



Journal for Duane & Marcia Binkley
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Every January 31 is a holiday for the Karen people. The Karen might wish they could call the day “Independence Day”. But, since Independence has not been achieved, they settle for calling it Revolution Day.

On this past Revolution Day, Marcia and I had the privilege of being in Thailand and we and the group we were with were invited to attend the 60th Revolution Day Celebrations. To get to the site of the celebration we parked our cars in Thailand then walked down to a sandy, foggy beach to catch a boat to cross the Moei R. Most of the maps in the world would say when we crossed the river we went to Burma. But the Karen would say we crossed the river into Kawthoolay – the Karen homeland.



Doan Dancing at Karen Revolution Day. Jan 31, 2009

In the world’s eyes, the Karen revolution has not gone well. Today, the Burmese have one of the world’s largest armies with no external enemies. The army is used against its own people. About 1/3 of the army is deployed in eastern Burma where the Karen and Karenni live. The Burma army has already destroyed thousands of Karen villages and more are being destroyed everyday. Hundreds of thousands, more likely millions of Karen, Chin, Shan, Wa, Lahu, Moslem Karen, Rohingya, Kachin, Arakanese and even ethnic Burmese continue to live on the run, hiding in the jungles and forests trying to keep out of site of the army and survive another day. The world would likely say, the Karen revolution has failed.

But what would God say? Fighting for independence is one definition of revolution, but consider this definition:

“Revolution: A sudden, radical or complete change.”

Using this definition, the Karen struggle might be seen in a different light. Currently, 10s of thousands of Karen, Karenni, Chin, Burmese and others are revolutionizing their lives as they leave the refugee camps in Thailand and are resettled in countries around the world. Not only do they revolutionize their own lives, but they are revolutionizing the lives of the people they meet and they are revolutionizing the churches they come to.

Recently, we got a phone call from a pastor. Part of what the pastor said was what a tough time the church was having. In fact due to low attendance and low income for the

church, he had just had to accept a pay cut. But a little later in the conversation he also said that 2009 has already been the best year he can remember. Why?

The pastor is excited because in December, the Karen in his area finally found his church and they have started to come regularly. His congregation has doubled overnight. His Sunday school is full. The original congregation has come alive. They are energized and starting to work together again. The congregation may have trouble talking to each other, but the church has been revolutionized.



Karen youth choir, First Baptist Church of Indianapolis, IN

In the world's eyes the pastor has had a pay cut, now he's got more work than he can handle. He can't talk to half his congregation. Poor guy! But the pastor is celebrating. Like it says in 1 Cor.1:20: Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

The Karen National Anthem was written in 1928, long before their revolution started and when there were not nearly as many Christians as now. At the time, Burma was still a colony of England. But the last verse of the anthem says:

“Oh God our king and ancient hope
We worship you so we can be your disciples
And take your Good News to the world.”

In the world's eyes this verse is foolishness. How can an obscure people group in a remote mountain region of a poor country with one of the worst governments in the world take the Gospel anywhere?

But in God's wisdom, only because the Karen are rejected by Burma, and only because they are rejected by Thailand, do they wind up being resettled around the world. Only because they are rejected can this obscure group of people energize people and churches all around the globe.

It's a little like Jesus isn't it? He was rejected by his own country. He lived the life of a refugee himself for a while. He was persecuted until He died. And through that, He has changed the world. As the Karen come to live in the US, their life is being revolutionized. The adjustment is extremely difficult and they often need help. But we marvel at how their faith is changing the people and churches they come in contact with.

God is changing you. God is changing your church. God has a plan and he will change the world. Welcome to the revolution.