

Rebecca W. Lewis,
Guest Editor

Rebecca W. Lewis has a BS from Caltech, an MA in International Development from WCIU, and has lived among poverty-stricken people on three continents while rearing four children with her husband. She has seen the impact of the death industries on families in both poor and rich communities.

CHALLENGING THE DEATH INDUSTRIES: DUTY OR DISTRACTION?

Mission Frontiers magazine exists for the purpose of advancing the kingdom on earth, specifically at the frontiers “where Christ has not been named.” Effective proclamation of the gospel is the guiding principle, so why focus *MF* issues on poverty, urbanization, or “death industries,” whose products directly cause the deaths of millions? Do these issues distract from *MF*’s purpose? Or are they crucial to address when considering unrecognized barriers preventing breakthroughs in the remaining least-reached Frontier People Groups? We seek to address these questions in this issue.

Why these “Death Industries”?

Recently the American secular news has reported on epidemics of drug deaths and an increasing struggle over the abortion of children. But news reports do not even begin to reveal the global scope of these kind of problem—the shocking death rates around the world and the power of the global industries behind them.

The “death industries” are a handful of global industries that together directly result in almost two-thirds of global deaths. Yes, two thirds of *all* deaths *every* year, and these particular deaths are fully *preventable*. Having lived on five continents from Latin America to North Africa to India, I have personally seen that millions of people God loves are being dragged down to death by these lucrative industries.

Unfortunately, missionaries and other believers with no money in the game are often the only ones willing to take a stand

against them. We hope to encourage all believers to repent, pray and have the courage to bring a gospel of both hope *and* freedom, as has happened in the past. We also hope to galvanize expat evangelical workers to confront issues that cause so much suffering in the people groups they serve and to help families avoid misery and death.

The articles *Hunting the Lion* and *Missionaries vs. the Opium Industry* highlight past mission work against death industries, while *When Doing Good is Controversial*, *How to Save a Life*, and *Hope in a World of Addictions and Sex Trafficking* highlight current global mission work against abortion and addictions.

Four articles focus on alerting the church by exposing the global statistics about death-causing industries: *What’s Killing Us?* focuses on the statistics of four main death industries: firearms, tobacco, alcohol and abortion, which is further addressed in *The Abortion Industry and the Gospel of Life*. Two additional articles cover deaths due to the global drug epidemics, *Making a Killing: How Mild Local Drugs became Global Epidemics* and *Famine, Poverty, and Violence: Three More Ways Drugs Cause Death*. One more highlights reform efforts and proposes action steps: *The Addiction Industries: Reform Efforts and the Unique Role of Missionaries*.

Righting a Wrong-Side-Up World emphasizes the need for the Spirit-led community of believers to engage in this kingdom task. Instead, evangelicals today seem to be losing moral authority by withdrawing from personal and societal transformation, having similar rates of divorce, addiction and even abortion as the world. Taken from a seminar in 2003, in *The Puzzling Power of Group Self-Deception* Ralph Winter asks, “if we cannot recognize evil in our own cultures, how can we adequately engage in the global kingdom task of wrestling with principalities and powers and rulers of this dark world?” (Eph. 6:12)

How Do People Become Apathetic to the Mass Killing of Human Beings?

Apathy toward mass killing is one result of cultural group self-deception. People can even believe they are doing good, as shown starkly in an interview of a former guard at a Nazi concentration camp. He spoke of the camp directors picnicking with their families on the hills above the camp—upwind so that they did not have to breathe the smoke from the crematoriums where never-ending piles of bodies were burned day and night. Recently, an American private abortion provider mentioned in an interview that her clinic killed over 30,000 babies, but she never thought of them as children until she herself had a late term abortion and regretted it.

In both cases, the people involved thought they were doing good for mankind and saving the planet. The Nazi guards spoke of saving the world from the “insidious menace of the Jewish people and other genetic undesirables.” The abortion clinic owner spoke of saving women from unwanted children and the world from over-population. Both knew they were killing human beings, but thought it was for a good reason. In both cases, few Christians even complained.

But what about the tobacco executives who have known for decades that their addictive product causes millions of deaths per year? Each year they kill as many people as the Nazis killed in their death camps. What is their excuse? The World Health Organization reports they systematically cover up addictions and death because “*Nicotine addiction destroys the industry’s PR*

and legal stance that smoking is a matter of choice.”¹ Today the magic death-industry word is “choice,” exemplified by the global “free to smoke” campaign, and by the abortion industry’s slogan “my body, my choice”—equating abortion with freedom while ignoring better choices that prevent unwanted conception. Individual people must be free to choose, even if it ends up causing their own deaths or the deaths of others.


“Death industries” are unique in that they spend billions of dollars on aggressively marketing deadly choices *as if they were harmless*. They disregard those regretting having been coaxed into an abortion or the years of suffering caused by addictions: deaths, crimes, poverty, domestic violence and disease.

Who will help take down these Goliaths of industry, killing millions? Who will dare to take a stand against them saying, as David said, “*I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.*”

Historically, missionaries have spread the gospel while simultaneously fighting the Goliaths of their generation, the giants attacking families and communities with no one to oppose them. Ralph Winter wrote about *The Future of Evangelicals in Missions* in MF in 2007. He emphasized the evangelical heritage of *personal transformation* coupled with *societal transformation*.

¹ www.who.int/tobacco/media/en/TobaccoExplained.pdf “The Truth About the Tobacco Industry in Its Own Words.”

The latter was eclipsed in the 20th century following the rise of secular utopianism, Darwinian socialism and the “social gospel” which divorced personal heart conversion from societal improvement and stripped out the foundation of transformation.

Ralph Winter hoped that in the 21st century a “fourth evangelical awakening” would result in such a passion for personal transformation that it would once again spark societal transformation, being the salt in society and the light defeating darkness. John Wesley, a founder of the evangelical movement, famously said, “*There is no holiness apart from social holiness,*” meaning that holiness, or lack thereof, is always played out in relationships and community. If we are going to fight these global Goliaths, we need to reclaim a personal transformation that includes societal transformation. The whole world is watching. 

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