



a journal of positive futures

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## **YES! #37, spring 2006** **10 most hopeful trends**

*YES! Discussion Guides are designed to help you explore your own experiences, opinions, and commitments as they relate to material found in YES! magazine. Use them in group discussions, classrooms, or study circles. We believe that when people discuss with mutual respect and caring the critical issues of our time, they create a powerful avenue for constructive social change.*

*You can find the articles mentioned below on our website at [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org). You are welcome to download and photocopy them free of charge. If you'd like to purchase multiple copies of YES! or subscriptions for your class or group, please phone 800/937-4451 and ask for the Discussion Group Discount.*

In this issue of *YES!* we examine the top ten reasons for hope. In the midst of grim news and trends that could lead the planet to destruction, we find powerful forces pushing in a different direction—from people around the world uniting to counter corporate globalization to U.S. citizens striving to reclaim our democracy, to quiet pioneers developing a potent science of nonviolence.

As *YES!* reaches its tenth birthday, we celebrate you, the readers who made it possible. We also look back on what those 10 years have meant for our world and we look forward to what the next 10 years could bring. Perhaps every era feels unique to those living through it, and many ages have been times of change. But change is happening at a hectic pace now, and with humans linked across the globe by powerful technologies, change is worldwide and potentially world-threatening. In this lies both the danger and the hope of our times.

As you look back on the last 10 years and forward to the next, what do you fear? What do you hope for? What has the last decade meant in your life? What do you expect from the next decade?

This discussion guide will focus on the following articles from the current issue of *YES!*:

- “Food Revolution: Americans Lose Their Appetite for Anonymous Food,” by Brian Halweil
- “The Good Life: Consumerism is So-o-o ‘90s,” by Holly Dressel
- “Democracy: The (Re)Claiming of Democracy,” by Doug Pibel
- “Global Justice: Another U.S. Is Possible,” by Tanya Dawkins

### **Food revolution**

The food most Americans eat comes increasingly from factory-raised animals and huge corporate farms thousands of miles from the person who finally eats it. Wal-Mart, for example, sells sea scallops from Thailand, orange roughy from Namibia, and salmon from Chile in vast quantities. You can have strawberries in January, apples in July, and avocados and artichokes any old time. The prices on the packages are low, but they don't include the cost to the environment and the workers who grow and process the food, or to your own health. It's a cornucopia, but an anonymous one, whose true costs are hidden.



Yet opposing this trend is one toward locally grown food, grown by small farmers. In the past 10 years, farmers' markets have boomed, membership in community-supported agriculture has taken off, and organic food sales have skyrocketed.

- Take a look in your refrigerator. Where did the items in it come from? Were they produced by a local farmer or by a large corporation? Are they organic or not?
- What factors do you consider when buying food? How do you weigh price, your health and safety, the environment, and the conditions of those who produce the food?
- Are there community-supported agriculture programs, farm-to-school programs, or farmers' markets in your community? Do you participate in them? Why or why not?
- How have your decisions about food buying changed over the last 10 years?

### **The good life**

“What is the good life” is a question humans have been asking at least since Socrates and more likely since we emerged as a species. *YES!* has focused on the question since we started publishing in the heat of the go-go consumer '90s. We and our readers have looked for a source of meaning more satisfying than money.

- What have you found provides you with lasting satisfaction?
- How has your vision of the good life changed over the last 10 years? What experiences shifted your vision of the good life?
- What challenges to living the good life do you see in contemporary America? How has it gotten harder or easier to live the good life in America or in your neighborhood in the last 10 years?

### **Democracy**

With a U.S. presidential election decided in 2000 by the Supreme Court, a 2004 election plagued with electronic voting machine problems, ballot access issues, and questionable redistricting, and a presidency that each day seemingly justifies another extension of government power in the name of the war on terror, American democracy would hardly seem to be flourishing. Yet these very dangers have prompted the emergence of strong grassroots opposition, drawing many into activism who before only cast ballots and forcing politicians to take notice of ‘we the people.’

- Have you become involved in a campaign or movement in the last 10 years? If so, what moved you to action?
- What are the most pressing political issues in your area? Are movements to address them having success? How?

### **Global justice**

The folksinger Greg Brown wrote that “They turned my country into a coast-to-coast strip mall. If they can do all that in 30 years, why does the good change take so long?” America is increasingly dominated by corporate chains selling standardized products made on other continents. Over the last 10 years, fewer and fewer U.S. communities have thriving downtowns with independent, local businesses, more and more jobs are being outsourced to low-wage countries, and fewer Americans have secure jobs with pensions and health coverage.

At the same time, a growing international grassroots is opposing corporate globalization and pressing for the right to local self-determination, public services, and a healthy environment.

- In your line of work, have jobs been outsourced to other countries in the last 10 years? How has your industry been affected by increasing pressure to trim wages and benefits? Do you have health insurance? A pension?
- Has your community been affected by globalization and the decline in U.S. industrial production? If so, how?
- When was the last time you bought something made in the U.S., produced by a union worker, or sold by an independent, local business?



- Has your community experienced struggles to maintain a local economy, such as a fight over a Wal-Mart, a living wage act, or elimination or privatization of services? What worked or didn't work in these struggles?

**What else?**

- What have we left out? What are the most important trends you see coming out of the last 10 years? What happened in the last 10 years that causes you most hope or fear about the future?

**What are you doing?**

Are you using this discussion guide as part of a discussion group? In a classroom? Please let us know how you use it and how we can improve it.

We're also looking for stories of what you're doing to change the world for the better. We'll publish selected stories in *YES!* E-mail stories of up to 500 words to: [Editors@yesmagazine.org](mailto:Editors@yesmagazine.org).

E-mail your comments or stories on using these discussion guides to [DiscussionGuides@yesmagazine.org](mailto:DiscussionGuides@yesmagazine.org). Download additional copies of this guide at [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org). *YES!* is published by the Positive Futures Network, an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to support people's active engagement in creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world.

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