, is a part of UNPFA's campaign to *prevent* and *treat* the condition. Most women who live with the condition keep it secret.

A further complication: Many fistula sufferers become victims in other ways. Because they are considered "unclean," these women are abandoned by their husbands, ousted from their homes, shunned by family and friends, and even deserted

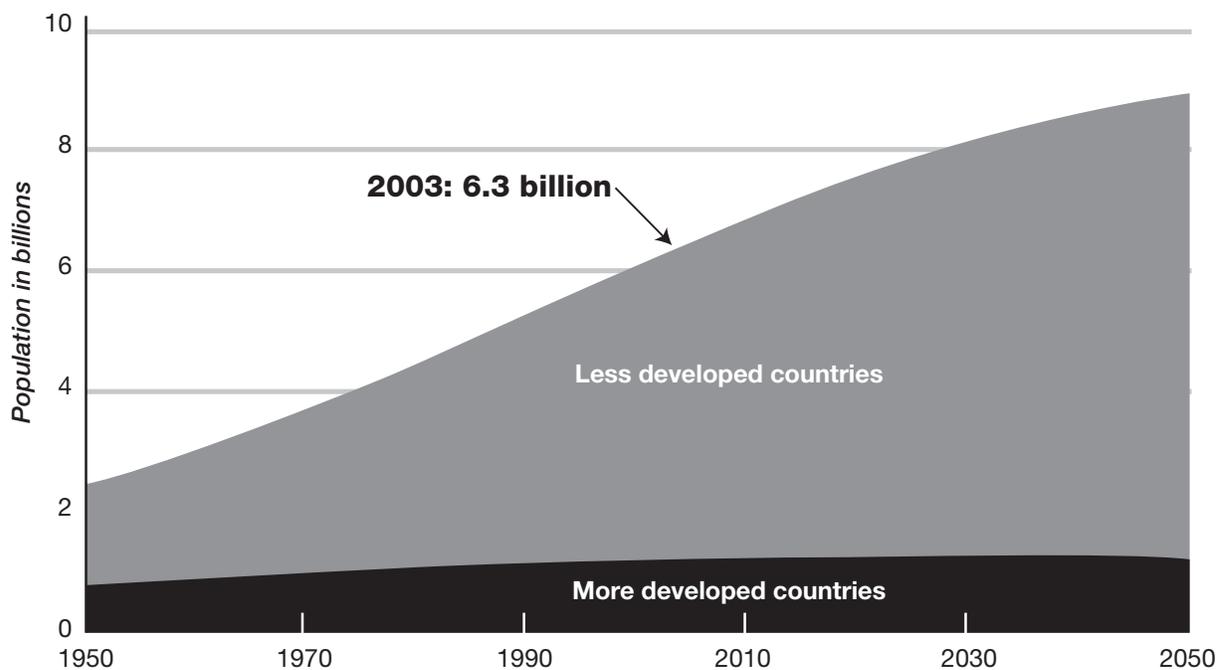
by health workers. Without skills to support themselves, some turn to begging or prostitution. Women with fistula in sub-Saharan Africa are very young: 13-20. They are also typically illiterate and poor. They have delivered their babies at home, without medical assistance. The labors are protracted, and the baby usually does not survive the birth.

Fistula is treatable. A simple reconstructive surgery can repair the damage and succeeds about 90% of the time. The surgery costs \$100-\$400. However, trained local surgeons and surgical supplies are in short supply, so that even if a woman could afford the repair, women lack access to skilled medical professionals.

Fistula is also preventable. The condition is virtually nonexistent where young women are educated, family planning is available, early pregnancy is discouraged, and skilled childbirth care exists. UNPFA hopes, through this report, to increase treatment and educate women to prevent the injury in the first place.



World Population, 1950 to 2050: 'Medium' Projection



Source: UN Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*.

Consultation receives funding to expose the religious roots of violence against women

By Daniel C. Maguire

The Religious Consultation On Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics has received funding for a project, entitled, **The Religious Roots of Violence Against Women**. Our project will show that —

1. All the world's religions (many now represented in the US) induce violence against women, although these inducements have remained undiagnosed.
2. By a kind of homeopathic medicine, these religions can be marshaled to promote cures. The means? To undermine the religious justification of this abuse that devastates women/girls and that undergirds public policies as well as public neglect.

The **Oxford Dictionary of World Religions** states it bluntly: *“The subordination of women to men became widespread in all religions.”* This subordination is the primal violence from which other forms of anti-woman violence are spawned. And it needs to be addressed by competent scholars from the world's religions. We are just now beginning a broad search for the scholars who will join this project.

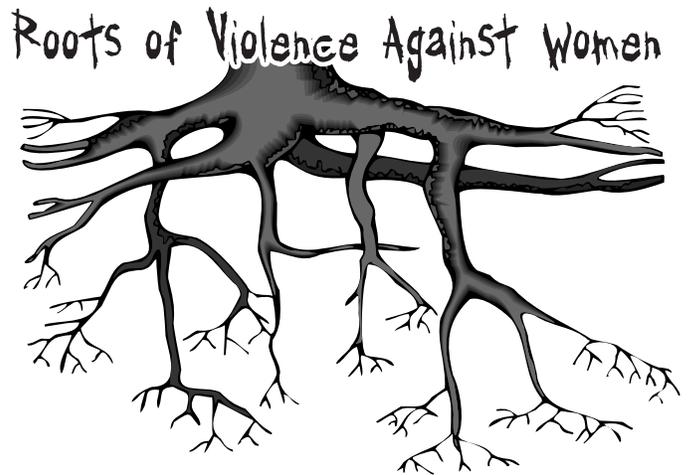
To circulate our message, we will produce—

- Two books — one popular and one scholarly version
- A video documentary for television and other educational uses
- A video that can be dubbed in multiple languages
- Multiple articles and Op Eds

Some Fast Facts

In the United States

- Battering is the major cause of injury to adult women.
- About 95% of the victims of domestic violence are women.
- Nearly one-third of women are physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend — that's nearly 4 million women each year.
- Black women are more likely to be victimized than white.
- About 1-in-5 women in emergency rooms show symptoms related to abuse.
- The FBI estimates that a woman is raped every two minutes.
- 1-in-3 girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.
- 90% of women report on-the-job sexual harassment.



Worldwide

- 1-out-of-3 women will suffer abuse. In some countries, the figure is over 50%.
- In India, 5,000 brides are killed annually in dowry disputes. “Honor killings” claim thousands every year — because women socialized with boys or were raped.
- For 33% of girls, their first sexual experience is forced.
- 50% of rape victims are under 18, and 25% are under 12.

The violence against women takes multiple societal forms: discrimination in employment, promotion, and pay scales; educational deprivation — including in many places — illiteracy; neglect in researching women's medical needs; female “sweat shop” labor; sexual enslavement and more.

And what does religion have to do with all of this? Religion is *a*, if not *the*, shaper of cultural values. Most societies do not want to admit it, but many religious definitions and teachings on the meaning of gender and male/female roles provide the justification for violence against women.

Religion is often used by aggressors to justify their behavior and used by victims to excuse the violence employed against them. The religious emphasis on “family values” often works to keep women in abusive relationships in the name of “keeping the family together.” Seeking justice against these crimes is seen in some religious settings as vindictive and un-virtuous. Male dominance in most clergies does not promote sensitivity to violence against women.

Thus the very religions that promote this abuse do little or nothing to stop it. That is why one of our targets in this project will be curricular formation in theological schools and seminaries.

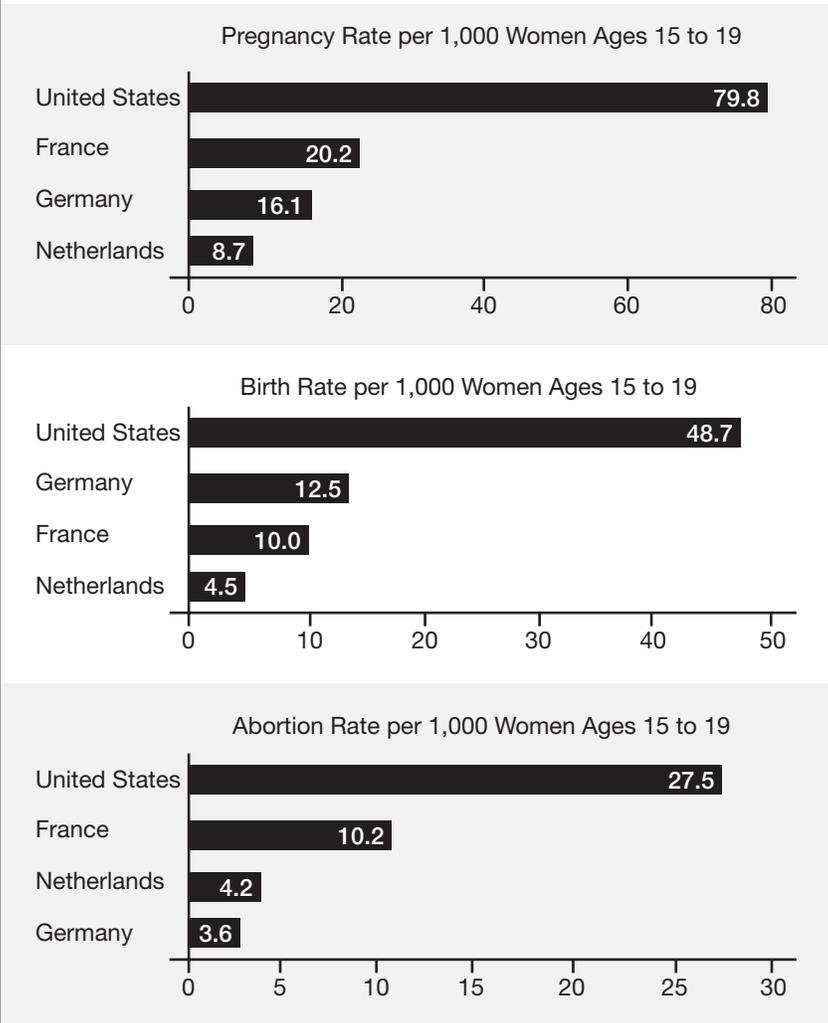
Technology used to screen gender in India

Voice of America reports that ultrasound technology, typically used as a pre-natal indicator of fetal health, is being used for another purpose in India. In a country where traditions still hold sway, pregnant women are using ultrasound to identify the sex of their fetus



and aborting female fetuses. The practice was discovered, according to the UNFPA representative in India, when the 2001 national census figures revealed the skewed gender ratio — with males increasingly outnumbering females in many parts of the country.

Adolescent Pregnancy, Birth, and Abortion Rates in Europe Far Outshine Those in the U.S.*



*Data are the most recent available for each country, ranging from years 1995 to 2000. Pregnancy data do not include fetal losses. US birth data are for 1999 while U.S. pregnancy and abortion data are for 1997.

Source: Advocates for Youth, *Transitions*, Vol. 15, No. 2.

An Update

Many Sudanese women still suffer from genital mutilation

The Sudanese government recently admitted that female circumcision is increasing alarmingly: up to 90% of women in the country's heavily Muslim northern provinces suffer from genital mutilation.

The Sudanese Health Minister, Ahmed Bilal Osman, blamed tradition and popular belief for the continuing growth of the practice, despite a religious decree last year stressing that the practice is not linked to Islam.





Tracking the Activities of Our Participating Scholars

Movers and Shakers

Rebecca Alpert is now the Chair of the Religion Department at Temple University. Rebecca's latest article, *Sex in Jewish Law and Culture*, appears in *Sexuality and the World's Religions*, edited by David Machacek and Melissa Wilcox. Published by ABC-CLIO.



Farid Esack was recently appointed the Besl Professor in Ethics, Religion, and Society at **Xavier University** in Cincinnati. During the summer, Farid traveled to **Kuala Lumpur** to participate in a conference of *Muslim Religious Leaders on HIV/AIDS*. He also co-facilitated a program in **Sri Lanka** on

Working for Gender Justice within Muslim Societies, acted as a Resource Theologian for **Crosscurrents Colloquium** in New York, and spoke at the **WCC** conference on *Hermeneutics and Religious Pluralism* in Bossey, Geneva. Farid is currently working on three projects:

- Beyond Victimhood — South African Reflections on Palestine
- Developing a Theology of Compassion — An Islamic Response to HIV/AIDS
- A Progressive Islamic Response to the Rise of the New Empire

In July, **Christine Gudorf** returned to **Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia** as a Fulbright Senior Specialist to teach *Gender and Religion* in the Graduate Program for Religion and Cross-Cultural Studies. Her book, *Boundaries: Cases in Environmental Ethics*, co-authored with James Huchingson, is being published by Georgetown University Press in November 2003.



Ben Hubbard has published an article, *Religious Education: Its Role in National Education* in the Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism (4,2003), 120-26. Ben has also recently appeared twice in the *Los Angeles Times*, Orange County Edition: *Time for Moral Courage on Both Sides*, March 16, 2003 and *Interfaith Movement Is Key to World Harmony*, August 17, 2003.



Paul F. Knitter's latest book *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002, offers an overview of the various ways in which Christians approach other religions and the need for more authentic dialogue among all. Paul also attended the four-day **Conference on Religious Pluralism**, the first of its kind.



The summit was held in **Birmingham, England**, to honor the 81-year-old English philosopher and father of the pluralist movement, **John Hick**. Pluralism asserts that all the world's great religions are valid paths to salvation. In all, 40 scholars from 16 countries participated in the September conference: Buddhists, Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Protestants, and Sikhs.



Hyun Kyung, an eco-feminist theologian, was the keynote speaker at the **11th Annual Feminist Liberation Theology Week at the Rockhaven Center for Holistic Living** just outside St. Louis Missouri. Since 1996, Hyun has taught ecumenical theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

She has lectured worldwide on spirituality, religious pluralism, ecology, and women's rights.

Pinar Ilkcaracan organized a regional meeting, *Sexual and Bodily Rights as Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa* in cooperation with the **Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies**. The conference was held in Malta last May 29 – June 1st. The most active feminist NGOs from the region participated in the meeting, representing organizations from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, Turkey, and the US.

James B. Martin-Schramm and Robert L. Stivers, have co-authored *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case-Method Approach*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003. Last spring, Jim was elected to a two-year term as the **Chair of the Board of the Division for Church in Society** of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha has accepted a position in the Department of Religion at California State University-Northridge.

continued on page eleven



Movers and Shakers

continued from page ten

Mary Evelyn Tucker of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania has published several books. **Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase**. Chicago: Open Court, 2003; **Confucian Spirituality**, 2 volumes, ed. with Tu Weiming. New York: Crossroads Publishers, Volume I, 2003, **When Worlds Converge: What Science and Religion Tell Us about the Story of the Universe and Our Place in It**, ed. with Cliff Matthews and Philip Hefner. Chicago: Open Court, 2002. You can also find Evelyn's work at

- The **Forum on Religion and Ecology** web site at <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion>
- The Daedalus issue on **World Religions and Ecology** at <http://www.daedalus.amacad.org/issues/fall2001/fall2001.htm>
- **Religions of the World and Ecology** Web site <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/ecology>

Harold Coward's activities have been numerous.

- He is co-directing a \$6 million, 5-year team project, **Coasts Under Stress: Human and Environmental Health**, now in its third year.
- Howard continues to serve on the **Board of GenomeBC as the Ethics Specialist**. Genome BC spends the Canadian government's budget on scientific genomics research. Howard oversees the portion of the research that engages dialogue between the genome scientists, ethicists, representatives of the law, economists, and the wider public.
- He and his wife, Rachel, taught a course, *Asian Religions*, for the **University of Pittsburgh's Semester At Sea**. In June, he boarded a ship at Vancouver and took a group of students on a "field trip" to Alaska, Russia, Korea, China, Viet Nam, Taiwan, and Japan.

He is leading three team-authored book projects:

- **Indian Critiques of Gandhi** published by SUNY Press
- **Religion and Pluralism in Canada**, published by Pearson
- **Climate Change in Canada**, published by WLU Press

He has authored **Sin and Salvation in World Religions**, published by Oneworld, Oxford in May 2003 and **Yoga and Psychology: Language, Memory and Mysticism**, in September 2002 by SUNY Press. He has just begun work on a major volume for Greenwood/Prager, **Hinduism and Human Rights**.



Fact-finding delegation to China assesses UNFPA assistance

Participating Scholar James Martin-Schramm spent a week in China in September along with eight other prominent religious leaders to investigate the role that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) plays in Chinese family planning. The trip was privately funded by Catholics For A Free Choice, and the Chinese government has not restricted the delegation's activities in any way.



The scholars were sent to assess whether or not UNFPA assistance helps increase choice and reduce coercion in the Chinese program. The independent delegation members represent Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant faiths. The delegation visited Beijing and three provinces: Gansu Province, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and Hubei Province. There, they met with health officials, religious and NGO leaders, and clinic staffs to gather the views and experiences of ordinary people in accessing reproductive health services in China — including prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.



Opponents of US funding for UNFPA have successfully lobbied the Bush administration to cut off funds to the organization, claiming that UNFPA participates in coercion in China. The trip has been planned to prove or disprove the allegation. Previous fact-finding missions from the British government and the US State Department have found no evidence to support the claim. Several of the denominations represented in this delegation have gone on record as supporting US funding for UNFPA, and so they feel it is important that they assess the situation themselves. The delegation will issue a report of its findings after returning to the US.

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