

Summer 2005

**7 Great ideas for
movement builders**

yes!
a journal of positive futures

From Abandoned to Beautiful

Lily Yeh brings her art to the
vacant lots of north Philadelphia

Give Your Neighborhood a Makeover

Speaking Up for Cities Just, Green, & Beautiful

Appalachian Ecovillage

**what makes
a great
place?**

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Issue #34

the city is like a ship for a journey into
humanity's future. better build it well.

—Richard Register



Dear Reader,



Illustration by Marc Mongeau

My son Alex and his friend Morrine were just four years old when they decided to go on a “journey,” to find me at my office. I worked a good mile and a half from the cohousing community where we lived, and so the first obstacle the two encountered when they set out was a street. The kids knew they were not allowed to cross streets without holding someone’s hand—so they held each others’ hands.

But then came a bigger street with cars going 30 miles per hour. Instead of attempting a dangerous crossing, they turned the corner. Once they did that a few times, lo and behold, they were back at cohousing!

Terribly pleased with themselves for having found their way back, they resumed playing, and no one was the wiser—that is until I got home, and they proudly presented the bouquet of dandelions they had collected on their journey.

My kids were fortunate to grow up in a child-friendly community. In addition to 30 small homes clustered together, Winslow Cohousing has lots of great places for kids—a small forest, a play field, a recreation room complete with foosball and wrestling mats, a common dining room, chickens to feed, berries to snack on—all on 4.5 acres. Alex and his



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sister had to tolerate long meetings held by grown-ups as we were forming and building the community. But our family benefited from living in a great place. In our case, that meant a cohousing community located within a larger community that also prides itself on being children-friendly.

Why are great places getting so hard to find? What can we do to reclaim great places from traffic congestion, big-box stores, abandoned neighborhoods, polluted waterfronts, vacant lots, and strip malls?

This issue of *YES!* shows how to create and preserve great places. In researching this issue, we found several distinct movements, each addressing a piece of the puzzle.

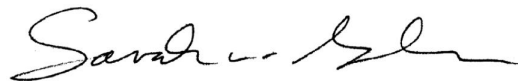
The smart-growth movement advocates community designs in which businesses and homes are clustered into walkable neighborhoods. When development is contained within cities and towns, rural land can be protected and fresh food, water, and open space are within reach. And it turns out sprawl isn't any better for our health than it is for the environment. People who live in pedestrian-friendly communities tend to have lower rates of obesity.

The regional-equity movement shows the link between the flight of the wealthy and white to the suburbs, the abandonment of urban neighborhoods, and the loss of open spaces. Urban neighborhoods could be attractive places to live and raise families if all communities had access to high-quality schools, jobs, and services, advocates say. Vibrant and diverse communities could replace segregated sprawl and impoverished cities.

The place-making movement focuses on public spaces that bring communities together for cultural happenings, pleasant scenery, and people watching. These are the qualities that make European cities so attractive to residents and visitors.

The green-cities movement is designing buildings and cities that function as healthy parts of eco-systems. Green roofs, reclaimed industrial sites, farmers' markets, and accessible waterfronts also make cities great places to live. Ecovillages are experimenting at the leading edge of green innovation in such areas as buildings, energy, and agriculture.

There are good reasons for all these shifts, but one may be especially urgent. As we reach the peak and then decline of oil production, community designs that rely on cars and cheap energy may become untenable. Whatever the motivation, though, a transition to more just, green, and beautiful communities could make life richer for everyone, young and old, wealthy and poor.



Sarah Ruth van Gelder
Executive Editor

P.S. As you have probably noticed, we are experimenting with using color in this issue. Please tell us what you think. And there's another experiment going on—I've started a blog. You can find it at www.yesmagazine.org/svgblog.





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readersforum



Did an article leave you delighted? Infuriated? Inspired to action?

Tell us what you think of the ideas you find in *YES!* and what you're doing to create a better world

Thanks for the Hope

I have read your latest issue on media from cover to cover and am convinced that this country, despite the rhetoric we are getting out of Washington, is still in good hands! I am especially heartened by the articles telling of the ways our youth are changing the perspective that most Americans have about them, and challenging the corporations that try to mold their lives for profit.

Carol Wiebe
Trinidad, California

More Youth Media

In your resources for the Spring 2005 issue, you listed three great youth media organizations, but there are many more throughout the country. Visit www.soros.org/initiatives/youth, www.listenup.org, or www.ymdi.org to find a youth media organization near you. Please call your newspapers and television stations to request more youth-produced media.

Katina Paron
Children's PressLine

More Steps for Media

I'd like to add to Jeff Chester and Gary Larson's "10 Steps to More Democratic Media" (Spring 2005).

1. Support public and cooperative libraries as the primary means of non-current media distribution. Materials there are free to readers.

2. Create regional funds to support decentralized media production organizations.

3. Organize local dialogue groups for candid discussion on

issues, not for the purpose of organizing, but for the purpose of understanding the ways that issues are connected to other concerns.

4. Encourage listeners and viewers of broadcast media to be aware that they are hearing an opinion or a presentation, rather than a fact, regardless of the source.

We have a responsibility, not only a conspiracy against us. We participate in the creation of the power structure that exists by our own work or lack of it.

Richard Witty
via e-mail

Indymedia

I was surprised that your issue on media did not include articles on Indymedia, which is fast becoming the most accessible and usable tool for media democracy worldwide. Since the founding of Indymedia at the protests against the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle in 1999, Independent Media Centers have sprouted up all over the globe—at last count, there were more than 150.

The idea? To make it possible and easy for people to publish their own photos, audio, video, and writing for a global audience, without editors, administrative hierarchies, or spin. A current list of all the local sites is available on the global site, www.indymedia.org.

Jenka Soderberg
DC Indymedia

Give NPR Credit

Amy Goodman's outstanding work investigating stories we hear little

about in depth is to be commended. I was glad to read more about her in your Spring issue.

However, I don't think Carolyn McConnell enhanced Amy's stature by putting down NPR in her introduction. I don't think it is fair to compare a "top headline" with a program like the one Amy produced on the same day that had arranged to have guests and an in-depth look at Social Security. I have heard many stories about Social Security from many points of view on NPR and as I write (February 22) they are beginning a three-day series on the subject.

B. Harris
Portland, Oregon

Used Cards for Down Home

In your Spring 2005 issue you said St. Jude's is no longer accepting used greeting cards. However, Down Home Ranch in Texas, which ministers to those with special needs, needs them. See www.downhomeranch.org or write Down Home Ranch, 20250 FM 619, Elgin, Texas 78621.

Emily FitzRandolph
Littleton, Colorado

Forget the Two Parties

I'm stumped by the turn David Korten takes in the last sentence of his contribution to "The Work Ahead" in your Spring 2005 issue.

When he wrote that we need to build "a non-party political movement with a long-term agenda grounded in a vision of a just and sustainable future for all," I said, yes, yes, yes. But then he suggested that,



in part, the way to build the movement is to “rebuild the Democratic Party and support moderate Republicans in wresting control of the Party of Lincoln from the far right.”

The stagnation of centuries will not allow new life to be breathed into the two parties. We must remember that the deaths of these organizations do not mean ours or that of the pursuit of justice and sustainability. We all must continue to do our part to birth the future and lay to rest that which no longer serves our common good.

Jeannine Anderson
Olympia, Washington

Elections Matter

Mia MacDonald’s article on Dr. Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, neglected to mention that Dr. Maathai founded the Mazingira Green Party and was elected in 2002 as a Green member of Parliament in Kenya’s first truly free, multi-party elections since independence. Why the silence? Can it be that we mistakenly see a need to separate the purity of activism from the applied science of politics?

It is unfortunate that political corruption and partisan maneuvering have so tarnished the image of politics that, in the U.S., many qualified people remain sidelined, when they could not only organize demonstrations, but also run for office. Many races, from local to Congressional, are not even contested because someone has decreed that those seats are “not competitive,” a self-fulfilling prophecy if ever there was one.

I ran for county election commissioner to draw attention to the need for verified voting and instant run-off voting. To my surprise, no one else filed, and I became the first Green elected to public office in Mississippi. Electoral politics can be another tool in the activist’s tool-

box, as Wangari Maathai knows.

John M. Wages, Jr.
Tupelo, Mississippi

Readers Take Action: A Joyful Protest

One morning this spring, I participated in my first protest. I jumped out of my Colorado College dorm room bed at 5:30 a.m., put on rainbow earrings, colored a rainbow and safety-pinned it to my back. Then I ran down to meet my friends to gather in support of local Palmer High School students who wanted to start a gay/straight alliance club. Fred Phelps, a minister who created the “God Hates Fags” website [see “Debating Hate,” *YES!* Summer 2003], had come with a group from Kansas to protest.

They held signs that read, “God Hates Fags,” “Thank God for 9/11,” and “God Hates the USA.”

We held signs that said, “For God so loved the world . . .” and “Gay or straight we think you’re great!” and “LOVE.” We sang and waved peace signs and ate cookies and doughnuts. Hundreds of people from the college and the town of Colorado Springs gathered in support of gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual friends, family, and lovers, while only a couple dozen gathered in opposition.

I was lucky to be able to gather with friends and stand up for something I believed in. I was suddenly hit with a wave of patriotism. America has its faults, but we have the right to speak out against them. We sent a message of support to the kids at Palmer High School, we sent a positive message to the community, and we were there for each other.

Marion Glaser
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Editors’ Note

We are sorry to report that Dirk Koning, a contributor to the *YES!* media issue

and executive director of the Grand Rapids Community Media Center, died this spring. Dirk’s last project was the acquisition of Wealthy Theatre and the expansion of the media center to Grand Rapids’ southeast side. The media center is about one-third of the way to its goal of raising \$2 million for the expansion. The Center’s organizers invite those who remember Dirk’s contributions to help fulfill his final vision. See www.grcmc.org/dirkkoning.

Correction

The Spring 2005 issue failed to credit the source of Thich Nhat Hanh’s “Remain Firm, Clear, Compassionate,” which appeared as part of “The Work Ahead.” Thich Nhat Hanh’s contribution was reprinted with permission from Plum Village Meditation Center, France.



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Military Families, Vets Say Bring Them Home Now



Diane Greene Lent

Children in Fayetteville, North Carolina, protest the occupation of Iraq

With a notable exception, the protests in hundreds of U.S. cities and towns on March 19 against the occupation of Iraq were smaller than those in 2003 and 2004. But in Fayetteville, North Carolina, a protest led by veterans and military families drew 4,000 people to the largest demonstration ever held in that military city. As they marched to Fayetteville's Rowan Street Park, the site of a similar rally against the war in Vietnam 34 years earlier, older men in faded jungle uniforms mingled with younger vets in desert camouflage.

Located just outside of Fort Bragg, home of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division and the Special Operations Command, Fayetteville is at the center of a growing wing of the peace movement led by veterans and mili-

tary families, which is taking some of the strongest and most visible stands against the occupation of Iraq.

At the protest, Iraq war veterans Michael Hoffman and Kelly Dougherty said they felt the war they fought in is wrong and called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. The two are spokespersons for Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), formed by six veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004. IVAW now has more than 150 veteran members and conducted its first national meeting on the day following the rally.

IVAW member and former Marine recruiter Jimmy Massey was one of several speakers who challenged the audience to counter military recruiting, especially in high schools. Before the

protest, Massey appeared at events for high school students in Raleigh and Durham. Some of the groups who marched in Fayetteville are crafting plans to pressure school boards to make it easier for parents of military-aged students to prevent recruiters from gaining contact information about their children under provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Another group at the forefront in Fayetteville was Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), an anti-Iraq war group made up of those with loved ones in the military. Formed in 2003, the group now has more than 2,000 members, according to co-founder Nancy Lessin. Members from as far away as Hawaii traveled to Fayetteville to attend the protest and strategize with other MFSO members.

MFSO members from Vermont organized a successful campaign this spring to pass resolutions in over 40 town meetings in Vermont calling for withdrawal of the state's National Guard troops from Iraq. Members in other states, including New York, Montana, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon are organizing similar campaigns.

Military family members argue that the use of local troops in Iraq deprives their communities of police officers, fire fighters, and other valuable public sector workers who make up a disproportionate number of National Guard troops. Their campaign aims to demonstrate to local officials that the war is a local as well as national issue.

Many of the organizations that participated in the Fayetteville rally are sponsors of the Bring Them Home Now! campaign, organized in 2003 following



President Bush's challenge to the Iraqi resistance to "bring it on."

—Lou Plummer

Lou Plummer, of Fayetteville, NC, is a member of Military Families Speak Out (www.mfso.org) and the Bring Them Home Now! campaign (www.bringthemhomenow.org). He can be reached at lplummer@mac.com. Find information on IVAW at www.ivaw.net.

Toxins to Be Pulled from Cosmetics

Three top cosmetics companies announced that they will remove from their products toxic chemicals banned by the European Union. In 2003, the EU banned chemicals known or suspected of causing cancer, mutation, or birth defects from cosmetics sold in EU countries. After a two-year public pressure effort by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, including a full-page ad in *USA Today*, L'Oréal, Revlon, and Unilever have agreed to remove the EU-banned chemicals from products they sell in the United States and other markets.

The Food and Drug Administration does not evaluate cosmetic products for safety nor does it regulate cosmetic ingredients. More than 10,000 chemicals are used in cosmetics, many of them linked to health problems and many more that have never been evaluated for health and safety at all, according to Jane Houlihan of the Environmental Working Group.

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, an international coalition, is asking companies to sign the Compact for Safe Cosmetics, a pledge to remove EU-banned chemicals immediately and to remove other chemicals of concern and replace them with safe alternatives within three years. So far, 100 companies have signed the compact.

—Stacy Malkan

For a database of chemicals in cosmetics, go to www.ewg.org/reports/skindeep. Find the companies that have signed the compact at www.safecosmetics.org/companies. Stacy Malkan is communications director for Health Care Without Harm.

Experts Warn of Oil Peak

Sources from around the world, including investment analysts and a U.S. government report, are now saying the same thing: world oil supplies are about to decline, risking major effects on the world's economy and politics.

The leading energy analysts who foretold Enron's demise are arguing that the world's major oil companies are almost tapped out. Herold—a research-only firm that calculates fair-market values of several hundred publicly traded energy companies—provides clients with estimates of when the output of each of the world's biggest energy companies will peak and begin to decline. Predicted peak years range from 2007 to 2009 for the world's seven largest publicly traded oil companies.

Critics of Herold's predictions claim that peaking of oil and gas production could be delayed by the development of new oil fields and technologies, such as turning tar sands and shale into fuel, which could become economically viable as fuel prices climb. However, Herold isn't the only Wall Street firm predicting that the peak of oil production is coming soon. In early December 2004, Deutsche Bank predicted global oil production will peak within the next 15 to 20 years. The Deutsche Bank report also stresses China's surging demand and global political instability caused by oil shortages, which "could trigger a shortage shock leading to a price crisis."

In recent months, oil prices have reached record levels of over \$50 per barrel. Recently, the Department of Energy issued a report saying that it expects crude oil prices to stay near or above \$50 per barrel for the rest of this year. This time last year the agency was predicting that crude oil would cost about \$29 per barrel throughout 2005.

According to the International Energy Agency, oil consumption has caught up with oil production. In a shift from its past stance, the IEA now recommends

promoting both alternatives to oil and energy conservation. In a different report, the IEA proposes drastic cutbacks in car use and fuel consumption. Those cutbacks would be achieved by measures ranging from car-pooling to police-enforced driving bans.

The agency was created in the mid-1970s by the industrialized nations after the Arab oil embargo to advise governments about energy security and conserving oil to protect their economies from fluctuations in its price.

The IEA's recommendation is supported by another recent report, this one for the U.S. Department of Energy by a private scientific and military contractor, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC).

World oil peaking "is going to happen," the report says, only the "timing is uncertain." The authors note that new finds of oil are not replacing oil consumed each year. Despite the advances in technology, reserves are becoming increasingly difficult to replace. The report also states that "... the economic loss to the United States could be measured on a trillion-dollar scale." The authors dismiss the idea that markets will solve the problem and calls for the intervention of governments.

—Rik Langendoen

India Restricts Generic Drugs

This spring, India's parliament voted to restrict production of low-cost generic medicines. Because India is the

President George W. Bush and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah met at Bush's Texas ranch in April to discuss oil prices





Rob Elliott

Indian pharmacist Mohd Azam Khan checks a vial of one of the latest Indian-made anti-AIDS drugs at the New Royal Chemists outlet in Bombay

primary supplier of inexpensive drugs to the developing world, particularly antibiotics, cancer therapy, and AIDS drugs, the bill may choke off a vital supply of medicines to the global poor.

Under India's 1970 Patent Act, Indian companies have been allowed to produce cheaper versions of a drug as long as they used a different manufacturing process. Competition from Indian generics has slashed the price of some drugs by almost 98 percent. In Africa, Indian generics have reduced the cost of AIDS drugs from \$15,000 to \$200 per patient per year. Indian companies also combined a cocktail of medicines into one simple pill. Aidsmap, a UK-based information resource for AIDS patients and caregivers, estimates that half of all AIDS patients in the Third World rely on Indian generics.

The bill will change Indian patent law to be more like laws in the West. Patents will be granted to products instead of processes, and companies will maintain exclusive rights to any new drug for 20 years. The change has been anticipated since 1995, when India joined the WTO on the condition that it agree to eliminate process patents by January 1, 2005.

The new bill still must be signed by the president to go into effect. The president was the original sponsor of the bill, so Indian and international officials expect the bill to become law soon.

The legislation allows Indian generic drugs currently on the market to be sold, but manufacturers must pay a royalty to the patent holder—usually a Western multinational corporation. The bill says this fee must be “reasonable,” but it does not specify what “reasonable” means. International standards for royalties hover around 3 to 4 percent, but Doctors Without Borders reports that GlaxoSmithKline charged a 40 percent royalty in South Africa until activists and courts intervened.

Like patent laws in the West, the new bill contains “compulsory licensing” clauses, which allow the government power to break patents in a health emergency. Although 5.1 million Indians are HIV-infected, the Indian government has not designated HIV/AIDS a national health emergency.

Theo Smart from Aidsmap writes that, by making it more profitable for Indian manufacturers to lend their capacities to large Western pharmaceutical companies than to produce their own drugs, the law may encourage further outsourcing from the West. According to the New Delhi-based newspaper *Financial Express*, more than 30 agreements between Indian and multinational drug companies have already been signed, including deals with Cipla and Ranbaxy, the two largest AIDS drug manufacturers in India.

—Meredith Dearborn

U.S. Budget At Odds with Public Opinion

A new poll finds that, given the chance, Americans would significantly alter the spending of their federal tax dollars. In the survey, respondents were presented with a breakdown of the current budget proposal and told to tailor the numbers to their liking. Most made major changes across the board.

Both Republicans and Democrats favored deep cuts in funding for defense in general and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular. Most chose to spend the money saved on social services. A majority chose to increase spending on education by an average of \$26.8 billion. Job training and employment would more than double, and programs for housing, veteran's benefits, and medical research each would increase by between \$9 and \$12.5 billion, almost doubling the figure proposed in President Bush's 2006 budget.

Republicans and Democrats alike preserved the budgets for homeland security and intelligence, and 82 percent favored an increase in salaries for military personnel. Nuclear warfare suffered the deepest cuts, with 65 percent of respondents reducing U.S. capacity to design and build warheads. On average, respondents placed the “necessary number” of active bombs at 155. (The actual number is around 5,000.)

Sixty-nine percent of respondents said that the United States should maintain a defense budget that is only large enough to protect itself and other nations alongside our allies and the United Nations, instead of maintaining our current ability to act unilaterally.

Americans also found money to fund increased social services by rolling back the tax cuts for citizens with incomes above \$200,000 per year. A majority also reallocated money toward reducing the deficit.

The most dramatic change in funding went to pursuing renewable energy sources. On average, the program for researching and developing renewables was given \$24 billion more than its current budget—an increase of 1,090 percent.

The poll, conducted by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes, surveyed 1,182 Americans and had a margin of error of 2.9–4.1 percent.

—Meredith Dearborn

Find the poll results at www.pipa.org.



Christians Call for Action on Poverty, Environment

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), an umbrella group for 52 Christian fundamentalist denominations whose 30 million members helped return George Bush to the White House, has committed itself to principles more commonly held by Bush's opponents. In the last year, the group has issued two documents calling for worldwide reduction of poverty, environmental sustainability, an end to racism, and an emphasis on human rights and social justice.

At their annual convention this March, the group marked the launch of the "Call to Civic Responsibility" in book form.

While the group invokes the biblical principle of human dominion over the Earth, it says that Christians have a duty to protect the environment. The NAE says that dominion means stewardship and "our uses of the Earth must be designed to conserve and renew the Earth rather than to deplete or destroy it."

The group urges Christians to practice recycling and conserve resources and governments to encourage fuel efficiency, reduce pollution, encourage sustainable use of natural resources, and care for wildlife and natural habitats.

The group also calls for economic justice, both in the United States and abroad, saying the Bible condemns gross economic disparities. The evangelicals advocate making the reduction of global poverty a central concern of American foreign policy.

The "Call for Civic Responsibility" also condemns racism, making reference to mistreatment of Native Americans and to slavery; calls for peaceful resolution to disputes and use of war as a last resort; and invokes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the precautionary principle with respect to biotechnology.

The "Sandy Cove Covenant," signed by the NAE in June, 2004, is a commitment to produce within a year a

consensus statement on global warming and other environmental issues.

The group continues its opposition to same-sex marriage, abortion, and embryonic stem-cell research.

—Doug Pibel

The full text of Call to Civic Responsibility is at www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf. Doug Pibel is a YES! contributing editor.

Latin American Leaders Signal Independence

In a sign of Latin America's desire for increased regional cooperation and independence from the United States, the leaders of Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil met with the prime minister of Spain at a summit in Venezuela in March to discuss ways of combating terrorism, poverty, and drug trafficking.

During the summit, leaders Uribe, Chavez, Lula, and Zapatero committed to promote regional alliances. "A new geopolitics is taking shape in the world," said Hugo Chavez, the president of Venezuela.

Much of the summit centered around Chavez' stormy relationship with the Bush Administration. Condoleezza Rice labeled Venezuela a "negative force in the region," and President Bush recently lobbied the leaders of Mexico, Canada, and Argentina to promote "containment" of Chavez on the American continent.

Since he was elected in 1998, Chavez has brought new homes, health care, education, and potable water to Venezuela's poor. The state constitution, approved by 70 percent of the populace in a referendum, outlaws oil privatization in Venezuela, the world's fifth largest oil producer and supplier of 15 percent of U.S. oil. Pro-business interests within Venezuela have agitated for Chavez' removal. Government documents acquired by the website Venezuelafoia.info show the U.S. government has financed opposition groups within the country.

Chavez has also been instrumental in creating PetroAmerica, a strategic

alliance of local Latin American and Caribbean oil companies to assist each other in production and trade in energy.

In the past few years, a groundswell of popular reaction to neoliberal privatization policies promoted by the United States and the International Monetary Fund has caused a swing to the left in Latin America, toppling the presidents of Argentina and Bolivia and resulting in the election of leftist or center-leftist leaders in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.

—Lisa Garrigues

Lisa Garrigues is a YES! contributing editor.

Farmworkers Win a Penny More

A campaign that brought together farmworkers, students, and faith communities has ended in a decisive victory for the workers who pick the tomatoes for Taco Bell. Under an agreement between the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Taco Bell, workers will receive one cent more per pound of tomatoes picked—raising their current wages by 75 percent—and suppliers will be bound to a code of conduct that prevents indentured servitude. This agreement affects thousands of workers in Florida and up the East Coast.

The Coalition, based in southwest Florida, is made up of immigrant farmworkers. The group exposed three modern-day slavery operations, freeing more than 500 workers from debt

Members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers celebrate their agreement with Taco Bell, which raises wages and improves working conditions for tomato pickers



Jacques-Jean Tizhou



bondage in U.S. fields. The group uses a community radio station to reach farmworkers [see YES! Spring 2005].

In the late 1990s, noting that wages for tomato pickers had fallen by as much as 60 percent during the previous two decades, the coalition asked Taco Bell to pressure its Florida suppliers to raise wages and improve working conditions. When Taco Bell refused, the coalition started a nationwide boycott in April 2001, focusing its efforts on high schools and college campuses. Using nationwide bus campaigns to spread their story, the Coalition and their student allies convinced over 21 schools and universities to prevent or cancel Taco Bell contracts.

The coalition staged hunger strikes and demonstrations outside Taco Bell headquarters and gained support from faith and human rights groups, including the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the National Council of Churches, as well as former President Jimmy Carter.

—Hannah Sassaman

For more information, see www.ciw-online.org. Hannah Sassaman is an organizer with Prometheus Radio Project, www.prometheusradio.org.

California Goes Solar

In February, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger released details of a plan he hopes will keep his campaign promise to harness the sun for California. The California Million Solar Roofs Initiative sets an ambitious goal of installing 1 million new solar roofs by the year 2018.

"If we pull this off," said Jan McFarland, vice president of the California program for Americans for Solar Power, "it will fundamentally change the way we view renewable energy."

A Republican and a Democratic state senator have co-authored bills to enact the Solar Roofs Initiative. The bills would provide rebates to homes and businesses that install solar roofs, lowering the cost from \$13,000 to \$8,500; a growing market is expected

to decrease that cost further over the next 10 years. The bills would also extend the 7.5 percent state tax credit on solar energy systems, set to expire this year. The law would allow consumers who generate extra power to *net meter*, or sell the extra electricity they generate back to electric companies.

The legislation aims at solar roofing being installed on 50 percent of all new homes in California and would generate 3,000 megawatts of power from the sun, equivalent to 12 medium-sized power plants. One megawatt can power almost 800 homes.

A study released recently by researchers at the University of California—Berkeley determined that the initiative would provide 19,000 jobs throughout the state.

The governor's plan is similar to successful initiatives in Japan and Germany to increase solar energy by decreasing the costs. Although both countries currently lead the world in solar energy generation, California has 40 percent more annual sunlight than Germany and 20 percent more than Japan.

—Megan Tady

Megan Tady, a former YES! intern, is a freelance writer who lives in Massachusetts.

Arctic Oil Fight Not Over

Proponents of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are one step closer to gaining access to its north coastal plain, but they're not there yet. On March 16, the U.S. Senate voted to keep a provision in the federal budget that opens the refuge to oil drilling; the House later included refuge drilling in an energy bill. However, the House and Senate must now reconcile their budgets. The drilling provision could be removed at several points before the law reaches President Bush's desk for signing.

Drilling in the 1.5 million acres between the Brooks Range and the Beaufort Sea in northeast Alaska has been banned since the 1980s. The refuge contains all of the remaining 5 percent of America's arctic coastline still

unopened to oil extraction. The tundra wetlands where drilling would take place are considered by scientists to be the heart of the refuge. The area is habitat for nearly 200 species of wildlife, including the Porcupine caribou, an animal central to the culture and livelihood of the Gwich'in tribe.

Bush Administration officials claim drilling in the refuge would lessen U.S. dependence on foreign oil. However, it is unclear how much oil from the coastal plain could be recovered profitably. A 1998 study by the U.S. Geological Survey estimated the recoverable oil in the refuge to be 10.4 billion barrels. Current U.S. oil consumption is 8 billion barrels per year.

BP and Chevron conducted exploratory drilling in the refuge in the early 1980s, but have kept the results closely guarded. These two companies were the first to drop out of Arctic Power, the consortium lobbying for drilling in the refuge. ConocoPhillips also dropped out, and ExxonMobil has shown little public interest in the project.

However, smaller oil companies with infrastructure already in the Alaskan tundra are poised to begin drilling. According to an article in *The New York Times*, many Republicans view drilling in the refuge as a symbolic victory that could lead to opening other federal lands to private interests, including areas off the coasts of Florida and California.

The Natural Resources Defense Council is targeting Republican Senators Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Gordon Smith of Oregon, and Susan Collins of Maine in a radio ad campaign to persuade them to vote against a budget that includes refuge drilling.

Strong opposition from citizens and environmental organizations has until now prevented drilling. Athan Manuel, of U.S. Public Interest Research Group, says that drilling can still be prevented by a "firestorm of opposition."

—Lisa Kundrat

For more information and how to take action see www.nrdc.org or www.uspirg.org.

Number of stories that ran in major newspapers in the last six months of 2004 in which
 “Social Security” appeared within five words of “crisis” or “looming”: 159
 Number of times the same phrase occurred in the same period a year before: 18¹
 Year that the trustees of Social Security expect their program’s trust fund to run out: 2041
 Percent of benefits that would still be paid through the program’s other sources of income in 2041: 74
 Year that the trustees of Medicare expect their program’s trust fund to run out: 2020²
 Percent of answers about billing provided by Medicare customer service representatives
 that were wrong: 96
 Percent of wrong answers that a toad, through random leaps, provided to the same questions: 50³
 Estimated deaths from the December 2004 tsunami: near 220,000⁴
 Estimated deaths from malaria every year: 1.3 million⁵
 Cost of lifesaving malaria treatment for one person: 25 cents to \$2.40⁶
 U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis in 2004: \$350 million
 Amount the contribution decreased from the year before: \$200 million⁷
 Number of prisoners held by the U.S. military in Iraq in October 2004: 4,300⁸
 Number held in March 2005: 10,200⁹
 Number of people threatened with loss of all public library access in Salinas, California: 150,000¹⁰
 Cumulative loss of funding for libraries across America in the past year and a half: \$111.5 million¹¹
 Percent of Americans who agreed with the statement that libraries and librarians play an essential role in
 our democracy and are “needed now more than ever”: 83¹²
 Number of libraries that were asked by law enforcement officials, under the USA PATRIOT Act, for
 records of their patrons’ reading habits in 2002: 444
 Number of libraries that refused the requests for the records: 225
 Percent of librarians who say they would challenge a court order asking them to provide information
 secretly about a patron: 21.7¹³
 Number of times Congress has voted to raise the federal minimum wage since 1997: 0¹⁴
 Number of times Congress has voted to raise its own salary since 1997: 7¹⁵
 Number of moose that have broken into retail stores in Norway over the past year: at least 2¹⁶
 Number of additional centimeters children in sunlit schools grow over a two-year period compared to
 children in artificially lit schools: 2.1
 Amount less tooth decay in children attending sunlit, rather than artificially lit, schools: 9 times¹⁷
 Percent of Americans who believe that buying a highly fuel-efficient car is patriotic: 66
 Percent of NASCAR fans who believe this: 67¹⁸

1. Geoffrey Nunberg, “Privatization and the English Language,” *The American Prospect*, February 2004. 2. Social Security and Medicare Boards of Trustees, “A Summary of the 2004 Annual Reports,” www.ssa.gov/OACT/TRSUM/trsummary.html. 3. Lawrence R. Hunkton, M.D., Ph.D., “Medicare: Incompetence-Based Bureaucracy,” *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*, Winter 2004. 4. Michael Thieren, “Asian Tsunami: Death-Toll Addiction and its Downside,” *World Health Organization Bulletin*, February 2005, www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/83/2/editorial10205/en/. 5. Scott P. Layne, M.D. UCLA Department of Epidemiology, www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/layne/Epidemiology%20220/07.malaria.pdf. 6. Medecins Sans Frontieres, “What is the Cost and Who Will Pay?” www.msf.org/content/page.cfm?articleid=44247857-6A39-4D9C-8FA7E54299FF1D4D. 7. Kaiser Network, “Global Fund to Begin New Funding Round in 2005; U.S. Cuts 2005 Contribution to Fund,” November 19, 2004, http://kaisernet.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=26821. 8. The Associated Press, “Prisoner Count in Iraq Doubles in 5 Months,” March 30, 2005, www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/03/30/iraq.detainees.ap. 9. Human Rights First, “Behind the Wire,” March 30, 2005, www.humanrightsfirst.org/media/2005_alerts/usls_0330_det.htm. 10. The American Library Association, “The Campaign to Save America’s Libraries,” 2004, www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopromotions/campaignsave.htm. 11. The American Library Association, “Public Library Use: Fact Sheet 6,” 2004, www.ala.org/library/fact6.html. 12. The American Library Association, “Fact Sheet and Timeline,” 2004, www.ala.org/ala/pio/piopromotions/factsheettimeline.htm. 13. Leigh S. Estabrook, Library Research Center at the University of Illinois, “Public Libraries and Civil Liberties,” 2002, http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/gslis/research/civil_liberties.html. 14. The Department of Labor, “History of Federal Minimum Wage Rates Under the Fair Labor Act, 1938-1996,” www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/chart.htm. 15. “CRS Report for Congress: Salaries of Members of Congress: A List of Payable Rates and Effective Dates, 1789-2004,” www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/97-1011.pdf. 16. *Aftenposten*, Norway, Norwegian News in English, “Angry Moose Attacks Dogsled, After Another Runs Wild in Clothing Store,” January 11, 2005, www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article945820.ece. 17. Mike Nicklas and Gary Bailey, “Analysis of the Performance of Students in Daylit Schools,” 1996, www.innovativedesign.net/paper_a.htm#student. 18. Opinion Research Corporation, “American Views on Fuel-Efficient Automobiles and a Federal 40 MPG Standard: Summary of Survey Findings,” March 17, 2005.



Imagine a city where music, theater, and festivals celebrate the rainbow of cultures, where creeks run through and fresh produce comes in daily from nearby farms, where young and old gather in the great places of their **community.**





just, green, & beautiful cities

Carl Anthony

For the better part

of the last century, the conservation movement and its offspring, the environmental movement, have had a negative view of cities.

It started with John Muir's celebration of nature in reaction to the ugliness of industrial development, urban pollution, congestion, and noise. But this bias against cities is changing. Environmental groups now acknowledge that the way we live in cities is at the nexus of many environmental challenges.

Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this awakening is the founding in the early 1990s of the Congress for the New Urbanism, formed to re-establish the relationship between the art of city building and the conservation of the natural environment. According to its founding charter, new urbanists view "the divestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one inter-related community-building challenge."

New urbanists call for reducing our reliance on automobiles, bringing a wide range of amenities within a 10-minute walk of home and work. They advocate pedestrian-friendly design, including front porches and tree-lined streets, with parking hidden from view. Every neighborhood would be a mix of shops, offices, apartments, and homes, including people of diverse ages, classes, cultures, and races, with higher density in urban centers, and a celebration of rural life at the clearly marked edge of the city.

Such cities, they argue, would result in greater sustainability and a higher quality of life for everyone.

Despite the appeal of this vision, new urbanists have been slow to engage advocates of social and racial justice, civil rights, labor, housing, and faith-based leaders concerned about the challenges facing marginalized city populations.

Now an emerging national movement for regional equity is bringing new actors, issues, policies, and practices to the quest for smarter growth and socially just and livable communities. This movement carries fervor and moral authority—not seen since the early days of the civil rights movement—to the rebuilding of our downtowns, city neighborhoods, and older and newer suburban communities.

Tackling displacement

Many long-time residents of isolated, poorer neighborhoods welcome middle-income families to their neighborhoods as they become popular again due to new urban trends. They see the newcomers as making the neighborhood more attractive for grocery stores, banks, safe public parks, better schools, and inviting spaces. However, neighborhood organizers, housing advocates, and tenant groups worry that newcomers will displace older residents, driving up taxes and housing prices, making it impossible for

TOP: Mardi Gras street scene this February in New Orleans. Photo by Mario Tama.

BOTTOM: Live performance in Grant Park, Chicago, on July 4, 2003. Photo by Scott Harrison



what makes a great place?

poorer residents to remain. Such groups, organized to protect traditional constituencies, are joining the regional equity movement, to develop new strategies to capture some of the wealth from changing neighborhoods to benefit poor people.

From abandonment to opportunity

For many urban and rural communities, the scale of abandonment has reached epidemic proportions.

There are 90,000 vacant properties in Detroit, 60,000 in Philadelphia. Once-prosperous cities like St Louis, Baltimore, and Cincinnati, and dozens of smaller cities are shrinking, while we continue to build auto-dependent suburban communities 50 miles away from the downtowns, on what was once farmland.

In recent years, though, cities like Richmond, Flint, and Philadelphia have launched ambitious initiatives to reclaim vacant properties. Others, such

as San Diego and Las Vegas, have taken aggressive steps to prevent abandonment in the first place. A National Vacant Properties Campaign is attracting smart growth advocates—who see property reclamation as a way to offset urban sprawl—and affordable housing groups seeking to rehabilitate homes.

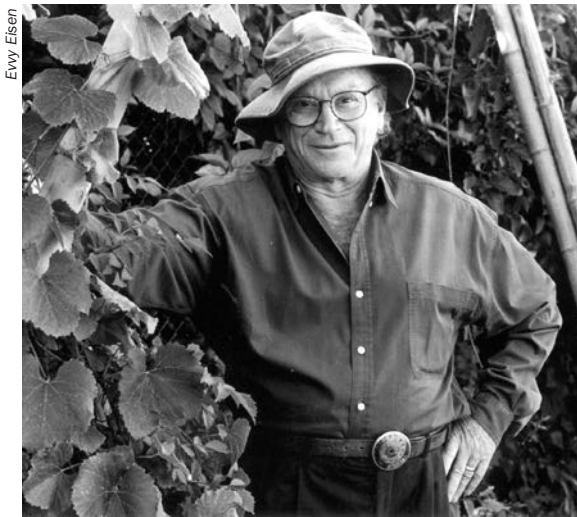
Working neighborhoods

Every community should have housing for the people who work there. A suburban neighborhood that has many stores, for example, should have places where cashiers and janitors can afford to live. And now that the nation has largely transformed to a service economy, and many industrial processes are less polluting, there is less need to separate places where people work and live. Having jobs closer to residential areas reduces over-reliance on automobiles, improves social integration, and reduces the ecological stresses associated with high traffic volumes.

Karl Linn 1923–2005:

Building a just world, one garden at a time

Diana Young



IN NORTHWEST BERKELEY, a greenway flows from a community garden where people gather amidst lush vegetation, artworks, and eco-friendly technology. Native plants, art, and interpretive panels tell the natural and cultural history of the neighborhood and inspire walkers and bikers to slow down and socialize. The creation of these life-enhancing environments was inspired and guided by community activist Karl Linn.

In 1959, Linn joined the landscape architecture faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. He developed a service-learning curriculum, taking his students into inner-

city communities where they worked with residents to design “neighborhood commons,” places close to home where people could relax, socialize, and celebrate the special occasions of their lives. Linn inspired volunteer professionals, youth teams, social service agencies, and city governments to be part of “barnraising commons.”

Linn recognized that reclaiming land for commons created a foundation for grassroots democracy. The pioneering community design-and-build centers Linn founded in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., became models for the Domestic Peace Corps, and he encouraged his students to create commons on college campuses.

Linn inspired Carl Anthony (see article above) to coordinate the creation of a neighborhood commons in Harlem in 1963. Anthony credits Linn with advocating for environmental justice two decades before the field had a name.

Later, responding to the nuclear arms race, Linn conducted workshops helping students and colleagues break through suppressed anxiety about the future. He took early retirement from a tenured professorship in 1986 to help found Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility and to chair its Education Committee.

Moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, he teamed up with Carl Anthony to start the Urban Habitat Program to develop multi-racial environmental leadership and restore inner-city neighborhoods. With the help of his wife, pianist-composer Nicole Milner, Linn worked tirelessly securing land for community gardens, nurturing the development of project teams, and promoting dialogue. Karl Linn died on February 3, 2005, at age 81.

For more information visit www.karllinn.org. Learn about Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility at www.adpsr.org, and Urban Habitat at <http://urbanhabitat.org>. Diana Young is a free-lance editor and graphic designer.





Bringing nature back into the cities

The natural world is a resource for aesthetic appreciation, education, and recreation. Cities that are barren of trees suffer from the heat-island effect as pavement and roofs absorb and radiate heat. When soils are displaced with paving, water can't percolate into the aquifers, and this too affects the microclimate.

Building community gardens, or opening up and restoring creeks and watersheds, provides opportunities to bring people of different jurisdictions, neighborhoods, and social classes together.

Perhaps easiest to understand, relating directly to issues of economic justice, is the urgent need to reconstruct our food system.

When I was growing up in the 1940s in Philadelphia, much of our food came from nearby farms. When the season changed, the food changed, and people kept track. During World War II, virtually every household in our neighborhood had a victory garden as a way of contributing to the war effort.

Today our food is grown, harvested, processed, packaged, distributed, shipped, and marketed by a small number of giant corporations. Folks in cities have no idea where their food comes from. The small family farm is no longer economically viable. Rural communities bear the brunt of noxious corporate farming practices. The money that urban populations spend for food increasingly pays for industrial farming monocultures, dependent on toxic pesticides, and transportation costs for shipping our food from countries all over the world to urban supermarkets.

Bringing nature back into the city means finding new ways to link small family farmers with consumers in the cities in a regional food system that provides healthy food to people who live in the city while keeping rural economies vibrant.

Just, green, & beautiful

An authentic approach to urban sustainability incorporates ecological integrity, beauty—and social justice.

Imagine cities as places where there is concern for air, water, and land, where working people can afford to live and raise their families. Imagine rural life protected and preserved, not turned into one commercial strip after another.

Imagine vital exchanges across generations and beautiful places where people gather.

Urban life is at its most vibrant when people from various parts of the world bring together their music, food, cultural systems, and religious expressions. All of these make for cities that manifest the strength and brilliance of the human garden.

Ethan Kent/PPS



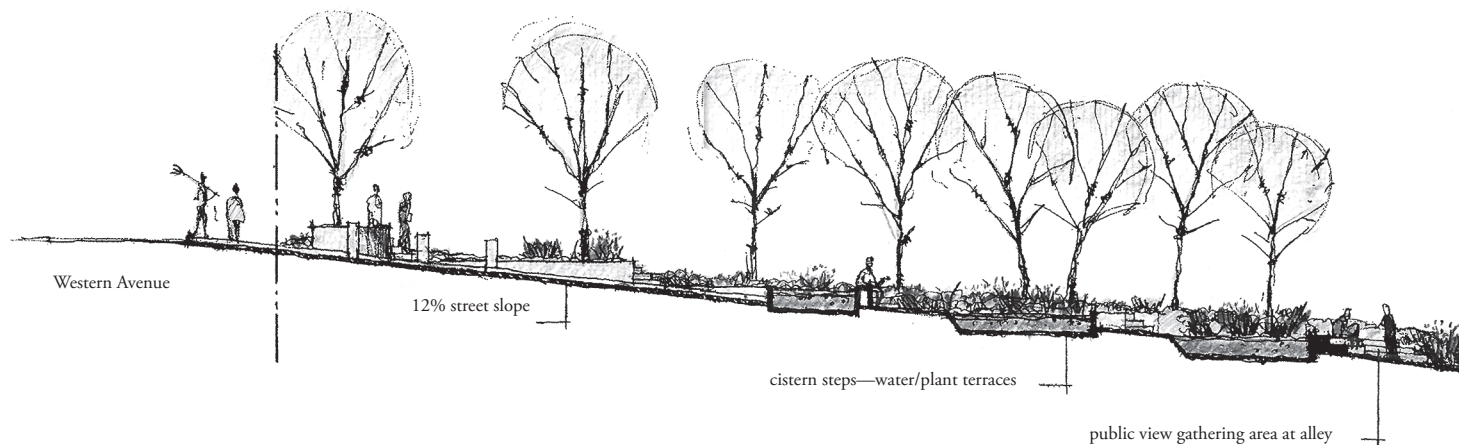
Imagine cities as places where there is concern for air, water, and land

The movement toward just, livable cities—the regional equity movement—is working to recapture some of this lost vibrancy, envisioning a new pattern of development that incorporates all the ecological ideas to grow a more equitable society.

Carl Anthony is director of the Ford Foundation's Sustainable Metropolitan Communities Initiative.



what makes a great place?



Francesca Lyman

the new city beautiful

It can happen in your town: Streetscapes blooming with wildflowers, industrial waterfronts transformed into parks, and creeks once again dancing with salmon. A green urban renaissance is growing

on a brilliant blue sky day in May, a shining silver fish jumps the rapids of Whatcom Creek past the old marble city hall building in Bellingham, Washington, darting amid the rivulets under the Holly Street Bridge and making its way to the sea. Standing with sketchbooks in hand, schoolchildren and teachers cheer wildly as it passes beneath them.

Cheering, also, farther upstream, is a group of stream restoration volunteers, who have spent many cold, grey days ripping out Himalayan blackberry vines and knotweed to restore the riverbanks with native grasses—so they can see salmon return.

“Got a big white thing on his nose!” yells Wendy Scherrer, director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.

Mike McRory, one of the founders of the 15-year old organization, confirms its identity: “It’s a steelhead!” While not leaping 10 feet in the air like the legendary salmon of a century ago, this wild steelhead has returned to spawn in a creek that once suffered from a legacy of logging, milling, and dumping.

“In the past, we straightened the creek, channelized it, buried it, and used it as a sewer and garbage

dump,” says Scherrer. “Now we’re bringing salmon back into the heart of downtown.”

Better habitat and the return of a cultural icon are just some of the city’s successes, she says, which have extended to the whole landscape. The city also closed down an old sewage treatment plant, turning it into a fish hatchery, and transformed the site of an old town dump into an environmental learning center, where the students today are learning the salmon cycle.

This spot is also specially sanctified. Just a few miles upstream, tragedy struck the city in June 1999 when a pipeline bringing gas from Canada ruptured, spurting nearly a quarter million gallons of fuel into the creek. Minutes later, the fuel ignited and exploded, engulfing parts of Bellingham in a fireball and killing three boys fishing in the creek. One of the boys was 18-year old Liam Wood. Soon after, his mother established a memorial fund in his honor that went toward further creek restoration. Now, as people walk along Whatcom Creek, they can pass through “Wayside Park,” built in Liam’s honor.

Time spent restoring the creek helped the community channel their grief and anger over the pipe-



what makes a great place?



line catastrophe into something productive and beautiful, says Scherrer. The creek also served to bring the community together around a vision of building a sustainable city.

A corner of the city hall parking lot has been retrofitted with a small “rain garden” to collect and filter storm water. There’s a “buy local” campaign here called “Sustainable Connections” that promotes local farms and industries. Most importantly, the city is embracing “smart growth,” channeling new growth into city neighborhoods instead of rural areas, as an answer to its growing problem of urban sprawl. When Bellingham showed up in *USA Today* ranked eighth in the nation among smaller cities for sprawl, it came as a shock to this city of 70,000 residents.

But look at most towns across America and you see the hand of sprawl across the landscape, in traffic congestion, air and water pollution, loss of farmland, and a crying need for parks and open spaces.

We’re finding also that the suburban development model is linked to our physical diseases and mental stress—everything from heart disease to depression to obesity—says Lawrence Frank, a researcher at the University of British Columbia.

But there’s hope. Just as the “City Beautiful” movement at the turn of the 20th century transformed America’s ideas of urban design, today’s planners and designers are turning to new models for reclaiming cities and retrofitting suburbs. A century ago, planners tried to lift America’s newly industrialized cities out of their congestion and squalor by infusing them with Beaux Arts architecture and civic planning borrowed from Europe and building parks to provide places of fresh air and sunlight. That movement died with the birth of the automobile age after World War I, when planners reshaped cities to accommodate cars and promoted develop-

ment of residential areas in the suburbs—thought at the time to be the “healthy” antidote to urban life.

Today, an urban sustainability movement is inspiring architects and city planners to shape new visions of city life, whether it’s remaking old downtowns and industrial wastelands, incorporating green space, or channeling new growth smartly. Community activists, too, are coming up with new ways of making neighborhoods and cities healthier—ecologically as well as socially. Here are some tools they’re using.

The life of downtown

Vancouver, Canada, always rates high in surveys gauging cities for livability and quality of life. Blessed with a mild climate, it is surrounded by majestic mountains and sea. But it was good planning that enabled the city to capitalize on its virtues—and views—with massive downtown redevelopment projects that created a lively mix of high-rise towers, shopping districts, and urban parks.

Starting in the 1950s, says Gordon Price, a former city councillor and planner, Vancouver focused on keeping its downtown neighborhoods alive and housing affordable. To this day, it draws a widely diverse population to its West Coast brand of high-rise living, with an outdoorsy lifestyle of walking, biking, and using public transit.

Its “Livable Region Strategic Plan” stresses not just “smart growth” development of compact, mixed-use neighborhoods, but also what it terms “complete neighborhoods” designed to promote “jobs closer to where people live and accessible by transit, shops, and services near home, and a wider choice of housing types.” This strategy also protects from devel-

ABOVE: The design for Seattle’s Growing Vine Street Project turns storm-water management into art





what makes a great place?

opment “green zones,” including parks, watersheds, ecologically vital lands, and farmlands.

Vancouver’s history provides many lessons, says Tom Hauger, a planner for the city of Seattle. “First, they decided, ‘there will be no freeways in our city,’ and second, they sold vast tracts of land to developers with strict conditions,” he says. That allowed the city to design a mix of densities and heights of buildings, street connections, walkways, and public space in one attractive package.

Vancouver continues to inspire planners with the longest of long-term planning. A few years ago, Greater Vancouver drafted a 100-year plan called “Cities Plus” (Cities Planning for Long-term Sustainability) that anticipates handling global warming, air pollution, sprawl, overflowing landfills, water shortages, disease, and terrorism through strategies to conserve energy and water.

Green infrastructure

Forests, waterways and watersheds, parks, and other green spaces have often ended up as casualties of planning. As cities lose more trees and open space, community leaders are uniting around the idea of viewing green space as not only essential to replenishing the human spirit, but also as a form of essential infrastructure like roads, water lines, or sewers. In fact, they have begun calling trees and other vegetation “green infrastructure” because they are so valuable to the economy and functioning of cities.

Trees provide vital services in a globally warming world. They absorb carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. They prevent the “urban heat island effect,” the phenomenon by which cities run higher temperatures because they are paved over with concrete and other surfaces that absorb rather than reflect the sun’s heat. And trees absorb and clean storm-water that runs off streets.

And green infrastructure often does the job better than anything human-built, for much less money, as groups like the Tree People in Los Angeles and Cascade Conservancy in Seattle argue. Take storm-water management. With conventional approaches, runoff from roofs and roads is channeled into underground pipes and into lakes and streams, an expensive process that also causes too much water to flow too quickly, disrupting habitat for fish and picking up pollutants from city streets and yards, spoiling water quality for all. Trees and vegetation slow, collect, and filter flowing water, and replenish aquifers.

Enter the “green street” concept. In this, Seattle, the city of rainstorms, is leading the way. The city

constructed the Street Edge Alternative (S.E.A.-Street) pilot project with a group of citizens. In this innovative streetscape, designers wove winding landscaped areas along the road edge to filter and slow the runoff into nearby Piper’s Creek.

Some of these projects rise to the level of a new artform. The “Growing Vine Street Project,” designed by Carlson Architects and Peggy Gaynor, which carries storm-water over eight blocks of Seattle’s downtown, features a streamlet coursing downhill over a series of water and plant terraces that act as biofilters for stormwater, as well as walkways and gardens to be enjoyed by passersby. On one building hangs artist Buster Simpson’s playful gutter system, the “Beckoning Cistern,” with a downspout shaped like an outstretched hand.

A green street can vary with locale. While a street may sculpt waterfalls of rain in Seattle, another might celebrate a sun shower over adobe in Santa Fe.

Taming the car, unleashing feet

Cars take 40,000 lives each year in the United States and are the leading cause of death of young people. In 2003, 4,827 Americans died while crossing the street, walking to school or work, going to a bus stop, or strolling to the grocery store, among other daily activities. Yet simple measures like crosswalks and speed-limit enforcement helped reduce that death toll.

At the same time, *not* walking is also dangerous to one’s health, because it contributes to obesity. Research shows that Americans walk so little not out of laziness, but because of the popularity of suburban living, which dictates car travel and sedentary behavior. Not surprisingly, research shows people are more likely to walk if it’s convenient for them and if it is an aesthetically pleasing experience.

Across the country, cities are establishing new traffic-calming measures, from roundabouts to *chicanes*, which curve the street to slow traffic. Some are adopting European-style traffic-calming road forms, like the Dutch *woonerf* (“Living Yard”) in which cars defer to pedestrians, bicycles, and other human powered forms of transport. A *woonerf* typically features winding paths and street furniture, along with play areas, unusual paving stones, and signage to indicate that non-motorized transport rules the space. Berkeley’s “slow street,” a six-block area combining speed bumps and weaving, shifting travel lanes, may be the closest official version in the United States. Seattle’s city planner Tom Hauger says that the streets feeding the city’s Pike Place Market, where shoppers, strollers, and itinerant street musi-





what makes a great place?

cians freely walk amidst parked vehicles, might be considered an ad hoc woonerf.

Bicycles, as author John Ryan writes, are the most energy-efficient form of travel ever invented: “Pound for pound, a person on a bicycle expends less energy than any creature or machine covering the same distance.” And, of course, bicycles, without burning any fossil fuels, are great burners of human calories. While European cities are miles ahead of us in terms of bike lanes, signage, bike rentals, and bike parking, there have been some improvements here. Witness the rise of the “Bike Station,” which has popped up in a number of cities on the West coast. These offer secure bike parking for people riding bikes to public transit or to offices and shops. Many are staffed and offer commuting tips; others offer bike repair. The Cadillac of bike stations in the U.S., however, is Chicago’s, which offers shower facilities. In Holland, Germany, and France, where there are many more services for bicyclists, 30 percent of the population regularly cycles to get from place to place, say researchers.

From brownfield to green

Despite its peerless view overlooking the Olympic Mountains, Seattle’s industrial waterfront is fouled by a century of logging, shipping, refining, and toxic dumping. But, like many cities that find their cores riddled with contaminated sites, its community leaders are coming together to remake the waterfront.

They hope to tear down a post-war, earthquake-vulnerable viaduct that carries truck traffic through the city and redevelop the land as a big civic park.

Re-using former industrial sites, called “brownfields,” can be an important strategy for economic development. Although hundreds of brownfield sites still litter the landscape, federal policies now encourage their redevelopment. Some are redeveloped along ecological lines. One of the most exciting examples is Chicago’s Center for Green Technology, designed by Doug Farr. Built on the former site of an illegal garbage dump, the Center now houses a solar panel factory, as well as community landscaping and job training programs. A further bonus: the Center boasts that it is the only brownfield redevelopment in an urban district accessible by transit.

One way to build sustainability into cities is to design green buildings. That’s important because buildings, in their construction and operation, use half the energy we expend as a nation—more even than the fuel burned by cars and trucks.

At the same time, construction demolition and disposal generate a quarter of the waste in landfills.

Under a self-certifying rating system called LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), building developers accumulate credits for saving energy and water and using recycled materials. Already, the green building movement has created a shift in the way architects and planners go

What’s the matter with sprawl?

Meredith Dearborn & Lisa Kundrat

SPRAWL IS A HEALTH RISK. People who rely on cars to transport them to their spread-out destinations are more prone to high blood pressure and obesity than those who live in compact cities. Suburban white men weigh 10 pounds more than men in cities.

Vehicle exhaust is the primary source of cancer-causing pollutants in Southern California. Smog was responsible for 6 million asthma attacks and 160,000 emergency room visits in 1997.

Car accidents happen three times as often in suburbs as in cities. The vast majority of the victims of pedestrian accidents are children and the elderly.

SPRAWL HARMS THE ENVIRONMENT. The suburbs are notoriously wasteful in terms of energy, timber, food, roads, houses, and infrastructure; people who live in cities use half as much energy as suburbanites. (Manhattan may be the most efficient community in the U.S.; if it were a state, New York City would rank 51st in energy use per capita.) The Union of Concerned Scientists says that “transportation is the largest single source of air pollution in the United States.”

SPRAWL DISCOURAGES COMMUNITY LIFE.

On average, an American adult spends 72 minutes of each day driving; this is more time than we set aside for cooking, eating, or playing with our children. An environment designed for cars disenfranchises those who do not drive, namely children, the elderly, and those who cannot afford to own a vehicle. And in sprawling suburbia, often the only “public” spaces—such as malls—are privately owned. Our constitutional rights, like freedom of assembly, are not protected within a mall.

SPRAWL SEGREGATES. By standardizing the square footage and other building specifications of all new houses and requiring that every dwelling accommodate only a single family, suburban zoning laws effectively segregate neighborhoods by income. Resources flow to wealthy communities, leaving poor suburbs and city neighborhoods underserved and worsening the effects of income and racial disparities.



what makes a great place?

about their work, says Lynne Barker, a member of the U.S. Green Building Council, the non-profit council that manages the certification process. In the five years since the council created its standard, more than 3 percent of all new construction uses it.

When it comes to “green urbanism,” extending sustainable practices beyond buildings to neighborhoods and cities, there are few examples in the United States, but a growing number in Europe. London, for example, has its “Bed Zed” (Zero Energy Development), 100 densely packed but attractively designed apartments with roof gardens. The complex generates energy from on-site solar and renewable sources, adding zero carbon emissions to the atmosphere.

Across North America, however, despite its daunting challenges, the quest for urban sus-

tainability is extending to cities big, mid-sized and small. Chicago bested Seattle by building a “green roof” on its city hall a few years before Seattle did, proving that a roof planted over with hardy, drought-resistant, native plants could effectively cool the building and lessen the city’s heat island effect. Cities like Vancouver are pragmatically preparing for “unthinkable” global warming scenarios while trying to imagine their best options. What would it take for your city to become a green city beautiful?

Francesca Lyman is a Seattle journalist writing a book on cities. She thanks the CASE Media Foundation for a fellowship to Western Washington University last year that helped support the research for this article. Send further suggestions on urban innovations to her at chicha19@comcast.net.

BELOW: People’s Grocery provides fresh food to West Oakland. Staff and volunteers grow produce and raise chickens at several sites and distribute food with a mobile grocery truck. Photo by Scott Braley

West Oakland Gets Fresh

Jodi Helmer & Carolyn McConnell



WILLOW ROSENTHAL NOTICED a paradox when she moved to West Oakland eight years ago: There was an abundance of vacant land in this urban landscape, but a scarcity of fresh produce. West Oakland has only one grocery store for 30,000 residents but dozens of convenience stores where canned and processed foods are the mainstay and prices are 30 to 100 percent higher than at the supermarket.

In 2000, Rosenthal purchased one of the vacant lots at auction and turned it into an urban farm. She and volunteers tended the garden. Impressed with her work, other landlords loaned their vacant lots, allowing her to create a nonprofit network of small farms called City Slicker Farms.

Rosenthal found allies in Brahm Adhmadi and Malaika Edwards, who had founded People’s Grocery to get youth involved in growing food on a city-owned empty lot in North Oakland. The two helped Rosenthal set up a produce market at City Slicker’s original lot.

But getting to the City Slicker lot was a challenge for many. Only half the residents of West Oakland have cars. So in 2003, Adhmadi and Edwards took the produce on the road with a solar-powered grocery store on wheels, made from a recycled postal truck. Their mobile market travels through West Oakland neighborhoods twice a week selling fresh produce, bulk food, and healthy snacks. People’s Grocery trains and employs youth to sell the produce from the mobile market.

West Oakland has become a hotbed of organizing around food. Numerous food organizations—including Oakland Butterfly and Urban Gardens (OBUGs), a non-profit neighborhood gardening association, and the West Oakland Food Security Council—have sprung up and are continually improving West Oakland’s access to organic produce.

In 2002, a lot across the street from the West Oakland BART station gained the weekly Mandela Farmers Market. Low-income residents of West Oakland can use food stamps and county vouchers at the Mandela Market, which sends coupons to residents offering them discounts on produce. People’s Grocery also purchases produce at this market.

“[These groups] have separate projects because we all need to be good at what we do, but we have a shared vision,” Rosenthal says. “We are trying to develop and model methods of creating a sustainable future in an urban environment.”

Jodi Helmer is a writer who lives in Portland, Oregon.



what makes a great place?

5 ways to a great place

Kathy Madden



1

Great places are full of activity.

A great place starts with offering a variety of things to do in one spot. A park is good. A park with a fountain, playground, and popcorn vendor is better. A library across the street is even better, more so if it features storytelling hours for kids and exhibits on local history. If there's a sidewalk café nearby, a bus stop, a bike trail, and an ice cream parlor, then you have what most people would consider a great place.

For 30 years, the Project for Public Spaces has worked with cities and neighborhoods to help create places that attract people—places where people young and old, rich and poor encounter one another, enjoy their surroundings, and experience being part of a community. **What makes these places work?** Why do some parks, main streets, and other public spaces become alive with activity and fun, while others become magnets for crime or sit empty? After studying that question, we discovered the qualities that divide a great place from the other kind.



2

Invite affection. A great place is one where people want to go to observe the passing scene, socialize, or celebrate interaction with a wide range of people who are different from themselves. It is where you arrange to meet friends, or bring visitors. When a place is working well, it encourages people to be relaxed and affectionate—the best places are full of affectionate activity, whether people are holding hands, having spontaneous friendly conversations with strangers, or sharing a kiss with a loved one. Have you ever noticed how many people are enjoying a conversation at a farmers market or on a friendly Main Street?





what makes a great place?



3

Are visible and accessible.

A great place is easy to see and easy to get to—people want to see that there is something to do, that others have been enticed to enter. On the other hand, if a place is not visible from the street or the street is too dangerous for older people and children to cross, the place won't be used. The more successful a place is, the more the success will feed upon itself. Sometimes, if a place is really good, people will walk through it even if they are headed somewhere else.

4

Are comfortable and safe.

Good details signal that someone took the time and energy to design a place that is welcoming. Community bulletin boards, restrooms, shade trees, child-friendly niches, and bike racks all help. Movable seating allows people to decide where they want to be in the space—alone, or with a few friends, in any configuration they like. Today, 2,000 movable chairs are scattered on the lawn of Bryant Park in New York; it is one reason that the Park has been transformed from a drug-infested public space to a popular mid-town haven.

5

Are places you can count on.

A neighborhood bocce court in a park, a corner bar, a coffeehouse, or a playground—all are informal places where you can anticipate lively conversations with the 'regulars,' 'characters,' and other neighbors. Every person is known for herself, not as an employee or family member—roles that can make people feel straightjacketed. Being able to rely on returning to a place to find something to do, or comfortably sit, converse, or just look at passersby, is key.



photos by Ethan Kent/PPS

Sometimes a great place has great beauty, or thoughtful design touches that say someone wanted you to feel welcome there.

At other times, a great place works well just because it is neighborly—it draws people in and enables them to relax, talk, and watch people.

If you feel refreshed and rejuvenated after you leave it, you've been in a great place.





S

what makes a great place?

Sprawl overruns open space, jams up roads, degrades air quality, and leaves center cities without jobs and services. Policies that fight sprawl, says **Angela Glover Blackwell**, could bring new life to cities and inner-ring suburbs, diversify our neighborhoods, and save the environment.

cities for all

An interview by Sarah Ruth van Gelder



Photo courtesy of PolicyLink

Angela Glover Blackwell is founder and CEO of PolicyLink, a national organization working for economic and social equity. Her work has centered on revitalizing low-income communities and communities of color and public-interest law. She recently co-authored *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America* (2002, WW Norton & Co). PolicyLink and the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities are sponsoring *Advancing Regional Equity: The Second National Summit on Equitable Development, Social Justice, and Smart Growth*, taking place May 23–25, 2005 in Philadelphia.

SARAH: You've been doing policy work for many years on economic and social issues, especially those affecting communities of color. What is your vision of the sort of cities and neighborhoods you are trying to achieve?

ANGELA: For me, it comes down to community. I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, at a time when segregation defined where you lived, where you went to school, pretty much everything about life. For African-American families such as my own, community was the scaffolding that allowed us to achieve our visions in a society where we were locked out of the mainstream. By building strong communities, we were able to create our own pathways to personal fulfillment.

Having that experience and watching communities change over time is what drives my work. I have worked to build mentoring programs in low-income communities to rebuild relationships between caring adults and children. I've worked to build relationships between faith institutions and pregnant women so that we could reduce infant mortality by making sure that the community rallies around pregnant women.

Community absolutely matters, and that understanding leads to ideas about the physical environment, the social environment, the spiritual environment that surrounds children and families





Laura Joseph

Cities often extend huge subsidies to developers in the hope of new jobs and an increased tax base. In practice, though, most of these developments return little to the community beyond low-wage jobs, traffic congestion, displacement of homes and businesses, and gentrification.

To change this, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) developed “community benefits agreements”—legally enforceable documents signed by developers that specify benefits to be provided to neighborhoods affected by a particular development. In exchange, developers get community support for the project and avoid the lengthy delays that can result from local opposition. The strategy’s success relies on effective community organizing and powerful, cross-issue alliances capable of negotiating with developers.

Here’s one example. In 2003, the mayor of Los Angeles proposed a 10-year plan to expand and modernize the L.A. airport. Airport expansions put a tremendous burden on nearby neighborhoods, which, in the case of LAX, are predominantly low-income African-American and Latino communities. A LAANE-led alliance of environmental groups, labor, school systems, churches, community organizations, and service agencies negotiated with LAX administrators over nine months, resulting in the nation’s largest community benefit agreement. The agreement includes hundreds of millions of dollars for noise and air pollution abatement, \$15 million for job training for local residents, a local hiring preference, and community-based environmental health programs.

“This agreement shows that by working with the surrounding communities from the beginning, large-scale development projects can result in economic benefits, social benefits, and environmental benefits,” said Jerilyn López Mendoza, policy director of the Los Angeles Office of Environmental Defense, one of the lead organizations involved in the negotiations.

For more information, go to www.californiapartnership.org or www.lanne.org. Laura Joseph is director of operations for LAANE. Photo above of the LAX Coalition for Economic, Environmental, and Educational Justice courtesy of LAANE.

and allows them to have the comfort of knowing that they’re not alone and that they can rely on these structures to create fulfilling pathways.

SARAH: What role does race play in these issues, and what will it take to undo persistent patterns of housing segregation?

ANGELA: Over the past 50 years, we have gotten to the point that where you live literally has become a proxy for opportunity. We have always had segregated neighborhoods. However, it used to be that within the city of Detroit or St. Louis or Cleveland or Philadelphia or Oakland or New York you could identify the communities that were black and poor, but the places with the good jobs weren’t that far away. You could usually get there on a bus, and people could aspire to live in a community that they could see while remaining close to their churches, families, and old neighborhoods.

Sprawl took off during the 1950s. Federal housing policies made mortgages available to families who were moving to the suburbs but not to families who were living in black communities. Transportation dollars went to creating roads out to the suburbs and took funding away from transit in cities.

There were lots of policies that fueled sprawl—but it was also fueled by the *Brown versus Board of Education* decision in 1954, which said that segregated public education is unconstitutional.

Unfortunately, America missed an opportunity for greatness at that point. Rather than integrating the schools, people began to move in droves to the suburbs where they built new enclaves around schools that were, again, segregated. While we no longer had legal segregation, we continued—and continue to this day—to have segregation based on housing patterns. Our development pattern is intertwined with our inability, or refusal, to deal effectively and productively with issues of race and inequality in America.

Those development patterns have taken on a life of their own, so people today move to the suburbs not to get away from black people but to find good schools, open space, and affordable housing. The absence of a commitment to full inclusion has become embedded. One form this takes is found in the many suburban communities that have exclusionary housing patterns. Houses must be built on lots of a certain size, or they must have a certain number of square feet, or two-car garages—all of which make housing very expensive. Prohibitions on in-law

PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110



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apartments (smaller housing units out back) and a lack of rental housing make it difficult for lower-income people to move into these neighborhoods. We still have a huge income and wealth gap in this country, and the people who are able to afford expensive houses are more likely to be white.

This exclusionary housing pattern continues the pattern of segregation and inequality in America. For the country to fulfill the dream of democracy and inclusion, we have to consciously build in policies based on full inclusion.

SARAH: How can we accomplish that?

ANGELA: There are many things that people are doing. One is to make sure that every community is a livable, healthy, and stable community.

Every community ought to have a supermarket, because without one, people rely on convenience stores and fast food restaurants where they don't get fresh fruits and vegetables.

Every community should have parks and open space where children can play, where families can gather, where elderly people can get out, feel safe, and get exercise.

Every community should have high quality schools, with attractive school buildings that also

function as community centers for adult education and after-school activities.

We need to make it possible for people to live near job opportunities. We also need to make sure that people, no matter where they live, can access opportunity; that means making sure that buses and streetcars and subway systems can get people from where they live to good jobs.

Here's an example of how to make a community livable. In San Diego, the Jacobs Family Foundation, in partnership with the residents in the Diamond neighborhoods, took a brownfield [an unused site that is contaminated or perceived to be contaminated] in the middle of the community and transformed it into a community destination point. A grocery store is the centerpiece of it, but it also has an open-air amphitheater where the community can share cultural events. It has places for local entrepreneurs to have businesses; it is adjacent to a transit stop so people outside the community can come there and shop.

SARAH: It sounds like your proposals are modest ones for the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world. Have you found that you are able to make common cause with other organizations and other political movements?

community land trusts

Susan Witt & Merrian Fuller

Inner-city communities often face a disabling paradox. Economically depressed communities are plagued with abandoned land and decaying buildings that discourage investment in community improvement. On the other hand, communities on the rise often experience soaring land and housing prices, so long-time residents and businesses find themselves priced out of their own neighborhoods. Either way, low- and moderate-income people often lose.

A community land trust (CLT) is a way to address both challenges. CLTs are non-profit, regionally based organizations that take land out of the speculative market and hold it for farmland or conservation, or as sites for housing or businesses. The long-term lease provides lessees with private ownership of buildings and improvements to the land. The resale formula excludes the land value from any future sale, keeping housing and farming permanently affordable.

In his E. F. Schumacher Lecture, "Wisdom That Builds Community," Greg Watson describes how the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (www.dsni.org) in the Roxbury section of Boston used community land trusts to gather abandoned properties and redevelop them for neighborhood

housing and business.

The land lease is a flexible tool that can specify height and design characteristics of buildings, owner occupancy of homes, and local ownership of businesses—all factors that help retain the character and scale of the neighborhood. The CLT need not itself act as builder of infrastructure on the land, but can facilitate appropriate development and lower up-front costs by providing a community-approved development plan as part of a lease.

Community land trusts are also used to support farm homesteads, the re-gathering of tribal lands, and the development of scattered sites for affordable housing.

Susan Witt is Executive Director of the E. F. Schumacher Society. Merrian Fuller is coordinator of the E. F. Schumacher Society's upcoming seminar program "Building Sustainable Local Communities." Background materials and legal documents for starting a community land trust, as well as Schumacher lectures, are at www.smallisbeautiful.org.



what makes a great place?

ANGELA: The proposals that we are talking about *are* modest for a country with the resources of the United States of America, and because they are modest, what we seek to do at PolicyLink is to embed the notion of full inclusion in everything we do. We call that equitable development, which means integrating the needs of people into investments.

So often, the big development projects have a lot of public dollars in them, and we want to make sure that public and private investments produce a double bottom line: economic return for investors and economic and social returns for people who live in communities.

SARAH: These are challenging times, particularly with the sorts of policies coming out of Washington, DC. What makes you hopeful that the changes that you're talking about could actually happen?

ANGELA: These are challenging times, indeed, and the thing that worries me most is that Americans seem to have lost faith in government. A nation cannot be strong if the government is not responsive to the needs of the people. If the people don't have enough trust in government to invest in it, there cannot be a national community.

Having said that, the thing that makes me optimistic is that local government and civic leaders are beginning to realize that we have to build strong regional communities if we're going to compete in the global economy. The movement for equitable development, the smart growth movement, is a real ray of hope.

PolicyLink's website is www.policylink.org. You can find out about the national summit on Advancing Regional Equity at www.policylink.org/Summit2005/



Darren McColester

A busy transit stop at a dark corner of a low-income community has turned into a major community asset and a national model of a smart, green building.

Transit-oriented development incorporates a mix of high-density residential, retail, and office functions, all within easy access of a major transit stop. Bethel New Life, a 25-year-old faith-based community development corporation on Chicago's west side, discovered transit-oriented development during their struggle to save the community's elevated rail stop from closing.

Mary Nelson

Bethel constructed the Lake Pulaski Commercial Center on a remediated brownfield site across from the transit stop. This smart, green building is the new home to an employment center, six commercial storefronts, and a daycare center serving more than 100 children.

Built in part with recycled materials, the building has a green roof that decreases heat absorption in the summer and heat loss in the winter. Photovoltaic cells, efficient heating and air conditioning, automatic light dimmers, and super insulation combine to create a potential energy savings of 50 percent compared to standard commercial buildings.

A walking bridge links the building to the transit platform for easy access. Bethel has also developed affordable homes within walking distance of the transit stop.

Looking ahead, Steven McCullough, Bethel's chief operating officer, says, "This development is now an anchor for the redevelopment of the community."

Mary Nelson is the president & CEO of Bethel New Life, Inc.

what makes a great place?

social patterns

Myron Orfield

Slicing through the jargon: one map speaks volumes

Regional equity advocates are using GIS mapping tools to increase their impact. A GIS map explains a region's complex social patterns in a way that is easy to grasp. While columns of numbers are mind-numbing, a map illustrating impacts across a whole region speaks volumes. It helps people to understand key regional social and economic trends that affect their lives—such as economic inequalities among communities, or how new growth at the region's edge undermines the inner city.

The forces of segregation and inequality are too large to confront in isolation. Activists tackling inner-city poverty often focus on one neighborhood at a time. Yet the power of racial discrimination and fiscal inequality across a region undermines their efforts. It is as if they are trying to bail water

in a boat with a teaspoon, while huge waves pour across the boat. It is vital to deal with the waves—the larger patterns. Maps make these patterns visible, both to citizens and to decision-makers.

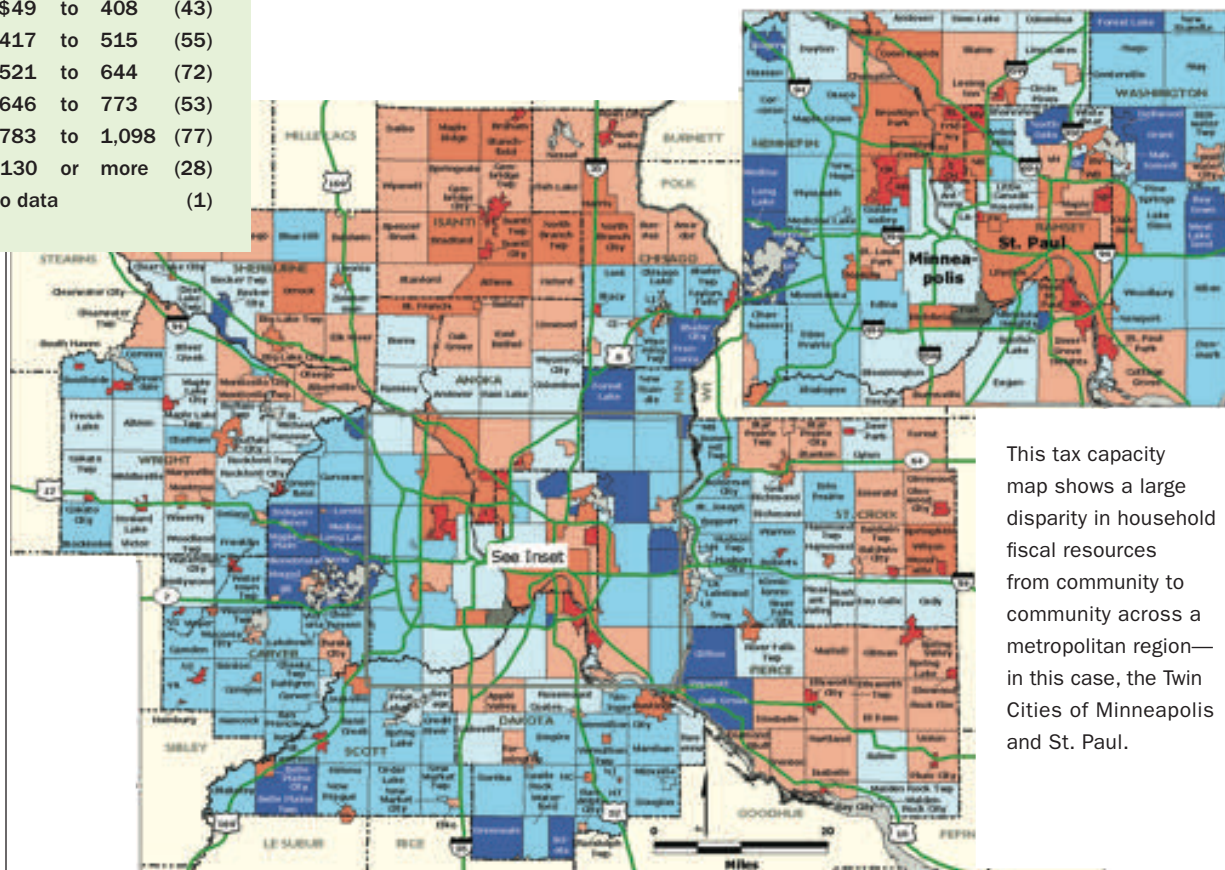
Assisted by such maps, communities have achieved important gains in such areas as fair housing, more equitable school financing, reform of transportation spending, and brownfield remediation.

Visit www.ameregis.com to view demographic maps of the 25 largest U.S. metropolitan regions, or to download *An Activist's Guide to Metropolitcs*. See also the maps of racial change and stable integration, available at the Institute on Race & Poverty's website, www.irpumn.org.

Minneapolis–St. Paul Region: Tax Capacity per Household

Legend regional value: \$646

- \$49 to 408 (43)
- 417 to 515 (55)
- 521 to 644 (72)
- 646 to 773 (53)
- 783 to 1,098 (77)
- 1,130 or more (28)
- No data (1)



This tax capacity map shows a large disparity in household fiscal resources from community to community across a metropolitan region—in this case, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Data sources: Minnesota Department of Revenue, Wisconsin Department of Revenue.





art in the Village

Abby Scher

How did an impoverished North Philadelphia community transform abandoned lots into whimsical sculpture gardens? How did six-story murals sprout on the sides of crumbling buildings?

Walking through the streets today, neighbors proudly call to point out to you the once-forsaken lots—more than 120 of them—that today display colorful murals. One of the murals is based on a painting of flowers first done by neighborhood children and then painted three stories high on the side of a building. Nearby a parade of angels representing the world's faiths—Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and others—guard a park and create a haven for performances.

Blocks and blocks of empty houses and rubble fields have given way to these murals, mosaics, and sculpture gardens. Streets better known for drug dealing and joblessness now are interspersed with pockets of hope and new community initiatives.

"All the gardens, parks, and buildings should bring people joy," says Lily Yeh, the artist behind this trans-



formation. "There should be a mystery to them; their appearance is rooted in different cultural traditions, some of which have distant and ancient origins."

The transformation of these blocks of North Philadelphia occurred over the course of 18 years through the work of the Village of Arts and Humanities. The Village, as it is called, is a nonprofit founded by Lily, a painter and immigrant from China who left her tenured professorship at the Philadelphia School of Fine Arts to reimagine and remake a neighborhood with the people who live there.

Philadelphia is a city full of murals, but the Village did far more than create beautiful places. The Village also spawned a daycare center, a theater





Murals by Lily Yeh, created in North Philadelphia as part of the Village for Arts and Humanities.

program that has sent neighborhood young people on international tours, and a health project. Most recently, the Village has launched “Shared Prosperity,” a program that aims to address the community’s economic ills.

The legacy of poverty

North Philadelphia is an African-American neighborhood with 30 percent unemployment, an average annual household income of only \$10,000, and gentrification threatening from nearby Temple University.

Not long ago, drug dealers controlled the streets. In one block that is now at the heart of the Village, three-quarters of the lots and buildings were abandoned. Children had nowhere to go.

The Village is centered in an eight-square-block area near Germantown Avenue and North 11th Street, where sculpture gardens and Village programs are concentrated. This is where its first renovated buildings and earliest art parks took shape, but the broader reach of the Village spans 250 blocks.

Lily Yeh’s story in North Philly began 18 years ago, when a prominent local dancer invited her to do something with the abandoned lot near his studio, one of hundreds in the neighborhood. Children saw Lily (“a crazy Chinese lady”) cleaning up the lot and wandered over to see what was up. They stayed to help, eventually drawing in their parents.

One of the first neighborhood adults to get involved was James “Big Man” Maxton, who left a life

as a drug runner to teach mosaic and masonry to hundreds of residents.

“I was a lost soul in the community, disconnected from my family, looking for a way to come back to reality on the tail end of a 22-year drug addiction,” Big Man recalled in a conversation before his untimely death in February.

Lily “wrapped her wings around me and taught me how to believe in myself,” he said of his early days at the Village. “Only later did I find out my work wasn’t tremendous!”

Like Big Man’s journey, the Village unfolded slowly, with Lily and her crew of children and street people creating an art park, then an open-air coming-of-age ritual for young people. Next there was a teen program and a project that trained local residents in construction and then practiced by renovating the buildings that would house Village programs.

All this happened under the radar of the city of Philadelphia, whose city planners and social workers were nowhere to be found in the neighborhood.

Lily’s vision inspired funders who did not look too closely at who owned the land that was being reclaimed (eventually the Village negotiated ownership of the key lots).

As local crews remade the buildings and lots, a sense of pride and ownership developed among the construction crews, and by extension, the whole community. “One of the most powerful things I learned,” says Lily, “is that when you learn a skill and transform your immediate environment, your whole life begins to change.”

Theater at the Village

In 1992, civil rights elder and theater director H. German Wilson added performance art to the built environment created by Lily, Big Man, and the community construction crews.

The Memorial Garden on Warnock Street, behind the Village’s administration building, became one of the Village’s open-air performance spaces. This garden contains totems—or “sticks in the ground” as one staffperson calls them—and walls of tiles created by neighbors in memory of lost ones.

The first play drew on Lily’s recordings of neighbors’ stories; playwright Winston Jones wove the stories into a script. Wilson directed the production, and the neighbors were cast and crew.

The theater productions have become a yearly tradition, with the script often coming directly out of the young people’s experiences. Word of the pro-



ductions has traveled; performances now take place not only in a Village park, but in theaters in Mexico, Iceland, and elsewhere.

This year Wilson is working with playwright Richard Lamont Pierce on a production called “Choices.” The play is about how mistakes can have a deep effect on your life, says Wilson, and how “you have to stay in school in order to make a choice.”

“The performances and the art make everybody equal,” said Jamile Wilson, 18, soon after he returned from a troupe trip to Iceland. “People from other places who may have more than you do can see what it is you can do.”

Philip Horn, director of the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts and an early supporter of the Village, echoed that view. The Village “changed the perception in the [wider] community from ‘there’s something wrong with these people’ to ‘there’s nothing wrong with these people.’”

In addition to the annual theater festival, the Kujenga Pamoja festival (meaning “Together We Build” in Swahili) has become an annual fall tradition. The festival culminates in a coming-of-age ritual that was one of the Village’s earliest contributions to the neighborhood.

“We transformed a physical space into a ritual space,” Lily recalls. “We cleansed the grounds and put candles everywhere, not just in the park, but on the sidewalks. The youth were prepared—they’d been through summer job training together and had been camping. The whole community held torches as we walked into the sacred space, and then we took pledges by the fire to be a foundation to the community. We will respect our elders. We will be the light of the future.”

Over the years, the Village continued looking for opportunities to create sacred spaces—to express, as Lily put it, “that everybody has an inner light, that each is equal, and together we can burn like a big torch.” One garden might host a celebration to mark the end of a term of the children’s programs, another might host a winter festival. Last September’s coming-of-age ritual inaugurated a new labyrinth the youth built in the Village’s tree farm, and had Lily passing the torch on to the new Village director, playwright and performer Kumani Gantt.

The Village has won international recognition, including the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence in 2001. Lily herself is the recipient of a 2003–2005 Leadership for a Changing World award, jointly presented by the Ford Foundation and the Advocacy Institute.



“When you learn a skill and transform your immediate environment, your whole life begins to change”

A global canvas

The Village has begun a new phase. The new director plans more training in video production and the digital arts for teens. A hip-hop festival will be held in September that will close off nearby Germantown Avenue, fill the parks, and attract customers to area merchants, while presenting the art form most embraced by younger residents. And vacant lots will be transformed in a wider range of ways as defined by the community—by creating basketball courts, for instance.

While focusing on what it does well—in youth work, performance, and greening and stabilizing the land—the Village also is recognizing its limitations. Through its newly launched Shared Prosperity project, the Village plans to invite allies to help with economic development and with the creation of quality housing beyond the six residential buildings the Village has already fixed up.

So the Village continues to change and grow. Lily is returning to the Village to create the Institute for Creative Learning to share what she’s learned about creating community art in partnership with people living in some of the poorest communities.

Abby Scher is a free-lance writer living in New York. Abby met Lily Yeh as a fellow in the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World Program. Until recently, she was director of Independent Press Association–New York, a network of immigrant and other culturally diverse press, and editor-in-chief of its free web weekly *Voices That Must Be Heard*; see www.indypressny.org.



what makes a great place?

Christopher Gutsche & Kathleen Smith

Appalachian ecovillage

A college founded by abolitionists builds on the dream of a school open to all, turning student family housing into a visionary model of sustainable living

driving along

D Jefferson Street in Berea, Kentucky, you might not notice at first glance anything remarkable about the 32 townhouse apartments that Berea College built in 2003. Like many homes in this part of Appalachia, the row-house apartments are modest structures with a mix of brick and siding.

Look a bit closer, though, and you'll see a large greenhouse among the buildings on the five-acre site. The greenhouse holds a "living machine"—a series of tanks filled with aquatic plants, fish, and microorganisms that purify the wastewater from the apartments and other buildings on-site. The greenhouse is prominently located facing the common outdoor space on one side and the busiest street adjacent to the community on the other. Anyone passing by can see the tanks.

Most communities keep their waste streams hidden. But at the Berea College Ecovillage, the waste treatment, as well as the flow of energy, food, and water through the site, are visible. This is just one example of how the Berea College Ecovillage works with natural systems and provides a model of ecological design and living.

The ecovillage features 32 new and 18 renovated units for student families; a commons house with a meeting room and laundry for residents; the Sustainability & Environmental Studies (SENS) house, which houses four students and an education center; and the Child Development Lab, a teaching and research childcare facility for 118 children.

Berea College was founded in 1855 by abolitionists dedicated to providing an interracial education and opportunities for residents of Appalachia, regard-

less of income. So when their student housing needed expanding, it was natural they would think radically.

The plan for Berea Ecovillage began with extensive community participation in the design process through a two-day design *charrette*—a collaborative community planning and design process—facilitated by the architects to develop concepts for the ecovillage. The result is a plan that grew out of the history and culture of the place and from the people who will live and work there. "Students who participated and graduated before completion cared enough to come back and take a look at it," says Connie Briggs, who oversees the ecovillage for the college. "They feel a strong sense of involvement."

Flows of water, air, light, and waste

What these students see is a direct outgrowth of their earlier design work. The buildings are connected by the central common outdoor space—a network of pathways, gardens, patios, gathering areas, and an open lawn planted with native grasses—carefully shaped by the buildings that form its boundaries to create a comfortable social arena and bring sun and breezes to the buildings. These outdoor spaces also play an integral role in the ecovillage's ecological function. Storm water collected from rooftops and ground surfaces is stored under the central commons in a large array of subterranean storage cells, to provide irrigation for gardening.

The living machine was intended to save water by reusing all wastewater on-site. Although it purifies water to swimming pool quality standards, the state of Kentucky currently will not allow the water to be reused for anything beyond refilling the toilet tanks. So most of the water is discharged to the city sewer system. Water from the living machine will be tested by the SENS students for the next two to three years to establish scientific data to support new state legislation, which Berea officials are helping draft and support, that will allow living



machines and their water to be used across the state. If this new policy is adopted, all the water from the ecovillage's living machine will be able to be used for other building water needs and irrigation.

Richard Olson, director of the SENS, notes that based on testing to date the living machine "works fine for water quality, but odors have been a problem." Students and staff have tried some renovations and are assessing the results.

The ecovillage was designed to support composting and recycling. Each building and townhouse is equipped with a recycling area. Garbage disposals were not installed in the unit kitchens, to encourage composting. "Composting and recycling is something I have always wanted to participate in but found it harder in other places that I have lived," resident Hallemah Morrison says. Not all residents participate, however, so the community is exploring how to inspire everyone to do so.

The college set ambitious environmental goals, including reduction of energy and water use by 75 percent compared to the regional average, treating wastewater on-site, and reducing waste by at least 50 percent through recycling and composting. Significant savings have been achieved, and SENS students are tracking progress to determine the precise results.

As for the challenges of living in the ecovillage, Morrison notes, "We don't have as much access to modern conveniences. It takes a little adjustment from being used to a dishwasher and dryer in your apartment to washing by hand or going to the community laundry." Yet there is a waiting list to get into the ecovillage.

Support for student parents

Perhaps more important than the tangible economic and environmental benefits are the social and educational ones. Each unit has direct ground level access to the outdoors and a trellised patio facing the common space. Residents gather on their patios, and some have added swings, lawn chairs, gardens, clotheslines, and children's toys. Parents feel comfortable letting children play freely in the common space without direct supervision.

"A strong indicator that the college's goal of creating community is successful is that residents are working together to solve problems and figure out childcare," says Connie Briggs. Briggs tells about a child living across the street from the ecovillage who talked with her parents one evening about wanting brothers and sisters. The girl thought for a moment after her parents had gently explained that siblings would not be



forthcoming, then said, "That's okay. The kids at the ecovillage are my brothers and sisters."

"The ecovillage," says college President Larry Shinn, "is first and foremost a place for Berea students and their children to live, to learn, and to play. It is secondly a place for others to learn from what we have done and to build upon it with their own dreams."

Green living, Kentucky style

Olson believes the ecovillage is a concept that just might catch on in this rural part of Kentucky. "I don't think there are many people in our area who would not be receptive to ideas that save them a lot of money on energy use, that will protect or improve the quality of their water, or that will preserve open space and farmland. Those are values widely held in this area," Olson says. "A house that will cost almost nothing to heat, cool, and light would be perceived as a good value worth paying for."

At its best, sustainable design creates harmonies between the social, physical, and natural worlds. The Berea College Ecovillage is demonstrating this potential and the benefits it has on people's lives.

Tonya Smith, a senior at Berea College living in the ecovillage with her four-and-a-half-year-old son, says, "I was worried that I would have to sacrifice so much time with my son when I came back to college. But the ecovillage allows my child to be an active participant in my college experience. This is the greatest gift living in the ecovillage has had for me."

Christopher Gutsche and Kathleen Smith were formerly senior architect and senior designer at Van der Ryn Architects, which designed the Berea Ecovillage. They now live in Winslow Cohousing on Bainbridge Island, Washington, with their daughter and run EcoSmith Design & Consulting. They can be reached at chris@ecodesign.org or kathleen@ecodesign.org.



what makes a great place?

How to build an ecohome

What goes into making a home that conserves energy, water, and wood? Here are some of the components used in Berea's ecovillage—and you can install them in your own house



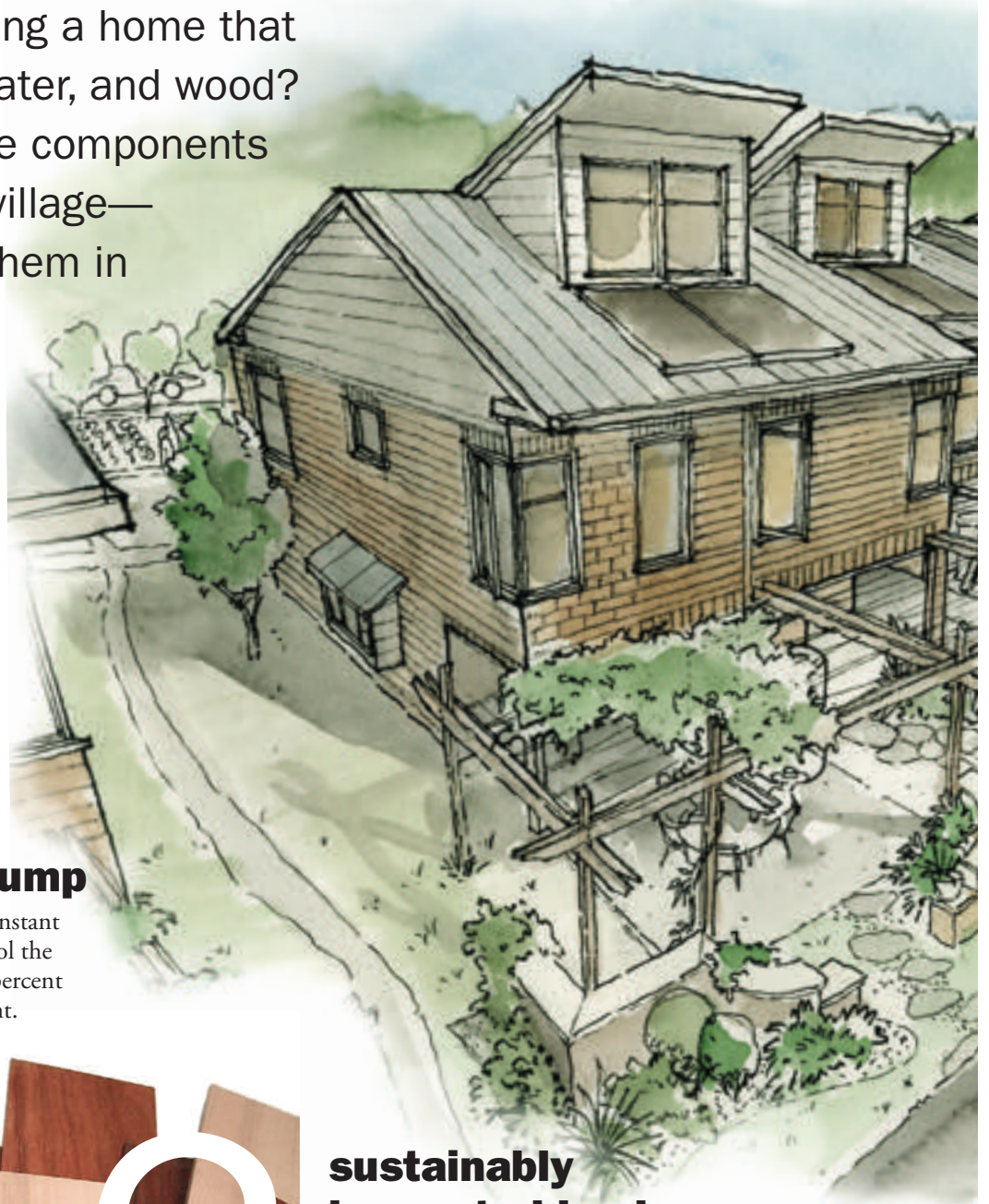
geothermal heat pump

A ground source heat pump uses the constant temperature of the earth to heat and cool the apartments. Heat pumps use 30 to 60 percent less energy than conventional equipment.



sustainably harvested lumber

Lumber certified by the Forest Stewardship Council was used for interior framing lumber and for trellises. Deciduous vines and plants covering the trellises provide shading in the summer months and reduce cooling loads.



PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110



what makes a great place?



fiber cement & brick siding

Berea Ecovillage used fiber cement board in combination with brick siding. More durable than wood or vinyl, fiber cement will not crack, rot, or delaminate over its 50-year lifespan.

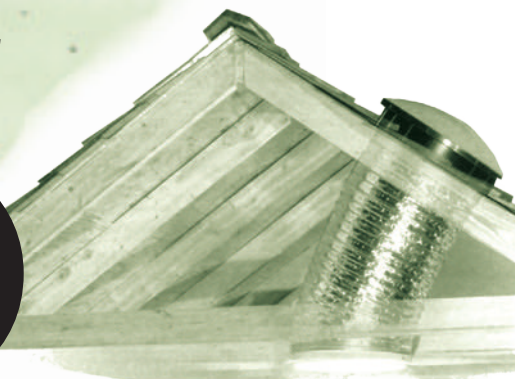
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low-e glazed windows

Low-e glazed windows have special coatings that reduce heat transfer through the glass. Overhangs above all the windows allow the low-angle winter sun in and keep summer sun out.

5



solar light tubes

Solar “light tubes” provide light from the sun to interior spaces. Simple to install and cost effective, the light tubes are real energy savers and will be especially helpful in delivering daylight to middle units of housing. Drawing of Berea Ecovillage © Van der Ryn Architects.



what makes a great place?

extreme makeover:



green neighborhood edition

David Wann

**You can grow a great community—anywhere.
It doesn't take TV producers. It just takes
some neighbors**

I vividly remember when a blizzard-caused power outage silenced the TVs and computers in the suburban home where I lived with my wife and two children. When the lights went out, we got creative, sharing stories by candlelight and popping popcorn on a wood-burning stove. Then we pulled on our parkas and helped dig the neighbors' cars out of snow banks. By the end of the storm, we became a closer family in a more supportive community.

Why does it take blizzards and power outages to strengthen natural bonds between people? Two-thirds of Americans say they value a friendly, lively neighborhood over a trophy home. But we've become strangers on our lifeless streets. We hear about new developments built in the style of traditional neighborhoods or as ecovillages, but why can't we revitalize the neighborhoods we already live in?

When compared to thousand year-old villages in Tuscany or England, our American neighborhoods are very young indeed. They're still evolving, yet without active participation by the people who live there, the typical neighborhood will remain a collection of resource-intensive houses, lawns, and cars, rather than a treasured place in which to raise

children and live out our lives. Imagine what might happen if we gradually reinvented our streets, houses, yards, and parks.

The process of reinventing a neighborhood begins when you walk out your front door and say hello to someone you've seen before but never met. After preliminary conversation, the topic of neighborhood security comes up, and you comment how valuable it would be to compile a list of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of everyone on the block. "That way, if someone gets hurt or simply needs help moving a dresser, he can call one of us," you say. Your neighbor, whose name is Shawn, agrees, adding, "Maybe we could set up a neighborhood e-mail listserve, to provide a forum for opinion, and a digital bulletin board for babysitting exchanges, discussion groups, carpooling, and things like that ..."

Coincidentally, while the two of you are talking about homeland security at the neighborhood scale, another neighbor, Marion, comes by with her own idea for getting neighbors together—a community picnic in her large backyard. She prepares a homemade flyer and takes it door-to-door to 44 houses on the block, explaining to those who are home that her intention is to create a friendlier, livelier neighborhood. All but a few neighbors seem interested, and many of them show up at the barbecue, which includes musical talent from the neighborhood, humorous nametags, and locally grown food.



what makes a great place?



The next day you notice neighbors knocking on the doors of other neighbors, following up on conversations, dropping off recipes, and arranging help with lawn watering or pet-sitting while people are on vacation.

In the months that follow, a discussion group, book club, a few carpools, and a food co-op form. Matt, a sociology professor, uses the new e-mail listserve to suggest a work-share program in which neighbors can trade skills like dry walling and landscaping to save money and continue building community. Sarah, the young woman with the German Shepherd, joins him to help coordinate, and she also spearheads a community clean-up of the vacant lot at the end of the street. While they pick up McDonald's wrappers and newspapers, she has an idea: maybe the absentee owner of the lot would let them have a community garden there. The lot's been vacant for the last 20 years...

These first few neighborhood-building efforts result in a new way of thinking about your neighborhood. You begin to think outside the boxes of your houses to envision a more productive and useful community. You begin to think in terms of "we" rather than just "me," creating what sociologist Matt calls "social capital," or a sense of mutual familiarity and trust.

With a handful of successes behind you, you organize a neighborhood meeting at the elementary school one evening to talk about visions for the neighborhood. This is an important step because it formalizes neighbors' intentions to create a neighborhood that is supportive and strives to be sustainable. You stand up and report, "Since our first community picnic, I've watched less TV, saved time and money by carpooling with Frank, and helped remodel Jerry's garage, where he will park an old pick-up truck that's available for any of us to borrow. Aren't these the kind of things that neighborhoods should be about?"

The usually quiet engineer, Roy, excitedly proposes ways the neighborhood can create cottage in-

These streetscape makeovers use computer simulations to show how unpleasant intersections can be transformed into livable spaces. TOP: El Cerrito, California. BOTTOM: Hercules, California. PAGE 38: Kendall, Florida. Images by Steve Price, Urban Advantage



what makes a great place?



Gradually, your neighborhood gets a well-deserved reputation for being a great place to live. Crime is almost non-existent, property values go up, and turnover goes down

dustries to create jobs that are a two-minute walk away and that reduce commuting. He suggests ways your neighbors can help make each house more efficient, even moving toward a neighborhood energy system—including such elements as wind turbines, solar panels, and fuel cells—to supply grid-connected electricity. Allison tells the group about her family's plans to mount solar panels for hot water on their roof. "We found some used panels for \$150 each," she says, "and we're going to have them installed next Sunday afternoon. Anyone who wants to see how they are installed is welcome to come watch."

After the meeting, a self-appointed Civic Team investigates how to work with the city for a zoning variance to allow a restaurant/outdoor café to move into the house the Rogers are selling. "We also want to see if they would consider installing landscape features like traffic circles, as they did on Ford Street, to slow down traffic and create more green space," says Marion.

With a rising level of trust in the group, the possibility of a jointly held bank account comes up. "The community land trust we'd form could purchase the vacant lot where the community garden is," says Jerry, "Or maybe even buy the next house that's up for

sale, to create a community center with shared office equipment, a library, and a guest room. "If you divide the cost of that house by 33 member-households it's really not so daunting," adds Marnie. "And we could recoup some of our investment by renting office space, or using the kitchen for a catering business."

Gradually, your neighborhood gets a well-deserved reputation for being a great place to live. Crime is almost non-existent, property values go up, and turnover goes down. In fact, one young adult, Liz, decides to rent a home on the block where she used to play, to be near her family and friends. The elderly widow, Nadine, rents her the apartment that her late husband created by remodeling the garage into a cottage, so Nadine can afford to stay in the neighborhood—and so can Liz.

As energy and water prices continue to climb, you and your neighbors are really glad you've taken action to transform your neighborhood from faceless suburbia to village-like *superbia*.

David Wann lives in Harmony Village Cohousing in Golden, Colorado. He edited a book on cohousing, forthcoming this fall from Fulcrum. He is coauthor, with Dan Chiras, of *Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods* and coauthor of *Affluenza*. His non-profit group helps neighborhoods become more sustainable. Call him with questions at 303/216-1281.

what makes a great place?

resources for just, green, beautiful communities

Lisa Kundrat

sustainable design tools

BuildingGreen, Inc. Find information on online sustainable design courses, a green product directory, and the monthly print newsletter *Environmental Building News*. 802/257-7300, www.buildinggreen.com

The American Institute of Architects' website features *Architects and the Public* that includes projects on designing for community and aging, tips on working effectively with an architect, and summer architecture education for high school students. Their Committee on the Environment offers information on sustainable design, including no-cost green building strategies. 800/AIA-3837, 202/626-7300, www.aia.org

City Farmer, Canada's office of urban agriculture, offers information on rooftop gardens, school gardens, gardening with children or people with disabilities, policy, urban forestry, water-wise gardens, and being an urban garden entrepreneur. 604/685-5832, www.cityfarmer.org

DESIGNER/builder, a bi-monthly magazine, examines how the built environment



affects our social and political life. 505/471-4549, www.designerbuildermagazine.com

Porch Magazine features stories, ideas and how-to guides for building community in your town and reconnecting with yourself, your family, and the people who walk past your porch. Six issues per year. 866/847-6724, www.porchmagazine.com

Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation outlines elements of livable cities, including trails and walkways to open spaces, active public process, community festivals, and how to make them work for your community. 406/541-2010, www.strans.org

Livable Landscapes: By Chance or By Choice?, a 57-minute film, follows five communities in New England struggling with development and conservation as they grow. 610/779-8226, www.bullfrogfilms.com

The Northwest Earth Institute, based in Portland, Oregon, offers self-facilitated discussion courses in all 50 states designed for your workplace, faith community, or home. The eight-week study course "Discovering A Sense of Place" can be used by neighbors to understand where they live from a bioregional perspective and to take steps to shape and preserve that place. 503/227-2807, www.nwei.org

The Project for Public Spaces works to improve the parks, markets, and other structures that build community. Offers courses, tools, and the book *How to Turn a Place Around* for creating successful markets and public spaces. See article on page 21. 212/620-5660, www.pps.org

network for change

Community Greens helps communities create shared green spaces owned and managed by surrounding neighbors. 703/527-8300, www.communitygreens.org

Walkable Communities helps make neighborhoods or cities more walkable. Offers walk-

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ability audits to determine problems and solutions, advice on public planning processes, and mediation in community disputes over planning issues. 866/347-2734, www.walkable.org

ZERI (Zero Emissions Research and Initiatives) helps businesses turn one business's waste into a resource for another. ZERI's educational initiative encourages kids to become budding sustainable design scientists. www.zeri.org

The Cohousing Association of the U.S. provides resources for groups and professionals developing cohousing (a form of intentional community), publishes *Cohousing Magazine*, hosts workshops, and provides a network for cohousing communities. Based in Boulder, Colorado. 314/754-5828, www.cohousing.org

Co-op America helps citizens and businesses build a green economy together through green business programs and guides for socially and environmentally responsible investing, and connects them through the *National Green Pages* and annual Green Festivals. 800/584-7336, www.coopamerica.org

American Community Gardening Association connects rural and urban community gardeners across the nation. Offers training for creating and running community gardens, publishes educational bulletins, and hosts conferences. Based in New York City. 877/ASK-ACGA, www.communitygarden.org

SustainableBusiness.com connects green businesspeople with green businesses; provides information on progressive investing, how to get your green business financed, and sus-

tainable business news. www.sustainablebusiness.com

The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities connects funders to organizations advancing more livable communities and better growth strategies. 305/667-6350, www.fundersnetwork.org

Smart Growth Network, a coalition of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, non-profits, and government organizations, provides an online A-Z smart-growth resource library, including designing sustainable workplaces and campuses and preserving historic places. 202/962-3623, www.smartgrowth.org

advancing equity

Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility publishes *New Village*, a journal on sustainable community development, and an Architectural Resource Guide for ecological building materials; gives awards each year in the categories of peace, environment, and development; and advocates low-income housing and social programs. ADPSR is calling for architects and designers to boycott designing new prisons. www.adpsr.org/prisons, 415/974-1306, www.adpsr.org

Smart Growth America is a coalition of nearly 100 national, state, and local groups. Website features Congress Watch (which tracks federal legislation), reports on metropolitan expansion and subsidized growth, and provides tools for community advocates, including *How to Talk About Smart Growth*. 202/207-3355, www.smartgrowthamerica.org

Urban Habitat, based in Berkeley, California, brings

together community leaders to stop the promotion of sprawl and support equitable urban investment and environmental justice. Publishes an illustrated history of regional environmental justice in a pamphlet titled *How Did We Get Here?*, and the bi-annual national journal *Race, Poverty, and the Environment*. 510/839-9510, www.urbanhabitat.org

PolicyLink's Equitable Development ToolKit helps community builders achieve diverse, healthy, mixed-income neighborhoods that provide opportunities for employment, education, and safe, affordable housing. Will host the Advancing Regional Equity Conference, May 23-25. 510/663-2333, www.policylink.org

Smart Growth and Social Equity, a film directed by Rick Butler and produced by Paloma Pavel of Earth House Center, serves as an introduction to the issues of regional equity. Call to order a copy. 510/652-2425

The Rural Studio Film, directed by Chuck Shultz and produced by Blueprint Productions, documents Samuel Mockbee's Rural Studio, an architectural studio in Hale County, Alabama, that trains students and builds affordable homes and community spaces. (See article on Rural Studio in *YES!* Summer 2002.) 212/563-4504, www.ruralstudiofilm.com

The Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University offers events, books, and reports on environmental and economic justice, land-use planning and industry siting, brownfields, transportation equity, sprawl, and smart growth, including a transportation equity newslet-

ter and film. 404/880-6911, www.ejrc.cau.edu

improving schools

EcoSchools Design features a list of organizations working to make schoolyards greener and safer for kids. www.ecoschools.com

Rebuild America, a project of the U.S. Department of Energy and community partners, offers online calculators to determine your school's energy use and strategies to lower consumption. www.energysmartschools.gov

Innovative Design's website offers a guide to affordable daylighting and catchwater systems for schools. 919/832-6303, www.innovativedesign.net/paper.htm

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities lists books, journal articles, and web-based guides on using a school's built environment as a context for learning. www.edfacilities.org/rl/outdoor.cfm

The Green Schools Initiative report, *The Little Green Schoolhouse*, provides a blueprint for making the transition to green schools, including tips for winning school board votes. www.greenschools.net

Second Nature helps colleges and universities incorporate environmentally and socially sustainable practices into facilities management, systems planning, and academic programming, and to network with educational, commercial, and governmental partners across the U.S. and Canada. www.secondnature.org

National Farm to School Program's website features case studies, how-to guides, and grant opportunities for

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schools to undertake a community food project. 323/341-5095, www.farmtoschool.org

The Healthy Schools Network provides information on environmental health practices for parents, personnel, and schools. Download posters, reports, and guides from the website on lighting, indoor air quality, preventing asthma attacks, and more. 518/462-0632, www.healthyschools.org

books

The Death and Life of Great American Cities, by Jane Jacobs, one of the most influential classics in urban planning, employs observation and common sense to argue that cities, buildings, and streets should be designed for people. Vintage Books, 1961, 1989

The Geography of Nowhere, by James Howard Kunstler, questions how a country of distinct and vital small towns became a mess of homogeneity and pavement and how we might work to make the places where we live and work worth caring about again. Simon & Schuster, 1993

The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community, by Peter Katz, uses 24 case studies of new and revitalized neighborhoods to explore a movement toward building places that foster community. McGraw-Hill Professional, 1993

Ecocities: Building Cities in Balance with Nature, by Richard Register, sets out to challenge the way we approach urban development in order to build cities that are ecologically and socially sustainable. Berkeley Hills Books, 2002

From Eco-Cities to Living

Machines, by Nancy Jack Todd and John Todd, discusses how we can integrate ecology, biodiversity, water, agriculture, and a bioregional perspective into the design of our urban systems. North Atlantic Books, 1994

A Field Guide to Sprawl, by Dolores Hayden, provides vocabulary to talk about and challenge the uninhibited growth characterizing the U.S. landscape, with each definition illustrated by an aerial photograph. W.W. Norton, 2004

Highway Robbery, edited by Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, demonstrates how U.S. transportation systems have perpetuated inequality by limiting who has access to reliable, safe, and practical public and private transportation, most often excluding poor people and people of color. South End Press, 2004

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, by William H. Whyte, uses surveys and observation in New York City's plazas to demonstrate what does and does not make a place work. Project for Public Spaces, 1980

The Experience of Place, by Tony Hiss, presents an experiential place-based approach to restoring our cities, rural areas, and landscapes. Vintage, 1991

Regions That Work: How Cities and Suburbs Can Grow Together, by Manuel Pastor Jr., Peter Dreier, J. Eugene Grigsby III, and Marta López-Garza, argues that equity must be the focus of smart-growth policy. University of Minnesota Press, 2000

Great Streets, by Allan B. Jacobs, uses observation of city

streets around the world to describe the specific qualities that make a street great. MIT Press, 1995

Neighbor Power: Building Community the Seattle Way, by Jim Diers, provides spirited and hard-earned advice for any neighborhood finding their own way to build community. University of Washington Press, 2004

A New Theory of Urban Design, by Christopher Alexander, presents a plan for

designing places with a sense of wholeness. See also Alexander's other books. Oxford University Press, 1987

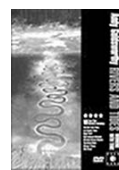
Superbia!, by Dave Wann and Dan Chiras, outlines 31 practical steps neighbors can take to make their urban or suburban neighborhood more economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. Includes a comprehensive resource guide to supplement each neighborhood make-over suggestion. New Society Publishers, 2003

YES! and The Film Connection

Films on Great Places

A Lot in Common

An eclectic group of neighbors transform a vacant lot into a garden. Features comments by Jane Jacobs, Ray Suarez, Paul Hawken, Carl Anthony, and Karl Linn



Rivers and Tides

This film follows Goldsworthy as he creates art from materials found in Mother Nature, which often succeeds in destroying his art—sometimes before it is even finished.

The Park

Through stories and interviews with random visitors, this film profiles what a city park means to the people who visit and work there.



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community

Two Crises, One Solution

by Van Jones



Karen Preuss

Van Jones believes there is a better future for young people than prisons and there is a better future for the Earth than ecological collapse. The solutions for the two may be the same

Two problems confront us: social inequality and environmental destruction. Both problems are reaching crisis points. We act as if they are separate. But they are linked—economically, politically, and morally. The solutions and strategies for each must, therefore, be one.

The United States is both the world's leading polluter and the world's leading incarcerator. We treat

the natural world the same way we treat inner city youth. We act as if there are throw-away resources and throw-away species. And we act as if there are throw-away nations, throw-away neighborhoods, and throw-away children. We are clear-cutting rainforests on a continental scale. And we are clear-cutting a whole generation of black and brown children by stuffing them into prisons.





Often these are for-profit, privatized prisons; U.S. corporations use prisoners for labor and undermine union jobs. But when a prisoner is released, the same corporation that used his labor in prison won't even hire him—because now he is an “ex-felon.”

My home state, California, spends more money on prisons than on its four-year colleges. The U.S. spends tens of billions of dollars subsidizing mass incarceration. And it spends hundreds of billions subsidizing polluters, despoilers, and clear-cutters. At bottom, both the social and ecological crises are fueled by a lust for profit. Both are made worse by a bought-and-paid-for government, bribed to stand on the wrong side of the issues. And both problems reflect our failure as a society to value what's truly sacred—all life, with its infinite value.

To execute the urgently needed ecological and social U-turn, we need three things: We need a good story, to shine a light on the past and show a way forward. We need a good politics, to unite us strategically. And we need a good moral framework, to ground our efforts spiritually and ethically.

A possible story

Let me offer a possible story. Suppose there was a continent, North America, that for thousands of years was taken care of beautifully by its indigenous stewards. It was lush, beautiful, and balanced. But then invaders arrived, killed the stewards, and disrupted the ecological balance. Suddenly, an environmental movement was needed to save the land and restore the balance.

As of today, we have seen two waves of this movement and the beginnings of a third. The first wave was called “conservation,” created by the likes of Teddy Roosevelt at the turn of the last century. The second wave, which came in the 1960s with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, went beyond conserving nature. It looked at the human health effects of toxic pollution and promoted conservation plus regulation. The second wave accomplished a great deal, but it had one critical flaw: It did not have a racial justice perspective. So despite itself, it began to create disastrous outcomes for people of color. White polluters and white environmentalists together ended up steering poison into communities of color.

The shortcomings of the second wave required a corrective effort, led by people of color, called environmental justice. Environmental justice activists said that if there must be toxic burdens, let them be shared equitably. Don't turn nations and neigh-

borhoods of color into dumping grounds, forcing us to bear the burdens of society's pollution. These activists made the second wave more just and fair, but they still did not quite provide the inspirational, unifying frame that we needed.

Today, a new and promising wave is rising. This third wave calls for something exciting and new: Conservation, plus regulating the bad, plus investing in the good.

Conserve, yes. Regulate, yes—and do that fairly and equitably. But also invest in those things that will affirmatively heal our bodies and restore our planet. Invest in solar, bio-diesel, permaculture, organic agriculture, and high-performance buildings. The third wave promises to solve old problems while creating new wealth and new jobs.

A solution-based, investment-driven environmentalism holds great promise. But it faces the same danger as the old second wave. This new environmentalism actually could lead to what I call “eco-apartheid.” Under “eco-apartheid,” you would have an affluent place like Marin County, California, with cooler, solar everything—bio this and organic that—while nearby Oakland would still be struggling to get the last century's toxic jobs and polluting industries. On that basis, the third wave would fail.

But suppose this third wave said: No! The people who were locked out of last century's pollution-based economy must be locked in to a new, clean and green economy.

That principle would transform the next wave into an inclusive, social-uplift environmentalism. It would advance urban-friendly slogans, like “Green Jobs, Not Jails.” It would embrace all these new, clean, green technologies. And it would see them not just as an alternative environmental strategy or a business strategy. It would see them as an alternative community investment strategy: A social-uplift strategy.

A new politics for a new century

What politics does this story suggest? Properly designed, the third wave could lay the groundwork for a New Deal coalition for the new century. This would be a new politics, rooted in a proud tradition. The last time the government got this screwed up, people took a stand. Farmers, workers, ethnic minorities, students, intellectuals, progressive bankers, and the best people in the business community came together. The New Deal Coalition, during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's day, moved the government onto the side of ordinary people.



We must re-imagine, re-create, and re-found a New Deal Coalition. And we must do this at the crossroads, at the intersection of the social justice and ecology movements, of business and activism, of spirituality and social change, of local and global activism. Where all these counter-currents converge, we will have enough power to stand up to the military-petroleum complex.

Using this framework, we are no longer stuck defending a failed welfare state against a rising warfare state. People of conscience at last would have a way out of that stale debate. We don't want the U.S. government as a nanny, nor as a bully. We want it to act as a partner. A partner to community groups trying to solve problems. A partner to the eco-entrepreneurs trying to bring world-saving innovations to market. A partner to the problem-solvers of the world—and not the problem-makers.

From this position, we can stand up to those who seek to repeal a century of New Deal achievements to promote their budget-busting tax cuts and their wars. We can say, "We reject your truncated, sick, disgusting, limited view of what the U.S. government can be." It is time to expose the radical right for its appalling lack of patriotism.

We can say, "Don't tell me you're against 'gov-

We can reach out to each other.
We can revere all life and the
generations to come. And we
can make the government our
partner in this great effort

ernment.' Don't say that 'government' is the problem. You must say the whole sentence, sir. You mean you're against the U.S. government. You're saying the U.S. government is a problem. And that is *not* a patriotic statement, sir."

We have an obligation to tell those who are anti-government, "If you don't love this government, then let it go. Anybody who wants to hijack the government and crash it with deficits is as big a threat as any terrorist in the world."

And we can take that message anywhere in this country. We don't have to hide in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Greenwich Village. Anywhere in

the country, we can tell people we want to see the United States government strong enough to lead the world. But not in war. Not in incarceration. Not in pollution. We want the U.S. to lead in green economic development, in world-saving technologies, in human rights, by showing a rainbow planet how our rainbow country can pull together to solve tough problems.

A moral framework

Now, on what moral framework can we rest this renewed political strategy? What moral vision can unite us, despite our class and race differences? Aqeela Sherrills, the great peace hero of Watts, California, has the answer. He's calling for a "Reverence Movement"—to honor the sacred in each other and our planet.

A reverence movement would anchor a different economics, a restorative economics. Working with nature, we can create wealth sustainably and spread it more equitably. Our economic activity can restore, rather than undermine, environmental health.

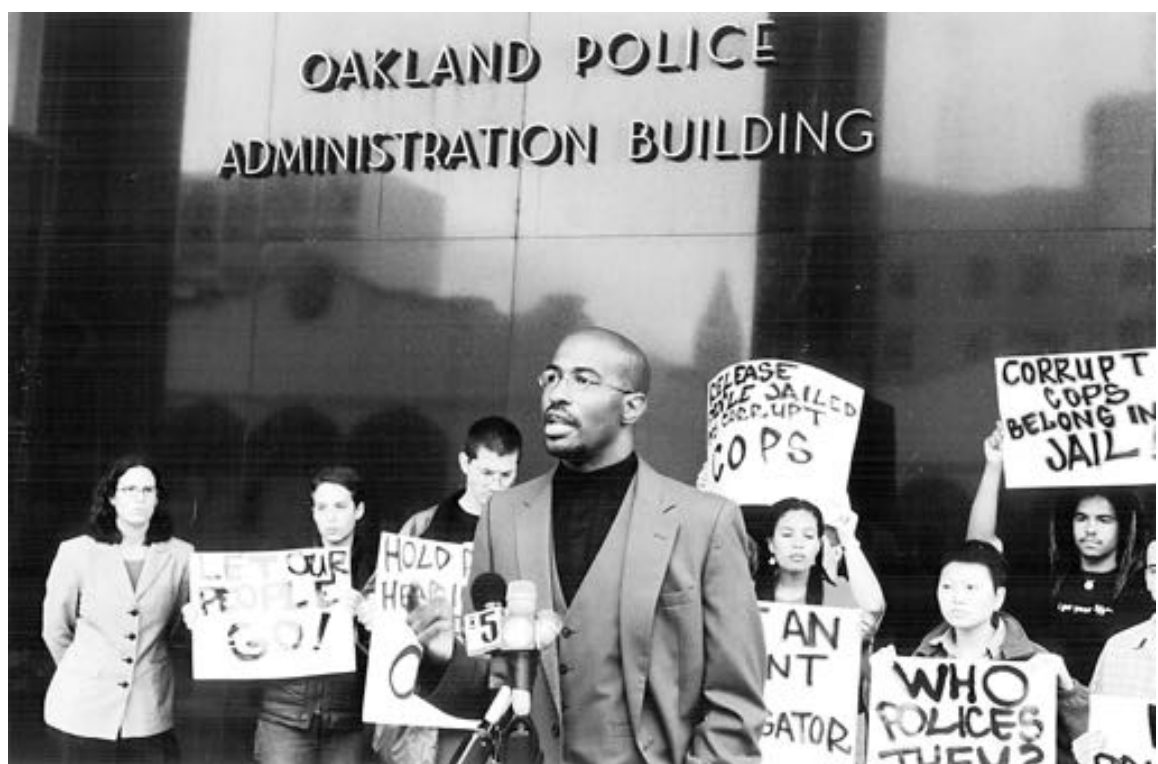
And a reverence movement would give us a new criminal justice system. Crime disrupts a balance. Our society attempts to restore that balance by using retribution—an eye for an eye. In this retributive justice system, justice is served when the wrongdoer has been appropriately hurt. Justice has been served when we have added more damage.

There is a more humane and cost-effective alternative. Under a restorative justice system, justice has been served when the person who has been trespassed against has been made whole.

If your car is broken into, you'll be angry. But if you find out that the culprit is a three-striker and is going to get 25 years-to-life if convicted of this crime, your heart may soften. You don't really want another person sent to prison for life. You just want to make sure this crime doesn't happen again. You want help paying for your window. You want to make sure that the person who did it learns his lesson.

Using a restorative justice system, you can have that for pennies. Sometimes you can fix what has been broken using coaches and counselors, rather than prison guards and police. And you will have a reduced likelihood of future violence and crime, because you helped break the cycle of harm. This works in New Zealand and in experiments across the United States. This is what we need.

I live in Oakland, California, which is sometimes the murder capital of the country. So nobody is going



Janet Jamman

to give me any lectures about the need for public safety. But the safest communities are not the communities with the most police and the most prisons. In the safest communities, you never see police. In the safest communities, there are no prisons. Instead, these communities have jobs and schools that work. We insist on everyone's right to these things. This way, we can solve the problems of inequality and insecurity, at once.

This is what I propose: A social-uplift strategy that creates green jobs, not jails; a politics anchored in a New Deal Coalition for this century; and a moral framework based on reverence for each other and the planet. It can be done.

Finding a way forward

And it must be.

The birth of my first child gives me even greater urgency. He's a little black boy, growing up in Oakland, California.

I'm not going to be able to tell him some of the things that some other people can tell their children. I'm not going to be able to tell him he's welcome in this country. I'm not going to be able to say he can go anywhere and be safe and expect people to treat him right, even people who look just like him. I'm not going to be able to say those things to my child.

And I can't even tell him that his father is working to "take back America." That's the big progressive slogan nowadays. But America wasn't ever ours in the first place. My people were stolen from Africa and brought here to be the country's footstools. We can't take back something that has never been truly ours.

But I can tell my son this: Lots of people in this country have been left out and locked out and laughed at. They're told: You can't marry who you want, can't love who you want, can't live where you want, can't go where you want. None of those people can take America back.

But we can do something better. We can reach out to each other. We can love ourselves and each other. We can revere all life and the generations to come. And we can make the government our partner in this great effort. And if we do that, we won't be taking America back. We'll be taking America forward. Let us begin.

Van Jones is executive director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, www.ellabakercenter.org, where he works to replace the punishment industry with youth opportunities and community-based solutions. Van Jones delivered a version of this speech at the Praxis Peace "Alchemy of Democracy" conference, Pacific Grove, California, June 2004.





7 Great Ideas for Movement Builders

by **Grace Lee Boggs**

As a Black Power activist in the 1960s, I identified more with Malcolm than with Martin.

However, my studies of King's struggles with the urban crisis during the three years from the Watts uprising until his assassination in April 1968 have taught me a lot about the difference between radical organizing and movement leadership.

Radical organizers concentrate on mobilizing masses to protest against the system. Their main aim is increasing militancy and numbers. On the other hand, movement leaders recognize the almost pathological fear and despair that oppression creates and therefore the need for the oppressed to find creative ways to move beyond fear to hope, and beyond despair to transformation.

In recent months I have been exchanging ideas and experiences with John Maguire, a friend of King's since their student days and a 1961 Freedom Rider. Together with Vincent Harding, John prepared the initial draft of King's 1967 anti-Vietnam war speech. I have known Vincent since the 1960s, but I met John for the first time last October. Recently, John sent me the following Notes on Movement Building, inspired by our correspondence. I recommend their careful study and discussion by activists who are beginning to sense that something is blowing in the wind:

- Suffering and oppression are not enough to create a movement. A movement begins when the oppressed begin seeing themselves not just as victims, but as new men and women, pioneers in creating new, more human relations, thus advancing the evolution of the human race.
- Movement builders are able to recognize the humanity in others, including their opponents, and

therefore the potential within them for redemption and the possibility of work-through-change.

- Movement builders are conscious of the need to go beyond slogans and to create programs of struggle that transform and empower participants.
- At the heart of movement building is the concept of two-sided transformation, both of ourselves and of our institutions.
- Thinking dialectically is pivotal to movement building because it prepares us for the contradictions that inevitably develop in the course of the struggle. A struggle that starts with the need of a particular racial, ethnic, or social group only becomes a movement if it creates hope and the vision of a new society for everyone. But because great hopes can also lead to great disappointments, movement participants must be in touch with elements that sustain them through dark times as well as bright.
- Movement building is intergenerational and involves children and youth, as well as adults, in community building and productive activities.
- Movement building is essentially counter-cultural. It is a struggle to transform both ourselves (the way we think and act in relationship to one another and the Earth) and institutions. Radical organizing, by contrast, is mostly about distributive justice, making demands on the system in order to redistribute the products of the society (wages, healthcare, education, etc.) more equitably. Genuine movement building is about restorative justice, new ways of thinking and being that restore community and advance us another step in our evolution as human beings.

For information on Maguire's Notes on Movement Building, see www.belovedcommunitynet.org. Grace Boggs has been an activist for more than 60 years and is the author of the autobiography *Living for Change*. She will celebrate her 90th birthday in June. This article appeared in the *Michigan Citizen*, February 20-26, 2005.



Antonio Scorza/AFP/Getty Images

In Brazil: Creating a New Reality

Thousands of displaced Brazilian families are taking back the land, setting up schools, homes, cooperatives, and organic farms—and re-envisioning the future of Brazil

by **Michelle Burkhart**

“You would never see that in a U.S. classroom,” one of the delegates whispered as we left the classroom.

“You would never see that in another Brazilian classroom,” our translator, Denise, answered with goose-bumped arms.

Our delegation fell silent as we continued down the hallway. The classroom in the convent-turned-school in southern Brazil had been filled with young members of the Landless Workers Movement

(MST)—one of the most successful land reform movements in the world. I had never seen a group of teenagers so intent on learning and so clear about the value that their education will bring to their lives and communities.

The MST arose 20 years ago out of a desperate need for land redistribution in a country where ownership of arable land is disastrously skewed (see *YES!* Fall 2002). At the root of much of this

Members of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) on a 900-mile march to the Brazilian capital, Brasília, in October 1999



inequality are policies that favor large-scale, export-oriented agriculture and wealthy landowners who fraudulently take land with impunity.

This consolidation of land ownership, sometimes accompanied by violent evictions of working families from the land, led to a major migration. Between 1965 and 1985, half of the Brazilian population streamed into the cities in search of work, and the influx continues today. Giant slums rose around cities, and many families fell into poverty, drugs, and hunger. Today, less than 3 percent of the Brazilian population owns two-thirds of the arable land in Brazil.

For many landless workers, the MST offers a rare path out of poverty and hunger. The MST mobilizes landless people to squat on or near idle land, in MST "camps." Those in the encampments, along with supporters, pressure the government to enforce the Brazilian constitution, which declares that land must be used for its "social function." This means that it must be cultivated for production if it is not being preserved for ecological reasons.

As a result of this massive nonviolent movement, more than 300,000 families have won land, and many are now living in permanent settlements, farming, studying at MST-organized schools, and supporting others who are likewise working to move back to the land.

BELOW: Residents of Camp Monte Pill sing in front of the idle 1,600-hectare farm the MST is trying to recover.
OPPOSITE: Children at the Monte Pill encampment play near the highway

But there have also been many casualties; since 1985, more than 1,000 rural workers have been killed in land disputes.

Classrooms for a New Life

The ITERRA Institute I visited with a delegation led by San Francisco-based Global Exchange, is located near Porto Alegre, Brazil. The ITERRA Institute is part of an educational network of more than 1,000 schools that the MST created to teach literacy, sustainable farming, and leadership, and prepare people for professions in such areas as teaching and health care.

The students are MST members who come from impoverished rural and urban backgrounds. At the school, they divide their time between study, work, physical education, reflection, discussion of current events, music, and volunteer work. Non-violence education is integrated into all courses.

Students stay at the school for two months, then travel back to their homes in MST encampments and settlements for several months to use their newly acquired skills. They continue this rotation until graduation.

ITERRA is a boarding school, but most MST schools are located on MST camps and settlements, and many classrooms are simple, open-air shelters.

The students we visited had studied together for three years to become teachers. They listened intently as their teacher explained to our delegation that each ITERRA class creates its own banners, chants, and songs that affirm their purpose as students and citizens. The students stood to sing us their class song about Salete Stronzake, an MST teacher who played a leading role in developing MST's educational system before she died in a car accident. Then they broke into a chant:

We are following the movement!

We are planting education!

We are practicing Salete's dream!

Their voices carried powerfully as they punched their fists into the air. Their confidence and solidarity impressed me.

As I scanned the students' faces, I could see that they were learning to be much more than teachers; they were learning to be builders of a new society even as they struggle literally to claim the ground that makes their survival possible.

As our group continued to tour the institute's grounds, I was struck by the school's focus on gender equality and its holistic approach to education. The school has a large garden, a crafts room, library,



Michelle Burkhart



kitchen, daycare, nursery, and natural pharmacy with massage. The students make preserves and juice in a small factory and baked goods for their own consumption and to sell at markets. The school runs as a cooperative; resources are shared between everyone, and everyone has a task that contributes to the whole, such as baking or gardening. Ideally, the students rotate through all the positions before graduation.

One of my favorite moments on the tour was watching several teenage boys and a girl gently rock babies to sleep in the nursery. I couldn't help but think back on my high school parenting class, where I was assigned to tend an egg for a week to learn what it means to care for a baby. And I realized how rarely I see teenage boys caring for babies.

Creating gender equality is integral to the MST movement, according to João Carlos, a resident of an MST camp. "Men and women have to work together. If a man fights, it's half a fight," he says. "It's only complete if men and women fight together."

Living in an MST camp

The day after our tour of the school, we visited Camp Monte Pill—also near Porto Alegre. As we arrived at the camp, an Afro-Brazilian man strummed his guitar and sang just outside the camp. A small group of teenage boys stood around him joining in the song and keeping time with clapping hands.

Behind them, a beautifully green 1,600-hectare farm sat idle. To their side stood a maze of black plastic tents—the homes of 200 landless families. They had pitched the tents on a narrow strip of land squeezed between a buzzing highway and the carefully guarded farm. The owner of the farm owes the government more money than the land is worth, and he does not live in Brazil, we were told; this makes the farm a good candidate for agrarian reform.

MST camps, such as this one, are where the MST's holistic and egalitarian approach to education and life begins.

"Time at the camps is incredibly important to start restoring people's dignity and awakening their social consciousness," João Carlos says. Many MST members are accustomed to being excluded from society—living in slums where drugs, violence, and poverty are rife and easily lead to an oppressive cycle. Integrating these people back into a functioning community is central to the success of MST settlements. The teachings of Paulo Freire (author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) on self-dignity, social responsibility, and breaking the cycle of oppression



Michelle Burkhart

"Time at the camps is incredibly important to restoring people's dignity and awakening their social consciousness"

help residents create positive change and the life they want to live.

According to Jacqueline—a Monte Pill resident who gave only her first name—the days go by quickly at camp and people stay motivated because of the many planning meetings, classes, music, and daily chores. The health of many of the Camp Monte Pill residents is poor due to lack of water and poor hygiene. The camp is plagued by pollution from a leak at a nearby gas station, acid leaking from a neighboring metal factory, and indoor smoke from residents' wood fires. The camp turns into a muddy mess when it rains, and when it doesn't rain the black tents trap the hot sun. The children play along the highway where large trucks go barreling by and people yell insults at camp residents from car windows. A security guard hired by the landowner keeps a watchful eye on the camp, and a police car passes by every half hour to check on them. Planning their future settlement helps camp residents keep their spirits up during their arduous stay at the camp.

The Monte Pill residents have lived on this strip



of land for about a year. The police once attempted to evict the families. In response, residents marched on the state capital and camped outside the government building in Porto Alegre for six months. They won the right to return to Camp Monte Pill to wait for the idle land next door.

Camp residents expect to receive the farmland soon; however, there will not be enough land to sustain everyone. This creates tensions in camp, says Jacqueline, because they will have to allocate the land only to those who have been at the camp the longest.

Camp Monte Pill is one of approximately 12,000 similar MST camps in Brazil. The MST strives to create a leader out of each individual at the camps; these leadership capacities help achieve successful cooperative-style settlements when land is turned over to the campers. It also helps further the broader-reaching goals of the MST—to create a just Brazil.

Re-Inhabiting the land

Assent Lagao do Junco, a permanent MST settlement, is made up of small, tidy houses lining a dirt road that leads to a large communal space surrounded by farmland. This settlement was another stop on our tour.

Fifteen of 35 families on the settlement chose to live in a cooperative-style community. Their communal space includes a kitchen with running water, large wood-fired ovens, a bathroom with flush toilets, murals depicting MST farmers and teachers, and picnic tables beneath shady trees. The settlement, where people know they have a permanent home, is a huge leap up in human dignity and in meeting basic human needs compared to the MST camps.

There is another way

In the settlements, MST works to demonstrate that people can provide their own food instead of importing and exporting cash crops—a system that has led to a large increase in poverty and starvation in Brazil.

“It’s a slow walk,” Tarcisio Stein, one of the settlement residents, says. “But we’re showing society that there is another way of doing things.”

At Assent Lagao do Junco, residents are proud to say that they have practiced 100 percent organic farming for four years.

“When we arrived, we had the idea that we had to use lots of pesticides,” Tarcisio says.

With time, the community realized that they were spending more and more money on fertilizers and pesticides because the chemicals were exhausting the soil. The chemicals’ side effects also caused illnesses within the settlement. The community decided to switch to organic farming.

Today, the settlement continues to experiment with ways to make organic farming more cost-competitive with conventionally grown food. Recently, they increased rice yields by adopting a Chinese practice of using carp to help till and weed their fields. The settlement also raises cattle for meat and dairy, and fruits and vegetables for their own consumption.

Not all MST settlements have switched to organic farming, but they are working in that direction.

One of the MST’s biggest challenges now is the recent decision by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to lift a ban on the sale of genetically modified crops. MST leaders believe this will increase corporate control over crops by making seeds “intellectual property.”

This is not the only disappointment that the MST has faced since 2002 when Lula won the presidency. The MST and many other Brazilians had invested high hopes in Lula, Brazil’s first left-leaning president, a former labor leader, and a long-time ally of the MST who had vowed to work to end hunger and close Brazil’s monstrous economic gap.

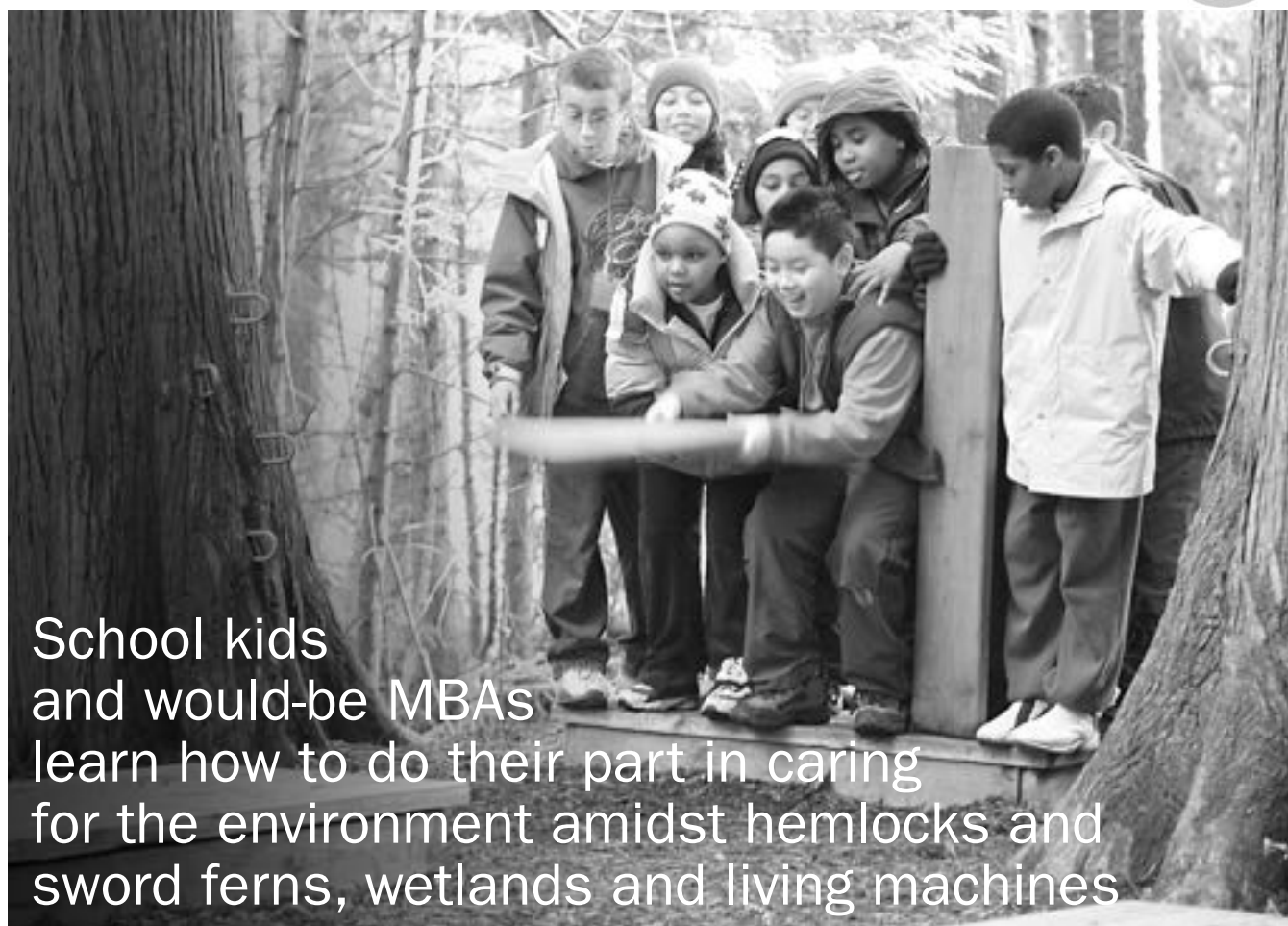
“During Lula’s government, nothing has changed,” Carlos says. Lula’s government is under tremendous pressure from the International Monetary Fund, other world organizations, and the owners of large estates, he says.

Nonetheless, Lula’s divergence from his campaign pledges is not halting the MST’s momentum to fight for a just Brazil.

“It is quite clear that Lula himself, as a single person, will never make agrarian reform. We must make agrarian reform happen,” Carlos says. “No matter what government we have, change has to come from the base.”

To strengthen their base, the MST is working to build an organization that unites all movements in Brazil. “Once we are united with all the movements, we can start the construction of a new social reality,” Carlos says. “We will not wait.”

Michelle Burkhart is a free-lance writer and a former intern at YES! magazine. You can learn more about the Landless Workers Movement at www.mstbrazil.org and about Global Exchange’s international tours at www.globalexchange.org.



School kids
and would-be MBAs
learn how to do their part in caring
for the environment amidst hemlocks and
sword ferns, wetlands and living machines

A Classroom in the Forest

by Kathryn Haines

Filling the forest amphitheater to overflowing, 100 fourth- and fifth-graders drown out the sounds of birds and wind with their own song.

"Predator and prey, producer and decay, are in the food chain, ch-chain, chain..."

Like all good camp songs, the tune is infectious, and the story vivid: Rabbit nibbles on a plant and then is caught by Coyote, who leaves her scat on the trail for the insects to turn into plant food.

It's the final gathering at the Friendship Circle for the kids of John Muir Elementary, and they sum up their four days of environmental education at IslandWood with gusto:

"The cycle never ends, it just begins again, in the food chain, ch-chain, chain."

So eat your food, my friend, but remember where it's been, in the food chain, ch-chain, chain."

For the previous group of students to hold classes here, the tune may not have been as catchy, but the tenor of the lesson was much the same.

"While every supply chain is trying to get more efficient, a *values* chain goes far beyond that."

It's Management 509, Sustainable Operations, and the second-year Masters of Business Administration students from the Bainbridge Graduate Institute (BGI) are tackling supply-chain management.

With an occasional pause to flash a flowchart on the classroom's large flat-panel display, instructors Dennis Gawlik and Dwight Collins outline the traditional manufacturing process. At the same time,

An IslandWood student field group doing a team-building, problem-solving activity. Photo by Robin Purcell



they insist something more is possible: a production cycle that more fully accounts for its social and environmental impact. In that model, businesses can be “eco-friendly” and increase efficiency by harnessing the by-products that industry traditionally ignores. “That’s where this revolution, this notion of sustainability, starts—by looking into the life of the product,” Dennis tells the class.

It’s the business version of a healthy food chain: using the scat to nurture something green. And it offers a fair notion of the values that have made both IslandWood and BGI pioneers in the field of “sustainability education.”

The two start-up schools—both based on Bainbridge Island, a 35-minute ferry ride from downtown Seattle—teamed up last fall when BGI moved its business classes and lectures to IslandWood’s campus. “(BGI is) teaching current leaders,

Grand, and timely: the state of Washington mandates environmental education across the K-12 curriculum. Motivating that mandate is a growing body of research on the benefits of environmental education, including higher scores on standardized tests and improved overall academic performance.

Now in its third full year of operations, IslandWood has seen 10,000 school children from more than 100 schools in the region participate in its programs, many from the urban schools of Seattle. Most take part in the center’s flagship program, a four-day residential learning experience for fourth- and fifth-graders.

As a site to learn about biodiversity, the 255-acre center is an educator’s dream, encompassing six different ecosystems and a nearly complete watershed. Trails wind from a cattail marsh and natural bog, descending through pockets of second-growth forest to a fern-blanketed ravine. From a four-acre freshwater pond, a historic salmon stream flows down to public park land and the Port Blakely estuary, where timbers from the Port Blakely Mill, once the largest sawmill in the world, still remain.

For naturalist Karen Salsbury, every step through the site offers her 10 student charges a new experience. Calling Team Marsh to a halt, the IslandWood naturalist urges them to listen for the red-winged blackbirds they heard the day before. Further down the trail, she plucks up some *Gallium ssp.*, “velcro plant,” and hands it around for the group to feel its sticky, burr-like surface. “I have a hard time not stopping every 50 feet,” she confesses.

Still, she sets a brisk pace for this morning’s mission: the Tree House. Twenty five feet up the bole of a Douglas fir, the group gets a birds-eye view of the bog. Karen points to a stubby cluster of hemlocks in the distance. “How old do you think those trees are?” As old, she tells them, as those in the surrounding forest. “It’s like orange juice down there, very acidic. And those trees are stunted by the acidic environment. Why are they still growing? Because they’ve adapted.”

IslandWood’s lessons are not just about the world outdoors; the school has earned national attention for its focus on what IslandWood’s technology coordinator, Clancy Wolf, calls “the built environment.”

“This campus makes a lot of principles very visible,” he says. “These buildings have a huge potential for teaching.”

From its composting toilets to its solar-paneled rooftops, IslandWood is a showcase of sustainable design and construction. In the classrooms, every



Every morning the students in IslandWood’s school overnight program gather around the Friendship Circle to reflect on the previous day’s experiences and prepare for the day’s activities

we’re teaching future leaders,” says IslandWood’s executive director Ben Klasky.

Sustainability made visible

For IslandWood founders Paul and Debbi Brainerd, the seed of sustainability-based education sent up its first shoots in 1997, when they purchased property on the forested slopes of south-central Bainbridge.

Their vision of an environmental learning center was grand from the get-go: an education facility combining nature, art, science, and technology that would set children on a path to environmental and community stewardship.



surface is a demonstration of recycled and renewable material, from countertops made of soybean shells and recycled yogurt containers to floors covered in cork and bamboo. In the art studio, a window wows students with a view inside the plaster-covered walls, where straw bales hold up the roof.

Textured, tactile, and visually interesting, the structures are nothing like the standard school room—"just enough out of whack," Clancy says, "to create a little cognitive dissonance, to challenge our assumptions."

This comprehensive effort to reduce its ecological footprint and put sustainable practices on display earned IslandWood and Mithun, the architectural firm which designed the campus, a coveted Gold-level certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) from the U.S. Green Building Council.

As much as BGI's co-founder Gifford Pinchot believes in conservation, he's adamant that some of what we've inherited shouldn't be conserved for future generations. Topping the list is the idea that business and morality are mutually exclusive.

"Society has been rigged in such a way that people think they dare not live their values," he says. "[BGI] was an opportunity to see just how much the chance to live those values can add."

Scarcely three years since its founding in early 2002, the school is flourishing, offering two- and three-year MBAs in Sustainable Business, as well as a two-year certificate program.

Their curriculum—though not their success—flies in the face of what BGI calls the "Friedman Principle," after influential free-market economist Milton Friedman, which dictates that market value for stockholders trumps all other considerations.



The campus has become a classroom for architects nationwide, and its appeal has drawn new revenue which, along with donations, enables IslandWood to subsidize the school visits. A glimpse at next month's schedule shows a prominent area politician and a multinational coffee company bringing groups to the center, and weekends filled with nature and art classes.

Daring to live your values

When IslandWood's neighbor, the Bainbridge Graduate Institute, found its offices bursting at the seams with eager MBAs, the IslandWood campus presented an ideal solution.

"Traditionally, taking responsibility for environmental or social impact is considered irresponsible in business," explains Rick Bunch, BGI executive director. Or, as Gifford puts it: in business as usual, it's immoral to be moral.

Increasingly, though, corporations are becoming convinced that their future success demands a different strategy. Under the aegis of "ethical business," "corporate responsibility," and "sustainable development," firms are coming around to the idea that environmentally sound and socially just behavior can be profitable.

"Sustainability is the next big trend in business,"

LEFT: One of three guest lodges at IslandWood, each of which sleeps 30-40. Photo by Jim Stewart

RIGHT: During the class "Systems for innovation," students don team hats for an exercise on sustainable innovation. Photo by Tim Crosby



says Kevin Hagen, principal of Shuksan Energy Consultants. "Huge corporations are in the process of transitioning to more sustainable business models—within the next five years, I think MBAs trained in sustainability will become mission-critical employees."

It's a belief that brought Kevin, already a seasoned entrepreneur in the field of renewable energy, back to the classroom two years ago as part of BGI's second crop of MBAs. Since then, the school's enrollment has doubled, and doubled again with the incoming class numbering over 50.

That growth speaks to the huge, unmet demand for sustainable business education. Its principles have already entered the corporate mainstream—83 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs believe sustainable development offers "real business value" to their firms, according to a 1998 survey. But the concepts of sustainability have been slower to gain ground in major business schools. Absent from core curricula are such key concepts as "the triple bottom line" (measuring profit for business, society, *and* the environment), and full-cost accounting (including the costs of business choices to society and the environment).

The lagging commitment to sustainability at other schools has led world-class educators—among them living systems theorist Elisabet Sahtouris, alternative energy guru Amory Lovins, and industrial ecology pioneer John Ehrenfeld—to join BGI's list of visiting faculty. And the demand for MBAs trained in sustainable business strategies has CEOs like Patagonia's Michael Crooke and Gene Kahn, vice president of Sustainable Development at General Mills, lining up to speak (and scout) at the school. These luminaries, enough to make any b-school shine, are only part of the appeal of BGI's program, which infuses sustainability into every aspect of the curriculum.

Intensives

"One of the key mythologies is that growth is good, and that more growth is better," Mark Anielski is telling his Sustainable Economics class. "And that growth will solve all the problems in the world, including poverty." As an example, he displays a graph of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product, the standard indicator of economic vitality, which has sloped resolutely upward for the past few decades. For contrast, he shows another measure, the Genuine Progress Index, which accounts for change in social and environmental assets, as well as economic ones. That slope is nearly flat, with a disturbing downtick in recent years.

While GDP is standard macroeconomics fare; GPI certainly isn't. These students will learn both. The school's credibility depends on challenging con-

temporary views of business while still covering the territory an MBA is expected to traverse. "If they leave here without being able to read a balance sheet, we're in trouble," jokes Gifford.

That's not likely to happen. Although the program is part-time, designed to meet the needs of work and family, the course load is demanding. The four-day residential sessions held each month are filled to the brim with six hours of classes a day, plus meetings, study groups, and lectures. "They call them 'intensives' for a reason," says Ann Brudno fortifying herself with a handful of almonds as she waits for classes to begin again.

It's in the intensives that much of the work of building sustainable business models takes place—the face-to-face inquiry, the push and pull of competing values and ideas, the creation of a collective understanding among individuals with notably diverse backgrounds. Oil industry and high-tech execs rub shoulders and toss frisbees with entrepreneurs in organic foods and cooperative housing—a mix of experience that's as integral to BGI as the coursework itself. "The school encourages students to use their real life circumstances as part of class work—which is not only more relevant, it helps share rich experience and real-life situations," confirms Kevin Hagen.

Buoying students and staff is a sense of camaraderie that underlies all of BGI's lessons in sustainability—what student Sarah Miller describes as "an entire community of like-minded people, each of us dedicated to making a difference in the world."

It's a feeling that the move to IslandWood has strengthened—both through the sustainable practices that pervade the campus, and the social connections that living and working together can foster.

"The students are learning a lot about creating a community with a common purpose," Rick says. "We want them not only to hear that there is a different way of doing things, but to experience it. Now they know it is entirely feasible."

For its part, IslandWood has benefited from the exposure BGI's presence has brought, and from having business leaders regularly visiting campus. And there's talk of joint programming in the future. As BGI grads become successful parents and IslandWood's elementary schoolers sprout into MBAs, sustainable education promises to become a virtuous and lifelong cycle.

Kathryn Haines, a free-lance writer, lives on Bainbridge Island; klhaines@att.net. Find out about IslandWood at www.islandwood.org and BGI at www.bgi.edu.org. Full disclosure: BGI and YES! are neighbors and Gifford Pinchot is a YES! board member.

Is Collapse Coming?



Fred Bruemmer

COLLAPSE: How Societies Choose To Fail Or Succeed

by Jared Diamond

Viking Adult, 2004, 592 pages, \$29.95

reviewed by Richard Heinberg

Civilizations tend to collapse. That is the rule we learn from history, a rule whose implications deserve careful thought given that our own civilization is busily severing its ecological underpinnings. Thus we should pay close attention to a new book by Jared Diamond, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, on how and why whole societies sometimes lose their way and descend into chaos.

Diamond traces the process of collapse in several ancient societies (including the Easter Islanders, the Maya, and the Greenland Norse colony) and show parallels with

trends in several modern nations (Rwanda, Haiti, and Australia).

The environment plays a crucial role in each instance. Resource depletion, habitat destruction, and population pressure combine in different ways in different circumstances; but when their mutually reinforcing impacts become critical, societies are sometimes challenged beyond their ability to respond and consequently disintegrate.

The ancient Maya practiced intensive slash-and-burn horticulture, growing mostly corn. Their population increased dramatically, peaking in the eighth century CE. But this resulted in the over-cutting of forests; meanwhile their fragile soils were becoming depleted. A series of droughts turned problem into crisis. Yet kings and nobles, rather than comprehending and respond-

ing to the crisis, evidently remained fixated on the short-term priorities of enriching themselves, building monuments, and waging wars. The population of Mayan cities quickly began a decline that would continue for several centuries, culminating in levels 90 percent lower than at the civilization's height in 700 CE.

The Easter Islanders, whose competing clan leaders built giant stone statues in order to display their prestige and their connection with the gods, cut every last tree in their delicate environment to use in erecting these eerie monuments. Hence the people lost their source of raw materials for building canoes, which were essential for fishing. Crop yields fell and the human population declined, so that by the time Captain Cook arrived in 1774 the remaining Easter Islanders, who had long since resorted to cannibalism, were, in Cook's words, "small, lean, timid, and miserable."

Human choice can make the difference between prosperity and ruin. Diamond describes how the Inuit in the Arctic and Polynesians on Tikopia managed to create ways of life that were indefinitely sustainable, and why the Dominican Republic has had a more peaceful and economically stable history than its neighbor, Haiti. In some situations, wiser policies on the part of leaders helped create ecological stability, while in others the credit appears to go to sheer luck—favorable weather or topography. In general, smaller-scale societies that stay in one place for a long time seem to do better than empires and invasive societies.

The author argues that our modern global industrial society is

creating some of the very same sorts of environmental problems that caused ancient societies to fail, and notes that many of these problems are likely to “become globally critical within the next few decades.”

Diamond devotes the last section of his last chapter to “reasons for hope,” leaving the reader with evidence for thinking that collapse will not occur in our own instance after all. This excuses him from asking, what if it’s already too late?

There are many reasons for concluding that Diamond has in fact made an extremely timid case for the likelihood of global industrial collapse; here are only two:

First, Diamond does not even hint at the imminent global oil production peak. Oil production capacity is in fact declining rapidly in several key countries, while the world’s reliance on oil for its essential energy needs continues to grow with each passing year. In the estimation of a growing chorus of informed observers, the oil peak is likely to trigger global economic crisis and the outbreak of a series of devastating resource wars.

Second, averting collapse would require unprecedented levels of national and international cooperation to avert deadly competition for essential resources as they become scarce. Yet the American political regime—the most important in the world, given U.S. military suprem-

acy and economic clout—is now the province of a group of extremist ideologues who have little interest in international cooperation. Evidently the most powerful of the world’s current leaders are every bit as irrational as the befuddled kings and chiefs who brought the Maya and Easter Islanders to their ruin.

Neither of these problems can be solved quickly or easily; the first is by itself a sufficient cause for collapse; if the second continues, it will preclude attempts to reverse the slide toward international chaos.

Diamond assumes that success is still an option. Yet if “success” means maintaining current per-capita rates of consumption, then we may already have exhausted our choices. We cannot replace dwindling non-renewable resources, we cannot make industrial wastes disappear, quickly restabilize the global climate, or revive species that have become extinct.

What, then, are Diamond’s reasons for hope? Our problems are, in principle, solvable, and environmental thinking has become more common in recent years. But for hope to be realized, he says, modern societies will need “courageous, successful long-term planning,” which, he says, is indeed being undertaken by some political leaders at least some of the time. Yet the single instance of long-term planning that might have made all the difference to the survival of our civilization—a sustained choice by the U.S. to wean itself from fossil fuels, beginning in the 1970s—was not followed through; as a result, economic crises and resource wars are now virtually assured.

Given Diamond’s emphasis on choice, it might have been helpful if he had studied what people chose to do during previous periods of collapse, and how certain actions helped or hindered personal and cultural survival.

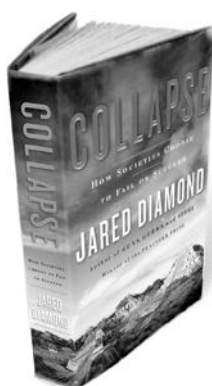
If there is even a moderate likelihood that industrial society is headed toward history’s dustbin, shouldn’t we be devoting at least some mental effort toward planning for a survivable collapse? Shouldn’t we be thinking about what needs to be preserved so that future generations will have the information, skills, and tools to carry on?

Initial efforts to manage collapse might be indistinguishable from efforts to prevent collapse—the sorts of things many people have been doing at least since the 1970s: the active protest of war, the protection of ecosystems and species, the defense of indigenous and traditional cultures, and the adoption of lifestyles of voluntary simplicity.

Then, as fossil-fuel-based infrastructures begin to disintegrate, other strategies might come to the fore: efforts to re-localize economies, to build intentional communities, and to regain forgotten handcraft skills. Like the European monks of the middle ages, forward-thinking groups with useful knowledge and abilities could build communities of preservation and service to help surrounding regions cope with change and stress.

It would be foolish to assert that such a program could avert all of the potholes on the road to a sustainable social order; however, if we do not make efforts to manage the process of economic and societal contraction, it is easy to imagine collapse scenarios that would be hellish indeed. If we do strive to manage contraction, we might find forms of collapse that are far more pleasant and that even offer some cultural compensations for our material losses.

One hesitates to criticize too harshly a book that tries to tell the world a truth that all too many refuse to hear. Yet at this point we could stand a prominent book by an important author that finally an-



nounces what so many of us know all too well: collapse has begun. Such a message need not be fatalistic, because fatalism implies absence of choice. Diamond is right: we always have some control over events, or at least our response to events. The choice we face now is not whether our society will collapse, but how.

Richard Heinberg is the author of The Party's Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies and Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World.

AMERICA BEYOND CAPITALISM: Reclaiming Our Wealth, Our Liberty, and Our Democracy

by Gar Alperovitz

Wiley, 2004, 336 pages, \$24.95

reviewed by Adria Scharf

Readers of *YES!* already know that thousands of grassroots economic alternatives are flourishing in communities across the country. Many readers may themselves be involved in worker cooperatives, conservation land trusts, soup kitchen collectives, and other efforts to strengthen the fabric of their local economies.

But might existing experiments in democratic economic alternatives, taken together, form something of larger significance? Might they form the basis for systemic change? With the liberal political agenda in disarray at the national level, it's past time for progressive activists to start thinking big and long-term and connecting our work to a shared vision for a democratic political-economic system.

America Beyond Capitalism will ignite that creative imagination. In it, historian and political economist Gar Alperovitz joins a scathing assessment of the state of U.S. democracy to an inspiring vision for long-term change. It's essential post-election reading for anyone concerned with social change in the U.S.

Our society is in trouble, Alperovitz begins. The signs are everywhere—escalating inequality, erosion of liberties, growing cynicism about the democratic system. We are, he suggests, at the initial stages of a full-blown legitimacy crisis as more and more citizens realize that the current system simply cannot deliver on its promises. Simultaneously, the federal budget crisis and the cooptation of the Democratic Party and regulatory agencies by corporations make the traditional “liberal” solutions—bigger social programs, more regulation—untenable.

This grim judgment leads to the question at the heart of the book: If the current system is broken and traditional fixes are no longer feasible, what set of institutions would actually restore and sustain equality, liberty, and democracy in the coming century? With bold strokes, Alperovitz sketches the outlines of just such a system.

What Alperovitz terms a Pluralist Commonwealth (pluralist to emphasize the diversity of democratic institutional forms, commonwealth to suggest the centrality of public wealth holding) entails first and foremost replacing corporate control of capital with new institutions of property ownership. Over time, municipal ownership structures, worker-owned and community-owned businesses, and a national public trust would come to hold public wealth on behalf of communities and the nation. Once the economy shifts from corporate control to public control, other changes could follow. For example, the workweek could be reduced to permit greater free time, enabling more participation in the community and in politics. Regional reorganization and greater decentralization—political and economic—would also be critical to permit

robust democratic practice at the local level, Alperovitz argues.

Getting from here to there should not require violent revolution, Alperovitz says, but rather an evolutionary process of deep institutional transformation, building on the bulwark of democratic economic alternatives—from land trusts to worker ownership, community development corporations, and worker pension investment trusts—already on the ground.

It's clear that over time, system transformation would require mass movements; profound political realignments at national, state, and local levels; and ultimately a serious power struggle. But Alperovitz seems to suggest that a key first step is to build experiences of economic democracy into workplaces and communities—here and now.

You don't have to be a radical—or to accept every element of the Pluralist Commonwealth



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vision—to find great value in this book. It's packed with information on trends in equality and corporate incursions on democracy. What's more, it pulls together a wealth of research findings on a broad range of community-based economic experiments, not only documenting this great mosaic of alternatives, but deftly analyzing their most promising facets and synthesizing them, perhaps for the first time, into a political analysis.

The book moves from a dark portrait of the current moment to a place of profound possibility. Alperovitz approaches the future with a historian's long view. Deep social change may look impossible just now—but so did overthrowing Jim Crow in the South of the 1930s and 1940s. History teaches us, Alperovitz reminds, that all major historical changes look difficult or impossible before they happen—but in world history, radical systemic change “is as common as grass.”

Adria Scharf is co-editor of Dollars & Sense, the magazine of economic justice, www.dollarsandsense.org. For more information on Alperovitz' work, see www.americabeyondcapitalism.com.

CARFREE CITIES

by J.H. Crawford

International Books, 2002, 324 pages, \$17.95
reviewed by Guy Dauncey

I must first declare my colors. I think of myself as a European, and I live in that large European nation to the west of Ireland called Canada.

My mother lives in Winchester, an English city that has turfed the cars out of most of its center. The people love it, the merchants love it, and the poets and buskers love it. I understand why the tourists flock to places like Venice, Sienna, and other European cities which have reclaimed their city centers

from the car. We North Americans may claim to love suburbia, and say we hate high density living, but we sure like to visit high density living when we are on holiday.

Car-free cities are all about people. They are about conversations, coffee-houses, slow wandering, shopping, and the beauty of small details in the architecture. As soon as you are walking, you have time to notice, since you no longer have to keep your eyes on the traffic. (More than 4,000 pedestrians were killed by cars in the U.S. in 2003; 13 people every day. Americans are two to six times more likely to be killed walking on the road than German or Dutch pedestrians, even though the Europeans walk and bike more.)

J.H. Crawford is an American who has travelled the world, been to Europe's cities, and fallen in love with car-free, pedestrian living. His paragon of the perfect city is Venice, where all transport is by foot or boat. The city works brilliantly, not just for its gondolas and architecture, but also for its car-free nature, which is why 12 million tourists flock to it every year.

Could more cities become car-free? J.H. Crawford's book is a song of praise for car-free cities, but it is also a detailed look at car-free designs, the merits of underground metro railways, ways of dealing with freight, and housing and street layouts that could be used to retrofit our cities as car-free. He looks at the Dutch *woonerf* system, where pedestrians have priority over cars in residential areas. He looks at the way the Brazilian city of Curitiba has managed to keep a lid on its cars by designing a superb bus system.

How do you design (or retrofit) a car-free city? Within each car-free district, the first element of design is for walking. After that, you design for cycling. For long distance

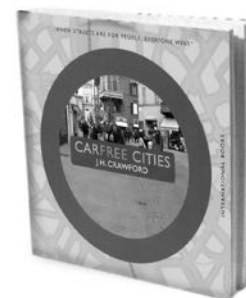
commuting, there is heavy-rail metro, used widely across Europe. For cross-city travel, he favors the underground metro.

But what about freight? Crawford starts with the assumption of containerized freight with standardized containers, which makes sense. For long-distance freight, he looks again to Europe, where the new generation of freight trains operate at high speeds. Once inside the city, we need customized freight-only tracks for use by rail-based metro-freighters, with 20-foot or 40-foot “roller-frame” containers that can be rolled directly into local loading depots. For small, local deliveries, he recommends the return of delivery bikes with trailers (commonly used in Amsterdam today), and small, silent, electric service vehicles for trades-people to ferry the heavier goods around.

I am convinced that in civilizations of the future, the cities that succeed the best at attracting bright, lively people, who will create vibrant, healthy economies, will be those that go the furthest to becoming car-free, as Freiburg, Germany (the world's solar capital) is doing.

It may be a very un-American thing to say, but life is better without the car. See www.carfree.com.

Guy Dauncey is author of Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change. He lives in Victoria, Canada. His website is www.earthfuture.com.





In Search of the Beautiful American



Linda Wolf

When I was 17, I read a book that shaped my life. Now, as I'm about to turn 64, I picked it up again. What I read shocked me. But in that very shock I found hope—despite the evidence to the contrary—that our culture just may be inching its way toward wisdom.

The book is *The Ugly American*, by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick. Published in 1958, it's set in Southeast Asia, where the Vietnamese are fighting to free themselves from the French, and the Russians and the Americans are vying for the loyalty of people and nations.

In the novel, the bad people are the Communists. The good people are the Americans. The Americans are really likable, but they have a problem. When they go overseas as official U.S. representatives, they become pompous. They live pampered lives in enclaves and don't learn the language. They're ignorant of the local politics and insensitive to the culture. They make fools of themselves, alienate the local people, and waste the taxpayers' money. So they are losing to the Communists.

The answer, in the authors'

view, is for Americans to go overseas, learn the language, live simply, and understand the culture of the place they live. Then everyone will follow the Americans, and we will win against the Communists.

It's a simple and compelling argument that fit the tenor of its time so well the book became a multi-million-copy bestseller. Its thesis laid the groundwork for what would become the Peace Corps. And the book ignited me. At age 17, I decided I would work in poor countries, learn the language, be

American, I am shocked by what I didn't see on my first reading—and what I believe millions of Americans, who were so taken by this book, also did not see.

First is the simplicity of the framing argument. In Lederer and Burdick's world of 1958, there is never any question that Communism is bad, America is good, and the goal of every American is to win the world's people to the American side.

Second is the authors' underlying arrogance and racism—ironic

We remain all too ready to resurrect the framework that there are good people in the world, like us, and bad people who “hate us for our freedoms”

sensitive to the culture, and help the people. Two years later I met David Korten, who also wanted to help people in poor countries. We fell in love, married, had two children, and spent most of the next 40 years in Africa, Central America, and Southeast Asia.

Now, in rereading *The Ugly*

in a book that calls Americans not to be arrogant. The book is famous for its portrayal of bad Americans. But it also portrays several good Americans, and it is how they are characterized that dismayed me. The good Americans are consistently active and the local people passive. The good Americans have



the valuable ideas, and the locals gratefully receive them. I cringed as I read the glowing account of a good American who “would stick out his huge hand and vigorously pump the small bird-like hand of the Cambodian.” When I lived in Southeast Asia, I learned early on that people feel a vigorous handshake is aggressive and inappropriate; and the term “bird-like” is so insultingly dismissive I can only conclude its use betrays the authors’ deep racism.

I’ve come a long way since 1958. I know that we Americans are not always the good people, and that some of our policies cause extreme misery for people in many parts of the world. I see we remain all too ready to resurrect the framework that there are good people in the world, like us, and bad people

“who hate us for our freedoms.” And I see that we still tend to put America and our people in the center of every story and diminish the roles, the capabilities, and the independent aspirations of others.

But I also see that a great many Americans have, like me, come a long way, some because they heeded Lederer and Burdick’s call and joined the Peace Corps. I see the millions who turned out to protest the aggression against Iraq, the thousands who protested the World Trade Organization in Seattle, the tens of thousands who read and resonate with the ideas in *YES!*, and the millions who work tirelessly to change our culture’s attitudes and our country’s policies. Despite the arrogant stance of our government’s leaders, and the willingness of many of our citizens to

accept the simple framework of “good people and bad people,” I see there are millions who don’t buy it. Those millions were not there in 1958—and in them lies my hope.

Part of me is still that 17-year-old girl, ignited by a book that says we can do better. I still believe that we are capable of moving beyond the simplicity of “good people and bad people,” and that we can overcome our racism and arrogance to work with others of all colors and cultures to make a better world for everyone. And I’m still basing my life on that belief.



Fran Korten
Executive Director

Events & Announcements

Equitable Development, Social Justice, & Smart Growth

May 23–25, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Conference will explore strategies for equitable development, social justice, and smart growth. For information, contact Policy Link, 510/663-2333 or www.policylink.org, or Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, 305/667-6350 or www.fundersnetwork.org.

Building With Spirit

June 25–July 2, Bath, New York. A week-long, hands-on gathering with top East Coast natural builders and designers. For information see www.peaceweavers.com or call 607/776-4060.

Green Cities Expo: Sustainable Commerce

June 3–5, San Francisco, California. Expo coincides with celebration of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. For information visit www.greencitiesexpo.org.

Sustainable Energy in Motion 2005 Tour

June 3–September 11, various locations in Oregon. Bike hundreds of miles, stay on organic farms, work to support sustainable practices in food production, and work

with Native American communities. For more information, contact Portland Peace and Justice Center, www.portlandpeace.org or 971/223-2268.

Midwest Social Forum

June 3–5, Williams Bay, Wisconsin. Provides an opportunity for progressive activists and academics to come together to discuss issues, strengthen networks, and devise strategies for progressive social, economic, and political change. For more information visit www.havenscenter.org/radfest/radfest.htm.

Earth & Religion

June 9–12, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. This is the fourth Resurgence conference in the Century of the Environment series. For more information visit www.earthandreligion.org or call 845/679-8761.

Take Back Your Time: Time To Care

August 4–7, Seattle, Washington. Conference will consider solutions to the issues of overscheduling, overwork, and time poverty. For more information see www.simpleriving.net/timeday, or contact Gretchen Burger, gretchenburger@prodigy.net, 206/293-3772.



The News Spreads Wide

Help YES! Meet the Challenge

We have been extending the reach of the solutions found in *YES!* through periodic e-mail alerts and updates. The response has been fantastic (we love hearing from you).

We now need to upgrade our web and e-mail systems to fulfill the real potential of this program. A generous donor, Dal LaMagna, has offered to match the first \$10,500 we raise. Help us meet the challenge! Subscribers can respond via our spring letter, just mailed (note that your donation is for the challenge grant). Or send a check made out to *YES!* This grant means your dollars will be doubled, and *YES!* will make an impact in cyberspace far beyond the quarterly magazine.

Call me if you have any questions: 800/937-4451.

—Fran Korten

Students Check Women's Progress

In March, middle-school students from two Seattle schools spent weeks researching women's issues, creating report cards on the status of women and girls worldwide, and developing local projects for action. They presented their findings on the status of women 10 years after the Beijing United Nations conference on women at an education summit co-sponsored by *YES!* magazine.

Seattle Girls' School, Facing the Future, and *YES!* created a new K-12 curriculum on women, equity, development, and peace (available at www.yesmagazine.org).

At the summit, held on March 29, keynote speaker Medea Benjamin, founder of Global Exchange and Code Pink, shared stories from a lifetime of activism.

YES! education program director Kim Corrigan hosted the event with assistance from the Seattle Girls' School, Facing the Future, the World Affairs Council, the Pacific Village Institute, and the Population Health Forum, and financial support from A Territory Resource, the Women's Funding Alliance, and others.

—Susan Gleason

Readers Form Film Groups

More than 800 film discussion groups have formed through the Film Connection, with new ones signing up everyday. More than 115 of those groups found out about the program through *YES!* magazine.

A year ago, *YES!* formed a partnership with The Film Connection, which offers its free lending-library of DVDs to grassroots film discussion groups. If you've set up a film group in your own community, send your stories to editors@yesmagazine.org. To find out more about the current *YES!*/Film Connection promotion, see page 41 or visit www.thefilmconnection.org.

—S.G.

Media Issue Gets Around

Journalism and media studies programs at more than 50 colleges and universities, and dozens of media activist organizations and community radio and television stations requested copies of our recent "Media That Set Us Free" issue (Spring 2005). *YES!* was able to give away 10,000 free copies, thanks to support from the Glaser Progress Foundation and the Park Foundation. Copies are also making it into the hands of activists at media conferences, including the

Women and the Media Conference at MIT, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a handful of regional Alliance for Community Media conferences, and the second annual National Conference for Media Reform in St. Louis, Missouri.

—S.G.

David Korten On Free Speech TV

David Korten's speech "Renewing the American Experiment: A Call to Choose Our Future" is on the air and available to millions through the 24-hour progressive TV network, Free Speech TV (available on satellite via the Dish Network and on some local public access stations). Korten's speech is part of a new video series called "Keynote," videotaped lectures by leading progressive voices.

Korten's speech can also be heard online at www.freespeech.org (search for "David Korten" or the name of the speech). To find additional speeches and essays by David Korten, see www.davidkorten.org.

—S.G.

Help Wanted

Senior Editor for *YES!* magazine

We are seeking an editor/writer to be part of the team that produces *YES!*

For job description and qualifications, see www.yesmagazine.org



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?

Painting

I am planning to repaint my house this summer. Any tips on how I should go about this to safeguard my health and the environment?

There are eight things to remember when painting:

1. Read the label and product literature. In addition to general information, look for:

VOC, or volatile organic content. Usually listed in grams per liter, this can range from 5 to 200. Using the product with the lowest VOC content will yield the lowest overall health risk.

Solid Content. Solids—or pigments—can range in concentration from 25 to 45 percent by volume. The higher the percent solids, the fewer volatiles in the paint.

2. Buy the right amount of paint for the job. Before you begin a painting project, measure the area first and calculate the area to be painted (height multiplied by width equals total square feet).

One gallon of paint covers about 400 square feet. Take into account that you may need to paint more than one coat.

3. Reuse turpentine and paint thinners. Simply allow used thinner or

turpentine to stand in a closed, labeled container until paint or dirt particles settle to the bottom. Pour off the clear liquid and reuse.

4. Avoid cleaning brushes and rollers. Paint brushes and rollers used for an on-going project can be saved up to a week, without cleaning at all. Simply wrap the brush or roller snugly in a plastic bag, such as a bread or produce bag. Squeeze out air pockets and store away from light. The paint won't dry because air can't get to it. Unwrap the brush or roller and continue with the job.

This works for water- and oil-based paints and stains. It does not work for varnishes or lacquer.

5. Use natural brush cleaners. Turpentine, made from the resin of coniferous trees, is an environmentally friendly solvent. It is excellent for cleaning brushes used with oil-based paints and for cleaning up small drips. Use a short glass jar, filled no higher than the bristles. Add a few drops of dishwashing liquid. After cleaning the brush, rinse with water.

6. Circulate air. To reduce the impact of indoor air pollutants, circulate fresh air through your house as often as possible. Avoid the use of spray paints altogether. When painting ceilings, be sure to provide cross-ventilation

to remove paint fumes. Fumes rise as paint dries, and so the fumes dissipate more slowly from ceilings, because there's no air above the paint. You can reduce fresh paint odors by placing a small dish of white vinegar in the room.

7. Beware of old lead paint. Paint manufactured before the 1970s often contains lead, which has harmful effects on health and children's development. If the paint is still in good shape, you can paint over it, or leave it be—lead is poisonous only if ingested or inhaled. If paint must be removed in small areas, wet the surface and scrape carefully. Clean up with trisodium phosphate (TSP). For large areas, call in a professional certified in lead abatement.

8. Remember the BUD rule. *Buy* no more product than you need. *Use* up all the product you buy. *Dispose* of leftovers in a safe, responsible manner.

Greg Seaman, eartheasy.com

Spam

I am overwhelmed with e-mail spam. Does it help to take advantage of the "remove me from your list" links at the bottom of some spam, or does that just confirm that I am receiving the messages? Is there anything else I can do to avoid getting spam?



Never click any link that invites you to unsubscribe when you receive spam. Doing so tells spammers that the e-mail account is active, resulting in more spam messages for you.

To avoid spam, Microsoft cautions against sharing e-mail or instant message addresses. Instead:

- Share your primary e-mail address only with people you know. Avoid listing your e-mail address in large Internet directories and job-posting websites. Don't even post it on your own website.
- Set up an e-mail address dedicated solely to Web transactions. Consider using a free e-mail service to help keep your primary e-mail address private. When you get too much spam there, drop that address for a new one.
- Create an e-mail name that's tough to crack. Try a combination of letters, numbers, and other characters. Microsoft gives the example Don2Funk9@example.com or J0e_Y0ng@example.com (substituting zero for the letter "O"). Research shows that people with complicated names get less spam.
- Disguise your e-mail address when you post it to a newsgroup, chat room, bulletin board, or other public Web page. Example: janesmithATexample DOT com. This way, a person can interpret your address, but the automated programs that spammers use often cannot.

Michael Leonen

Vegetable Oil

In the Fall 2003 "Yes, But How?," I noticed a question from a reader about recycling cooking oil. In addition to the excellent ideas listed, I would like to add another way of recycling oil.

Vegetable oil, even used or rancid, can be recycled into soap. After reading about a Japanese group making recycled oil soap in the

book *Living Lightly*, by Walter and Dorothy Schwarz, I decided to try it myself. Although it was necessary to heavily scent the soap with essential oils to cover up the odor of fried food, the soap lathers nicely, and is gentle on the skin. The lye alters the oil enough that even somewhat rancid oil does not affect the final product significantly.

After a few attempts, I found that I still needed to add some coconut and palm oil as the original recipe for "virgin" soap requires. However, my soap is now composed of more than 50 percent recycled oils, and the cost of making the soap has dropped significantly.

Sigrid Reymond

Aprovecho Stoves

I read about the stoves made by the Oregon research center Aprovecho in the Fall 2004 issue of YES! Can you give me more information about these stoves? Are they available in the United States? Are there different models?

Dan Benedict
Newark, NY

Smoke-free, fuel-efficient stoves designed by Aprovecho researchers are meant to be built—not bought—by anyone, anywhere from the materials available at home, a recycling center, or the local dump.

Aprovecho has developed designs and instructions for stoves to be used as griddles, to boil water, and to bake bread. They developed instructions on how to build grills, cob ovens, solar cookers, solar water heaters, and wood-fired food dehydrators.

They also designed an insulated box (called a "hay box") inside which heated water or rice can be placed to finish cooking itself with its own heat, rather than continuing to use outside energy to simmer the substance. Originally insulated with hay, the

design now suggests using a variety of materials.

These designs are all free from Aprovecho.

For more information write to: Aprovecho Research Center, 80574 Hazelton Road, Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424-8521. You can also call 541/942-8198, e-mail apro@efn.org, or visit their website at www.aprovecho.net.

Lisa Kundrat

Send your questions to:

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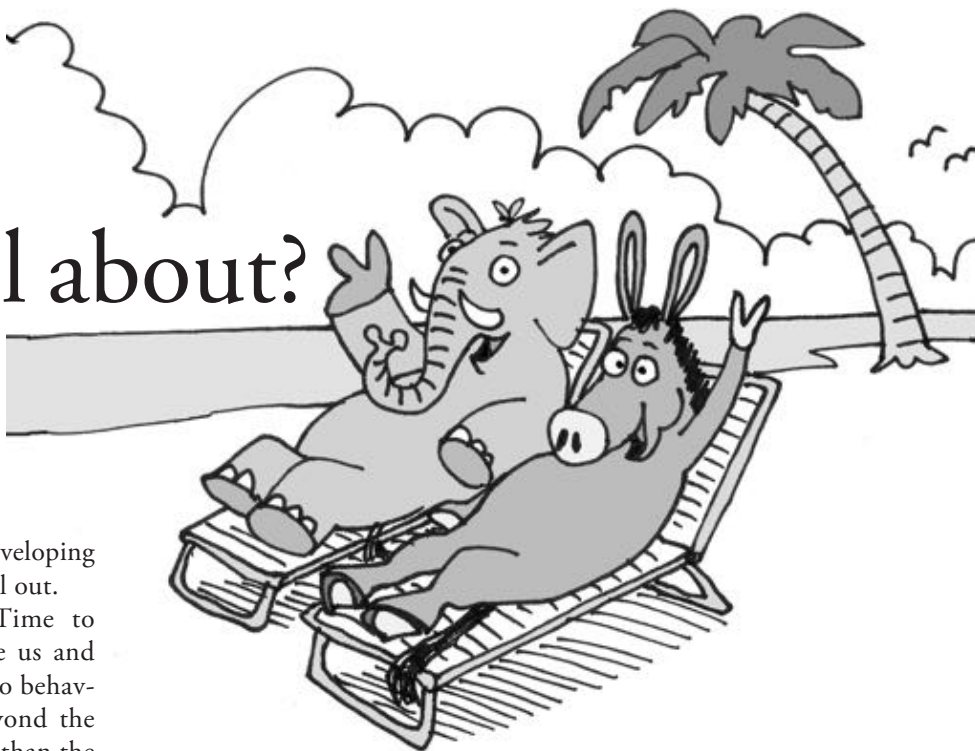
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In this dogma-eat-dogma world where fear is fueled by terrorism—not to mention anti-terrorism—I say it's time to declare all out peace.

Swami Beyondananda

What is it all about?



Those of us who have been developing inner peace all these years, time to let it all out.

Let's declare an Emerge 'n See. Time to *emerge* from beliefs that no longer serve us and *see* how we humans have been tricked into behaving foolishly. Time to *emerge 'n see* beyond the dueling dualities to find solutions bigger than the problem. Time to *emerge 'n see* there's no escape. Might as well surrender. We are all part of the inescapable Oneness.

One Spirit, many paths. One Planet, great diversity. One humanity, each of us totally unique, just like everyone else.

It makes no sense to take up arms against warfare, it makes all the sense in the world to lift up arms and embrace anything that nourishes peace.

Now in this shrinking world that could use a good shrink, it is understandable to look upward in hopes of the Messiah. But I say, face each other, and face the truth that we are looking the Messiah in the face. We have met the Savior and he is us!

Here are all these children of God praying for Jesus to intervene, but we cannot expect to be fed intravenously forever. Time for children of God to grow up and become adults of God instead. It turns out both the creationists and the evolutionists are right. The Creator created us to evolve in consciousness. Otherwise Jesus would have said, "Now, don't do a thing until I return."

Allow me to tell you my dream. Each year at Passover, the Jewish people affirm the possibility of the Messiah: "Next year in Jerusalem." Next year always comes, but the Messiah never seems to come with it. Maybe it's time to make a break with the past and act as if the Messiah is already here. So put it on your calendars—next year let's celebrate Past Over in Jerusalem, and declare that the past is over and a new day has begun.

Hold this vision with me please: Leaders of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, and Hindus and Buddhists, too, doing the Hokey Pokey.

They put their whole selves in ... that is commitment. They pull their whole selves out ... that is detachment. They turn themselves around ... that is transformation.

And that's what it's all about!

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