A Life’s Work through Quotes

Charlie Clements
For the Global Health Review
April 20, 2011
“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Robert F Kennedy, South Africa, 1966
“There are no American combat troops in Laos. We are interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Beyond that I do not think the public interest would be served by any further discussion.”

Richard Nixon, 1969
“I don’t have a pet. The cat food is mine. It’s what I can afford.”

Millie Goldsworthy
82-years old retired school teacher, Seattle, 1974
“I’ve had eight children and only five are still alive. The three girls were only helpful while they are young; then they get married and went to live with their husbands. The dowry for each one cost me five years worth of harvests. I have two sons. They are my social security. When I can no longer keep the plow upright, they will do it for me. I wish I had more sons.”

Peasant farmer, Punjab, 1977
“What do you expect *us* to do?

Medical Student at the La Raza Medical Association national meeting, 1980
“I worked on the hacienda over there. I used to feed the owner’s dogs bowls of meat and bowls of milk, when I couldn’t put them on the table for my own children. I would take the dogs to the veterinarian when they were ill, while my children died without medical care. They only got a nod of sympathy from the landlord. You will never understand violence or non-violence until you understand the violence to the spirit of watching your own children died slowly of hunger.”

peasant, El Salvador, 1982
“I am waiting for my husband to bring home AIDS. I am a nurse. I am educated, but I cannot protect myself. Two of my husband’s brothers have died of AIDS. He has had to sleep with their wives to cleanse them. He refuses to use a condom when he sleeps with me. He’s middle aged and fearful of losing his manhood. He goes with prostitutes to prove to himself he’s not too old. It is only a matter of time.”

Rose Biani, nurse, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1989
“I’ve never been ashamed of being poor. It’s our daily bread. When I’ve had to go to school for a week without being able to wash my hair, because there is not enough water, then I am ashamed.”

Maria Alvarez, 14 years old, colonia resident in Texas 1998
“If the men gather wood, they will surely be slaughtered. They will only rape the women.”

18-year old refugee from Darfur Chad, 2007
“Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief.  
Love mercy now.  
Do Justly now.  
Walk humbly now.  
You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are free to abandon it.”

from the Talmud