

Fall 2002

# yes!

a journal of positive futures

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the boy who kissed the soldier  
ecology and equity at Earth Summit II  
the America that can be  
print your own money

# living economies

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the creative commons  
unleashing hidden wealth  
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Issue #23



## Dear Reader,



Linda Wolf

The collapse of public confidence in corporations may be the silver lining in the dark cloud of economic news. In the race to revise our way of life before we inflict permanent damage to the Earth's ecological and social fabric, losing our society's almost religious faith in the corporate system could open us to fresh possibilities.

The Enron and WorldCom managers who walked off with millions while employees and other shareholders were left holding depreciated or worthless stock have provoked a crisis of confidence in corporations, a crisis Congress has responded to with reforms addressing only the tip of the iceberg—the accounting scandals.

But what if we responded to the deeper problems of corporate rule? What if along with investors, the natural world could cry “Foul?” What if the people who have lost their land, water, and livelihoods to corporations; the people whose governments have been corrupted or overthrown to extend corporate access to their resources and markets; the victims of land mines, massacres, and other attacks carried out with the products and blessings of the military-industrial complex—what if all these people had a voice? What might they say?

Corporate rule has thus far continued in spite of its damaging record in part because no one—at least no one whose voice is heard in the mainstream media—offers a workable alternative. Media pundits, economists, and politicians from both parties agree that the corporate capitalism of the late 20th century is it. We've reached “the end of history,” in the words of author Francis Fukuyama. This is the best of all possible worlds, and the best we can do for those devastated by its collateral damage is to enact a few social programs, tune out the suffering of those excluded from this bright new economy, and hope that the ecological damage will be repaired by the next invention or the next generation.

This issue of *YES!* reveals that in fact there are workable alternatives unfolding before our eyes. The protests against the WTO, World Bank, IMF, and specific corporations indicate widespread discontent with this system. One outcome of that has been serious rethinking and a spate of innovation. New, living economies are forming that provide for the long-term healing and sustaining of, well, life—people, communities, ecosystems, future generations. Life is not fodder for the corporate mill. Life is the whole point. Here's some of what I've found to

be at the foundation of this new economy, as it is envisioned and as it is beginning to emerge.

- Production and exchange takes place at the most local level possible, rather than at the most global. When production must be larger and more powerful—because of technology or real economies of scale—democratic accountability ensures that these enterprises remain responsive to the requisites of life.
- Those who have rights also take responsibility. Ownership and decision-making rest with employees, members of the community, single-proprietors, customers, and others with a direct stake in the enterprise itself.
- Mutually supportive networks develop among individuals, enterprises, and communities based in distributed power, not in the coercion that results from vast differences in size and power.
- There are rich and abundant feedback loops, so that those who make decisions for an enterprise are accountable for the impacts—not just the stock values. Transparency helps keep enterprises honest. And, instead of “externalizing” costs (passing on to the public such costs as pollution and poor safety standards), costs are borne by the enterprise. When the resulting prices reflect the true costs of production, the market can tell the truth.
- Instead of being invisible, the “care” and “gift” economies (involving, for example, the care of children and elders, the strengthening of community, or the sharing of cultural treasures) are celebrated, supported, and rewarded; the contribution of all ages, races, and genders is recognized.
- Government intervention in the market encourages the production of goods and services that meet basic needs and discourages practices that result in safety and health hazards; distributes power, wealth, and opportunities widely; enhances and protects the commons; protects the natural world so it can continue to meet the needs of the next seven generations and more.

As Americans wake up to the high costs of corporate rule, they are becoming more open than ever to the possibility of a truly life-centered economy. Now is the time to open a dialogue about the kind of economy we want. Do we want a world ever more dependent on giant corporations whose wealth and power exceed that of many nations, and whose centralized command-and-control structure makes them unaccountable to people, communities, and the future of the planet? Or do we want a living, diverse, democratically accountable market economy, founded in communities and cities throughout the world, with power, decision-making, responsibility, and initiative resting in ordinary people?

Let's imagine together some of the possibilities.

Sarah Ruth van Gelder  
Executive Editor



Katie Sauter

The suicide economy is  
a product of human choices  
motivated by a love of money.

It is within our means  
to make different choices  
motivated by a love of life.

**David C. Korten**

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# living economies



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**YES!** is published by the Positive Futures Network, an independent, nonprofit organization that supports people's active engagement in creating a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world



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## READERS' FORUM



Tell us what you think of the ideas, possibilities, approaches you find in YES! If you'd like a discussion guide, send us a self-addressed stamped envelope or visit our website

### More Art and Community

I thoroughly enjoyed your most recent issue, "Art and Community." I wish every organization and person building community through art could have been featured. In particular, there is one based in Boston: Art Street, Inc., run by "Sidewalk Sam."

I first met Sidewalk Sam and ArtStreet through a mural painting project with students in SquashBusters, an after-school program for urban kids from Boston.

Art Street's method is simple: Use art as a catalyst to bring people together in support of community issues. Place art directly in the path of busy people and reach a large audience with an important message. Art Street works with schools, community organizations, government agencies, and corporations to develop and manage effective cultural programs that reach diverse audiences and promote public support for civic and cultural issues.

Thank you for your inspiring, centering work.

MARY BETH HORN  
*via email*

### Iraq Tragedy

I was surprised to see a photo of Phil Steger and myself in your Spring 2002 issue.

Iraq broke my heart. I am a family nurse practitioner and cannot imagine going to work every day to care for my patients knowing that they will die of easily cured diseases. I saw children dying in the hospitals for want of the free samples I had back in my office in the US. The few medicines we were able to bring with us,

were just a drop in the bucket of need. I talked to a doctor in Basra who had delivered 34 babies with major fetal anomalies between January and August of 2000. In the 14 years prior to the Gulf War, she had seen one such baby. Pregnancy has become a time of terror for many women who wonder if they will deliver monsters.

The sanctions being imposed against the people of Iraq are by far the worst 'weapon of mass destruction' in the Middle East, killing 160 children every day for over 11 years.

LARRY KERSCHNER  
*Pe Ell, WA*

### Kucinich's Future Not Positive for Women

An important piece of information was left out of Sarah van Gelder's interview with Rep. Dennis Kucinich in issue 22: Kucinich has a strong anti-choice voting record in Congress that has earned him low ratings from both Planned Parenthood and NARAL. It's clear that if Rep. Kucinich has his way, it won't be a very "positive future" for millions of American women who cherish their reproductive freedom.

I, too, am hopeful about many of the issues Rep. Kucinich cares about, but his anti-choice actions, which are a direct attack on women's rights, contradict his dedication to the just world his proposed Department of Peace would work toward.

MAUREEN CAIN  
*Tucson, AZ*

### Kucinich Loses My Vote

I was encouraged to read about Dennis Kucinich by Studs Terkle in

*The Nation* magazine several weeks ago and to see your article about him, until I read Katha Pollitt's column "Regressive Progressive?" in the May 27 issue of *The Nation*, where I was appalled to learn that Kucinich's voting record on abortion rights is zero for and 100 percent against.

As opposition to abortion rights is to me the core of hard-core misogyny, I could not possibly support Kucinich for anything, despite all of his other fine ideals. I don't know how other readers of YES! feel, but don't they at least have a right to know this? And in the list of the progressive issues listed in the "New Political Compass" article by Paul Ray, women's rights are not included.

SUE NASH  
*via email*

### New Progressives, Vote!

I enjoyed reading "The New Political Compass" by Paul Ray in the summer issue of YES! I certainly fit his definition of a "New Progressive." However, after pondering his statistics, I have to ask myself, "Why is Bush president?" Ray claims that 12 percent of the population is "Liberal Left" and 36 percent is "New Progressive," which together add up to 48 percent of the population. "Social Conservatives" and "Big Business Conservatives" together account for 33 percent of the population. In order for Bush to have come close to a majority, most of those Ray identifies as "Alienated/Uninformed" would have had to vote for Bush, though the category implies many nonvoters should be in there as well. Even if I'm a bit off on my mathemati-

### Write us!

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cal reasoning (never my strong suit), I'm still wondering how such an anti-progressive man like Bush could have been (s)lected if 38 percent of the population or 45 percent of likely voters, as Ray further claims, are New Progressives. I hope that any New Progressives out there who tend to abstain from voting will realize the importance of voting against this regressive and repressive administration, its congressional allies, and its at best incompetent public figurehead. The future of our global environment, civil liberties, and democratic traditions may be hanging in the balance.

MARK ARCHAMBAULT  
*Nashua, NH*

### Ray Responds

Voter participation rates were back down again in 2000, which favors conservative candidates like Bush. Normally a tight race raises voter participation, but not this time: our folks tended to sit it out. Campaign 2000 was a cowardly centrist campaign that did not favor emerging issues. None of the New Progressives' issues were discussed in the 2000 elections, so there was no way to mobilize them. No one was speaking to them, and people won't respond unless they do.

If emerging issues, for creating more positive futures, get a lot of discussion, you'll see the New Progressives shine. And they're 45 percent of likely voters, and Liberal Left are 15 percent of likely voters, so that if any competent coalition building is done, they'll walk away with any election campaign that is run by New Progressives on their issues.

Sue Nash obviously has not seen my longer article, available online at [www.culturalcreatives.org](http://www.culturalcreatives.org), which shows that women's issues of all kinds, especially women's rights, are at the center of New Progressive values. She should also remember, on the subject of Kucinich, that one-issue politics is

a loser's game. We'll never build the political big tent if we have to have every candidate of ours just right on every issue, even one as important as a woman's right to choose. I predict Kucinich will find a way to carry the abortion issue to a higher level and transcend this unproductive conflict that feeds only the radical right.

### Prison Issue Still Important

I realize it is a bit late for comments on this issue, but as a woman who served time in California for killing her batterer over 22 years ago and am now a practicing psychologist with women who are currently incarcerated for killing their abusers, I found your issue on prisons [*YES!*/Fall 2000] most informative and I have taken the liberty to share much of it with my clients. They often lose hope that anyone cares or is trying to protect their rights and those of their children. You have helped to reaffirm that they are not forgotten.

I have been a contributing author to *The Verdict* magazine for the California Coalition of Legal Professionals and I find your journal to be a wonderful addition to that publication. Thank you for such a well done product.

LINDA BRAUN LOPEZ, PH.D.  
*via email*

### Not My Opinions

I am writing in response to Preston Enright's letter in the Summer 2002 issue. I am Preston Enright, and I would never have written the letter that was attributed to me. Apparently, there was a mix-up during production and my name was attached to somebody else's sentiments. Usually, I concur with the letters printed in *YES!* Unfortunately, the content of this letter could have been authored by one of the military's public relations firms.

To take one example, the suggestion that, "America's problem is that we would really prefer that the world go away and leave us alone" ignores

the American Empire's long history of violent intervention in regions that wish this superpower would go away and leave them alone. An honest look at the casualties in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Wounded Knee, East Timor, Colombia, and other locations we have invaded or sanctioned or sprayed with Monsanto products to "impose peace" would dispel such delusions.

I suggest that the actual author explore the work of Global Exchange, Noam Chomsky, and others.

PRESTON ENRIGHT  
*Denver, CO*

### Corrections, Issue 22

Due to a production mix-up, we misidentified a letter as being written by Preston Enright of Denver, CO. Mr. Enright (see letter, this page, and his letter expressing his own views, page 52) did not write that letter and in no way endorses it. We regret the error.

We failed to credit K. Ruby of Wise Fool Puppet Intervention for the photo on the back cover of *YES!* #22. Our apologies and appreciation for the photo of the giant puppet. (Find Wise Fool Puppets at [www.zeitgeist.net/wfca/wisefool.htm](http://www.zeitgeist.net/wfca/wisefool.htm).)

A film review misidentified a film as *In the Light of the Sacred*. The correct title is *In the Light of Reverence*. For information, see [www.sacredland.org](http://www.sacredland.org).

### Readers' Forum continues on page 52

## YES! pass it along

Who do you know who's waiting to read *YES!*?  
Why not share your copy with your neighbor, daughter, librarian, coffee buddy, bus driver, student, sweetheart, boss, grandson, rabbi, senator, best friend...



Share the wealth!

Steve Fisher



## INDICATORS



# Americans Sound Alarm About Iraq War Plans



Bob Haines

**Bert Sacks hands contraband pencils to Baghdad school girls. Sacks faces a fine and jail time for violating US-led sanctions against Iraq**

Scott Ritter, the former chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq, is sounding the alarm about Bush administration plans for war in Iraq. There will be war in October unless Congress stops it, Ritter said in a July 24th speech, quoted extensively in an article by William Rivers Pitt published on truthout.com. There is no justification for such a war, Ritter argued. Based on his seven years as a weapons inspector in Iraq, Ritter, a 12-year Marine Corps veteran and Republican, says there is nothing in national security, international law, or basic morality to justify this coming war with Iraq.

Other sources confirm that the Bush administration is planning an attack on Iraq. The Knight Ridder news service quoted a number of

senior officials as saying the groundwork is being laid for war either in October or early next year. An October attack would put the US on war-footing just before mid-term elections, on which control of Congress hangs.

"This is not about the security of the United States," Ritter says. "This is about domestic American politics. The national security of the United States of America has been hijacked by a handful of neo-conservatives who are using their position of authority to pursue their own ideologically driven political ambitions. The day we go to war for that reason is the day we have failed collectively as a nation."

Little opposition to such a war is coming from either political party. But resistance to US policies is showing

up among human rights groups and others who have witnessed the enormous human costs of sanctions against Iraq.

In May, two Seattle activists became the first Americans to receive fines (\$10,000) and threats of prison terms for violating UN sanctions. Their crime? Transporting medical supplies to Iraq in 1997. Bert Sacks and Rev. Randall Mullins say that they acted to help children who suffer under the sanctions. Sacks hopes that the case will be tested in the US courts, which would allow him to present information about the effects of the sanctions to the public.

A 1999 United Nations Children's Fund report blames the sanctions, which have been in place since 1991, for the deaths of half a million children under the age of five. The child mortality rate increased from an estimated 400 per month before the Gulf War to about 5,000 per month in 2001.

The Bush administration says sanctions must remain in place until Iraq proves that it has given up its weapons of mass destruction. Ritter claims the weapons have already been destroyed, and other countries, including France, Russia, and China, oppose the sanctions. US officials say Iraq's refusal to comply is to blame for the country's economic collapse, which has degraded health and education in Iraq and left many of its citizens dependent on UN food rations.

Ritter argues that Iraq never expelled UN weapons inspectors. Inspections ended in 1998, he says, when the US withdrew

inspectors just prior to commencing bombing runs. Ritter resigned at that time from his post as chief of inspections.

Citing the UN Subcommittee on Human Rights' judgment that the US-led sanctions are "unequivocally illegal under existing international humanitarian law and human rights law," Sacks said. "Given this finding, I am morally and legally obligated not to obey US laws that violate international law."

—Rik Langendoen

See [http://truthout.com/docs\\_02/07.25A.wrp.iraq.htm](http://truthout.com/docs_02/07.25A.wrp.iraq.htm) for a full report on Ritter's speech. For information about a planned protest against war in Iraq, visit [www.internationalanswer.org](http://www.internationalanswer.org).

## Declarations of Liberty

Their forebears organized the Boston Tea Party and fomented the American Revolution. Now citizens of Massachusetts are again organizing resistance to what they see as government infringement of liberties. In May, the Northampton town council unanimously passed a resolution ordering the town government to resist the USA Patriot Act, calling it a threat to the civil rights of the residents of their communities. Amherst and Leverett passed similar resolutions in April, and Cambridge followed suit in June.

The Patriot Act, passed by Congress in October 2001 by an overwhelming majority, grants the federal government increased power to conduct domestic surveillance and to detain immigrants suspected of terrorism indefinitely without charge.

The Northampton resolution, which began as a grassroots petition organized by the Bill of Rights Defense Committee, orders the town government to "preserve residents' freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and privacy; rights to counsel and due process; and protection from unreasonable searches and seizures even if requested to infringe upon these rights by federal law enforcement acting under new powers granted by the USA Patriot Act or orders of the executive branch."

Other cities, including Berkeley, California; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Carrboro, North Carolina, have passed similar resolutions. Organizers in Boulder hope to pass an initiative soon, and in Denver, a somewhat weaker measure was adopted by the city council.

Even before the Patriot Act passed, police in Portland, Oregon, announced their department's refusal to cooperate with the FBI on investigations of Middle Eastern students in the city, because state law barred police from questioning immigrants who are not suspected of a crime.

While the resolutions have little legal weight, because federal law trumps local initiatives, activists see the moves as shattering the illusion that the nation is in full support of the Bush administration's domestic security program. The measures defy John Ashcroft's warning that those "who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty" aid terrorists.

The Northampton initiative orders federal and state law enforcement to report to the local Human Rights Commission all local investigations undertaken under authority of the Patriot Act. It directs the community's congressional representatives to monitor implementation of the act and work to repeal those sections found unconstitutional.

Some court cases have already found post-9/11 Justice Department actions unconstitutional. A Detroit

district court ruled in April that it was unconstitutional for the department to require immigration court judges to bar the public from deportation hearings. The suit was brought in response to secret detentions and deportation hearings of Arab men. A similar ruling by a New Jersey court was stayed by the US Supreme Court.

In July, a Seattle man became the second US citizen known to be held on suspicion of terrorism by the FBI as a material witness without being charged with a crime. James Ujaama and Jose Padilla, the first citizen held on suspicion of terrorism after 9/11, are both converts to Islam who are being held by the FBI, apparently indefinitely. Ujaama's family spread the word of his detention; the FBI initially would not discuss the case.

—Carolyn McConnell

The Bill of Rights Defense Committee offers a toolkit on adopting resolutions such as those reported above; visit [www.gjf.org/NBORDC](http://www.gjf.org/NBORDC).

## Students Don't Want to Fight War on Terror

In the past year, the media have portrayed American support for the war on terrorism as unequivocally enthusiastic. A recent telephone poll of college students across the country, conducted by a conservative education and research organization, provides a remarkably different perspective.

The opinion poll posed questions related to the war and US



Paul Shoul

**Northampton citizens gather signatures calling for protection of the Bill of Rights in the wake of the passage of the USA Patriot Act**



foreign policy issues; the results show that 37 percent of students would attempt to avoid a draft, while only 35 percent say they would be "willing to serve and fight anywhere in the world."

Fifty-seven percent of college students believe that US policy is "at least somewhat responsible" for the attacks of September 11; 71 percent disagree with the statement that US values are superior to those of other cultures; and a full 79 percent do not believe



KRT photo by Jason Clark

**A noncommissioned officer leads a Junior ROTC class. A new survey shows most youth are reluctant to fight a "war on terror"**

that Western culture is superior to Arab culture. Sixty percent of the students agree that "developing a better understanding of the values and history of other cultures and nations that dislike us" is a better way to prevent terrorism than using defense and military tactics at home and abroad.

The study was conducted by Americans for Victory Over Terrorism (AVOT), a project of Empower America. Its directors include William Bennett, who served under presidents Reagan and Bush Sr., and Jack Kemp, Robert Dole's running mate in 1996. The organization aims to strengthen public support for the war on terrorism by promoting a "proper understanding of patriotism and love of country," according to its website. AVOT plans to hold a series of teach-ins and lectures on university campuses across the country beginning in

September "to support the use of our military around the world in defense of those principles."

—Erin Cusick

For more, see [www.avot.org](http://www.avot.org).

## World Bank Divestment

Marches and protests have helped raise public awareness of opposition to the World Bank, but have not succeeded in shutting it down. Now, critics of the Bank are trying a new tactic, borrowing a page from the anti-apartheid divestment movement, in which people around the world withdrew investments in companies that did business in South Africa.

The Bank raises nearly all of its funds by issuing bonds, many of which are held by ordinary people in Europe and the US through trade unions, churches, town councils, universities, and private investments. Activists are calling for a boycott of these World Bank bonds.

The effort is being led by Dennis Brutus, a former leader of the anti-apartheid movement. "We need to break the power of the World Bank over developing countries, as the divestment movement helped break the power of the apartheid regime in South Africa," he says.

Brutus argues that the World Bank has "denied Africa's right to health" by forcing cutbacks in spending, imposing the privatization of healthcare, and demanding that foreign debt repayment take precedence over basic health services.

The campaign, launched in 2000, immediately won support from nongovernmental organizations in the developing world and is starting to have some success in pressing US institutions to ditch World Bank-issued bonds. International and local labor unions, churches and religious communities, foundations, and socially responsible investment firms have joined the boycott. In April, Cambridge, Massachusetts, became the seventh US city to participate in the boycott, joining San Francisco, Boulder, Oakland, Berkeley, Milwaukee, and Takoma Park, Maryland.

If the boycott spreads, the bank's AAA bond rating could be threatened, driving up borrowing costs for the bank. This has prompted criticism of the boycott from those who argue that it undermines efforts to change the World Bank from within.

Brutus, however, believes that the bank is as unsalvageable as the regime of FW de Klerk and favors scrapping the World Bank altogether.

—Rik Langendoen

See [www.worldbankboycott.org](http://www.worldbankboycott.org).

## Bush Unilateralism Isolates US

The current US administration's foreign policy stances are increasingly alienating the nation's strongest allies. The US is going it alone on a growing number of major issues. It has refused to cooperate with implementation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), going so far as to threaten to "unsign" the treaty that created the court. And it is moving closer to making war on Iraq, in the face of near-universal condemnation, not least from every nation bordering that country.

On the eve of the ICC's opening, the US threatened to veto renewal of the UN Bosnian peacekeeping mission if US personnel were not exempted from the court's jurisdiction. The UN Security Council granted the US a renewable one-year exemption. Criticism came from nations normally considered friendly to the US—Canada, Mexico, Britain, Sweden, and Germany. Both Toronto's *Globe and Mail* and Britain's *Guardian* ran sharply critical editorials.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush said of the US, "If we are an arrogant nation, they'll view us that way, but if we're a humble nation, they'll respect us." But within two months of taking office, he'd declared the Kyoto Protocols on climate change dead, arguing that they might harm US economic interests. International reaction was resoundingly

negative, but produced no change in the administration's stance.

In the following months, Bush:

- Declared the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty an outdated relic of the cold war.
- Declined to participate in an initiative sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to crack down on money laundering, although that issue later became a matter of importance in the war on terrorism.
- Opposed, and effectively vetoed, a proposal that the G-8 industrial nations commit to helping one billion people get power from renewable sources.
- Backed away from the Clinton administration's pledge to comply, by 2006, with the treaty banning landmines.
- Withdrew from the United Nations Conference Against Racism.

The Bush administration's commitment to unilateralism was temporarily interrupted by the World Trade Center/Pentagon attacks in September 2001. In the midst of near-universal expressions of support and sympathy following the attacks, the US paid some of its arrears to the UN and sought, and received, UN approval for its war in Afghanistan.

The hiatus was brief. In November, the administration declared the Biological Weapons Convention dead and withdrew from the ABM treaty in December.

There are signs, though, that other world leaders are losing patience with US policies. Europe and Japan are leading efforts to get the pact on global warming implemented. The US failed to retain a seat on the UN Human Rights Commission last year. And in late July, the UN Economic and Social Council voted to enforce a treaty on torture that was 10 years in negotiation, which would allow international and independent visits to, among others, US prisons and detention facilities. This came despite US opposition to the treaty. European Union External Affairs Commissioner Chris Patten, in an

interview with Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, accused the Bush administration of taking a dangerously "absolutist and simplistic" stance toward the rest of the world.

In May, Bush was greeted in Berlin by thousands of protesters against his policies toward Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In July, despite calls for further delay from the Bush administration, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and move the treaty to the full Senate for debate for the first time since it was drafted in 1979. The US is the only industrialized nation that has not ratified the treaty.

—Doug Pibel

## Co-ops on the Web

In January 2002, cooperative organizations received a coveted internet identity with the creation of a co-op domain. Cooperatives, which have never quite fit under the ".com" (for businesses) or ".org" (for non-profits) labels, now can easily be distinguished online. In a world with over 28 million web addresses, having the ".coop" suffix will make it easier for people to identify cooperative businesses.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)—the Internet's technical governing body—collected applications for over 180 new top-level domains (TLDs). The .coop domain beat out other powerful industries that lobbied unsuccessfully for TLDs, such as .travel, .law and .phone, to receive one of only seven new TLDs created since 1988.

According to Paul Hazen, CEO of the National Cooperative Business Association, .coop received more support both from within the US and overseas than any other proposed TLD. "What seemed to persuade ICANN was the tremendous grassroots support," he stated. "We demonstrated that .coop could make a real

difference on the Net to a group of businesses who are all about people and making the Net more about democracy."

To date, cooperatives have registered 7,000 .coop domains. The .coop suffix is carefully monitored, reserved for legitimate cooperatives that adhere to the International Cooperative Alliance's cooperative principles.

—Connie Kim

For more information, go to [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop).

## Campaign Finance Showdown

It sounded like a straightforward victory for campaign finance reform: Massachusetts activists struggled to get a campaign initiative onto the state ballot, then mobilized support for the measure, and last fall voters overwhelmingly supported the bill by a 2-to-1 margin in every legislative district in the state. Massachusetts was set to provide public financing for all candidates who chose to forego large private donations and agreed to spending limits. Advocates believed this could transform elections in a state in which 73 percent of incumbents run for re-election unopposed. But then the story took a bizarre twist.

State lawmakers refused to release money to fund the law. So in February the initiative's backers, including several candidates owed funds under the law, sued the state.

**Auctioneer Richard Allyn auctions off state-owned property to fund Massachusetts' clean elections law, which lawmakers have refused to fund**



The Boston Herald



The judge ruled in their favor and authorized them to auction state property to raise the funds.

The first to go were several state-owned SUVs and trucks. "We figured those were the most painless items to sell, and we thought if we proved we were serious, the state might back down," said David Donnelly, director of Massachusetts Voters for Clean Elections. Next came furniture from the offices of the state lawmakers fighting the law.

Then the fight got uglier. With the state still holding up millions of dollars, the activists needed much more money than could be raised selling trucks and furniture. The group turned to a list of supposedly unused real estate, provided by the state. But one property turned out to be a state jail housing 80 prisoners. Another included a pioneer-era burial ground and protected marshland adjacent to Thoreau's Walden Pond.

"While we don't have any evidence of funny business, our strong suspicion is that the state has been less than forthcoming in this process," Donnelly said.

In July, a former state hospital was auctioned off for \$2.4 million, enough to provide funding under the law for a candidate for governor, but no other candidates.

State senators who oppose the new law are planning to put the matter up for a vote this November. However the ballot wording, which asks whether voters wish to "support taxpayer money being used to fund political campaigns for public office in Massachusetts," is "unfair" and "biased," according to a June 19 editorial in the *Boston Globe*.

Donnelly dismisses rumors that his group plans to auction the statehouse next. "We think it's already been sold to the highest bidder, so it's no longer available."

—Carolyn McConnell

### **Bullying's Lasting Harm**

Just what is "normal," anyway? To many parents and teachers,

dealing with schoolyard bullies is a normal, albeit annoying, part of childhood. Troublesome to the victim, perhaps, but still the norm.

In the last year, however, the American Medical Association threw its considerable weight behind a new policy that addresses bullying not as a standard nuisance, but as a serious public health problem with wide societal consequences. In the wake of such horrifying events as the Columbine massacre, new attention has focused on the victims of bullying, the generally accepted motive behind much school violence.

The AMA wants to make it clear: bullying is not acceptable just because it is common. In fact, studies show that both bullies and victims of bullying are more likely to suffer long-term consequences ranging from lower grades to an increased risk of suicide, and psychiatric problems such as anxiety and depression. There is also an increase in spousal abuse and criminal behavior in adults who were bullied or bullies as children.

The problem is widespread. More than 10 percent of all students report being the regular victim of bullying at school, and 13 percent acknowledge being bullies themselves.

—Mary Guterson

Tips for both bullies and victims can be found through links on the AMA website, [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org).

### **Muslim Grocers Exonerated**

In July, four months after the USDA targeted two Somali grocery stores for allegedly trafficking in foodstamps, the agency reversed itself, acknowledging a lack of evidence. Seattle activists say the Muslim-owned Maka and Madina Mini Markets were victims of post-September 11 racial profiling.

This decision means that the grocery stores, which receive 90 percent of their business from foodstamps, can remain in business. They are unlikely, however, to receive any compen-

sation for lost business during the months when they lost the right to accept foodstamps, as USDA regulations exempt the agency from liability for lost food sales in case of a reversed decision. Still, pro bono lawyers for the grocers plan to seek restitution.

A third Seattle grocery, Towfiq Halal Meat and Grocery, was also disqualified by the USDA, but has yet to file an appeal.

—Carolyn McConnell

See *YES!* Summer 2002 for the full story.

### **Jury Rebukes FBI**

On June 11th, Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney, two activists labeled eco-terrorists by the FBI, were awarded \$4.4 million by a federal jury that found the Bureau and the Oakland Police Department conducted illegal searches, made slanderous statements, and falsely arrested Bari and Cherney.

On May 24th, 1990, Bari and Cherney were organizing the Redwood Summer, the largest ever nonviolent protests against corporate liquidation logging, when a pipe bomb made from gasoline and nails ripped through the floor of their white Subaru station wagon. The blast crushed Bari's pelvis and sent the two Earth First! organizers to the hospital, where, at the prompting of the FBI, they were arrested by the Oakland Police for possession and transportation of an explosive device.

The FBI and Oakland Police insisted that the bomb belonged to Bari and Cherney for use in eco-sabotage and that it had detonated accidentally. Nails found by police in Bari's house reportedly matched the nails in the car bomb; the police later admitted there was no such match. Neither the FBI or the OPD investigated any other suspects in the bombing. An anonymous letter in a local newspaper claimed responsibility, described details of the bombing, and called it retribution for Bari's participation in a pro-choice demonstration.

—Dylan Chalk



# The Page That COUNTS

Percent increase in paper consumption after an organization adopts e-mail: 40<sup>1</sup>

Size of one "accounting irregularity" while Dick Cheney was CEO of Halliburton: \$100 million<sup>2</sup>

Value of contracts with Iraq by Halliburton subsidiaries while Cheney was CEO: \$73 million<sup>3</sup>

Increase in value of US government contracts while Cheney led Halliburton: 91%<sup>4</sup>

Value of Cheney's retirement package and stocks when he left Halliburton after 5 years: \$48 million<sup>5</sup>

Annual care and feeding requirements for an average one-third-acre US lawn:

Pesticides: 10 pounds

Fertilizer: 20 pounds

Water: 170,000 gallons

Mowing labor: 40 hours

Pollution: equivalent to driving a car 14,000 miles<sup>6</sup>

Reduction in California's use of pesticides between 1998 and 1999: 11,700,000 pounds<sup>7</sup>

Percentage of Israelis who favor unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories: 63

Who call for the evacuation of Israeli settlements from the territories: 69

Who believe that Israel should agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state: 60<sup>8</sup>

Reincarceration rate among women at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility (NY) who participated in the prison college program: 7.7%

Among women who did not participate in the college program: 29.9%

Number of college programs in US prisons in 1982: over 350

In 1995: 8<sup>9</sup>

Number of "mega-cities" (with populations in excess of ten million) worldwide in 1950: 1

In 1975: 5

In 2001: 19<sup>10</sup>

Average change in onset of arctic snowmelt between 1975 and 1995: five days earlier per decade

Northward expansion in range of guillemots (an arctic bird species) in the last century: 500 miles<sup>11</sup>

Ratio of plastic to zooplankton found by researchers surveying North Pacific marine debris: 6:1<sup>12</sup>

Ratio of US bachelor degrees earned by women versus men in 1970: 43:57

In 2000: 57:43<sup>13</sup>

Average amount of vitamin C found in organic crops compared to conventional crops: +27%

Of iron: +21%

Of calcium: +26%<sup>14</sup>

Sources: 1. *Future Survey* v23, no12, December 2001, p15 2. *New York Times*, May 22, 2002. 3. Washington Post, June 23, 2001. 4. Center for Public Integrity, [www.public-i.org/story\\_01\\_080200.htm](http://www.public-i.org/story_01_080200.htm). 5. *USA Today*, June 9, 2002 6. *Audubon*, v104, no2, March 2002, p65 7. Department of Pesticide Regulation, California EPA, cited in The Organic Trade Assoc. *Organic Report*, March 2001, p8 8. Megan Goldin, *Reuters*, "Intifada Throws Israeli Political Map into Disarray", 5/31/02, <http://jerusalem.indymedia.org/news/2002/07/56357.php> 9. [www.changingminds.ws/brochure/](http://www.changingminds.ws/brochure/), citing a 1997-2001 study by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and the NY State Dept. of Correctional Services 10. UN Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects*, [www.un.org/popin/data.html](http://www.un.org/popin/data.html) 11. Darcy Frey, "George Divoky's Planet", *NY Times Magazine*, Jan 6, 02 12. Algalita Marine Research Foundation, cited in *WorldWatch*, v15, no2, March-April 2002, p10 13. Analysis of Postsecondary School Education, *Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy*, No116, Feb 2002, [www.postsecondary.org/ti/ti\\_22.asp](http://www.postsecondary.org/ti/ti_22.asp) 14. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, volume 7, no 2, 2001, "Nutritional Quality of Organic versus Conventional Fruits, Vegetables, and Grains", [www.organictcs.com/organic\\_info/articles/downloads/organic.pdf](http://www.organictcs.com/organic_info/articles/downloads/organic.pdf)

Enron. Accounting fraud. Mad cows. Wal-Mart. Monopoly. Political corruption. WTO. Disintegrating schools. Downsizing. WorldCom. Tax havens. Cancer. Hostile takeovers. Channel One. Harken Energy. Climate change. Corporate welfare. Temp workers. Economic refugees. Arthur Andersen. Hidden partnerships. Billionaires. Money laundering. Citibank. Financial bubbles. Prison crowding. Insider trading. Infomercials. Halliburton. Price gouging. GMOs. Terrorism. Malnutrition. Monsanto. Uninsured workers. Nike. Sweatshops. Maquiladoras. Trade wars. Homelessness.

welcome to the world of  
*the suicide economy.*

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**David C. Korten**

*Longview Daily News*



# economies for life

The language of economic dysfunction has become so common that when I use the term “the global suicide economy” in my talks, I rarely need to elaborate. Most people are now aware that rule by global corporations and financial speculators engaged in the single-minded pursuit of money is destroying communities, cultures, and natural systems everywhere on the planet. Until recently, however, most people responded with polite but resigned skepticism to my message that economic transformation is possible.

Now, with the revelations of high-profile corporate fraud and corruption, I sense a dramatic change. While the political power brokers talk of new rules and penalties to restore confidence in financial markets, members of religious orders and congregations, community groups, city officials, business people, and young activists are talking about the possibility of far greater changes—of creating truly new economies. They speak of real wealth as a sense of belonging, contribution,

beauty, joy, relationship, and spiritual connection. They share their dreams of a world of locally rooted living economies that meet the material needs of all people everywhere, while providing meaning, building community, and connecting us to a place on the Earth.

Many are acting to make their dreams a reality. In late 2001, the Social Ventures Network, an alliance of socially committed entrepreneurs, responded to this upsurge in civic innovation by launching a new nationwide initiative—the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies—to encourage, strengthen, and facilitate the interlinking of these initiatives with the aim of creating a cohesive national movement. (See page 16.)

The suicide economy is a product of human choices motivated by a love of money. It is within our means to make different choices motivated by a love of life. We have created a suicide economy based on absentee ownership, monopoly, and the concentration of power delinked from obligations to people or place. Now we



## living economies

must create living economies based on locally rooted ownership and deeply held American ideals of equity, democracy, markets, and personal responsibility.

In the place of a suicide economy devoted to maximizing returns to money, we can create living economies devoted to meeting the basic needs of people. In the place of a suicide economy in which the powerful reap the profits and the rest bear the cost, we can create a system of living economies in which decisions are made by those who will bear the consequences.

In the place of the suicide economy's global trading system designed to allow the wealthy few to control the resources and dominate the markets of the many, we can create living economy trade through which each community exchanges those things it produces in surplus for those it cannot reasonably produce at home on terms that support living wage jobs and high environmental standards everywhere.

Under a system of relatively self-reliant local living economies, communities and nations will not find themselves pitted against one another for jobs, markets, and resources. In the absence of such competition, the free sharing of information, knowledge, and technology will become natural, to the mutual benefit of all.

### Locally owned, human-scale enterprises

Living economies are made up of human-scale enterprises locally owned by people who have a direct stake in the many impacts associated with the enterprise. A firm owned by workers, community members, customers, and/or suppliers who directly bear the consequences of its actions is more likely to provide:

- Employees with safe, meaningful, family-wage jobs.
- Customers with useful, safe, high-quality products.
- Suppliers with steady markets and fair dealing.
- Communities with a healthy social and natural environment.

One of my favorite prototypes of a living economy enterprise is Philadelphia's White Dog Cafe. (See *YES!* Spring 2001.) Founder, owner, and proprietor Judy Wicks buys most of her food from local organic farmers, serves only meat from humanely raised animals, pays her workers a living wage, devotes 10 percent of profits to local charity, and has mobilized other Philadelphia restaurants to join in rebuilding the local food production and distribution system. Wicks is also former board chair of the Social Ventures Network and a founder of the newly formed Business Alliance for Local Living Economies.

Living economy enterprises may be organized as partnerships; individual- or family-owned businesses;

consumer- or producer-owned cooperatives; community corporations; or companies privately owned by workers, other community members, or social investors. They may be for-profit or nonprofit.

There is no place in living economies, however, for publicly traded, limited liability corporations, the organizational centerpiece of the suicide economy. This corporate form is legally structured to allow virtually unlimited concentration of power to the exclusive financial benefit of absentee shareholders who have no knowledge of, or liability for, the social and environmental consequences of the actions taken on their behalf. It is a legally sanctioned invitation to benefit from behavior that otherwise would be considered sociopathic—even criminal.

### Life-serving rules

In the suicide economy, the success of an enterprise is measured by the financial return to its investors. The corporate media cheer when stock prices rise, increasing investor wealth, but sound the alarm when wages rise. Information on the price of a corporation's stock is available on a minute-by-minute basis, but information on its social and environmental impacts is rarely disclosed.

Rule-making in the suicide economy focuses on enforcing contracts, providing incentives for investors, and protecting the rights of property owners. Government intervention to protect workers, the environment, and consumers is denounced by corporate elites as an infringement of market freedom. Trade agreements like NAFTA and institutions like the World Trade Organization open countries to unbridled competition for investment and jobs that creates a race to the bottom in terms of labor, health, social, and environmental standards.

When Mr. Bush spoke to Wall Street bankers on July 9 on the subject of corporate accountability, his remarks centered on restoring investor confidence by increasing financial integrity and transparency. He made no mention of corporate accountability to workers, communities, the environment, or any other larger public interest. Follow closely the policy debates between Republicans and Democrats on financial fraud, and you will find they center on the competing private financial interests of managers and shareholders—with Republicans generally favoring the corporate managers and Democrats favoring the Wall Street financiers.

The primary purpose of a true market economy, however, is not to make money for the rich and powerful. When Adam Smith conceptualized the idea of the market economy in his classic *The Wealth of Nations*, he had in mind economies that allocate human and mate-



rial resources justly and sustainably to meet the self-defined needs of people and community.

In order to allocate justly and sustainably, a market economy requires enforceable rules. Because markets respond only to the needs of those with money to pay, there must be rules to assure an equitable distribution of income. Because markets respond to prices, a just and sustainable allocation of resources depends on public regulation and user fees to assure that market prices internalize the true cost of a product or service—including the social and environmental costs otherwise borne by the public. Public oversight is also needed to assure that common heritage resources essential to the survival and well-being of all—like land and water—are protected and equitably shared.

When enterprises are locally rooted, human-scale, owned by stakeholders, and held accountable to the rule of law by democratically elected governments, there is a natural incentive for all concerned to take human and community needs and interests into account. When income and ownership are equitably distributed, justice is served and political democracy is strong. When workers are owners, the conflict between labor and capital disappears. When needs are met locally by locally owned enterprises, people have greater control over their lives, money is recycled in the community rather than leaking off into the global financial casino, jobs are more secure, economies are more stable, and there are the means and the incentives to protect the environment and to build the relationships of mutual trust and responsibility that are the foundation of community.

### Quality of life

Our quality of life would be stunningly different if we based economic decisions on life values rather than purely financial values—a natural choice if owners had to live with the non-financial consequences of their decisions.

Full-cost pricing of energy, materials, and land use could expose the real inefficiencies of factory farming, conventional construction, and urban sprawl and make life-serving alternatives comparatively cost-effective. Much of our food could be grown fresh on local family farms without toxic chemicals, and processed nearby. Organic wastes could be composted and recycled back into the soil. Environmentally efficient buildings designed for their specific micro environment and constructed of local materials could radically reduce energy consumption. Much of our remaining energy needs could be supplied locally from wind and solar sources. Local wastes could be recycled to provide materials and energy for other local businesses.

Compact communities could bring work,

### How would we live?

**When challenged to think of a world of living economies free of publicly traded corporations many people ask:**

**How would we earn our living?** For all their economic power, the number of jobs provided by global corporations relative to the world's workforce is small. The 200 largest corporations in the world employ less than 1 percent of the global work force although they account for about 30 percent of global economic activity. Between 1983 and 1999 the number of people they employ grew by 14 percent while their profits grew over 360 percent. Most job growth comes from local independent businesses.

**Who would produce our food?** Smaller independently managed farms using environmentally sound agricultural practices are far more productive and efficient in the use of scarce land than are corporate factory farms. A 1992 US Agricultural Census shows that, based on total output per unit area, small farms produce over ten times more dollar output per acre than do the largest farms. The intercropping methods used by small farms guarantee more biodiversity and do less environmental damage than do large scale monoculture crops. Localizing food production means fresher, more nutritious food, more jobs, major energy savings, and a healthier environment.

**How would drug research be financed?** Most basic research on new drug treatments is already funded with public money. Eighty-five percent of the research contributing to the top five selling drugs of 1995 was conducted by US taxpayer-funded researchers and foreign academic studies. Marketing, advertising, and administrative costs for the top nine drug companies totaled \$45 billion in 2001; research and development expenditures totaled \$19 billion.

**How would we finance retirement?** Contrary to the claims of those who would profit from the privatization of Social Security, the elderly can't eat stock bubbles; they need food, shelter, clothing, and medical and personal services that someone must produce. Living economies might feature intergenerational living arrangements with cooperative community facilities for child and elder care along with a system of social insurance much like the current social security system.

**Who would build our airplanes?** There will be far less need for air travel in a world of local living economies. Where there is need for the production of large, complex pieces of technology, they can be produced by publicly or worker-owned companies, or in facilities owned by cooperatives of the independent businesses that provide component parts and services.

**David C. Korten**

shopping, and recreation nearer to our residences—thus saving energy and commuting time, reducing CO2 emissions and dependence on imported oil, and freeing time for family and community activities. Land now devoted to roads and parking could be converted to bike lanes, trails, and parks.

## living economies

By reducing waste and unnecessary use of energy and other resources, we in America could reduce our need to expropriate the resources of other countries. We could quit allocating a major portion of our national treasure to the large military required to secure our access to those resources. The world's poor would regain access to the resources that are rightfully theirs to improve their own lives—and the threat of terrorism would be greatly reduced. The elimination of global corporations with their massive overhead, inflated executive compensation packages, and myopic focus on short-term profits would free still more resources. Together these savings could provide workers with family wages and finance first-rate education, health care, and community services for all.

We would expect to see the effects of living economy institutions ripple out across the social landscape. With ample living wage jobs, educational opportunities, and essential services, crime rates would drop, and prison and other criminal justice costs would fall.

An economy that responds to rather than creates demand diverts fewer resources to advertising. Fewer ads mean less visual pollution and wasteful consumerism, an improved sense of self-worth, and still more resources freed up to be converted into shorter work weeks and more leisure time. We would work less and live more. Our lives would be freer and richer. Our environment would be cleaner and healthier. A world no longer divided between obscenely rich and desperately poor would know more peace and less violence, more love and less hate, more hope and less fear. The Earth could heal and provide a home for our children for generations to come.

### Awakening majority

The ideal of a living economy might seem an impossible dream, except for the fact that so many of its elements are already in place. There are millions of for- and not-for-profit enterprises and public initiatives around the world aligned with the values and organizational principles of living economies. They include local independent businesses of all sorts from bookstores to bakeries, land trusts, local organic farms, farmers'

markets, community-supported agriculture initiatives, restaurants specializing in locally grown organic produce, community banks, local currencies, buy-local campaigns, suppliers of fair-traded coffee, independent media, and many more. Indeed, independent, human-scale businesses are by far the majority of all businesses, provide most jobs, create nearly all new jobs, and are the source of most innovation.

It is clear that living economies are a viable alternative to the suicide economy. Nonetheless, the suicide economy continues to dominate our economic, political, social, and cultural lives. So how do we get from a few million living enterprises that are struggling to survive at the fringes of the global suicide economy to a healthy planetary system of thriving living economies? The answer is, "We grow it into being."

No one planned the suicide economy. It is what organizational consultant Margaret Wheatley calls an "emergent system." Those responsible for corporate interests grew it into being through their day-to-day effort to increase profits and market share. Step by step over the last several hundred years, they reshaped politics, the legal system, and modern culture to create the interlocking systems of interests and mutual obligations of what has become a suicide economy.

The complex, self-reinforcing dynamics of an emergent system make it virtually impossible to transform from within. Those who attempt to do so are almost invariably marginalized or expelled. When environmental writer Carl Frankel set out to write the book *In Earth's Company* on corporate environmentalism, he looked for true environmental champions within the corporate world. He found three. By the time his book was published, all three had been fired.

An emergent system that no longer serves can be displaced only by a more powerful emergent system. According to Wheatley, "This means that the work of change is to start over, to organize new local efforts, connect them to each other, and know that their values and practices can emerge as something even stronger."

This insight is critical to the work ahead. The most promising approach to ridding our societies of the pathological culture and institutions of the suicide economy is to displace them—an idea that at first seems hopelessly naive. Consider, however, that the institutions of the suicide economy are animated by our life energy. They have only the power that we each yield to them. Each time we choose where we shop, work, and invest, we can redirect our life energy from the suicide economy to the emergent living economy.

Choosing living economy enterprises may appear more expensive. Organic produce may cost more than

### Business Alliance for Local Living Economies

**The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) was launched in 2001 by the San Francisco-based Social Ventures Network. By mid-2002, BALLE had signed on 17 regional chapters, which are encouraging people to buy from, work for, and otherwise support locally owned, values-based enterprises. BALLE chapters also facilitate business-to-business relationships among firms committed to living economy values. Information on BALLE is available at [www.livingeconomies.org](http://www.livingeconomies.org).**



## living economies

non-organic; a bar of soap may cost more at a local store than at a big chain. That greater expense disappears, however, when we factor in such benefits of the living economy as improved health, caring communities, shorter commutes, meaningful work, cleaner air and water, free time, economic security, and hope for our children's future. Employment in a smaller enterprise may pay less, but be more secure.

When top mutual funds were returning 20 to 50 percent a year, putting money in a community bank that pays 4 or 5 percent seemed an expensive choice. In a period of market decline, however, an insured CD with a community bank that makes loans to local businesses begins to look like a smart, as well as ethical, choice.

### Making it happen

Those interested in helping to grow a living economy in their own community might start with a few simple questions. What do local people and businesses regularly buy that is or could be supplied locally by socially and environmentally responsible independent enterprises? Which existing local businesses are trying to practice living economy values? In what sectors are they clustered? Are there collaborative efforts aligned with living economy values already underway? The answers will point to promising opportunities.

Food is often a logical place to start. Everyone needs and cares about food, and food can be grown almost everywhere, is freshest and most wholesome when local, and is our most intimate connection to the land. In many communities, a farmers' market or a restaurant serving locally produced organic foods provides a focal point for organizing. In some communities, clusters of businesses devoted to energy conservation, environmental construction, and the local production of solar, wind, and mini-hydro power are forming living economy webs devoted to advancing local energy independence.

Many groups are working to create the financial infrastructure for living economies. Some are creating interest-free local currencies that encourage and facilitate transactions among local people and enterprises. Others are establishing community banks dedicated to financing local enterprises. The ShoreBank is one of my favorite examples of a living-economy financial institution. The bank is privately owned by a number of individual investors, foundations, and nonprofit organizations dedicated to its social and environmental mission. It finances enterprises and projects that provide jobs, contribute to environmental health, upgrade low- and moderate-income rental housing units, create affordable home ownership opportunities, and develop

and staff day-care centers and job-training programs. (See "A Founder of the Next Economy," *YES!* Fall 1999.)

A number of groups are developing a "fair trade" infrastructure that seeks to improve the conditions of low-income producers of coffee, handicrafts, and other goods. Still others are mobilizing political action to eliminate public subsidies, tax rebates, sweetheart contracts, regulatory exemptions, and giveaways of public resources on which the profits of otherwise inefficient corporate monoliths often depend, and to put in place new rules that favor local independent businesses, stakeholder ownership, living-wage employers, and environmental responsibility. (See the "New Rules Project" of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, page 44.)

Countless local living-economy initiatives are being launched all across America and around the world, including some by former corporate employees who have chosen to walk away from the suicide economy to start new businesses aligned with their values. The greater the number and diversity of such initiatives, the more rapidly the web of an emergent planetary system of local living economies can grow, and the more readily each of us can redirect our life energy toward living economies in our shopping, employment, and investment choices.

Corporate scandals, a faltering economy, and stock-market declines have dealt a serious blow to the legitimacy of the suicide economy and the big corporations that dominate our lives. Thousands of people are already spreading the message that there is a life-serving alternative that we can grow into being. As suggested by the case examples from Appalachia and Argentina presented in this issue of *YES!*, living economy initiatives flourish most readily under the conditions of economic adversity that dramatically expose the suicide economy's false promises of instant, effortless wealth. The United States may be entering such a period. While the ruling elites occupy themselves with seeking to restore faith in the pathological institutions on which their power and privilege were built, the rest of us can embrace this moment of economic failure as an historic opportunity. Through our individual and collective choices, we can grow into being the economic institutions, relationships, and culture of a just, sustainable, and compassionate world of living economies that work for all.

Dr. David C. Korten is the author of *When Corporations Rule the World* and *The Post-Corporate World: Life after Capitalism*; board chair of the Positive Futures Network; president of the People-Centered Development Forum; and a visionary-advisor member of Social Ventures Network. For more on living economies visit [www.pcdf.org](http://www.pcdf.org).

living economies

## trying to do right

**Victor Bremson**

In the early 1980s, I became the president of a small lighting fixture company operating in East Los Angeles. We supplied small lighting fixture showrooms around the US, but the large home-center chains were beginning to take their place. These chains made huge orders, and we expanded our facilities and hired more employees to support their ever-growing demands.

The chains demanded our newest and most popular items at lower prices than we could offer our other customers. Then they ran big promotions on our best-selling products advertising very low prices until they ran their smaller competitors out of business.

As thousands of small lighting fixture stores went under, the power of the large stores grew even more. Their buyers asked us to provide designs for new products and then asked us to compete with the prices of Asian companies that turned out copies of our designs with low-cost labor. The final blow was the chain stores' demand that, since we were a local company, we should provide better in-store service than the Asian suppliers.

Eventually, I moved the company's production facilities to a *maquiladora* in Mexico. I laid off over 100 local manufacturing workers because otherwise we would go out of business. But this is not the whole story.

I quickly found out that there were few regulations in Mexico. Despite my orders to the contrary, our local managers allowed workers to weld lighting fixtures using lead wire, which was harmful to the workers. There was no equivalent to OSHA or EPA there. We were under less supervision regarding discharges of paint fumes into the environment. Our workers were represented by a union that made sure employees did not cause owners any problems. Consumers got low prices from this plant, but at what expense?

In 1993, I managed a small independent chain of pet food stores and once again found myself up against large discount chain stores. The large pet chains were able to purchase products at lower prices, they had large amounts of venture capital, and they would often open stores near ours. They were not smarter merchandisers, nor were they more efficient. They were bigger, though, and had more money. They did extensive advertising of poorer quality pet food priced below our cost in order to attract our customers. Their size allowed them to press suppliers for lower pricing and better deals.

These large chains were selling beautiful, but endangered, saltwater tropical fish. These fish were

collected from coral reefs by stunning them with poisons or explosives. Both methods killed many fish and ruined the health of endangered coral reefs. The stores sold temperamental species of tropical birds that the staff was not trained to handle. Some stores sold puppies from breeders as opposed to encouraging adoption from pounds, where animals were being slaughtered every day. It was only a business to them, not a place to respect living beings.

At the stores I managed, we used only freshwater fish that were bred domestically. We sold only hand-fed birds from breeders we knew personally, and every store had staff trained to handle them. We encouraged dog adoptions from the local shelter. We trained and paid our employees a fair wage. Our employees were pet lovers who came to work with spirit and enthusiasm. We offered true service, not catchy advertisements, and our customers responded.

When it became obvious that despite their pricing and marketing efforts, we wouldn't be forced out of business, the competitors bought the business from the aging owner and closed us down. Most of our employees were offered minimum wage jobs and chose to move on. Our customers lost a pet-friendly alternative. I understood that the owner was frightened about his future, but I felt like a traitor to the employees who had worked so successfully to out-compete the large chain, only to lose in the end. In hindsight, I wish the owner had sold the company to his employees.

I now understand that these are not isolated examples; they are practices that have become widespread over the last 40 years as we've moved from Main Street economies, populated by local independent businesses, to a global Wall Street economy, dominated by huge discount chains located in vast parking lots. While huge chain stores like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and others offer cheap prices, the costs to all of us are becoming increasingly evident. These costs include loss of local businesses, loss of family-wage jobs, a degraded environment, increased dependence on automobiles, and loss of support for community infrastructure. Are the cheap goods worth the price?

After 30 years performing corporate turn-arounds, Victor Bremson is now a doctoral student at the University of Creation Spirituality and cofounder of Seattle's chapter of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (see page 16).



Corporations were first created  
to serve the common good. A  
little transparency might help  
make that ideal a reality—  
because sunshine is a  
powerful disinfectant.

### Ralph Estes

The purpose of the corporation has become perverted, from serving the public interest to serving private interests of financial investors. Our MBA programs fail to teach the history of the creation of corporations, and, even in the midst of a wave of corporate scandals, debate over reform addresses only the rights of investors.

The first corporations were chartered by the sovereign with the purpose of serving the public purpose; financial investors could seek a return but did not have a standing above the public interest.

Although this public purpose was sometimes abused, it was known and accepted for over 200 years, from Queen Elizabeth through the establishment of the American colonies and on through the early 1800s. A confluence of forces then served to pervert the corporation's purpose, capped by the action of Congress in the 1930s making corporations publicly accountable to financial investors. Thus began the elevation of this special interest to dominance and primacy in corporate affairs.

Today, the purpose of corporations is taken to be maximizing the wealth of executives and stockholders at whatever cost to other stakeholders, the public interest, and the commonwealth.

The financial interests wrested the corporation away from us. It is right and appropriate that citizens now act to take it back. The ultimate goal is to make corporations responsible to those who charter them, who grant them life—the people. But the first step is to force corporations to be accountable to all who are affected by what they do, or who contribute to their success—the stakeholders.

Theodore Roosevelt called for corporate disclosure in his first message to Congress: "Great corporations exist only because they are created and safeguarded by our institutions; and it is our right and our duty to see that they work in harmony with these institutions. ... The first requisite is knowledge, full and complete; knowledge which may be made public to the world."



Lynn Brofsky

The corporate system, which has given us cooked books, sweatshops, Enron, clear-cutting, the Exxon Valdez, irradiated food, Tyco, WorldCom—along with NAFTA, GATT, the WTO, World Bank, and IMF — could use some sunshine.

A groundswell of activism is building against unchecked corporate abuse. But in every challenge to corporations, activists quickly discover that much of their work is invested in seeking information. Before we can confront a corporation on its pollution, safety, or diversity record, we first have to work to establish that record. Then when we do find the data, too much time and energy are spent arguing with innumerable corporate lawyers, engineers, and accountants over whether what we have uncovered is accurate—time and energy that divert activists from the real goal of changing corporate behavior.

Even though we're experiencing a rash of accounting failures, financial investors are still favored enormously over other stakeholders. Corporations are required to provide frequent and detailed financial reports—which, with legislation currently in the mix, may once again become reasonably dependable. These reports must be attested, at no charge to the investor, by truly independent auditors—again, changes in legislation are intended to restore a respectable level of auditor independence.

## living economies

Other stakeholders—workers, customers, communities, all those affected by corporate actions—should have an equal right to full and fair disclosure.

Citizens should have the information they need for decisions regarding public contracting, investing, taxpayer subsidies, corporate tax breaks, and other special benefits. Students should similarly have the information they need to assert their preferences with respect to their colleges' endowment fund investments, production of logo-bearing products, campus recruiting, and institutional purchasing and contracting.

Drawing on codes of corporate conduct developed by activists, I have helped develop the Sunshine Standards for Corporate Reporting to Stakeholders. These standards could be adopted as requirements by cities, universities, even states for companies they do business with. Stakeholder right-to-know properly takes precedence over cost, inconvenience, or risk to the

environmental impacts and liabilities. This is far more effective and efficient than subsequently having to remediate environmental impacts." Manufacturing efficiencies can also lead to cost savings.

And *The Washington Post's* Stuart Auerbach, in assessing the effects of consumer 'report cards' that rate hospitals, health plans, doctors, and other medical services, notes that researchers have documented an unexpected benefit from these guides: "a significant improvement in the quality of care and range of services offered in hospitals that are publicly rated." The newspaper quoted University of Missouri School of Medicine Professor Daniel Longo: "I've been on both sides of the fence, and I know that there is something about public disclosure that makes a difference. Public reports are in the public interest. We have not seen many changes in the quality of care without public accountability."

*The Economist* magazine reports that 10 years after a federal toxic release reporting requirement was enacted in 1986 and California passed a ballot initiative requiring another layer of disclosure from state firms, emissions of chemicals covered in the legislation had fallen by 72 percent in California and by 45 percent in the US as a whole.

Making corporations accountable through public disclosure of information needed by stakeholders won't cure all that is wrong with the corporate system. It might appropriately be viewed as an 80 percent solution. Public disclosure will change managers' actions when they have to anticipate that their misdeeds will be exposed for all the world to see. And when the harm does occur, we as stakeholders will be empowered both to confront corporations in the public space, demanding reform, and to vote with our feet and our pocketbooks by taking our labor and our purchases elsewhere.

With corporate accountability, stakeholders win through a substantial reduction of the harm that corporations do. Corporations win by learning about and having the opportunity to fix problems before they grow into crises (and lawsuits). Society wins with a more equitable, and thus stronger, corporate system built on providing safe and effective products, produced under humane conditions, and sold at fair value. It's a win-win-win prescription.

Ralph Estes directs the Stakeholder Alliance ([www.stakeholderalliance.org](http://www.stakeholderalliance.org)), a national coalition that advocates for corporate stakeholder (instead of just stockholder) rights. He is working on a series of books on corporate responsibility and accountability, number one being a response to "the Enron moment."

## Great corporations exist because they are created by our institutions; it is our right to see that they work in harmony with these institutions

corporation. These standards would require companies to disclose information about:

- Workplace conditions, environmental impact, commitment to sustainability, and other areas of corporate social responsibility, so that customers, residents, and present and potential employees can make informed decisions.
- Environmental risk, including risks associated with the company's transportation, storage, processing, and disposal of radioactive, toxic, hazardous, and dangerous materials.
- Charitable and political contributions, to permit assessment of efforts to influence public policy.
- Tax abatements, industrial development bonds, zoning exemptions, and other special concessions and public subsidies to the corporation, as well as past performance in response to such benefits.

In the 1933/34 securities acts, Congress gave stockholders the right to disclosure. But they left stakeholders out. It is now up to us to demand that disclosure.

Disclosure will work. After the judge ruled in a CNN employee suit that CNN would have to disclose salary data and portions of an internal study on diversity, settlement talks suddenly accelerated.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, if environmental disclosure is required, "Employees can prevent



# starting over

Photos by Andrew Stern

**Lisa Garrigues**

## Argentines are re-inventing their economy from the ruins of corporate capitalism

Sleeping on the floor of the factory in order to keep her job was not exactly what Alva Sotelo had in mind when she started working as a seamstress at the Brukman Factory in Buenos Aires. Like most people, she figured her job would give her enough money to feed herself and her children, and that at the end of the day, she could go home and forget about it.

For a while, that was true. Though the work was tedious and the workers had orders from the boss not to talk to each other while they worked the machines and hand-stitched the cloth all day long, they did get a 15-minute lunch break. And Alva was earning 100 pesos a week.

Then everything changed. By December of last year, Argentina found that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recipe it had followed had gone sour. Loans to prop up an overvalued peso, multinational privatizations of Argentine companies that stripped the country of control over its own industry and dumped thousands of people from their jobs, combined with political corruption, had created a national mess: an external debt of \$132 billion, a 25 percent unemployment rate, and a middle class suddenly slipping into poverty. Businesses

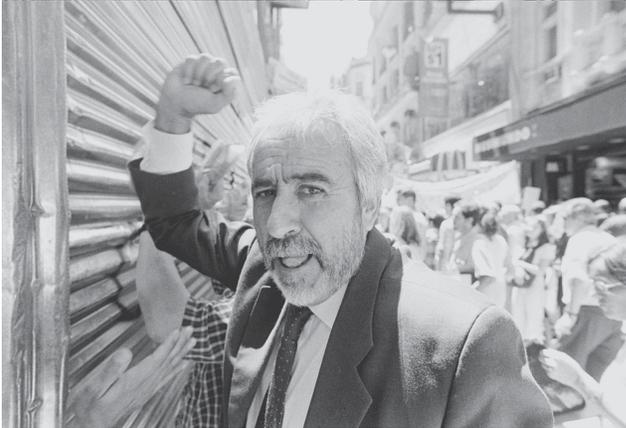
were going bankrupt, and people throughout the country were sifting through garbage for food.

On December 19th and 20th, the country finally exploded. Hordes of hungry families ransacked and looted grocery stores. Thousands of members of the middle class who had lost their money to a bank freeze defied President Fernando de la Rúa's state of siege and filled the streets of Buenos Aires banging pots and chanting, "Get rid of de La Rúa! Get rid of them all." Street battles left 25 dead and toppled four presidents in succession. What had once been the world's seventh richest nation found itself in total economic, political, and social collapse.

Throughout all this, Alva Sotelo was just trying to hold onto her job and her salary. By December, she and her fellow workers' pay had fallen to only five pesos a week. The Brukman brothers, who owned the factory, agreed to meet with the workers. But, according to Alva, the owners never showed up. She and her fellow workers began sleeping at the factory because they kept hoping their employers would come back and pay their salaries. "At first, we were waiting for someone to tell us what to do," she says.

*A seamstress from the Brukman garment plant, which was taken over by workers*

## living economies



Top: The unemployed blockade roads in protest of Argentina's financial crisis. Bottom: A citizen demanding his savings from a bank

Eventually, the workers at Brukman realized that wasn't going to happen—the owners had effectively abandoned the debt-ridden factory. The workers began, slowly, to run the factory themselves. They elected a six-member commission to coordinate the work. They paid off the company's debts with factory profits. They paid their salaries by dividing the remaining profits equally among themselves. The Brukman brothers—who claim they were locked out by the workers—wanted to sell the factory and use the profits to pay the workers, a proposal the workers rejected.

Alva and her 50 or so fellow workers continue to sleep in shifts at the factory. But now they are bringing home around 50 pesos a week, and they laugh and talk to each other while they work. "We've actually discovered that we get more done when we communicate with each other," she says.

Alva Sotelo is one of many people in Argentina who have been forced by the collapse of the economy into

creating alternatives. The result is new-found solidarity and empowerment and an opportunity to create new models that transcend the old individualist capitalist one. "Solidarity solutions" are sprouting up all over Argentina: streetcorner soup kitchens organized by neighborhood assemblies, food donations replacing money as the price of entrance to cultural events, neighbors buying food together, community food gardens. The most notable changes have been the explosion of worker cooperatives like Brukman's, the rise of neighborhood assemblies, and the proliferation of barter clubs.

### Solidarity solutions

Worker-owned cooperatives are not a new phenomenon in Argentina. There are about 100 legal cooperatives in the country, some of which date back to the Peron years. They include printing presses and refrigerator factories, and range in size from eight employees to over a thousand.

But the current crisis has caused a "dizzying increase" in workers taking control of bankrupt companies, says Jose Abelli of the Confederacion Latino-Americana de Cooperativas y Mutuales de Trabajadores. Roughly 10 businesses a month are now being taken over by workers. Most of them share a model similar to Brukman's: the "directors" of the company are elected by the workers themselves, and the profits are split among the workers, or "associates." In some companies, everyone earns the same amount of money. In others, the highest-paid associate makes no more than four times the amount of the lowest-paid associate.

Once workers take control of a company, they can use legal channels to apply for cooperative status. Owner attempts to evict the workers are often unsuccessful either because they are legally challenged or because members of local neighborhood assemblies show up *en masse* to support the workers and nonviolently prevent the eviction.

These assemblies, born in early January from "the pot and pan uprisings" (*cacerolazos*) of December, are another powerful force for innovation within a collapsing system. Breaking through the fear of activism instilled by the brutal military dictatorship, roughly 200 groups of neighbors throughout Buenos Aires have rejected traditional party divisions and opted for direct democracy and a "politics without politicians." They are sending delegates to an inter-neighborhood assembly, publishing newsletters, requesting donations from local merchants for streetcorner community kitchens, and organizing demonstrations. In addition to confronting the practical needs of the neighborhood, the assemblies have



become improvisational think tanks where people trade political, social, and economic ideas to create a new vision for the country.

“In December,” says assembly member Hugo Perez, “we dissolved the trance we had been in of ‘Don’t get involved.’ We woke up and claimed the street, and once we had it, we didn’t want to give it up.”

Many of these middle-class professionals have lost their jobs. Some have had their utilities cut off because of lack of payment, and some worry about how and what they are going to eat. Pro-government forces have attacked and threatened neighborhood assembly members. Suddenly their own situation does not seem so different from the struggles of the working-class unemployed who have been protesting by blocking roads. A new slogan is chanted at demonstrations: “Potbanger and roadblocker, it’s the same fight!”

**Abundant social “money”**

Social distinctions also blur at the barter clubs proliferating throughout the country. With 400,000 participants and 800 nodes, the barter system now accounts for \$400-600 million worth of business. The nodes operate with slips of paper called credits, earned by trade in goods or services.

At one club in an office building in Alto Palermo, a posh Buenos Aires neighborhood filled with upscale cafés and multiplex cinemas, carefully made-up and coiffed women from the neighborhood rub shoulders with indigenous women with long braids who come in from the provinces. Hundreds of people mill around tables stacked with clothes, books, artwork, and food, while Tarot readers, manicurists, and hair dressers ply their trades. In rooms off to the side, doctors, dentists, psychologists, and masseuses attend to clients on the spot in makeshift offices.

Buenos Aires is teeming with psychologists, many of whom live and practice in this neighborhood. So it is not surprising to find that this club is filled with mental health professionals, who are either using the barter system to find new patients or supplementing their income trading artwork and other goods. The barter economy is not only an invention born of necessity. Many of them say it is also an unexpected tool of psychological health.

“It gets people out of their houses and interacting with one another,” says Nilda Cañon, who with fellow psychologist Alicia Aguirre sees patients on site.

Social economist and barter promoter Heloisa Primavera says the barter economy creates “social money” that fosters community rather than the isolation of traditional consumerism. “It’s also a tool for



replacing scarcity thinking with abundance thinking.”

How far can this thinking go? At least one Argentine writer has suggested that the country could use barter with other countries as a way to free itself from the leash of the IMF and the external debt. When an entire people wake from the trance of political passivity, as the Argentines did last December, it seems that anything is possible.

Economists are concerned about the contagion of collapse spreading from Argentina to other countries. But the contagion that spreads may be of a different sort: the contagion of people working together to think differently and create alternatives to a global economic model that for many is no longer working.

A recent cartoon in a Buenos Aires newspaper summed it up: “Doctor,” says a patient at a doctor’s office, “I think I’m suffering from a solidarity worm.”

Lisa Garrigues is a freelance writer who lives in Buenos Aires.

*Argentines marching in solidarity over the Brukman garment factory’s closing*

living economies

# the creative commons

Molly Van Houweling

Copyright laws protect your right to exclusive ownership of your art, music, or writing. But what if you want to share your creative work freely, without worry that it will be exploited?

A year ago, *YES!* published a collection of articles challenging readers to “reclaim the commons”—what Jonathan Rowe thoughtfully describes as “the vast realm that is the shared heritage of all of us that we typically use without toll or price” (see *YES!*/Summer 2001). Rowe and others warned of the enclosure and destruction of common resources, while celebrating thriving commons—from community gardens to open-source software—and urging their protection.

This call to action resonated with observers alarmed by recent changes in copyright law. These changes threaten to erode the intellectual commons.

Copyright law grants people who produce expressive works (books, maps, musical compositions, etc.) exclusive rights to copy and distribute those works, and to make new works based upon them. The traditional justification for this limited monopoly is that it encourages creativity and, in the words of the US Constitution, “promote[s] the progress of science and useful arts.”

Of course, lots of people who produce creative work aren't in it for the copyright. At one time, the restrictions imposed by US copyright law did not extend to the work of these self-motivated creators. If they published their work without invoking copyright law, the work passed by default into the public domain. It thus became fodder for unlimited copying and creative reuses—part of a commons that promotes creativity not by promising financial rewards, but by providing the intellectual raw materials for new creations.

Expressive works are now automatically copyrighted, and the monopoly rights last at least 70 years—a time

period now being challenged before the US Supreme Court. This means that when I find a photograph posted on the Internet without any indication of its copyright status, I have to assume that the photograph is subject to copyright restrictions—I can't safely copy it onto my website, or use it in film, or reprint it in a book.

Imagine that whenever you grew a flower in the community garden, an officious caretaker potted it up and delivered it to your backyard where only you could enjoy it. That is how copyright works now.

I am involved with a new nonprofit project, called Creative Commons, that is attempting to make it easier to permanently plant creative works in the community garden of the public domain. We are building an Internet-based tool that will help people create legal documents that voluntarily disclaim or limit the copyrights that would otherwise automatically apply to their works. We also plan to help people label their digital works in a “machine-readable” way that will ultimately enable Internet users to search for, say, public domain sound recordings or photographs that may be copied for noncommercial purposes. We plan to make this tool available at no cost to anyone—whether world-renowned professional or garage-based amateur—who wants to share work freely with others.

This idea won't appeal to all copyright holders. Some people prefer to restrict copying of their works; some people make a living by selling copies of their works or charging other people royalties for the privilege of doing so. But these preferences are not universal, and imposing them on everyone unnecessarily diminishes the commons—depleting our shared store of intellectual raw material and imposing needless barriers to collaborative creativity. We invite self-motivated creators to opt out of the default of copyright and instead cultivate the Creative Commons.

Creative Commons is based at Stanford Law School and supported by the Center for the Public Domain. To learn more about Creative Commons, and to offer your feedback, visit [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org). Molly Van Houweling is executive director of Creative Commons and a visiting fellow at Stanford Law School's Center for Internet and Society.





living economies

Appalachia's dependence on coal, forestry, and tobacco has kept the region in poverty. Now, farmers and community activists are building a new economy—one that can sustain people, their unique culture, and the region's ecosystems for generations to come

# from the earth, up **Anthony Flaccavento**

*Before any course of action, we should first ask:  
What is already here?  
What does nature allow us to do here?  
What does nature help us to do here?*

Wendell Berry

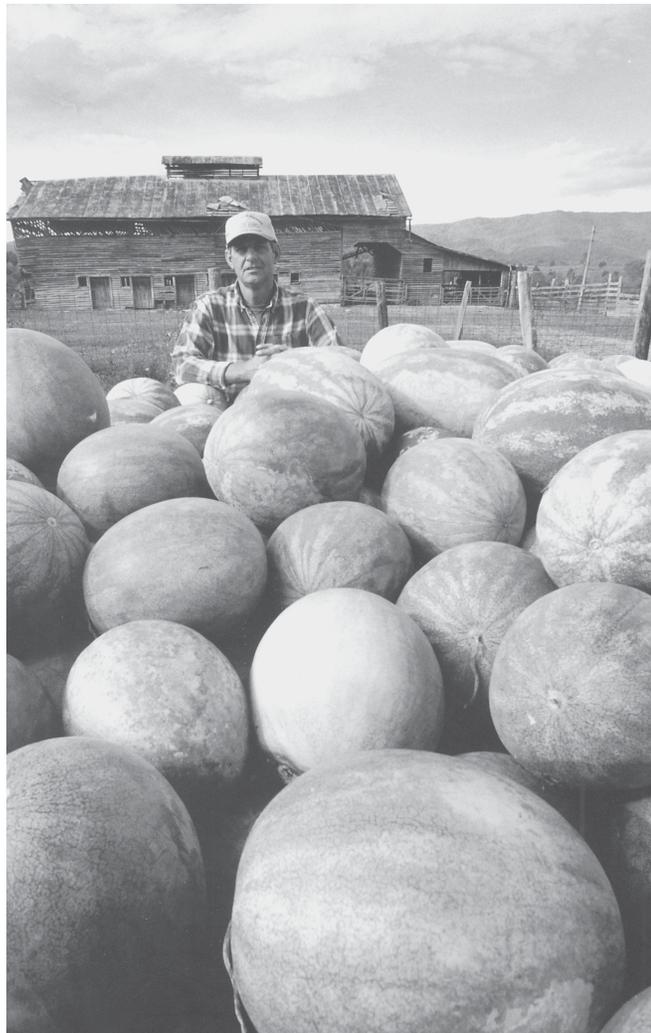
On November 1, 1996, the day-shift crew arrived at the Louisiana Pacific Waferboard factory in Dungannon, Virginia. Greeted by a small group of security guards and a management representative, they were told to go home. The plant was closed. Permanently. No notice had been given. Ten years after opening its doors in this richly forested Scott County community, the plant laid off nearly 100 workers, also idling loggers who had been supplying the plant with logs. The profits from this plant, management said, were not high enough to keep it operating.

The Appalachian regions of Tennessee and Virginia are not in crisis. Rather, the area is suffering from long-term economic stagnation and marginalization, and steady ecological deterioration. It is an all too common story of cultural and economic subordination, of individuals and communities gradually relinquishing the skills, knowledge, and bonds that made this part of the world different from countless others.

But there is another Appalachian tale unfolding. It is the evolving story of community-based initiatives regenerating the region's economy and culture from within.

At Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), we focus our efforts on a 10-county area of southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. This part of Appalachia has sustained jobless rates two to three times higher than US rates, approaching 20 percent in some counties; poverty rates exceed 30 percent in some counties.

Our plan was clear yet ambitious: to help the community build a more sustainable economy from networks of small, local endeavors. ASD set itself the task of transforming two central legs of Appalachia's economy: agriculture and timber.



Photos by Ann Hawthorne

## living economies



*Appalachian Sustainable Development buys local, sustainably harvested timber for use in local manufacturing and crafts*

In the seven years since ASD was formed, the most important lesson we learned was this: Building an alternative regional economy—one that is more just, more ecologically sound and more self-reliant—requires networks of relationships that are synergistic, and a means of capturing and accumulating knowledge and assets. We have come to call this an infrastructure for community sustainability.

The foundation of this infrastructure is the ecosystem. Therefore, the strategy focuses on restoring ecological health, creating livelihoods and economic systems that are ecologically sustainable, and building the financial and physical capital needed to add value to the region's natural resources and bridge the gap between producers and the marketplace.

### **From tobacco to food**

In 1995, a small group of nontraditional farmers—market gardeners, “back-to-the-landers,” some Amish families—launched a fledgling cooperative, a community-supported agriculture (CSA) project, and a restaurant marketing system. Over the next several years, the CSA grew to between 50 and 100 families who received produce during the growing season directly from farmers. The restaurant marketing co-op delivered locally grown produce to 15 area restaurants.

In spite of this growth, however, the size of the market was limited and we were reaching only a small percentage of tobacco and other conventional Appalachian farmers. As long as our primary markets were white tablecloth restaurants and gourmet food shops, only a small portion of the community had access to these products.

In 1999, we began marketing our produce to a small regional chain called White's Fresh Foods. During 1999 and 2000, the base of farmers began to grow, attracted by the larger market provided by White's.

Among them was John Mullins. Mullins was born into tobacco in the tiny community of Sticklelyville, Virginia. Small hillside farms were the backbone of the economy there in Lee County, and tobacco was the central economic activity. Like most of his neighbors, Mullins began to see a dramatic decline in tobacco about five years ago. The amount that he and his farming partner, Martin Miles, were eligible to sell dropped by more than 75 percent over four years. By 1999, Mullins and Miles were beginning to look for alternatives.

The growing market for local organic produce provided a viable option. In close consultation with consumers and the buyers at the grocery stores, we developed a growers' network with a trademark label and brand name, Appalachian Harvest, which became the umbrella for an increasingly wide range of certified organic, locally raised crops.

The network began to take off in 2001 with more farmers joining, larger farms involved, and more outlets. Three new, larger supermarket chains joined as partners. Two of them were family-owned, based right in Virginia. From 2000 to 2001, sales nearly tripled, and projections suggest another 200 to 300 percent growth in 2002.

For the farmers, this expansion means greater opportunities to grow and market organic produce—for many, that represents a life line as tobacco allotments continue to decline. For the general public, it means access to local, sustainable food and a connection to the land. For supermarkets, it's a chance to highlight local farmers through farmer profiles, recipe cards, and informational flyers and to market fresh, local produce. The region's produce is beginning to develop a product brand identity and a sense of connection between family farmers, the land they till, and ordinary citizens.

### **Strengthening community through farming**

When ASD began its effort to build a more diversified and healthy farm economy in the late 1990s, we attempted to mimic the best features of the tobacco infrastructure, those elements that had helped keep family farmers viable and encouraged community involvement and pride. We worked to encourage diversity at all levels—within each farm enterprise, within the network of farmers, and within the scope and types of markets we pursue. Mullins and Miles now raise 10 different types of produce and a small herd of goats, while maintaining five commercial organic greenhouses.



## living economies

Mullins and Miles and 25 other farmers gained access to regional markets by guaranteeing high-quality organic produce and by carefully coordinating among participating farmers to ensure a reliable supply.

The Appalachian Harvest network meets monthly from October through March to decide what to grow, how much to grow, when to plant, and who is to plant what. New farmers are matched with crops that are easier to grow, until they gain more experience. Farmers have gradually recognized their responsibility to one another both to produce what they pledge and to maintain high quality standards. During the growing season, a short newsletter and regular farm tours and field days keep network members in close contact.

“When you’re with people with a like interest, your enthusiasm feeds each other and the learning curve accelerates,” John Mullins says.

University faculty, county extension agents, ASD staff, and farmers collaborate in research and assist farmers transitioning from tobacco to alternative crops and from conventional practices to organic practices.

### Ripple effects

With this sustainable agriculture infrastructure now taking shape, we are just beginning to realize some of the potential for economies of synergy and greater regional self-reliance.

A large egg company looking for a means to comply with stringent water quality standards saw this opportunity. The result: a high nutrient compost produced within 75 miles of all our farms, priced at half of what “imported” organic fertilizers cost.

Locally owned farm stores have begun to carry organic fertilizers and disease- and pest-control products in response to growing demand from farmers. This makes organic farm inputs widely available and helps institutionalize sustainable practices.

In 2001 we transformed a portion of an old tobacco barn into a small packing and grading facility, thanks to a donation by Martin Miles. This system will increase the payments to farmers by adding value to the produce. This year, we have added a much larger building beside the barn, creating a total area of about 5,000 square feet. With this new facility, we can process 3,000 to 4,000 boxes of organic produce each week, our projected market demand.

The sorting and grading process creates “seconds” and culls—for example, tomatoes that are too ripe or peppers that are too small. The Clinch Community Kitchen, a commercial kitchen incubator, will be working with ASD to develop salsa, bruschetta sauce, and other tomato-based products using these seconds.

If successful, we will create high-value products from what otherwise would be low-value produce, while diversifying our offerings, extending the season for Appalachian Harvest products, and providing new opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Most recently, we are seeing farmers take on new leadership roles. Several have become advocates for family farms and sustainable agriculture at county, state, and federal levels—no small feat in a region historically wedded to tobacco and often antagonistic to alternatives.

### From forests to floors

ASD’s sustainable forestry and wood products program follows a path similar to our agriculture efforts. ASD forester Emily Duncan works with interested landowners to assess the health of their forests and inventory the timber. Together, they create a plan to protect streams and waterways, conserve wildlife habitat, and regenerate biodiversity. If appropriate, Emily then marks some timber for harvesting. The cut includes a high proportion of lower-quality trees in order to help regenerate both species diversity and better quality timber for future generations. Trees harvested under our standards are purchased by ASD, sawed into boards, dried in our dry kiln, and then manufactured into flooring, cabinets, and other products by local companies.

This restorative forestry requires at least three things: patient landowners willing to forego some money in the short term in favor of long-term wealth, both economic and ecological; skilled loggers, whether mechanical or animal-powered in their operations; and markets that pay closer to the true cost for wood products.

The beauty of the process is its affordability. Because of the proximity of trees to their market, and because of the value adding-steps in the process, it is possible to pay a substantial premium to loggers and landowners, while charging only slightly more to the end user. Sawing the logs, drying the boards, and manufacturing cabinets or flooring makes every foot of log far more valuable.

The Louisiana Pacific waferboard factory that laid off nearly 100 people in 1996 relied on extensive clear-cutting for its cheap supply of timber, and it established no roots in the community. ASD and its many partners are working towards a different type of economic development—one that is inextricably local, that builds upon and adds value to the ecological wealth of our communities. Like a good farmer, the more we pursue this path, the more we see what is already here and what nature enables us to do now and into the future.

To contact Anthony Flaccavento and ASD, call 276/623-1121 or visit [www.appsusdev.org](http://www.appsusdev.org).

A passerby:  
*“That horse logging  
does a good job  
alright, but it’s slow.  
At that rate, you’ll be  
here forever.”*

Jason Rutledge,  
Appalachian logger:  
*“Yeah. I know.”*

living economies



# pieces of the puzzle Jill Bamburg

For 20 years, Burlington, Vermont, has been pursuing policies that buck the growth-at-any-cost trend followed by so many other medium-sized cities. The policies the city adopted in the early '80s emphasize economic self-sufficiency, local ownership, fairness, environmental protection, inclusiveness, and a strong nonprofit "third sector." Some would say such policies are a recipe for economic decline. But Burlington has a string of success stories that show the practical power of its vision.

Will Raap, an urban planner by training, was one of Burlington's sustainable development pioneers. In 1985 Raap moved his Gardener's Supply Company to an unlikely location—the Intervale, an area that since the early 1900s had been the town's dump. Its dominant feature was the McNeil power plant, a wood burning plant that uses wood chips, sawdust, and urban wood waste to generate 50 megawatts of electricity—nearly enough to power the entire city.

It was the power plant that attracted Raap. He hoped to use the plant's waste heat to warm his buildings and greenhouse. The first step, however, was to clear the land of junk and restore the soil of the valley, which had once been a fertile floodplain. He established the Burlington Compost Program in 1987, using a combination of food and yard waste from local households and a Ben and Jerry's ice cream plant. Once a potential farm site was restored by the compost, he moved the mobile composting operation to the next site. Eventually the operation became too large to move, at which point it put down roots and compost became a Burlington export within the region.

Meanwhile, all that fertile land was being put to good use. The nonprofit Intervale Foundation, which has since taken over the composting operation, manages about 300 acres in the Intervale as an organic farm

incubator. Would-be farmers get their starts using the Foundation's land, equipment, and technical expertise. Once they become proficient, they buy their own farm land in Vermont and make way for the next generation of farmers-in-training. The graduates become part of a mutual support system, in which they share marketing, knowledge, and farm equipment.

The Intervale is now home to 14 farms, including four community-supported agriculture (CSA) operations that supply food to 1,000 subscribing families. All told, Intervale supplies about 6 percent of Burlington's food supply—up from 0.1 percent when the Foundation started and well along towards the goal of 10 percent.

## Closing the loop

This fall, the Intervale Foundation and the city of Burlington will break ground on their most ambitious project to date: the Intervale Community Food Enterprise Center. This \$4-million project will combine a 21,000-square-foot greenhouse with a 20,000-square-foot food production facility to provide local entrepreneurs with an affordable, state-of-the-art food growing and processing facility.

One of the lead tenants will be Wind Harvest Brewery, an artisan brewery that will make beer from locally grown hops and fruits, providing an additional market for nearby farmers. Liquid wastes from the brewing process will go to the compost project and to a living machine created by John Todd's Ocean Arks International. The living machine is a human-made ecosystem, a carefully balanced set of sixteen 500-gallon tanks that create a biologically diverse food web that turns waste into fish food and fish waste into people food.

Other tenants of the center will include River Run Foods, which will make ketchup, sauces, and jambalaya



## living economies



from local produce; a community kitchen for nutrition education and fledgling entrepreneurs; and a winter CSA project. The facility will use state-of-the-art green building practices, and most of the heat requirements—even in Vermont’s frigid winters—will be met by using waste heat from the McNeil Generating Station next door, just as Raap envisioned when he came to the Intervale.

The Intervale story is just a part of Burlington’s success with sustainable development. In the early ‘80s, Burlington adopted a set of policies that have guided its efforts over the last 20 years. These policies emphasize economic self-sufficiency, local ownership, fairness, environmental protection, inclusiveness, and a strong third sector made up of nonprofit businesses and organizations that work in concert with government.

Burlington has lots of other results to show for its sustainable development policies. Here are a few:

**Groceries:** When the city’s last downtown grocery closed several years ago, residents realized that, as in many other communities, essential services were leaving the city center for the suburbs. The city decided to lease a city parking lot on attractive terms to a grocery store, through a competitive bid process.

The local food co-op won the bid, and opened its new 17,000-square-foot energy-efficient facility a year ago. The store now serves 1,800 customers a day and has met its sales projections from the day it opened. The co-op offers a full range of natural, organic, and traditional supermarket items at competitive prices, all with a bias toward locally grown food.

**Housing and Land:** With a housing shortage and a community-wide aversion to suburban sprawl, maintaining affordable housing is a challenge. The centerpiece of the city’s response is the Burlington Community Land Trust (BCLT), the largest land trust in the country and the first to be created and funded by a municipality. With over 250 units—mostly single-family homes and condominiums—BCLT insulates affordable housing from market forces and land speculation, assures access to land and housing for low-income people, and preserves and improves neighborhoods.

BCLT is also a major redeveloper of brownfields (blighted industrial and commercial property) in the city’s low-income neighborhoods, transforming them into housing, nonprofit, and commercial space.

**Banking:** The Burlington Ecumenical Action Ministry founded the Vermont Development Credit Union in 1990. The member-owned cooperative, which serves low-income and other underserved populations, is now self-sustaining. In the 10 years since it was founded, the credit union has provided banking services to 6,600 low-income Vermonters, made 4,900 loans with less than a 1 percent default rate, made available \$35 million in capital, and provided financing for 250 new homeowners.

**Power:** In the late 1980s, Burlington’s municipally owned power company faced a tough choice: should it buy power from a controversial hydropower project in Quebec or take that same money and invest it in energy conservation? Burlington chose the latter. In 1990, the city authorized an \$11.3 million bond to fund the energy-saving program. The result: nearly 15,000 individual energy-efficiency installations, saving customers \$4.3 million annually on their electric bills. The majority of the work was done by local contractors, resulting in job growth and reinvestment in the local economy.

**Democracy:** In the early 1980s, then Mayor (now US Representative) Bernie Saunders, established seven Neighborhood Planning Assemblies to give citizens a vehicle for solving neighborhood problems, allocating funds for neighborhood projects, and choosing citizens to represent their neighborhoods on a variety of task forces and advisory boards. Since then, they’ve provided a platform for such citizen-led neighborhood improvement projects as clean-up days, home and business improvement awards, and tree plantings. They’ve also incubated new leadership in the city.

**The Future:** In 1992, Burlington purchased a 45-acre parcel of prime undeveloped land located along the shore of Lake Champlain and created a Waterfront Urban Reserve. According to the city’s urban renewal plan, this will “reserve the right for future generations to determine what level of development should occur at this site.” For now, the reserve is open to the public for walking, fishing, biking, quiet contemplation, and periodic art events.

These are just a handful of the lessons from Burlington. Check out the Burlington Legacy Project ([www.cedo.ci.burlington.vt.us/legacy/strategies/index.html](http://www.cedo.ci.burlington.vt.us/legacy/strategies/index.html)) for over 70 more “Strategies in Action” in what is arguably America’s most sustainable community.

*Jill Bamburg is a consultant in the area of business and the environment and a frequent contributor to YES!*

*A town dump becomes a center of organic food production. Neighborhood assemblies, a land trust, jobs, affordable housing, an urban reserve, all are making Burlington into a microcosm of a living economy*

living economies

# breaking down buildings, building up a neighborhood

The suicide economy is all too ready to cast off used material, disadvantaged people, and troubled neighborhoods. These living economy entrepreneurs are turning throwaways into gold

**Holly Dressel**

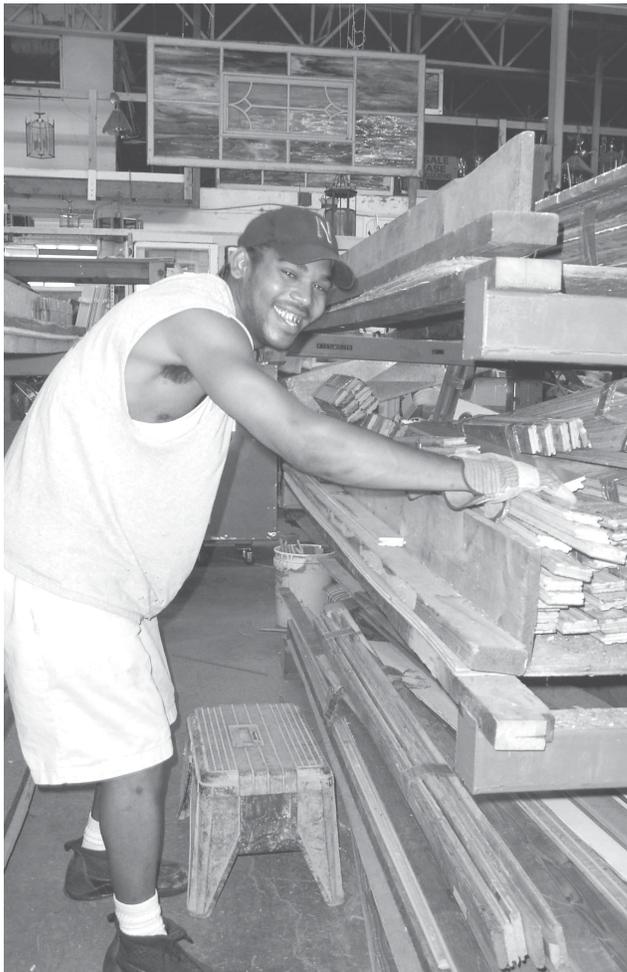
When Shane Endicott was 27, he wrestled with a crisis that haunts many adults. He'd spent his early years amassing skills and was now ready to embark on a profession that would define his adult work life. He wanted to make a living that would support his new family, but he didn't want to spend his life making rich people richer. He believed in doing work that would provide benefits for his neighborhood as well as himself. He wanted to work someplace where everyone had an equal say and similar values. And he especially wanted to avoid producing anything that would create more dangerous wastes or use up more natural resources.

Endicott's work ethic sounds not just idealistic, but positively quixotic; it flies in the face of every rule society teaches us about business life in the modern world. But today, Endicott and his work crew are grossing nearly \$2 million a year supporting their families and watching their dreams turn into reality. In a business Endicott and his partners have built from the ground up, the Rebuilding Center in Portland, Oregon, is living up to all the demands he had about work. They are also doing it within a well-established but under-used business model—the nonprofit.

Endicott had always been interested in the construction and demolition business. But he and his partners did not want to emulate demolition as it is usually done. He says he didn't want to "crunch and dump, grind up all that useful wood, metal, and brick and dump it in a landfill, then go out and chop down more trees and mine more iron to build something else." Instead, the Rebuilding Center demolishes, by hand, wooden or brick houses, guts entire apartment buildings, or removes built-ins like old kitchen cabinets for reuse. The Center renews the used building materials and sells them to the public at half the cost of retail or less.

## **Rebuilding ideas: economy and community**

Endicott and his partners understood that one of the first steps toward being a socially responsible business





is to have ties to the locality. They were located in an economically depressed area of northeast Portland. While the neighborhood needed job opportunities, it also needed a sense of itself as a viable community.

Starting with a \$15,000 private loan, Endicott, his partners, and several volunteers worked for a few months out of a garage. Now, after four years, they're still in the neighborhood. They've expanded to a half-block-long building, stuffing it with recycled building materials. Humming with the activities of 36 full-time employees, it attracts customers from all over the city who come to get good deals on everything from toilets and light fixtures to roofing and door frames.

About 80 percent of the Rebuilding Center staff comes from the surrounding neighborhood. Because no expensive, oil-demanding machines are used, the Center employs three to six times more people than mechanized demolition companies; and they still do the job for less money while paying their employees considerably higher wages. Wages start at \$10 an hour for the most unskilled labor (like shifting bricks or pulling nails) with regular reviews and wage increases, plus full medical and dental coverage. "We didn't want [to be] the kind of nonprofit that appeals to people's ideals and then doesn't pay a living wage," says Endicott. "We also didn't want the kind of inequalities you find in many businesses. One of our goals was to raise the bar for unskilled labor and lower the bar in management to level out the inequalities found in most pay scales."

Workers are treated like full business partners; everyone, including the director, gets the same single vote on work-related issues, and potential workers are hired by the people they'll be working with. With principles like these, the employees and their families aren't the only ones who have felt the effect. After just two years of existence, the Center was being hailed by the local neighborhood paper as "an anchor that's revitalizing the local economy."

### Environmentally friendly

Besides revitalizing the economy, the Rebuilding Center's key tenet for social responsibility is to help protect the Earth. They've adopted a closed-loop cycle for building materials that reuses everything down to, as Endicott says, "a two-foot length of nail-studded two-by-four." Because of this, they've diverted millions of pounds of still-useful materials from overflowing landfills every year, and they prevent more raw materials from being extracted.

"And even more importantly, we value the energy in that porcelain sink, even the gyprock," says Endicott. "We help that energy, that was once alive, to go on

giving." Although the Center is now so successful it could ship high-end items like oak doors or repaired stained glass to distant markets, the staff has refused to do so, believing that burning fossil fuels for shipping out of state would negate the point of their enterprise.

### Uniting the neighborhood

After everyone's paid a decent wage and all the bills are paid, there's usually money left over. If not needed to improve or expand the business, the money is paid out to the public. "With our surplus, we try inspiring various community projects, which is what Our United Villages, does," says Endicott.

The inspiration for Our United Villages (OUV) started with Endicott (before he'd even established the Center) when he and a few neighbors met to discuss a local 12-year-old who was stealing in the neighborhood. They discovered that the youth badly needed braces, which his family couldn't afford. The whole neighborhood decided to chip in and buy them for him. Now, the youth not only abstains from acts like stealing, but prevents other youths from doing the same. "It's not that we aren't having things stolen from the neighborhood anymore, but that we have a different relationship with him and the community," says Endicott.

With that, the neighborhood started discussing other ideas. Neighbors could learn how to make jam from the older folks. Kids might perform odd jobs such as mowing a neighbor's lawns in exchange for locally-donated funds from a tax-deductible scholarship trust.

While ideas were flowing, locals found that they weren't easy to implement. "I realized that there was an amazing amount of ideas and passion but no cultural outlet for them," says Endicott. To create this outlet, he helped establish an organization that would foster community dialogue and activity—Our United Villages. Endicott had always envisioned the Rebuilding Center as the means for creating OUV but only recently have profits grown enough to get it going. Endicott is optimistic that with OUV now established, many ideas can finally be realized.

"We used to think we could attain quality of life individually, by making more money," Endicott says. "But with our water and air increasingly polluted and so many people isolated and unhappy, the only way we'll get that quality of life is to evolve new ways to do business and to live together in communities that are value-based, not money-based."

Holly Dressel is co-author of *Good News for a Change* and *From Naked Ape to Superspecies*. She has been a writer and researcher for television, film, and radio for 20 years.

*Opposite page: Anthony Dancer, one of the 36 workers at Portland's Rebuilding Center, gets used lumber ready for re-use*

living economies

# unleashing our hidden wealth

Edgar Cahn



Our most valuable qualities—our capacity to give and the sense of self we get in doing so—are irrelevant to the suicide economy

We worship money. We are unaware of the appalling price we pay for excessive reliance on that measuring rod. Our vision—intellectual, emotional, moral—our perception of what we call reality has been distorted by examining everything through the lens of money.

When we see our communities failing, families falling apart, neighborhoods deteriorating, clean air and water becoming scarcer, and open space disappearing, we feel helpless to address the problems because we only know how to use money to solve them. We have let money devalue the very characteristics that define our humanity and that enabled our species to survive: Our universal capacity to care for each other, to learn from mistakes, to come together to act in concert. Small wonder, then, that we feel helpless to take effective action.

But we do not have to stand by helpless. Local currencies in communities around the world are revealing

hidden sources of wealth. When we see the wealth we have available to us, we can do more to create and spread it. One such currency is Time Dollars, which I created in 1980 as a tax-exempt medium of exchange that rewards sinking roots, staying in place, accepting responsibility, building community, maintaining family. But when I created Time Dollars, I had no idea how many ways Time Dollars might be used.

The very groups whose labor the market devalues, rejects or exploits have demonstrated the effectiveness of Time Dollars in helping them to redefine themselves as contributors and partners in child care, juvenile justice, mental health, public housing, community development, offender rehabilitation, and elder care. A compelling illustration is found in a realm that many regard as beyond repair: public education.

## Reclaiming throwaway kids

Chicago schools have been among the worst in the nation. In 1995, Mayor Daley appointed his chief budget officer, Paul Vallas, to reform the school system. I had a problem with Vallas' solution of bringing in 10,000 tutors from the outside. Research showed that outside tutors help individuals, but don't necessarily change the system; it showed that what



works is cross-age peer tutoring—older kids tutoring younger kids.

I asked Vallas to let me try it out in some schools in Englewood—one of the most troubled neighborhoods on the South Side. Englewood had been dubbed a killing zone. We had to make it safe for a kid to be caught learning. The quickest way to do that seemed to be to get older kids to reward younger kids with praise for getting right answers. That would make it better than safe to learn; it would win the younger kids approval and (as we found out) actual physical protection.

At the beginning, the principals all asked whether we wanted just the bright students, the honor students, as tutors. We said no. We took anyone who volunteered and stuck it out. Some had already been classified special education kids, attention deficit kids, problem kids. But kids flocked to us because we made an offer. We promised a recycled computer to every student who earned 100 Time Dollars tutoring other kids.

One hour of helping another earns one Time Dollar. 1=1. No PhD in economics is required. The government does not tax this currency that is based only on caring for others and enforced only by the moral obligation to return the care. For the IRS, mere moral obligation is no more taxable than fairy dust.

A lot of the kids who volunteered to tutor had been programmed by the system to believe that they were dumb. They already knew how the system viewed them: They just didn't have it and would never make it.

The decision to accept all who volunteered proved a special blessing—though we can claim no credit for that. When these kids whose self-esteem was at rock bottom looked at a homework assignment for a first or second grader, it looked easy to them. And so they figured that if they could do it, anyone could do it. The result was that they imposed high expectations on the first and second graders.

Remember, these tutors were the throwaway kids. Suddenly, they became educators, teachers. And they had something that no adult teacher has. They were peers—and better yet, older peers. Every kid seems to want praise and acceptance from an older kid.

The older kids made it fun to learn. We found out from the principals that attendance actually went up on after-school tutoring days. Kids came to school in order to tutor or be tutored.

The older kids made it safe to learn on two levels. First, peer acceptance was either automatic or irrelevant. Either nobody taunted the kids as uncool for being smart, or the label lost its power to prevent learning because something better—an older kid's praise, approval, and friendship—could be earned by learn-

ing. Secondly, the bullying and after-school fighting stopped. It was to be expected that tutors wouldn't beat up their tutees; what we hadn't anticipated was that they wouldn't let anyone else beat them up either. Learning bought you a protector. Not bad.

Something else began to happen as well. Some of the not-so-special older students started to get good grades for the first time. It takes higher-order skills to teach lower-order skills. So these older kids were not only brushing up on their basics and building a better foundation, they

## These tutors were the throwaway kids. Suddenly, they became educators, teachers

were problem solving, practicing communication, framing and testing hypotheses as to what it would take to get their tutee to learn. Small wonder that those skills began to show up in their own studies.

### Reclaiming parents

For many Englewood parents, coming to school was associated with unpleasant memories—from their own childhood as students, and again as parents being given bad news about their kids. So the rules for participation in the Time Dollar program were written to require a parental contribution. Even after earning 100 Time Dollars, no child could take home a computer until a parent had earned eight Time Dollars helping at the school. You had better believe that no parent knew any peace at home until they had done what they needed to do. But the joy on these parents' faces, and their sense of pride in having helped their child get a computer, spoke volumes—to us and to their kids.

One mother told me that the only time she had been to the school before the Time Dollar program was to get bad reports on her child's performance. Until now she had dreaded coming to the school. Now, she had come to help out, and she felt enormous pride in seeing her own child helping younger children.

One seventh-grader's mother died two months before he was due to get his computer. He hadn't seen his father for six years, but he was so determined to claim what he had earned that he hunted his father down. The father, proud to be reunited with his son, earned the eight Time Dollars needed. He didn't stop there, though; he decided to take over as parent, full time, permanently.

The first year, we lost one kid to a gang shooting. His parents came to us with two requests: Would we

## living economies

include in the boy's obituary that he was a tutor and was working to earn a computer? That's how they felt he would have wanted to be remembered. And would we let his younger brother take over where he left off? They wanted those Time Dollars to be a kind of legacy so that the younger brother could finish earning the computer by building on the Time Dollars his older brother had earned. You never know what's going to hit you hardest, the triumph or the tears. But you know that there's no going back.

The tangible reward itself had a special poetry to it. We rounded up old computers that no one else wanted from military bases, insurance companies, law firms, and wherever we could find them. Those throwaway computers can help bridge the great and growing digital divide between the haves and the have-nots in this new Information Age.

The real reward, though, is not the computer but what earning that computer symbolizes. It says, "By helping others, you can create for yourself a new future." It means that we have the power to reclaim throwaway kids, throwaway parents, and throwaway computers—to create a genuine learning community with no limits. That's happening. It's powered by kids and computers and parents.

The focus of the Time Dollar program was not on what this community lacked, but what it had. Kids were not empty vessels to fill, cracked vessels to repair, or defective merchandise to relegate to the scrap heap. They were producers, earners, learners, mentors. And they had proof. In fact, they had three kinds of proof: A Time Dollar bank statement recording their hours; a computer—a symbol of approval so important and so valid that even their parents had been willing to earn some Time Dollars to get it; and one or more new buddies—a tutor they could look up to, or a tutee they had helped and would protect. In short, Time Dollars helped unleash the wealth that was already there by reclaiming people (and computers) society was prepared to throw away.

Time Dollars don't work just for kids. Consider this story captured by a PBS documentary: Two men, both retired, had lived within a block of each other all their lives but without the Time Dollar program never would have known each other. Now they are a Time Dollar home repair crew, fixing old toilets with jury-rigged parts while the arthritic but beaming resident looks on. She has worked all day earning the Time Dollars to pay for the repairs by preparing a seven-course meal, served on her best china. As they take seats around her prized dining room table, festive with table cloth and candles, one of the men wisecracks, "I guess we won't have to go to McDonald's tonight."

When I created Time Dollars, the logical side of me reasoned: People are assets; they are our real wealth. We have to redefine those activities we honor as work to include the tasks essential to our species, like rearing children, building community, caring for elders. We have to stop conceiving of the world as the sum of individual, private transactions and appreciate the importance of social networks and social capital built upon trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement. That was the logical side of me.

### Tending the neglected economy

The truth is that I created Time Dollars not only out of logic, but out of outrage. I wanted the currency to declare: It is time we draw a line in the sand. It is time we say: No more throwaway people. It is time we declare that we will not demand subordination, peonage, or passivity as the price for providing help to a human being in need. And it is time we stop strip mining our villages and our families by requiring all adults to leave home, leave the neighborhood, leave the village to work for Mammon and the market. There is other work to be done. There is another economy that needs tending, the core economy of home and family and village.

Time Dollars enable us to develop an awareness of how money distorts our calculation of what is possible. Money distorts our view of what people can do, what people are willing to do, whom you can trust, what motivates people, what human nature is—and what it is possible for us to achieve. The extent to which artificial limits and external costs are built into money becomes clear when we alter the currency. A different world and a different set of possibilities emerge.

In a world with the technological capacity to produce goods in abundance, we need not tolerate the vast deprivation and waste of human capacity that we see. In a world that values work and the work ethic, we can tap the capacity of every human being to contribute something of value. In such a world, there is no reason why all human beings willing to contribute by helping, teaching, and nurturing others cannot at least enjoy basic sustenance, roofs over their heads, care when ill, and above all, opportunities to learn, to develop, and to blossom.

If there is no reason why we cannot create such a world, there is no longer reason for tolerating the pain, the deprivation, the suffering that now abounds.

Edgar Cahn is the creator of Time Dollars; professor of law, University of the District of Columbia David A. Clark School of Law; co-founder, National Legal Services Program; and the author of a number of books including *No More Throwaway People*, from which this article was adapted.



# Camy Mathay money's conversations

## Printing your own currency and challenging the suicide economy

When I offer MadHOURS to vendors, people often think it's a joke. After I assure them that I didn't rip the bills off of a board game or print them myself—that these bills are, in fact, accepted for trade—their incredulity weakens. If they look at the bills, which have a certain beauty and authenticity about them, a conversation usually begins: "What do people do with this money?"

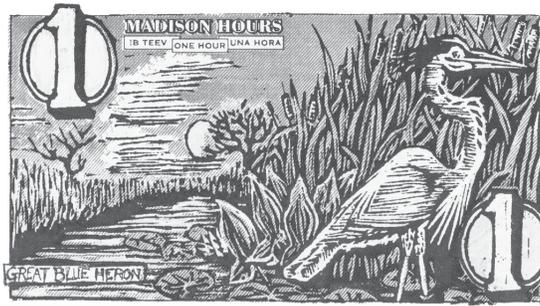
Well, I buy coffee at Mother Fool's and food at the Willy St. Co-op. I've bought custom sewing, a felt hat, a printer for my computer, and garden seedlings with MadHOURS. My kids bought a unicycle with their own hard-earned MadHOURS. You could also hire a cook, a naturalist, rent a truck, take French lessons, hire a pet-sitter, have custom furniture built, or get your toaster repaired, among a variety of things and services.

MadHOURS, like its prototype Ithaca Hours, was initiated in 1996 to combat low wages and unemployment, and to spur sustainable, grassroots economic development in the Madison, Wisconsin area.

In the five years HOURS have circulated, they have connected people as neighbors and members of a common regional community. In my own experience, HOURS foster valuable conversations about the nature of money.

As people begin to accept this money as an economic instrument in the community, certain preconceptions about money unfold. It was apparent, for example, that though people find it easy to talk about what money does, they often can't find a satisfactory definition of what money is. Given that most people save money (when they can) as insurance against an uncertain future, a sobering consensus emerged: Money is a measure of our distrust, of our failure to commit ourselves to what is good about human nature.

People I spoke with also began to see through the myth that money is a neutral medium of exchange. "Federal dollars," as Paul Glover, the founder of Ithaca Hours, explains, "come to town, shake a few hands, then leave to buy rainforest lumber and fight wars." While dollars make us increasingly dependent on transnational corporations and bankers, local currencies stay in a region to help people hire each other, reinforce community trading, and expand commerce that is more



accountable to concerns for ecology and social justice.

Local currencies create conditions where people re-evaluate the costs of money. In their capacity to decentralize control and create participatory processes, local currencies can be powerful pivots for social change. The multiplication of these alternative economies threatens the interests of the corporate elite by preparing revolution in the minds and behaviors of people.

Participation in these economic alternatives is a form of direct action against monopoly capitalism. It is nonviolent, and therefore its methods are compatible with its goal.

With sufficient evidence of working alternatives, more people may begin to wonder why human activities that used to be done naturally have been rendered scarce and commodified; why activities like learning, dwelling, walking, and healing, under the rubrics of "education," "housing," "transportation," and "healthcare," have been turned into commodities and services that must be purchased. With more evidence of working alternatives, people begin to understand that the modern market economy takes what is best about humanity—care, neighborliness, kindness, community—and corrupts it by attaching a price.

Even though we have been socialized by a competitive and selfish culture and become accustomed to certain arrangements of social life, it is always possible to refuse destructive practices and to make steadfast commitments to relationships that presume fairness and goodwill, rather than self-interest and exploitation. Like the thousands of other local currency initiatives in the world, MadHOURS is a practical and immediate strategy for this kind of change.

For information on MadHOURS, visit [www.madisonhours.org](http://www.madisonhours.org) or call 608/259-9050. Camy Mathay is a writer and mother who lives in Brooklyn, Wisconsin.

*Madison HOURS currency shows the value of community and provides evidence that a different economic foundation is possible*

living economies

# saving together

Richard Douthwaite

Interest is among the most pernicious causes of concentration of wealth and devaluation of the future.

What if we got rid of it?



Courtesy of Hornbore Village

*This replica of a Viking ship is part of an eco-tourism project funded by JAK bank*

Oscar Kjellberg of Sweden is not your normal banker. But then, the bank he heads is not your normal bank. Oscar's bank has the unthreatening name of JAK—the initials stand for land, labor, and capital in Swedish—but it is founded on a revolutionary premise: it doesn't charge interest.

Besides the Swedish JAK, there are a dozen or so small interest-free banks in Denmark. In both countries, JAK banks are run as co-operatives. When you open an account, you become a shareholder. As everyone holds just one share, each shareholder has equal influence in the annual vote for the board of directors.

Oscar's JAK is doing well. Its 24,000 members have around \$50 million deposited with it. Membership is growing by 1,000 a year. "Many rural households and small enterprises are being excluded by the commercial banking system, which is completely dominated by four big banks in the urban areas," Oscar says.

The JAK movement was started in Denmark in 1931 by Kristian Englebrecht Kristiansen, explains Inger Marie Ebbesen, a leader in the Danish interest-free banking movement who set up an interest-free bank in her village. "As a child, Kristiansen had seen the difficulties his parents had faced in paying interest on their farm,

which was on poor, heather-covered heath. He believed that real capital was created when barren, worthless land was made fertile, just as his parents had done, and that money in itself produced no return," says Ebbesen. "The charging of interest leads to the concentration of wealth, the increase of indebtedness and the growth of unemployment."

While the Danish JAK banks are prevented by law from accepting deposits and making loans to people outside their local areas, Oscar's bank serves all Sweden from a single office in Skovde, a town in the center of the country 180 miles west of Stockholm. This does not mean that account holders have to travel long distances to visit the bank. With no public office (a notice on the door informs would-be robbers that no cash is kept on the premises), all business is done by post, telephone, or the internet. If anyone wants to take money out, the bank sends a check by post for cashing at a normal commercial bank. A lot of Oscar's work is done from a small Stockholm sub-office, or from his home on a tug boat docked in Stockholm harbor.

The bank's public face and local roots are provided by hundreds of unpaid volunteers around Sweden who spread the interest-free message out of personal commitment—playing the same role that Oscar did before he was hired by the bank. Eva Stenius, whose husband, Per Almgren, had established Sweden's JAK 25 years earlier using the model developed in Denmark, discovered Oscar when he organized a JAK study circle in his district and invited her to speak. They found they shared a lot of ideas.

"Interest causes unemployment, inflation, and environmental destruction," Oscar says. "Every hike in interest rates means that businesses have to pay more to service their loans. To counteract this financial strain they must either cut labor costs, which worsens unemployment; or raise prices, causing inflation; or re-engineer their work to increase output, which leads to increased use of natural resources."

Most of us imagine that money is created by the government. In fact, over 95 percent of all the money in circulation in a typical industrialized country is created by banks lending it into existence. Conventional banks usually lend out more money than they have



## living economies

received in deposits, confident that, as other banks are doing the same thing, each will get enough of the new money its rivals create to balance the outflow of funds resulting from its own excess loans—creating money through a kind of musical chairs game. JAK, by contrast, does not play this risky game. It never lends out more money than its members have saved with it. As a result, it plays no part in the money creation process.

With a normal commercial bank, one bank's loan ends up as a deposit in another bank, enabling the second bank to make another loan, which in turn enables bank number three to make another loan, too. Building most of a country's money supply on this debt pyramid makes the economic system inherently unstable. Moreover, charging interest transfers wealth from the poor to the rich and from declining areas to more prosperous parts.

"That sort of transfer doesn't happen with JAK," Oscar says. "People save with us because they either want to borrow themselves or because they want to assign the right to an interest-free loan to a relative—a son or daughter, perhaps—or to an organization they support. This means that most money is lent out in the same area that it was collected, and, if not, it's only loaned in a place and for a purpose that the saver has approved."

Instead of being paid interest, JAK savers are rewarded with savings credits that entitle them to a basic loan—they can use other people's money for as long as they've already given other members the use of theirs. Thus, if they save the equivalent of a thousand dollars for a year, they can then borrow a thousand dollars for a year, or two thousand dollars for six months, or five hundred dollars for two years.

But that's only the basic loan. Depending on the balance between members wanting to borrow and wanting to save, the bank will offer an additional loan perhaps nine or ten times larger than the basic loan to which a saver is entitled. If too many members want to borrow and too few to save, that figure will come down. If savers outweigh borrowers, it will go up.

Members who take out more than the basic loan must continue making payments after the loans have been repaid, until the number of months they have let other members have the use of their money equals the number of months they had the use of other people's. Only then can they take out their cash.

"This system works extraordinarily well for people buying houses. About 80 percent of our loans are for that purpose," Oscar says. "Someone opens an account with us and saves for a while. We then give them a house loan which they repay over, say, 15 years. Before we will hand back the deeds to their house, however, they have to carry on making the same monthly payment for another

12 years, to give other people the use of their money. Then they can stop and, if they wish, take their money out. It means that they have a good big lump sum ready for their retirement. With other banks, that sum would have been swallowed up by interest payments."

Most banks make their profits from the margin between the interest rate they pay savers and the much higher rate they charge borrowers. As JAK doesn't charge or pay interest, it covers the salaries of its 25 employees and its other operating costs by charging fees for the services it provides to both households and other enterprises. Members pay 200 Swedish kronor (about \$20) annually towards the cost of operating their account and for a magazine which keeps them in touch with the bank's activities and the educational workshops it organizes. In addition, there are arrangement fees for loans and annual management fees while the loan is outstanding. If these charges were levied as interest, they would amount to about three percent on a typical loan.

"Community projects find it difficult to get loans, so we have recently created community reinvestment accounts to support them," says Oscar. There are six so far and several more in the pipeline. One is for an eco-village, another for an eco-slaughter house that won't accept cattle more than three hours' travel away. The bank has helped open an eco-tourism railway and a community business center, and funded the re-creation of a Viking village from year 1000 for historical and

### Mortgage borrowers end up with a big lump sum ready for their retirement. With other banks, that sum would have been swallowed up by interest payments

tourism events. All of these enterprises are run by volunteers supported by local firms and the local government. "They would have found it almost impossible to get funding elsewhere," says Oscar. "Their economic impact is small, of course, but word is spreading, and they have given hope to people trying to develop their communities all over the country."

For more information, visit [www.jak.se](http://www.jak.se). Richard Douthwaite helps communities devise their own currency and banking systems. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Ecology of Money*, *Short Circuit*, and *The Growth Illusion*.

living economies

Every complex society has a dilemma to solve—wealth and power tend to concentrate until the divide between haves and have-nots threaten the social fabric. Some Native American cultures have massive give-aways (potlatches) in which the giver is honored and all benefit from the largesse. The prophets of the Old Testament also cried out for redistribution

# it shall be a jubilee unto you

Michael Hudson



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Above: cuneiform tablets c. 1800 BCE, now at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad

Right: Sumerian carved tablet with record of horses and sheep destined to be sacrificed

Agrarian life is full of risks: drought, flooding, infestation, and other natural disasters, capped throughout antiquity by wars. Farmers must often borrow to get themselves through the lean months, while hoping that nothing prevents them from bringing in crops that will allow them to repay their debts. In ancient times, failure to repay loans could cost farmers their land, possessions, enslavement of family members, or their own freedom. For millennia, the problem confronting rulers was how to prevent the destabilization that occurs when large portions of the population are forced off the land or into debtor's prison for failure to repay loans.

And so there developed throughout the ancient Near East a tradition of clean-slate edicts, which "proclaimed justice" or decreed "economic order" and "righteousness" by canceling debts and restoring forfeited land to farmers. Clean-slate proclamations date from almost as early as the first interest-bearing debt, starting in Sumer around 2400 years BCE. Eventually, the tradition became known as the Jubilee Year, but by that time it was taken out of the hands of kings and placed at the core of Mosaic law.

Radical as the idea of the Jubilee seems to modern eyes, these "restorations of order" were a conservative

tradition in Bronze Age Mesopotamia for 2,000 years. What was conserved was self-sufficiency for the rural family-heads who made up the infantry as well as the productive base of Near Eastern economies. Conversely, what was radically disturbing in archaic times was the idea of unrestrained wealth-seeking. It took thousands of years for the idea of progress to become inverted, to connote irreversible freedom for the wealthy to deprive the peasantry of their lands and personal liberty.

The clean-slate tradition was so central to Israelite moral values that it framed the composition of both the Old and New Testaments. Yet so far has the modern idea of market efficiency and progress gone that today, although the Bible remains our civilization's defining book, its economic laws are rarely taken seriously. The Ten Commandments and Golden Rule have become so dissociated from the economic legislation of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy that whoever takes these laws in earnest is considered utopian and anachronistic. Yet these laws formed the take-off point for Jesus upon his return to Nazareth's synagogue and for his denunciation of the money-changers who had taken over Jerusalem's temple. As recently as medieval Spain, the tradition of the Jubilee Year was kept alive by the Jewish sages Maimonides and Ibn Adret. To dismiss these laws is thus to remove much of the Bible from the context of its times.

Laws that periodically canceled debts, freed Israelite debt-servants, and returned lands to their traditional holders have confused Biblical students for centuries. They have long been virtually ignored by historians on the ground that, to modern eyes, they would seem to wreak economic havoc.

Recent discoveries of Bronze Age Near Eastern royal proclamations dating from 2400 to 1600 BCE leave



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no doubt that these edicts were implemented. During the Babylonian period they grew more elaborate and detailed, capped by Ammisaduqa's Edict of 1646 BCE. Now that these edicts are understood, the Biblical laws no longer stand alone as utopian or other-worldly ideals; they take their place in a 2,000-year continuum of periodic and regular economic renewal based on freedom from debt-servitude and from the loss of access to self-support on the land.

The revolutionary Israelite contribution to the tradition was its removal from the hands of rulers to become a sacred popular compact, to be preserved by the Israelites in memory of the fact that they had once been enslaved and must never again permit economic oppression to develop. The Israelites are portrayed as having made a covenant to protect the economically weak by holding the land as the Lord's gift to support a free rural population: "Land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land belongs to me, and you are only strangers and guests. You will allow a right of redemption on all your landed property," and restore it to its customary cultivators every 50 years (Lev. 25:23-28). Israelite debt-slaves likewise were to go free periodically in the Jubilee Year, for they belonged ultimately to the Lord, not to any person (Lev. 25:54).

The Bible is a unique composite, embedding ritual traditions and laws of social behavior in a dramatic context of stories and legends intended to appeal to the widest possible audience. This popularization was greatly aided by the spread of alphabetic writing, which made documents accessible to the population at large, in contrast to cumbersome syllabic cuneiforms prevalent prior to the first millennium BCE. But the great innovation was to democratize liturgical texts that earlier Near Eastern societies had restricted to temple priesthoods. Deut. 31:10 directs that the laws be read aloud publicly every seven years, in the year of canceling debts (*shemitta*), so that all the population would know they were to be freed from bondage.

Jesus later sought to restore the archaic ethic by overturning the banking tables in Jerusalem's temple and preaching anew the promise of Jeremiah to proclaim equity and liberty (*deror*) throughout the land. Indeed, it was specifically on this principle of restoring freedom to debt-slaves and unburdening the land that Christianity elaborated its ideas of redemption. In addition to redeeming souls, early Christians redeemed their co-religionists from worldly bondage. When Handel staged the first performance of his *Messiah* in Dublin in 1742, it was no coincidence that the proceeds were used to free debtors from prison. For thousands of years, redeeming people and land from debt

was the primary and most concrete form of redemption. Indeed, when Christians pronounce "Hallelujah," they repeat the ritual term *alulu*, chanted upon the freeing of Babylonian debt-slaves.

Echoes of the doctrine can also be heard in American tradition. The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia is inscribed with a quotation from Leviticus 25:10: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, and to all the inhabitants thereof." The Hebrew word translated as "liberty" is *deror*, cognate to the older Akkadian *andurarum*—to move freely as running water, as freely as debt-slaves liberated to rejoin their families. The full verse in Leviticus speaks of freeing debt bondsmen and freeing the land from debt generally: "Hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land and to all inhabitants thereof; it shall be a Jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his family."

Rome was the first society not to cancel its debts. And we all know what happened to it. Classical historians such as Plutarch, Livy, and Diodorus attributed Rome's decline and fall to the fact that creditors got the entire economy in their debt, expropriated the land and public domain, and strangled the economy.

Michael Hudson is distinguished research professor of economics at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and author of *Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire* (new edition forthcoming November 2002). This article is based on "Reconstructing the Origins of Interest-Bearing Debt and the Logic of Clean Slates," in *Debt and Economic Renewal in the Ancient Near East*, by Michael Hudson and Marc Van De Mieroop.



Francis Rexus

living economies

# of land and hope

Frances Moore Lappé & Anna Lappé

Getting land for a quarter million of Brazil's poorest people was the first task of the Landless Workers Movement. Now comes the question of building a new life



© Sebastião Salgado/Contact Press Images

Brazil had always held tremendous power for me as I (Frances) struggled to grasp why some eat and others do not. In the early 1970s, the experts were telling us that hunger—at home and abroad—was caused by food scarcity. And yet countries like Brazil, a leading agricultural exporter, had a GNP ranking in the world's top ten, while tens of thousands of its citizens starved. If ever there was a place where hunger could not be blamed on scarcity, it was Brazil.

Hunger in Brazil persists not because of a lack of food, but because of a lack of democracy. Inequality in Brazil is so extreme only Sierra Leone ranks worse. Today, one percent of Brazil's landowners control almost half of the arable land—leaving thousands of acres idle—while millions of rural people have no land at all.

Land reform has been an obvious focus of efforts for democracy in Brazil, but I knew all attempts at land reform had been snuffed out with peasant blood. Landowners had too much power—political, economic, and military; the landless too little. (In fact, it was partly the president's threat of land reform that triggered a US-condoned military coup in 1964).

But in 1986, with the end of military rule, the landless got a key to power. The constitution, adopted that year, includes a clause calling for land reform. If land is not serving a "social function," the government has a constitutional right to redistribute it.

At first there was little political will to make land reform more than an article on paper, but a movement emerged to ensure the government made good on its promise. This movement is the Landless Workers Movement, or the MST, for its name in Portuguese. It has been wresting idle land from landowners, challenging Brazil's large-scale agribusiness model, and pressing Brazil's relatively new government for democracy.

Almost 20 years old, the MST's efforts seem to be working. Today, the MST has settled a quarter of a million families on more than 15 million acres in thousands of settlements across almost every Brazilian state.



## living economies

On our first day in Brazil, we head to the MST's national headquarters. Sitting in a small, stone-walled room, we are greeted by a man with the build of a farmer and the language of a philosopher.

João Pedro Stédile is one of the founders of the MST. Like millions of Brazilians, João Pedro comes from a farming family, so his personal story is the perfect place to begin.

"My grandparents and parents worked the land for more than a century but ended up with nothing," he said. "I was one of the few in my family who had a chance to study. At school, the church taught us that it was wrong to conform to inequity. When I graduated, I went back to work with the poor. Remember," he underscored, "this was during military rule. No gathering of any size was tolerated. But we gathered ten thousand and managed to raise the price of grapes."

João Pedro took many of the lessons of these early years to his work as a founding member of the MST. One of the central lessons is that you can't succeed alone. From the very beginning, the MST worked with a shared leadership model. Today, João Pedro tells us, if Brazil's president asks for a meeting with the head of the MST, all 21 of their leadership committee show up.

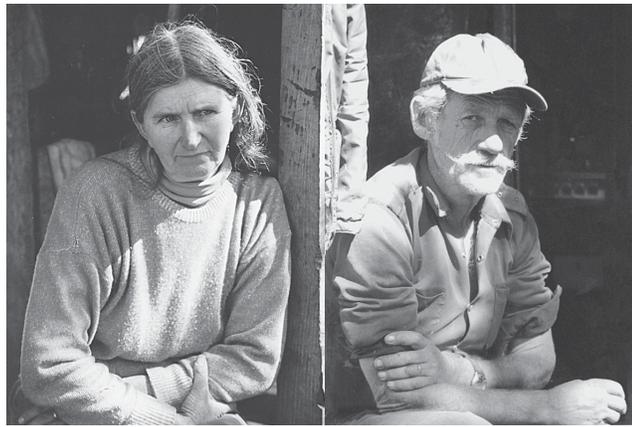
Another lesson: Actions speak louder than words. The MST analyzes which idle lands offer the most agricultural promise, brings landless together, and—under the cover of night—they occupy the land. MST members build temporary shelters and start working the land while the leadership presses the government to transfer the title. Today, thousands of families continue living in encampments waiting for official titles.

The process hasn't been easy. The Movement has faced serious obstacles—from bad press to government hostility to violent attacks. We learn that more MST members have been killed struggling for land reform than were "disappeared" during the two decades of the Brazilian military dictatorship. During our time with the MST, we met dozens who have experienced firsthand the real-life threats of pushing for land reform in a country still largely controlled by landholders.

### Facing fear

A few days after meeting João Pedro, we get to see the fruits of the MST's labors. On our way to one of the encampments, we notice a guardhouse that was set up to warn families of attacks by landowners and gunmen.

Minutes later, we sit outside an MST standard-issue, a shack made of black plastic sheets wrapped around poles. We try to imagine these past four years of waiting for official approval, protected from the elements by nothing more than thin plastic.



Anna Lappe

Baby chicks peep at our feet as we talk with a family that has been here since the early attacks—Luis and Selga Barch, their five children, and a baby grandson. I notice their affection with each other—passing a bubbly baby among family, hands on shoulders.

Luis and Selga learned about the MST on the local radio. We find out later that the MST operates over 30 community radio stations in its attempt to counteract the mega-media monopoly here.

"Yes, that was a hard time," Selga says, referring to gunmen the landowner hired to remove them.

"We were afraid," Luis adds. "But we had no choice; our land was too rocky, too small." Now, though they are still technically landless, they have the support of a community of dozens of other families, and like hundreds of thousands of other families may soon have official title to land.

### Whose choices?

We've been reading press coverage that makes the MST sound like neo-Communists. This gets us thinking. The MST says it's helping free people from the shackles of poverty, but is it just a different drumbeat with which one must align one's step? We look for real signs of choice.

According to MST official Geraldo Fontes, in encampments, families decide together how to organize their community. Less than a third, we learn, choose cooperatives. Forty percent choose private plots. The rest opt for a common area as well as private plots.

Two days after visiting the Barches, we're standing in an MST settlement, *Perpetual Seguro*, near the town of Pitanga in the middle of the Southern state of Paraná. The settlement sits on a high bluff overlooking rolling green hills. We meet Nivaldo Fernando, a four-year resident. Now, hammer in hand, he builds his first home.

*Selga and Luis Barch sit in front of their temporary shelter of four years where they live while waiting for official title to their land*

## living economies

Among the 40 families, few were part of the original encampment. We're curious about the newcomers.

"They have come because of our cooperative," Nivaldo says. "You can make more money. Each individual can specialize. My specialty is building and also selling quilts."

"Who decides on your specialty?" I ask.

"The group decided based on what people are good at and what's needed. [If there is a conflict] we discuss it. But it was my choice to be in the cooperative. It feels good making a contribution. Plus, say I'm building houses and you're harvesting the corn and the weather is bad, we all share that loss. It's not fair to blame the farmer if it doesn't rain, is it?"

The cooperative seems to work well, so we're curious why other families aren't choosing it.

"Most are still afraid," Nivaldo's wife, Doraci, says. "Small farmers don't like to rely on others. But we make the rules for ourselves, for practical reasons. A lot of the original people didn't want to be a part of the cooperative, so they went to other encampments. Now many want to come back because the cooperative is working."

A lot of shifting and sorting out—that's what we're sensing everywhere in the MST. People are trying on new roles and seeing what works for them.

### Pizza and the neo-liberal model

We return from the countryside to the capital of Paraná, Curitiba. We've just met brothers Dirceu and Vilmar Boufleuer at the MST's headquarters and headed to an all-you-can-eat pizza parlor. Biting into our first slice of pizza, we ask why they joined the movement.

"I was a seminarian," says Dirceu, "but my faith called me to do something more practical."

"Christianity and MST are similar," Vilmar adds. "They both value people. Capitalism only cares about production; it doesn't care about the individual."

At this, some Christians might cringe. In the US, opposing capitalism is tantamount to endorsing communism. But since arriving in Brazil, we've been hearing about the MST creating businesses to function *within* the market. It's not the market itself that violates the brothers' faith; it's the elevation of the market above all other values, including dignity and health.

And it's here—in the realm of values—that the MST differs from the neo-liberal model. Vilmar and Dirceu tell us it's the neo-liberal model that has turned Brazil into the world's third-ranked agricultural exporter and the number-one exporter of coffee, sugar, and orange juice. It explains why two-thirds of Brazil's grain feeds livestock, not people. What Vilmar and Dirceu dream of in its place is what the MST is creating—communities

coming together to decide how to organize themselves, educate their children, and grow their food.

### The birth of citizens

Most people are suspicious of movements that claim great moral purpose. Such movements start using power for their own ends. That's the assumption, that's the fear.

And yet many of our conversations with the MST revolved around community and values. So when we get a chance, we ask José Paulo dos Santos Pires, a long-time member, how the MST develops these values.

"Society cultivates individualism and competition," he answered. "We in the MST have been brought up under this system. This creates problems in some of the older settlements where we didn't talk much about values. A lot of people thought that land would be enough. But soon they find out that they are still illiterate and have no resources to make the land productive."

"They realize with time, through debates and seminars, that they have to get together to decide what to plant and how to buy seeds. They may have to join a demonstration, even occupy City Hall to get a school for their children. They acquire the consciousness that they wouldn't be able to do any of this individually."

Paulo's words bring to mind what João Pedro said about getting the landless involved in the Movement.

"The first step is losing naïve consciousness," he said, "no longer accepting what you see as something that cannot be changed." (We were amused by the irony that in the US, a person gets labeled naïve who believes that things *can* change.) "The second step is realizing you won't get anywhere unless you work together."

Once you start believing a better life is possible, you also must come to believe you have the power to make change. So, João Pedro told us, the Movement also builds this confidence. In the process, he explained, "you forget how to say 'yes sir' and learn to say 'I think that...'" This is when the citizen is born."

We went to Brazil thinking we'd learn about land reform. But we left realizing that the MST's biggest achievement may not be in land reform, nor in helping people build dignified places to live, nor even in reducing infant mortality. It may be in the creation of citizens, people who believe they can create what does not yet exist

*Adapted from Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé, author of *Diet for a Small Planet* and more than a dozen other books and Anna Lappé, cofounder, with Frances, of the Small Planet Fund. See [www.dietforasmallplanet.com](http://www.dietforasmallplanet.com) and Friends of the MST at [www.mstbrazil.org](http://www.mstbrazil.org)



living economies

# 12 things to do *now* about corporations

Americans know that corporate excess is about more than flawed accounting. It corrupts democracy, drives a wedge between rich and poor, degrades the environment, and disrupts communities.

So what might *we the people* do?

**Sarah Ruth van Gelder**

## 1 Give it back

The first step in any rehabilitation is to take responsibility for wrongdoing and make amends. In sentencing corporate executives, judges should consider how much of their ill-gotten gains they voluntarily returned. States should seek to recoup ill-gotten gains on behalf of pensioners, ratepayers, taxpayers, and investors. To set an example of the “new ethic of personal responsibility in the business community” President George W. Bush called for in his July 9 speech, he and Vice President Cheney should give back any gains they have earned through questionable accounting and insider trading. (See “Give it Back, Mr. President,” [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org).)

## 2 Three strikes, you’re out

Why not a corporate death penalty; three criminal convictions and your corporate charter is history. The town of Wayne is one of several Pennsylvania towns that prohibit corporations with repeated violations from setting up shop. So far, the law has been used to keep out hog farms that have repeatedly broken the law.

## 3 Personhood for people

Corporations were first chartered to serve the public good. POCLAD (Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy) is developing a model charter based on that idea; it includes time limitations on corporate charters, incorporation only for specific purposes, charter revocation for violations, prohibitions on one corporation owning another. It would also require that corporations refrain from infringing on the health, dignity, and rights of employees and refrain from damaging

such commons as air, water, and wildlife habitat.

The legal fiction giving corporations legal personhood was a result of an interpretation of the 14th amendment by an 1886 Supreme Court decision (*Santa Clara v. Southern Pacific Railroad Co.*). But there has never been a vote of the people on corporate personhood nor on bestowing on corporations the rights contained in the Constitution. We should be clear: the rights of persons are reserved for real people. (See [www.poclad.org](http://www.poclad.org).)

## 4 Favor local

From the town council up through the UN, rules, incentives, and subsidies should favor locally owned enterprises that serve local needs. (See the Institute for Local Self-Reliance [www.ilsr.org](http://www.ilsr.org).)

## 5 No deals for lawbreakers

Let’s quit rewarding corporate law breakers with lucrative government contracts. White-collar crime is costing America an estimated \$200 billion per year, about 50 times the cost of street crime. According to *Business Ethics* editor Marjorie Kelly, Lockheed Martin has 63 violations and alleged violations, yet its 1999 government contract awards totaled \$14 billion. Companies with more than one criminal conviction or civil judgment in three years should face contract suspensions or debarments, says the Project on Government Oversight ([www.pogo.org](http://www.pogo.org).)

## 6 Quit exporting Enron

According to the Institute for Policy Studies, Enron-related projects have received more than \$4 billion in

federal financing since 1992 and \$3 billion from the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and other public sources. Now Enron wants more; the company is after a \$125 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to expand a Bolivian gas pipeline through ecologically sensitive areas and the lands of indigenous people. Of course, Enron is not the only one. Public money should not subsidize exploitation. (See [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org).)

## 7 Clue in the public

Sunlight is the best disinfectant. All those with a stake in a corporation—employees, communities, customers—should have access to information about its practices and impacts. (See page 19.) Here’s one example: studies by EPA and others show that many corporations under-report environmental liabilities. Get real about costs; report them honestly.

## 8 Serve all stakeholders

Corporations are required by law to maximize profits for shareholders. Robert Hinkley, a corporate lawyer, is pressing for a law that prohibits making profit at the expense of the environment, human rights, the public safety, the welfare of the communities in which the corporation operates, or the dignity of employees. Groups in several states have taken up this Code for Corporate Citizenship. (See [www.citizenworks.org](http://www.citizenworks.org) or call 202/265-6164.)

## 9 Tax the casino

Every day, \$1.5–\$2 trillion is exchanged on world currency markets; over 95 percent of that is speculative. The Tobin tax, a proposed small tax

on currency transactions, would calm financial markets, protect developing countries, and generate billions of dollars to address global poverty. (See [www.waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org).) A similar tax on stock transactions could slow stock speculation.

## 10 End corporate welfare

After working hard to get impoverished mothers and children off public assistance, Congress should turn its attention to CEOs. To start, we could help executives learn self-reliance by sunsetting corporate giveaways; eliminating tax breaks for companies that move off shore; and doing rigorous, independent assessments of tax incentives and subsidies to see which, if any, work.

## 11 Hands off public assets

Those who propose privatization of public assets or services carry the burden of proof to show that long-term public benefits outweigh the costs.

## 12 Restore democracy

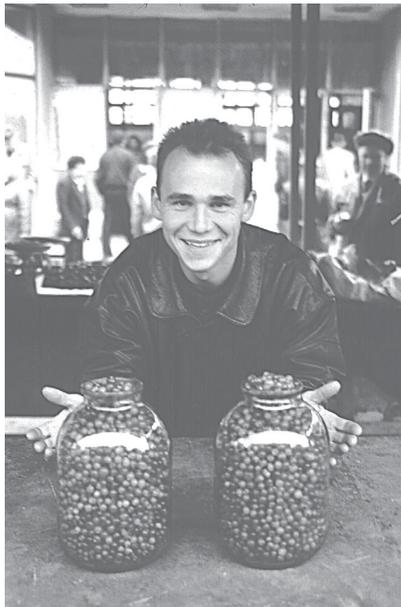
Lord John Browne, CEO of British Petroleum, announced in February a halt to BP political contributions anywhere in the world. “We mustn’t confuse our role,” he said. “We must be particularly careful about the political process—not because it is unimportant—quite the reverse—but because the legitimacy of that process is crucial both for society and for us as a company working in that society.”

We can hope that other corporations will follow BP’s example. Realistically, though, we need to enact clean-election reform of the kind that is helping to restore democracy in Maine, Arizona, and Massachusetts. (See [www.publiccampaign.org](http://www.publiccampaign.org).)

living economies

# resources for living economies

Victor Bremson & Erin Cusick



## support community

**Eco-Trust** of Portland, Oregon, supports sustainable economic development in resource-dependent communities in the Pacific Northwest. They have developed "patterns," which integrate social, financial, and natural capital to show how they fit together to form a "Conservation Economy." [www.conservationeconomy.net](http://www.conservationeconomy.net) 503/467-0773

**The Institute for Local Self-Reliance** provides practical information for communities interested in local energy independence, waste management, and supporting locally owned businesses. The "New Rules Project" highlights local communities that have rewritten rules, policies, and public subsidies to encourage locally controlled sustainable economies. [www.ilsr.org](http://www.ilsr.org) 202/232-4108

## buy local and fair traded

**Co-op America** is probably the most comprehensive practical resource for businesses or individuals who want to move toward more just and sustainable economies through either purchasing or investment. Co-op America publishes *The National*

*Green Pages*, a directory of sustainable businesses. [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org) 800/58-Green

**Global Exchange** provides educational tools and resources aimed at promoting corporate responsibility, improved international relations, socially responsible tourism and human rights campaigns. The website includes a good listing of companies and organizations that support fair trade practices. [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org) 415/255-7296

**Local Harvest** is developing a public directory of small farms nationwide, providing people with direct contact to farms in their area. It also lists food outlets that support local farms. [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

**Booksense** allows you to purchase new books online from local independent bookstores. [www.booksense.com](http://www.booksense.com)

**Abebooks.com** carries used books from local independent bookstores [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)

## create business alliances

**The American Independent Business Alliance** (AMIBA) is focused on developing local chapters to help local independent businesses thrive in the midst of corporate monoculture. AMIBA chapters raise awareness of the benefits of buying from independent businesses and help link businesses for collaboration, advocacy, exchanges, and business transactions. They have chapters in Boulder, CO; Austin, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Corvallis, OR; Duluth, MN; and Ontario, Ottawa. [www.amiba.net](http://www.amiba.net), 303/402-1575

**GEO: Grassroots Economic Organizing Newsletter** covers economic democracy and provides a global forum for networks of worker cooperatives. [www.geonewsletter.org](http://www.geonewsletter.org) 800/240-9721

**InBusiness Magazine** publishes success stories about local independent and sustainable businesses. [www.inbusiness.org](http://www.inbusiness.org) 610/967-4135 ext. 22

**National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils** (NARC&DC), in coordination with the US Department of Agriculture publishes stories of successful community sustainability. [www.rcdsuccess.com](http://www.rcdsuccess.com)

## finance living economies

**The Institute for Community Economics** (ICE) provides technical assistance and financing to community land trusts and those working to produce and preserve affordable housing, land, and other resources in communities where they are most needed. ICE coordinates a national network of over 90 land trusts operating in 23 states. ICE's revolving loan fund accepts funds from socially

concerned individuals and makes low-cost loans available to nonprofit housing groups. [www.iceclt.org](http://www.iceclt.org), 413/746-8660

**The National Community Reinvestment Coalition** works to keep credit and banking services available in neighborhoods, particularly low-income communities. [www.nrcr.org](http://www.nrcr.org), 202/628-8866

**The E. F. Schumacher Society**, named after the author of *Small Is Beautiful*, applies the values of human-scale communities and respect for the natural environment to economic issues. They promote community land trusts, local currencies, and local sustainable economies. [www.schumachersociety.org](http://www.schumachersociety.org) 413/528-1737

**Self-Help** is a community development lender that has provided over \$1.5 billion in financing to over 24,000 home buyers, small businesses, and nonprofits. Self-Help reaches people who are underserved by conventional lenders—particularly minorities, women, rural residents, and low-wealth families—through the support of socially responsible citizens and institutions across the US. [www.selfhelp.org](http://www.selfhelp.org) 800/476-7428

**The Social Investment Forum** is the best source of information on socially responsible investments—investments that screen out the worst environmental and social offenders. If you want to invest your savings in the living economy, check out Community Development Financial Institutions, which invest in local housing and commerce. Find a guide to this investing on the Social Investment Forum Website: [www.socialinvest.org](http://www.socialinvest.org) 202/872-5319

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## living economies

### rein in corporate rule

**Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy** (POCLAD) conducts research on the history of corporations and labor struggles, and provides resources in the form of books, reports, and articles.  
[www.poclad.org](http://www.poclad.org), 508/398-1145

**Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch** provides regularly updated information and analysis of US legislation in relation to globalization.  
[www.citizen.org/trade](http://www.citizen.org/trade)  
202/588-1000

**CorpWatch** publishes information on corporate power and resistance to corporate globalization. CorpWatch is working to eliminate corporate partnerships within the United Nations and to hold corporations accountable to environmental and human rights standards. The group's Greenwash awards recognize corporations that spend more promoting an eco-friendly appearance than they do actually protecting the environment.  
[www.corpwatch.org](http://www.corpwatch.org), 415/561-6568

**Project on Government Oversight** (POGO) confronts government's links to such issues as the oil industry's fraudulent use of Native American land and public subsidies provided to arms exporters. Also provides whistleblower-protection information and supports contract suspensions for companies with criminal records.  
[www.pogo.org](http://www.pogo.org), 202/347-1122

**Citizen Works** provides links to a host of information regarding corporate crime. The website includes a discussion guide and suggested reading list to facilitate starting a local corporate reform group.  
[www.citizenworks.org](http://www.citizenworks.org)  
202/265-6164

### read all about it

**Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth**, by Lester R. Brown, challenges us to consider the economy part of the environment. W.W. Norton & Company, 2001

**Democracy at Risk: Rescuing Main Street from Wall Street**, by Jeff Gates, on re-creating democracy through redistribution of wealth and spreading of ownership. Perseus Books, 2001

**Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution**, by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L.

Hunter Lovins, on coming to terms with our economy's scarcest resource: natural capital. Little, Brown & Company, 1999

**The Natural Step Story: Seeding a Quiet Revolution**, by Karl-Henrik Robèrt, by the founder of The Natural Step, lays out a framework for sustainable production. New Society Publishers, 2002

**The Nature of Economics**, by Jane Jacobs, a conversation on the underlying principles of a living economy. Vintage Books, 2001

**The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism**, by David C. Korten, documents the accelerating problems dealing with unrestrained corporate power and then creates a vision of a new living economy. Berrett-Koehler Publishers with Kumarian Press Inc., 1999

**Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet**, by Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé, the author of *Diet for a New A Small Planet* and her daughter, traces their travels around the world finding people rebuilding their local economies, improving food security, health, and democracy (see excerpt, page 40). Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2002

**The Future of Money**, by Bernard Lietaer, a former currency speculator who helped design Europe's currency and is now helping design complementary currencies. (See *YES!* spring 1997.) Random House Group Ltd (UK), 2001

**Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things**, by architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart, shows how to use the principle, "Waste equals food" to design products that reduce environmental damage and begin to make our ecosystems healthy. North Point Press, 2002

**How Wal-Mart is Destroying America and the World and What You Can Do About It**, by Bill Quinn, tells the story of what happens when a Wal-Mart store comes to town and how citizens are succeeding in keeping them out. Ten Speed Press, revised and updated, 2000

**Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age**, by Michael H. Shuman, provides a thorough overview of many ap-

proaches to creating a local living economy. Routledge, 2000

**Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered**, by E.F. Schumacher. This classic on human-scale, life-sustaining economics was re-issued in 1999, with an introduction by Paul Hawken. Hartley & Marks

**White Dog Café Cookbook**, by Judy Wicks and Kevin Von Klause. The White Dog Café in Philadelphia is a business that walks its talk. (See *YES!* Spring 2001.) Running Press, 1998

**What Comes Next: Proposals for a Different Society**, by Thad Williamson, assesses proposed alternatives to the current political and economic system. The National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives, 1998

**Working Capital: The Power of Labor's Pensions**, edited by Archon Fung, Tessa Hebb, and Joel Rogers, shows how workers can turn their \$7 trillion in pension funds into a powerful tool to promote progressive goals. Cornell University Press, 2001

## YES! on economic alternatives

*YES!* coverage of alternatives to the suicide economy began with our first issue. For quick reference, here are some articles you might want to check out. You can order back issues online or by calling 800/937-4451, or find most at our website [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org)

**Future Watch: Signs of an Emerging Culture, winter 1997, #1**  
Mohammad Yunus on micro-credit and ending poverty

**Money, Print Your Own, spring 1997, #2**  
Focuses on local currencies with articles by David Korten, Tom Greco, Edgar Cahn, Jonathan Rowe, Michael Linton, and Bernard Lietaer.

**Sustainable Sex, winter 1998, #4**  
Sharif Abdullah on Gandhian economics in practice

**Millennium Survival Guide, spring 1998, #5**  
Anita Roddick on making a difference with The Body Shop

**Peace Makers, fall 1998, #7**  
Karl Henrik Robèrt on a foundation for sustainability

**Economics as if Life matters, spring 1999, #9**  
David Korten, Tuenjai Deetes, Oronto Douglas, Berito Kuwar U'wa, Ted Howard, Gar Alperovitz, Jonathan Rowe, Richard Douthwaite, Peter Barnes

**Cities of Exuberance, summer 1999, #10**  
Doug Pibel on how and why to stop Wal-Mart  
David Korten and Paul Hawken on corporations

**The Power of One, fall 1999, #11**  
Steve Lerner on timber-dependent regions getting sustainable

**Changing the Climate, winter 2000, #12**  
Joseph Romm on "cool companies" and global warming  
David Morris on enhancing local economies

**Food for Life, summer 2000, #14**  
Hal Hamilton on signs of life for sustainable agriculture  
Sen. Byron Dorgan: why we shouldn't give up on family farmers

**A New Culture Emerges, winter 2001, #16**  
Pramila Jayapal on a Gandhian economy in India

**Working for Life, spring 2001, #17**  
Matthew Fox, Parker Palmer, Juliet Schor, Danny Glover

**Reclaiming the Commons, summer 2001, #18**  
David Bollier, Kari McGinnis, Jonathan Rowe, Maude Barlow, Peter Barnes, Corinne Asturias, Mike Moore

**Technology: Who Chooses? fall 2001, #19**  
Andrew Kimbrell and Janine Benyus on technology and nature  
Guy Dauncey on a sustainable energy plan

**What does it Mean to be an American, Now? spring 2002, #21**  
Amory and Hunter Lovins on security and renewable energy

**Art and Community, summer 2002 #22**  
Walden Bello on the World Social Forum

# The boy who kissed the soldier

by Starhawk



A woman travels to the Occupied Territories to offer support and discovers the limits of endurance and trust amidst relentless destruction

June 1, 2002: I am in Balata refugee camp in occupied Palestine, where the Israeli Defense Forces have rounded up 4,000 men, leaving the camp to women and children. The men have offered no resistance, no battle.

The camp is deathly quiet. All the shops are shuttered, all the windows closed. Women, children, and a few old men hide in their homes.

The quiet is shattered by sporadic bursts of gunfire, bangs, and explosions. All day we have been encountering soldiers who look like my brother or cousins or the sons I never had, so young they are barely more than boys armed with big guns. We've been standing with the terrified inhabitants as the soldiers search their houses, walking patients who are afraid to be alone on the streets to the UN clinic.

It is nearly dark, and Jessica and Melissa and I are looking for a place to spend the night. We are hurrying through the streets, worried. We need to be indoors before true dark, and curfew. "Go into any house," we've been told. "Anyone will be glad to take you in." But we feel a bit shy.

From a narrow, metal staircase, Samar, a young woman with a wide, beautiful smile beckons us up.

"Welcome, welcome!" We are given refuge in the three small rooms that house her family: her mother, big bodied and sad, her small nieces and nephews, her brother's wife Hanin, round-faced and pale and six months pregnant.

We sit down on big, overstuffed couches. The women serve us tea. I look around at the pine wood paneling that adds soft curves and warmth to the concrete, at the porcelain birds and artificial flowers that decorate a ledge. The ceilings are carefully painted

in simple geometric designs. They have poured love and care into their home, and it feels like a sanctuary.

Outside we can hear sporadic shooting, the deep boom of houses being blown up by the soldiers. But here in these rooms, we are safe, in the tentative sense that word can be used in this place. "Inshallah," "God willing," follows every statement of good here or every commitment to a plan. "Yahoud!" the women say when we hear explosions. It is the Arabic word for Jew, the word used for the soldiers of the invading army. It is a word of warning and alarm: Don't go down that alley, out into that street. "Yahoud!"

But no one invades our refuge this night. We talk and laugh with the women. I have a pocket-sized packet of Tarot cards, and we read for what the next day will bring. Samar wants a reading, and then Hanin. I don't much like what I see in their cards: death, betrayal, sleepless nights of sorrow and regret. But I can't explain that in Arabic anyway, so I focus on what I see that is good.

"Baby?" Hanin asks. "Babies, yes," "Boy? Son?"

The card of the Sun comes up, with a small boy-child riding on a white horse. "Yes, I think it is a boy," I say.

She shows me the picture of her first baby, who died at a year and a half. Around us young men are prowling with guns, houses are exploding, lives are being shattered. And we are in an intimate world of women. Hanin brushes my hair, ties it back in a band to control its wildness. We try to talk about our lives. We can write down our ages on paper. I am 50, Hanin is 23. Jessica and Melissa are 22, all of them older than most of the soldiers. Samar is 17, the children are 8 and 10 and the baby is 4.

"Are you Christian?" Hanin finally asks us at the



end of the night. Melissa, Jessica, and I look at each other. All of us are Jewish. Jessica speaks for us.

"Jewish," she says. The women don't understand the word. We try several variations, but finally are forced to the blunt and dreaded "Yahoud."

"Yahoud!" Hanin says. She gives a little surprised laugh, looks at the other women. "Beautiful!"

And that is all. Her welcome to us is undiminished. She shows me the shower, dresses me in her own flowered nightgown and robe, and puts me to bed in the empty side of the double bed she shares with her husband, who has been arrested by the Yahoud. Mats are brought out for the others. Two of the children sleep with us. Ahmed, the four-year-old, snuggles next to me. He sleeps fiercely, kicking and thrashing in his dreams, and each time an explosion comes, hurls himself into my arms.

### The power of trust

I can't sleep at all. I am thinking about the summer I spent in Israel when I was fifteen, learning Hebrew, working on a kibbutz, touring every memorial to the Holocaust and every battle site of what we called the War of Independence. I am thinking of one day when we were brought to the Israel/Lebanon border. The Israeli side was green, the other side barren and brown. "You see what we have made of this land," we were told. "And that—that's what they've done in 2,000 years. Nothing."

I am old enough now to recognize one of the prime justifications the colonizers have always used against the colonized. "They weren't doing anything with the land. They weren't using it." They are not, somehow, as deserving as we are, as fully human. They are animals, they hate us. All of that is shattered by the sound of Hanin's laugh, called into question by a small boy squirming and twisting in his sleep. I lie there in awe at the trust that has been given me, one of the people of the enemy, put to bed to sleep with the children. It seems to me, at that moment, that there are indeed powers greater than the guns I can hear all around me: the power of Hanin's trust, the great surging compassionate power that overcomes prejudice and hate.

One night later, we go back to our family just as dark is falling, together with Linda and Neta, two other volunteers. No sooner do we arrive than a troop comes to the door. At least they have come to the door. We are grateful for that, for all day they have been breaking through people's walls, knocking out the concrete with sledgehammers, bursting through into rooms of terrified people to search, or worse, use the house as a thoroughfare, a safe route that allows them to move through the camp without venturing into the streets. We have

been in houses turned into surreal passageways, with directions spray-painted on their walls, where there is no sanctuary because all night long soldiers are passing back and forth.

We come forward to meet these soldiers, to talk with them and witness what they will do. One of the men, with owlish glasses, knows Jessica and Melissa; they have had a long conversation with him standing beside his tank. He is uncomfortable with his role. Ahmed, the little boy, is terrified of the soldiers. He cries and screams and points at them, and we try to comfort him, to carry him away into another room. But he won't go. He is terrified, but he can't bear to be out of their sight. He runs toward them crying.

"Take off your helmet," Jessica tells the soldiers. "Shake hands with him, show him you're a human being. Help him to be not so afraid."

The owlish soldier takes off his helmet, holds out his hand. Ahmed's sobs subside. The soldiers file out to search upstairs. Samar and Ahmed follow them. Samar holds the little boy up to the owlish soldier's face, tells him to give the soldier a kiss. She doesn't want Ahmed to be afraid, to hate. The little boy kisses the soldier, and the soldier kisses him back, and hands him a small Palestinian flag.

### No end

This is the moment to end this story, on a high note of hope, to let it be a story of how simple human warmth, a child's kiss, can for a moment overcome oppression and hate.

But it is a characteristic of the relentless quality of this occupation that the story doesn't end here. The soldiers order us all into one room. They close the door, and begin to search the house. We can hear banging and crashing and loud thuds against the walls.

I am trying to think of something to sing, to do to distract us, to keep the spirits of the children up. I cannot think of anything that makes sense. My voice won't work. But Neta teaches us a silly children's song in Arabic: "The train comes, the train goes, the train is full of sugar and tea." The children are delighted, and begin to sing. Hanin and I drum on the tables. The soldiers are throwing things around in the other room and the children are singing and Ahmed begins to dance. We put him up on the table and he smiles and swings his hips and makes us all laugh.

When the soldiers finally leave, we emerge to examine the damage. Every single object has been pulled off the walls, out of the closets, thrown in huge piles on the floor. The couches have been overturned and their bottoms ripped off. The wood paneling is full of holes knocked into every curve and corner. Bags of grain have



been emptied into the sink. Broken glass and china covers the floor. We begin to clean up. Melissa sweeps as Jessica tries to corral the barefoot children until we can get the glass off the floor. I help Hanin clear a path in the bedroom, folding the clothes of her absent husband, hanging up her own things, finding the secret sexy underwear the soldiers have obviously examined. By the time it is done, I know every intimate object of her life.

### This is normal

When the house is back together, Hanin and Samar cook. I sit down, utterly exhausted, as Hanin and the women serve us a meal. A few china birds are back on the ledge. The artificial flowers have reappeared. Some of the loose boards of the paneling have been pushed back. Somehow once again the house feels like a sanctuary.

"You are amazing," I tell Hanin. "I am completely exhausted: you're six months pregnant, it's your house that has just been trashed, and you're able to stand there cooking for all of us."

Hanin shrugs. "For us, this is normal," she says. And this is where I would like to end this story, celebrating the resilience of these women, full of faith in their power to renew their lives again and again. But the story doesn't end here.

The third night. I am staying with another family who has asked for support. The soldiers have searched

in the tiles and the concrete beneath. They smash and destroy, and when they are done, they piss on the mess they have left. Nothing has been found, but something is lost. The sanctuary is destroyed, the house turned into a wrecking yard. No one kisses these soldiers. No one sings.

When Hanin emerges and sees what they have done, she goes into shock. She is resilient and strong, but this assault has gone beyond 'normal,' and she breaks. She is hyperventilating, her pulse is racing and thready. She could lose the baby, or even die. Jessica, who is trained as a street medic for actions, informs the soldiers that Hanin needs immediate medical care. The soldiers are reluctant. "We'll be done soon," they say. But one is a paramedic, and Melissa and Jessica are able to make him see the seriousness of the situation. They allow the two of them to violate curfew, to run through the dark streets to the clinic, come back with two nurses who get Hanin and the family into an ambulance and taken to the hospital.

This story could be worse. Hanin and the baby survive. That is, after all, why we've come, to make things not quite as bad as they would be otherwise. But there is no happy ending to this story, no cheerful resolution. When the soldiers pull out, I go back to say good-bye to Hanin, who has come back from the hospital. She is looking dull, depressed: something is broken. I don't know if it can be repaired, if she will ever be the same. Her resilience is gone, her eyes have lost their light. She writes her name and phone number for me, writes "Hnin love you." I don't know how the story will ultimately end for her.

I still see in the cards destruction, sleepless nights of anguish, death. This is not a story of some grand atrocity. It is a story about 'normal,' about what it's like to live under an everyday, relentless assault on any sense of safety or sanctuary. "What was that song about the train?" I ask Neta after the soldiers are gone. "Didn't you hear?" she asks me. "The soldiers came and got the old woman at one o'clock in the morning and made her sing the song. I don't think I'll ever be able to sing it again."

Every song is tainted, every story goes on too long and turns nasty. A boy whose baby dreams are disturbed by gunfire kisses a soldier. A soldier kisses a boy, and then destroys his home. Or maybe he simply stands by as others do the destruction, in silence, that same silence too many of us have kept for too long. And if there are forces that can nurture peace they must first create an uproar, a vast breaking of silence, a refusal to stand by as the boot stomps down.

*Starhawk is a lifelong activist and the author of nine books, including Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising. For more information on her work, visit [www.starhawk.org](http://www.starhawk.org). For information on the International Solidarity Movement, visit [www.palsolidarity.org](http://www.palsolidarity.org).*



Reuters

their house three times and have promised that they will continue to come back every night. We are sleeping in our clothes, boots ready. We get a call. The soldiers have come back to Hanin's house. Again, they lock everyone in one room. Again, they search. This time, the soldier who kissed the baby is not with them. They have some secret intelligence report that tells them there is something to find, although they have not found it. They rip the paneling off the walls. They knock holes



## GLOBAL SHIFT



Reuters

# Building a New Force

Michael N. Nagler

Armed only with their eyes and their consciences, nonviolent intervenors have had remarkable effects—saving lives in Guatemala, sustaining hope in the West Bank, and freeing India from colonial rule. What might happen if the world had a standing nonviolent army of thousands? Could we transform our response to conflict?

When Israeli tanks rolled into Ramallah during “Operation Defensive Shield” last April, they met with a surprise: international volunteers had somehow gotten into the city and walked blithely past them, ignoring threats backed by gunshots fired over their heads, to enter the building where besieged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was trapped, thus discouraging further military action against him. This was an unusual event in the history of modern warfare. The press noticed. For a while, “human shields” made daily headlines:

“Both television and newspapers [gave] a heroine’s welcome to Sophia Deeg, a 50-year-old Munich teacher who acted as a human shield for Arafat at his Ramallah compound,” reported the *San Francisco Chronicle* on May 2.

For a moment, the media gave a glimpse of a radical possibility: a different kind of force, a nonviolent army that could constitute an entirely new and creative response to conflict. Such a force is not a dream; an actual Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is being born. Nonviolent intervention has been going on—without benefit of media coverage—for some time. This new organization

is poised to take it to a new stage by creating a 2,000-member professional corps, along with 4,000 reservists, 5,000 volunteers, and a research division, ready to respond wherever there is conflict around the globe.

NP’s mission is not merely to end violence after it has already begun, but to prevent or dampen outbreaks of violent conflict before they escalate. The Peaceforce would enter a conflict only after being invited, with the aim of creating the space for local groups to resolve their own disputes peacefully.

NP would draw its membership from throughout the globe, so that it could circumvent political divisions and visa problems. Its 2,000 professional peacekeepers would be paid, trained, and signed on for two-year contracts.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce began to take shape in 1999 when San Francisco-based civil rights and peace activist David Hartsough and veteran St. Paul community organizer Mel Duncan discovered each other at the Hague Peace Conference.

In three years the project, operating from offices in St. Paul and San Francisco, has garnered endorsements from seven Nobel Peace laureates, established bases in Europe and Asia, and built up a network of participants

**International volunteers block Israeli Army vehicles during a demonstration in Ramallah**



and potential volunteers from around the world, emphasizing the global South, in part to avoid the problem of ‘peace imperialism.’

If all goes well, an international convening event will take place in Delhi, India, November 28 through December 2, 2002. At this event, delegates will elect an international governing committee to carry the dream further, and select a pilot area for its first field effort, based on an in-depth study completed the year before.

### A recurrent vision

Knowing that success would depend on careful planning, Hartsough and Duncan decided that before the Peaceforce coalesced, they should conduct a feasibility study to document and glean strategy from the many small peace-team projects already working around the globe. What the study found was a 100-year history of nonviolent intervention that has intensified in the last 20 years, yielding a growing body of evidence that nonviolent intervention does work.

Nonviolent intervention is a recurrent vision among people who refuse to believe that humankind is condemned either to fight or stand by helplessly when violence rages. Though people no doubt have stepped in to break up fights as long as there have been fights (the Buddha is said to have defused a war over water this way, and Chinese philosopher Mo Tzu made a name for himself by doing this in the fifth century BCE) what

instead of violence they would harness it for nonviolence; instead of mobilizing what peace theorist Kenneth Boulding would later call “threat power,” they would use it for “integrative power.”

Since Gandhi’s time and especially in the last two decades, various forms of nonviolent third-party intervention across borders have had dramatic successes in protecting life and reducing human rights abuses and destructive conflict all over the world. These interventions have taken a number of different forms.

One element is witnessing—being present as an observer, sharing information with the outside world and demonstrating to all the parties involved that the world is watching. “My heart breaks,” a Quaker volunteer in Hebron writes in *Peace Team News*, “as I recall the kindness we received from these gentle people, the smiles and the thanks that greeted us, the words of hope ... that we might let the world know of their suffering and despair.” (For another story of witnessing in the occupied territories, see “The Boy Who Kissed the Soldier,” page 46.)

The protected are not the only ones moved by this courageous kind of intervention. This story is told by volunteers who found their way into Jenin blocked by a large group of soldiers, according to the *Catholic Radical*: After some discussion back and forth, the commanding officer said to them, “You people have a lot of faith.” One of them answered, “When the people of Israel fled to the Red Sea, they didn’t even bring a boat, but God got them through.” The officer paused awhile. Then he said, “Go back 100 meters and cut through the fields.”

The mere presence of internationals changes the atmosphere of conflict, often defusing hatred. When they ‘short-circuit’ entrenched hostility in the way we’ve just seen, third parties can actually reawaken the humanity in people under arms. These people are voluntarily risking their own lives and safety to reflect, through their concern, the humanity of those who have become mere victims.

Elana Wesley, part of a team of internationals in the Balata refugee camp in Palestine in June, describes her team’s efforts: “As the Israeli forces made their way from house to house, knocking down joint walls between families, the internationals tried to explain to soldiers that the doors were open to adjoining rooms and apartments and there was no need to make holes in walls to gain access. ... The internationals *offered to walk in front of the soldiers* so they could enter through doors rather than destroying walls.”

The phrase that I’ve emphasized illustrates one of the key principles of nonviolent intervention: non-partisanship. You are not there to protect one group from

## When they ‘short-circuit’ entrenched hostility, third parties can actually reawaken the humanity in people under arms

is now called nonviolent intervention arose 100 years ago, in Mahatma Gandhi’s great campaigns for Indian rights in South Africa. When Gandhi was not calling his Satyagraha volunteers “pilgrims,” he often referred to them as nonviolent “soldiers.”

Gandhi, who had served in two wars, realized that, while war itself is an unnecessary evil, there are some qualities of war that are not only positive but indispensable. Soldiers need courage, discipline, training, loyalty, and restraint. But nonviolent activists need these qualities even more. Why not turn the restless energies of men (and women) into different channels, creating a disciplined “army of peace?” They would use the same courage and sacrifice, but for the opposite purpose:

another, even when your actions do have that effect. You are trying not to be part of the political mix at all. You are there to protect peace, for everyone, and that means getting in the way of violence against anyone—as did the African-American woman from Michigan Peace Teams who covered a fallen Klansman with her own body when he was attacked by an anti-racist mob.

Another kind of nonviolent intervention is accompaniment. Peace Brigades International volunteers have successfully accompanied threatened human rights workers for 20 years now all over Central America, East Timor, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. They monitor, and thus moderate or prevent, human rights abuses—and in the extreme they can even stand between armed groups to stop violence.

### War-stoppers

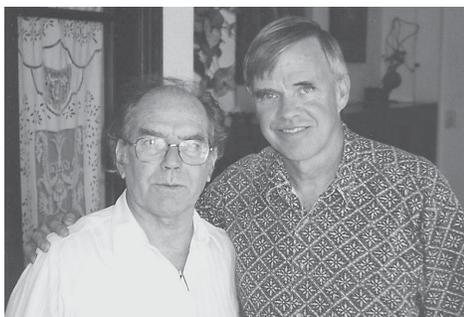
The latter kind of action—the real ‘war stopper’—has captured the imagination of visionaries since Anglican minister Maude Roydon tried to raise an “army” of peacemakers to get between Chinese and invading Japanese forces in 1932. Unarmed groups within a society—the civilians who interposed themselves between government forces and the Polisario guerillas in the Western Sahara in the 1970s, for example—have put themselves between hostile forces and stopped potentially disastrous conflicts. But the method has yet to be tested by third parties intervening on a large scale.

The largest peace teams right now are active in one of the places where the violence is worst—in Colombia. “Large,” of course, means ridiculously small when compared to the kind of force needed for armed operations. Peace Brigades International’s team in that country is all of 36 people, yet they are succeeding not only in protecting threatened human rights workers but also the fledgling peace communities in the north of the country.

It is the potency of such tiny efforts that inspires activists to dream of what a larger project might accomplish. If 36 people can shift the terms of conflict, “What would it mean if there were 100 of us?” asks Donna Howard, who is furnishing protective accompaniment to a woman whose partner was recently assassinated in Guatemala. Howard is part of the team building the Nonviolent Peaceforce, which asks the far more ambitious question: What would it mean if the world had at its disposal thousands of trained nonviolent soldiers?

The new project, if it succeeds, will result in a worldwide peace service capable of intervening in a conflict or incipient conflict more quickly than the UN peace-keeping division and—more importantly—with a different kind of power from that of national militaries.

While the US government insists there is no alternative to endless war, the Nonviolent Peaceforce is quietly attempting to institutionalize a proven alternative. If it succeeds, the world will have two kinds of standing army to choose from.



*Courtesy of Nonviolent Peaceforce*

The NP study concludes that nonviolent intervention is humanity’s greatest chance to mobilize civil society against the war system, and finally to bring it to an end. As long as the international community can think of nothing else to do but bomb someone to stop some conflict it deems intolerable, as long as societies know of no other way to defend themselves but to take up arms, war will be with us. But when they do come to know that there is actually an alternative, more and more people will demand that their governments choose it.

Recently, Kathy Kern, a longterm nonviolent volunteer with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron, found herself shouting to an Israeli soldier who warned her (in an unmistakable American accent) not to try to rescue a woman and child trapped in a house that they had encircled with armored vehicles. “You are putting yourself in danger,” the soldier warned. Kathy yelled back, “Everyone here is in danger.” That gave him pause. Then he added, “Kathy, you are making a fool of yourself. You are turning this into a circus.”

Hmm. This could be the best thing that ever happened to the war system.

*For more information about local Peaceforce affinity groups forming in a number of cities, visit [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org). The Nonviolent Peaceforce is organizing Work a Day for Peace on September 11, 2002, and invites people to donate that day’s wages to the group. Michael N. Nagler is professor emeritus of classics and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-founder of its Peace and Conflict Studies Program. He is the author of *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, which won an American Book Award (see review, page 56).*

**Peaceforce co-founder David Hartsough with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel, a Peaceforce supporter**

## READERS' FORUM

continued from page 5



### Readers Take Action

How are you and others you know taking action to create a more positive future? Send us stories of your accomplishments, frustrations, setbacks, and progress.

We will print selected letters of 500 words or fewer. Please tell us if you change anyone's name to protect privacy.

Send your typed or clearly printed, double-spaced submission to PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or via email to "editors@futurenet.org" with "Readers Take Action" as the subject heading. Include your name, address, and an email address or telephone number.

#### Democracy's Conversation

We've all heard that "talk is cheap," but philosopher John Dewey's comment that, "democracy begins in conversation," speaks to its true value.

Here in Denver, some friends and I have been able to provide dozens of taped lectures by people like Angela Davis and Howard Zinn to the main library, and they're checked out constantly. We've also donated tape collections to libraries in Seattle, Minneapolis, South Africa, and Venezuela and are working on packages for Missoula, Vancouver, and London.

To support libraries that are facing "structural adjustment" budget cuts and/or privatization threats, we're providing tapes to any librarian who can get them shelved. Many have been actively seeking material on topics such as corporate globalization and civil liberties now that the WTO and the FBI are skulking around for potential market opportunities and "terrorists."

We've also been able to share alternative perspectives through commercial AM radio by calling local and national radio talk shows for the past three years. Sometimes the hosts get irritated and quickly move to another

caller or a commercial break, but most of the time we've been able to have respectful debates.

Similarly, instead of assuming the corporate media are hopeless, we write and call and email journalists who are often open to doing some muck-raking work. The corporate media have plenty of institutional problems, but there are human beings in those institutions who are actively supporting a broader discussion.

Readers can e-mail me at publicmind@msn.com for tapes for their libraries.

PRESTON ENRIGHT  
Denver, CO

#### High Noon for Sprawl

Armed not with six shooters but with ballpoint pens, voter application forms and three long-winded, letter-perfect ballots, the Voters Choice on Mountain Springs gang hit the streets of Tuolumne County, to face a good old-fashioned show-down. Utopian promises of prosperity made by silver-tongued corporate cowboys had corralled our city planners into approving 1,500 new homes, convention center, hotel, condominiums, and a brand spankin' new shopping center, around our existing golf course.

This high-stakes project would double the size of Sonora, California (current population 4,500). The project was approved even though developers danced around particulars of water availability, waste management, road construction, and so on, claiming they couldn't possibly pin down a darn thing 'til full build-out.

News about the development spread like wildfire. As realtors, bankers, and investors waited, licking their chops, other folks were gettin' as nervous as chickens on a choppin' block. A no-nonsense gal of good stock named Hope Silfert got up enough gumption to call a town meeting, where we formed Voters Choice on Mountain Springs.

Across town another bunch was gettin' together to take on Home Depot and Lowe's, calling themselves Citizens for Responsible Growth. What was once the gold rush that brought fortune seekers here to the foothills of the Sierra was now a corporate development rush. But instead of cluckin' and scratchin' we got out of the hen house and crowed out loud our heartfelt and well researched concerns, right there in front of the board of supervisors.

After days and nights of deliberation, we had a gut feeling that the deal was in the bag, or in the pocket, as some said with a wink and a nod. Sure enough, on that fateful day of September 11, 2001, the project was approved 3-2.

As I was sayin', that's when we hit the streets, offering folks a chance to vote for themselves. Maybe it was the fear of being tarred and feathered by investors that prompted developers to launch a "Don't sign the petition" campaign, using local radio ads and settin' up booths next ours. It didn't take long before we were asked to leave key locations as suspicious allegations of harassment were made to store owners. At times the law even showed up to insure peaceable behavior. Not fooled and pretty ticked off by all the shenanigans, folks lined up to sign.

Tails between their legs, those big dogs went back to the drawing board, and Lowe's and Home Depot were cut off at the pass. Make no mistake, we know those cowboys will come ridin' into town again, 'cause they know what they want. The challenge is to know what we want. So the gang is attending meetings to keep a tight rope on our representatives, not for hanging but for proper decision making. Secretly I think they're enjoying all the fussin' and fightin', 'cause it just ain't natural for a politician to speak to an empty room.

LEILA BROTHEN  
Twain Harte, CA

# Fairness in a Fragile World

Wolfgang Sachs

On the 10th anniversary of the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Johannesburg summit this August and September offers an occasion for reviewing the fate of “sustainable development” in the age of globalization. Preliminary documents show that the official summit will fail to see a contradiction between globalization and sustainability, so it is up to civil society to provide a critical perspective.

Against this background, a group of 16 activists, intellectuals, and managers, brought together by the Heinrich Boell Foundation, has produced an agenda for equity and ecology, titled *The Jo'burg Memo*. The group, which includes Tewolde Eghziaber, Paul Hawken, Hazel Henderson, Ashok Khosla, and Anita Roddick, developed what may be the most comprehensive policy statement for Johannesburg from a civil society perspective. In what follows, some arguments from the Memo are highlighted.

## Fairness first

Southern countries—foremost the host country, South Africa—intend Johannesburg to be a development rather than an environment summit. This is understandable, given the systematic neglect of equity and fairness in world politics. Yet it would be a regression of sorts, a retreat from Rio, if this were to result in further neglect of the biosphere.

Our Memorandum argues that there can be no poverty eradication without a healthy environment. Moreover, an environmental strategy is indispensable for moving beyond the hegemonic shadow of the North, leap-frogging beyond fossil-based development patterns that are now historically obsolete.

Most of our arguments turn around one core question: What does fairness mean within a finite environmental space? The basic answer is fairly straightforward. On the one hand, fairness calls for enlarging the livelihood rights of the poor, while, on the other hand, it calls for cutting back the claims of the rich to resources. The interests of local communities in maintaining their livelihoods often collide

with the interests of urban classes and corporations to expand consumption and profits. These resource conflicts will not be eased unless the economically well-off on the globe move toward resource-efficient patterns of production and consumption.

## Ecology and equity

At the official summit in Johannesburg, poverty eradication will be highlighted, and the environment will be sidelined. The Memo makes the case against the conventional wisdom that poverty eradication is at odds with environmental care. On the contrary, it argues, livelihoods cannot be maintained unless access to land, seeds, forests, grasslands, fishing grounds, and water is secured. Moreover, pollution of air, soils, water, and food chronically undermines the physical health of the poor, in particular in cities. Environmental protection, therefore, is not a contradiction to poverty elimination, but its condition. With regard to the poor, there will be no equity without ecology. But also the reverse is true, given that resource conservation is best guaranteed by stronger community rights: there will be no ecology without equity.

At the official summit, it will be commonplace to speak about poverty alleviation, and taboo to speak about *wealth* alleviation. But the two cannot be separated. After all, the global environmental space is unequally divided; obtaining more resource rights for the low-consumers in the world implies reducing the resource claims of over-consumers in North and South. The affluent will have to move towards resource-light lifestyles. It is not just a matter of going for higher resource efficiency, solar materials or a new understanding of wealth; it is a matter of justice as well. If the majority of world citizens is to get their fair share of the natural patrimony, the consumer classes will have to learn to live gracefully without the surplus of environmental space they have occupied so far. Indeed, neither the climate convention nor the biodiversity convention are just moves



Kate Saurer

toward environmental protection; they both address the fair distribution of wealth as well.

It is very likely that in Johannesburg the sustainability agenda is going to be subordinated to the WTO agenda. In contrast, the Memo points out that international trade regimes must foster sustainability and fairness, not just economic efficiency. What is needed is not free trade, but fair trade.

In any governance scheme for ecology and equity, emphasis must be placed on the protection of the most vulnerable ones. For this reason, the Memo suggests a framework convention on the resource rights of local communities that would consolidate the rights of the inhabitants of resource-rich areas whose livelihoods are threatened by mining, oil, logging, and other extractive industries. Indeed, in this era of globalization, one of the central tasks of governments is securing equitable resources for all inhabitants on Earth.

Johannesburg will be measured against the hope of a flourishing life for all people. For with the emergence of biophysical limits, sustainability has become a cornerstone of human rights and world citizenship.

*Wolfgang Sachs, author, teacher, and senior fellow at the Wuppertal Institute for Climate Change, Environment, and Energy, coordinated the group that developed The Jo'burg Memo. It can be found at [www.joburgmemo.org](http://www.joburgmemo.org).*



# Tapping the Power of Talk



instantly cure the world's ills. But often, extreme positions and stereotypes are born of failing to listen to real people talk about their real, complex beliefs. Conversation groups give everyday people a chance to put a human face on political and social issues.

In addition, salons hold a certain attraction for North Americans because we've lost much of our public space. Suburban highways, strip malls, and long work days have isolated us, and now there's a renewed yearning for events and places that allow us to connect. Organized salons are one way to reclaim the valuable art of public conversation.

Two recent books aspire to keep that conversation flowing: The revised edition of *Salons* by Jaida N'Ha Sandra and Jon Spayde of *Utne Reader* and Margaret Wheatley's *Turning To One Another*.

The *Utne Reader* book is a practical guide that grew out of a 1991 cover story on salons. This revised edition is packed with hands-on information about group talk. The authors carefully lay out advice for starting, organizing, and running salons. Much of this nuts-and-bolts advice has been culled from feedback from hundreds of salons the magazine helped inspire.

Thoughtful sections aim at improving readers' salon skills: practicing the art of listening, focusing on brevity over long-windedness, and remembering to stay light-hearted and avoid over-earnestness. Sandra and Spayde tackle tricky

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## **SALONS: The Joy of Conversation**

by Jaida N'Ha Sandra, Jon Spayde and the editors of *Utne Reader*  
\$16.95, New Society Publishers, 221 pages, 2002

## **TURNING TO ONE ANOTHER: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future**

by Margaret Wheatley  
\$15.95, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 158 pages, 2002

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At a book festival in Seattle, not long after September 11, I heard a reading by Israeli novelist and peace

activist Amos Oz. Afterward, a member of the audience asked Oz his opinion of a movement that brought Israelis and Palestinians together in coffeehouses to discuss issues. His response was skeptical. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict wasn't a case of misunderstanding, he asserted; both sides lay claim to the land, and no amount of talking was going to change that. Oz went on to say that in North America there exists a popular but slightly naïve belief that if everyone could just get together and talk about social problems, we'd solve them.

I don't think it's necessarily naïve. Certainly, salons and conversation groups aren't the magic pill that will

issues, including dealing with a salon member who won't follow agreed-upon rules. For those organizing conversation groups, *Salons: The Art of Conversation* is an essential resource.

Wheatley's book is decidedly more inspirational. The author's resumé is a full one; she's an outspoken leadership consultant, motivational speaker, poet, and founder of the Berkana Institute, an organization dedicated to life-affirming leadership. Unlike the authors of the *Utne Reader* guide, who have no overt agenda other than bringing people together, Wheatley wants to change the world.

*Turning to One Another* is founded on the premise that things are not right on the planet in 2002, that we live in a disconnected society—but a society that can be made better through talk. In a series of brief essays, inspirational quotations, poems, and epigrams, Wheatley meditates on the power of conversation groups to overturn our assumptions and create a better life.

As the *Utne Reader* guide makes clear, salons have long been a crucible where new movements were forged: Germaine de Staël's salons fomented dissent against Napoleon, Gertrude Stein's salons helped inspire the modernist movement in 1920s Paris, and the informal gatherings at A'Lelia Walker Robinson's home sparked the Harlem Renaissance. Wheatley, in her work with grass-roots activists, was told time and time again that a movement began when "some friends and I started talking."

The core of Wheatley's book offers "conversation starters" on topics that seem even more appropriate after September 11: What is my faith in the future? What is my unique contribution to the whole? When have I experienced working for the common good? These topics may seem a bit vague, but as Wheatley has discovered, it's often these big-life topics (rather than say, a more specific discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) that

generate the most personal, meaningful, and passionate discussions.

In listening lies the answer, I think, to Oz's skepticism. For in addition to providing a place to talk, salons teach us—above all else—the art of listening. Those participating in salons soon discover that they spend most of their time hearing what others have to say. Through active listening—which both books attempt to cultivate—we begin to understand others and dig ourselves out of entrenched positions.

*Andrew Engelson writes on the arts and outdoors for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Seattle Weekly, High Country News, and Backpacker magazine.*

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### **TAKE IT PERSONALLY: How to Make Conscious Choices to Change the World**

edited by Anita Roddick  
\$24.95, Conari Press  
256 pages, 2001

### **THE GLOBAL ACTIVIST'S MANUAL: Local Ways to Change the World**

edited by Mike Prokosch and Laura Raymond  
\$15.95, Thunder's Mountain Press/Nation Books  
324 pages, 2002

### **GLOBAL BACKLASH: Citizen Initiatives for a Just World Economy**

edited by Robin Broad  
\$35.00, Rowman & Littlefield  
347 pages, 2001

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The movement against corporate-led globalization has an image problem. In recent years, reporters and opinion makers have taken an undisguised glee in portraying opponents of the economic status quo as 19-year-old nose-ringed know-nothings. And even when the pundits acknowledge that, yes, corporate globalization is exacerbating social inequalities and environmental

destruction, they often complain that this social movement knows what it is against, but not what it is for.

Part of the problem is that the backlash to corporate globalization isn't led by any single charismatic figure carrying an all-encompassing manifesto. Rather, critics of globalization are what author Naomi Klein has called a "movement of movements." The swirl of voices, causes, and agendas has deepened the misunderstandings of who the protesters are and what they want.

Three new books tackle these misunderstandings by letting members of the movement for global social justice and environmental sustainability speak for themselves. All three of the new volumes are edited collections of essays, reflecting the diversity of the movement itself. The authors have taken what is sometimes considered a liability—the movement's range of opinions—and made it into a virtue. Read these three books, and you'll hear no fewer than 99 different voices.

The title of *Global Backlash*, edited by Robin Broad, a professor at American University, may be misleading, as the author concentrates on ideas for reform, not on mere critique. Broad's concern is to show that, despite what the pundits may think, the backlash against corporate globalization has a host of well-thought-out proposals for change. She breaks the backlash into two categories: *reshape* and *rollback*. It's a twist on the old question, reform or revolution.

According to Broad, the *reshape* school assumes that economic globalization is here to stay, so the best place to concentrate energy is by including social and environmental standards in the globalization framework. The labor and environmental "side agreements" of NAFTA are part of the reshape agenda, as are efforts by anti-sweatshop activists to establish independent monitoring of apparel factories.

Those in the *rollback* camp want to protect or fence off certain goods



from the reach of globalization. The rollback proponents want to ensure that there is no globalization or commercialization of the world's water supply, the world's forests, and certain essential social services. For the most part, the rollbackers believe that local economies are superior to global economies.

Yet even as she charts the variations in the range of backlash visions, Broad is careful to note that the differences haven't led to divisions. This is an important point, and it gets to the spirit of the backlash movement, which is the belief that many different alternatives to the status quo are possible.

What Broad hints at but never really hits straight on is the idea that corporate globalization needs to be both reshaped and rolled back. The

tactics for making change as there are grand proposals. Activists with the Boston-based social justice group United for a Fair Economy, Prokosh and Raymond have put together a comprehensive toolkit for the in-the-trenches organizer who wants to spur people to action.

Want to know how to organize a speaking tour for a foreign guest? Anxious to learn about building coalitions with disparate communities, and the pitfalls you might encounter? Curious to know the history of nonviolent direct action and its importance today? This book has the answers, and in providing them it reveals an extraordinarily diverse and strategically minded social movement.

*Take It Personally*, by The Body Shop founder Anita Roddick, combines corporate globalization horror stories with hopeful visions of transformation and everyday ways of contributing to change. While the ideas aren't as fresh as those of the other two books, the presentation is as fresh as it comes. The book has panache—a jazzy, almost MTV-like layout, bleak statistics, and stark images grab the reader's attention. By providing readers with simple suggestions (such as: raise questions, check how companies are really operating, give as generously as you can, and think before you buy), Roddick shows that you don't have to be a full-time activist or brainy academic to make a difference.

The gamut of ideas found in the backlash movement doesn't lend itself easily to the neat sound bites demanded by the media. This range of voices has sometimes been mistaken for cacophony. But as these new books prove, all the critics agree on at least one central point: human values should come before commercial profits.

Biologists tell us that a field with an assortment of plants is healthier than a monocrop. So it is with social

movements. Diversity must be at the center of resistance to corporate globalization because diversity gives the lie to the notion that there is no alternative. The reality is that not only is another world possible, but that many different worlds are possible.

*Jason Mark is a free-lance journalist and communications director for the international human rights organization Global Exchange.*

### IS THERE NO OTHER WAY? The Search for a Nonviolent Future

by Michael N. Nagler  
\$15.00, Berkeley Hills Books  
335 pages, 2001

As I write, another suicide bomber has killed a bus load of schoolchildren in Israel, Israel is responding with a wall and more invasions, Pakistan and India are poised to nuke themselves and the world to oblivion, Japan is reconsidering its 50-year-old anti-nuclear weapons policy, and the US has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the test ban and threatens first-strike use of nuclear weapons. It seems the human race may have no future, let alone a nonviolent one.

And yet there are voices of reasoned hope, among them Michael Nagler's (see his article on the Nonviolent Peaceforce, page 49). There is another way, he insists, and he shows that way alive and working in the very darkest times and places.

With story after story, Nagler demonstrates the ability of individual human beings to reawaken the empathy of bystanders, torturers, and bureaucrats through nonviolent action.

Nonviolence works, Nagler argues, and it usually even 'works.' That is, nonviolent action can often have immediate effects, saving lives right then and there. But more importantly,



*Courtesy of Conari Press*

#### **Protesting the devastation of the Ogoni homelands in Nigeria**

billions of people already brutalized by corporate globalization can't wait for the rollback to occur. The sweatshop seamstress, for example, needs relief now, and a reshape agenda can provide it. At the same time, however, tinkering around the edges won't solve the environmental crisis spurred by corporate globalization. The major change envisioned by rollback proponents is necessary if we are to avoid widening ecological disaster.

In *The Global Activist's Handbook*, Mike Prokosh and Laura Raymond show that there are as many concrete

nonviolence works deeply into the sources of conflict.

Nagler, whose book recently won an American Book Award, offers a vision of history in which each of us has the power to use non-violence to change our course.

Carolyn McConnell, YES! senior editor

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### THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

by Riane Eisler

\$23.95, New World Library

272 pages, 2002

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“Psychology Lite,” I once heard someone say dismissively of self-help books. In response I argued that there is nothing inherently wrong with the genre of self-help, that the quality of titles in that category run the gamut from excellent to execrable, as is true for any genre. But having read some execrable self-help, I see exactly where labels like “psychology lite” come from, and so I am occasionally embarrassed by my fondness for self-help books, especially when confronted with works designed to help women fulfill traditional gender roles more completely (*The Rules* springs to mind) or books touting the acquisition of money as a spiritual virtue.

Still, the best self-help books do indeed help me by offering insights into human motivation and suggesting ways to be more ethical, more conscious, healthier, wiser and kinder.

Riane Eisler calls her new book a self-help book, but points out that “the self cannot be helped in isolation.” Self-help improvement begins with presentation of a model for human behavior, recognition of a problem by scrutinizing one’s life according to the model, and then implementing practical solutions to solve the problem. Eisler’s purpose is to extend that model beyond the self to seven key relationships. Eisler starts

with our most personal and private relationship: that of each person to him/herself. She widens her scope to include relationships with one’s circle of intimates; with professional and community associates; with our national community; with the international community; with nature; and finally spiritual relationships and ideas about the meaning of life.

Eisler draws on a wealth of intellectual resources, from current scientific research about early childhood development, to the knowledge she acquired in researching and writing *The Chalice and the Blade*, a history of humanity covering 30,000 years.

She brings this wealth of information to bear in examining two opposing ways of interacting with self and others: the partnership model, which is egalitarian and respectful and shuns the use of violence; and the dominator model, which is authoritarian and controlling and maintains its control through violence. Eisler argues that neither model is ever an absolute proposition, but that all relationships fall somewhere on the continuum of partnership at one extreme and domination at the other. If we approach the seven key relationships in the spirit of partnership rather than domination, she tells us, these seven crucial relationships can transform our existences.

Eisler sees the well-being of the planet and every individual on it tied to the achievement of partnership-oriented goals, goals many readers of *YES!* will share: universal human rights, including equality for women and the destruction of patriarchy; preservation of the beauties and resources of our planet; responsible parenting and family planning; adequate health care for everyone on the planet; safe, healthy food.

As some of the more blatant examples of dominator goals and policies, Eisler cites the maintenance

of a large government-funded military, protection of big business at the expense of workers, consumers, and the environment, and the subjugation of women by moving them from the workplace back to the home and restricting access to abortion and contraceptives. These goals and policies are readily recognizable as part of the agenda of many conservative political factions in the United States and abroad. Thus it struck me as odd that Eisler would claim to presume a wide ideological audience, and to speak to people at opposite ends of the political spectrum. As she herself states, “People who were raised and are now living by deeply ingrained dominator rules ... often tend to filter, shut out, or deny information that contradicts their worldview.” So why should people who believe that a large military is necessary to ensure their well-being and that of their children be at all receptive to her message?

Insightful as the dominator/partnership analysis is as a lens to examine the world, I don’t know “how much better the world would be if the Osama bin Ladens of the world would read this book,” as a blurb on the book jacket gushes. I cannot imagine the Osama bin Ladens of the world—nor the George Bushes of the world—reading this book. Indeed much of what Eisler lauds as progressive and necessary is anathema to the people who hold power and want to retain it—after all, that is what “domination” is all about.

Yet I hope this book reaches readers who have previously interacted according to the model of domination and that they will be persuaded by the ethics of empathy Eisler preaches to move towards relationships of partnership, and that thus the world will be improved and changed in just the ways Eisler imagines.

Holly Welker is a writer who lives in Arizona.



Grace Lee Boggs



# Journey to a New America

Who are *We the people* at a time when democracy is under assault?  
How can all Americans, of all races, help build a country that “has never been and yet must be?”

“I love this country not only because my ancestors’ blood is in the soil but because of its potential, what I believe it can become.” This is how my late husband, Jimmy Boggs, used to respond to those who said they hated this country because it had enslaved blacks, forced Native Americans onto reservations, and continued to discriminate against people of color. As an auto worker, organizer, writer, and speaker, Jimmy was always calling on other African Americans to assume leadership not only in their own communities but in the struggle to make this country one that all Americans, regardless of race, class, religion or national origin, would be proud to call their own.

The video in which Jimmy explains why he loves this country was one of many sources of inspiration at the spring 2002 “State of the Possible” retreat in the towering redwood forests of northern California. The retreat was convened by the Positive Futures Network (publisher of *YES!*) to address the question, “Who are ‘We the people’ in the 21st century?”

We came together because we recognized that we are in the midst of a great turning, a time that challenges us to reaffirm our human connection and our

commitment to social change. Since September 11, it has become increasingly apparent that the Bush administration’s “war on terrorism” is making us more, not less, vulnerable because it is further alienating us from people all over the world. For our own health and safety, we need to love America enough to change it.

More than half of the retreat participants were people of color—African Americans, Chicanos, Asian Americans, Native Americans. We/they are the ones who, because of our marginalization and exclusion, have found it hardest over the years to love and own America. For that reason, we are also the ones who have struggled unceasingly to make it worthy of being loved. That is why we came together—to deepen and broaden the struggle to make it, in Langston Hughes’ words, “the land that has never been/and yet must be.”

Vincent and Rosemary Harding, who worked closely with Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s, gave quiet leadership. Since King’s assassination in 1968, the Hardings have been reminding the world that, in the last two years of his life, King was calling for a radical revolution in values and a radical reconstruction of our society. King’s reasons for opposing the Vietnam War

against communism can be applied almost verbatim to the current war against terrorism. "Poverty, insecurity, and injustice," he said, "are the fertile soil in which communism grows. War is not the answer. We must not engage in a negative anti-communism, but rather in a positive thrust for democracy."

"Creating a more perfect union," Vincent Harding explained, "is sacred work, requiring faith and courage. The only way to protect democracy is to advance it."

African-American educator and writer Belvie Rooks pointed out that viewing ourselves in relationship to nature and to 4 billion years of the Earth's evolution requires that we leave behind the labels 'black' and 'white' and create new language to describe our diversity. "The reality is that we are all one species," she said.

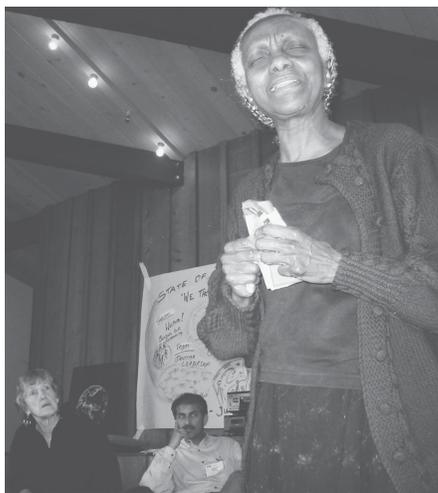
Pamela Chiang, an Asian-American environmental justice organizer, emphasized that "the democracy we're creating is not about winning a seat at the table but about changing the rules of the game. We're addressing the question of power internally, in order to build our sense of self, of family, of community."

Another retreat participant was Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), whose "Prayer for America" at the Americans for Democratic Action meeting last February has been circulating on the Internet and eliciting tens of thousands of enthusiastic responses. A Croatian-American from middle America whose forefathers were coal miners and steel workers, the slightly-built leader of the Congressional Progressive Caucus said that the messages he is getting from all over the country indicate that a new America is emerging, an America of people who want a more peaceful and more just world.

(See *YES!* Summer 2002 for an interview with Rep. Kucinich.) Three generations of Americans, he said, are now awaiting a call to create this new America: Seniors, many of whom fought for the principles of democracy during World War II and who now worry about their grandchildren, their pensions, their Social Security, and unaffordable prescription drugs; the generation of the 1960s, who want another chance to make this a better world; and the young generation, who yearn for something to believe in and an opportunity to serve.

My sense is that since September 11, there are people all over this country engaged in conversations like those at our retreat. Their discussions are not reported by the media because they are mostly informal and spontaneous, neighbors exchanging views on porches or in backyards, or workers on their lunch breaks. But I suspect that a video of snapshots from these conversations would reveal that a new *We the people* is in the process of being created at the grassroots level.

*The State of the Possible retreat series is convened by the Positive Futures Network (publisher of YES!) with support from the Fetzer Institute and several individual donors. Grace Lee Boggs is an activist, scholar, writer, community organizer and speaker with sixty years of political involvement.*



**Opposite page: Left, Grace Boggs and Nicole Pearson. Right, Pamela Chiang, David Korten, Anita Rios.**

**This page: Left, Joanna Macy and Roberto Vargas listen to Rosemarie Harding. Above, from left, Grace Lee Boggs, Dennis Kucinich, Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, Sarah Ruth van Gelder, Tim Iistowanohpataakiwa. Photos by Rod Arakaki.**



## We're All Hyphenated Americans

We're going to use a new term in *YES!* magazine. It may elicit groans from some of you, dear readers. So as a preemptive strike (I understand those are in these days), let me share with you the evolution of my own thinking—and our editors'—around the change.

Those of you who have been reading *YES!* for some time are aware that we host a series of retreats called the State of the Possible. Grace Boggs' article on page 58 tells of the most recent gathering in the series. Each retreat brings together a diverse group of transformational change leaders to weave a web of connection and understanding across the divides of movement, race, ethnic heritage, age, and sector.

The retreats have provided a venue for exploring our individual heritages and identities. At this last retreat, in the middle of such a

discussion, I became acutely aware of a gaping chasm in the way we referred to one another. Many people in the room were referred to by their heritage—African-American, Latino, Asian-American, Native-American—not by their skin color—black, brown, red, yellow. But the rest of us were referred to as “white.” Why is that, I wondered? Why am I referred to by my skin color in these discussions of identity? Well, maybe that's because I don't need to be some special kind of American because I'm the norm, right? I'm just the regular kind of American.

Regular? Who gets to be regular in this multicultural country? And, actually, I do have a heritage. My great-great grandparents came from various parts of northern Europe. So doesn't that make me European-American? If I'm that, instead of “white,” then I claim my heritage. When I call myself a European-American person, I put myself on the same footing as others who claim their heritage. Nobody gets to be “the norm.” We all come from someplace.

Editor Sarah Ruth van Gelder, who was also part of the retreat, was thinking along the same lines. She suggested we extend this practice to *YES!* So European-American is the term you'll see where previously we used “white” to refer to race.

OK, so now you get to groan. You may be feeling that's just too much of

a mouthful. *YES!* magazine can do it, but few others will.

Maybe so. But I want to make a really un-PC confession here. Many years ago, when feminists began to call for ridding our language of the use of “man” to stand for all humans, I was among those who thought it was a bit much. After all, everyone knew that “man” stood for all humans. I had no problem with Captain Kirk wanting “to boldly go where no man had gone before.” (It was the split infinitive that annoyed me.) The s/he construction drove me nuts.

But over the years, I changed my mind. I now see how language shapes consciousness. I've come to appreciate the use of humankind rather than mankind, chair rather than chairman, letter carrier rather than postman. I see myself more clearly included in this new usage. The shift in language was both a cause and a reflection of the massive shift in our consciousness about the relationship between men and women.

Then I watched the environmental movement turn “swamps” into “wetlands.” Everyone wants to drain a swamp, which is full of mosquitoes and alligators. But wetlands serve critical ecological functions. That shift in language—and in consciousness—has moved billions of dollars to preserve and restore wetlands with real consequences for flooding, fish, birds, and beauty.

So becoming European-American feels to me like a similar step in



Linda Wolf

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Thank you!

consciousness. If the term feels awkward, my hunch is that it's because a great many of us still see this country as being basically white, with people of color some kind of exception—and maybe not quite American. I want to celebrate and participate in the multicultural nature of my country. The mix of cultures, perspectives, food, art, music, and appearance adds immeasurably to my life. To become fully a part of that multicultural reality, I need to claim my heritage. So that's why I now consider myself European-American.

Is this a positive step in consciousness? Or an unneeded burden for the politically correct? I invite your thoughts—groans included. We'll post them on our website. In

the meantime, watch for the shift in the language in *YES!*—and just maybe in the way we think.

#### More new staff

In the last issue of *YES!* I introduced four new PFN staff. Since then, we've hired two more amazing people.

Nicole Pearson is our new Retreat Coordinator. She replaces Rod Arakaki, who is now our Operations Manager. Nicole brings a background in social action, networking, dance, theater, and lots of inner work, which makes her well-suited to coordinate our State of the Possible retreat series.

Bruce Haedt is our new Development Coordinator, picking up from Donna Trost, who left to tend to her newborn second child.

Bruce worked for years in business. He's also an accomplished chef (yes, he's definitely upgraded our breakfast meetings), a musician, and a photographer.

We're delighted to welcome these two magnificent people to our staff.

Fran Kortzen, Executive Director



Rod Arakaki

Nicole Pearson



Audrey Watson

Bruce Haedt

## Events & Announcements

### Earth Spirit Rising Conference

The Imago Institute holds its second annual Earth Spirit Rising conference in Black Mountain, North Carolina (near Asheville), September 22-25. Speakers include Thomas Berry, Brooke Medicine Eagle, and Miriam Therese MacGillis. The event will explore drawing on Earth Elders's wisdom to help culture reconnect with the planet and all its species. EarthSpirit Rising, 3208 Warsaw Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45205, 513/921-5124, jneal@imagoearth.org, www.EarthSpirit-Rising.org.

### Ecovillage Design Course and Practicum

Crystal Waters Permaculture Village in Australia, a recipient of a UN World Habitat Award for its "pioneering work in demonstrating new ways of low impact, sustainable living," will offer a two-part design course November 11-14. The course will provide a theoretical base on the design and development of ecologically

designed settlements in rural or urban settings. Contact 59 Crystal Waters, 65 Kilcoy Lane, Conondale Qld 4552, Australia, www.gaia.org/secretariats/genoecania.

### Bioneers Conference

The annual Bioneers Conference brings together environmental visionaries with practical solutions to pressing crises. October 18-20, San Rafael, CA. Visit [www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org) or write 901 West San Mateo Rd., Suite L, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

### Green Fest

A two-day gathering November 9-10 in San Francisco will bring together entrepreneurs, community groups, NGOs, and anyone who wants to participate in building an alternative economy. It will offer opportunities for both networking and celebrating. Co-sponsored by Bioneers, Co-Op America, and Global Exchange. For information or to volunteer to help, call

415/255-9319, or send an email to [gef@globalexchange.org](mailto:gef@globalexchange.org), or visit [www.globalexchange.org/gef](http://www.globalexchange.org/gef).

### Voices of the Imprisoned

Prisoners.com publishes notices from prisoners seeking penpals, visitors, or legal assistance. Visit [www.prisoners.com](http://www.prisoners.com).

### Environmental Leadership Program

The ELP, a national non-profit dedicated to providing leadership opportunities and training to emerging environmental leaders, is accepting applications for its three-year fellowship program. Fellows form a network to enhance their understanding of the environmental movement and develop projects for their communities and home institutions. Applications due by October 1, 2002. Information and applications available at [www.elpnet.org](http://www.elpnet.org) or PO Box 446, Haydenville, MA 01039.

## SUSTAINABLE LIVING



**My husband and I have a little piece of land in Montana. I would like to leave it alone as much as possible. Now it has gotten Napa weed (I think) all over. The neighbors say this is not a native plant and will destroy the other vegetation. They are trying to talk my husband into spraying it. What are the alternatives?**

**R. Sant'Anna**  
Chicago, Illinois

The editor of this column objects to attempts at eradicating non-native 'noxious invasive aliens.' (She claims to be one herself.) Although getting along with your (human) neighbors may be the overriding concern here, this curmudgeonly editor questions the assumption that we can or should take responsibility for policing the environment to fit our ideals.

Nevertheless, we contacted Marty Malone, a Park County, Montana, Extension Agent, who said the plant is probably knapweed (*Centaurea* species). Knapweed is a naturalized European perennial with tough wiry stems, small thistle-like flowers, and a bitter taste. The plant is common and spreading throughout the West. Lacking local predators and thriving in disturbed soils, it can out-compete native vegetation.

If you don't do anything about it, you may find yourself with nothing but knapweed growing on your land

(or even, by law, be charged for the cost for others to spray it with poison).

The Montana Weed Control Association ([www.mtweed.org](http://www.mtweed.org)) can assist with weed identification, eradication techniques and alternatives to chemical spraying.

Retailers such as Biological Control of Weeds (BCW) ([www.bio-control.com](http://www.bio-control.com)) sell insects that are natural predators of offending weeds. For knapweed, they recommend several weevils (*Cyphocleonus achates*, *Larinus obtusus* and *L. minutus*). Although biological controls are non-chemical, they do release yet another non-native species into the environment. But, according to Leona Poritz of BCW, "insects go through a rigorous host specificity screening to ensure that they feed only on the targeted plant." Washington's Okanogan County has had great success with these bugs.

With this plant, our staffer who worked several seasons pulling weeds for the National Park Service says, hand weeding does work over time. While some plants grow from underground runners and are so tenacious that poison may on balance seem the only alternative, the good thing about knapweed is that it grows from a single tap root and pulls up fairly easily when soil is moist. One of the bad things about knapweed, however, is that it is somewhat toxic (it is poisonous to cattle

and horses, which may be why your neighbors dislike it), so you should always wear gloves when pulling it.

For readers dealing with other invasive weeds, visit the Center for Invasive Plant Management website at [www.weedcenter.org](http://www.weedcenter.org) or contact your county Cooperative Extension program or local Master Gardeners.

—Sara Lingafelter

**I am stymied by the new-age-old question: cloth or disposable diapers? Some say that the water required to wash cloth diapers is more damaging to our planet than the waste associated with disposables. What do you think?**

**Alison**  
San Francisco, California

Cloth. Washing cloth diapers at home uses 50 to 70 gallons of water every three days, according to *Mothering Magazine*, "about the same as a toilet-trained child or adult flushing the toilet five to six times a day."

"It takes 440 to 880 pounds of wood pulp and 286 pounds of plastic (including packaging) per year to supply one baby with disposable diapers," according to Environment Canada. Dioxin, a chemical on the EPA's list of most toxic cancer-linked chemicals, is a by-product of this manufacturing process. By contrast, less than 22 pounds of cotton is enough to supply





one baby with reusable cotton diapers for two years. A study by the British Landbank Consultancy determined that, factoring in cotton growing, the manufacture and use of disposable diapers requires twice the water use and three times the energy of cloth diapers. (See [www.realnappycompany.com/NappyFacts.htm](http://www.realnappycompany.com/NappyFacts.htm).)

Disposables also pose risks during use. The wood pulp, plastic, sodium polyacrylate (which turns urine into gel), dyes, and fragrances in continual contact with a baby's skin worry some of those who study infertility and hormone-mimicking chemicals. Several components of disposables (toluene, xylene, ethylbenzene, styrene, and isopropylbenzene), according to a report in the October 1999 issue of the Archives of Environmental Health, are bronchial irritants associated with asthma.

Each year, 18 billion disposable diapers burden US landfills, combining plastic, wood pulp, fecal matter and urine, and biohazards, including live vaccines from immunizations. The bundled fecal matter requires 200-500 years to decompose and can contaminate ground water. In contrast, waste water from washing diapers is treated, at least in most municipalities.

Finally, Jane McConnell in *Mothering Magazine* in June 1998 notes that babies in cloth diapers are changed more frequently, a factor that reduces diaper rash. As a bonus, she says that a child in cloth diapers actually knows when he or she is wet, and hence, is toilet trained earlier. Given all this, I'd choose cloth as the bottom line.

—Anna McClain

**I just figured out that the soot damage throughout my home is caused by candles. I am concerned about how my children's health is affected and about the property damage, and would appreciate any help in aiding my homeowner's insurance claim.**

**Amy Anderson**  
via e-mail

Candle soot is a growing but overlooked indoor air pollution issue that is worsened by today's airtight modern homes. According to Ron Bailey, a Florida testing engineer, just four candles burning for 15 hours caused significant soot deposits on walls, drapes, and appliances in a new model home. Soot can travel through ductwork then stick to surfaces throughout a home. University of Missouri experts concluded that calling in professional fire restorers may be the only way to eradicate soot damage. (See listings for "carpet and upholstery cleaners" or "fire and water damage restoration" in your telephone directory.)

All yellow (vs. blue) flames emit incompletely burned residue (soot) but some candles are worse than others. Heavily scented or soft-to-the-touch candles contain high levels of oils that do not burn completely. Petroleum-based (paraffin) candles also emit volatile organic compounds (toluene, benzene, and naphthalene, among others). According to a study for the California Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, candle soot emissions were not measurably carcinogenic, although benzene is a probable carcinogen. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) particles are emitted by candles (as well as wood fires). These can trigger respiratory ailments. Finally, some candles have wicks that contain lead, a heavy metal that can cause learning disability and behavioral disorders.

Choose 100 percent beeswax candles with all-cotton wicks or candles made of soy, bayberry, other vegetable waxes, or high quality paraffin that are advertised as "smokeless." To determine if a metal wick has a lead-core, rub a piece of paper on the tip of the unused wick. A lead-core wick will leave a gray pencil-like mark, while a zinc- or tin-core wick will not. Be sure to straighten and trim wicks to 1/4" and keep candles away from

## Seeking interns

YES! magazine and Positive Futures Network are looking for interns to join the editorial team and PFN's networking department. For details, see [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org)

drafts to help them burn cleanly. For aromatherapy sessions, instead of burning candles, put a few drops of the essential oil of your favorite scent into a small dish.

Insurance companies frequently exclude soot build-up from their "sudden and accidental occurrence" provisions. The website [www.lead.org.au/lanv7n4/L74-4.html](http://www.lead.org.au/lanv7n4/L74-4.html) suggests that before contacting your insurance agent, you identify the candle manufacturer and retailer and make notes of how and when you burned the candles and what damage resulted. In the interest of your fellow candle consumers, you may wish to file a report with the US Consumer Product Safety Commission ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)), Washington DC, 20207-0001.

—Pam Chang

*Our team of researchers and advisors for YES! But How? includes: Annie Berthold-Bond, Pamela O. Chang, Sara Lingafelter, and Anna McClain.*

### **Do you have a question for YES! But How? Send it to:**

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NO COMMENT

# Congress demands ... **The Halls of Power**

## Inadequate concession stands. Too few restrooms. Fed-up fans. Congressional leaders demand a change

"It's no longer suitable for a world-class legislative branch. The sight lines are bad, there aren't enough concession stands or bathrooms, and the parking is miserable. The United States Capitol building is no longer suitable for a world-class legislative branch," claims Speaker of the House of Representatives Dennis Hastert.

Congress is threatening to leave Washington, DC, unless it receives a new \$3.5-billion building. Other cities are making offers to entice the lawmakers to relocate, among them are Charlotte and Memphis. But San Francisco civic leaders have offered to finance a \$4-billion Pac Bell Capitol Building using a combination of private corporate funds, a county sales tax, and a local cigarette tax.

On June 3, 2002, subscribers of China's *Beijing Evening News* read this story. So did subscribers of *The Onion*—the United States' political satire newspaper. The quotations were a hoax. The entire article was.

The article, which parodied the insistence of major league sports teams for publicly funded new stadiums, described fictional plans for "The Halls of Power," complete with a retractable dome, a Dancing Waters fountain in the front courtyard, and 55 more luxury boxes than the current building.

Faced with the embarrassing truth, the *Beijing Evening News* refused to apologize to readers until proof of the article's falsity was presented. After finally admitting the error, the newspaper complained they had been deceived.

"Some small American newspapers frequently fabricate off-beat news to trick people into noticing them, with the aim of making money," the paper said. "This is what *The Onion* does."

The *Beijing Evening News* fell victim to a bewildering foreign culture. After all, the United States is home to a Justice Department that spent \$8,000 to hide a statue's breast and late night television shows that make fun of the president.

"We love to be misunderstood," said Robert Siegel, managing editor of *The Onion*.



Dennis Hastert

Congressional leaders want a new \$3.5 billion capitol building, complete with a retractable dome ...