
Summer 2004
The secret to happiness
10 ways to change U.S. history
Staying wild
yes!
a journal of positive futures
Frances Moore Lappé
fear, family, turning points, and hope
what is the good life?
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Issue #30

Linda Wolf

Dear Reader,

I sometimes feel remarkably blessed. I live in a lovely cabin not far from the salt water, and I can take my canoe out on a whim into winds and tides. I still read stories aloud to my two teenage children, because a good book is even more fun when it's shared. I have the privilege of editing this magazine and seeking out the most hopeful stories, the most wonderful and compassionate people.

At times I feel that I am living a good life. But visitors might think otherwise when they note my lack of a television, dishwasher, second bathroom, and other fundamentals of the American Dream.

So much of our striving, individually and as a country, is aimed at achieving that elusive dream. Television, pop-up ads on the Internet, and magazines keep asking: Have you got it all? Are you having fun yet?

According to a radio ad I heard recently, if you own a house large enough that your spouse might get lost coming to breakfast in the morning, then you can say you've arrived.

Whether or not it ever represented the good life, this version of the American Dream is moving out of reach for large numbers of Americans, as well-paying jobs disappear and personal debt reaches record levels (see page 16). Suburbia—that icon of the American Dream—is linked to obesity, depression, isolation, and an undermining of the vibrancy of urban life. Many Americans, especially people of color, never really had a shot at that American dream, and the ecological systems of the planet are being strained by its demands.

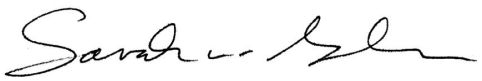
Yet the passing of the America Dream may not be too great a loss. As you might suspect when you think about the sources of your own deep pleasures, people actually find happiness in close relationships, a rich spiritual life, and activities that engage us, according to the research cited by social psychologist David Myers. Those expensive, resource-gobbling habits that turn us into passive consumers are not actually sources of happiness, he claims (see page 12).

In this issue of *YES!*, you'll meet some people who are creating their own paths to a good life: Portlanders who are "repairing" street corners, transforming them into community spaces (page 17); students who are choosing service over partying for their spring breaks (page 38); worker-owners of a cheese shop who are redefining workplace culture (page 22); and a woman who lives with and for the wilderness (page 40).

Can the quest for the good life be a completely private matter? Contributing editor Jon Rowe says we need vibrant and accessible "commons" in order to live the good life. Among these commons are wilderness; quiet; safe, commercial-free spaces for children; the sharing of knowledge that spurs innovation; and spaces for community and political discourse (see page 44). Seems obvious, yet our national policies promote economic growth, often at the expense of the commons, whether or not those growth policies result in job flight or the depletion of the Earth's capacity to sustain life.

The good news is that there do seem to be ways we could choose to live that both bring happiness and require far less of the Earth. Myers' article suggests that I'm not so unusual in finding the good life in a hand-paddled canoe, the book read aloud, and good work. There are as many variations on the good life as there are people, but it appears that giving up on the American Dream does not mean giving up on happiness.

Times of big transitions are nonetheless frightening. In order to reach for the next trapeze, we will have to find the courage to let go of the old trapeze. In an interview on page 30, author Frances Moore Lappé shares her experiences during times of major changes in her own life. These are times when fear doesn't mean we should pull back, she says. These are times for courage, fearlessness, even a bit of recklessness in our quest for a way of life that can sustain the planet and bring us joy.



Sarah Ruth van Gelder
Executive Editor

Albert Einstein

there are two ways to live your life.
one is as though nothing is a miracle.
the other is as though everything is a miracle.

Nelson A. Dauz/UNEP/Peter Arnold

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readersforum

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or e-mail us at editors@yesmagazine.org

Thanks for the Hope

Thank you, thank you, Zahara Heckscher, for your uplifting article that led off the Spring 2004 issue. Your historical perspective is invaluable, especially now with the unfolding events in Haiti and implausible denials by U.S. officials of any involvement in the ouster of Aristide.

I was feeling particularly saddened today while researching the history of Haiti, from its inception in 1804 through a slave revolt, to the present day. I feel more optimistic having read your article, knowing that my efforts are a link in a long and very strong chain that extends over generations.

Sarita Sidhu
Irvine, California

A Conspiracy of What?

I read with great interest the Spring 2004 issue of *YES!* on the globalization of the social justice movement. While looking for a description of the issues that energize the demonstrations against international economic institutions such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank, I mainly found descriptions of various organizations involved in the protests, none of their issues.

I thought that globalization began when the first humans migrated from Africa about 100,000 years ago. Thus, the so-called "anti-globalization protests" have left me a bit puzzled. Recasting the protest movement as a global social justice movement, as *YES!* did, is very helpful.

Anwar Fazal's clear description of the process for strategic planning needed to focus the global social justice movement was excellent. But I wonder who will provide the "information in useful form" needed to initiate this process, and who will provide the "Clear vision and mission statements" needed to "define both the future we want and the specific outcomes we seek."

The Surman and Reilly article on "appropriating the internet for global activism" suggests a possible mechanism for organizing this movement, at least among the wired world. But the resource guide and websites mentioned in other articles indicate that this disorganized array has yet to develop sufficiently. We must hope that someone will be able to unify this effectively without stepping on too many toes or eliciting turf wars among organizations.

David H. Griffin
Jamesville, New York

The Power of Nature

"A Sewer Becomes A Water Park," by Karen Charman (Winter 2004), is an amazing story. I was just talking with a friend last week about the possibility of using bacteria and other life forms to salvage landfills. It's remarkable how powerful and complicated natural forces can be.

Alan Wong
via e-mail

Whose Forests?

According to "Forests Win Protection," in the Spring 2004 issue, the Pew Charitable Trusts of the U.S. has decided to set aside a massive amount of Canadian land for protection. Roughly 50 percent of the forests being protected will be open to development. This is over half a billion acres of forest and mineral wealth. The article also notes that several key parties, Weyerhaeuser and the Canadian government, are missing from the agreement.

Did I read correctly? Do we really have private U.S. groups with the power to set aside vast tracts of Canadian land without the consent of our democratically elected government? As a citizen in a free country, I do not recall being asked to debate the merits of this initiative.

The article says a consensus has been reached between the First Nations and environmentalists. But the First Nations have been involved in protracted legal disputes to reclaim their lost territories. Imagine the surprise of your readers in Canada when we read the World Wildlife Fund has accomplished what our law courts have been unable to resolve.

Gordon Schweers
Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Canada

From the Editors: We love to hear from you. Tell us what you think about articles you've read in *YES!* and what you're doing to make the world a more sustainable, just, and compassionate world.

Readers take action

How are you and others taking action to create a more positive future? Here are your stories. . .

Taking Action on Hog Farms

Thanks for the spring issue's article by Holly Dressel, "A Better Life for Hogs"—a better life, too, for independent farmers, consumers and the environment. It was useful to learn something of the organizing efforts in Europe and Canada.

In the U.S., groundbreaking work is being done in Pennsylvania. Beginning in 1995, over 200 rural municipalities have turned to attorney Thomas Linzey's Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (www.celdf.org) for help in keeping corporate hog farms out of their communities. The result has not been the passage of laws to regulate odors or waste from factory farms, or to permit the land application of sewage sludge. Instead, the result of those partnerships has been to bar factory farm and sludge corporations from operating in those communities. In several places, township supervisors have taken the next logical step and stripped corporations of "rights" used by them to override local control.

The laws have been unquestionably successful. No new factory farms have been sited, and no new sludge has been applied in communities that passed these laws.

Furthermore, over the past two years, these laws have triggered public relations, judicial, and legislative responses from corporations and public officials representing them. No longer about odor, noise, or waste disposal, these issues have been transformed into a crucial and pointed question about who has the authority to govern communities. In effect, each new response by corporations and officials to strong-arm local control results in a new round of organizing focused on building democracy.

This model can be applied to any issue and in any community where citizens need to assert our promised right of self-governance.

Mary Zepernick
Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy
Yarmouth, Massachusetts

Solutions for Elections

I've heard a lot of concern about voting machines for the upcoming U.S. presidential election, but I found "Visualize a Fair Election in 2004" (Fall 2003) quite thin on the "how to" part. If electronic voting machines are used, they will spit out the legally binding result, no matter how flawed they are. Proving fraud is likely to be frustrating and slow, since it has not been possible so far despite such obvious clues as three Republicans winning by exactly 18,181 votes in Texas.

Whatever its legal status, the courts and media would be compelled to pay attention to an exit poll run along the lines of manual elections. Here in Canada, we get honest results with very little expense to the taxpayers just by inviting "scrutineers" from the major political parties to observe the whole process. Given the hordes of volunteers around election campaigns, it is never difficult to find a few to go to make sure the public doesn't get cheated.

These volunteers check that the ballot boxes start off empty and keep an eye on things during the voting. They are replaced in a relay system during the day, and stay to witness the vote counting. It's labor-intensive, but so is getting everyone to get out and vote. The various representatives develop some mutual respect as they go about their parallel tasks. They usually catch only minor things like a barely-spoiled ballot, but develop a powerful sense of working for justice.

If MoveOn or another group were to organize a paper-trail vote that was convenient for users of the voting machines, and generally kept an eye on the official process,

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indicators

Bryan Bedder/Getty Images

Musician Moby volunteers in one of thousands of Bake Sales for Democracy held around the country April 17 to raise money for MoveOn

Even as Howard Dean's presidential candidacy was ending this spring, his organization, renamed Democracy for America, signaled that the grassroots insurgency inspired by his campaign would continue. In late February, the Dean blog urged Dean supporters to "demonstrat[e] that you are ... serious about taking back the soul of the Democratic Party by recruiting and identifying 100 new Democratic office seekers inspired by Dean." Within a week, 110 candidates had been recruited.

This was just one of many signs of a resurgent progressive movement organizing for the November elections and beyond. MoveOn announced this spring that its membership totals more than 2 million people in the United States—larger than the Christian Coalition at its peak.

While the Democratic Party once could marshall a vibrant grassroots organization to turn out voters for each election, in recent decades this structure withered as the Democratic Party leadership focused on raising large donations from the wealthy. Dean and MoveOn's ability to generate voter enthusiasm while raising money in small donations sparked new interest in grassroots organizing within the party.

The new McCain-Feingold campaign finance law, by forbidding the large donations to political parties known as "soft money," has shifted power from the parties to independent groups known as "527s," for the section of the tax code that authorizes them.

In response to this shift and the need to rebuild grassroots organizing, dozens of organizations are forming to mobilize progressive voters. In April, Democracy for America announced it was joining 29 other organizations, including the Sierra Club, MoveOn, Planned Parenthood, and the AFL-CIO, in a coalition called America Votes to coordinate their campaign efforts. Another coalition, National Voice, will be assisting nonprofits in their get-out-the-vote efforts, focusing particularly on traditionally underrepresented voters, including youth, rural residents, and communities of color.

Progressive Majority PAC is already raising funds for progressive candidates and has launched PROPAC, an aggressive program to recruit, train, and elect the next generation of candidates for Congress and other offices. Through the MoveOn PAC, more than 10,000 Americans contributed more than $2 million to key congressional campaigns in the 2000 election, and more than $3.5 million in 2002 election. MoveOn has just begun to solicit political contributions for 2004 races.

MoveOn is continuing to build on its creative political use of the internet to get political support from ordinary citizens rather than the wealthy few. When Education Secretary Rod Paige recently called teachers' unions "terrorists," the Campaign for America's Future, MoveOn, and the National Education Association joined to launch a campaign to demand that Bush fire Paige. Within days, over 230,000 people joined an online protest petition.

Hundreds of local groups—including Mothers Opposing Bush, Bands Against Bush, and Run Against Bush, formed by joggers to raise money to oust Bush—have sprung up around the country. People are joining who are getting involved in politics for the first time, and they are striving to make political organizing sociable and fun. Women Against Bush seeks to organize the fashionable set, with fund raisers at spas and a Wax Away Bush event, while Babes Against Bush is issuing a

Regime Change Countdown calendar of women who stripped to raise money to defeat Bush.

In a bid to coordinate this grassroots work, the Campaign for America's Future announced the second annual Take Back America conference June 2–4.

Republicans have also been assembling a strong grassroots organization, with an e-mail list of over 6 million George W. Bush supporters and a drive to register 3 million new Republican voters. By the end of March, the Bush campaign had raised a record $185 million. Democratic candidate John Kerry had raised $85 million.

—Roger Hickey and Carolyn McConnell

Roger Hickey is co-director of the Campaign for America's Future.

Solutions to E-Voting

Criticism of electronic voting machines has begun to move from exposé to efforts to replace the flawed technology. Bev Harris, the Seattle-based activist who has led scrutiny of electronic voting, has invited thousands of volunteers to join a Clean Voting Crew. She aims of having a volunteer at every polling place in the fall elections who will look for problems and publicize them. Harris is also calling for nominations of the top 10 counties in need of voting cleanup, aiming to use this publicity to prevent problems in the fall. VoteWatch.us is training and organizing similar teams of volunteer election monitors.

Verified Voting organized lobbying days this April to push for passage of federal legislation requiring voter-verified paper ballots. Congressman Rush Holt has introduced a bill (H.R. 2239) that would require paper ballots, surprise random recounts, public access to voting software, and certification of software by accredited labs. Two similar bills have been introduced in the Senate by Bob Graham and Barbara Boxer (S.1980 and S.2045). A third (S.1986), introduced by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, would not require actual random recounts nor audits using paper receipts and would not require changes in time for the November elections.

Much of the criticism of voting technology has centered on the secrecy of the software, owned by private companies, many of which have strong ties to the Bush administration and the Republican Party. In 2002, a losing candidate for county office in Palm Beach, Florida, who charged that computer voting problems caused him to lose, was denied access to the software used in the election on the grounds that it was proprietary. The Open Voting Consortium, led by University of California, University of Iowa, and Princeton University computer scientists, is working to design free, open-source voting software. Like the operating system Linux, the open software model allows thousands of computer programmers to share improvements to the software, making it more secure, more accurate, and open to public scrutiny.

In response to pressure from groups such as Verified Voting and True Majority's The Computer Ate My Vote campaign, seven states—California, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont, and West Virginia—now require that electronic voting machines provide paper ballots. However, in most cases paper ballots will not be required until after the November elections. Nevada became the first state to require paper ballots by November, after officials received advice about security from gambling machine experts, according to John Gideon of Verified Voting.

In April, Voters Unite (www.votersunite.org) released "Myth Breakers for Election Officials," which offers information on electronic voting and the requirements of the Help America Vote Act. The group is asking voters to give the guide to local elections officials.

In a bizarre turn of events, the inventor of a voter-verified electronic voting system died suddenly in a car crash on March 12, when the car he was driving was hit from behind by a truck when he attempted to pass it, according to Gannett News Service. The late Athan Gibbs, an African-American accountant and CEO of TruVote, created the verified voting system in response to the loss of thousands of votes in 2000, he told *The Tennessean* in December. The TruVote system provides voters with paper receipts with unique validation numbers, which voters could use on a website to confirm that their votes were recorded. TruVote officials say they have a version of the system certified and ready for use. Avante and Accupoll also make voter-verified electronic voting machines.

—Carolyn McConnell

For information on e-voting, see the series of articles at www.wired.com. For information on the Clean Voting Crews, see www.blackboxvoting.org.

Troops Again Exposed to Depleted Uranium

Several U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq have tested positive for depleted uranium (DU). Use of DU weapons in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans continues to raise concerns about health risks to soldiers and civilians.

The nine soldiers from the 442nd New York Army National Guard company who were tested told the *New York Daily News* that they and other members of their company became sick last summer while stationed in Iraq. The soldiers were examined and tested by an independent uranium expert, Dr. Asaf Durakovic. He concluded that four of the nine soldiers had "almost certainly" been exposed to radioactive dust released by depleted uranium shells fired by U.S. troops.

The Army says that only soldiers wounded by depleted uranium shrapnel or who are inside tanks during an explosion face measurable radiation exposure. However, the 442nd company did not see active combat while

in Iraq. After learning of the recent results, the Army reversed course and ordered immediate testing for more than a dozen members of the 442nd company who are back in the U.S.

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton blasted Pentagon officials for not properly screening soldiers returning from Iraq and vowed to introduce legislation mandating screenings.

DU is used in weapons because it is very dense, giving DU shells the ability to pierce armored vehicles, and it is cheap and readily available.

A number of newspapers recently reported on a classified Pentagon report on health risks of depleted uranium, which stated that when "soldiers inhale or ingest DU dust they incur a potential increase in cancer risk."

Several European studies have linked DU to chromosome damage and birth defects in mice. Many scientists say too little is known about the long-range effects of DU exposure to claim any amount is safe.

Steve Robinson, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center (NGWRC), says that data from both Iraq wars should be analyzed to determine whether exposure to DU results in medical problems for soldiers and civilian populations. There has been speculation that DU might be a cause for the mysterious rash of ailments suffered by U.S. and British troops in the first Gulf War and their offspring, as well as for high rates of cancer among Iraqi children.

Comedian Al Franken (left) and actor Janeane Garofalo (center) perform at the Air America launch party March 30, 2004

Thos Robinson/Getty Images

According to Dan Fahey, a researcher on depleted uranium for the NGWRC, dust from depleted uranium shells scatters into the air and water supplies when the shells explode. Materials in the dust remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years. Fahey said that the worst danger from DU appears to be its chemical toxicity when inhaled or swallowed.

A study of DU for the World Health Organization warns that Iraq's civilian population could be endangered by DU weapons. Authors Keith Baverstock, Carmel Mothersill, and Mike Thorne, who posted the study to the Internet after the WHO refused to release it, suggest that the radiological and chemical properties of DU might interact in a heightened "cocktail effect" on the human body.

The U.S. Navy confirmed in 2003 that it has been using depleted uranium shells in arms tests off the Washington State coast, but rejected criticism that the radioactive ammunition could harm people and the environment. There are reports that the Navy is switching to tungsten rounds, but it has not said why. A Canadian military spokesman said Canada's Navy has stopped using DU shells.

Amid growing controversy in Europe and Japan, the European Parliament called last year for a moratorium on the use of DU.

—Rik Langendoen

For more information on DU, see www.antenna.nl/wise/uranium/pdf/duunris.pdf or www.ngwrc.org. Rik Langendoen is an environmental geologist and a longtime* YES*! volunteer.

Rush Gets Competition

A new liberal radio network now offers listeners an alternative to today's conservative-heavy AM talk radio. Comedian and author Al Franken, actor and comedian Janeane Garofalo, hip-hop icon Chuck D, radio personality Randi Rhodes, political humorist Sam Seder, environmental activist Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and "The Daily Show" co-creator Lizz Winstead are among the regulars on this progressive answer to Rush Limbaugh. Air America debuted in six radio markets on March 31 and by April 17th had tripled its number of stations.

A 2002 Gallup Poll showed that the percentage of Americans who say they get their news from talk radio has nearly doubled since 1995, from 12 percent to 22 percent. *Talkers* magazine reported last year that most of those listeners identified themselves as ultra or moderate conservatives (60 percent) and as politically active (73 percent voted in 2000).

Air America hopes to attract conservatives and liberals alike and tap into the half of America that currently ignores talk radio altogether. As Rush Limbaugh took 26 years to grow to his current popularity, Air America's CEO Mark Walsh does not expect to surge straight to the top of AM ratings. But he hopes the network's entertaining and compelling content will set it apart. According to Walsh, "Humor is an efficient way to wrap important messages and get them out to people."

The switch drew fire from some listeners. New York's *Amsterdam News* reported that many WLIB listeners were disappointed when the station's black-oriented programming was replaced by Air America's personalities, 90 percent of whom are white. In Los Angeles and Chicago, listeners who used to tune in to hear Spanish-language programming now find an English-speaking Air America line-up.

Air America can be heard in over 15 cities and on XM Satellite Radio.

—Becky Brun

A complete list of Air America programs and updated stations is available at www.airamericaradio.com.

California Town Defeats Wal-Mart

Voters in Inglewood, a working-class urban corridor of Los Angeles, have dealt a setback to Wal-Mart. In April, 60 per-

cent of voters rejected a measure that would have overturned local law and allowed Wal-Mart to build the first of 40 planned supercenters in California.

After city officials voted to block the Wal-Mart supercenter last year, Wal-Mart hired signature gatherers to collect thousands of signatures to put a measure on the ballot and force a vote by Inglewood residents. The initiative would have exempted the Wal-Mart store from environmental review, traffic studies, and public hearings, and required approval by two-thirds of the electorate before the city could require any changes to Wal-Mart's plans.

The Wal-Mart store would have spanned an area as big as 17 football fields, with 22,000 parking spots. The corporation spent more than $1 million campaigning in Inglewood, throwing street fairs and giving away bags of free groceries.

Residents of Inglewood responded by forming the Coalition for a Better Inglewood made up of churches, businesses, and unions to campaign against the measure. They were outspent 15 to one.

"People took it to their churches, to the shops where they get their hair done and their clothes cleaned, neighbor to neighbor," said Danny Tabor, a campaign organizer for the community. "It would have been easy for voters to think, 'I want low prices, and jobs for the young people, and revenue for the city.' But what we ended up saying was that we wanted self-determination over our own destiny."

On average, Wal-Mart employees make $2 to $3 less per hour than employees at other supermarkets and rarely receive health benefits. This, and Wal-Mart's anti-union tactics, did not sit well with Inglewood's 10,000 union members and a community still feeling the effects of the five-month supermarket strike in southern California.

United Food and Commercial Workers went on strike when the Safeway, Kroger, and Albertsons grocery chains announced they would cut labor costs to compete with Wal-Mart. The strike was settled in March with UFCW members keeping their healthcare and pension plans, but accepting a two-tiered wage system under which new hires are paid less than their co-workers.

As Wal-Mart vows to build "big-box" stores across the state, many other communities in California are bracing for a fight. Lawsuits against Wal-Mart are pending in Turlock, Alameda County, and Bakersfield, and San Marcos recently reversed the city's approval of a Wal-Mart supercenter.

Wal-Mart continues to face scrutiny for its wage and employment policies. A congressional report released in February accuses the chain of violating labor standards. A sex-discrimination case against Wal-Mart, filed in 2001, now encompasses over 1.6 million present and former Wal-Mart employees and may be the biggest civil-action suit ever filed in California.

—Megan Tady

Former YES! intern Megan Tady is a freelance journalist who lives in the Pioneer Valley in Massachusetts.

Publishing Industry Begins to Go Green

Responding to the environmental costs of publishing, a group of authors has joined forces to convince the publishing industry to increase the number of books printed on recycled paper. In the last three years, 120 North American book publishers have joined the Green Press Initiative in the United States and the Markets Initiative in Canada, pledging to shift to recycled paper. Forty-two percent of the world's industrial tree harvest is used to make paper, according to the American Forest and Paper Association, .

Authors Paul Hawken, Julia Butterfly Hill, Alice Walker, Barbara Kingsolver, Andrew Weil, and Winona LaDuke are among the initiative's members. Authors or publishers can join the initiative if they commit to use 30 to 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper that is non-chlorine bleached, to phase out the use of endangered forest fibers entirely, and help establish committees to monitor the process.

So far, only small to mid-size publishing houses—including Berrett-Koehler, Chelsea Green, Island Press, and University of Alberta Press—have joined Green Press or Markets Initiative. Green Press Initiative founder Tyson Miller hopes that once one big house joins, the rest will follow.

Fritjof Capra (left), Alice Walker (center), and Julia Butterfly Hill (right), author members of the Green Press Initiative

—Becky Brun

Learn more at www.greenpressinitiative.org (U.S.) and www.oldgrowthfree.com (Canada).* YES! *is printed on 100 percent post-consumer-waste recycled paper.

Moroccan Women Win Rights

Under the first major reform of its family law since independence from France in 1956, Moroccan law now recognizes women as adults for the first time. Moroccan women also gained the right of divorce, can marry without a male guardian's consent, and are no longer legally obligated to obey their husbands. The law raises the minimum marrying age for women from 15 to 18, the same as for men, subjects polygamy to judges' authorization, and obligates men to support their children born outside of marriage.

Women's groups had long advocated a reform of the marriage code,

called the Moudouana, and in 2000 Morocco's socialist Prime Minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi joined the calls for reform. Hundred of thousands of people attended a supportive rally in the capital, Rabat. However, a massive counter-protest in Casablanca, organized by Islamist leaders, succeeded in staving off reform. But in 2001, the new reform-oriented King Mohammed VI appointed a commission of religious theorists, academics, and women activists to revise the Moudouana. The king unveiled the new law in October 2003.

Both the new and the original law are based on Islamic Sharia law. "The original one was based on a more conservative interpretation of Islam—using the most women-unfriendly parts," said Iman Bibars, regional director for the Middle East and North Africa for the Ashoka organization, a nonprofit that supports social change. Bibars sees the new law as offering a promising model for other Muslim countries.

The new Moroccan law comes on the heels of a quota system that came into effect in 2002 requiring that 30 of the 230 seats in parliament be held by women. Nonetheless, girls are less likely to be sent to school than boys, 62 percent of Moroccan women remain illiterate, and women constitute 25 percent of the workforce.

—Michelle Burkhart

Big Money Loses in California Elections

In March, Mendocino County became the first county in the nation to ban genetically engineered crops and animals within county limits. In nearby Humboldt County, voters celebrated another victory over corporations with the lopsided defeat of a recall campaign against Paul Gallegos, a district attorney who had brought fraud charges against Pacific Lumber Company for its timber cutting practices.

In both campaigns, big money failed to buy victory. Eighty percent of the money spent in the Humboldt recall campaign came from Pacific Lumber. In a $250 million civil fraud case, Gallegos charged Pacific Lumber with deceiving state agencies about timber cutting practices that allegedly resulted in massive landslides and flood damage to streams and farms.

Pacific Lumber, which became famous for cutting some of the last old-growth redwoods, now calls itself Palco. The company bankrolled a massive ad campaign claiming that Paul Gallegos was soft on crime and conspiring with environmentalists to go after the timber giant. Nevertheless, after a massive get-out-the-vote campaign by Gallegos supporters, Humboldt voters supported Gallegos by 61 percent, with turnout of 63 percent.

In Mendocino, Croplife, a consortium of biotech producers outspent proponents of the anti-modified-foods measure seven to one. But voters passed the measure by 57 percent.

The Mendocino initiative has given hope to opponents of genetically modified (GM) foods nationwide. California organizers say similar ballot measures are currently being promoted in 11 of the state's 58 counties. In Vermont, the state senate recently passed a law that holds biotech industries accountable for cross contamination when GM pollen fertilizes other crops.

About 70 percent of all processed food in U.S. supermarkets is genetically modified, according to a recent PBS documentary. GM foods, restricted by the European Union in 1998, have found links to increases in cancer and food allergies, and diminishing food quality, according to studies in the U.S. and Europe, although those results have been hotly contested. Indigenous rights groups have lobbied against practices by GM producers such as Monsanto that pressure farmers in the developing world to buy GM patented seeds instead of saving seeds from one harvest for the next year's sowing.

Since the passage of Mendocino's ban, California farmers, fearing cross-contamination of their crops, successfully lobbied the California Department of Food and Agriculture to block the introduction of GM rice in California. And despite intense lobbying by the Bush administration, 87 countries recently signed the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety establishing international standards for the labeling of GM foods.

—Lisa Garrigues

Lisa Garrigues is a YES! contributing editor.

Sweat-Free Sneakers

This summer, shoppers can slip into new sneakers with a clear conscience. On May 1, International Worker's Day, fair-trade fashion label No Sweat Apparel began selling the world's first 100 percent union-made sneaker.

Workers at the factory in Jakarta, Indonesia, where the sneakers are made, receive almost 30 percent above minimum wage. Founder and CEO Adam Neiman said of the choice to outsource a percentage of No Sweat's labor to developing countries, "Our mission is to support their struggle against exploitation—not take their jobs away." He added, "We are providing workers a fair wage, but more importantly, we are supporting the global labor movement."

Since 2002, through its website (www.nosweatapparel.com), No Sweat has sold apparel made by union workers in the United States, Canada, and Indonesia. The sneaker, a Converse All-Star look-alike, is the first No Sweat product to be sold in retail stores. Other union-made apparel firms include SweatX, Justice Clothing, and Reason8.

When customers buy a No Sweat Apparel product, they receive a detailed fact sheet, including the name of the factory and the wages of the workers who produced the item.

—Becky Brun

the page that counts

Value of the amount of lost fuel and productivity resulting from traffic congestion in the U.S. each year: $69.5 billion[1]

Percent of trips taken by bicycle or walking in the U.S.: 6

Percent of trips taken by bicycle or walking in the Netherlands: 28[2]

Bicyclist fatality rates per 100 million trips in the U.S.: 21

Bicyclist fatality rates per 100 million trips in the Netherlands.: 1.6[3]

Year that Jimmy Carter installed the first solar panels on the White House: 1979[4]

Year that Ronald Reagan removed them: 1980[5]

Number of solar panels installed at the White House under the current Bush administration: 167[4]

Proposed cuts in Bush's 2005 budget for renewable energy research and development programs, including solar: $29 million[6]

Rank of Nigeria among the world's nations for percent of citizens reporting that they are happy: 1

Rank of the United States: 16[7]

Rank of Nigeria's per capita gross daily product (GDP): 211

Rank of United States' GDP: 2[8]

Percent of Americans who consider having a home computer as a necessity: 33[9]

Percent of Nigerians who do not have access to safe drinking water: 70[10]

Number of broadcast TV stations in Nigeria: 3[8]

Number of broadcast TV stations in the U.S.: more than 1,500[8]

Percent reduction in crime in the U.S. from 1990 to 1998: 20

Precent increase in crime reported in network TV news from 1990 to 1998: 83[11]

Percent rise in the number of families in bankruptcy over the past 25 years: 400[12]

Percent of personal bankruptcies filed in the U.S. that are a result of injury or illness: 50[13]

Healthcare expenditures per capita in the U.S.: $4,887

Average healthcare expenditures per capita in the other 30 OECD countries : $2,100[14]

Rank of the U.S. among the world's nations in life expectancy: 24[15]

Income-adjusted fine recently given to a wealthy Finnish man for driving 40 kilometers per hour over the speed limit: 170,000 euros ($217,000)[16]

Percent increase in fatal accidents since the U.S. raised the National Maximum Speed Limit in 1995: 20[17]

Divorce rate of heterosexuals in Denmark: 46

Divorce rate of homosexuals in Denmark: 17[18]

Percent of Danish children born to unmarried parents: 60[19]

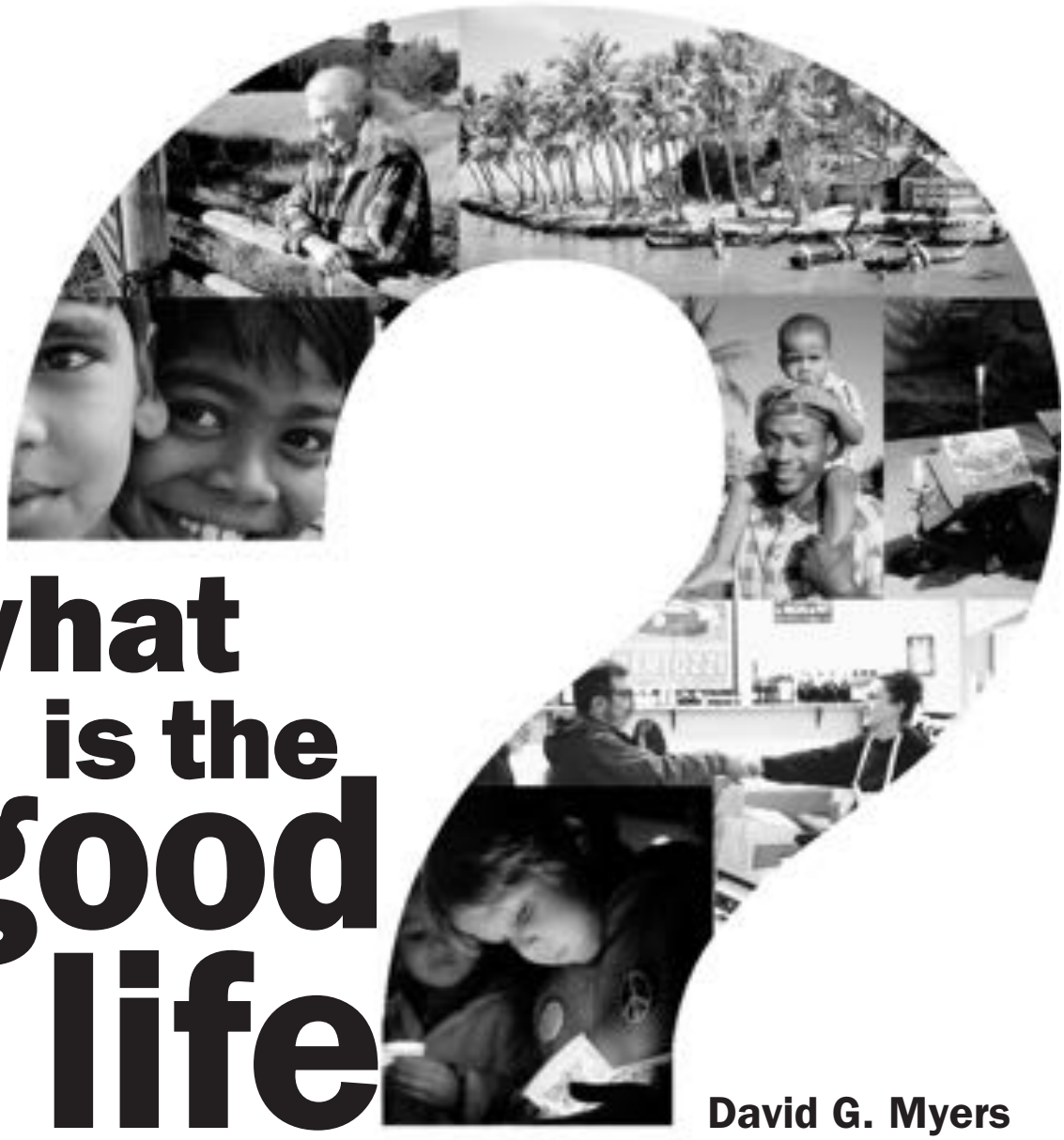
Number of Danish children waiting to be adopted in 1999: 25

Number of Danish children adopted in 1999: 25[20]

Number of American children waiting to be adopted in 1999: 127,000

Number of American children adopted in 1999: 47,000[21]

1. Texas Transportation Institute, 2003 Urban Mobility Study, http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/news_release **2.** Transportation Research Board, www.trb.org as cited in Pucher and Dijkstra,"Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health Public Health: Lessons From the Netherlands and Germany," *American Journal of Public Health*, September 2003 **3**. Pucher and Dijkstra **4**. Mark C. Fitzgerald, "Solar at the White House," *Solar Today,* May/June 2003 **5**. www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/solar whitehouse.htm **6.** www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2005/pdf/appendix/doe.pdf and www.ems.org/rls/2004/02/03/coalition_decrie.html **7.** World Values Survey, www.worldvaluessurvey.org/, as cited in Michael Bond, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *New Scientist*, October 4, 2003 **8.** The CIA World Factbook, www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook **9.** Roper Institute as cited in Juliet Schor, The Overspent American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure, Basic Books, 1992 **10.** "Developing a sustainable water policy," October 6, 2003, www.nigeriafirst.org/article_1318.shtml **11.** Lori Dorfman, "Off Balance: Youth, Race & Crime in the News," www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/media **12.** Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Warren Tyagi, The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers & Fathers Are Going Broke, Basic Books. 2003 **13.** Melissa B. Jacoby, Teresa A. Sullivan, and Elizabeth Warren, "Rethinking the Debates over Health Care Financing: Evidence from the Bankruptcy Courts," *New York University Law Review,* vol. 76, no. 2, www.nyu.edu/pages/lawreview/76/2/jacobyetal.html **14.** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, www.oecd.org **15.** www.who.int/inf-pr-2000/en/pr2000-life.html. **16.** The Associated Press, "Police hand millionaire a record speeding fine," February 10, 2004 **17**. American College of Emergency Physicians, www.acep.org/1,400,0.html **18.** Marian M. Jones, "Lessons From Gay Marriages," *Psychology Today,* May/June 1997 **19.** Stanley Kurtz, "The End of Marriage in Scandinavia: The 'conservative case' for same-sex marriage collapses," *The Weekly Standard,* February 2, 2004, Volume 9, Issue 20 **20**. Danish National Board of Adoption, www.adopt.dk **21.** Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, www.adoptioninstitute.org/FactOverview/foster.html



what is the good life?

David G. Myers

Watch television, and you'll learn that the good life is in a new car, a cold beer, or a new drug. Look at surveys, and Americans say they want more money. But look inside at what actually gives you joy, and the good life may be closer than you thought

the secret to happiness

What is the good life? The old American Dream offers an answer: It's individually achieved affluence. It's the indulgences promised by magazine sweepstakes: a 40-foot yacht, a deluxe motor home, a personal housekeeper. ("Whoever said money can't buy happiness isn't spending it right," proclaims a Lexus ad.) In a phrase, it's life, liberty, and the purchase of happiness.

Does money indeed buy happiness? Few *YES!* readers would answer yes. But ask another question—"Would a *little* more money make you a *little* happier?—and many readers will sheepishly nod. There is, we assume, a connection between fiscal fitness and feeling fine, an assumption that feeds what Juliet Schor has called the "cycle of work and spend"—working more to buy more. According to one 1990s Gallup Poll, one in two women, two in three men, and four in five people earning more than $75,000 a year say they would like to be richer.

But we delude ourselves. The good life springs less from earning one's first million than from loving and being loved, from developing the traits that mark happy lives, from finding connection and meaningful hope in faith communities, and from experiencing "flow" in work and recreation.

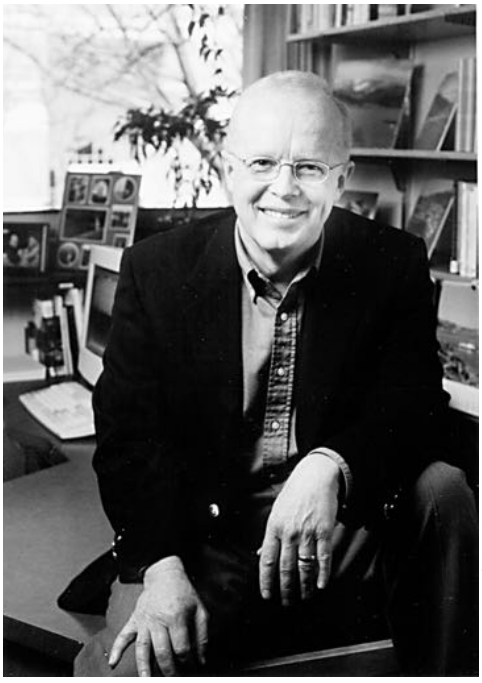


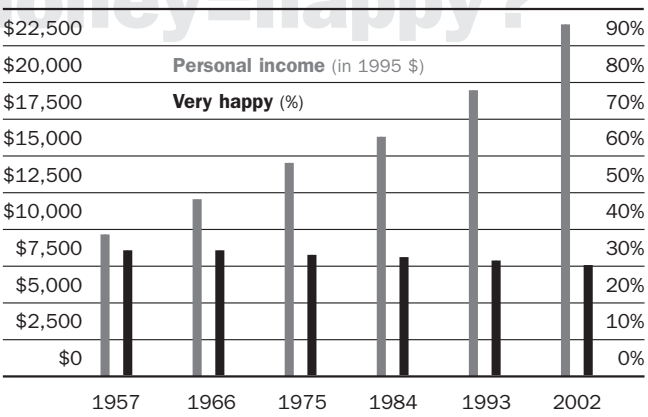
photo courtesy of the author

Rising materialism

Materialism surged during the 1970s and 1980s, as evident in the annual UCLA/American Council on Education (ACE) survey of nearly a quarter million entering collegians. The proportion considering it "very important or essential" that they become "very well-off financially" skyrocketed from 40 to 74 percent, flip-flopping with the shrinking numbers who considered it very important or essential to "develop a meaningful philosophy of life." Materialism was up, spirituality down.

What a change in values. In the recent UCLA/ACE surveys, "very well-off financially" has been the top ranked of 19 rated goals, outranking "becoming an authority in my own field," "helping others in difficulty," and "raising a family." And it's not just collegians. Asked by Roper pollsters to identify what makes "the good life," 38 percent of Americans in 1975 and 63 percent in 1996 chose "a lot of money."

money=happy?



In *Luxury Fever*, economist Robert Frank reports that, with more people having more money to spend, late-1990s spending on luxury goods was growing four times as fast as overall spending. Thousand-dollar-a-night suites at the Palm Beach Four Seasons Hotel were booked months ahead for weddings, as were $5000-a-night suites at Aspen. The number of America's 100-foot yachts doubled to 5,000 compared to a decade ago, and each may cost more than $10,000 per hour of use. Cars costing more than $30,000 (in 1996 dollars) increased during the 1990s from 7 to 12 percent of vehicles sold.

Does such unsustainable consumption enable the good life? Does being well-off make for well-being? Would people—would you—be happier if you could exchange a modest lifestyle for one with a world-class home entertainment system, winter skiing from your condo along the Aspen slopes, and being wined and dined on executive class travel? Social psychology theory and research offer some clear answers.

Are rich people happier?

To a modest extent, yes, rich people are happier. Especially in poor countries, such as India, being relatively well-off does make for greater well-being. We need food, rest, shelter, and some sense of control over our lives.

But in affluent countries, the link between wealth and self-reported well-being is "surprisingly weak," notes researcher Ronald Inglehart. Once able to afford life's necessities, more and more money provides diminishing additional returns.

"People who go to work in their overalls and on the bus are just as happy, on the average, as those in suits who drive to work in their own Mercedes," observes David Lykken, summarizing his own studies of happiness. Even the very rich—for example, the *Forbes* 100 wealthiest Americans in a 1980s survey by psychologist Ed Diener and his colleagues—are only slightly happier than average.

Over time, does our happiness rise with our affluence? A recent windfall from an inheritance, a surging economy, or a lottery win does provide a temporary jolt of joy. But as soon as one adapts to the new wealth, the euphoria subsides.

If personal happiness does not enduringly rise with our rising personal affluence, does a rising economic tide lift our collective happiness? Are we happier than in 1957, when economist John Galbraith was describing the United States as *The Affluent Society*?

Compared to then, today's America is the doubly affluent society—with doubled real incomes (thanks partly to the doubling of married women's employment) and double what money buys. Americans today own about twice as many cars per person, eat out more than twice as often, and commonly enjoy big screen color TVs, microwave ovens, home computers, air conditioning, Post-it notes, and gobs of other goodies. Materially, these are the best of times.

So, believing that it is "very important" to be very well-off financially, and having seen our affluence ratchet upward little by little over four decades, are we now happier?

We are not. Since 1957, the number of Americans who say they are "very happy" has declined

slightly, from 35 to 30 percent. We are twice as rich and no happier. Meanwhile, the divorce rate has doubled, the teen suicide rate has more than doubled, and increasingly our teens and young adults are plagued by depression.

I have called this soaring wealth and shrinking spirit "the American paradox." More than ever, we at the end of the last century were finding ourselves with big houses and broken homes, high incomes and low morale, secured rights and diminished civility. We were excelling at making a living but too often failing at making a life. We celebrated our prosperity but yearned for purpose. We cherished our freedoms but longed for connection. In an age of plenty, we were feeling spiritual hunger.

These facts of life lead us to a startling conclusion: Our becoming better off materially has not made us better off psychologically. In the U.S., Europe, and Japan, affluence has not purchased the good life. The conclusion startles because it challenges modern materialism: *Economic growth in affluent countries has provided no apparent boost to human morale.*

It is further striking that those who strive most for wealth tend to live with lower well-being, a finding that "comes through very strongly in every culture I've looked at," reports psychologist Richard Ryan.

In *The High Price of Materialism,* Ryan's research collaborator, Tim Kasser, concludes that those who instead strive for intimacy, personal growth, and contribution to the community enjoy a higher quality of life. This concurs with those from an earlier survey of 800 college alumni, which found that those with "Yuppie values"—those who preferred a high income and occupational success and prestige to having very close friends and a close marriage—were twice as likely as their other former classmates to describe themselves as "fairly" or "very" *un*happy.

Pause a moment and think: What's the most satisfying event that you have experienced in the last month? Psychologist Kennon Sheldon and his colleagues put that question to samples of university students. Then they asked the students to rate the extent to which 10 different needs were met by the satisfying event. What were the three emotional needs that most strongly accompanied that satisfaction? They were self-esteem, relatedness (feeling connected with others), and autonomy (feeling in control). At the bottom of the list of satisfaction-predicting factors was money and luxury.

A study by Ed Diener and Martin Seligman confirms that *very* happy university students are distinguished not by their money but by their "rich and satisfying close relationships." The good life is not primarily about money and consumption.

We at the end of the last century were finding ourselves with big houses and broken homes, high incomes and low morale, secured rights and diminished civility. We were excelling at making a living but too often failing at making a life

A new American dream

If materialistic strivings do not entail the good life, then we can ask, what's the point of luxury fever? "Why," wondered the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, "do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?" What's the point of accumulating stacks of unplayed CD's, closets full of seldom worn clothes, three-car garages with luxury cars—all purchased in a vain quest for an elusive joy? And what's the point of leaving significant inherited wealth to one's heirs, as if it could bring them happiness, rather than applying it to a hurting world?

Ronald Inglehart, a social scientist who follows world values surveys, has discerned the beginnings of a subsiding of materialism and signs of a new generation maturing with increasing concern for personal relationships, the integrity of nature, and the meaning of life (or the "search for spiritual moorings," as George Gallup has called it).

If affluence and materialism are not major ingredients for the good life, research indicates those that are:

- *Close, supportive relationships.* We humans have what today's social psychologists call a deep "need to belong." Those supported by intimate friendships or a committed marriage are *much* likelier to declare themselves "very happy."
- *Faith communities*. Connection, meaning, and deep hope are often nourished in congregations. In National Opinion Research Center surveys of 42,000 Americans since 1972, 26 percent of

Honey, I Shrunk the Middle Class!

Meizhu Lui

While some Americans luxuriate in thousand-dollar-a-night suites at Palm Beach Four Seasons Hotel and in $30,000-cars, those in the middle class—America's pride and joy—are struggling just to stay in the middle class.

During the last three years, there has been a massive loss of jobs, especially in the manufacturing sector, that had paid the bills for middle-class families. Out of the 2.9 million private-sector jobs that have been lost in the last three years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2.8 million or 96 percent of them have been factory jobs. These were the unionized jobs in industries like auto and steel that paid good wages and created the middle class after World War II.

African-Americans have been hit especially hard. When discrimination in the auto and steel industries was curtailed by the federal government, many African-Americans were able to buy homes and send their kids to college. But now, with unemployment at 5.2 percent for whites, almost one in 11, or 9 percent of African-Americans are out of work—and out of the middle class.

If a laid-off worker finds a new job, chances are that worker will be taking a big cut in pay and benefits. According to the North American Alliance for Fair Employment, the jobs in industries that are growing pay 21 percent less than those in industries that are declining. In Delaware for example, average wages in downsizing industries are paying about $50,000 a year, while newly created jobs are paying less than $30,000. Family income has fallen in 39 states.

White-collar jobs are also on the chopping block. An estimated 14 million professionals will lose their jobs in the next few years as companies move these jobs overseas. For example, accountants making over $23 an hour in the US can be replaced by an accountant in India for little more than $6 an hour.

The problem is not only wages. Today, fewer and fewer jobs include health benefits. In 44 states, the percentage of people with employment-based health insurance decreased. Nearly 75 million Americans worried sometime in the last year that they would lose everything in case of an unexpected health crisis.

Older Americans are also on the middle-class endangered list. Employers have moved away from "defined benefit" pension plans that guarantee a worker a certain percentage of their yearly wages after retirement. Now, if a worker is lucky enough to have an employer-based retirement plan, employers generally guarantee only a "contribution"—that is, dollars that are invested in the stock market. As seen with Enron, if the stock goes bust, so does a worker's retirement.

In the meantime, corporate profits are up 25 percent. CEOs of our largest corporations are paid 301 times more than an average worker's salary. Government policies helped create the middle class after World War II, when work and wealth were more widely shared. Today, government policies have divided people through massive tax breaks for the wealthy and erosion of the public services all but the very wealthy rely on. We need to revive the American dream of economic security for all

Meizhu Lui is executive director of United for a Fair Economy, *www.FairEconomy.org*

those rarely or never attending religious services declared themselves very happy, as did 47 percent of those attending multiple times weekly.

- *Positive traits*. Optimism, self-esteem, and perceived control over one's life are among the traits that mark happy experiences and happy lives. Happy people typically report feeling an "internal locus of control"—they feel empowered. When deprived of control over one's life—an experience studied in prisoners, nursing home patients, and people living under totalitarian regimes—people suffer lower morale and worse health. Severe poverty demoralizes when it erodes people's sense of control over their life circumstances.
- *Flow*. Work and leisure experiences that engage one's skills also enable the good life. Between the anxiety of being overwhelmed and stressed, and the apathy of being underwhelmed and bored, lies a zone in which people experience flow—an optimal state in which, absorbed in an activity, they lose consciousness of self and time. Flow theorist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi found people reporting their greatest enjoyment not when mindlessly passive, but when unself-consciously absorbed in a mindful challenge. Most people are happier gardening than power-boating, talking to friends than watching TV. Low consumption recreations prove satisfying.

Sustainable joy

All this is good news. Those things that make for the genuinely good life—close relationships, a hope-filled faith, positive traits, engaging activity—are enduringly sustainable. As Jigme Singye Wangchuk, King of Bhutan, observes, "Gross national happiness is more important than gross national product."

Fulfilling a new vision of an American dream need not romanticize poverty or destroy our market economy. But it will require our seasoning prosperity with purpose, capital with compassion, and enterprise with equity. Such a transformation in consciousness has happened before; today's thinking about race, gender, and the environment are radically changed from a half century ago. And it could happen again.

Hope College social psychologist David Myers is author of *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Avon) and *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (Yale).

Photo credits page 12 (clockwise): Sheila Krishnan, Dan Lamont, Paolo Mulazzani, Susan Pierres, Elias Amidon & Elizabeth Rabia Roberts, The Cheese Board Collective and Joshua Apte, Sheila Krishnan, and Chrissie Long

Stephen Silha

With winged trucks, paint, and corner kiosks, Portlanders are transforming their neighborhoods. Now, even city officials are applauding

street-corner revolution

Stephen Silha

It's nine in the morning, and the tea water is hot at the southwest corner of Ninth and Sherrett Street in the Sellwood neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. An earthen goddess bench beckons mysteriously next to the wooden hook-tree from which mugs hang at all hours. At this crossroads, once a nondescript urban intersection, a new and ancient approach to community building is flourishing. Yet in the 1970s this neighborhood was so tough a U.S. Marine was beaten to death here the same year a 57-year-old grandmother was raped and killed.

Mark Lakeman, a resident of the neighborhood, grabs a cup of tea as he takes a stack of books to the community "library" across the street. It's a bookcase on the opposite corner, stuffed with such titles as Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth,* a biodiversity handbook, and Kahlil Ghibran's *The Prophet.*

On the third corner of the intersection, now known as Share-It Square, there's a produce-sharing station and a multi-layered information kiosk. On various "pages" of the information book, neighbors can advertise services needed or offered (such as housecleaning, gardening, massage, fix-it repairs), events, births, and deaths.

"There's a lot of sidewalk synchronicity," explains Lynne Doiron, who lives on the corner by the tea station. "People just care for these things. They bring tea bags to the tea station, clean up the kids' playhouse, keep the library stocked."

The fourth corner houses a children's playhouse full of games and stuffed animals, which converts

Mark Lakeman, architect and the visionary behind Portland City Repair, stocks a street-corner lending library

A cob bench made by neighbors welcomes passersby to pause for a rest

to a food-serving station known as the Bombay Café when the neighborhood celebrates community gatherings. Each year, neighbors repaint the intersection with different colors and patterns.

"It's like we're planting a garden," explains Lakeman. "Ultimately, it could bloom into world peace."

These ideas sprouted from conversations over tea in a community space piled with cushions, built from recycled materials by neighbors for about $65 in 1996. The city ordered the teahouse demolished, as it did not meet codes. And the city tried to fine neighbors for creating community amenities on the corners of the intersection. One city official even said, "That's public space. Nobody can use it."

Then the neighbors complained to the city commissioners. They invited them for tea.

Suddenly, city officials realized that the kind of citizen initiatives happening at Share-It Square were the sort they had been trying to inspire with expensive programs for decades. And it was all happening at no cost to the city.

The city passed an ordinance to encourage "intersection repair" in all 96 neighborhoods of Portland. Today, citizens are invited to design paintings for the centers of intersections, and creative public spaces on the four corners. Portland's ordinance requires that 80 percent of neighbors within two blocks sign statements approving the plan.

Now, five such "intersection repair" projects have sprouted in the city, mostly in the neighborhoods of Southeast Portland where many activists live. "It's a typical place, though, not some hippie enclave," insists Lynne Doiron, who lives in one of the houses on Share-It Square. "On these four corners you had an old Catholic woman, a drag racer, a potato farmer, and a bomb maker who worked for a U.S. military contractor."

The neighbors mapped their area, identifying a surprising range of skills among nearby residents. They figured out how to reach out to neighbors who were different from them, going door-to-door or organizing community potlucks.

New projects emerged over the years, as the intersection got repainted (for about $500, raised by residents) and people worked together. One neighbor built an earthen oven in the shape of her Australian tree frog "Oblio;" it gets fired up for neighborhood pizza parties. Several neighbors went door to door and took 60 to 70 orders for fruit trees, huckleberry bushes, and other edible plants that will make the neighborhood a "fruitopia," perfect for "grazing" as people walk through it.

"Anybody in Portland who considers themself a steward can be involved," says Lakeman, one of a number of pied pipers of intersection repair in Portland and, recently, across the country. City repair projects are springing up in State College, Pennsylvania; Asheville, North Carolina; Eugene, Oregon; and Olympia, Washington.

Winged picnic trucks known as T-Horse and T-Pony took form after the original teahouse was torn down. They travel around the city to parks and public spaces, where people enjoy free tea and an opportunity to meet neighbors, sit on colorful cushions, and discuss the future of their neighborhoods. "Beauty," Mark Lakeman smiles, "is our greatest tool."

An architect by training, Lakeman has devoted enormous energy to fighting the "grid"—not just the urban grid of streets, but the grid that forces linear, lock-step thinking in education, media, and consumer culture. "It's all symbolic," he says of the physical work of intersection repair. "It's really about building community, getting people to talk to each other, and getting kids involved so they own their neighborhood. Then they'll never vandalize it."

In fact, there have been a few acts of vandalism, but nothing serious. "Some kids have 'laid rubber' in the middle of our intersection, there's often litter, and one time someone pulled out the wiring in our kiosk," says Jan Semenza, a Swiss-born professor of public health who lives on the corner of 33rd and Yamhill Southeast, where neighbors painted a

gorgeous sunflower design and called it Sunnyside Piazza. Rain water from Semenza's roof flows into a solar-powered fountain that flows and babbles over brilliantly colored mosaics, next to a solar-lighted cob-constructed neighborhood information kiosk. (Cob is an adobe-like material made of earth, sand, straw, and water that dries to the strength of concrete.)

Three years ago, neighbors were complaining of noise, speeding, drugs, and abandoned cars. After a series of meetings and workshops facilitated by City Repair, they determined to paint a sunflower in the middle of the intersection, turning it into a piazza. One neighbor provided 28 gallons of paint. The city's street sweepers cleaned the intersection. Planter barrels were placed on either side of the four corners to keep people from parking in the piazza, and to slow traffic down. Neighbors had a community gathering, complete with dancing and a visit from the winged T-Horse.

The next year, the city approved plans for trellises on all four corners, the first arches built over sidewalks in Portland since the stone gateways to Laurelhurst Park some 100 years ago. One neighbor, who had initially opposed the painting of the intersection, came up with the idea to plant honeysuckle in the trellises. Neighbors raised the money and did the work.

Jan Semenza, whose studies of public health have suggested that "urban planning processes may contribute to the epidemics of obesity, diabetes, and depression that are sweeping the United States," has assigned his students to study neighborhood reactions to the Sunnyside Piazza over time, and to compare crime and other statistics with those at comparable unimproved intersections in demographically parallel neighborhoods. After more than 700 interviews, they concluded that 65 percent of Sunnyside Piazza-area residents rated their neighborhood an excellent place to live, compared with 35 percent at another similar but unimproved intersection. Also, 86 percent of Sunnyside neighbors reported excellent or very good general health, compared with 70 in the adjacent neighborhood. And 57 percent versus 40 percent said they felt "hardly ever depressed," even in Portland's rainy weather. Calls for police services have decreased since the intersection repair.

"It's not about paint," says Semenza, now on City Repair's board. "It's about neighbors creating something bigger than themselves. One woman, an artist who was very opinionated about what color we should paint the square, after hours of back and forth, said, 'I finally realized my relations with my neighbors are more important than the colors we paint the intersection.'" Semenza estimates he spends two hours a week maintaining and cleaning up the intersection in the summer.

"It's not about paint," says Semenza, now on City Repair's board. "It's about neighbors creating something bigger than themselves."

Volunteer energy is at the heart of City Repair, which describes itself as an "organized group action," not an organization. All the leadership donates its time. Organization decisions are made by consensus of a council of nine project coordinators, which meets monthly. Many key leaders became involved after happening upon T-Horse events in city parks, sitting on cushions, and chatting with their neighbors.

One vision shared by the City Repair community, and no doubt discussed in the community sauna built in a converted garage two years ago, is to see public squares in all 96 neighborhoods of Portland. "Each person has to individually figure out what it is to be a citizen," says Charla Chamberlain, a cofounder and one of nine co-directors in the ever-evolving structure of City Repair. "And that can best happen very locally. Somehow we have to unlearn our conditioning of fear and isolation, and relearn a new way of being."

The village building convergence

Each spring, City Repair coordinates an event that brings visionary architects, planners, and artists together for 10 days of concentrated work on 10 or more projects in Portland neighborhoods. The Village Building Convergence, as it's called, provides a catalyst and new volunteer energy to neighbors who are considering creating public spaces. Workshops in how to design and build cob structures and plant ecological gardens combine neighborhood energy with that of out-of-town visitors, who pay a nominal price to attend the workshops.

"For ten days, it's the world you wish you could live in all the time," recalls Michelle Freedman. "There are work parties and festivals all over the city." Freedman coordinates a People's Park built during the 2003 Convergence in two city-owned

lots at Southeast 47th and Ivon Streets that had been slated for a freeway until citizens put a stop to that. "At first there was big opposition to doing anything," she says. "But now we love our park."

Well, most neighbors do. One couple who lives directly across from the recently cleared lots, dotted with stone and cob planters, complained, "The planters are ugly. They look like empty cardboard boxes designed by a committee. But getting the neighbors together was good. We finally recognized this place as a public space."

Other public spaces catalyzed by City Repair include:

- *The Salmon Street Poetry Garden,* a spot in a yard where people are invited to write, read, and appreciate poetry. One poem, written by a kid on a tile in the garden, reads: "I wish tomato plants would grow through my window and into my mouth..."
- *The Memorial Lifehouse,* a solar-powered lighthouse with a shrine dedicated to Matt Schekel, an 18-year-old bicyclist who was killed by a vehicle at the corner of Southeast 37th and Taylor; a tiled "love bench" big enough for two to sit very close; and a "life cycle" wheel, made by his mother, telling the story of Matt's life.
- *A big red labyrinth* painted in the middle of the intersection at Southeast 19th and Washington, with an herb garden and benches on the corners. (As at other "repaired" intersections, two houses have been repainted by their owners since the community got involved.)
- *At Southeast Eighth and Ankeny Streets,* a shrine to the Virgen de Guadelupe conceived, designed, and built with the Mexican day-laborers who wait on the streets in that neighborhood to be picked out for work.
- *Outside of Portland,* a community plan for the coastal Oregon town of Bay City, where a parking lot is becoming a public square, intersections are becoming piazzas, and a skate park has been developed for kids.

In the end, it's about increasing personal and community expression in what Lakeman calls our "muted society, where the guts of community have been removed." Ultimately, he hopes neighbors will expand the idea of public spaces, perhaps blocking off traffic altogether in some places, and meeting each other face-to-face more often. "When we can look into the eyes of a future generation on a daily basis, and know they will carry on our co-creations, we'll build a culture of gifts, not of fear."

TOP: Community sauna, made from a former garage. BOTTOM: A tea kiosk offers refreshment to passersby, and an excuse to gather with neighbors

Stephen Silha is a freelance writer and communications consultant who lives on Vashon Island, Washington.

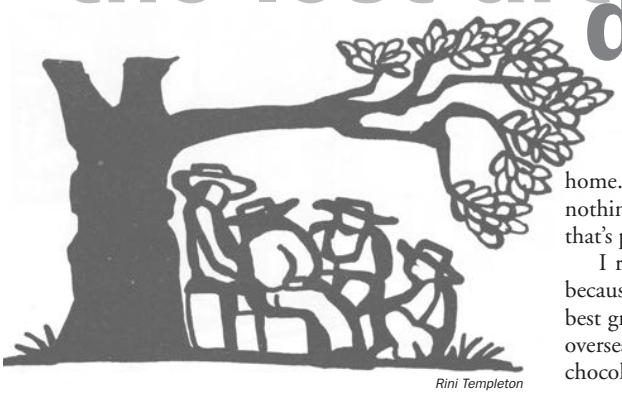
Repairing your city

City Repair's annual Earth Day Celebration of Localization (April 17, 2004, at Kellogg Middle School in Portland) is a huge festival of local culture, business, and sustainability, held at a different park or school each year. City Repair's Village Building Convergence (May 21–30, 2004) offers hands-on workshops on community building. City Repair sponsors SHIFT, a bike advocacy group that organizes bike-in movies and serves "Breakfast on the Bridges" to bike commuters. SHIFT will host its annual Pedalpalooza festival June 10–26, 2004.

City Repair's Placemaking Guidebook is a treasure trove of practical ideas for "intersection repair." Contact City Repair to purchase a copy for $10. The City Repair website *(www.cityrepair.org)* lists events and activities, provides resources on placemaking and sustainability, documents experiences of neighbors, and contains registration, volunteering, and ordering information.

the lost art of dropping by

Patrisia Gonzales



Rini Templeton

Before the leaves started turning one year, we stopped by our neighbors', the Britos, to eye their yard sale. One of their sons started up about how people don't talk to each other anymore. He was a blackjack dealer at one of the casinos, and he was talking about this and that, and how Espanola, New Mexico, is getting browner and how beautiful culture is, and how he tells his children (the ones who like to play cowboys and Eagle Warrior) to turn off the TV so they can have a nice talk.

"People have lost the art of conversation," he told us. "Stop by again. I like to have intellectual conversations."

That was a conversation of long ago. As we've moved, we've befriended other neighbors: Alice and Joe, who became like *tios* to us, uncle and aunt; sweet Robin, who let me cut her rosemary, and we embraced in peace after 9/11.

People have lost the art of visiting, or just plain neighborliness. People don't drop by or call. It's all on e-mail—invites to birthday parties, even notification of nervous breakdowns, divorce, and funerals, the kind of life markers that once warranted some kind words and a personal phone call.

We're proud to say we're notorious for dropping in on people unannounced. Our friends seem to enjoy this because it reminds us all of how our parents did things, or of the way things were when they were young and the *compadres* would drop by. Now a lot of people don't have time for spontaneity. It's not in the date book.

My husband and I often get inspired to drop in while we're bike riding or in the mood for pie. In fact, we make mental notes of where friends live so that we can have options when we don't find one home. We know friends who visit and say absolutely nothing. They just sit there with each other. Now that's poetry.

I remember I knew when visitors were coming because my grandmothers would bring out their best gravy dishes and the china their boys got them overseas in World War II. They'd serve Mexican hot chocolate or cinnamon tea. Don Agustin, or some respected *señor* or *señora del barrio*, would come wearing hats and canes and Sunday clothes in the middle of the week.

Some of my most prized possessions are my grandmothers' gravy dishes, some teapots, a Mexican traditional chocolate stirrer, and a lime squeezer for homemade *limonada*. And when guests drop by, I try to employ one of them in my feeble attempts at rising to my grandmothers' graces.

Of course, when we visit my folks in Texas country land between Godley and Joshua, my husband starts calling me "Mable," and we joke that we can do nothin' in the front or nothin' in the back. Most of the neighbors there are sheep, horses, and dogs. Doin' nothin' is a nice visit with the land.

Now we live in Madison, Wisconsin. Our neighbor Gladys is 91 and a half years old. I help her with her hair and grocery errands, and she brings us cookies. Another neighbor graces us with arias and "Ave Maria." Sometimes I see another neighbor with learning disabilities on the bus. For Halloween, she told me she was going as a bride. When the day came, I saw her walking in her winter jacket, wearing a white bridal dress, with her veil flying.

Conversation, visitin' and neighborliness—that's what makes community. It's time to reclaim our porch, find out what our neighbors are thinking, and let them know how much we like to hear them sing like a sweet bird in the shower. And if you're like us, apologize that your dog whines like a little bitty baby.

Patrisia Gonzales, along with her husband Roberto Rodriguez, writes the syndicated "Column of the Americas." She is author of *The Mud People: Anonymous Heroes of Mexico's Emerging Human Rights Movement* (Chusma House Press).

all photos © the Cheese Board collective and Joshua Apte

The Cheese Board Collective

cheese, bread, and thou

In a shop in Berkeley, you'll find handmade crusty bread, sharp cheese, and pizza slices fresh from the oven. You'll also find vibrant community, live music, and a new vision of work

As you enter the Cheese Board Collective store in Berkeley, California, a multitude of sensations surrounds you: the aromas of fresh baguettes, hot cheese bread, and garlic oil from trays of focaccia. From the cheese counter comes the barnyard smell of goaty chèvres and the sharp tang of the blue cheeses. The open kitchen allows you to see the whole operation. Everything is in motion: in the front of the store, workers are selling cheese and customers are browsing and choosing breads and cheeses; in the back, workers are rolling and baking bread. Forty feet of cases hold more than 300 varieties of cheese from around the world. Sourdough products are a store specialty, as are hearty wheat breads, hefty scones, muffins, and savory breads.

Customers seem to prize the store as a gathering place for social nourishment as much as a place to buy food. There is a loud party atmosphere of busy shoppers waiting for service and catching up with old friends.

A few doors down from the bakery and cheese shop is the Cheese Board Pizzeria. The pizzas feature a crisp sourdough crust, Mozzarella, and different combinations of fresh seasonal produce and, of course, specialty cheeses for the topping. Just as the hot pizzas are taken from the oven, garlic-infused olive oil is brushed over the crust, creating a heady scent. There is always live music—piano and stand-up bass, sometimes a drummer—and occasionally musician friends drop by and bring their horns, saxophones, guitars, and flutes. Jazz, the roar of the oven fans, aromas, and conversation fill the small space as customers wait in line for slices or whole pizzas.

Art, an employee-member of the Cheese Board, says, "It absolutely changes people to work here. You learn about yourself, you learn about trying to get along with people. Hopefully, before you die, you learn that these are the most important things in life."

Elizabeth and Sahag Avedisian first opened the doors of the Cheese Board in 1967. Their dream was to run a small specialty shop together and make use of slow moments to pursue their interests and studies. The location was a tiny, narrow storefront wedged into a converted alley on Vine Street, in north Berkeley. While south Berkeley and the university campus were often roiled by the political actions of the era, the Cheese Board's immediate locale seemed nothing more than a quiet corner of a small college town.

The Avedisians selected the first cheeses for the store by randomly paging through a Domestic Cheese Company catalog. By reading and tasting, talking and sharing, they soon developed a sense for what they liked. By offering samples to customers they learned more about what was delicious and popular. Despite having no real retail experience and little knowledge of cheese, Sahag and Elizabeth soon had a steady business. Within three months it became necessary to hire a few people to help out in the busy store.

A history of generosity

Arising from a deep belief that a more equitable distribution of wealth was necessary for a good and just society, and inspired by time spent on an Israeli kibbutz, Elizabeth and Sahag offered to sell the shop, at cost, to their employees. In 1971, the two owners and six employees formed a worker-owned collective. "Sahag and Elizabeth had the chance to

become serious capitalists, and they turned it down for the benefit of the workers," said Darryl Henriques, a former employee-member.

The transformation from a small, privately operated store into a collective with a completely egalitarian pay structure was revolutionary. The generosity of this act has graced the workplace for succeeding generations of workers.

"We still believe that everybody's time is worth the same amount of money. The quintessential element of the Cheese Board politics is that notion," said Michael, a current member.

The transition to a worker-owned and -operated cooperative relied upon a shared work ethic, high standards, and the strong emotional connections among the group. Decisions were made, after much debate, either on the shift or at the monthly meetings. The operation and management of the collective was, and is still, a constantly evolving process. Meetings in the first years were frequently loud, argumentative, and unstructured.

The new owners shared a belief that the collective process would organically create a truly democratic society. The utopian vision was, however, firmly grounded in an everyday reality.

"During one member's job interview with the entire group, she asked, 'Do I have to agree with all those posters and signs in the front window of the store in order for me to work here?'" said Craig Knudsen, a former member. "We all told her, 'Of course not.' She wouldn't have worked here with us unless we had said that."

Another member said, "Being a collective does not make you exempt from market forces. You still have to create a place customers want to shop in so that you can generate enough income to pay a living wage to your members."

The introduction of bread for sale, like so many changes at the Cheese Board, wasn't planned. One day friends brought by a loaf of hearty whole-wheat rye as a gift. Inspired, the members invited the friends to bake loaves to sell alongside the cheeses. Bread making was seductive—it was a hands-on, tactile experience that was deeply satisfying. Customers loved the bread, and the new product added variety to the store, inspiring members to develop recipes for other breads.

With a steadily growing business in cheese and new breads, the Vine Street store was bursting at the seams. When a larger storefront became available around the corner on Shattuck Avenue, the opportunity was too good to pass up.

It wasn't long before the Cheese Board was one of many food establishments in the area: Lenny's meat market; North Berkeley Wine; the restaurant Chez Panisse; Cocolat, a decadent chocolate shop; the Fish Market; and the Juice Bar, another collective, which took over the original Cheese Board location, and others. The neighborhood exchanged ideas over food, and there was a shared belief that good food was essential, honest, and important. Alice Kahn, a local writer and humorist, labeled the neighborhood the Gourmet Ghetto, a title that has stuck to this day.

Hard times and opportunity

When the recession of the 1980s hit us in California, the business suffered. At the Cheese Board, we brainstormed about ways to stay viable. There was talk of taking a pay cut. As business was slow, there was time to play around. "Initially, someone started making pizza once a week on Tuesdays. Then people on other shifts began experimenting, too," said Art.

Pizza became a regular staff lunch. Someone grabbed cheese from the case, someone else would run next door to the Produce Center for vegetables. A half an hour later, pizza was served. Customers noticed and wanted a piece, too. Before we knew it, we were selling slices for lunch. What started out as a whim ended up reinvigorating our sales. It was so successful that we needed to open an entirely separate storefront and add new members to handle the volume.

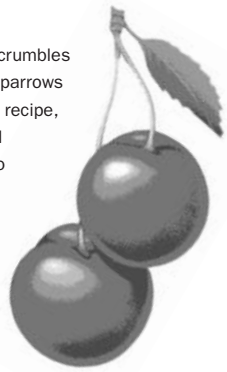
The pizzeria quickly developed its own character. Nowadays, friends and families listen to live jazz while sitting at café tables inside and out on the sidewalk in front. The tiny space fills up quickly and spills out into the neighborhood. In good weather, picnickers spread out on the median strip, and the sidewalk is full of people eating a slice as they walk along. The line out the door is echoed down the block by the coffee line at the French Hotel.

Recently, the Cheese Board has participated in an effort to launch a network of worker cooperatives modeled on the Cheese Board and using its bread and pastry recipes. The network is called the Association of Arizmendi Cooperatives, in honor of the priest Jose Maria Arizmendiarrieta, the founder of the Spanish Mondragon Cooperatives. This network has opened one Arizmendi Bakery Cooperative in Oakland and another in San Francisco. These are independent cooperatives owned and operated by their workers. The Cheese Board provided some initial seed money and training and gave the new bakeries Cheese Board recipes. At the time of this writing, the newest Arizmendi Bakery is being established in Emeryville, just south of Berkeley. The new cooperatives, which are members of the association (and own the association), will then provide financial and technical support for starting other new cooperatives based on the same model.

Much of what we have done has come about by chance, by following our passion for food with the support of our community. The belief that every voice is central has sustained us over the years. We have never wavered from the original vision of a democratic workplace. This commitment has made it possible to constantly reinvent ourselves while remaining faithful to our political vision and our belief in good, honest food.

Adapted from the introduction to *The Cheese Board Collective Works,* by the Cheese Board Collective. Used with permission from Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA, www.tenspeedpress.com

Corn Cherry Scones



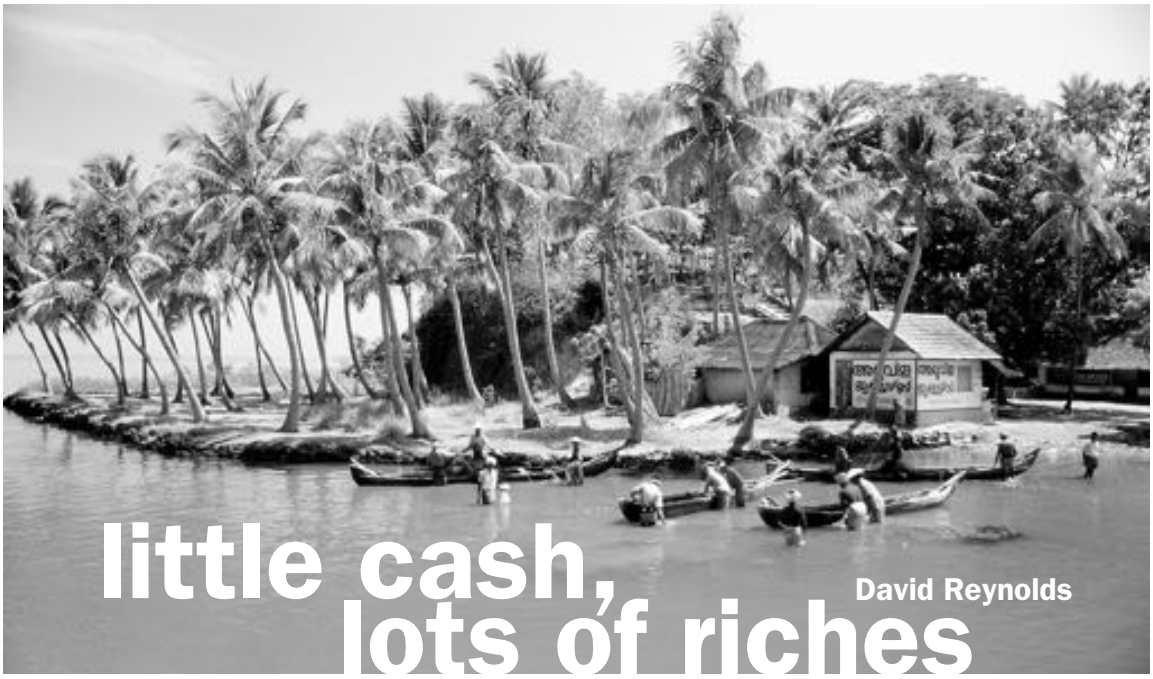
This buttery, sweet scone, studded with dried cherries, crumbles when eaten, and the crumbs are very popular with the sparrows and dogs that hang out in front of the store. Here's the recipe, one of the hundreds of recipes for breads, pastries, and pizzas in *The Cheese Board Collective Works,* which also includes an extensive primer on cheeses. This recipe makes 10 to 12 scones. Preparation time including baking: 45 minutes

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
2/3 cup plus 1/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups medium-grind yellow cornmeal
1 cup (2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch cubes
3/4 cup dried sweet cherries
1 1/4 cups buttermilk

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a baking mat. Sift the flour, baking soda, and baking powder together into a large bowl. Add the salt, the 2⁄3 cup sugar, and the cornmeal to the bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Add the butter and cut it in with a pastry cutter or 2 dinner knives until it is the size of small peas. Using the spoon, mix in the cherries. Make a well in the center and add the buttermilk. Mix briefly, just until the ingredients come together; some loose flour should remain at the bottom of the bowl. Let the batter stand for 5 minutes.

Gently shape the dough into balls about 2 1⁄4 inches in diameter (they should have a rough, rocky exterior) and place them on the prepared pan about 2 inches apart. Sprinkle the 1⁄4 cup sugar on top of the scones. Place the scones in the oven on the middle rack and immediately turn the temperature down to 375°F. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the scones are golden. Transfer the scones to a wire rack to cool.

Kerala, a cash-poor province of southern India, defies all the stereotypes. Life expectancies are long, kids are healthy, women are educated, and democracy is thriving. How does such a poor region do it?



Paolo Mulazzani

little cash, lots of riches

David Reynolds

Having lived in Central America in a home with a dirt floor and candle lighting, I arrived in Kerala, India, prepared to see the wooden shacks that provide homes to so many people around the developing world. After two weeks traveling Kerala's length I still had not found any. Even when I visited several homes of what westerners call the "untouchable" caste, I walked on tiled floors surrounded by solid concrete walls in rooms lit with electric lights. In every town and city was the opportunity to browse the thousands of bustling family shops that blanket Kerala—a sign that most of the population can afford to buy basic goods.

India's state of Kerala, with its 30 million people and an average per capita income of $324 a year, ought to have vast shantytowns. If Kerala were an independent country, it would rank among the world's 50 poorest nations. Yet, Kerala has literacy, life expectancy, and infant mortality rates that far exceed those in the rest of India and the world's other poor countries. Indeed, on all these measures Kerala rivals the vastly richer United States. Though its per capita Gross National Product is lower than the rest of India, children in Kerala grow physically larger than in India generally.

That the birth rate in Kerala is nearly identical to the rate in the United States suggests that the link between population explosions and poverty may be more complicated than simple cause and effect—and that there is more to poverty than low income. Most people in Kerala have very little money, but the communities I saw didn't seem impoverished in terms of subhuman living conditions or basic well-being and health.

Kerala is also a haven of tolerance and coexistence. While India as a whole has experienced significant Muslim-Hindu tensions, Kerala's Christian and Muslim minorities live peacefully with the Hindu majority. Although India's Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, has used appeals to religion and caste to win national power, in Kerala it has been unable to elect a single representative to the state or national assembly, drawing only around 5 percent of the vote.

Kerala's human achievement has quietly emerged as an alternative model to corporate-driven economic development. What is Kerala's secret?

Not long after I arrived in Kerala, I met Mr. M. Subramanian Nambudiri. Born a member of the upper landholding caste, as a young man he joined the Communist Party, wrote plays about social justice, and fought for land reform that redistributed his own family's holdings to poor villagers. At his house we also met a local Communist leader and union activist, a state-hired women's organizer, and a science activist. Fifty years ago these three could not have even entered Nambudiri's house, as they all came from families below his caste.

Into the 20th century, Kerala had India's most rigid and elaborate caste system. Those born into the upper castes controlled most of the wealth while those at the bottom did the dirtiest work at starvation wages. Untouchables cleared the sewers, cleaned animal droppings off the streets, and worked the most backbreaking tasks in the fields. In return they lived homeless or in shacks. Those of low caste were considered not only "untouchable" but unseeable. People of low caste were banned from public markets. Mere physical contact with a member of this caste was deemed an act of spiritual pollution and the Nambudiri Brahmins could punish any such transgression with death.

But beginning in the early 20th century, landless laborers, poor tenant farmers, and Gandhian independence activists built strong agricultural unions through a militant and at times bloody history. They demanded land redistribution and an end to caste privilege. All of these movements overlapped with the state's Communist Party, and in the first election after the state was formed in 1957, the people of Kerala voted in the world's first democratically elected communist government.

Kerala's democratic fruits

Social reform in Kerala was not simply a matter of electing left-wing governments, however. Indeed, India's national government dissolved the state's first Communist administration after only two years in office. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Communist-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress Party-led United Democratic Front (UDF) alternated control of state power. Reforms happened because ordinary people through their unions, neighborhood groups, and other grassroots organizations fought to make them a reality.

A land reform program in the 1960s transferred more than 2 million acres to 1.5 million households, transforming a small parasitical landlord class that lived off crushing rents into productive medium-sized farmers and white-collar professionals such as schoolteachers and government administrators. Although designed and enacted by Communist-led governments, much of the land reform was carried out by non-left governments pressured through land occupations, demonstrations, and other direct grassroots action.

Travelers in Kerala are greeted by bright red flags at every bus stop. These are the pennants of the Communist-affiliated transit workers union, of which most bus drivers are members. Roughly half of the population belongs to some grassroots organization. Kerala's labor movement is one of the strongest in India and the developing world. Unions in Kerala succeeded in organizing beyond

Quality of Life Indicators, 1997

	Kerala	India	Low-income Countries*	United States
Per capita GNP	$324	$390	$350	$28,740
Adult literacy rate	91%	48%	51%	96%
Life expectancy (yrs)	71	62	59	77
Infant mortality per 1,000	12	65	80	7
Birth rate per 1,000	17	29	40	16

* Low-income countries refers to 54 economies whose 1997 per capita GNP was $785 or less.
Data come from material provided by Richard Franke, Montclair State University.

the large industries and public sector, where unions are relatively common in the developing world. As a result, coir (coconut fiber) weavers employed in small shops of a dozen people, construction workers, headloaders ("coolies" who carry goods around with their bodies), and even elephant handlers belong to unions. Pushed by the unions, the state has recognized the right of agricultural workers to organize and established unemployment insurance and pensions. Kerala also boasts an extensive cooperative movement that includes worker production cooperatives, distribution cooperatives, and cooperative finance.

Over the decades the left-wing worker movement expressed itself in a range of other grassroots organizing. For instance, a library movement gave rise to and helps maintain a network of village libraries estimated at 15,000 branches. This tradition combined with recent literacy campaigns has helped produce the largest per-capita circulation of newspapers and magazines in India and a thriving literary and film culture. The People's Science Movement (KSSP) networks over 80,000 volunteers to bring science to ordinary people. Their projects run from adult literacy classes to developing appropriate and environmentally sound technology. An example of the latter are the KSSP's styrofoam "hot boxes" that allow villagers to cut their wood consumption by reducing the time rice needs to be cooked over an open fire.

Kerala has universal primary education, a free lunch scheme for poor children in schools, and scholarships for former low caste groups and tribal peoples. Combined with grassroots reading campaigns the state enjoys universal literacy. The state funds a network of western and traditional medical clinics with four times the number of hospitals and twice the number of beds per 100,000 people as India as a whole. The state also promotes health through support for decent housing, safe water, immunization campaigns, and sanitation

Coconut-fiber weavers, headloaders, and even elephant handlers belong to unions

In short, Kerala did not wait for substantial increases in material wealth—the goal of corporate-driven development. Instead, democratic movements took the existing wealth and redistributed it so that everyone enjoys a basic living standard. The human impact of this experience struck me powerfully when I met a family who came from the "untouchable" caste. The small size and dazed gaze of the grandparents spoke to the malnutrition and violence of past caste exploitation. Standing next to and towering over them, however, were their alert and vibrant grandchildren—a visual testament to social justice. Their father belongs to the agricultural workers union, their mother does sewing work on a state-funded machine, and the children enjoy a full public education. The family's house was built through a public program.

Democracy versus globalization

Today, Kerala faces significant challenges. As a predominantly agricultural society, its economy is vulnerable to falling international commodity prices. Kerala's unemployment rate is one of the highest in the country. A quarter of the state GDP comes from remittances of Keralites working abroad. The national government has cut revenue sharing and pushed IMF- and World Bank-inspired privatization. As in much of the developing world, corporate practices have savaged the economy and the environment, including destroying fish stocks and forests (the state nationalized what forest remains). Villages have sued Coca Cola for destroying their water table through a bottling plant that extracts 1.5 million liters a day. Green Revolution farming practices drastically reduced biodiversity, leaving farmers vulnerable to changes in climate and pests.

To survive the pressures of corporate globalization, Left leaders concluded that they needed to promote economic growth in innovative ways that would build upon past social gains and prove environmentally sustainable. Between 1996 and 2001, the last LDF government launched an experiment in local democracy, the People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning. The People's Campaign attempted to use the state's most important asset—its rich grassroots movements—to foster new models for economic development. Between September and October 1996, three million people participated in ward assemblies to identify collective needs and develop projects to be worked into regional five-year plans.

By transferring state funds into local hands, the People's Campaign produced a wealth of grassroots experiments. Some projects addressed immediate physical needs such as housing, safe water, sanita-

tion, local pre-schools, and mosquito control. The campaign also generated a wide range of economic activity. One village set up a cooperative dairy station so that farmers could process their milk and thus enjoy a greater portion of the revenues. Another launched a women's production cooperative for school uniforms while yet another village funded a women's bookbinding cooperative. The village of Chapparappadavu established a cooperative factory to produce improved versions of the KSSP's "hot boxes." Many projects sought to provide an independent income for women. By law each election for the revived village councils must reserve one-third of the seats for women candidates.

Not only do neighbors develop plans for state funds, they are also involved in implementation—often state funds provide a seed that facilitates pooling of people's own financial and labor resources. For example, in a long-neglected village in northern Kerala, school children had to negotiate a 10-person ferry, or make a four-mile detour, to reach a government-built school placed on the far side of the river. Through the planning process the villagers combined state funds with 21 days of volunteer labor from 402 people to build a pedestrian bridge. In the same village, volunteer labor also helped build a bus depot, a dam to protect fresh water, a bird sanctuary, and a biodiversity park. Many campaign projects stand out for the way in which environmental and economic health intertwine.

The People's Campaign did experience difficulties. The process tended to be weaker in the major cities and in political opposition strongholds. It also became clear that wards encompassing an average of 2,000 people were still too large a unit for the kind of participatory democracy organizers envisioned. As one way of promoting smaller gatherings, organizers fostered women's self-help groups. Meeting once a week, 15 to 25 women come together to contribute small funds to a collective account available for family needs such as weddings and health emergencies. By providing state resources and dedicated paid staff —such as the women we met at Nambudiri's house —organizers hoped to encourage the groups to take up broader issues such as domestic violence and women's economic independence.

The resulting network of women's cooperatives became an example of democratic vibrancy in the face of corporate power. Recently, the World Bank and USAID established a "Hand Washing" project in India, to fight disease. However, of all the states to come to, they selected Kerala—the state with the highest level of education and hygiene. Critics charged that the plan was simply a marketing scheme to sell soap produced by multinational corporations. In response, the self-help groups and plan process organized hundreds of small women's cooperatives to produce soap using local materials in a sustainable manner. Through door-to-door campaigning, the women sell the soap as a way to support the community and challenge corporate domination.

David Reynolds

In 2001, the Left lost the state election amid strains and controversies unrelated to the planning campaign. But Dr. Issac Thomas, the People's Campaign chief architect, argued in a February 2003 interview that the decentralization process had won over enough mass approval that the UDF government must support it even if under a different name. He and others, however, also say that the new government is embracing corporate strategies of foreign investment, privatization, and neglect of traditional and agricultural sectors. The ruling UDF has also labeled Kerala's strong labor movement a chief hindrance to economic development.

As in the past with the land reform and other progressive state policies, Kerala's popular movements will again have to fight to maintain and further social gains. Kerala's achievements and ongoing struggle remind us that, despite all its limitations, partial victories, setbacks, and compromises, democracy works.

David Reynolds teaches at the Labor Studies Center, Wayne State University and is author of *Taking the High Road: Communities Organize for Economic Change* (M.E. Sharpe, 2002). He visited Kerala in late 2002. More information on Kerala can be found at www.*chss.montclair.edu/anthro/frankecurrentresearch.htm.*

Her book *Diet for a Small Planet* sold 3 million copies. She co-founded organizations to fight hunger and bolster democracy. Along with her daughter, Anna, she traveled the world to gather stories for *Hope's Edge*. Yet, like many of us, she experienced a time when her world crumbled...

walking through fear

Sarah Ruth van Gelder interviews Frances Moore Lappé

Sarah Putnam

Sarah Ruth van Gelder: It's a real pleasure to be interviewing one of my heroes. I've admired you for a long time, so I was surprised to find you describing, in the book you co-authored with Jeffrey Perkins, *You Have the Power,* times when you felt afraid and lost. Why did you decide to share these experiences?

Frances Moore Lappé: Because we are living in a culture increasingly dominated by fear where many feel blocked. But fear doesn't have to stop us. I learned this when my world came apart. I was living a life-long dream of a family life combined with an organization to promote living democracy—all on a gorgeous 45-acre compound in rural Vermont. I'd spent a decade building my dream, and then it started to crumble, piece by piece—my marriage, my organization, my confidence."

Sarah: How did you respond? What did you do?

Frances: The first words that come to mind are those of Wangari Mathai, a woman my daughter Anna and I met in Kenya, who suffered terribly during her divorce, and she came through it to found the Green Belt Movement. Her refrain to us was basically, "I just kept walking."

I thought about her during this time when fear seemed to grab me by the throat. Sometimes it was so tight it hurt, my mouth was often dry, and I felt awful pressure in my upper chest.

Then my children threw me a life line: "Return to your roots—food—and rewrite your first book, *Diet for a Small Planet*." I learned that if I could just show up, in this case, if I could just get myself out of bed, get to the computer in my tiny office at MIT,

and start writing, help would start arriving. For me, just showing up for the traveling and writing gave me the power to overcome my fear of fear.

Sarah: You tell the story of Diane Wilson, the shrimper from the Gulf Coast of Texas, who stood up to some of the world's largest polluters. I loved the moment in your book where she says she was "outrageous for so long that they could not predict or control me."

Frances: I get goose-bumps when you talk about Diane Wilson. Who knows where she found that courage? When she was a child, she would crawl under the bed when a stranger came to the house.

But in 1989, she found out that her county in south Texas was ranked worst in the country for toxic waste. She wondered if the effluent, dumped into the waters where she and her family had shrimped for generations, might be responsible for the dwindling fish populations. And she suspected that her son's autism might be related to the pollution.

She asked, "Why aren't people upset? Why aren't people protesting?" The mayor and county commissioners told her to keep quiet, and everybody else was afraid to speak out against the companies, which included some of the country's biggest chemical companies. There were even attempts on her life. Family members abandoned her, and certainly none of the other shrimpers stood with her.

Finally the other shrimpers did come around, and together they formed a boat blockade of commercial traffic in the main channel. Then came an embarrassing Associated Press story about the pollution. Finally in 1997, Formosa Plastics signed a zero-discharge agreement, and Alcoa Aluminum soon followed. These agreements became a national model for environmental protection.

So what gave her the courage? If you look at someone like Diane, it's easy to say, well I could never be like that. But we don't know. We do know that it's possible for a woman, who didn't grow up as a world changer, to find it in herself to take a stand.

What was so moving for her, and also for me, is that she felt the Bay itself was like her grandmother. She said, "I don't think there's a woman alive who would give up fighting for her child, or her mother, or her grandmother."

Recently, she went on a hunger strike to protest Dow Chemical's refusal to accept responsibility for a 1984 chemical disaster in Bhopal, India, caused by a company they now own, Union Carbide. In the past, Diane's hunger strikes had been lonely affairs, but this time friends and co-conspirators from around the country took turns joining her on her flatbed truck under the hot Texas sun, greeting Dow workers as they entered the plant.

Sarah: You mentioned in your book that one of the greatest fears people have is the fear of embarrassment. People avoid venturing out of accepted roles or suggesting a better way, because doing so might subject them to ridicule or humiliation.

Frances: I think that fear of embarrassment is the essence of the human challenge. On the one hand, our social nature is our greatest beauty—it means that we have natural empathy and sympathy. But our social nature also means that we may let ourselves be controlled by the judgments of others, precisely because we care so much about our status in community.

Few of us can go it alone, but we can choose who we bring into our lives. We can choose who will reinforce our risk taking. That's what happened when my own life crumbled. The people who came into my life bolstered me to take more risks, to be even more true to myself.

Sarah: You and Jeffrey Perkins suggest that sometimes we think fear is telling us to stop when it actually means "go!"

Frances: I think we are at a new evolutionary stage. We evolved in tight-knit tribes in which we faced death if we didn't have the support of the rest of the tribe. So little wonder that it can seem unthinkable to say "no, thanks" to the modern-day equivalent of our tribe—our fear-driven culture.

The problem is that our whole tribe—if you will, the larger community of humanity itself—is on a death march ecologically and in terms of the intensification of violence and conflict. So breaking with the pack may be *exactly* what we should be doing. Saying "no" to the dominant culture that is trapping us in destructive ways of living might be the most life-serving thing we can do. Fear doesn't necessarily mean that we have to stop. It doesn't mean that we are failures. It doesn't mean that we are cowards. It means that we are human beings walking into the unknown, and that we are risking breaking with others for something we believe in.

Sarah: You use the word "power" in the title of your book. A lot of people are uneasy with power, feeling it

is suspect and inherently corrupt. Are you thinking of power in a different way?

Frances: Very much so. A teacher told me this story some time ago: She asked her students to line up in order of how much power they thought they had relative to the others in the class, and they all fought to be last in line. They didn't want to acknowledge that they had personal power.

I like to think of power back in its Latin root, its meaning comes from *posse*—to be able. We didn't evolve to be passive victims or shoppers. We evolved to be problem-solvers, to create, to be choosers of our own future!

Sarah: This issue of *YES!* asks what is the good life? What is the good life to you?

Frances: I think back to when I was growing up in Fort Worth, Texas, in the 1950s, during the McCarthy era, with two parents who founded a Unitarian Church. We lived in a little frame house, and my bedroom was just down the hall from the kitchen. My favorite memories of childhood are of the smell of coffee wafting into my bedroom as my parents and their friends talked about the big, important things—about racism and about how to move our country to live its values. So the good life for me always meant connecting with those big, important issues that grown-ups get so excited about.

A life-long mission has been to counter the notion that political engagement is the spinach we must eat in order to have the dessert of freedom. Engagement *is* the good life. What could be more exciting than getting involved in something that you care about and joining with others and seeing something change? What could be more thrilling?

I read a book in the late 1990s called *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, by Erich Fromm, and it had a profound impact on me. Fromm takes Descartes' statement, "I think, therefore I am" and changes it to "I *effect*, therefore I am." Humans need to feel effective—to feel that we can "make a dent," as he puts it. So the art of living is to find expressions appropriate to our own uniqueness in which we can experience effectiveness.

The good life may mean doing some things that do not feel comfortable. It may mean sitting long hours just with yourself as you begin to listen to your own questions. That was the reality for me when I was 27, and it was really terrifying. I wasn't sure where I was headed. I had no identity—I was terrified that somebody would ask me what I was doing, and I would have no answer.

My path has not been smooth. But the great thing about getting to be an elder—Sarah, I just had my 60th birthday—is that you can look back and see the intense times of confusion and challenge, and see that if you keep walking through them, they can lead to times of great satisfaction and reward. The good life is not about avoiding fear. Just the opposite.

Sarah: Are you talking about the time that led to your writing *Diet for a Small Planet*?

Frances: Yes. I had left graduate school, determined that I wasn't going to do anything else to "save the world" until I understood how I could get at the underlying causes of deepening suffering. To do that, I had to start by admitting that I didn't know.

My intuition told me that food would be my key. In the late 1960s, there were alarming predictions that worldwide famine was around the corner. I wondered if humans had already lost the race, overrun the Earth's capacity. I let one question lead to the next, and unearthed information that would forever change my life: Not only is there enough food in the world to feed every man, woman, and child on Earth, there is enough to make us all chubby. The experts were wrong. Hunger was not, and is not, caused by a scarcity of food; it's caused by a scarcity of democracy—by people being denied a voice in their own futures.

Sarah: In the United States we have an epidemic of obesity and we also have a giant-sized diet industry. We are turning food into something that makes us sick. Yet enjoying food is a foundation of the good life in most cultures.

Frances: Yes, food has always been at the center of community bonding, of family life, and simple pleasure, but it is becoming more and more an obsession, a source of pain. This was my experience, because I was a compulsive eater in my late teens and until I wrote *Diet for a Small Planet*, so I know what it feels like when food becomes a threat.

What we do in the book my daughter Anna and I wrote, *Hope's Edge*, is to give people a glimpse of food as a source of nourishment, health, and community, rather than a threat. That means reconnecting with food as it comes from the Earth and with those who produce food. Many families participate in the Community Supported Agriculture move-

ment, which allows a family to buy shares in a farmer's produce so that they know where their food is coming from, and they can take their families out and see the farm and meet the farmer. That movement has helped create a new culture around food.

Sarah: When you think about our situation in the United States today in mid-2004, are your feelings hopeful? Pessimistic?

Frances: I never like to use those terms. After the journey around the world, writing *Hope's Edge*, I began to see that it is not possible to know what's possible—and therein lies our freedom. If we cannot know what's possible, then we are free to do that which is pulling our hearts and that which is life serving.

I think of Wangari Mathai in Kenya. If she started out saying she wanted to plant 20 million trees, she would have been laughed at. In fact, the foresters and the government did laugh at her. They said, "Villagers? Un-schooled villagers? Planting trees? No, no, no, it takes foresters." So she planted trees anyway.

History doesn't proceed in incremental little notches. There are surprising turning points; there is the straw that breaks the camel's back, and you never know if your action could be the straw. We can't see ahead of time what actions are going to be the ones that move history in dramatic ways. Who could have predicted Nelson Mandela's triumph?

What we see today is a world movement represented by the World Social Forum, involving all sorts of interactions across cultures, not to create some new "ism," but to learn as we walk and to create more democratic forms of social organization that re-embed economic life in community.

So I don't rule anything out, and I couldn't underscore more the importance of what *YES!* is doing to show that there are people who are pushing the edge of hope, who are stepping into the unknown and taking risks, because that will then enable others to do the same.

We are very much social creatures who model ourselves on one another. Every time you take a step and walk with your fear, you'll never know the impact. But you can be certain somebody's watching, and that courage is contagious.

Do what you love

Jeffrey Perkins

Adam Coney

As I was growing up, my Dad always told me: Do what you love. A few years ago I took my Dad's words to heart. I asked myself, what do I truly want?

I did feel a little greedy. After all, shouldn't I just be grateful to have a job, any job? And mine was helping develop curricula about creative conflict resolution—certainly important work.

But one morning, gazing out my office window on a beautiful spring day, I looked longingly at those passing by. I suddenly realized that my life was out there and not behind a desk. While I believed in what I was doing, it wasn't my work.

To make time to read and think about what my unique contribution to the world might be, I began taking off one day a week. While I thought it would be a joy to spend time totally dedicated to my own interests and questions, I couldn't sit for five minutes; my whole body rebelled against the torture. The tape going through my head kept telling me I was inadequate. Don't even try to find meaning, my inner voice kept insisting. Where was all this leading? How would I make a living? Did I really have anything unique to offer?

I became curious about other people's experiences with less-than-soul-filling work and started questioning my friends. All were bursting with interests they wanted to pursue, but I would always hear why, actually exploring them just "wouldn't be realistic." My friends had translated the unknown into something dangerous. Rather than focusing on what might surprise them, they were focused on what they might lose.

Eventually I made it to writings of Pema Chodron, the much-loved Buddhist nun and writer. She suggests anyone can consciously interrupt the impulse to run from difficult challenges. The power of curiosity, she said, is a resource to deflect fear's energy into fuel for exploration. I printed the words "curious mind" on a small piece of paper on my desk, and whenever I lost heart on my Friday adventure, I'd return to those words ...

Excerpt from *You have the Power: Choosing Courage in a Culture of Fear* (Tarcher/Penguin 2004)

your stories of the good life

What does the good life mean to you? These readers tell us it means sharing food, helping neighbors, raising a child, honoring other gods, and being present with someone who is dying

For Dova, it takes a village

When my partner and I adopted our new-born daughter, Dova, I welcomed the neighbors who came to call on Dova. It added some adult company to my day. As she got older, there was always someone who would stop and talk with us on the pathway—or even better throw her up in the air to her delight.

Where we live in Winslow Cohousing, an intentional community on Bainbridge Island, Washington, we've got 30 small houses, a forest, an orchard and garden, a big common house where we can eat dinner five nights a week, and a pedestrian focus. One of our values is to consider children's needs in the decisions we make. When we sometimes stumble in our understanding of what it means to live in community, the children's experience here is apt to remind us of what is important.

As Dova started to walk, I could let her feel her independence, while I kept my eye on her out the kitchen window. Now she can run to a neighbor's house to visit her favorite cat and run back, or pick strawberries with another neighbor, while I throw clothes into the laundry. Neighbors stop in and ask if we need something from the store, and likewise it is rarely difficult to find a baby sitter whom my child knows and loves. I reciprocate by giving the young teens an opportunity to make baby sitting money and by taking Dova to their classes or events when we provide their ride—or by being a child's check-in person when parents are still at work. Because of this interaction, she is a child who sees the world as a safe place and people, even strangers, as potential friends instead of a danger. This self-confidence is what I see in many of the other cohousing children, young and older, especially those whose parents allow the village to nurture their children.

Some say it does not take a village to raise a child; it takes a strong family. I say it takes both. When parents are exhausted from commuting and work, children suffer. When parents are worried about making ends meet, children suffer. When there is famine and war, children suffer. I know I will not feel at peace until we make a commitment to all the children of the world—until we understand that the village is all of us. Then we will grow people who can be at peace with themselves and with others—like Dova.

Roberta L. Wilson
union organizer, Winslow Cohousing resident

Honoring other gods

As a traveling student in southern India in February 2004, I was told of the widespread practice of politicians harnessing Hindu and Muslim nationalism to gain political popularity. Some candidates for office have incited religious riots or stonings. Other politicians use subtler methods to create deep divisions.

One weekend, I traveled to Mysore, a historic trading post in the state of Karnataka, and happened upon a small city neighborhood where hundreds of people were packed from wall to wall in the winding streets. Strings of orange lights lined the road for two blocks. Men in white cloth, and women in their most prized saris held coconuts, candles, and flower petals as offerings to the gods.

As the only white person at this Hindu festival, I was quickly noticed by a group of young men my age, who invited me to their rooftop. From the roof, I listened to the sounds of firecrackers, prayers, and smashing coconuts. Three stories below, the throngs blended into a sea of color. Not only were the streets packed, but the balconies above every storefront were filled with people as well. Yet these people on the balconies were only observers. As it turned out, my new friends were Muslims, and this was a majority Muslim neighborhood.

While watching the procession of thousands dance through the city street on the way to the temple at the end of the block, I asked my friends how it was that such a loud, grandiose, Hindu celebration came to be put in this neighborhood. "Don't you feel intruded upon?" I asked. "Isn't this your neighborhood?" They looked at me with confusion, as if they misunderstood my questions. I dropped the subject.

Soon, a 20-foot high statue of the goddess Laxmi rounded the street-corner, dragged with rope by 25 men. My new friends bowed their heads and told me that I should do the same, that I should pray to Laxmi. I looked up in surprise. "But I'm Christian, and you're Muslim, so why do we need to pray to Laxmi?"

They met my look with equal surprise, and said, "We all honor the same God, so we should all treat their god with the reverence with which they treat ours."

At that moment I learned that these boys were living the good life, tossing off the reins of the political propaganda that saddles much of India and the rest of the world.

Sander Daniels
junior, Yale University

The world in one neighborhood

I have the good fortune to live in the San Francisco Bay area. There are people here from every place in the world. I don't have to go somewhere to find the world; it's right here in my neighborhood. I was recently at the dry cleaner. The woman who owned the dry cleaner was an Asian woman. A woman came in, a Latina, with her dry cleaning. Both the Latina and the dry cleaner woman had limited English, and I had limited Spanish. They could barely talk to one another, so I spoke in Spanish to the Latina and translated it into English so that the Asian woman could understand what she was wanting. The three of us were laughing the whole time and gesturing.

That's why I live here. This is what happens in my neighborhood. But if I didn't have the time, if I were rushing and I had a nine-to-five job, work, work, work, I might have had a whole different attitude, like here's one more impediment, I just want to drop my laundry off so I can go. But I have the time to stop, connect, and help and laugh. There's not enough money in the world to take the place of that.

Akaya Windwood
facilitator, Oakland, California

Building it by hand

While I was a college student in northern Wisconsin, I spent a summer working at a local u-pick blueberry farm. My boss, Rick Dale, a hard-working yet soft-hearted man of 55, taught me more about life while we pruned raspberries and moved beehives than I learned in a full year of lectures and research papers at school. His passion for life and love of work was contagious, and his fusion of the two admirable. As a graduation present, he gave me a pair of pruning shears, saying, "This is a reminder that you don't have to work in an office to achieve wealth and happiness." Below are some of his thoughts on the good life.—Becky Brun

We grow our own vegetables and eat them year-round. I go have coffee with my mother every morning by walking up the driveway to her place. Janet, my wife, runs a day-care that has the biggest playground in Bayfield. I can choose when I want to work late, when I want to take vacation, and how long I'll stay away. I don't have much disposable income, but I don't know what I would buy if I had more money. Janet and I made the decision a long time ago that this was the life we wanted and it's been a fantastic journey.

Many people drive into the farm during the summer, look around, and tell us that we are the luckiest people in the world. But this farm took years of planning and hard work. We searched a long time for this piece of land before building our own house on it.

Often when people talk about the good life, somehow it gets equated with being laid back. But fulfillment—in life, relationships, work—is found through intention. The best opportunities in life are the ones that we make for ourselves. I believe that 90 percent of accomplishing something is deciding that you can do it.

Rick Dale
farmer, Bayfield, Wisconsin

Choosing grace, choosing now

Volunteering with Hospice to sit with folks as they're dying has taught me a lot about how to live. The hardest death I've ever witnessed was that of a young African-American woman who had not six months between her diagnosis and her death. She had a very painful kind of cancer. She wasn't 35 years old, so dying was not on her agenda. The whole time, she fought death just as she had fought everything in her life. She was disabled and knew it, and she had cancer and knew it, but she wouldn't admit that she had a disability or that she was dying.

Deciding to enter Hospice is hard, because it means admitting you're dying, but once people enter Hospice, they say, "I wish I'd done this earlier. This is so much easier." This young woman never stopped resisting, which interrupted her capacity to accept help. She had a hard time letting me run errands for her or take her to the park. If she hadn't fought the inevitable so hard, it wouldn't have been so hard on her friends, her family, and her community. The burden wouldn't have fallen so squarely on one or two people's shoulders.

The most graceful death I've witnessed was my mother's. In some ways, it was similar to the young woman's death. My mother, also African-American, was young, 59 years old. She was diagnosed and died within six weeks. But she said, "Well, okay, here it is. I'm going to do this at some point. This is a little sooner than I expected. But I'm going to do this." And so she faced it gracefully, just as she had lived gracefully. She walked into the process. This made it easy for us to lend a hand.

Given the choice, I'm opting for grace. That means I need to live gracefully, so there's no big transition to make when I die. This realization has had a profound impact on how I live. I realized I'm the only one in charge of the quality of my life. I decide what I do, how I spend my money, how I spend my time, what I think about, what I pray for. I have to choose well-being every moment.

The gift of being part of people's dying keeps me in the immediate. Every time I walk through a dying with someone, it brings me back to now in a way that nothing else does. It's a wonderful reminder of the importance of being awake, of being present. Now. Not tomorrow, not when I get down to it, not when I have time, but now. Right now.

Akaya Windwood
facilitator, Oakland, California

Living with dignity

Wes: When I speak to groups about homelessness, I am often asked, "What do homeless people need most?" The most important thing one can provide to a homeless person is the opportunity to give, to contribute. That's the one thing we almost never receive.

Anitra: Poverty is often a result of society not valuing what people have to offer. There is a tremendous amount of talent out there (on the streets of Seattle), but people are rarely given the chance to show it. A long time ago, I was living in a homeless shelter where I was given everything I needed—food, clothes, medicine, a bed, safety—but other people were controlling my life. I had no freedom, and freedom is essential to human dignity. I couldn't even sweep my own floor. Then I moved into a shelter that was run by homeless and formerly homeless people. We relied on one another and we became close friends.

Wes: Often, when people move from homeless shelters into public housing, they lose contact with their old friends. The need for public space—public meeting places—is very important. Otherwise, people begin to feel isolated. Community space is important for everyone—not just homeless people. Many people tend to think that the more public benches there are, the more homeless people will use them. But taking away public benches does not take away homelessness.

Anitra: In Portland, there are benches everywhere. All types of people—tourists and shoppers and little old ladies and kids—sit down next to strangers and engage in conversation. We will never put an end to poverty if we don't acknowledge that everyone, regardless of their economic, social, or racial background, has something important to say.

Wes Browning and Anitra Freeman
writers, *Real Change* newspaper, Seattle, Washington

Photo credits:
Page 34, Sheila Krishnan
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Page 36, Sheila Krishnan (left), Dan Lamont (right)
This page, Pierre Dunnigan (top), Dan Lamont (bottom)

Becky Brun & Brian Edstrom

students break out

Christian Bisson

Looking for more out of your spring breaks than suntans and late night parties? These young people experienced adventure, camaraderie, and the satisfaction of making a difference—plus a few surprises

When Tom Barrington landed in Kathmandu during his spring semester last year, he did not expect to lead a rescue team on the world's highest mountain two weeks later. Barrington, a senior outdoor adventure education student at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, had joined nine other students, seven alumni, and three professors on a four-week trip to the base camp of Mount Everest. Through Porters Progress (www.portersprogress.org), a three-year-old non-profit organization started by American climber-turned-porter Ben Ayers, they taught first aid to porters and cleaned up garbage. Porters Progress tackles issues of workplace exploitation through first aid training, English classes, cottage industry development, and other empowerment programs. Hiking at elevations above 17,000 feet, often carrying loads that exceed 100 pounds, indigenous Nepalese porters risk altitude sickness,

exhaustion, hypothermia, and other injuries and illnesses.

"Most of the porters are from the lowlands," says Barrington. "They are farmers who seek work in the mountains because they want to make more money." Their employers rarely take the time to train them on how to take care of the cuts and injuries they could sustain in the unfamiliar terrain, Barrington said.

The Northland group, all of whom were certified to teach wilderness first aid, helped 66 porters learn how to splint broken arms, clean wounds, carry out rescues, and recognize illnesses.

Their lessons were put to immediate use when one porter suffered a stroke during the trek. When the company that employed the porters refused to send a helicopter for his evacuation, the entire group used the techniques that they learned in first aid training to carry the porter seven miles to a town where he could be airlifted to a hospital.

"The feeling that you get from volunteering and having a positive impact on someone's life is far more fulfilling than what you would experience on a normal vacation," says Barrington.

The trip also had a profound impact on Cindy Sakry, another Northland student. "They were the best students you could ever imagine," she says of the porters. While her peers returned to the States, she traveled to Kathmandu to create an English phrase book for Porters Progress.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Barrington and Sakry are part of a large group of young people who are stepping up to make a difference. Department statistics say 24 percent of men and women between the ages of 16 and 24 spent, on average, 40 hours volunteering last year, up 2 percent from 2002.

Thousands of students on alternative spring break trips have cleared trails, picked up garbage, read to children, visited nursing homes, built bridges, and developed lasting friendships all over the world.

A wolf's life

At Colorado College in Colorado Springs, a unique "block" scheduling system provides students with multiple short breaks throughout the year. Many students spend these breaks volunteering through a student-run program called "Breakout." Sophomore Chrissie Long recently led an annual Breakout trip to Mission: Wolf (www.missionwolf.com), a rehabilitation center in the remote Wet Mountains of southern Colorado. The center provides a refuge for 40 grey wolves and wolf-dog cross-breeds that were born into captivity.

Kent Weber, who founded Mission: Wolf in 1988, has developed an on-site education facility and traveling education program, hoping his work will encourage wolf-recovery efforts. This past February, Colorado College students spent four days constructing fences, compiling sponsor packets for Mission: Wolf supporters, and helping prepare and deliver meals for the wolves.

"Kent [Weber] told us that Mission: Wolf is as much a refuge for people as it is for wolves," Long says. "I found that to be true. To get off of campus for a few days to do community service work is as valuable to me as it is for those we serve."

The camaraderie shared between the volunteers, staff, and canine residents at Mission: Wolf allowed the students to return to class with a greater appreciation for wolves and a renewed enthusiasm for community service.

This spring, Northland and Colorado College students joined approximately 11,000 students from the United States, Canada, and Japan who participated in Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge. Together, they raised almost $1 million and spent their spring breaks working. For many students, trips like these play a significant role in shaping their lives.

"When it comes to living well, I focus on three things," Barrington says. "Academics gives you a base of knowledge and skills to build on. Service teaches you the importance of service and community. And personal growth—through traveling, adventure, cultural experiences—helps you decide what you want to strive for."

Resources for Alternative Breaks

Break Away: the Alternative Break Connection provides training and information about alternative break programs for students and citizen groups. www.alternativebreaks.org, 850/644-0986

Habitat for Humanity connects student and community groups with low-income families that need manual labor to build or rehabilitate simple homes. www.habitat.org/ccyp, 715/392-2118

Communications for a Sustainable Future provides links to national and international volunteer organizations, an on-line discussion group, and examples of service-learning syllabi used at various schools. http://csf.colorado.edu

The National Service Learning Clearinghouse supports students and community groups in developing service-learning trips. Provides discussion guides, sample curricula, and a book-lending library. www.servicelearning.org, 866/245-7378

OPPOSITE: Andy Yencha, Northland Everest Environmental Region Expedition member, gazes at memorials to climbers and porters near the Khumbu glacier

Annick Smith

staying wild

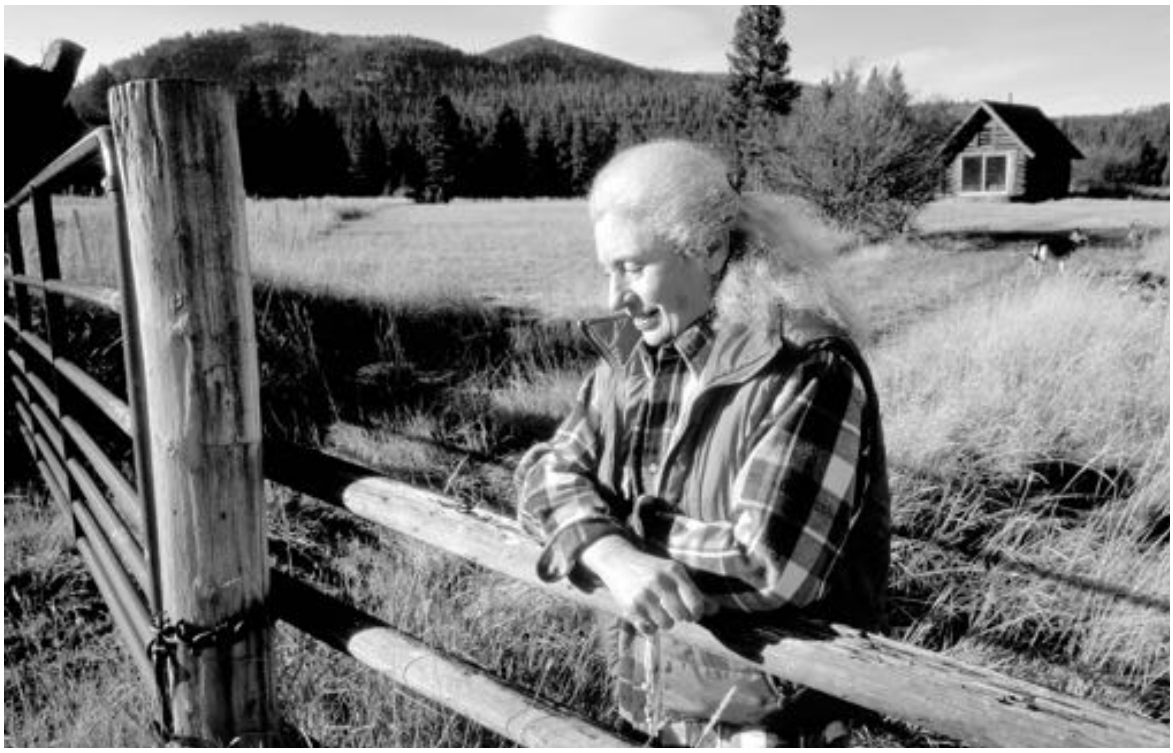
all photos by Dan Lamont

For one woman writer, wilderness provided sanctuary and solace in an unstable world. Preserving this source of the good life meant stepping into the political fray

When I was a child, I experienced my first taste of the wild from our summer house in the dunes bordering Lake Michigan. Running on beaches, gathering wildflowers, nestled within the maternal curves of the dunes, or swimming in waters that flowed to the horizon, I discovered freedom and solitude.

Seeking wild places would become a lifelong quest. I went from Chicago to Seattle as a 20-year-old wife and mother and discovered backpacking in the wilderness of the Olympic Peninsula. A few years later, my husband, Dave, and I acquired our patch of back-country in Montana's Blackfoot River valley. We recycled an old hewn-log house and, with our four boys, moved into its rough shelter on Christmas Day in 1973. A year and a half later, while the six-year-old twins watched, I witnessed my husband die of heart failure on the maple floor of our kitchen. I stayed on our land, raised the boys, completed the unfinished house, found the true companion of my later years, and reinvented myself.

On balance, I think I am leading a good life, and it is tied to wilderness. My freezer is filled with salmon, steelhead, grouse, and elk fished and hunted by my son Steve; we grow organic vegetables in our raised-bed gardens; there is homemade wine in the cellar, and huckleberry jam for pancakes. My sons, though scattered, remain close to home in their hearts and minds. I share my household with two dogs and two cats, and the ghosts of my horses keep company with black bears, elk, whitetail deer, coyotes, bobcats—even porcupines. Our skies are



vivid with American eagles, red-tailed hawks, and blue herons. Flitting among pines are migrating bluebirds, tanagers, chickadees, and hummingbirds. Down in Bear Creek, a few hundred yards from our cattle guard, we have seen endangered bull trout, and fished for native cutts, rainbows and brown trout. Tonight, singing winter's end, spring peepers are courting in the cattail pond.

But a life in nature is not all wild roses. I used to have lush forests around me. Those forests had been logged, and in many places burned. Still, when my family settled here some 35 years ago, the foothills and mountains that circle our meadow were black-green with ponderosa pines, Douglas fir, and larch, and their density was broken only by chartreuse patches of seedlings growing back from clearcuts. For years, we have enjoyed the forest's gifts, but now I watch logging trucks roll by carrying its trees away. Recently, I walked with my dogs in the woods above Bear Creek and found great swaths cut down, treetops and limbs scattered on the torn soil, bleeding sap. Health and beauty had fled to become toilet paper, plywood, and essays I publish in books and magazines—products I use and enjoy. I am complicit in my forest's destruction.

Yet not all logging is equal or necessary. I believe forests that harbor rare and bounteous wild life should enjoy protection, even if privately owned. I will do what I can to stop saws from cutting down every mature tree in my vicinity. But I doubt if I will succeed, because the forest is not mine. It is owned by Plum Creek, a corporation that calls its huge woodlands "industrial." Plum Creek cares nothing for my environmentalist notions. If the forest is industrial, they reason, then it has one purpose, and that is to produce a cash product as efficiently as possible. But wasn't it corporations themselves that thought to call forests industrial? As if calling something by a false name excuses the damage you do to it.

These days, looking west and south, I face logged off hills and peaks. And where the sun rises above

my meadow's fringed horizon, are the doublewides, SUVs, and barking dogs of creeping suburbia. Even the Blackfoot River, a mile and a half down Bear Creek, is being threatened by investors wanting to mine gold with cyanide at its headwaters.

A few years ago, we, the local landholders, ranchers, fishermen, environmentalists, concerned mothers, and plain citizens, won a ban on all mining with cyanide in Montana through an initiative process. It was a victory. But the price of gold is up, and mining interests with deep pockets are trying to overturn the initiative.

Wilderness is another matter. As defined and set aside by the Wilderness Act of 1964, wilderness areas belong to everyone. We may go there or not, and yet be assured they will not be destroyed, for they are protected in perpetuity. When I feel trapped in society, I use the escape valve I discovered as a child. From the height of my meadow, to the north I see peaks of the Bob Marshall Wilderness; east lies the Scapegoat. I might drive south to the Selway-Bitterroot, or find myself a short way out of Missoula in the Rattlesnake. Whatever area I choose, I know I will step into a secure place where the intertwined systems of nature are unhindered by human greed or need or desire to control. There, I may rediscover joy.

What we call wilderness was every place before humans destroyed so much of the natural world it seemed almost gone. Then wilderness became an idea. The idea of wilderness is embodied in our nation's identity. Indian myths and cowboy myths and the myth of the frontier are all part of the wilderness idea. Europe and Asia might claim advanced civilization, but the United States boasts the Grand Canyon, giant sequoias, Yellowstone's geysers, the grizzlies and glaciers of Montana.

Congress enacted the Wilderness Act 40 years ago this fall. Its purpose was to recognize certain wild and undeveloped regions as vital resources for our society, and to define such areas in ways that could make their preservation actual and consistent. Section 2(a) explains the rationale:

In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.

The Wilderness Act designated over 9 million acres to be protected in its first year. Since then, citizens concerned with saving their special wild places have helped to increase the Wilderness System to a total of 105 million acres. This is less than 5 percent of the nation's land, but it includes such beautiful and remote areas as mountains in the Northern Rockies, swamplands of Florida's Everglades, deserts in the southwest, redrock canyons of the Colorado Plateau, as well as Idaho's Salmon River country, and Alaska's Denali Wilderness.

As for me, I have put a conservation easement on my 163 acres that will protect it from subdivision and development. Whether it stays in my family or passes to someone else, the meadow and its old-growth forest will stay wild. In the larger neighborhood, I will work to keep the watershed of the Big Blackfoot River free of cyanide, and beyond that I will join with those who are trying to protect the Rocky Mountain Front from energy exploitation. All this is preventive.

On the active side, over in eastern Montana, a group of us prairie lovers are collaborating on a project to preserve grasslands and reintroduce bison. In such collaborations, notions of how to lead a good life get married to the idea and practice of wilderness—a coupling that should last as long as wildness exists in the natural world.

Annick Smith is the author of a number of books, including *Homestead* (Milkweed Editions) and *In This We Are Native* (Lyons Press). She also produced the film *Heartland* and co-produced *A River Runs Through It.*

Rachel Attituq Qitsualik

carry me away

The great sea
Has set me adrift,
It moves me as a weed
in a great river,
Earth (Nuna) and the Great Weather (Sila)
Move me,
Have carried me away
And move my inward parts with joy.

Song of the Igloolik female shaman, recorded in the 1920s

Early missionaries in the Arctic had to tailor their message to suit the particular spiritual needs of Inuit. Classically, Christianity promised the faithful immortality, one in which the great reward was the opportunity to praise God for an eternity. Inuit, however, needed to specifically hear that they were going to be allowed to do all the things—throughout eternity—that made them happy here on Earth.

While Inuit had various versions of the afterlife, their most popular realms of the dead promised plentiful hunting and joyful game-playing. It is the spirits of those in one such realm that we supposedly see when we watch the Northern Lights, as they play with a ghostly walrus skull.

It was being at peace with death that enabled Inuit to be at peace in life. In feeling that death was a reality, an inevitability for every living thing, they were free to maximize the quality of their current existence. One of the things that most astonished early explorers and missionaries was the Inuit love of freedom and personal happiness: an Inuk might work his knuckles to the bone to produce a gift for someone he liked, but then harbor extraordinary resentment toward anyone who forced him to do something he did not wish to do. In a world of uncertainty and short life, the Inuk's quality of life was of paramount importance to him—he had no tolerance for anyone who inconvenienced him.

Thankfully, I have been blessed with an understanding of this attitude—not because of my culture, but because I have nearly been killed so many times, in both the South and the North.

The first time I was near death was in early childhood, afflicted with near-fatal spinal meningitis. Then there were a few close calls out on the land, such as the time I barely hung onto a sled while crossing an ice-crack.

And there was the time, while at university, I was hitchhiking along a darkened stretch of road. The fellow who picked me up started driving me towards his house, confessing that he was going to murder me. I still have the nasty scar from when I turned off his ignition and jumped from the moving car (he stalked me like an animal throughout the woods that night).

The last time I was nearly killed was about a year after my wedding. My in-laws' car, with me in it, spun out of control and was catapulted into the air. It corkscrewed and landed on its side, turning end over end until finishing upside-down. My C6 and C7 vertebrae (neck bones) were separated. Doctors tried holding my neck together with a frame drilled into my skull, but it failed, so they resorted to surgery to fuse the vertebrae together with a steel clamp. It was funny how the doctors barely knew what to do with me the entire time, since they were unused to people with my injury surviving. They still can't explain why I'm not paralyzed.

Let me put it this way: when you are nearly killed time and again, you start to get used to it. You never lose the fear of danger, but you do start to understand that life is a very temporary thing—and survival is always a matter of millimeters, of seconds, of minuscule details that barely preserve you. Once you come to understand how dangerous the world truly is, you cease to take your life experiences—particularly your happiness, pleasures, joys—for granted. The positive things in your life are magnified a thousand-fold.

Yet this is a sort of knowledge that generations before us have already held, a way of appreciating the world that we might share without trauma, without hard lessons, if we but remember how our ancestors used to live.

There is something to be said for the fact that they lived in a world without the illusion of safety that we so cultivate today—yet a world that they seemed to value more than we value ours.

Pijariiqpunga. (That is all I have to say.)

Rachel Attituq Qitsualik was born into a traditional Igloolik Inuit lifestyle. She has worked in Inuit sociopolitical issues for the last 25 years, and witnessed the full transition of her culture into the modern world.

the demand for the common good

Jonathan Rowe

What happens when economic growth produces more "*illth*" than wealth? What happens when it gobbles up the foundation of the good life—the commons?

Rakefet Kennan

Practically since the first steam engine roared into action, people have worried about where the massive new machinery of the market was headed. In the wake of the Second World War, these questions took a new form: what is prosperity for? For the first time in human history, there was enough to go around, and more. So what would come next? Simply more TVs and cars, and their successor items? Or something different?

Probably the most eloquent statement of the question came in John Kenneth Galbraith's book *The Affluent Society*, a best-seller for which Galbraith's colleagues in the economics profession never forgave him. Galbraith observed that the reigning economic orthodoxy was formulated in an age of scarcity. All the gears were arranged to increase output, and this was assumed to promote the greatest good. But after two centuries of output frenzy, the problem no longer was scarcity. Rather it was glut. The challenge no longer was to produce enough stuff for the people; it was to get the people to buy the stuff produced.

This made the old mental mechanism obsolete. If it took a massive advertising industry to conjure up what economists quaintly call "demand," Galbraith asked, did it really have the urgency that term implies? Was it even "demand" in any honest sense of the word? Since private consumption had become so dispensable, couldn't a bit of that spending be shifted to the public sector, where the need indisputably was great—for schools, roads, public transit, help for the needy and the rest?

This was the economic brief for post-war liberalism, and it remains valid to a point. America is still a land of private affluence and public poverty. There is still great economic need. When schools and libraries are begging for funds in the richest nation in the world, only a confirmed ideologue could deny that something is out of whack. But the answer has become more elusive. The old liberal approach meant priming the growth pump to produce revenues to fund public needs. The Right countered that growth alone would lift all boats and government wasn't necessary. But either way, what happens when the rising tide itself starts to go bad, so that when it rises, a host of problems rise with it? What happens when yesterday's answer becomes today's problems?

In Galbraith's day, need creation meant mainly the wants prodded by advertising, with its pervasive messages of deficiency and craving. Today that process has metastasized into a pharmaceutical industry determined to redefine every state and stage of experience as a pathology in need of "intervention."

But the economy no longer just plays on the psychology of need. Increasingly it produces actual problems that more expenditure purports to solve. From cancers prompted by toxics in the environment to obesity and coronary ills caused by too much fatty food, for example, a good portion of the nation's escalating medical bill is growth-induced. Just a few decades ago, hungry children were a subject of national concern. Now the big concern is kids who are fat and cannot focus their own attention.

Add traffic, noise, bad air, the breakdown of neighborhood ties, loneliness, stress—and on and on—and you have *iatrogenesis* on a systemic level, an economy that creates the problems it is supposed to solve. A mechanism that was supposed to create wealth, and did for a while, now increasingly turns out what John Ruskin, the 19th century essayist, called "illth." The tragedy—the Tragedy of the Market, one might say—is that it has to create problems and needs, or the gears will grind to a halt. Not all growth does this, of course. But the balance is shifting, and the result is something new, a period of systemic diminishing returns—diminishing not for a particular product or industry, but for the economy as a whole.

It is the kind of dilemma that defines nations and epochs. No one can say for sure how to resolve it, or even if this nation can. But this much is clear: a big part of the answer is sitting under our noses. It is the invisible economy called the commons, which is the part of life that is not the market and not the state, but is the shared heritage of us all. Some people hear the word and think of village sheep pastures in Olde England. But, in fact, the term includes the entire life support system and asset base, both natural and social, that we all hold in trust for those who will come after us.

The sky and oceans, the multitude of species, wilderness and flowing water and the like are commons. So too are language and knowledge, sidewalks and public squares, the stories and games of childhood, the processes of democracy.

The commons is a kind of counterpoise to the market. It provides stability and sustenance rather than restless appetite and craving. It connects to the "we" side of human nature as opposed to the market's unrelenting "me." The concept includes anything not owned but shared in common.

For centuries, economists have regarded the commons as a quaint medieval relic and mere fodder for the market (or, in the Soviet model, the state). In their creation myth, the commons is inchoate matter, a kind of economic primal sludge that awaits the vivifying hand of the market to attain reality and life. Forests are worthless until they become timber, quiet is worthless until it becomes an echo chamber for noise, childhood is worthless until it becomes a marketing free-fire zone, ad infinitum.

The scarcity of the commons

The commons is the submissive female in the old gender script, always available, ready to serve, asking nothing in return. Money is what really counts: progress and well-being—the good life—follow always in the train of the dollar bill. This is the conventional notion, and it actually seemed to work for a while. At the start of the industrial age products were scarce, the commons was abundant, and it easily could seem that the latter could serve as a supply depot and waste dump forever.

But things change, even if economic beliefs don't. After several centuries of this, the nature of scarcity has shifted. Where once the products of the market were scarce, now it is the commons that is scarce and also most needed. Which is more lacking where you live—electronic noise or quiet, cars or clean air, malls or Main Streets where people run into neighbors and friends? Which would do more to make your life better—a high-definition television set, or neighbors who could take care of your kids and watch your house when you go away?

The commons is not a relic of a bygone age. It is a parallel economy that does real work. It produces

the language we speak, the air we breathe, the conviviality of public spaces, the quiet that gives us rest. All are things the market tends to destroy. In fact, much market growth these days is not growth at all; it is the cannibalization of the parallel economy. If there is to be well-being in the future, we will have to reverse this trend. Economic policy will have to become commons policy as well as market policy; the government will have to do as much to promote the commons as it does now to promote the market.

To some degree, this is happening already under a different name. What is called "environmental protection" really aims at maintaining the productivity of the natural commons: clean air and water, the thermostatic properties of Earth's atmosphere, space for quiet and recreation, and the like. The commons is the next supply-side, and it needs to become warp and woof of policy on a global basis.

For millions, this is a matter of basic sustenance. For example, in my wife's village in the Philippines, people used to catch fish in the stream that runs through the rice fields. Plants grew at the edges that were excellent for such things as washing hair. But since the Green Revolution, with its chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the fish and plants are gone. People have to buy these now, which is a boost for the market but a financial setback for them. Thanks to escalating prices for chemical inputs and stagnant rice prices, the Green Revolution hasn't been a great deal for farmers on the income side either.

That's the myopia of economic policy that looks only at the market. A genuine economics would include the whole spectrum of supply. It would promote fish in the streams as well as rice in the fields, through more natural methods of fertilization and pest control, for example. This would help Third World farmers on both the cost and income side.

The subsistence commons is not a Third World anachronism, by the way. It is everywhere people don't have much cash: community gardens in Harlem, fishing in D.C.'s Potomac River, the mosquito fleet of improvised trucks that comb San Francisco's business district on trash nights to scavenge paper to sell for recycling. Air is a part of the subsistence economy that we all depend on. In most cities, pollution is worst where the poorest live. The subsistence commons is a global issue, not a Third World one.

Commons economics is about more than subsistence, though. It is an antidote to many pathologies of the old industrial model. Noise is an example. For centuries noise has been regarded as an incident of progress, an offshoot of the wonderful devices that filled the supposed void. Today Americans rate noise as the number-one urban problem—not crime or trash, but noise (which come to think of it is both.)

Quiet is not a mere amenity. People need it for sleep and concentration, both of which are in short supply. One study showed that kids who live in the quiet rear of apartment buildings do better in school than do those who live above the noisy street. The answer of the market is drugs for sleeping and concentration. Commons economics, by contrast, addresses the problem instead of numbing the sufferer. If the pharmaceutical industry is "productive" when it manufactures sleeping pills and Ritalin, is not quiet equally productive when it achieves better results at no expense?

Critics say such things as noise controls are regulatory obstacles to the economy. In reality they are economic measures that meet a real need. Once it is established that quiet is a commons, moreover, then it becomes a form of property, and those who violate it become trespassers. In this and other contexts, commons thinking turns the tables on the "takings" argument—the claim that regulations constitute a "taking" of private property and therefore require compensation. In reality, those who claim an absolute right to do anything with their property often are engaged in a taking themselves—of common property, such as quiet, clean air and water, and so on.

The culture of childhood

The culture of childhood is another commons that has been degraded in the name of growth. Not long ago, kids played their own games. They were weaned on a common stock of story and myth that spoke to them at a deep emotional level. Storytelling in families established a narrative bond between generations and provided a window to the adult world. Today by contrast this rich cultural ecosystem is dying. Kids are immersed in narratives constructed for the purpose of making them want things. They play games devised by corporations, and their toys are expensive high-tech devices in which the content lies in the thing rather than the child.

It is not coincidental that kids are petulant and overweight and have trouble focusing their own attention. The market offers more stuff to consume, such as drugs, counseling, and special diets. A New York City company called Zone Chefs caters special meals to overweight kids for $866 per month. Economists regard all this, without irony, as "growth."

Commons policy, by contrast, would restore the healthful childhood commons. It would re-establish boundaries to commercial huckstering to kids—no ads in school, for example. Videos and TV shows with embedded ads—called "product placement"—would be clearly labeled so parents can avoid them. There would be time on television for parents to design their own messages to talk back to the ads. The raising of healthy children is no less important—no less an economic task—than is the production of televisions and beer. To protect children from commercial predators is not a crimp on the economy; it is a core function of the real economy.

The geography of somewhere

If one thing sums up commons-based economic policy, it is community. The commons is a form of property that embodies the "we" side of human nature—the desire to connect with others rather than to stand apart. This side is increasingly repressed in America today, where even the simple acts of sharing computer programs or patented information in a university research lab have become criminal acts.

All commons provide a counterweight to such imbalance, none more directly than the shared spaces of daily life. Life once was rich in occasions for such spontaneous human interaction. People shopped on Main Streets, visited on front porches and stoops, attended political events in public venues. Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas had their famous debates in county fairgrounds and town squares all over Illinois, and farmers and townspeople sat for hours in the heat and dust to hear. Politics occurred in common space, and this was related directly to the democratic culture that resulted.

Today, by contrast, most Americans live in suburbs conceived as staging areas for consumption. They move about in the hermetic enclosure of cars, and shop in the anonymity of malls, from which political and community activities generally are excluded. Political debates occur in enclosed settings before audiences of big shots. Most Americans watch at home alone. Then people wonder why they feel lonely and depressed, and why the sense of community has vanished.

A commons approach, by contrast, seeks to restore the opportunity for spontaneous interaction in daily life. It encourages development on the traditional village model, for example, with houses close together, front porches for visiting, and shopping within walking distance. It encourages mixed uses and granny flats instead of malls and sprawl, and it builds common spaces, such as community gardens, pocket parks, and benches.

Such arrangements often are called the "New Urbanism." But actually they are the old village-ism, and they are incubators of friendship and civic engagement. Studies show that the happiest people are those actively involved in helping others. Spatial arrangements that encourage engagement with others can be productive of the happiness that people seek.

There are many other realms to which commons economics can apply, from open-source software and the public domain of knowledge and artistic creation to public revenue. If we cut taxes on work and enterprise, for example, and imposed them instead on activities that expropriate or degrade the commons, then we'd have a healthier commons and market both. If we freed university research labs from the secrecy and paranoia that has come with corporate sponsorship and patent lockdowns, then the science would get a burst of fresh air.

The success of Linux, the computer operating system developed on the web by programmers around the world who contributed without pay, shows how a healthy commons enriches the market, while creating opportunities for creativity and conviviality that the market doesn't.

This is a template for the emerging economy: a thriving commons sector that both complements the market and provides refuge from it. The market will continue. It answers to a genuine need for initiative and enterprise. But the market will exist in equilibrium with this parallel economy that does some things better—providing health, creativity, community, and freedom of a kind the market has begun to foreclose. The government will maintain the boundaries, and provide a structure of law and support for the commons just as it does for the market—no more and no less.

Officialdom's sacred measure of productivity and growth—the GDP—will expand to include the production of the commons. Citizens will get annual reports on the state of their common assets, just as shareholders get annual reports on the state of their corporate assets. This will mean big changes, not least for our friends in the economics profession. But they have gone to great pains in recent decades to urge the rest of us to accept destruction in the cause of their version of creation. Isn't it time we returned the favor and urged some change on them?

Jonathan Rowe is director of the Tomales Bay Institute and a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly* and of *YES!*

resources for the good life

Becky Brun & Michelle Burkhart

Dan Lamont

family and simple living

The Center for a New American Dream teaches how to be a more environmentally and socially conscious consumer. Instructs individuals on ways to encourage businesses, communities, and governments to change the way goods are produced and consumed. Provides downloadable guides to simplify life, tips for parenting in a commercial culture, and more. www.newdream.org, 301/891-3683

***Simplicity Lessons: A 12-Step Guide to Living Simply,* by Linda Breen Pierce** (Gallagher Press, 2003), is a workbook for people who want to simplify their lives. She offers suggestions, resources, discussion questions, and assignments that help readers reflect on their consumer habits, relationship to money, commitment to community, and time spent with family. Pierce also maintains a website called **The Simplicity Resource Guide**, which offers resources for simplifying one's life and instructions on how to start simplicity study groups. www.gallagherpress.com/pierce

Simple Living, a PBS series hosted by Wanda Urbanska, will begin airing on PBS in July of 2004. It will highlight people who are leading lives of environmental stewardship, thoughtful consumption, community involvement, and financial responsibility. Check local listings.

***The Circle of Simplicity,* by Cecile Andrews** (Perennial, 1998), advises people to focus on creativity, community, and caring for the environment. Also offers detailed instructions on how to form and run a simplicity circle.

***What Kids Really Want That Money Can't Buy,* by Betsy Taylor**, Director of Center for a New American Dream, (Warner Books, 2003), advises parents on how to raise children to experience joy, love, and acceptance without focusing on having more stuff. Ideas range from reconnecting to nature to creating meaningful family traditions and from teaching kids media literacy to fighting prejudice.

***The War Against Parents*, by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West** (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998), advocates for parents to fight back against a society where big business, government, and the wider culture create a hostile environment for parenting. The authors encourage a parent's movement that will implement a "Parents' Bill of Rights," including such items as paid parenting leave, a living wage, and family health coverage.

finding time

***Six Months Off* by Hope Dlugozima, James Scott, and David Sharp** (Henry Holt, 1996), is a comprehensive guide for taking a sabbatical without losing your job or alienating friends and family. Includes advice on making a proposal to your employer, financial issues, and health insurance alternatives.

***The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work,* by Arlie Russel Hochschild** (Owl Books, reissued 2001), explores how excessive work creates stress at home, which leads people to spend more time at work. Explores alternatives to this negative cycle.

***Take Back Your Time*, edited by John de Graaf** (Berrett Koehler, 2003), presents essays, which offer suggestions for reclaiming Americans' most precious resource. This is the handbook for a national movement that is raising awareness about the nine extra weeks that Americans work compared to our trans-Atlantic neighbors. www.timeday.org

***Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet: Work Time, Consumption, & Ecology,* by Anders Hayden** (Zed Books, 2000), explores how reducing work time can increase employment and decrease environmental degradation

in industrial societies. Looks at a range of solutions such as a shorter work week, early retirement, and parental leave. Also explores political, economic, and cultural obstacles that need to be overcome to reduce work hours.

***In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed,* by Carl Honoré** (Harper San Francisco, 2004), explores the "slow movement" of people around the world who are slowing their pace, bringing depth back to relationships, and living happier, more productive, and healthier lives in return. Shows how to integrate modern technology into a balanced life.

***Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Vacations That Will Benefit You and Others,* by Bill McMillon, Doug Cutchins, and Anne Geissinger** (Chicago Review Press, 8th Edition, 2003), is a resource guide for vacations that are culturally enriching and service-oriented. Profiles more than 200 organizations and thousands of opportunities worldwide and in the United States.

food and the good life

American Community Garden Association website lists community gardens by cities, provides basic information needed to start a community garden, tips on gardening with seniors and people with disabilities, and more. www.communitygarden.org

The Vancouver Community Kitchen Project website offers support to community kitchens, which gather people to cook healthy meals. The website instructs on how to begin a community kitchen and offers resources for community kitchens in progress. www.communitykitchens.ca

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, a web resource, explains Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and enables readers to do a state-by-state search for CSAs. Provides resources and ideas on how to eat seasonably and regionally. www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa

community and commons

The Citizen's Handbook, a web-based resource, provides a do-it-yourself guide to community organizing. Also provides instructions on how to initiate community activities such as community gardens, block parties, and community kitchens. www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook

The Community Toolbox, a web resource, offers over 200 sections of practical guidance to develop a healthy community. Sections include: cultural competence; spirituality; the arts and community building; analyzing community problems; and promoting interest and participation in initiatives. http://ctb.ku.edu

Reinventing the Commons, on the web, provides an overview on the commons as a concept and guides people in writing letters to the editor on issues that pertain to the commons. www.earthisland.org/tbi

Intentional Communities provides a city-by-city search engine that lists intentional communities and intentional community resources. www.ic.org

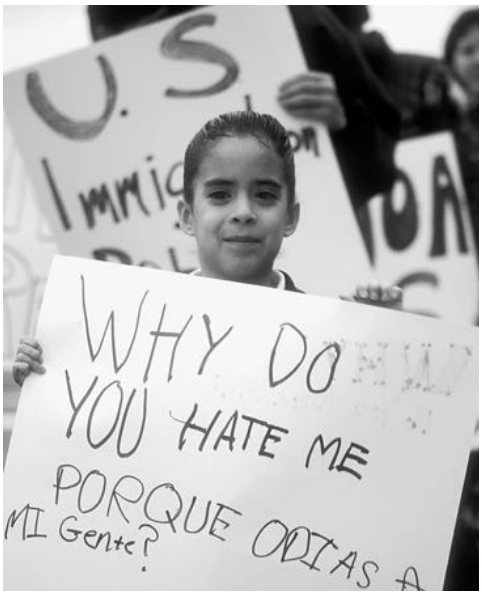
***Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods,* by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann** (New Society Publishers, 2003), presents examples of communities that are creating public green spaces, revitalizing local businesses, retrofitting homes for energy efficiency, and implementing various other sustainable solutions. Extensive resource guide helps readers implement solutions.

***Natural Assets: Democratizing Environmental Ownership*, edited by James K. Boyce and Barry G. Shelly** (Island Press, 2003), is a collection of essays, which document examples and ideas of how people in rural and urban settings can simultaneously reduce poverty and protect the environment.

Time Dollar Institute promotes Time Dollars, a medium of exchange that allows people to convert their time and skills into purchasing power. An hour helping another earns one Time Dollar. Provides instructions on now to create a neighbor-to-neighbor Time Dollar exchange. (See *YES!* #23). www.timedollar.org

community

Since September 11, immigration has resurfaced as a political lightning rod, notably in the just-completed Sierra Club election fight over immigration. *YES!* contributing editor Pramila Jayapal reflects on what is at stake for all of us in the debate over immigration



Jim West

Pramila Jayapal

The Mother of Exiles

A few weeks ago, I debated a high-ranking official in the Department of Justice at a gathering on the topic of national security. In defending programs such as Special Registration, which required Arab and Muslim men from 25 countries to be fingerprinted and registered (and was ended because it was both ineffective and discriminatory), the official said that we need to track immigrants just as we need to track sex offenders.

Although innocently made, this disturbing comment provides a glimpse into why it is so difficult have a sensible discussion of immigration. The September 11, 2001, attacks unleashed enormous anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim sentiment, reinforced by Bush Administration actions that initially targeted Arabs and Muslims, but now affect all immigrants, including Latinos and Haitians. Immigration policy has become increasingly divisive in national politics and even became the focus of a high-stakes battle within the Sierra Club this spring.

Sierra Club members recently rejected a slate of anti-immigrant candidates for the club's board of directors. But this election was not the first high-visibility attempt to use the environmental group as a platform for anti-immigrant campaigning; efforts like this date back to 1998.

Any debate that pits environmentalists against immigrant-rights advocates or Latinos against Muslims is harmful. It is especially dangerous now, when the government is testing just what weakening of civil rights we will accept in the name of security. Instead of accepting this debate as it is handed to us, we should remind ourselves that society's vulnerable members, such as immigrants, are the canaries in the coal mine. For our own sakes, we must seek solutions that are compassionate and comprehensive and do not marginalize any group in the name of furthering—or protecting—another.

Who is American?

Underlying much of the debate around immigration is the profound question of who we consider to be part of America, and who is entitled to American justice and democracy. Over the past two centuries, America has changed dramatically. Today, our cities and towns are filled with people who look many different ways, speak various languages, and display various cultural values and traditions. The 2000 Census

shows that approximately one-third of Americans are Native American, African American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic. Nominally, we celebrate America the melting pot, but in practice, we're not so sure who we want to allow into the pot.

Understanding anti-immigrant sentiment is impossible without a discussion of race. While there was always hate and anger directed at any new group of immigrants, whether Irish or Italian or Jewish, the first anti-immigrant law to be passed was the Chinese Exclusion Act, passed in 1882.

Today, anti-immigrant groups often assert that America is being "overrun" by immigrants. In fact, the annual rate of immigration was highest in 1913. In 1900, approximately 10 million people, or 13 percent of the U.S. population, was foreign-born, compared to approximately 10 percent today.

The difference, however, is that almost 70 percent of today's immigrants come from Latin America, Asia and Africa, whereas in the early 1900s, 80 percent came from Europe. The role of racism in today's debate is inescapable, especially when anti-immigrant literature often relies heavily on issues of race.

All immigrants to this country share in common many of the reasons for their journeys: to find a better life, food, shelter, escape from torture, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and work. In this, we all remain united.

Why do people migrate?

In the U.S., I often hear people disparage immigrants fighting for their rights by saying they should be happy with what they've got because they chose to come to America.

In reality, as the photographer Sebastiao Salgado wrote in the introduction to his book *Migrations*, "few people uproot themselves by choice. Most are compelled to become migrants, refugees, or exiles by forces beyond their control, by poverty, repression, or war. ... Some know where they are going, confident that a better life awaits them. Others are just fleeing, relieved to be alive."

Studies show that immigrants to the United States work hard, paying an estimated $70.3 billion in taxes and receiving just $5 billion in welfare benefits and $11.5 billion in education benefits. Too many people in America, however, are swayed by fear, prejudice, and misinformation, buying in to the language of "us versus them." Some are simply unconscious about their prejudice. Some have been seduced by negative media images without actually getting to know real immigrants. Others deliberately use fear to further a message of hate and racism.

Either way, the effects are very real on many of today's immigrants as they are scapegoated and targeted by neighbors, colleagues, and government, and witness the destruction of their hopes and opportunities.

In September 2002, at a hearing called Justice for All in Seattle, a young Afghani refugee described the horrors he had gone through before coming to America, reminding the audience that, "I did not come to America for a good life. I came here to be treated like a human."

At the same hearing, Issa Qandeel, a U.S. citizen of Jordanian origin, testified: "I thought I found the land of my dreams. ... Now these dreams seem blurry, and that land seems too far away. The sadness is indescribable, and there is nowhere to go when you are home but still feel homesick."

The people, united ...

In February 2004, President Bush—looking for the support of Latino voters in an election year—unveiled a "temporary guest worker" proposal that he claimed would lead to reforming a broken immigration system. The proposal, which has yet to be translated into any real legislation, closely resembles the oppressive *bracero* program of the 1940s, providing cheap labor for U.S. companies without ensuring either basic rights on the job or a path to citizenship.

As author and professor Ronald Takaki detailed in his book, *A Larger Memory*, this is an age-old tactic for keeping workers divided and keeping wages low. Plantation managers devised a policy reported in an 1895 Report of the Labor Commission on Strikes and Arbitrations: "Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case of strikes, for there are few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into a strike as a unit."

But when bosses used this policy in 1920, bringing in Filipino workers to supplant striking Japanese workers, the workers united together on strike, demanding "no barriers of nationality, race or color."

Today, also, many are refusing to be divided. Large unions (which have reversed course since the days of supporting the Chinese Exclusion Act) and immigrant advocacy groups oppose Bush's proposal, calling instead for immigration reform legislation that provides a path to citizenship (including legalization), real protections for immigrant workers, a reduction in the long waits for immigrant families

to be reunited, and civil rights and liberties for all.

An example of this unity was the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride in October 2003, when workers' rights, civil rights, and immigrant rights activists joined together to bring 900 immigrants from cities across the country to Washington to lobby Congress for comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

The success of anti-immigration groups depends on capitalizing on current fears about the loss of U.S. jobs through offshoring, the overwhelming of America by people who speak different languages, or the environmental impacts of immigration. The Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, like the strikes in the early 1900s, was a rejection of those attempts to divide and conquer, and a reaffirmation of a vision of moving forward together.

Likewise, the Sierra Club's overwhelming rejection of the anti-immigration campaign opens doors to progress. This vote was the latest battle in a struggle that dates at least to 1998, when a group of Sierra Club members attempted to get the club to adopt an anti-immigration platform. That effort failed by 60 percent, but in February 2003 board member Ben Zuckerman tried to pass a resolution that would have reversed the membership's policy of neutrality on immigration and instead called for the club to urge restrictions on immigration.

A continuing force behind these efforts is the anti-immigration group Federation for Immigration Reform (FAIR), co-founded by John Tanton. In recent Sierra Club debates, Zuckerman described Tanton as a "most intelligent and courageous human being."

In a 1986 memo, Tanton argued that anti-immigrant issues "must be broached by liberals. ... The conservatives simply cannot do it without tainting the whole subject" by attracting charges of racism.

In 1988, an internal memo by Tanton to his colleagues at FAIR was released that raised fears about falling white birth rates and high Hispanic rates: "as Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? ... Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!"

The recent slate of anti-immigrant candidates included former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm, who is the chair of the board of FAIR. In a speech called "How to Destroy America," Lamm argued that if he wanted to destroy America, he would "turn America into a bilingual or multilingual and bicultural country." Lamm went on to say: "I would make our fastest growing demographic group the least educated. I would add a second underclass, unassimilated, undereducated and antagonistic to our population. ... I would get all minorities to think their lack of success was the fault of the majority. ... History shows that no nation can survive the tension, conflict and antagonism of two or more competing languages and cultures."

Tanton and his friends claim their campaign is about how many people the United States can hold. But simply talking about limiting access to the juicy pie we have here in the U.S. without looking at how we came by that pie, or at the effects of our overconsumption on the world's resources, is disingenuous and dismissive. Although Americans constitute less than 5 percent of the world's population, we use more than 30 percent of the world's resources, and an American baby drains as many resources from the Earth as 35 Indian kids.

In addition, the conditions that today's immigrants seek to escape often can be tied directly to U.S.-backed wars that throw countries into deep poverty and destroy internal systems. Simultaneously, countries around the world struggle to fight the power of transnational corporations to change farming practices and skew the terms of trade, and IMF/World Bank-imposed policies that undermine traditional, sustainable economies.

Nevertheless, there is a place for discussion of how to manage immigration to the U.S. If immigrant-

The New Colossus

Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

rights advocates and environmentalists join together instead of fighting each other, perhaps we can create the space for a true progressive agenda to emerge.

The recent vote at the Sierra Club is a first step in building the trust we need for a real discussion between immigrant groups and environmentalists.

Crisis and opportunity

None of today's issues—the environment, poverty, workers' rights, human rights, immigration, or the power of multinational corporations—stand alone, and none can be solved alone.

Only in the U.S. have I seen such big gaps between the environmental and social justice movements. It is up to us to fix that. The beautiful moments when the two embrace—the "battle of Seattle" outside the WTO summit, last year's anti-war march, the struggle for environmental justice that has the African-American community working together with environmentalists to stop toxic waste dumps in their communities—are powerful and invigorating.

What does that mean for you, me, or anyone who refuses to accept the terms of the debate as framed by the would-be dividers?

It means we need to get active. The campaign launched to stop the anti-immigrant takeover of the Sierra Club was an excellent example of what we can do together; turnout for the election broke records. And many environmentalists already recognize the need to limit resource consumption through recycling and reusing materials, supporting local economies, and buying organic food.

But let's also educate ourselves on immigration, including what it takes to become a citizen, how long immigrants must wait to bring immediate family members to this country, and the discrimination faced by immigrants on the job and in schools. Visit an immigration detention center and imagine what it would feel like to be locked up for months or years without access to legal counsel while waiting for your case to be heard.

Urge your congressional representative to support the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill and the Civil Liberties Restoration Act currently before Congress. These bills, which were drafted by a coalition of immigrant and civil rights groups, propose logical and humane ways to address who gets to share in our-already-too-big slice of the pie.

Let's imagine a world where we all look honestly at U.S. foreign policy and its direct impact on migration patterns. Let's discuss together the hubris of globalization policies that encourage transnational corporations to exploit the resources of other countries. Let's acknowledge, too, our own hypocrisy in bristling at the idea that foreign workers might take "good American jobs" when foreign trade was, in large part, responsible for creating those jobs in the first place. Let's show true global leadership by figuring out how to meet the needs of American workers and how to share our resources. Let's use our collective intelligence to design an inclusive social contract for America, and let's start by modeling this behavior on an individual level.

On a recent plane flight, the woman in the seat next to me, a Caucasian woman from a small town in Washington, told me that she had stopped going to her hairdresser because she said bad things about immigrants and "people who don't look like us." "I told her why I wasn't going to have her cut my hair anymore," she told me, "because if I hadn't, she would have kept repeating those hateful things to people and then they might have gone home and told their kids. That's how hate gets spread. But we can stop it."

We should all be inspired by my flight companion. It may seem that treatment of immigrants has nothing to do with most of us. But designating a group beyond the protections of law endangers all of us—even when the group is "terrorists," "enemy combatants," immigration "absconders," or, yes, even sex offenders. Pastor Martin Niemoller said it best: "When they came for the Communists, I said nothing; after all, I was not a Communist. ... When they came for the Jews, I said nothing; after all, I was not a Jew. When they came for me, there was no longer anyone who could protest." What is being done to immigrants is testing the limits of what we will tolerate; if we do not object, we allow it to be done to any of us.

Let us reject divisiveness. True leadership in foreign or domestic policy, in issues of the environment, immigration or poverty shines through only when we think from a place of expansiveness, not of fear. It's up to each of us to do our part to change the debate from "us versus them" to "us *and* us." We have important work to do to uphold our tradition as the Mother of Exiles, shining the lamp beside the golden door.

Pramila Jayapal is founder and director of the Hate Free Zone Campaign of Washington and author of *Pilgrimage to India: A Woman Revisits Her Homeland*, Seal Press, 2001.

inreview

Corporation as Psychopath

THE CORPORATION:
The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power
by Joel Bakan
Free Press, 2004, 240 pages, $25.00

THE CORPORATION
a film by Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott, and Joel Bakan
www.thecorporation.tv

Courtesy The Corporation

RIGHT: Filmmakers Mark Achbar, Joel Bakan, and Jennifer Abbott examine a model of workers in their cubicles

People ask us—the world is going to hell in a handbasket. What can we do about it? We say, read one book, see one movie, both called *The Corporation.* (Full disclosure: our work, the Top 100 Corporate Criminals of the 1990s, is featured in the movie.)

We've seen an advance copy of the movie and read an advance copy of the book. Here's our review:

Scrap the civics curricula in your schools, if they exist. Cancel your cable TV subscriptions. Call your friends, your enemies, and your family. Get your hands on a copy of this movie and a copy of this book.

Read the book. Discuss it. Dissect it. Rip it apart. Watch the movie. Show it to your children. Show it to your right-wing relatives. Show it to everyone. Organize a party around it. Then organize another.

For years, we've been reporting on critics of corporate power—Robert Monks, Richard Grossman, Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky, Sam Epstein, Charles Kernaghan, Michael Moore, and Jeremy Rifkin.

For years, we've reported on the defenders of the corporate status quo such as Milton Friedman, Peter Drucker, and William Niskanen.

But Bakan, a professor of law at British Columbia Law School, and Achbar and Abbott have pulled these leading lights together in a 145-minute documentary that grabs the viewer by the throat and refuses to let go.

The movie is selling out major theaters across Canada. And if it detonates here—which in our view is still a long shot (the U.S. after all is not Canada)—it could have a profound impact on politics.

The filmmakers juxtapose well-shot interviews of defenders and critics with the reality on the ground—Charles Kernaghan in Central America showing how, for example, big apparel manufacturers pay workers pennies for products that sell for hundreds of dollars in the United States—with defenders of the regime—Milton Friedman looking frumpy as he says with as straight a face as he can—the only moral imperative for a corporate executive is to make as much money for the corporate owners as he or she can.

Others agree with Friedman. Management guru Peter Drucker tells Bakan: "If you find an executive who wants to take on social

responsibilities, fire him. Fast." And William Niskanen, chair of the libertarian Cato Institute, says that he would not invest in a company that pioneered in corporate responsibility.

Of course, state corporation laws actually impose a legal duty on corporate executives to make money for shareholders. Engage in social responsibility—pay more money to workers, stop legal pollution, lower the price to customers—and you'll likely be sued by your shareholders. Robert Monks, the investment manager, puts it this way: "The corporation is an externalizing machine, in the same way that a shark is a killing machine (shark seeking young woman swimming on the screen). There isn't any question of malevolence or of will. The enterprise has within it, and the shark has within it, those characteristics that enable it to do that for which it was designed."

Business insiders like Monks and Ray Anderson, the CEO of Interface Corporation, the world's largest commercial carpet manufacturer, lend needed balance to a movie that otherwise would have been dominated by outside critics like Chomsky, Moore, Grossman, and Rifkin. Anderson calls the corporation a "present-day instrument of destruction" because of its compulsion to "externalize any cost that an unwary or uncaring public will allow it to externalize."

"The notion that we can take and take and take and take, waste and waste, without consequences, is driving the biosphere to destruction," Anderson says, as pictures of biological and chemical wastes pouring into the atmosphere roll across the screen.

Just as Republican Kevin Phillips is doing as he criss-crosses the nation, pummeling Bush from the right, Anderson and Monks are opening a new front against corporate power from inside the belly of the beast. They are the stars of this movie and book.

The movie and the book drive home one fundamental point: the corporation is a psychopath.

Psychologist Dr. Robert Hare runs down a checklist of psychopathic traits. There is a close match.

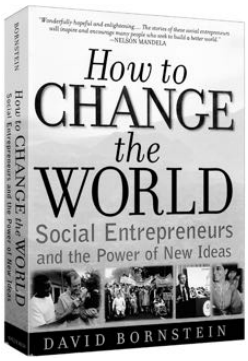
The corporation is irresponsible, because, in an attempt to satisfy the corporate goal, everybody else is put at risk. Corporations try to manipulate everything, including public opinion. Corporations are grandiose, always insisting that "we're number one, we're the best." Corporations refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions and are unable to feel remorse.

The key to breaking this psychopathic institution's power is to understand the nature of the beast.

No better place to start than right here. Read the book. Watch the movie (www.thecorporation.tv). Organize for resistance.

—Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

Russell Mokhiber is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Corporate Crime Reporter, www.corporatecrimereporter.com. Robert Weissman is editor of the Washington, D.C.-based Multinational Monitor, www.multinationalmonitor.org. They are co-authors of Corporate Predators: The Hunt for MegaProfits and the Attack on Democracy *(Common Courage Press; www.corporatepredators.org).*



HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas
by David Bornstein
Oxford University Press, 2004,
282 pages, $28.00

Erzsebet Szekeres, a Hungarian mother of a severely disabled child, was discouraged about the options available for the care of her son. Like many parents in similar circumstances, she became involved with her local disability association, meeting other parents and lobbying the government for better support.

But that was only the beginning for Szekeres. While staying home to care for her son, she began supplementing her income by taking in piecework from a clothing factory. She then helped other parents and disabled people to do the same thing, eventually running an informal—and at that time illegal—cooperative business out of her basement. When the laws changed and such businesses became legal, she began to dream of establishing a center "where handicapped young folk could work, learn, and live, keeping their human dignity."

So she did. She formed three groups trying to bring her dream to life; three times, she failed. But the fourth time she succeeded and the center she brought to life now includes apartments, workshops, a meeting hall, a greenhouse, a restaurant and bar, several group homes, and a discotheque. The complex houses and employs 300 adults.

But she didn't stop there. She built 20 additional centers across Hungary to provide vocational training, work opportunities, and assisted living to more than 600 multiply disabled people. In the process, as Bornstein observes, "Her facilities have shaken up the mental health and disability establishment and challenged standard practices in her field."

Erzsebet Szekeres' story is just one of nine equally inspiring stories told at a satisfying length in *How to Change the World.* More encouraging still is that Szekeres is just one of 1,400 people, working in 48 countries around the world, who have been recognized as Ashoka Fellows for their pioneering work as social entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurship is a hot topic these days. Actually, it seems to be three hot topics, each of which has spawned its own institutions, research, case studies, and heroes.

First, there is the social entrepreneurship being promoted by an increasing number of top-tier business schools. This can be broadly defined as "any kind of enterprise and undertaking, encompassed by nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, or public sector businesses engaged in activities of significant social value or in the production of goods or services with an embedded social purpose," to quote the definition advanced by the Social Enterprise Knowledge Network. Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Columbia, and Duke all have major initiatives in this area.

Second, there is the social entrepreneurship being promoted by the Social Enterprise Alliance, which defines social enterprise more narrowly as "any earned-income business or strategy undertaken by a nonprofit to generate revenue in support of its charitable mission." That definition recently attracted a vibrant, sell-out crowd of over 600 practitioners, funders, and consultants to the group's annual gathering in San Francisco.

And then there's the definition at the core of David Bornstein's book and the Ashoka organization it chronicles, which might be roughly stated as the application of entrepreneurial energy and ideas to otherwise intractable social problems. The focus is less on the enterprise and more on the entrepreneur.

Bornstein's book does a masterful job of jumping between the stories of individual Ashoka Fellows and the equally inspiring story of Bill Drayton and the Ashoka organization itself. Drayton, who first came into public view as an assistant administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the 1970s, founded Ashoka in 1980 to identify and support individual human beings who are hellbent on bringing about social change. As the Ashoka website says, "The job of a social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is stuck and to provide new ways to get it unstuck … Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry."

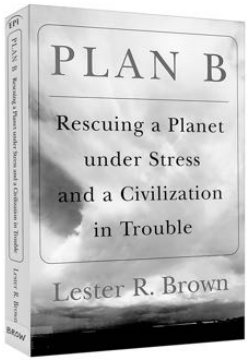
The Ashoka organization is truly unique. Its basic strategy is to invest in people—individual social entrepreneurs—rather than organizations. It literally scours the earth searching for people who have the right combination of powerful new ideas and relentless entrepreneurial zeal to bring about large-scale social change. It then invests relatively small amounts of money in stipends and professional services that enable these unique individuals to focus full-time on realizing their visions.

In the last few years, Ashoka has begun to distill and disseminate the lessons of its successful social entrepreneurs, some of which are available at www.changemakers.net.

One of the strengths of Bornstein's book is that it neatly braids chapters of such distilled wisdom with its chapters on the history of the Ashoka organization and its case studies of the work of the social entrepreneurs themselves. While not a "how-to" book in any conventional sense, *How to Change the World* offers a wonderful set of lessons in how to expand our thinking about what is truly possible.

—Jill Bamburg

Jill Bamburg is a YES! *contributing editor and the Program Director of the Bainbridge Graduate Institute (BGI), which offers an MBA in sustainable business.*



PLAN B: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble

by Lester Brown

W. W. Norton, 2003, 286 pages, $15.95

Once in a while a book comes along that should be put into as many hands as possible. Lester Brown's *Plan B* is such a book.

Brown's warning—that if we don't set our house in order, we face an environmental apocalypse—has been sounded previously in the State of the World books, issued annually by the Worldwatch Institute, which he founded in 1974. But *Plan B* goes beyond the doom-and-gloom scenario to argue for steps that governments and businesses can take to avert disaster. The strength of this book lies in its potential for influencing the attitudes of the business people, politicians, and mainstream economists for whom it is intended.

Brown begins by documenting the ecological stresses caused by human activity, which are exceeding the carrying capacity of the planet. Failure, in the crucial case of fresh water and hence food, is not decades away. It is almost upon us.

Brown draws a stark comparison between the U.S. Dust Bowl of the 1930s, which forced some 2.5 million "Okies" and other refugees to head for California, and the dust bowl now forming in China that threatens to displace tens of millions of people. "China's twenty-first century 'Okies' have no California to escape to—at least not in China."

Why, on the brink of calamity, do we continue blindly with business as usual? Because our economic reckoning is all wrong. Our economy fails to reflect the actual environmental costs of doing business. The price of lumber, for instance, does not reflect the subsidies to the timber industry or the ecological value of standing forests. The price of coal does not reflect the cost of treating respiratory illnesses caused by air pollution or the cost of cleaning up polluted waterways.

Today's outmoded fiscal systems "reflect the goals of another era—a time when it was in the interest of countries to exploit their natural resources as rapidly and competitively as possible. That age has ended. Now natural capital is the scarce resource." What Brown calls 'Plan A'—the existing system—is not working.

What is needed is 'Plan B'—a shifting of taxes and subsidies to reflect the ecological truth. So urgent is the need that it requires retooling on a scale and at a pace that historically has occurred only in times of war.

He refers to the stunning conversion from a peacetime to a wartime economy as our own country entered World War II, when the automobile industry went from producing nearly 4 million cars in 1941 to producing 24,000 tanks and 17,000 armored cars in 1942. Between 1940 and 1942, the U.S. increased its production of aircraft from 4,000 to 48,000. We must make a similar push to create a sustainable economy.

Brown suggests the possibility of such a shift, with real-world examples of positive steps being taken across the planet. China has reduced its fertility rate to below two children per woman and is thus headed for population stability within a few decades. South Korea has reforested its hills and mountains. Germany is reducing income taxes in favor of energy taxes, and now leads the world in wind-generating capacity—which increased sixfold worldwide between 1995 and 2002. Iceland is using its geothermal and wind resources to build the world's first hydrogen-based economy. Corporations such as Toyota are "greening" both their products and their manufacturing processes. Brown suggests that the more talented corporate leaders are becoming increasingly sensitive to the ecological balance-sheet.

I have one complaint. Brown pretty much ignores the sometimes destructive roles played by the World Bank, the IMF, and other trade organizations. This is perhaps a tactical omission. With their agendas redefined, these institutions could foster trade and development of a sustainable sort.

This omission is symptomatic of Brown's thinking as a whole. He is a reformer, not a radical. He seems to believe that environmental problems can be fixed simply by tinkering with capitalism. Those who think these problems are symptoms of fundamental flaws in capitalism are likely to be disappointed with this book.

For reformers, though, *Plan B* will appeal precisely because the rescue plan it sketches seems like something that could be achieved within the market economy. If we can find the political will.

—David Morse

David Morse, www.david-morse.com, is author of The Iron Bridge *(Harcourt Brace, 1998), a novel about efforts to save humanity from ecological disaster.*


Linda Wolf

10 Ways You Can Change U.S. History

This may be the most important election of our lifetimes. So much that we care about is at stake. With the electorate so evenly divided, the efforts of a few people in both local and national races could be decisive. Are you wondering what you can do between now and November 2? Here are my top 10 ideas for making a difference—and staying sane—in the coming months.

1. Make a realistic commitment. I know you are already busy doing lots of good work. How much can you add during the election months ahead? An hour a week? One major project? Ask yourself what won't burn you out, will be satisfying, and can make a difference. Talk with family and friends to gain their support.

2. Get out the vote. Our democracy can't work if people aren't voting—and half of us don't. An Indian tribe near my home held a salmon dinner at which registering to vote was the price of admission. Think about that as a twist on your family's reunion. Or bring voter registration forms to a farmers' market or craft fair. You can download your state's voter registration form at www.vote-smart.org (or call 888/868-3762). In the 2000 election, the difference between the Bush and Gore votes was small in 16 states. Consider traveling to one of these "swing states" to help register voters before the election or get people to the polls on election day. (See www.drivingvotes.org)

3. Help safeguard the vote. Most of the new electronic voting machines leave no paper trail. So if there are suspicions about the results, there's no chance for a recount. You can encourage your election officials to use safe voting technology. Learn about the legislation pending in Congress that could address concerns about electronic voting. You can join the Clean Voting Crew of election monitors to make sure votes are counted fairly on election day. (See page 7.)

4. Pay attention to local elections. The national races are riveting, but local judges, state legislators, school boards, and county commissioners also determine a lot about our lives. But it can be hard to keep track of all the issues and candidates. Ask four friends to join you, each researching a different race or issue. Then share what you've learned over pasta and wine. How hard is this?! A great place to start is the League of Women Voters' website, www.lwv.org. Under "voter information" you can click on DemocracyNet, enter your address, and get a list of your state and national candidates.

5. Share your views. Talk to that 19-year-old who "knows" her vote doesn't count. Discuss an issue she cares about and encourage her to check out www.rockthevote.org, where she can register on-line. Write a letter to the editor or an e-mail to friends. Call in to a talk show. Be informative, clear, and brief, and speak from your heart. The fact that you care matters to people.

6. Donate and volunteer. I too wish we had real campaign finance reform. But for now, money makes a big difference. I'm loosening my purse strings for people and organizations I believe in. Hold a coffee for a candidate or campaign you support, and encourage your friends to join you in making a contribution. And every campaign needs volunteers—pick your favorite and find out what you can do.

7. Join a conversation—outside your comfort zone. We all prefer to

talk with people who see the world the way we do. But democracy is about understanding each other. Check out Let's Talk America (www.letstalkamerica.org) and consider joining or hosting a conversation. You may find yourself better prepared for that awkward conversation with your brother-in-law.

8. Support independent media. How we think about an issue has a lot to do with what we've read, heard, or seen. The corporate-owned media have way too much clout. Give money, time, and encouragement to your community radio station, an informative website, or a magazine that reflects your values, so they can reach more people.

9. Keep your sights on the long term. It will take far more than one election to bring about the deep changes needed to reverse the damage to our planet and create a society that treats everyone fairly. Make your political work count toward building lasting networks, organizations, and relationships. Get your organization involved in coalitions that can work together over the long haul.

10. Hold a party. This election will bring both good news and bad news. Gather with friends on November 3 to celebrate the good, comfort each other about the bad, and regroup to keep making a difference. Make it fun. The future depends on our being in this for the long haul.

Fran Korten
Executive Director

P.S. You can download a one-page version of this column at www.yesmagagazine.org.

events & announcements

David Brower Youth Awards

This year's Brower awards for youth environmental activism went to Andrew Hunt, Andrew Azman, Thomas Nichols, Rachel Ackoff, Illai Kenney, and Whitney Cushing for their work on vegetable-powered bus fleets, restoring rivers, trade agreements to raise environmental standards, and environmental justice.

For more information, go to www.earthisland.org. To read interviews with each of the honorees, go to www.yesmagazine.org/education.htm.

Local Currencies

June 25–27, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Conference on understanding money, building local economies, and renewing community. For information, contact the E.F. Schumacher Society, 413/528-1737, or go to www.localcurrency.org.

Take Back Your Time Day

June 10–13, Loyola University in Chicago. Workshops include re-learning leisure, challenging workaholism; changing workplace culture; time out for sabbaticals; and why we are overworking. For more information, go to www.timeday.org/conference.

Reclaiming Economics

June 18–20 at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina. Conference will look at economic strategies for promoting community, ecology, and self reliance in communities. For more information, go to www.reclaimingeconomics.org.

Common Society Gathering

June 26–27, St. Louis, Missouri, ideas for pooling community resources, supporting local activities rather than global corporations, developing local governance structures, and creating local energy production and distribution networks. Sponsored by the Institute of Noetic Sciences and the Commonway Institute. For more information, visit www.commonway.org/CSM%20Gathering.pdf.

Renewable Energy Fair

July 23–25, John Day, Oregon. Admission includes workshops on both off-grid and grid renewable energy and sustainable living topics. For more information contact Jennifer Barker, SolWest/EORenew, 541/575-3633 or go to www.solwest.org.

Summer Courses

July and August, Whidbey Institute/Schumacher College. Faculty include Juliet Schor, Prasannan Parathasarathi, David Korten, Vandana Shiva, and Satish Kumar. Courses taught at Whidbey Island, Washington. For more information, go to www.whidbeyinstitute.org.

New Media, New Partners

Northwest Social Forum

In April, YES!/the Positive Futures Network held a three-day retreat for 40 social change leaders to make plans for the Northwest Social Forum. The Forum, modeled on the World Social Forum, is expected to bring several thousand people to Seattle October 15–17 for discussions of themes such as Protecting the Common Good, Globalization, Environmental Justice, and Indigenous Wisdom. If you're interested in coming, find out more at www.nwsocialforum.org. Our April gathering was the 10th in our State of the Possible retreat series supported by the Fetzer Institute. Each retreat brings diverse leaders together to bridge the divides among the social change networks and create momentum for change.

—Fran Korten

Volunteer Spotlight

Bryce Mathern, a graduate student at Antioch University in Seattle in the Environment and Community program, has devoted a semester-long research project to exploring the effectiveness and impact of *YES!*' outreach programs. Bryce's research will go a long way towards improving our ability to put *YES!* in the hands of activists and community groups who will most benefit from the articles and resources found in each issue.

—SG

YES! and Film—a Fine Combination

In an innovative cross-media collaboration, *YES!* is pairing up with the Film Connection to provide magazines and great films on a wide range of contemporary issues to discussion groups around the country. Find details on page 47.

YES!' first video production, *We the People: Conversations on Being American,* was featured in the recent Conscientious Projector Film Festival in Bainbridge Island, Washington. For additional details on the video, see www.yesmagazine.org. Copies of *YES!* were distributed at both the Tangle River (www.tangleriver.org) and Hazel Wolf (www.hazelfilm.org) environmental film festivals, in California and Washington states.

—SG

On the Road

Following his well-received keynote address at Seattle Thunder earlier this year, David Korten (co-founder and Board Chair of *YES!*/ Positive Futures Network) will be the featured speaker at a special joint fundraiser May 13th for *YES!* and KGNU 88.5FM Community Radio in Boulder, Colorado.

David will speak at the Praxis Peace Institute conference, "The Alchemy of Democracy: Restoring Soul to Culture" in Pacific Grove, California (June 13–18, www.praxispeace.org) and at a summer course co-sponsored by Schumacher College and the Whidbey Institute, "Challenging Globalization," August 8–15 (www.whidbeyinstitute.org). For transcripts of David Korten's recent speeches see www.davidkorten.org.

Executive Editor Sarah van Gelder will be speaking at the Praxis Peace event and the Institute of Noetic Sciences conference, "Consciousness & Media," in Santa Barbara, May 28-30 (www.noetic.org).

Marketing and Outreach Manager Susan Gleason and Education Outreach Manager Kim Corrigan will be attending the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Long Beach, California, June 24–28. If you attend, stop by and say hello. A full listing of upcoming events can be found at www.yesmagazine.org.

—SG

Students Study Justice

This spring, the YES! Education Connection, with our partner Global Visionaries (www.globalvisionaries.org), is delivering *YES!* stories to students taking a Global Justice Leadership course at Cleveland High School in Seattle. We've created student notebooks that include a selection of *YES!* articles that feature young people as environmental and social justice heroes. We've also developed questions for each article to engage students in exploring positive solutions to current problems and to encourage them to express their own ideas. In June, we'll publish students' responses to the articles at www.yesmagazine.org/education.htm.

—Kim Corrigan

Readers take action

Continued from page 5

it might produce remarkably accurate results. Volunteers could offer paper ballots to everyone who was seen to be accepted as a voter, and a separate one to anyone claiming to be wrongly disenfranchised, as is increasingly happening to blacks.

You don't have to have a legal charter to create a mass of rock-solid evidence, you just need a diverse bunch of people to witness the same things and sign a fair summary. The beauty of the labor-intensive process is that every voter probably knows someone who knows a scrutineer, and even the media can't ignore that much awareness. If we can get millions of people to just walk around together, surely we can get them to go do something about the possible demise of democracy.

If you think this idea should grow, please pass it on.

Bob Stuart
Salt Spring Island, Canada

Good Living, Good Food

I am addicted to good food and good community. As a junior ecological studies student at Seattle University, I'm one of six students participating in a cooking commune. We eat together Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights, taking turns preparing and hosting vegetarian meals for each other in our homes. For example, I cook every other Monday night and, in exchange, I get to enjoy five meals prepared by my fellow commune members throughout the following two weeks. I have belonged to this fabulous community for three years, and the tradition will most likely emerge as one of the most consistent and valuable experiences of my college career.

There are drawbacks and challenges of being part of a cooking commune. It's not easy to synchronize six people's schedules, make the commitment to meet three times a week, or accept the occasional "whoops" meal (although it can be amusing when someone's recipe goes awry). But the benefits of the system are well worth our efforts. On average, I spend three hours every two weeks preparing, serving, and cleaning up one meal. If I plan ahead, I can buy all the food I need for that meal during my regular weekly shopping, taking only a few extra minutes each week to gather ingredients. In return, I sit down to enjoy five delicious, vegetarian, home-cooked meals with wonderful people without lifting a finger.

Yet the food is not the only thing about the cooking commune that is nourishing. The community and lifestyle that is born out of this commune is priceless. Over the past three years, I have enjoyed deep, thoughtful conversations, equally deep and vibrant friendships, and laughter on all scales.

Monica Maggio
Seattle, Washington

Quilts for Peace

In December 2001, I found myself making quilts for Afghanistan, with 100 fourth graders in my language and reading classroom. To comply with curriculum standards, we also wrote letters. Our letters were read to hundreds of Afghani students to let them know we care about them.

A Christian Peacekeeper encouraged me to send a quilt to the Ibdaa Cultural Center in Bethlehem, "as a sign of hope, because Bethlehem is rubble." We also now have quilts at Neve Shalom-Wahat al Salaam, where Palestinians and Israelis work, and live in community, and at the Rachel Corrie Center. Students in Nashville wanted to make quilts in African fabric for Africa. The students talked about violence in their own neighborhoods. We sent these quilts to the women of Africa who have each opened their homes to dozens of children orphaned by the AIDS virus.

Since 2002, we have made hundreds of quilts with thousands of students around the country, and even at a school on an army base in North Korea. Our quilts are now in 10 countries. We sent quilts to be given as baby blankets to new mothers in Baghdad. Kathy Kelly, who was in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness, tells us that our quilts have helped new mothers out of despair during the bombing of Baghdad.

It takes many students to make one quilt, but each has opened their heart to learn about others who are suffering from violence, poverty and hardships that we can not even imagine. While making quilts for others is the hands-on activity we use to engage students, teaching them to think, learn, and care about others is its main objective.

Judith Biondo Meeker
More Than Warmth
Fairview, Tennessee

Send your typed, double-spaced submission of 500 words or less to:
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PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
E-mail: editors@futurenet.org
Include your name, address, and an e-mail address or telephone number.

sustainable living

Searching for simple and practical ways to live sustainably? Want to be part of the solution? Looking to create a safer world for yourself and your family?

Yes! But How?

Plastic Bottles

In the Winter 2004 issue, Yes! But How? stated that the Good Bottle by Marilyn Farms does not leach chemicals. I ordered some and found that they look to be the same as the Nalgene #7 bottle made of harmful lexan polycarbonate. I would like to be able to find a bottle that does not contain harmful plastics. Please help sort this out.

At the time the Winter 2004 issue went to press, we were unaware of a study that casts doubt on the safety of polycarbonate bottles. The Good Bottle is made of polycarbonate, although Marilyn Farms stands by the safety of its bottles.

The study, published by Dr. Patricia Hunt in the April 2003 issue of *Current Biology*, reports that exposure to bisphenol A (BPA) causes a chromosomal abnormality in the oocytes or egg cells of female mice. Polycarbonate plastic is manufactured with BPA.

In her study, Hunt, a geneticist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, detected a chromosomal error in cell division known as aneuploidy. Other researches linked aneuploidy to spontaneous miscarriages and birth defects in humans.

The Bisphenol A Global Industry Group of the American Plastics Council, the Association of Plastics Manufacturers in Europe, and the Japan Chemical Industry Association, however, dispute Hunt's findings, especially on how it applies to human reproduction or development. They claim the reproductive and development effects were not examined in Hunt's study and the experimental system used has not been validated or standardized for the evaluation of reproductive effects. They instead point to two multi-generation studies that specifically investigated the reproductive or developmental effects of BPA. The studies, one by the Research Triangle Institute and the other by the Japanese National Institute of Health Sciences, reported that BPA did not cause reproductive or development effects at any environmentally relevant dose.

At best, research on BPA is far from definitive. In the meantime, it is wise to minimize your use of plastics, as all plastics break down over time, and so have the potential to leach chemicals.

To minimize your use of plastics, we suggest the following:

- Exchange that plastic bottle at your office desk for a glass.
- Never microwave anything in a plastic container.
- When you need a portable container, try alternatives to plastics, especially for hot or acidic drinks. Thermoses with stainless steel or ceramic interiors may be too bulky for hiking, but could be used for your commute or car-camping.
- When you must use plastics, choose #2 high-density polyethylene (HDPE), #4 low-density polyethylene (LDPE), and #5 polypropylene (PP). These types of plastics are not known to leach harmful chemicals. Avoid #3 polyvinyl chloride (PVC), #6 polystyrene (PS), and, according to Hunt's study, #7 polycarbonate. Plastic bottles made from #1 polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE) are for single, not multiple use.
- When you do use plastic water bottles, store them away from heat. Hand wash them with mild detergent and rinse well. Never expose bottles to harsh chemicals, such as bleach, in cleaning.

Michelle Burkhart

Wood Protection

We have used spray can, petroleum-based products such as Pledge in the past to clean our cypress wood paneling. Are there any natural products that protect wood furniture, floors, and paneling?

Yes, there are natural alternatives to petroleum-based products to protect wood furniture, floors, and paneling.

Multiple books and websites covering alternative cleaners suggest using a mixture of vinegar and oil to clean and polish interior wood. The vinegar pulls the dirt out of the wood and the oil lubricates the wood and prevents it from drying out. Some people prefer to substitute lemon juice for the

vinegar because it smells better, while others use equal parts of both.

Experiment with different amounts to decide what you prefer. The following ratios are recommended:

1/4 cup white, distilled vinegar (apple cider vinegar may stain)

3 or 4 drops of oil (olive oil is best)

Pour the mixture into a spray bottle and apply to wood. Wipe clean with a dry cloth.

Some recipes suggest melting one tablespoon of liquid wax such as jojoba or carnauba as a final polish on occasion. Both can be found in most health food stores. Mix the melted wax with two pints of mineral oil, pour into a spray bottle, and apply to wood. Let sit for an hour and buff with a soft cloth.

To remove watermarks on wood furniture, rub toothpaste on the stain, let dry, and remove with a soft cloth.

See :
www.ecocycle.org/hazwaste/recipes.cfm or
www.wswmd.org/recipes#furn

Becky Brun

CD Recycling

I've been buying and keeping CDs over the years, and now these are gathering dust and eating space in my room. Do you have a suggestion on how I could recycle my CDs or put them to better use?

Over the next five years, consumers in the United States will go through more than 10 billion computer disks and CDs. Clearly, the challenge of what to do with this and all technology-based waste materials needs attention.

A number of well-established organizations that collect and recycle obsolete CDs exist, as the polycarbonate component found in CDs can be recycled and reused to create egg cartons and automotive parts.

GreenDisk, an organization headquartered in Sammamish, Washington, cleanly disposes of and recycles electronic media devices (including CDs, DVDs, and jewel cases) and most other forms of "techno trash." EcoDisk, based in Tacoma, Washington, offers a similar service. Both organizations require a small payment to cover the costs of recycling. To learn more, call either organization or visit their website: GreenDisk (www.greendisk.com); EcoDisk (www.ecodisk.com) 888/797-SOFT.

A quick Internet search on CD recycling will also introduce you to a wide range of suggestions on how to reuse CDs. Popular ideas include CD coasters, art pieces, disco balls, and bird-thwarting garden devices. Visit www.make-stuff.com/recycling/cd.html for other unique ideas.

Brian Edstrom

Dog Fleas

Do you know of a recipe to get rid of the fleas on my dog and in my house?

Care2, an environmental network, recommends mixing an equal amount of powdered eucalyptus, rosemary, fennel, yellow dock, wormwood, and rue. Put mixture in a shaker-top jar, such as a jar for parsley flakes. While brushing backward your pet's coat with your hand or a comb, sprinkle the mixture onto the base of hair—especially on the neck, back, and belly.

Apply the mixture once a week. For severe infestations, apply the mixture several times a week.

After each application, put your pet outside so that the fleas will vacate outside your house.

Do remember, though, that preventing fleas from infesting your pet's coat is better than getting rid of them. Preventive measures include bathing your pet with pesticide-free shampoo, combing your pet with a flea comb, vacuuming your house and immediately discarding the dust bag, washing your pet's bedding, and mowing areas of the lawn where your pets spend time.

Also, many pet stores and natural food stores carry herbal flea-repellant products.

For additional information, visit www.peta.org, www.hsus.org, and www.nrdc.org.

Michelle Burkhart

Send your questions to:
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5 Millennium Survival Guide

4 Sustainable Sex

3 Sustaining Watersheds

2 Money: Print Your Own!

1 Future Watch: Signs of an Emerging Culture

Books & Video

Saying Yes!: Conversations on a World that Works for All David Korten, Joanna Macy, Juliet Schor, Paul Hawken, Vicki Robin, Carl Anthony, Muhammad Yunus, and other *YES!* favorites

Making Peace: Healing a Violent World Is peace possible? A prison inmate, a theologian, a global activist, a spiritual leader, a Kentucky farmer, a diplomat—all answer "Yes!"

We the People: Conversations on Being American Narrated by Danny Glover, a diverse cross-section of Americans shares experiences of life and activism in the U.S.—and comes to some surprising conclusions. (This 28-minute video comes with a discussion guide & *YES!* #21.)

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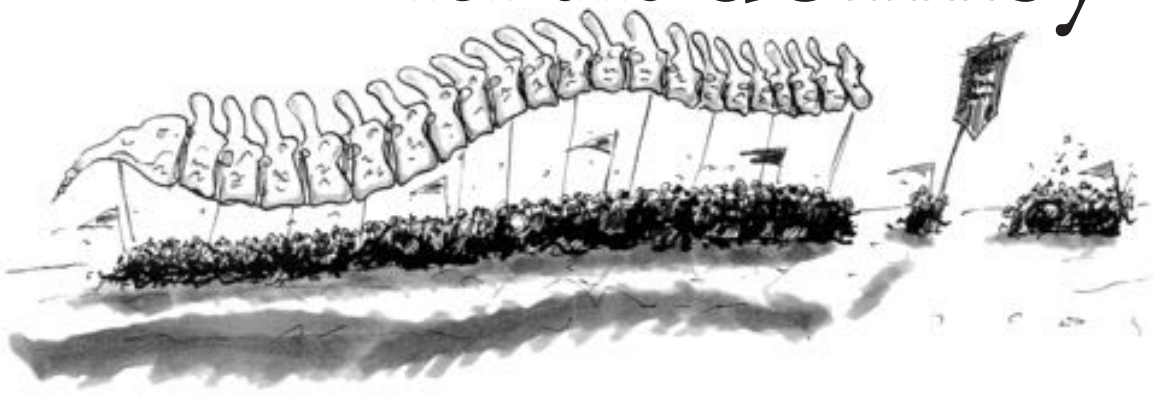
nocomment

a backbone for the donkey



How do you reward that rare elected official who shows some spine? One who can stand up to hate-mongering, talk-radio slander, exile from the neo-conservative halls of power—those who show that democratic values still mean something in America?

Dr. Howard Dean admires his highly coveted Backbone Award

How about a gold-plated backbone?

Okay, maybe you think these beauties look like cast-offs from a chiropractic rummage sale. But check out who's joining the backbone club.

In January, U.S. Representative Jim McDermott, who didn't buckle when he got tarred as "Baghdad Jim" for his pre-war trip to Iraq, was favored with the first backbone award. Then came awards to presidential candidates Howard Dean and Dennis Kucinich and to down-home rabble-rouser Jim Hightower.

What do these guys have in common? A certain righteous orneriness that's in short supply among Democrats. Putting the mulishness back in the old donkey is the goal of the Backbone Campaign, which will parade an 80-foot backbone down the streets of Boston at the Democratic Convention in July, with each vertebra representing a piece of a strong platform.

You too can give a Backbone Award to a favorite person who's not afraid to stand up for their beliefs. Contact the Backbone Campaign: www.backbonecampaign.org.

Could a little spunk help the D's retake the White House? Stay tuned.