

Spring 2009

yes!

Building a Just and Sustainable World

ISSUE 49

**Van Jones: I'll Stay Independent
in the Obama Era**

**David Korten: Don't Fix Wall Street,
Replace It**



MacArthur genius
Will Allen
and daughter
Erika farm the
inner city

Food for Everyone

HOW TO GROW A LOCAL FOOD REVOLUTION

Reconnecting People, Food, and Culture

The City That Ended Hunger

8 Ways to Join the Local Food Movement


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**“A significant part
of the pleasure of eating
is in one’s accurate
consciousness of the lives
and the world from which
food comes.”**

WENDELL BERRY
AUTHOR AND FARMER

A young milk goat from Kookoolan Farms nibbles at visitor Beth Gentry. Kookoolan is a small, diversified farm in Yamhill, Oregon, committed to grass-fed animals, organic farming, and rotational grazing.

PATRICK BARBER



The Local Food Revolution

At the YES! office, we have lunch together almost every day. It's not a requirement, but most of us find we enjoy our work day more when we gather to share a meal, exchange film picks, family challenges, stories from travels, and of course opinions on current events. Visitors often join us at the lunch table with updates on their work in Boston, New Delhi, or Prince William Sound.

Food connects. Over a meal, co-workers become friends, strangers become companions, intimacies are shared, we renew our spirits and our bodies at the same time. Young people are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol when they share regular meals with family. Food not only connects us with other people, it links us to traditions—our own and those of others we come to appreciate through the flavors and aromas of the cuisine they share.

Food also connects us to our environment. We benefit from the nutrients plants derive from sunlight, soil, air, and water.

But, until recently, our understanding of our connection to the environment was eroding. We absorb directly and indirectly the byproducts of the agro-industrial complex: pesticides, artificial hormones, bioengineered organisms, antibiotics, and the preservatives used to maintain the appearance and texture (if not the flavor and nutrition) of food during long periods in storage and transport. Our ad-stimulated diets now include fat and sugar overloads that are creating epidemic levels of obesity and chronic illness.

Our food habits poison not only our bodies but also our rivers, soils, forests, and climate. By raising animals in overcrowded feedlots far from fields, we transform manure from a valuable fertilizer into a pollutant. Nutrient-rich runoff is killing our rivers and creating a large “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico. The demand for cheap meat spurs the clearing of rainforests for cattle. Meat production accounts for a whopping 18 percent of

greenhouse gas emissions. When managed organically—in a way that restores our connection to the land—farming can instead store carbon in healthy soil and help solve our climate challenge.

The same system that fosters obesity among some is contributing to hunger for others. Local farms producing for local consumption are displaced when trade policies and subsidies favor exports. Foreign aid too often involves the dumping of subsidized foods on unwary countries, driving down prices and undermining local farming, thus further severing the connection of people to the land and to sustainable livelihoods.

But change is coming to food. As the global economy unravels, and as the implications of peak oil and climate change sink in, interest in alternatives to the current food system is growing. People are reconnecting with the land and with community, and rediscovering diverse, local, and organic practices. All over the world, people are standing up to the agro-industrial complex and calling for “food sovereignty”—the right to nourish and strengthen their families and communities, sustain their culture, build health, and protect biodiversity.

A new generation of farmers is going local, opening farmers markets and bringing fresh foods to urban “food deserts.” Schools are growing their own fruits and vegetables. Cities and towns are adopting food-friendly policies. Farmers and ranchers are turning to land management practices that protect and restore ecosystems.

Food is an area of life where we can each live the revolution now. No need to wait. Grow your own, and share the abundance with your neighbors.

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor



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is to support you and other people worldwide in building a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. In each issue we focus on a different theme through these lenses ...

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Solving today's big problems will take more than a quick fix. These authors offer clarity about the roots of our problems and visions of a better way.

WORLD & COMMUNITY

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THE POWER OF ONE

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ON THE COVER



Erika and Will Allen, photographed in January in the aquaponic greenhouse of the Milwaukee Growing Power facility, minutes before an international training conference began. The sprouts in the foreground lie above a four-foot deep, water-filled trench holding 10,000 tilapia and yellow perch. Photographed by Peter DiAntoni peterdiantoni.com

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Wall Street has become more a burden than a boon to the economy. Time to replace it.

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Some 4.5 million Iraqi refugees are trying to make their way far from the violence of home. *A Photo Essay by Johnny Barber*

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READERS FORUM

Tell us. Send your response to an article, stories about making the world a better place, and ideas for connecting with readers to 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to editors@yesmagazine.org.



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Happiness After a Layoff

When I first received the Winter 2009 edition of YES!, I set it aside. Recently, however, I was laid off from my job and I suddenly had time to catch up on my reading. I read your issue on Sustainable Happiness, which addressed my core concerns as I grappled with unemployment in a crashing economy—how to survive by living simply and how to be happy in the process.

The magazine was a godsend—full of inspiring examples and practical tips for exiting the “rat race” and pursuing real happiness. It gave me comfort and a vision for alternative ways of living, and I am heartened to know that many others have already pioneered the

path that I am now treading. Thanks for the directions.

BRAD THACKER
Lakewood, CO

Contentment Is Enough

Your Winter 2009 issue left out an important factor on the subject of happiness. We all feel anxious to be “happy.” When we believe we have not achieved this goal, it can become the cause of unhappiness! It is important to recognize that happiness, like joy, is only momentary and does not last as long as contentment, which should be our goal. Contentment arises from achieving our goals and can be maintained. Your issue avoided the issue of how temporary the joy of happiness can be.

ARTHUR M. PIERSON
Poughkeepsie, NY

Tiny House on a Budget?

I just read Carol Estes’ article “Living Large in a Tiny House.” I am exploring options for cheap housing, including pole buildings and used campers, and was excited to learn about these portable houses. My research found estimates of \$21,000 to build a similar house yourself, so I would love to learn how Dee Williams built her home for \$10,000 including PV panels!

ADAM SHANK
Painesville, OH

RESPONSE FROM DEE:

I bought and modified a set of plans from Tumbleweed Tiny House Company and built the house myself using second-use materials. You can find more on this at www.yesmagazine.org/deeshouse.

Conservatives are Happier

I just finished your Winter 2009 issue. I was disappointed with the slant of the magazine. For example, there was no mention of the work of Arthur Brooks showing that conservatives are happier than liberals and religious people are happier than secular. To not explore these discoveries seemed a blatant omission.

TOM TERRILL
Lake Bluff, IL

“10 Things” Poster

Your “10 Things Science Says Will Make You Happy” was fantastic. I printed it out, and we’ve been reading and discussing them at parties and get-togethers. It certainly brings one back to reality.

ALICE SLATER
New York City, NY

ORDER THE HAPPINESS
POSTER AT www.yesmagazine.org/posters

Gandhian Awakening

I saw the piece in YES! on Sarvodaya. All the things in the article are true, but (I believe) are secondary to the main point: the transformation of society. Deshodaya activities (“national/political awakening”) are now the central focus of Sarvodaya. We are aiming way beyond “conflict resolution.” December marked the 50th Anniversary of Sarvodaya. I believe that the next 10 or 20 years will see the establishment of a Sarvodaya-inspired, spiritually based economic and governance structure in Sri Lanka and also in every other society in need.

SHARIF ABDULLAH
Portland, OR

Sharif is a founding board member of YES!, president of Commonway Institute, and recently received the Sarvodaya Vishvamitra (Friend of the Universe) award.

Hey, look! This is not ordinary dull white paper with occasional imperfections.



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Your Own Food Solutions

Our December online newsletter asked readers this question: "How are you changing your food habits?"

I am a work-for-food volunteer for Idaho's Bounty local food cooperative, and I love it. Every Wednesday we sort produce from local farmers and distribute it directly to local consumers. **BLAIR VAN PELT**

In October 2008, I heard author Will Tuttle talk about how I, as a non-vegan, am a predator, and how our forced numbness to our cruelty makes our peace efforts "ironic." I am now a practicing vegan, as well as a macrobiotic eater. **LINDA BACON**

Being elderly, we eat a lot less animal products. We find fresh fruits and vegetables with nuts added keeps us slim and fit. More groups in our area are creating food kitchens since so many people have lost their homes to foreclosure. **JONE MANOOGIAN**

Our community has a wonderful farmers market and I am blessed to have a 40-year-old freezer in our basement and a shelf for pumpkins and squash. If the power goes out, the freezer is on a platform with casters, and we can wheel it out into the winter. **SUSAN HEITZMAN**

My wife and I chair a committee to promote a community garden. We already have 12 families signed up. We convinced a local subdivision developer to gift us with a half acre ... We had been looking for the right volunteer outlet for us in retirement, and this seems to be it. **BEN & DEE ANDREWS**

More of your solutions at www.yesmagazine.org/foodcomments

WANT TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION?

Stay in touch with us between issues.

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GOOD FOOD AT HOME: YES! staff share their favorite cook books ... Madhu Suri Prakash on lentils and chicken

AUDIO: Ever thought of inviting the world to dinner? Jim Haynes does it every Sunday.

VIDEO: Refuseniks ... Greenhorns ... YES! interns

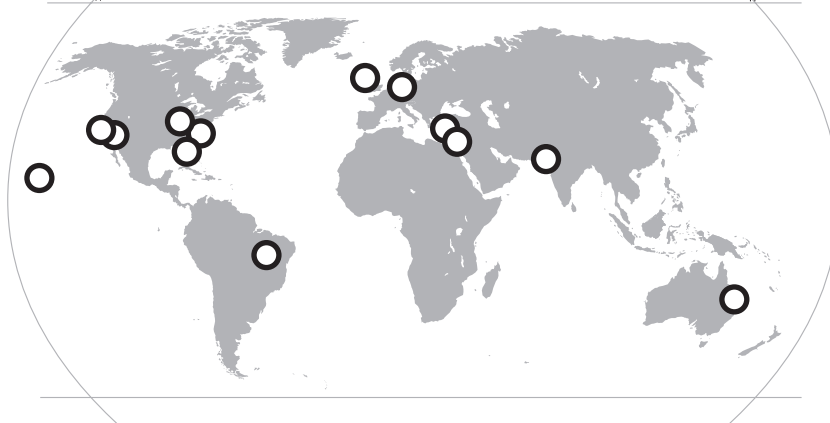
PHOTO ESSAY: Young farmers show the way ...

ALSO: Tried and true green living advice ... Must-see film picks ... Uplifting music ... Cartoon caption contest

WWW.YESMAGAZINE.ORG/SPRING09

Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



MIDDLE EAST

Activists Seek Peace in Gaza

In the wake of the death and destruction that resulted from the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, there is a positive story that has received little attention: People of conscience from around the world are organizing to support human rights in Palestine.

While there has been little sympathy in the international community for the extremist Hamas organization that came to power in the crowded Palestinian territory a year and a half ago, there has been widespread recognition that Palestine's civilian population should not be subjected to massacre. More than 1,300 Palestinians, close to half of whom were civilians, died during the Israeli assault in December and January, compared to 13 Israelis (three civilians).

In the United States, which provides Israel with most of its weaponry, an unprecedented number of peace and human rights groups mobilized their memberships to challenge the Bush administration and Congress in their support of the war. Liberal pro-Israel groups like Americans for Peace Now (APN), Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, and J Street countered more conservative

groups—who rallied in support of the attacks—by pushing for an immediate cease-fire.

When the House of Representatives passed a resolution defending Israel's actions, a sizable number of representatives who had previously supported similar resolutions abstained as a result of phone calls, emails, online petitions, local demonstrations, and other constituent pressure. Activists believe these successes point to a growing understanding in the U.S. that Israeli security

and Palestinian human rights are mutually dependent.

Within Israel, there was a series of antiwar demonstrations, some numbering in the thousands. Near the Gaza border, hundreds of residents of Sderot, an Israeli town that had been hit by Hamas rocket attacks, signed a petition calling for an end to the Israeli military operations.

Since the end of the fighting, an unprecedented amount of donations has poured in from around the world for relief or-

ganizations working in the Gaza Strip, and teams from human rights organizations have begun documenting war crimes.

Meanwhile, Israelis in growing numbers are questioning their government's actions in light of emerging stories of loss and hardship suffered by Palestinians. Chief among these is the case of Ezzeldine Abuelaish, a prominent Palestinian doctor who lost three of his children after his house was hit during an Israeli missile strike on January 17. Among them



More than 70 Israeli high school seniors have refused to obey their legal requirement to serve in the military, and some have been jailed. On December 18, 22,000 letters of support were delivered to the Israeli Minister of Defense. At right, supporters of conscientious objectors outside of a prison.

 www.YesMagazine.org/refuseniks Conscientious objectors speak out

“We’re matching homeless people with peopleless homes.”

MAX RAMEAU, DIRECTOR OF TAKE BACK THE LAND, AN ACTIVIST GROUP IN MIAMI THAT HAS ORGANIZED A SQUATTING CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN UP VACANT FORECLOSED HOUSES AND HELP HOMELESS PEOPLE MOVE INTO THEM.



was Abuelaish's daughter, who had attended a summer camp in the United States designed to build trust and reconciliation among Israeli and Palestinian youth. Abuelaish is well-known in Israel for his peace activism. His story has triggered an out-




OREN ZIV PHOTOS / ACTIVESTILLS.ORG

pouring of sympathy in the U.S., Israel, and Palestine, and served to mobilize efforts for peace and reconciliation.

Stephen Zunes is a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, where he chairs the Middle East Studies program.

ALSO ...

 **The organization Jewish Voice for Peace** has launched a global movement on behalf of a group of over 70 Israeli high school seniors calling for Israel to recognize the rights of conscientious objectors. The students have refused

to obey their legal requirement to serve in the military, and some have been jailed. In December, the group, called the Shministim, launched an online campaign asking for letters of support. On December 18, they delivered 22,000 letters to the Israeli Minister of Defense in Tel-Aviv. The group has continued to receive an outpouring of support: a total of 50,000 letters has come in from around the world since the campaign started.

An online apology for the 1915 massacre of Armenians living in what is now Turkey has gathered more than 28,000 signatures. The statement expresses regret for “the insensitivity and the denial of the Great Catastrophe,” during which as many as 1.5 million Armenians were killed.

Turkey has for decades refused to acknowledge the 1915 events as genocide, and in recent weeks investigated the authors of the apology for possible violation of the Turkish penal code, which makes “insulting the Turkish people” a criminal offense. They have since found no grounds for prosecution.

ECONOMY

A Fight for Tenants' Rights

Tenants' rights groups are taking action to protect renters from eviction when banks foreclose on property owners.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition,

renters make up an estimated 40 percent of the families currently facing eviction because of foreclosure. Nearly a million properties are at risk of foreclosure, a number expected to more than double in the coming year.

Renters can be evicted with only a few days notice, even if they've never missed a rent payment, and they are frequently unable to recoup security deposits and advance rent without suing. Vacant rental buildings are often targeted by vandals, and entire neighborhoods can suffer.

Lawyers for New Haven Legal Assistance (NHLA) threatened a lawsuit against Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, forcing them to allow renters to stay in their apartments. Advocacy groups are now pressuring other lenders to do the same.

Groups like the San Francisco Tenant's Union and Boston's City Life/Vida Urbana are helping renters challenge evictions in court. They are also organizing public protests against banks and urging policymakers to stop lenders—many of whom are benefiting from federal bailout funds—from evicting tenants in foreclosed properties.

“The current situation is a lose-lose situation for everyone right now,” says NHLA's Amy Eppler-Epstein. “Banks can make more money on a full building than an empty one that's trashed. Shareholders, neighborhoods, communities, and tenants are suffering. It's crazy, and it's got to change.”

Daniel Fireside is book editor at *Dollars & Sense* magazine, www.dollarsandsense.org.

Campaign for Public Water Trust

Citizen groups like Food and Water Watch are asking Congress and the Obama administration to tackle the nation's water infrastructure crisis, a problem they say has not sufficiently been addressed by the president's proposed economic stimulus. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (Ore.) has lent his support and will be crafting legislation this spring for a public water trust fund, which would help secure an ongoing source of federal money for water projects.

The U.S. has 72,000 miles of pipe, some more than 100 years old. Federal agencies estimate that between \$300 and \$500 billion is needed over the next 20 years to repair our aging water infrastructure and halt pollution. Currently, one trillion gallons of untreated water end up in our rivers, lakes, and streams each year as a result of poorly functioning water systems.

This crisis is putting ecosystems and people at risk, but help from the federal government is virtually nonexistent. Since 1978, the federal government's contribution to overall spending for clean water has shrunk from 78 percent to 3 percent. These numbers are reflected every day in beach closings and water advisories from sewage overflows. Many municipalities have opted to turn operation of their public water systems over to private companies in an attempt to draw private investment into upkeep. Unbelievably, almost half of our waterways in the U.S. don't meet water quality >>



MAL CHADWICK / WWW.MALCHADWICK.CO.UK

Energetic activists outside the U.N. Conference on Climate Change held in December in Poznan, Poland.

» standards.

"We have trust funds for highways, airports, and social security. So, why should support for the liquid that sustains all life be any different?" asked Wenonah Hauter, the executive director of Food and Water Watch. "Clean water, a public resource used by all Americans, certainly warrants federal support and deserves the same protection."

Tara Lohan is managing editor at Alternet. www.alternet.org

CLIMATE

Brazil Agrees to Protect Rainforests

👍 The Brazilian government made its first-ever serious commitment to Amazon rainforest protection this December, pledging to reduce the rate of

deforestation by 70 percent over the next decade.

If the target is met, it will keep 4.8 billion tons of CO₂ out of the atmosphere.

The announcement came just before the most recent international climate meeting in Poznan, Poland, where negotiators debated how to reward countries that reduce deforestation. Brazil's plan seeks international funding. Norway has pledged \$1 billion over seven years to the effort.

—Brooke Jarvis

Climate Activists Turn Up the Heat

👍 2009 could be the year when the drive to stop global warming finally becomes a full-fledged global movement.

For almost two decades, experts and diplomats have been trying to negotiate a treaty. But

with insufficient outside pressure, they've been making little progress.

December's meeting in Poznan, Poland—the 16th giant "conference of the parties" to be held on climate change—began as usual with people going through the diplomatic motions.

But several things shook the session up. One, the nations who will be affected most quickly by climate change stepped up their rhetoric. Small island nations demanded that other countries stop threatening their survival and commit to reducing carbon concentrations in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million.

In the concluding speech to the conference, Al Gore got a full minute of lusty cheering when he said the new benchmark for climate progress was indeed 350.

Activists at 350.org have spent the last year pushing that

number, originally identified by NASA climatologist James Hansen. It's the most important number on earth—and this year, the organizers of 350.org plan to make it the most well-known. On October 24, people in thousands of locations, from high in the Himalayas to underwater on the Great Barrier Reef, will rally around that number.

Now activists are turning to direct action. March 2 in Washington D.C. will mark the first mass civil disobedience on climate change in U.S. history. Organizers expect more than a thousand people will be arrested outside the coal-fired generating station that powers Congress. Hansen has said that we can't reach 350 unless we stop burning coal soon.

A letter I wrote with Wendell Berry put it this way: "There are moments in a nation's—and a planet's—history when it may be necessary for some to break the law in order to bear witness to an evil, bring it to wider attention, and push for its correction. We think such a time has arrived."

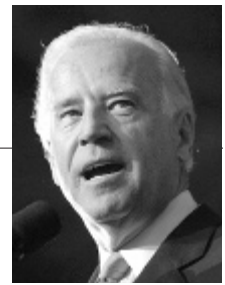
Bill McKibben is a journalist, author, and the founder of 350.org.

Interested? Bill McKibben launches mass civil disobedience campaign. www.yesmagazine.org/coalprotest

ALSO ...

👍 **The State of Hawai'i** and the Hawaiian Electric companies have allied to dramatically expand renewable energy. Their agreement requires that 40 percent of the islands' electric power be renewable by 2030 and commits them to ban new

“ They’re thinking the same old thing that got us here, greed. They’re thinking, ‘Take care of me.’ ”



VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

AFTER HEARING WALL STREET EXECUTIVES RECEIVED 18.4 BILLION IN BONUSES FOR 2008. THE AVERAGE WALL STREET BONUS OF \$112,000 WAS ABOUT TWICE THE AVERAGE AMERICAN'S INCOME.

coal plants, retire or convert older fossil fuel plants, encourage new clean energy projects and the use of electric vehicles, and build an undersea cable to link island grids.

Hitchhiking is going high-tech as a number of companies pilot applications that allow commuters to “thumb a ride” using their iPhones. The shared transport “apps” connect drivers with potential passengers. The Avego system, which is being tested in Dublin, is one example. It lets drivers enter information about their intended route, then automatically sends riders a menu of potential pick-up points and destinations.

A similar application called Carticipate was released this year by a San Francisco company, and also offers a Facebook application. The developers hope the applications will increase carpooling and reduce fuel use. Currently, about three-fourths of U.S. workers commute alone.

The U.S. Army plans to lease 4,000 electric vehicles, in what the Pentagon claims is the “largest acquisition of electric vehicles in the United States by any entity to date.” The Army says the program will support energy security by saving 11 million gallons of fuel and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 115,000 tons. The Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs) will replace some of the Army's fleets of non-tactical sedans and light trucks. The first six NEVs were unveiled on January 12.

Scientists have developed a new device that produces clean energy from water flows of less than one knot (1.15 miles per hour). Most of the world's currents are slower than three knots, but dams and water mills require an average of five to six knots to generate electricity.

Inspired by the physics of swimming fish, the device, called the Vivace, is less likely to harm aquatic life than dams or wave-action power systems. The developers say it can produce energy more cheaply than wind and solar, and believe it could have widespread applications.

ELECTIONS

Campaign Finance Pledge

More than 1,500 voters have pledged “not to donate to any federal candidate unless they support legislation making congressional elections citizen-funded, not special-interest funded.”

The “donor strike” is sponsored by Change Congress, a campaign finance reform group that advocates banning lobbyist contributions and financing

campaigns solely through a combination of public funds and small-dollar donations—a proposal polls show is supported by 69 percent of Americans.

Legislators who refuse to back the proposal will be reminded of what they're missing. Pledgers report their zip codes and recent campaign contributions, and the website (www.change-congress.org) tracks how much funding their representatives stand to lose from the strike—over \$400,000 and growing daily.

—Brooke Jarvis



ZORIAH / WWW.ZORIAH.COM

Barack Obama's Inauguration Day: Residents of Kogelo, Kenya, the village of Obama's father's family, watch on television as Obama becomes the U.S. president.

 www.YesMagazine.org/voicesofchange Our own videos: reactions from the inauguration



Tom Steinberg
Open Source
Democracy

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY is in “technologies that empower and uplift, not depersonalize and degrade,” says Tom Steinberg, founder of mySociety.org. The nonprofit runs popular websites that provide U.K. citizens with access to information and political action without requiring paperwork, lawyers, or bureaucrats.

On WhatDoTheyKnow.com, for example, anyone can ask government agencies to release their records through U.K.’s Freedom of Information law. On FixMyStreet.com, people can report a pothole or broken streetlamp: more than 800 problems reported were fixed in January 2009.

In 2006, mySociety created an e-petitions site for the prime minister’s office that has since gathered 8.9 million signatures on a variety of topics.

And though most of his websites focus on the U.K., Steinberg also offers tools and services freely to people around the world.

 www.YesMagazine.org/steinberg
How to improve your Democracy using the internet



Isabel Latorre
Coffee for Women’s
Rights

“IF WOMEN HAD their own income, we would be able to solve the gender problem,” says Isabel Latorre.

Latorre worked for years with fair trade coffee projects in her home in northern Peru, but she noticed that business income was too often controlled solely by men—and not always used to benefit families and communities.

In 2004, Latorre and a group of women coffee farmers decided to produce their own coffee, separate from the men’s harvest. The project led to the creation of Café Femenino, a nonprofit that sells fair trade coffee produced by women in Latin America to vendors in the United States and Canada. The organization says that communities with women-owned coffee projects have seen reductions in rates of domestic violence and improvements in education, medical care, and childcare.

Today, nearly 1,000 women from 50 communities in Peru and 5,000 women across Latin America are involved with Café Femenino.



Tim DeChristopher
Utah Student Knows
Real Value

TIM DECHRISTOPHER walked past the protesters outside the office where Bush administration officials were auctioning drilling rights in pristine Utah wilderness. He entered the building, picked up an auction paddle, and bid a total of \$1.8 million for 13 parcels near Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Federal officials finally got suspicious and stopped the bidding. It turned out the 27-year-old economics student had no money and no intention of drilling for gas and oil. Instead, he saw a chance to monkey-wrench the last-ditch effort to offer federal lands to energy companies.

“If I ended up going to prison, then I could live with that,” he told Amy Goodman on Democracy Now! “But if I saw an opportunity to protect the land of southern Utah and give us a better chance for a livable future, and I passed up that opportunity, I wouldn’t be able to live with that.”

Donations have poured in from around the country.

 www.YesMagazine.org/oilbid
Tim DeChristopher tells his story



America Bracho
Health Care By and
For the People

WHEN DR. AMERICA BRACHO began working with the Latino community in Orange County, California, she made a disturbing discovery. Children were suffering from obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other preventable conditions, and their families lacked the information and programs that could keep them healthy.

As a native of Venezuela, Bracho was familiar with participatory health care models widely used in Latin America to teach preventative health. She took these models as her inspiration and founded Latino Health Access, which recruits and trains community members to act as health educators, known as *promotores*. These educators lead programs on asthma prevention, diabetes, and healthy eating.

Over the past 15 years, the *promotores* have reached out to thousands—many of them low-income, uninsured, Spanish-speaking families—helping them overcome obesity and prevent, manage, and get treatment for illnesses.

COMMENTARY :: David Korten

WHY NOT AN ECONOMY OF REAL WEALTH?

The current economic debate centers on how best to revive our existing economic system through some combination of a Wall Street bailout and a job-creating economic stimulus package. That amounts to trying to revive an economic system that has failed in every dimension: financial, social, and environmental. Rather than prop up a failed system, we should use the current financial crisis as the opportunity to create a system that works. Trying to solve the crisis with the same tools that caused it is the definition of insanity.

As individuals, we humans appear to be an intelligent species. Collectively, however, our behavior ranges from supremely wise to suicidal. Our current collective economic insanity is the product of an illusion—a belief, cultivated by the prevailing economic orthodoxy, that money is wealth and that making money is the equivalent of creating wealth.

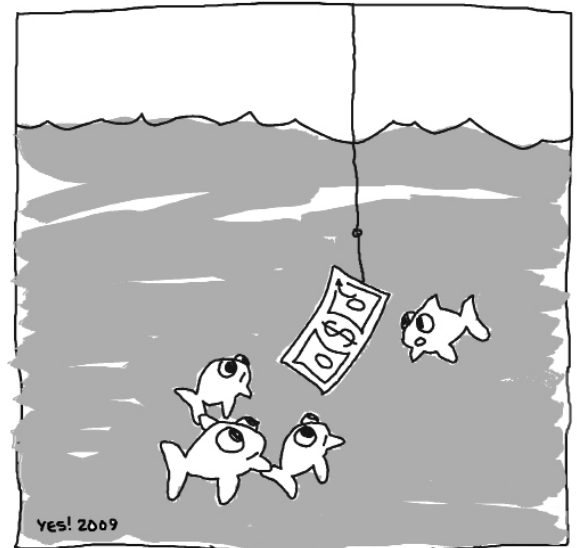
Money is merely an accounting chit with no intrinsic value—it is useless until we exchange it for something of real value. Wall Street's specialty is creating money for rich people without the exertion of producing anything of corresponding real value. They increase their claims against real wealth without increasing the supply of goods, making it harder for the rest of us to meet our needs.

Real wealth is, first of all, the tangible things that support life—food, shelter, clothing. Of course, the most valuable forms of real wealth are those that are beyond price: love; a healthy, happy child; a job that provides a sense of self-worth and contribution; membership in a strong, caring community; a healthy vibrant natural environment; peace. Our Wall-Street-driven economic system makes fantastic amounts of money and actively destroys all these many forms of real wealth.

We have been in thrall to a pervasive cultural story, continuously reinforced by academics, government officials, and corporate media, which led us to believe our economy was functioning splendidly even when it was quite literally killing us. You have heard this story many times:

"Economic growth, as measured by Gross Domestic Product, creates the wealth needed to provide material abundance for all, increase human happiness, end poverty, and heal the environment. The faster we consume, the faster the economy grows and the wealthier we become as the rising tide lifts all boats."

The logical conclusion from this story is that the faster



These humans sure are stupid if they think we're going to fall for the fallacy of consumerism!

CARRIE BAIL & DARIUS JONATHAN

See, class. This is what humans think is real wealth

LAURENCE SMITH



www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

we convert useful resources to toxic garbage, the richer we are. The only true beneficiaries of this obviously stupid idea are a few very rich people who reap financial gains from every economic transaction—whether the transaction cures a disease or clearcuts a rainforest. It is a system that defies money and dilutes wealth.

In contrast, the Main Street economy is comprised of local businesses and working people who produce real goods and services to meet the real wealth needs of their communities. It has been battered and tattered by the predatory intrusions of Wall Street corporations, but it is the logical foundation on which to build a new, real wealth economy of green jobs and green manufacturing, responsible community-oriented businesses, and sound environmental practices.

Let Wall Street corporations and their phantom wealth machine slip into the abyss of their own making. Devote our public resources to building and strengthening Main Street businesses and financial institutions devoted to creating real wealth in service to their local communities. **Y**



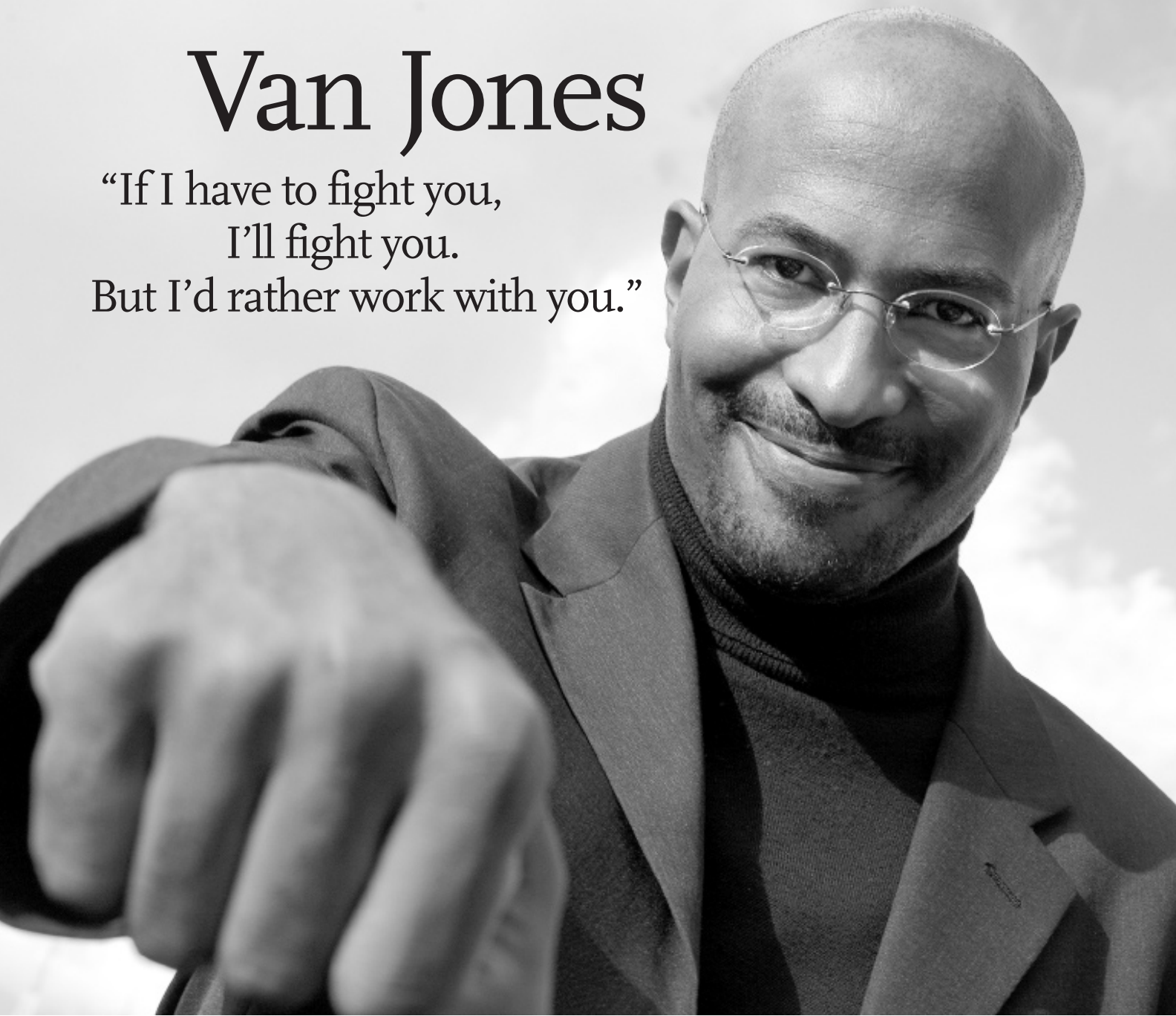
David Korten is co-founder and board chair of YES! Magazine. His most recent book is *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*.

www.YesMagazine.org/kortenbook

Read an excerpt from David's new book

Van Jones

“If I have to fight you,
I’ll fight you.
But I’d rather work with you.”



Interviewed by Sarah van Gelder

When I first met Van Jones in 2004, he was working in Oakland with young people of color who were being funneled from inadequate schools and impoverished neighborhoods into overcrowded courts and detention centers. Jones was speaking at a beachside peace conference that day, trying to explain his world to a predominantly white, middle-class audience. When he spoke of his newborn son and the steep odds against his future success, the audience got it. The next economy needs to be both green and just, Van said. It needs to include those left out of the last economy. Van later founded Green for All, became a YES! contributing editor, and now speaks widely about the need for a transition to a just and green economy. I interviewed him shortly after the election of Barack Obama.

Sarah: What does this election change in terms of the issues you care about?

Van: Having President Obama in office means that we have someone whose number one campaign pledge is five million clean jobs, who says that clean energy and energy independence are among his top policy priorities.

So it means that at Green for All, we



BETTY UDESEN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Van Jones and students
at Seattle's Garfield
High School shared
"go-Obama" fist bumps
during a visit just after
the election.

have a chance to do what we have been talking about doing: helping to build a clean-energy, green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty and put folks back to work, beat global warming, and make us more energy secure and less involved in oil wars or resource wars. The whole enchilada.

So Barack Obama's agenda is our agenda, except he's the president-elect. So that makes our agenda a whole lot easier to get done.

Sarah: Some people say we just don't have the money to deal with climate change because we have already spent so much on the financial bailout.

Van: The smartest things we can do in the short term pay for themselves. If we were to weatherize and retrofit millions of buildings in the United States, the energy cost savings would let you pay for that work in two to four years. So we literally are wasting money, time, and our planet when there are cost-effective, revenue-positive answers here that would put people to work.

The government needs to create a revolving loan fund so cities, hospitals, and universities can put people to work retrofitting buildings so they leak less energy. Slap some solar panels up there while you're at it, and then use the cost savings to repay the government so the government can loan that money out again. Now that would be a smart strategy. Or the government could offer federal loan guarantees to get private capital moving in this direction. That's a way to put people to work.

Sarah: Did you work with the Obama campaign?

Van: I was on a couple of working groups and got a chance to give some advice and counsel to the campaign, as did many people.

Sarah: Are you planning to be part of the Obama administration?

Van: Uh, no! *(laughs)* No! I am plan-

ning to be a part of the Obama Nation as a whole, to bring grassroots power to bear.

Even though we have a great president, we also need a great popular movement to support that president. All of us can't go into the White House and hang out there. We've got a lot of work to do out in these communities, and that's what I plan to do.

Sarah: One thing I was struck by during the campaign was how much it resembled movement building. How does that work once the head of this movement is in power, and how do those involved in this mobilization maintain independence?

Van: The great thing about it is that Barack Obama didn't create this movement. This movement created the opportunity for Barack Obama.

This all started with the civil rights movement, of course, but my generation's involvement began in 1999 in the streets of Seattle when we were warning that the WTO and NAFTA and all the so-called "free-trade" agreements would lead to disaster. People forget that. Here we are 10 years later, and we see the collapse that we were afraid of. The global justice movement morphed after 9/11 into an anti-war and peace movement, then into a "dump Bush" movement, and in 2006 we took back Congress.

Then Barack Obama—seeing the potential of this pro-democracy movement, this concern for green energy, the incredible work Al Gore had done, the pain of Katrina—decided to jump in and relate to this movement and help to take it to an even higher level.

So Barack Obama didn't create this movement, this movement created the opportunity for Barack Obama to become an historic figure. That means we have to make sure this movement keeps on moving and growing, and that we can continue to pull the best out of Barack Obama, even as he inspires the best in us.

People have to remember what hap- >>

» pened when Nelson Mandela became president and all of the ANC activists left Soweto and left the townships and went into Parliament. Those communities are now worse off in terms of violence and economics than they were even under apartheid. That's one of the shameful secrets of South Africa.

Obama may declare the 10 million people who were part of his campaign an independent organization. He may call it "Yes We Can!" or something like that. But we have to make sure there are independent groups that continue the ecology of hope and the ecology of progress. It's never going to be one person or one organization—it's going to be networks of networks that solve these problems.

Sarah: You are one of the people who first brought together the social justice and the environmental movements, and in both places, you have

I know that many of the best people have not even been heard from yet. People of faith, African Americans, Latinos—a lot of people who you might assume don't care about the environment and don't know anything about climate change. They *do* know what's going on. But they haven't had the chance to work together in a way where they feel comfortable and respected and where their other concerns—like their concerns about thrown-away kids—are part of the conversation.

Green for All and the book that I wrote, *The Green Collar Economy*, both come out of the experience of walking between those worlds and seeing the goodness on both sides—seeing the beauty that, if it could just be connected to itself, would be an unstoppable force for good in this country. It is beginning to happen because it's the right time, and it's so beautiful to see!

of the pain that we have experienced with varying forms of oppression. And I just don't think it's worked out very well.

I think that we've gotten ourselves into a bit of a logjam of accusation and blame on all sides of American politics and that it's time for some of us to give up the addiction to being righteous, being victims, and having the right to be mad at somebody.

It's not that we are wrong when we point out the exploitation, the oppression, the bigotry, the incredible levels of discrimination that so many people experience. I just don't think that litany and that dirge is something that has worked out well in terms of getting us the power we need in order to fix it.

I think the power we need to fix it comes from saying that all of that is true, *and* there is another truth. The other truth is that, despite all of that, there's still more good in each and

We have to make sure this movement keeps on moving and growing, and that we can continue to pull the best out of Barack Obama, even as he inspires the best in us.

been pushing people to move outside their comfort zones and learn to work together. What was it like for you, personally, to be in that position?

Van: You know, I've achieved something great in my life—I am equally uncomfortable everywhere. *(laughs)* That's a huge achievement!

It was a long road. It took a while to figure out the language and develop the personal skills. But it was an important road for me to go on as a person, as a man, as a father.

I lost my father this year, and this year I also became a dad for the second time. I have two boys now: Cabral, who is named after Amílcar Cabral, and Maathai, whose name is inspired by Wangari Maathai.

It's been a long walk, but I am glad that I went on that walk because I know the goodness in this country.

Sarah: You talk in your book about how our movements should be issuing fewer demands and instead setting more goals, and how we should have fewer targets and more partners. What are you getting at?

Van: I've been the biggest practitioner of the politics of confrontation and outrage for most of my life—I've gone to my share of prisons and public housing projects and funerals.

But I've come to realize that the way that we have done left activism for the last 20, 30, 40 years has been about multiplying enemies. We've been trying to show how more and more people are wrong, to be more and more refined in our denunciation of the country and of American culture, and of all the different *isms* and sicknesses. We've been trying to achieve this incredibly rich taxonomy

every person than there is bad—that there is still more reason for us to work together than for us to fight.

If I have to fight you, I'll fight you, but I would rather work with you to get a better outcome for my children and for your children.

Sarah: Is there a particular moment when you came to that realization?

Van: Yeah. This morning. *(laughs)*

It's a learning, like I said. I was tear gassed during the WTO protests in Seattle, and I think what happened there was an important moment in American politics. I got run over by a police car in D.C. protesting the World Bank in 2000. I know about the need for us to stand up against injustice. I also know about the need for us to stand up for the best in this country.

Here's the thing: We let people we

don't like tell us what America is. Well the Castro District in San Francisco, that's America, right? Bayview-Hunter's Point, Watts, New Bedford, Newark, Appalachia where good working folks are—that's America, too. I think it's time for us to stand up for our America and snatch that flag back.

I remember when I was a child, we were told about "liberty and justice for all." Well, I'm for that! "America the Beautiful," I'm for that. And I'm willing to oppose the clear-cutters who want to destroy that beauty. I'm willing to oppose the "Drill, baby, drill" and the "Spill, baby, spill" politics that



BETTY UDESEN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

I think that we've gotten ourselves into a bit of a logjam here of accusation and blame on all sides of American politics and that it's time for some of us to give up the addiction of being righteous, being a victim, having the right to be mad at somebody.

would undercut America's beauty.

The best gift that we can give the world is a better America. If you want to be a good global citizen, fix America! You can't lead a country you don't love. You can't save a country you aren't willing to serve.

So as far as I am concerned, the big contradiction has not been on the right. The big contradiction has been on the left. Allegedly, our politics are the politics of love and redemption, but you sure couldn't tell it coming to our protests. You sure couldn't tell it listening to our radio programs. You sure couldn't tell reading our blogs that we are on the side of love and forgiveness.

So I hope I don't sound too Pollyanna-ish, but part of a politics of restoration has to do with fixing some of the brokenness inside. Fighting the poluter within, fighting the incarcerator within, fighting the warmonger within—as well as all those things without. That's where I think the new politics is going to take us.

Sarah: The first time I saw you speak,

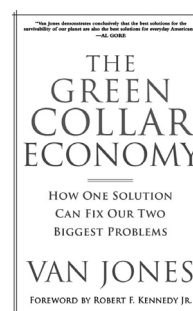
your first son had just been born, and you were talking about your fears for his future. Now you have two sons, and so much has changed in American politics. How are you are feeling now about your children's future?

Van: You know, it's funny. In 2004, there were so many people who were despairing because of John Kerry's defeat. I felt there was something to be gained by four more years in opposition. I felt there was something to be gained by four more years to actually build a pro-democracy movement that didn't necessarily fit under the Democratic Party—which is what happened.

I also thought it was time for me to take more responsibility as a father for what was going on and not be content to just protest from the sidelines. I wanted to find ways to build better coalitions and to work on my own issues so that I could be a better bridge builder and continue the work of expanding our pro-democracy movement. I spent the past four years doing that. As a result, I'm much more hopeful.

When Maathai was born, I was excited for him. I said, "This guy's gonna have a president that looks just like him when he's eight years old. Going into third grade, he's never going to have known a president that didn't look just like him." Now that's pretty remarkable. He's going to see technological innovations and things in his lifetime that will save the world. That's a good thing. So in four years, not only has the country gotten more hopeful, more determined, more effective, but

I hope I have, too. And I hope my kids will benefit. **y**



Van Jones is a YES! contributing editor and author of the *New York Times* best seller, *The Green Collar Economy* (HarperOne, 2008).



www.YesMagazine.org/vanjoness

Read an excerpt and a review of Van's new book, and watch clips from this interview.

Number of escalators in the United States: **30,000**¹

Number of homes the energy from 30,000 escalators can power: **375,000**²

Calories burned by a 150-pound person walking up a flight of stairs: **approximately 9**³

Tons of tuna Japan imports annually: **800,000**

Price in U.S. dollars of a 2 oz. piece of bluefin tuna in a Tokyo sushi restaurant: **75**

Percentage decrease in North Atlantic breeding populations of bluefin tuna since the 1970s: **90**⁴

Average number of monthly cell phone calls made by U.S. wireless subscribers age 13-17: **231**

Average number of monthly text messages: **1,742**⁵

Percentage of teenagers who say their social life would end or suffer without text messaging: **47**

Percentage of teenagers who can text blindfolded: **42**⁶

Number of art pieces on view on the fourth and fifth floors of the Museum of Modern Art in Fall 2004: **415**

Number of pieces by women artists: **20**

Works of art on view in Fall 2007: **400**

Number of pieces by women artists: **14**⁷

Percentage of works on display at the NY Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2004 by female artists: **4**

Percentage of nudes on display that depicted women: **83**⁸

Time per day one can listen to music with stock iPod earphones at 60 percent volume without hearing damage: **18 hours**

At 80 percent volume: **1.2 hours**

At 100 percent volume: **5 minutes**⁹

Number of pirate attacks worldwide in the first quarter of 2008: **53**

Number of pirate attacks in the second quarter of 2008: **63**

Number of pirate attacks in the third quarter of 2008: **83**¹⁰

Number of species of moss that can be found on one tree: **over 70**¹¹

Number of different species of trees in the world: **over 23,000**

Number of people who travel to Macon, Georgia to see the cherry trees in bloom: **over 600,000**

Average time in minutes it takes to walk around the crown of a giant banyan tree in Calcutta at a normal walking pace: **10**¹²

Number of competitors at the 2008 International Tree Climbing Championship: **50**¹³

Complete citations at www.yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation. **2.** Jeffrey Hill, Next American City, Summer 2008. **3.** caloriesperhour.com. **4.** Richard Ellis, Tuna: A Love Story, 2008. **5.** Nielsen Mobile, September 22, 2008. **6.** Harris Interactive Poll, September 12, 2008. **7.** Jerry Saltz, New York Magazine, November 17, 2007. **8.** Guerilla Girls, 2004. **9.** Cory D.F. Portnuff & Brian J. Fligor, National Hearing Conservation Association, October 19, 2006. **10.** Int'l Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Center, October 24, 2008. **11.** Nalini M. Nadkarni, The Evergreen State College, August 17, 2007. **12.** Trees of Strength Project, NC State University. **13.** Arborist News, October 2008.

FOOD FOR EVERYONE

When did food become a cause of obesity and pollution instead of a source of spiritual and physical sustenance? How did we let corporate fast food replace the freshness and flavor of local food? In urban food deserts and degraded rangelands, people are bringing a new food ethic to life.



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The Good Food Revolution. Can we relearn reciprocity and respect in time to save our food systems?



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Corporate Food. Hunger. Pollution. Instability. Obesity. The problem with corporate food—by the numbers.



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Fresh from ... the City. Who's bringing farming and fresh foods back into city neighborhoods.



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Growing Power. Veggies, fish, even beef—grown in and near cities. Sustenance for urban food deserts.



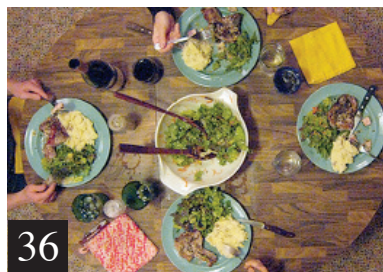
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New Crop of Farmers. The next generation of farmers and why they love what they do.



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End Hunger. The people of Belo Horizonte, Brazil did, and it wasn't that hard.



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Graces. Across the world, people pause in gratitude before partaking. Here is a sample of what they say ...

*A sustainable food system requires
more than cutting the number of miles food travels.
We must reconnect food, people, land, and culture.*

The Good Food Revolution



SCOTT CRAWFORD, KIPAHULU OHANA
WWW.KIPAHULU.ORG

Hawai'i's lush environment once provided its people with abundant food. What happened?
Above, community taro harvesting and replanting during an annual festival.

Claire Hope Cummings

THE ISLAND OF KAUAI IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL and fragile places on earth. From above, it looks like a vibrant green flower, lush and pulsing with life, floating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The Hawaiian tourist industry calls it "The Garden Isle," comparing it to the Garden of Eden. The image of Hawai'i has always been sold as a "paradise." But there is another side to life on this island, one that visitors rarely see.

The west side of this tiny island is home to the U.S. military's Pacific Missile Range and testing grounds, part of the longstanding military occupation of the Hawaiian islands, and to the headquarters of giant agrochemical corporations Syngenta and Dupont. These corporations test and produce genetically modified crops on former sugar plantation lands here and throughout Hawai'i, along with toxic herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers. It is the very worst of America's "agrochemical military industrial complex," imposed on the ancient homelands of a rich traditional farming and fishing culture, in the midst of some of the world's most precious biodiversity.

When I visited the west side of Kauai in 2006, the local newspapers were full of reports of children from Waimea Canyon School who had been sickened by chemicals used on nearby test plots. As many as 60 people were affected, including teachers and staff. It happened again in 2007, with school children suffering nausea, headaches, and dizziness. In 2008, for the third time in three years, chemicals being tested for industrial agriculture sickened children and adults and sent them to clinics and the emergency room with tears in their eyes, holding their heads in their hands, or vomiting. The corporations responsible for the tests deny any role in the incidences. But the open air testing of chemicals and genetically modified crops is a now a persistent worry for people living in this small rural com-

munity. Local activists have suggested that the welcome sign at the Kauai airport be changed to warn tourists of what is going on there: "Welcome to the *Mutant Garden Island*." Instead of being a source of health and well-being for the land and people, the American system of industrial agriculture has become a source of problematic food and even fear.

The connection to the military is the key to understanding how this tragedy came about. Most of the toxic chemicals used in agriculture came from the implements of war, such as nerve poisons and defoliants developed during World War II. And our military has been repeatedly used to impose our system of industrial agriculture on other lands, depriving traditional farmers of their livelihoods and redirecting their natural resources to the use of U.S. business interests. American plantation owners used the military to force the monarchy of Hawai'i out of power. The takeover of Hawai'i—the imposition of plantation agriculture on Hawai'i's traditional system and the conversion of the Hawaiian people to a Western lifestyle—is a case history and a warning for all of us concerned about the future of food. We are facing an urgent problem: Given global warming, growing populations, and declining natural resources, how will we feed ourselves?

Before colonization, Hawaiians had a sophisticated system of land, water, and ocean resource use that fed populations equal to or even greater than those on several of the islands today (excluding the urban populations of O'ahu). Now, residents of Hawai'i import 85 percent of their food. The descendants of the first Hawaiians, like most native peoples who have been colonized, suffer from some of the worst poverty and diet-related health problems of anyone living in the United States.

The food being imported into Hawai'i is produced, processed, packaged, and transported using enormous amounts of fossil fuels. By one

measure, the current U.S. food system uses 10 times more energy than it produces in the form of food calories. Even if you like industrial agriculture, its built-in obsolescence is a problem. When oil production peaks, and prices rise again, as they inevitably must, food in Hawai'i will become unaffordable. What will happen when the gas pumps and grocery store shelves are empty? This is a question all of us will face, sooner or later, since we are all on what David Brower called "Earth Island," a small planet floating in a sea of space.

A Storied Land

Mythologists like Joseph Campbell tell us that many creation myths are stories about how a food plant or animal came to people, usually as a gift from their creator. But invariably, these gifts came with instructions about maintaining respect for and reciprocity with the sources of one's food, to assure its continuing productivity. These stories are central to the formation of a culture's core values. And they affect us now, not just in how we feed ourselves, but in how we relate to the natural world and each other.

A Hopi creation story, as told by Frank Waters in *The Book of the Hopi*, is a good example, illustrating the values inherent in the choices we make. As Waters explains, the continuity of the Hopi people comes from these values and the way corn forms the sacred center of their lives, kept alive in ritual and practices to this day.

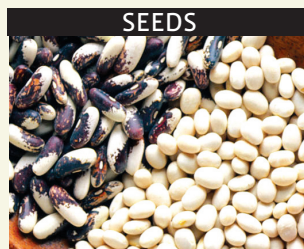
Since the beginning of their existence, the Hopi have emerged through several worlds. Whenever they were overwhelmed by wickedness or corruption, their world would be destroyed. Later, they would emerge into the next world. At each emergence, the Creator would give them corn for sustenance. When the people entered the Fourth World, the one we are living in now, the Creator decided to find out how much greed and ignorance there still was among these humans. Many ears of corn were laid out of all dif- >>

» ferent shapes, sizes, and colors. The people had divided into many races, and each was told to choose, according to its wisdom, the corn they would take with them into the Fourth World. They rushed forward and took different corn ears—long ears, fat ears, and ears of different colors. The Hopi held back and waited. All that was left for them was the smallest ear. But, they said, it was like “the original humble ear given them on the First World.” They recognized that this corn would be the best one to help them survive the harsh desert climate where they now lived.

Traditional people worldwide have developed long-standing symbiotic relationships among themselves, their homelands, and their foods. And their farming practices are intimately adapted to the places they inhabit. All over the Americas, people developed corn varieties that were finely tuned to local conditions. According to Boone Hallberg, a botanist and one of the world’s experts on corn, some of these varieties were drought-resistant; some withstood wind, crowding, local pests, and different soils; and some even fixed their own nitrogen. These plants are evidence of an incredible genius at work in the reciprocal relationships among people, plants, and place. New Mexican activist Miguel Santistevan describes how, in the Pueblos, each type of corn “drank” from its own river, producing seed that was specific to its own watershed.

One of the world’s most influential creation stories comes from the Book of Genesis in the Bible. It is often told incorrectly, without the warnings and prohibitions that are in the story—as if the children of Adam and Eve were entitled to control creation. Whether you read this story literally or metaphorically, it has had a powerful impact on Western thought. Many scholars believe that our current environmental conditions came about because our society interpreted this story as a license to dominate nature. When told this way, the development »

New (and Old) Ideas for a Better Food System



Restore Seed Diversity and Native Varieties

“My community needs its own food,” says Winona LaDuke, executive director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project. “We cannot afford the industrial food system.”

Native American tribes across the country are rediscovering food plants well adapted to their regions and conducive to good health.

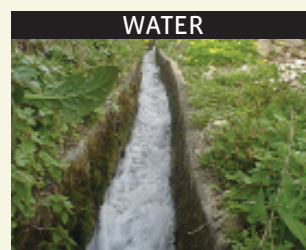
Among those reclaiming native seeds are the people of the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota, whose White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP) is restoring old, endangered varieties of corn and other crops once grown by native farmers.

Starting in 2001, the project began collecting traditional varieties of seeds. These strains are more resilient and don’t need petroleum-based fertilizer. The group focuses on crops that can thrive in Minnesota’s short growing season, such as Bear Island Flint corn.

Seed banks and individual growers provided the initial stocks. Working with seed breeders at North Dakota State University and native farmers, WELRP grew the plants to produce more seeds and keep the diverse strands alive.

Their work is reconnecting native communities with their food traditions, which include healthier foods that can prevent diabetes and other diet-related diseases.

More than 25 percent of native adults in Minnesota have Type 2 diabetes, according to WELRP. “We are doing this,” LaDuke says, “because we want to survive.”



Steward Water

Water is among the most contentious issues in farming, especially in western states.

New Mexico, where water is scarce, has a tradition of community-controlled irrigation that is making a comeback. The name for this system, *acequia*, refers not only to the network of canals that brings water to farmers across the Southwest, but also to the traditional community management of the water.

A few generations ago, nearly everyone in northern New Mexico understood this traditional form of sustainable irrigation. But the younger generation was losing that knowledge, says Miguel Santistevan, a teacher and biologist. In schools, kids were encouraged to learn high-tech skills and move to the city.

Santistevan left his teaching job and joined the New Mexico Acequia Association as youth program coordinator. Soon he was bringing kids to farms and teaching them how to maintain acequias. Students record the work to post on YouTube and podcast on Acequia Radio.

"By getting them involved in media production, we give them a voice," Santistevan says. "But the content is traditional culture, so we've achieved two goals at once."



Build Soil and Resiliency

Across the U.S., about 90 percent of cropland is losing soil at an unsustainable rate.

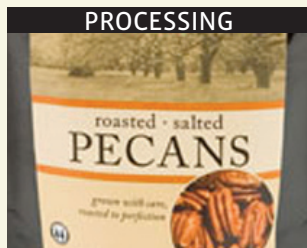
In Salina, Kansas, researchers at the Land Institute are working to solve the problem from the roots up by breeding perennial varieties of grains that actually build soil. By crossing high-yield annual species like wheat and sorghum with their wild perennial relatives, the Land Institute aims to create food crops that don't require intensive tilling, tending, or spraying.

"We have to farm the way nature farms," says Land Institute founder Wes Jackson, a plant geneticist and fourth-generation farmer. Instead of row after row of a single species, perennial crops are grown in diverse mixtures that function like

Kansas native wild prairie, naturally repelling pests and disease while storing water and holding soil and nutrients in place.

By mimicking ecosystems, farmers encourage and take advantage of the age-old evolutionary relationships between plants, soil, bacteria, insects, and animals.

The Land Institute believes ecosystem-modeled agriculture can be applied anywhere in the world, provided we look to nature's example for cultivating plant communities that can also feed people. The result, claims the Land Institute, is "a wholly new way of farming" that will "make conservation a consequence of, not an alternative to, food production."



Process Locally and Cooperatively

In an area of the country where modern agriculture has devastated rural communities, the women of the Georgia Southern Alternatives Agriculture Co-op (SAAC) are independently processing and selling their locally grown pecans as a way of providing jobs for young women in the community.

In 2006, the co-op began working with the Equal Exchange Domestic Fair Trade program to package and ship pecans all over the United States. Their pecans are sold in places like food co-ops.

WORKERS



Treat Everyone Fairly

Food processing workers are at the very bottom of the pay scale. Many are subject to repetitive stress injury and other on-the-job hazards. Where unions exist, they improve conditions. But what can consumers do?

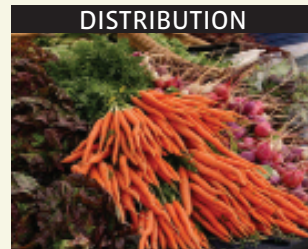
In early 2006, Rabbi Morris Allen struck a deal with Agriprocessors, a large meat-packing plant in Postville, Iowa, to bring fresh kosher meat to St. Paul, Minnesota. Two months later, a Jewish newspaper published a report exposing harsh working conditions at the plant. The report alleged that money was disappearing from paychecks, safety trainings were conducted in English for Spanish-speaking employees, workers were underage, and health coverage was overpriced.

Rabbi Allen felt "personally embarrassed" for putting his faith in the company. To him, a kosher seal means not just preparing and processing food according to the ritual tradition but also treating employees in an ethical way.

In the summer of 2007, Rabbi Allen, the Rabbinical Assembly, and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism launched a program called the Magen Tzedek, an ethical certification awarded to kosher food companies that meet high standards in employee health, safety, training, wages, and benefits.

With over 10 million Americans buying kosher products, the Magen Tzedek assures consumers their food is produced with high integrity. As Rabbi Allen states, "Keeping kosher is the way in which I demonstrate not only a concern for my relationship to God and Torah but the Jewish concern for our relationship to the world in which we live."

DISTRIBUTION



Get Local Foods to Local Outlets

Small, local farms have a tough time getting products into supermarkets, which prefer year-round deliveries. After years of puzzling over that dilemma, the founders of Portland's Organically Grown Company worked out solutions. They convinced local farmers to stagger planting schedules. They purchased seasonal crops from farmers further south as needed. And they helped farmers showing up with muddy crates of beans to package their goods more attractively.

Stores loved the fresh vegetables, and the small nonprofit grew into an employee- and farmer-owned company of 160 staff. In addition to providing local organic foods, Organically Grown Company runs its warehouse entirely with wind power, fuels its trucks with biodiesel, and pays its employees wages that keep them with the company for the long haul.

**And the good, no, the really wonderful news, is that all over the world,
people are engaged in relearning traditional ways,
weaving them into new life-enhancing technologies, and making
essential ecological and economic reconnections.**

» of our military-industrial system of agriculture makes sense. We can see the long arc of history, the search-and-destroy missions throughout the ages, including manifest destiny and the conquest of native peoples, their lands, and their well-developed integrated food systems.

We can see the gradual and painful dismembering of North America. Europeans brought with them a fragmented system of agriculture, breaking the sod, fencing, and buying and selling parcels of land. Piece by piece, they went about destroying the natural systems that gave this land its enormous fertility. Their ancestors had deforested many European countries, and they continued seeking sustenance by taking more than was returned, depleting the resources they used, and then moving on. After using up the larger landscapes, they now have turned to smaller frontiers—genes and molecules.

Genetic engineering in agriculture was developed as a way to squeeze more from corn, wheat, and rice, turning these plants into little machines. We demanded that these plants put out more and more for us, and pumped them full of chemicals and hormones. Now, almost 80 percent of corn grown in the United States is genetically modified. The rest is contaminated with GMOs, and the parent seed lines of corn are privately owned by the agrochemical companies. If we cared to learn, corn would have been able to teach us about generosity, adaptability, and resiliency. But rather than learn from nature, we still believe that our limited human imagination is sufficient and that we can solve systemic problems in mechanistic ways.

This approach is fundamentally flawed. Production-based solutions to hunger have failed miserably. And

yet the urge to control nature seems unbounded. Farmers at the beginning of the 20th century could make a decent living. They saved and exchanged seeds, and bred their own crop varieties.

Then, in the 1920s and 1930s, a growing private seed industry used the new medium of radio advertising to heavily promote commercial hybrid seeds as the way to increase production. Hybrids can be bred to increase vigor, but they do not produce seed that is “true,” meaning that each year new hybrid seeds have to be purchased and planted. On-farm seed saving and plant breeding began to go out of fashion. Not content with just a good share of the seed market, seed companies began pushing for changes to the law, and by the end of the 20th century, farm-based seed saving and plant breeding ended. Now, sexually reproducing, living plants can be patented—a moral, biological, and legal outrage.

American commodity agriculture has become a bloated industrial machine dependent on chemical inputs and government subsidies to survive. Commodity farming is not about food for people. It’s an extractive industry, often compared to mining. It mines the soil and pollutes the water and creates mountains and rivers of waste. Soil regenerates on a slow natural timescale, about one inch of topsoil in every 500 years. The United States is losing topsoil 13 times faster than it can be replaced, costing the nation an estimated \$37.6 billion in productivity losses each year. According to a recent U.S. Geological Survey, the one billion pounds of pesticides that American farmers use every year have contaminated almost all of the nation’s streams and rivers, as well as the fish

living in them, with toxic cancer-causing chemicals. Fertilizers pour off farms into the Mississippi watershed, stimulating algae blooms in the Gulf of Mexico and creating a “dead zone” where nothing lives.

If science had remained publicly funded and in the hands of land grant universities committed to conducting research in the public interest, production-based innovations might have added another useful tool to farm technology. Instead, private commercial interests hijacked the research agenda and privatized its technologies. Corporations and a few foundations took over the social mechanisms for problem solving, leaving us with only for-profit solutions in the form of products. Government not only deregulated many toxic technologies; it abdicated its responsibility to protect our health and safety.

There are no brakes on this runaway technology train. The continual expansion of corporate power poses even greater looming dangers. Biotechnology, especially as used in agriculture, has been harmful enough, but nanotechnology and synthetic biology, now being developed for biofuels, promise to do far more harm than good.

Industrial agriculture contributes almost 17 percent of all greenhouse gases, along with accelerating deforestation, desertification, and profligate water use. A study released in January this year in the journal *Science* predicts that half of the world’s population will face food shortages by the end of this century as rising temperatures, drought, and loss of soil moisture depress crop production. Who, indeed, will be feeding us then? Monsanto, with its patented “climate-ready” crops, or the organic farmer who sells at your local farmers market?

As a Native American friend of mine used to say, “Here’s a little bit of native wisdom: If we don’t change direction pretty soon, we’ll end up right where we’ve been headed!”

Severing and Remembering

Another way to look at this rather dismal story is this: At every step of the way, we have disconnected and dismembered the intricate relationships that form the web of life. Recombinant DNA technology, for instance, cuts a genome, inserts foreign material, and severs the original evolutionary lineage of that organism.

The solution to all this severing and disconnection is re-membering, meaning “to put back together.” This is the fundamental lesson traditional peoples keep trying to teach us. They often say that they are minding the rituals that hold the world together. They say that if we want to save the places, peoples, and plants we love, we have to remember their stories. They know that the answers we seek are already available, once we begin reweaving the social and biological webs that sustain us.

Independent science supports this interconnected approach to solving problems. The biotechnology industry asked several major international institutions like the U.N. and the World Bank to study how best to feed the world. After a four-year global study, 400 experts prepared a peer-reviewed report, adopted by 60 countries, known as The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development. Ironically, the report said biotechnology cannot feed the world. There is now a consensus in government and the scientific community that small-scale farming, traditional knowledge, and a focus on local economic vitality and adaptable agro-ecological methods are the optimal way forward.

And the good, no, the really wonderful news, is that all over the world, people are engaged in relearning tra-

ditional ways, weaving them into new life-enhancing technologies, and making essential ecological and economic reconstructions. Young farmers, urban activists, cooks and chefs, teachers and students, community organizers, and faith groups are bringing local organic food, seed saving, and sustainable work projects into the mix. The values of the natural world—diversity, integrity, adaptability, and resiliency—are re-emerging and re-entering the cultural exchange, just when we need them the most.

On Kaua’i, too, there are people engaged in remembering and reconnecting. Unlike the dry west side of the island, the North Shore is a lush place of almost heartbreaking beauty with a vibrant, racially mixed local culture. There, the Waipa Foundation hosts a weekly farmers market selling organic local food to support its work reviving traditional foodways. Like many Native Hawaiian organizations, they have a Hawaiian-language immersion school that integrates traditional food, farming, and fishing into their curriculum. They connect local farmers with schools, which are getting young people out of the classroom and into the mud of the taro patch. Activists on the island and throughout Hawai’i are working toward food security. They achieved a ban on genetically modi-

fied coffee and are bringing back the original “gift economy” of exchanging traditional varieties of taro.

Just up the road from the Waipa farmers market, Limahuli Garden is restoring the traditional Hawaiian land-use system called an *ahupua’a*. Kawika Winter, an engaging young ethnobotanist, Native Hawaiian, and the garden’s director, says the name *limahuli* means “turned hand.” It refers to a Hawaiian proverb which, roughly translated, says, “If your hand is turned up, you will be hungry; if your hand is turned down, toward the soil, your belly will be full.” The up-turned hand, Winter says, is not a positive symbol for Hawaiians. It is a sign of supplication. The down-turned hand, however, represents the hard work of cultivating the land.

Winter explains that the work they are doing there is all about remembering that the land is our ancestor. “We know that the way to get through difficult times is to use what was left to us—our land and our traditional knowledge. That will carry us into the future,” he says. “This is also our gift to the world.” **V**



Claire Hope Cummings is an environmental lawyer, journalist, and the author of *Uncertain Peril: Genetic Engineering and the Future of Seeds* (Beacon Press, 2008).

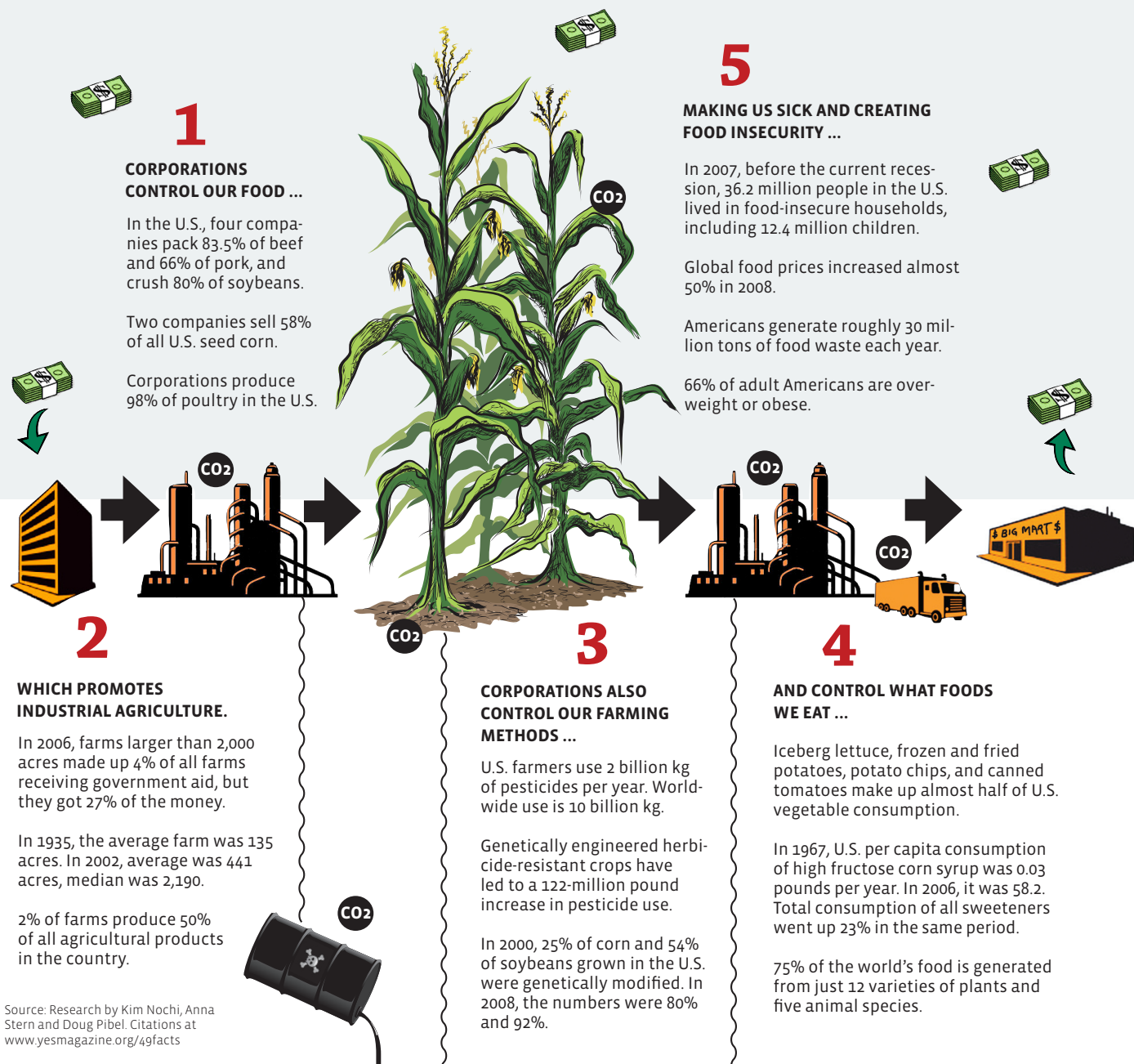


WOLFGANG SCHUBERT

At the Waipa Farmers Market, in an empty field just outside of Hanalei town on Kaua’i, neighbors buy food from each other.

Just the Facts

When Corporations Rule Our Food



Source: Research by Kim Nochi, Anna Stern and Doug Pibel. Citations at www.yesmagazine.org/49facts



6

AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS.

The "dead zone" at the mouth of the Mississippi River is now 8,000 square miles—about the size of New Jersey.

38% of agricultural lands worldwide are designated "degraded."

Livestock production creates 18% of greenhouse gases globally.



NEW AGRARIAN CENTER

Cleveland city councilor Joe Cimperman at the construction of Wonder City Farm, one of the city's many "asphalt" vegetable gardens.

Fresh from ... the City

*Citizens and local policymakers join up
to get junk foods out of schools and fresh veggies
into urban neighborhoods*

Mark Winne

THE ALBUQUERQUE HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM was nearly full. On stage sat a dozen New Mexico state officials, physicians, and other health professionals, listening intently to a parade of parents, teachers, civic leaders, and even the occasional student—all speaking in favor of a proposal to ban sugary soft drinks and to require the state's public schools to offer healthier food.

Then it was the other side's turn. Standing in a carefully coifed cluster, immaculately attired and bristling with confidence, America's beverage industry representatives made their case for the retention of soda in New Mexico's public schools. Each of the speakers—none of whom were state residents—announced their names, punctuated with an alphabet soup of credentials that spanned the range of most known health disciplines. They argued that soft drinks were not as unhealthy as people thought, that the real culprit in America's obesity crisis wasn't too

many calories but too little exercise, and that it was simply not right to deprive school children of the nation's iconic soda brands.

These arguments were as disingenuous as the case for healthy school food was compelling. But public institutions don't change easily, and corporations don't give up millions of dollars without a fight. A back room deal between state officials and the beverage industry nearly scuttled the proposed reforms. But the light of day was too bright, and the voice of citizens too strong. Today, the cafeterias of New Mexico's public schools no longer sell Pepsi or Coke. In their place, students find apples, chiles, and other locally grown fruits and vegetables.

The victory was by no means inevitable. The state's nutrition reforms were the direct result of work done by the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, an organized group of farmers, nutritionists, educators,

activists, and others on a mission for healthier food.

Big decisions about food, nutrition, and agriculture used to be the purview of a small cadre of agribusiness corporations and political heavy-hitters. But more and more, people are realizing that decisions that affect their food and health are too important to leave in the hands of others. Around the country citizens are holding their elected officials accountable for junk food in schools, food insecurity in poor neighborhoods, and the future of agriculture through groups called "food policy councils" (FPCs).

The FPC movement started more than 25 years ago in Knoxville, Tennessee, and now there are about 100 councils in North America. The councils come in many shapes and sizes—some organized by citizens, some established formally by an ordinance, state statute, or executive order. And increasingly, these food policy councils >>

» are publicly asserting that the nation's food system must serve a triple bottom line—one that is good for producers, the environment, and all consumers, including low-income households.

Food Democracy at Work

Agitated chatter spilled out of the meeting room at the Boulder County Natural Resources building in Colorado as the 12 members of the newly appointed Boulder County Food and Agriculture Policy Council gathered

you better learn to deal with them.”

But Torres insists the payoff can be enormous. “At first we had only a collection of special interests. But now we have a vision that everyone can share and work for,” she says. “Yes, we focus on environmental sustainability, but in order for our work to have a long-term impact, we must also work on social sustainability.”

It's that proximity to local voices that gives food policy councils their strength. At the federal level, where

tainable local food system,” according to Jennifer Schofield, cofounder of the Cleveland Cuyahoga County Food Policy Council.

Like many so-called rust-belt cities, Cleveland has lost a staggering number of residents and supermarkets, leaving citizens stranded amid large tracts of vacant land with no place to shop. But Schofield saw vacant lots as future mini-farms, and the remaining corner stores as potential outlets for healthy food, not just candy, tobacco,

But how do you start up agriculture in the middle of a city, and on a scale that will make a difference?



NEW AGRARIAN CENTER

From vacant city lot to fresh food: the making of Cleveland's Neighbors in Family Practice Farm.

over beer and pizza (both made locally) and put finishing touches on a strategic plan to boost local food production and distribution.

The discussion grew tense when one member protested that her values were not reflected in the plan's current draft. Cindy Torres, the council chair, called a time-out. It wasn't about whether the member's perception was right or wrong. Food policy councils are committed to listening to everyone's ideas. As discussion resumed, the reluctant member calmed, put aside her doubts, and accepted compromise language.

“We want everyone to know they have a voice in our food system,” says Torres. Such an inclusive process may take longer. Food policy councils are “like being in a big family,” she says. “All those people aren't going away, so

Congress and the administration make policies like the Farm Bill, the average citizen's voice can get lost. But when food policy councils confront a local school board or state legislature, elected officials must listen and work with them.

This strategy has been successful in New Mexico, where the council has worked with public and private partners to advocate successfully for increased state funding for farmers markets and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

Food policy councils' commitment to building a “big tent,” open to many interests, is starting to pay off in other communities as well. Cleveland, for example, has “brought together an amazing group of food system stakeholders who have a vision for a just and sus-

and lottery tickets. “Anybody in their right mind knows that Cleveland's economic future isn't with the Fortune 500. We need to stimulate small, local businesses like food and gardening.”

But how do you start up agriculture in the middle of a city, and on a scale that will make a difference?

The food policy council tackled that question by seeking citywide policies that could open possibilities for urban farming. They found a champion in City Councilor Joe Cimperman, a 10-year veteran of Cleveland's 13th Ward.

“Urban farming can be transformative in terms of the economy, nutrition, health, and public safety,” Cimperman says. “Our goal is to make Cleveland a national leader in the local food economy.” He and the FPC have secured a zoning change that permits community

gardening. They are now working on new zoning to create larger plots, one-acre or more, and allow chicken-raising and beekeeping.

Similar approaches have succeeded in Portland, Oregon, where the 15-member Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council has encouraged the city to open up more land for community gardens through their “Diggable City” project, which has turned the public spotlight on the need for more urban plots. Even though 3,000 people currently till the city’s community gardens, there are still 1,000 gardener wannabes on a waiting list.

Portland is also thinking beyond a few garden plots. The council is working with the region’s planning commission to encourage the inclusion of food access, affordable food, and the viability of state agriculture in the region’s five-year comprehensive plan. Should they succeed, it will be the first time any major American city has recognized food and agriculture as key issues in city and regional planning.

Through such collaborations, food policy councils give ordinary people a chance to have a big impact on where their food will come from in the future. According to Pam Roy, co-director of the non-profit Farm to Table, the New Mexico council was created to bring about profound change.

“We could do food projects forever,” she says, “but never get the kind of far-reaching results that we get by tackling state policy.”

As new voices speak out through the FPCs, there’s hope that food and agriculture decisions will start delivering what people really need—healthy, affordable, sustainable food. ⑦



Mark Winne is cofounder of the City of Hartford Food Policy Commission, the Connecticut Food Policy Council, End Hunger Connecticut, and the national Community Food Security Coalition, and author of *Closing the*

Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty (Beacon, 2008).

Interested? Learn how to get involved in Food Policy Councils at www.yesmagazine.org/fpc



A “Food Bill” Instead of a Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is the nation’s most sweeping piece of food and farming policy legislation, influencing nearly every aspect of our food system.

The bill provides critical financial assistance for people who struggle to afford food. But it also promotes environmentally harmful agricultural practices and distorts prices with hefty subsidies that primarily fund corporate farming operations growing “commodities” like corn, soy, and wheat. As a result, unhealthy foods, like corn-fed meat and corn-based sweeteners, are usually far cheaper than fruits and vegetables.

Every few years the bill is revised in a process critics say is too closely guided by agribusiness interests. Food advocates scored a few victories in the 2008 version, like pilot programs supporting local food options for food assistance recipients. But author Michael Pollan says the bill still “preserves more or less intact the whole structure of subsidies responsible for so much that is wrong in the American food system.”

A revamped farm bill could revolutionize the food system. Advocates are beginning to organize now with the goal of radically changing the bill in 2012.

YES! PICKS ::

Top 4 Ways the Farm Bill Should Change

Here are four ways the Farm Bill should change to encourage vibrant regional food systems and create a nation of healthy eaters:

- 1 Reform the subsidies program** to get rid of the unfair economic advantage held by corporate “commodity” farms and allow small family farmers and fruit and vegetable growers to become more competitive.
- 2 Allow food vouchers to be used regularly at farmers markets.** The 2008 bill provides limited funding to link food assistance with local food. For instance, participants in the Women, Infants, and Children program get just \$30 per year to spend at farmers markets. A good start, but a new bill could make local food a regular part of food assistance.
- 3 Increase funding for research on organic food and fruits and vegetables.** Under the current farm bill, most federal research dollars are spent on commodity grains, meat, and oilseeds. We should focus our research funding on foods that improve health and protect our environment.
- 4 Make cafeteria lunches local.** Equip publicly funded cafeterias at schools, prisons, hospitals, and government institutions with the funding and infrastructure to prepare meals from regional sources.



www.YesMagazine.org/pollan

Michael Pollan talks about the implications of the Farm Bill

Oasis in an Urban Food Desert

Healthy food is the foundation of social justice, says Will Allen. And he knows, because he grows a lot of both.

Roger Bybee

AT THE NORTHERN OUTSKIRTS OF MILWAUKEE, in a neighborhood of boxy post-WWII homes near the sprawling Park Lawn housing project, stand 14 greenhouses arrayed on two acres of land. This is Growing Power, the only land within the Milwaukee city limits zoned as farmland.

Founded by MacArthur Foundation “genius” fellow Will Allen, Growing Power is an active farm producing tons of food each year, a food distribution hub, and a training center. It’s also the home base for an expanding network of similar community food centers, including a Chicago branch run by Allen’s daughter, Erika. Growing Power is in what Allen calls a “food desert,” a part of the city devoid of full-service grocery stores but lined with fast-food joints, liquor stores, and convenience stores selling mostly soda and sweets. Growing Power is an oasis in that desert.

Allen’s parents were sharecroppers in South Carolina until they bought the small farm in Rockville, Maryland, where Allen grew up. “My parents were the biggest influence on my life,” says Allen. “We didn’t have a TV and we relied on a wood stove, but we were known as the ‘food family’ because we had so much food. We could feed 30 people for supper.”

He was a high school All-American in basketball, played for the University of Miami, and played pro ball with the American Basketball Association in

Europe. At a towering 6 feet 7 inches, with Schwarzenegger-size biceps, and chiseled features, Allen looks ready to step back onto the court.

After stints as an executive for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Proctor and Gamble, he returned to his family roots. “I never wanted a career in the corporate world, but I wanted to be able to afford a good education for my kids,” he explains. “At the right time, the kids were in college and the opportunity to buy the farm and start Growing Power came up,” Allen remembers. “From a spiritual standpoint, it worked out right; it was a natural thing, something I wanted to do.”

Growing Food

Since 1993, Allen has focused on developing Growing Power’s urban agriculture project, which grows vegetables and fruit in its greenhouses, raises goats, ducks, bees, turkeys, and—in an aquaponics system designed by Allen—tilapia and Great Lakes Perch—altogether, 159 varieties of food.

Growing Power also has a 40-acre rural farm in Merton, 45 minutes outside Milwaukee, with five acres devoted to intensive vegetable growing and the balance used for sustainably grown hays, grasses, and legumes which provide food for the urban farm’s livestock.

Allen has taken the knowledge he gained growing up on the farm and supplemented it with the latest in sus-



Will Allen shows some of the 10,000 fish growing in one of Growing Power’s four-foot-deep, 10,000-gallon aquaponics tanks. Waste from the fish feeds greens and tomatoes. The plants purify the water for the fish. The fish eventually go to market.

RYAN GRIFFIS
TEMPORARYTRAVELOFFICE.NET



tainable techniques and his own experimentation.

Growing Power composts more than 6 million pounds of food waste a year, including the farm's own waste, material from local food distributors, spent grain from a local brewery, and the grounds from a local coffee shop. Allen counts as part of his livestock the red wiggler worms that turn that waste into "Milwaukee Black Gold" worm castings.

Allen seems to take a particular delight in thrusting his steam-shovel-sized hands into a rich mixture of soil

and worms in Growing Power's greenhouses. "You can't grow anything without good soil," he preaches to a group touring the project.

Allen designed an aquaponics system, built for just \$3,000, a fraction of the \$50,000 cost of a commercially-built system. In addition to tilapia, a common fish in aquaculture, Allen also grows yellow perch, a fish once a staple of the Milwaukee diet. Pollution and overfishing killed the Lake Michigan perch fishery; Growing Power will soon make this local favorite available again. The fish are raised in 10,000-gallon

tanks where 10,000 fingerlings grow to market size in as little as nine months.

But the fish are only one product of Allen's aquaponics system. The water from the fish tanks flows into a gravel bed, where the waste breaks down to produce nitrogen in a form plants can use. The gravel bed supports a crop of watercress, which further filters the water. The nutrient-rich water is then pumped to overhead beds to feed crops of tomatoes and salad greens.

The plants extract the nutrients while the worms in the soil consume bacteria from the water, which emerges virtu- >>

» ally pristine and flows back into the fish tanks. This vertical growing system multiplies the productivity of the farm's limited space.

"Growing Power is probably the leading urban agricultural project in the United States," says Jerry Kaufman, a professor emeritus in urban and regional planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Growing Power is not just talking about what needs to be changed, it's accomplishing it."

Growing Community

Simply growing that much food in a small space is a remarkable achievement. But it's only the start of Growing Power's mission. "Low-quality food is resulting in diabetes, obesity, and sickness from processed food," Allen maintains. "Poor people are not educated about nutrition and don't have access to stores that sell nutritious food, and they wind up with diabetes and heart disease."

Growing healthy food is part of a larger transformational project that will create a more just society, as Allen sees it.

He also works on the Growing Food and Justice Initiative, a national network of about 500 people that fights what he calls "food racism," the structural denial of wholesome food to poor African-American and Latino neighborhoods. "One of our four strategic goals is to dismantle racism in the food system. Just as there is redlining in lending, there is redlining by grocery stores, denying access to people of color by staying out of minority communities."

The store at Growing Power's Milwaukee farm is the only place for miles around that carries fresh produce, free-range eggs, grass-fed beef, and homegrown honey. Even in winter, customers find the handmade shelves and aging coolers stocked with fresh-picked salad greens.

Growing Power co-director Karen Parker, who has worked alongside Allen since the project started, says, "It's a wonderful thing to change people's lives through changing what

they're eating." Parker believes her parents would have lived much longer with a healthier diet. She takes a deep pride in providing fresh, healthy food. "Last summer during the salmonella problem with tomatoes, I was able to tell customers, 'You don't have to worry. These tomatoes were grown right here.' I found myself selling out of tomatoes."

Growing Power supplements its own products with food from the Rainbow Farming Cooperative, which Allen started at the same time as Growing Power. The cooperative is made up of about 300 family farms in Wisconsin, Michigan, Northern Illinois, and the South. The southern farmers, who are primarily African-Americans, make it possible to offer fresh fruits and vegetables year-round. The produce goes into Growing Power's popular Farm-to-City Market Baskets. A week's worth of 12-15 varieties of produce costs \$16. A \$9 "Junior/Senior" basket, with smaller quantities of the same produce, is also available.

Each Friday, Growing Power delivers 275-350 Market Baskets of food to more than 20 agencies, community centers, and other sites around Milwaukee for distribution. Bernita Samson, a retiree in her 60s with eight grandchildren, picked up the Market Basket habit from her brother and late mother. "I get the biggest kick out of what I get in my bag each week," she says. "At Sunday dinners my grandkids say, 'Ooh, Grandma this is good!' They really like what they call the 'smashed potatoes.'"

For Samson, Growing Power provides not only healthy food but also a vital source of community. "Sometimes it's so crowded at the [Growing Power] store on Saturdays you can't even get up in there. Going there gives you a chance to meet people and talk."

Growing Power is also a source of 35 good-paying jobs in an area of high unemployment. The staff of Growing Power is highly diverse—a mixture of young and old, African-American, white, Asian, Native American, and

Latino, with remarkably varied work histories. All live nearby. Co-director Karen Parker, a high-energy African-American woman who radiates warmth whether greeting her 6-year-old granddaughter or welcoming a volunteer, notes that some staff are former professionals who left the high-stress environments of corporations, social work, and other fields. At Growing Power they find a new kind of fulfillment in the blend of hard physical labor and thoughtful planning based on scientific research. Others are former blue-collar workers, farmers, or recent college graduates. All find satisfaction in transforming how Americans eat.

Loretta Mays, 21, who works in the marketing department, was only 14 when Karen Parker recruited her into the Growing Power Youth Corps program. "It's a good learning experience, and you learn the importance of good food. I never understood how food was grown. Now, it's like, 'Wow, I can grow my own garden.'"

Growing Youth

Four middle and high schools bring students to Growing Power to learn about vermiculture (raising worms) and growing crops, and to eat the food they've grown. The impact can change the kids' lives.

Anthony Jackson started working at Growing Power when he was 14, with half of his earnings going to school clothes and half to a bank account that his church set up. At age 20, he went away to college.

"I learned a good work ethic—that things don't come easy," he says of his time at Growing Power. "You'd see Will doing the same things he asked you to do."

The experience helped to shape the direction of his college education. "Early on, the importance of the healthy food really didn't hit home," he says. "But when I got a degree in natural resources, it came to mean a lot more." Jackson, now 29, still maintains a strong connection, shopping at Grow-

ing Power and attending workshops.

Working with the young people in the community is central to Growing Power's work and its hopes for the future. It provides year-round gardening activities for kids aged 10-18 at its Milwaukee headquarters and offers summertime farming experience on its parcel in Merton, adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club's Camp Mason. Growing Power recently leased five acres at Milwaukee's Maple Tree School and built a community garden in partnership with the school. Growing Power also assists school gardens at the Urban Day School and the University School of Milwaukee.

"For kids to make their own soil, grow their own food, and then get to eat it, that's a very powerful experience," Will Allen says. "There's nothing like hands-on experience for kids who are bored with school. They get excited about what they're learning and then take it back to their classes."

Growing Power on the Road

Success in Milwaukee isn't enough for Allen. Growing Power seeks nothing less than, in the words of the organization's mission statement, "creating a just world, one food-secure community at a time." To show that the techniques pioneered in Milwaukee can work anywhere, Growing Power is helping set up five projects in impoverished areas across the United States, including training centers in Forest City, Arkansas; Lancaster, Massachusetts; and Shelby and Mound Bayou, Mississippi.

The largest application of Growing Power's model is in Chicago, where Erika Allen, Will's daughter, is carrying on the family tradition. The Chicago project started in the Cabrini-Green public housing project, where Growing Power's techniques helped the Fourth Presbyterian Church transform a basketball court into a flourishing community garden fueled by Will Allen's beloved red worms. Growing Power also has a half-acre farm in Grant Park, in the heart of downtown Chicago. The Grant Park project focuses on

job training for young people, involving them in all aspects of growing the 150 varieties of heirloom vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers the farm sells in Chicago farmers markets and through the Farm-to-City Market Basket program, like the one pioneered in Milwaukee.

After Erika Allen, 39, earned a degree in art therapy, she eventually settled back into her family's farming tradition, which she believes extends back some 400 years. "I was very much influenced by that tradition, and I got really inspired," she says. "It was a way of learning to honor my ancestors."

But she has not turned her back on her artistic impulses. "With my love of art, the Grant Park project is an opportunity to integrate the two—with the colors, design, textures of the plants."

The most important element, she says, is "to see it inspiring other people. When people in communities like Detroit are really suffering, we can show that we did it in Chicago, with women and a bunch of teenagers."

The work of involving people in producing and distributing healthy food in Chicago's food deserts is part of equalizing power in American society, Erika Allen says. "Our work is infused with social justice, fighting racism and oppression."

The same hunger for justice drives Will Allen's vision of changing the

food system. "How do you take our model and our vision around the world?" Allen asks. "It takes some foot-soldiers who become change agents. We've trained an awful lot of people."

Every year, 10,000 people tour the Growing Power farms. About 3,000 youths and adults from around the world participate in formal training sessions, learning how to build aquaponics systems, construct "hoop houses" (low-cost greenhouses covered by clear plastic), use compost to heat greenhouses, use worms to turn waste into rich fertilizer, and all the other low-tech, high-yield techniques that Growing Power has developed or adapted.

Will Allen takes obvious pleasure in seeing people fed healthy food in great quantities, just as his parents did on their small farm. But he says he derives his deepest satisfaction from a sense of changing the lives of other people harmed by the present food system and the inequities it reflects. "I don't do things to satisfy myself," he states firmly. "This is what I'm doing for a bigger pool of people out there." **Y**



Roger Bybee is a Milwaukee-based writer and has been a progressive activist for 40 years. His work has appeared in *Z*, *Dollars & Sense*, *Multinational Monitor*, *The Progressive*, and elsewhere. His website is www.zcommunications.org/zspace/rogerdbybee.



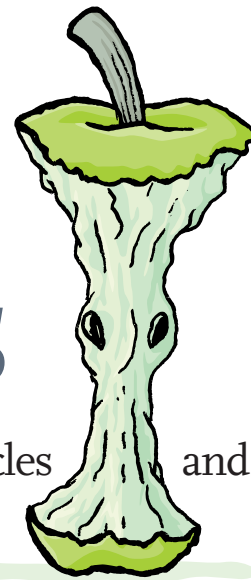
Erika Allen is carrying on her family's 400-year-old farming tradition at Growing Power's Chicago project.

SCOTT STRAZZANTE FOR YES! MAGAZINE

HOW A COMMUNITY-BASED FOOD SYSTEM WORKS

Everybody Eats

It begins with small farms working with natural cycles and ends with fresh



SMALL INTEGRATED FARMS

Cooperatives allow farmers to share the cost of buying land and supplies, and to share labor and equipment.

Fact: Farms of 27 acres or less produce 10 times more dollar value per acre than larger ones.

Fruit and nut orchards

Crop diversity increases yield, keeps soil fertile, helps fight pests

Grass-fed livestock has smaller carbon footprint, leaves grain for humans to eat.

Homegrown Seed keeps old strains alive, produces new varieties adapted to local conditions.

Fact: since 1900, 75 percent of vegetable varieties have disappeared worldwide.

Clean energy

Solar, wind, and biogas provide clean power for farm machinery

Closed-loop cycles mimic nature, eliminate waste. Nutrients returned to soil.

Farm waste to biogas fuel

Farm waste to compost

Manure to fertilizer

Clean water runoff

BULK GRAINS

No-till farming reduces soil loss and sequesters carbon. Edible prairie produces grain while building soil.

Fact: If all farmers in the U.S. used no-till, crop rotation and cover crops they'd sequester 300 million tons of carbon a year.

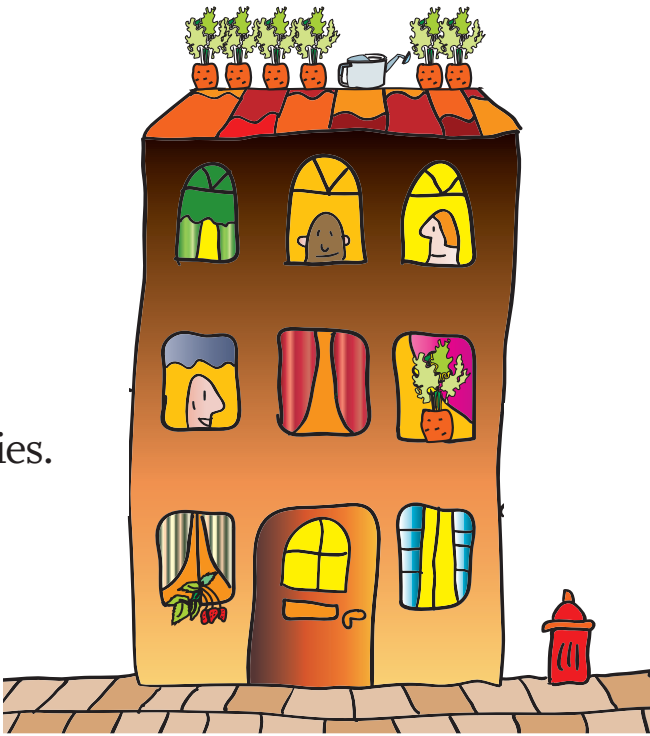
LONG-HAUL DISTRIBUTION

Fact: Moving goods by rail instead of truck reduces fuel use by two-thirds.

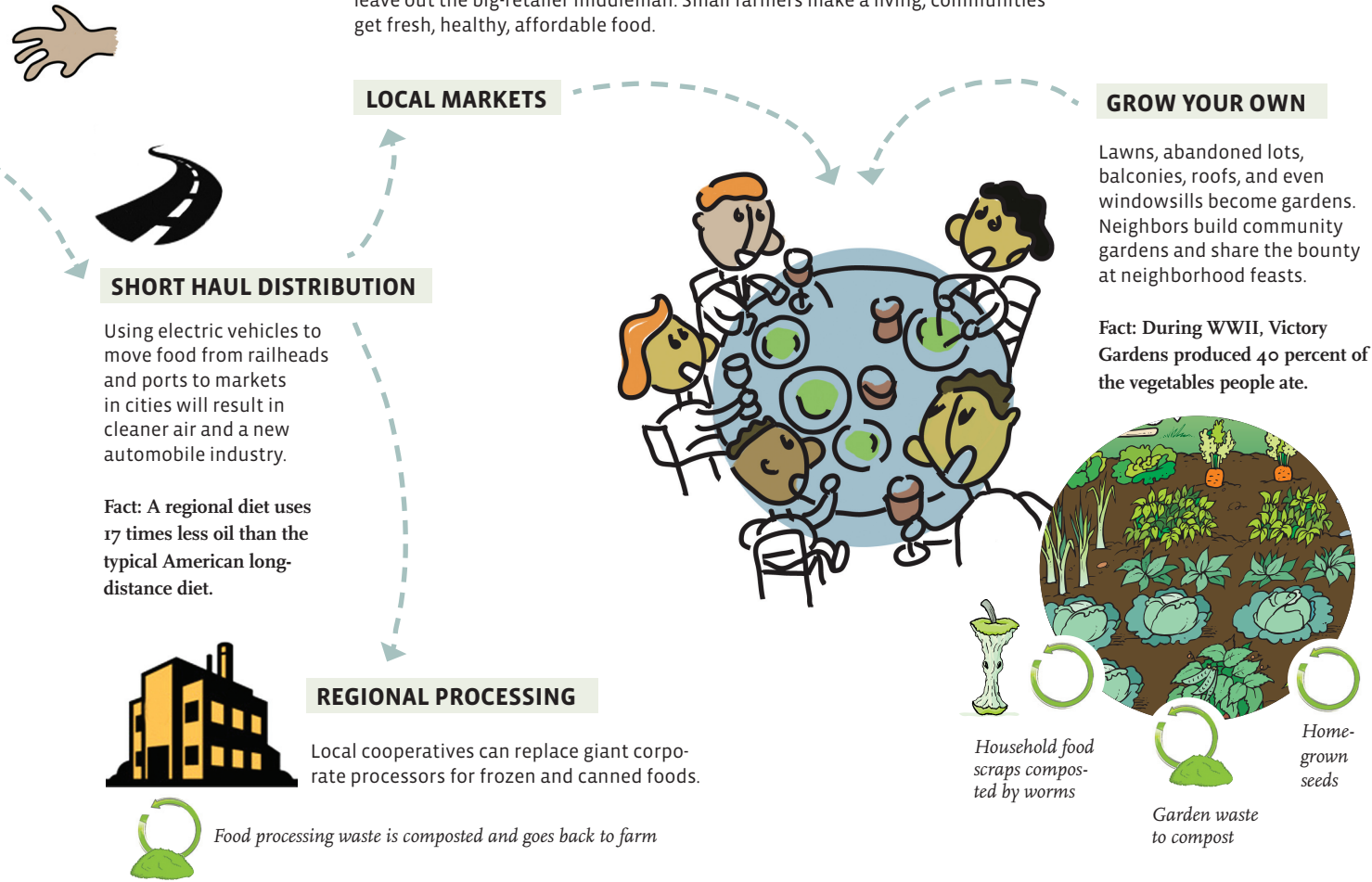
food and stronger communities in nearby cities.

Money spent locally increases a community's economic health.

Fact: Every dollar that stays in a community has three times the effect of a dollar that goes to a distant corporate HQ.



Where we get our food: Farmers markets and community supported agriculture leave out the big-retailer middleman. Small farmers make a living; communities get fresh, healthy, affordable food.



New Crop of Farmers

Today's young farmers are protecting the land and the seeds, reclaiming farming traditions, and sharing the abundance with family and community.

Interviews by Anna Stern and Kim Nochi



TEAM GARLACTICA

Pete Rasmussen, 26
SANDHILL FARMS, EDEN, UT

Pete grows over 20 varieties of gourmet garlic on two acres in northern Utah. In the off-season he works as the garden and nutrition teacher at Maxwell Park Academy, an elementary school in Oakland, CA.

“What does it mean to be a young farmer today? Each moment the land speaks; our mission is to remember how to listen. Turning soil, planting seeds, praying for rain, and walking silently each morning through our maze of crops—these daily rituals teach us to be good listeners. Once we learn to hear the land speak, we will be prepared to build bridges between land and people. ‘The peculiar genius of each continent—each river valley, the rugged mountains, the placid lakes—all call for relief from the constant burden of exploitation,’ said Native American philosopher and author Vine Deloria, Jr. ‘Who will find peace with the lands?’ This is our challenge as young American farmers. Each season, as we learn to listen, we’ll better understand what it means to be farmers and guardians of this sweet land.”

Friends and fellow farmers of Pete Rasmussen, center, in his field of hardneck garlic.



Meet more young farmers who are planting seeds for the next generation.

www.YesMagazine.org/youngfarmers



Michael Ann Johns, 21
JOHNS FAMILY FARM, GERING, NE

Currently a student at Colorado State University, Michael Ann is a third generation farmer of 600 acres of corn, beans, sugar beets, a little alfalfa, and 100 head of cattle.

“Our family farm was passed down from my grandfather to my dad. Both have farmed their entire lives. It’s normal for the males to take over the farm; very few women have come back to take over their family farm. It would be something I would like to do.

“I began helping with tractor work and from the age of 14, I had my own irrigation pipes to set. Operating a large piece of equipment was scary when I was young but my dad or grandfather would ride with me, show me what to do, and give me the long list of what *not* to do.

“Unlike most jobs, if I screw up, I don’t get to leave at the end of the day and forget about it. We reminisce about our mistakes at dinner, at Thanksgiving with the whole family, and probably will for years to come. But I also get to be part of something bigger than a summer job; I sit down with family members and discuss solutions to problems we’re having.

“The most important thing my dad and grandfather taught me is a strong work ethic. When it snows and everything else shuts down, farmers have to go out and make sure things are still running. It is a way of life I have come to love.”



Gailey R. Morgan III, 34
TESUQUE NATURAL FARM,
TESUQUE PUEBLO, NM

A member of the Tesuque Pueblo and Meskwaki Nations, Gailey works at the 10-acre tribal farm raising food for the Tesuque Pueblo people.

“It seems like I just fell into farming. When I came to the Pueblo, I had just turned a father and was raising my daughter. One of the gentlemen from the Tesuque Natural Farm asked if I’d ever been into farming. I told him no. He asked me if I’d like to get involved with the program. Things took off from there.

“Our people here have been farmers for centuries. You always hear stories about how they’d go out and farm the land. It’s good to be out here taking care of the land, taking care of the water, taking care of the Mother Earth. You plant crops and see them grow, then you harvest them and eat them. You keep the seed. You know you’re going to preserve that seed for the following year and for years to come. It’s very rewarding to bring the food home to my family, my uncles and aunts. When we harvest we go right away to the Head Start and give it to the kids there, and to the elders at the senior center. They’re always very appreciative of the food that comes from the farm. It gives me a good feeling.

“That first year, the director brought an ear of Hopi blue corn. From that one ear of Hopi blue corn it’s made a lot of corn. It’s been 10 years. We still have that seed now.”




Juan “JP” Perez, 25
J&P ORGANICS, SALINAS, CA

In 2006, JP and his father graduated from the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association’s Spanish-language Farmer Education Program. They grow “a little bit of everything” on five certified organic acres.

“It all started when I was a young boy. My father leased five acres and used to bring me to the farm after school, over summer break, and on weekends. When I was in middle school my dad came up to me and said, ‘Hey JP, you have a choice: come to the farm everyday with me or go to school.’ I knew how hard it is to work in the fields, so I decided to continue school.

“I don’t know if it was destiny or runs in my blood, but it’s funny because my education brought me back to farming. I went to college to get a better job. I didn’t want to work in the fields. But now, I like it. I like being out there. I’m a hands-on guy. I don’t like being in a cubicle or four walls. Some people learn in the classroom and some people learn in the fields. I’m a guy who learns in the fields.

“I have my degree in my pocket, but I wanted to do to something that my family was involved in. My dad and mom, they’ve been farmers for a long time. Now instead of them working for somebody else, they work for themselves. That was one of the reasons I decided to go into farming: I wanted to do something everyone was proud of.”

 www.YesMagazine.org/greenhorns
 See the trailer for *The Greenhorns*, a documentary about young farmers

8 Ways to Join the Local Food Movement



“Food is the rare the one more likely to make

1 From Lawn to Lunch



To convert your sunny lawn to a lunch box, remove turf in long, 18-inch strips. Cut the edges of each strip with a sharp-bladed edging tool. While one partner rolls up the grass like a jellyroll, another slices through grass roots with the edging tool. Remove about an inch of rooty soil with the top growth. When the roll gets heavy, slice it off and load it in a wheelbarrow.

To compost the strips, layer green sides together, then brown sides together, ending brown-side-up. Cover the stack with soil and mulch (straw, chopped leaves, or shredded bark) and let stand for 10-12 months.

Make beds 10 to 20 feet long and six to eight feet wide (so you can reach the center from each side). Mulch three to four-foot wide paths between beds (grass left in the path will infiltrate your beds) to accommodate a wheelbarrow. Now fork over the soil strips and re-

move as many roots as possible. Aerate beds with a garden fork, sinking it as evenly and deeply as possible.

Spread on two or three inches of compost, then set plants about six inches apart, in staggered rows. Top with a mulch containing corn gluten, a high-nitrogen protein that prevents weed seeds from germinating.

Ann Lovejoy is author of *Ann Lovejoy's Organic Garden Design School* (A Rodale Organic Gardening Book, 2004) and many other books.



www.YesMagazine.org/lawn
Look who wants to TransFarm the White House lawn...

2 Eat Your Vegetables

Some 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by meat production. The USDA attributes 14 percent of all deaths in the U.S. to poor diets and/or sedentary lifestyles. You can improve your health and the health of the planet by following food columnist Michael Pollan's simple rule: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."





Buy dinner fresh from a roadside stand. Get the kids involved.

LESLIE M. FRIEND

moral arena in which the ethical choice is generally you groan with pleasure. ”

BARBARA KINGSOLVER

3

Party with Your Preserves

Ten quarts of pumpkin puree in the pantry, and not a jar of tomato sauce left? Throw a canning swap party. Here are some tips and recommendations from foodroutes.org:

Plan ahead. Gauge interest with your friends early on. Then remind them throughout the planting, growing, and harvesting season to set aside extras for canning and swapping.

Don't be afraid to grow a lot of something. If you're a budding salsa artist, plant that extra row of tomatoes. Or if you see a good deal on a box of local pears—get them.

Try new recipes on your swappers. Bust out that crazy 5-alarm *salsa verde* recipe you've always been scared to try. Make sure to can extra so you can pop a jar open for samples.

Be aware of what constitutes a “fair” trade. This is simple. You're all friends and canners who know how

time-consuming canning can be. Be open and ask what your neighbor feels comfortable receiving in exchange for one jar of Grandma Edie's apricot chutney.

Think outside the Ball Jar. Not everything at the canning swap party has to be pressure-canned or boiled in a hot water bath. Dried items, homemade baked goods, candies, and homebrewed beer are all eligible. You'll be amazed by what can be preserved from the season's bounty.

4

Glean Those Fields Clean

A lot of perfectly good food is left to rot in farm fields and under fruit and nut trees. With a bit of work, you can gather a group to “glean” this free food, providing fresh, nutritious food to your community.

To glean in your area, talk to farmers, gardeners, and orchard owners. Explain your purpose, share a copy of

federal “Good Samaritan” law, which protects them from liability, and ask for written permission to glean.

Recruit gleaners. Family, friends, students, and members of your faith community are potential volunteers. You can also put a notice on craigslist, bulletin boards, at farmers markets, or in the local paper.

Contact food banks, shelters, and other facilities to check on their needs, and to arrange delivery times. >>



» On gleaning day, bring collection baskets and buckets, snacks, water, and other necessities that will ensure a successful expedition.

As the day ends, gather your freshly harvested food, thank the landowner, distribute something to each gleaner, and leave the land in better condition than you found it.

—Kim Nochi

Source: University of Maine Cooperative Extension

5

Shop Outside of Supermarkets

It's easy to see, taste, and feel the benefit of locally produced food, but for many of us it's a hassle to locate alternative food sources. Local foods are not nearly as well-advertised or visible as chain supermarket foods, so even those who want to give locally harvested food a try may not know where to get it. Here are some ways you can find local food sources in your area.

Get the lay of the land; consider what types of agriculture are natural to your environment. Does your area have a history of blueberry farming or cod fishing? Are there traditional foods that have been neglected in the fast-food age?

Talk to old timers, ask around at farmers markets, look for road-side food stands and U-pick places. Watch for hand-painted signs. You may find a wide variety of freshly harvested foods and get to know new communities and regional traditions at the same time.

Visit localharvest.org, sustainable-table.org, and eatwellguide.org to find sources of affordable and environmentally friendly food. —Heather Purser

6

Start a Community Garden

Start by calling a meeting (or better yet, a potluck) to decide what kind of garden



LIZ DEANE

you want, what locations might work, and how to manage plots.

Identify possible sites. Look for land that gets plenty of sunlight, has a water source, is convenient to get to, and is free of soil contamination. You could consider combining back yards if several neighbors are involved.

Identify the owner of the land and negotiate a lease long enough to make it worth building the soil and the community involvement. Invite immediate neighbors to join.

Test the soil for nutrient levels and contaminants. Clean the site, mark plots with gardeners' names, and, if possible, include on-site storage for tools and equipment. Also designate a spot for compost.

When the first planting season comes around, consider hiring someone to turn the earth, or throw a work party to build raised beds.

Meet now and then with your fellow gardeners to swap seeds and seedlings, advice, and produce, and to resolve any difficulties. Have potlucks to enjoy the harvest.

For more ideas, including sample bylaws and insurance policies, go to community-garden.org

PATRICK BARBER

7

Plant a Row for the Hungry

As unemployment rises, more people are wondering how they will put food on their table. How can you boost food security at home ...

- Skip the so-called convenience foods; processed foods almost always cost more for what you get.
- Form a buying club to get healthy food in bulk at discount prices.
- Grow your own—start a community garden, or transform your lawn or parking strip (see #1 and #6).
- Buy in season, or harvest and preserve it yourself.
- Study (and/or teach) the art of cooking and preserving tasty, nutritious food on a budget.

... and in your community:

- Contribute something from every shopping trip to local food banks.
- Glean (see #4 above).
- Plant a row for the hungry and donate the produce to a shelter, day care center, neighbor, or food bank.
- Start a food bank out of a faith center or community center if there are no similar programs nearby (see www.yesmagazine.org/pantry).

8

Share Your Table

The best antidote to fast-food culture is as simple as your table. Invite friends and a few strangers to a local-foods potluck.

In good weather, eat outside. Share an evening of conversation and enjoy the good life.



www.YesMagazine.org/sundaydinner

Meet Jim Haynes, the man who invites the world to dinner.

Restoring the Range

The Mortenson family is part of a growing number of ranchers who see healthy food production as part of an ecosystem, shared with plants, animals, and insects.



CARTER JOHNSON

Madeline Ostrander

I FIRST MET JEFF MORTENSON several years ago while working on a tiny reservation on the Big Sioux River in South Dakota.

The tribe I worked for wanted to protect some traditional food plants that grew along the river. An ecologist at South Dakota State University, Carter Johnson, told me about a family in the middle of the state, the Mortensons, who had restored large areas of grasslands and creeks on their land, and were running both a profitable ranch and a small native seed business.

When I phoned Jeff Mortenson and began asking questions, he said, “Well,

I guess I better come out there.” Two days later he showed up and walked through tribal land with the tribe’s natural resources director and me. We stopped at an area of low ground along the river, thick with weeds, and he looked startled, “Oh, this place is very disturbed,” he said.

The word “disturbed” for a biologist means ecologically disrupted. But its colloquial usage often means crazy, and both meanings are apt for a farming system that’s taking a hard toll on the environment of the area. The Big Sioux collects water that runs off feedlots and fields. It’s full of sediment and >>

Healthy woodlands form habitat for wildlife on the Mortenson ranch, a landscape brought back to life by sustainable grazing.

Over the years, they have continued to rotate cattle, scatter native grass seed, and plant thousands of trees. Now more than 90 percent of the 19,000-acre ranch is back in native vegetation.

» has high concentrations of *E. coli*, the bacteria found in feces. When I lived there, sections of the river stank in the summer, smelling like urine, or rot.

The Mortenson family has found another way of working with watersheds. They are among a growing number of farmers and ranchers across the country who acknowledge that their food production is part of an ecosystem, shared with other plants, animals, and insects. As the country looks to clean up its act, its climate, and its waterways, their work may be a first step toward a saner model of animal agriculture for the future.

Healing Land and Water

The Mortenson Ranch lies in the big rangelands and wheat fields of central South Dakota—a dry, undulating, and vast place. Jeff Mortenson's father, Clarence Mortenson, a Lakota from the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and a fifth-generation rancher, was born in the 1930s, when harsh droughts ravaged the crops that homesteaders had planted in the area. When he was a child, the landscape he lived in was denuded, with barely a tree in sight. But an elderly neighbor told him that things had looked different decades before, with belly-deep grass dotted with waterholes and tree-lined creeks. In college, Clarence studied engineering, learned how water moved across landscapes, and understood it might be possible to recreate the central South Dakota grasslands that his neighbor remembered.

Clarence went into the cattle business with his stepfather. In the beginning, whenever it rained or spring snows melted, water used to flash across the ranch, sometimes carving out deep gullies. Clarence built small dams and dikes to slow water flow and stop erosion. He fenced to control where cattle moved and avoid overgrazing. As water collected behind the

dams, it replenished the groundwater, and springs appeared on the property.

Clarence's sons stayed on the ranch, taking on parts of the business. In the 1980s, Todd Mortenson, Jeff's younger brother, learned about "holistic range management" from a friend who managed cattle for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and decided to try it out on the ranch. Holistic management moves cattle across a range to mimic buffalo herds. In the spring, the herds graze on lush grasses along streambeds. While there, they stamp seeds into the ground with their hooves, speeding the establishment of trees and grasses and stimulating root growth. In summer, the Mortensons move the animals upland, which gives the stream vegetation time to resprout and flourish.

Proponents of holistic management say it dramatically increases soil health and vegetation cover. The Mortensons have seen such results on their own property. Over the years, they have continued to rotate cattle, scatter native grass and wildflower seed, and plant thousands of trees. Now they say more than 90 percent of the 19,000-acre ranch is back in native vegetation.

In the 1990s, researchers became interested in what the Mortensons were doing. Carter Johnson and his colleague Susan Boettcher studied the woodlands along the streams and documented an explosion of native tree and shrub species. A regional rural development organization found that the Mortensons had substantially reduced the amount of sediment flowing through the creeks on their land. The ranch also teems with wildlife and migratory birds.

In 2001, Clarence Mortenson won awards from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Society for Ecological Restoration for restoring wildlife habitat.

The land management strategy is at least as much sound business as it

is ecology. The Mortensons have been able to run twice as many head of cattle per acre as land in their area typically supports. During recent drought years, the Mortensons' cattle fared better than their neighbors', because the grasses were healthier.

Both Jeff and Todd Mortenson speak with reverence about "healing" the land. "Our Lakota grandmother taught us to think a different way about land," says Jeff Mortenson, "to see it as a whole."

But neither holds environmental views that are easily pigeonholed. Todd Mortenson is pragmatic about conservation: "It only makes sense to work with nature rather than against her, because it's a hell of a lot cheaper to do things right than to do things wrong. You might get short term gain by abusing things, but it'll come back and bite you. It'll break you."

He now runs the ranch operations and recently became president of the state's ranchers' lobby, the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, which has spoken out against regulating greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act, over concerns about how it might economically impact family-run ranches.

Cattle and Climate

This brings us to an inconvenient truth about beef.

Like most ranchers, the Mortensons send their cattle to a feedlot to be fattened. The average diet of feedlot cattle is 70 percent corn, mostly grown in row-crop operations using large amounts of fossil fuel to make fertilizer, run farm equipment, and transport feed to cattle and cattle to feedlots. More than half of the nation's corn crop is produced to feed animals.

The alternative to feedlots is to let cattle do as the bison did for millennia—just eat grass. Grass-fed cattle have a much lower carbon footprint than their feedlot-raised counterparts, because their

food, for the most part, doesn't need to be fertilized, sprayed, or trucked from place to place. According to one analysis by the Institute for Environmental Research and Education, a grass-fed cattle operation can actually be carbon-neutral when combined with holistic management. The carbon that gets stored in soils and plant roots balances out the methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that cattle naturally produce in large quantities. The Chicago Climate Exchange even sells carbon credits for ranches that use holistic management.

But feeding grass to cows is not so simple in a modern agricultural market. For one thing, the feedlot system is cheap. Federal subsidies keep feed corn prices down, lowering operating costs of feedlots and giving the industry a \$500-million break every year, according to researchers at Tufts University. For another, a great deal of private and government research money has poured into refining the industrial feedlot system, while only a small group of pioneering ranchers and researchers has been sorting out the nitty-gritty of how to effectively run a grass-fed business.

Todd Mortenson is thinking of joining that group. "The key to grass-fed beef is to make sure they're always gaining [weight]," he says. "I haven't figured out how to put pounds on cattle in this harsh environment. I think it can be done. It's something that I'm not going to quit working on."

As the country responds to climate change, many environmental groups suggest that the cattle industry as a whole will need to convert to a grass-fed model. However, some insist this transition will necessarily lower meat production because there is simply not enough land to support as much beef as Americans consume. "We've got to stop eating so much meat and realize that it's expensive no matter what way you produce it," says Danielle Nierenberg of Worldwatch Institute. Holistic Management International, a group that promotes sustainable grazing, disagrees, claiming grass-fed ranching



RLA FOUNDATION

A Farmer Rounds Up Monsanto

After a decade of battling agribusiness giant Monsanto, Percy Schmeiser, a farmer in Saskatchewan, Canada, came away with a clear win. Monsanto wrote him a check for \$660, the cost of cleaning Monsanto's patented "Roundup Ready" canola off Schmeiser's land.

Schmeiser's saga began in 1998, when Monsanto claimed it found its canola growing on 1,030 acres of Schmeiser's farm. Schmeiser hadn't bought seed from Monsanto. He'd grown canola for 50 years and, as farmers have through the ages, planted seed that he saved from his crops. But Monsanto's genetically modified (GM) product had found its way into Schmeiser's fields.

Even though Schmeiser didn't want the GM seed and didn't hose his fields down with herbicide—the only practical bene-

fit of the GM plants—Monsanto thought he should pay them for their patented seed, to the tune of \$400,000. According to the Center for Food Safety, as of 2005, 186 farmers had paid Monsanto a total of \$15 million in response to similar Roundup Ready claims. Schmeiser didn't pay; Monsanto sued.

Schmeiser lost at trial and on appeal and was ordered to pay nearly \$20,000 in damages and \$150,000 for Monsanto's legal fees. The Canadian Supreme Court, however, saw it differently. The court said the patent was valid, and that Schmeiser had infringed, but held he gained no benefit from using the seed, and that he owed Monsanto nothing.

Schmeiser quit planting canola but, in 2005, found more Roundup Ready canola in his fields. Monsanto had a standing offer to clean the stuff out of any fields where it was growing without the company's permission. But they required farmers to sign a release that included an agreement never to discuss the terms under which the cleanup was done.

Schmeiser refused to be gagged. When Monsanto wouldn't change the release, he hired help to remove the invading canola and sent Monsanto the bill. Monsanto wouldn't pay; Schmeiser sued.

On the eve of trial, the parties agreed to settle. Monsanto paid the cleanup costs and Schmeiser signed a release—without the nondisclosure clause.



www.YesMagazine.org/schmeiser
Percy Schmeiser interview

is more efficient and inherently more productive.

Interconnections

Perhaps the most valuable lesson from the Mortenson Ranch is that sustainable agriculture works better when it integrates all parts of the ecosystem, instead of trying to isolate the crop or the animal.

"You don't operate in a vacuum," says Todd Mortenson. "In Mother Nature, everything is interconnected. You want a diverse landscape, because it can support more wildlife, more plants, and more native bees and pollinators. That benefits my livestock be-

cause there's always something that's palatable, during any season."

Diversity beyond the field edge is valuable in crop systems too. California farms that have restored wetlands and established hedgerows of native plants at the edges of fields have documented increases in native pollinators and beneficial insects and higher yields of crops like tomatoes, according to the Wild Farm Alliance. And they've seen dramatic reductions in water pollution.

Animals and plants, wild and domestic, evolved as part of a system. One of the jobs of sustainable agriculture is to put that system back together. **Y**

Madeline Ostrander is senior editor of YES!

The City That Ended Hunger

Belo Horizonte: Food Democracy on a Penny a Day

Frances Moore Lappé

“To search for solutions to hunger means to act within the principle that the status of a citizen surpasses that of a mere consumer.”

CITY OF BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL

In writing *Diet for a Small Planet*, I learned one simple truth: Hunger is not caused by a scarcity of food but a scarcity of democracy. But that realization was only the beginning, for then I had to ask: What does a democracy look like that enables citizens to have a real voice in securing life’s essentials? Does it exist anywhere? Is it possible or a pipe dream? With hunger on the rise here in the United States—one in 10 of us is now turning to food stamps—these questions take on new urgency.

To begin to conceive of the possibility of a culture of empowered citizens

making democracy work for them, real-life stories help—not models to adopt wholesale, but examples that capture key lessons. For me, the story of Brazil’s fourth largest city, Belo Horizonte, is a rich trove of such lessons. Belo, a city of 2.5 million people, once had 11 percent of its population living in absolute poverty, and almost 20 percent of its children going hungry. Then in 1993, a newly elected administration declared food a right of citizenship. The officials said, in effect: If you are too poor to buy food in the market—you are no less a citizen. I am still accountable to you.



The new mayor, Patrus Ananias—now leader of the federal anti-hunger effort—began by creating a city agency, which included assembling a 20-member council of citizen, labor, business, and church representatives to advise in the design and implementation of a new food system. The city already involved regular citizens directly in allocating municipal resources—the “participatory budgeting” that started in the 1970s and has since spread across Brazil. During the first six years of Belo’s food-as-a-right policy, perhaps in response to the new emphasis on food security, the number of citizens engaging in the city’s participatory budgeting process doubled to more than 31,000.

The city agency developed dozens of innovations to assure everyone the right to food, especially by weaving together the interests of farmers and consumers. It offered local family farmers dozens of choice spots of public space on which to sell to urban consumers, essentially redistributing retailer mark-ups on produce—which often reached 100 percent—to consumers and the farmers. Farmers’ profits grew, since there was no wholesaler taking a cut. And poor people got access to fresh, healthy food.

When my daughter Anna and I visited Belo Horizonte to write *Hope’s Edge* we approached one of these stands. A farmer in a cheerful green smock, emblazoned with “Direct from the Countryside,” grinned as she told us, “I am able to support three children from my five acres now. Since I got this contract

with the city, I’ve even been able to buy a truck.”

The improved prospects of these Belo farmers were remarkable considering that, as these programs were getting underway, farmers in the country as a whole saw their incomes drop by almost half.

In addition to the farmer-run stands, the city makes good food available by offering entrepreneurs the opportunity to bid on the right to use well-trafficked plots of city land for “ABC” markets, from the Portuguese acronym for “food at low prices.” Today there are 34 such markets where the city determines a set price—about two-thirds of the market price—of about twenty healthy items, mostly from in-state farmers and chosen by store-owners. Everything else they can sell at the market price.

“For ABC sellers with the best spots, there’s another obligation attached to being able to use the city land,” a former manager within this city agency, Adriana Aranha, explained. “Every weekend they have to drive produce-laden trucks to the poor neighborhoods outside of the city center, so everyone can get good produce.”

Another product of food-as-a-right thinking is three large, airy “People’s Restaurants” (Restaurante Popular), plus a few smaller venues, that daily serve 12,000 or more people using mostly locally grown food for the equivalent of less than 50 cents a meal. When Anna and I ate in one, we saw hundreds of diners—grandparents and newborns, young couples, clusters of men, mothers with toddlers. Some were in well-worn street clothes, others in uniform, still others in business suits.

“I’ve been coming here every day for five years and have gained six kilos,” beamed one elderly, energetic man in faded khakis.

“It’s silly to pay more somewhere else for lower quality food,” an athletic-looking young man in a military police uniform told us. “I’ve been eating here every day for two years.

It’s a good way to save money to buy a house so I can get married,” he said with a smile.

No one has to prove they’re poor to eat in a People’s Restaurant, although about 85 percent of the diners are. The mixed clientele erases stigma and allows “food with dignity,” say those involved.

Belo’s food security initiatives also include extensive community and school gardens as well as nutrition classes. Plus, money the federal government contributes toward school lunches, once spent on processed, corporate food, now buys whole food mostly from local growers.

“We’re fighting the concept that the state is a terrible, incompetent administrator,” Adriana explained. “We’re showing that the state doesn’t have to provide everything, it can facilitate. It can create channels for people to find solutions themselves.”

For instance, the city, in partnership with a local university, is working to “keep the market honest in part simply by providing information,” Adriana told us. They survey the price of 45 basic foods and household items at dozens of supermarkets, then post the results at bus stops, online, on television and radio, and in newspapers so people know where the cheapest prices are.

The shift in frame to food as a right also led the Belo hunger-fighters to look for novel solutions. In one successful experiment, egg shells, manioc leaves, and other material normally thrown away were ground and mixed into flour for school kids’ daily bread. This enriched food also goes to nursery school children, who receive three meals a day courtesy of the city.

The result of these and other related innovations?

In just a decade Belo Horizonte cut its infant death rate—widely used as evidence of hunger—by more than half, and today these initiatives benefit almost 40 percent of the city’s 2.5 million population. One six-month period in 1999 saw infant malnutrition in a sample group reduced by 50 percent. >>

More than 10 years ago, Brazil’s fourth-largest city, Belo Horizonte, declared that food was a right of citizenship and started working to make good food available to all. One of its programs puts local farm produce into school meals. This and other projects cost the city less than 2 percent of its budget. At left, fresh passion fruit juice and salad as part of a school lunch.

LEAH RIMKUS PHOTOS

**“I knew we had so much hunger in the world.
But what is so upsetting, what I didn’t know when I started this,
is it’s so easy. It’s so easy to end it.”**



The city of Belo Horizonte puts “Direct From the Country” farmer produce stands throughout busy downtown areas.



The line for one of three “People’s Restaurants” a half hour before opening time. Meals cost about 50 cents; diners come from all socio-economic groups.



LEAH RIMKUS PHOTOS

ABC bulk produce markets stock the items that the city determines will be sold at a fixed price, about 13 cents per pound.

» And between 1993 and 2002 Belo Horizonte was the only locality in which consumption of fruits and vegetables went up.

The cost of these efforts?

Around \$10 million annually, or less than 2 percent of the city budget. That’s about a penny a day per Belo resident.

Behind this dramatic, life-saving change is what Adriana calls a “new social mentality”—the realization that “everyone in our city benefits if all of us have access to good food, so—like health care or education—quality food for all is a public good.”

The Belo experience shows that a right to food does not necessarily mean more public handouts (although in emergencies, of course, it does.) It can mean redefining the “free” in “free market” as the freedom of all to participate. It can mean, as in Belo, building citizen-government partnerships driven by values of inclusion and mutual respect.

And when imagining food as a right


of citizenship, please note: No change in human nature is required! Through most of human evolution—except for the last few thousand of roughly 200,000 years—Homo sapiens lived in societies where pervasive sharing of food was the norm. As food sharers, “especially among unrelated individuals,” humans are unique, writes Michael Gurven, an authority on hunter-gatherer food transfers. Except in times of extreme privation, when some eat, all eat.

Before leaving Belo, Anna and I had time to reflect a bit with Adriana. We wondered whether she realized that her city may be one of the few in the world taking this approach—food as a right of membership in the human family. So I asked, “When you began, did you realize how important what you are doing was? How much difference it might make? How rare it is in the entire world?”

Listening to her long response in Portuguese without understanding, I tried to be patient. But when her eyes

moistened, I nudged our interpreter. I wanted to know what had touched her emotions.

“I knew we had so much hunger in the world,” Adriana said. “But what is so upsetting, what I didn’t know when I started this, is it’s so easy. It’s so easy to end it.”

Adriana’s words have stayed with me. They will forever. They hold perhaps Belo’s greatest lesson: that it is easy to end hunger if we are willing to break free of limiting frames and to see with new eyes—if we trust our hard-wired fellow feeling and act, no longer as mere voters or protestors, for or against government, but as problem-solving partners with government accountable to us. 



Frances Moore Lappé is the author of many books including *Diet for a Small Planet* and *Get a Grip*, co-founder of Food First and the Small Planet Institute, and a YES! contributing editor.

The author thanks Dr. M. Jahi Chappell for his contribution to the article.

Food Rebellions

The world's farmers can feed the world, but only if they can gain control of their lands and food systems

Eric Holt-Gimenez

THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM DESCRIBES the current global food crisis as a silent tsunami, with billions of people going hungry. Hunger is, indeed, coming in waves, but not everyone will drown in famine. The recurrent food crises are making a handful of corporations very rich—even as they put the rest of the planet at risk.

Built over half a century, largely with public grain subsidies and foreign aid, the global food-industrial complex is made up of large corporations that sell grain, seed, chemicals, and fertilizer, along with global supermarket chains and food processors.

When these players first came on the scene, world agriculture was different. Forty years ago, the global South had yearly agricultural trade surpluses of \$1 billion. After three "Development Decades," they were importing \$11 billion a year in food. Immediately following de-colonization in the 1960s, Africa exported \$1.3 billion in food a year. Today it imports 25 percent of its food.

International trade agreements and pressure from the global North opened up entire continents to cheap, subsidized grain from the North. This put local farmers out of business, devastated local crop diversity, and consolidated control of the world's food system in the hands of multinational corporations. Today three companies, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Cargill, and Bunge control 90 percent of the world's grain trade.

The official prescriptions for solving the world food crisis call for more subsidies for industrialized nations, more food aid, and more so-called Green (or Gene) Revolutions. Expecting the institutions that built the current flawed food system to solve the food crisis is like asking an arsonist to put out a forest fire. When the world food crisis exploded in early 2008, ADM's profits

increased by 38 percent, Cargill's by 128 percent, and Mosaic Fertilizer (a Cargill subsidiary) by a whopping 1,615 percent!

For decades, family farmers the world over have resisted this corporate control. They have worked to diversify crops, protect soil and native seeds, and conserve

2. Stabilize and guarantee fair prices to farmers and consumers by re-establishing floor prices and publicly owned national grain reserves. Establish living wages for workers on farms, in processing facilities, and in supermarkets.

3. Halt agrofuels expansion.

4. Curb speculation in food.

5. Promote a return to smallholder farming. On a pound-per-acre basis, family farms are more productive than large-scale industrial farms. And they use less oil. Because 75 percent of the world's poor are farmers, this will address poverty, too.

6. Support agro-ecological production.

7. Food sovereignty: Recognize the right of all people to healthy and culturally



NICHOLAS PAGET-CLARKE

Food sovereignty in action: The First of December Farmers' Association, in Lichego, Mozambique, works together to increase crop diversity and output, and improve diets.

Interested? www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/npc_moz_assoc.html

nature. They have established local gardens, businesses, and community-based food systems. These strategies are effective. They need to be given a chance to work.

The solutions to the food crisis are those that make the lives of family farmers easier: re-regulate the market, reduce the power of the agri-foods industrial complex, and build ecologically resilient family agriculture. Here are some of the needed steps:

1. Support domestic food production.

appropriate food produced through ecologically sound methods and their own food systems.

The political will to take these steps must come from informed social movements. These movements already exist, and are gaining strength in the face of the food crisis. Together we can fix the food system and solve the food crisis once and for all. 7

Eric Holt-Gimenez is executive director of Food First. This article was adapted from "The World Food Crisis." Find the full-length version at www.foodfirst.org.

A World of Grace

THAT PAUSE BEFORE THE MEAL
INSPIRES US
ACROSS CULTURES



LATIN AMERICAN

To those who have hunger
Give bread.
And to those who have bread
Give the hunger for justice.



BUDDHIST

This food is the gift
of the whole universe.
Each morsel is a sacrifice of life,
May I be worthy to receive it.
May the energy in this food
Give me the strength
To transform my unwholesome qualities
Into wholesome ones.
I am grateful for this food.
May I realize the Path of Awakening,
For the sake of all beings.



MUSLIM

All praises are due to Allah who gave us
sufficient food to eat and who satiated our
thirst while such food is needed by us all
the time and while we are not ungrateful
to Allah.



ASHANTI, GHANA

Earth, when I am about to die
I lean upon you.
Earth, while I am alive
I depend upon you.





SELKIRK GRACE, SCOTTISH

Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it.
But we hae meat, and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be thankit.



CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S PRAYER

Thank you God for the world so sweet,
Thank you God for the food we eat.
Thank you God for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything.



APOSTOLIC, ARMENIA

The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord,
And Thou givest them their food in due season.
Thou openest Thy hand and fillest all things
Living with plenteousness.



HINDU, INDIA

Before grasping this grain,
let us consider in our minds
the reasons why
we should care for and safeguard this body.
This is my prayer, oh God:
May I be forever devoted at your feet,
offering body, mind, and wealth
to the service of truth in the world.



COPTIC, EGYPT

Bless, O Lord, the plants, the vegetation,
and the herbs of the field,
that they may grow
and increase to fullness
and bear much fruit.
And may the fruit of the land
remind us of the spiritual fruit
we should bear.



MOTHER TERESA, CATHOLIC, CALCUTTA

Make us worthy, Lord,
To serve those people
Throughout the world who live and die
In poverty and hunger.
Give them, through our hands
This day their daily bread,
And by our understanding love,
Give peace and joy.



SHOSHONE, NATIVE AMERICAN

I'm an Indian.
I think about the common things like this pot.
The bubbling water comes from the rain cloud.
It represents the sky.
The fire comes from the sun,
Which warms us all, men, animals, trees.
The meat stands for the four-legged creatures,
Our animal brothers,
Who gave themselves so that we should live.
The steam is living breath.
It was water, now it goes up to the sky,
Becomes a cloud again.
These things are sacred.
Looking at that pot full of good soup,
I am thinking how, in this simple manner,
The Great Spirit takes care of me.



JEWISH

Praised are You, our God, Ruler of the universe, who
in goodness, with grace, kindness, and mercy, feeds
the entire world. He provides bread for all creatures,
for His kindness is never-ending. And because of His
magnificent greatness we have never wanted for food,
nor will we ever want for food, to the end of time.

For His great name, because He is God who feeds and
provides for all, and who does good to all by preparing
food for all of His creatures whom He created: Praised
are You, God, who feeds all.



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Rajinder's Remarkable Rasoi

WHAT MY MOTHER'S VILLAGE KITCHEN CAN TEACH AMERICAN SCHOOLS



Madhu Suri Prakash

I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A BOOK, COLLECTING STORIES of a rapidly growing movement in the United States. Across the country, people are working to connect students with real food—grown themselves in school gardens or bought from local food producers. The aim is to break the chains of fast-food addiction and reawaken our connection to food as both physical and spiritual sustenance.

As I watch children, and the adults who teach them, relearn the joys of local food, I am reminded of my own experience growing up in India. Our home shifted every three years as my military father was shunted back and forth across the subcontinent. But in the face of that dislocation, my mother, Rajinder, stayed grounded in our indigenous food traditions. For a taste of her common sense, I invite you to enter our home, and explore with me its center—my mother's kitchen, her *rasoi*.

Rajinder's Remarkable Rasoi

Rasoi comes from the Hindi word "*rasa*," a word almost untranslatable, as are most of the core words referring to the sacred—the divine—that is the heart of Hindu culture and traditions. Yet, without *rasa*, it is impossible to say anything significant about the traditional Hindu arts and sciences, includ-



www.YesMagazine.org/rasoi

Madhu Suri Prakash, at left, shares more of her mother's kitchen secrets

DOUG PIBEL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

ing the art of preparing and serving spicy, stunningly beautiful, aromatic foods that bring out the deepest pleasures of eating.

One of the many meanings of *rasa* is “juice”—the quintessential flow of flavors that comes only from slow, deliberate ripening that follows the organic rhythm of nature’s cycles. *Rasoi* literally means that sacred place in the home where these juices flow naturally, and therefore produce profound pleasure—for the palate, the eyes, and the soul.

True artists in every field of creativity, including the art of living, bring forth diverse and unique kinds of *rasa*. Excellence of technique is necessary.

for buttered *parathas*, *naan* and super-hot *chappatis*—breads served so hot we had no recourse but to enjoy the pause as they cooled—long, soulful and necessary—awakening all the human senses without which the sacred and the sensuous cannot be headily and heartily enjoyed.

If all that came out of that pre-dawn pot of freshly drawn milk was butter, Rajinder’s *rasoi* would be impressive, perhaps, yet not remarkable. In reality, Rajinder’s deft fingers took that same pot of milk many miles beyond the wildest imaginations of “industrial eaters.” She created creamy soft cottage cheese within minutes of squeez-

yard and wafting over the whole neighborhood from her earthen oven—the *tandoor*.

No time-saving machines, no labor-saving gizmos, no measuring cups and spoons, no fancy ovens, no Cuisinarts, no blenders, and no recipe books—apart from her carefully handwritten slender, little notebook of recipes, Oriental and Occidental, appreciatively learned from visiting neighbors or friends.

Rajinder’s *rasoi* revealed the remarkable genius that was far from hers alone. She was but one lovely expression of her people’s well-honed common sense, born of a commons of

The common peoples of the world, when left to live by the wisdom of their own traditions, culinary and other, do magnificently.

But *rasa* only emerges when people combine the technical expertise that comes from the head, with habits of deepening the heart—connecting head and heart to the slow, deep workings of the soul. Only when we prepare food with love, reverence, and respect do we become adept in the art of bringing out the juices, the *rasa*, of all the vegetables, fruits, and other ingredients that go into the sublime and sacred preparation of food.

In the pre-dawn darkness, without electricity, Rajinder’s unassuming little kitchen, with only two tiny earthen stoves designed centuries before the Dark Ages of Europe, slowly got going with fired charcoal; ready to receive the milk lovingly released only moments before by the hands of the *gwala* (milkman) from the udders of our neighborhood black buffalo herd. Frothing forth straight from the udder into the steel pot in which it would soon be boiled, its cream was quickly collected for the fresh, soft, and white butter I learned to churn by hand at age eleven.

This was Rajinder’s remarkable *rasoi*, where for the first quarter century of my life, I saw one pot of milk, traveling no further than a block or two, yield generously to our yearning

ing the juice of limes harvested just then from our kitchen garden. She produced yoghurt *raitas* to accompany every lunch and dinner, to cool palates tickled by tamarind chutneys and gingery garlic cilantro curries bringing out all the flavors—whether of potatoes or the roots of lotus flowers. She concocted soothing summer drinks—including *lassis* and *chach* flavored with black rock salt, mustard seeds and curry leaves—and *kheer*, *phirni*, *rabri*, *gajar ka halwa*, among others.

How can I do justice to the diverse dishes Rajinder created from the foods she bought in the local market? The twenty-five hues, textures, and tastes of lentils and beans, colorfully arraying her *rasoi*; constituting our subsistence, our staples. Or the 101 potato combinations concocted with coconuts, mints, fennel, spinach, *tulsi*, bitter gourd, *brinjal*, okra. Her thirty-four distinct ways of mixing a cup of basmati rice with whatever vegetables came out of the earth in abundance that particular morning—winter, spring, summer, or fall. During the thundering monsoons, the heady aromas of parched earth coming to life with long-awaited summer rain would mix and mingle with the aromas floating across the court-

shared food and shared knowledge. This common sense daily demonstrates that most of the common peoples of the world, when left to live by the wisdom of their own traditions, culinary and other, do magnificently. They have hundreds of generations of elders to turn to for insights and guidance who have for centuries upon centuries accumulated knowledge of their place, through trial and error, creating forms of abundance and riches that respect the slow cycles of seasons from seed to plate, learning lessons taught in quiet conversations with Mother Nature.

With her indigenous Punjabi eyes kept wide open through habits of inventive frugality honed in slow time, she could clearly see what her children and grandchildren with advanced university degrees in economics, business, and marketing remain blind to, even today. In her heart, guts, and bones, and not in her head alone, she knew well all the reasons why out-of-season, long-distance-traveling refrigerated milk and other foods systematically destroy the delicate, intricate web of local relationships between tiny *rasois* and well-rooted, humble, small local businesses—like those of >>

» the *guala* and the *sabzi-wala* (vegetable man) peddling fruits and vegetables from a handdrawn cart, singing his song from home to home.

From Fast Food Nation to a New Rasoi

A few generations ago, Rajinder's rasoi would not have seemed so foreign to most Americans. A different set of spices, perhaps. But the American kitchen would have held food from vendors not so different from the *walas* Rajinder bought from. The advent of fast food quickly changed that picture. By 1970 Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000 they spent more than \$110 billion. According to Eric Schlosser, "Americans now spend more on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars; more than on movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and recorded music combined."

Is there any hope for regenerating the affection, the care, and the other virtues sung about and savored in the age of slow food? In schools and campuses across the country, a new American Dream is bringing together school lunches, families, family farms, gourmet chefs, and community-supported farmers in fresh, new, radical (that is, rooted) ways. Revolutionaries are rising up to reclaim the *rasa* we have so easily surrendered. I cannot hope to honor them all in this little space. I can only give a taste of what is underway.

Alice Waters, of Berkeley's "Chez Panisse," is spearheading a "Delicious Revolution" in Berkeley. Her philosophy of Slow Food Education is based on the pleasure of food. Freshly picked produce is tastier than that which has lingered in cold storage, inspiring kids to choose an apple over a Snapple. The Edible Schoolyard project at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School

in Berkeley models Waters' vision of how we can return to producing much of our own food. Starting in 1995, students, teachers, and parents began the transformation of an acre of parking lot into what is now an organic garden supplying food for student lunches. Waters points out that about 20 percent of Americans are in school at any given time. "If all these students were eating lunch together, consuming local, organic food," she says, "agriculture would change overnight to meet the demand. Our domestic food culture would change as well, as people again grew up learning how to cook affordable, wholesome, and delicious food." There are now programs similar to the Edible Schoolyard in 400 school districts in 22 states.

With her own unique flair and genius, Judy Wicks of the White Dog Café in Philadelphia is making similar connections between the community-supported agriculture movement and her gorgeous restaurant. She is educating people from all walks of life about the pleasures of slow food, creating new links between communities, students and real food—grown organically and preferably locally on small family farms.

Catherine Sneed is demonstrating that "hardened criminals" who learn to grow Swiss chard and broccoli are less likely to grab old ladies' purses for a few bucks than men raised on drugs, speed, and fast food.


From the Common Roots program at the Barnet School in Vermont to students picking scallions and cilantro from their own garden at Evergreen Elementary School in West Sacramento, California, this grassroots movement across the United States and beyond now includes urban as well as rural schools. In California alone, some

3,000 schools have campus gardens.

In Happy Valley, Pennsylvania, where I live, Kimber Mitchell, Laura Silver, and other bioneers set up "Pizza Gardens" as well as perennial plots at Radio Park Elementary School—fostering connections between Penn State University's Center for Sustainability, local master gardeners Gene Bazan, Tania Slawewski, among others, and faculty drawn from different colleges, including engineering and education.

Will we rely on our common sense for regenerating the *rasa* of indigenous peoples, like Rajinder's? Danny Heitman says it well: "Not since the launch of Sputnik has U.S. education seemed so ripe for reform." Ripeness of reform for the *rasa* of teaching and learning, living and eating is here. The time has come to regenerate the classical concept of "school"—rooted in the Latin *schola*, or leisure. The tragedy of the loss of leisure from schooling because of industrial fast food (and more) can finally be put aside—the cruel, sickening, hard lessons of the twentieth century having been learned.

It is the most realizable dream of the twenty-first century: the dream of Slow Food education. Instead of McDonald's or Burger King announcing the nine-billionth burger sold, we are building a world where schools and colleges announce the 250 millionth American savoring the nourishing Slow Food grown by local CSA farmers.

Come, let us go forward towards schooling that savors and enjoys the good life lived through nourishing, slow food. Starting with our children, we can all learn how to reclaim the *rasa* I enjoyed in Rajinder's rasoi. 

Madhu Suri Prakash is a professor at Pennsylvania State University. Her books include *Grassroots Postmodernism*, *Escaping Education*, and the forthcoming *No Chive Left Behind*.



Resource Guide

The information and links you need to find out more about Food for Everyone.
www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide49



Discussion Guide

Start the conversation and begin your own Local Food Revolution.
www.YesMagazine.org/discuss49

IRAQI FAMILIES ON THE BORDERS

“Day by day, years go by”

Photos and Text by Johnny Barber

As the economic crisis deepens and all eyes are on the new Obama administration, the dire situation of Iraqi refugees has been ignored in the media. The U.S. promises \$2 billion to expand services in neighboring countries and ensure safety for those displaced within Iraq, but doesn't say how or when. The U.N. High Commission on Refugees has identified only 50,000 people for resettlement. The U.S. will accept up to 17,000 Iraqi refugees in 2009. But the United Nations counts more than 4.5 million Iraqi refugees, with 2.5 million stuck in bordering countries. More than tales of bombs and battles, these are the real war stories. In the fall of 2008, I traveled to Jordan and Syria to speak with these people. These portraits represent people from across a wide economic, cultural, and political landscape who now share common harrowing stories of escape and survival.



“THE KIDS DON'T KNOW”

ABU MAZIN AND HIS FAMILY

Abu Mazin and his family fled to Syria in 2006. He worked as a driver between Baghdad and Damascus but was forced to abandon that job when cars were stopped at checkpoints and people had to state their religion. For a member of the minority Sabian faith, the risk became too great. He occasionally finds menial work in Syria, but he is unable to support his family. “Day by day, years go by. The children are getting older. The family's needs are growing.” His extended family is now spread across five countries. Eighty percent of Iraqi families have been fractured in this way. Abu Mazin says, “I am just looking for a place to live in peace, where I can find some work and secure a future for my kids.” I comment on the joy of his children. He tells me, “The kids don't know. The parents bear it all.”

Iraqi Families on the Borders

"WHY ARE YOU STILL THERE?"

IBRAHIM AND HIS FAMILY

In April 2003, just three days before the end of the initial "shock and awe" bombing, a U.S. air strike hit Ibrahim's home. In the chaos that followed, three of his children fled to the garden and were killed by cluster bombs. In 2004, he fled with his family to Jordan. Having no money and few options, he returned to Baghdad. Then his brother was killed. He fled again, this time to Damascus. Ibrahim has visited 20 embassies looking for help. His friends who have been resettled to the United States call and ask him, "Why are you still there? Why is there no resettlement for you?" He has no answers. Six years of effort, six years of persistence, six years of desperation.



WILL NEVER RETURN TO IRAQ

UM ALAN AND HER SON

When Um Alan and her son arrived in Damascus in 2007, UNHCR representatives didn't believe the police report she produced detailing her husband's disappearance in Baghdad. Her husband had been working for an American contractor. Although he quit that job to protect his family when he got married, he was kidnapped from his car a few months later. Though ransom demands were initially made, Um Alan lost contact with the kidnappers and doesn't know what has happened to her husband. Alan, now 10 months old, never met his father. Um Alan points to pictures of her husband and murmurs, "Abu ... Abu Alan" to her son. Um Alan says she will never return to Iraq and hopes to find a future for her son outside the Middle East.





SCATTERED, MAKESHIFT FAMILIES

UM ADNAN AND ABU ADNAN WITH SELMED

In July 2005, their son Adnan was robbed, bound, and beaten while working in his store. He left Baghdad for Damascus with his two sisters. But Abu and Um Adnan remained in Iraq. Family friend Abu Selmed told them that he had received threats because of his work with an American defense contractor, and in December 2005 his wife was gunned down as she answered a knock at the door. The couple's son Selmed was the only witness. The gunmen kidnapped the boy, releasing him after a ransom was paid. Abu Selmed and his son fled to Syria. Within two months Um and Abu Adnan followed and were reunited with their children. Though Abu Selmed worked with an American contractor, he is still waiting for resettlement to the United States. Um Adnan says she doesn't know what she'll do if she is resettled to a different country than little Selmed whom she has helped raise in the three years since his mother's death. But their cases are separate and there is no consideration given to relationships outside of family.

FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

YOUNG MEN IN JORDAN

Of all the refugees, the most isolated are the young men ages 18–35 who fled Iraq without family. Their childhoods in Iraq were shaped by sanctions and war. They watched as the social fabric of their communities collapsed and militias took over their neighborhoods. As young men, they left home to escape the violence. Many have no passport and no documents and are considered illegal immigrants. They are targeted by police and taken advantage of by employers. They are not considered “at risk,” so resettlement is not a possibility. They are not the face of refugees that elicits Western sympathy. They are trapped, alone, and with few options.



Iraqi Families on the Borders



HEADED TO AMERICA

ABU DIAH AND HIS FAMILY

Abu Diah lost his sight during the Iran-Iraq war. Forced to flee Iraq, he and his wife and six children live in a three-room flat in Amman. They spend their days waiting. In March, they were approved for resettlement to the United States. They have no information about when or where they are going. Abu Diah has heard mention of Kentucky, Oregon, or perhaps Miami. The family is concerned about the move. Most of their information about America is rumors and hearsay. The oldest son only has a third grade education, but he has been the sole wage earner for the family. They are a traditional family; all the women wear the hijab. No one speaks English. When they are finally notified of their departure date, they will leave Jordan quietly and quickly with two suitcases each.



SAVING HER REMAINING SON

IMAN AND TOOTIE

Iman and her son are new to Damascus, having arrived in October 2008. She is determined to save 14-year-old Barath, whom she affectionately calls Tootie. Iman has lost two sons to the sectarian violence in Iraq. Both were kidnapped, brutally tortured, and murdered. She fled when her remaining son was threatened, leaving her husband and three daughters behind. Tootie is adjusting to his new life in Damascus. Iman says she has no plan other than resettlement. She says she only knows they must leave the Middle East, and she is willing to go anywhere that offers an opportunity for her youngest son.

Johnny Barber is an activist and freelance photographer. Additional portraits can be seen at oneBrightpearl.com and further information is available at his blog oneBrightpearl-jb.blogspot.com.

FROM THE PUBLISHER



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Fran Korten, Publisher

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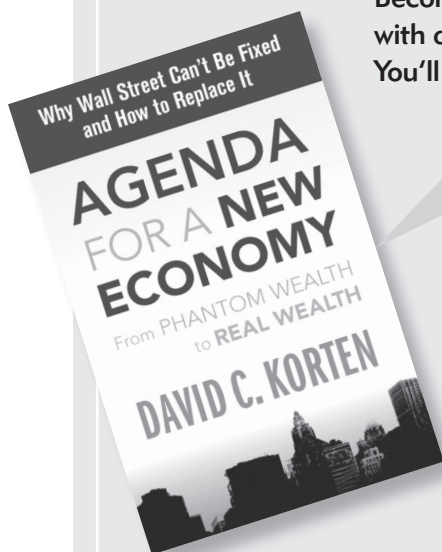
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The Art of Healing

Can the arts bridge our world's deep divides? True stories from Northern Ireland, South Africa, Serbia, and the United States suggest they can.

REVIEWED BY BROOKE JARVIS

It's 1999, and in Belgrade, bombs are falling. Sirens and explosions—the results of NATO bombers and Serbian antiaircraft—fill the night. But between the bombs, a different story is unfolding. DAH Teatar, a community theater company, is rehearsing a new play.

They had at first searched for a script that would offer meaning and hope. But the play that emerged instead reflected the confusion and uncertainty of wartime. It took the form of a conversation between two old women burdened with the memory of human history. One describes natural beauty, everyday life, and small kindnesses, while the other relates the terrors of wars and tyrants. The endless cycle of despair and hope concludes with what seems to be the only meaning the company could find at the time. "They will not say: 'The times were dark,'" says the voice of hope. Her companion answers, "Rather, 'Why were their poets silent?'"

Like the artists who created it, the play refuses to despair, and transforms horror into an imperative for action. As one company member put it, "It's the most important time to create things when things are being destroyed."

Playwright Arthur Miller, refusing Lyndon Johnson's invitation to the White House during the Vietnam War,



COURTESY REYUM, FROM ART AND UPHEAVAL

Chan Vitharin's "Opposites" questions whether a Cambodia that avoids its past can have a future.

 Samples from *Art and Upheaval*
www.YesMagazine.org/cleveland

famously telegrammed, "When the guns boom, the arts die." But a new book by community arts activist Bill Cleveland argues that in times of violence, upheaval, and cultural dislocation, art is a key tool for confronting darkness and eventually rebuilding

communities.

Art and Upheaval: Artists on the World's Frontlines tells the stories of six community arts organizations (including theater and writers' groups, galleries, and arts co-ops) operating at the crossroads of risk and reconciliation



**Art and Upheaval:
Artists on the World's
Frontlines**

WILLIAM CLEVELAND

New Village Press, 2008, 332 pages, \$20.01

in Northern Ireland, Cambodia, South Africa, the United States, Australia, and Serbia.

Each of the groups Cleveland profiles started small, but grew to provide essential safe space where communities could come together and heal. Community art offered a way forward: a chance to acknowledge and confront painful histories, to begin to resolve current conflicts, and to imagine a different kind of future.

In the case study that inspired the book, a group of artists in Belfast was alarmed by renewed bombings that threatened to derail peace talks in Northern Ireland. The members of Community Arts Forum (CAF) worried that until divided Catholic and Protestant communities deepened their understanding of each other, peace talks could not succeed, and anger and polarization would worsen. Their contribution, they decided, would be a play.

Like an Elizabethan comedy, *The Wedding Play* ended with a wedding celebration—a conclusion traditionally meant to portend unity. But by proposing a wedding play about the volatile issue of intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants, CAF averted both the ease and the inadequacy of a formulaic happy ending. Peace, they believed, could never last if it came as the result of glossing over the sources of deeply entrenched anger.

By involving the communities as deeply as possible in the play's production, CAF hoped to make the process as therapeutic as the outcome. The group spent months interviewing community members about their experience with love, marriage, and family in the context of the conflict, turning up stories of threats and warnings, ostracism and violence, and children lost to their families after marrying across religious lines. Careful diplomacy was required. CAF formed committees to represent both Catholic and Protestant communities, and recruited writers from each side to weave the interviews into a script. Character biographies

and dialogue had to be carefully negotiated. To avoid attracting violence, CAF also indirectly approached paramilitary organizations for approval.

The final play was staged not in theaters, but in more ordinary city locations: audience members crammed into tiny kitchens with actors, or sat next to them at church, still treated more like participants than spectators. In a final speech, the bride's father voiced the play's more complex version of a happy ending: "This is not the time nor the place to make up for all the wrongs ... [as] I stand here and ... look around me, the strange faces are becoming familiar ... so by the end of this wonderful occasion we will all be friends."

And that, writes Cleveland, is more or less what happened: the audience "had become part of a newly constituted cross-community family. By the fourth act, it was hard to tell where the 'theatrical' wedding reception ended and the post-performance party had begun."

As the bride's father cautions, few wrongs are quite so easily solved. While many felt the mere existence of *The Wedding Play* was a major victory, some believed that too much had been compromised in the effort to please both communities. Cleveland cautions readers that his book is not about the triumph of art over evil, but rather a chronicle of the details and difficulty behind six "messy miracle stories" that succeeded in opening up communication, understanding, and new vistas of possibility in places that had seemed beyond hope.

What, then, is the relationship between art and upheaval? Which is the stronger voice, that of hope or despair? Dijana Milocevic, a founder of DAH Teatar, could answer. Rehearsing during the air raids, she said, "was dangerous and unreal, but we kept working. We needed to be doing something more powerful than the bombing."

Brooke Jarvis is a Hawai'i-based writer who works to implement sustainable practices in Moloka'i and a former YES! editorial assistant.

YES! PICKS :: Musical inspiration while putting out this issue



Time the Conqueror

Old soul **Jackson Browne** bears down on the world today. His new album asks us to learn from the past ("Giving That Heaven Away"), pay attention to our present (the provocative "Drums of War" and "Where Were You," a 10-minute reminder of the dark days of Hurricane Katrina), and live for a better future ("Far from the Arms of Hunger").



Asa

Nigerian guitarist **Asa** grew up listening to Marvin Gaye, Fela Kuti, and Bob Marley, and now brings her own smoky voice to songs on injustice ("Jailer"), the uncertainties of life ("No One Knows"), the state of society ("Fire on the Mountain"). Mainly in English, with some Yoruba.



Mercy Now

Mary Gauthier's lyrics cut like those of poet/songwriter Leonard Cohen. In the title track, she pleads for mercy for her father and brother, but also for church, country, and "every living thing." A soundtrack for the '00s.

🎵 Have a listen at
www.YesMagazine.org/music

The Road to Sustainability? Four Authors Tell Us Which Way to Turn

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MARIEN

The deep recession now underway will probably last another year at least, but could spiral down to a second Great Depression. Political leaders worldwide are under pressure to use a variety of economic stimulus tools to restore normalcy. This will likely lead to some progress toward renewable sources of energy and energy conservation, especially in the U.S., now under the competent leadership of President Obama. But these welcome changes are only first steps toward meeting long-term sustainability challenges. The four books reviewed here illustrate contrasting approaches to the big changes that are needed, perhaps best appreciated as four points of the compass: north (global action) vs. south (local action), and east (reforming capitalism) vs. west (U.S. government policy reform).

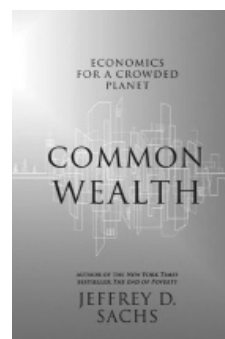
Global reform is emphasized by Jeffrey Sachs, director of Columbia University's Earth Institute, who maintains that the defining challenge of our new century is to face "a common fate on a crowded planet." We will flourish or perish in the new Anthropocene Era of a human-dominated earth by our ability to secure sustainable systems of energy and land, stabilize world population at 8 billion or less by 2050, and end extreme poverty by 2025, while improving economic security in rich countries.

Sachs advocates a new approach to global problems based on the creativity of nongovernmental organizations and cooperation among nations: among his proposals, a new financial

architecture of seven global funds for sustainable development that would expand the Global Environment Facility and the UN Population Fund and create a new global infrastructure fund. The enthusiasm undergirding his many sensible proposals (for meeting water needs, conserving biodiversity, ending poverty traps, and achieving global goals, etc.) is commendable. Still, there is much more to be said about addressing sustainability.

James "Gus" Speth, dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and founder of the World Resources Institute, insists that reform of business and economics is imperative. Our market economy operates on "wildly wrong market signals" and lacks other correcting mechanisms. The basic need is "transformative change in the key features of contemporary capitalism." This means making the market work for the environment (e.g., the polluter pays; prices reflect environmental costs of any product or service). He advocates using the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare as a more accurate overall measure of progress than GNP, changing the dynamics of the corporation, and promoting a "new consciousness" similar to the "Great Turning" proposed by David Korten.

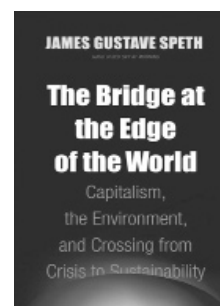
Lester R. Brown, founder of the Worldwatch Institute and head of the Earth Policy Institute, proposes that government should lead. His *Plan B 3.0* expands on two previous editions—*Plan B* (2003) and its "2.0" update (2006). Brown describes the severe environmental degradation our planet faces, and like Sachs and Speth, calls for urgent action. His "Great Mobilization" scheme focuses on U.S. govern-



Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet

JEFFREY D. SACHS

Penguin Press, 2008, \$27.95



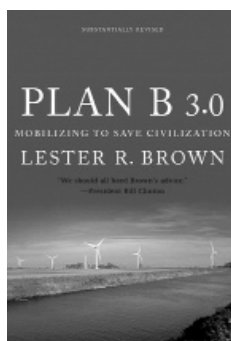
The Bridge at the Edge of the World

JAMES GUSTAVE SPETH

Yale University Press, 2008, \$28.00

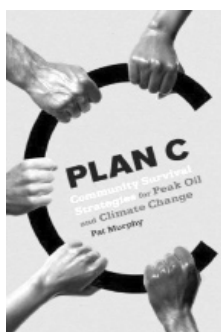
ment policies—green tax codes, ending environmentally harmful subsidies to big agriculture and nonrenewable energy, a new Department of Global Security to be funded by resources from the Department of Defense, and a "Plan B Budget" to attain basic social and earth restoration goals such as planting trees and enhancing fisheries.

With a title like *Plan C*, readers might expect Pat Murphy's book on community survival to be a response, but Lester Brown is never mentioned. After making a detailed case for (indisputable) climate change and for (disputable) "peak oil" depletion just ahead, Murphy lays out four possible futures. Plan A, or "Business as Usual," is seen as still favored by "a sizable majority of the U.S. population."



Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization

LESTER R. BROWN
W. W. Norton, 2008, \$15.95



Plan C: Community Survival Strategies for Peak Oil and Climate Change

PAT MURPHY
New Society Publishers, 2008, \$19.95

Plan B, the “Clean Green Technology” approach, is dismissed as failing to sufficiently challenge capitalism and “its underlying values of competition and infinite growth.” The dystopian Plan D or “Die Off” describes individual and family survival for those who believe “it is too late to avoid catastrophe.”

Murphy favors Plan C, or “Curtailment and Community,” which involves “buying less, using less, wanting less, and wasting less.” Most of his book offers details of radical cutbacks, and food and energy conservation at the local level, no doubt

now underway for many people as an economic necessity. Notably, *Plan C* is the only book reviewed here to see communities and individuals as an important part of the long-term shift to sustainability.

Murphy’s “Die Off” scenario is quite possible if bold actions are not taken, or if they prove unsuccessful. But it’s equally possible that, with luck and sensible policies, the economic shocks will stimulate many positive reforms. Already, the “sizable majority” that still practices business as usual is rapidly embracing Clean Green Technology in the unfolding age of Obama, while a number of business leaders are greening corporations with a “triple bottom line” that values social and environmental goals along with profit.

But much more will be needed. To accelerate the transition, ongoing global conversations are needed among the many authors who advocate different approaches to sustainability, and politicians, journalists, businesspeople, academics, and others who have yet to consider and embrace the sustainability imperative.

Michael Marien recently retired from 30 years of editing *Future Survey*.



Emmanuel Jal in *War Child*

YES! PICKS :: Maddening and motivating independent films

War Child

Reel U Films, 2008, 1 hr 32 min.

An award-winning documentary by first-time director C. Karim Chrobog, *War Child* chronicles the shocking and ultimately hopeful odyssey of hip hop artist Emmanuel Jal. Recruited as a child soldier for the Sudan People’s Liberation Army, Jal survived civil war and eventually turned his ferocious story into internationally successful hip hop and rap.



www.YesMagazine.org/warchild
Interview with Emmanuel Jal

The End of Poverty?

Cinema Libre Studio, 2008, 1 hr 44 min.

Five hundred years after imperial globalization began, have we achieved the end of poverty? Hardly, suggests this beautiful and compelling documentary. Narrated by Martin Sheen and drawing on dozens of first-hand accounts and interviews with experts including Joseph Stiglitz, Susan George, and Amartya Sen, *The End of Poverty?* mixes heart-rending testimonies with scenic footage. The film argues that poverty is created by exploitive global economics. The solution? Restore the commons and consume less in the First World. This film tackles the issue of global poverty with clear-eyed honesty and optimism.



www.YesMagazine.org/endofpoverty
See the trailer



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OIL-FREE PLASTIC

What's up with compostable plastics? Are they really as green as they seem?

Americans use 500 million tons of petroleum-based plastics every year, accounting for nearly 10% of annual U.S. oil consumption. Bioplastics—all plastics made from plants—are an exciting alternative, but may not yet be a silver bullet.

Most bioplastics on the market today are made from corn, including Polylactide (PLA) and Mater-Bi, the two you are most likely to encounter as a spoon or sack. Manufacturing a pound of petro-plastic generates a whopping 2-3 pounds of carbon dioxide, compared to as little as 0.28 pounds of CO₂ for a pound of PLA.

Both PLA and Mater-Bi are "compostable" according to industry standards that assume the conditions of commercial composting facilities. However, research indicates that corn-based cutlery can take upwards of two years to break down in home composting systems. NatureWorks, the leading U.S. bioplastic producer, explicitly "does not recommend PLA for use in home composting."

And don't toss bioplastic waste into the recycling bin: corn-based plastics contaminate and degrade recyclable

petro-plastics such as PET. Today most bioplastics end up in landfills where, as they degrade without oxygen, the corn compounds release methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times stronger than carbon dioxide.

What's more, NatureWorks' patented PLA is sourced in part from genetically modified corn, and NatureWorks itself is a joint venture of agribusiness giant Cargill.

For now, your best bioplastic bet is a BioBag made of certified GMO-free Mater-Bi. Ranging from shopping sacks to lawn and leaf bags, thin plastic BioBags will decompose in the backyard within a matter of months rather than years. Check them out at www.biobagusa.com.—A.S.

PLUG IN YOUR CAR

How can I convert my Toyota Prius hybrid into a plug-in hybrid?

A plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) is a car that runs on electricity when its battery has enough charge, runs as a gas-electric hybrid when its battery is low, and can be plugged into a wall outlet to charge when it is not in use. PHEVs have the climate-friendly benefits of an electric car with the long range of a gas-powered vehicle.

Since major auto manu-

facturers are not currently building PHEVs, some intrepid individuals and companies have converted standard hybrids, such as the Toyota Prius, into plug-ins. There are companies around the country that will do the conversion for you, but they are concentrated in California. You can find a list at www.calcars.org/howtoget.html. Be warned: a conversion isn't cheap—it will likely cost you more than \$10,000.

If you are a mechanic, engineer, or electrician with the know-how and tools to pull off a difficult job like this, you might want to consider

converting a hybrid yourself, which brings the price down to about \$6,000. A good place to start would be the Prius Plus wiki at www.eaa-phev.org/wiki/PriusPlus. They have an open source design for adding standard lead-acid car batteries and a charger to your Prius, giving it an all-electric range of around 15 to 20 miles per charge.

You can also get a PHEV without any of this hassle if you are willing to wait until 2010 when several are scheduled to make it onto the market, including a plug-in Prius and the Chevy Volt.—J.S.

Our Issue 49 Researchers

Anna Stern came to YES! after WWOOFing in Corsica and hopes to do some planting and growing of her own this spring. **Jon Sayer** plans to follow his internship with the YES! web team with a career as a Web designer or journalist. **Kim Nochi**, founder of the office "Cave Rave" dance parties, hopes the tradition continues even when she's not around to lay down the beats.





YES! PICKS :: Solar Hot Water

Looking for ways to green your home? Installing a solar water heater will curb your carbon footprint and save you money in the long term.

Hot water typically accounts for around a third of your household power bill. Solar hot water systems are pricey, but energy savings alone will repay the investment in four to eight years. With routine maintenance, solar thermal arrays last 40 years or longer, eliminating more than 100 tons of carbon emissions.

Solar water heaters come in two basic configurations. Flat panel systems are less expensive and best suited to southern latitudes where hard freezes are uncommon. Evacuated tube set-ups are better for colder climates and produce more hot water per square foot, making up for their higher price. All solar water heaters supplement, rather than replace, existing water heating systems. A solar array usually preheats

water, leaving the final few degrees to an on-demand or conventional batch heater. In summer months and southern states virtually all household hot water needs can be met by solar heating. Even regions along the northern border of the U.S. can produce over half of their hot water through solar.

Conservation is key to making solar hot water systems work. "The best thing about it is that it requires rethinking your household's relationship to the sun," says Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn, YES! creative director and owner of an evacuated-tube system. "Can't take a shower until midday, when the water heats up. Can't wash whites in hot water unless I wait for a sunny day." Solar water heaters are a great option for folks who are excited to adjust their habits and monitor meeting their family's needs renewably.

Solar hot water systems range from \$6,600 to \$13,000 installed, and tax incentives of up to \$2,000 are available to cushion the cost. Solar water heating is an investment that will improve the value of your home and our planet.—A.S.

Interested? www.findsolar.com: size and cost calculator; www.dsireusa.org: tax incentives

DIGITAL ROCKS

What's the best way to support musicians instead of big corporations?

The most direct way to cut out the middleman is to go to a concert and purchase an album directly from the band. You can see your favorite musicians perform, contribute to ticket revenue, and give the band what the retailer would have taken.

But say you live in the middle of Nebraska and concert-going isn't an option. Welcome to the world of digital music downloads. CDbaby, Amie Street, IODA, TuneCore, and Topspin Media are online

distributors that return some of the highest revenue shares to artists.

Glenn Peoples, founder of Coolfer.com, a blog offering analysis of the music industry, suggests checking out the band's website to see if you can purchase music straight from them.

Artists with the know-how can set up links on their homepage to sell music or even release albums for free and ask only for donations.

Also, don't forget other merchandise—T-shirts, stickers, and pins—benefits the musicians, making you a walking poster of mad pride and providing free advertising for the band of your choice.—K.N.

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UPDATE

HAS THE PROMISE OF THE STORIES WE'VE PUBLISHED TURNED INTO REALITY?



One of thousands of house meetings held in all 50 states in response to the Obama transition team's call for house meetings on health care reform. This one took place in Visalia, CA

OBAMA-BIDEN
TRANSITION PROJECT

A Call for Universal Health Coverage

Two years ago in YES! ... We reported on the millions of Americans with little or no access to health care. We reported on the Canadian-style single-payer system, in which doctors remain private but the government pays the bills, and we interviewed U.S. advocates who were calling for a similar program here. Single-payer would mean coverage for everyone, regardless of employment or pre-existing condition. But few politicians were signing on, and the call received little media attention.

Today ... Rising unemployment coupled with high insurance premiums is making health care even less accessible for millions of Americans. A Kaiser poll taken in October 2008 reports that 71 percent of the uninsured delayed needed health care because of cost, as did 34 percent of those who had insurance.

The position of the American people on universal health care is clear: 66 percent say we should provide coverage for everyone, even if it means raising taxes. When Change.org invited the public to propose and vote on top priorities for the Obama administration, single-payer health care made the top three. At Move-on.org, 65 percent voted to make universal health care

the top priority, more than any other goal.

Small-business owners agree—70 percent of those responding to a recent 12-state survey said government should play a strong role in guaranteeing access to health care and 59 percent supported a “public insurance option.”

Single-payer health care would create 2.6 million jobs, according to a new study by the California Nurses Association. It would also infuse \$100 billion in wages into the economy.

President Obama campaigned on a public/private health-care reform plan that would give everyone the option of buying into public insurance—at a subsidized rate if necessary. During the transition, thousands of local meetings were held in all 50 states in response to Obama's call for discussion of health care options. As of press time, Department of Health and Human Services officials had not responded to our request for the results of those meetings. However, the groups we heard from all called for single-payer health care.

—Sarah van Gelder

www.YesMagazine.org/healthcare for coverage of the options and citations for this update.