

Winter 2008

yes!

Building a Just and Sustainable World

**Frances Moore Lappé
Speaks from the Heart**

**Bill McKibben, Barbara Lee on
Hopes for the '08 Election**

ISSUE 44

Don't Ask for Change. Be the Change.

Liberate Your Space

**Get Creative in Your Activism
Turning to Gandhi's Eco-Ethic
Bike with Critical Mass
Grow Food on Your Roof**

Graffiti artist
Banksy liberates
walls all over
the world.

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**DO-IT-YOURSELF
LIBERATION GUIDE**

“Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side had won, and you had the kind of society that you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now! ”

PAUL GOODMAN (1911–1972)
AUTHOR AND SOCIOLOGIST



BIRGIT CARLSSON

CHRISTIANIA, DENMARK
This neighborhood within Copenhagen has declared
itself a “free zone,” open to all, car-free,
and governed by its inhabitants.



Taking Freedom to the Streets

The otherwise law-abiding neighbors of the YES! office are holding a picnic in a nearby park this evening. Earlier, one neighbor brought in picnic tables, which she anchored to the ground with cables. Others cleared invasive brambles from the pond. A few restored an old gazebo, where local musicians are playing for their neighbors.

It appears to be a quiet neighborhood gathering, but it's actually a revolution. A street that runs parallel to the island's main highway dead-ends in this tiny park. The city of Bainbridge Island, and many business owners, would like the street punched through this oasis of green, with its small pond, a few trees, red-winged blackbirds and lawn. That would give the island another north-south route for the convenience of cars, trucks, and those same business owners.

Neighbors think not. Many walk or bike on this quiet street to get to the ferry or downtown shops, and the park is one of the few public green spots in what is becoming a sea of parking lots, apartments, banks, storefronts, and offices.

So these neighbors launched their revolution; instead of banners, there are cut-outs of cows to decorate the lawn. Instead of barricades, there's an unauthorized gazebo. (The city's large "stop work" sign arrived hours after the gazebo was a *fait accompli*.)

This is the spirit that infuses this issue of YES! People are claiming spaces where they can live as free people—essentially creating outposts of a different sort of world.

For some, it's about something as basic as a roof over their heads. The residents of Umoja Village in Miami (see page 28) built a shantytown on vacant land in response to the city's desperate shortage of affordable housing.

For others, it's about reclaiming spaces for community and culture. Dutch neighbors dragged couches into the street to claim living space that had been overtaken by

cars, and they launched the traffic calming movement (page 31). A cello player brought his musical meditation practice to Seattle streets, exchanging Bach for coins and conviviality (page 23).

These are people who don't just ask for change, they are the change. They are people who refuse to give in to pessimism.

In much of modern society, we are losing the belief that we have choices (the kind that matter—not the kind found on a Wal-Mart shelf). The inevitability of corporate globalization and the specter of a terrorist attack are trotted out again and again to convince us to accept draconian "security" measures, degraded public spaces, and diminished lives.

The spirit that shines through many of these stories challenges that pessimism. By liberating exterior spaces, these people are also freeing their minds and hearts and opening up the potential of human society for greatness.

This spirit is especially important now, as we face some of the most serious challenges ever to confront humankind. It may be the irreverent spirit of guerrilla gardeners and the courageous voices of pirate radio producers that help us shake off the hopelessness and lethargy of the Bush era. As we experience the empowerment that comes when we do things ourselves, we may discover that we can avert climate chaos, stop wars, rein in pretensions of empire, feed the children, and live lives of creativity and passion.

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor

BOMB IRAN?

Sarah van Gelder and the YES! team on the growing threat of war against Iran. What's real, what's not, and what we can still do to stop it.

www.YesMagazine.org/iran

P.S. Special thanks to Jack Herranen and Valentina Campos for the insights they shared at their Puentes Center outside Cochabamba, Bolivia, (www.totorkawa.blogspot.com) which helped inspire this issue.

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THE MISSION OF YES!

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

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

WORLD & COMMUNITY

Here you'll find 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

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Climate change, war, civil liberties, poverty—issues Americans care passionately about. But can they get the candidates' attention? *Sarah van Gelder interviews Rep. Barbara Lee, Bill McKibben, Chris Hedges, Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Mark Ritchie, and Cheri Honkala.*

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READERS FORUM

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



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or call 800/937-4451



Read more responses to the corporations issue at
www.YesMagazine.org/letters

New Economic Paradigms

Your “Standing up to Corporations” issue begins to get at one of the institutional roots of imbalance and violence—social, political and ecological—in our society. I was particularly interested in the article by Michael Marx and Marjorie Kelly describing the formation of the Strategic Corporate Initiative.

Taking the long view is what we must do. There are always brush fires to fight, but we have to address the arsonist behind them, now carefully protected by law, politics, and lore.

A major sphere of frames for the SCI to consider is economics. Neo-classical economics is merely an ideology. Its axioms are never tested empirically, but only repeated

like a creed. A number of economists have formed the Post-Autistic Economic Network (www.paecon.net), subjecting the shibboleths of their discipline to informed and rigorous scrutiny.

Part of what we need is a new kind of accounting, looking beyond money as the unit of measurement, and evaluating what it is that the money is actually doing. Redefining Progress, a think-tank in the San Francisco Bay area, does so with a Genuine Progress Indicator (www.rprogress.org).

STONEY BIRD
Mount Vernon, WA

Right to Clean Water

Kelydra Welcker (featured in Signs of Life, Fall 2007), an outstanding young scientist, is to be commended for her de-

velopment of an inexpensive countertop filter to remove APFO, a potentially carcinogenic chemical, from water polluted by the manufacture of Teflon. But wait!

Why is it a family's responsibility to purchase this device to filter our water? Shouldn't the Teflon manufacturer be responsible for not poisoning the water to begin with?

SYLVIA LAMBERT
Interior, SD

Natural Gas Pipelines

I read your article “Communities Take Power” where a community fought to protect their water source. In my community, we are opposing a liquid natural gas facility and an enormous gas pipeline that will carry the product to other states. This project was planned behind our backs and is now being shoved into our communities. We have not had the time to become informed or participate even though we have rights to be active participants in the decision-making process. The corporate gas industry is currently pursuing over 50 such terminals around the USA.

Your community might be targeted next.

Please get the word out.

DEA ANNA MCCONNELL
Myrtle Creek, OR

YES! in Latin America

I am writing to you from ADITAL, a Brazilian news portal focusing on social change. We are very happy to feature your Spanish language articles on our site. It has been difficult to build relationships with groups who produce articles and news about what is happening in U.S. civil society. We have the common objective of letting the world know about the good ideas and initiatives that people are putting into practice. We are very excited about this collaboration. —Un abrazo.

(translated from Spanish)

ERMANNO ALLEGRI
Director of ADITAL, Brazil

Zucchini Wars

After chuckling my way through Barbara Kingsolver's “Zucchini Wars,” I had to write because what she says is so true! One summer as our potluck dinner group



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arrived, we realized that all nine dishes were squashes. There were so many varying recipes, however, that it was delicious. We've laughed about it ever since. It never happened again.

LANE WAAS
Asheville, NC

Carbon Trading

In your editorial supporting the auctioning of carbon allowances, you seem to support Peter Barnes' idea of a Sky Trust. I have serious concerns about the governance of such an organization. Why wouldn't it be more democratic to simply have the government run such an agency? Why would we want to give control over decisions as to how to spend the vast sums of money from the auction to a private organization? Auction funds could be invested in renewable energy and conservation technologies so that the overall economy could achieve the

carbon limits imposed in a more economically efficient way than if the money is simply given back to individuals on an equal per capita basis.

RICHARD ROSEN, PH.D.
Executive Vice-President
Tellus Institute, Boston, MA

Fan of YES!

I must confess I had decided not to renew my subscription. Then along came the recent issue on democracy in Latin America. I read it with great fascination and satisfaction. It was the kind of coverage and investigation that made me aware of why I liked YES! in the first place—insightful, interesting, provocative and objective; maybe even courageous.

RONALD C. REIMER
Mission Hills, KS

CORRECTION TO ISSUE 43

Robert Shetterly's Americans Who Tell the Truth website is
www.americanswhotellthetruth.org

YES! ONLINE

COOL SCHOOL CAMPAIGN: High school students teach their teachers about climate change...

PHOTO ESSAY: Homeless in Miami: It took a village...

AUDIO: Vote Hope: interviews on real change in 2008

FILM: Trailer for *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song*

ALSO: Reader cartoon captions ... Music that inspires us ... Film picks ... Yes! But How advice on sustainable living



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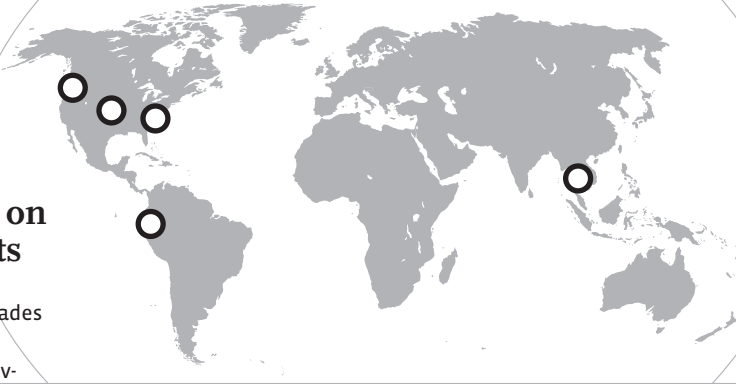
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Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



HUMAN RIGHTS

U.N. Declaration on Indigenous Rights

👍 After two and a half decades of work by indigenous peoples and U.N. member governments, the United Nations General Assembly passed the Indigenous Rights Declaration on September 13, 2007. Only four countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States) voted against it.

For 25 years, the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations (later changed to “Peoples”) monitored events occurring in indigenous territories and worked to adopt standards for interaction between states and indigenous peoples.

The process provided an international stage for indigenous peoples to tell of their experiences of colonization and taking of territory, and of their struggles for self-determination.

The North, Central and South American indigenous experiences, along with the Sami of Scandinavia, were presented first. As the process rolled on, many other indigenous peoples were heard.

This U.N. process was unique in that the indigenous people themselves took a major part in formulating the standards, working with government “experts.”

“Indigenous peoples, even in the most remote places, have been made aware of the existence of this Declaration through all the years that it was being negotiated,” said Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, an indigenous woman from the Philippines and the chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous



SARAYAKU.COM

👍 In September, the Ecuadorian government announced it would direct removal of 1.5 tons of explosives left behind by oil companies at 640 different points within Sarayaku territory in the Amazon. The Sarayaku people are known for their decade-long refusal to allow oil extraction on their land, even in the face of imprisonment and paramilitary assault. With support from the Inter-American Court for Human Rights, they proclaimed their land an “Autonomous Territory of the Original Kichwa Nation of Sarayaku.” Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has promised to support indigenous rights against oil companies.

Interested? Art for Social Change: www.chequedelarealidad.org

Issues. “Now they have a strong ownership of it and, hopefully, will be able to use it to help strengthen their battles.”

The Declaration identifies a wide range of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples

—the right to unrestricted self-determination; collective right to the ownership, use, and control of lands and natural resources; the right to maintain and develop their own political, religious, cultural, and educational institutions—and the

protection of their cultural and intellectual property. The document highlights the requirement for prior and informed consent in activities that affect indigenous peoples, their property, or their territories. It calls for fair and adequate compensation for rights violations. Guarantees against ethnocide and genocide are established.

Tauli-Corpuz emphasizes the impact of the declaration: It creates a frame of reference against which to check government or corporate policies, it is a tool for awareness-raising and education, and it legitimizes the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, an indigenous voice within the U.N.

In 2008 the Forum will address impacts of climate change, alternative fuels, and carbon trading on indigenous communities.

Pōkā Laenui represented the World Council of Indigenous Peoples before U.N. bodies in the 1980s and 1990s. He is executive director of Hale Na`au Pono, a community mental health center in Wai`anae, Hawai`i. www.opihi.com/sovereignty

ALSO ...

In October, the mayors of Brownsville, Del Rio, and El Paso, Texas, showed their opposition to a border fence by denying access to city property to U.S. government officials assigned to begin design work on the fence.

Updates on the “No Wall” campaign at www.notexasborderwall.com

For the “Panties for Peace” campaign, women in several countries are sending underwear to Burmese embassies. The protest against the military regime’s violent crackdown on peaceful protesters plays on Burmese generals’ superstitious belief that contact with women’s underwear deprives them of their power.

“The civil rights movement taught me that if I’m alive, I can find some way to participate in changing things.”

DR. BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON, MUSICIAN, SCHOLAR, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, AND FOUNDER OF SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK. REAGON PERFORMED AT THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT OF THE HIGHLANDER CENTER.



(CC) JONATHAN MCINTOSH, RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK

Since 2000, Rainforest Action Network’s Global Finance Campaign has successfully challenged the world’s largest banks to stop funding the world’s most destructive industries. In Boston and across the nation, street theater activists at Merrill Lynch offices protested the company’s investments in dirty coal.

GREEN ECONOMY

Seattle Adopts Zero-Waste Policy

👍 The Seattle City Council has committed the city to a zero-waste policy—and one small neighborhood’s activism helped spur the change.

Earlier this year, the city was making plans to build a transfer station to keep pace with its expanding garbage problem. Two existing transfer stations, built in the 1960s, couldn’t handle the daily, mile-long train of garbage—a total of 440,000 tons in 2006.

The third transfer station was to be located in the industrial neighborhood of Georgetown. But residents fought the decision and called for an alternative

solution in testimony at City Hall: zero waste.

In response, councilmember Richard Conlin and the Environment, Emergency Management, and Utilities Committee unveiled the city’s new zero-waste plan this summer. It caps the tonnage of exported garbage at 2006 levels and requires yearly reductions.

The strategy represents a major change in the way the city views trash. “Instead of accepting more trash as inevitable, we are now treating waste as a resource,” Conlin said. Food waste will be picked up for composting; support will be available for community waste-reduction initiatives and for durable products designed for easy reuse; and grants and tax-breaks will encourage contractors not to demolish old buildings but to

disassemble and recycle their building components. The council is also studying the possibility of banning plastic bags and foam.

The plan also means that Georgetown won’t be home to a new transfer station. Instead, Seattle will retool its existing stations for recycling. “Thanks to the community activists, I think the pattern has been broken,” said council president Nick Licata.

— Brooke Jarvis

Interested? www.seattle.gov/council/issues/zerowaste.htm
Seattle City Council member Richard Conlin is a YES! board member.

Blocking Big Coal

Kansas Secretary of Health and Environment Roderick Bremby has blocked the building of two coal-fired power plants, a \$3.6

billion project.

Concerns about carbon emissions and the public’s health spurred Bremby’s controversial decision, the latest in a trend of resistance against Big Coal.

With more than a third of the nation’s carbon dioxide coming from coal plants, citizens and politicians alike are pushing for a ban on new plants, and some are calling for closing the ones now in operation—especially when inefficient. There is also growing opposition around the practice of “mountaintop removal,” which has destroyed mountainous regions of the Southeast, cutting into mountaintops and filling streambeds in search of coal.

As of May 2007, U.S. energy companies were pursuing permits for about 130 new coal plants, yet since 2006, plans for more than 24 plants have been canceled and more postponed.

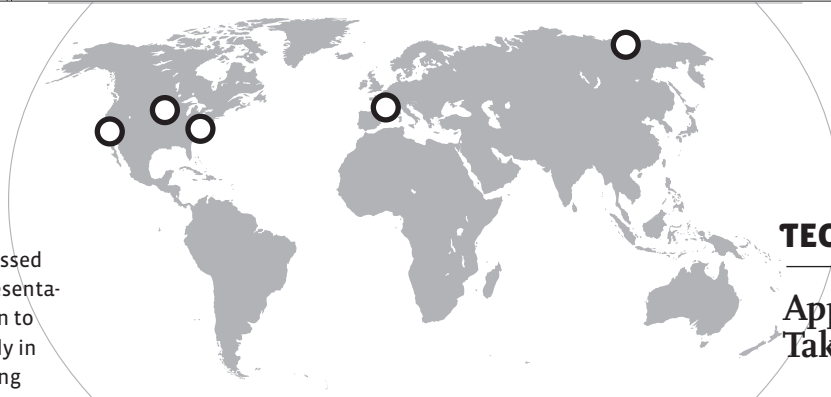
Mark Brownstein, managing director of Environmental Defense, cited Bremby’s decision as “further evidence that the days of business as usual for coal are over.”

—Margit Christenson

Interested? www.stopmountaintopremoval.org

ALSO...

👍 **The U.S. Supreme Court** upheld Vermont’s right to enforce stricter regulations on greenhouse-gas emissions for cars. Vermont’s law calling for a 30 percent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions for automobiles by 2016 had been challenged by the American automobile industry. The suit claimed that individual states must defer to the federal emissions standards set under the Clean Air Act.



ALSO ...


 **The Green Jobs Act** passed by the House of Representatives dedicates \$125 million to train 35,000 people annually in “green-collar jobs,” including low-income people. The bill, sponsored by Representatives Hilda Solis (D-CA) and John Tierney (D-MA), is supported by the Apollo Project, which proposes massive public investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy designed to create jobs, cut climate-disrupting emissions, and reduce dependence on oil. “If we focus on practical

steps to accelerate job-creation in the green economy, we can save the polar bears—and the poor kids, too,” says Van Jones from the Ella Baker Center. Jones has been an advocate, nationally and in his community in Oakland, CA, for green-collar jobs and the Apollo Project.

Interested? www.greenforall.org



EMILY KORNBLOT

 Paris will soon be home to the world’s largest public bike fleet. This summer, the city joined Amsterdam, Oslo, and Copenhagen in offering low-cost bicycle rentals to help solve its traffic, pollution, and parking issues. Free for the first half-hour of use, the bikes can be rented and returned at more than 800 stations across the city.

TECHNOLOGY

Appropriate Tech Takes on Poverty

The International Development Design Summit, held at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in August 2007, brought together engineers, scientists and prospective users of low-tech, low-cost technology. In just four weeks, participants from 16 countries developed 10 prototypes, addressing critical needs in their communities.


Bernard Kiwia from Tanzania, where 40 percent of the rural population lacks access to clean water, developed a backpack for carrying and disinfecting water. The transparent plastic pack uses solar heat and ultraviolet rays to disinfect the water and could retail for less than \$5.

Other design concepts included a greenhouse made with recycled materials, a low-voltage light powered by electricity generated by the microbes in dirt, a low-cost water-purifying system, and a pedal-powered grain mill.

The University of Colorado now offers a graduate program in engineering for developing countries, and Princeton and Columbia offer classes on the topic. “Young people today are much more aware of the needs of the planet,” said Bernard Amadei, founder of Engineers Without Borders and a professor at Colorado. “This is a kind of engineering that involves the heart as well as the brain, and it’s appealing to more people than ever before.”


—Rik Langendoen

ALSO...

 **The Journal of Geophysical Studies** published a University of East Anglia study in October 2007, showing that the ocean’s CO₂ absorption has halved between the mid-1990s and early 2000s. Scientist fear that the dwindling absorption capacity of the oceans, one of our two major natural carbon sinks, may worsen global warming.

HEALTH

San Francisco’s Health Care for All

 San Francisco is the first city in the nation to offer health care to all of its uninsured residents.

Healthy San Francisco opened first to residents earning at or below the federal poverty line, but now offers health care to all 82,000 uninsured adult residents while they are within the city, regardless of income or immigration status.

The initiative is not an insurance program. Instead, it is a network of community clinics, providers, and a public hospital. The funding comes from redirecting money previously spent on emergency hospital visits by the uninsured into a more complete medical safety net.

—Brooke Jarvis


“We can’t simply do whatever we want with this earth that has been entrusted to us.”

POPE BENEDICT XVI DECLARED THE VATICAN THE FIRST CARBON-NEUTRAL STATE. VATICAN CITY WILL INSTALL MORE THAN 1,000 SOLAR PANELS IN 2008. IN ADDITION, THE HUNGARIAN COMPANY KLIMAFÁ DONATED A CLIMATE FOREST TO OFFSET VATICAN EMISSIONS: 37 ACRES OF DEGRADED LAND BY THE RIVER TISZA WILL BE REFORESTED WITH NATIVE SPECIES.



(CC)

ALSO...

 **Dole, the world’s largest producer** and marketer of fruit, vegetables, and fresh flowers, will no longer use Paraquat. The company joins a growing number of major producers who are voluntarily phasing out the highly toxic pesticide. The move puts pressure on the maker, Syngenta, who is currently fighting to have Paraquat re-approved in Europe.

 **Sex ratios of newborns** are changing across the world and shifting dramatically in the Arctic. Scientists found that two girls are being born to every one boy in monitored communities in Greenland and Eastern Russia. The sex disparity has been traced to chemical pollutants. The Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme measured hormone-mimicking chemicals in women’s blood and concluded that they were capable of triggering changes in the sex of unborn children.

 **The state government of the Spanish islands** of Mallorca, Menorca, and Ibiza declared the islands a GMO-free zone. The campaign, supported by Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, now includes 236 regions, over 4,200 municipalities, and tens of thousands of farmers and food producers in Europe who have declared themselves “GMO-free,” banning the use of genetically modified organisms in the agriculture and food in their territories.

Interested? www.gefoodalert.org, www.gmo-free-europe.org




HENRI LAUPMAA, ESTONIAN FUND FOR NATURE

A group at the Third International Conference on GMO-Free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development in Brussels in April 2007. Three hundred attended representing regional governments and municipalities, farmers, consumers, and environmental and other organizations. The first World Summit on GMO-Free Diversity is planned for May 12-16, 2008, in Bonn, Germany.

Interested? www.planet-diversity.org

Strike Bike

 On October 25, 2007, the workers of the bankrupt Bike Systems factory in Nordhausen, Germany, completed the assembly of 1,800 bicycles in a week-long, fully worker-managed production run. The workers occupied the factory when they were told it would be closed. To avoid eviction over the past months, workers have stayed on premises in a non-stop staff conference. In an international solidarity campaign, they offered two versions of their “strike-bike” for \$395, a price they say covers production costs and salaries.

The idea for the strike bike

came from a radical fair trade collective that sent coffee to the striking workers, and offered to buy bicycles should the factory ever open again. The bike was designed in collaboration with a bicycle cooperative in Berlin.

—Lilja Otto

Interested? www.strike-bike.de

MEDIA

FCC Fines Comcast for Fake News

Comcast Corporation has been airing pre-packaged video news releases (VNRs), and the Federal Communications Commission is cracking down. The VNRs are

sponsored promotional ads created to look like news reports. The fines, issued in September, were for a video news release that appeared in the middle of a legitimate newscast. The Comcast cable channel that aired the segment, CN8, did not disclose to viewers that the company would receive payment for running the piece. Later, Comcast was fined for four more undisclosed VNRs.

The initial fine came in response to a 2006 complaint from Free Press and the Center for Media and Democracy, which documented nearly 140 undisclosed VNRs. The \$4,000 fine is the first-ever penalty imposed by the FCC for airing fake news.

—Margit Christenson



Conrad Honicker Empowering LGBTQ Youth

WHEN CONRAD HONICKER, then 14, was harassed for holding another teen boy's hand in a public park, the aggressors probably didn't expect their actions to result in a procession of same-sex couples marching hand-in-hand through downtown Knoxville, Tennessee.

But they also didn't know that Honicker had grown up with a "second home" at the Highlander Center, which provides support for activists fighting prejudice and injustice in Appalachia.

After organizing the Holding Hands demonstration, Honicker, now 16, founded the first gay-straight alliance in Knox County and now works with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network to increase its impact in schools.

He's become, in his words, a "poster child" for youth activism in the area, attention he would rather share with the many effective young organizers he knows. His advice for nurturing activists? "Appreciate the work that youth do, and help them along."



In Memoriam. **Anita Roddick,** Body Shop Founder

DAME ANITA RODDICK, founder of The Body Shop, died on September 10, 2007 of a brain hemorrhage. Born to Italian immigrants in England, Anita Roddick was an outsider child, inspired by rebels and outraged by the Holocaust. Roddick's visits with indigenous peoples fed her skepticism about throw-away consumption and inspired her commitment to community trade.

She dedicated herself and her business to high-profile campaigns on environmental and social issues, turning her stores, trucks, and advertising into outlets for the messages she was passionate about. For Roddick "campaigning and good business are about putting forward solutions, not just opposing destructive practices or human rights abuses."

In October 2007, Amnesty International launched one of the last campaigns that Roddick had worked on: www.unsubscribe-me.org, an online campaign against human rights abuses in the "war on terror."



César López Killer Sound: Guns to Guitars

COLOMBIAN CLASSICAL musician César López began building guitars out of guns after he noticed that a soldier was holding his rifle the same way that one would hold a guitar. López gets guns through the office of Colombia's peace commissioner. His first guitars were made from Winchester rifles, but now he is using AK-47s.

"What we want to create is an invitation to an attitude of change," he said. "The main idea is that weapons can be changed from an object of destructiveness to an object of constructiveness."

López is the founder of the Battalion of Immediate Artistic Reaction, a group of Colombian musicians and activists who are committed to making peace through music. The battalion mobilizes whenever there is a guerrilla attack in Bogotá, heading out into the streets to bring healing music to victims.



Listen to samples of
César López's music at
www.YesMagazine.org/lopez



Sophia Rabliauskas "Everything We Do is About the Land"

SOPHIA RABLIAUSKAS lives in an isolated but thriving community of the Poplar River First Nation, whose traditional lands were threatened by industrial logging and hydropower development. The Nation's lands border the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg and are under Manitoba provincial jurisdiction.

Rabliauskas, who grew up in the region and now works as a student guidance counselor, led her people in a successful struggle to protect the land they call home. For eight years she helped create maps of the territory and recorded the ecological and historic knowledge of Poplar River elders—melding modern technology and traditional wisdom. The most comprehensive and detailed land management plan ever produced by a First Nation led to interim protection for 2 million acres of boreal forest. The 2007 Goldman Environmental Prize honored Rabliauskas' leadership in developing this process.

The Nation is now seeking UNESCO world heritage status for a larger part of its forest.

COMMENTARY :: *Frances Moore Lappé*

CLIMATE CHANGE, COURAGE, AND CELEBRATION

I'd been preparing for a speech by devouring literature about the global environmental catastrophe—50 species disappearing daily and ice caps melting way faster than experts had predicted.

The messages were tough: Hey, you Americans, the party's over. Be more responsible and less greedy. Give up your toys and wake up to the disaster happening around us. "Power down" and stop trying to get your status from acquisition. Remember, you've had it easy compared to the rest of the world.

Inside I'd felt tight, frightened, and guilty.

Then I got a call from Helen Whybrow, host of the Mad River Valley, Vermont, event at which I'd been preparing to speak. All she really wanted was reassurance that I understood the nature of the event. "Each fall our Center for Whole Communities puts on a Harvest and Courage Celebration," she explained.

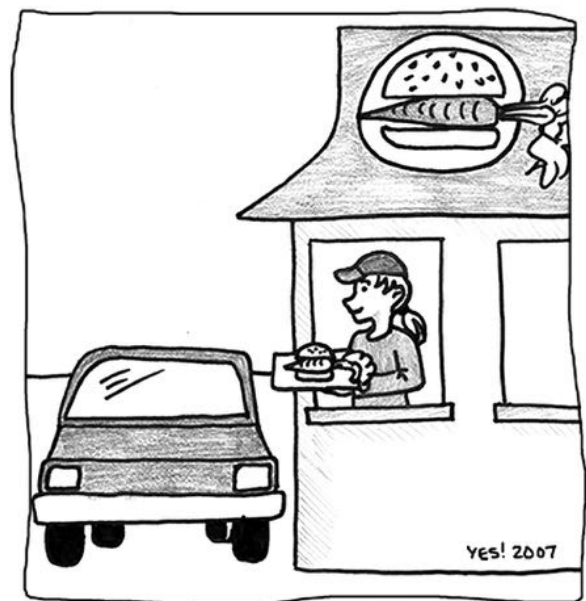
That was it. All it took were these few words, and my body eased and heart lifted. In my mind's eye, I could already see hundreds of Vermonters (among whom I will always count myself, having been one during the '90s) filling a huge barn to share steaming bowls of soup, homemade bread, and pies. Together, we'd dig deep for answers to our global crises and take strength in our common search.

I've spent much of my life focused on learning that, in regard to world hunger, fear and guilt don't truly motivate systemic change. Sometimes they have the exact opposite effect. Telling people "no" can intensify our craving, our grasping for even more before it's all gone.

Yet many impassioned, well-intentioned environmentalists believe that now we must sound the shrillest possible alarm, for Americans are asleep—unaware of the now near certainty that unless we cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 or earlier, the consequences of climatic disruption will be catastrophic.

But what if many of our messages are themselves trapped in mechanistic and moralistic thinking that helped get us into this mess in the first place? And what if, to make this historic turn seem possible—even compelling—we have changed the way we talk and think about it?

Instead of scolding people for being wasteful, we encourage ourselves and others to shed a belief system that denies us power and happiness, and keeps us on a treadmill wast-



*Sorry for the wait. We've got a new kid in back—
first day on the peeler.*

TERESA CLARK


Would you like to sustain-a-size this?

WANDA ROCKWELL



www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

ing the Earth's plenty. In that inefficient system, only 6 percent of the material extracted and processed actually ends up in products we use. Rather than "power down" we can offer ways to "align with the Earth's answers." After all, the sun provides daily doses of energy 15,000 times what we currently use from fossil sources. The message might also shift from "simplify" to enrich and diversify as we make new connections in our heads and in our communities, as we learn new skills and ways of being. The challenge becomes less about restriction and more about trusting our common sense and curiosity.

For its event, the Center for Whole Communities links "harvest" with "courage" with "celebration." For me, the three words capture it all: We can harvest the abundance that is our home if we have the courage to break away from the dominant culture of waste and destruction and to walk with our fear of the unknown and of being different. These natural fears are the dark side of our beautifully social nature; but we can tame our fear of separation as we make new connections in communities of common purpose—instead of common purchases. Then we can celebrate. For—who knows—we may just be able to make this historic turn. 



Frances Moore Lappé is a YES! contributing editor and author of many books, most recently *Getting a Grip*.

COMMENTARY :: Jonathan Rowe

NEW FLOW IN THE GLOBAL PLUMBING

It is customary to describe human economies as “mechanisms,” but “plumbing” would be more apt. The economy, as economists define it, really is just the realm of money; so those who get to design the pipes and valves can determine in large measure where that money flows.

Establish a Federal Reserve to guide the creation of money through commercial banks, for example, and the rest is pretty much details. Arrange the international plumbing so that struggling nations have to go to an International Monetary Fund for financial relief, and you can bring those nations to heel without a rifle being raised.

Sometimes, though, the system springs a leak, which offers a brief opportunity to direct a flow in a new and constructive way. That’s happening now with the money that expatriate workers in the U.S. and elsewhere send to their families back home. There’s an effort underway to turn these payments into the foundation of a new grassroots development fund that bypasses the World Bank and IMF with their built-in agendas. It’s not as far-fetched as it might seem.

Remittances, as this money is called, are not new. What is now the Bank of America began more than a century ago to help Italian immigrants in San Francisco send money home. But recent disruptions of the global economy have sent remittances soaring. No one knows for sure, but the total amount is probably close to \$300 billion, which is almost three times more than all official development aid in the world.

These remittances have become a lifeline for families in Third World countries. Entire nations depend on them. In the Philippines, remittances now comprise some ten percent of the formal economy. In Mexico, they are the number two source of foreign exchange, next to oil. But little of this money turns into the kind of local economic development that would make migratory work—legal and otherwise—less necessary.

For one thing, the companies that handle the remittances have been charging exorbitant fees, often ten to twenty percent. Western Union, the biggest, has been reaping a thirty percent return. For another, the plumbing of the global economy is designed to recapture the flow.

Consider the Western-style mega-malls that are arising incongruously amidst the cinderblock and rust of Manila and Philippine provincial capitals. These largely are outgrowths of the remittance culture. The money makes a brief stop home, and then flows right back to the First World via Nike, Burger King, et. al. Pharmaceutical companies get a big cut, too.

LAUGHING MATTERS ::



It's a one-owner car—and she's still somewhere inside.

PAUL VENTURA

You know, George, the closer to Peak Oil we get, the more these things really start to look like dinosaurs.

RON WALLEY

Supposedly it gets 35 miles per talon.

LINDA PESCATORE

No, YOU open the hood.

ELIZABETH L'ABATE



www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

This is why the Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action (TIGRA), based in Oakland, California, is stepping into the breach. TIGRA is organizing remittance senders throughout the U.S. to demand that transfer companies contribute one dollar per transaction to local development funds. (They also are demanding more reasonable fees.)

That could raise some \$150 million a year from the U.S. alone. The result would be a kind of global Community Reinvestment Act, says Francis Calpotura, the head of TIGRA and himself a Filipino immigrant. Ultimately it could lead to an “alternative World Bank.” What a novel idea—that the money of ordinary people might flow through institutional plumbing designed with their needs in mind. **y**



Jonathan Rowe, a YES! contributing editor, is a fellow at the Tomales Bay Institute, which recently published *The Commons Rising*, a report on the revival of commons-based economics throughout the United States. Rowe is a founder of the West Marin Commons Association and is host of America Offline, a weekly program on KWMR-FM in West Marin County, California.

PEOPLE POWER

IT'S TIME TO STOP THE WAR OURSELVES



CHRIS CUNNINGHAM, [HTTP://CRC1988.GOOGLEPAGES.COM](http://CRC1988.GOOGLEPAGES.COM)

100,000 people marched against the Iraq War in Washington, DC, on September 15. Of those, 5,000 risked arrest by participating in a symbolic "die-in."

Aimee Allison and David Solnit

WE NEED A STRATEGY to end the occupation of Iraq and stop the next invasion, in Iran or elsewhere. One reason it's been hard to mobilize people since the invasion of Iraq is the absence of a clear logic as to where our efforts are headed.

What will another march, continued lobbying, or even a nonviolent direct action add up to? How will we actually stop this war and prevent the next one?

As we approach another presidential election, we have to look soberly at the history of candidates who mobilized anti-war sentiment only to reverse

course once elected. Woodrow Wilson was elected on his promise to keep the United States out of World War I and Richard Nixon was elected on his promise to bring troops home from the Vietnam War. Most members of Congress who were elected in 2006 on promises to bring the troops home have done little or worse.

The solution is written in the mountain-road blockades and mass mobilizations in Bolivia that have driven out transnational corporations like Bechtel and Suez, and even the country's president in 2003. It is written in the farm-

worker-led Taco Bell boycott victory of 2005, and in the immigration-rights boycotts, walkouts, and mobilizations. It's in our own history of workers' and women's rights, environmental, and civil rights struggles. It's called people power.

It's time to stop the war ourselves. A new strategy is emerging from below to make it happen.

It can be seen in the Pittsburgh Organizing Group's "Troops Home Fast," a month-long, around-the-clock vigil held in September 2007 outside Pittsburgh's Recruitment Center, to >>

If we ... identify the pillars that support the war, and choose thoughtful campaigns with creative tactics to remove them, then we will have a viable anti-war strategy.



(CC) BEVERLY VEALACH

"March on the Pentagon" earlier this year brought out an effigy accusing both media and corporations.

» call for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq and an end to military recruitment in Pittsburgh. The counter-recruiting actions have met with attacks by police dogs, electric cattle prods, "tasers," and pepper spray, but their organizing has become contagious. Counter-recruitment is the fastest growing and most hopeful strategy of resistance to war in Iraq.

This strategy can also be seen in last summer's gutsy Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) bus caravan, during

which veterans traveled to military bases across the country—at times facing arrest on base—to talk with the active-duty soldiers who will fight (or resist) the war in Iraq. One of the first active-duty IVAW chapters formed at Fort Mead, Maryland, in the wake of the caravan.

Kelly Dougherty, director of IVAW, explained their strategy at a recent workshop: "The U.S. war in Iraq is this unstable upside-down triangle. It's supported by a lot of pillars like

the military, public opinion, war profiteers, the school system, media, Congress, the president, and the oil industry. If we can weaken those pillars, that will weaken the war as a whole."

For the vets and active-duty soldiers of IVAW, this strategy has translated into their "Truth in Recruiting" and "GI Resistance" campaigns. IVAW members have been challenging military recruiting, supporting GI resisters, and organizing recent vets and active-duty soldiers.

Pillars of War

A group of people in a college classroom are participating in a workshop on "people-power strategy to end the war." They are asked to name "the pillars of support that the U.S. war in Iraq depends on" which, if removed, would "prevent the war and occupation from continuing."

"Troops!" someone shouts out.

That person is asked to step forward and become that pillar by holding up part of a mattress with the words "War and Occupation of Iraq" taped to it.

Another person says, "Corporations, like Halliburton." That person becomes the second pillar holding up the "War and Occupation" mattress.

"Media that persuades people to support the war and misinforms them." The person steps forward, and the mattress has three pillars.

The workshop facilitator asks, "What are some ways we can weaken or remove these pillars of support? Let's start with troops."

"Counter-recruiting, so they can't get enough soldiers."

"Supporting soldiers who refuse," someone else offers.

"Resisting a draft that they might turn to if we are successful at counter-recruiting."

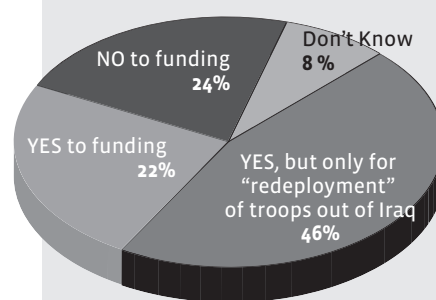
"If we do all these things, will that weaken or remove the pillar of troops?"

Slamming Shut the War Chest

It's Clear We Want the Troops Home

70 percent of Americans are done with spending money in Iraq—almost half want money spent only to get troops out; an additional quarter oppose any more funding at all.

Should Congress approve a \$200 billion request to continue funding the Iraq War and keep the troops in Iraq?



1,000 American adults polled Sept. 20-23, 2007
Poll commissioned by OneVoicePAC.org

What Will It Take in Congress?

Writer David Sirota calls it "The Myth of the Innocent Bystander." Democrats in both houses of Congress protest that they're helpless to stop the war without 60 Senate votes to break a filibuster and 67 to override a veto.

But there are problems with that story. It takes just 40 senators to stop a bill; it takes a simple majority in the House. Were legislators who oppose the war to vote as a bloc, they could stop any further funding. No supermajority is required to follow the will of the people. There's plenty of money in the pipeline to get the troops home. Concern about political fallout seems misplaced in light of the fact that a majority of Americans favor ending the occupation.

YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC, 2008

People agree that it could, and so that pillar is removed and the mattress lurches, held up by just two pillars.

The same exercise is done with the "corporate" and "media" pillars. The "War and Occupation" mattress collapses.

People Power

People power can assert the democratic will of communities and movements to change the things that matter when the established, so-called democratic channels turn out to be little more than public relations for elite rule.

Every successful movement in the United States—from the workers' and civil rights movement to victories in anti-corporate campaigns today—and every successful effort to topple a dictator in recent history has relied on people-power methods.

The term was popularized by the 1986 Philippine uprising against the U.S.-backed dictator Ferdinand Marcos; military resistance and mass direct action mobilizations were central to his ouster.

If we, as a movement of movements, adopt a people-power strategic framework, identify the pillars that support the war, and choose thoughtful campaigns with creative tactics to remove them, then we will have a viable anti-war strategy.

It's clear that we are not all going to agree on any one (or two or three) campaigns, but it is possible for us to consciously adopt and promote a people-power strategy that makes our various efforts complementary and cumulative. We think of it as a massive umbrella under which we can—whether we are a national organization, a local group or a decentralized network—make our efforts add up.

The Battle of the Story

A final key ingredient for a successful strategy is our ability to frame our

own struggles, or to tell our own story. If we act defensively within the framework of the United States government and their "war on terror" story, we will always be on the defensive. If we allow them to define reality, we will always lose. If we limit ourselves to defensively arguing that there were no nuclear weapons in Iraq, or that there are none in Iran, for example, without challenging the legitimacy and cost of the United States being an empire, then we are operating in a reality defined by those in power. We have to be able to understand, fight, and win the "battle of the story."

The courage of young people in the military, on the campuses and in the streets is showing us how to assert our people power. It's clear that more and more folks in the United States and around the world have the courage to resist. Can we find what lies at the root of the word courage—*le coeur*, or heart—to assert our power as communities, as movements, and as people to reverse the policies of empire and build a better world? **Y**



David Solnit, anti-war, global justice, and arts organizer, was a key organizer in the WTO shutdown in Seattle in 1999 and in the shutdown of San Francisco the day after Iraq was invaded in 2003. He is the editor of *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*.



Aimee Allison is an Army veteran and conscientious objector. She leads counter-recruitment activities and actively supports veterans who are healing from their war experiences. She is a contributor to *10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military*. Excerpted from *Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment, End War and Build a Better World*. See www.couragetoresist.org/x/content/view/302/58/ Find out about the authors' tour myspace.com/armyofnonebook

Percentage of Iranians who favor normal relations and trade with the United States: **68**

Percentage of Iranians who strongly support a democratic system: **79**¹

Dollar value of sales of organic cotton in the United States in 2001: **86 million**

Dollar value of sales of organic cotton in the United States in 2005: **275 million**

Projected dollar value of sales of organic cotton in the United States by the end of 2008: **2.6 billion**²

Number of guns in the United States per 100 citizens: **90**

Number of guns in Yemen (ranked second in per capita gun ownership) per 100 citizens: **61**

Number of guns in England and Wales per 100 citizens: **6**³

Percentage of American 13- to 24-year-olds stating that time with family is the one thing that makes them the happiest: **20**

Percentage of American 13- to 24-year-olds stating that time with friends is the one thing that makes them the happiest: **15**

Percentage of American 13- to 24-year-olds who state that money is the one thing that makes them the happiest: **1**⁴

Number of diagnoses of bipolar disorder for patients under age 20 in 1994: **20,000**

Number of diagnoses of bipolar disorder for patients under age 20 in 2003: **800,000**⁵

Number incarcerated out of every 100,000 black males in Apartheid South Africa in 1993: **851**⁶

Number incarcerated out of every 100,000 black males in the United States in 2006: **4,789**⁷

Smallest extent of Arctic sea ice in 1987, in square kilometers: **6.9 million**

Smallest extent of Arctic sea ice in 2007, in square kilometers: **4.1 million**⁸

Percentage by which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underestimated the rate at which polar ice is melting: **50**⁹

Percentage of Alaskan polar bears that scientists project will die by 2050 because of melting ice caps: **100**¹⁰

Percentage decrease of cancer death rates in the U.S. between 2002 and 2004: **2.1**

Percentage decrease between 1993 and 2002: **1.1**¹¹

Price, in Iraq, of a standard wooden Kalashnikov assault rifle in 2003: **\$80-\$150**

Price, in Iraq, of a standard wooden Kalashnikov assault rifle in 2006: **\$400-\$800**¹²

Number of billboards removed from São Paulo, Brazil after the city's near-complete ban on outdoor advertising went into effect in early 2007: **15,000**¹³

Complete citations at www.yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. Terror Free Tomorrow, 2007. **2.** Organic Exchange, Spring 2006. **3.** Small Arms Survey, 2007. **4.** Associated Press-MTV Poll, August 2007. **5.** *Archives of General Psychiatry*, September 2007. **6.** The Sentencing Project, September 1994. **7.** Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006. **8.** National Snow and Ice Data Center, 2007. **9.** Discovery News, September 6, 2007. **10.** *The Guardian*, September 7, 2007. **11.** The American Cancer Society, et al., October 15, 2007. **12.** Small Arms Survey, 2007. **13.** *Adbusters*, August 21, 2007.

DO-IT-YOURSELF LIBERATION

Why wait for permission? Create the world you want right now. Start by doing what you love where you live and work. Claim space to be free and feed the human spirit. Don't wait for the people in charge—become a pioneer of liberated spaces.



18

Live Free. *The consumer life carries invisible chains. Let's make spaces where we can be free. Step off the path.*



20

Schools Without Teachers. *What if students chose what to learn? A school for free people in free communities.*



26

Don't Fall in Love With the Guitarist. Be the Guitarist! *The ladiezzz take up where the grrrls left off.*



27

People Taking Charge. *They're liberating public parks, urban factories, and all the spaces in between.*



28

It Took a Village. *How Miami's homeless reclaimed place, community, and dignity.*



36

Gandhi's Footsteps. *Self-reliance, intention, and tradition yield liberation, top to bottom.*



38

The Fine Art of Raising a Ruckus. *What does spectacle have to do with challenging empire?*



40

Celebrating a Critical Mass. *Cycling to reopen public space. Rev. Billy on bikes and free speech.*

THE DIY GUIDE. *Walk out, get free stuff, toss a flower bomb. Simple steps for day-to-day liberation. Go ahead: free your world.*

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KEVIN FLEMEN
FLICKR: KFXPOSURE

Live Free

Do It Yourself

Sarah van Gelder and Doug Pibel

FOR ALL THE FREEDOM WE CLAIM in the United States, we lead lives that are mapped out for us from the beginning. We go to school and, if we're fortunate, to college; then to a job to pay for all we and our families need and want. We teach our kids to do the same.

This path once served at least some of us well. But today, it is tied to a system of institutions, habits, and beliefs that is leading us all to an ecological and human train wreck.

What if we got off the train? What if we walked out on this tangled web of

What happens when we throw off the invisible chains that keep us from realizing the world we want— when we, as they say in the global south, decolonize our minds?

businesses, laws, freeways, drugs, television-addiction, dead-end jobs or no jobs, strip malls, prisons, and war?

There are places where people are doing that. Those who need homes claim space and work together to build them. People go to universities where they find their own teachers, or teach each other the skills to make their communities work better for everyone. Artists do their work unconstrained by the profit-seeking of corporations and middlemen. Bicycles rule the streets, making cars take second place, at least some of the time.

In short, people are creating spaces for community, for learning, for fulfilling their own dreams while supporting the aspirations of others.

You may want to find these free spaces. For now, they flash into being in a few places, at a few times, and in a few minds. But they are available to anyone who wants to find or create them.

The Game of Go

This issue asks what happens when we throw off the invisible chains that keep us from realizing the world we want—when we, as they say in the global south, decolonize our minds.

Suppose that, instead of waiting for the whole world to change so we can live as we would like, we remake spaces where we can live that way now.

Think of the game of Go. Unlike chess, where you confront and defeat an enemy, in Go you win by taking over spaces. You simply surround territory and make it yours.

Instead of asking someone in power for policy changes or the right job, why not take over streets for bikes and

parks, build our own cooperatives, create cultural events that nurture our souls and community spirit, build our own homes? Why not live the lives we want, along with others, without waiting for permission from the authorities?

This is the approach of the autonomists, the street artists, the tent city dwellers. In our society, people on the fringes have the most skill at this. They have been excluded because they are poor, a minority, or undocumented, and they make their own space both of necessity and as a declaration of power. Those who have succeeded within the power structure and become accustomed or even addicted to the rewards of obedience may find the transition difficult. But it can be done.

An Antidote to Fear

Does seeking freedom mean sacrificing family and friends and striking out alone? Quite the contrary. Getting free of debt, addiction to shopping, and corporate television can open up space for the authentic relationships we crave. Getting free of the burden of paying for and taking care of the excess stuff frees up time to notice where we live—the natural and human communities that need our stewardship.

The best antidote to the fear, helplessness, and isolation that drives people into apathy is community and joy. That is reason enough to create free spaces. Individually, people are extraordinarily intelligent and capable. But together—in settings that encourage each person's full potential and open us to our own wisdom and that of others—we can be geniuses.

Does this mean turning our backs on the dire challenges facing the world? It may, in fact, be the best tool we have to face them.

Our individual liberation and the liberation of our society are interconnected. The United States claims to set the gold standard for “the good life,” and around the world, billions are doing their best to imitate us. Our way of living drains the life from the planet, but our leaders say we insist on it. Do we? If we can free ourselves of the advertising-induced stupor of consumer society, maybe we can help release the whole world from the American dream-turned-nightmare.

Let's get off that train, and with the clarity that comes with our freedom, we can begin inventing the world we want—and ways of life that might leave a livable world for our children and grandchildren.

If we believe there is nothing more urgent than building a just and sustainable world, maybe we simply need to start building it, beginning wherever we are.

This is the leadership we need today. Not the lone heroic leader, who is so easy to corrupt or shoot down, but the leadership of ordinary people who are both the creators and the beneficiaries of free spaces, and who use those spaces to claim more freedom for everyone.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “You must be the change you want to see in the world,” and less famously, “I believe it to be perfectly possible for an individual to adopt the way of life of the future ...without having to wait for others to do so.”

So who's done waiting? **y**

Cultural Spaces

Reclaiming Our Freedom to Learn

Gustavo Esteva

YEARS AGO, WE STARTED TO OBSERVE in villages and barrios, particularly among indigenous peoples, a radical reaction against education and schools. A few of them closed their schools and expelled their teachers. Most of them avoided this type of political confrontation and started instead to just bypass the school, while reclaiming and regenerating the conditions in which people traditionally learned in their own ways.

The people in the villages know very well that school prevents their children from learning what they need to know to continue living in their communities, contributing to the common well-

being and that of their soils, their places. And school does not prepare them for life or work outside the community. In many communities in Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico, parents no longer delegate their children's learning to school.

They know by experience what usually happens to those who abandon their communities to get "higher education." They get lost in the cities, in degraded jobs. A recent official study found that only eight percent of graduates of Mexican universities will be able to work in the field they graduated in. Lawyers or engineers are driving taxis or tending stalls. In spite of such awareness, people still hold the illusion that higher education offers something to their children. They don't feel comfortable depriving their children of such an "opportunity."



A primary school in the Zapatista village of Oventic, the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico.

AARON CAIN

Life Without Teachers

We once did a thought experiment in which we took a suggestion of author John McKnight—imagining a world without dentists—and applied it to the teaching profession. For a few minutes many apocalyptic descriptions circulated around our table as we imagined a world without teachers or teaching. But then something radically different started to come into our conversation. We imagined a myriad of ways in which the people themselves would create a different kind of life.

nities to learn in freedom. In many cases, they can no longer learn with parents, uncles, grandparents—just talking to them, listening to their stories or observing them in their daily trade. Everybody is busy, going from one place to another. No one seems to have the patience any more to share with the new generation the wisdom accumulated in a culture. Instead of education, what we really need is conditions for decent living, a community.

Our challenge thus became to find ways to regenerate community in

Our “students” have been learning faster than we expected. After a few months they are usually called to return to the living present of their communities to do there what they have learned. They seem to be very useful there. Some of them are combining different lines of learning in a creative way. One of them, for example, combined organic agriculture and soil regeneration (his original interest), with vernacular architecture. He is not offering professional services that allow him to move towards the middle class

We have learned, with the Zapatistas, that while changing the world is very difficult, perhaps impossible, it is possible to create a whole new world.

One of the most important conclusions of our conversation was the explicit recognition that we learn better when nobody is teaching us. We can observe this in every baby and in our own experience. Our vital competence comes from learning by doing, without any kind of teaching.

After the exercise, a very practical question came to the table. We have learned, with the Zapatistas, that while changing the world is very difficult, perhaps impossible, it is possible to create a whole new world. That is exactly what the Zapatistas are doing in the south of Mexico. How can we create our own new world, at our own, small, human scale, in our little corner in Oaxaca? How can we deschool our lives and those of our children in this real world, where the school still dominates minds, hearts and institutions?

The most dramatic lesson we derived from the exercise was to discover what we were really missing in the urban setting: conditions for apprenticeship. When we all request education and institutions where our children and young people can stay and learn, we close our eyes to the tragic social desert in which we live. They have no access to real opportu-

the city, to create a social fabric in which we all, at any age, would be able to learn and in which every kind of apprenticeship might flourish. In doing this radical research, we surprise ourselves, every day, when we discover how easy it can be to create alternatives and how many people are interested in the adventure.

So we created our university, Unitierra. Young men and women without any diploma, and better yet no schooling, can come to us. They learn whatever they want to learn—practical trades, like urban agriculture, video production, or social research, or fields of study, like philosophy or communication. They learn the skills of the trade or field of study as apprentices of someone practicing those activities. They also learn how to learn with modern tools and practices not available in their communities.

As soon as the young people arrive at Unitierra, they start to work as apprentices. They discover that they need specific skills to do what they want to do. Most of the time, they get those skills by practicing the trade, with or without their mentors. They may choose to attend specific workshops, to shorten the time needed to get those skills.



BERKANA.ORG

Apprenticeships foster traditional skills at Unitierra.

standard of living by selling services and commodities. He is learning how to share, like peasants, what it means to be a cherished member of his community and commons, as has been done through time immemorial—before the modern rupture. >>

DIY LIBERATION

Cultural Spaces

» Discipline and freedom

In Unitierra we are not producing professionals. We have created a convivial place, where we all are enjoying ourselves while learning together. At the same time, both the “students” and their communities soon discover that a stay at Unitierra is not a vacation. True, the students have no classes or projects. In fact, they don’t have any kind of formal obligation. There are no compulsory activities. But they have discipline, and rigor, and commitment—with their group (other “students”), with us (participating in all kinds of activities for Unitierra), and with their communities.

Our “students” do not belong to communities. They are their communities. Of course, they can enjoy themselves and have very long nights of pachanga and many fiestas. But they have a responsibility to their communities, that is, to themselves. And hope. That is why they can have discipline, and rigor, and commitment.

Our “students” have the internal and social structure that is a fundamental condition for real freedom. If you don’t have them, if you are an individual

atom within a mass of a collective, you need someone in charge of the organization. The workers of a union, the members of a political party or church, the citizens of a country—all of them need organizers and external forces to keep them together. In the name of security and order, they sacrifice freedom. Real people, knots in nets of relationships, can remain together by themselves, in freedom.

“True learning,” Ivan Illich once said, “can only be the leisurely practice of free people.” In the consumer society, he also said, we are either prisoners of addiction or prisoners of envy. Only without addiction or envy, only without educational goals, in freedom, can we enjoy true learning.

In Unitierra we have been fruitfully following a suggestion of Paul Goodman, a friend of, and source of inspiration for, Ivan Illich. Goodman once said: “Suppose you had the revolution you are talking and dreaming about. Suppose your side won, and you had the kind of society you wanted. How would you live, you personally, in that society? Start living that way now! Whatever you would do then, do it now. When you run up against obstacles, people, or things that won’t let you live that way, then begin to think about how to get over or around or under that obstacle, or how to push it out of the way, and your politics will be concrete and practical.”

We call Unitierra a university to laugh at the official system and to play with its symbols. After one or two years of learning, once their peers think they have enough competence in a specific trade, we give the “students” a magnificent university diploma. We are thus offering them the social recognition denied to them by the educational system. Instead of certifying the number of ass-hours, as conventional diplomas do, we certify a specific competence, immediately appreciated by the communities, and protect our “students” against the usual discrimi-

nation. Most of our graduates are surprising us, however, by not asking for any diploma. They don’t feel the need for it.

We are also celebrating our wise and our elders with modern symbols. We thus offer diplomas of Unitierra to people who perhaps never attended a school or our university. Their competence is certified by their peers and the community. The idea, again, is to use in our own way, with much merit and humor, all the symbols of domination. Or rather, as Illich says, to misuse for our own purposes what the state or the market produces.

Our diplomas have no use for those who wish to show off or to ask for a job or any privilege. They are an expression of people’s autonomy. As a symbol, they represent the commitment of our “students” to their own communities, not a right to demand anything. Nonetheless, 100 percent of our “graduates” are doing productive work in the area they studied.

But playing with the symbols of the system is not only an expression of humor. It is also a kind of protection. What we are doing is highly subversive. In a sense, we are subverting all the institutions of the modern, economic society. In packaging our activities as one of the most respected sacred cows of modernity—education—we protect our freedom from the attacks of the system.

In my place, every I is a we. And thus we live together, in our living present, rooted in our social and cultural soil, nourishing hopes at a time in which all of us, inspired by the Zapatistas, are creating a whole new world. ⑦



Gustavo Esteva is a grassroots activist and deprofessionalized intellectual. Author of many books and essays, former advisor to the Zapatistas, and member of several independent organizations and networks, Mexican and international, he lives in an indigenous village in Oaxaca, in southern Mexico.

An Immersion in Liberated Spaces

“Nations and Identities,” a new study abroad program, will explore how the people in Canada, India, and Mexico are reclaiming their commons or creating new ones. In dialogues with the Mohawk, in Quebec, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and tribal India, and with non-indigenous groups in all three countries, participants will observe how each is affirming their respective identities and conceiving political horizons and convivial ways of life beyond the nation-state.

Interested? International Honors Program, www.ihp.edu.

ZEN, BUSKING & ANARCHY

Playing music on the street, even snooty music like the stuff I play, resonates mightily with the subversive tone of Zen anarchism. It calls us to feel what we feel, to express what we are, and to be real to ourselves and to one another.



Parke Burgess

WHEN I PLAY THE BACH SUITES for cello on city streets, I am acutely aware of both my freedom and yours.

Music-making becomes my meditation. My spontaneous response to the music flows freely, and I offer that experience to you, the listener.

You have the freedom to respond any way you like. We have no contractual agreement; you can toss a coin into my case or not. And it makes no difference. I make no effort to control you, and you (I hope) make no effort to control me.

This is deeply subversive, even anarchistic. Although I am playing “respectable music,” my intent runs directly counter to the compliant mentality that our culture demands of us and constantly woos us to accept.

Most people think of anarchy as “all hell breaking loose.” But what anarchy

really means is “a society without hierarchies of power.” Critics of anarchism argue that these two notions amount to the same thing, and that hierarchies of power, and principally the state, maintain law and order. Anarchy, they say, leads to lawlessness and chaos.

But in fact, power hierarchies themselves have proven to be exceptionally violent over the long course of history. The state is simply the institutionalization of “all hell breaking loose” around a particular arrangement of power.

When the use of power is primarily self-centered and largely unexamined, as it is in our society, the logic of “might makes right” prevails, and society becomes formalized around systems and practices that benefit the powerful at the expense of the weak.

The promise of anarchism is that we might rise to the challenge of being

transparent about our uses of power, intentional about sharing power in a more just way, and thoughtful about the corresponding organization of systems and structures.

Only when we’re deeply honest, with ourselves first of all, can we really discern the subtle and myriad ways we exercise power and try to control the world. Misery arises when we try to control others; Zen and anarchism converge on this point.

The practice of Zen cultivates a freedom and openness of mind that promotes self-honesty and compassion. Anarchism provides a freedom and openness of social forms through which honesty and compassion may infuse our politics and economy, and so become truly lived in the world.

Thus, what we normally call Zen may be described as an anarchism of the mind; and what we normally call anarchism may be understood as a Zen of social relations.

Playing music on the street, even snooty music like the stuff I play, resonates mightily with the subversive tone of Zen anarchism. It calls us to feel what we feel, to express what we are, and to be real to ourselves and to one another.

And that, friends, carries within it the seeds of a radically different, and much greater, society. ⑦

Parke Burgess is managing editor of *Communities* magazine, cellist, and author of a forthcoming book under the working title, *The Nonviolent Mind and Society*.

IT'S GETTING HAUTE OUT THERE. HOW FREE IS THE BURNING MAN?



Charles Shaw (aka "Seven")

IT BEGINS AS A PILGRIMAGE of light inching its way across the Nevada desert. Thousands of cars, vans, RVs, painted buses and mutant art vehicles carrying inside them the minions of "The Man."

They are some 50,000 strong: neo-tribal fire-spinners decked in bones, feathers, and tattoos; half-nude ambassadors of the love revolution; pyrotechnicians, metal workers, survivalists, demolitionists, DJs, deconstructionalists, atheists, alchemists, and aesthetes. All of them, waiting for Sunday midnight to come so that they can pass into a renewed Black Rock City and begin building this year's Burning Man community.

This mind-bending cultural bacchanal is held every year for one week in late August on the gypsum powder of the Black Rock Desert near Pyramid Lake in northwest Nevada. From far-flung parts of the globe, Burners come to give expression to possibilities for the human race in unregulated space.

This year's theme, "The Green Man," invoked the planetary environmental crises. Perhaps without intending to, this theme highlighted the prodigious waste and consumption at the core of this most unsustainable of festivals, despite its "leave no trace" maxim. Most Burners reacted to the theme with ambivalence, perhaps best exemplified when on Monday night, hidden in the darkness beneath a

CATHERINE BAILEY

CAN WE TALK?

CONVERSATION CAFÉS

SHOW US HOW

blood red lunar eclipse, the Green Man burned before his time, torched by a disillusioned dissident disgusted with the size and scope the festival had attained.

The community pulled together to rebuild him, and the festival continued, driven by Mother Nature, who whipped up dust storms that rocked the city, crashed domes and towers, and uprooted whole camps.

On Friday the rains came, followed by a double rainbow that punctuated the intermission between Daniel Pinchbeck's talk on the coming cultural shift and Starhawk's passionate address about creating a permaculture from the ashes of our collapsing ecosystems.

Four a.m., Saturday: a meteor shower blitzed the skies as I made my way to the Sapphire Portal, an evolutionary interface that provides an environment for personal and planetary transformation. Inside, we huddled together against the cold through the remaining hours of the night, and awoke to the light of the rising sun pouring through the portal gates, surrounded by people praying, dancing, and practicing yoga.

Saturday night, after the anti-climactic burn, the Black Rock faithful watched as "Crude Awakening," a massive art installation of nine 30-foot tall metal humanoid sculptures worshipping a 100-foot tall oil derrick, was destroyed in a massive pyrotechnic explosion. Although a powerful statement on our obscenely wasteful relationship to fossil fuels, it was, for the green-conscious, a case of torturous hedonism.

Next year's theme is "The American Dream." Already we can hear the distant sirens blaring. ⑦

Charles Shaw is a Chicago-based writer, executive editor of *Evolver/Reality Sandwich* (realitysandwich.com) and former editor of *Conscious Choice*.

Vicki Robin

I DIDN'T ASK ANYONE if I could start Conversation Cafés. There was no one to ask. No one is in charge of conversations in cafés or at bus stops or in grocery lines. The potential for rich, fun, meaningful, enlivening conversations in such locations was glaringly evident to me, so two Seattle friends and I set out to develop a way that diverse strangers and neighbors could gather in cafés to talk about things of common interest and concern—culture, politics, philosophy, and so on. We each stationed ourselves weekly at a café in our neighborhoods, inviting other café customers, friends, and the general public to talk. We built it—and they came. In six months there were two dozen Seattle locations. In six years the method has spread around the world.

Conversation Cafés are intended to restore something missing from our culture; to nudge us towards the classic American values of generosity, safety, friendliness, creativity, pragmatic decision making—in short, democracy.

I envisioned intimate, reflective conversations that increased participants' capacity to engage in respectful and inquisitive conversations at home, work, and in social situations. Could a "culture of conversation" be built, or coaxed into being? To make this technique widely available, we asked ourselves: "What is the minimum structure that will allow strangers to shift from small talk to big talk—that is, talk about things that really matter?"

The resulting Conversation Café agreement sounds a bit like what one should have learned in kindergarten about getting along with other kids. They are guidelines for group settings that hold a space for

freedom for all, not a free-for-all:

Open-mindedness: *Listen to and respect all points of view.*

Acceptance: *Suspend judgment as best you can.*

Curiosity: *Seek to understand rather than persuade.*

Discovery: *Question assumptions, look for new insights.*

Sincerity: *Speak what has personal heart and meaning.*

Brevity: *Go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on.*

I believe that there is a freedom that can come in community. This freedom involves holding with tenderness your frightened, belligerent self while working with others, however difficult they might be, on something you care about. By staying with—neither closing up nor lashing out—you embrace the task of belonging. Such freedom-in-community comes as you act together to make your family, neighborhood, workplace, and world more harmonious and lively.

Conversation Café hosts are social liberators—and the function can go far beyond a small table in a coffee shop. "If you want to change the world, throw a better party." That's my friend Rick Ingrasci's motto. Social freedom isn't a wild party. It's a better party, a way to gather with others that leaves everyone enlivened and inspired, and free to keep participating. ⑦

Vicki Robin co-wrote *Your Money Or Your Life*. Conversation Cafés host an annual Conversation Week, when circles convene worldwide to talk about the most important questions of our times. See www.conversationcafe.org for the 2008 Conversation Week.

Expanded guidelines for conversation cafés at www.YesMagazine.org/ConCafe

DIY LIBERATION

Cultural Spaces



Berlin ladyfest 2007

CONNY SCHLEE



DON'T FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GUITARIST. BE THE GUITARIST!

Lisa Bolyos

INVENTED IN OLYMPIA, WA, in 2000, ladyfest was meant to be a festival but in a very short time grew to be a movement. All over the world, in Jakarta, Warsaw, Houston, Leipzig, Timisoara and Newcastle upon Tyne, ladiezzzz are celebrating, holding workshops and making music around the vague issue of being queer—by their own definitions. While posters in the city of Budapest are asking, “Do you find solidarity among women a great thing?” ladiezzzz in Vancouver say it less discreetly: “Fuck your gender!” they suggest on their leaflets, and that’s exactly what ladyfest intends to do.

Ladyfest wants to establish temporary and continuous spaces for a radical feminist culture that can no longer fit into the grrrls identity that was taken over by a capitalist market a

long time ago. We are not cute, we are queer—and if anybody determines categories for our identities, it’s us.

That’s how the lady entered the ‘90s stage. But still the motto of the riot grrrls’ movement hasn’t lost any of its validity: Don’t fall in love with the guitarist, be the guitarist.

To work out a feminist, queer culture means to jump onto the stage, make loud, self-assured and self satisfied music, but also to acquire skills and knowledge that still have to be put into our words and our language: learn to program a computer, learn how to get on the air, learn about anti-fascist theories—all that can be liberating in the right context.

And ladyfest is trying to establish this right context in many places and many times in the world, not only in

concert halls and workshop rooms, but also out on the street, around our bodies and inside our heads: Are you a man or a woman? The answer is no.

That ladyfest is open for all those interested does not mean that we do without exclusions. There is, on the contrary, a clear policy of exclusion against racism, hetero-sexism, anti-semitism, and nationalism.

The festivals create a space where the ladyfest society can be tested for real life. A space where we can learn to move away from transphobia and heteronormativity, and on occasion to take an ironic look at our own prejudices about identity.

Ladyfest is nothing you can define in a handful of poetic lines. Ladyfest is a work in progress, taking queer culture into our everyday lives. ⑦

Lisa Bolyos is a photographer, anti-racist and feminist activist. She lives, works, and is active mainly in Vienna and Berlin.

Interested? Participate in a ladyfest near you, or organize one in your town. Find tips and experiences at www.myspace.com/ladyfesteurope.

MYSPEACE MUSIC PUTS FANS AND ARTISTS SIDE BY SIDE

Glenn Peoples


IN SOME CIRCLES it might be sporting to bash an online branch of the Rupert Murdoch empire. Musicians, however, don't bash MySpace. They've turned it to their own ends. It is the single greatest tool for musicians since the advent of PC-based recording. Everybody from aspiring hopefuls to superstars uses MySpace pages to connect with fans. The often clumsy, cluttered pages are the online version of the New York City subway, a technological equalizer where everybody rides shoulder-to-shoulder.

This five-year-old site stands alone as a tool for musicians. It is to musicians what a Phillips screwdriver is to a carpenter. A number of bands have no proper web site and use only MySpace. And why not? It is simple to operate, extremely user friendly, and free.

Recently, MySpace has moved from mere promotion to outright commerce. Mass distribution is no longer the sole domain of major music companies. Snocap, co-founded by Napster creator Shawn Fanning, allows artists to sell digital downloads right from their MySpace page. Lala.com recently entered the scene when it allowed users to buy the new James Blunt album at his MySpace page.

With these tools, the more entrepreneurial bands can eliminate the middleman—the record label—and go directly to consumers. This works particularly well for relatively unknown bands with a local following and modest goals. MySpace is also a godsend for struggling artists who just want to be heard.

Even for stars, MySpace is a fabulous way to reach people. John Mayer posts long, rambling blog entries to his MySpace page; new U.K. star Lily Allen posts frantic, emotional rants on hers. Their fans can't get enough.

All of this comes from a perfect confluence of factors. The do-it-yourself genius of MySpace is magnified by inexpensive home recording tools, the high penetration of home computers, and the growth of speedy broadband connections. For music fans who dig deep for the exotic and hard-to-find, the combination of Google and MySpace presents a universe of new music that can reach across political boundaries and oceans. 

Glenn Peoples is editor of the music blog cooler.com

Interested? Check out *YES!* Magazine on MySpace.
www.myspace.com/yesmagazine



EROC OF THE FOUNDATION MOVEMENT

People Taking Charge

Hip Hop: "Voice of the Voiceless"

In July, the South Bronx community was bogged down in a dispute with New York City police over whether they had all the correct sound permits needed to hold a community concert at The Rock Garden. In the end, the wrangling didn't matter—residents and performers decided to go ahead with the free concert, with or without permits.

It's that we-don't-need-permission attitude that keeps the Hip Hop genre relevant.

Foundation Movement and Rebel Diaz, Hip Hop artists who hit hard at social justice themes, were among the performers.

"Hip Hop is right at home being the voice of the voiceless—anti-establishment from the onset," says Ernesto Arroyo, aka Eroc, of Foundation Movement. "It has always represented the voice of the people. Simply because corporate radio decided it's not in their commercial interest to promote music that supports positive social change doesn't mean that music hasn't always existed."

Eroc emphasizes that he and bandmate Optimus are activists first. "Whether we are performing in Philadelphia in support of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, or in refugee camps in Palestine demanding an end to occupation worldwide, we recognize that through our music we can be advocates."



Watch the Rebel Diaz music video "Which Side Are You On?"



Listen to Foundation Movement's "Fruits of Babylon"

www.YesMagazine.org/hiphop44

Living Spaces

It Took a Village

In Miami, homeless citizens didn't wait for the city. They created their own home and found dignity and safety.



ROLFE ROSS, WWW.ROLFEROSS.COM



Above, Micah at Umoja Village.
Rolfe Ross' photo essay of residents at
www.YesMagazine.org/umoja

Heather Mueller

EVEN AS THE SKELETONS of half-finished condominiums and luxury high-rises emerge along Miami's skyline, the City of Miami has been tearing down affordable housing. The historically black community of Liberty City is the only neighborhood in Miami-Dade County where population has declined in the past 10 years. Many residents have become homeless or been forced to move, opening the neighborhood to gentrification.

Instead of waiting for the city government to solve the housing shortage, local activist Max Rameau and a core group of organizers began meeting with Liberty City residents, many of them homeless, to talk about housing issues in the neighborhood. Out of these weekly meetings, the blueprint for Umoja Village—"Unity" in the East African language of Kiswahili—was formed.

On October 23, 2006, homeless residents and organizers erected a shantytown on public land at the corner of 62nd Street and NW 17th Avenue. Once the site of low-income apartments, the lot had been vacant since the building was demolished by the city in 1998. By reclaiming this lot for low-income housing, Umoja established a direct link between the people and the land, and staked out their right to stay in the neighborhood.

Starting with 10 full-time residents, the village quickly grew to a maximum capacity of 50 people. A drug- and alcohol-free zone from the beginning, Umoja offered a safe space to put down roots and work for a communal cause. Makeshift homes built from plywood, cardboard, tarps, and donated mattresses soon filled the lot in neat rows. Some walls were covered in colorful murals or marked with messages supporting Umoja's mission for "Housing Now."

"Liberty Café" served as a gathering spot and communal kitchen, stocked with donated food, where villagers cooked over oil drum grills and washed dishes in buckets of soapy water. Within two weeks of opening, the once-homeless residents had taken almost complete control of the day-to-day operations of their new home,

growing food, piecing together a library of donated books, and deciding in weekly meetings how to settle disagreements and distribute resources.

Umoja Village directly confronted and, for 50 individuals, provided a solution to the problem of homelessness. But the impact of the village has much deeper roots and implications. Amanda Seaton, one of the core organizers of the project, explains, "Throughout the [African] diaspora, there is a history of people not controlling or owning the land that they live on." Fighting for justice is difficult without the dignity that comes from being able to meet basic needs. And that ability, Umoja residents and organizers believe, is rooted in land and in community. As one resident stated, "I want to be a man again. I want to be able to come home from work and be in a house and be a man with my family and feel like a man again instead of going somewhere else and feeling like a burden."

In April 2007, a tipped candle ignited a fire that destroyed Umoja Village. The land is once again vacant, this time surrounded by a fence, though the Umoja community still hopes to see permanent housing built on the site. A new project spearheaded by Max Rameau is petitioning the city of Miami to build 123,564 new units of affordable housing by the year 2025. Meanwhile, many of the residents and activists continue to meet each Sunday to cook a meal together, maintaining the community support generated by the village. As Max declared on the morning after the fire, "We're going to make sure that even if [the residents are] not here physically, they're going to have Umoja with them wherever they're at." **V**

Interested? Information on the Umoja community and their current projects at takebacktheland.blogspot.com.



Heather Mueller, a writer and teacher in Boulder, Colorado, has family and friends in Miami-Dade County. She is Managing Editor of iamelephant.com.



A Taste of Freedom at Home

Adam and Kibby MacKinnon

LET'S SAY YOU'RE A TYPICAL wage-slave: you work a 40-hour week—at least 160 hours a month—on top of which you've got a nasty, desensitizing commute. What little time you have left you spend feeding yourself, and then collapse in front of a DVD.

Contrast this with life at the Emma Goldman Finishing School, an egalitarian social justice commune in Seattle where we lived for a year. On a budget of \$100,000 Emma's provides a 12-person community with food, housing, heat, utilities, internet and phone access, health coverage, transportation, even a pension. Each adult contributes a "quota" of approximately 110 hours a

"I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things."

EMMA GOLDMAN (1869-1940)

WRITER AND ACTIVIST

month in income hours or labor hours. To start with, that eliminates the need for a full-time job. For us, it meant that Kibby's time cooking dinner, food shopping, doing home maintenance, gardening, or caring for our child had the same value as Adam's salaried hours at YES!

Emma's members also choose to cap their personal spending. These choices provide them time to pursue their activism and a lifestyle that doesn't contradict their beliefs. Living there

challenged our assumptions, which in itself is perhaps the most liberating thing that can happen to you.

Take food, one of the most-discussed topics at Emma's. We bought wholesale, from our local co-op, and whenever possible, direct from farms. We didn't just buy organic, we avoided giant corporations riding the organic food craze. We discussed hosting a needs-based community food pantry, and the idea of buying locally-grown produce at double or triple market value in order to make local farming viable.

There have been many attempts to create an egalitarian society: why does this model work so well? First of all, the recruitment process is rigorous. By the time we moved in, we knew what we were getting ourselves into.

But above all, it works because of trust. Emma's members have weekly three-hour meetings, so there is always a chance to bring up issues and raise suggestions. The first hour is devoted to check-in, where everyone speaks freely about what is going on for them. Now, this sounds awfully touchy-feely, but it works. Grievances are aired and nothing festers.

Because the community provides all the basics, it's easier to see what are truly needs and what are unnecessary wants. Limited consumption becomes a route to freedom, not a restrictive asceticism. And trusting others—how liberating!

The people who established Emma's didn't wait for permission. They didn't look to some non-profit to set them up in a communal house. A few passionate folks got together and worked to make it happen. Brava, Emma Goldman, past, present and future! **Y**

Interested? www.egfs.org

People Taking Charge

Grow Food on Your Roof



DOUG PIBEL

At Start Now Farm in Bremerton, Washington, Jean Schanen and Glenn Huff grow enough produce to feed themselves and to stock their stall at the local farmers' market. Their acreage? A city lot plus the roof space on their garage, carport, and house.

THAT COUCH WAS SO GORGEOUS IT COULD SLOW TRAFFIC

Jay Walljasper

TRAFFIC CALMING has swept the world over the past 15 years. It's based on the simple idea that cars and trucks don't have exclusive ownership of our streets. Streets are shared public space that also belongs to people on foot and bicycles, in baby strollers and wheelchairs. Traffic calming uses design features such as narrowed roads or elevated crosswalks to slow traffic and to assert pedestrians' inalienable right to cross the street.

This idea has altered the landscape of urban life in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Germany, and Australia as people can now move about cities with more ease and pleasure. And now traffic calming is starting to make an impact in other parts of the world.

The origins of this ingenious idea can be traced to Delft, Netherlands, where residents of one neighborhood were fed up with cars racing along their streets, endangering children, pets, and peace of mind. One evening they decided to do something about it by dragging old couches and other furniture out into the roadway. They positioned these objects in such a way that cars could pass, but only if they slowed down.

The police soon arrived on the scene and had to admit that this project, although clearly illegal, was a good idea. Soon the city itself was implementing similar plans of its own, called *woonerfs* (Dutch for "living yards"), on streets plagued by unruly motorists.

One can only imagine the response of politicians and engineers if these neighbors had meekly come to city hall to ask permission to partially block the streets. They would have been hooted right out of the building. By taking direct action, however, they saved their neighborhood and brought comfort and civility to cities around the world. ⑦

Jay Walljasper is a senior fellow at Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and writes frequently on urban issues. You can contact him at JayWalljasper.com

Excerpted from *The Great Neighborhood Book: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Placemaking* (2007, New Society Publishers) by Jay Walljasper in partnership with PPS, a New York-based group that helps citizens improve their communities. Order the book at www.pps.org.



LAWRENCE CUEVAS

People Taking Charge

PARK(ing) For a Day

With some sod and pockets full of quarters, citizens are upping the square footage of green space in cities. Activists have named September 21 PARK(ing) Day, transforming public parking spots into public parks, complete with grass, trees, and benches. Started in 2005 by the San Francisco-based environmental art/absurdity group Rebar, the idea of claiming public places has spread quickly in just two years. PARK(ing) Day 2007 brought 180 new mini-parks to the world, with citizens in 47 cities taking part. Above, a lending library park created at Market and Duboce in San Francisco. —Margit Christenson

Building Autonomy One Community at a Time

Michael Fox

IT'S A SOCIAL MOVEMENT and a housing cooperative. A massive self-help program for the poor and a new way of life for thousands. With 20,000 member-families living in cooperatively owned homes in 400 communities across the country, it is one of the largest and most radical housing cooperative federations in the Americas.

The Uruguayan Federation of Housing for Mutual-Support Cooperatives (FUCVAM) is also one of the most organized social movements in Uruguay. Last March, Federation members led the demonstrations against President George W. Bush's visit to the country, marching for five days to cover the nearly 125 miles from the nation's capital, Montevideo, to the presidential estate where the U.S. President met with his Uruguayan counterpart, President Tabaré Vázquez.

The two concepts—housing and political activism—may not seem like natural partners. But FUCVAM's principle of promoting autonomy in its member organizations translates into broader social engagement.



The Cooperative Experience

Fabian Ramirez, 31, extends his hand to help us up the makeshift stairs to the second floor of a nearly finished three-bedroom home.

Many co-op members had no prior building experience before they started work on their homes, but everyone works together and puts in the same number of hours. "If you know a little about construction, even better," Ramirez says. Whatever your background, "there's a job for everyone."

Ramirez, his wife, and their young child are members of a housing cooperative of 40 families in one of Montevideo's working-class barrios. Like other Federation affiliates, they are building their homes with their own hands. For



Vicente Addiego in front of his home in the BANREP cooperative, where he has lived for 35 years.



MICHAEL FOX

Co-op members work on building their homes in the Housing and Family Cooperative.

the last 30 months, each family has put in over 20 hours a week on the construction, and their labor is finally paying off.

Ramirez proudly shows off the newly laid wooden floors, which they put in themselves. He points out the window at a nearby cluster of buildings, their roofs inlaid with pools of water which Ramirez says will act as insulation against extreme temperatures, keeping the buildings cool in the hot summer and warm in the chilly Uruguayan winter.

Although the co-op is just a month away from completion, Ramirez doesn't yet know which home he and his family will live in; that will be decided by lottery next month. The sys-

tem is set up to ensure that everyone works equally hard on every house.

Once they are done with the homes, co-op members plan to build a common room and a daycare center for use, free of charge, by the cooperative members.

The homes are owned by the cooperative, not by individuals or families, but each family has the legal right to use their home. That right can be passed down to future generations, or exchanged for the money and work hours they put into the community, but it cannot be sold.

Cooperative members aren't just workers and residents. They are also administrators and organizers. All decisions are made in democratic weekly meetings that continue even af-

ter construction has finished.

The idea of cooperative housing might seem unusual elsewhere, but not here in Uruguay. Ramirez lived in the same co-op since he was seven. Now that he's starting his own family, he's building a home in the Housing & Family Cooperative (COVIFAM), a cooperative not unlike the one he lived in as a child. Both co-ops are members of FUCVAM, which is at the heart of one of the most important, democratic, and autonomous housing cooperative experiences in the Western Hemisphere.

Building a Movement

The cooperative housing movement got a start in Uruguay in reaction to a growing housing crisis. Grassroots >>

DIY LIBERATION

Living Spaces

» pressure resulted in the passage of the 1968 National Housing Plan, which opened new housing opportunities for Uruguayan citizens. The plan provided the legal framework for cooperative ownership of property, and created the National Housing and Urbanization Fund by taking 1 percent out of every Uruguayan paycheck, with a mandate for employers to match the figure.

The new fund opened the door for some workers to get loans to purchase their own homes. But with unsteady employment during difficult economic times raising the threat of default, many Uruguayans risked losing their newly-acquired homes and ending up right back where they started. The answer: housing cooperatives, that could take out loans collectively, minimizing the individual risk while building solidarity among members.

"Collective property functions as an umbrella under which members can take cover in stormy weather," says FUCVAM President Mario Fígoli metaphorically. "If I lose my job, and for a few months I don't have the funds to pay off my monthly share of the loan, ... my fellow cooperativistas will pay for me until I have a job again. Then I will pay them back."

FUCVAM was born less than two years after the passage of the Housing Plan. It grew out of a well-organized Uruguayan labor movement and a quickly growing cooperative movement, in order to help provide the means for low-income, working-class families to acquire their own homes.

Each affiliated cooperative receives support from the Federation and a technical advisory team. "No co-op has ever failed," says Fígoli. "It is not easy for a group of humans who have just met each other to develop a project through *autogestión*, because we are taught to value individualism. ... But that is the richness of the housing cooperative model, to transform the individual into a citizen." (The term "*autogestión*" has no direct English counterpart. It embodies self-

management through autonomous, grassroots, and democratic decision-making.)

"We each come to the co-op for just one reason. We need housing," says Fígoli, who has himself been a resident of a Federation-affiliated cooperative since the late 1970s. "But once we get involved in the process, the dynamics of *autogestión* create a cultural change in people."

The change is evident when you visit one of the cooperatives.

"Everyone here knows each other?" I ask as we wander through a large FUCVAM-affiliated cooperative apartment complex of nearly 200 families just down the street from COVIFAM.

"Of course," says our guide, Vicente Addiego, who is well into his 70s and has lived in a housing cooperative on the other side of town for nearly 35 years. "They all have to meet frequently. They have to administer all of this."

A neighbor passes and waves hello. Someone else stops to help us with directions. You get the feeling that they look out for each other.

We pass the gymnasium, recreation center, daycare center, common room, library, sports fields and playgrounds. They are all built by the residents, run by the residents, and free of charge to cooperative members. Some larger cooperatives even have their own free health clinics.

Perhaps this habit of community sharing is why FUCVAM continues to be one of the most active social movements in Uruguay.

Decades of Struggle

FUCVAM's political activism may seem risky for a group whose funding depends almost entirely on the government. But Uruguay's housing loan program has weathered political storms, in part because, as housing activists point out, the loans are financed out of workers' pay.

The true autonomy of the Federation was put to the test only two years after

its founding, when Uruguay was thrust into a repressive 12-year dictatorship. Tens of thousands were jailed and tortured, and FUCVAM was not spared. Hundreds of Federation activists were persecuted, and the government tried to outlaw co-op assemblies, while decreasing loans to new co-ops and increasing interest rates from 2 percent to as high as 9 percent. In spite of the repression, FUCVAM's members soon emerged as the vanguard of the struggle against the dictatorship, as organizing erupted throughout FUCVAM's tight-knit communities.

"You can shut the door on a union, but you can't kick 7,000 families out of their homes," says Fígoli with a smile.

After the fall of the dictatorship in 1984, FUCVAM faced government threats to outlaw cooperative style ownership. In the 1990s, they opposed a loan restructuring. The Federation is now conducting "a pay strike," with its affiliated cooperatives withholding repayment on all outstanding loans. The strike is intended to force the government to agree to restructure previous loans based on worker salaries and to throw out the exorbitant interest rates imposed on Federation co-ops during the dictatorship. As a result, according to Addiego, Uruguay's current leftist government, Frente Amplio, is giving out only a pittance of the loans to new co-ops compared to past governments.

Learning from the Past

Not everything is perfect at the Federation. Not every member likes FUCVAM's political activism, and the Federation found that children were resenting their cooperative because of the long hours of construction and meetings in which their parents had to participate. As a result, FUCVAM now encourages the whole family—from the youngest child to the oldest grandparent—to get involved in their cooperative from the very beginning, whether through helping out with construction, taking care of younger children, or attending a daycare or adolescents'


program. FUCVAM has a training center where they hold workshops on social politics and cooperative management, organization and administration for their members. They have just recently launched a training program for community teachers based on the teachings of Paulo Freire, author of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, who is best known for his groundbreaking work on popular education to combat illiteracy.

"We believe our model is one of the many expressions of Paulo Freire's work" says Fígoli, "and that it is completely replicable anywhere in the world."

It would appear that Fígoli is not far off. With the support of the Swedish Cooperative Center, FUCVAM is collaborating with grassroots housing movements across the Americas. Representatives of the Federation are currently in Venezuela to exchange experiences and expertise with the Urban Land Committees. Throughout Central America, the Federation has supported local struggles with workshops on FUCVAM's unique style of cooperative housing. Elsewhere, such as in Bolivia, FUCVAM has helped local groups to directly form their own housing cooperatives.

Addiego takes us across town to show us his cooperative, BANREP, where an impressive 90 percent of the original 40 member families still live.

"When we got here, this was all sand," he says pointing at the green yard and thick trees in front of his house. His passion is contagious, and we ask him to sum up his three and a half decades of cooperativism with FUCVAM.

"It's not easy," he answers quickly, "but it's worth it." 

Interested? www.fucvam.org.uy



Michael Fox is a freelance journalist based in South America. In 2006, he was a staff writer with *Venezuelanalysis* (www.venezuelanalysis.com) and a correspondent with Free Speech Radio News.



People Taking Charge

Homeless Build Community



TATIANA CARDEAL
TATIANACARDEAL.BLOGSPOT.COM

The Prestes Maia building in downtown São Paulo, abandoned for 12 years, had become a haven for drugs and prostitution. Then, in 2002, more than 400 homeless families, in cooperation with a local group called the Downtown Homeless Movement, occupied the 22-story building. Conditions were crowded and difficult—the building lacks electricity and running water—but residents established a free library, cinema, and educational and social activities.

The Brazilian Constitution recognizes the right to housing and states that all property must serve a "social function." But in São Paulo, where slums and homelessness are common, an estimated 400,000 housing units are unused. The Downtown Homeless Movement, which has reclaimed more than 30 buildings in São Paulo, is just one of many groups reclaiming abandoned buildings across Brazil. At Prestes Maia, residents have fought eviction with protests, road blockades, and legal battles. After years of struggle, they have won either new housing or assistance from the government. —Brooke Jarvis



Gandhi, 1929

Being the Change

Living Gandhi's Revolution Now

Manish Jain

AFTER TRYING FOR YEARS to achieve social change through mainstream institutional activism, I have turned to an approach deeply rooted in my own culture and history. I have spent the past nine years trying to understand how to live my values today rather than waiting for the system to change. My search for the roots of deep transformation have led me to re-engage with the seemingly mundane, the small, the slow, the inefficient, the unorganized, the invisible.

I became involved in activism in college. I focused on stopping discrimination against marginalized groups. I thought we could make the system work by reforming it to give equal rights to all. We signed petitions, held protests, issued policy reports. But despite minor gains, I felt we were losing our dignity, being made into beggars. I started to learn that the price for “redistributed benefits” to people in North America was being paid by people and nature in so-called Third World countries.

After college, I spent eight years in the belly of the beast—Wall Street, Harvard, the United Nations, NGOs—seeking to change the system from within. But I discovered that the problem was bigger than just removing a few bad apples or making some clever policy declarations. I started to question the labels we use, such as “under-developed,” “poor,” or “illiterate”; the manic logic of unlimited growth and obscene profits over all other values; and the reliance on experts and technocratic solutions, rather than on the people.

During this time I came across *Hind Swaraj*, a booklet written by Mahatma Gandhi in 1909. In it, he explores the nature of India's freedom struggle. He says, “It is not about getting rid of the tiger [the British] and keeping the tiger's nature [tools, systems, world-view, etc].” He calls for *swaraj* (rule over the individual and collective self)

and urges us to look beyond “modern” colonizing systems of health, justice, and technology. I learned that non-violent political strategies require tremendous self-discipline and the courage to challenge our own comfort zones.

Gandhi's insights helped me transcend such false polarizations as capitalism vs. communism, Left vs. Right, and East vs. West. I found the courage to move beyond playing “big” power games to fix the state and market systems which, no matter how clever they were, only fueled the monster.

I started to reorient myself to a practice of honestly questioning my own complicity, fear, and insecurity, as well as searching for my own real sources of organic power. I resigned from UNESCO and moved back to India. I have been experimenting with hands-on alternatives—from self-healing to community media to urban organic farming—which reduce dependence on institutions and revalue physical labor as an essential part of intellectual growth, political activism, and spirituality. Much of my own unlearning has resulted from our family decision not to send our daughter to school.

I have met people from around the world who are working to regenerate their communities—many of whom do not call themselves activists and would never think of doing so. One is my “illiterate” grandmother, who is one of the

greatest environmentalists I have ever known. She is not a member of Greenpeace, nor an environmental scientist. But she is an amazing up-cycler, taking responsibility for her own waste by finding new uses for everything from mango pits and peels to old toothbrushes. She cares for the people, creatures, and place around her, giving concrete meaning to “localization” and “zero waste” living.

For me, the most exciting change movements seek to re-legitimize and reconnect to the knowledge, imagination, and wisdom of traditional communities. Giving top priority to regenerating diverse local languages, ways of seeing, and systems of natural learning is urgent if we are to co-create our way out of the massive crises that face us today. Equally important is finding the courage to walk out of institutions and structures that reinforce violence, injustice, and exploitation. Through an active practice of non-cooperation, we can withdraw the legitimacy that they have in our minds and open up spaces of calmness from which to explore new possibilities.

It is critical that we search for real expressions of our nature, not the tiger's. Only then can we reclaim the dignity of our lives on our own terms. 7

Manish Jain lives in Udaipur, India with four amazing women to keep him honest: his loving wife, sister, daughter, and grandmother. He co-edited an e-booklet on Now Activism and invites you to dialogue on it at www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/nowact_toc.htm

Compost Toilets and Self-Rule

Madhu Suri Prakash

THE ECOLOGICAL TOILET is one of today's most hope-filled expressions of people's power and people's science. These toilets—which celebrate Gandhian simplicity and ecological sensibility—recover and honor traditional practices of healing and agriculture, related arts of non-violent living.

In contrast, the abuse of water via flush toilets renders it toxic as well as globally scarce. More than 40 percent of the water available for domestic purposes is used for transporting shit.

Mixing three rich, marvelous substances—water, urine, and shit—turns them into a poisonous cocktail. At a very high cost we seek to separate them again with dangerous chemicals and exotic technologies in “treatment plants.” We reduce our sacred waters into chemically treated H₂O that pollutes our bodies and soils and waters.

Ecological toilet users cannot but smile with a certain sadness as they observe how their “free” and “civilized” flush toilet peers’ stomachs are attached everywhere to the prisons of centralized, violent bureaucracies—the kinds Gandhi-ji resisted.

Returning our waters to the pristine purity of our ancestors’ sensibility and sense of the sacred affirms the dignity and political autonomy of those who resist addiction to the technologies of professionals, bureaucrats, and centralized sewage agencies.

Just as Gandhi-ji’s radical act of making his own salt at the culmination of the famous Salt March taught us about power and autonomy, a bucketful of soil collected from our own backyards, combined with some lime, can end our addiction to the chemicals and pipes of sewage empires. Incarnating our Mahatma in my own little mud hut, I enjoy the freedom I find in following him, taking hope from his first steps in humble living over a century ago.

And I take hope also in the initiatives for ecological toilets that are sprout-

ing everywhere. Abby Rockefeller, the granddaughter of John D., for years has been championing the use of alternative toilets in New England. A few years ago, a town in Sweden stood first in the return to hu-manure, by rendering illegal continued addiction to the flush toilet.

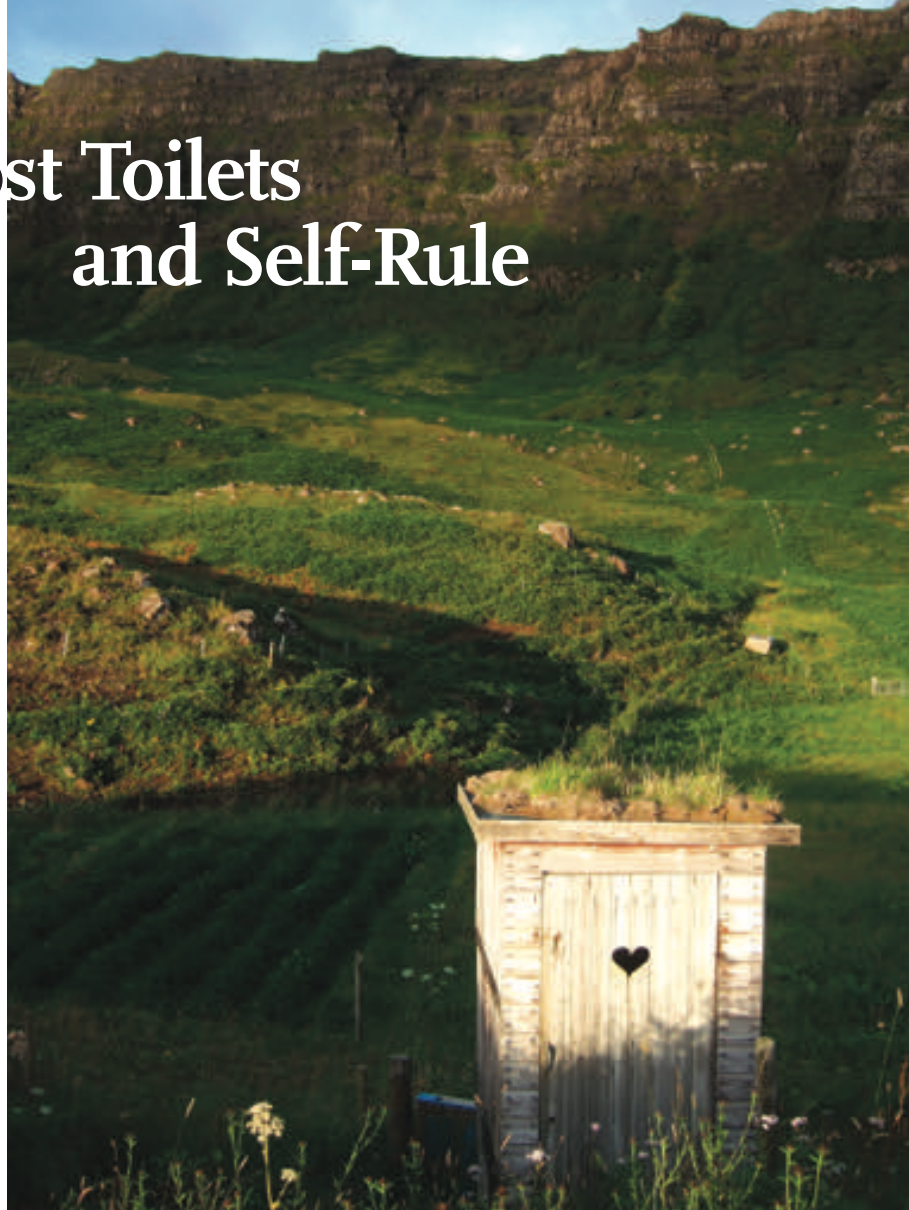
True, it is not easy to abandon the addiction to flush toilets, and I can well imagine the challenge in places like Chicago or New York. Despite the difficulties of such struggles, serenely engaging in them is easier than continuing our blind race to the ecological, economic, and political disaster toward which we are currently running.

Gandhi was among the first to discover in the beginning of the 20th century that to follow in the economic,

industrial, or political footsteps of England, we were joining in the global enterprise of violating and stripping the Earth bare like locusts. Honoring our “shit work” with Gandhi’s regard for bread labor, we re-skill our hands and stop making waste, while offering golden soil to our garden’s vegetables and fruit trees. Shit and food, no longer schizophrenically separated, come together organically in the great circle and web of life and daily living. **Y**



Madhu Suri Prakash studies grassroots initiatives that celebrate people's power in her books *Grassroots Postmodernism* and *Escaping Education*. She professes at Pennsylvania State University.



ANDY WRIGHT, WWW.RIGHTEE.COM

Political Spaces

The Fine Art of Raising a Ruckus

Jen Angel

ON THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY of the invasion of Iraq, San Francisco Bay area activists locked themselves to barrels in front of the world headquarters of Chevron. They were there to draw attention to the link between climate change and war, and specifically to the oil law before Iraq's parliament that would give much of the profit from Iraq's natural resources to foreign corporations like Chevron.

How do we know that's what they were protesting? Their giant banners read, "Chevron loves Oil Wars" and "End Chevron's Crimes from Richmond to Iraq."

Likewise, the barrels that the activists were locked down to were painted with slogans like, "Stop the Iraqi Oil Theft Law" and "Chevron = Climate Criminal."

Red-clad demonstrators held placards in the shape of oil drums, and there were 10-foot-tall puppets of the corporation's leadership.

And there was street theater: a "Tug of Oil War," a funeral for the last piece of ice on earth, and a performance by a political theater group called the Ronald Reagan Home for the Criminally Insane (www.insanereagan.com).

In short, the activists completely dominated the visual space.

The Power of Spectacle

Art, music, and theater are often more effective than speeches and leaflets.

Jessica Bell, one of the organizers of the March 19, 2007, Chevron protest, says art and culture communicate in a



(CC) DAVE MORRIS

Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army during the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland

way that is “more interactive and participatory, not just in how protesters interact with the public, but how activists interact with each other.” Bringing in culture creates space for people to learn, grow, and express themselves. She adds, “Art and theater can also challenge people—activists and observers—by putting them in new situations.”

Rebel Clowns

Imagine being a police officer during the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, preparing to face thousands of protesters. Now imagine being confronted by an army of clowns.

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army was organized by UK activists and included hundreds of clowns (some veterans, some novices) from around the world. The point, according to Clown Army participant Subsubcommandante Robin Hood, is to “confront the eight most dangerous men in the world—the G8—with ridicule and disobedience; from clowning traffic to a standstill and blocking G8 delegates on the A9 motorway to undermining police discipline by placing them on the unfamiliar terrain of laughter.”

Film footage of the protests show a befuddled group of police officers who stand idly by while the clowns take over roads.

What does clowning do for the protesters? “Rebel clowns work with our bodies to peel off the activist armor and find the person who once felt so deeply,” he says. That’s how we “find courage to both feel and overcome the fear and despair that can make activists withdraw behind that armor.”

Pushing the edge of protest means opening space for creativity, experimentation, and growth. Billionaires for Bush, Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping (see page 40), and other activists around the country are creating new ways to challenge consumerism, war, and empire.

“Public interventions by artists catch the public off guard and disrupt business as usual,” says Nicolas Lampert,

an activist and radical art historian living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. “These types of actions also encourage people to think and question their own daily routine and the daily routine of the city. In actions such as these,” he adds, “artists present other possibilities—the possibility of reclaiming public space.”

“Old power relations that have been reified and made invisible suddenly stand out in stark contrast when art is used to point them out in a novel way,” says University of California at Davis

political theater professor Larry Bogad.

“Just as important, a spectacular, participatory, creative protest can give participants and passersby a sense of the better world we want to see,” he says, “and not just what we’re against.”

Author and activist Stephen Duncombe urges activists to learn the art of using public spectacles to influence public opinion and dominate culture. In his recent book, *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*, he points to the Bush admin- ➤



ORLANDOFOODNOTBOMBS.ORG

People Taking Charge

Sharing Food, Breaking the Law

The members of Orlando’s Food Not Bombs share vegetarian food with hungry people in Orlando’s public parks—spaces they believe belong to everyone, not just the privileged. The City of Orlando sees it differently. In July 2006, the city passed an ordinance sharply restricting the practice of sharing food in downtown parks. Orlando Food Not Bombs continues sharing food anyway. The group is a plaintiff in a federal lawsuit that challenges the constitutionality of the city’s restriction on food sharing.

The Orlando group also has a weekly “free grocery day,” in which members distribute produce, clothes, and other donated or recycled items at the same street corner. The group’s mission, according to their website, is to “use direct action to, in a small way, create a grassroots alternative to the capitalist economy, in which the items that people require for their basic needs ... are treated as commodities for profit and access to them is based upon one’s ability to pay for them.”

Food Not Bombs was started in 1980 by anti-nuclear activists in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and since then has offered free hot meals in 175 communities, including to homeless people, disaster victims, Ground Zero rescue crews, and Katrina survivors.

» istration's May 2003 "Mission Accomplished" aircraft carrier stunt as an example of spectacle and theater.

Duncombe also cites a now-famous quote by an unnamed senior advisor to Bush (now widely believed to have been Karl Rove) who told a reporter, "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create reality." Conservatives, Duncombe says, understand how important it is to create images and narratives to support their agendas, or "to manufacture consent" as Walter Lippmann argued in 1922.

Duncombe argues for the "ethical spectacle" using the same techniques as the conservatives to advance a radical or progressive agenda to "manufacture dissent." But, he argues, we must do this in a way that is not manipulative or exploitative.

"Our spectacles will be participatory: dreams the public can mold and shape themselves," he says. "They will be active: spectacles that work only if people help create them. They will be open-ended: setting stages to ask questions and leaving silences to formulate answers. And they will be transparent: dreams that one knows are dreams but which still have power to attract and inspire."

"And finally," he says, "the spectacles we create will not cover over or replace reality and truth but perform and amplify it." These criteria will allow us to meet people where they are, he says, drawing on pre-existing desires and redirecting them toward a positive, more just world.

Stephen Duncombe and all the activists who use theater and art to communicate are saying one thing: dreams and spectacles are important ways of imagining the future world we want to live in. **Y**



Jen Angel is former editor of *Clamor* and a YES! contributing editor.



On Critical Mass and the First Amendment

Reverend Billy

REVEREND BILLY—THAT WOULD BE ME—was arrested while reciting the First Amendment during a Critical Mass bicycle ride in downtown New York City. I joined the hundreds of bicyclists who have been arrested over the years for their wheeled First Amendment expression. The New York police have curtailed, or demanded that we get Kafka-nightmare police permits for: dancing, shouting too loudly (as defined by the officer) with the unaided voice, parading, biking, posterizing, handing out political leaflets, using a battery-operated bullhorn, selling art on the sidewalk, well—you get the picture. We certainly do. We have our own adjustment to the First Amendment. "NYPD shall make no law..."

People sense that now is the time to support the First Amendment. Critical Mass bicyclists are supporting it by saying that it is their only required permit. The rides are peaceable assembly. Their free expression comes in an intriguing form—the act of traveling by bicycle up streets and down avenues where defenders of the internal combustion engine have



FRED ASKEW, WWW.FREDASKEW.COM

At left, Reverend Billy leads his flock during Critical Mass rides in New York. Above, a bicyclist demonstrates freedom of expression for NY police.

built a thick book of pre-emptive, car-friendly laws.

Critical Mass is leaderless and has no set route for its parades. To the cops it is like a mirage. Something in the sinuous mystery of the rides makes them gravitate to their power. The uninstructed bicyclists slowly circle out from Union Square and might suddenly take a hard left up 16th Street in an act like the flock-mind of birds. They just go.

Critical Mass represents freedom in public space, where ads, cell phones, surveillance, and traffic jams have melded together to make sections of Manhattan the outdoor equivalent of a privatized (First Amendment-free) super mall. These bikers don't wear logos; they are not en route to a purchase. The bicyclists are opening up public space as citizens see them wheeling by, and their trips through the city are ushered forward by a rolling citizens' cheer. Critical Mass bikers make it realistic that there is more in life than consumption, and people who see them feel relieved.

What form would the Boston Tea Party take today, against our psychological traffic jam? What is our equivalent to Rosa

Parks sitting in the front of the bus? ... of Lenny Bruce talking dirty? ... of Wangari Maathai lowering a seedling into the ground? We are instructed by all the enforcers of consumption that to speak up is inappropriate, to act up is illegal, and to ride a bicycle you must file your parade plans. But if we all begin to re-inhabit public space bravely, then there is a critical mass we can reach with the help of the First Amendment's 45 words.

There has been sacrifice for our freedoms, and not only sacrifice in war but also here at home as strikers, civil rights marchers, anti-war demonstrators, and now Critical Mass riders put their bodies on the line. We are walking around inside the freedom that has been opened up by brave people, their bodies, and their words.

The First Amendment offers all of us our sweaty bodies and souls back. Our 45 beautiful words invite us to appreciate who we always were, and that is the most powerful thing. I mean, that is my faith. **Y**

Reverend Billy preaches the gospel of the Church of Stop Shopping on the streets of New York and nationwide.



DJ
icecreamlopez
of Pirate Cat
Radio in San
Francisco.

(CC) SCOTT BEALE, LAUGHINGSQUID.COM

Pirates On the Open Airwaves

Brooke Jarvis

"It's LIKE RADIO used to be during World War II, when the airwaves were used to get messages out to families and friends ... to get important information out to the community."

Ranessa Lopez may sound more like Franklin Roosevelt than Blackbeard, but technically she is a pirate. As DJ icecreamlopez for Pirate Cat Radio in San Francisco, Lopez is part of a growing movement of people fed up with radio dominated by corporate giants like Clear Channel and fighting to take back the airwaves any way they can.

But grassroots voices are increasingly being denied legal access to radio space. In 2000, the FCC responded to activists' pressure for more democratic media by licensing non-commercial stations that transmit only a few miles. Recently, though, complaints lodged by established broadcasters from corporations to NPR have slowed the number of licenses to a trickle. And even for

those who can get them, licenses and approved transmitters can cost thousands of dollars.

For those without the money or the desire to be officially sanctioned by the FCC, cheap and accessible technologies are making pirate radio an increasingly popular option. Websites, books, and seminars teach people to build their own low-power transmitters. You can do it for under 50 bucks, according to Lee Montgomery of Oakland's Neighborhood Public Radio, who runs free start-up seminars. Another option is to buy a transmitter kit online—the kind used by realtors, drive-in theaters, and the like—for \$100-\$300.

It may not be legal, but it gets alternative voices on the air. Some, considering corporations to be the real thieves of public airwaves, call it micro-broadcasting, Micro Radio, or simply unlicensed. Others, like Lopez, prefer

to be pirates.

While those behind Pirate Cat Radio do consider their actions revolutionary, they also point out that they're just doing what they can to fill a basic civic need. On their show, Lopez and her co-host John Hell spin independent music and interview people from the community. The station is also supporting a local Get Out The Vote campaign, running announcements and programming about the upcoming election.

And in their eyes, it's not really illegal. The producers at Pirate Cat cite title 47 section 73.3542 of the Code of Federal Regulations, updated as part of the Bush administration's "War on Terror." The Code grants authority to operate an unauthorized radio transmitter "in extraordinary circumstances requiring emergency operation to serve the public interest." That, say proponents, is what pirate radio is all about. **Y**

World Social Forum

Liberated Spaces at Your Doorstep

Lilja Otto

SINCE 2001, PEOPLE from all corners of the globe have come to the World Social Forums (WSF) to build strategies for another world. This year, the World Social Forum is coming to them.

Thousands of people and organizations will take part in a week of action, January 20–26, 2008. Local organizers are planning events in more than 70 countries. By late October, more than 2,020 organizations and individuals had committed to mobilize in January, at the same time the World Economic Forum is meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

“This time, you don’t go to the World Social Forum, you bring the forum to your city, to your community—you create a World Social Forum,” says Alessandra Ceregatti from the World Social Forum office in São Paulo, Brazil.

“Creating local events using the WSF method of open space workshops and grassroots leadership can be both stimulating and challenging,” she says.

This isn’t the first World Social Forum to move beyond a one-location event. To allow activists from a greater number of locations to participate, the

2006 WSF was celebrated in Venezuela, Mali, and Pakistan.


The 2008 WSF will be even more decentralized, which will help the movement expand beyond the usual suspects. Organizers are encouraged to stage events outside, in the street, where they can “enter in dialogue with the whole society—including those people who are not linked to any organization, movement, struggle,” Ceregatti says.

In the United States, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, a driving force behind the first U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta, has put out a call to join the day of action under the motto “Many Struggles, One Movement.”

True to the spirit of the WSF, all events are self-organized, and the international coordinators simply provide the space for activists to step into. A website collects all event plans, allowing individuals and organizations to learn what is being planned and to connect their actions.

The site encourages cross-border collaboration around particular issues. International housing and land-rights networks are creating a joint campaign. The Human Dignity and Human Rights Caucus is another international space for collaboration.

The WSF also suggests using the events to link individual issues to other struggles. The groups active within the Belgian Social Forum have chosen this approach. Organizations will frame their different campaigns through the common lens of human rights in a city tour through Brussels.

Global radio broadcasting and public screenings of different events in places around the world will help infuse local gatherings with the same exuberance and excitement that are a trademark of the central social forums. 

Interested? Sign up at www.wsf2008.net and read more at www.yesmagazine.org/wsf

People Taking Charge

Colombia Peace Village



AILEEN NOWLAN

In 2007, the Aachen Peace Prize was awarded to 10-year-old San José de Apartadó, one of 50 peace villages in Colombia that are resisting the protracted fighting among government, guerrilla, and paramilitary forces. The small village in the region of Uraba, near the Panama border, has a population of nearly 3,000.

In order to be part of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, each resident agrees to remain neutral, participate in community work, say no to injustice, refuse to participate in the war, and not carry weapons.

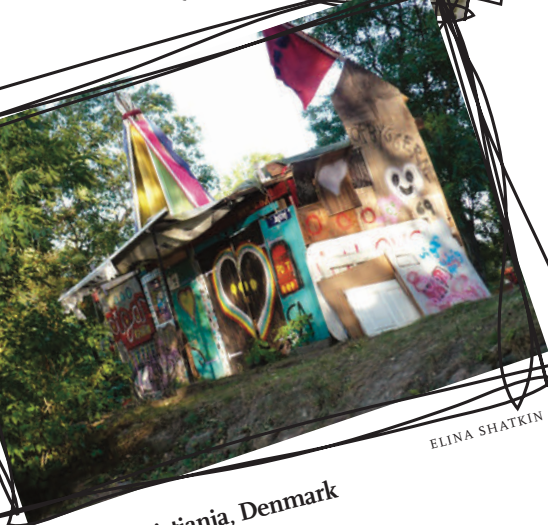
A HANDY "HOW TO" GUIDE

By Lilja Otto

Bussana Vecchia, Italy



WWW.DILUVI.COM



ELINA SHATKIN

Christiania, Denmark

Visit Liberated Places

... and come home inspired with ideas for free living. Here are a few we recommend:

Work in an Ecovillage (gen.ecovillage.org), or join a solidarity work camp to help grow local food or build a free space in a community. Volunteers for Peace, is an example: www.vfp.org

Spend a weekend touring local family farms (call ahead) or join a farm tour and talk to the people who grow your food. Find farms at www.localharvest.org, ask at your farmers market, or check the phone book.

Visit City Repair installations in the next city you visit—or in your own city. Find a list at www.cityrepair.org

Stay at Hotel Bauen, Buenos Aires, Argentina, which was reclaimed by its workers after the country's 2001 financial crisis. The hotel also offers free meeting spaces for area activists. Phone + 54-11-4372-1932.

Visit a squat like Christiania, a former military base in the center of Denmark's capital, Copenhagen (www.christiania.org). Or the idyllic village of Bussana Vecchia in Italy (www.bussana.com), once abandoned after an earthquake, then squatted by artists in 1960 and lovingly restored. Wikipedia's listing of squats is at wikipedia.org/wiki/squatting

"To live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

HOWARD ZINN
HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR

Practice Your Voice

Speak up when you hear somebody perpetuate a gender-, race-, or other stereotype.

Sing out loud, on the street, on your break, in a community choir.

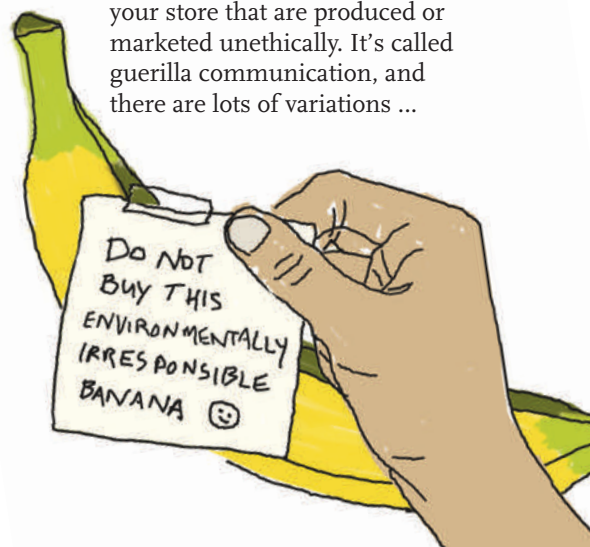
Write a column in a local or national paper, or in a blog.

Tell yourself how your day would look in a liberated world.

Tell your friends.

Vote.

Stick notes on products in your store that are produced or marketed unethically. It's called guerilla communication, and there are lots of variations ...





MIKE EVERETT-LANE

Get Debt Free

Say good-bye to predatory lenders. Transfer balances from high-interest credit cards to one with a low rate, or take out a loan with a local bank or credit union.

Pay off old debt as quickly as possible and avoid new debt by keeping track of your expenses. Decide where money spent adds to your happiness and where to cut spending.

Question assumptions: Do you need or want a (second) car? Do you need pre-processed foods or could you make it yourself? Could you share instead of own? Could you buy used? Do you need it?

Start a zero-interest lending circle with your friends or colleagues. Set up a monthly contribution and take turns in using the fund created by all of you.

Ditch the dollar. Barter instead of buy, join a local currency or timebank, or start one: wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_currency

Learn more: *Your Money or Your Life*, co-authored by Vicki Robin (see page 25) offers nine steps to change how you earn, spend and save money. Co-op America has info on living green without spending more: www.coopamerica.org

Get Stuff Free

Clothing Exchange: Get your friends together to swap clothes that you don't wear any more. Add a potluck and special theme.

Free Cycle: Give away what you don't need or want. Get what you do. Free and local: www.freecycle.org

Free ads: Find things others want to get rid of, or advertise your own: www.craigslist.org and some local newspapers and websites.

Dumpster Dive: Get a headlamp, gloves, and a pole with a hook. A step stool helps, and with a buddy it's more fun. See www.freegankitchen.com for tips and recipes.

Couch Surfing: Stay in exotic cities or remote outposts for free. Or bring the world to your living room: www.couchsurfing.com

With the money you save, support others who are creating free spaces: local organic food, fair trade goods, union-made, green energy, local arts, your favorite non-profit.

No-Frills Guide to Squatting

- 1 Talk to successful squatters.
- 2 Find a suitable abandoned building.
- 3 Learn about current ownership.
- 4 Move in silently, or squat publicly to call attention to homelessness and speculation.



- 5 Change all locks and never leave the place empty during the first days.
- 6 Get essential services connected and have mail sent to you at the new address.
- 7 Embellish, repair, and maintain the space: put up curtains; remove trash; paint.
- 8 If the owners appear, negotiate a stay in exchange for maintenance. Have a transport plan ready in case of eviction.
- 9 If the police come, it's helpful to appear settled by showing utility bills, mail, and a tidy, furnished feel.
- 10 Research *adverse possession* or other state laws that could eventually give you title to the property.

Get more advice at www.geocities.com/squattersguide and www.sftu.org/hnj.html

A HANDY "HOW TO" GUIDE

Map Your Freedom

Point out liberated spaces in your area with Google's new map function—put community centers, co-housing, flex-car stations, farmer's markets, gathering spaces, and free events on the map.

- 1 Create a Google account.
- 2 Go to maps.google.com
- 3 Click on *my maps* and find the geographic area you want to work on.
- 4 Save the map and give it a name people will be able to find.
- 5 Mark your liberated spaces, draw lines to show safe bike paths, add images or stories.
- 6 Overlay free content offered by Google, such as transit maps.
- 7 E-mail your map to your friends, hand out fliers with the web address, or put it in your blog or on your website. Google's step-by-step guides help you do all this.



www.YesMagazine.org/discuss44
Download this guide and start a conversation



Free Your Inner Space

How can you liberate your inner space in the midst of a busy day? Here's how mindfulness can be part of everyday life, creating spaces where you can feel your heart's desire, your true passion, your burning question:

Simply stop for a few seconds throughout the day. **Pause and feel** yourself in the moment. **Listen** to what you really long for in that moment. Learn to **do this again and again** throughout the day: before you get up, as you get out of the shower, when you leave work, as you get on your bike, at dinner. Let those **pauses add up**. From this new space, **surrender** to your deep longing.

Author Gunilla Norris writes about mindfulness in everyday life in *Inviting Silence* (2005, Rider & Co.).

Toss a Flower Bomb

Here are some quick ways to beautify a highway median, an abandoned lot, or a parking strip. Make sure to use locally appropriate seeds.

Flowering Eggs

Blow out an egg and carefully fill the eggshell with compost and seeds of local flowers—perennials or drought-resistant annuals are best. Cover the hole with light-weight paper if necessary. Carry your seed eggs with you and toss when you see a likely spot.

Fukuoka Seedballs

Mix equal parts of seeds and dry compost, then add clay. Spray water over the mixture, and knead until it just holds together without crumbling. Roll into quarter-sized balls and dry. Easy to carry in your pocket. The seeds sprout once rain or sprinklers hit them.

Read David Tracey's *Guerilla Gardening* (2007, New Society Publishers) for tips on edible landscapes, sod sofas, and other green delights.

Anti-Advertising Agency activists polled residents living near 10 Oakland bus stops regarding what advertising tactics they found most bothersome. The team designed bus bench illustrations for each neighborhood. The agency mission is to question the strategies of today's marketing media by co-opting the tools and structures they use. Also check out the billboard Liberation Front at www.billboardliberation.com



Learn Activism

Rosa Parks was not only an activist, but a *trained* activist. If you are a first-time organizer or a veteran looking to hone your skills, here are some places to go:

The Highlander Research and Education Center supports grassroots leaders of all ages with tools for building broad-based movements for change.
www.highlandercenter.org

The Ruckus Society provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with tools, training, and support for direct interventions.
www.ruckus.org

Earth Activist Training graduates have done bioremediation in New Orleans, started community gardens, set up permaculture camps for major mobilizations, and helped restore watersheds.
www.earthactivisttraining.org

The Rockwood Leadership Program teaches activists organizational as well as inner skills to support their on-going work.
www.rockwoodleadership.org



ANTIADVERTISINGAGENCY.COM



Just Walk Out ...

Kick your TV addiction. Or your shopping habit. Or screw up the courage to leave a soul-crushing job, school, or relationship. Here's how to get started:

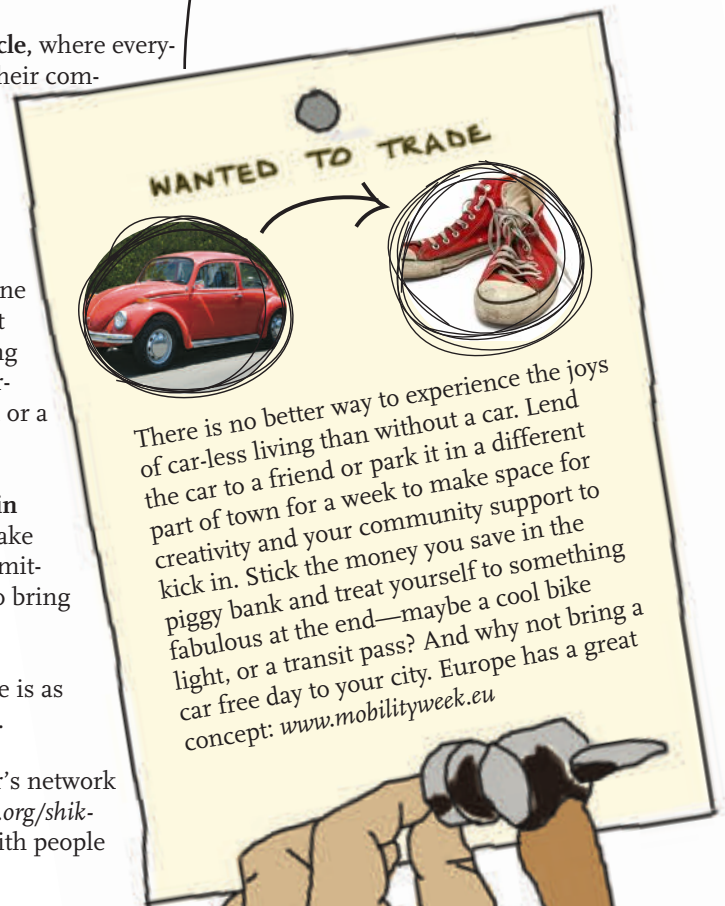
- 1 Bring together** one or two people who have walked out from an institution, societal norm, or dysfunctional mindset, and some others who are still rounding up the courage to do so. Bring food and drinks.
- 2 Start with a talking circle**, where everyone can briefly share their complaints, passions, and desires.
- 3 Encourage each participant** to take the "walk-out challenge," committing to doing one thing—even if it is just for a day—from turning off the TV, to going car-free, to quitting school or a destructive job.
- 4 Set a time to meet again** to share stories and make the next round of commitments. Invite people to bring a friend.
- 5 Repeat**—until everyone is as free as they want to be.

Check out Shikshantar's network in India at www.swaraj.org/shikshantar and connect with people at www.berkana.org

... And Walk On

Just walked out, and searching for what can be next? **Find a mentor.** Walked out successfully? **Be a mentor.** Carrie Ellet at Girls for a Change has some tips:

Don't be afraid to ask someone you admire. **Set up a way of work**—establish consistent meeting times and frequency. Decide on a **goal or timeline** that will signify the end of your mentoring relationship. Be honest about **what kind of time you can give**. If it turns out you can give more, great! But if you can't meet your promises, this can be damaging to the relationship. Be sincere in **empowering your mentee** to make progress in their goals. Instead of leading, **ask questions**, listen, open your networks, and share your resources. Learn more about a mentor program for young activists at www.girlsforachange.org



There is no better way to experience the joys of car-less living than without a car. Lend the car to a friend or park it in a different part of town for a week to make space for creativity and your community support to kick in. Stick the money you save in the piggy bank and treat yourself to something fabulous at the end—maybe a cool bike light, or a transit pass? And why not bring a car free day to your city. Europe has a great concept: www.mobilityweek.eu

“Imagine acupuncturists being integral to every community, and acupuncture being the medicine everyone uses and values.”

ACUPUNCTURE FOR ALL

Pamela O'Malley Chang

Skip Van Meter, lead acupuncturist at Working Class Acupuncture (WCA) in Portland, Oregon, led me into the treatment area and offered me my choice among recliners set in a series of living-room-like groupings. I chose a seat in a circle where two people were reclined and napping in a softly lit area with a fountain splashing in the background. In about five minutes, Van Meter asked what ailed me, felt pulses at my wrist and neck, and inserted a dozen or so hair-fine needles in my legs and arms

below the knees and elbows.

This treatment approach, called by its founders “Community Acupuncture,” interested me as an alternative to standard acupuncture practice. As a soon-to-graduate student of traditional Chinese medicine, I knew that acupuncture can be more effective than Western medicine, especially for chronic problems. But it often requires multiple or frequent treatments, and with fees averaging \$65 per visit nationwide, who could afford enough treat-

ments to achieve results? Certainly not my friends who work part-time or are retired, or the teachers, secretaries, and laborers I treated at my school clinic.

I loved the holistic 2,000-year-old Chinese medicine, but faced with the choice of opening an expensive standard clinic or finding a low-paying job at a subsidized clinic, I didn't know if I could afford to practice my new profession.

Fortunately for me, in 2002, Lisa Rohleder, Skip Van Meter, and Lupine Hudson, co-founders of Working Class



Acupuncture, dreamed of and established a low-cost, community-supported acupuncture clinic that paid its staff a living wage. In Fall 2006, they launched the Community Acupuncture Network (CAN) to spread their ideas nationwide.

Community Acupuncture's key to affordability is volume and simplicity. Acupuncture is inherently low-cost, simple, and adaptable to any setting while remaining remarkably effective. The cost of disposable needles is a few dollars per treatment.

In the United States, acupuncture fees are inflated by the cost of private treatment rooms and often-lengthy one-on-one sessions with practitioners. At WCA, patients are scheduled at 10-minute intervals and treated in a shared area. WCA sees some 300 patients per week at an average fee of \$20 per visit for everyday ailments such as backache, asthma, migraine, arthritis, common cold, indigestion, and food or drug cravings.

Everyone is offered a \$15 to \$35 sliding-scale fee option. Everyone gets a choice of recliner, a short whispered consultation with an acupuncturist, quick treatment while sitting comfortably and fully clothed, and the opportunity to doze off in a relaxing setting for minutes or hours. The group setting creates a collective healing energy where friends can be treated together or newcomers can watch another treatment before being needled themselves.

The low fees allow clients to afford enough treatment to obtain good results. Over time, they come to see acupuncturists as health partners rather than remote experts. Vito, a WCA patient, sees his treatments as "taking myself in for a tune-up. It's managed health care with me in the driver's seat."

The experience that generates such



Portland's Working Class Acupuncture

WORKING CLASS ACUPUNCTURE

enthusiastic patients is just as uplifting for the acupuncturists. As Rohleder wrote in the March 2006 *Acupuncture Today*:

"As years passed and my practice flourished, as I reflected on how all of my problems with earning a living had been solved by focusing on acupuncture's simplicity, I became possessed by a vision of what acupuncture could do for the problems of our health care system as a whole. Imagine what could happen if acupuncture were widely available to everyone in America, regardless of whether they had insurance or not. Imagine the impact of a clinic in every neighborhood: patients getting off expensive pain medication they can't afford, uninsured asthma patients no longer needing to go to the ER, overwhelmed working parents no longer yelling at their kids or drinking to escape from the stress of their lives—because they have an alternative. Imagine acupuncturists being integral to every community, and acupuncture being the medicine everyone uses and values."

In the year since CAN launched, it has sponsored a half-dozen sliding scale, sold-out workshops to encourage other acupuncturists to adopt the community-supported model. The CAN-website (www.communityacupuncturenetwork.org) offers a directory of Community Acupuncture Clinics—currently 80 of them—and a

forum where practitioners can share professional problems, tips, and experiences. Barbara Chapman feels that the Community Acupuncture workshop she attended in February 2007 was "the missing piece of my [Chinese medicine] education." Chapman got her acupuncture license in March 2007 and, in late May, opened the Sebastopol Community Acupuncture Clinic in Sebastopol, California. She treated seven patients during her first week. Now she works 21 hours a week and treats about 60 patients.

Chapman says: "The health care system in the United States is seriously flawed. More than 50 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured. This has to change. Community Acupuncture is an attempt to address this need through a sustainable business model that offers affordable health care to most people in the community while enabling the acupuncturist to make a living. Sebastopol Community Acupuncture is part of a growing movement in the nationwide acupuncture community."

Having seen the benefits, both to patients and practitioners, I am talking with fellow acupuncturists about opening our own community clinic in 2008. **Y**



Pamela O'Malley Chang is a YES! contributing editor and a newly licensed acupuncturist in Berkeley, California.

Skip Van Meter helps patients relax as they are treated. Working Class Acupuncture keeps treatments affordable and serves as a business model for other health care clinics.

“Where are the opportunities for real change in the 2008 election?”

ELECTION SEASON is a mixed blessing for those working for deep change. On the one hand, the debate is too often confined to who (or what) is considered “electable” by insiders. Big money can drown out the voices of “we the people,” and local organization often evaporates after the election night parties are over. On the other hand, there is the possibility of electing public officials who will stand for the public interest, and during election season, candidates are more likely to listen to the people’s voice. So where are the opportunities for real change in 2008? To find out, we spoke to some grassroots organizers, national leaders, and elected officials who are working for change.

Interviews by Sarah van Gelder

Hear and read more from these conversations at
www.YesMagazine.org/votehope

Poor People Will Be Heard

Cheri Honkala

Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign



YES!: What do you see as the most promising opportunities for change in the 2008 election season?

Honkala: As a formerly homeless mother, I never thought that I would see things as bad as they are. People are quadrupling up in homes, people living on the streets are hidden out of

view because of the criminalization of homelessness, and our jails are basically the new housing plan for this country. Battered women’s shelters used to be just a stop along the way, and now it’s almost a miracle to get into battered women’s shelters across the country.

We intend to have marches both at the Democratic and the Republican National Convention, talking about issues of housing, health care, and living wage jobs.

We’re going to be going door to door, asking folks to get out and vote, but we’re also going to be documenting their real-life pains around these issues. We’re going to have a national Truth Commission in Minnesota, in

which we will have jurists who will listen to what’s taking place in this country, and they will come up with findings in terms of what they see as the solutions. We will be asking all of the presidential candidates what they intend to do with this human rights documentation that we collect.

YES!: What do you think it’s going to take to bring together our different efforts in a substantial enough way that we can have a political impact?

Honkala: We need a political party that represents the majority of people that live in this country, and we don’t have that now.

I think that the key to a winning strategy is that those people who are



Challenge Status Quo

Rep. Barbara Lee
U.S. Representative (D-CA)



most impacted by the issues need to be at the forefront of coming forward with solutions. Whether we're talking about farmers, immigrant workers, people who live in public housing projects—when you talk about any of their issues, the people who are suffering from those issues aren't involved in crafting solutions.

We're putting all these people together in a room, and they don't have time to play politics as usual because they're talking about their very real lives and their families.

YES!: Do you think there are opportunities for those groups to make common cause with some of the other efforts out there, like the peace movement and the environmental movement?

Honkala: Absolutely. You know, we say "poor people" and we mean "poor people" in the broadest terms possible. If you're not rich, you're poor. There's this idea that the rest of the population is safe from these issues, and they're not. Most of the people in this country are a healthcare crisis away from homelessness or some kind of financial devastation.

YES!: What are the most interesting possibilities you see for progress in the 2008 election season?

Lee: I see every election as an opportunity to build on the number of progressives in Congress, and 2008 offers a great opportunity to do that.

The American people have had it with the Bush administration and the Republican party. Whether the issue is the occupation of Iraq or paying for tax cuts for the wealthy by cutting vital services, people are hungry for an alternative vision.

That is the reason that I launched OneVoicePAC.org. When I cast the lone vote after September 11 against giving George Bush an unlimited war-making authority—an authority, I might add, that his administration has invoked in invading Iraq, setting up military commissions, even warrantless wiretapping—I was alone. Today, there are millions of Americans who are calling for an end not just to the occupation of Iraq, but to the entire Bush foreign policy of unilateralism and pre-emption. Our goal is to help translate that support into more progressive votes in Congress.

YES!: How might the election help us move toward ending the war in Iraq and preventing war in Iran?

Lee: I am hopeful that these elections,

in addition to giving us a new president, will also help change the dynamic in the Senate, where efforts to end the occupation have gotten bogged down. Currently, because of the slim majority in the Senate and the Senate rules, Republicans have been able to block up-or-down votes on Iraq-related legislation, and they have not, thus far, had to pay a price for it politically.

As we get closer to the elections, I think that is going to change. Certainly if it doesn't I think that there will be a lot of Republicans who will not be re-elected, and we have to make sure that there are strong progressive candidates who are prepared to take those seats.

At OneVoicePAC, in addition to raising money to support progressive candidates, we'll be working to change the face of politics.

Many of the people who are most profoundly impacted by the decisions being made in our government today are also the most marginalized from the political process, particularly communities of color and young people. Part of our mission is to help these communities elect candidates who are accountable to them and who will work to challenge the status quo.

YES!: Poll numbers for the Democratic-led Congress are almost as low as those for the Republican administration. Many feel that the Democratic Party has thus far failed to end the war, get us universal health care, deal meaningfully with poverty, and to provide a sense of vision for our country. What will it take to get real change?

Lee: Real change only comes from unrelenting political pressure, and that is not just about elections, it is about holding people accountable between elections. I know that there are a lot of people out there who are disappointed and frustrated that more has not been accomplished. I am disappointed and frustrated. But if you allow yourself to get discouraged, you just let the other side win. For me, the stakes are too high, and I have to look at the challenges and setbacks as an incentive to keep pushing harder.



“Where are the opportunities for real change?”

The Vote of the Dream Generation

Rev. Lennox Yearwood
Hip Hop Caucus



YES!: Last election season, the Hip Hop Caucus mobilized a lot of young people to vote. Can you talk about what you did, and what you’re planning for 2008?

Yearwood: We were mobilizing the Hip Hop Generation—what I call the Dream Generation, because we are the first generation born after Dr. King gave his “I Have a Dream” speech. We are the ones working together—black and white and Latino, male and female, straight and gay.

We had a goal of registering a million people, and we actually registered 1.3 million people. We did it over the Internet, though summits, town hall meetings. We also used TV, culture, PSAs, radio ads, and peer-to-peer contacts.

We’re going to be mobilizing again in 2008, but it will be difficult this year. The people came out in 2006. They put a lot of faith in voting and literally changed the scene from Republican to Democratic. Some of them felt the election was stolen in 2000, and

was stolen again in 2004, and now they’re discouraged that this current Congress had the clearest mandate but didn’t work against this war, didn’t respond to Katrina, didn’t put forth a healthcare plan, didn’t fix education. So it becomes harder to ask people to become involved, to vote, if they don’t think that the structure itself is even worth voting in.

YES!: What is your long-term strategy?

Yearwood: First, we’re really beyond party-line politics. We have to be issue-based.

What I want to tell my generation is to be involved, because this is a long-term process. We have to get big money out of elections; we have to return the power back to the people. Elections and politicians need to be more aligned to the people’s concerns than the corporate concerns.

We know this won’t be changed by 2008 or even 2012, possibly even 2016. But when you have 20/20 vision, you can see clearly—so by the 2020 election we can see more clearly a better structure of politics in America.

YES!: Do you see opportunities during this election season to change the direction that we’re taking with the war?

Yearwood: I do. But I will say this: most of the candidates—Dennis Kucinich, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton—are already members of Congress, so they can actually change things *now*. I don’t want them to wait until one of them becomes president.

Speaker Pelosi took impeachment off the table, and I would just say she’s taking something off the table that is the people’s constitutional means of recourse.

There are two issues that literally can destroy us as humans. If we don’t fix the Middle East, if we don’t return respectability to our country, the situation can spin out of control. Likewise with the climate—if we don’t fix that then literally we are going to destroy

ourselves. Ironically these issues are connected, because of our dependency on fossil fuels.

YES!: Are you doing organizing at the local level that sustains in between the big presidential elections?

Yearwood: That’s an excellent question. This issue really showed up with Katrina. We did voter registration in Louisiana in ’04, and other groups did as well, but there was no sustainable organization after the election. If there had been, then the people could have mobilized and organized themselves much better for Katrina. That was probably one of the most disastrous things that we learned.

People are wondering why we aren’t like the conservatives—why aren’t we building from the bottom up? Why are we working from the top down? When really, the best way to build power in our communities is from the dog-catcher, from the sheriffs, and the prosecutors to the president of the United States.

Protecting Elections

Mark Ritchie
Minnesota Secretary of State



YES!: The integrity of elections has been in some doubt since the 2000 election. What is at stake in 2008?

Ritchie: Some of the problems with voting were shown to be part of larger strategies to affect the outcome of elections, so that's one thing that's at stake.

The second thing at stake is the way elections are administered—whether they encourage everyone to participate or encourage only some people while discouraging others.

Finally, there's the psychological side. If you believe the elections are rigged or your voice is not welcome, you will be less likely to participate. If you feel showing up to vote will subject you to harassment or intimidation, or if you feel that democracy is a sham, you will be less likely to vote. If any of these concerns also affect your willingness to stand as a candidate, to work for a candidate, to help with voter registration, or to be an election judge it will be a negative impact on the elections process and on democracy itself.

YES!: Where is the most promising work going on in this regard?

Ritchie: I think that hope is being restored in many parts of the country, including Florida, Ohio, and California. For example, the newly elected [Republican] governor of Florida stood up and said no more embarrassments. No more discrimination. Get rid of these electronic computerized voting machines and use paper ballots and optical scan systems. He went on to say that discrimination against people who had committed felonies and have served their time is unconscionable, and he pushed through a huge change in the re-enfranchisement of former felons.

Ohio has a new secretary of state, Jennifer Brunner, who has been successfully battling corrupt local officials—some of whom have been convicted and sent to prison for tampering with elections. Secretary Brunner will soon be conducting a top-to-bottom review of their election equipment. In California, the new secretary of state, Debra Bowen, did a

thorough review of the election system and exposed incredible vulnerabilities, and then she took immediate action.

YES!: Do you think that all the electronic voting systems need to be replaced in order to restore integrity?

Ritchie: In Minnesota, voting on computers is illegal. We've never allowed them in our state. They were proposed once many years ago and people said 'Are you crazy?' We also have taken a strong position that in elections for president it's not okay to have voting conducted on machines that cannot be properly re-counted or the results verified. So far, we've not seen any computer voting equipment that meets basic standards for security and ability to be recounted.

YES!: Are there other opportunities for improving the election system?

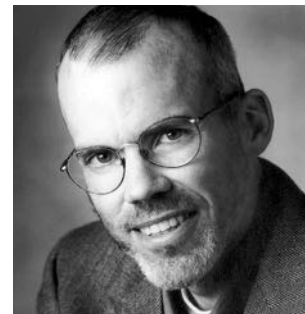
Ritchie: In Minnesota we've had election-day registration for 33 years—you can register when you go to vote on Election Day. We believe that the combination of paper ballots, which instill voter confidence in our system, and election-day registration, which largely removes the biggest barrier to voting, is why Minnesota is the number one state in the nation for turn-out of eligible voters—4 percent above any other state.

Now we're working to improve our system. We're proposing that any time you get a driver's license or other government-issued ID, you are automatically registered to vote, as long as you are legally eligible. You would, of course, be able to opt out if you don't want to be registered.

We believe that this approach will move us towards near-universal registration. Instead of the current paradigm, in which registration is a barrier to voting that each individual must overcome, we're proposing a system that is constantly and consistently updated so that no eligible citizen is ever prevented from voting because their name fails to appear on a list.

Taking on the Climate Crisis

Bill McKibben
Step It Up '07



YES!: Where are there leverage points in the election process that can help raise up issues like climate change?

McKibben: I think that our greatest possibilities for progress occur in the short window before the primaries are over while there is still a chance to lever these guys; after that, everyone will commence to race towards the middle. This is when we've got to show them that there is a sizeable number of people who actually want to see real progress on this issue.

So with stepitup2007.org, we're holding rallies in all 50 states and inviting every member of Congress and every presidential candidate to speak at these rallies and explain what they're going to do about climate change.

YES!: How about state and local elections? That's where most of the leadership on climate change has actually been taking place so far.

McKibben: To do what we need to do in the time we have to do it, it's imperative that we take those smart lessons learned in states and city halls, and get them to the national and then the international level. >>



“Where are the opportunities for real change?”

Facing Down Despair

Chris Hedges

*Author, American Fascists:
The Christian Right and the
War on America*



» **YES!:** What is the argument that politicians should be paying attention to climate change?

McKibben: On the one hand we have the greatest single peril that the human enterprise has yet faced, and on the other hand we have the opportunity for the greatest transformation, economic and social, for this century: the prospect of the transition to a decentralized, renewable, benign form of energy that will put millions of people to work and allow us to live very different and much more sensible lives.

YES!: Are you finding some crossover between Republicans and Democrats on this issue?

McKibben: Some, John McCain being the prime example. So far the rest of the Republicans have done very little on climate change. There was a survey of members of Congress recently that found that 98 percent of Democrats believed global warming was real, but that only 13 percent of Republicans believed it. Which to me was very dismaying. It sounds like they've been drinking their own Kool-Aid, and if so, that makes it that much harder.

YES!: Has the Democratic Party been slow to act because of campaign contributions from energy and mining corporations?

McKibben: That's probably a good part of it. I mean, look, this is heavy lifting for politicians. There are strong, vested interests and there's the great fear that voters will punish them if they do anything that, for instance, changes the price of fossil fuel. So it's asking a lot, and therefore we have to show that there are a lot of people who are making that request. Churches are playing an important role in that, and so is the youth movement, which is growing fast.

YES!: Where do you see opportunities in the coming election to address the trends you describe in *American Fascists*?

Hedges: The fundamental problem that contributes to the rise of a radical Christian mass movement is the personal and economic despair that has gripped tens of millions of Americans through the outsourcing of jobs and the slashing of federal and state assistance programs. This process has left parts of the United States looking like the Third World, including the former mill towns where my family comes from in Maine.

Until that issue is addressed, until the American working class and now increasingly the American middle class are given hope, some kind of stability, and some kind of belief in the future, this movement is going to grow.

It will suffer setbacks as it did in 1980 when Pat Robertson ran for president and got shellacked—but the engine of this movement is personal and economic despair, and that's only gotten worse.

YES!: Why does this despair turn into support for fascism?

Hedges: When the reality-based world no longer works, people look for magic, miracles, and a mythic world—one where they have a specially anointed

destiny. That's precisely what has happened to the American working class.

And now we're seeing the same kind of pernicious assault by corporations on the middle class. Anything that can be put on software is being outsourced, from engineering to architecture.

We live in a country where the top 1 percent controls more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined, and democracies cannot be sustained in oligarchic states.

With the exception of Dennis Kucinich and maybe Ralph Nader—and I don't know if Ralph is running—nobody is addressing the fundamental issue that is distorting and destroying American democracy and giving rise to a mass movement under Christian banners that seeks political power and that has fused with the corporations.

YES!: Just last year, when the Democrats took Congress, some people felt that this period was winding down.

Hedges: It seems pretty clear that the Democrats regained control of Congress on the issue of Iraq, which is unequivocally a disaster. The Democrats have not proved adept at doing much about the war, and it now appears that the Democratic Party will continue to fund the war through the end of the Bush administration. That's going to hurt the Democrats a lot.

YES!: What do you think it's going to take to open up the political dialogue?

Hedges: We have to break the power of the corporations. Eighty percent of American media is controlled by six or eight companies. Television is a wasteland. We are a country that is woefully uninformed, not only about what we do abroad, but how we're perceived by others. The very cable news networks that sold us the war no longer report the war, because it doesn't fit the mythic narrative of us as a great and glorious nation liberating oppressed Iraqis.

It's very hard to work in a society that's lost the ability to discern what's true and what isn't, and is willfully kept in darkness. ●

FROM THE PUBLISHER



A relationship is what we have with each of you, our readers. To us, you are not just a subscriber, you are the heart and soul of our work.

You Can't Outsource a Relationship

Some things you have to learn the hard way.

It had all seemed so logical, so smart, so efficient. Thanks to you, our readers, the *YES!* subscriber base had grown to more than 25,000, and we were distributing nearly 50,000 copies of each issue. But Sally Wilson and Sharon Booth, our two-person circulation staff, were straining under the load of entering all those orders. So, why not outsource the routine tasks to a company that is expert in fulfilling subscriptions? Then our own staff could concentrate on more creative projects. A fulfillment house can do the routine stuff better and more efficiently than we can, right? Well actually, wrong.

Here's what happened. Last October we turned over our subscriber database to a fulfillment house in the Midwest and began sending them all our subscription and renewal orders. The phone service, however, we kept in-house. Soon after we outsourced, we began receiving a stream of calls from unhappy subscribers telling us of errors with their subscription service.

Believe me—this was painful for Sally and Sharon. They have handled our circulation for years and know how to fix the inevitable problems that come up. But they're also used to getting lots of enthusiastic comments from callers

about the value of *YES!* Now they were hearing more complaints than words of encouragement. While most orders were handled well, the number of errors was too great to fit our standards.

That made us realize a fundamental truth. You can't outsource a relationship. And a relationship is what we have with each of you, our readers. To us, you are not just a subscriber, you are the heart and soul of our work. You take ideas from *YES!* and put them into action in your life and your community. You pass along articles to friends and relatives, colleagues and clients, local officials and members of Congress. You use our articles in classrooms, sermons, community meetings, and discussion groups. In short, you turn *YES!* into a tool—one that helps shift the foundations of our culture to the values of justice, sustainability, and compassion. Serving you is the most important thing we do.

Fulfilling subscription orders seems simple, but it is actually amazingly complicated and takes tremendous attention to detail. Doing it well can only come from caring about each subscriber. There's no one who cares as much about the *YES!* community as we do. No fulfillment house, no matter how well meaning, is going to match our passion for supporting you in the work you're doing to make the world a better place.

So we decided to bring the subscriber database back home. We made the conversion on September 27 and Sally and Sharon are delighted to be back in charge. Take a look at the subscription cards inserted in this magazine. You'll find the return address no longer sends the card to the Midwest, but rather to our home on Bainbridge Island. Your subscription orders, your renewals, your donations—everything comes right here. We'll enter all your information with care. If you jot notes to us, you can be sure we'll read them.

Fortunately, our brief experience with outsourcing had a helpful side. We learned some smart practices from the fulfillment house that we are incorporating into our systems; and the interlude gave our business manager, Rod Arakaki, and our data systems programmer, Kevin Audleman, time to use their technological savvy to make a lot of improvements in the way we work. Building efficiencies in-house will still free up our staff for the creative projects they've been longing to do. And best of all, we're confident, once again, that we can serve you, our dear readers, with all the loving care you deserve.



Fran Korten, Publisher

WHO WE ARE ::

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.

NEWS AND NOTES ::

Project Censored covers *YES!* For over three decades, Peter Phillips and his graduate students at Sonoma State University have researched and compiled the most critical under-reported stories of the previous year and published them as an annual compendium of the Top 25 Censored News Stories. 2008 marks the first year that Project Censored has highlighted a new category of nearly-invisible stories: the stories of positive change that are taking place in communities around the globe. *YES!* Magazine is featured prominently in the "10 Signs of Hope" section of the new Project Censored volume, encompassing "Stories of Action and Change You Didn't Hear About in 2006 and 2007." For links and descriptions of the winning stories of hope, visit www.yesmagazine.org/projectcensored.

***YES!* supports Teach for America teachers.** Last spring *YES!* launched an initiative to support teachers in the Teach for America program. Teach for America is a national corps of recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in public schools in low-income areas across the U.S. *YES!* is providing hundreds of these young teachers free one-year subscriptions to *YES!* Magazine. We also provide them a free *YES!* Education Connection email newsletter with tips and tools for teaching about sustainability and social justice. Our support for Teach for America is part of our Education Outreach Program, which since 2001 has fulfilled requests for *YES!* subscriptions from over 10,000 teachers hungry for materials that help them inform and inspire their students.



New editor at *YES!* Madeline Ostrander has joined the *YES!* staff as our new associate editor. She brings to us more than a decade of experience working on sustainability and environmental policy, most recently for Sightline Institute and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Madeline holds a master's degree in environmental studies and was a Graduate Fellow with the Ford Foundation U.S. Community Forestry Research and U.S. EPA STAR programs. She plays piano, flute, and autoharp and performs in a folk band. She lives in a cohousing community in West Seattle. Madeline replaces Lisa Farino, who decided to work as a freelancer for a while. We are grateful to Lisa for a year of fine work with *YES!*

Donate to *YES!* on the Web. There's a quick and easy way to make a year-end, tax-deductible donation to *YES!* Just use our secure website: www.yesmagazine.org/donate. We don't accept funds from government, corporations, or advertisers—it's your support that enables the unique voice of *YES!* to thrive. Thanks so much!

YES! PICKS ::

Things To Do, Places To Go



www.YesMagazine.org/events

For an expanded listing of upcoming events

Ecological Farming Conference

January 23–26, Pacific Grove, CA. This annual winter forum is a leading sustainable agriculture conference. The 2008 theme, "Root Values: Connecting Ecology, Community, and the Land" features prominent keynote speakers and more than 50 workshops on the latest advances in agricultural production, marketing, research, and other important issues. Held at the historic Asilomar Conference Center on the Monterey coast. www.eco-farm.org

Global Day of Action

January 26, worldwide. In place of the annual World Social Forum convergence, in 2008 diverse social movements representing the interests of millions across the globe will express their shared conviction that "Another World is Possible." A week's worth of creative, independently organized activities in rural towns and urban centers worldwide will culminate in a Global Day of Mobilization and Action on January 26, 2008. www.wsf2008.net

Regional Equity Summit

March 5–7, New Orleans, LA. Join PolicyLink and an array of organizations, philanthropists, and concerned citizens for Regional Equity '08: The Third National Summit on Equitable Development, Social Justice, and Smart Growth. www.policylink.org

Green Festivals

April 12–13, Seattle, WA

May 17–18, Chicago, IL.

Thousands attend these annual regional gatherings to learn about creating sustainable economies, ecological balance, and social justice. Featured speakers include *YES!* board chair David Korten. Visit with *YES!* staff and volunteers at our Seattle Green Festival booth. www.greenfestivals.org

FROM THE PUBLISHER ::

Support the YES! Education Program

Imagine helping thousands of young people feel the same hope and inspiration you feel when you read *YES!* magazine. Become a Dedicated Friend of *YES!* and your monthly or quarterly contributions will help get *YES!* stories into classrooms across the country.

At Voyager Montessori School on Bainbridge Island, teachers were inspired by our *YES!* Earth Charter curriculum guide to create an all-school, year-long sustainability program—including a popular project to encourage bees and other pollinators. The students were so enthusiastic about this program, they saved their pennies to fund two subscriptions to *YES!* for teachers elsewhere.

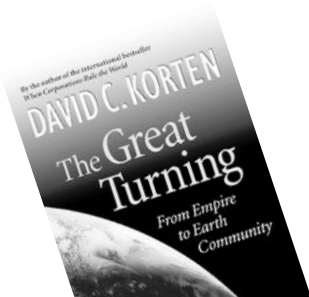
You too can help get *YES!* to teachers. Already, people like you have provided more than 10,000 teachers a free one-year subscription to *YES!* plus a free monthly e-newsletter. Those teachers have reached more than 300,000 students.

Every month hundreds of teachers request a free one-year subscription to *YES!* As a Dedicated Friend of *YES!* you can help us keep up with the demand and inspire students nationwide.



KIM CORRIGAN

A Voyager student works on a bee box, part of a project to create an ecosystem on the school campus to attract and nurture pollinators.



As a Dedicated Friend, you'll receive:

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- Your subscription to *YES!* included (no more renewal notices)
- Quarterly updates from our publisher
- Future free gift offers of books, CDs, or calendars
- Invitations to *YES!* events

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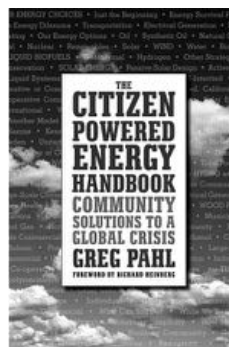
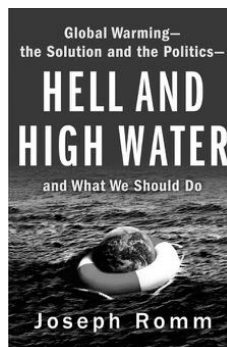
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Climate Crisis and New Energy



With Speed and Violence

FRED PEARCE

Beacon Press, 2007, 278 pages, \$24.95

Hell and High Water

JOSEPH ROMM

William Morrow, 2007, 292 pages, \$24.95

The Citizen Powered Energy Handbook

GREG PAHL

Chelsea Green, 2007, 347 pages, \$21.95 paperback

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MARIEN

Everyone knows about global warming. Nearly everyone now accepts it as a fact.

The great majority of those who face this fact agree that it is due to human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases and that action is needed soon to reduce them.

A small handful of “greenhouse skeptics” argues that warming is not that pressing a problem yet, or that it is part of a recurring long-term cycle so it might subside. Much attention has been paid to the skeptics (e.g., a recent *Newsweek* cover feature), but little or no attention has been given to the other side of the argument: that the

fourth report of the IPCC—the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—may be greatly understating the problem.

The IPCC reports every six years in the form of detailed statements by three Working Groups concerned with the physical science basis, impacts and vulnerability, and mitigation (see www.ipcc.ch for summaries of the 2007 reports). This is a consensus of what is firmly known, based on solid evidence.

At the frontiers of climate science, however, there is considerable doubt. As summarized by Fred Pearce of the UK weekly *New Scientist*, “beyond the cautious certainties of the IPCC reports, there is a swath of conjectures and scary scenarios. ... We may know

much less than we think.”

Pearce has interviewed many of the world’s leading climate scientists. He skillfully draws these conversations together, explaining the unanticipated acceleration of ice melt in Greenland, the threatened west Antarctic ice sheet, the drowning island nations of the South Pacific, the drying trend in the Amazon region, how India’s “brown haze” could turn off the monsoon, the burning of tropical peat swamps in Borneo (a disaster of global importance), how CO₂ weakens the carbon sink strength of the oceans, the ice-like methane clathrates on the ocean floor (holding 1-10 trillion tons of methane, a potent greenhouse gas which could be released by global warming), the potential of thawing northern peat bogs to release huge amounts of methane, changes in the Earth’s “albedo” (reflectivity of the planet’s surface), the possibility of a major runaway ozone destruction (despite the perception that this problem has been solved), and much more. And ruinous climate change could happen “with speed and violence,” over a matter of a few decades, rather than over the entire 21st century. James Hansen, a leading US climatologist, warns: “We are on the precipice of climate system tipping points beyond which there is no redemption.”

What might climate catastrophe look like? Joseph Romm, a former assistant secretary of energy in the Clinton years, follows up nicely with his scenario of “hell and high water” in the latter decades of the 21st century—if we do not act in time. Sea-level rise could be 20-80 feet (the IPCC estimates only 1-2 feet), with some 400 million people exposed to higher water by 2100. A vast swath of the United States would see average summer temperatures rise by 9°F, but if thawing tundra released enough methane (a greenhouse gas 23 times more potent than CO₂), average temperatures over the inland U.S. could be 20°F hot-

FROM THE CITIZEN POWERED ENERGY HANDBOOK ::

"It's increasingly clear that we cannot wait any longer for our government to solve these problems or wait for some 'miracle' technological fix. It's time to get active at the local level. We need to build lifeboats—and get ready to use them. Thanks to the criminal negligence of our leaders, it is almost certainly going to devolve on individuals and communities to fend for themselves, especially if the interconnected global economy—which is hopelessly dependent on cheap oil—collapses. The intelligent response is to begin the process of localizing and decentralizing our economy now, while we still have the time and resources to do it."

ter. Many areas would also experience drought and more wildfires ("hell and no water"). Hurricanes would become stronger, and scientists would add a "category 6" for storms above 175 mph, which may become common.

Over-the-top weather disaster porn? Or our probable future? It is best seen as a plausible worst-case scenario, serving as prelude for Romm's list of "eight remarkable changes" that are needed: a massive efficiency program for buildings, a similarly massive effort to expand use of cogeneration, capturing CO₂ from 800 new large coal plants, 1 million large wind turbines (or solar power equivalent), 700 new large nuclear-power plants, every car averaging 60 mpg, every car a hybrid running partly on electricity, and stopping all tropical deforestation while doubling the rate of new tree planting.

Will any of this happen soon enough to forestall disaster? There are rumblings of change in this direction, and some sort of major effort will likely be attempted if the Democrats take over the White House in 2009. But Greg Pahl of the Vermont Biofuels Association operates from a different premise, stating that we can't wait any longer for our government to solve these problems, or for some tech fix: "It's time to get active at the local level." Individuals and communities must fend for themselves, he says, launching into a dazzling and useful survey of well-and lesser-known local options:

passive solar design, active solar for hot water and space heating, photovoltaic systems, off-grid systems, community systems, geothermal, wind power, micro-hydro, masonry heaters or tile stoves, pellet heat, wood-chip heat, cogeneration combining heat and power, cellulosic ethanol, backyard ethanol, and biodiesel (Pahl wrote a 2005 book on biodiesel). An appendix lists some 80 relevant organizations and online resources.

Regardless of whether global warming is fast or slow, modest in impact or severe, it is prudent to encourage the transition to low-cost, safe, and renewable energy sources and greater efforts at conservation. This huge transition is underway on many fronts, albeit slowly.

It is possible, though, that despite heroic and creative improvements at all levels, our response will be inadequate to the global forces we have unleashed. Which is all the more reason to pursue sustainability quickly and cost-effectively at global, national, and local levels. Don't expect easy "solutions to a global crisis," but, with luck and many efforts, we just might muddle through.

Michael Marien (mmarien@twcny.rr.com), editor of *Future Survey*, has recently assembled a mini-guide, *Global Warming and the Energy Transition*. Both are available at www.wfs.org.

Coming Up: The YES! Spring 2008 issue will focus on ways to meet the challenge of the climate crisis.

YES! PICKS ::

Musical inspiration while putting out this issue



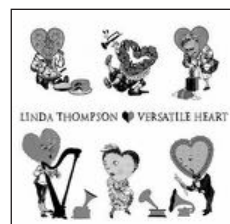
Girl in the War

Idaho's alt-folkie **Josh Ritter** offers possibly the sweetest anti-war song out there. Ritter can crush you with the weight of his lyrics, then pick you up again with his gentle guitar.



Living Like a Refugee

Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars met each other in refugee camps as they fled civil war. Their songs are upbeat and infectious. As they were performing on makeshift instruments to cheer up fellow refugees, they were discovered by American documentary filmmakers.

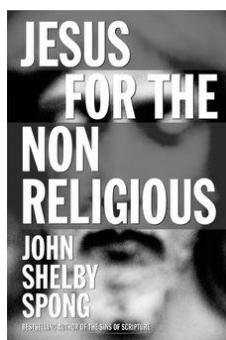


Versatile Heart

Linda Thompson's third CD proves her return to singing is sticking. If you're looking for the aching voice that rubbed up against Richard Thompson's in the '60s and '70s, it's here again. Check out her version of Tom Waits' soldier's lament "Day After Tomorrow."



Have a listen at
www.YesMagazine.org/music



Jesus For the Non Religious

JOHN SHELBY SPONG

HarperCollins, 2007, 336 pages, \$24.95

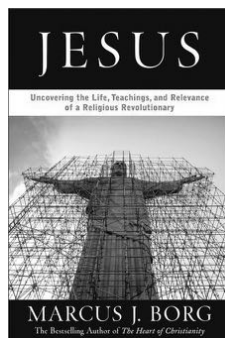
REVIEWED BY IGNACIO CASTUERA

The most important contribution of two current books on Jesus by Bishop John Shelby Spong and Professor Marcus Borg is their relevance.

Spong is especially interested in the Jewishness of Jesus and in combating anti-semitism; he portrays Jesus as a “breaker” of tribal and religious boundaries as well as of prejudices and stereotypes.

Borg goes deeper than Spong: Jesus was and is a religious revolutionary, in Borg’s view, and his followers’ main task is to oppose all empires, including the American empire today.

Bishop Spong, for all his fury, is still primarily a polite Episcopalian bishop who works hard for electoral reform and supports liberal politics, primarily



Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary

MARCUS J. BORG

HarperCollins, 2006, 352 pages, \$24.95

of the Democratic Party.

Borg’s book suggests that Christian discipleship today should lead believers to break with the “natural” allegiances to cradle, creed, and country, especially when one’s country acts as the big bully in the global village.

Both men are passionate about and committed to Jesus even as they question the way he is being portrayed by many Christian religious institutions.

The difference in tone stands out from the first page of each book. Spong has been in the middle of ecclesiastical controversy for many years and his book is polemical. In contrast, Borg slowly brings readers to a new understanding of stories that have been precious to many generations and that, when carefully explained, have transformative power for our day.

Rather than merely questioning that there was a star over Bethlehem, or any other “supernatural” metaphors, Borg leads readers to ask, “what do these stories mean?” He does not overstate the fact that they are not “true.” Instead he looks for the “truth” inherent in the intentions of the originators of the stories.

Rev. Dr. Ignacio Castuera is a pastor at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Pomona, California, and chaplain for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.



Branded!

MICHAEL E. CONROY

New Society Publishers, 2007, 334 pages, \$19.95

REVIEWED BY FRAN KORTEN

How do you introduce sustainability into a powerful, well-established industry? That’s a question I was pondering in 1994 as I watched forest communities torn apart by wars between timber companies and environmentalists.

At the time, I was working at the Ford Foundation, and the newly formed nonprofit Forest Stewardship Council caught my attention. The Council planned to certify sustainable forestry practices, thereby providing consumers with the tools to choose sustainably harvested wood. It seemed to me a powerful idea, and I got deeply involved in making this idea into a reality.

The forestry story is just one of the successes Michael Conroy recounts in *Branded!* He tells how fish, apparel, coffee, gold, and tourism are all sectors where the certification revolution is taking hold—with more to come.

Conroy draws on his insider knowledge from his work at both the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to tell of campaigns that force brand-conscious corporations to become more socially and environmentally responsible. In reading this book, you’ll find yourself cheering the people who use the marketplace to confront these giant corporations—and win.

Certification cannot solve all the devastating impacts of the global economy, but Conroy’s well-researched account shows it to be a valuable tool in building a just and sustainable world.





FILM ::

Pete Seeger: The Power of Song

*Documentary, 2007, 93 minutes,
Concert Productions International,
directed by Jim Brown*

FRED PALUMBO

REVIEWED BY DOUG PIBEL

PETE SEEGER has been making music for 80 years. It should be impossible to do that justice in 90 minutes, but "Pete Seeger: the Power of Song" does it. This tightly packed, but graceful, documentary tells the story through the voices of musicians, friends, family, and the man himself, along with a rich helping of music.

Seeger's story is full of subplots, all covered here: hoboeing with Woody Guthrie, stardom with The Weavers, blacklisting and contempt of Congress, the civil rights movement, Vietnam War activism, Hudson River cleanup, and elder statesman of the folk movement.

But the overarching theme is his unique approach to music. For Seeger, music is a tool to bring people together, and that, as much as the singing, is the point. As we see him leaving the stage of Carnegie Hall at the end of a concert when he was 84, he says in voiceover, "I've never sung anywhere without giving the people listening to me a chance to join in. As a kid, as a lefty, as a man touring the U.S.A. and the world, as an oldster. I guess it's kind of a religion with me. Participation. That's what's

going to save the human race."

What comes through most clearly is Seeger's belief in his cause, his optimism, and his joy in living. There is no trace of bitterness as he recalls the years when his blacklisting was so complete that he "traveled from college to college to college" playing for whatever crowds would come to sing with him. His son asks whether he was afraid of going to jail. Seeger replies, "I'm probably very stupid, but I was not fearful. I really believed, and I think I was right, that in the long run, this country doesn't go in for things like that."

As the film explores the story of the sloop Clearwater and the rehabilitation of the Hudson River, Seeger says, "We've all got to be involved in trying to put this world together. I think if the world is put together, it isn't going to be done by big organizations. It's going to be done by millions upon millions of little organizations, often local."

Watching this moving demonstration of the power of music and personal dedication leaves you believing it can be done.



www.YesMagazine.org/seeger
to see the trailer

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MARGIT CHRISTENSON FOR YES! MAGAZINE
APOLOGIES TO NORMAN ROCKWELL

Bunny Boiler

Here's the punchline: Philanthropy, good intentions and a kind heart will always put you in tyranny's stew pot.

Here's the story: Early in 2007 German farmer Karl Szmolinsky sold 12 of his prize giant rabbits to the North Korean government with the aim of setting up a breeding program to alleviate famine. The rabbits averaged 22 pounds, with ears up to 8 inches long. That's 15 pounds of meat per rabbit. He was supposed to travel there in April to help set up the breeding farm but received a call from officials in North Korea canceling the trip. Since then Szmolinsky has complained to the press that his prize breeding rabbits were eaten at Kim Jong-Il's birthday banquet on February 16. "North Korea won't be getting any more rabbits from me," he told the press. Some in the media were suspicious of the plan from the beginning, pointing out that it takes two pounds of food a day to feed these rabbits. That's twice as much as the North Korean government distributes to its people for survival.