

POWERFUL IDEAS,
PRACTICAL ACTIONS

yes!

WINTER 2011

Families: Freer, Messier, Happier

Radical Homemaking: No Cash Required

You Are Who You Eat With

7 Ways to Keep Love Going Strong



What Happy Families Know

THE GOOD LIFE?
IT'S CLOSE TO HOME

Hawaiian activists
Puanani Burgess and
husband Poka Laenui
weave together
generations



PHOTO BY PATRICK BARBER

**“IT IS THE ABSURDITY OF FAMILY LIFE,
THE RAGGEDNESS OF IT,
THAT IS AT ONCE ITS REDEMPTION AND ITS TRUE NOBILITY.”**

James McBride,
author and musician



Families in Hard Times

Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in. —Robert Frost

Family life is in the midst of big changes.

It's partly that cultural norms are shifting—women are increasingly the family's breadwinners, and campaigns for same-sex marriage have been building public acceptance of gay and lesbian-led households. Today, you can live with your partner, marry your same-sex sweetheart, or stay single and help another family raise their children.

But it's the Great Recession that is making the isolated family living in a suburban McMansion nearly obsolete. Families are losing the homes that had represented a step up the ladder to security. Unemployed workers are averaging six months without work, nearly double the average for any time since World War II. Median household wealth has decreased by 20 percent since 2007. Retirement savings have evaporated, and now Social Security is under attack.

Economists wring their hands about the failure of American families to continue the decades-long shopping spree that fueled economic growth by converting nature's bounty into mountains of throw-away stuff.

But many American families know something the economists don't understand. Going into debt to buy all that stuff made us less secure and less happy, not more. Whether out of wisdom or necessity, nearly two-thirds of households have cut their spending since the beginning of the Great Recession.

The research is clear on this: It's not more spending, it's the richness of our relationships that is key to our well-being.

This issue of YES! Magazine explores our changing sense of family. As economic security erodes, fragmented families are coming back together. Many are rebuilding extended families like those that were

the norm through most of human history—2.6 million more Americans lived in multi-generational families in 2008 than in 2007.

People are looking for ways to rebuild family and community support networks that have been lost in our fragmented society.

The fact that extended families and community are making a comeback doesn't mean a return to the old cultural norms, though. As more moms work outside the home, there's increasing acceptance of stay-at-home dads. And nearly half of Americans now believe same-sex couples should have the right to marry. Cohousing and other shared housing options offer more choices for building an extended family life. And the "go local" movement is encouraging people to look to their neighborhoods for sources of food, companionship, and security.

In hard times, families and neighborhoods of all varieties offer some buffering from an unforgiving economy. Now that there are more ways we can be part of a family, we have more opportunities to offer our gifts to people we love. Who better to read to a toddler or counsel a prickly pre-teen than a grandparent? How else to help a young graduate or an unemployed partner make it through a period of no income? Who else will listen to an elder, even when he tells the same story over and over?

Families—and the communities that support them—don't fix us. Ideally, they accept us as we are, warts, unemployment, feuds, and all. And as we turn to each other to give and receive support, we discover strengths we might not otherwise know we had.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah van Gelder". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor



YesMagazine.org/quotes

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What Happy Families Know



LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

THE MISSION OF YES!

is to support you in building a just and sustainable world. In each issue we focus on a different theme through these lenses:

NEW VISIONS

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

WORLD & COMMUNITY

New models that foster justice and real prosperity, and sustain the Earth's living systems. How can we bring these models to life and put them to work?

THE POWER OF ONE

Stories of people who find their courage, open their hearts, and discover what it means to be human in today's world.

BREAKING OPEN

Humor, story-telling, and the arts—taking you into unexpected spaces where business-as-usual breaks open into new possibilities

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The new family—gay and straight, blended, messy—and stronger because of it.

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PHOTO BY PATRICK BARBER

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Nine ways to support families in hard times.

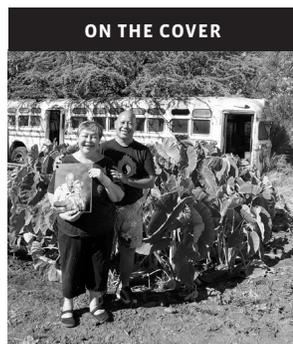
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7 Ways to Keep Love Going Strong

Steps to strengthen—or save—your partnership.

By John M. and Julie Gottman



Hawaiian activists Puanani Burgess and husband Poka Laenui Hayden Burgess are photographed on their family land in Waianae, Hawaii. They credit this taro garden and tilapia pond system—the bus serving as storage—with helping to keep their extended family connected. Pua is holding a portrait of Poka's parents. Photographed by Paul Dunn for YES! Magazine.

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Singer Billy Bragg: Rocking the Cynical World

How Britain's iconic political songwriter confronts fascists, Glenn Beck, Tea Parties, and his own fans. *Interview by Madeline Ostrander*



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER WEIGOLD

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When you start measuring progress by the happiness of the people and the quality of the environment, the oddest things happen.

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READERS FORUM

Tell us. Send your response to an article or an issue theme, or send us your own story. Write to 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to editors@yesmagazine.org. Or comment online at www.yesmagazine.org



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Resilience Hits a Nerve

I just want to say THANK YOU for the great resilience building issue. I really do think people are finally ready to move away from superficial discussions about alternative energies and into, “OK, how are we going to get along with a LOT less energy?” It has been an uphill battle, especially with the progressive crowd, to get past the Technological Fix barrier, or the Algae Will Save Us (and our REI lifestyle).

Great work. You just helped tilt the axis just that much more towards a better future.

KATE CLARK
Bellingham, Wash.

Return to Local

Bottom line—why I subscribe to YES!: I was (am) so excited

about the “Skill Up, Party Down” article that, before I’d finished reading it, I called my local bookstore to order *The Transition Handbook*. Then the article about Richmond, California’s movement from gangs to growers had me weeping at the remarkable, beautiful return to ourselves, our LOCAL selves! YES!: I love you.

MYLA BLAIR
Santa Rosa, Calif.

P.S. Thanks for printing Pete Seeger’s postcard!

Resilience in New York City

While I didn’t like everything about the Fall issue, I was interested in the stories of how we could become more resilient. I now wish to learn things like clothing repair and pickling, and I’m considering exchanging some of the stuff I

haven’t used for a while.

However, I live in an apartment building in the middle of Manhattan with no balcony. Therefore, I can only grow something if it can fit on my windowsill. While you did mention a man who keeps bees in New York City, he’s got his own brownstone, and my apartment is a rental.

I feel that your section should have told people who live in cities what we could do to become more sustainable.

ALEX GREETHAM
New York, N.Y.

It’s Different Here

I live in the Deeply Corporate South and see no communities like the ones you describe who are pulling together. I think your take on this issue is good for affluent progressive-ist people on the less populated sub-suburban and rural side who own their own homes, have arable land and/or clean well water. But it’s small “s” solidarity at best and won’t come close to realistically addressing this nation’s problems.

The people in these communities you describe sound just like a new specialized form of class elites to me, and I wouldn’t be surprised if they are as predominantly white as the Tea Party. This movement

is a regressive retreat from problems whose magnitude cannot be evaded.

SULYEN MASON
Atlanta, Ga.

Ready for Big Change

I picked your magazine up at Puget Consumers Cooperative while visiting Seattle. I’ve read it cover to cover about 20 times and underlined passages on just about every page. Amazing information—now if I can just figure out how to put these ideas to work in my own town. I’m ready for some BIG changes!

I’ll be taking your magazine & posters to my next Sustainable Delaware, Ohio, meeting. If you ever wonder if what you’re doing makes a difference, I’m here to tell you it does!

JEN DEVERE WARNER
Delaware, Ohio

My Take on Population

I was surprised by my response to the letters you published on the need for population control in regards to water and humans on the planet.

I object to the idea that population is the main factor. So-called “developed” countries, particularly the United States, use a disproportionate amount of the world’s



HEY, LOOK! THIS IS NO ORDINARY DULL WHITE PAPER WITH OCCASIONAL IMPERFECTIONS.



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resources. It's easy for us in the United States to talk about the need for people to have fewer children as we consume 50 or more gallons of water a day and raise our eyebrow at someone in an "undeveloped" country who uses one gallon a day and wants to have a family or improve their life!

Population is not the only problem. How we use the resources of the world is equally important.

SALLY LACQUIEE
Kettle Falls, Wash.

Wear a Helmet

My husband bikes to work year-round and I tote our two girls (one and three years old) in our bike trailer all around

town. I was pleased to see Resilient Idea #3, a full-page picture of a stylish and burly biker in the snow, but wouldn't a helmet be wise?

LESLEY WOODRUFF
Newberg, Ore.

Urban Beekeeping

How many people are actually out there keeping bees in an urban environment? At Hayes Valley Farm in San Francisco, we've been working to get bees going on site, and when they are around, our plants are happy, and pollination is not a problem.

I love this magazine! Thanks for the inspiration.

CHRIS BURLEY
San Francisco, Calif.

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Stand up to Wall Street

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Create sharing economies

Build local resilience

"Imagine an economy in which life is valued more than money, and power resides with ordinary people who care about one another, their communities, and their natural environment. It is possible. It is happening. Millions of people are living it into being. Our common future hangs in the balance."

—David Korten, Chair and Co-Founder, YES! Magazine

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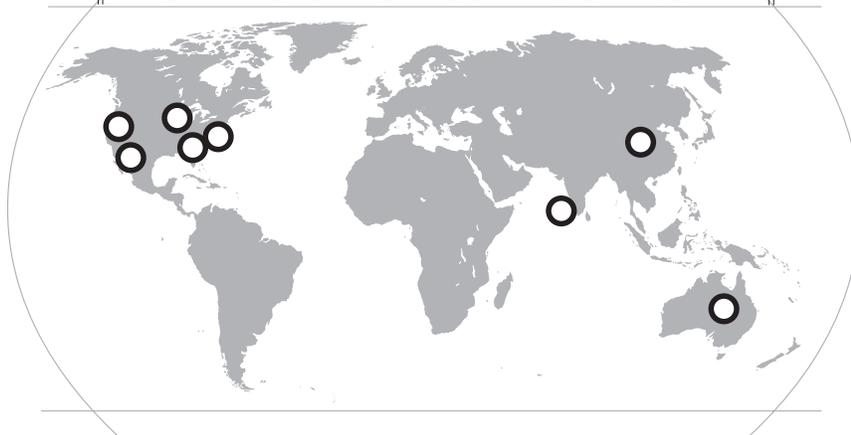
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SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



ENERGY

Hot Renewable: Wide Interest in Solar Power

 The work of activists and researchers, along with shifts in the energy market, may be pushing solar energy toward a tipping point in the United States.

A series of mega-solar projects are being constructed in Arizona and California. The company Brightsource has already begun construction on the 370 MW Ivanpah project. In October, the U.S. Department of the Interior approved an application for construction of the Blythe Solar Power Project, consisting of four solar thermal arrays that will produce 250 MW each. Seven other projects are expected to break ground before the end of the year with a combined capacity of 4,000 MW when completed.

Activists are pressuring the Obama Administration to take leadership on solar policy, and recently scored a symbolic victory that they hope will bring solar more public attention and cachet and lead to policy change.

This fall, Bill McKibben, founder of the climate activist organization 350.org, and a group of students from Unity

College traveled down the East Coast with one of the original solar hot water panels that President Jimmy Carter installed on the White House in 1979. (Reagan removed them in 1986.) Along the way (and online), the group collected 40,000 signatures petitioning the White House to resurrect the panels. The White House initially rebuffed the request. But on October 5, U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced that the White House plans to install photovoltaic panels and a solar

hot water heater on its roof.

“The Obama announcement has sparked this campaign to rev up in a number of other places around the world,” says Jamie Henn, communications director with 350.org. On October 10, the day of a Global Work Party coordinated by 350.org, President Mohamed Nasheed of the Maldives also installed a set of solar panels, by hand, on the presidential residence. Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn has committed to putting solar on the governor’s mansion, and Australians have

launched a campaign to pressure Prime Minister Julia Gillard to put solar on the Lodge, her official residence.

Activists believe the White House gesture will also make solar seem more accessible to the average American homeowner. In his announcement, Chu said the White House panels “will show that American solar technology is available, reliable, and ready to install in homes throughout the country.”

Meanwhile, recent technological breakthroughs may make



SUNGEVITY.COM

This summer, San Franciscans staged a “Shine In” to ask the president to put solar panels on the White House and to ask citizens to sign an electronic petition of support.

“YOU DON’T NEED 60 VOTES TO FIX YOUR ROOF!”

Bill McKibben to President Obama, in an email requesting that the White House put solar panels on its roof. The Obama administration in October announced its plan to do just that.



home solar power much more affordable. An interdisciplinary team at Western Washington University (WWU) announced in September a \$970,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for additional research on a new kind of solar collector. Traditional photovoltaic panels use only the red band of visible light. The WWU team’s collector uses colored polymers to gather light from the whole spectrum. The increased efficiency allows electrical generation on overcast days and will cut the cost of solar panels by as much as 90 percent, according to a WWU press release. —*Madeline Ostrander and Doug Pibel*

FOOD

Boat-to-Table Fish CSAs Catching On

👍 Fishing communities from Maine to California are working together to save their way of life and restore marine resources by establishing direct markets between fishermen and the people who eat their catch.

Several years ago, concerns about dwindling worldwide fish stocks prompted federal regulators to limit how much fish can be caught in U.S. waters, but the measures don’t regulate who catches the fish. Small-scale fishermen in the North Atlantic region were hit particularly hard by regulations, because they were competing in the global market with domestic and international industrial-scale

factory fleets and aquaculture companies.

Factory fleets can process and freeze large quantities of fish while still at sea, giving them a big advantage over smaller fishermen.

“All of a sudden everybody got out, and those of us who stayed didn’t have anywhere or anyone to sell to,” says Gary Libby, a fisherman based in Port Clyde, Maine.

“The old model of catching as much as you could just wasn’t working any longer,” says Libby’s wife, Kim. Inspired by fishermen in North Carolina, who sell directly to the public off their boats, she started the first CSF, or Community Supported Fishery, from their home in Port Clyde in 2007.

CSF shareholders pay up front for a share of the catch. Most CSFs deliver whole fish in season, so customers experience variety and seasonality. Fishermen are paid a flat rate per season, rather than being paid only for the number of fish

they catch. This encourages them to diversify their catch and fish according to the demands of the ecosystem, rather than to maximize sales.

According to the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), which works on policy to support small-scale fishing, nearly 20 other communities across North America have been inspired by the Port Clyde experience to start their own CSFs.

“It makes people feel good to know their fisherman,” Libby remarks. He says no one left in the small-boat community-based fishing business in New England is in it for the money. “Bringing a high-quality product to consumers they wouldn’t ordinarily have is the real reward.”

Interested? <http://namanet.org/csf> for a list of CSFs in the Northeast.

Ellen Tyler is a graduate student of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science & Policy at Tufts University. Daniel Fireside is the Capital Coordinator at Equal Exchange.

TRANSPORTATION

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Hit the Road

👍 Electric cars are gaining ground. Car manufacturers are rolling out new models next year, such as the Nissan Leaf and new Ford Focus, that will go about 100 miles on one charge. Private, public, and non-profit organizations are supporting consumer purchase of electric cars by launching new projects to provide charging stations.

The Electric Vehicle Project will install 15,085 electric-vehicle charging stations in six states (Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Texas, Tennessee) and Washington, D.C., by 2013. The project, managed by ECOTality, will install the charging stations in publicly accessible places in partnership with Arco, BP, Zipcar, Best Buy, and other companies. The \$230 million cost is supported by \$115 million from >>



ECOTALITY.COM

High-speed charging stations outside a BART train station in California.



SARAH-JI



A 37-day protest by parents in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood ended in victory. Whittier Elementary's Field House (La Casita community center) had been scheduled to be demolished. But Whittier parents occupied the building and demanded that the \$350,000 demolition money instead be used to convert the field house into a school library.

» federal stimulus funds.

In addition, ECotality will study 8,300 Chevy Volt and Nissan Leaf drivers to learn how best to streamline electric vehicle adoption nationwide. BP plans to install over 1,000 charging stations along Interstate 5 in Oregon by next July. In support of the project, Washington, Oregon, California, and British Columbia have started the West Coast Green Highway initiative to "electrify" I-5. Washington is the first to start and is already installing several chargers along I-5 between Canada and Oregon.

Businesses that install a charging station can get a federal tax credit for 50 percent of the cost. Connecticut-based Green Garage Associates uses the credits to encourage sales of their "juice bar" chargers to

parking lots.

Many states provide a rebate that, combined with the tax credit, covers the cost of chargers. Massachusetts is using funding from a settlement over pollution violations to install 100 chargers, and the Beautiful Earth group built a solar-powered charging station next to its headquarters in New York. The Greenway Self-Park in Chicago and the Adobe headquarters in San Jose both have charging stations powered by wind. Even McDonald's is installing a charging station at their location in Cary, North Carolina.

Greenwashing or not, the Baker Institute for Public Policy says electric vehicles are the most effective way for the U.S. to reduce oil consumption.

—Alyssa Johnson

WATER

Restaurants, Counties, Colleges Promote Tap Water



Actions to promote tap over bottled water are spreading across the globe.

Restaurants in California, Oregon, New York, Maine, and other states are serving only tap water. Students at Brown University were inspired to start Beyond the Bottle after Washington University in St. Louis ended sales of bottled water on its campus. Seattle University and Gonzaga University in Washington state, and the University of Portland in Oregon, have also ended sales of bottled water.

Multnomah County became the first county in Oregon to ban

bottled water from county meetings and functions. Efforts to prevent a bottling company from extracting millions of liters of water from the local aquifer led the city of Bundanoon, Australia, to ban the sale and production of bottled water. Toronto, London, and other cities in Ontario, Canada as well as school boards in Ottawa and Waterloo have stopped the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities.

Bottled water is marketed as superior to tap, but public water supplies are actually cleaner, less expensive, and more environmentally responsible, according to organizations like Take Back the Tap, Food and Water Watch, and Stop Corporate Abuse. They are mounting campaigns to combat misconceptions caused by bottled-water marketing.

EPA tap water regulations are more rigorous and require more disclosure than FDA bottled water regulations, according to a 2009 Government Accountability Office report. The cost of bottled water can run 10,000 times more than tap. An estimated 25 percent of bottled waters, often marketed as spring water or mineral water, comes from public tap water.

According to the Pacific Institute, the 38 billion plastic bottles sold in 2005 used 900,000 tons of plastic, which required more than 1.7 million barrels of oil for transport. More than 75 percent of discarded water bottles end up in landfills where they take up to 1,000 years to decompose. —Tiffany Ran

“I REALIZED, SITTING THERE, I CAN’T TALK TO BILLY LUCAS, BUT I CAN TALK TO OTHER ISOLATED, MISERABLE GAY TEENAGERS OUT THERE THINKING OF HARMING THEMSELVES.”

Dan Savage, Seattle activist and columnist on why he created the “It Gets Better” YouTube channel, after hearing of a gay teen who was driven to suicide. Savage asked other gays and lesbians to upload personal stories about how it gets better.

MARRIAGE

Episcopal Church Works on Same-Sex Blessings

👍 The Episcopal Church is drafting an official same-sex marriage rite.

The church partnered with the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, a seminary in Berkeley, Calif., to secure a \$400,000 grant from the Arcus Foundation to fund the project. They are working with priests across the country to create original prayers and essays on the spiritual meaning of same-sex blessings, and guidance for priests who will administer the new rite. Rev. Ruth Meyers, chair of the church’s standing commission on liturgy and music, says she believes the effort acknowledges fuller participation in the church by gays and lesbians.

The new rite will likely take years to complete, but will formalize the unofficial practice of blessing same-sex unions that has become common in dioceses throughout the country. The Episcopal Church has also ordained openly gay bishops in the United States, despite opposition from some segments of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

—Tiffany Ran



PHOTO BY ROB BAIRD

📺 YesMagazine.org/better

Watch a sampling of “It Gets Better” videos produced in response to the suicide of gay Rutgers student Tyler Clementi.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Sourcing “Rare Earth” Elements

👍 This autumn, China imposed, and then lifted, restrictions on exports of “rare earths”—17 elements essential to the manufacture of high-tech and green energy products. The news galvanized efforts to increase recycling and develop alternative sourcing of these elements.

Rare earth elements are commonly found in wind and solar energy generators and in products ranging from iPhones and hard drives to automobile windows and permanent magnets. A Toyota Prius, for example, contains at least two pounds of rare earths; an advanced wind turbine, roughly 660 pounds of the rare earth element neodymium.

China now supplies more

than 90 percent of rare earths to global manufacturers, in large part because extraction of rare earths in China is cheaper than in countries with stricter environmental protection laws. Although rare earth minerals occur worldwide, extracting them involves the risk of environmental contamination from the radioactive metals that accompany most deposits and from chemicals used in processing. Going from discovery to production takes up to 15 years.

A shortage of rare earths could drive up prices and slow down the development and production of green technologies. Japan is moving forward with the recycling of rare earth elements from used electronics and exploring new manufacturing processes that do not require rare earths.

The U.N. Environmental Programme’s chief, Achim Steiner, told the AFP News Service that there is “a strategic as much as an environmental or an

economic rationale” for developing a recycling economy of rare earth elements.

Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill authorizing research funding and broadening government-backed loans for rare earth development, saying the elements are critical to energy, military, and manufacturing technologies. The bill aims to make the United States self-sufficient in five years.

The Department of Energy is developing a strategy to increase U.S. production, find substitute materials, and use rare earths more efficiently. The Pentagon will also complete a study of the military’s reliance on the materials.

“We are certainly putting our country at risk in terms of our national security and our economic security if we don’t do something to ensure that we have an adequate supply,” Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (Pa.) told the *Financial Times*.

—Rik Langendoen

People We Love



PHOTO BY STEPHEN SPILLMAN
AMARILLO GLOBE-NEWS

JACOB ISOM *Skateboarding for Tolerance*

There was a broad range of responses to the religious intolerance that bubbled up last summer. Opponents of a planned Muslim cultural center in lower Manhattan and radical pastors, threatening to burn the Quran, raised tensions across the world. From the president on down, people were calling for tolerance.

One response to this hate turned out to be especially timely. When a radical pastor, David Grisham, threatened to burn a Quran in Sam Houston Park in Amarillo, Texas, hundreds gathered to protest the burning and to support religious tolerance. But it was a 23-year-old skateboarder who took quick action and became an instant celebrity. Jacob Isom, a pizza cook and self-described atheist, dashed in and snatched the holy book out of the pastor's hands. Isom's quip: "Dude you have no Quran!" became a catchphrase overnight.



LYNN NOTTAGE *Drama of War, Assault, and Survival*

Playwright Lynn Nottage is the winner of numerous accolades and prestigious prizes for her work, including the MacArthur Genius Award.

Shocked by news from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where many women have suffered rape and trauma in the long-standing civil war, Nottage applied her talent to drawing attention to their situation.

Nottage traveled to refugee camps in Africa to interview women survivors of sexual assault and armed conflict. She incorporated their lives and experience into *Ruined*, a powerful play that conveys damage but also love and resilience.

Ruined won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2009. The touring production educates audiences on issues of conflict, development, and violence, and raises funds for health providers for women, like Panzi Hospital in Congo.



YesMagazine.org/ruined
Go behind the scenes of *Ruined*



OMAR TELLO *Restoring a Forest Habitat for Orchids*

Thirty years ago, accountant and orchid aficionado Omar Tello quit his job to fulfill a dream of restoring forest habitat for wild orchids in his native Ecuador. Property was worth more money as pasture than as forest, and Tello was viewed as eccentric for trying to restore an ecosystem rather than raising cattle.

At first insects consumed almost everything he planted, but he learned through trial and error.

"I observed the evolution of the forest, when different insects came and fed on specific plants, then I understood that all of the plants were necessary," says Tello.

Today the habitat Tello restored is the Orchid and Botanical Garden in Puyo, home to many species of insects, mammals, and plants, and a conservation model and research resource.

Tello's next goal is convincing local government to make the land a protected forest.

Interested?
jardinbotanicolasorquideas.com



JORDAN HOWARD *Organizing a Green Prom*

Jordan Howard was a student at an environmental charter high school, but she wasn't enthusiastic about environmental issues. Then a Green Ambassadors class got her inspired "to educate people on the solutions."

Howard and the prom committee planned a green senior prom for her school, which took place at a LEED certified mansion. They used paper lanterns instead of balloons, served organic food, and encouraged students to rent dresses and get their hair done at eco-salons.

Her next step was to help start the teen educational campaign Rise Against Plastics; followed by Green My Parents, a program that helps kids get parents to go green. Howard is a winner of the U.S. Green Building Council's Young Leader Award, and now speaks to organizations across the nation.

COMMENTARY ::

Jeffrey D. Clements and Ben T. Clements

LEGAL PROS SAY NO TO CITIZENS UNITED

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, corporate money has poured into the 2010 elections in unprecedented amounts. Now, a bipartisan group of leading law professors, former state attorneys general, former prosecutors, and prominent attorneys from across the country has signed a letter calling on Congress to consider a Constitutional amendment to overrule *Citizens United* and return elections and government to the people. We joined that call because the notion of "corporate rights" expressed in *Citizens United* is antithetical to Constitutional principles of free speech, democracy, and self-government.

In that case, the Court ruled that the First Amendment prohibits restrictions on so-called "independent expenditures" by corporations to attempt to defeat or elect candidates. The Court equated corporations with people for purposes of free speech rights and struck down key provisions of the federal Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act.

The creation of absolute corporate "speech" rights to spend money on elections is contrary to Constitutional principles and to the American vision of self-government by free people. That vision cannot coexist with elections dominated by hundreds of millions of dollars of corporate electioneering money.

Caution about corporate interference in politics goes back to our earliest days as a nation. James Madison, for example, warned that corporations may be "necessary evils," but they must have proper "limitations and guards." That's why the federal ban on corporate political contributions enacted by Theodore Roosevelt and Congress in 1907 was never, until *Citizens United*, viewed as a restriction on anyone's free speech.

We know that amending the Constitution must be reserved for what Madison called "great and extraordinary occasions."

Americans have many times used the amendment process to remove obstacles to people's participation in self-government on equal terms. The 13th Amendment ended slavery; the 14th guaranteed liberty, due process, and equal protection to all; and the 15th guaranteed the right to vote could not be abridged on account of race. With the 17th Amendment, the people claimed the right to elect U.S. Senators. The 19th Amendment guaranteed the right of women to vote—directly overruling the Supreme Court. In fact, in the 20th Century alone, we amended the Constitution 12 times.

Constitutional amendments require a wide consensus



The reception is lousy, but it's sweat shop-free, organic, biodegradable, and supports small farmers in Ecuador.

ALYSSA JOHNSON

It's fine, but I really wanted an Apple.

CHRIS PIZZELLO



www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

across all party lines. *Citizens United* has created that consensus. Most Americans know that corporations are not people and that money is not speech.

Indeed, according to multiple polls, more than two-thirds of the American people, regardless of political party, reject the *Citizens United* decision and do not accept that we the people cannot decide for ourselves the appropriate level of regulation of the use of corporate money to determine our election results.

We did not lightly conclude that the long, hard work of a Constitutional amendment campaign must begin. But we cannot ignore the state of our nation and the increasing danger that our government may no longer be of, for, and by the people. We look forward to exploring with Congress, our states, and the American people the path back to a spirited and healthy democracy. ⑦

Jeffrey D. Clements, co-founder of Free Speech for People, previously served as assistant attorney general and chief of the Attorney General's Public Protection Bureau. **Ben T. Clements** is a Boston attorney who served as chief legal counsel to the governor and as an assistant U.S. attorney. The letter from law professors and other former public servants can be viewed at freespeechforpeople.org/sites/default/files/finalfsppfaw.pdf

Free Speech For People is a national constitutional amendment campaign, launched on the day of the *Citizens United* decision, to restore and strengthen American democracy for people, not corporations. Free Speech For People led the circulation of this letter and the enlistment of its signatories. For more information on the campaign, see freespeechforpeople.org.

Rocking the Cynical World

WHY ICONIC POLITICAL SINGER-
SONGWRITER **BILLY BRAGG** CONFRONTS
FASCISTS, TEA PARTIES, GLENN BECK
—AND HIS OWN FANS

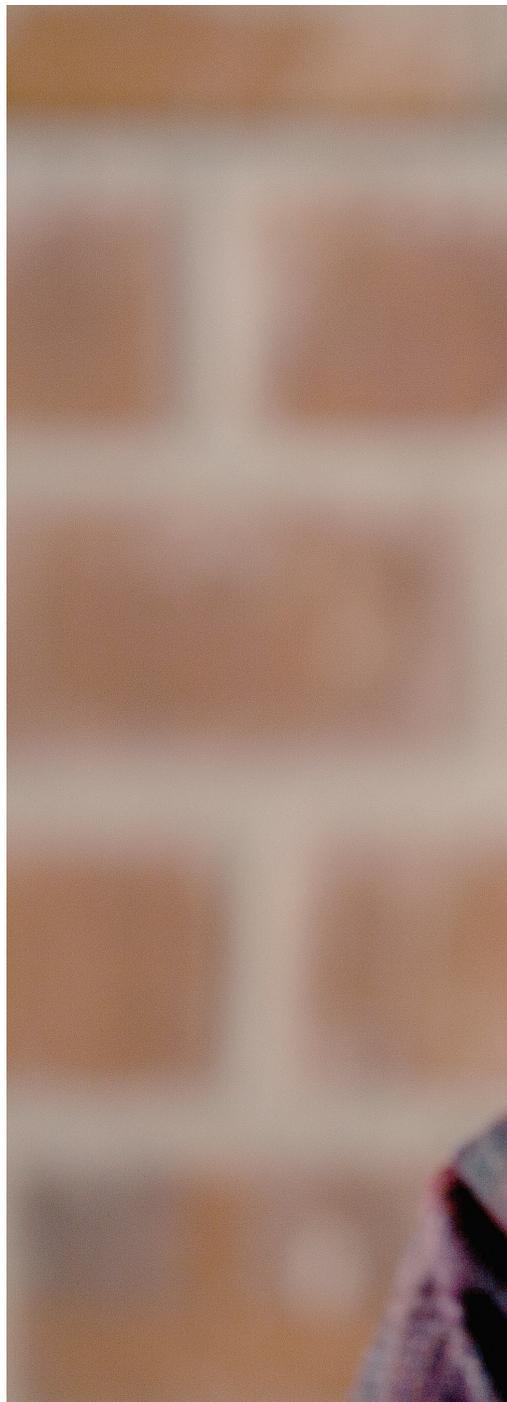
Madeline Ostrander

In the mid-1990s, when Nora Guthrie, Woody Guthrie's daughter, was looking for someone to set some of her father's unpublished lyrics to music, she passed over the obvious choices—such as Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, or Woody's old traveling companion, Pete Seeger. She turned instead to British icon Billy Bragg, who emerged from the London punk movement in the late 1970s and has since become synonymous with political songwriting. *Mermaid Avenue*, Bragg's Grammy-nominated collaboration with Nora Guthrie and the band Wilco, rocketed him into the American music scene.

It's not hard to see parallels between Bragg and Woody Guthrie—their poetry, politics, and irreverence. Bragg knows how to capture the zeitgeist, and his songwriting and activism are as relevant to today's predicaments—soaring economic inequality, Tea Parties, Glenn Beck, and racism—as Guthrie's were to the Great Depression.

Now 52 years old, Bragg grew up in a community hit hard by economic crisis, the working-class borough of Barking and Dagenham, near London. He became a political activist after attending a rally in 1978 for Rock Against Racism, an antiracism movement led by pop and punk bands like The Clash. Bragg's background allows him to cut through the divisive politics of race and immigration and speak plainly to audiences about social issues. In the last several years, Bragg has used his influence and panache to campaign against anti-immigration politicians in his hometown.

On a damp Sunday in September, I watched Bragg perform to a crowd of young and old fans at Seattle's annual Bumbershoot arts festival. Earlier that weekend, a YES! photographer and I met him at a coffee shop. He was milder and more personable than I had expected, smiling at us as if we were old friends. I asked him to explain how a singer can help change an election, reach millions of young people, and use music to fight the fear and cynicism that is undermining the democratic process in both of our countries.





**“IT’S MY
JOB TO
REMIND THE
AUDIENCE
THAT ONLY
THEY CAN
CHANGE THE
WORLD.”**

BETTY UDESEN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Madeline Ostrander: You’re widely known as a political songwriter, but you write on your website, “The notion that you can change the world by singing songs can only serve to undermine activism.”

Billy Bragg: I feel it’s my job to remind the audience that only they can change the world. If people just come to my gigs, buy T-shirts, and think they’ve done their bit, that’s the worst kind of hypocrisy on my part. My job is to bring them together in a space where

they feel that they’re not the only person who gives a sh*t about an issue. And they go away thinking, “Yeah! I had a sense of community!”

One of the first political things I ever did was Rock Against Racism. Before that, I felt my political views were in the minority. Where I was employed, there was a lot of casual racism. I was the youngest person and the only one who found it offensive. In that Clash crowd, I saw a hundred thousand kids just like me. I realized racism was the issue on which my generation was

going to take a stand.

The Clash got me there, but it was the crowd that empowered me.

The song has a part to play—it gives you a different perspective of your position in the struggle and your view of the world. But it’s what we do when we go back to our communities that makes a difference.

Ostrander: You recently campaigned against politicians in your hometown who were using race and immigration to inflame the public. Does it ever feel >>

» discouraging that these issues are so cyclical?

Bragg: No, as long as there's a new generation coming in to fight, you've got to pass the torch. When we marched for Rock Against Racism, we were part of a tradition that stretches back to the activists of the 1960s who were out on the streets, to our parents and grandparents who defended London against the Nazis in the 1940s, the people from our country who fought in the Spanish Civil War against fascism, all the way back to the abolition of slavery in the early 19th century. Our job is to pass

The British National Party is a proper fascist party; they're not just right-wing nut cases. Their leader, Nick Griffin, has cast doubt on the veracity of the Holocaust. They read the same census report that I did, probably, and targeted our borough. They started saying, "Can't get your roof fixed? Can't see the doctor? It's these immigrants." In 2006, out of nowhere, Barking elected 12 councillors from the British National Party.

All of the sudden, my hometown was called the racist capital of Britain. But the only difference between my hometown and anywhere else is that Barking has these bastards knocking

Ostrander: How do you talk to—or sing to—someone who doesn't share your political views?

Bragg: Well, you have to talk to them about the implications of electing a party that is such a pariah. It's not a protest vote anymore. And I think the cynicism that the BNP relied on failed them this time.

It turns out that the white, working-class people of Barking and Dagenham are not racist. This year, when they looked into the face of the British National Party and realized who they were, they threw them out. I'm quite encouraged by that, because if they

WE'RE NOT THE FIRST PEOPLE TO HAVE FOUGHT THE STRUGGLE ... EVENTUALLY, WE GET 'EM, AND WE USUALLY GET 'EM WITH OUR MUSIC AND OUR CULTURE.

that information on, to not be discouraged. We're not the first people to have fought the struggle, and usually we win. The other side has their high points but eventually, we get 'em, and we usually get 'em with our music and our culture.

Ostrander: What was so significant about the victory against the British National Party in your hometown this summer?

Bragg: My hometown [the borough of Barking and Dagenham] is probably the most industrial borough in south-east England. When I left school, the car plant employed about 40,000 people in a borough of 150,000. And over the last 15 years or so, employment at that plant has dropped to about 3,000 people. There's no work. But the housing prices in our borough are the lowest around London, so there's an influx of people and huge pressure on housing, schools, and doctors' waiting lists. Twenty years ago, the borough was 98 percent white. Now whites make up below 80 percent.

on doors, turning people's genuine concerns into racism.

This summer, there was an election for the local council, and the British National Party expected to win 12 seats, which would have given them control of schools, the allocation of housing, and a £750 million budget.

I was out there with groups such as Unite Against Fascism and Hope Not Hate, knocking on doors, singing a few songs when people broke for lunch at work, and stuff like that. The incredible thing was the number of young people involved, because in the last ten years, a lot of the anti-racism activists have been old Clash fans like me—gray-haired geezers with tattoos.

When results were announced, not only did the BNP fail to win any more seats, they lost every seat they had. They were wiped out of the local council. That's a real tribute to the young people who came out in such great numbers—proof that your actions have meaning. But you can't just sing about it; you have to actually go and do it until it happens.

can't pick up votes in a place like Barking and Dagenham, they've had it as an electoral force.

Ostrander: In the U.K., you've been a spokesperson and an icon for working-class interests for years. Is that ever a burden? Does anyone ever suggest that you're not representing them?

Bragg: Yeah, I get bashed for it all the time. The British National Party threw three things at me during the election campaign: They said I'm not working class, I'm not heterosexual, and I'm not a good songwriter. But that ain't going to stop me.

The thing about me and Barking is actually about belonging, which is deeper than class. My son and my missus take the piss out of me mercilessly about being some sort of Cockney geezer. But it's okay. In the end, it's about being who you are. My brother and my mum still live in the borough. He's a bricklayer. She lives in the house we grew up in. When the sh*t went down in the local council, it would have been easy for me to say that people in

BUT IT'S NOT GLENN BECK'S CYNICISM THAT STOPS THE WORLD FROM CHANGING. IT'S OUR OWN CYNICISM—THOSE OF US WHO BELIEVE IN A BETTER WORLD. CYNICISM IS OUR GREAT ENEMY.

my hometown are all racists. But that would have been a complete betrayal of the people I went to school with.

One problem is that the white working class has been dismissed in the last 20 years in the U.K. In the U.S., I think that's also why the Tea Party exists. Who does represent us any more when the Democratic Party has become an old, white-collar party within the Beltway? When the Labor Party has been hollowed out, and they're not standing up for you?

Because consumerist individualism is fine when you've got money in your pocket, but when you've got no money, then you can feel very, very lonely.

Ostrander: You said in an interview in the Guardian, "Our real enemy is cynicism." What did you mean?

Bragg: Well, what do you think Glenn Beck is in the business of doing? He's spreading cynicism. He wants you to think, as a listener, that there's no point in trying to do anything positive. Tear down the government.

I'm not saying what the government does is always good, but the government is only as good as the people who elect it. When you're encouraged to believe that anybody who puts forward an idea of collective responsibility like free health care is a socialist-Nazi, whatever that means, it undermines your belief in community.

The free market can't solve everyone's problems. How are we going to solve climate change? Recycling your plastic and your bottles ain't going to do it. It can't just be individual action. It's got to be collective action at a global scale.

Ostrander: Which of your songs do you feel have had a particularly

powerful impact?

Bragg: Well, you can't really measure it like that. You can't say, "I wrote this song, and these things happened," except that a song's success might let me buy more socks and underpants. I could show you a graph, "I wrote these songs, and the number of socks and underpants in my drawer at home went up."

When people tell me that they took action as they listened to my song, I'm always happy to receive their thanks. But I don't take credit because I didn't do all those things. They did. I just provided the soundtrack.

Ostrander: It sounds a little like you're downplaying the impact of your music.

Bragg: I'm not downplaying my music. But I don't set out thinking, I've got to write a political song or a love song. I just write what turns up. Open the guitar case, play a couple of chords. The key song in my current set is a track from my most recent album called, "I Keep Faith." It can either be a love song or a call to arms. When I perform, I say it's about my faith in the audience's ability to change the world. But when my son heard me say that, he said to his mum, "Why didn't Dad tell the audience this song is about you?" And my missus said, "Well, it is about me, Jack, but it's also about what Daddy's saying it's about." That, to me, is the best kind of song.

Ostrander: Is that song also about your own struggle with cynicism? Particularly these lyrics: "I know it takes a mess of courage to go against the grain ... let me rekindle all your hopes."

*I lost my job, my car, and my house
When ten thousand miles away
some guy clicked on a mouse
He didn't know me, we never spoke,
He didn't ask my opinion or
canvass for my vote
I guess it's true, nobody cares
'Til those petrol bombs come
spinning through the air
Gotta find a way to hold them to
account
Before they find a away to snuff our
voices out
Can you hear us? Are you
listening?
No power without accountability!*

—from the song, "NPWA," on *England, Half English*, Cooking Vinyl, 2002

Bragg: Yeah, of course. We're all prone to cynicism. But it's not Glenn Beck's cynicism that stops the world from changing. It's our own cynicism—those of us who believe in a better world. Cynicism is our great enemy. It's Glenn Beck's bread-and-f**king-butter. That's the heartbreak. If we, coming together, can't overcome our cynicism, then there really is no hope. We just might as well pack up and go home. And I can't absolve myself from that. Hell, I helped get Tony Blair elected! But I'm fortunate: I get to stand with a thousand people every couple of weeks, and when I talk about my anger or my politics, everyone cheers. And I come away thinking, "Yeah! I'm not the only one who feels this." 🗣️

Madeline Ostrander is senior editor at YES!



YesMagazine.org/bragg

Billy Bragg in live performance

Number of billionaires in the world: **1,011**

Percentage of billionaires living in the U.S.: **40**¹

As of August 24, 2009, number of living people who had given \$1 billion or more to charity: **14**

Number of these who were still billionaires after giving: **11**²

As of August 4, 2010, number of U.S. billionaires and near-billionaires pledging at least 50 percent of their wealth to charity: **40**³

Time needed for the Earth to generate the ecological “income” that humanity “spends” annually: **1 year, 5 months**⁴

Percentage of Americans who believe most energy will come from sources other than coal/oil/gas by 2050: **74**

Percentage favoring expanded exploration and development of coal/oil/gas in the U.S.: **68**

Percentage of Americans who favor incentives for more nuclear power: **50**

Percentage who foresee a major global energy crisis in the next 40 years: **72**

Percentage of Americans who favor requiring utilities to produce more renewable energy: **87**⁵

In 2009, percentage of Americans who thought the gap between rich and poor would decrease by 2050: **34**

In 1999, percentage who thought the gap would decrease by 2050: **27**⁶

Average percentage energy savings in EPA Energy Star certified buildings versus conventional buildings: **40**

Money spent on Energy Star building upgrades by the Council Rock School District in Bucks County, Penn.: **\$150,000**

Projected annual energy costs for the school district before the upgrades: **\$4.5 million**

Actual energy costs, after upgrades: **\$3 million**⁷

Percentage rate of annual human population growth in 1963, the peak rate in records dating back to 1950: **2.2**

Annual rate in 2009: **1.12**

Projected annual rate in 2049: **0.45**⁸

Average minutes American public transit users spend walking daily: **19**⁹

Minutes of daily moderate aerobic activity the U.S. Center for Disease Control recommends: **22**

Estimated annual American per capita health cost savings that would result from improving transit quality and building walkable, mixed-use developments around stations: **\$540.68**¹⁰

Percentage of parents who say their college student child has a credit card: **35**

Percentage of college students who say they have a credit card: **49**¹¹

Percentage drop in global phytoplankton population since 1950, attributed to rising ocean surface temperatures: **40**¹²

Complete citations at www.yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. Forbes.com, 2010. **2.** Forbes.com, 2009. **3.** The Giving Pledge, 2010. **4.** Global Footprint Network, 2010. **5.** Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, June 14, 2010. **6.** Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, June 22, 2010. **7.** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2009. **8.** U.S. Census Bureau, International Database, June 28, 2010. **9.** American Journal of Preventive Medicine, June 10, 2005. **10.** Victoria Transport Policy Institute for the American Public Transportation Association, June 14, 2010. **11.** Sallie Mae and Gallup, Aug 2010. **12.** Nature, July 29, 2010.

What Happy Families Know

It was never easy for families to make it on their own. As the economy becomes more turbulent and America diversifies, many people are embracing new family values. We are learning to care for, love, and bring into our families people who come from different cultures or ethnicities, are gay or straight, are blood relatives or relatives by choice.



18

Freer, Messier, Happier. Families get flexible to deal with a less stable world. And are richer for it.



24

Radical Homemaker. You don't need much cash if you can make, barter, or share the things your family needs.



28

You Are Who You Eat With. The return of the family dinner.



32

All in the Ohana. For this Hawaiian clan, fish, taro, babies, and adult children are all part of the family.



38

7 Ways to Keep Love Going Strong in a new relationship, in a long marriage, and even if it's complicated.



42

Raising Babies in Prison. Moms get a second chance, babies get a better start.



46

9 Ways to Support Families in Hard Times. Ideology aside, here's a political agenda that would help families.



48

The Good Life? It's Close to Home. Supporting a family really does take a village—here's how to build one in your community.



This is My Family

Claimed by grandchildren, raising my neighbor's child—our family stories. Pages 27, 31, 36, 40, and 45



LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE



Freer, Messier, Happier

THESE DAYS, MOMS, DADS, KIDS,
GRANDMAS—EVEN NEIGHBORS—ARE
SHARING THE WORK OF FAMILY



Jeremy Adam Smith

In 1946, when my grandfather mustered out of the army and married my grandmother, he set up what looked like the ideal family at the time. His wife quit her job and he started work driving a crane in a Massachusetts quarry—a job he would do for the next forty years, working up to six days a week, sometimes 12 hours a day. When I asked him if he faced any challenges raising his three children, he replied, “I never did. My wife took care of all that. She brought the kids up.” This arrangement came with a rigid hierarchy: “She worked for me,” said my grandfather of his wife. “I always said, ‘You work for me.’”

By the time my mother and father

met in Dracut High School in 1963, the same year that Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, more and more people were starting to question this division of labor between men and women. The following year, Congress formally abolished sex discrimination at work. I was born in 1970. “I wanted to be closer to you than my father was to me,” my dad told me when I interviewed him for my book, *The Daddy Shift*. “I wanted to participate more in my kids’ lives.” Even so, my parents never questioned for a moment that he would make most of the money and she would change most of the diapers.

By 1988—the year I graduated from high school—only 29 percent of children lived in two-parent families with a full-time homemaking mother. And like many Baby Boomer couples,

my parents split in 1991—the same year I met the woman who is today my wife. By the time we became parents in 2004, my wife and I were stepping into a family landscape that was totally different from the one my grandparents faced in 1946.

For one thing, we never assumed that one of us was the natural breadwinner and the other a natural caregiver—instead, we saw those as roles that we would share and negotiate over time. For a year, I took care of my son while my wife went to work, and as we visited San Francisco’s playgrounds, I met other stay-at-home dads, gay and lesbian parents, single mothers and fathers, and multiracial and immigrant families. I watched these disparate kinds of families manage to knit themselves into a community.

The right-wing “family values” movement has painted these trends as a crisis, but no one I know experiences them that way. Instead, we seem to share a positive (if often unarticulated) vision of the family as diverse, egalitarian, voluntary, interdependent, flexible, and improvisational. Many people hold these ideals without necessarily being conscious of their political and economic implications—and they’re not making politically motivated choices. In researching *The Daddy Shift*, for example, I didn’t interview any breadwinning moms and caregiving dads who adopted their reverse-traditional arrangement for feminist reasons. They almost always framed their work and care decisions as a practical matter, a response to brutally competitive labor and childcare markets.

These day-to-day challenges can prevent us from seeing the bigger picture. We tend to see decades of battles over divorce, single moms, interracial marriage, same-sex marriage, and even immigration as isolated “issues.” In fact, each of these issues is a frontline in a wider conflict over family ideals. »

Author Jeremy Adam Smith
with his family: wife, Shelly “Olli”
Mei-Jing Doo, and son, Liko.



PHOTO BY MOSHE SHAI



» Each is part of a larger debate about what kind of society we want to be: one rooted in solidarity, cooperation, nurturance, and inclusiveness, the other in ideals now being most forcefully articulated by the Tea Party movement.

Today's parents are pioneering new relationships among moms, dads, neighbors, relatives, and community, largely in response to challenging economic conditions—and they're doing it with little or no support from marriage, divorce, and medical leave policies designed to support married, heterosexual, nuclear families. Those policies need to change, and we're the ones who are going to have to change them.

Women at Work, Men at Home

Economics have always shaped family. For most of human history, extended families were consolidated business units, growing and making what they needed to live and then selling the surplus to other families. The sole-male-breadwinner, nuclear

family came with the rise of industrial capitalism, when fathers marched off to factories and mothers tended homes that became more mechanistic and consumerist as time went on. Today, we are in the throes of another economic and technological evolution that is transforming our most intimate family relationships. As money and people move across borders, barriers against intercultural marriage are dissolving. Today, one in seven new marriages is interracial.

Meanwhile, jobs are becoming more portable, less stable, and more technically demanding—and the recession has hit hardest in male-dominated sectors of the economy.

For almost every decade for the past 100 years, more and more women have gone to college and work. Over the past three years, men have been much more likely to lose their jobs than women, who are concentrated in fast-growing, high-skill industries like health care and education. Between

2009 and 2010, men with college degrees saw their median weekly earnings drop 3 percent while the income of women with degrees grew by 4.3 percent. Today, young women's pay exceeds that of their male peers in most metropolitan areas.

These trends have changed the way moms and dads relate to each other and to their children. As men lost the ability to reliably support families on one income, families responded by diversifying. Men have developed emotional and interpersonal skills by taking care of children—since the mid-1990s, the number of hours dads spend with kids has nearly doubled—and women have gone to school and to work. In the eyes of many couples, equity between parents has moved from a nice ideal to an urgent matter of survival.

And it's a strange but true fact that these changes to the structure of heterosexual families are what's driving acceptance of gay and lesbian marriage



PHOTO BY WAYNE JONES



PHOTO BY GAUTAM BASU

and parenthood. In August of 2010, Judge Vaughn Walker explicitly recognized this connection when he overturned Proposition 8, an amendment to California's constitution that defined marriage as being between "one man and one woman." In his decision, Walker wrote:

"The evidence shows that the movement of marriage away from a gendered institution and toward an institution free from state-mandated gender roles reflects an evolution in the understanding of gender rather than a change in marriage. ... The exclusion [of same-sex couples] exists as an artifact of a time when the genders were seen as having distinct roles in society and in marriage. That time has passed."

Extended Families Make a Comeback

But however equally moms and dads share the load, this economy is not easy on families as a whole, and parents are increasingly reaching out

beyond their nuclear units to grandparents, neighbors, and friends. They're building extended families based on both blood and affinity, and relying more and more on their communities.

As the Pew Research Center reports, "The multigenerational American family household is staging a comeback—driven in part by the job losses and home foreclosures of recent years but more so by demographic changes that have been gathering steam for decades." Today, more Americans live in a multigenerational home than at any time in the past 50 years. According to Pew, this shift has been driven in part by the arrival of immigrants who prefer to live in communal situations—a way of life that research says helps them survive economic distress.

In a five-year longitudinal study, sociologists Ross Parke and Scott Coltrane compared how Latino and Anglo families in Riverside, Calif., coped with layoffs and money problems. They found that Latino families were astonishingly

resilient, largely because they shared resources among a large network of extended family. Based on their findings, Parke and his colleagues argue that Anglo families have a great deal to learn from Latino families: "We often assume that immigration is a one-way process," the researchers write in *Greater Good* magazine. "This is an oversimplified view that ignores the mutual influences between cultural groups." In their view, the fusion of new, more equal gender roles with extended-family values like sharing and community can create a 21st-century family form "that is better anchored by extended kin, neighbors, and communities committed to the common good of our children."

In my own community, I've seen their vision put into practice. >>



YesMagazine.org/humanity

Photos from the book *Humanity: A Celebration of Friendship, Family, Love & Laughter*. The book represents 150 winning entries from a worldwide photo competition.

» My friend, Viru Gupte, grew up in India, where most marriages are still arranged by parents and communal life remains very strong. “In Indian cities, the people around you become your family,” says Viru, who was raised in Delhi. “The kids practically grow up in their neighbors’ apartments. You just walked in whenever you wanted, and they fed you.”

I met Viru because he had consciously attempted to recreate that way of life in our San Francisco neighborhood. He struck up a conversation with me one day at the neighborhood farmers market and then out of the blue invited me to an all-dad outing he had organized. “You have to work very

broken and vulnerable contingent would find strength and security in the tribe. Since that union was forged, more jobs were lost—and gained—but we weather those storms as a group, and not alone anymore. If one has a bill that cannot be paid, another is there to find spare change under couch cushions.”

Moms and Dads Speak Out

Corbyn’s family is surviving under enormous economic pressure, but she’s not getting much help from our political system. It’s never a political decision to love another person, but political decisions can support, or hurt, our personal ones. Banning

the example of my friend Viru, and begin by talking to the people you see in your neighborhood and beyond, and helping each other out with babysitting, casual work, and sharing stuff. Viru’s case illustrates the degree to which immigrants are infusing our neighborhoods with a stronger sense of interdependence.

We can make a difference by welcoming the insight and energy of folks like him. We can also form communities that include all of today’s families. For example, we can welcome fathers into caregiving situations or take the commitments of gay and lesbian couples seriously. As part of this process, we need to articulate to each other what

IT’S TIME FOR TODAY’S FAMILIES, IN ALL OUR DIVERSITY, TO FIND OUR POLITICAL VOICE AND RESHAPE SOCIETY.

hard to have a community here,” he later said. “It requires planning.”

Viru has taught me a lot about the relationship between family and community. I don’t think I’m alone: Motivated by a shrinking economy, native-born families are starting to integrate these attitudes and values into 21st-century family life.

My friend, Corbyn Hightower, is a bisexual, breadwinning mother, who has one child with her ex-wife Mimi and two children with her husband Larry, a stay-at-home dad. When she lost her job at the start of the recession, Corbyn and Larry decided to join forces with Mimi and her new partner, Patty. They sold their belongings in Texas and moved back to California, where Corbyn had lived with Mimi.

Today, Corbyn, Larry, Mimi, and Mimi’s partner all live within a half-mile of each other and, through many twists and turns in their personal relationships, all four have served as parents to the three children. As Corbyn writes in an essay for the site I help edit, Shareable.net:

“The agreement was always that we are in this together, and that our

same-sex marriage hurts some families, and it does nothing to strengthen heterosexual families. Fighting against paid parental leave or food stamps or health care in the name of “small government” makes life harder for all of us. It’s time for today’s families, in all our diversity, to find our political voice and reshape society.

It’s no secret what social policies could lessen inequality, nurture family diversity, and rebuild community: They include paid, mandatory leave for both parents on the birth or adoption of a child, universal early childhood education, and funneling resources to schools in poor and working-class communities. In countries like Sweden, decades of generous paternity leave have gradually leveled the domestic division of labor between mammas and pappas—and had a measurably positive impact on the health and educational outcomes of both kids and parents.

We will never realize such policies in the United States unless we as parents, both moms and dads, speak out together.

I think the first step is to follow

values make us strong and what ideals we try to live by.

It can’t stop there: Building community is critical, but I think it’s equally critical to leverage the power of that community for social change. We can help each other by voting, marching, speaking out, and clicking for the policies that will nurture all of our families.

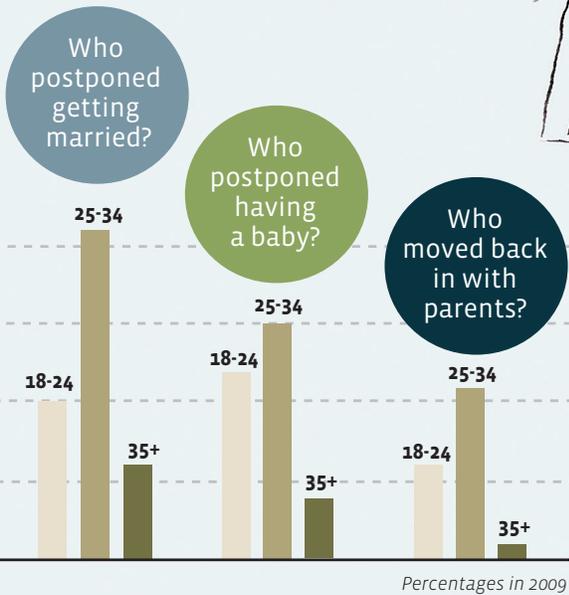
Being an activist parent is very different from youthful activism. Total commitment to the cause is not usually possible, at least when kids are young, because it competes with commitments to our partners and children. But raising a child has taught me many things about social change: to be patient and persistent, to try to see the world through the eyes of others, and to never give up on the people in my life.

Fatherhood in my family did not change overnight; it took three generations, and it would be silly to think that evolution will stop with me. We stand on the shoulders of the generations before us—and our children will stand on ours. ⑦

Jeremy Adam Smith is a John S. Knight fellow at Stanford University and the author of *The Daddy Shift* (Beacon Press, 2009), from which parts of this essay were adapted.

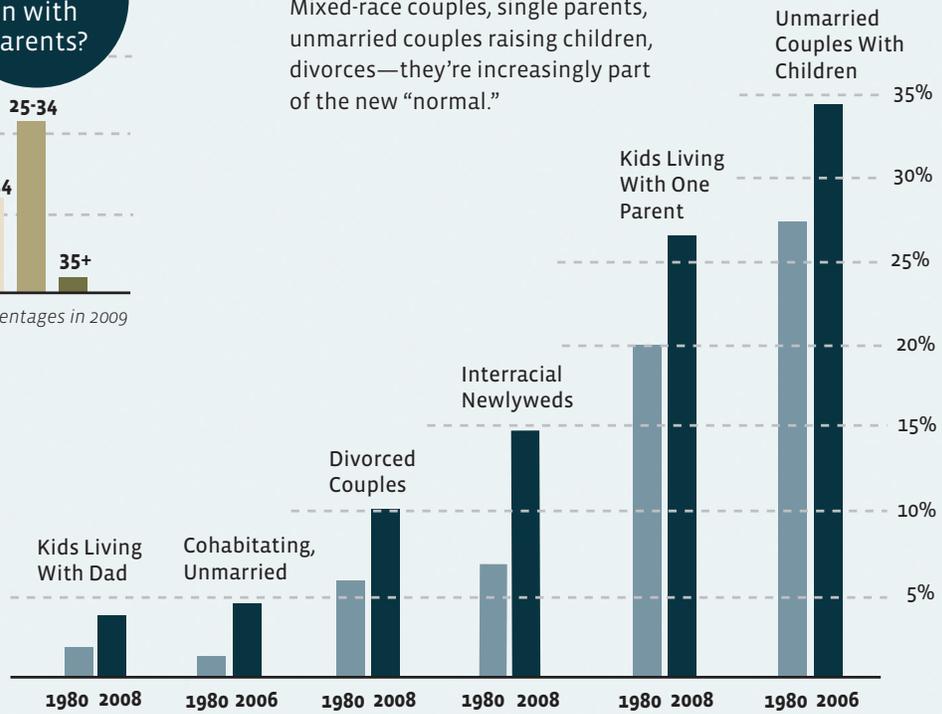
Just the Facts

Alyssa B. Johnson



Who Is Family Now?

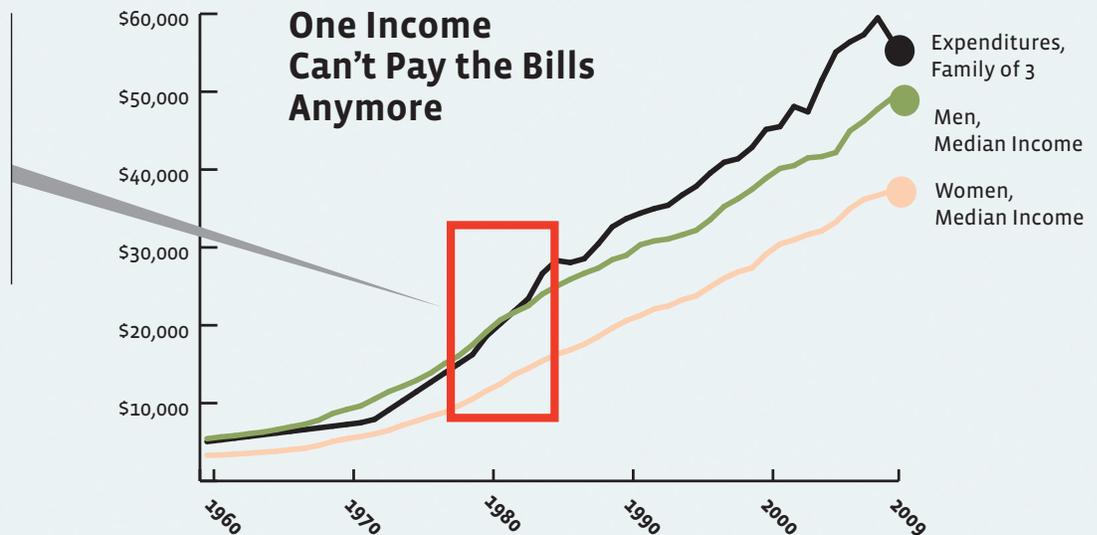
Mixed-race couples, single parents, unmarried couples raising children, divorces—they're increasingly part of the new "normal."



The Recession Has Changed Families

The recession that started in 2008 accelerated trends that were already developing. Young people at the start of their careers are having a hard time making ends meet. And 63 percent of workers ages 50 to 61 say the recession means they'll put off retirement.

As recently as 1980, a family of three could get by on the income of one parent—as long as that parent was male. Now that income won't even cover the average family's expenditures, let alone the things we've come to associate with a middle-class life, such as adequate housing or paying for a child's college education.



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Homemade Prosperity

CAUGHT IN THE CONSUMER TRAP? **RADICAL HOMEMAKER SHANNON HAYES**
 WHAT SHE NEEDS AT HOME LETS HER LIVE ON A FRACTION OF



PHOTOS BY TERRY WILD

“Even with two children, we live very well on a bit more than \$40,000 per year, a far cry from the six-figure income that I once thought we needed,” says Hayes.

Shannon Hayes

It should have been a high point in my life. I had just successfully defended my dissertation and had three potential job opportunities. But I found myself pacing around our cabin or walking the hills of my family’s farm, alternately weeping and hurling invectives into the country air. Bob and I were fighting with a force I’d never seen.

The simple fact was, I didn’t want the job I’d spent years working toward.

“I thought you wanted this! Why the hell did you just spend the last four years at Cornell? Why did we just go through with this? Why did you say that’s what you wanted?”

What could I tell him? Because I didn’t know any other way to stay close to my family’s land and make the kind of money I thought we needed? Because I didn’t believe there was a future in farming? Because the only way I thought I could manifest my talents was within an institution that would offer me a paycheck?

“What do you want?”

“To write and farm.”

“Then do it.”

“We need money. I don’t know how to do it.”

But I did know how. Since our arrival on these shores, every generation of my family has farmed. I was in the first generation that didn’t believe we could make a living doing it. Our neighbors lived, laughed, and loved on these rocky hillsides, and they did it with four-figure incomes. And yet, I’d come to believe that, on these same hills, we needed six. Somewhere along the line, I had stopped believing the evidence that was before

DISCOVERED THAT PRODUCING WHAT SHE THOUGHT SHE NEEDED

me and started believing one of the central myths of modern American culture: that a family requires a pile of money just to survive in some sort of comfort and that “his and her” dual careers were an improvement over times past.

What had changed? Why did I believe we needed so much? It was a puzzle to me at the time. In retrospect I see that my generation grew up immersed in media that equated affluence with respect, happiness, and fulfillment. We heard a national dialogue that predicted the end of the family farm. Those messages shook our security in our lifestyle—we ended up questioning our own experience.

After all, I grew up working on my neighbor’s farm. We had fantastic mid-day feasts, the house was warm in the winter, and there was always a little spare cash on hand to donate when someone was in trouble. And plenty of pies got baked, gratis, to contribute to the local church bake sale and turkey supper. I was in my mid-20s before I discovered just how little money they lived on.

That was how many people lived as I was growing up in West Fulton, N.Y., where my family still farms. The steep hillsides and frosty valleys render most modern industrial farming technologies impractical in my community. Cash crops are few. To survive, my neighbors had to produce as many of the things they needed as possible and buy only the things they absolutely couldn’t make or grow at home. They grew and preserved food, sewed and mended clothes, and did their own repairs, improvements, and upkeep on the farm.

But most American lives reflect a transition that happened in households following the Industrial Revolution. Before then, the home was a center of production, not very different from the original households that first emerged in 13th-century Europe, as the feudal period was coming to an end. The family’s economic security was a result of the householders’ combined efforts to produce what they needed. They raised their food, cured their meats, made soap, wove fabric, and produced their own clothing.

Once the industrial revolution took hold, the household changed. Men were first to leave the home to work in factories, where they earned wages and used them to purchase the goods and services they were no longer home to produce. The more men worked outside the home, the more households had to buy in order to meet their needs.

For a time, women continued to produce from within the home, but factories eventually supplanted the housewives’ duties as well. As time wore on, domestic skills were no longer paramount for survival. Instead of cultivating skills to provide for our own needs, we pursued skills to produce for others’ needs in exchange for the money to buy what was once produced in the home. The household had changed from a center of production that supplied most of its own needs to a center of consumption that bought nearly everything it needed.

At first, there were some pretty great consumer items that, in all fairness, lightened a burdensome domestic labor load—automatic washing machines, for

example. But the idea of buying labor-saving devices that can’t be made at home gradually turned into our modern consumer culture—where everything from bread to entertainment must be bought—and generated our national assumption that a middle-class family requires one or both spouses to make lots of money.

The families I grew up around were exceptions to the trend. The agricultural industrial revolution is a relatively newfangled phenomenon that really only took hold in the last 60 years. For a long time after most American households became centers of consumption, the family farm was still a center of production. The survival of the pre-industrialized farm was contingent partly on products grown for sale, but also on household production that reduced the need to buy things.

Ultimately, Bob and I joined my parents in the grassfed meat business, where we now work, like many others, to help build a local, sustainable food system that enables us to make an adequate living. Keeping the lessons of our neighbors in mind, we determined that the key to survival was producing as much as we could and buying only what we must. We raise and sell meat for our income, but we also render fat into soap, preserve the summer harvest for winter, and spend more time socializing with friends and neighbors at home for entertainment than we do going out and spending money on amusements. Even with two children, we live very well on a bit more than \$40,000 per year, a far cry from the six-figure income that I once thought we needed. >>

How To Transform Your Household

OK, not everyone is in a position to quit their job to spend more time at home. And not everyone wants to. That doesn't mean that the household can't shift toward increasing production and decreasing consumption. The transition can start with simple things, like hanging out the laundry or planting a garden. For those people who need or want to push further into the realm of living on a single income or less, here are a few secrets for survival we've learned on the family farm:

Get out of the cash economy

Sometimes a direct barter—"your bushel of potatoes for my ground beef"—works. But we don't always have something the other party needs. At those times, gifting may be the best answer. Gifts are often returned along an unexpected path. Last summer I canned beets and green beans for my folks—of course, for no charge. In the process, I discovered that my solar hot water system wasn't working. I called a neighbor and asked him to look at it. He fixed it, free. We have a facility that a butcher uses to process chickens for local farmers. On chicken processing days, Bob, Mom, and Dad help out, at no charge. At the end of the summer, the neighbor who fixed our hot water wanted to get his chickens processed. He got them done, no charge. Mom and Dad got a winter's supply of veggies. Bob and I got a repaired hot water system. The butcher had a place to do his work, and the neighbor got his chickens processed.

Be interdependent

It would be handy sometimes to have our own tractor and tiller. But it seems foolish for us to own that equipment



when we can borrow from my parents. It's cheaper to borrow and lend money, tools, time, and resources among family, friends, and neighbors and abandon the idea that it's shameful to rely on each other, rather than a credit card, paycheck, or bank.

Invest in your home

One of the most solid investments Bob and I have discovered is spending to lower expenses. Examples are better windows, more insulation, solar hot water, photovoltaic panels, or even just a really big kettle for canning.

Tolerate imperfect relationships

Living on reduced incomes may require more family members living under one roof, husbands and wives spending more time together, or greater reliance on friends and neighbors who may stand in for family. The families depicted on television, in movies, and in advertisements show dysfunction as the norm—with an antidote of further fragmentation of the family and community. That gets expensive. While no one should tolerate an abusive relationship, learning to accept or navigate the quirks of family and friends will keep the home stable and facilitate the sharing of resources.

» Bob and I are fortunate in having access to my parents' land and to the knowledge that they and other farmers in the area share with us. That has made our transition easier. But it doesn't take a farm to begin the journey. Americans from different walks of life all around the country are taking steps in their own households, whether they are rural, urban, or suburban. Even without a land base, they are finding ways to turn their homes from units of consumption to units of production. They are walking and biking, rather

than driving; cooking rather than going out for fast food; playing music and creating art rather than buying entertainment from mass media; preserving the harvest from local farms rather than buying packaged foods from an industrialized food system; brewing beer in the corner of their apartments; learning how to fix their own toilets and cars; repairing their clothing or finding ways to repurpose it; networking with neighbors to barter for goods and services that they cannot produce.

The upshot is a growing movement

of Americans who are creating a new home economics where there is time for family members to enjoy each other, where the ecological footprint is greatly reduced, and where, instead of the family working to support the household, the household works to support the family. With this new home economy, relationships are deeper, children are more connected with the life systems that support them, and the family can make it through economic hard times with dignity and joy. **Y**

Shannon Hayes blogs at yesmagazine.org/hayes



Returning Grandpa's Love

by Kristy Leissle

WALKIN' AND CHALKIN', THAT WAS WHAT WE DID.

Roaming the streets of Brooklyn, a couple of chalk sticks in my hand, I made primitive sketches on sidewalks, fire hydrants, and the occasional garage door, while Grandpa ambled nearby. Aloft on his shoulders, I felt as tall as the telephone poles we passed on our way home, where we played grocery store and toll bridge and ate chocolate. Grandpa was my babysitter, and he was my first friend.

Grandpa watched me because he was retired from his job as maintenance worker at Betsy Head Pool. My mom was a secretary for a small importing company, my dad a helicopter mechanic. That we were poor was simply accepted as fact. No one dreamed of paying for childcare: The cash economy was a parallel but distant realm we seldom visited. We had no money—but we did have relatives.

In my family, the decision to leave home is seldom permanent. We can, and do, come back any time we need to. When I was six, my parents divorced. Mom got custody of my brother and me, and we all moved in with her parents. Her two sisters were already there; one had left briefly to live in Florida, the other not at all. My grandparents had moved to the suburbs by then, and my brother and I grew up in their small house, surrounded by elders and aunts.

Mom continued to work as a secretary, so Grandma and Grandpa watched us after school. Grandpa was a natural teacher, and we sat together at the dining room table learning mathematics, geography, and history. I remember being astonished, then pitying, to discover that my classmates in the fourth grade could not measure the radius of a circle; Grandpa had taught me that years ago.

Later, when Grandpa began to suffer from poor circulation and Grandma to exhibit signs of dementia, “nursing home” sounded to me like a dirty word. To consign Grandma or Grandpa—warm, living family—to a cold institution simply wasn’t an option.

So the care of Grandpa’s ailing body and Grandma’s deteriorating mind fell largely to their daughters—my mother and her sisters—and to a lesser extent my brother and me. Grandma quickly descended into an impenetrable fog, reliving her past through mumbled arguments with ghosts and hearty laughter with unseen friends. She could communicate nothing concrete. Grandpa could, but was often too embarrassed by his frailty to ask for help.

Though the care of elder bodies brings with it moments of macabre levity, the truth is that life at home became a sodden, endless routine of helping with bathroom trips, cleaning bedsores, and emptying chamber pots. We lived, as ever, in the “love economy”—doing all those unpleasant tasks that involve blood, pus, urine, feces, and knowing the profound sadness of watching the bodies of loved ones decay.

My brother speaks of it in the language of today’s fractured corporate world: “I could never imagine outsourcing that tough work,” he said to me at breakfast. “I mean, it’s family. It’s not like they outsourced your upbringing.” Indeed. My family has often felt to me like a closed circuit of care, an island economy unto itself. As in the larger one, our economy involves costs, risks, successes. But there are no profits, no gains to be distributed. Our returns are integrity, compassion, laughter, suffering, and, above all, the knowledge that we have lived fully—beginning to end—with those who have always loved us.

Kristy Leissle is a writer and professor of Global Studies at the University of Washington, Bothell, where she researches the cocoa-chocolate trade.



PHOTO BY PATRICK BARBER

You Are Who You Eat With

WHY HECTIC TIMES CALL FOR A RETURN TO THE FAMILY MEAL

Katherine Gustafson

When the 10 Garcia-Prats boys got together every night for dinner, they shared more than food around the table. They talked about the successes and frustrations of their days. The older boys helped the younger ones cut their meat. They compared their picks for the World Cup, a conversation that turned into an impromptu geography lesson.

Their mother, Cathy, author of *Good Families Don't Just Happen: What We Learned from Raising Our Ten Sons and How It Can Work for You*, strove to make the dinner table warm and welcoming, a place where her boys would want to linger. "Our philosophy is that dinnertime is not just a time to feed your body; it's a time to feed your mind and your soul," she told me over the phone from her Houston, Texas, home. "It lets us have an opportunity to share our day, be part of each others' lives."

Today, families like the Garcia-Prats are the exception. According to the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health, fewer than half of Americans eat meals daily with their families, a statistic that highlights the breakneck pace at which we live and our grab-and-go food culture. Increasing economic pressures only exacerbate these cultural trends, as many families are forced to work two jobs to afford the basics and have little time to slow down and have dinner.

But the deterioration of the family meal may be more damaging than we realize. “Our lives have gotten so hectic and so busy that if you don’t set aside time as a family, I think you just get lost,” said Garcia-Prats. “Then you’re just individuals living in a building, instead of a family living in a home, supporting each other and being there for each other.”

Dinner and Happiness

When food advocate and chef Tom French asked a student how she felt after his organization, the Experience Food Project, began replacing the bland, processed food in her school cafeteria with fresh, healthy school lunches, he received an unexpected answer.

“She gave it some serious thought,” he told me over the phone. “Then she said, ‘you know, I feel respected.’”

Moments like this make French believe that adults who prepare quality meals for children are offering something more important than a nutrition lesson: They are communicating that they care. This is why the Experience Food Project teaches PTA parents about the importance of prioritizing family meals and helps them schedule the logistics of dinnertime.

French says there are “mountains of statistical data” correlating family dinner with benefits such as better communication, higher academic performance, and improved eating habits. Having dinner together boosts family cohesiveness and is associated with children’s motivation in school, positive outlook, and avoidance of high-risk behaviors. Teens who frequently eat with their families are half as likely to smoke or use pot than those who rarely have family dinners, according to researchers at The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA).

The correlation between family dinner and well-adjusted teens is so strong that CASA launched the first Family Day on September 27, an annual event honoring the family

meal. The day recognizes that “parental engagement fostered during frequent family dinners is an effective tool to help keep America’s kids substance free.”

President Obama officially proclaimed Family Day 2010, noting that it served as an opportunity to “recommit to creating a solid foundation for the future health and happiness of all our nation’s children.”

Communities from all over the country held Family Day celebrations, and some made the event into a week-long affair. Families found creative ways to celebrate each others’ company over food—putting together homemade pizzas, picnicking, doing activities from CASA’s Family Dinner Kit, and eating at restaurants offering discounts for the occasion.

Such events draw attention to the ways in which meals together help families strengthen their relationships, according to Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA Founder and Chairman and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. “The more often teens have dinner with their parents, the more likely they are to report talking to their parents about what’s going on in their lives,” said Califano in a statement to press. “In today’s busy and overscheduled world, taking the time to come together for dinner really makes a difference in a child’s life.”

Family dinner also encourages the development of language skills and emotional intelligence in children. During dinner conversations, children learn how to articulate their feelings and experiences and to communicate respect—whether that means asking politely for a dish or talking about their day at school. Research shows that children who have acquired skills in identifying and expressing emotion and negotiating conflict often experience less distress, have fewer behavior problems, hold more positive attitudes about school, and exhibit better academic performance.

Fusion Cuisine

Finding ways to connect is increasingly important as families become more diverse and must negotiate cultural and generational difference. “People are tired and they are working and they are blending cultures and blending generations,” said French, who grew up in a household with his great-grandmother.

Families of all types benefit from sharing life’s daily ups and downs around the table. In a 2010 study of a group of racially diverse, low-income, urban youth, kids who ate family dinner more frequently had more positive perceptions of their communication with their parents. Extended and blended families may find that dinner solidifies fledgling or fragile bonds. And families that unite multiple cultures can make the sharing of specific traditions and dishes—which, as French puts it, “carry generations of cultural DNA”—into a centerpiece of family bonding.

As Garcia-Prats sees it, dinner is a time when families can celebrate their differences. “We learn diversity appreciation in our homes,” she said. “It’s going to be hard to appreciate someone else’s religion or ethnicity or culture if we haven’t even learned to appreciate the uniqueness of each person in our own family. It’s one of our philosophies: We are 12 unique individuals in this home.”

At dinner, we bridge the gaps between us by sharing our food and the stories of our lives. And the moments we spend together at the table form the basis of something remarkably profound. Call it what you will—sibling bonding, communicating respect, bridging cultures—but at the very least it is, as Garcia-Prats told me, “not just about food.” It is about the way food can connect us. **Y**



Katherine Gustafson is a freelance writer and editor with a background in international nonprofit organizations. She is currently writing a book about sustainable food.

Family Food

My family has always shared meals. So, whenever we are apart, our favorite way of keeping in touch is by texting snapshots of the food we are eating. Even from afar, “eating together” makes us feel closer (and sometimes jealous of each other’s meals)!—*Alexandria Abdallah*

Growing up, my family ate together nearly every night, and we’d linger at the table long after we were done eating. I loved it, but I remember high school friends leaning over to whisper, “Um ... why are we still sitting here?”—*Brooke Jarvis*

Vietnamese fish sauce, nuoc mam, as a secret ingredient in everything, from spaghetti sauce to scrambled eggs!—*Lynn Boland*

Sunday night supper is popcorn, cheese, apples, and juice. A meal an eight-year-old can prepare, so other cooks get a break.—*Loree Monroe*

Blessings and Celebrations

Our family—myself, partner, daughter, three stepsons, ex-partner, partner’s ex-husband, new girlfriend, girlfriend’s daughter, and my mother (11 at the table when all are present for family dinners!) always say a special grace before any meal we are fortunate enough to share. Originated by my partner, my grace calls on each of us to say what we are grateful for, who or what we want to send special energy to, and where we wish for peace. Gratitude, blessings, peace. We share this grace with all who come to

break bread with us. Amazing things happen.—*Jill Bamburg*

My family sings a birthday dirge to the tune of Volga Boatmen (Agony and despair, people dying everywhere ... BUT, Happy birthday). Also, traditional joke with my kids: If you don’t know what to say in Confession, use “I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die.”—*Cathy Sherwin*

relationship really—grow and develop.—*Glen Gersmehl*

We play games at top volume, especially when we have visitors. And we integrate smooching and hugging into every day life.—*Angela Park*

We formed a five-piece orchestra—even the five-year-old plays a part! Beatles to Sousa, we’ll play anything we can.—*“teledyn”*

“My Family Always ...”

YES! staff and friends share their traditions, rituals, habits, and quirks



PHOTO BY RON TECH/ISTOCK

You Had to Be There ...

If anyone gets underwear for Christmas, they have to wear it on their head.—*Kate Elmer*

The first holiday I spent with my partner’s family, I was introduced to raucous late nights of Boggle, cards, trash-talking, laughter, wine-drinking, and cookie-eating. The most unique of the games was invented by my partner and his brother: “flaming midnight croquet,” played only on New Year’s Eve, with a croquet set and luminaria (which invariably catch on

fire).—*Madeline Ostrander*

Before big dinners my great uncle says the prayer in Norwegian then my grandma, aunt, and dad yodel! (I can’t do it yet!)—*Sarah Crumrine*

YesMagazine.org/traditions

More of your rituals, habits, and quirks

Three ways to keep in touch with YES!: Sign up for our email newsletter, “like” YES! Magazine on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter. See yesmagazine.org/feeds-and-community.

We have the “Watterson goodbye” in which we continue waving to leaving visitors until they are literally out of sight.—*David Watterson*

Taking Time

As coordinator of a nonprofit I adjusted my schedule to spend a week-day with my son as he was growing up. We would go down to the shore of Puget Sound and explore. Over the course of hundreds of visits, he got to know one natural environment intimately, and it has been such a joy to watch that understanding—that



Did I Ever Tell You the Story ...?

by Tomas Moniz

MY MOTHER ALWAYS REPEATS THIS STORY to me anytime she knows I'm upset, and especially when I'm struggling with some difficulty within my family. And there seem to be many struggles between raising three teenaged kids and navigating an amicable separation with their mother and balancing the costs of two households with limited income.

My mother repeats:

"I remember when you were just a little baby. So mean and sour. I remember it was this night I was on the Greyhound bus going from El Paso to Albuquerque, and you must have been seven weeks old. It was late at night, and I was exhausted, trying to sleep, and I heard you making these weird, gurgly noises. I had no idea what I was doing with you. No, you were just so strange. I was only 19. So I reached up and turned on that light above the seat. Like a spotlight, it hit your face, and you stopped everything, and you looked right at me, right in the eye. And you smiled. You smiled at me. I loved you right then."

At this point in the story, every time, my mother is in tears.

It used to bother me that she told that same story year after year. "I know, Mom," I'd cut her off, "I smiled at you."

But now I know that story was a way to remind each other of our bond—through difficulties, we share a history.

Now I listen to how she tells it each time differently, what additions she makes, how little things change or take on new meaning. The tenor of her voice, soft like a hymn. I let the

story hit me, making me feel small like that baby, shocked at how vulnerable I feel. I watch my mother's face, the aging lines deeper, the weight around her brow heavier.

I see how I have learned to do the same thing with my children.

When my middle daughter walks in from school, I tackle her onto the couch, telling her how much I love her. We have this game we play. I say, "I love you this much," and measure out a foot or so with my hands, and then she says, "Well, I love you this much," and measures out maybe two feet, and we go on until we can stretch no farther.

After we are done, I ask her about school. In her class they're talking about the enslavement of blacks, about the ways slave traders and slaveowners would break up families, would breed humans. She's horrified.

She asks, "What would you do, Dad? Would you let them take me?"

I sit for a second, trying to imagine. I can't; it's beyond comprehension. So I relate a story. It's the one that the book *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison, is based on.

I tell her about Margaret Garner—when she was about to be returned to slavery, she hid with her children in a toolshed. She then picked up a saw and proceeded to cut off her youngest baby's head. The slaveowners stopped her before she got to the second child. Needless to say, my daughter is horrified.

"Are you kidding?" my daughter says, "Maybe that's too much love."

We sit in silence. I think about what she just said: maybe sometimes as parents we love too much, we try too hard, desperate to do something to keep at bay pain, loss, change.

I realize now—as children grow older and learn to resist you and your values and ideals, like they should—that families, in fact, have to change. But what bridges the divides are the stories, the memories we keep alive.

Later that night, as I tuck my youngest daughter into bed, I ask her, "*Mija*, did I ever tell you the story of when you were sick as a baby?"

I think of my mother. I can taste the importance of the story.

I look down. My daughter rolls her eyes and moans, "Yes—like a thousand times," but she waits for me to continue.

And I do.

I continue to tell the stories.

Tomas Moniz is editor of the zine *Rad Dad*, raddadzone.blogspot.com.

All in the Ohana

HOW HAWAIIANS EMBRACE THE LAND,
ITS ABUNDANCE, AND THEIR
RESPONSIBILITY TO EACH OTHER



Some of the Burgess clan gathered on the family land in Waianae. At left is the tilapia pond, at right is the taro patch—both part of the family. Ned E. and Nora Lee Lo Tung Burgess are shown in the portrait held by Hilda Ku'ulei Haynes. Standing, left to right: Puanani, Poka Laenui, sons La'amea 'o Mauna 'Ala Burgess holding baby Layla and Poha-o-kalani-ku-lanakila-nana-i-ke-kumulipo Yoshiyuki Sonoda-Burgess, Ho'oipo DeCambra, Charlotte Fameitau, Rhonda DeCambra Villanueva, Tiffany Villanueva, Virginia "Pola" Burgess and her son Stephen Burgess.



PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Puanani Burgess as told to Doug Pibel

The Hawaiian culture is one of inclusion. Our language and our processes and our traditions—it's all about trying to make people family. We end up, like I have, with very large families.

Hanai is one of the ways we build family. It started out as a kind of adoption. Traditionally, hanai was first-born children going to be raised by their grandparents. It was a way of making sure the culture survived—that each new generation learned traditions from the generation closest to the source. It wasn't optional for the parents. If the grandparents wanted the child, they got the child.

That still went on, even in my lifetime. My grandmother hanai'd one of my cousins. My aunt didn't want to give up the child, but she felt compelled to, because it was a duty traditionally. But the word means a lot of things now. Hawai'i has many cultures, and they mix together, and words change meanings.

Hanai can also be a lot like adoption. When my father married my mother, she already had a daughter. My father hanai'd her, and she was brought up as much my father's child as I was. He eventually adopted her, but it's different. Adoption is a legal thing—it gives you duties that the law can enforce. Hanai is a *kuleana*—a moral duty. The consequences of breaking a *kuleana* are really worse than breaking a legal duty. You can be shunned, or cursed.

Building Bridges

I think even in traditional times hanai came to be a way of building bridges between families so that there wouldn't be as much animosity when it came to disagreements. If I hanai'd your child into my family, you and I are family now. And so that makes it more difficult for you to come and fight with me. So it was a way of aligning perspectives.

And I think that's partly what my father was doing when he and my mother hanai'd me to my father's

brother when I was eight. My parents were going through hard times, and that was part of it, too. My uncle and aunt didn't have children, so they were in a position to take care of me.

But I think it was also a way for my father to build bridges within his own family. When my dad married my mother, his family didn't approve. My father was Japanese, and when I was born, intermarriage between Japanese and other ethnic groups, especially Hawaiians, was really unpopular. I think my father sent me to live with his brother as a way to try to make peace with his family.

I lived with my Japanese uncle and aunt for three years, and then my parents were able to take care of me again. We moved to Waianae, right around the corner from where I live now. My grandmother had purchased this row of Quonset huts. My family moved into one of the Quonset huts, and all of my aunts and uncles lived in the other ones. So in a little patch of ground, there were about 14 kids. We sort of lived in between each other's porches and houses, and played on the road at night. It was a lovely time. And in my cousins' households, there were lots of hanai kids. And that's another meaning of hanai—the kids go where they need to go, to anyone who can take care of them.

The rule is: you all belong to every one of us. So, if you're doing something naughty, anyone can spank you or yell at you, and unless they do something really horrendous, nobody ever goes back and yells at the adults for doing that. So there was a lot of interchange, and we ate at everybody else's house, and they ate at ours.

Then my mother and grandmother got into an argument, so my grandmother kicked us out. We ended up sharing a house with some cousins. It >>

THERE WERE ABOUT 14 KIDS. WE SORT OF LIVED IN BETWEEN EACH OTHER'S PORCHES AND HOUSES, AND PLAYED ON THE ROAD AT NIGHT. IT WAS A LOVELY TIME.



The new generation:
Layla Ahonui-a-Lanakila Burgess held by
auntie Rhonda DeCambra Villanueva

» was in Damon Tract—a place that was thought of as a ghetto. And, you know, I didn't know that I lived in a ghetto.

There were a lot of us. So some of us, the older ones like me, we had to sleep on benches, and then the smaller kids got the beds. There were a bunch of kids who slept on the bed, and then there were a bunch of us who slept on the floor, or slept on a bench, or we just figured out where to sleep. It was an interesting time of life, and I really remember the good times.

That was my family—or my families—growing up. Family is complicated. Everywhere it's complicated.

My life took a complete turn when I met Poka, who's been my husband for 43 years. I was at the University of

Hawai'i, and a friend of his introduced us. We stood in the hallway of Gartley Hall for four hours, and we just talked. We eventually ended up—in Hawai'i you always end up—talking about “What's your family name?” and “Where'd you grow up?” And it turned out we lived around the corner from each other in Waianae. And that day I knew that we were going to be married.

Poka grew up in a big family—seven boys and one girl. They weren't rich at all, but they owned their land. So they had a stable place to live. When Poka brought me into this family, they really hanai'd me. Just like with adoption, it's more than being an in-law. It's really becoming a member of the family as much as anyone who was born into the family—they know how to bring you into them. I learned how to be a parent, how to be an adult, from the Burgess family. I learned to talk to people; I had people who loved me very openly.

Family Portrait

Now Poka and I are the elders—we live in the same place where he grew up—and we have our own family, both our children and the people we've hanai'd in our own way.

So I was supposed to get my family together for a picture to go with this story in the magazine. That could have been a lot—enough to fill up the yard—because we've been here forever, and we could call about a third of the people in Waianae family. One of the ways that's happened is through aquaculture.

About 20 years ago, a group of us started an economic independence project to give families a way to make money at home—this is not a wealthy town. We reached back to the Hawaiian tradition of aquaculture: Huge fish farms were part of ancient Hawaiian culture. We set people up with fish

tanks in their back yards to grow tilapia. They could eat some and sell some, and both ways they got something they needed: good traditional food and some money for things they had to buy.

We found that setting up the tanks was a bigger job than one family could handle, so in order to participate, three families had to agree to work together. That built bridges within the community and got families working together. And the fish need a lot of attention—raising hundreds of fish in a tank takes constant care. It turned out the people who did that best were children and elders. So it reminded families that those members had something valuable to contribute.

In our family, our fish tank is one way we all stay close. When it's time to harvest the fish, we get together, and we process the fish, and then we have a feast. We harvested just a couple of weeks before we got together for the family picture. All the fish—400 pounds—went to family members.

My elder brother is Haloa—the taro. When we harvest tilapia, we also dig taro to make poi—it's a traditional Hawaiian fish and poi feast. When you eat the taro, you reconnect to the ancestor, all of us who are sharing a bowl of poi. And he's in our family picture, along with our fish tank.

The cooking is done by my sister-in-law, Pola Decambra. She's married to Poka's brother David, who's a chemist. Pola's the most wonderful cook in the world—the Decambras are all great cooks.

Then there's Ho'ipo. She's a Decambra by marriage. When I asked her to be in the picture, she asked me “Can Herbie come?” Herbie passed away, but they were married for 48 years, and she still has this incredibly interesting and vibrant relationship with her

husband, so she wanted to bring his ashes so he could be in the picture.

There's another person like that in the picture, our friend Kenneth. He was a client at our mental health center, and he worked in our yard. Before he died, we asked him where he wanted to be—we invited him to come live at our house. So after he died, we had a ceremony in our back yard, and put his ashes in the ground, and planted a mountain apple tree over him. So we hanai'd Kenneth, and he's next to the fish tank and the taro patch that he helped take care of.

Poka's older sister, Ku'ulei, married Sanford Haines, who's from Alabama, and they lived there for many years. They moved in next door about five years ago. All their children live on the mainland, so we're their local family. Sanford couldn't make it for the picture because he was back in Alabama visiting his family.

Of course, my children are in the picture, except my daughter Pua'Ena F. Burgess. She had to teach the day of the picture, and the gap in the picture is painful for me. She's the closest one in her generation to this land, because she spent a lot of her childhood here. When she was young, I was in college and Poka was in law school, and I guess you could say that Pua'Ena was hanai'd to her grandparents—almost like the traditional hanai.

And Anna couldn't be there. She and my son Mauna 'Ala have given us the new generation in the picture, Layla Ahonui-a-Lanakila Burgess.

I would have liked for my father, Christopher Y. Sonoda, to be in the picture. But he's 85, and although he's very active, he doesn't like coming to the country.

That's just the closest ring of my family. If you add in nieces and nephews and in-laws and their kin, it gets up to 300 pretty quickly. I've been learning about how to make family all my life. It just keeps growing. 🍎

Puanani Burgess is a mediator, poet, community organizer, Zen priest, and YES! board member.

Doug Pibel is managing editor of YES!

Ho'oponopono

How Hawaiian Tradition Sorts Out Family Disputes

Ho'oponopono is a traditional Hawaiian way to make peace in families when there's the kind of conflict that starts with something small and just gets bigger and bigger.

Ho'o is to make. *Pono* is a word that has three layers. The first layer is to behave righteously, with good spirit and good intention. If you do that, the second layer is that you create justice. If you operate with those two layers, you create the innermost layer: hope. So what you do by *Ho'oponopono* is you restore all of those layers, and you restore balance within the *ohana*—the family.

When I was a kid, I went to a *Ho'oponopono* session. My cousin stole a dollar from my aunt's purse and used it to buy candy, and everybody got into a huge flurry about it. My Aunt gave him what we call "dirty lickins"—basically a beating. And then her part of the family starts calling the kid names, and that leads to, "Naturally—he comes from that family over there, you know. They no good, too."

So it was just getting bigger and bigger. Finally somebody said, "I think we need to do *Ho'oponopono* and resolve this."

They asked the pastor of the church that most of us went to, to be the *Kahu*—to be the shepherd through this process. He talked to all the parties of interest to find out what happened from everybody's perspective. He asked everyone, "Are you ready to do *Ho'oponopono*? We're not going to do it until people are ready to be engaged."

So the *Kahu* decides who needs to be there, and people have to agree to come and stay, no matter how long it takes to finish.

Ho'oponopono always includes prayers and exultations. People stay together and rest, and eat, and come back again, and pray, and fast. So it's a whole big deal.

They call it unpeeling the onion, layer by layer. It starts at the surface: This is what happened. Then the *Kahu* will unpeel the layer and begin to explore the different perspectives until we get down to the innermost.

It turns out my cousin was walking home with friends, and they had money for candy. He didn't, and they wouldn't share. He lost face, and he felt shamed. So when he saw my aunt's bag there, he took the dollar, and he bought candy for himself as a way of restoring his pride.

He was sorry, and he understood that what he did was wrong, so he *mihid*—he confessed to it. Then my auntie, who gave him "dirty lickins," also confessed and asked for forgiveness for hitting him so hard. And then other people who said bad things about him started to let go.

Basically, it's a process of forgiveness. You ask forgiveness for the things that you did to make that situation bad.

You feel very relieved when it's over, and once you say the closing prayer, it is done. You're not supposed to talk about that stuff anymore; you're not supposed to hold grudges. It's done, and it's sort of like taking communion: You eat to show that there are no hard feelings anymore. If I can eat with you, then we're back into a relationship again.—*Puanani Burgess*



The Child We Never Had

by Wendy Call

ALL LAST YEAR, OUR NEIGHBOR delivered his toddler daughter to our house several afternoons each week. My partner or I would knock off work early and settle in with Lesley, among piles of wooden blocks, picture books, and Lincoln Logs. Her father rushed off to his 10-hour shift shucking oysters, juliennening carrots, and whipping custard at a downtown restaurant where a dinner costs more than he earns in a day.

For fifteen hours each week, my partner Aram and I practiced parenting, adoring everything about Lesley's two-year-old perfection. We loved feeding her crackers and sliced apples, building the hundredth wood-block tower, encouraging each new word she spoke, accepting the diaper she would hand us when she needed to be changed, and laughing as she barked back at the neighbors' dogs. In the evening, Lesley's mother arrived on the bus from her job at a hotel, and carried that dear toddler home.

Aram and I recently celebrated 16 years of shared life. In all that time, we've never wished to be parents. We began our relationship the same month that four environmental scientists published "The Environmental Consequences of Having a Baby in the United States." For us, that article closed

the discussion. When Bill McKibben published *Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families* a few years later, we shook our heads and thought: "Well, how about none?"

Many of our friends choose to become parents without ever having spent a whole day caring for a child. The choice seems particularly stark: become parents for every minute of every day, or not at all. Caring for children can be overwhelming, lonely, even frightening. Parents weren't meant to go it alone. My partner and I are enormously lucky to parent without becoming parents.

More than a year before Lesley's birth, her parents emigrated from Mexico and became our neighbors. Aram and I speak Spanish (and they spoke no English), so our friendship grew over shared dinners, garden harvests, and walks to the lake. Now, Lesley has caregivers from four different cultures. I grew up in a white, middle-class family on a half-dozen U.S. military bases; Aram, in a middle-class family in Tehran; Lesley's mother, in a rural, peasant family; and Lesley's father, in a working-class, single-parent household in the world's largest city.

Our informal family structure—mother, father, godfather, godmother, daughter—is not some new alternative

CO-PARENTING LESLEY HAS ONLY AFFIRMED OUR DECISION NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN. AS MUCH AS WE ADORE HER, AND AS WILLINGLY AS WE'D TAKE HER IN IF NECESSARY, WE'VE NEVER WISHED SHE WERE OUR CHILD.

but an old tradition. When Lesley could speak just a handful of words, she called all four of us “ama.” It was some amalgam of papa and mama, with an added twist of meaning in Spanish: “she loves.” Aram and I are Lesley’s padrinos. The word translates as “godparents,” but the concept indicates something broader in Mexico. Padrinos are responsible for everything a child’s parents can’t provide, whether that is a well-rounded meal, new clothes, childcare, or a college education. Aram and I have started saving for that last one, though college is still distant. Lesley just started preschool.

Co-parenting Lesley has only affirmed our decision not to have children. As much as we adore her, and as willingly as we’d care for her full-time if necessary, we’ve never wished she were our child. While the arrangement feels natural to us, it often surprises others.

Lesley loves to visit our neighborhood children’s consignment store. Her mother and I both take her there regularly, to replace the clothes she seems to outgrow every six weeks. The owner watched Lesley develop from a smiling baby, riding in a stroller we bought from this shop, into an 18-month-old playing under the clothing racks and shouting “Ama?!” every time she lost track of my legs.

Now Lesley’s a preschooler, and she can jump high enough to see and greet the owner over the counter. On a recent visit, the owner waved back to her and said to me, “Your daughter is so charming!”

“Oh! She’s not my daughter,” I replied. The owner looked surprised. “You’ve met Lesley’s mother; she shops here, too,” I explained. I’ve had variations of this conversation many times—in cafés, at the playground, at the children’s museum. When Lesley’s mother and I are together with her, people often assume I adopted Lesley. They ask

me where Lesley “came from,” expressing surprise when I explain she was born in Seattle, not Guatemala or Peru, and I’m her godmother, not her adoptive mother.

For now, some find it difficult to believe or understand that Lesley’s parents have chosen to share their daughter’s care (and love) with the couple down the street. When they asked Aram and me to be her padrinos, some of their friends—most of whom are Mexican—questioned their decision. How could they trust people so different from them? It’s a fair question. Co-parenting can be complicated.

I’m the only one who refuses to ever slap Lesley on the wrist, though I also have the least patience with the relentlessness of toddler chaos. Her parents expect her to sit still and silent during Mass. Aram and I expect her to play for hours without asking to watch television. Lesley usually meets all our expectations and knows what she can expect from each of us. A book read aloud for the tenth time? Madrina. Kick a ball for an hour? Padrino. A puzzle put together six times in a row? Papa. Quiet cuddling? Mama.

Our friends sometimes tell Aram and me that our co-parenting is “generous.” We don’t see it that way; we’re struck by her parents’ generosity. They trust us with their daughter—usually for five hours at a time but sometimes for five days. They have immigrated to a society that tends to trust institutions more than neighbors. Thousands of miles away from the aunts, uncles, and grandparents who would care for Lesley in Mexico, her parents have chosen to trust us, the people who happen to live down the street.

Co-parenting is an experiment, an endless improvisation, a frequent inconvenience, and an occasional tug of war. So far, our work-in-progress seems to be an unusually adaptable, content, and self-confident 3-year-old.

Wendy Call is a writer, editor, and translator in Seattle. wendycall.com

How to Keep Love

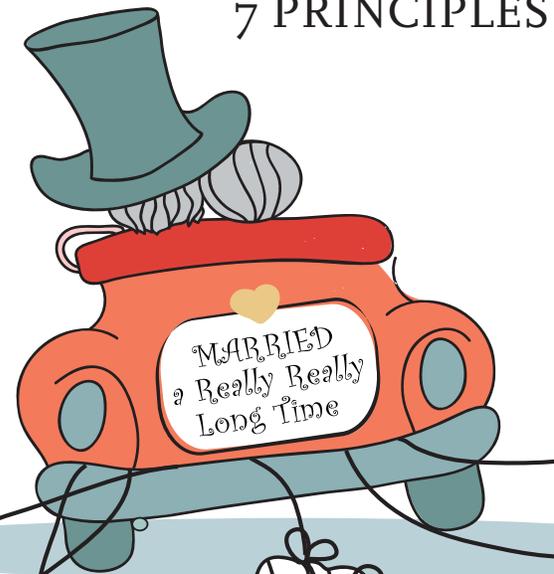
7 PRINCIPLES

John M. and Julie Gottman

Why is marriage so tough at times? Why do some lifelong relationships click, while others just tick away like a time bomb? And how can you prevent a marriage from going bad—or rescue one that already has?

After years of research, we can answer these questions. In fact, we are now able to predict whether a couple will stay happily together after listening for as little as three hours to a conflict conversation and other interactions in our Love Lab. Our accuracy rate averages 91 percent. Gay and lesbian relationships operate on essentially the same principles as heterosexual relationships, according to our research.

But the most rewarding findings are the seven principles that prevent a marriage from breaking up, even for those couples we tested in the lab who seemed headed for divorce.



1

ENHANCE YOUR LOVE MAP

Emotionally intelligent couples are intimately familiar with each other's world. They have a richly detailed love map—they know the major events in each other's history, and they keep updating their information as their spouse's world changes. He could tell you how she's feeling about her boss. She knows that he fears being too much like his father and considers himself a "free spirit." They know each other's goals, worries, and hopes.

2

NURTURE FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION

Fondness and admiration are two of the most crucial elements in a long-lasting romance. Without the belief that your spouse is worthy of honor and respect, where is the basis for a rewarding relationship? By reminding yourself of your spouse's positive qualities—even as you grapple with each other's flaws—and expressing out loud your fondness and admiration, you can prevent a happy marriage from deteriorating.

3

TURN TOWARD EACH OTHER

In marriage people periodically make "bids" for their partner's attention, affection, humor, or support. People either turn toward one another after these bids or they turn away. Turning toward is the basis of emotional connection, romance, passion, and a good sex life.

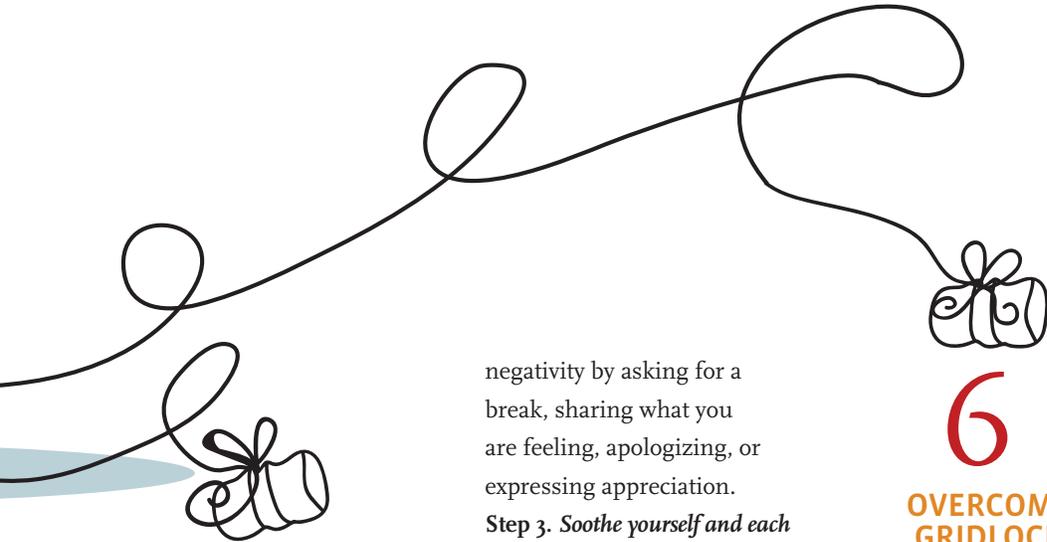
4

LET YOUR PARTNER INFLUENCE YOU

The happiest, most stable marriages are those in which the husband treats his wife with respect and does not resist power sharing and decision making with her. When the couple disagrees, these husbands actively search for common ground rather than insisting on getting their way. It's just as important for wives to treat their husbands with honor and respect. But our data indicate that the vast majority of wives—even in unstable marriages—already do that. Too often men do not return the favor.

Going Strong

ON THE ROAD TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER



5

SOLVE YOUR SOLVABLE PROBLEMS

Start with good manners when tackling your solvable problems:

Step 1. Use a softened startup: Complain but don't criticize or attack your spouse. State your feelings without blame, and express a positive need (what you want, not what you don't want). Make statements that start with "I" instead of "you." Describe what is happening; don't evaluate or judge. Be clear. Be polite. Be appreciative. Don't store things up.

Step 2. Learn to make and receive repair attempts: De-escalate the tension and pull out of a downward cycle of

negativity by asking for a break, sharing what you are feeling, apologizing, or expressing appreciation.

Step 3. Soothe yourself and each other: Conflict discussions can lead to "flooding." When this occurs, you feel overwhelmed both emotionally and physically, and you are too agitated to really hear what your spouse is saying. Take a break to soothe and distract yourself, and learn techniques to soothe your spouse.

Step 4. Compromise: Here's an exercise to try. Decide together on a solvable problem to tackle. Then separately draw two circles—a smaller one inside a larger one. In the inner circle list aspects of the problem you can't give in on. In the outer circle, list the aspects you can compromise about. Try to make the outer circle as large as possible and your inner circle as small as possible. Then come back and look for common bases for agreement.

6

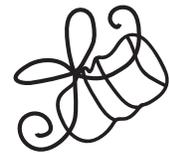
OVERCOME GRIDLOCK

Many perpetual conflicts that are gridlocked have an existential base of unexpressed dreams behind each person's stubborn position. In happy marriages, partners incorporate each other's goals into their concept of what their marriage is about. These goals can be as concrete as wanting to live in a certain kind of house or intangible, such as wanting to view life as a grand adventure. The bottom line in getting past gridlock is not necessarily to become a part of each other's dreams but to honor these dreams.

YesMagazine.org/posters
To order this poster

Adopted from *Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, by John M. Gottman, Ph.D., and Nan Silver, Three Rivers Press, 1999. For further information on practical, research-based relationship tools for couples and therapists, contact The Gottman Institute at gottman.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY IVANA FORGO/ISTOCK AND YES! MAGAZINE



7

CREATE SHARED MEANING

Marriage can have an intentional sense of shared purpose, meaning, family values, and cultural legacy that forms a shared inner life. Each couple and each family creates its own microculture with customs (like Sunday dinner out), rituals (like a champagne toast after the birth of a baby), and myths—the stories the couple tells themselves that explain their marriage. This culture incorporates both of their dreams, and it is flexible enough to change as husband and wife grow and develop. When a marriage has this shared sense of meaning, conflict is less intense and perpetual problems are unlikely to lead to gridlock.

Sex without Jealousy, Love without Ownership

by Jen Angel



EVER SINCE I WAS A TEENAGER, I've questioned the world around me—everything from our car-based culture and corporate food system to my intimate relationships. How can my personal life reflect my political beliefs—autonomy, transparency, respect? How do I work for balanced power dynamics in love, sex, and partnership with other people?

These questions led me to open relationships, or as some people say, “polyamory” or “nonmonogamy.” While a lot of people date multiple people before they decide who they want to be with long-term, being in open relationships means long-term involvement with more than one person at a time. Everyone I know approaches it differently. I've gone through periods of living on my own, living with one of my partners, mainly seeing one person and casually dating on the side, or sometimes “partnering” with two people for a period of time. My longest relationship was six

years—I lived with my partner, and we both dated other people. Right now I often have one person in my life whom I see several times a week, another whom I see less, maybe once a week. I'm involved in both their lives, they know each other, and usually they're dating other people, too.

I constantly challenge my own assumptions about sex, intimacy, and commitment. It's exciting to have the freedom to evaluate each new person who comes into my life and see where that relationship goes on my own terms, terms that I've chosen or negotiated with my partners, rather than limits preset by culture.

I believe open relationships are empowering for everyone, especially women. As I became an adult, the freedom and autonomy I felt in my relationships helped me understand my self-worth as an individual, separate from my partners. I learned to speak up for my needs and desires while respecting others' feelings. I can admit openly that I

like sex and that I think it's fun and interesting to explore that level of intimacy with different people.

To be in healthy, open relationships, I have to understand myself and know what makes me feel loved, valued, and supported. Understanding myself and my needs is key, because when I am getting what I want or need I don't feel jealous or possessive of my partners' other relationships.

Every couple goes through a stage of assessment as you figure out if you want to be together: Do you want to

I CONSTANTLY CHALLENGE MY OWN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SEX, INTIMACY, AND COMMITMENT. IT'S EXCITING TO HAVE THE FREEDOM TO EVALUATE EACH NEW PERSON WHO COMES INTO MY LIFE AND SEE WHERE THAT RELATIONSHIP GOES ON MY OWN TERMS.

live together? Do you want marriage? Children? Many traditional couples feel like they go through this stage at the beginning of their relationship, then settle into a pattern.

In an open relationship, there are additional negotiations: How much do I want to know about what my partners are doing with their other partners? If we live together, how do I feel about those partners hanging out in or having sex in our house? If I were to have children, what relationship would I want my partners and their partners to have with my children?

Each new person who enters or leaves your life requires a new conversation with your partners. Most open couples have clear agreements with each other that help them feel safe and comfortable. They might not be the same agreements that monogamous couples make ("I'm not going to have sex with anyone but you."), but something like, "I want to know you're going to sleep with someone before you do it." Over the years, I've settled on just a few things that are important to me. For instance, "If someone is important to you, I hope you talk to me about them, whether or not you're sleeping together—but I don't really want to hear details about your sex life. And if we go to a party or event and one of our other partners is going to be there, we all know in advance who is going home with whom."

Being "open" is not like being single. When you're single you can choose to sleep with or flirt with whomever

you want. In an open relationship you have boundaries and agreements established with your partners, and your choices also should reflect their needs and desires. It certainly is possible to "cheat" in an open relationship—by going back on an agreement or lying.

As I've learned to negotiate, I've re-examined and rejected some of the attitudes that I saw around me growing up, like the idea that you possess and control your partner—as if dating someone gives you the right to know what they are

doing all the time or to manipulate or coerce them. I believe these behaviors are means of avoiding your own fears and discomfort. When I confront my jealousy, I stop focusing my anger and irritation on, for example, the new person my boyfriend is seeing, and focus on the action causing the problem—maybe we're not spending enough time together.

Separating commitment from sex opens possibilities for different types of long-term or committed relationships and redefines family. There are many people in open relationships who choose to have children. And I know committed nonmonogamous couples, some of whom are married, who don't live together. Or there are couples who have been together for decades who don't have sex with each other any more (and do have sex with others), but still maintain their commitment and intimacy.

Being in open relationships takes a lot of emotional energy. But the self-awareness I bring to each relationship makes me feel authentic. Open relationships are not more politically correct or "hip." They're about choosing what's important to you and working to live, love, process, argue, and be upset in healthy ways that make you feel empowered. Such choices make any relationship—whether open or monogamous—honest and meaningful.

Jen Angel is a contributing editor to YES! and blogs at jenangel.wordpress.com.

YesMagazine.org/angel
How to have an open relationship



Erika Freeman and 2-month-old Riley in their prison room. Bonding with Riley has given Freeman hope for her own future. "It's made all the difference for me."

PHOTOS BY CHERYL HANNA-TRUSCOTT

Raising Babies in Prison

SUPPORTING THE BOND BETWEEN INMATES AND THEIR NEWBORNS
GIVES THESE FAMILIES A BETTER START

Abby Quillen

Like most new moms, Erika Freeman is enchanted by her baby, nine-month-old daughter Riley. She decorated her daughter's room in pink, with pictures of princesses and "Princess Riley" on the wall in block letters. Freeman grins when she talks about her daughter's strong personality. "She wouldn't eat for me. She would only eat if she could hold the spoon. It was everywhere."

In other ways, Freeman has little in common with most new moms. She can't take her daughter to the park or library. She can't take Riley to her grandparents' house, and at certain times of the day, she can't even take Riley down the hall to the bathroom.

Freeman is in prison at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). She is one of 12 low-level, non-violent inmates who are parenting their infants for up to 30 months behind bars in WCCW's Residential Parenting Program (RPP). They live in the J-Unit, a housing complex surrounded by razor-wire fences in the prison's minimum-security wing.

The J-Unit is the sort of facility you'd expect in a prison—with gray walls, pay phones, and locked doors. But the mother-baby pairs have their own rooms, painted in bright colors and furnished with beds, cribs, and rocking chairs. There's a shared kitchen and a cheerful playroom outfitted with couches and bins of toys.

To get into the parenting program, inmates must be pregnant at the time of admittance to WCCW. Any history of violence, crimes against a child, or sexual offenses will bar them from the program. The program is limited to 30 months, so women who will not be released within 30 months of their baby's expected delivery are not eligible. Applicants sit before a screening committee to explain their crimes and why they want to be in the program. The stakes are high. Those who don't get in must relinquish their babies to a family member or foster care within 36 hours of giving birth.

Freeman almost didn't get into the program. Dressed in a gray sweatshirt,

the WCCW inmate uniform, she's a 26-year-old with blue eyes and a dimple when she smiles. She cradles a plastic coffee cup while she talks about the life that led her to prison. "I grew up in a really good home. I didn't do drugs or anything in high school."

After high school, Freeman attended Washington State University and got hooked on OxyContin. She soon moved on to heroin, then meth. Freeman's parents sent her through several treatment programs, but each time she relapsed. After her most recent relapse, she met a group of addicts who taught her how to steal identities and forge checks. Freeman got pulled over while driving, and the police found fake IDs and checks in the car. She was charged with 11 felonies.

"I was pregnant, and I knew I was pregnant, and I was trying to quit the drugs. It's shameful to think about." She checked herself into a drug treatment program for women with high-risk pregnancies and stayed there until she came to prison.

"They classified me into closed custody," she explains. That's the highest level of security at the prison; it's on the other side of two razor-wire fences from the J-Unit. Freeman was put there because there was a felony arrest warrant for her in Oregon. This made her ineligible for the RPP.

"My little window was four inches by 20 inches or something, and I'd just kneel on my bed, and I'd be praying, and I'd look over at this unit, and I'd see the strollers coming up and down. I was eight months pregnant and then I was nine months pregnant," she says.

Four days before Freeman's due date, prison officials notified her that Oregon had dropped her detention order, and she was eligible to get into the RPP. "I fell to my knees and started crying. The guard thought I was going into labor. They put me in my own room and I saw this bassinet and this crib and I couldn't have been happier. It was the best day of my life."

Now Freeman is in therapy, and taking courses on parenting, infant development, and healthy relationships.

She's studying cosmetology, and has books on business plans stacked next to her bed. She's determined to live differently when she leaves prison.

Sonja Alley, the supervisor of the program, works in an office scattered with toys and adorned with pictures of babies who've lived in the unit. She says she's witnessed countless inmates change after having a baby.

Although most of the women in the RPP already have children on the outside, Alley says their previous parenting experiences were different. "This is really a first-time mother-child relationship sober, so it's more meaningful than if you're on the streets and drugged up or abusing alcohol or not in a good social environment. You see offenders who prior to having a baby may have been kind of problematic, and after they have their child, something happens and they change."

Some mothers in the J-Unit form close friendships. Living quarters are tight, and they share difficult and joyous moments of their lives. They participate in moms' groups together, take parenting classes together, and play with each other's babies. Freeman explains that some inmates at WCCW designate family roles to these supportive relationships, like "mothers," "sisters," and "brothers."

Some prison nursery programs discourage inmates from forming these kinds of close, family-like relationships, because officials fear that forming friendships with other women with drug or criminal histories will negatively influence an inmate's rehabilitation. But Marie-Celeste Condon, who is studying the women and babies in the RPP for her doctoral dissertation says, "Our data is showing the opposite. What we're finding is that people do change and are capable of persevering in incredible odds, and they need the support of other people."

Statistics show that the majority of women who go through the RPP successfully remake their lives. The program's recidivism rate—released inmates who end up back in prison—is 12 percent, compared to 40 percent >>

STATISTICS SHOW THAT THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN SUCCESSFULLY REMAKE THEIR LIVES. THE PROGRAM'S RECIDIVISM RATE IS 12 PERCENT, COMPARED TO 40 PERCENT FOR THE GENERAL PRISON POPULATION.



PHOTO BY CHERYL HANNA-TRUSCOTT
PROTECTIVECUSTODY.ORG

YesMagazine.org/purdy

Photo essay of the Purdy prison nursery program by Cheryl Hanna-Truscott. Above, Misty at 9 months pregnant.

» for the general WCCW population. Rehabilitating inmates and reducing recidivism are important goals of the corrections system, but the RPP's main focus is on the babies.

The prison system divides and breaks down families. When a parent goes to prison, families often suffer financial hardship, become socially isolated, and break up. Sometimes family members can't visit inmates, because they are in prisons in remote areas inaccessible by public transportation.

More than two million American children have a parent in prison. These kids frequently grapple with depression, hyperactivity, aggression, withdrawal, regression, clinginess, sleep problems, eating disorders, truancy, poor grades, and drug abuse. Older female children are more likely to be teen mothers, and boys have a higher

incidence of juvenile delinquency. A report by the Department of Human Services says children of prisoners are "seven times more likely to go to jail than children whose moms or dads have not served time behind bars."

"We're really trying to stop that cycle," explains Alley.

Infants may face even worse odds than most children of inmates if they don't get the opportunity to bond with their mothers. A body of research, commonly referred to as attachment theory, shows that a secure attachment between mother and baby in the first years of life lays the groundwork for a child's further development.

"Everything babies learn about themselves, relationships, and the world is learned from the perspective of their early attachment relationships," explains Condon, a specialist in infant

mental health and development.

This is what prompted the Washington Department of Corrections to start the RPP in 1999. The hope was that supporting the bonds between inmates and their newborns would give some of the most vulnerable children of inmates a better start in life. The prison's Early Head Start center is where the babies stay while their moms are in class or working. The center's developmental assessments show that babies thrive in the program.

Condon has plans for a longitudinal study of the mothers and babies in the program, to measure how babies like Riley fare as they get older.

Freeman doesn't need the research to convince her of the RPP's merits. "This program has been such a blessing," she says. "Riley is absolutely thriving, ever since the beginning. She's very interested, very observant and outgoing."

Bonding with Riley has given Freeman hope for her own future. "Sometimes I just come to tears thinking, 'How could I love someone so much?' It's made all the difference for me." She's on the council of a group called The Village, which creates supportive relationships between inmates, and plans to use what she's learned after release.

"I want to start an organization to help girls not end up where I did," says Freeman. She hopes to visit juvenile detention facilities, treatment centers, and schools to talk to young girls and provide support and mentors.

"Someone told me one time not to waste good pain. I think I've had enough, and I think I have enough to benefit other people." Most importantly, Freeman says, "I just want to be the best mom I can be."



Abby Quillen is a freelance writer in Eugene, Oregon. She blogs at newurbanhabitat.com.



Becoming Abuelita

by Allison Green

WHEN I MET MY PARTNER, Arline, I was 35 and had no children. She was 45 and had three children, with her ex-husband, and five grandchildren. The oldest grandchild was 8 when we met. “Nice to meet you, Gabi,” I said. We were in a kitchen but no food was cooking.

“¿Quieres frijoles?” he asked. “Want beans?” I guess he was trying out my Spanish. Monolingual and white, I didn’t have any.

Seven months into our relationship, Arline and I attended Memito’s birth. Two months later, Serafina’s. Another year and we were speeding to the hospital to greet Leticia.

In the several years before another child was born, I stopped referring to the grandchildren as Arline’s, but I couldn’t quite refer to them as mine. “We have grandchildren,” I could say, but, “This is my granddaughter,” I could not. When some of the parents referred to me, as they did to Arline, as *abuelita*, “grandma,” I was delighted.

One day Arline commented that 4-year-old Tatiana had her grandmother’s nose. But Tatiana called her paternal grandmother “Nana,” and didn’t know who Arline meant. Tatiana frowned, then turned to me: “I have your nose!”

We become grandmothers when our grandchildren

bestow the title. Grandchildren conjure grandmothers; we don’t otherwise exist.

Four more grandchildren were on their way. My mother shook her head—how did this childless one end up with so many grandchildren? She didn’t have any. She took to calling our black lab her “granddog.” This, Serafina understood. One day at the park, she asked why our dog was so hot. “Because he’s wearing his fur coat,” I said.

“Where did he get it?” she asked.

“He was born with it.”

She squinted at me: “When he was in your tummy?”

Arline had no trouble acknowledging my relationship with the grandchildren, but she wasn’t so keen on taking on the traditional grandmother role herself. She was now enjoying the freedom to spend her time in adult company. In contrast, I was enamored with the little ones and dragged her to all their birthday celebrations.

I finally realized that my ambivalence about pronouns was not new. There had been a time I slid “he” over “she” to disguise the truth about my relationships with women. Now I was doing something similar with “we” and “my.” So I made the decision to claim these bonds out loud. I practiced: “my granddaughters, my grandchildren, my grandson.” People sometimes look confused when I introduce grandchildren who are clearly too old to be mine biologically, but my confidence gives no room for them to question the legitimacy of our family. My joy and pride in introducing them feels purer now, less encumbered.

A few years ago, at the fifth-grade open house, students stood beside posters from a class project about family trees and ancestry. I leaned into Tatiana’s poster: photos of her mother, a hand-drawn map of Panama, and a diagram of her family. Tatiana had drawn a center circle to represent herself. A vertical line led to her parents and another from her mother to Arline. A horizontal line broken by a slash led from Arline to her ex-husband. On the other side of Arline’s circle, an unbroken line led to me.

Allison Green is a writer and a community college English teacher in Seattle.

YesMagazine.org/family-stories

More essays on what makes a family



Real Family Values

9 WAYS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES IN HARD TIMES

Sarah van Gelder

SAFEGUARD OUR HOMES

Every family needs a place to live. When banks use our homes and mortgages to make bets in the global casino, we wind up with predatory lending, financial bubbles, crashes, and foreclosures.

Shared Equity Home Ownership is a way to make homes permanently affordable. Community groups or local agencies invest in homes and share the equity with homeowners. When a homeowner sells, the agency shares in any gain, recycling the funds to keep homes permanently affordable. The foreclosure rate in Community Land Trusts, one example of this model, is 1/8th the national rate.

Protect families from foreclosures by allowing judges to modify unaffordable loans.

CREATE JOBS

Government stimulus spending should be aimed at a recovery that can support families, communities, and the natural environment. Green and locally based jobs are our best bets.

Fund job programs that create and retain jobs at the local level. Give preference to communities with high unemployment and to green jobs.

Increase the minimum wage so that those who work can support their families and increase local economic activity. (In most of northern Europe, the minimum wage is \$12 an hour or more.) And end pay discrimination against women, people of color, and single moms.

PROTECT VULNERABLE FAMILY MEMBERS

Many families care for disabled children and spouses and elderly parents. Here are ways we can support them.

Protect Social Security from those who would like to cut it to pay for tax cuts for the rich.

Help the elderly and disabled live at home by financing upgrades that make homes more accessible and weatherproof.

Provide full VA benefits and protection from job discrimination for veterans with PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and other disabilities. Support community-based centers with services and mutual support for veterans.

Support home caregivers through tax credits, payments toward their Social Security, and respite services.

BALANCE WORK & LIFE

Time is essential to good family life. Children, couples, and elders need companionship, vacations, and time to respond to life's crises. In Europe, workers have at least four weeks paid vacation, and in Germany and the Netherlands, they have the right to switch to part-time hours.

Make part-time schedules available with equal (pro-rated) wages, benefits, and opportunities for promotion. Part-time work spreads jobs and income around and allows time for family.

Make paid sick leave available to all, and allow parents to use it to care for ill family members. Give both parents paid leave following the birth or adoption of a baby.

Guarantee paid vacation for all workers.



ILLUSTRATION BY DRAFTER123/ISTOCK AND YES! MAGAZINE

GIVE KIDS A BREAK

One in five children live in poverty in the United States. Many children attend failing and even dangerous schools. Our kids deserve better.

Fully fund Head Start and K-12 education. And give kids opportunities for exercise, art, music, and self-expression—don't let tests rule.

Strengthen community colleges and the Pell Grant system so all qualified young people can go to college and contribute to the future of their families and our nation.

End the "cradle-to-prison pipeline" through local collaborations that intervene when young people get into trouble. The funds saved by lowering the rate of juvenile detention can be invested in substance-abuse treatment and education.

Protect our kids from advertising, especially in schools, that promotes an unhealthy, consumer-oriented lifestyle.

PROTECT OUR HEALTH

Health and health care costs are big worries for American families.

Extend Medicare to everyone 55 and older, to pregnant mothers, and to children. Better yet, extend Medicare to all.

End tax write-offs for advertising fatty, sugary foods that are making Americans sick.

Fully fund domestic violence shelters, which are in high demand during the recession.

Protect families from exposure to cancer-causing contaminants. Use precautionary regulation, which forces manufacturers to prove chemicals are safe before putting them in our homes, workplaces, and schools, instead of the current approach, which puts the burden on consumers or regulators to prove harm. Give special attention to vulnerable groups—like children, farmworkers, and those in cancer "hot spots."

Fund research into safe alternatives to toxic chemicals.

TAX FAIRLY

Making our tax system more equitable could bring down the deficit; sustain family-friendly local, state, and federal government programs; and help reduce vast inequality, which threatens the health of all families, rich and poor.

Make the first \$20,000 of income free from payroll taxes. Make up for it by applying payroll taxes to incomes above \$250,000. Tax capital gains at the same rate as other income. Under President Eisenhower, the top marginal rate was 91 percent; today, it is just 35 percent.

Bring Back the Estate Tax on estates over \$2 million (\$4 million for a couple).

Close offshore tax havens that corporations use to hide profits and evade at least \$100 billion in taxes each year. Share the revenues with struggling state and local governments for programs that support family well-being.

PROTECT OUR FUTURE

Our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren deserve to inherit vibrant ecosystems, a strong democracy, and opportunities for a good life.

Transition to renewable, clean energy. Invest massively in energy efficiency. Build infrastructure—like bike lanes and efficient transit—that makes sense in a time of energy constraints and climate disruption.

Free elections from wealthy special interests. Start by overturning the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts on campaigns.

End subsidies to Wall Street. Invest in local jobs and sustainable communities.

Protect our heritage of diverse species and healthy habitats.

SUPPORT MARRIAGE

Make marriage available to all committed couples, gay or straight.

Hospital visits, family leave to care for an ill partner, spousal health care, and pension benefits should be available to both straight and gay couples.

Reform immigration law and stop separating families through detention and deportation.

Researched by Alyssa Johnson, Tiffany Ran, and Sarah van Gelder
Citations and resources
yesmagazine.org/agenda56

The Good Life? It's Close to Home

REBUILDING FAMILIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS
AROUND THE GIFTS EACH OF US OFFERS



PHOTO BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS LEBLANC



PHOTO BY SILVIA MORARA



[YesMagazine.org/
humanity](http://YesMagazine.org/humanity)

Photos from the book *Humanity: A Celebration of Friendship, Family, Love & Laughter*. The book represents 150 winning entries from a worldwide photo competition.

John McKnight and Peter Block

When family members do not work or live well together we sometimes call the family dysfunctional. We prescribe professional help for the family or advocate for social policies that would support it—child care, parental leave, extended unemployment insurance, debt forgiveness.

But the real challenge to the family is that it has lost its job. The functions of the family have been outsourced. The problem is not dysfunction—that's just a side effect. The problem

is non-function, and this has much to do with the growth of the consumer society.

The End of the Functional Family

Consumer society has put an end to the functional family. We normally think of consumerism as buying stuff we want but don't need, but it runs deeper than that. The essential promise of consumerism is that all of what is fulfilling or needed in life can be purchased—from happiness to healing, from love to laughter, from

raising a child to caring for someone at the end of life. What was once the task of the family and the neighborhood is now outsourced. Aunt Martha is forgetful? Little Arthur is restless? Get them a diagnosis and a prescription. In this simple act, we stop being citizens—we become consumers.

The cost of our transformation into consumers is that the family has lost

communities are no longer able to support the family in its efforts. In most cases, we are disconnected from our neighbors and isolated from our communities. The community and neighborhood are no longer competent.

A competent community provides a safety net for the care of a child, attention and care for the vulnerable, the means for economic survival for

are not raised by a village. Instead, they are raised by teachers and counselors in school, youth workers and coaches out of school, juvenile therapists and corrections officials if they are deviant, television and computers and cell phones if they have spare time, and McDonald's if they are hungry. What this means is that the space that the family and neighborhood once filled has been sold and is now filled with paid professionals, electronic toys, and marketing.

Until the 20th century, the basic idea in rearing children was that they become effective grownups by connecting with productive adults and learning from them the community's skills, traditions, and customs. Youth learned from the community and had jobs to do: caring for the elderly and young, doing errands for the household, working on machines, helping with food. When they became adults, they were equipped to care both for the next generation and for those who had cared for them.

What we now know is that the most effective local communities are those where neighborhoods and citizens have reclaimed their traditional roles. The research on this point is decisive. Where there are "thick" community connections, there is positive child development. Health improves, the environment is sustained, and people are safer and have a better local economy. The social fabric of neighborhood and family is decisive.

Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods

Creating a more community-based way to live and find satisfaction, even when surrounded by a consumer culture, requires only that we act as if each of us has what we need. We have the gifts, structures, and capacities to substitute for our habit of consumption. We can decide to shift our attention toward building the functions of our family and neighborhood.

Here is a story of how this works, drawn from the real-life experiences of»

its capacity to manage the necessities it traditionally provided. We expect the school, coaches, agencies, social workers, probation officers, sitters and day care to raise our children. The family, while romanticized and held as a cultural ideal, has lost its function as the primary place to raise children, sustain health, care for the vulnerable, and ensure economic security.

The Rise of Neighborhood Incompetence

The neighborhood has also lost its function. Our neighborhoods and

the household, and many of the social tools that sustain health. The community, particularly the neighborhood, has the potential to provide the extended support system to help the family in all these key functions. The usefulness that used to reside in the neighborhood is now provided by the marketplace.

Outsiders Raising Children

"It takes a village to raise a child" is an African saying repeated as a matter of faith by American leaders of all persuasions. Yet most of our children



PHOTO BY ALICIA HANSEN

» families from neighborhoods around the world that we have worked with.

Naomi Alessio and Jackie Barton were walking through the neighborhood, talking about being overwhelmed with work, meals, lessons, school, and especially the kids. Except, Naomi noted, her son Theron had begun to turn around.

Last summer, when Theron looked through the open door of the metal-working shop Mr. Thompson had set up in his garage, the old man invited him in. Something clicked. Theron

Wilt, Mark Sutter, and Sonny Reed—joined Naomi, Jackie, and Mr. Thompson in finding out what the kids on the block were interested in learning.

When they got together after interviewing the kids, Mark talked about a boy he met who knew about computers. Why not ask all the kids what they knew about? Then they could match adults to the kids, just as they planned to match up the kids with the grown-ups. When they were done, they found they had 22 things the young people knew that might interest some adults

for 74 years. The Matchmakers got two neighborhood teenagers, Lenore Manse and Jim Caldwell, to write down her stories about the neighborhood and post them on the website.

Then Lenore decided to write family histories for everyone on the block, and persuaded Jim and her best friend, Lannie Eaton, to help her record the histories and round up photos to go along with them.

Charles Wilt suggested a way for the Matchmakers to welcome newcomers to the neighborhood and begin to con-

CREATING A MORE COMMUNITY-BASED WAY TO LIVE AND FIND SATISFACTION, EVEN WHEN SURROUNDED BY A CONSUMER CULTURE, REQUIRES ONLY THAT WE ACT AS IF EACH OF US HAS WHAT WE NEED.

began to stop by every day, and he started bringing home metal pieces he'd learned to make.

Naomi could see Theron change. He was proud of what he made—Mr. Thompson even paid him to make a few things. Naomi said she'd finally stopped worrying about what Theron was doing after school. Jackie admitted that her son Alvin was in trouble, and she asked Naomi if there might be someone in the neighborhood whose skills would interest Alvin.

They knew that Gerald Lilly was into fishing, and that Sam Wheatley was a saxophonist, but that was about it. They decided to ask all the men in the neighborhood about their interests and skills. Mr. Thompson agreed to go with them.

It took three weeks to visit all the men on the block. When they were done, they were amazed at what they had found: men who knew juggling, barbecuing, bookkeeping, hunting, haircutting, bowling, investigating crimes, writing poems, fixing cars, weightlifting, choral singing, teaching dogs tricks, mathematics, praying, and how to play trumpet, drums, and sax. They found enough talent for all the kids in the neighborhood to tap into. Three of the men they met—Charles

on the block.

The six neighbors named themselves the Matchmakers and, as they got more experience, they began to connect neighbors who shared the same interests. The gardeners' team shared growing tips and showed four families how to create gardens—even on a flat rooftop! Several people who were worried about the bad economy created a website where neighbors who knew about available work could post job openings. To give it some flair, they found people in the neighborhood to take photos for the site and gradually opened it up for all sorts of neighborhood uses.

Jolene Cass, for instance, posted one of her poems on the website and asked if there were other poets on the block. It turned out there were three. They began to have coffee, share their writing, and post their poems online.

Eleven adults and kids formed the Block Band, and neighborhood singers formed a choir led by Sarah Ensley, an 80-year-old woman who'd been singing all her life.

Charles Dawes, a police officer, formed a team of adults and young people to make the block a safe haven for everyone.

Libby Green had lived on the block

nect them with their neighbors: give them a copy of the block history and get information about the new family's history, skills, and interests.

Three years later, at the annual block party, Jackie Barton summed up what the neighborhood had accomplished:

“What we have done is broken all the lines. We broke the lines between the men. We broke the lines between the women. Then the lines were broken between the men and the women. And best of all, the lines were broken between the adults and the children and between all of us and our seniors. All the lines are broken; we're all connected. We're a real community now.”

Seeing the Abundance in the Neighborhood

The story has the elements of what we can call a competent neighborhood. Creating competence starts with making visible the gifts of everyone in the neighborhood—the families, the young people, the old people, the vulnerable people, the troublesome people. Everyone. We do this not out of altruism, but to create the elements of a satisfying life.

This thickens the social fabric. It makes the community's gifts more

5 Questions to Awaken Your Functional Family

The path to restoring function to the family in a citizen society, not a consumer society, is quite simple. It begins with five questions:

1

What functions can we put back into the hands of young people? Whether they are our kids or a neighbor's, how do we help them be useful? Can we have them teach the Internet to seniors? Can we hold gatherings where they learn about music, painting, or poetry from artistic neighbors? Which neighbors can help them learn about carpentry, wallpapering, cooking, auto and small engine repair, house painting, making videos, pruning trees, talking to the elderly, sewing?

2

What does each person do to support the household economy? Reduce or stop certain purchases? Part-time jobs? Could we grow our own food? Support clothing exchanges? Contact merchants and neighbors to find local sources of income? Start a home-based business? What would it take for all members to be financially literate, know what a budget is, comparison shop, monitor income and expenses? How could we reinstitute savings as an economic good and debt as something to be reduced to zero?

3

How does this family care for those who are vulnerable? Who is good at listening? Are there people in the neighborhood who are lonely and can be introduced to one another? What do people on the margin in the neighborhood like to do? How do we find this out? Who in our family struggles, and what support do they need from all of us?

4

How can we begin to entertain ourselves? Which black boxes are sucking the life out of the family? How do we spend our evenings? Is there anything we do together on a regular basis? What can we do that could replace the electronic boxes? Anyone for slow food?

5

What do we do to protect the environment and our health? What is our commitment to eliminating waste? What food can we eat that is local and consciously grown? How do we reduce packaging when we buy things? Can we walk or bike instead of drive? How do we eat healthy food and track our own health? Who around us has traditional wisdom about health?

These are a few samples of ways to begin developing a new family narrative that offers the satisfaction of usefulness. Taken to heart, these questions build neighborhood competence and give us tools that cannot be purchased from professional service providers. This restoration of the power of citizens living in concert might also be good for the soul and for our democracy, but those are another story.

widely available in support of the family. If we do it, even in small way, we find that much of what we once purchased is at hand: carpentry, Internet knowledge, listening, driving a truck, math, auto repair, organizing ability, gardening, haircutting, wallpapering, making videos, babysitting, house painting, accounting, soccer coaching, artistic abilities, cooking, fitness knowledge, sitting with the old or the ill, health remedies, sewing. And some of those things will come from the elderly, the young, the isolated, and the unemployed.

With the consciousness of our gifts and the ability to connect them and make them practical and usable, we experience the abundance of a community.

These local connections can give the modern family what the extended family once provided: A place with a strong culture of kin, friends, and neighbors. Together we raise our children, manage health, support local enterprise, and care for those on the margin.

When we become competent again and have families reclaim their functions, we see emerging from our community culture those essential qualities of a satisfying life: kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, and the ability to live with our common fallibilities. These will all be given a home and nurtured by families who have reclaimed their function. ♣

John McKnight and **Peter Block** are the co-authors of *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010). abundantcommunity.com

McKnight is a community organizer and emeritus professor of education and social policy and co-director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University. He is co-author of *Building Communities from the Inside Out* and author of *The Careless Society*.

Block is a citizen of Cincinnati, Ohio. He is a partner in Designed Learning, and is on the Board of Cincinnati Public Radio and Elementz, a local Hip Hop Center for Youth. He is the author of *Flawless Consulting, Stewardship, The Answer to How Is Yes, and Community: The Structure of Belonging*.

FROM THE PUBLISHER



THE TRULY GOOD NEWS IS THAT, OVER THE NEARLY 15 YEARS SINCE YES! WAS FOUNDED, THE NUMBER OF POSITIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES HAS EXPLODED.

Change Comes From You and Me

If you're like me, you are struggling to see how our country and the world will ever dig out of the multiple messes we've made. How will we untangle Wall Street's outrageous financial shenanigans? Or roll back the levels of CO₂ we are pumping into our precious Earth's atmosphere? Or get out of our unending wars?

I rise above my despair by returning to my profound belief in the power of people like you and me to make change. I see, for example, the local food revolution taking hold in so many communities. That revolution has huge implications for rejuvenating community life, making us healthier, and weaning us all, just a bit, off the global economy. Which reminds me of where change starts—with us.

That's why in YES! Magazine we give a lot of space to what people are doing in their communities. Our goal is to build the momentum of those actions until the shifts grow from place to place into a whole new way of living.

That goal is based on the strategic premises that motivated the founding of YES! Magazine back in 1996. I found these ideas so powerful that I left my position at the Ford Foundation in New York to join this fledgling organization. Let me share them with you.

The first is that our society is on an unsustainable path. We knew back then what is so clear now—that we are hitting walls environmentally, socially, and economically. We also knew that reforms at the margins will not do the trick. The problems are too big. What we need is deep change.

The second is that deep change will not come from the top. Economic and political leaders can tweak the system but are too embedded in existing institutions to bring about the level of change that is needed. Big shifts must come from people like you and me—ordinary citizens, unencumbered by entrenched interests. We are free to look at problems as they truly are, imagine different ways of doing things, and work together to live them into being.

The third premise is that the needed changes are already happening in communities in this country and around the globe. It is hard to see those actions as a serious force because they are generally ignored in the mainstream press, the dominant political discourse, and nowadays even the blogosphere and social media.

So what is needed is a way to heighten the visibility of those actions, knit them together to show their

significance, and invite others to join. That's what YES! was founded to do.

The truly good news is that, over the 15 years since YES! was founded, the number of positive, community-based initiatives has exploded. In fact there are so many stories to report that we now post every day on the YES! website and never run out of material.

The other news that is deeply satisfying is that you, our dear readers, tell us how much encouragement you get from YES!—that it helps you know you are not alone and that your efforts can add up to real change.

So in spite of very real crises on every side, I take heart. Deep change is coming. The work you are doing to build momentum at the grassroots can make all the difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fran".

Fran Korten, Publisher

P.S. Want to make sure the YES! stories of grassroots change reach millions of people? You can. Go to yesmagazine.org/donate and make a tax-deductible donation. And during this holiday season, give gifts of YES! We are nonprofit, independent, and reader-supported. We depend on you.



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YES! Magazine is published by the Positive Futures Network, an independent, nonprofit organization supporting people's active engagement in creating a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. The work of the Positive Futures Network is to give visibility and momentum to signs of an emerging society in which life, not money, is what counts; in which everyone matters; and in which vibrant, inclusive communities offer prosperity, security, and meaningful ways of life.

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At YES! we work with hundreds of organizations that are building a just and sustainable world. We develop partnerships with some to help us reach more people. Here are four partner organizations whose work we think you'll want to know about.



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SHAREABLE is a nonprofit online magazine that tells the story of sharing. *Shareable* covers the people, places, and projects bringing a shareable world to life, including how-tos so you can make sharing real in your life. Shareable writes about community efforts like clothing swaps, childcare co-ops, potlucks, carsharing, and cohousing, which make life more fun, green, and affordable. shareable.net



PROJECT HAPPINESS began as a film project and developed into a nonprofit organization, dedicated to giving young people the skills to generate their own happiness from within. With the 195-page *Project Happiness Handbook* and innovative curriculum featuring over 70 interactive activities, it mixes the best from the Science of Happiness with insights by kids for kids. projecthappiness.com



TAKE BACK YOUR TIME is a major U.S./Canadian initiative to challenge the epidemic of overwork, overscheduling, and time famine that threatens our health, our families and relationships, our communities, and our environment. October 24 is celebrated annually as Take Back Your Time Day. timeday.org

YES! PICKS ::

Things To Do, Places To Go

No Impact Week

January 3-7, nationwide. The No Impact Experiment is a one-week carbon cleanse—a chance to see what a difference no-impact living can have on your quality of life. YES! will be participating, too. Watch for blogs and multimedia documenting the fun—and we want your stories as well! noimpact.org

New Partners for Smart Growth

February 3-5, in Charlotte, N.C. Join leaders from multiple disciplines exploring smart-growth solutions for reducing dependence on foreign oil, creating a green economy, assuring a healthy population, fostering more equitable development, and expanding transportation and housing options for all Americans. newpartners.org

Nonprofit Technology Conference

March 17-19, in Washington, D.C. More than 1,400 nonprofit leaders will attend this annual gathering hosted by the Nonprofit Technology Network, a collegial, skill-sharing group of tech enthusiasts, using technology to help nonprofits work with greater social impact. nten.org/ntc

ReVisioning Value

March 21-22, in Portland, Ore. Join experts in finance, social innovation, civic leadership, and education, with a passion for financing change through social investing. revisioningvalue.org

YesMagazine.org/events
For an expanded listing of upcoming events



YES! BUT HOW?

IF YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR PRACTICAL WAYS TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY, JUST ASK US.

Send questions to YES! But How?, 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to editors@yesmagazine.org

NIT PICKING

I don't want to treat my child's head lice with insecticides that may be neurotoxins. Is there a natural way to treat head lice?

There is—thank goodness, since health professionals are seeing head lice that are resistant to commonly used insecticides. There is even a new pill on the market for resistant infestations.

Children in school are more likely than adults to catch head lice, and may need multiple treatments for resistant lice or recurring infestations. Going the natural route is a safe alternative that is recommended by community health professionals and is four times more effective than over-the-counter insecticide treatments.

The natural treatment for head lice requires an understanding of the head louse life cycle. During the mating stage, female lice lay eggs, called nits, that are glued to the base of the hair and require body heat for incubation. Nits hatch into nymphs that become adults in about seven days.

Natural treatments done thoroughly through repeated cycles will eliminate head lice—without poisons.

• It's most effective to treat someone who is sitting down,

so you can easily reach all around the head. Sitting in the bathtub, or in a chair with a towel around the shoulders is most comfortable.

• Slather wet hair from root to tip with any kind of thick conditioner until every strand is heavily saturated. Conditioner smothers and immobilizes the head lice and makes it easy to comb through the hair.

• Remove conditioner and head lice by combing small sections of hair from root to tip with a lice comb. Inspect the comb as you go along and rinse away any lice caught in it.

• Rinse off any remaining conditioner.

• Combing with conditioner doesn't kill nits, so repeat every three to four days to catch newly hatched nymphs.

It takes three treatments to end an infestation. Between treatments, do nightly wet or dry brushing or combing. This breaks the lice's legs and prevents them from feeding, eliminating ones that hatch between conditioner treatments. Remember: "break their legs so they don't lay eggs."

Head lice can live for up to two days without a blood source. Personal possessions that touch the head like pillowcases, hats, and hair accessories should be washed or kept in a tightly sealed container for longer than two days.—T.R.

Our Issue 56 researchers

Tiffany Ran hopes that her bunny, Gloomy, will be a coverboy for YES! Magazine. She plans a career of cooking, writing, and being stage mom to the most famous bunny in the world. **Alyssa Johnson** is enjoying her first attempt at professional journalism, and hopes to continue doing work that involves making a better world.



PHOTO BY ALEXANDRIA ABDALLAH

Alyssa Johnson

Tiffany Ran

FLAKE OFF

I like natural products, but I have dandruff. How do I get rid of it without chemicals?

If you have dandruff, you may have *Malassezia* on your head. That's a yeast-like fungus that lives on the scalp. Stress, illness, hormones, or a buildup of oil can cause it to grow out of control, irritating the skin and causing cells to die faster than normal. The cells clump together and fall off in visible flakes. Since *Malassezia* feeds on oil, washing more often helps keep it in check. Zinc pyrithione is an anti-fungal used in many anti-dandruff

shampoos to attack *Malassezia*. Instead, try diluted oil of rosemary or tea tree, both of which have natural anti-fungal properties.

Dandruff is not always caused by *Malassezia*. The things that cause *Malassezia* infections can also cause dandruff on their own, as can dry skin. To keep the skin cell turnover on your scalp in balance, take care of yourself, eat foods with vitamins B and C and healthy fats, and get a bit of sunshine. Shampoo more often if your hair is oily, and cut down on styling products. Try these things, and your dandruff may go away without any treatment at all.—A.J.

YES! BUT HOW? ::

(Gift) Bag Your Calendar



You will need: a calendar, scissors, glue, hole punch, and ribbon or cord.

Remove two pictures from your calendar. The pages should be the same size. You may also want to choose pictures with similar symmetry—both centered or slightly to the right or left. This will help preserve the central focus of the pictures as you fold them.

Choose which picture you like better, and imagine the picture cut in thirds vertically. Approximately two thirds will form the front, and the remaining third will form a side. The thirds do not have to be exact. Crease that picture where you have decided to divide the front and side, then unfold. Use the fold you have made as a guide to make the exact same fold for the other picture.

Turn both pages picture side down, with the hole at the top. On both pages, fold down the top edge of the picture side about a half-inch onto the calendar side. The resulting flap will form a neat edge on the bag opening.

Repeat the same fold along the right side edge of each page. Make sure the resulting flap is the same size and on the same side of both calendar pictures. Place one page on top of the other so that the bottom picture is face down and top picture is face up. Keeping all flaps closed, slip the side flaps under the top flaps in the corners where they overlap. Glue along each side flap to attach the pages. Lay a book on the pages to keep them flat until the glue dries.

With the front picture facing up and the back lying flat against your work surface, pull the pages open so that the sides of the bag are vertical. Vertically crease the sides of the bag by pushing them inward and pressing the bag flat.

The calendar edges that have not been folded yet will be the bottom of your bag. With the bag lying flat, grab both pages and fold the bottom edges up and crease horizontally about a quarter of the way from the bottom. Open the bag and vertically cut the four corners up to the crease you just made. Turn the bag upside down and fold down the smaller flaps. Glue the larger flaps on top of them and hold for a minute to set. Cut two equal lengths of ribbon or cord, long enough for handles, plus extra. Punch equally spaced holes at the top of the bag. Thread the ribbon or cord through and tie on the inside. —*Alyssa Johnson*

PHOTO BY ALEXANDRIA ABDALLAH

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Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley
on Gross National Happiness, his country's traditions,
and the importance of democracy

Why the Kings of Bhutan Ride Bicycles

Interview by Madhu Suri Prakash

Bhutan has pioneered the use of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a measure of progress, instead of the more commonly used GNP. GNH measures not only economic activity, but also cultural, ecological, and spiritual well-being.

YES! Magazine Contributing Editor Madhu Suri Prakash attended a meeting of educators from around the world, convened by the government of Bhutan in December 2009, to encourage them to make the happiness of all people the central organizing principle of their philosophy of education. In September 2010, Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley visited the United States to promote GNH education and economic theory. Madhu was granted an interview with the prime minister at the Pennsylvania State University, hours after he received the university's highest honor as a distinguished alumnus.

Madhu Suri Prakash: Ten months ago, you welcomed educators from different continents with moving words about promoting the happiness of your people and spreading the idea of Gross National Happiness to other nations. What help does Bhutan need to achieve its aspirations?

Prime Minister Thinley: I don't think, by way of material support, Bhutan is really in need of much, especially in respect to the pursuit of GNH. But outside perception, positive perception and expression of moral support—making the people of Bhutan feel that they are doing the right thing—is a great source of inspiration and help. I am encouraged by the growing interest in this philosophy of development, or alternative development paradigm, as more and more people see it.

Prakash: What difference has it made to have GNH as your yardstick rather than gross domestic product?

Thinley: From the government's point of view, Bhutan has undertaken this pursuit through four broad strategies, or indicators.

First, we are promoting sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development which can be measured to a larger extent through conventional metrics.

Second is the conservation of a fragile ecology, [using] indicators of achievement, [such] as the way the green [vegetation] cover in my country has expanded over the last 25 years from below 60 to over 72 percent. ... The very conscious efforts and the very deliberate program interventions ensure that in no way will Bhutan have loss of biodiversity. We of course continue to be very directly

involved in raising consciousness and concern and trying to promote policy reorientation especially ... with respect to battling climate change. And it is to that end that Bhutan will be hosting, sometime early next year, a mountain countries summit on climate change.

The third strategy is promotion of culture, which includes preservation of the various aspects of our culture that continue to be relevant and supportive of Bhutan's purpose as a human civilization. Among the various things that we do is ensure that, as small as we are and as vulnerable as we may appear to be, no Bhutanese should suffer a sense of insecurity arising from loss of their cultural identity, language, and so on, under the onslaught of modernization.

Today, Bhutanese have an appreciable sense of pride and dignity about themselves, which I think, again, is key to happiness. Family values and community vitality are things that we are promoting in a very conscious way. It is our hope that, unlike many of the developed, industrialized, and urbanized societies, Bhutan will always have the benefit of the social safety net in the form of the extended family network. There are various ways in which we can do this. Not least among these are, for instance, religious festivals, traditional festivals, and social festivals, which serve to bond community and family. It heartens me

to see the multi-generational participation of families in these social bonding activities, giving very clear evidence of the vitality of the extended family network—as opposed to the state-supported artificial and unsustainable welfare systems that we try to prop up.

Then there is the fourth strategy—good governance—on which the other three strategies or indicators depend. We know that democracy is the best form of governance. Democracy is what enables and empowers each individual not only to express his or her point of view, but gives the power to determine what kind of people should lead and how these people should be held accountable. From the moment that my government was elected we have devoted and continue to devote much of our time to trying to promote a democratic culture.

Prakash: In your welcome address to us last December you noted a loss of conviviality in Thimphu. People were walking and talking less and driving more due to foreign influences. How is Bhutan reducing harmful outside influences, without walling off the world?

Thinley: Well, it would have been easier in the past but in a democracy as we are now, it is more difficult. To control these things through law and rules and regulatory processes is near impossible. So what we are trying to do is to advocate. This has to be done not only through speech but through action. I'm very happy to tell you that our two kings—the fourth king who is now in retirement, and the present king who sits on the throne—have very recently started bicycling. I have spoken on this subject and I'm trying to raise ways and means to make it easy to buy bicycles. ... And one business that is doing very well, especially in the last four or five months is bicycle vendors. The idea is to make Bhutan a bicycle culture, supported by a public transportation system. We are in the process of making it more expensive to drive private vehicles.

Prakash: What do you suggest for promoting GNH in the United States?



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER WEIGOLD

Monks at a monastery outside Punakha in Bhutan.

Thinley: This is a free society and the freedom of opinion is greatly cherished and facilitated here. It just strikes me that people refuse to talk about the pursuit of what matters most to them as individuals, as communities, and as a society, and that is happiness. Somebody has to start it and I'm happy that there are a few people who are doing it. I hope that more will listen, hear, think and speak out what they have in their mind, rather than be afraid because it is unconventional to talk about happiness.

Prakash: Was GNH readily accepted

in Bhutan, including in the business community?

Thinley: I would not use the term “acceptance” because GNH has always been a way of life in Bhutan. It continues to be. It was at a more subconscious, more intuitive level, but now we are promoting it at the conscious level, especially given the onslaught of modernization and development. This we are doing, through people like you, whereby we have now started embedding GNH values in our curricula, through public discussion. ●

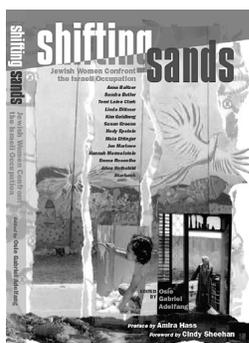
Madhu Suri Prakash is a contributing editor for YES!

14 Jewish Women Find their Voice



“Those who love and care for Israel,” writes activist Starhawk, “need to stand with her true interests now, by demanding an end to the occupation.” Starhawk contributed the essay “Heresies in Pursuit of Peace.”

REVIEWED BY LINDA FRANK



Shifting Sands: Jewish Women Confront the Israeli Occupation

EDITED BY
OSIE GABRIEL ADELFRANG
Whole World Press, 2010, 157 pages, \$16

News reports about Israel and the Palestinians are often full of political doublespeak and misinformation. This makes it difficult for people of conscience to work for a just Middle East peace. How can we help if we don't know what's really going on? A new book goes to the heart of the issues, with true stories that stress human rights over political expedience.

Shifting Sands: Jewish Women Confront the Israeli Occupation is a collection of personal essays by 14 women activists who found it impossible to remain passive when confronted with the human cost of Israel's dispossession of the Palestinians from their homeland.

Many of the essays in *Shifting Sands* describe how an individual comes to

question, and then challenge, the “official version” of conflict and history.

In “Do Not Stand Idly By,” Hedy Epstein describes how her trauma as a German-Jewish teenager bereaved by the Holocaust was tempered by humanistic values, and how her career of social service and activism on behalf of Jews eventually led her, in her 80s, to volunteer with the Gaza freedom flotilla. Linda Dittmar, in “Lights Vanish From Lifta,” describes the adult realization that the quaint villages in Israel where she played as a child were in fact the ruined homes of forcibly evacuated Palestinians.

Former Israeli Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg has said that too many in Israel fail to question the actions of their government. Defenders of Israel >>

AN EXCERPT ::

My Feet Were Praying

ALL MY LIFE, I CREATED STORIES to help me make sense of the world. I created the stories, then I believed in them. Inevitably, as life intervened, the stories dissolved, leaving me with more complex and often painful realities. My central story about Israel was based on the belief that there were parallel narratives, an equivalently urgent Israeli and Palestinian history, that there were real dangers Israel had to protect against. I was carefully taught that the state of Israel was a refuge for persecuted and tormented remnants of a vibrant and rich world of European Jews after World War Two. I saw that singular truth, and no other. ...

Now, as I listen and struggle to remember my dedication to the oneness of all things, I push against criticism, shame, as well as the sense of moral disappointment and personal outrage at the draconian oppression Israelis are carrying out against Palestinian people. How do I keep from arming myself with anger and judgment, separating myself from the Israeli government's actions and all its supporters? How do I ask my broken heart to stay open? How do I express my oppositional trust with fierce love? Like my grandfather taught me, no matter who or what! Challenged by members of his conservative congregation about why he chose to march with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel responded, "My feet were praying."

For me, standing in the street with Women in Black is my public expression of the Amidah, our daily prayer. —*Sandra Butler*



Women in Black protesters

INDYBAY.ORG

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



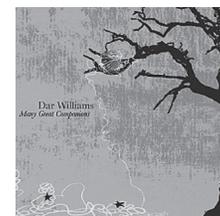
Bodega Rose

Debut album of singer-songwriter **Kesang Marstrand** (daughter of global peace activist Marianne Marstrand and Tibetan translator Ngodup Tsering). A relaxed and delicious voice, an intimate guitar, and seasoned songwriting. Asian-tinged "Real Boy" is fresh, and she turns Paul McCartney's bouncy "Say, Say, Say" into a caress.



The Sound of Sunshine

This is a new sound from **Michael Franti**. Instead of reggae-spiced protest rock, there's acoustic guitar and songs about family and friends. The flavor is world dance. The message is "be happy." Franti's upbeat outlook comes after a ruptured appendix nearly killed him last year.



Many Great Companions

A double treat from folk-pop's **Dar Williams**: a new best-of compilation, and a disc revisiting 12 of her classics "with a guitar and a few friends," including **Gary Louris** of the Jayhawks and **Mary Chapin Carpenter**. A wide-ranging introduction that will also please long-time fans.

🎵 Have a listen at
YesMagazine.org/music

» “right or wrong,” both within its borders and in the United States, insist criticism of Israel is unfair, claiming that other nations also violate human rights and flout international law, but are subjected to less rigorous scrutiny.

Some of the contributors to *Shifting Sands* address this mindset in essays that are part travelogue, part political witness. In “Only 30 Miles But A World Away,” Tomi Laine Clarke describes how the journey from the living room of her welcoming in-laws in Tel Aviv to a refugee camp in the West Bank traverses a barrier of experience and perception even greater than the obstacles presented by walls and checkpoints.

Transcending this status quo in the context of the U.S.-led “global war on terror,” and \$3 billion a year in U.S. military aid to Israel, is an enormous task for citizen activists. *Shifting Sands* includes an appendix that is something of a toolkit for taking action. It offers maps, statistics, and quotes (most of the latter from the now-declassified version of the history of the founding of Israel). There’s also a chronology that distills a lot of history into just a few pages—terrific to share with those who regard the situation as too complicated to understand or as the continuation of a centuries-old conflict.

“Those who love and care for Israel,” writes contributor Starhawk, “need to stand with her true interests now, by demanding an end to the occupation, an end to the siege of Gaza, the dismantling of the settlements, restitution, and real justice. These are the preconditions that will lead to true security and peace.”

Human complexity is often reduced to a rhetoric of black and white polarities. The women in *Shifting Sands* don’t change sides. They retain Jewish identities while dissenting against Israeli government policy, and disprove the myth that people who speak against Israeli policies are betraying Israel, Jewish people, or

Jewish values.

“It is a circuitous journey that leads many of us toward a new awareness that reconciliation and peace must stand on a bedrock of truth,” writes Linda Dittmar. The contributions of the 14 women who poignantly share

their journeys in *Shifting Sands* are an important step in that direction. ▼

Linda Frank is a founding member of Women in Black Tacoma, and traveled with the CodePink Women for Peace delegation into Gaza for International Women’s Day 2009, just two months after Israel’s Operation Cast Lead.



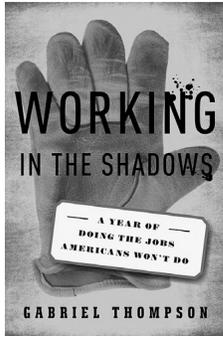
Hedy Epstein

AN EXCERPT ::

Do Not Stand Idly By

I ARRIVED IN THE WEST BANK IN DECEMBER 2003. The very first non-violent demonstration I participated in, together with other internationals, Israelis, and Palestinians, was in opposition to the gate in the “security fence” in Mas’ha, which had not been opened for two weeks, keeping farmers from their fields. As we neared the gate, Israeli soldiers shot at us with live ammunition. The very first person critically injured (his aorta was severed, but he survived) was a young Israeli. Just two weeks prior, he had been released from his three-year mandatory military service. ...

When Dianne and I were leaving to come home from that first trip, I was stopped by Israeli security at the airport. I was 79 at the time. I do not know if they knew I was a survivor (although my passport states that I was born in Germany) but they knew where I had been and what I had been doing. After being frisked, I was asked to get undressed. I asked the 20-something woman why and told her I wanted an attorney. These were her words: “Because you are a terrorist, because you are a security risk. Yes, you can have an attorney, but until you get one, you will be detained at the airport detention center.” —Hedy Epstein



Working in the Shadows

GABRIEL THOMPSON

Nation Books, 2010, 320 pages, \$24.95

REVIEWED BY CARLOS JIMENEZ

“Please don’t make me do this [job] again—it is really, really hard.” That’s what Stephen Colbert said to a Congressional committee on immigration, recounting his day as a farm worker. Colbert was responding to the claim—often repeated but rarely explored—that undocumented migrant workers take jobs that would otherwise go to American citizens.

Gabriel Thompson’s response to the debate over immigration and employment was to embark on a serious piece of investigative journalism. He immersed himself in work at the bottom of the scale in terms of pay, rights, and working conditions. His experience, described in *Working in the Shadows*, makes it clear why these are not only the jobs most Americans don’t do, but also the jobs most *won’t* do.

Thompson, an award-winning writer, went undercover to investigate the underside of the American economy. Presenting himself as a drifter with a sketchy resume, he took jobs cutting lettuce in the fields of Arizona, processing chickens in a plant in Alabama, and delivering food in New York City. It’s evident from the first day in each new setting that, although an impressive resume is not required, each job is extremely demanding in its own way.

Thompson catalogues the hardships of these jobs: the need for physical strength and endurance when bending, cutting, and bagging in the lettuce

fields; the likelihood of an industrial accident during an exhausting night shift in the chicken processing plant; the frantic pressure of restaurant delivery work. Despite discomfort—at times, outright pain—Thompson remains clear about the difference between his choice and the financial realities that compel others to do this backbreaking work: “This book was an exhausting learning experience for me; for my coworkers, it’s life.”

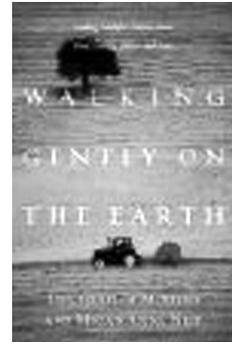
Whatever the workplace, he sees how those in charge “will do whatever they can get away with” to make higher profits, and that while undocumented workers “suffer disproportionate abuse on the job, it is a mistake to pretend that their plight is unrelated to that of American workers.”

Thompson describes the development of the local economy and the political aspects of each of the three places he works. He exposes our broken regulatory systems, the need for strategic organizing to develop collective bargaining power, and the skewed immigration policies that punish working people rather than corporations.

Most importantly, Thompson describes the lives of the working people who keep the economy going. Coworkers befriend him, and he sees how they provide solidarity and community for each other. Their conversations reveal their life histories, dreams and aspirations, and the bleak realities of life on the edge of economic survival.

What stands out are two recurring themes: Despite their current woes, many of Thompson’s coworkers have actually known worse. And, just as importantly, that people take pride in a job well done. Thompson asks us to look a little deeper and see if we can’t find a little bit of ourselves in the working class, urging readers toward an attitude that is even more crucial in times of economic crisis: to re-evaluate how “we honor the dignity of work, no matter who is doing the work.”

Carlos Jimenez is a union organizer, occasional student, and youth organizing trainer. He lives in Washington, D.C.



Walking Gently on the Earth

LISA GRAHAM McMINN AND
MEGAN ANNA NEFF

IVP Books, 2010, 237 pages, \$16

REVIEWED BY REV. WENDY BELL

We are not just interconnected—we are interdependent. Our choices affect others across the globe, and we must take that into account as we decide how to eat, shop, and live. Lisa Graham McMinn and her daughter, Megan Anna Neff, begin with this point as they invite readers “to think deeply about living well in a modern and complex world.” They’ve written a “primer” for Christians on environmental issues and ethical decision-making.

Walking Gently Upon the Earth explores agricultural practices, food and consumer choices, global warming, and energy consumption. The authors also take on controversial issues such as family planning and U.S. food subsidies.

This is a good entrée for those new to “creation care,” but it’s also a radical book. It challenges long-standing evangelical beliefs that the material world is a temporary, expendable home, and that Christians ought to focus on saving souls.

The authors remind us of the commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, and point out that we cannot care for their needs unless we care for Earth.

McMinn and Neff assume the best of people and are unabashedly optimistic. Their gentle tone is encouraging and persuasive, and they remind us that we have met other global environmental challenges successfully before.

Wendy Bell is a Unitarian Universalist minister in Harvard, Mass.

YES! PICKS ::

Maddening and motivating independent films

The Age of Stupid

Bullfrog Films, 2009, 89 min.

Essentially a documentary creatively framed by a fictional “what if” scenario, *The Age of Stupid* features the British actor Pete Postlethwaite as a doleful everyman living in the ravaged world of 2055, reviewing documentary evidence on the global causes and phenomena of climate change. A compelling argument for action before *The Age of Stupid* becomes, irrevocably, our own. Directed by Fanny Armstrong, founder of 10:10.

Living Downstream

The People's Picture Company, 2010, 85 min.

Ecologist Sandra Steingraber presents her research into the connections between environmental toxins and cancer in a lyrical cross-country journey, articulating a concern experienced by increasing numbers of Americans.

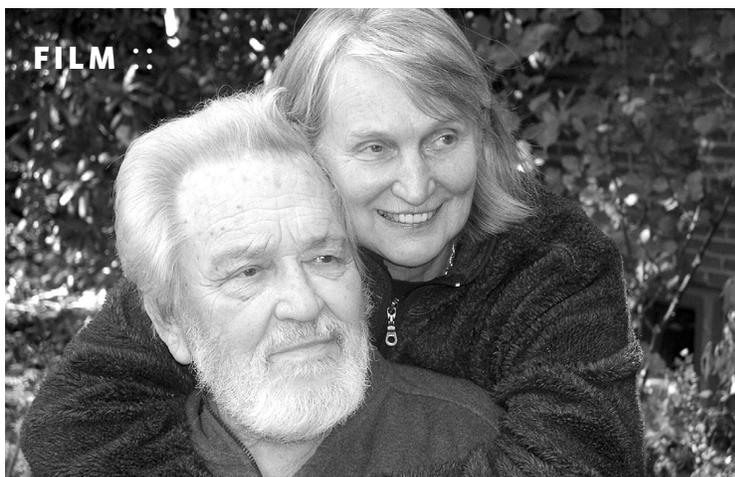


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American Renegade: Confessions of a Radical Humanist

Directed by Scott Garen, 2009, Seven Arrows, 80 min.

Abe Osheroff: One Foot in the Grave, the Other Still Dancing

Directed by Nadeem Uddin, 2009, MEF, 46 min.

REVIEWED BY VALERIE SCHLOREDT

Abe Osheroff said that being an activist was “the richest way to live,” and the story of his life, as captured by two complementary documentaries, proves it. Osheroff’s ideas and words are featured, too: on the costs and satisfactions of activism, the inherent worth of action that may not achieve a desired aim, and the value of a life in which thought is consistent with action.

Osheroff was born in 1915 in an impoverished Brooklyn neighborhood where early awareness of injustice formed his character. Alarmed by the threat of fascism in Europe, he joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade at 22 to fight Franco’s fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Over the next 70 years, Osheroff, who described himself as a radical humanist, was involved in some of the most critical struggles for justice of the past century: union organizing, fighting for civil rights during Freedom Summer, resisting U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, and opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

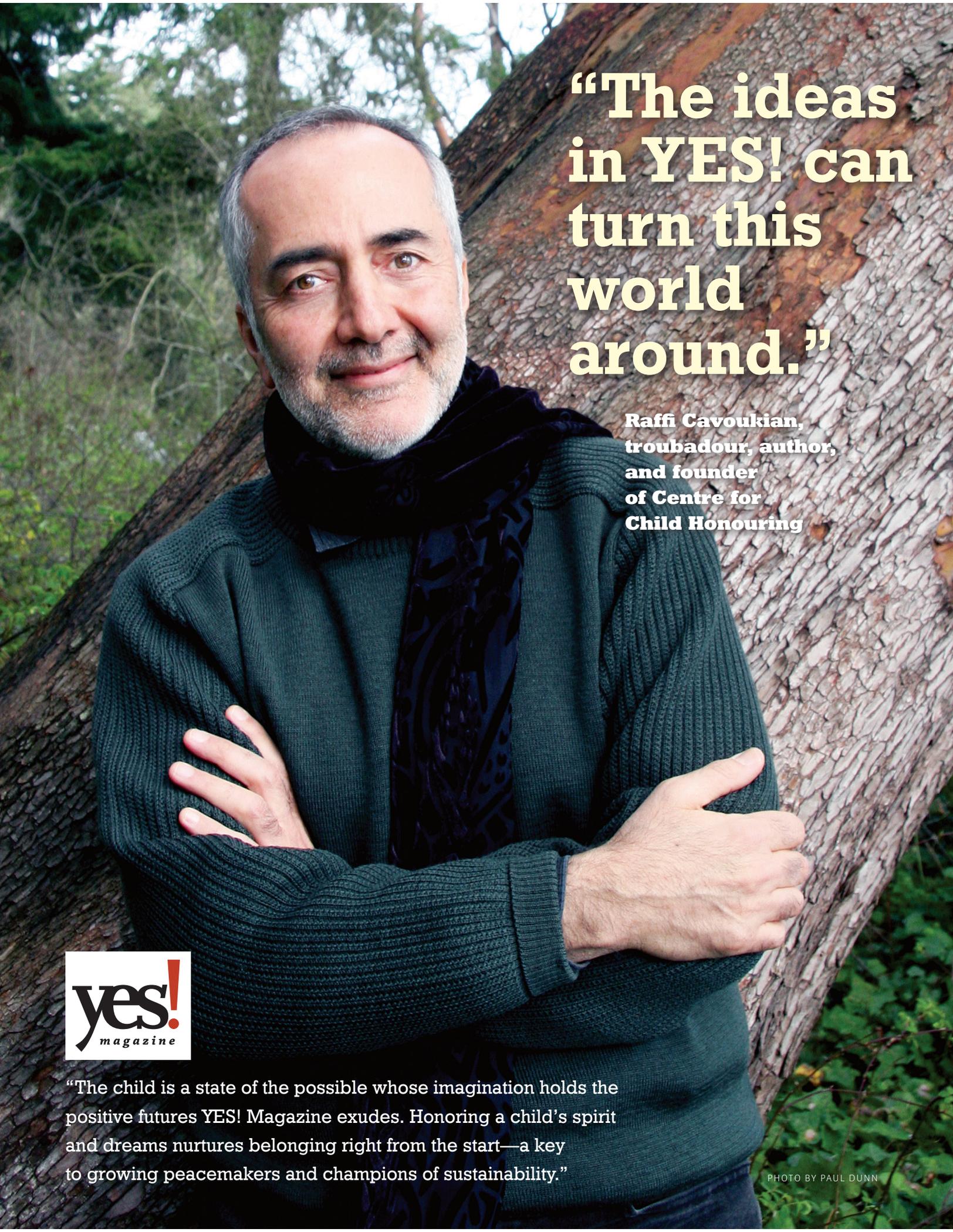
Osheroff’s gift as a narrator is used to good effect in *American Renegade: Confessions of a Radical Humanist*, and

illustrated by dynamic use of documentary footage. Osheroff was a carpenter by trade whose vigorous activism often involved building something both to serve a need and highlight an injustice: a community center in Mississippi, a playground wrested from developers in Venice Beach, and housing in Nicaragua. His charismatic energy is evident in a film focused on the activist as adventurer and larger-than-life hero.

By contrast, *One Foot in the Grave, the Other Still Dancing* is concerned with Osheroff the teacher and critical thinker, who, though frail and confined to a wheelchair, inspired young people, turning some to activism. The core of the film is Osheroff’s speech to college students in 2007, at “a period of American history when an empire is falling apart.” His prognosis for their future is one of increasing austerity, demanding more citizen engagement. While “a better world is necessary,” he leaves them with the message that not only are authentic, aware lives the most rewarding, but they empower the action that makes a better world possible.

Valerie Schloredt is associate editor at YES!

 YesMagazine.org/films56
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PHOTO BY PAUL DUNN