SPANNING THE GLOBE

Religious and Ethnic Jihad in Sudan

by Gina Dalfonzo and Robert Morrison

Slavery is a word that usually conjures up thoughts of the old South and the Civil War. What most people don't realize is that slavery still exists today, more than 130 years after it ended in America.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees confirmed not long ago that the Sudanese government is carrying on a brutal slave trade as part of a "jihad" against religious and ethnic minorities in southern Sudan. Soldiers routinely capture thousands of men, women and children who are trying to escape the bombing or invasion of their various villages. These people then are sold to masters who often starve, torture, rape or even murder them.

Human rights lawyer Bill Saunders recently traveled to Sudan, where he talked with children who had been slaves and participated in Christmas services with the Nubas and Dinkas, people in the most isolated areas of the region. Several times, he and members of his group had to run for cover at the sound of planes overhead. "We thought they were going to bomb us on Christmas Day," he recalls, but the group managed to hide in a heavily forested area where the planes could not find them. "You can't have a church in the open because it gets bombed," he explains.

What can Americans do to put a stop to atrocities like these halfway around the world? Several groups are coming up with ways to help.

Human rights organization Freedom House has developed a network of some 60 college groups to build shacks on campus, to pray, and to write to Congress protesting the Sudan slave trade. The American Anti-Slavery Group in Somerville, Mass., is collecting signatures for a petition to be sent to President Clinton and the United Nations. The students of Barbara Vogel at Highline Community School in Aurora, Colo., have written letters to various leaders and celebrities, including their senators, President and Mrs. Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, and Steven Spielberg. Although some of their correspondents failed to respond and others brushed off the problem, the chairman of Viacom, Sumner Redstone, helped them spread the word about the slave trade by featuring them on cable's Nickelodeon channel.

Saunders is putting together a corporation called Sudan Relief and Rescue, Inc., to raise money for Bishop Macram Gassis and his diocese, which includes the Nubas and Dinkas. Because the Sudanese government has cut this area off from United Nations relief efforts, the people have little food and hardly any clean water. "We witnessed firsthand the effects of famine that's caused by government," he says.

Sandy Morris, mother of one of Barbara Vogel's students, says we sometimes "get complacent and think tragedies like Sudan are too far off to do anything about." As many Americans are discovering, modern-day slavery isn't just something we watch on television and forget. It offers an opportunity to apply the words of the One who said, "Inasmuch as you [helped] one of the least of these My brethren, you did to Me" (Matthew 25:40, NKJV). WW

Across the NATION

Life Wins Again in Virginia: On February 22, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand without review the ruling of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Planned Parenthood of the Blue Ridge v. Camblos* upholding Virginia's *Parental Notice Act.* Passed in 1997, this act prohibits a physician from performing an abortion on a minor unless notice is provided to her parents at least twenty-four hours in advance of the procedure. Initially, a district court struck down the statute for its failure to provide a "judicial bypass" around such parental notification. The Court of Appeals overruled the district court and required, instead, a judge to grant a mature minor, capable of informed consent, authorization to receive an abortion. – *CMR*

Photo by PH3 Mike Larson

A shot in the arm

Anthrax Vaccination Program Anthrax, a bovine disease fatal to humans, may also be a deadly weapon. Military personnel deployed to high threat areas where anthrax weapons may exist must be vaccinated. There is some concern among Americans that the vaccine may be unsafe. Such fears are unmerited. Anthrax vaccines are licensed by the Food and Drug Administration as safe. They have been used for nearly 30 years without problems. Eventually, all military personnel will be vaccinated against anthrax.

Reliable information regarding the anthrax vaccination program is available on the Internet at **www.defenselink.mil** and **www.armymedicine.army.mil**. You may also contact the Army Surgeon General's office at (703) 681-6530. – *GTH*

Three Wins – One Loss. The Columbus, Ohio city council voted unanimously to rescind its domestic partners ordinance it passed last December, after its citizens collected 8,500 signatures to bring it to a referendum vote in May.

Commissioners in Broward County, Fla. approved a domestic partnership ordinance that allows unmarried sex partners to register with the county and grants special preferences in county contracts to businesses that provide benefits to employees' partners. A court challenge is pending.

Massachusetts legislators introduced a bill that would strengthen the commonwealth's ban on same-sex marriages, stating that the Commonwealth will not validate or recognize such marriages.

The Utah Board of Child and Family Services voted to prohibit unmarried couples, polygamists, homosexuals and other non-married households from adopting children. – *RER*

CHAMPIONS of FAITH

Fighting for What Is Right

by Laurel L. Cornell

In the 1960s, they appeared to be prime candidates for teaching sex-ed "how to." Desperate parents and teachers asked Dr. John Willke and his wife, Barbara, a nurse, "how do we teach children about sex?" The turnout at their first presentation astounded them. Members of the audience begged them to make further presentations. They soon found themselves in high demand and, in order to meet all the requests for instruction, they wrote their first book: *The Wonder of Sex: How to Teach Children.*

Fortunately for thousands of hungry and teachable minds, the Willkes did not subscribe to the emerging mentality of "free love" but, rather, to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They did not tell adults how to instruct their children about sex. Instead, they made clear their belief that adults should be living lessons to children: human beings are created in the image of God and worthy of respect. This "traditional" philosophy was rare even three decades ago. The good news is that it was in demand – and the Willkes were ready and willing to meet the demand. They went on to write five other books to help parents, teachers, and young adults face the issue of human sexuality without giving in to the "sexual revolution" mindset.

Humbly, the Willkes resolved to use their gifts, particularly their credible medical training and growing experience in public speaking, to become involved in the abortion crisis several years before *Roe v. Wade.* They became concerned as some states made abortions legal, albeit only under certain dire conditions. Mrs. Willke believes that the force behind these subtle changes "was not a groundswell of people wanting abortion." Instead, the national slide toward abortion-on-demand was accomplished primarily by the elite – legislators, governors with veto power, federal judges and the presidents who appointed them. She also recalls Jack's warning that involvement in the struggle against abortion, would "take over" their lives. "He was right," she muses. The cause was worth the cost, however. In 1970, Barbara, with her husband, founded Right to Life of Greater Cincinnati. Several state chapters sprang up around the same time and in 1973 the Willkes helped organize National Right to Life.

Since then, Mrs. Willke has been involved in founding Birthright, Right to Life, Nurses for Life, L.I.F.E. (a youth group), and several Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Dr. Willke served for 10 years as president of National Right to Life, founded the Life Issues Institute, co-founded the International Right to Life Federation, and has written several books. He still serves as president of IRLF, and hosts Life Issues, a daily five-minute commentary on abortion and related subjects. The Willkes have written five more books, slide presentations, pamphlets, and videos affirming the sanctity of life. In an average year, the Willkes participate in 100 radio and television interviews. They have spoken in 66 countries. Meanwhile, they raised six children, provided foster parenting to several teenagers. They now have 18 grandchildren.

Mrs. Willke believes that every human heart senses the sanctity of human life. Even in public opinion polls, she observes, most people assert that abortion kills and admit that it's wrong. Strangely, these same people support the contention that women have a "right" to choose this wrong. "There's a disconnect," she reflects as she tries to awaken the culture's sense of right on this issue.

Last month, Mrs. Willke retired as the Executive Director of Right to Life of Greater Cincinnati. For 28 years, she served the pro-life cause in this position, doing everything from managing the mundane details of an organization to brainstorming with the nation's brightest pro-life fighters about how to appeal to the hearts of the culture.

FRC applauds these two champions. The have worked faithfully for decades to send simple, intuitive messages to the nation about God's great gift – life. They are engaged in more than simply "fighting against abortion." They call out to the culture to value and preserve life. We are accountable to God, Mrs. Wilke concludes, "not [necessarily] to win, but to fight for what is right." WW

You can find Life Issues Institute at www.lifeissues.org on the Internet, or call (513) 729-3600.

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Notes & Quotes

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Alexander Pope
(1688 – 1744)