A Call to the Religious Society of Friends
To A Conference on the Treatment and Prevention of Torture
Friends Journal 2005

Dear Friends,
January 2005

I believe the time has come for Quakers to create a conference on torture. Increasingly, there are corners without Light in American culture and places of American domination where there is no longer simply the threat of abduction, imprisonment or death, but also the likelihood that this includes torture. This calculated brutality has become so large a part of our culture that the U.S. president has "found" legal grounds to sidestep the Geneva Conventions on torture perpetrated by our military on captives. What was once small and secret is now widespread, public, and stated policy. Opposition would be the essence of Friends' Peace Testimony, practice, and faith and would add to our history.

Because there is indication that torture will continue and increase, I believe it is time for Friends to study this with a conference. Let us become informed, spread information, and choose action in education, investigation, prevention, and treatment.

I know this is the most repulsive topic to conference on. It may only draw a small number of people at first. But the problem of torture is the most without Light aspect of the current spiritual condition of the human family. It is the ugliest act of our species, and it is a furtive American crisis at home and abroad. These negative features make it more urgent that it be examined. Friends' history makes us a good group to begin that very hard work.

Approaching great wounds with even the least amount of light will draw resistance and trouble. An effective conference will involve very careful planning. If its purpose and program are explained well, it may draw the widest possible audience, including experts from a wide range of fields. Since taking in such information is a burden of some density, to avoid exhausting participants the schedule will keep to a measured, reflective pace. The topic calls us to learn new ways to carry this realm of ideas, whose horror is well beyond the relative simplicities of hunger, homelessness, disease, and simple violence.

As so many of you, I have neither the time nor energy to create such a conference. But I also know that I cannot turn away. There is much good that needs doing, and the work is mine, and ours. Of course, it would be best if an established Friends group(s) created this.

I ask 3 things of you-
1- Please share this call to conference widely among Friends, Friends meetings and Friends organizations. This letter will be on my website www.johncalvi.com <http://www.johncalvi.com/> with future updates.
2- Please take this call to heart and hold the effort in the Light.
3- If there are talents, gifts, resources you or your organization have to help make this conference happen, please be in touch with me directly, e-mail is BEST calvij@sover.net.
With many thanks,

John Calvi calvij@sover.net PO Box 301 Putney VT 05346 802/387-4789

The Secret of torture- Viewpoint/ Friends Journal April 2005
with thanks to editor Robert Dockhorn

The spiritual consequences of secrets are sudden potholes in integrity, surprises, and struggles to keep a secret hidden rather than open and exposed to wonder- wonder being the most basic posture of spiritual life. Always, certain people will choose to be with something so challenging, to wash and heal the culture and individuals. And knowing why something exists can include many more people who listen, think, and wonder a bit to learn what torture is and what it means for a society and for people who are providers or receivers.

The spiritual consequences of torture are that you either are moved to act against it or you stifle and smolder. For each of us who have paid for torture through our taxes, the dilemma is strong. Our cultural myth of the independent individual making change and doing good encounters a fierce don't-rock-the-boat mentality in the public arena. Choosing to act in any form brings a sense of integrity and oneness with our deepest feelings of justice- always good for mental and spiritual health. It will also inevitably bring some disappointment, loneliness, and the need to explain oneself.

The choice of not acting is the more common response. Life is already full, and we tell ourselves: What might one do anyway, and aren't I in enough trouble already? It hurts to see and know what is there; we could let this one go by and forget. How much awareness do I need to maintain anyway? The monster is too big for me to address. But both acting and not acting are work, requiring energy and effort; and only one has a payoff.

To have torture as part of the heritage the United States has provided to the world in the last several years (think of the wars in Southeast Asia and Central America, not to mention Iraq) is to experience a national loss of integrity, an ignorance, and a panic of discovery in each of our hearts- regardless of whether we approve of torture. Torture has always been easy to justify, but it resembles the addict's stash or the unwashed bruise hidden under clothing: maybe known by others, unable to be stopped, and always a greater pain than is understood.

To have U.S. leadership participate, deny, spin, and wink over the use of torture in our wars abroad lingers within us like glimpses of the car wreck that we can't get out of our minds. Torture injures all who know any aspect of it from any distance, and it shames all other good works done over hundreds of years. To do anything other than admit to it and stop it is to participate.

There is indication that torture will continue to increase. Therefore, I believe the time has come for Quakers to call a study conference on torture. The purpose would be to become informed, spread information, and choose actions of education, investigation, prevention, and treatment. Because this is a most repulsive topic, a conference may draw a small number of people at first. A conference will require careful planning, and to avoid exhausting participants it will require a measured, reflective pace. If its purpose and program are explained well, it could draw participation that included experts from a wide range of fields.

I have neither time nor energy to create such a conference- yet I know that I cannot turn away. I ask three things of you:

- Please share this call to conference widely among Friend, Friends meetings, and Friends organizations. A letter will be on my website, www.johncalvi.com, with future updates.

- Please take this call to heart, and hold the effort in the Light.
- If there are talents, gifts, or resources you or your organization have to help make this conference happen, please be in touch with me directly. E-mail is best: calvij@sover.net.

John Calvi Putney, VT.

Torture and Other Secrets- Peacework magazine AFSC November 2005

There are things we don't talk about much, secrets, because they are difficult. They are difficult because we don't have ways of thinking about them. We may not have ways to talk about them. We don't have much information on them. And, most importantly, they are ugly and scary. Each culture has a list of these secrets. The list changes as information escapes into conversation and ways of learning become possible around something previously obscure. In my own life time the list of American secrets has changed considerably so that what was unknowable and untalkable before has now become topics of study and common knowledge- such as cancer, homosexuality, lynching, post-traumatic stress disorder in soldiers, incest, addiction, rape, and the holocaust.

A secret on this list moves slowly upward towards light as more people come to understand that something has parts and pieces and even logic and is not just a huge horror. The above list is of the movers and shakers on this list as culture changes and progresses. What is still on the bottom of this list is torture. It is a great American secret still holding all the requisite conditions of huge and horrible, ugly and scary, unknowable from so little information available, and very present in all our generations and especially today.

Like the car wreck we saw on the way home, we try not to see it again in our minds though each image lingers with some part of us wanting to understand it's meaning in our lives. The push to not see what is so ugly and the wonder to sort out what it is push against each other. The battle is joined by American popular culture with it's bias for bright shiny things for sale, fast and shallow content giving only glimpses, and above all the distracting noise of who's winning something or is a danger. Thus, torture stays on the list of things we don't see or know and therefore can't change. It will always be true that only a certain amount of people will choose to be with something as challenging as death or rape as works to be undertaken for the washing and healing of the culture and individuals. But the level of knowing why something is can include many more people who will just have to listen, think, and wonder a bit to learn what torture is and what it means for a society either as providers or receivers.

The spiritual consequences of secrets are well known- sudden potholes in integrity, surprise areas where knowledge is lacking, the panic of cover-ups, and the confusing combination of the previous three to create a response for which there seems to be no logic. Most obvious is the extraordinary effort to keep a secret hidden rather than open to wonder, wonder being the most basic posture of spiritual life.

The spiritual consequences of torture are also quite specific. Either you are moved to act against or you stifle and smolder. For each of us who have paid for torture through our taxes, the dilemma is a strong cultural watershed. We have the cultural myth of the independent force of the individual making change and doing good. But often this myth meets with a fierce don't-rock-the-boat mentality at home, at work, and in public spaces. Choosing to act in any form has the light of integrity in being one with our deepest feelings of justice, always good for mental and spiritual health. It will also make for some disappointment, loneliness, and the need to explain yourself.

The other choice of not acting is the more common response. It's common because life is already full, what might one do anyway, and aren't I in enough trouble already. These are the overt reasons to stuff and numb oneself. The more quiet reasons are that it hurts to see and know what is. It's disturbing and we could let this one go by and forget. How much awareness do I need to keep up with anyway? The monster is too big for me to address. Both acting and not acting are work that requires energy and effort. Only one has a payoff.

To have torture as part of the heritage we've provided the world in the last several years (think of the American wars in Southeast Asia and Central America), is to carry the loss of integrity, the ignorance, and panic of discovery in each of our hearts whether or not we approve of torture. Torture has always been easy to justify but it's never rested within the human awareness to be comfortably carried. As a burden, it resembles the addicts stash or the unwashed bruise hidden under clothing- maybe known by others, unable to be laid down, and always a greater pain than is understood.

To have our leadership participate, deny, spin, and wink over the use of torture in our current American wars abroad, lingers within us like glimpsing the car wreck, the neighbor's or family member's bruise, the addicts stash. We can't bear to know its scary ugliness and we can't get it out of our minds. There is no moral force in leadership to say what we all know – that torture injures all who know any aspect of it from any distance, that it shames all other good works done over hundreds of years, and that to do anything other than admit and stop is to participate. This is how a list of secrets is kept as heritage and burdens our children.

Intro to the First QUIT Conference Program Book June 2006

Dear Friends:

QUIT is the spiritual work of Quakers to end torture. There have been too many stories of American torture involving children and women, civilians and soldiers, abductions and disappearances, and the use of medical professionals to "improve" torture. These reports have brought North American Friends together to support a renewed effort to oppose torture as policy and practice in all places, at all times, for all peoples. Minutes of support for this new work have come from numerous Monthly and Yearly Meetings to declare that torture is always immoral, illegal, and abhorrent. Our care for healing extends to all survivors and perpetrators as the practice of torture defiles all involved with the sickness of de-humanizing and the lasting memory of the worst humans can become. The Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT) begins in the United States where we have learned that much of the responsibility for torture around the world resides. Our plan is to begin with a conference for education leading to action. These two intentions bring to bear a long history of good works among Friends in places of suffering and injustice. Our greatest dangers are denial and inaction. The greatest good will come by being faithful to the Light that guides compassionate work and restores our frail humanity in the face of unimaginable pain and systemic illness. We will begin in the silence of worship, waiting upon that leading to surrender our worldly obstacles, and continue in reverence, as the work is large and will take more than good intentions or a mere generation. We are hopeful because such work strengthens our spiritual muscles and disciplines our listening for the Divine in all.
In the light,

John Calvi, QUIT

The Quaker Initiative to End Torture- First Conference Report June 2006

Friends from 18 yearly meetings including Canada, Britain, and Rwanda, gathered on June 2-4, 2006, at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina to learn about United States-sponsored torture and to plan how to end it. Several non-Friends worshipped and worked with us, as well. Sixteen speakers, including three survivors of torture, provided information and inspiration to 126 conference attenders.

After a period of welcome and worship, Jennifer Harbury gave a riveting keynote on Friday evening, giving us a brief but comprehensive overview of U.S. torture. She spoke from her personal experiences with CIA-sponsored torture of her deceased Guatemalan activist husband in the 1980s through the May 2006 United Nations hearings on United States compliance with the Convention Against Torture. This was followed by the film, "Hidden in Plain Sight," which gave a vivid history of the School of the Americas and the twenty-year struggle to close the school that has trained Latin American military officers since World War II. The film and the question and answer session offered by two survivors brought participants a sense of immediacy and responsibility.

On Saturday morning, a panel of three speakers introduced us to the topics of direct action, legislation and executive monitoring, and treatment, which were followed by more intensive workshops providing in-depth information to conference participants on these topics, and on strategic planning. On Saturday afternoon, Hector Aristizibal using the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed depicted his own experience as a survivor of torture and then engaged the audience in a powerful interactive movement that moved us toward hopeful engagement to end the practice of torture. Chuck Fager and Bal Pinguel then took the stage to exhort us towards the long work ahead to abolish torture, moving us from learning to action. Conferees next joined in a town meeting to brainstorm ideas in the five categories of education, legislation, treatment, prisons, and media/strategy. After supper, work groups in those categories met to plan actions. A hard day's work closed with a folk music concert donated by the Short Sisters, an amazing a capella group of three women.

Sunday worship was led by our five elders, who held the conference in the Light throughout the weekend and attended every session, workshop, and work group. The conference culminated in a second town meeting in which we heard from each work group and then discussed the future of QUIT.

There was a clear sense of the meeting towards the following actions:
-educating our meetings and others;
-asking for monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting support (minutes, donations, conference attendance);
-using the QUIT website as a resource of information and events (http://www.quit-torture-now.org);
-joining the QUIT listserv via the website to share news and ideas.

Conferees appreciated the QUIT planning team's care in creating an excellent conference on a difficult topic presented with a tone of reverence, and they thanked the five elders for their prayerful attention in setting the tone for spiritual work. The planning team was asked to bring in more members and plan a second conference at Guilford College, June 1-3 2007.

We ended with worship that was deep in silence and full of gratitude and expectancy.

PREPARING TO WITNESS - MEDITATION
presented at the Canadian QUIT conference in Ottawa April 28. 2007

Take a long slow deep breath, again longer slower deeper
Spread your toes and lower your shoulders
Soften your hands and feet
Clear your thoughts, laying down the noise of the world
Straighten your back, head high
Soften your jaw and your gaze
Breathe slowly, deeply
Let reverence and humility wash over you
Now witness, see what has been created beyond you
Feel the change in your gut, the body shift
Welcome emotions, observe inwardly & outwardly
Feel deeply & hold to the center
Breathe, loosen, lengthen, soften
Soften, Witness, feel, hold, soften
Soften, Witness, feel, hold, soften
Soften, prepare to hold to the center
Let the witness change you
Be the anchor and the wave
Hold the Light as you see the pain
Then choose the inward and outward work.

Intro for the Second QUIT Conference Program Book June 2-4 2007

The Quaker Initiative to End Torture seeks to make a spiritual work of ending the worst of human activity. We keep the disciplines of Friends historically as we listen for guidance and respond knowing that none are the enemy and all are kindred.

We seek truth in a time when deceit is common and a norm, knowing that reverence will open the way to more truth. We witness that brutality attracts power for powers sake and is without Light. We know this to be out of balance with the human-Divine connection and sickens all who participant.

The preparation for our work begins with the humility of attempting a large task knowing that it will go on after us. We wash in the Light with the prayers of many and hold ourselves tenderly as we learn of "experiments" and "improvements" in torture.

As we mourn new laws protecting torture, we know that hard work makes spiritual muscle and that this strength is birthed in the on-going rhythms of stillness and action. As we seek to witness the wounding without carrying the paralyzing confusion and pain into ourselves or to others, we also know that we grieve the loss of humanity in what we see.

Responding to all these opposites becomes a dance within us to learn, grieve, act, and seek Light. We each choose our work carefully, knowing that a small thing done well for the long haul is more useful than the large thing done poorly and ending in exhaustion or despair. We remember that hope is the desire for goodness with the expectation that it can be achieved. And in our better moments, we are grateful that such hard work will change us, bring us closer to the Divine, and put us in awe of all creation.

In the Light,
John Calvi, QUIT convener

A Call to Spiritual Discipline - Friends Journal May 2007

I was 16 years old when I attended meeting for worship for the first time. Also present were a woman marathon runner, several professors, an ancient colonel from World War I, and a man who spoke Navajo and his poet wife. Not all were vegetarians or tax resisters. Not all the men had been conscientious objectors. All were white middle class people who tried not to be part of the problems of 1968, but there was only some general agreement on how to be part of the solution.

Now, 38 years later, as I travel among Friends as a teacher, I still see this odd collection of people who don't quite fit any single description except that maybe they still want to be part of the solution to the suffering in the world.

Considering the question, what Friends are called to today, I find the answers as numerous as the various ways that Friends live their lives. On the one hand, there are the passions—the conscious, deliberate decisions and actions Friends take in their work and living. On the other hand, there are the inward, spiritual practices which deepen over time. Both influence the way our lives contribute to society and help us identify the problems and the solutions.

Personally, I see a large, open classroom called Life on Earth, and the shelves are full of the various learning materials. Some of us choose the books, some the blocks, some the math materials, and others are dancing with scarves on the round rug near the blackboard. We choose according to what catches our eye and our heart, making each choice not only valid, but important. We work with our material until we understand it, and we take that knowledge to other materials. And we all move at various rates and at varying depths in ever-changing cycles. We are in motion individually, in small groups, and as the Religious Society of Friends.

We are called as watercolors are called across a page: not a simple, straight line nor one shape, but many colors with different densities of light, and overlapping pigment, rarely tidy. And so it is that the meat-eaters and the vegetarians work for social justice. The old and the young work against war. And men and women work against sexism, racism, and homophobia among some Friends (and maybe not so much among other Friends).

Lately, I see fatigue among Friends in trying to sort out what is true. Can it be that the United States needs a law to protect U.S. military personnel from prosecution for torture? Is what political leaders say true, and why are their messages reported in the media without the background or history to show that they are not true? There is fatigue from witnessing the grand theft of the treasury while the basic needs of the people increasingly go unmet. Yes, we see and feel the outrage among ourselves and we work locally as best we can, but our tax dollars continue to support the disasters taking place in the halls of power.

Friends today are called to put out so many fires of injustice, cruelty, militarism, and poverty; it may be that we haven't been so busy since the days of King Charles and Cromwell. If this is so, then Friends should be called to greater spiritual disciplines than ever before—spiritual disciplines because the crux of our faith is to listen for the Divine message and act upon it. Listening and acting have become more difficult as the noise of the world from suffering and deceit has risen.

So, what disciplines should we to attend to? Perhaps these:

enough silence, listening for the Divine, trying not to hear yourself
enough rest and nurture to be clear vessels to receive Light
enough stillness to feel our humility as fragile carriers of Light
enough comfort to offer our best effort
enough strength kept up for the long haul
enough concentration to focus while listening
enough love of life to see beauty while surrounded by pain

The first conference of the Quaker Initiative to End Torture in June 2006 at Guilford College in North Carolina was an open classroom like the one described above. Friends came together, with interests in various aspects of the topic: history, legislation, treatment, education, and direct action. They worked individually to absorb the information, and then worked in small groups to plan actions for still larger groups. Many Friends will attend to this work, but there will be no lockstep movement with total agreement nor singular action towards one task. Rather, Friends will choose work that best fits each one's gifts and energy level. What remains unified is the intention and the spiritual discipline, aimed at staying in the Light as both seekers and carriers.

What are Friends called to do? To be good Friends and to become better Friends, especially at times when the worst potential of human nature is yet again being realized and spreading here at home.

Beginning to End Torture: Quakers Heed the Call
Peacework magazine – May 2007 American Friends Service Committee

I've been watching the unfolding of the Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT). This is a beginning that took place within many people. The pictures from Abu Ghraib caught many people in the gut. Among Friends (Quakers), the response was similar to learning of a rape, or a particularly painful disability after a car accident -- many people tried to look away, to think of something else. But the thought of young soldiers from our communities learning torture in "service" to security was too ugly either to face or to ignore. Such a spiritual dilemma can be good for catching the attention.

The first time I worked with a torture survivor was in 1983. And now, 25 years later, I've worked with survivors from every continent. I know what the outcome looked like in the body and mind of the receiver. I know covert operations have involved the torture of thousands of people over many years, countries, and wars. Still, the photos of our young people gleeful at wounding and terrifying captives, fell like stones on my soul.

When I began to talk with Friends about the need to gather to oppose this increasing use of torture, there was certainty that something needed to be done and a great reluctance to initiate. Checking the websites of several Quaker organizations, I found only one that spoke to the topic -- and the information was more than a year old.

Talking with leaders of Quaker groups the response was nearly identical -- shortages of staff, money, and time meant they would join an effort but could not lead at this time. Clearly, all wanted more to be done, but none had the room to move.

I already had my hands full, and didn't want to add a new job! But then I attended an Amnesty International meeting where particular news was shared -- Barbara Olshansky, a lawyer with the Center for Constitutional Rights, reported that some of the detainees in Guantànamo were under 16 when they were imprisoned, and that in the many detention facilities either operated or directly overseen by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are detainees as young as seven years old. And suddenly, I heard, not the voice of holy calling, but my Italian grandmother's voice suffused in outrage and calling for correction immediately without compromise, delays, or excuses -- clear as a bell.

That was May 3, 2005. I thought about who might help me do this. I needed various skills, various connections to Friends theologically and geographically. Liz Keeney in Ohio knew something of the topic and had good attention to detail for difficult learning situations. John Meyer at Pendle Hill knew about organizing conferences and had some of the necessary legal background. Chuck Fager at Quaker House in North Carolina knew direct social action and publicity. Joe Franko in California, formerly with the American Friends Service Committee, had just organized a girls' school in Afghanistan -- surely that would bring good skills. And all said, "Yes, let's do this." Thank heavens.

Suddenly, once the there was a group, all manner of gifts came forward. Blake Arnall of San Francisco created a wonderful website (www.quit-torture-now.org). Orange Grove Meeting in Pasadena, CA offered to receive donations for the work. Primary to the effort was the seed money for the conference offered by the Peace Issues Working Group of the Friends World Committee for Consultation.

The first particulars were choosing what to teach and who would best represent current knowledge. Jennifer Harbury was chosen as keynote speaker. She is a human rights attorney, author of *Truth, Torture, and the American Way,* and widow of a man tortured to death by CIA-paid informants. Hector

Aristizabal was chosen as a survivor who teaches about what torture means to the soul, and about the politics of oppression. Carlos Mauricio was a chosen speaker not only because he survived torture but also as the winner of a lawsuit against the Salvadoran generals, retired in Miami, who had ordered his torture. A legal overview, an overview of history, the status of treatment, torture in US prisons, and possibilities of direct action -- all would be offered.

And now another challenge revealed itself. Ten years as a Montessori teacher with young children and twenty-five years as a Quaker healer/massage therapist with torture survivors meshed within me to understand that we needed to create a conference that would educate Friends and move us to action without being overwhelmed or causing despair and paralysis -- an excellent spiritual curriculum challenge.
How could we set the right tone for the conference? How could attenders witness the most horrible potential of human beings without losing personal resources to fear, anger, confusion, or despair? One of our answers was to have five "elders" (a Quaker term for someone of any age with special gifts and experience in attentive, centered listening and prayer) attending the first conference, and more than two dozen at-large elders holding the entire effort in the Light. The effect was tangible during each meeting for worship, plenary, and workshop.

Next, we began with a clear statement that this work would be very hard and so each Friend was charged with the good self-care of deep breathing, relaxing the body during difficult learning, and above all, knowing that bringing the end of torture would take at least two generations of good hard spiritual work. In view of this, each conference participant was asked to watch closely for the piece of work they wanted to take up and to choose carefully.

Over 100 Friends came together June 2-4, 2006, at Guilford College in North Carolina for three days of learning and choosing actions. Friends from 18 regions returned to their home meetings to educate and inform. Many Friends reported their actions on the QUIT listserve. Over the course of this year, a small group of Friends has been able to coalesce the yearning of many for more definite action to take place in our faith community.

This June 1-3 2007, again at Guilford College, the second QUIT conference will offer more information and discussion to foster more learning and action. Alfred McCoy, author of *A Question of Torture*, will give us an overview of the 50-year history of CIA experimentation with torture along with recent changes in US law making torture "legal" for the first time in the US. Retired interrogator Tony Lagouranis will describe his journey from torturer to anti-torture activist. The spiritual disciplines of breathing deeply while learning difficult things, and choosing our work carefully, will continue. The task of taking home a new piece of work for others to learn will grow, in the tradition of John Woolman and Rosa Parks.
An important work will come of age as QUIT discusses how its future is to be shaped and led. Some will call for a board, budget, and 501c3 status. Some will say that the first conference was able to happen in a single year because a small group worked swiftly and effectively and that these elements should not be lost. Still others will point out that there is a tradition among Friends that once an organization is assigned an issue, work can get bogged down in bureaucratic detail.

How do we get important work done, large work, over a long term and keep it vital, moving, and breathing? We can do it by heeding the call, supporting with funds, showing up, and sharing our hopes. What would it feel like to have torture exist only in history?

UNOBSTRUCTED LOVE- May 2006 - for Tom Fox, Quaker martyred in Iraq
CHAPTER 2 - TOM FOX WAS MY FRIEND. YOURS TOO. C. FAGER- EDITOR

The problem with unobstructed love is that it's rarely understood. Maybe that's because it does not appear like any other love- puppy love, romantic love, true love, love of country. No, unobstructed love is unlike anything we see in day-to-day life. It is seen mostly in stories of great heroes. But even then it's so rarely witnessed that it can seem illogical, perhaps even a sickness or a chronic miscalculation.

But when the Light shines through ones soul and there becomes a certainty of what one must do, even after all the tantrums of asking that the cup pass from our lips, and the horizon one sees is suddenly more broad then ever before- well, it's not easily forgotten. The rare gift to be one with one's word, hopes, and faith washes up a dingy day and a mangy life to a spit shine inwardly and outwardly. It holds all of creation within reach of understanding and just far enough away to remain in awe.

The surrender does not come easy as it is non-verbal and lacks explanation. Whether it is a visitation, a message, or a simple knowing, the experience is a private one and known in ones heart and deep in the gut. How we shall think about it or which words to use comes about later with time and wonder and our awkward attempts to make sense of another realm.

When love has the walls around it lifted so that care and compassion are moved up and out of the rat runs of ordinary living, the transformation resembles water seeking it's own level. The rules of gravity have been changed and it might be that there is no downhill and yet there is great motion and new movement and expanse.

We are spotty in our practice of unobstructed love. We try to love the ones we know we should. We might even try to love the ones we did love before something came undone. There's the duty to love the inferior and goodness knows there's slews of them. But what of loving all that is? What of loving those who might do us great harm, perhaps the ultimate harm? Could Jesus possibly have meant to Love our enemies? Surely, it's metaphor or a translation problem.

And yet, at the stage of unobstructed love, it's a simple reach. Not a simple practice, goodness knows, but once glimpsed, the temptation to feel and see that Grace again is too wondrous to await chance. No, this is an elixir beyond all.

And so it comes that a Mother Teresa, a Martin King, a Daniel Berrigan, a Gandhi set off on some spiritual adventure and the great parade of spectators haven't a clue as to the core of the adventure, not a clue- not want house and car, leave family and home, be in danger- maybe in jail or war zone? How could this not appear as madness for the merely in love?

The moments of Grace are not so rare. But the signing up for the life-time subscription and heeding the call, that's when the crowd thins out. For the blessed few who reach that state of love and stay on, it's a ride that teaches us all how limited our vision is and how regular our hopes. This is not a ride for anyone. There's no gift in being misunderstood by so many. No, this is a ride for a few and a message to us all that great love exists and can change hearts, move mountains and empires, and provide an edge to the known world for us to wonder at and hope the blessing comes again soon to someone.

A Few Thoughts on Torture-

Refugees from around the world came to Toronto with the name of Nancy Pocock on small slips of paper. The word was that Mama Nancy would help a refugee find safety. And if you had been tortured, Mama Nancy knew newspaper people who could get your story out and help secure your place in Canada's safety net.

When I entered her home for the first time in the late 1980's, she was fighting with a reporter over the phone. No, he could not use Ali's last name in the newspaper interview since his family in the Middle East could still be persecuted. She won that fight and Ali's story was read by millions. He had found a place to make a new home with a special welcome from an old Quaker lady with a certain charm.

And so it was that I got to work with Ali soon after the teenager had been denied asylum in the United States when he jumped out of a ship in New York harbor after stowing away secretly for weeks to leave the Persian Gulf. He had been imprisoned and tortured for being Christian. As he lay on my massage table upstairs in one of Nancy's guest rooms and relaxed deeply into the energy work, he took my hand, weeping, and said, "This is how my body used to feel before they hurt me."

The meeting room of Toronto Monthly Meeting was half full with members of the Toronto Refugee Action Committee, the Refugee Committee of Toronto Meeting, and many of the refugees they served. My work in Wash. D. C. with Co-Madres, mothers of the disappeared in El Salvador had prepared me for many of the stories of torture and how their hurt would feel in my hands. I was prepared for most- the Central Americans, the Palestinians, and the Asians. But there was a man whose hurt was different from all the rest. He had been in the prisons of Idi Amin in Uganda. With most torture survivors there is the feeling of enormous grief, some rage, and the body contracted for an extended time after chronic pain and malicious trespass. But here was a man with no feeling to be found within or without his entire body, as though he had learned to become the paint on the wall to acquire numbness. Imagine a soul made flat without dimension, no reflection of its original essence, only the eyes watching to see if the hurt might come again.

Years later, I am teaching massage for trauma at a large national conference. A question comes about massage for torture. I find myself saying, "20 years ago torture was done with regional and ethnic differences. The Middle East focused on the feet. South East Asia focused on joints. But now increasingly, around the world, torture is done the way Americans do it. We've become the McDonalds of torture." Later a colleague tells me, that's what she heard years ago from a Danish nurse working in the world's first torture survivor treatment center.

In Costa Rica in 1988 there was a large international conference of organizations working to heal torture survivors and end torture as government practice. Each night in my room, I did hands-on work for survivors or professional caregivers as my husband Marshall sat by in prayer. Two clergymen working with survivors from South Africa, themselves torture survivors, went into deep sleep as though a coffee break, years overdue, had just been offered. A high point in the conference was the discussion from Chhile about the governments offer to end military rule so long as no future commission investigates the torture and death of the thousands of disappeared. A German therapist rises to say that recently when the last Nazi was released from a German prison, frail and in a wheel chair, therapist offices across Germany were over whelmed with concentration camp survivors terrified that they were again in danger. There was consensus that even if a government is given clemency, at the very least, what a country needs to heal is the whole truth about what happened.

There were hundreds of digital photographs taken of prisoner torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib prison. The most famous picture, a hooded man standing on a box with wires protruding, is a famous "stress position" known in torture circles as The Viet Nam position as it was developed by the Phoenix program of the US Army during the American war in Viet Nam. The whole truth on Abu Ghraib seems light years away as no one above sergeant is charged with court-martial.

The use of torture financed by American tax dollars has been well documented in the 20th century and now even more so in the 21st. The U.S. laws against torture are in place and have been for years. The laws are not being followed. The cops on this beat are not giving tickets. There's no intervention. It's time to end this history of the worst of what humans do to one another by declaring in a loud clear voice that all torture under any circumstances is illegal, immoral, and abhorrent. What is the best way for you, us, to deliver this message? Right now, someone needs you to answer this question. Are you doing something else instead? What will we tell our children years hence about what we didn't do?

PLEASE READ AND RESPOND AS YOU ARE LED

QUIT is the spiritual work of Quakers to end torture.

There have been too many stories of American torture involving children and women, civilians and soldiers, abductions and disappearances, and the use of medical professionals to "improve" torture. These reports have brought North American Friends together to support a renewed effort to oppose torture as policy and practice in all places, at all times, for all peoples.

Minutes of support for this new work have come from numerous Monthly and Yearly Meetings to declare that torture is always immoral, illegal, and abhorrent. Our care for healing extends to all survivors and perpetrators as the practice of torture defiles all involved with the sickness of de-humanizing and the lasting memory of the worst humans can become.

The Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT) begins in the United States where we have learned that much of the responsibility for torture around the world resides. We began with a conference held on June 2-4, 2006 at Guilford College Greensboro, North Carolina for education leading to action with Friends from 18 yearly meetings. These two intentions bring to bear a long history of good works among Friends in places of suffering and injustice. We continued with a second conference June 1-3 2007 at Guilford College Greensboro, North Carolina with Friends from 19 yearly meetings.

QUIT needs new planning team members to plan for the future. A planning meeting will be held at Penn House in Wash. D. C. on October 6th, 2007. Please join us.

Our website www.quit-torture-now.org contains resources and links for learning and action. Who is educating your meeting about torture? Historic opportunities await.

Our greatest dangers are denial and inaction. The greatest good will come by being faithful to the Light that guides compassionate work and restores our frail humanity in the face of unimaginable pain and systemic illness.

We begin in the silence of worship, waiting upon that leading to surrender our worldly obstacles, and continue in reverence, as the work is large and will take more than good intentions or a mere generation. We are hopeful because such work strengthens our spiritual muscles and disciplines our listening for the Divine in all.

Please, your tax deductible donations should be made payable to
"Orange Grove Meeting" with a notation for the "QUIT" - Donation
Please send checks to: Joe Franko, 7649 Airlie Drive Tujunga, CA, 91042