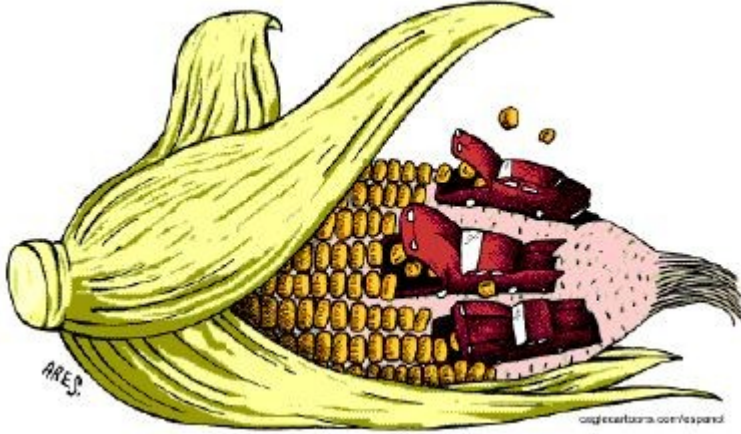


Century Marks

Century Marks in the [May 1, 2007](#) issue



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Make videos, not war: Ava Lowery, 16, is a Methodist peace activist in Alexander City, Alabama. *Rolling Stone* magazine called her one of the great mavericks of 2006. Lowery makes homemade videos that juxtapose images from the Iraq war with popular music and provocative quotes (her Web site is www.peacetakescourage.com). One of her best-known videos is “WWJD?” which pairs the song “Jesus Loves Me” with images of grieving and wounded Iraqi children. She says her antiwar stance has lost her some friends, and she has received death threats, but otherwise she sees herself as a typical teenager (*Chicago Tribune*, April 4).

Outing the truth: Presbyterian Diana Nishita Cheifetz reports that when her presbytery conducts investigations into allegations of ministerial misconduct, the cases are labeled Minister A, Minister B and so forth to maintain confidentiality. On one occasion a minister in the presbytery stood up and acknowledged that she was the one under investigation. With poise and without rancor toward those investigating her, she said that she had broken the rules of the Book of Order because as a woman she is living in a committed relationship with another woman. “This is who I am,” she declared. Cheifetz wonders “what it would be like for all of us . . . to speak our truths without attacking anyone else, to listen to the truths of other people’s lives, and to see what larger truths emerge” (*Weavings*, May/June).

Remapping the Holy Land: Early Christians rejected the notion that land or place could be considered sacred. Visits by Christians to Palestine began as early as the second century, but the impetus seems to have been the desire to understand biblical events, not to revere a place. However, all that changed when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the empire, according to scholar Julie Ann Smith. Constantine's mother, Helena, visited Palestine in search of biblical sites, especially Calvary and what came to be called the Holy Sepulchre. Once biblical sites were identified, "profane" buildings and statues were dismantled. Christian churches, monasteries and hospices were built and pilgrimages followed (*Church History*, March).

Supply and demand: A rancher along the Mexican-American border told writer Philip Caputo that there is no solution to the problem of illegal immigration because "it's not a problem, it's a human predicament, a condition of life," one that we'll have to live with "as long as we have the Third World sharing a border with us." More than a million people pour through one 261-mile-wide corridor every year, not counting drug traffickers. "That's about 2,800 per day, nearly 120 an hour," says Caputo. The reason for this influx is that "the United States has a large appetite for cheap labor and illicit drugs; Mexico has an abundance of both." Mexican workers in the U.S. send about \$18 billion a year back home—the largest source of income for Mexico after oil revenues. As for the security fence the U.S. government wants to erect, Caputo says, "Count on it, ways will be found to get around it, or over it, or under it" (*Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring).

Don't fund, don't ban: Senator Sam Brownback (R., Kan.), an opponent of stem cell research, says that "a human embryo . . . is a human being like you and me; and it deserves the same respect that our laws give to us all." The claim is clear and logical, but according to Michael Sandel the same cannot be said for the position President Bush has taken. The president has said that it is okay to do research on existing lines of stem cells, but not to create new stem cells or spend federal dollars to do such research. It is a "don't fund, don't ban" policy (April 8 *Boston Globe* article, adapted from Sandel's forthcoming book *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*).

Equal opportunity offender: Radio shock jock Don Imus, first suspended for two weeks and then fired by CBS and MSNBC for his derogatory comments about the Rutgers women's basketball team, has offended many groups before, including Muslims. In 2004, the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations

(CAIR) got an apology from MSNBC for a comment on Imus's program—a fictitious “senior military affairs analyst” had justified the alleged execution of a wounded Iraqi by a U.S. marine and referred to the Iraqi as a “booby-trapped raghead cadaver.” Another *Imus in the Morning* program called Palestinians “stinking animals” and suggested that they all be killed (CAIR press release, April 11).

Divide and conquer: Steven D. Martin, who describes himself as an evangelical, traditional United Methodist, has produced a 24-minute video titled “Renewal or Ruin? The Institute on Religion and Democracy’s Attack on the United Methodist Church.” Martin says his complaint with the IRD is not about its positions but about its “divide and conquer” tactics. “Renewal or Ruin” includes interviews with bishops, professors and church leaders who’ve been maligned by the IRD (www.ird-info.com).

Eye of the beholder: A safety drill at a New Jersey school has been criticized by some conservative Christian groups. In the drill, which simulated a hostage-taking, mock gunmen were labeled members of a “right-wing fundamentalist group,” the “New Crusaders,” who were intent on avenging the punishment given to a student for praying before class. The director of the drill denied that it carried negative messages about Christians. The word *Christian* was not used at all, he noted; “this could’ve been any religion” (Religion News Service).