

connection

The Newsletter of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. Vol. 32 No. 7 – September 2008



"Faces" by Bertha Saveniers (Belgium)

Voices & Perspectives

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a nonprofit support organization. We minister to the spiritual, emotional, social and physical well-being of current and former Seventh-day Adventists who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals and their families and friends. Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of LGBTI Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy and reconciliation. Kinship is an organization which supports the advance of human rights for all people.

Founded in 1976 the organization was incorporated in 1981 and is recognized as a 501(c)(3) non profit organization in the United States. Kinship has a board made up of thirteen officers. There are also regional and population coordinators in specific areas. The current list of members and friends includes approximately 1,550 people in more than forty-three countries.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn or even mention homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts that are used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up as LGBTI has its roots in the misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

Kinship operates primarily on contributions from its members and friends. Help us reach out to more LGBTI Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below or donate securely online at sdakinship.org. (You can also donate using your Visa or MasterCard by contacting treasurer@sdakinship.org. You will be phoned so that you can give your credit card information in a safe manner.)

SDA Kinship, PO Box 69, Tillamook, OR 97141, USA
 or visit SDA Kinship's website at:
www.sdakinship.org.





From the Editor

This month I'm writing to you from Germany. We have just finished European Kinship Meeting 2008 in Bremen. We had great speakers. Joachim prepared tasty meals. We had conversations over picnic table lunches where we laughed so hard our sides hurt...and we cried tears that went through several tissues. One of the great gifts of this gathering we call EKM is the number of languages swirling around us: German, Dutch, Danish, Finnish, Swedish, French, Spanish, English and American (yes, there are distinct differences). It reminds me of the many voices that make up Kinship, languages and perspectives. I find it fitting that even though it is the October issue that will focus on the European meeting, this issue has "voices" and experiences from all over the world. We hope you will enjoy the stories, learn from the perspectives and be encouraged by the shared caring. Take good care of yourself for you are infinitely valuable.

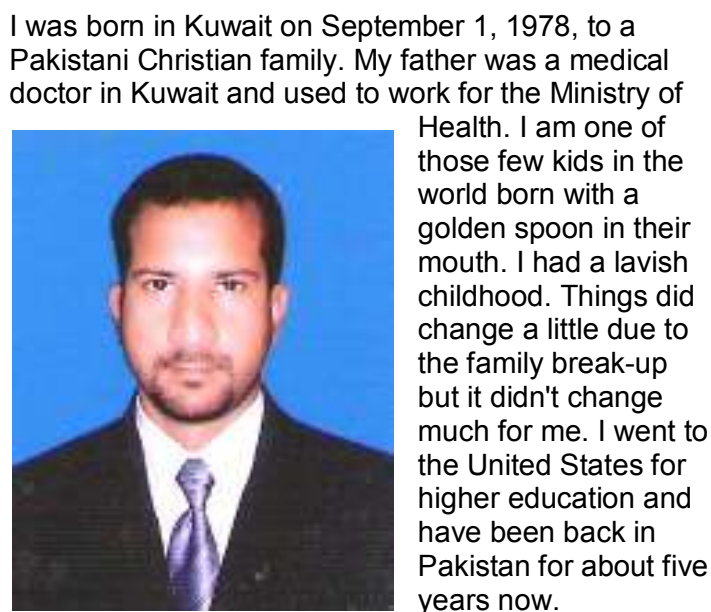
Catherine



A Voice from Pakistan

Khuram Shahzad

in a written interview with Ruud Kieboom



I was born in Kuwait on September 1, 1978, to a Pakistani Christian family. My father was a medical doctor in Kuwait and used to work for the Ministry of Health. I am one of those few kids in the world born with a golden spoon in their mouth. I had a lavish childhood. Things did change a little due to the family break-up but it didn't change much for me. I went to the United States for higher education and have been back in Pakistan for about five years now.

In 1983, my family got introduced to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Kuwait. My family took Bible studies, accepted Adventist teachings and became members of the church. The Adventist Church in Pakistan is strong. We have a seminary, a college and several elementary and high schools. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is working in different forms throughout the country. Nevertheless church membership is low. I think that's mainly due to the church's internal politics. This is a common administrative difficulty in Christian denominations.

I am a philosophical person. I don't do things because somebody tells me to. I want to do my own research. In this sense I think I am a bit more liberal than many members of the church but in some things I'm conservative. Over all I am open to any debate (*laugh*).

Utopians

I am a lawyer by education but am part of an import/export marketing business and a manufacturing company. I have some private contracts with big firms.

After an Asian earthquake my friends and I joined hands with street theater groups and established collection campaigns to work in our area. At the end of three weeks, with the help of the local army, we sent three trucks of bedding, food, medicines, and clothing to the needy people. Four of us volunteered

to go to Bala Kot to add our personal energy for two weeks. The things we saw there were horrible! When our work was done we incorporated ourselves into *Utopians Welfare Organization*. The Word "Utopian" is from Thomas Moore's novel "*Utopia*" and thus (you may say) making Utopians the citizens of Paradise. We have been self supporting. We organize fund-raising programs every three months: street theatre, seminars on new teaching methodologies for schools, semesters of teaching English. I give 20 % of my business profits to the organization. We have two full-time medical clinics. Once a month I donate my counseling services there. We have three doctors working full time for us. We have a medical laboratory, radiography (X-ray) and general medicine. In the future we plan to open an old-age nursing home in our city.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People in Pakistan

When I studied in the United States I became friends with lesbians and learned from them a lot about the issues they faced in their country. A couple of years ago I was asked by the Canadian High Commission to do some research on the homosexual community here in Pakistan. I found a few contacts and have been in touch with them ever since. One of them is my neighbor. He is a great friend to have. I use his circle of friends to obtain inside information on the homosexual community. In Pakistan it is illegal to be gay. Some areas enforce this law. Some do not.

There have not been officially released statistics on the number of LGBT people in our country. Leaders in the community say that because there are strong, culturally based, physical separations between men and women that as many as thirty percent of Pakistanis have experienced homosexual contacts or relationships. I understand that there are many transgender people.

After the most recent elections of Pakistan, the former ruling party that was very open and accepting to human rights, including those of homosexuals, was defeated. The present government has smashed gay political groups throughout the country and has made many arrests. Though the charges brought against them were not related to homosexuality, officials cracked down on activities that were not attacked in heterosexual political groups.

Help to the glbt community

Since many homosexuals are suppressed I want to find out what can be done to help them. To reach out to the homosexual society we need to establish a way to provide support and advocacy. We need to do a mass advertisement to create awareness in the general public regarding the respect LGBT people need. There is much we can do. I wish to be a part of it.

At the moment I don't know any Adventist homosexuals. There might be some out there who we don't know. I want Christian and non-Christian homosexuals to know that Jesus loves them and does not condemn them. This is how I want to evangelize.

Since the *Utopian* organization decided to do something for the homosexual community my younger brother researched the Internet and found Kinship. I tried to attend the European Kinship Meeting in

Bremen but began the visa process too late to be able to travel. I plan to meet with the group next year in London. I want to learn from the international Seventh-day Adventist LGBT community. I am especially interested in understanding the Biblical texts so that I can use my knowledge to help gay people in my country. I think Kinship can be a great help as a consulting group. I am sure we can do something creative and productive for the homosexual community in Pakistan. ▽

For More Information:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4583911.stm
<http://www.globalgayz.com/g-pakistan.html#article2>
<http://www.petertatchell.net/religion/dark%20ages.htm>
http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=1&ZoneID=6&FileID=1172
http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?FileID=1142
<http://www.indegayforum.org/news/show/27139.html>

A Voice from Vancouver

John Edwards



I hope all of you who live in the Northern Hemisphere have had a good summer. I wish you folk in the Southern Hemisphere a good spring. I thought I would share a little bit of life in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Gay Pride

was celebrated in August. I attended a block party on Friday night, then was dazzled by the grand finale of the Celebration of Light. This fireworks competition is not lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex related. It just falls on the same weekend as Pride. I went out dancing, went to church on Sunday and then joined the Pride parade that followed church. The Grand Marshall of the parade was Gilbert Baker who created the rainbow/gay flag in 1978. Ironically, the west end area of Vancouver known as Davie Village and the gay district is currently up in arms because

the executive director of the west end business improvement district wants to remove the gay flags from the lamp posts. The parade and festival are held in the west end. Why must life be so complicated?

Despite flag politics the parade was quite fun. There were about two hundred floats or marching groups including the outgoing mayor, members of parliament and city council. One of the most striking moments included the floats from the Vancouver Police Department, including the police chief and several deputies, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Paramedics, the Canadian Border Services and the Canadian Armed Forces. All had brave LGB members in addition to the brass marching band and recruiting booths at the festival. Even though we have problems it is nice to live in a city and country that are making efforts to create equality. ▽

DVD

Open Heart, Open Hand contains stories of three supportive Seventh-day Adventist parents of gay and lesbian children.

This DVD can be ordered online at www.sdagayperspectives.com

Public Relations Cards

These 4" X 10" rack cards have information on one side about our book, *Christianity and Homosexuality*, and can have Kinship regional information on the other side. They are perfect to have in any gathering place for LGBTI people, such as pride parades, or other public events. For more information you can contact us at communications@sdakinship.org

Voices from an Adventist University

David Ferguson

My partner Peter and I want to share a discussion about the book Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives with Adventist university students. I thought you might be interested in notes I received afterwards.

"Thank you for your insight."

Male student

"Thank you again for sharing with us, and for bringing copies of your book as well. I'll be referencing it in my social work classes and can hopefully start meaningful conversations."

Female student visiting from another Adventist university.

Books:

Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives and My Son, Beloved Stranger can be ordered online at www.sdagayperspectives.com.

"Thank you so much for coming out to Loma Linda on Friday. I really appreciate your courage to come out and talk about yourselves. Your self-disclosure really helped me to let go of my negative judgments and bring more peace into my life. Ever since I attended public high school, my eyes became more open toward the struggle of gays and lesbians. I was never sure how to deal with this issue since everyone around me seemed to be judgmental already. Nevertheless when I got home I started reading the book that you gave me. As I read through it my emotions have gone through a journey. I hope my generation will bring that change within the church. I am convinced that God loves every individual equally. I feel ashamed that a lot of Christians haven't been more supportive toward this issue. Instead of focusing on God's will for us to love each other, heterosexual Christians have prevented other people from seeing God's true love. But I think changes will come, and time will come soon where we all will be able to worship together, where Christ's love and compassion will be put into a real practice. I am glad we have Kinship ministry and I will keep this ministry in my prayer. God bless!"

Female student. ▽



Impressions from Kampmeeting 2008 Talentshow

Forgiveness

Raymond Thompson

*Taken from a talk given at
Kinship Kampmeeting, July 2008*

It is not often that we can gather like we do at Kampmeeting. I am a member of the *Spectrum* online blogging community. After one person read my post about "gay theology without apology" they asked me why I don't just start my own church. I had mixed feelings about even considering that option. I thought, "Why not join a church that will accept me?" I thought, "Why should I have to leave the church in which I grew up and where I have found Jesus as my Savior?" I didn't respond to the question but it did hurt.

At the time, I didn't know why I couldn't give an answer. My response now has come from my personal growth inside the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has been through trying times that God has taught me to learn patience, even tolerance. I do not agree with everyone but I believe we can still learn from each other and fellowship together.

I believe we need to experience the power of forgiveness. We often think a community should be a utopia free from disagreements. In a true community we don't always choose our companions. They are given to us by grace and will upset our view of the world. I hope they will love us at our least loveable moments. And I hope we will learn to love them in their least loveable moments.

As homosexual Christians we often see this love missing from our church pulpits. Our own relationships can be tainted by the way our denomination treats us. I have found it helpful to meditate on an Ellen White quote my grandmother read to us from *Desire of Ages*. "Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. When the King of Glory became one of us He showed us that we must love one another as He loved us. Then our mission is accomplished and we are fitted for Heaven because we have Heaven in our hearts."

It is hard to forgive the shortcomings of our family, friends and church when they do not honour who we



are, but Paul says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God chose to redeem us. We magnify the Savior who loved us when we use the strength of our community to love others, even the difficult ones in our lives. I have come to believe that one of the gifts of our community is that our pain has taught us to understand what Micah wrote: "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." We have learned the need of it for ourselves so we can offer it to others.

Shared forgiveness in a community helps us utilize the most important building blocks of any fellowship: tolerance, compassion and mutual benefit. Tolerance helps us to foster respect. Compassion allows us to know that we are not alone. Our mutual benefit is the blessing and growth and support we receive from each other. We learn not to ostracize. We learn to go through the pain it takes to build and rebuild with each other. ▽

Raymond is a former student of Southern Adventist University where he founded an Adventist Forum chapter. He is now attending college in Pennsylvania.



A representative from the website The Adventist Times wrote and asked for our responses to what we call "The Clobber Texts." Here is part of our reply to her.

Instead of Clobber Texts, Give Them Bread!

Catherine Taylor

I appreciate your questions and the opportunity to think about them in answer to you.

To begin, there are some foundational principles of Bible study that I want to follow in my response:

1. Consider the meaning of the word in the original language and in the context of the Biblical passage in which it is found.
2. Understand the context in which it was written and the people to whom a message was written.
3. Have an understanding of the difference between:
 - a. Biblical principles, which are never changing and eternal.
 - b. Biblical policies, which have shifted depending on time in history and context.
 - c. Biblical practices, which are the ways followers of God have lived their lives.
 - d. Biblical present truth: Each age seems to have a specific testing focus, lesson or truth.
4. The Bible uses people, events, places and rituals to represent spiritual principles.

Some examples of Biblical principles come from Eden. They would include the notion of dominion, as exercised by humanity, being an object lesson of the way Heaven exercises dominion over created beings. Jesus has shown us throughout the Bible that God's view of dominion is that we are to use it to nurture and to serve those who are vulnerable. Another principle is that diet is meant to nurture our bodies so that we may be physically and mentally healthy. The Sabbath rest is a principle designed to help us re-

member the lessons of creation and re-creation. Another is the notion that relationships are to replicate the intimacy, love, and caring that the Deity shares. A Biblical principle that became known more clearly after the Fall is that we are to make a clear distinction between our use of Heaven's principles and those of the evil ones. We are never to have a God other than Yahweh.

Here are some examples of Biblical policy shifts. After the Fall our diet changed to include green vegetables. After the flood it changed to include meat. The Levitical rules stated that the meat must be killed in a certain fashion. In Paul's time the discussion was

about whether or not to eat food offered to idols. There came to be a time in Biblical history when the taking of slaves was permissible. There was a time in Levitical history when divorce was permissible. Jesus reframed Heaven's priorities. There was a time in Biblical history when it was permissible to marry your sibling. Then it was permissible to marry a half-sibling. Then it was forbidden to marry a sibling. Then it became an abomination to marry a sibling. There was a time when we were clothed only in light. Then God provided animal skins. In Levitical times it was forbidden to have clothing made of two different materials. There was a time when a non-Israelite could not be a member of the congregation for several generations. After the debacle at the borders of the Promised Land, Moabites were proscribed and an abomination. In Paul's time it seemed particularly important that the women of Corinth cover their heads during worship.



I want to share with you some examples of non-condemned Biblical practices that might not fit with what we have considered in the policies and principles sections. Despite the prohibitions against it, Ruth, a Moabite woman becomes a member of the people of Israel. Despite the policy that non-Israelites, in a matrilineal culture, are not a member of the congregation for several generations, Ruth's great-grandson becomes Israel's most beloved king. By former policies David should not have even been a member of the tribe. Despite the traditional inference that relationships must be between one man and one woman, in Genesis 25 there is no condemnation, or even comment, on Abraham being married to Keturah

and at the same time having concubines. Esther is lifted up as a hero of her people, while being a member of a polygamous harem. Daniel will not touch strong drink when he arrives in Babylon but seems to have put that principle aside when reacting to one of the visions. Tamar has sex with her father-in-law, conceives a child, is not condemned and becomes an ancestor of Christ. What seems to be of overriding importance in these cases is that the people involved are doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God (Micah 6:8). In other words they are following Edenic principles.

Present truth has included:

- * Do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- * Enter the Ark.
- * Leave Ur and follow Me where I lead you.
- * Have faith that the promised child (to Abraham and Sarah) will be a miracle child conceived only by the intervention of God.
- * Separate yourselves from the practices of the heathen people around you.
- * Christ is the Divine Son of God.
- * Jesus will come again.

This is a very brief look at the foundational concepts but I hope enough to create a context.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

Context:

Both of these texts are given as part of the Holiness Code given to Israel as they were becoming a nation. Leviticus 17-26 is a set of policies designed to make certain that the Hebrew people would be distinctly different from the pagan nations around them. They were to be an object lesson of separateness: nothing co-mingled, no reminders of pagan practices. Prohibitions include no mingling of seed in the field, no mingling of materials in the cloth, no mingling of the seed of men (thou shalt not lay with a man as you do with a woman). Additionally, same-sex intercourse was connected to the pagan fertility rites, idolatry that was an anathema to a Holy God. Finally, forced sexual intercourse between men was the norm in that culture for prisoners of war and people who had been vanquished in a battle. Given God's principle of how dominion was to be observed, any kind of behavior that would demean and denigrate another would be proscribed. It should be noted here that same-sex relationships between women were not mentioned. Many of these policies shifted in later years. Today, Seventh-day Adventists are not commanded to eat meat killed in the Levitical fashion, leave the side of men's heads unshaved, wear clothing made of only

one fiber, or avoid companion planting crops. We do not make slaves of neighboring nations. We do not stone those who either do not keep Sabbath or keep it differently than we deem appropriate. The means by which followers of Yahweh are differentiated are based on other criteria.



Romans 1

...is a remarkable and riveting denunciation of those who have refused to follow Yahweh; again, a holy diatribe against idolatry. Paul addresses those who have had evidence made "plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed (the truth) to them... they have made fools of themselves exchanging the splendor of the immortal God for an image shaped like mortal man, even for images like birds, beasts and creeping things." (Romans 1:20, 22) He is writing to a Christian congregation surrounded by a city where the cult of Aphrodite was one of the primary sources of worship. Like the Canaanite fertility practices, this cult used sexual intercourse between men and women as a way to gain power from the pagan gods to influence various aspects of their lives. Those lusting after power or wealth or position would exchange the "natural" relationships that would be normative in their lives, for cult prostitutes (either male or female). It was a perversion of the way Yahweh has always wanted to show >>

His love to fragile humanity. Despite the fact that these texts mentions sexual acts, they are in the context of calling a people away from idolatry and to the worship of the true God. This is not in the context of a discussion of relational/sexual orientation but of the abuse of an orientation in order to get power from a false god. The principle here is, "Thou shall have no other gods before Me.

I Corinthians 6:9

For me, this text follows along with the Old Testament texts describing why Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were overfed and unconcerned. They did not help the poor and the needy." (Ezekiel 16:49) This type of concern and focus is reflected in Isaiah 58 and in the teachings of Jesus. They are violating God's principle of *dominion*. The Greek words used in I Corinthians 6: 9-10 are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. *Malakoi* carries the connotation of softness, those who live luxuriously in palaces where soft living was the mark of the oppressor. This fits with the denunciation of Sodom because they did not take care of the vulnerable. It is in direct contrast to the athletic and warfare motifs used by Paul where followers of the way must be spiritually fit. *Arsenokoitai* is composed of two words,

arsen (male) and *koite* (the term for bed or, euphemistically, sexual behavior). The use of the term seems to indicate sexual behavior that was self-centered or used to exploit others, much like the Greek male tradition of having young boys as sexual objects. In today's language it would be called sexual abuse. Given the marked contrast between God's principle of dominion - care for the vulnerable (human, animal or planet) and the selfishness listed here and condemnations of Israel and Sodom - it would make sense that the people who insisted on selfish, opportunistic behaviors would not have a place in the kingdom of God.

From the reading of the texts here it would seem that, while Paul is not talking about orientation, he is making a call to return to the principles of Eden: Heaven-like dominion, selfless interactions between humanity, worship of the true God and acknowledgement of His creatorship.

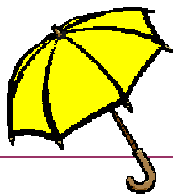
This is just a short response, almost an outline. There are many more Biblical examples of these precepts. You might also find John Jones' article, "In Christ there is neither..." found in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* more scholarly. I appreciate your interest and wish you well in your studies. ▽

The Voices of Kampmeeting 2008



"Building Our Community"

Shasta Lake, Women's Prison, CR Grill and the Leper? *Wanna hear more?*



A retreat at Region 8, Summer 2008

Obed Vazquez-Ortiz

Redding, in northern California, was the gathering place for Region 8 members on August 8-10. Norma Hult was our wonderful host, providing the Community Room at Mercy Oaks Village, her residential community, for us. Our group made the journey from the whole state, Southern, Central and Northern California!! We made new friends, reinforced some ties and walked away with huge blessings and rested souls!

Norma welcomed us Friday evening with watermelon, soft drinks and a couple of other munchies. On Sabbath morning, she outdid herself providing a wonderful spread of croissants, bagels and toast, along with juice, coffee and tea. After consuming some breakfast items we started our program around 10:15 a.m.

I opened up the program welcoming everyone, and then, along with Sam, led out for the rest of the program. We sang hymns and prayed; we had special music by Joyce at the keyboard, from Cathi on the flute and Sam on the violin. Norma shared her life experiences and how she ended up in prison and of her subsequent ministry. Her conviction, her spirit and dedication were wonderful to experience. For his homily, Marcos told us the story of the life of the leper from the leper's point of view before he met the Christ. It was moving, inspiring and challenging. Afterwards we celebrated communion with footwashing and sharing of the wine and the bread.

For lunch we were able to create a circle and enjoy a wonderful potluck lunch which included quite a variety of dishes, including some absolutely delicious home-made cookies baked by Sam. It was wonderful to enjoy the display of talent, share in the messages and receive such a blessing from being with each other. In the afternoon, folks took a nap or went to walk along the Redding Dam at Shasta Lake.

Sabbath evening all seventeen of us met at C.R. Gibbs American Grill for a terrific dinner with great service. Some tell me that the jazz musicians on the patio were relatively good as they could be heard every once in a while when the doors swung open. Afterwards we walked the incredible Sundial Bridge, an architectural wonder crossing the Turtle River. We sang Kumbaya underneath the bridge at midnight and listened to our own echo bouncing off the bridge. In the early hours of Sunday morning Norma persuaded



us to visit one of the local gay hangouts. THEN most of us called it a night.

Later Sunday morning found us having *huevos rancheros*, *tostadas* and *huevos revueltos* at the Salsa Café next to the Roadway Inn where many of us stayed. It was a time of nonstop discussions across the table. After breakfast some of us had to return home, but quite a few decided to see the *Bodies Revealed* Exhibition at the Turtle Bay Exploration Park or went on to another local adventure. The weather was in the high 90s and dry. It was comfortable and pleasant for those from cool-weather San Francisco. Plans are already underway for another retreat in 2009. ▽

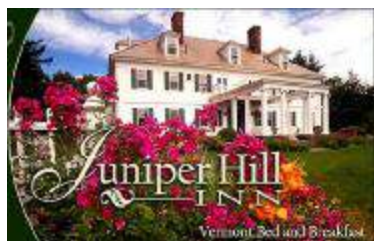
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Kampmeeting 2009 – Naveen Jonathan
Want to help us celebrate our 30th anniversary as an organization? Please plan on joining us for the Annual Kampmeeting of SDA Kinship International next summer, July 12-19, 2009, in Seattle, Washington. *Women and Children First* will be held on the week-end of July 10-11, 2009. Our event will be held at the Talaris Conference Center located ten minutes from downtown Seattle. To visit the site, please go to www.talarisconferencecenter.com. More information on KM2009 will be released shortly. Please watch for announcements via the *CONNECTION* and the Kinship eNews. In the meantime, want to start planning your trip? We will be sharing with you the many places that will entice you to our gathering. Here are the first five.

- **The Space Needle** - Seattle Center, 400 Broad St.; 206.905.2100. A 41-second elevator ride takes you up 520 feet to the observation deck of the Space Needle, built for the 1962 World's Fair. Enjoy a meal at SkyCity, the restaurant at the top that revolves 360° while you dine.
- **Pike Place Market** - Between First Ave. and Western, from Pike to Virginia Streets. Born in 1907, Seattle's Pike Place Market is the granddaddy of farmers' markets. Today, it's a major tourist attraction with 200 businesses operating year-round, 190 craftspeople and 120 farmer booths - plus street performers and musicians. Flowers by the bucketful, flying fish, fresh pastries and fruit, hand-made cheeses, local honey, wine, an assortment of restaurants, import goods, antiques, collectibles and lots of surprises are around every corner.

- **Ferries** - Traveling by ferry is a state of mind as much as a means of transportation to some of the Puget Sound's most historic and scenic sites. Views of the Olympic and Cascade mountains, the Seattle cityscape and the green shorelines will draw you out onto the deck to feel the salt breeze on your face. The state ferry system takes passengers and their vehicles from Seattle and nearby departure points to Vashon Island, the Kitsap Peninsula, the San Juan Islands and Canada.
- **Seattle Aquarium** - Pier 59, 206.386.4300. Meet Alki, the sea otter pup born at the Aquarium. Walk under the water in a glass dome as bluntnose sixgill sharks and other Elliott Bay creatures swim all around you. Touch a sea anemone. Learn about the lives of salmon at the world's first aquarium-based salmon ladder. Marvel at the impossibly bright-colored coral reef fish. And don't forget to wave to the giant Pacific octopus.
- **The Seattle Waterfront** - Piers 52 to 70 on Alaskan Way - A bustling collection of attractions, restaurants and shopping, as well as starting points for ferries, cruise ships, the Victoria Clipper and Argosy boat tours are located here. Feed the seagulls at the statue of Ivar Haglund in front of Ivar's Acres of Clams, stroll by the fountains on the wooden piers of Waterfront Park, admire the view or shop for souvenirs.

In the upcoming issues of the *CONNECTION*, stay tuned for more reasons you want to join us at Talaris in Seattle, Washington! ▽



Region One Meeting – Catherine Taylor

You are cordially invited to join Region One members at the Juniper Hill Inn during the weekend of November 7-9, 2008 for a weekend of music, laughter, Bible study, great companionship, a Thanksgiving Feast and a few surprises! For more information and to register you are invited to contact Catherine at region1@sdakinship.org. ▽

Rejuvenation ALL ARE WELCOME!

Lismore,
Northern
(NSW)
3-6 October



<http://www.sdakinshipaustralia.org>



Different Perspectives of KampMEETING 2008



A String too Short to Save

Rom Wilder

In my next life I would like to be an artist. I want to be able to draw the cartoons I get in my head, paint the lake lapping the pebbles at its edge, mold clay to show the young girl holding the baby sister she'd been wanting as long as she could remember. Until then I must be satisfied with "art" I can do on the computer. One of the things I decided to do was change the

colors in a photograph. Replace a shade of green with a shade of red. That's when I discovered how many, many, many shades of green there are in a tree or bush or patch of grass. I didn't have the patience to do very many pictures changing every shade. Maybe this means nature is more patient than I am. I'd still like to be an artist in my next life! ▽



A Voice from Colorado, USA

Waiting in Line

Ben Kemena



I am one of those multi-hyphenated Americans that use punctuation as a matter of translation rather than identity. I am a grateful American. As such, you might know me a little better as a Eurasian-American – with a mother from North Korea and a grandfather from northern Germany. You may also know me better by other labels: physician, forty-something, gay, Coloradan, outdoor enthusiast or amateur photographer.

I have walked the streets of Berlin and Beijing – as an American – streets that neither my paternal or maternal grandparents could have walked because of their social class and economic poverty. I have walked the streets of Washington DC with my own father – because it was important to embrace our new country and identity. My family could have only had "a future" in these United States. I am the product of American public assistance – people in society and government who believed in me and my family without ever knowing me. I am grateful.

My parents met in college in the United States. My father entered college on the GI bill after service in the Korean War era. My mother came to college as a foreign exchange student – one of two girls who successfully passed examinations in a small field of students selected for a government-sponsored opportunity in America. My parents met trying to pass English class – and they endured the challenges of an interracial marriage that was not celebrated in the America of the 1950s. Despite their hardships, they worked very hard and believed in only one unforgivable sin: laziness. Next year, they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary – and I cannot

express my pride for their example, efforts and achievements.

We made our way to Denver for reasons of health and dry air. Though born in Nebraska, I have known no other home but the Rockies of Colorado. I attended public schools and studied at public university buoyed by public scholarship money. No other country or society would have offered me or anyone else in my family such opportunity.

After finishing engineering and medical school, I served in the Veteran's Administration for more than ten years as a physician. I did not serve because of a formal obligation – I served as a physician in the VA healthcare system as my way of saying "thank you" – for gratitude is a verb. My father served in the US Army. US Marines rescued my mother when she was orphaned in the misery of the Korean War. I could not serve "openly" in the armed forces and refused to misrepresent my full identity. So, as service is not about self, but about the patients I care for, it was my quiet way of contributing to the welfare of our country and its warriors – recognizing a society that has given my family and me so much. I remain a grateful American and continue my work as a physician.

For many years, I have lived in the respectful shadows of the American "mainstream", gingerly balancing the many hyphens of my identity while reveling in the choices I have in the United States – choices usually reserved only for royalty. In the United States, I can live in my hyphenations as well as my wholeness – there is no other society on Earth that allows me such privilege. Certainly, I am still the figure of ridicule or despair in certain American circles. Some decry my "mixed blood," others lament my sexual orientation and religion, and still others wonder why I haven't accomplished more given my advantages. All of it stings – and yet, it is in my American character to quietly persevere, work hard and remain willing to learn. We are a nation with our feet in tradition and our heads in the heavens. We aren't sure whether our melting pot American identity will be enough – or whether we need to cling to old hyphenated labels. But it is my present obligation to help move our country and society forward – and those steps are always best taken with honesty and humility along with a grateful and forgiving heart.

I am convinced that, in the American society of this century, our hyphens will give way to acknowledging each other as many-splendored human beings. In the end, we are either pro-human or we are not! One day, our census forms will abandon questions such as racial identity because it will be irrelevant. "For God so loved the world" – the whole world, no exceptions.

My background is Christian and I live in a Jewish neighborhood enclave. I shop at a Korean grocery store and probably spend too much time at hardware stores or coffee shops. I enjoy the challenge of Colorado "fourteeners," I have been healthy and very ill – and understand the grace of good health and the necessities of infirmity. I have a wonderful spouse, a loyal dog, loving parents and I pay my taxes. It all sounds so ordinary ➤➤

connection▼

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that one can forget the extraordinary privilege of leading such a life!

After two decades of labor, the government loans that allowed me to attend school have all been paid back in full. In my wildest dreams, I could have never dared believe that my life was a possibility anywhere else. I have tried to honor the traditions of my family and a genuinely trusting government. I remain a work in progress – flawed but knowingly so. I will fall short of the mark and aim of my generation – and will depend on the next generation to help shoulder the hopes and dreams for a better America. For in the words of

Senator Obama, it is not what we necessarily see – "but what is unseen, that better place around the bend."

The generation of my parents has been called the "greatest generation" of Americans -- and I honor that earned title. Their children now collectively hold their love, hopes, dreams, power and labor – I hope we always remain grateful rather than entitled – as we respectfully share our own American stories. The "greatest generation" taught me the importance of being "each other's keeper" – providing me with stewardship and opportunity when such "great society programs" were

neither cheap nor easy. Written from the crucible of my parents' embrace of the American dream and the Union so many hurt and died for, I want you to know this first: I am a grateful American. Our inherited legacy matters in my heart, industry and soul. Thank you!

These thoughts were inspired as I was waiting in the long lines at Invesco Field at Mile-High to hear the acceptance speech of Senator Barack Obama from Illinois as formal nominee of the Democratic Party for President of the United States of America, August 28, 2008. ▽



"After All Those Years I Still Can't Stop Loving You"



George and Fern Babcock

Bruce Tichner and Eddie Acosta