

Beacon Press

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

December 17, 2007



To: UUA Board of Trustees
From: Helene Atwan, Director
Re: Beacon Press Board Report

Beacon Broadside, our blog, debuted in September, and the quality of material that has been sent in by our authors is truly a testament to the depth of Beacon's list: Among dozens of posts, a new one almost every weekday, **Mary Oliver** gave us her reflections on Edna St. Vincent Millay, **Meredith Hall** discussed the "rules of silence" around adoption, and **Stacy Mitchell** urged us to shop locally this holiday season. We also featured friends of the house, from **Lois Lowry** about Banned Books Week to **Pagan Kennedy** on animal rights.

Every week sees more readers logging on. A reviewer at popular publishing website *galleycat* praised the blog as "a site which uses the imprint's passion for social justice as a starting point for it's own engagement with readers...it's more than just an advertisement; it's an entirely new conversation." The site *Lean Left* noted that Beacon Broadside "should be a template for how publishers do blogs."

Our fall season has been a remarkable one in other ways as well:

Katherine Newman and **Victor Tan Chen's** *The Missing Class* has really taken off since my last report. The authors have made appearances on PBS's Bill Moyer's Journal, on WGBH-TV, on NPR's Marketplace, and on two popular nationally broadcast radio shows: The Tavis Smiley Show and The Leonard Lopate Show.

Mark Winne's *Closing the Food Gap* has been getting an abundance of media attention, including an appearance in December on ABC-TV's World News. "*Closing the Food Gap* reveals the chasm between the two food systems of America—the one for the poor and the one for everyone else. Mark Winne offers compelling solutions for making local, organic, and highly nutritious food available to everyone," in the words of Dr. Jane Goodall. Winne's November article in *The Washington Post* on the same topic spurred a storm of conversation with the author that continues well into December.

Philip Winslow's book on working in the West Bank with the United Nations Relief and Works agency, *Victory for Us Is to See You Suffer*, has been censored in Israel. A shipment of books ordered by the Educational Bookshop in East Jerusalem for a talk and book-signing given by Winslow at Al Quds University was confiscated by Israeli Customs on the grounds that the books were "incitement material." It took vigorous protest over almost two months to get the book released. The book has received very favorable reviews and the author has appeared on several radio shows, including NPR's Fresh Air with Terry Gross.



60 on Up: The Truth About Aging in America, written by **Lilian B. Rubin**, has been striking chords with baby boomers everywhere; the book was hailed by *O Magazine* as “a sharp, brazenly honest exposé” and was picked as a fall favorite by the *Boston Globe*. *USA Today* consulted the author for an article on “senior sex,” and Dr. Rubin was also interviewed by Leonard Lopate and Michael Krasney, as well as other public radio hosts.

Among our recent awards, ***The Earth Knows My Name*** by **Patricia Klindienst** has won the American Book Award for nonfiction from the Before Columbus Foundation. **Jennifer K. Harbury**, author of ***Truth, Torture, and the American Way***, has won the M. Shanara Gilbert Human Rights Award, given by the Society of American Law Teachers. And ***Without a Map***, by **Meredith Hall**, is a finalist for the first book category for Books for a Better Life. In addition, the Sundance Film Festival has chosen ***Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*** as one of its 16 documentaries. The film is a companion to **Thomas Norman DeWolf**’s just-released ***Inheriting the Trade***, a book about facing the legacy of the slave trade.

Among our recently acquired titles:

Carl Elliott’s ***White Coat, Black Hat*** will take readers on an insider tour of our modern medical system, in which fakery and deception are not just tolerated but rewarded. He will discuss professional guinea pigs, clinical researchers, drug industry reps, and ghostwriters for prestigious journals, observing them all with fascination and telling the story of the commoditization of medicine while exploring the larger philosophical issues surrounding medical consumerism.

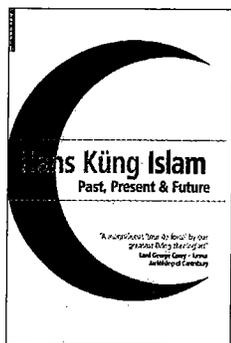
Patricia Harman, a nurse-midwife who runs a private practice with her physician husband in West Virginia, has written a debut memoir that chronicles her own trials and triumphs while also telling the intimate tales of her patients, providing a behind-the-scenes look at the challenges of running a medical practice and of caring for women facing major health problems—including the author’s own cancer—as well as abuse, STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and even female-to-male transitioning.

Fred Pearce’s new book, ***Confessions of an Eco-Sinner***, will look at the author’s own environmental footprint by examining the sources of everything in his life. Pearce will look at how interconnected the global economy is and at the often troubling but sometimes hopeful realities behind the fresh fish we order at a restaurant, the fair trade coffee we drink, and the garbage we discard.

Former Gallup pollster **David W. Moore**’s ***Manufacturing Public Opinion*** will take a critical look at what media polling has become: manipulative and misrepresentative of public opinion, sometimes with disastrous results. Moore will expose the inner-workings of pollsters and the cycle of bias that tends to promote the powerful and suppress dissent, just in time for the presidential election.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World and The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, as well as two translations of the Qur'an and a comprehensive concordance that is being made available for the first time electronically.

Meanwhile, print studies of the Qur'an also continue to flourish. Duke scholar Bruce Lawrence received rave reviews for his "biography" of the Qur'an with Atlantic Monthly Press, part of the house's Books that Changed the World series (Feb. 2007). And HarperOne is assembling a major new translation and commentary of the holy book, spearheaded by general editor Seyyed Hossein Nasr, to be published in late 2009.



A wide range: from weighty tomes (Beacon) to memoirs (OneWorld).

The New Muslim Memoir

It's impossible to focus just on Muslim history and theology, however, when what many readers want is a thoughtful explanation of how Islam functions politically and socially in the world today. And they often want that information delivered in the context of memoir, with personal stories and anecdotes eloquently reflecting the diversity of opinions within Islam.

One example is Eboo Patel's *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Beacon, July). "Eboo had this insight that religious extremists target young people," says Amy Caldwell, senior editor for Beacon. Caldwell encouraged Patel to weave his political ideas and the story of why he founded the Interfaith Youth Core to combat religious extremism with vignettes about his own life as a young Muslim in the U.S. "I thought his was a really interesting story. What is it like to be Muslim and to grow up in America in this day and age?" A personal story, Caldwell notes, is often the best way to get readers engaged in a topic or issue. Her strategy must be working: after an initial print run of 6,000 copies, Beacon

has gone back to press and now has 12,500 copies in print, a growth no doubt fueled by Patel's speaking engagements at universities and high schools. And the success is enough to get Beacon to do it again: it will publish *The Next Golden Age*, the family memoir of Pakistani-American journalist Ayesha Akram, sometime after 2009.

It takes time for readers to be ready for personal voices, says Farrar, Straus & Giroux senior editor Paul Elie. "Shortly after the World Trade Center was destroyed, we published *West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story* by Tamim Ansary. I don't think the public was ready yet for the first-person Muslim narrative. We

raced to publish the book in about six months, and it was still a little too early. But now, that is one of our leading books for course adoption. A number of colleges have bought 2,000 copies at a time, and everybody reads it over the summer."

At HarperOne, former *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Asra Nomani chronicled her experiences of going on hajj as an unwed mother in *Standing Alone in Mecca: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam*. The book came out in 2005 in cloth and sold 25,000 copies, followed by a paperback release last year, which has sold an additional 12,000. The paperback edition removed the words "in Mecca" to reflect the universalism of Nomani's Muslim experience.

Sometimes personal voices are collected into a book of profiles or interviews, as is the case with Melody Moezzi's forthcoming *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*, which offers personal interviews with a dozen young Muslims in the U.S. (Univ. of Arkansas, Dec. 10). The book has been excerpted in *Parabola* and will be promoted to Muslim student associations, in *Muslim World* and *Muslim Girl*, says Tom Lavoie, director

of marketing and sales for the press.

Another collection of profiles is FSG's *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion* by journalist Paul Barrett. FSG's Elie reports that the book arose out of Barrett's *Wall Street Journal* profiles of American Muslims after 9/11, and took the author the better part of five years to put together. Far from being a flash-in-the-pan response to the tragedy, the book drew upon carefully cultivated relationships with the profile subjects. Elie notes that the author and the press resisted the temptation to release the book to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the WTC attacks last fall, "in part because it was a crowded season around the fifth anniversary, but in part because the American Muslim community is diverse and peaceful. It would have created a false association between the World Trade Center attack and American Islam."

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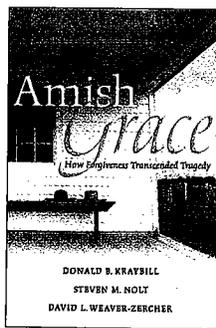
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Amish Tragedy

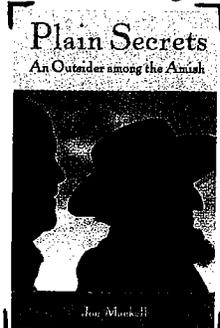
Mormons aren't the only religious group under the microscope. In October 2006, America watched in horror as a gunman killed five Amish schoolchildren before turning the weapon on himself. Then it watched in admiring fascination as the Amish people extended forgiveness to the shooter and his family, and capably tended their wounded survivors.

In conjunction with the first anniversary of this horrible event, Jossey-Bass released *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* by Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt and David Weaver-Zercher (Sept.). "The authors are among the foremost experts on the Amish," says Sheryl Fullerton, executive editor. "When the tragic shooting happened at Nickel Mines, they were the people the media went to. The question reporters had over and over again was how the Amish could have forgiven the shooter so soon and so completely. So Don and his colleagues came up with the idea for this book. From the beginning, we wanted to make it not exploitative or sensational, but to describe who the Amish are."

Kelly Hughes, president of DeChant-Hughes Public Relations in Chicago, arranged interviews for the authors on *Anderson Cooper 360*, *Bill Moyers Journal*, in the *Christian Science Monitor* and on *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, among others. Hughes says public interest is high because the Amish "represent an ideal of a bucolic, idyllic, simple existence, free from the problems of the world. The intrusion of evil into their quiet world was especially shocking." To help combat such evil, the authors are donating all



Illuminating a people in crisis (Jossey-Bass) and in daily life (Beacon).



The More, the Merrier? New Polygamy Memoirs

Call it the *Big Love* effect: the ex-polygamist memoir has gained an ascendancy not seen since the late 19th century, when exposés such as *Wife Number Nineteen* scandalized Victorians. Two books making a splash this fall offer an inside view of polygamous life. On August 22, Center Street published *Shattered Dreams: My Life as a Polygamist's Wife* by Irene Spencer. Bolstered by a 4-star review the following week in *People* magazine and an author appearance on *Anderson Cooper 360*, the book spent several weeks on the *New York Times* hardcover nonfiction bestseller list, peaking at #10. "The polygamist way of life is fascinating and people are just naturally curious," says Lori Quinn, associate publisher/marketing for Hachette Book Group.

Spencer's memoir has just been joined by the literary equivalent of a sister wife: on October 16, Broadway released Carolyn Jessop's tell-all *Escape*, which chronicles how and why she fled Warren Jeffs' polygamist cult in 2003 with her eight children and just \$20 to her name. The book's publication coincides nicely with the accused leader's high-profile court trial this fall, and Jessop will be in the national spotlight as she testifies against him. Associate director of publicity Joanna Pinsker reports that "strong early enthusiasm from accounts" caused Broadway to go back for a second printing before publication, bringing the total in print to 57,000 copies. At press time, *Good Morning America* was confirmed for a two-part interview, and interviews were also scheduled for CNN and several national magazines. Pinsker doesn't think that the success of *Shattered Dreams* will negatively affect sales of *Escape*. "While there are similarities between the two books, Carolyn Jessop's first-hand account of her experience in a polygamist community is more contemporary than that depicted in *Shattered Dreams*," Pinsker says. —J.R.



proceeds from the book to the Mennonite Central Committee to benefit children suffering around the world from poverty, war and disaster.

Amish Grace isn't the only book about the school shootings. John L. Ruth's *Forgiveness: A Legacy of the West Nickel Mines Amish School* came out in May from Mennonite-affiliated Herald Press. Sales also spiked for a spring 2006 title from Farrar, Straus & Giroux, *Rumspringa*, Tom Shachtman's entertaining analysis of the "running-around period" for Amish teens. The book "definitely had an increase" after the shootings, according to senior editor Paul Elie. It has sold 15,000 copies in cloth and 10,000 in paper.

For timeless behind-the-scenes glimpses of Amish life, few can match the close views afforded by Ohio writer Joe Mackall's memoir *Plain Secrets: An Outsider*

Among the Amish (Beacon, June). Mackall has forged a years-long friendship with a neighboring Amish family and writes respectfully of their traditions and beliefs. "We wanted to acknowledge the fascination people have about the Amish without romanticizing them," says Beacon senior editor Amy Caldwell. Sales of the book "have been pretty nice, and we've gone back to press twice. It got a couple of great NPR interviews, and was widely reviewed in the *L.A. Times*, *Boston Globe* and *Cleveland Plain Dealer*."

Caldwell has her eyes open for other books that investigate the "nooks and crannies" of sectarian religious experience in the United States. Books about religions outside the mainstream, she says, "shed light on different ways to think, and that informs the choices the rest of us might want to make."

The New York Times

Sunday, August 26, 2007 Last Update: 11:26 AM ET

Is There (Middle Class) Life After Maytag?



Matthew Holst for The New York Times

Lisa and Guy Winchell will lose their jobs at the Maytag plant in Newton, Iowa, when it shuts down on Oct. 26. Above, they worked on his bus, converted into a recreational vehicle.

By LOUIS UCHITELLE

Published: August 26, 2007

NEWTON, Iowa



Matthew Holst for The New York Times

Tootie Samson was laid off from Maytag but later recalled to help wind down the plant. She will go back to school with federal aid.

THE last of the Maytag factories that lifted so many people into the middle class here will close on Oct. 26. Guy Winchell and his wife, Lisa, will lose their jobs that day. Their combined income of \$43 an hour will disappear and, soon after, so will their health insurance. Most of the pensions they would have received will also be gone.

The Winchells are still in their 40s. They can retrain or start a business, choices promoted by city leaders in a campaign to “reinvent” Newton without its biggest employer. But as they ponder their futures, the Winchells are uncertain about how to deal with a lower standard of living. “I’m not wanting to go waitress,”

said Mrs. Winchell, who, at 41, drives a forklift and earns \$19 an hour, “but I can do what I have to to make money.”

Mr. Winchell, 46, having earned \$24 an hour as a skilled electrician, seems paralyzed by the disappearance of his employer. He imagines that there is work for electricians in central Iowa but he hasn’t looked. “Lisa is always on me because I’m so angry,” he said. “She says, ‘What would your mom have said?’ My mom would have said, ‘Worrying is not going to help.’”

Newton’s last day as a manufacturing mecca comes a century after Fred L. Maytag built his first mechanical washing machine here. Over time he also located his headquarters, research center and most production in Newton, changing it from a rural county seat into a prosperous city of 16,000. Absent Maytag’s high pay, overall hourly earnings last year for other workers in the county would have been \$3 an hour less, according to Iowa Workforce Development, a state agency.

And then the Whirlpool Corporation bought Maytag in the spring of 2006 and began shutting down its operations here, eliminating jobs and depressing wages. Those caught in this process around the country are gradually swelling what Katherine S. Newman, a Princeton sociologist, describes as “The Missing Class,” the title of a soon-to-be-published book (Beacon Press), of which she is co-author.

Ms. Newman calculates that 54 million adults and children occupy a “nether region” of family incomes well above the poverty line — but well short of the middle class. Either they fall out of the middle class, as the Winchells are in danger of doing, or they have never earned enough at one job to get a family of four into the middle class.

“We are caught in a never-ending cycle of de-industrialization in which the best jobs disappear,” Ms. Newman said. “It is amazing to me how much we have come to accept that there is nothing to be done about this loss of income.”

HERE in Newton, Maytag’s fortress-like headquarters building, its beige-colored bulk looming over the downtown, has been emptied of 1,200 white-collar workers. Of nearly 900 unionized blue-collar workers still left last December in the sprawling factory, 400 were laid off and the rest got a reprieve, including the Winchells.

But theirs is a dead-end task: keeping retailers supplied until Whirlpool can start production of redesigned Maytag models built on the chassis of Whirlpool machines at the company’s existing factories in Monterrey, Mexico, and Clyde, Ohio. In Clyde, top pay for nearly all of the 3,700 non-union blue-collar workers is \$17 an hour, several dollars less than Maytag paid in Newton. But as Bill Townsend, the plant manager, put it, “whenever we advertise for employment, it is not difficult finding folks.”

Nor is it difficult to recruit workers in Newton anymore. Absent Maytag, a good wage in central Iowa is \$12 or \$13 an hour. The trick is to get that much as well as health insurance — and if not the wage, then at least the health insurance, even if that means commuting 40 to 50 miles, as more than a few ex-Maytag workers are now doing.

The downshift is reflected in the Labor Department’s national data. Median family income has risen at an average annual rate of only six-tenths of a percent, adjusted for inflation, since the mid-1970s — in sharp contrast to the 2.8 percent growth rate in the preceding 26 years.

article continued...

Either Too Poor or Too 'Rich'

The Missing Class Portraits of the Near Poor in America

By Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan Chen

Beacon Press. 288p \$24.95
ISBN 9780807041390

Recently, economists pointed to a small drop in the number of absolutely poor in 2006 census data. Many dispute the finding's significance. The U.S. government's calculation of poverty (\$20,000 or under a year for a family of four) is considered by many policy analysts as a grossly inadequate measure. The proportion of Americans living in poverty has remained relatively constant in the past decades, ranging from 11 percent to 15 percent (the highest rates of any advanced industrial country). Those who do escape from

the ranks of the 37 million who live below the poverty line tend to approach the precarious position of the 57 million near poor (those making between \$20,000 and \$40,000 for a family of four). Many of these are just one pink slip, one divorce or one major health crisis from falling back below the poverty line.

Katherine Newman, professor of sociology and public affairs at Princeton University, has charted the fate of the near poor for over a decade now in important books such as *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*; *Downward Mobility in the Age of Affluence* and *Chutes and Ladders: Navigating the Low-Wage Labor Market*.

By any reckoning, the working poor are quite vulnerable economically. They face substandard day care and a crisis in affordable housing. Many are uninsured or underinsured. They cannot afford tutors or private schools for their children, and in many cases they stagger under dangerously high consumer debt. Many work double-shift jobs to make ends meet. Growing inequality puts a severe squeeze on this second lowest quintile. The top 20 percent of Americans hold 83 percent of the total net wealth of the country; the bottom 80 percent hold only 17 percent. This gap is growing at almost unprecedented rates. The bottom 40 percent of households saw their net worth fall between 1983 and 2001. The share of bachelor's degree recipients from households earning between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year fell from 15 percent of all graduates in 1980 to 11 percent in 2004. Intergenerational mobility in the United States is lower than that found in France, Germany and Canada.

Newman, also a gifted anthropologist, makes the statistically proven vulnerability of the near poor come alive through in-depth interviews with families (mainly African-American and Hispanic) from five neighborhoods in the New York City area. We see how a welfare mother who made the transition to work and escaped the poverty line (by dint of long hours and several jobs) may also jeopardize the mobility chances of her children. Statistics show a mother's transition to work has negative effects on school achievement of older children (mothers have less time to read to them, interact or supervise homework). Another vignette included is that of

an underinsured family experiencing catastrophic illness, which led to their fall from the precarious second lowest quintile back into poverty.

We have been treading water in the way we address poverty. A study by the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston tracked family incomes over a 10-year period. It found that among families in the bottom fifth of the income distribution, slightly more than half remained there after 10 years; a quarter had moved up, but only to the second quintile. Among families who started out in this second quintile, about a quarter dropped to the bottom quintile over the same 10-year period.

Many of the working poor also bear financial burdens for extended family members. Twenty-nine percent care for indigent elderly parents. It can be a nightmare for low-paid factory workers to get time off to take their child to a doctor's appointment or to treat a sick child at home. The working poor, under strain, have higher divorce and separation rates than the national average.

Newman and her co-author Victor Chen, a journalist, turn in a final chapter to issues of policy reform. Their suggested remedies echo those of most of the people who study poverty in America: from addressing the minimum wage (with an automatic indexing of it to reflect inflation), to health care reform, to educational reform, to policies that support home ownership for the near poor, to reform and regulation of lending practices (one of the families in this study lost its home because of exorbitant sub-prime mortgage rates). Of high priority would be child-care and education reforms. As the authors argue "[W]e must replace this patchwork child-care 'system'—a term it barely merits—with a comprehensive, public-supported network of day care (for children aged six months to 3 years) and kindergarten (starting at four)." The benefits of such early childhood interventions would outweigh the costs by \$32 billion by 2030, if we factor in the expected returns on lifetime earnings and decreased criminal behavior by the young.

I read *The Missing Class* simultaneously with the 2006 policy paper by Catholic Charities USA, *Poverty in America: A Threat to the Common Good*. Most of its statistics mirror those of *The Missing Class*. The policy positions are also quite similar.

One advantage of Catholic Charities' policy paper over this book by Newman and Chen is its ability to mount a clear moral argument for addressing poverty in America (something that, ultimately, diminishes us all). The goal of reducing poverty and near poverty in America will require major structural changes.

Whether the nation has the will to address poverty as a systemic and serious issue remains to be seen. Listening to the voices of the often desperate families in *The Missing Class*, one has a sober sense that our nation—unlike the Good Samaritan—is passing by those who have been left by the road. **John A. Coleman**

Dirty work

How powerless Americans have been entrapped in forced labor and poverty

Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy

By John Bowe

Random House, 304 pp., \$25.95

The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America

By Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan Chen

Beacon, 258 pp., \$24.95

By James Green

In the heated debate about undocumented immigrant workers toiling away in the United States, we don't hear much about the condition of abject bondage under which many of these laborers toil in what is supposed to be the world's freest nation. These working people are the subject of "Nobodies," a disturbing new study by journalist John Bowe, who believes that the American public has been numbed by horrific news stories of contract laborers who are trapped and suffocated in ship containers, railroad cars, and trailer trucks. Bowe hopes his book will wake up a nation unaware of what is happening to these shadow people.

To this end, the author provides three sharply written case studies of what he calls "labor slavery."

In one case, a manufacturer of oil tanks imported 53 welders from India to Oklahoma, then asked them to surrender their documents and stay in dormitories with steel doors that made their quarters seem like jails. Facing bad publicity and a lawsuit, the manufacturer closed his business, but he never believed he was doing anything wrong, writes Bowe, never understood why his employees felt intimidated and terrorized.

An even more alarming case study takes place in South Florida — "ground zero for modern slavery" in the nation — where a ruthless labor contractor named Ramos kept

his Mexican and Central American tomato pickers in bondage at an isolated camp. A federal court convicted Ramos and his brothers of conspiring to hold people in involuntary servitude, and on various other charges.

This was one of six successful federal cases prosecuted in South Florida, none of which involved charges against corporate executives of food chains because purveyors like Taco Bell are exempt from prosecution under federal anti-slavery laws, even if they benefit from coerced labor.

Bowe's final case concerns the fate of Asians working in the sex trade and the garment industry of Saipan, in Micronesia. The island became a US commonwealth in 1978, and in the 1990s a haven for garment production where apparel giants like Gap and Ralph Lauren could import clothes made for \$3 an hour without paying tariff duties.

Bowe spent two years on Saipan talking to native islanders as well as Asian factory workers and prostitutes. He writes evocatively about the awesome beauty of the island and the "depressing tawdriness of everything human beings have done to it." People on Saipan seemed universally "doleful." This is what Bowe calls the "dark side" of globalization — a condition ignored by prophets of the new global age of market freedom.

Bowe wonders whether "slavery" is the right word to describe the condition of workers who had been restricted, intimidated, threatened, and unpaid for a few weeks' work. Unfortunately, he doesn't settle the matter, nor does he explore the difference between temporary and permanent bondage — the kind of conditions black children of chattel slaves inherited. Though less alarming than the word "slavery," the term "involuntary servitude" used in the 13th Amendment is still the designation best used to characterize the distressing range of forced labor that still exists in our nation.

This confusion about naming the problem reveals that Bowe is not as skilled at historical and political argument as he is at investigative journalism; nonetheless, his book should still serve to arouse a numbed public to the ways powerless people are being co-

erced in thousands of workplaces.

In "The Missing Class" sociologist Katherine S. Newman and journalist Victor Tan Chen shine a light on another nearly invisible group of people who live in economic peril — workers with steady jobs that put them in the \$20,000-\$40,000 income bracket.

For seven years Newman and Chen studied nine families in New York City who belong to this new "missing class" of near poor. The result is a compelling group portrait of heroic families living at risk of descending into poverty if someone is laid off, taken ill, or trapped in the clutches of predatory loan sharks and credit card companies.

The authors tell these people's stories not just to evoke empathy but to reveal the many forces, like the credit industry, that pull them back toward poverty and prevent their children from getting ahead.

Newman and Chen are not asking just for sympathy but attainable public policies that would, for example, expand health protection for people with few choices, cut predatory interest rates, open up access to equity through home ownership, and increase job mobility through career ladder programs in workplaces.

The authors don't base their argument — at least explicitly — on appeals to the nearly abandoned New Deal and Great Society belief that greater equal opportunity would raise all boats together. Instead, Newman and Chen invoke a conservative American belief in the value of hard work: the promise that, if you sacrifice, you will reap the rewards for yourself and your children.

Since this is clearly a false promise to families of "the missing class," the book ends with a troubling question: If these hard-working, hard-pressed people continue to struggle and fail, and their children do too, then what confidence can anyone else have in this vaunted American Dream that is supposed to make us so exceptional as a nation?

James Green teaches history at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He is working on a new book about West Virginia coal miners.

BOSTON COLLEGE MAGAZINE

FALL 2007



COHERENCE

A mother's tale

Book excerpted inside

by **Clare Dunsford**

Clare Dunsford is an associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Her essay is drawn from *Spelling Love with an X: A Mother, a Son, and the Gene that Binds Them* (copyright © 2007 by Clare Dunsford), by permission of Beacon Press. The book may be ordered at a discount from the Boston College Bookstore via www.bc.edu/bcm.

San Francisco Chronicle

MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2007

Resurgence of nooses reminds African Americans of past horrors

Leslie Fulbright, Chronicle Staff Writer



Sar-ron Beverly knew about nooses from family stories and historical photos. But he never understood their power until he walked into his boss' Fairfield office one day and saw one hanging from the ceiling, in front of a bookshelf and a family portrait.

"It was just too much," said Beverly, 30. "I'm from Mississippi. My grandparents moved to California to get away from this stuff.

"A hangman's noose shows the ultimate hatred for African Americans."

Since a noose hanging in a schoolyard triggered a civil rights firestorm this summer in Jena, La., there's been a resurgence of nooses across the United States. They've been found in a post office, in a hospital, on a professor's door, in a Coast Guard cadet's bag, in a fire station and on a bronze sculpture of the late rapper Tupac Shakur.

Historians and academics are examining why the noose is resurfacing and trying to explain its current cultural significance. Some say the symbol will always represent hate and proves that racism still exists in America. Others say the nooses are meaningless pranks.

Whatever the case, the fear and anger that a noose incites among African Americans are real.

Between 1882 and 1968, there were a documented 4,743 lynchings in the United States, and most victims were black men. Victims were usually beaten and hanged, often in public squares. White families would watch and take photos. No one was ever convicted of murder in connection with any of the deaths.

"Many white people are unaware of the incredible power of the lynching story for African Americans," said Sherrilyn Ifill, a professor of law at the University of Maryland and a former civil rights attorney. "Lynching was a message crime. It served to tell the black community that there were boundaries. Don't get too educated. Don't vote. Don't get too wealthy. Don't look at a white woman.

"It was not just used to punish an individual, but to serve as a threat to others."

Ifill wrote a book titled "On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century," which looks at the relationship between decades-old lynchings and today's racial violence.

"I don't buy the story that these are pranks," Ifill said. "If this were a swastika or a burning cross, no one would be asking that question.

"Lynching is a history that blacks take very seriously and live with, and that whites have almost entirely ignored."

Displaying a noose is illegal under federal hate-crime laws if it is intended to injure, intimidate or interfere with any person, or to attempt to do so, by force or threat of force, because of that person's race, color, religion or national origin.

In 2005, the most recent statistics available from the FBI, there were 3,919 racial hate crimes reported nationwide. Of those, more than 67 percent - 2,630 - were against black people.

Few African Americans have grown up in households where there aren't discussions about racism and recollections of when lynching was a reality, said Patricia Turner, a faculty member in the African American studies department at UC Davis.

"There is nothing more likely to inspire the trauma of those years than a noose," Turner said. "I think that lots of African American families would say it is disingenuous for anyone to say it is just a prank.

"There is a reason for selecting the noose, and perhaps the reason is that if you get caught you can say it was just a prank."

Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights law firm in Montgomery, Ala., says the recent increase in noose incidents is a result of publicity from the Jena Six case, in which six black teens are accused of beating a white student after a noose was hung on a tree at their school.

No one was arrested for hanging the noose. The six black students were arrested in connection with the beating.

Across the nation, there are efforts to address the recent rash of noose incidents.

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Southie Memoir Comes Home

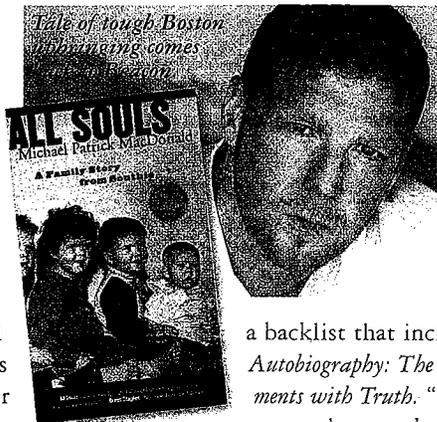
Beacon takes back rights to bestselling 'All Souls'

BY JUDITH ROSEN

In recent years, no neighborhood in Boston has generated as much book interest as Southie—both tell-alls of street soldiers for crime boss/FBI informant Whitey Bulger, charged with killing 19 people, and analyses of him and his brother Billy, former president of the Massachusetts State Senate and the University of Massachusetts system. During the past year alone, radio personality Howie Carr authored *The Brothers Bulger* (Grand Central); Kevin Weeks, a Whitey Bulger lieutenant, wrote *Brutal* (Regan Books); and John "Red" Shea, another insider, brought forth *Rat Bastards* (Morrow).

Although all three of those books made in onto bestseller lists, it is another book, published eight years ago, that readers have responded to most—Michael Patrick MacDonald's 1999 memoir about coming-of-age during the Bulger years, *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* (Beacon Press). MacDonald has just completed the screenplay for Crossroad Films, to be directed by Ron Shelton, producer of *Hollywood Homicide*.

Under normal circumstances, MacDonald's paperback publisher, Ballantine, might be readying a design for a movie tie-in. Instead, Beacon is taking back paperback rights for *All Souls*, which has close to a quarter million copies in print in both hardcover and paper. The hardcover spent 34 weeks on the *Boston Globe* bestsellers list; the paperback hit the *New York Times* extended list and the list for the *Denver Post*.



The 150-year-old, Boston-based publisher's decision has less to do with the film than with changes in the marketplace and the book's fit with

a backlist that includes Gandhi's *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. "We felt this would strengthen our backlist as a whole,"

says Beacon associate publisher and director of sales and marketing Tom Hallock. And, he adds, "it's potentially more lucrative to do it, provided the sales volume is maintained." To boost sales, the new edition will have a step-back cover, an insert with four-color photos of the family and a slightly lower price [\$1 less than Ballantine's].

"A separate ID sales force is no longer necessary," notes director Helene Atwan. "I don't think there's a channel we can't reach between Beacon and our distributor, Houghton Mifflin." The latter will pursue the trade, while Beacon follows up on course adoptions at high schools and colleges. Already the book is a popular read at Boston-area schools, including Tufts, Northeastern and Wellesley. "Beacon was my first experience with publishing and that team is really family," says MacDonald, who is pleased to be back at Beacon. One of the things he says he appreciates most about the press is that they let him find his voice on his own and gave him the final say throughout the publishing process.

For its edition, Beacon is removing Ballantine's reading group guide and will post three guides—one each for high-school

teachers, college professors and reading groups—on its Web site (BeaconPress.org). In addition, Beacon plans to cross promote *All Souls* with Houghton Mifflin in March '08, when they publish the paperback of the second volume of MacDonald's memoirs, *Easter Rising: An Irish American Coming Up from Under*. It received a starred review from *PW* and focuses more on MacDonald's personal story of growing up and away from Southie, the traditionally Irish-American section of Boston.

"Everyone here was passionate about *All Souls*," says Ken Carpenter, v-p, director of Houghton Mifflin Paperbacks and Mariner Books. "I think it's terrific to see it back on the Beacon list and for our reps to be able to sell both of Michael's books." When *Easter Rising* is published—in time for St. Patrick's Day—MacDonald will do a five-city tour to Boston, New York, Washington, D.C., Denver and Portland.

This is not the first time that Beacon has asked for the rights to one of its top sellers. In April 2006, after more than 20 years and 13 million copies, it took back the paperback license for Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* from Simon & Schuster. In fact, since Simon published it in trade and mass market, Beacon had to publish its first, and says Atwan, "only" mass market edition. So far sales have not suffered. Beacon sold 100,000 copies of *Man's Search for Meaning* in paperback last year and another 20,000 in hardcover.

Nor does Beacon have any intention of stepping back from its commitment to memoir. "I think memoir is one of the best ways to tell a story," says Atwan, "especially for a mission-driven press." In April Beacon published Meredith Hall's *Without a Map*, which chronicles what it was like to be kicked out of the family and community she knew when she became pregnant at the age of 16. A May Book Sense selection, Hall's book got a four-star review in *People* and was a Reader's Prize in *Elle*. It has 30,000 copies in print after three printings, and *Good Housekeeping* is running a second serial this fall. ■

Lean Left

Beacon Broadside

Thu 13 Dec 2007

Posted by Kevin under Bloggin , Writing

So I get this email saying that someone has a blog they want me to check out. No big deal, happens, even to relatively small blog fish like us, every so often. I usually ignore them, mostly out of a lack of time. I figure if it is interesting enough, I'll stumble across it in the natural course of my reading. This was different for two reasons. One, the emailer actually offered me advice on getting rid of the track back spam. Second, and more importantly, she was upfront about the blog being a publisher publicity blog. But she also said that they tried to be different. I'm a huge book geek, so the combination of good will form the good advice and curiosity got the better of me. And I am glad it did.

The Beacon Broadside is a publisher's blog, no doubt about that. But they aren't just a publicity blog, not in the usual sense. The posts are mostly by their authors, and they are usually pretty interesting. There is one by Carol Joffe (who, by the way, wrote a fantastic book. It literally changed the way I looked at abortion politics and *Roe v. Wade*) about abstinence only sex education. There is a very interesting piece about Chanukah in Israel and the meaning of the holiday by a foreign rights agent. There is a good overview of the differences in the national culture and the meaning of the Romney and Kennedy religion speeches by the author of a book on the Religious Right and its focus on the judiciary. What there isn't is a lot of hard sell, buy me now, here's a contest desperation masquerading as marketing. They have their authors write about subjects that interest them and let their writing do the marketing. It's a very good idea and should be a template for how publishers do blogs.

So it goes on the blog roll, both because the concept is interesting and, so far, I've liked the posts I have read.

galleycat

THURSDAY, OCT 25

Duke, Beacon, Amazon Join the Blogosphere

Working my way through the inbox, I found a message from **Duke University Press** about its recently launched blog, which compiles recent mentions of Duke authors in the press, along with recent awards. Then I heard from **Beacon Press**, which launched a site last month called *Beacon Broadside*, which features original essays from authors who are simply friendly to the press as well as the ones they publish, with each post open to comment.

For me, the two sites offer an object lesson in how to incorporate blogging capability into one's publishing mission. There's nothing really *wrong* with the Duke blog, but at the moment it's basically a string of "in the news" items that, although they can be easily generated using a blog engine, don't necessarily rise to the level of their own website. *Beacon Broadside*, on the other hand, is a site which uses the imprint's passion for social justice as a starting point for its own engagement with readers. Obviously, on one level, the site exists to promote Beacon's books, but it's more than just an advertisement; it's an entirely new conversation.

article continued...

Posted by Ron | 04:28 PM | Web & Tech

Beacon Press Acquires Book About Corruption in Medical Industry; *New Yorker* to Excerpt

by **Leon Neyfakh**

Boston-based Beacon Press has acquired a book by Carl Elliot about consumerism and corruption in the American medical system. Mr. Elliot, a professor at the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota, has written about the topic for a range of general-readership publications, including the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Slate*, and *The Believer*.

According to a press release, the book, tentatively titled *White Coat, Black Hat*, will be an insider tour of our modern medical system, in which fakery and deception are not just tolerated but rewarded.

The book will be excerpted in *The New Yorker*, according to a spokeswoman for Beacon Press, though it's not yet known when the excerpt will appear.

Agent Andrew Blauner represented Mr. Elliot in the deal; Beacon Press director Helene Atwan was the acquiring editor.

In an e-mail, Mr. Elliot said that several major New York publishers had expressed serious interest in the book, but he declined to say which ones.

He noted that one house actually outbid Beacon in the auction, but that he chose to go with Beacon anyway because of their enthusiasm for the book, and because he wanted to work with Ms. Atwan, who worked with Walker Percy when she was at Farrar Straus & Giroux.

"Percy is one of my heroes -- another Southerner who went to medical school but gave up medicine to write philosophical books," said Mr. Elliot, who is originally from South Carolina.