

POWERFUL IDEAS,
PRACTICAL ACTIONS

yes!

SUMMER 2011

A Quieter Life Now. Love, Wendell Berry

5 Protests That Shook
the World (*With Laughter*)

Beyond Prisons

2.3 MILLION PEOPLE
BEHIND BARS. HOW TO
STOP WASTING LIVES
AND MONEY

Maori Traditions Look
to Communities
Instead of Prisons

Can Prison Become
a Healing Place?

40 Years Since Prison,
Patrice Gaines Still Fights
to Get Free

*Gaines—reporter, teacher,
and long-ago convict*



Instead of Prison

A “parallel social universe”—that’s what Michelle Alexander (page 18) calls the world that millions of Americans inhabit once they’ve been convicted of a crime. Those in prison seldom get access to the education, substance abuse treatment, and job training that would prepare them to succeed on the outside. Once released, ex-offenders are discriminated against for jobs, housing, and state and federal assistance; millions permanently lose the right to vote. Without a reliable source of income, many pass along their status as outcasts to their children.

But today’s massive budget deficits may create an opening for transforming a system that is locking up Americans at the highest rate in the world. What might such a system look like? This issue of YES! explores alternatives to punishment and banishment—approaches that demand accountability from offenders, but also give them a shot at full reintegration into the community.

Instead of punishing drug addicts, many of whom are victims of trauma, treatment and safe spaces lessen addiction and the harm caused by drug use (see page 24).

Instead of warehousing people behind bars, education programs reduce the number who reoffend and return to prison (see page 32).

In New Zealand, instead of locking up young offenders, a council made up of family, community members, and crime victims holds them accountable for their crimes, and then gives them an opportunity to make restitution and be reintegrated into the community (see page 36). This approach also benefits crime victims; studies show those involved experience less post-traumatic stress.

The involvement of the broader community is key to the success of these restorative approaches. A welding instructor, a

Girl Scout troop (see page 40), or a garden club can create a vital link to the outside. Ex-offenders and ex-addicts can mentor those released from prison; the Delancey Street Project (page 28), for example, offers peer support and job-skills training in businesses run by ex-inmates and addicts.

There are a small number of people we might agree should be locked up: psychopathic killers, rapists, and others who threaten to harm us.

But the bulk of the prison population is made up of those with few resources who have committed nonviolent offenses—especially poor people, people of color, drug users, alcoholics, and the mentally challenged. Imprisoning millions of these people does not make us safer. Crime rates have fallen, but no more so in states with high rates of incarceration than in states that have reduced prison populations.

Imprisoning 2.3 million people is depleting government coffers, resulting in funding cuts for programs like quality education with proven track records for reducing crime. The state of California is just one place where a formerly excellent system of higher education languishes as state spending flows into a prison building boom.

“When we were in the village, we took care of the *kolohe*, the hard-headed people,” the warden of Hawaii’s women’s prison told me (see page 38). “But now we don’t rely on our neighbors anymore. It’s easy to take the *kolohe* person and just throw them away.”

This issue is about what happens when we quit throwing people away—when instead of isolation and punishment, we choose healing and inclusion.

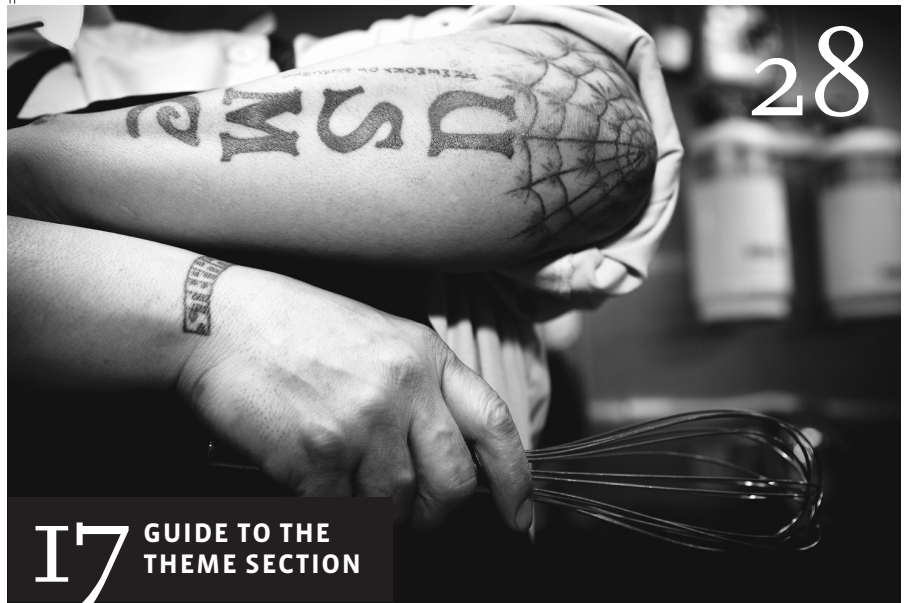
Sarah van Gelder
Co-founder and Executive Editor



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Beyond Prisons



LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

THE MISSION OF YES!

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

NEW VISIONS

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

WORLD & COMMUNITY

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

THE POWER OF ONE

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

BREAKING OPEN

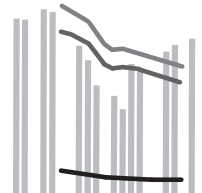
Humor, storytelling, and the arts—taking you into unexpected spaces where business-as-usual breaks open into new possibilities.

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PHOTO BY IAN WINGFIELD

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Don't Punish Pain

What brain science tells us about addiction, and why compassion is the only solution.

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Can Prison Be a Healing Place?

Hawaii's only women's prison houses mothers, addicts, and abuse victims. How one warden stopped the punishment and is helping them recover. By Sarah van Gelder

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Restoring Lives. Now *That's* Justice

I was a reporter—and a convicted felon—when I learned it's possible to find dignity after making a mistake. By Patrice Gaines



Diedra Laird, a photographer in Charlotte, N.C., photographed author Patrice Gaines at home and at the Mecklenburg County Jail, where Gaines once was an inmate and where she now teaches.

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Wendell Berry: A Quieter Life Now

In an exchange of letters with a dear friend, Berry explains why his writing is only a small part of the movement against greed and waste.

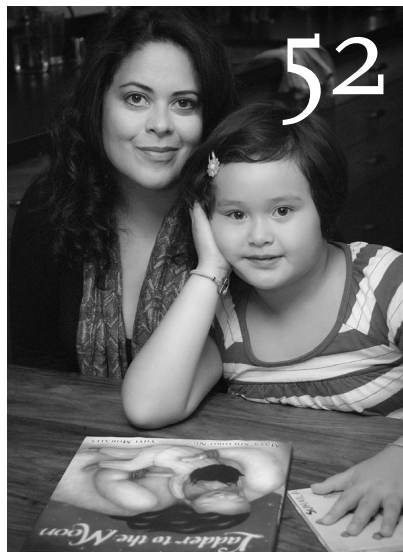


PHOTO BY KELLI BULLOCK

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READERS FORUM

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



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in New Jersey and Virginia. It has not yet passed the New York Legislature and was recently introduced in California.

DREW MARKHAM
Seattle, Wash.

Gorilla Grief: Correction

While I was curator of research at the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston, we decided to hold a wake for Bebe (not Babs), the gorilla who had died of cancer. She was actually euthanized after an examination, prompted by her decline in health, revealed that she had a large number of cancerous masses. We first let Bobby (her mate) in with the body, and he did try to revive her, touching her gently, vocalizing, and even placing her favorite food (celery) in her hand. When he realized she was dead, he began to call in a soft hoot, but then started to wail and bang on the bars. It was clearly a demonstration of immense grief, and it was very sad to watch. We were all in tears.

After Bobby had spent time with her, we let the remainder of the gorilla group in with Bebe's body. So it wasn't the gorillas that held a wake, but the staff who chose to let the gorillas spend time with her body before removing it for necropsy. We didn't want the gorillas to wonder what had

happened to Bebe after she had been separated from them. I'm sure you [Marc Bekoff] picked up your information from a story in *The Boston Globe* which has been quoted numerous times, but Bebe's name and the circumstances have somehow been changed over the years. This event was in the early 1990s.

DONNA M. FERNANDES PH.D.
Buffalo Zoo, N.Y.

We Second That Emotion

Thank you for Marc Bekoff's article on the emotional lives of animals.

One day last summer I was in our backyard when a large crow alit on a tree branch and began cawing, croaking, and fluttering its wings, bouncing the branch up and down. I stood and watched this strange behavior. Then another crow landed next to the first one, and both raised a ruckus with a cacophony of sounds and a flurry of movement. A third large crow flew in and joined the other two in their rowdy demonstration. I felt they were trying to tell me about some disaster. Feeling helpless at their distress, I started for the front of the house. All three of these big, beautiful, black birds came with me, flying in circles over my head, cawing

Should We Eat Animals?

Re: Sunaura Taylor's article *Should We Eat Animals?* No. Our species has been consuming meat since our beginning. Hunter-gatherers did not simply live on berries, nuts, and roots. They also existed on animals. And what of those cultures that live in the far north of this planet? Many of them live on diets of roughly 80 percent meat. With their land covered with snow for most of the year, what are they supposed to do to survive?

Let's do what we can to limit population growth on this planet *and* improve the lives of the entities we consume, so that each of us can have the freedom to eat the foods we individually need to nourish our bodies.

CATHLEEN DORINSON
Point Reyes Station, Calif.

More than just B Corps

Regarding the article on Benefit Corporations, there was no mention of other models of socially responsible, for-profit corporations under consideration. Earlier this year, legislation to create the "flexible purpose corporation" was introduced in California, and an amendment to Oregon's corporate statute was introduced that would similarly allow for-profit corporations to pursue social goals. Under consideration in Washington state is a new class of corporation that, like California's flexible purpose corporation, would permit companies to further certain designated purposes, such as environmental protection or community involvement, beyond the mere maximization of shareholder wealth.

Benefit corporation legislation has been signed into law



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and crowing.

Then I saw it! A small crow was stuck between the compost bin and the fence. With no room to turn around or spread its wings, it had frantically attempted to push its head through the chain links.

I ran and opened the gate. I feared it might be hurt, but it hopped out and flew up on our neighbor's truck. The five of us were laughing, cackling, and screaming!

JUDITH A. LAWS
Bellingham, Wash.



Jonathan Rowe (1946-2011)

At YES!, we knew Jon Rowe for his original thinking, clear writing, and sense of humor. His stories on the commons, populist economics, and the lives of ordinary heroes like John Francis, graced our pages from the beginning of YES! His community knew him as a devoted husband and father, host of a local radio show, and neighbor. He will be sorely missed.

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Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



JOBS

Farming Careers for Young Veterans

👍 American soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan often find that employment prospects are scarce. But veterans who want to transition into careers as farmers are getting help from a growing number of projects around the country.

Michael O’Gorman, a successful organic farmer with 40 years’

experience, formed the Farmer-Veteran Coalition (FVC) to connect veterans to the resources they need to start their farming careers. Earlier this year the FVC established the Farmer-Veteran Fellowship Fund. The fund will provide individual grants of up to \$10,000 for education, supplies and equipment.

Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots at the University of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture offers training to would-be veteran-farmers. And Archi’s Acres, a bio-hydroponic

farm started by former Marine Colin Archipley and his wife Karen, is one of an increasing number of veteran-owned farms training aspiring veteran-farmers.

Military enlistment is greater in rural parts of the country where traditional jobs are in decline. At the same time, the average American farmer is nearing retirement age, and U.S. agriculture needs a new generation of farmers.

A study by the Carsey Institute at the University of New

Hampshire found that soldiers from rural areas accounted for 27 percent of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, compared with a national rural population of only 19 percent.

O’Gorman reflects that farming offers a personal transition away from combat. There is an “environmental peace,” he says, that comes from working outside with living things. Equally important, farming provides a mission to fulfill the needs of a community. Many of the farmer-veterans have found that their



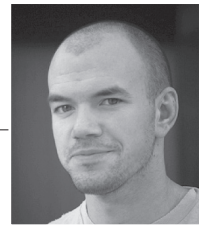
FVC founder Michael O’Gorman addresses a group of veterans in an organic tomato-growing operation during a training session in Ensenada, Mexico.



Army veteran and farmer Sufyan Bunch is FVC’s Veteran Outreach Coordinator.

"LET THIS BE THE LAST TIME THAT WE COME TOGETHER JUST TO MAKE STATEMENTS. FROM NOW ON, OUR MOVEMENT NEEDS TO TAKE A STAND."

Tim DeChristopher, addressing youth climate activists at the Power Shift conference. DeChristopher will be sentenced in June for disrupting an auction of federal land for oil and gas drilling.



new careers heal the wounds of war in a way that no medication or counseling ever could—with new opportunities for life.

—Robert Mellinger

ENERGY

Closing Down Coal Plants

👍 In April, states on both sides of the country made progress toward a coal-free future, with plans to close down more than 20 coal-fired boilers in the United States by 2025. These measures to reduce greenhouse gases may signal big changes for the nation's energy future.

In the Pacific Northwest, the closures highlight concern for limiting air pollutants produced

by coal-powered electrical plants—both Oregon and Washington have committed to going coal-free. Groups like the Sierra Club and Climate Solutions helped to spearhead the anti-coal campaign, and worked closely with Governor Christine Gregoire, the power company TransAlta, and labor unions to negotiate a transition that was fair and sustainable.

The resulting Washington State Senate Bill 5769 requires the phase-out of the TransAlta energy plant, the only coal-powered operator in the state. Additionally, the bill requires that TransAlta provide \$55 million for pollution control, energy efficiency and local job creation. Oregon's only coal-fired power plant, run by Portland General Electric Co., is scheduled to close by 2020.

With the proposal of the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards under The Clean Air Act, the EPA will be able to regulate coal-fired power plants on a national level. The D.C. Court of Appeals ordered that these regulations, which will require many plants to install new pollution-curbing technology, be finalized by November.

According to the EPA, these measures will dramatically cut emissions of mercury, arsenic, and other toxins, preventing as many as 17,000 premature deaths a year. K.C. Golden, policy director at Climate Solutions, said that the agreements made in Washington state wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the regulation, due to the low market price of coal.

"It's not until you start to properly and fairly account for and internalize these mining, air, and climate costs that coal becomes uncompetitive," Golden said. "The EPA's role in administering the Clean Air Act and cleaning up these plants is absolutely vital."

In the Southeast, the federally owned Tennessee Valley Authority came to an agreement with the EPA in April to shut down 18 of its oldest coal-fired boilers in Tennessee and Alabama. The deal also requires TVA to provide \$350 million for clean energy projects, a majority of which must be energy efficiency initiatives.

Golden said that the recent successes are not only real achievements for environmental advocates, but also for local businesses, investors, and labor groups—who are on the ground, making the alternatives work.

"Most folks get that fossil fuel dependence is a really bad idea in the long run," Golden said. "What we're still working to prove is that we can do without it, and that we can power strong, sustainable economies with cleaner fuels. And there are a whole lot of partners in the campaign to make that true, well beyond just the environmental community."—Sarah Kuck

Sarah Kuck is a graduate student at The New School. She is a freelance writer and a former YES! intern.

ALSO ...

Activists in the port towns of Bellingham and Longview, Wash., are working to block the construction of proposed export terminals for shipping coal to Asia. With coal demand set to drop in Washington and Oregon, U.S. coal producers are looking to send their supply where the demand is highest: China.

ALSO ...

Oakland, Calif., has drafted one of the nation's most ambitious plans to address climate change. It aims to reduce Oakland's emissions to 36 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, a goal based on targets defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's leading body of climate scientists. A coalition of community organizers pushed the city to include broad issues in the plan like affordable housing, energy efficiency, and access to healthy food. On March 1, the city council approved the plan for review under state environmental laws. Oakland is already implementing several components of the plan.



FVC PHOTOS

Adam Burke was injured twice in Iraq. Now, with his wife Michelle, he has started a 5-acre blueberry farm designed so that veterans in wheelchairs can help take care of the plants.



PHOTO BY BENNETT V. CAMPBELL

Albany, N.Y., residents gather April 11 for an anti-hydrofracking rally organized by Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

ENVIRONMENT

Communities Push Back on Fracking

Communities have been gaining ground in the battle over “fracking,” a controversial method of extracting natural gas that involves breaking up subterranean stone with a pressurized mixture of water, sand, and chemicals.

Industry spokespeople insist that fracking is safe. But affected residents have long complained about its impact on the environment, and two new reports back up their claims. The first, from Democratic members of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, looks at the chemical composition of the fluids used in the process. It found that fracking liquids contained 650

different compounds identified either as carcinogens, drinking water hazards, or air pollutants.

A second study from Cornell University threw cold water on the theory that shale gas can help solve global warming. Natural gas burns more cleanly than coal, but fracking facilities leak lots of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The study found that the full climate impact of shale gas is so large, when measured over 20 years, that even coal would be cleaner.

Better valves and pipes would help, acknowledged Robert Howarth, the study’s lead author, but even with the best technology, “the total greenhouse gas footprint of shale gas would still be comparable to that of surface-mined coal.”

Mari Margil of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) said the studies

add credibility to what people already know. CELDF has helped more than 110 communities in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Maine, and Virginia to draft legislation that bans fracking, and the idea is quietly gaining momentum. In early 2011, Mountain Lake Park, Md., and Wales, N.Y., became the first towns in their states to pass anti-fracking ordinances. Activists are pushing for similar legislation in New Mexico and Ohio. —James Trimarco

EQUALITY

Preventing Sexual Assault

On April 4, Vice President Joe Biden and Education Secretary Arne Duncan visited the University of New Hampshire, where

they announced new guidance to colleges on sexual assault.

The guidance, in the form of a “Dear Colleague” letter from the Education Department’s Office of Civil Rights, reminds high schools and federally funded colleges of their obligations under Title IX, the Equal Opportunity in Education Act. The message is that schools must take responsibility for preventing and punishing acts of sexual harassment, intimidation, and assault, in order to protect the rights of students to equal education.

A study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice found that 20 to 25 percent of women will be victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault while at college. Most colleges and universities don’t respond adequately to this crisis, according to a detailed investigation published by the Center for Public Integrity in 2010. A companion series on NPR depicted a scenario repeated across the country: Female students who brought sexual assault complaints reported being further traumatized by the process, and outcome, of college investigations.

The government’s announcement comes at a time of increasingly high-profile student activism on the issue. In March, Dickinson College in Pennsylvania made changes to its sexual assault policy after protesting students occupied an administration building for four days. Yale students and alumni lodged a detailed complaint with the U.S. Education Department that prompted an investigation of the

“WHAT WE REALLY NEED IS A COAL-FREE AND NUCLEAR-FREE FUTURE, BECAUSE THE SUN’S ENERGY IS SO ABUNDANT, AND WE’VE NOT EVEN STARTED TO TAP IT IN SENSIBLE WAYS.”

Vandana Shiva, on Earth Day 2011. Shiva is an author and activist on the environment and alternatives to globalization.

college’s sexual assault policy.

Strengthened legislation could make the new guidelines more enforceable. A bill sponsored by Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.) and Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Campus SaVE (Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act), would update the Clery Act to include new provisions to prevent and respond to sexual violence on campus.

—Selena Shen

Selena Shen is on the board of directors of Students Active For Ending Rape (SAFER), an endorser of the Campus SaVE Act.

More Multiracial Americans

👍 2010 census data indicates an increase in interracial marriage. The census results also show growth in multiracial populations between 2000 and 2010, most notably in the South and the Midwest.

The Census Bureau changed the way it counts race and ethnicity in 2000, allowing people to check multiple race boxes for the first time. Nine million Americans, about 3 percent of the total population, identified themselves as multiracial in the 2010 census.

Multiracial Americans seem to be increasingly comfortable identifying as more than one race, says Marvin King, a political science professor at the University of Mississippi. King is African American and married to a white woman. They have a two-year-old daughter. “Children are conscientiously raised as both

black and white at the same time. They don’t have to hide it like in the old days,” King said.

Young people marry partners of another race more frequently than older people. According to a 2008 study by the Pew Research Center, 8 percent of all existing marriages in the United States were interracial, while 14.6 percent of all new marriages were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity.

When it comes to interracial marriage, America has come a long way. When Barack Obama was born, his parents’ marriage would have been illegal in more than 25 states. According to King, “We are getting closer to fulfilling some of the promises of the civil rights movement.” —*Oliver Lazenby*

MEDIA

Community Radio Powers Up

Choice on American radio dials has shrunk in recent years. A handful of companies have bought out or consolidated stations, pushing local programming off the airwaves. But this January, activists and media groups worked with politicians on both ends of the political spectrum to pass the Local Community Radio Act, which gives broadcast access back to communities.

The bill frees up more of the dial by allowing low-power stations to operate on every third frequency rather than every fourth, which was formerly the rule. The change will allow the



PHOTO BY WILLIE DAVIS / LOVING DAY PROJECT

A family attends last year’s New York City celebration of Loving Day, June 12, which is the day the Supreme Court legalized interracial marriage. lovingday.org

Federal Communications Commission to issue hundreds or even thousands of new low-power radio permits. The stations are allowed up to 100-watt signals, which reach 10 to 15 miles.

Grassroots organizers, including faith groups and media democracy and social justice activists, worked for more than 10 years on this bill, after the Broadcasting Preservation Act of 2000 restricted the number of frequencies open to low-power stations. Larger stations raised objections on the grounds of signal interference, although a 100-watt station can’t overpower a 10,000-watt station. A congressionally mandated study in 2003 found the complaints of interference were baseless.

Low-power stations meet specific community needs all over

the country. In Woodburn, Ore., the local farmworker’s union station, KPCN (*Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste*) broadcasts to thousands in Spanish and indigenous dialects. In New Orleans, KOCZ keeps traditional zydeco accordion music on the air.

It doesn’t take much to add diversity to the dial. Media think tank Free Press found that the average radio market has 16 white-male-owned stations for every female-owned one and every two minority-owned stations. Because the Community Radio Act was passed to combat radio conglomeration, only noncommercial entities like nonprofits, religious organizations, and public institutions can qualify for permits. —*Oliver Lazenby*

People We Love



MAHLON MITCHELL
Wisconsin firefighter

Mahlon Mitchell has two brothers who are firefighters, and he wanted to be one since childhood. At 33, he became a union leader—both the first African American and the youngest president of the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin.

Only a month later, Mitchell's union was in the national spotlight. Protesters occupied the Capitol building in Madison in response to a budget bill that cut public employees' rights to collective bargaining. Firefighters were exempt, but chose to protest in solidarity, and Mitchell emerged as a spokesperson for workers' rights.

"The ability to sit down at the table with your employer and talk about hours, wages, and working conditions is not a fiscal matter," says Mitchell.

Mitchell believes that collective bargaining allows unions to make the same sort of contribution he values in his job as a firefighter. "It's community," he says, "and helping people every day."



MARIA AGUINDA
Quechua vs. Chevron

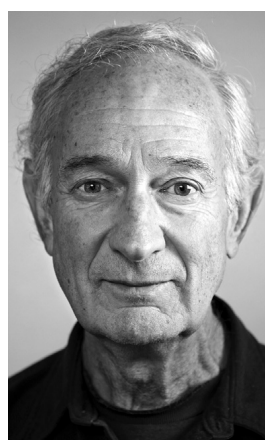
Maria Aguinda is an elder of the Quechua indigenous people in Ecuador, and lead plaintiff of 30,000 in a lawsuit against oil multinational Chevron. Between 1964 and 1990, Chevron pumped over 16 billion gallons of toxic waste into the Amazonian environment. Plaintiffs believe this increased the local incidence of health problems, including cancer.

In February, after an 18-year legal battle, an Ecuadorian court awarded the plaintiffs \$9.5 billion. It is the first time an indigenous group has won this type of environmental lawsuit in their own country.

Aguinda isn't satisfied. The land that once met the food and medicinal needs of local people is nearly uninhabitable. On appeal, plaintiffs seek damages of more than \$27 billion.

On days when Aguinda isn't in court, she wakes up early and travels miles to find clean water. "Before I die they have to pay me for the dead animals, and for what they did to the river, and the water and the Earth," she told AFP news.

 YesMagazine.org/chevron
The story of the Chevron suit



BERT SACKS
Civilians over sanctions

Peace activist Bert Sacks says "We live in a very violent country, and we don't realize it so much." Sacks, a retired engineer, will appear in federal court in September to appeal a \$16,000 fine for violating U.S. economic sanctions when he delivered medicine to an Iraqi hospital in 1997.

For more than a decade, the sanctions caused shortages of clean water, medicine, and other necessities for Iraqis. UNICEF reports that the sanctions, combined with Gulf War bombing of infrastructure, caused the deaths of over 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of 5 from 1991 to 1998. Sacks argues that this mass killing was terrorism.

After 15 years as a humanitarian activist and witness to atrocities, Sacks believes unconditional benevolence—as practiced by Gandhi—is the only remedy to personal and global violence. Sacks does not expect to win his case, but says, "It's not a sacrifice. I want to be happy—that's why I'm doing this."

Interested? iraqikids.org



CARESSA CAMERON
HIV awareness

Miss America 2010 Caressa Cameron entered her first beauty pageant as a way to speak out about HIV and AIDS. Her uncle, who lived with her family, died from AIDS when she was 8 years old. As he struggled with the disease, some of the community avoided the Cameron family because "in Southern Baptist Virginia, people didn't talk about sex," Cameron said.

By age 16, Cameron was speaking about HIV and AIDS in churches and schools. Those venues didn't always welcome her—until she was crowned Miss Fredericksburg Fair in 2005.

"That's when I knew there was something more to this whole pageant thing," Cameron said. "Schools were more willing to let me come in."

Being crowned Miss America allowed Cameron to spend a year traveling and speaking about sex education at events as varied as NASCAR and World AIDS Day. She plans to finish her degree in broadcast journalism and continue her work with sex education.

COMMENTARY :: David Korten

TWO POINTS FOR THE TEA PARTY. NOW WHAT?

The Tea Party has it right on two points: America has a deficit problem and the federal government is spending recklessly on things it should not be funding. But the solutions the Tea Party suggests are ones favored by its funders, the billionaire Koch brothers. Those are not solutions that work for most of us.

Fortunately, there are signs that the country is waking up to the need for solutions that promote the interests of the vast majority of Americans, not just those of the right-wing advocates of wealth concentration. In 2010, the tax-time conversation centered on complaints that Americans are over-taxed. This year the conversation centered on wealthy tax dodgers, including reports in corporate media such as *The New York Times* and *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*. Corporate tax dodgers like Bank of America have been the targets of lively protests across the country.

In simple truth the deficit problem can be readily resolved by eliminating tax giveaways to the rich and cutting government's most wasteful and unnecessary spending.

History gives the lie to the story that taxing the wealthy destroys the economy. In 1961, the top U.S. income-tax rate was 91 percent. Our strong middle class made us the envy of the world, a single wage earner could comfortably support a family, we were the undisputed world industrial champion, Wall Street mostly financed real investment, and the federal debt was a bit under \$300 billion.

Now, the top income-tax rate is 35 percent, wealth is obscenely concentrated, the middle class is badly eroded, we are no longer an industrial power, two wage-earners struggle to keep food on the table, Wall Street makes money gambling instead of funding real investment, and the growing federal debt tops \$13 trillion. Advocates of wealth concentration who claim that taxing the rich is bad for the nation are on weak ground.

"Unnecessary Austerity; Unnecessary Government Shut-down," a report by the D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, notes that in 1961 small business owners and individuals paid twice as much in federal income taxes as large corporations. In 2011, they will pay nearly five times as much. The report estimates that eliminating tax giveaways to the super-rich and the largest corporations would raise \$4 trillion within a decade and largely resolve the deficit crisis.

On the spending side, the U.S. military is the number one example of wasteful spending. We face no credible conventional military threat, yet devote more than half of the federal discretionary budget to the military, an amount roughly



*"Corporate said we have to make time for feelings.
I think this solution was by committee."*

JOHN SIMON

*No matter how much Carl stared at the clock,
he could not find "Peace."*

GLENN COSTA

When it's Grumpy past Sad, it's time to go home.

VALERIE FALCONER



YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

equal to the military spending of the rest of the world's governments combined. Most of our military establishment could be disbanded without compromising our real security and the resources could be redirected to reducing the deficit and dealing with far greater threats to our security, such as climate chaos and dependence on Middle East oil. Other obvious opportunities for cost cutting are expenditures for Wall Street bank bailouts and subsidies to the oil and pharmaceutical industries, among others.

So, yes: We have a deficit problem and a spending problem and there are obvious solutions to both. It is up to us as citizens to demand that politicians act on these solutions and to bring them to the fore of the political debates in the upcoming 2012 election cycle. **Y**



David Korten (livingeconomiesforum.org) is the author of *Agenda for a New Economy*, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, and the international bestseller *When Corporations Rule the World*. He is co-founder and board chair of YES! Magazine and co-chair of the New Economy Working Group.

A Quieter Life Now Love, Wendell



YES! contributing editor **Madhu Suri Prakash** is a longtime friend of poet, essayist, novelist, activist, and farmer **Wendell Berry**. Inspired by changing attitudes among her college students, who were reading Berry, Madhu declared the Wendell Berry Era, and wrote to him, proposing that he write an open letter to President Obama calling for funding to establish new small farms. This correspondence ensued.

Dear Wendell,

I HAVE A DREAM; AND, AT ITS CENTER, YOU STAND—tall, humble, simply magnificent.

Despite all my reservations about writing to you, here I am, hours before dawn, doing something I could not even have dared to imagine only last evening.

I awoke with a dream long before the sun is scheduled to shine. In this dream, I join millions reading your open letter to the White House, courteously requesting \$5 billion—a tiny pittance compared to the going rate for government bailouts—to regenerate 50 million family farms; \$5 billion, in other words, that could support young people who have the gumption and sense of adventure necessary to grow food and sequester carbon in the soil; \$5 billion that would

allow American women, men, and their families a chance to eat and grow clean, uncontaminated, uncancerous food.

Your moral stature and vision are such that all you would have to do is write such an open letter to the president to more fully awaken millions; to start a groundswell.

My dream declared itself loud and clear as soon as I rolled out of bed—perhaps the time is right. It's been a long time coming, Wendell. Your half-century-old patience, my dream declares, may finally be paying off. Your time, the Wendell Berry Era, has finally dawned. Hopefully.

People might now be ready to embrace your vision, holding it close to their hearts while abandoning the illusions foisted upon us by recent elections and by corporate admen and those in cahoots with them. My dream declares boldly



CHARLIE PEARL / STATE-JOURNAL

Wendell Berry on his front porch in Port Royal, Ky., earlier this year.

YesMagazine.org/17rules Wendell Berry's 17 Rules for a Sustainable Community poster

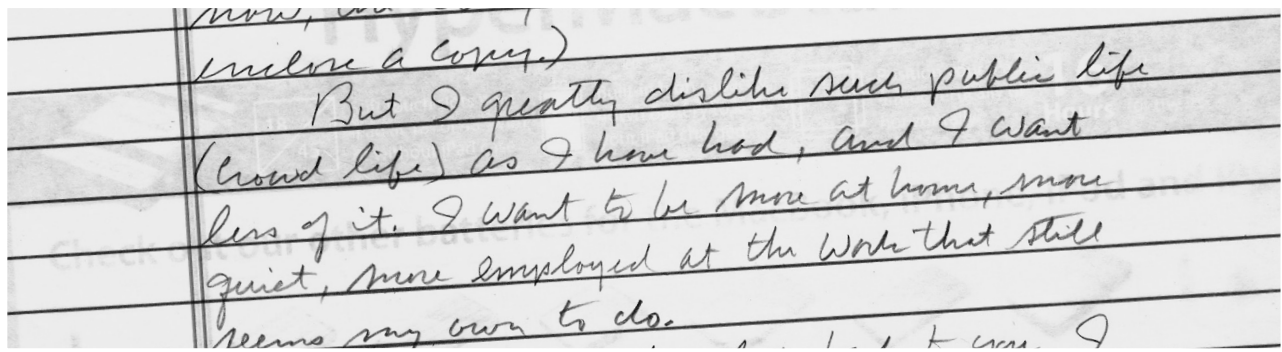
that not only your grassroots fans in the millions are ready to savor your wisdom, but that others, who may not have heard of you nor studied your writings, are world-weary of hokey hope and industrial illusions, and are ready as well. We find ourselves genuinely scared of the triple crises of climate collapse, resource depletion, and inequality, which we have all colluded in creating, and, at long last, are able to hear your words with an openness to surprise.

Your long patience with all of us during the past half-century reminds me of the 50-year-old patience of Gandhi. Gandhi had a dream of walking unarmed towards *Ahimsa* freedom, symbolized by taking back from the Empire India's salt—the original birthright of its people. Gandhi's tiny coterie of conspirators marching to the ocean to

harvest their salt was the most powerful 20th-century gesture of the powerless spurning brute force.

If Hindus in the heyday of the British global economy could exercise the audacity of harvesting salt by the side of their beloved Gandhi, then what stops us from shaking off the shackles with which Monsanto, ADM, Cargill, and their governmental gang bind us? What stops us from harvesting our own food, nourishing our communities, audaciously enjoying the pleasures of eating?

Wendell, it is clearly outrageous of me to ask anything of you over and above the many gifts you have brought into my life. Following in your footsteps, learning lessons given to us by many of your loving fans—including the likes of Ivan Illich, Michael Pollan, and Barbara Kingsolver—I find »



» myself still compelled to write to you from my small world in Happy Valley, Pennsylvania.

The time has come to listen to you and your kindred spirits.

Your era is our era.

We are ready.

Affectionately,

Madhu

P.S. Have I ever properly thanked Tanya and you for all the abundant gifts of hospitality with which you showered Krishna, Gustavo, and me?

Dear Madhu,

YOUR LETTER IS FULL OF GOOD NEWS. ITS ONLY MISTAKE is your overestimation of me and what I'm capable of. As most men would be, I'm delighted to have made an appearance in an attractive woman's dreams, and so I'm tempted to concur in all the terms of your praise, but in fairness to my own understanding of myself I'm obliged to resist.

I'm not a leader. I am, above all, in no way comparable to Gandhi, who was an ascetic. I love the world's abundance of ordinary pleasures. And he was a leader. I have neither the character nor the abilities required for leadership. And I want no followers. If I looked back and saw myself being followed, my only wish would be to escape. I am a mostly solitary man, always in need of quiet, who has written some essays inviting, not converts or followers, but honest judgment.

So far as I can see, there is no reason for me to write an

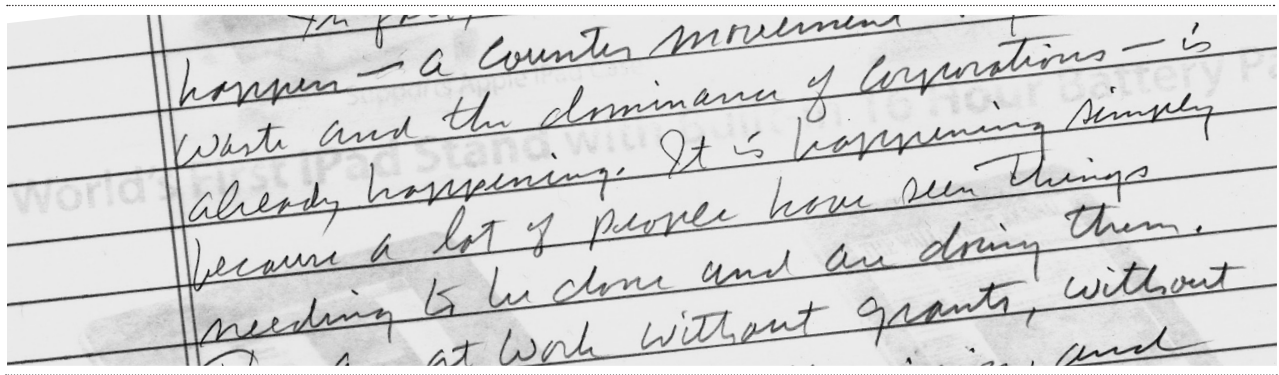
open letter to the president. All of my effort as an essayist has been at least to suggest the real complexity of the issues of agriculture, and of all of human culture in its relationships to nature. I would not now reduce that effort to the inevitable oversimplification of an open letter to a politician.

As far as an open letter to everybody, I think that is exactly what I have already written in my essays in which, by now, I have probably said nearly all I'm capable of saying. Now I have my mind mostly on writing of other kinds.

In fact, Madhu, what we both want to happen—a counter movement to greed and waste and the dominance of corporations—is already happening. It is happening simply because a lot of people have seen things needing to be done and are doing them. They are at work without grants, without official instruction or permission, and mostly unnoticed by the politicians and the news industry. Eventually this movement will have political powers which will be in some ways regrettable. I hope it will have the sense and strength to remain locally oriented, and to resist the simplification and corruption that will come with power.

This movement involves a lot of people—as I know—who have never read a word I've written, who don't know my name. And it would be happening now, for the same reasons, if I had never written a word. It would be happening because the justifications of individual and corporate greed are now exhausted, and better ways are available. The better ways will be helped along, as we know, by large historical forces such as rising energy costs, rising ecological and social costs, and the inability of governments, large institutions, and corporations to respond effectively.

And so, rather than becoming more involved, I intend, and I've begun, to be involved less. I've already, except for



one engagement next May, put an end to my career as a “visiting writer.” There’ll be no more trips to schools, libraries, etc. I’ll continue to do what is necessary, even travel, to stand with my old allies against the coal companies, and to work with Wes Jackson, Fred Kirschenmann, and other friends on agricultural issues—such as, right now, the 50-year Farm Bill. (I’ll enclose a copy.)

But I greatly dislike such public life (crowd life) as I have had, and I want less of it. I want to be more at home, more quiet, more employed at the work that still seems my own to do.

So this is my love letter back to you. I would like Krishna and Gustavo to know I wish them well.

Your friend,
Wendell

Dear Wendell,

TODAY, YOUR BELOVED FRIEND WES JACKSON discussed the 50-Year Farm Bill that you crafted with him and Fred Kirschenmann. Delightful presentation, quintessential Wes Jackson. Witty and brilliant.

Just as I begged you in my November letter, Wes Jackson urged those gathered at the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) conference to use their power and influence to push this nation/Washington, D.C./civil society towards implementing the bill, from the grass-roots and ground up, starting today.

I asked him what type of farm/place/farmer connections he envisions. He reiterated your celebration of diversity

in farms and communities, working with the genius of their places. ... Responding to questions about the farmers and communities that would be needed to implement the 50-Year Farm Bill, he estimated 80 million Americans growing good food on 400 million acres of good soil; supported by \$50 million.

You continue to be the beloved hero/leader of PASA. Your disinterest in power and politics is what, I sense, draws PASA farmers and members towards your philosophy of farming practices.

So, Wendell, there you have it! Your 50-Year Farm Bill for the nation inevitably has Berry moving the hearts, minds, and spirits of millions—despite all his disavowals of leadership and his perfectly understandable shyness of being followed and pedestalized by followers and devotees.

Life is funny that way, Wendell! Don’t you think so?

With more affection,
Madhu

Dear Madhu,

I’M NOT DISINTERESTED IN POWER AND POLITICS. But I don’t think there is much to be gained from answering the oversimplifications of politicians with our own oversimplifications. The World, the given World, is complex and finally mysterious. The truth of it cannot be reduced to campaign slogans or bumper stickers. We must remember this, even under political pressure, and we must keep reminding the politicians.

Your friend,
Wendell

Percentage of U.S. national debt owed to U.S. institutions and individuals: **42.2**

Percentage of U.S. national debt owed to the Social Security trust fund: **17.9**

Percentage of U.S. national debt owed to China: **9.5**¹

Total worldwide capacity for energy generated from wind in 2001, in megawatts: **24,322**

Total U.S. capacity for energy generated from wind in June 2010, in megawatts: **36,300**

Total worldwide capacity for energy generated from wind in June 2010, in megawatts: **175,000**²

Number of ingredients in the “light cream” that comes with McDonald’s oatmeal: **7**

Number of those ingredients made from dairy: **2**³

Bank of America’s 2009 pre-tax income: **\$4.4 billion**⁴

Amount Bank of America paid in taxes in 2009: **\$0**⁵

Number of foreign tax havens Bank of America used in 2009: **115**⁶

Percentage of Americans who want to end tax cuts for the richest Americans: **59**⁷

Fatalities per million hours of driving an automobile: **0.47**

Fatalities per million hours of bicycling: **0.26**

Fatalities per million hours of living (all causes of death): **1.53**⁸

Amount the U.S. spends on the military for every dollar spent on climate security: **\$41**

Approximate amount China spends on military for every dollar spent on climate security: **\$2 to \$3**⁹

Number of viewers who tuned in to the 2011 Super Bowl: **111 million**

Percentage of Super Bowl viewers who tuned in primarily for the ads: **22**¹⁰

Percentage of annual budget the average American thinks is spent on foreign aid: **27**

Percentage the average American thinks should be spent on foreign aid: **13**

Percentage actually spent on foreign aid: **1.65**¹¹

Estimated number of wolves in Idaho at the end of 1996, a year after they were reintroduced: **35**

Estimated number of wolves in Idaho at the end of 2009: **835**¹²

Median weekly earnings of full-time union workers in 2010: **\$911**

Median weekly earnings of full-time non-union workers in 2010: **\$717**¹³

Complete citations at yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. U.S. Department of the Treasury. **2.** World Wind Energy Association, June 2010. **3.** Nutrition.mcdonalds.com. **4.** Business Against Tax Havens. **5.** American Consumer News. **6.** U.S. Government Accountability Office. **7.** Gallup Poll, August 30, 2010. **8.** Failure Analysis Associates. **9.** Miriam Pemberton, “Military vs. Climate Security: The 2011 Budgets Compared,” October 25, 2010. **10.** Marist Institute for Public Opinion, February 5, 2011. **11.** WorldPublicOpinion.org, November 10, 2010. **12.** Idaho Fish and Game. **13.** Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 21, 2011.

Beyond Prisons

The United States locks up more people than any other country, but that hasn't made us safer. The drug war jails thousands of nonviolent addicts. Taxpayers and poor communities lose as states slash social programs to pay for prisons. There's a better way—compassion, not punishment; restoration, not isolation. It's less costly, more humane—and it works.



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Michelle Alexander. *Who goes to jail? The law targets the poor and people of color. Real justice could unite us.*



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Voices of Compassion. *A mom forgives her daughter's killer, and other personal essays. Pages 23, 27, 34, 43*



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Don't Punish Pain. *Science says punishment can't help people who do drugs—but compassion can.*



28

Recipes for Recovery. *A radical treatment center puts ex-cons in business—and in charge of their lives.*



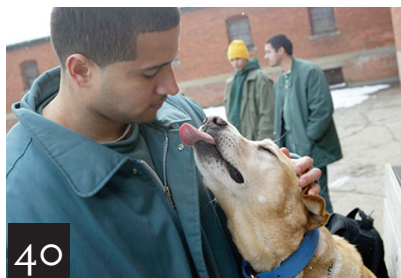
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Maori Justice. *New Zealand turns to traditions to deal with crime and strengthen families and communities.*



38

Sanctuary. *Women learn to weld and grow food in a Hawaiian prison that helps them heal from trauma.*



40

Reaching In. *Programs on the outside send a lifeline to prisoners—books, cultural celebrations, puppies.*



44

Restoring Lives. *A newspaper reporter—and convicted felon—finds hope in stories of restorative justice.*



48

Ban the Box. Restore the Vote. *Ex-offenders lead a movement to open workplace doors and regain civil rights.*



Think Outside the

WHY REAL JUSTICE MEANS FEWER PRISONS

Michelle Alexander

A WHITE WOMAN with gray hair pulled neatly into a bun raises her hand. She keeps it up, unwavering and rigid, as she waits patiently for her turn to speak. Finally, the microphone is passed to the back of the room, and she leaps to her feet. With an air of desperation she blurts out, “You know white people suffer in this system, too, don’t you? It’s not just black and brown people destroyed by this drug war. My son, he’s been in the system. He’s an addict. He needs help. He needs treatment, but we don’t have money. He needs his family. But they keep givin’ him prison time. White

people are hurting, too.” She is trembling and sits down.

There is an uncomfortable silence in the room, but I am in no hurry to respond. I let her question hang in the air. I want people to feel this discomfort, the tension created by her suffering. The audience is overwhelmingly African American, and a few of them are visibly agitated or annoyed by her question. I’ve spent the last forty minutes discussing my book, *The New Jim Crow*. The book argues that today, in the so-called era of color-blindness, and, yes—even in the age of Obama—racial caste is alive and well

in America. The mass incarceration of poor people of color through a racially biased drug war has birthed a new caste system. It is the moral equivalent of Jim Crow.

Racial Politics, Not Crime

The audience has heard the facts: Our prison population quintupled in a few short decades for reasons that have stunningly little to do with crime or crime rates. Incarceration rates—especially black incarceration rates—have soared regardless of whether crime was going up or down in any given community or the nation as a



Michelle Alexander teaches law at Ohio State University. “Mass incarceration has been driven primarily by politics—racial politics—not crime,” Alexander says.

NICK KOOGLER FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Bars

whole. Mass incarceration has been driven primarily by politics—racial politics—not crime. As part of a backlash against the Civil Rights Movement, our nation declared a “War on Drugs” that has turned back the clock on racial progress in the United States. Although people of color are no more likely to use or sell illegal drugs than whites, African Americans have been targeted at grossly disproportionate rates. When the War on Drugs escalated in the mid-1980s, prison admissions for African Americans skyrocketed, nearly quadrupling in three years, then increasing steadily

to a level in 2000 more than 26 times the level in 1983. In some states, 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison have been African American.

As a nation, we’ve been encouraged to imagine that this war has been focused on rooting out violent offenders or drug kingpins, but that is far from the truth. Federal funding has flowed to those state and local law enforcement agencies that boost dramatically the sheer number of drug arrests. It’s a numbers game. That’s why the overwhelming majority of people arrested in the drug war are the “low-hanging fruit”—poor people of color who are stopped, frisked, and tossed to the sidewalk by law enforcement, forced to lie spread-eagled on the pavement, simply because they “looked like” criminals while standing on the corner talking to friends or walking home from school or the subway.

The U.S. Supreme Court has given the police license to sweep poor communities of color, stopping, interrogating, searching anyone or everyone—without any evidence of criminal activity—so long as they get “consent.” What’s consent? When a police officer, with his hand on his gun, approaches a 16-year-old on the street and bellows, “Son, will you turn around so I can frisk you?” and the kid says, “Yeah,” and complies, that’s consent. Usually the exchanges are less polite.

And once the police get consent, the Fourth Amendment ban against unreasonable searches and seizures no longer applies. According to the Supreme Court, these “consensual” encounters are of no constitutional

significance, even though they may wind up sending a 19-year-old kid to prison for the rest of his life: Life sentences for first-time drug offenses were upheld by the Supreme Court in *Harmelin v. Michigan*. The race of the defendant in that case was key to the sentence in the first place. It is nearly impossible to imagine a judge sentencing a white college kid to life in prison for getting caught with a bag of weed or cocaine. That’s how this system works: Poor people of color are swept into the criminal justice system by the millions for drug crimes that go largely ignored when committed by middle- or upper-class whites. And release from prison or jail marks just the beginning of punishment, not the end.

Once branded a criminal, people enter a parallel social universe in which they are stripped of the rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement. The old forms of discrimination—employment and housing discrimination, denial of basic public benefits and the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service—are perfectly legal again. In some major American cities, more than half of working-age African American men are saddled with criminal records and thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives. These men are part of a growing undercaste—not class, caste—a group of people, defined largely by race, who are relegated to a permanent, second-class status by law.

Uniting Poor People

The white woman is waiting for me to speak.

I know a great deal rides on my

»

1 in 87 working-aged white men is in prison or jail compared with 1 in 36 Hispanic men, and 1 in 12 African-American men.



» response. It is not an overstatement to say that the success or failure of the emerging movement to end mass incarceration may turn on the ability of advocates like myself to respond to people like her in a manner that validates and honors her experience, while not brushing aside—even slightly—the thoroughly racial nature of the prevailing caste system. Is it possible to join poor whites like her with poor people of color in a movement to challenge a political and economic system that harms them all, though differently?

There was a brief moment when it seemed clear that the answer was yes. As the Civil Rights Movement was gaining full steam, Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders

made clear that that they viewed the eradication of economic inequality as the next front in movement building—a Poor People’s Movement was required. Genuine equality for black people, King reasoned, demanded a radical restructuring of society, one that would address the needs of black and white poor throughout the country.

In 1968, having won landmark civil rights legislation, King strenuously urged racial justice advocates to shift from a civil rights to a human rights paradigm. A human rights approach, he believed, would offer far greater hope than the civil rights model had provided for those determined to create a thriving, multiracial democracy free from racial hierarchy. It would

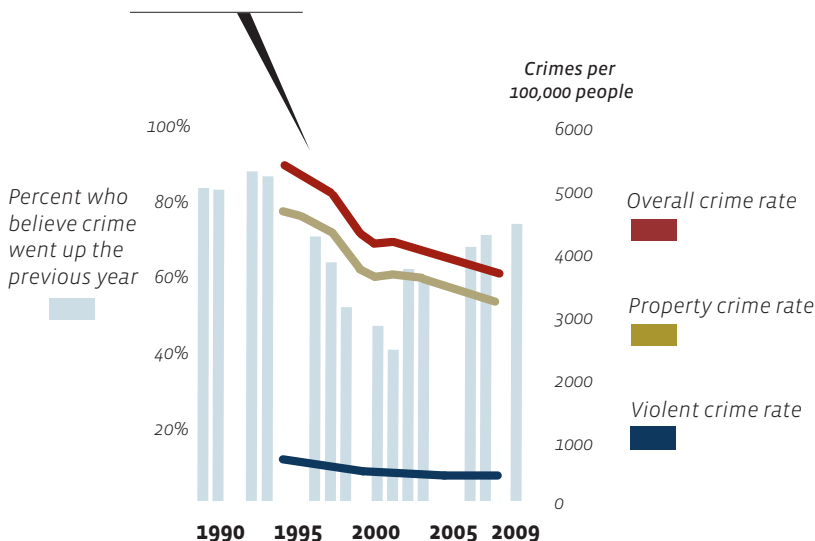
offer a positive vision of what we can strive for—a society in which people of all races are treated with dignity and have the right to food, shelter, health care, education, and security. “We must see the great distinction between a reform movement and a revolutionary movement,” he said. “We are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society.” The Poor People’s Movement seemed poised to unite poor people of all colors in a bold challenge to the prevailing economic and political system.

White Backlash

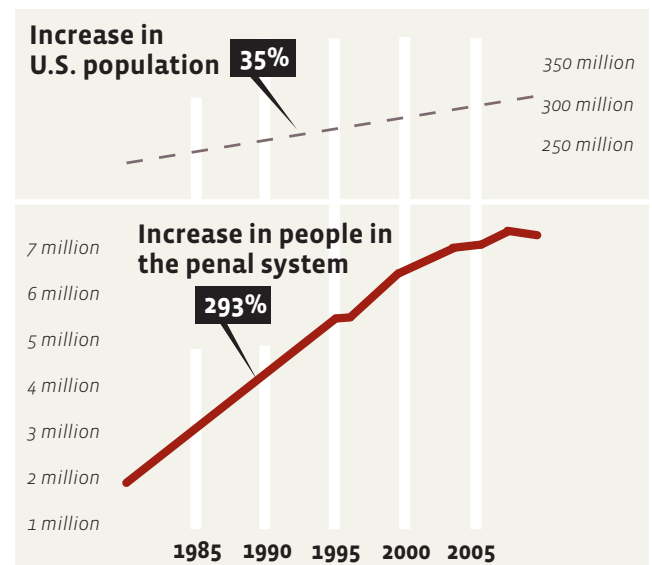
But a backlash was also brewing. Anxiety and resentment among poor and working class whites was on

It’s Not a Crime Problem ... It’s a Locking-People-Up Problem

The crime rate has been dropping for 15 years. But the majority of people believe it goes up every year.



In the past 30 years, the number of people in the penal system increased much more rapidly than the population.

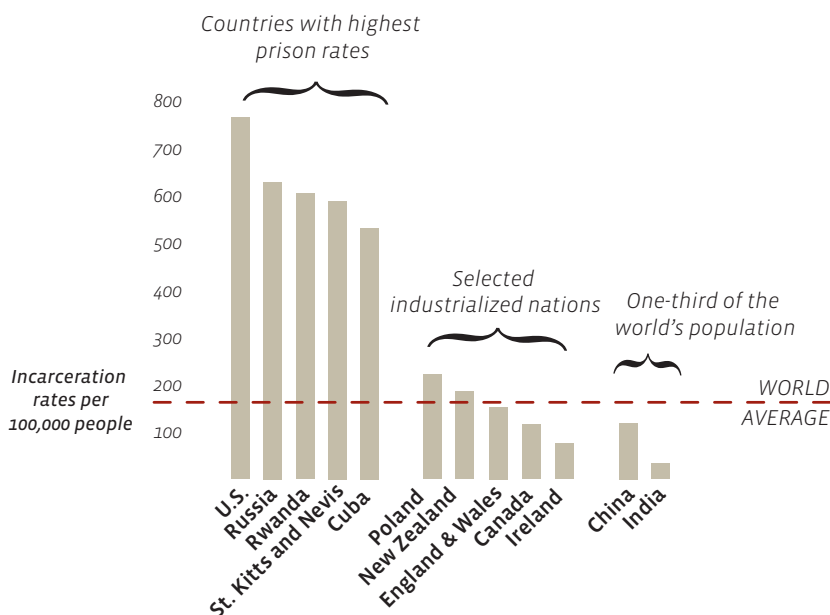


the rise. The truth is that poor and working class whites had their world rocked by the Civil Rights Movement. Wealthy whites could send their children to private schools and give them all of the advantages that wealth has to offer, yet they were a tiny minority that stood apart from the rest of whites and virtually all blacks. Poor and working class whites—the regular folk—were faced with a social demotion. Their kids were potentially subject to desegregation and busing orders; their kids were suddenly forced to compete on equal terms for increasingly scarce jobs. Poor whites were better off than African Americans for the most part, but they were not well off—they, too, were struggling for survival.

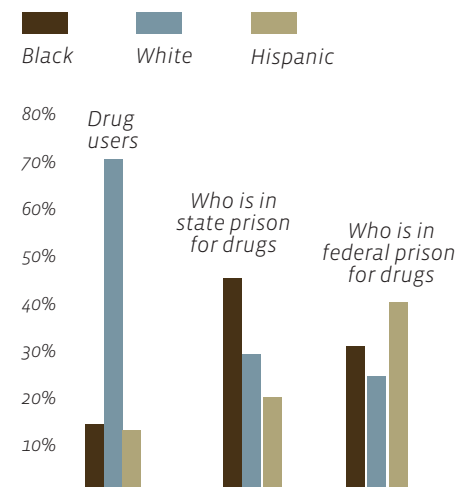
What lower-class whites did have, in the words of W.E.B. DuBois, was “the public and psychological wage” paid to white workers, whose status and privileges as whites compensated for low pay and harsh working conditions. In retrospect, it seems clear that, from a racial justice perspective, nothing could have been more important in the 1970s and 80s than finding a way to create a durable, interracial, bottom-up coalition for social and economic justice. But in the years following King’s death, civil rights leaders turned away from the Poor People’s Movement and began resisting calls for class-based affirmative action on the grounds that whites had been enjoying racial preferences for hundreds of years.

Resentment, frustration, and anger expressed by poor and working class whites—as they worried aloud that blacks were leapfrogging over them on their way to Harvard and Yale—were chalked up to racism, leading to little open or honest dialogue about race and an enormous political opportunity for conservative strategists. “Get tough” rhetoric provided a facially race neutral outlet for racial frustrations and hostilities. H.R. Haldeman, President Richard Nixon’s former chief of staff, summed up what came to be known as the “Southern Strategy” this way: “The whole problem is really the blacks. The key is designing a system that recognizes this while not appearing to.” >>

The United States imprisons more people than any other country.



And we don't imprison fairly, especially when it comes to drug laws.



Source citations: yesmagazine.org/jtf58

RESEARCH AND GRAPHICS BY ROBERT MELLINGER AND DOUG PIBEL
YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2011

Felon disenfranchisement laws bar **13%** of African-American men from voting. Polls show **8 in 10** Americans support voting rights for people who have completed their sentences.

» The War on Drugs

And so the “War on Drugs” was born. Richard Nixon was the first to use the term, but Ronald Reagan turned the rhetorical war into a literal one. When he declared his drug war in 1982, drug crime was actually on the decline. It was a couple years before—not after—crack ripped through inner-city communities and became a media sensation. From the outset, the drug war had little to do with drug crime and much to do with racial politics. As numerous historians and political scientists have now shown, Reagan declared his drug war in an attempt to make good on campaign promises to “get tough” on a group of people identified not-so-subtly in the media and political discourse as black and brown. Once crack hit the streets, the Reagan administration seized on the development, actually hiring staff whose job it was to publicize inner-city crack babies, crack dealers, and the so-called crack whores. Once the enemy in the war was racially defined, a wave of punitiveness washed over the United States.

Democrats began competing with Republicans to prove they could be even tougher on “them.” Some black legislators joined the calls for “get tough” measures, often in desperation, as they sought to deal with rising crime and joblessness in ghetto communities. They found themselves complicit—wittingly or unwittingly—in the emergence of a new caste system. And many civil rights advocates found themselves exacerbating racial divisions, fighting for affirmative action even as they abandoned the Poor People’s Movement that sought to restructure our nation’s economic and political system for the benefit of people of all colors. They had accepted a racial bribe: the promise of largely superficial changes benefiting a relative few in exchange for abandoning the radical movement born in the 1960s that sought liberty and equality for all of us.

Poor whites had accepted a similar racial bribe when they embraced Jim Crow laws—laws which were proposed following the Civil War as part of a

strategic effort by white elites to destroy the Populist movement, the nation’s first interracial, political coalition for economic and social justice in the South. Time and time again, the divide-and-conquer strategy has worked to eliminate the possibility that poor people of all colors might see themselves as sharing common interests, having a linked fate.

It’s time for me to break the silence.

“Your son is suffering because of a drug war declared with black folks in mind,” I say after a long pause. “White people—especially poor whites—are suffering because of the politics of racial division. Latinos are suffering, too. The drug war as we know it would not exist today, but for the demonization of black men, and now your son, a young white man, is paying the price. Poor whites are collateral damage in this drug war. But whether you’re the target or collateral damage, the suffering remains the same. Thanks to the drug war, we have the opportunity to see clearly how caste-like systems hurt us all, even though they hurt us differently or in different degrees. We must go back and pick up where Martin Luther King Jr. left off and do the hard work of movement building on behalf of poor people of all colors. Are you willing to help build a movement to end racial caste in America, a human rights movement on behalf of all of us? All of us or none?”

“Yes, I am,” the white woman shouts loudly, unaided by a microphone. The crowd erupts in applause. She wipes a few tears and smiles. “I just need to know that my son matters, too. I guess we all need to know that we matter. That’s what it’s all about, right?”

Right. ⑦

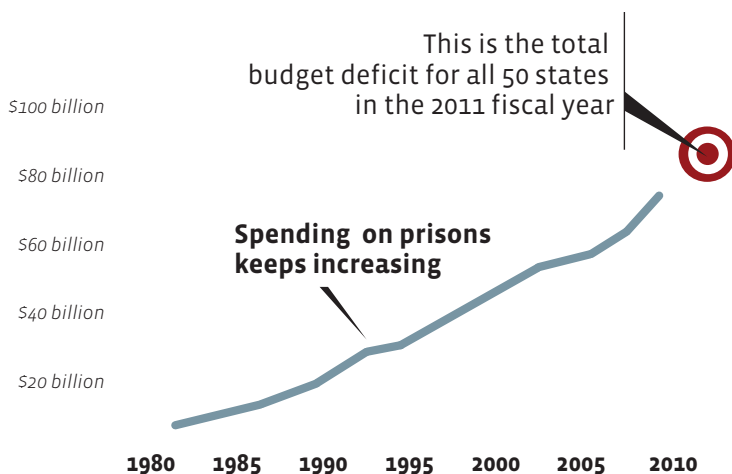
Michelle Alexander is an associate professor of law at Ohio State University. She is the author of *The New Jim Crow*.



YesMagazine.org/alexander

Amy Goodman interviews Michelle Alexander on “Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”

Fixing the Prison Problem Could Solve Our Money Problems



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RESEARCH AND GRAPHICS BY ROBERT MELLINGER AND DOUG PIBEL
YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2011

by Martina Davis-Correia

AS TOLD TO JEN MARLOWE

The Locked Gate

I WILL NEVER WALK OUT ON MY BROTHER



Twenty years ago, Troy Davis was convicted of murdering a police officer and sentenced to death. Davis maintains his innocence, and his family, including sister Martina Davis-Correia, have appealed the case with help from Amnesty International. Davis' final appeal was denied by the U.S. Supreme Court, paving the way for the state of Georgia to set an execution date.

MAMA, MY YOUNGER SISTER KIM, and I were visiting my brother, Troy, like we did most weekends. Inside the prison in Jackson, Ga., death-row inmates and family members sat in a narrow corridor, a locked door with yellow bars and a guard separating us from the non-death-row inmates and their visitors.

After Troy and I went over the latest developments in his case, we started talking about religion. Troy has always prided himself on knowing as much as he could about all religions. He's studied the Bible, the Torah, the Quran, and the Book of Mormon. Troy has friends from all different religions and ethnic groups, and he wants to understand all their faiths.

We got into a heated debate about Bible verses. But when Troy began reciting the Bible to me, throwing in some passages from the Torah and Quran for good measure, I got mad. "I don't have to listen to this!"

I got up, left the prison, and went and sat in the car, pouting, waiting on Mama and Kim.

The argument wasn't really about a Bible verse. Most

likely I wasn't even right about the verse, and I knew it. My daily frustration about Troy's case and the legal system just came to a boiling point that day. I couldn't get Troy's lawyers to do what they were supposed to do. They knew Troy was innocent, but they didn't have the resources to properly defend him.

Every weekend, I sat in there with Troy, while he dissected police statements and pointed out enormous contradictions and inconsistencies in witness testimony. He had nothing to do all week long aside from examining his case file. And he had nowhere else to pour out his frustrations, except when he was with us. I was trying my best to get him out of there, trying my best to get someone to listen. And then, Saturday after Saturday, I had to relive the case with him. My irritation mounted each time Troy found and parsed a new detail about his case ... how could he have been convicted on such flimsy evidence?

About an hour later, Mama came out to the car. Every few minutes, Troy had gotten up and gone to the gate looking for me, she said. He thought maybe I had gone to the restroom and was coming back.

An hour after we got home, the phone rang. It was Troy. He wanted to apologize to me.


That's when I realized: I could get up and leave when I felt like it, and Troy couldn't. He was powerless to leave, powerless to go after me. And, frustrated as I was with his case, Troy's sense of impotency ran far deeper. He had no control over his own life or over Georgia's justice system, which is trying to kill him. And then, on top of it all, his older sister walked out on him, and he couldn't do anything other than twist his neck as far as he could to look out the locked yellow gate to see if she was coming back.

With everything else stacked against him, he couldn't stand the thought that his big sister was angry with him. No wonder Troy called me right away to tell me he was sorry, even though I had been the one who was wrong.

I hung up the phone and bawled.

I will never walk out on Troy again. Not unless he is free to come after me.

Jen Marlowe is a human rights activist, author, and documentary filmmaker. She is currently working on a book with **Martina Davis-Correia**. Information about the case: justicefortroy.org

 **YesMagazine.org/marlowe** The backstory on Troy Davis' case

Nearly **60%** of the people serving time in state prisons for a drug offense in 2007 had **no history of violence** or of any significant selling activity.

Why Punish Pain?

A HIT OF COMPASSION
COULD KEEP **DRUGS** FROM BECOMING
A CRIME PROBLEM

Gabor Maté

The early 19th-century literary figure Thomas de Quincey was an opium user. "The subtle powers lodged in this mighty drug," he enthused, "tranquelize all irritations of the nervous system ... stimulate the capacities of enjoyment ... sustain through twenty-four hours the else drooping animal energies ... O just, subtle and all-conquering opium ... Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise." A patient of mine in Vancouver's infamous Downtown Eastside said it more plainly: "The reason I do drugs is so that I don't feel the f***ing feelings I feel when I don't do drugs."

All drug addicts, even (or perhaps especially) the abject and marginalized street user, seek in their habit the same paradise de Quincey rhapsodized: a sense of comfort, vitality, and freedom from pain. It's a doomed search that puts in peril their health, societal position, dignity, and freedom. "I'm not afraid of death," another patient told me. "I'm more afraid of life." What

kind of despair could lead someone to value short-term pain relief over life itself? And what might be the source of such despair?

Not Choice or Genes

In North America, two assumptions inform social attitudes toward addiction. First is the notion that addiction is a result of individual choice, of personal failure, a view that underlies the legal approach toward substance dependence. If the behavior is a matter of choice, then it makes sense to punish or deter it by means of legal sanctions, including incarceration for mere possession. The second perspective is the medical model that sees addiction as an inherited disease of the brain. This view at least has the virtue of not blaming the afflicted person—after all, people cannot help what genes they inherit—and it also offers the possibility of compassionate treatment.

What the choice and heredity hypotheses share in common is that they

take society off the hook. Neither compels us to consider how a person's experience and social position contribute to a predisposition for addiction. If oppressed or marginalized populations suffer a disproportionate share of addiction's burden—as they do, here and elsewhere—it must be due to their faulty decision-making or to their flawed genes. The heredity and choice-based models also spare us, conveniently, from looking at how our social environment supports, or does not support, the parents of young children, and at how social attitudes and policies burden, stress, and exclude certain segments of the population and thereby increase their propensity for addiction.

Another, starker view emerges when we listen to the life histories of substance abusers and look at the ample research data.

Addictions always originate in unhappiness, even if hidden. They are emotional anesthetics; they numb pain. The first question—always—is



PHOTO BY D.M. GILLIS

Makeshift needle exchange in Vancouver, B.C., which has the highest heroin death rate in North America.

not “Why the addiction?” but “Why the pain?” The answer was summed up with crude eloquence, scrawled on the wall of my patient Anna’s room: “Any place I went to, I wasn’t wanted. And that bites large.”

“A Warm, Soft Hug”

For 12 years I was staff physician at the Portland Hotel, a nonprofit, harm-reduction facility in the Downtown Eastside, an area with an addict population of 3,000 to 5,000. Most of the Portland’s clients are addicted to cocaine, crystal meth, alcohol, opiates like heroin, or tranquilizers—or to any combination of these things.

“The first time I did heroin,” one of my patients, a 27-year-old sex-trade worker, once told me, “it felt like a warm, soft hug.” In a phrase, she summed up the deep psychological and chemical cravings that make some people vulnerable to substance dependence.

Contrary to popular myth, no drug

is inherently addictive. Only a small percentage of people who try alcohol or cocaine or even crystal meth go on to addictive use. What makes those people vulnerable? According to current brain research and developmental psychology, chemical and emotional vulnerability are the products not of genetic programming but of life experience. Most of the human brain’s growth occurs after birth, and so physical and emotional interactions determine much of our neurological development—which brain areas will develop and how well, which patterns will be encoded, and so on. As such, each brain’s circuitry and chemistry reflect individual life experiences as much as inherited tendencies.

Drugs affect the brain by binding to receptors on nerve cells. Opiates work on our built-in receptors for endorphins—the body’s own, natural opiate-like substances that participate in many functions, including regulation of pain and mood. Similarly,

tranquilizers of the benzodiazepine class, such as Valium, exert their effect at the brain’s natural benzodiazepine receptors. Other brain chemicals, including dopamine and serotonin, affect such diverse functions as mood, incentive- and reward-seeking behavior, and self-regulation. These, too, bind to specific, specialized receptors on neurons.

But the number of receptors and level of brain chemicals are not set at birth. Infant rats who get less grooming from their mothers end up with fewer natural “benzo” receptors in the part of the brain that controls anxiety. Brains of infant monkeys separated from their mothers for only a few days are measurably deficient in dopamine.

It is the same with human beings. Endorphins are released in the infant’s brain when there are warm, non-stressed, calm interactions with the parenting figures. Endorphins, in turn, promote the growth of receptors and nerve cells, and the discharge of other »

In 2008, more than **216,000** people were sexually abused in prisons and jails—almost **600 a day** or **25 an hour**. At least **17,100** were in juvenile detention.



» important brain chemicals. The fewer endorphin-enhancing experiences in infancy and early childhood, the greater the need for external sources. Hence, a greater vulnerability to addictions.

Chronicles of Pain

What sets skid row addicts apart is the extreme degree of stress they had to endure early in life. Almost all women now inhabiting “Canada’s addiction capital”—as the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver has been called—suffered sexual assaults in childhood, as did many of the males. Childhood memories of serial abandonment or severe physical and

childhood histories that saddle them with emotional baggage they are not conscious of. What we are not aware of in ourselves, we pass on to our children. Stressed, anxious, or depressed parents have great difficulty initiating enough of those emotionally rewarding, endorphin-liberating interactions with their children. Later in life such children may experience a hit of heroin as the “warm, soft hug” my patient described: What they didn’t get enough of before, they can now give themselves through a needle.

Unconditional Love

The U.S.-based Adverse Childhood

Feeling alone, the sense that there has never been anyone with whom to share their deepest emotions, is universal among drug addicts. That is what Anna had lamented on her wall. No matter how much love a parent has, the child does not experience being wanted unless he or she is made absolutely safe to express exactly how unhappy, or angry, or hate-filled he or she may at times feel. The sense of unconditional love, of being fully accepted even when most ornery, is what no addict ever experienced in childhood—not because the parents did not have it to give, but simply because they were too stressed, or overworked, or beset by their own

WHAT KIND OF DESPAIR COULD LEAD SOMEONE TO VALUE SHORT-TERM PAIN RELIEF OVER LIFE ITSELF? AND WHAT MIGHT BE THE SOURCE OF SUCH DESPAIR?

psychological abuse are common. My patients’ histories are chronicles of pain upon pain.

Carl, a 36-year-old Native man, was banished from one foster home after another, had dishwashing liquid poured down his throat for using foul language at age 5, and was tied to a chair in a dark room to control his hyperactivity. When angry at himself he gouges his foot with a knife as punishment.


But what of families where there was not abuse, but love; where parents did their best to provide their children with a secure, nurturing home? After all, addictions also arise in such families. The unseen factor here is the stress the parents themselves lived under, even if they did not recognize it. That stress could come from relationship problems or from outside circumstances such as economic pressure or political disruption.

The most frequent source of hidden stress is the parents’ own

Experiences studies have demonstrated beyond doubt that childhood stresses, including factors such as abuse, addiction in the family, a rancorous divorce, and so on, provide the template for addictions later in life. It doesn’t follow, of course, that all addicts were abused or that all abused children become addicts, but the correlations are inescapable.

If we look closely, we’ll see that addictive patterns characterize the behaviors of many members of society, including high-functioning and respectable citizens. As a workaholic doctor, I’ve had my own non-substance addictions to feverish professional activity and also to shopping. In my case, I can trace that back to emotional losses I suffered as a Jewish infant in Nazi-occupied Hungary during the last years of World War II. My children, in turn, were subjected to the stresses of a family headed by a workaholic father who was physically present but emotionally absent.

demons, or simply did not know how to transmit it to the child.

Addicts rarely make the connection between troubled childhood experiences and self-harming habits. They blame themselves—and that is the greatest wound of all, being cut off from their natural self-compassion. “I was hit a lot,” 40-year-old Wayne told me, “but I asked for it. Then I made some stupid decisions.” And would he hit a child, no matter how much that child “asked for it,” or blame that child for “stupid decisions”? “I don’t want to talk about that crap,” said this tough man, who has worked on oil rigs and construction sites and served 15 years in jail for robbery. He looked away and wiped a tear from his eyes. 



Gabor Maté is a Vancouver physician and the author of *In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters With Addiction*, from which this article was adapted.

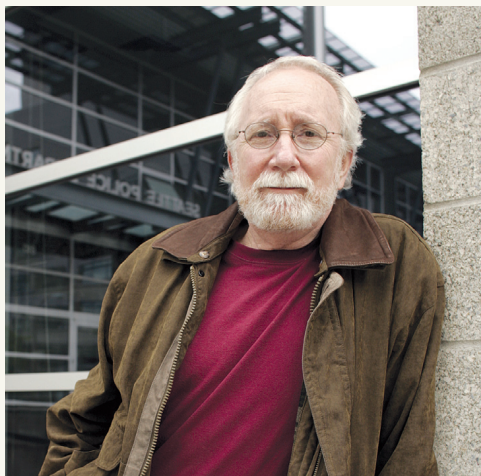
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What you can do about the war on drugs

by Norm Stamper

Drug Warrior No More

**EX-POLICE CHIEF NOW FIGHTS
TO END THE WAR ON DRUGS**



IT'S NOT HARD TO EXPLAIN why I morphed from drug warrior to drug policy reformer. For more than three decades, I watched the drug war destroy values that, as a cop, I swore to uphold. I observed unnecessary suffering, justice gone wrong, and widespread corruption within policing. I witnessed the physical deterioration of whole neighborhoods—streets, homes, and schools made less safe.

And I saw myself and fellow police officers cast as the “bad guys” in the enforcement of drug laws.

In the late 1960s, I worked alongside one of the most dangerous cops I would ever meet. He didn't beat people, didn't even call them names. In fact, he was one of the most soft-spoken, decent cops you'd ever want to encounter. Unless he thought you were holding.

In which case he would find—or invent—cause to rip your car apart, invade your pants pockets or purse, or storm your dorm in quest of a leaf, stem, or seed that would justify a drug bust.

I also recall vividly a moment in 1988 when I responded to a drug raid gone bad. A 56-year-old civilian navy instructor, deeply opposed to drug use, made the mistake of opening his door with a TV remote in hand. When I got there, the body was just being bagged. His family would never understand. The cop who shot him would never be the same.

And some 35 years ago, my friend, Connie, a beautiful, slender woman, was dying. My wife, Patricia, and I drove her to dialysis three times a week. We took her to restaurants and

movies (where, because of her illness, we sat in the front row so she could distinguish between Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman in *All the President's Men*).

As she grew thinner and weaker, Connie stopped venturing out of her dark, stuffy apartment. One hot summer afternoon, she took Patricia's advice: She donned jeans and a halter top and left the apartment for the 7-Eleven a block and a half away. As she gave the clerk a 5-dollar bill for the iced tea she'd taken from the cooler, a hand violently seized her bird-like wrist. A voice demanded, “And what's this?” Connie had not seen the uniformed cop standing behind her.

Terrified, shaking, and humiliated, our friend explained her medical condition and the reason for the tracks on her arm. The cop left in a huff, no apology. Connie would never again go out in public by herself. Three months later, she died alone at the age of 32.

Heart-wrenching stories are inevitable in a nation that has chosen prohibition as its model for drug policy, a nation that has criminalized a disease—drug addiction.

Over the past 40 years, we've spent a trillion dollars prosecuting the drug war. We've jailed tens of millions of Americans for nonviolent offenses, ruined countless young lives, turned neighborhoods into armed battlegrounds, done major damage to the Bill of Rights, destabilized the political and economic policies of foreign countries, and tacitly granted commercial and regulatory monopolies to traffickers from Afghanistan to Jamaica, L.A. to New York. U.S. drug policy is the proximate cause of 37,000 deaths in Mexico alone since 2006.

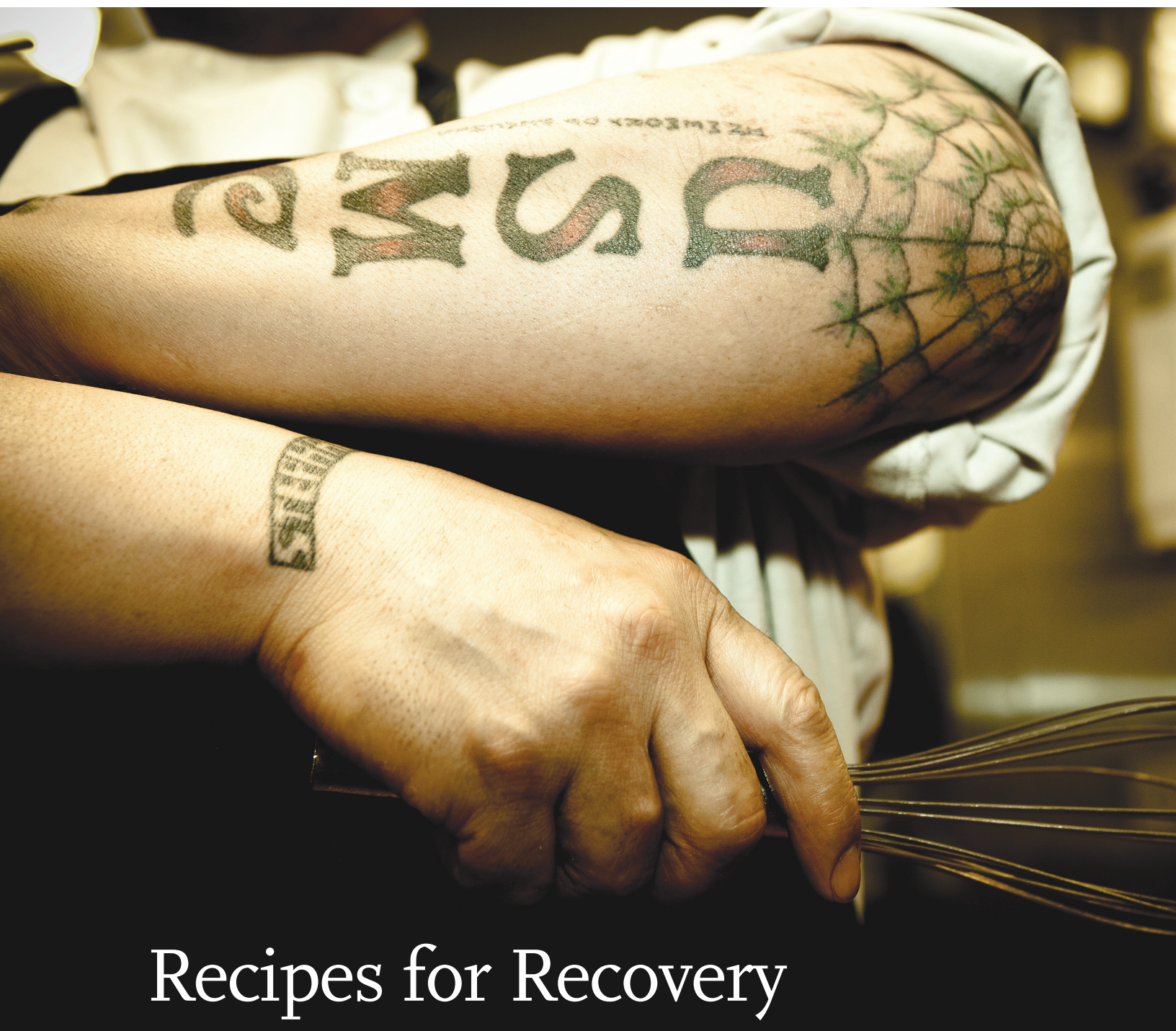
Someday we'll wise up. The only true solution to the horrific financial and human costs of the drug war is to end it—to legalize and regulate drugs.

According to Harvard economist Jeffrey Miron, drug legalization would save \$77 billion a year. It would free up close to half the nation's prison cells, reserving them for violent offenders. We would be able to invest substantially more time, money, and imagination in prevention, education, and drug treatment. And, we would make our communities much safer and healthier.

Norm Stamper, Ph.D., was Seattle's police chief from 1994 to 2000, and a police officer for 34 years. He is a member of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition and the author of *Breaking Rank: A Top Cop's Exposé of the Dark Side of Policing*.

YesMagazine.org/stamper An interview with Norm Stamper

Serving time reduces hourly wages for men
by about **11%**, annual employment by
9 weeks and annual earnings by **40%**.



Recipes for Recovery

EX-CONS SHOW EACH OTHER **THE WAY OUT**
AT SAN FRANCISCO'S DELANCEY STREET



LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Delancey Street resident Saul Valencia at work in the kitchen, above. Before entering the Delancey Street program, Margie Lewis, at right, was facing a “Three Strikes” life sentence.

James Tracy

IN EARLY MAY 1995, Margie Lewis sat on a bench at the Delancey Street Foundation, a residential education center for addicts and ex-convicts in San Francisco, awaiting intake. Until that moment, her life had been defined by institutions—teenage years in the California Youth Authority and long stays in jail as an adult. Enrollment in the program was her last chance—her only alternative to the life sentence that

addictions. Recovery sessions happen in groups, led by people in recovery themselves. “You hear about yourself from people who know you,” said Lewis. “They are your mirrors. Your peers understand the things in your life you have tried to forget through drug use.”

Residents also learn at least three marketable job skills through Delancey’s business enterprises—run by



would otherwise be mandated by the state’s new “Three Strikes and You’re Out” law.

Lewis was filled with optimism. At Delancey, she saw no paid professional social workers, no guards, and little bureaucracy. Instead, the place was run by dozens of people like her, who had been in and out of prison and came here to recover. “I was nervous and excited, sitting there,” said Lewis. “I felt like there was a possibility things could be different this time.”

In San Francisco, Delancey Street, now celebrating its 40th year, has quietly built a model program that has kept thousands of addicts and ex-offenders from landing back in prison. It isn’t just a treatment program—it’s an all-hands-on-deck community that recognizes that everyone, even an addict or ex-convict, has a skill to offer others. At Delancey Street, you don’t just go through treatment; you are put to work helping those around you rebuild their lives.

Lewis, who had only completed her G.E.D. a few months earlier while in county jail, was tasked with teaching others how to do the same. Former addicts also help their peers kick their

ex-offenders. They work at one of many ventures such as the on-site restaurant, the moving company, the Christmas tree sales lot, the landscape business, or the digital print shop. The enterprises supply roughly 60 percent of Delancey’s funding.

Breaking the Prison Cycle

California is second only to Texas in the number of people in its prisons, according to the Pew Center on the States. The state experienced a prison construction boom after decades of laws that lengthened sentences—even for nonviolent crimes. A report by the California Legislative Analyst’s Office shows that, in its first decade, Three Strikes flooded more than 80,000 new inmates into the prison system, many for petty drug possession.

At the end of most sentences is a revolving door that leads back to prison. The formerly incarcerated return to the outside with few of the resources they need to survive—no job, no place to live, and no support network. About two-thirds of those released from the California prison system return there within three years. The cost of maintaining a bloated »

Within three years of their release, **67%** of former prisoners are rearrested and **52%** are re-incarcerated.



» prison system has drained the state budget. California expects to spend \$9 billion on corrections in its 2011-2012 budget, and has had to wrestle with a deficit of more than \$25 billion by cutting health care and social services. The human costs of a correction system that tears apart families and communities are even greater.

In contrast, Delancey started as a tiny economic investment that produces giant returns—in the form of recovered ex-addicts and ex-felons who become healthy, contributing members of a community. Delancey's founder, Mimi Silbert, grew up in a poor community on the Lower East

main headquarters is now in a four-story complex on the waterfront in the city's South Beach neighborhood, with housing and retail businesses, including a restaurant, outdoor café, and bookstore. By the mid-1990s, the organization had opened branches in Los Angeles, Calif.; San Juan Pueblo, N.M.; Greensboro, N.C.; and Brewster, N.Y. In 2007, Delancey began renovations on Norman Rockwell's historic home in Stockbridge, Mass., and now runs a treatment program there. Each branch shares the same basic model but offers training to match the local economy. In rural New Mexico, residents can learn wastewater treatment

to help keep parolees out of prison and in community service programs and helped San Francisco write a master plan to reduce crime among youth. It has also started a program inside San Mateo County's jail based on the Delancey Street "each one teach one" philosophy. And a number of Delancey Street graduates have started their own treatment programs based on the model they lived and worked in for years.

In Service to Each Other

You don't have to have a past like Lewis' to get into Delancey. You can just show up for lunch. Delancey owns

DELANCEY'S RESIDENTS LEARN, OFTEN FOR THE FIRST TIME, THAT THEY HAVE VALUE AND CAN MAKE AND DO THINGS THAT ARE OF VALUE TO OTHERS.

Side of New York, the daughter of European Jews. "As the years went by, I began to see people who didn't get out of the ghetto, and who by a hair turn, ended up in prison," she said in an interview with *Southern California Woman Magazine*.

Silbert, who holds dual doctorates in criminology and psychology from UC-Berkeley, teamed with John Maher, a former addict from the South Bronx. In 1972, the year after President Nixon declared the "War on Drugs," the two drew from their family backgrounds, naming their project after a New York street known as the starting point for new immigrants. Delancey Street began with a thousand-dollar loan and has since charted a new path in addiction treatment—challenging drug abusers and offenders to take maximum personal responsibility within the context of a community of support and mutual aid.

Delancey Street opened its first home in the former Russian Consulate building in San Francisco. Its

and livestock management. In Stockbridge, they can learn stagecraft and study the performing arts.

Most importantly, Delancey's residents learn, often for the first time, that they have value and can make and do things that are of value to others. And Delancey's approach to treatment confirms that compassion and respect can be more fiscally sound than the dehumanization and punishment that happens in the prison system.

Delancey Street's success has turned heads and won respect from experts and leaders all over the world. Former President Bill Clinton sent his drug czar to San Francisco to consult with Silbert. Its board of governors includes influentials such as former Secretary of State George Shultz and Senator Diane Feinstein. Delancey has trained people in 450 cities in 48 states and 25 countries and is helping groups in South Africa and Singapore launch similar treatment programs. It has worked with the California Department of Corrections on policy changes

and operates a renowned waterfront restaurant at its South Beach location.

The expansive American-themed menu changes daily and features items chosen by Delancey's staff—such as spit-roasted chicken, chorizo omelettes, and Latin scallop ceviche.

An impeccably groomed maître d' greets my girlfriend and me, his tattoo peeking up over his collar. Looking around the room, I notice members of the city's political elite seated near a mother with three small children, and next to her, a group of electrical workers on lunch break. All receive the same respect from the waiters—who seem just a little nervous, like actors on opening night of a play. The food rivals anything offered farther up the Embarcadero at the foodie bistros and take-out carts. Our waiter returns several times to confirm that my ahi tuna sandwich is cooked perfectly.

No one at Delancey Street, whether a dishwasher or the executive director, receives a wage. Instead, they receive housing, treatment, and food.

All money generated from Delancey Street's enterprises is returned to keep the program running without government funding. At first this took resident Sean Cronk by surprise. "I asked 'Who is going to control us?' In prison, I was used to having guards make all of my life decisions for me!" Instead, he answers to peers, ex-offenders like himself.

Delancey has graduated more than 18,000 people—bringing them, as they see it, out of "America's underclass into society as ... citizens living decent, legitimate, and productive lives." More than 10,000 of them arrived illiterate and have gone on to receive high-school equivalency degrees. Delancey's alumni go on to a wide range of careers—such as firefighter, carpenter, and graphic designer. The organization relies on its graduates to come back, counsel, volunteer, and train the new arrivals. "At Delancey, we're responsible for each other. We're based on the idea of family and community. We're not really a business, institution, or even a program," said resident Brett Crawford.

After graduating from Delancey, Margie Lewis founded a nonprofit called Into the Solution, based in Oakland, Calif. The group helps formerly incarcerated people find affordable housing. "It's what you learn at Delancey. You have to give back what you have been given. It's a lifelong commitment for me to help people who are in the same situation I was in not so long ago." ⑦



James Tracy is the co-author of the forthcoming book *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times*. He is a longtime economic justice organizer in the San Francisco Bay Area and works for Community Housing Partnership.



LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE

James Ludwig, left, and Leland Stanful work in the Delancey Street auto shop. Program participants learn vocational skills at business ventures run by residents.

Average cost for tuition and room and board at American public colleges in 2008–2009 was **\$12,113**. Average cost to lock up an inmate for a year was about **\$29,000**.

School of Second Chances

INMATES WHO GET AN EDUCATION ARE LESS LIKELY TO REOFFEND WHEN THEY'RE RELEASED. SO WHY ARE PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS GETTING CUT?



PHOTO BY JOHN ESTES

Inmate students show their newly earned A.A. degrees and college credit certificates at the 2009 University Beyond Bars graduation. Kimonti Carter, interviewed for this article, is front row, third from left.

Carol Estes

Washington State Reformatory looks like a college, and in one improbable sense, it is. A massive stone temple of a building, it has sat for a hundred years atop a campus of rolling lawn and manicured flower beds, overlooking groves of giant evergreens and pink rhododendrons. Today, as families walk up the wide granite staircase to a University Beyond Bars graduation, the scene is like that at any college—except that the arched windows here are bricked in and the walls topped with coils of razor wire.

And these college students are staying a lot longer than four years. They've been convicted of crimes classified as "serious violent," and their sentences run from a decade or so to well beyond their natural lifetimes. Hardly college material, it would seem.

But soon they'll be awarded certificates showing the college credit they've earned from Ohio University in courses ranging from general psychology to precalculus to Renaissance poetry. Two men will receive Associates Degrees. They've earned the right

to be proud. They have helped design and create an independent prison college program, and they have earned, over the last five years, a total of more than 2,000 hours in college credit.

A Mean-Spirited Time

Thirty years ago, a successful prison college program would not have been particularly remarkable. Close to 400 college programs operated in prisons across the nation, funded primarily by federal Pell Grants. Thousands of men and women left prison with

college degrees and a chance at a better life. And in those days, even though crime rates were *higher* than they are today, people generally believed that men and women who served a prison sentence had paid their “debt to society” and earned a second chance. Besides, taxpayers were repaid many times over by those who earned college degrees in prison, since only 12 to 33 percent of them reoffended compared to a national recidivism rate of nearly 70 percent.

But today’s unlucky prisoners live in a different America. This one is the end product of three decades of tough-on-crime legislation. Pell Grants for pris-

themes emerged. First, surprise that prisoners are not only a pleasure to teach compared to college students on the outside, but also talented and often brilliant.

The second theme was more ominous: To do the work of educating prisoners in the United States, it is necessary to “fly under the radar.” Just one misstep or piece of bad luck—one legislator bellyaching publicly about college education wasted on criminals, one guards’ union rep griping that criminals are running the prison system, just one individual who commits a horrific crime—can put a highly suc-

a menace, but also those who are just starting to serve their sentences. They see me as a role model and see what can be accomplished in spite of one’s circumstances.”

Noel Caldellis, a young yoga practitioner and UBB teaching assistant, says, “When I see guys carrying textbooks out to the yard, meeting for study halls, or when I hear that the latest bet between two students is being placed on the outcome of their math tests rather than on a football game, I know that UBB is cultivating something unique.”

Caldellis and the others are right.

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Taking aim at the half-inch gap beneath the cell door with the folded and flattened end of an empty toothpaste tube I’ve fashioned specifically for this purpose, I flick it through the opening, sending it skittering across the stained concrete floor outside the cell. I know it has come to rest in front of the cell next door; a thin line (of threads that I have pulled from my orange coveralls and painstakingly braided together for strength) trails out behind it, leading back to me. Seated on the floor beside the door, I wait.

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Their achievement is remarkable in a country that imprisons more of its population than ever before, for longer periods of time than ever before. As UBB student and teaching assistant Kimonti Carter puts it, "UBB is just as life-changing as fresh water to villages in underdeveloped countries, and just as important."

Program at Risk

But the prison educator's nightmare has come true in Washington. In January 2011, a corrections officer, Jayme Biendl, was brutally murdered by an inmate at WSR—the first death of a guard in Washington since the '70s. All of the prisoners at the institution were punished with weeks of cell confinement. The state prison system has convulsed with a flurry of zero-tolerance rule enforcement, blaming programs for coddling prisoners and punitively transferring prisoners who have done nothing wrong.

"You're going to have to use every bit of political clout you have," one DOC employee told us, "because this will set programs back 25 years." That discouraging process has already begun. But Stacey Reeh, UBB's program director, prefers the advice of one of its students, a man who's been in prison long enough to have experienced everything the system can dish out, from riots to years in solitary confinement: "You can't let it knock the juice out of you. You just roll with it."

That's what UBB intends to do. 



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Average cost for tuition and room and board at American public colleges in 2008–2009 was **\$12,113**. Average cost to lock up an inmate for a year was about **\$29,000**.

School of Second Chances

INMATES WHO GET AN EDUCATION ARE LESS LIKELY TO REOFFEND WHEN THEY'RE RELEASED. SO WHY ARE PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS GETTING CUT?



PHOTO BY JOHN ESTES

Inmate students show their newly earned A.A. degrees and college credit certificates at the 2009 University Beyond Bars graduation. Kimonti Carter, interviewed for this article, is front row, third from left.

Carol Estes

Washington State Reformatory looks like a college, and in one improbable sense, it is. A massive stone temple of a building, it has sat for a hundred years atop a campus of rolling lawn and manicured flower beds, overlooking groves of giant evergreens and pink rhododendrons. Today, as families walk up the wide granite staircase to a University Beyond Bars graduation, the scene is like that at any college—except that the arched windows here are bricked in and the walls topped with coils of razor wire.

And these college students are staying a lot longer than four years. They've been convicted of crimes classified as "serious violent," and their sentences run from a decade or so to well beyond their natural lifetimes. Hardly college material, it would seem.

But soon they'll be awarded certificates showing the college credit they've earned from Ohio University in courses ranging from general psychology to precalculus to Renaissance poetry. Two men will receive Associates Degrees. They've earned the right

to be proud. They have helped design and create an independent prison college program, and they have earned, over the last five years, a total of more than 2,000 hours in college credit.

A Mean-Spirited Time

Thirty years ago, a successful prison college program would not have been particularly remarkable. Close to 400 college programs operated in prisons across the nation, funded primarily by federal Pell Grants. Thousands of men and women left prison with

college degrees and a chance at a better life. And in those days, even though crime rates were *higher* than they are today, people generally believed that men and women who served a prison sentence had paid their “debt to society” and earned a second chance. Besides, taxpayers were repaid many times over by those who earned college degrees in prison, since only 12 to 33 percent of them reoffended compared to a national recidivism rate of nearly 70 percent.

But today’s unlucky prisoners live in a different America. This one is the end product of three decades of tough-on-crime legislation. Pell Grants for pris-

themes emerged. First, surprise that prisoners are not only a pleasure to teach compared to college students on the outside, but also talented and often brilliant.

The second theme was more ominous: To do the work of educating prisoners in the United States, it is necessary to “fly under the radar.” Just one misstep or piece of bad luck—one legislator bellyaching publicly about college education wasted on criminals, one guards’ union rep griping that criminals are running the prison system, just one individual who commits a horrific crime—can put a highly suc-

a menace, but also those who are just starting to serve their sentences. They see me as a role model and see what can be accomplished in spite of one’s circumstances.”

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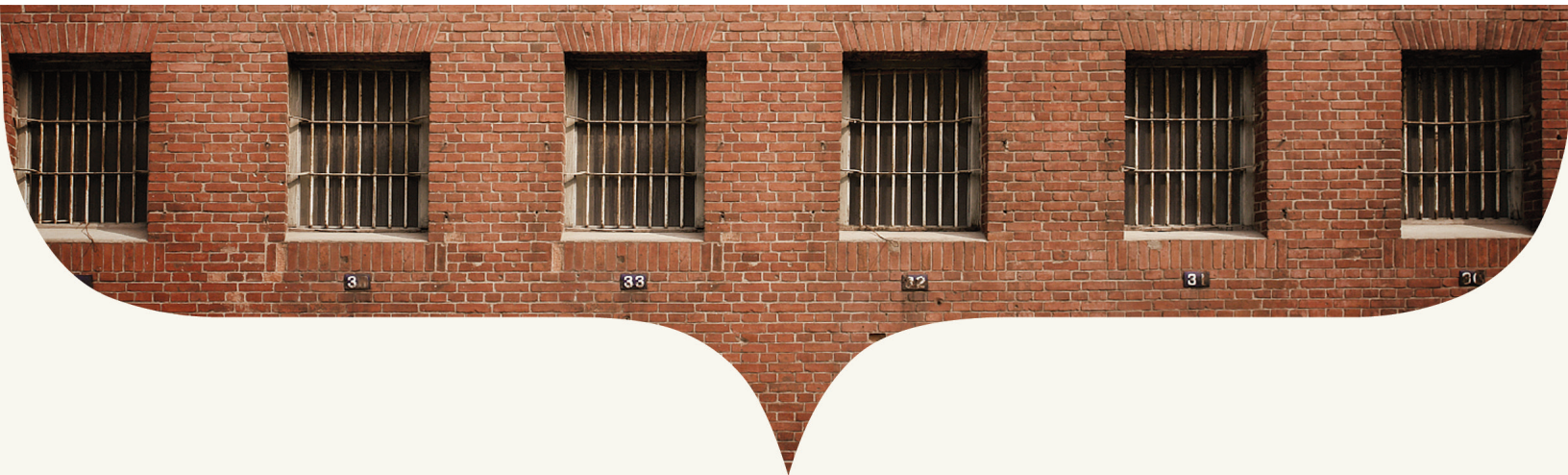
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On average, it costs states **\$88,000**
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Righting Wrongs the Maori Way

INSTEAD OF PRISON, NEW ZEALAND CHOOSES
 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND **COMMUNITY PROBLEM-SOLVING**

**Allan MacRae &
Howard Zehr**

During the 1980s, New Zealand faced a crisis familiar to other Western nations around the world. Thousands of children, especially members of minority groups, were being removed from their homes and placed in foster care or institutions. The juvenile justice system was overburdened and ineffective. New Zealand's incarceration rate for young people was one of the highest in the world, but its crime rate also remained high. At the same time, New Zealand's punitive approach was also in part a "welfare" model. Although young people were being punished, they were also being rewarded by receiving attention. Yet they were not being required to address the actual harm they had caused.

Especially affected was the minority Maori population, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Maori leaders pointed out that the Western system of justice was a foreign imposition. In their cultural tradition, judges did not mete out punishment. Instead, the



PHOTO BY MURRAY WILSON / MANAWATU STANDARD

A young offender and her mother meet with with police, court, and community officials. The goal is to draw up a plan that will hold the young person accountable while attempting to prevent further offenses.

whole community was involved in the process, and the intended outcome was repair. Instead of focusing on blame, they wanted to know "why," because they argued that finding the cause of crime is part of resolving it. Instead of punishment ("Let shame be the punishment" is a Maori proverb), they were concerned with healing and problem-solving. The Maori also pointed out that the Western system, which undermined the family and disproportionately incarcerated Maori youth, emerged from a larger pattern

of institutional racism. They argued persuasively that cultural identity is based on three primary institutional pillars—law, religion, and education—and when any of these undermines or ignores the values and traditions of the indigenous people, a system of racism is operating.

Because of these concerns, in the late 1980s the government initiated a process of listening to communities throughout the country. Through this listening process, the Maori recommended that the resources of the

extended family and the community be the source of any effort to address these issues. The FGC [Family Group Conference] process emerged as the central tool to do this in the child protection and youth justice systems.

In 1989 the legislature passed a landmark Act of Parliament. The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act totally revamped the focus and process of juvenile justice in New Zealand. Although it did not use this terminology until later, the New Zealand legal system became the first in the world to institutionalize a form of restorative justice. Family Group Conferences became the hub of New Zealand's entire juvenile justice system. In New Zealand today, an FGC, not a courtroom, is intended to be the normal site for making such decisions.

The Conference

FGCs are a kind of decision-making meeting, a face-to-face encounter involving offenders and their families, victims and their supporters, a police representative, and others. Organized and led by a Youth Justice Coordinator, a facilitator who is a social services professional, this approach is designed to support offenders as they take responsibility and change their behavior, to empower the offenders' families to play an important role in this process, and to address the victims' needs. Unlike restorative justice programs attached to justice systems elsewhere, this group together formulates the entire outcome or disposition, not just restitution. Importantly—and remarkably—they do this by consensus of all the participants, not by a mere majority or the decree of an official. Victim, offender, family members, youth advocate, or police can individually block an outcome if one of them is unsatisfied.

...

A Story

I [Allan] held a Conference for a young person who was a refugee. He had come to New Zealand with his grandmother, who was his caregiver,

and an aunt. New Zealand had only just started taking refugees from this young man's country, so there were no other family members and, in fact, few other residents of his culture nearby. The three arrived in New Zealand with nothing but what they could carry. Their only income was from a benefit paid by the New Zealand government, which provided for only the very basics of food and accommodation.

The charge was serious; the young person had assaulted his grandmother for cash. He had taken the rent money, and the grandmother was afraid of what would happen now that she could not pay it. In desperation, she reported the incident to the aunt, who in turn reported it to the police.

The police referred the case to an FGC without making an arrest. I met with the grandmother and aunt to consult on what format the Conference might follow, and, in particular, what cultural and/or religious process should guide it. In this meeting I learned that the grandmother had been assaulted on more than one occasion and that she did not know where to go for assistance.

I met with the young person to explain the process to him and to see if he could identify any possible supports. It was agreed that I would invite his teacher, but it was clear this was not going to be enough. I contacted two organizations: Victims as Survivors, and the Refugee and Migrants Services Trust. Neither organization had been involved with Family Group Conferencing, but agreed to assist. I asked one to be the direct support for the grandmother and the other to help the young person meet his obligations to his grandmother.

I then arranged for the grandmother to meet with the supporting organization so that she could share her story with them. They, in turn, would help her share her story at the Conference. I advised the grandmother that they would also transport her to the Conference and see her safely back home. And I also arranged for the young

person to meet with his supporting organization. They agreed that they would assist him in developing a plan to put things right and support him to complete it.

The Conference started with a prayer in their native language, and all parties used interpreters to ensure full understanding. The grandmother told her story in much detail, as did the young person. As the young person began to understand the impact he was having on his grandmother, tears came to his eyes. The young man eventually told of his life in a refugee camp before the three arrived in New Zealand, what he had to do to survive, and how in his new community he felt he could not mix with others if he did not have money. Clearly, loneliness, anger, and hurt were shared by both the young man and his grandmother.

The plan that came out of the Conference required the young person to pay in full all the money he had taken. He was given help to find part-time employment. It was agreed that he could not live with his grandmother until she felt safe with him in the house. The plan provided also for counseling to help him overcome the anger that he carried from his experiences in the refugee camp. A mentor was found from his own culture who would check that he kept his promises and put things right with his grandmother. The putting right called for him to cook a meal for his grandmother and to make an apology. He was also required to complete community work and attend school every day. He would receive support with his homework.

The plan was successful. The young man did no further offending, and he completed all his outcomes. Most valuable of all, both he and his grandmother found new friends and support that stayed with them, well beyond the Family Group Conference plan, and assisted them in starting their new lives in New Zealand. ⑦

Reprinted from *The Little Book of Family Group Conferences*. © Good Books, goodbooks.com. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

From 1980 to 2008, the **number of women** in state or federal prisons went from **12,331** to **114,852**, an **831.4%** increase. Male prisoners rose to **1,495,594**, a **393.6%** increase.

Can Prison Be a Healing Place?

WHY THE WARDEN OF HAWAII'S ONLY WOMEN'S PRISON CREATES **A SANCTUARY** FOR ITS RESIDENTS

Sarah van Gelder

When Warden Mark Kawika Patterson started work at the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) outside Honolulu, he made a discovery that upended his ideas about prisons. Fully a third of the inmates at Hawaii's only women's prison were on medication for psychiatric disorders, 90 percent of their crimes were drug related, and, of those who were addicts, 75 percent had a history of emotional, physical, or sexual trauma.

These women don't need punishment, Patterson realized. They need a place to heal. He set out to reinvent the WCCC as a *pu'uhonua*. In traditional Hawaiian culture, a *pu'uhonua* is a sanctuary where those who break a taboo or rule, or are fleeing violent conflict, can go for forgiveness and transformation.

Like many prisons, the WCCC had few programs for the inmates when Patterson arrived. Although most of the inmates were incarcerated for minor infractions and classified as minimum security, the entire inmate population of 270 was treated like the 80 prisoners requiring higher security measures. In spite of the large number of women with psychiatric ailments, there were no full-time mental-health professionals, just a



SARAH VAN GELDER FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Warden Mark Kawika Patterson shows off the banana plants, taro patch, and vegetable gardens grown on prison grounds by inmates and community partners.



“WE GO THROUGH STAGES IN PRISON: DENIAL, GRIEF, ANGER, AND THEN FREEDOM ... I GOT FREE IN PRISON.” —DAPHNE HO’OKANO

part-time psychiatrist. The correctional officers were helping as they could, says Warden Patterson. Some bought crayons and coloring books with their own money so the women with mental illness would come out of their cells and join other women at tables in the courtyards.

But apart from funding for a substance abuse program, there was no money for programs to help the women rebuild their spirits and learn the job and life skills they would need to succeed on the outside. In fact, the prison budget was being cut.

So the warden turned to the larger community for help and found people in all walks of life prepared to step in.

One of the groups that responded was the Lanikai-Kailua Outdoor Circle, a local conservation group that helps inmates grow vegetables in hydroponic gardens. The greens they raise go to the prison kitchen. And together they build small, portable hydroponic gardens that inmates can take with them when they are released.

A culinary arts instructor from the Kapiolani Community College teaches cooking, and inmates who earn certificates are getting good job offers when they're released. A welding instructor has also been teaching a class.

Although they represent only 20 percent of the state's population, Native Hawaiians comprise 43 percent of the prison population, so Patterson, who is himself Native Hawaiian, looks for ways to help the women learn their traditions. With the help of the Honolulu Garden Club, the inmates raise taro, bananas, and sugar cane, incorporating traditional Hawaiian agricultural practices.

“We've forgotten how to be a village—how to depend on each other,”

Patterson says. “We used to take care of the *kolohe*, the people who are hard-headed,” he says. “But now we don't rely on our neighbors anymore. It's easy to take the *kolohe* person and just throw them away.

“My idea is to get the community involved in bringing [the women] back into the community.”

For the Children

More than half of the women at WCCC are mothers. Children can visit the prison on weekends, if their caregivers bring them. Counselors from a local nonprofit, Keiki o ka 'Aina—Children of the Land—observe the interactions and coach the mothers in effective parenting. The same group co-hosts picnics for the inmates and their children several times a year, featuring barbecues prepared by the inmates, games, and time for quiet conversations and hugs.

Sometimes the children's caregivers ask the warden why the women are getting such good treatment. Many of these are relatives angry about the burden of raising children while their mothers serve time behind bars.

“I tell them it's for the children,” the warden says. “So the children won't wind up in prison, too.”

But the women must be making progress with the issues that got them locked up if they want to participate. “Because I've sent these women out, sad-faced, with seven or eight kids,” Patterson says, “and then they're back in a week or two.”

Getting Free

One of those recently released from the WCCC is Daphne Ho'okano, who

served four years for trafficking in methamphetamines. Ho'okano started selling drugs at age 12 and began drinking with other members of her close-knit extended family when she was 13.

“When I first came in, I pictured myself behind bars, in lockdown,” says Ho'okano, as she recalls a map of her life she drew when she first came to prison. “There was just me all by myself, and there was no sunshine.”

At first she resisted the treatment programs. “We go through stages in prison,” she says. “Denial, grief, anger, ... and then freedom.”


Today, she's setting up a mentoring program to help others getting out of WCCC. “Life doesn't get easier just because you're out of prison,” she says. “You need help out there, someone who walked the same walk as you, to hold your hand and guide you. That's what drives me—to be part of the solution.”

Ho'okano points to her new map showing her life beyond addiction and criminality. “This is me, soaring in the light,” she says. “I got free in prison.”

With teachers and mentors from the community pitching in, Patterson believes other inmates can likewise find their way to freedom.

“I like to take first steps that have never been done before,” Patterson says. “Then, if no one slaps my hand, I just keep on going.” The warden's next project? Tear up the pavement in the prison courtyards and transform these outdoor areas into lush, green gardens. 

Sarah van Gelder is co-founder and executive editor of YES! Magazine. She visited the Women's Community Correctional Center in February along with YES! board member Puanani Burgess.

 YesMagazine.org/sustainable-prisons
Connecting with nature in sustainable prisons

In 2009, the number of **state prisoners declined** for the first time since 1972. But **federal prison population increased**, producing a net rise in prison population.

WHAT THE OUTSIDE CAN DO

Family, community, and the world of ideas help prisoners cope and prepare for life after incarceration. Eight outreach programs that make a difference.



SUPERCONSCIOUSNESS MAGAZINE PHOTO

Nane Alejándrez of Barrios Unidos



PHOTO BY ELLEN SPIRO

Girl Scout Jessica visits her mom at the Hilltop Prison in Texas

1. Barrios Unidos Working for Unity

Barrios Unidos works to curtail gang violence on the city streets of California by sponsoring cultural and spiritual programs in the state's prisons. "A lot of these folks are our relatives," says founder Daniel "Nane" Alejándrez, a veteran activist who has worked to forge truces among youth and prison gangs. "We are not the enemy against each other. We need to get these guys to think in a different way."

The organization is based in Santa Cruz County but runs economic development programs in

several other areas. At a time when many prison programs have been cut, Barrios Unidos offers classes and helps organize cultural celebrations in prisons every year—June-teenth, Cinco de Mayo, and St. Patrick's Day—that support social cohesion, trust, and respect. "We are inside," Alejándrez says. "We are talking directly to the guys face to face."—*Stuart Glascock*

2. Justice Now Empowering Prisoners

The Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla is the largest women's prison in the world, with 3,795 inmates. The world's second

largest, holding another 3,306, is the Valley State Prison across the street. Both hold about twice as many inmates as they were designed to handle. Justice Now works inside this grim system to promote health and justice through legal services and prisoner organizing.

Prisoners document human rights abuses in prison, circulate petitions, and write opinion pieces. Currently, five inmates serve on Justice Now's board of directors. Three other directors were released in the last 18 months. "All of our programs are designed to build leadership among people in prison," says executive director Cynthia Chandler. Justice Now recently helped defeat proposed prison expansion legislation

FOR THE **INSIDE**



PHOTO BY RICK FAHNESTOCK

Yoga at the Illinois State Prison near Canton



PHOTO BY IAN WINGFIELD

Puppy training at Fishkill Correctional Facility, N.Y.

in California that would have added capacity for 4,500 additional women prisoners. Inmates worked on the communications strategy and were spokespeople for the 2-year campaign.—S.G.

3. Yoga Helps Prisoners Cope With Stress

The balancing, breathing, and centering of yoga bring immediate results to prisoners, according to Natalie Smith, executive director of Yoga Behind Bars, a nonprofit that promotes yoga to help soothe the rage, anxiety, and hopelessness of

life in prison. “Incarceration is an ineffective band-aid for many other problems—homelessness, mental health issues, drug addictions,” Smith says. “Antisocial behaviors are the tip of the iceberg. Yoga has the potential to go down below the surface and teach skills like coping with stress.”

In 2010, Yoga Behind Bars dispatched 35 trained volunteers to give classes to 1,400 students in jails, prisons, and treatment centers in Washington state, but demand still exceeded supply. “It’s so rare that we have the opportunity to be calm behind bars,” wrote one participant. “I am so thankful to be able to stretch and meditate while in this stressful place.”—S.G.

4. Books to Prisoners: The Reading Connection

Volunteers at Books to Prisoners (BTP) read a thousand handwritten letters each month. Word has gotten around prisons that you can request books from BTP and eventually—it may take six months—a parcel will arrive for you with the books you asked for. There may be a personal note explaining the addition of an extra book you might enjoy. Somebody thought of you as a person with a mind. A window opens a crack.

Seattle-based BTP was started in the early 1970s by people who ran >>



» an independent bookstore. It has affiliates in Bellingham and Olympia, Wash., and Portland, Ore. As prison libraries are starved of acquisitions, the most common requests to BTP are for English and Spanish-English dictionaries, African American history and fiction, Native American studies, and GED materials. Beyond these high-demand categories, people behind bars like to read as broadly as the rest of us.

BTP is an all-volunteer effort. Most donations of books and money come from individuals, including the occasional check that arrives with a thank-you note from a former inmate. More information at bookstoprisoners.net.
—Paige Grant

5. Puppies Hard at Work Behind Bars

Labrador and golden retriever puppies live with inmates through Prison PUP Partnership, one of several training programs across the country that provide meaningful work for inmates and a benefit to people on the outside who need service animals. Puppies Behind Bars is another program based in New York.

Puppies tag along to classes, recreation time, and meals, as prisoners train the animals to open doors, turn on light switches, and pick up objects. The puppies learn about life outside too—cars, traffic, public transportation—on weekend visits to volunteers outside the prison.

The full-time training in prison means dogs in the program are ready to be in service sooner—in about a year—than puppies trained outside. —S.G.

6. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars: Breaking the Cycle

Like Girl Scouts all over the country, the 45 members of Troop 1500 in Austin, Texas, wear the familiar green uniforms, work for merit badges, and sell cookies in February. But their big event is a monthly excursion to Gatesville, Texas, to visit their mothers in prison. They talk, catch up, and hug on those days, but this group of 6 to 17-year-olds also studies life skills, interpersonal communication, and decision-making strategies.

Troop 1500 is one of 30 Girl Scout programs across the United States that support daughters visiting their mothers in prison. The girls also get backup from the social work school at the University of Texas, which works to ease the trauma of separation and stop the family pattern of offending that affects children whose parents were in prison.—S.G.

7. Communication Over Conflict

Inmates are greeted with a handshake when they arrive for Ilene Stark's class in mediation skills at the prison in Monroe, Washington. "Prisoners live in an incredibly intense environment," Stark says. "We try to offer a respite in class."

Almost every week for the past 10 years, professional mediators from the Dispute Resolution Center of Snohomish and Island Counties have volunteered to teach basic mediation classes to inmates at Monroe. The focus is on communication, thinking clearly instead of impulsively, perspective, and compassionate listening.

"These are skills we use in mediation, and the men can use them in their everyday lives," said Stark. "Several have told us stories about finding themselves in tense situations, and instead of fighting, they make better choices in the heat of conflict." —S.G.

8. Learning Together and Rethinking the System

A college professor schooling the incarcerated was hardly a new idea when Lori Pompa taught her first class inside a Philadelphia city jail 14 years ago. But Pompa brought along her Temple University undergrads. That novel academic exercise, in which "outside" and "inside" students met together once a week for a semester, laid the foundation for the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. The program has since spread to more than 120 colleges in 35 states and will soon be replicated in Canada and Australia.

The experience can be transformative. At a time when the United States incarcerates more people than any other nation in the world, Inside-Out has moved thousands of people to rethink the nation's approach to criminal justice. "It makes the prison system so much more real to you," says Christa Henderson, who took an Inside-Out course at Drew University in New Jersey. "They're actual people. They're not theoretical masses that you read about in books."

"The hope is that the students go forward and make change," says Pompa. "What could be more profound than two groups of people on either side of these walls coming together to examine serious issues and equally serious solutions?"

—Chris Hann

by Marietta Jaeger-Lane

AS TOLD TO LYNISI BURTON

Susie's Story

THE NIGHT I FORGAVE MY DAUGHTER'S KILLER



WE HOPED THIS WOULD BE a once-in-a-lifetime family vacation—camping for a whole month in Montana. One night, at our first stop, our 7-year-old daughter Susie was kidnapped out of our tent. The tent was cut next to where her head had lain; she was pulled out and carried away.

My husband and dad drove to the next town and returned with the sheriff. A massive investigation ensued, while all we could do was to sit at the picnic table and watch, wait, and worry.

Then came an intense and stressful day. The deputies were dragging the river next to us, and every time the boat would stop, lifting its empty net, my heart would stop. I was terrified that Susie might be found in that water.

That was the day that I got in touch with my rage. That night, getting ready for bed, I said to my husband, “Even if the kidnapper were to bring Susie back, alive and well, I could kill him with my bare hands and a smile on my face.”

I knew the kidnapper could be liable for the death penalty, and I wanted him to hang high. However, I had always tried to live my faith with integrity, and my conscience was calling me to forgive my enemy. I realized if I gave myself to that desire for revenge, it would obsess and consume me. So, I promised to cooperate with whatever could move my

heart from fury to forgiveness. One year to the minute after the kidnapper had taken Susie, he called me at my home in Michigan. He was calling to taunt me. Even though he was smug and nasty, to my own real surprise, I was filled with genuine concern and compassion, which thwarted his intention to rile me up and then hang up.

During that past year, I had worked diligently to come to a healthier attitude than rage and revenge. I reminded myself that, however I felt about this person, in the eyes of the God I believed in, he was just as precious as my little girl. So I asked him what I could do for him; he broke down and sobbed heavily. Our middle-of-the-night conversation lasted for 80 minutes. When the call finally ended, I was left hanging on to a silent phone.

The kidnapper inadvertently gave enough information to be identified. Eventually he was arrested, and irrefutable evidence was found to charge him with kidnap/murder, a capital crime with a sentence of the death penalty.

But I realized that to kill him in Susie's name would not restore her life; it would only make another victim and another grieving family.

So, I asked the prosecutor for the alternative sentence of mandatory life without parole. Only when he was offered that was he willing to confess to the murders of a 19-year-old and three children, including Susie.

Using the same mindset as killers to solve our problems demeans our own worth and dignity. Victims' families have every right initially to feelings of revenge. But the laws of our land should not be based on bloodthirsty, gut-level state-sanctioned killings: They should call us to higher moral principles more befitting our beloved victims.

My work to abolish the death penalty is not what I had ever planned. Local churches invited me to share my spiritual journey. People would say that, if I could forgive someone who had done such a terrible deed, they now knew that they could forgive the problem people in their own lives. In the years since, I've been invited to visit many countries, been interviewed by Vatican Radio, and testified to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Susie's story has been a gift to all who've heard it.

Marietta Jaeger-Lane is co-founder of Journey of Hope, which advocates alternatives to the death penalty. She is pictured above with her daughter, Susie. **Lynsi Burton** is a freelance writer based in Bremerton, Wash.



Author Patrice Gaines at her home in North Carolina. Once a heroin addict, Gaines is now a successful journalist and motivational speaker.

DIEDRA LAIRD FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Restoring Lives

Now *That's* Justice

Patrice Gaines

It was the summer of 2009. I was on my second day of work for the U.S. Census Bureau, knocking on doors in rural South Carolina.

My cell phone rang. It was my supervisor.

"Patrice, headquarters called me and told me to send you home immediately and to take back all government property," she said. "I don't know why."

She knew me as a 61-year-old gray-haired mother, a former *Washington*

both to the people who make mistakes and those victimized by crime.

Throwaway People

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that one in 32 adults in the United States is behind bars or on probation or parole. One quarter of the prison population is locked up for nonviolent drug offenses, according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

incarcerated parents.

I was lucky. I was becoming an addict when I was convicted. The system that sent me to jail did nothing to address my drug problem: It put me on probation and ordered me to pay more than \$2,000 in fines, which only made me more bitter. I was a single mother who could not find a job because of my criminal record. I did not see any connection between the high fines and my behavior. I did not

THE MORE TIME I SPENT IN PRISONS, THE MORE I CAME TO BELIEVE THAT THERE HAD TO BE A WAY TO KEEP OUR STREETS SAFE WITHOUT THROWING PEOPLE AWAY.

Post reporter, an author and motivational speaker. She knew nothing about me 40 years ago, when I was a 21-year-old heroin user. I knew exactly why they were sending me home: I am a convicted felon.

In 1970, I spent part of a summer in jail for a drug charge and received five years probation. But that was just the beginning. In the decades since, I have learned what it's like to try to change your life in a fearful society that believes it's safest to lock up or discard anyone who has ever made a criminal mistake or had a problem with addiction. And I have learned that there's another way—a way that offers the possibility of restoring dignity and hope

Each time a person is locked away behind bars, it leaves a void in a family, neighborhood, or community. Most often, the burden of incarceration falls on communities of color. The Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), a leading organization promoting alternatives to incarceration, writes, "The war on drugs has become a war on families, a war on public health, and a war on our constitutional rights."

"We are exiling millions of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters—making them missing persons," says Carol Fennelly, director of Hope House, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that helps children stay connected with

see how I was expected to dig myself out of the hole I was in.

Anyone labeled an "offender" or "ex-con" has a difficult time finding employment. Even though I served a short sentence, once I got out of jail, I could not find a job. I didn't know how to answer the question, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" Some days I lied; some days I told the truth.

If I lied, I usually got fired within two weeks when the results of the background check came in. If I told the truth, I didn't get past the interview.

I searched for a job for at least three months before I finally received a break: A woman at a mental health center took a chance and hired me to >>

1 in every 28 children has a parent behind bars, up from one in 125 just 25 years ago. **Two-thirds** of these parents were incarcerated for nonviolent offenses.



» work as a clerk in the business office in spite of my criminal record. Over the next several years, I took creative writing courses at night, got accepted into a journalism training program, and eventually became a newspaper reporter.

But I have never forgotten that those doors probably would never have opened without the woman who was brave enough to give me a chance.

Finding Real Justice

Years later, as a reporter at the *Washington Post*, I wrote my autobiography, *Laughing in the Dark*, and started giving motivational speeches and running workshops for women in prisons around the country.

The more time I spent in prisons, the more I came to believe that there

has roots in the very communities that have been hurt most by the prison system. There is evidence that similar approaches were used by West African slaves brought to the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia and by Native Americans.

While researching restorative justice, I found cases such as one in Norfolk, Va., where a youth stole his parents' car, crashed it into another woman's car, and ran. Instead of serving time in juvenile detention, a restorative justice program allowed him to work and pay the woman back for damage to her car and income she lost while her injuries prevented her from working. The youth and the victim met, and he was able to see the connection between his bad decisions and the harm he had caused. It struck me that he received

houses—little shacks, not churches. They would bring together the offender and his folks, and victims and their folks, and the elders—and they would come up with a resolution.”

As I investigated these stories, I realized restorative justice offered everything my experience with the corrections system did not. I had wanted to change my life, so I could be a good daughter, sister, and mother. But I didn't know how to change. Being on probation, paying restitution, and being disregarded when I applied for a job did not address my desire to be a good person or help boost my self-esteem. The punishment and judgment against me crippled me even more.

Once I committed my crime, I never felt as if I was part of a community.

I HAD TO PUT ALL OF THE PIECES TOGETHER MYSELF: FIND A WAY TO REPAIR THE HARM I CAUSED, FORGIVE MYSELF, AND BE A PART OF THE COMMUNITY AGAIN—A PROCESS THAT TOOK YEARS.

had to be a way to keep our streets safe without throwing people away. Everywhere I turned, I saw myself. I met women, most of them mothers, serving too much time for crimes (embezzlement, check fraud, prostitution, burglary) committed because, like me, they had a drug problem.

Then I discovered what I had been looking for—an alternative to incarceration called restorative justice.

In restorative justice, all of the parties impacted by an offense—offender, victim, and community—are involved in determining a resolution that addresses the harm caused by the crime. Restorative justice acknowledges that crime is about more than breaking the law: Therefore, the resolution is about more than simple punishment.

In North America, restorative justice

what I missed. He was given work to help him pay his restitution. The process was respectful to everyone: The young man left changed but not labeled a criminal.

I met Morris Jenkins, a criminal justice scholar at the University of Toledo. Jenkins' work demonstrates how communities have historically resolved crime. The Sea Islands have preserved much of the unique Gullah culture of the West Africans who were brought there as slaves generations ago. Jenkins found that before there was a bridge from the islands to the mainland, the island people used restorative justice to settle civil disputes and some criminal complaints. “They called it the Just Law,” Jenkins told me recently. “One of the ladies in her 90s told me a story about how they used to have these community meetings at faith

No one saw the power in getting me to realize the harm I had caused to my family. My parents were ashamed. I disappointed friends and neighbors who had helped me over the years. I knew that some of them probably even felt I had brought shame to our close-knit neighborhood. No one ever considered finding a way for me to give back, to feel forgiven and accepted again. I had to put all of the pieces together myself—find a way to repair the harm I caused, forgive myself, and be a part of the community again—a process that took years.

Transforming the System

Over the years since I discovered restorative justice, the number of programs has grown slowly. Today, as federal and local governments search for ways to save money, more attention is

I STAND BEFORE THESE STUDENTS AND THE WOMEN WHO ARE LOCKED UP AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE DISTANCE ONE PERSON CAN TRAVEL IN A LIFETIME.



DIEDRA LAIRD FOR YES! MAGAZINE

Patrice Gaines shows her booking photo from Mecklenburg County Jail. Now, decades later, she teaches there.

being paid to alternatives to incarceration. Many restorative justice programs are now operating in partnership with the court system.

My friends, Ivy and Saleem Hylton, receive clients referred by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency in Washington, D.C. The couple co-founded Youth and Families in Crisis, which runs innovative restorative justice sessions in Prince George's County, Md.

The Hyltons have seen incredible changes in former perpetrators of violent crimes who have attended their restorative justice sessions. They teach relaxation and meditation to clients to give them tools for controlling their emotions and refocusing their attention. Using a restorative justice practice from Native American traditions, they hold discussion circles in which each person has an opportunity to speak without interruption and learns to truly hear and respect others, often for the first time.

I spoke with Antonio Addison, who spent 15 years in prison for a murder

conviction: He believes participating in the circles and learning to meditate has saved his life.

"We started with prayer and then the circle," said Addison. "Some spoke up; some were not open. I would share my deepest emotions. The only peace I had felt in my life was when I was in the hole in prison, in solitary."

Addison found he could create a feeling of peace by using sounds, such as the sound of the ocean or soft bells. "I would play the CDs to relieve stress before I went to sleep. Then I started using them when I got upset or angry, and I found they relieved me of those things so [my emotions] didn't build up and explode."

In one year, with the Hyltons' help, Addison accomplished something he could not do in 15 years of incarceration: He is able to control his anger before it explodes into rage. Now, at 41, Addison is married, has two-year-old twins, is a supervisor for a major utility company, and gives back by volunteering with the Hyltons, encouraging new

participants by sharing his story and answering their questions.

Restoring Hope and Imagination

Five years ago I co-founded a non-profit organization, The Brown Angel Center, which helps women transition from prison to the community. We run workshops for the women in the Mecklenburg County Jail in Charlotte, N.C. A couple of months ago, I was teaching the women about restorative justice. They sat silent, intrigued.

"We need that here," one said.

"It makes so much sense," said another.

At the jail, the women are waiting to be sentenced or to begin long prison terms. They are separated from their children, and some have already lost custody because their sentences are too long to allow them to continue parenting. One thing hasn't changed since I started speaking in prisons 16 years ago: Most women I meet are incarcerated for nonviolent crimes. Restorative justice would help them; prison time does not.

»

A **reduction by one-half** in the incarceration of nonviolent offenders would lower correctional expenditures by **\$16.9 billion** per year.

Meanwhile, restorative justice practitioners say we have just begun to use our creativity to develop inventive programs to address crime. I speak at colleges around the country, encouraging a new generation of leaders to consider applying their talents to create a new model of justice. I stand before these students and the women who are locked up as an example of

the distance one person can travel in a lifetime.

Dressed in my best business suit, I hold up my mug shot to illustrate to them that you can never know what a person might become, what potential they have within. My photo shows me at 21, a baby-faced girl with a large afro and a sign hanging around her neck that says, “Charlotte Mecklenburg NC,

19 Jun 70, 70 – 90.”

“This is what a drug addict looks like,” I say. “This is what a teacher looks like. This is what an author looks like. This is what a mother looks like.” **Y**

Patrice Gaines is the author of *Moments of Grace: Meeting the Challenge to Change and Laughing in the Dark: From Colored Girl to Woman of Color—A Journey from Prison to Power*. She is based in South Carolina.

Ban the Box for a Fair Chance



Americans with criminal records face legalized discrimination in the workplace, at the voting booth, and in their daily lives. But grassroots leaders across the country are breaking through “tough on crime” policies and winning major challenges to their second-class status.

The National Employment Law Project estimates that 65 million Americans have a criminal record, counting both convictions and arrests that did not lead to convictions. Since 1994, the fraction of major employers screening for criminal records has grown from 20 percent to more than 90 percent. People of color are disproportionately convicted, and suffer more discrimination after completing their sentences. Black ex-offenders are four times less likely to get initial job interviews than their white counterparts, despite equivalent credentials and offenses.

In Massachusetts, residents denied the ability to earn a living and support their families began to speak out and organize. A broad-based coalition led by ex-offenders and supported by youth organizations, labor unions, workforce agencies, and faith groups waged a 5-year “Ban the Box” campaign to end overt discrimination and eliminate the felony check-box from initial job application forms.

In July 2010, after dozens of major demonstrations, hundreds of legislative meetings, and thousands of constituent phone calls, the Massachusetts legislature passed a landmark criminal records reform bill including a “Ban the Box” provision. The new law makes employers evaluate applicants more fairly by allowing background checks only after an applicant is deemed qualified for the job.

California, Minnesota, and New Mexico have removed the question from state job applications, and more than 25 major cities have banned the box for city jobs. Hawai‘i and Massachusetts have extended the guidelines to all private-sector employers, setting a policy example for the rest of the nation.

Formerly convicted Americans are also challenging felony disenfranchisement laws. In the last 15 years, they have won partial victories in 23 states restoring the vote for over 800,000 voters. Still, 35 states prevent over 5.3 million people, including 13 percent of all black men, from voting.

After decades of prison expansion, spiraling costs, and high recidivism rates, ex-prisoners and their allies are forcing states to review policies of wholesale exclusion. Massachusetts’ grassroots victory adds momentum to a growing national movement challenging the new Jim Crow and building a more just and inclusive society.

Aaron Tanaka is the executive director of the Boston Workers Alliance, co-coordinator of the Massachusetts “Ban the Box” campaign.

YesMagazine.org/my-first-vote

Interactive map: Personal stories about getting back the right to vote

FROM THE PUBLISHER



MAKING IT TO 15 IS A BIG DEAL FOR A PRINT MAGAZINE. THANKS TO YOUR ENTHUSIASM AND SUPPORT, DEAR READER, YES! IS STILL HERE.

YES! Turns 15—And You're Invited

This year, YES! turns 15, and we want to celebrate with you.

Making it to 15 is a big deal for a print magazine, especially now when many are cutting back or folding.

Thanks to your enthusiasm and support, dear reader, YES! is still here. And we'd like you to celebrate with us. On June 1 at Seattle's Town Hall, join green jobs advocate Van Jones, scientist and activist Vandana Shiva, and author and 350.org co-founder Bill McKibben for our 15th anniversary party. If you can't make it to Seattle, watch the live stream on the YES! website.

These past 15 years have been quite a ride—for the world and for all of us in the YES! community. The challenges that prompted the founding of YES! have deepened. But so have the initiatives we set out to make visible.

In 1996, we knew that an economy dominated by mega-corporations would inevitably enrich the few at the expense of the many, heighten injustice, and drive social backlash. We knew a culture that glorifies consumption would undermine well-being and exhaust ecological resources. But we held the audacious belief that, working together, we could make a transition to a better world. Why? Because we knew that people across the globe were rerooting their economies in

their communities and local ecosystems, working to combat racism and other forms of injustice, and learning to live in harmony with one another and the Earth.

Today, we have the same goal we had in 1996: to change the story of what our country and our species can become and to help people see their power to shift the course of history. In a time of flux, small actions can add up to big change.

Over the years, our tools for communicating the unique YES! form of solution-oriented journalism have greatly expanded. We have far more magazine subscribers, millions see our articles at yesmagazine.org and on the hundreds of other websites that post our stories, and thousands subscribe to our e-newsletters and follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Now that we post stories online every day, we can tie our powerful ideas and practical actions to timely coverage. Treehugger.com, a popular environmental website, recently named YES! the best green business and politics website. They said, "When it comes to creating a more socially and ecologically sustainable civilization, there isn't one way forward, but if just half of the solutions shown in YES! were adopted, we'd be doing pretty well." *Utne Reader* nominated YES! for its 2011 awards for General Excellence and for Body/Spirit Coverage.

YES! contributing editor Frances Moore Lappé has noted that a characteristic of our time is that "things are getting worse and worse, and better and better, faster and faster!" The "worse and worse" and the "faster and faster" are readily apparent in our media-saturated world, but the "better and better" often slips below the radar. That, of course, is why you turn to YES! In these turbulent times, YES! is your place to see that you are part of a powerful force for change that has the potential to pull us through the crises to a better world.

So let's celebrate. We've come a long way together.

Fran Korten, Publisher

JOIN THE PARTY

Order tickets for the Town Hall event at yesmagazine.org/celebration. Or watch the live stream starting at 7 p.m. PDT, June 1. If you plan to watch with friends, email gwolf@yesmagazine.org ahead of time, and we'll try to call out your greetings during the event.



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YES! is a subscriber-supported, independent media organization that inspires people to create a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. We are ad-free and published by the nonprofit Positive Futures Network. By giving wide visibility to stories that fuse powerful ideas with practical actions, we drive profound change through a growing community nationwide, from active citizens to policymakers. Find out more about us at YesMagazine.org.

YES! PICKS ::

**Things To Do,
Places To Go**

Sustainable Living Roadshow 2011 Tour

Multiple dates & locations. A caravan of educators and entertainers touring the country to empower communities and individuals to use sustainable living strategies for a healthier planet. The Roadshow sets up off-the-grid eco-carnivals with experiential learning villages with workshops, speakers, and entertainment. At college campuses and major festivals throughout the year. sustainablelivingroadshow.org

Architecting the Future

June 8-10, New York, N.Y. The Buckminster Fuller Challenge is an annual international design award of \$100,000 supporting development and implementation of a strategy with significant potential to solve one of humanity's most pressing problems. Presenting the 2011 award is part of the Buckminster Fuller Institute's three-day event, Architecting the Future. challenge.bfi.org

National BALLE Business Conference

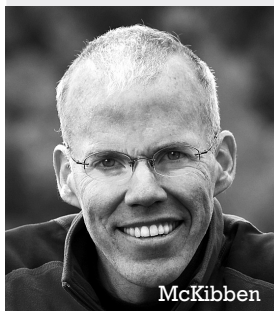
June 14-17, Bellingham, Wash. From eco-fisheries to slow money to farm-to-school and beyond—catch leading innovators at the BALLE Business Conference. With some 80 speakers pioneering the New Economy and 20 interactive sessions, the conference explores triple-bottom-line businesses, the emerging "relationship economy," community capital, the economic agenda for the 21st Century, and more. livingeconomies.org

YesMagazine.org/events

For an expanded listing of upcoming events

WELCOME TO THE YES! TEAM

Our Newest Contributing Editors



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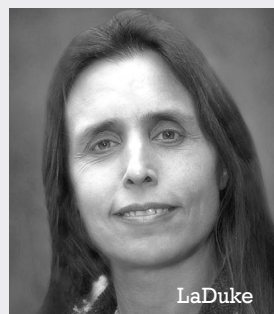
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LaDuke



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The journalists and visionaries who help shape the powerful ideas and practical solutions of YES! Magazine:

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Rob "Biko" Baker
Walden Bello
Adrienne Maree Brown
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At home in Hawai'i, Maya Soetoro-Ng reads to her daughter, Suhaila, from her new book, *Ladder to the Moon*.

What Our Mother Taught Us

Maya Soetoro-Ng reflects on her childhood with brother Barack, her own family and children, and how to keep everyone connected.



PHOTO COURTESY MAYA SOETORO-NG

Interview by Fran Korten

In 1984, YES! Publisher Fran Korten worked alongside Barack Obama's mother, Ann Soetoro, at the Ford Foundation's office in Jakarta, Indonesia. Ann's daughter, Maya, who was 14 at the time, attended the Jakarta International School with Fran's daughters, Alicia and Diana. Maya was recently in Seattle preparing for the launch of her new children's book, *Ladder to the Moon*, and Fran talked with her for the first time in 27 years. The book is a tale of Maya's daughter Suhaila's adventure with her grandmother Ann, who died in 1995, long before Suhaila was born. In the storybook, grandmother and grandchild climb a ladder to the moon where together they look back at the Earth. As they see tragedies unfold, they reach back to help. The book, launched in April 2011, is illustrated by Yuyi Morales, and published by Candlewick Press. Fran talked with Maya about the book, her life, and her reflections on her mother and her famous brother.

Fran Korten: This is your first book. What inspired you to write a children's book?

Maya Ng: In 2008, I was campaigning for my brother and had a bit of down time because my husband was taking care of Suhaila, who was then 3 years old. So I was in Chicago in the basement of my brother's home, and I thought to myself, if my brother can risk the enormous rejection [of possibly not being elected], then I can risk the much smaller rejection of not having anyone pick up my book. I became emboldened. I think the campaign resulted in a lot of people, not simply relatives, being emboldened to try new things. It was a very fruitful time.

One could also say that the book was born years earlier. When I was pregnant with Suhaila, I came across some boxes that Mom had saved for me that said "for Maya's children." They contained my childhood toys and books. Seeing them filled me with sadness that she wasn't there to share this time with me. In a way it was like losing her all over again.

My daughter was born in 2004, just a couple of months before my brother made his speech at the Democratic National Convention. I suddenly had all of these new questions. So this was when I began imagining what my mother would have been like with her grandchildren and what they would have gotten from her.

Korten: Have your children read this book?

Ng: Yes, I've read it to them. In fact Suhaila, who is now 6, helped me with a couple of the ideas. The orphan children leaping up like flying fish—that was her idea.

»

» **Korten:** How does your other daughter, Savita, feel about her sister being in this book?

Ng: She doesn't know it's her sister because she is 2 and can't read, so she thinks it's her. She points and says "That's me." Then Suhaila says, "No, that's me," and she gets very upset. I've got another book in the works. It's a young adult novel entitled *Yellow Wood*, based on the Robert Frost poem—two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and we took the one less traveled, and that made all the difference. In that book the main protagonist's name is Savita. I joke that I can't have another child without another book contract.

Korten: Ann is, of course, grandmother to Barack and Michelle's children, Malia and Sasha. Have they read the book?

Ng: Yes, they have. They liked it, though they have not seen the version with the illustrations. I had received that version at Christmas, but we had so much going on I forgot to bring it. My brother's book had just come out, so we talked more about his book. At Christmas several families and old friends join us—there's about 13 children in this group. It's a wonderful opportunity for my brother to be precisely who he has always been. He can completely relax. He even connects with high school friends.

Korten: In the book, why did you have the grandmother and grandchild go to the moon?

Ng: Mom loved the moon. She would wake me up in the middle of the night to go gaze at the moon. I named my daughter Suhaila because in Sanskrit it means "the glow around the moon." So it was in honor of my mother. Part of why she loved the moon was that for everyone it was the same. Maybe they were looking at it at a different time of day, but if it was a new moon for you, it would be a new moon for me.

So the moon became a symbol of connection in that way. The main message of my book is that we are interconnected, that we can help one another, that our actions have an impact on others. So why don't we act to impact one another benevolently instead of adversely? I wanted the moon to act as a place where everyone could gather, since it is the same for everyone. It's a very calming force. I think of the moon and the tides—there's sort of a sweet earthly caress that takes place through the water. So I thought of the moon as a place of sanctuary, as a place of healing and a reminder to all of us that we share the same space. Even though it feels like we are far away, we are in fact united and connected.

Korten: If you think of a 5-year-old reading this book, what do you hope the child gets out of it?

Ng: I don't imagine children of that age reading this for the first time by themselves. I think it can be a means for parents to have conversations with their children about the people who came before them, people perhaps who are gone.

I was thinking of specific things when I wrote about worlds and languages lost and about natural disasters, strife, and trembling towers. But I don't name them because I want the book to be relevant for many years to come—to others who will have their own events. I want parents to be able to choose whether to use this book to talk to their children about the fact that bad things happen—people *did* lose their lives with this tsunami or that quake.

I wanted the images to be neutral enough that parents could simply say that sometimes life is hard. And if you have the power to make others feel better and if you are loving and kind, what does that mean? What does that look like? I think it's an opportunity to have conversations about empathy, about caring, and about humanizing

traits that we want to develop in our own children. And perhaps giving kids a place where they can safely ask questions about things that have happened. But not every parent will feel comfortable talking about that with a 7-year-old. So a parent or a teacher can choose. I'd love for this book to be used in elementary schools as well.

Korten: The people in this book are drawn to be ethnically ambiguous. Did you have the illustrator, Yuyi Morales, do that on purpose?

Ng: Yes, I wanted to make sure that there were lots of people in the world who could look at the illustrations and say, "That looks like someone I know." And I think Yuyi's done that. The way my mom is portrayed, she could be Brazilian or Samoan or Egyptian. Creating someone who is universal reminds us that we all share certain fundamental traits by virtue of being human.

Korten: When I reflect on the work Ann did in the time that I knew her in Indonesia—with metal workers, batik makers, basket weavers, and leather workers, I realize her work was really about jobs. The Ford Foundation hired her to help answer the question, "How do all these people flowing into the cities from the rural areas make a living? What will be their jobs or livelihoods?" So it's interesting that now her son is struggling with that same question—where are the jobs for people in this country? What do you think would be her advice to him, based on her long engagement with that question?

Ng: That parallel occurred to me as well. I don't know for sure what she would say, but I think it would be much the same—looking at diversification of opportunity. In Indonesia, people were focused primarily on rice cultivation as the source of livelihoods. And she was saying, "Hey, don't discount these other efforts. These



MOM LOVED THE MOON. SHE WOULD WAKE ME UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO GO GAZE AT THE MOON. I NAMED MY DAUGHTER SUHAILA BECAUSE IN SANSKRIT IT MEANS “THE GLOW AROUND THE MOON.”

cottage industries are very important in keeping this economy stable.” I think she would argue the same thing here—look at many points of entry. Yes, create jobs in new arenas—technology, alternative energy, exploration, environmental stewardship, climate, but also look back at things foundational to our country and offer to assist them in adapting to current situations. Adaptation is something that I think she would try to encourage so that older occupations wouldn’t necessarily need to die.

Korten: In 2009, for Mother’s Day, I wrote an article for YES! entitled “Would Obama’s Mother Be Amazed?” What is your answer? Would Ann be amazed that her son is president of the United States?

Ng: No, I don’t think she would be. I think that, like me, there would be moments when she would be sort of overwhelmed with the recognition that this is immense. That’s what happens to me sometimes. I’ll be sitting somewhere and look up and think “Wow—the forces impacting the world through my family are great.”

The fact that my brother became president is in keeping with his trajectory, his character. He was always a wonderful leader, he was always charismatic, and he was always ambitious. There were moments in his career when he felt his destiny resided in something larger than what he was doing at the time.

There was a moment when I walked into his office and said, “How are you?” And he said, “I feel like I’m not doing what I’m supposed to be doing.” I laughed at him because he was a law professor, he was consulting for a law firm, and he was a state senator. I said, “Only you would be doing all three of those things and regard yourself as an underachiever.” This was back in maybe 2003. So that indicated to me that there was something pulling him toward this place. So I’m not too surprised.

I think that he is well-suited for the job, because he’s so even-tempered. But he is a very private man in many ways. He likes meditative moments, and he likes long walks by himself. He doesn’t get those things. That’s, I think, the hardest part.

He is inclined to try to represent

the largest possible constituency, to try to build bridges, even though there has been some backlash from people who are working only to bring him down. But the truth is, there are also a large number of people who were brought to a place of cooperation as a result of his example. I think his coolness, his fairness, his idealism, coupled with a certain pragmatism, make him well-suited to the job. I think all of those things were in evidence while Mom was alive and I think that she would have seen that it made sense for him to be where he is now.

Korten: So what’s next for you?

Ng: I want to finish my novel, but I’m not sure when. I am teaching social studies methods and a practicum at the college of education, and I supervise student teachers in the field. I do multicultural education and am also consulting for the East-West Center. And I have two kids, and I’m going to begin painting soon. So it’s hard to find time. I think, how lucky we are to be able to have all these choices. **Y**

5 Protests That



1



Abbie Hoffman incites a money grab. In 1967, Abbie Hoffman and members of the Yippies, a radical activist group, threw 300 one-dollar bills from the New York Stock Exchange balcony onto the trading floor. According to Hoffman, as brokers grabbed for petty cash, trading ground to a halt. The famous stunt mocked the unregulated greed that still pervades Wall Street.

2



Let's kill dissent—just kidding. In 1702, in an era of religious persecution in England, Daniel Defoe published a fake pamphlet called “The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.” It proposed that—rather than barring non-Anglicans from office—it would be faster and easier to exterminate them. Some people believed the pamphlet was real, which so humiliated Anglicans that they had Defoe briefly imprisoned—during which time he produced some wonderful writing.

Shook the World (With Laughter)

Great moments in “laughtivism” from Yes Men Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, the guys who **DUPED** the BBC, **EMBARRASSED** Dow Chemical, and **MOCKED** Halliburton

Some say that laughter helped bring down the Soviet Union, by making “Brezhnev” rhyme with “ridiculous.” At the Yes Lab, we help activists cook up funny antics and escapades to change public opinion—with laughter. We’ve used humor as a weapon to avenge corporate wrongdoing for more than a decade, ever since we started dressing up as phony PR men, comic strip heroes, and government officials.

That’s because we know humor is powerful: people have used jokes and hoaxes for centuries to humble the bad guys and inspire the good ones. Here are some of our favorite moments in “laughtivism.”



But, but... the humble Yes Men did not include one of their own stunts. But we, YES! Magazine editors, (no relation) decided to anyway.

3



Daring satire tweaks Nazis. In November 1943, a fake issue of the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* was published by the Front de l’Indépendance, a Belgian resistance organization. The paper looked like the real thing, but a close read revealed biting satire about the Nazi occupation. Some of the publishers were sent to concentration camps, but their brazen humor gave many Belgians the courage to resist the Nazis.



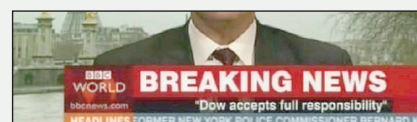
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4



Phony bid stops drilling. In 2008, Tim DeChristopher, then a student at the University of Utah, went to protest a federal auction selling rights to drill for oil and gas in the Utah wilderness. He then performed what is surely the best prank of the century. DeChristopher intended to barge in and disrupt the proceedings, but a door attendant confronted him: “Are you a bidder?” Tim thought: “That’s funny. Bidder?” “Why yes,” he said out loud. “Yes, I am.” The attendant gave him a paddle, and Tim won 14 parcels of land. Finally the auctioneer caught on, put the auction on hold, and had Tim arrested. Months later, the Obama administration cancelled the sales. DeChristopher single-handedly saved thousands of acres of wilderness and now looks forward to writing some wonderful things in prison, where he may be headed after sentencing.

5



Imposters “help” Dow do the right thing. Mike and Andy had already begun a habit of impersonating corporate hacks and hacking corporate websites, when in 2004, the BBC fell for a phony site (dowethics.com) the two had constructed to mimic Dow Chemical’s website. The site described why Dow and its subsidiary, Union Carbide, had never taken responsibility for the 1984 Bhopal disaster, when a pesticide plant leaked, causing thousands of deaths and leaving behind a toxic legacy. The BBC booked Jude Finisterra (a.k.a. Andy Bichlbaum) to comment on the anniversary of Bhopal. Finisterra announced on international television that Dow would spend billions of dollars to clean up Bhopal. Major news wires picked up the story, and within 23 minutes, Dow’s stock price fell by 4.2 percent, a \$2 billion loss. — YES! editors



Fatherhood Confronts Climate Change

Environmental journalist Mark Hertsgaard describes what life will be like for his daughter's generation

REVIEWED BY ANNA FAHEY

“Everyone who finally ‘gets it’ about climate change has an ‘Oh, shit’ moment,” Mark Hertsgaard observes in *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*, “an instant when the pieces fall into place, the full implications of the science at last become clear, and you are left staring in horror at the monstrous situation humanity has created for itself.” I’ve had countless such moments. And for a climate policy nerd like me, Hertsgaard’s basic storyline is familiar—the climate impacts and the hopeful solutions. Arrogantly perhaps, I thought my eyes were as wide open as they could get. But two aspects of this book made it surprisingly cathartic for me.

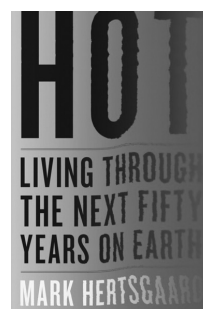
First, Hertsgaard is writing as a father. As visions of the next 50 years come into focus and predicted events

unfold, we’re reminded how old his little girl will be. Rising sea levels, drought, flooding, mass migrations, deadly heat waves, vulnerable food and water supplies—she’s 15, 30, 45. I hadn’t expected a wake-up call, but mapping impacts to my own one-year-old’s lifetime in the book’s margins, I allowed myself to acknowledge for the first time that climate change will define her life.

The second eye-opener is Hertsgaard’s focus on adaptation, a topic long forbidden in environmental circles as a signal of surrender. But coping efforts must now move forward as rapidly as mitigation to “manage the unavoidable and avoid the unmanageable,” as Hertsgaard puts it. Particularly intriguing to me is the idea that tackling adaptation may prove to be a badly needed stepping stone—an

engagement strategy—for those dragging their feet on mitigation.

There are lots of reasons mitigation efforts have stalled (the power of fossil fuel lobbies and the multimillion-dollar campaign aimed at discrediting the science of global warming come to mind). But we may also be hard-wired for foot-dragging. The human brain has trouble visualizing a future different from the past; fear shuts us down rather than stirring us to action; and we’re good at filtering information that conflicts with our worldview. Rather than changing our minds, piling on more scientific evidence actually risks further entrenching preconceived notions.



Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth

MARK HERTSGAARD

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,
2011, 352 pages, \$25

Earth Day pledges in Santa Barbara, CA.

CITRIX ONLINE PHOTOS



Adaptation charts a middle path. It takes a problem of atmospheric proportions and makes it local—and far more concrete. Focus on the imperative to protect ourselves and our assets makes it easier to come to terms with the problem. Hertsgaard illustrates this with examples of governments—from cities on up—building infrastructure and developing policy designed for the reality of climate change.

Although it sometimes borders on cliché, Hertsgaard's fatherly lens nonetheless gave me license to grapple with the emotional dimensions of global warming, fears that I'd kept well compartmentalized. Would someone outside sustainability policy circles feel the same way, I wondered? As I read, I ticked off the names of friends who should read this book—friends who know there's a problem and who'd do anything to protect their kids, but for whom the appropriate response remains a mystery.

Climate change has arrived a century earlier than predicted. We can't avoid it. Still, anger and despair, while appropriate, aren't going to get us far. Taking action to avoid the worst, Hertsgaard argues, has now become "part of a parent's job description, no less vital than tending to your child's diet, health, or education." But how? That's

the question that stops even the most informed and motivated among us.

Most of the book is devoted to successful actions being taken around the world to prepare for climate disruption (as well as some of the biggest failures to do so) and some time is spent outlining policy-level solutions and the opportunities they represent (a "Green Apollo Program," a price on carbon in the form of a cap-and-dividend policy, energy efficiency incentives, and investments in clean-energy technology). But only the final chapter touches on what an individual might actually start doing tomorrow, say. Get involved. Join the movement. Stand up against industry's control over energy policy. Push for clean energy sources. Demand accountability from our lawmakers. Easier said than done, but easier to do than many might think. And time's a-wasting.

One thing to do right now is to go online and check out Hertsgaard's campaign to "throw the bums out" by naming and shaming elected officials he dubs climate cranks. It's time to turn up the heat on policy makers at every level of government. Tell them your kids sent you!

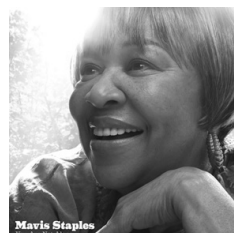
Anna Fahey is communications strategist at Sightline Institute, a sustainability policy think tank in Seattle.

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



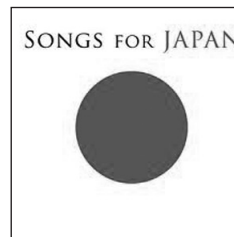
Million to One

A new album from Ruthy, daughter of legendary fiddler Jay Ungar, and her husband, Michael Merenda, who are better known as half of the subversive acoustic band, The Mammals. **Mike + Ruthy** rock out on blues songs such as "Be the Boss" and folk-rock "Rise," about fighting hate, and turn inward for the contemplative "End of Time," about love and the passage of time.



You Are Not Alone

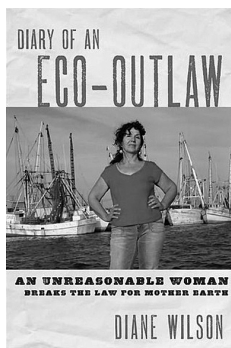
71-year-old soul singer **Mavis Staples** teamed with **Wilco's Jeff Tweedy** to produce her followup to the civil rights remembrance *We'll Never Turn Back*. Many of these songs are about poverty and hard times, but faithful to her gospel roots, they are laced with strength and encouragement.



Songs For Japan

Ten dollars of charity buys a lot of hits. Red Cross benefits 100 percent from 38 song donations: **Lady GaGa** to **Norah Jones**, **John Lennon** to **John Mayer**.

🎧 Have a listen at
YesMagazine.org/music



Diary of an Eco-Outlaw: An Unreasonable Woman Breaks the Law for Mother Earth

DIANE WILSON

Chelsea Green, 2011, 284 pages, \$17.95

REVIEWED BY KRISTIN KOLB

Environmentalist, writer, and spitfire Edward Abbey coined a term with his most-admired book, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Now imagine a one-woman gang climbing 75 feet up a chemical-spewing smokestack at a plastics plant in rural Southeast Texas and dropping a spray-painted banner that declares, “Remember Bhopal.” How did she get there? Isn’t India just about as far from rural Texas as you could imagine?

That character, in *Diary of an Eco-Outlaw*, is not fictional. She’s a mom of five—her youngest is a honky-tonk-blasting autistic 16-year-old boy—living in a trailer in a company town owned by Dow Chemical/Union Carbide/Alcoa, depending on which way the corporate winds blow. She’s also a high-profile environmental activist, who began by trying to protect the Gulf Coast bays where her family had worked as shrimpers for generations, a story told in her earlier book *An Unreasonable Woman*.

This is Diane Wilson’s rollicking tale of how she was moved to action



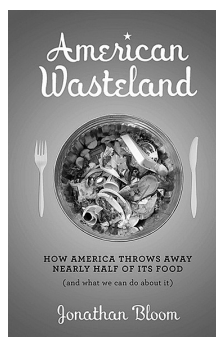
YesMagazine.org/wilson

Diane Wilson on civil disobedience and why hunger strikes are a challenge in Texas

by the infamous tragedy in Bhopal, where lethal fumes from a Union Carbide chemical plant killed thousands overnight. Sometimes Wilson raises hell just for the sake of it, but she also connects a senseless tragedy and the pain of mothers half a world away to her own family and community. It takes some elbow grease to reveal the connections between Texas and India, not to mention wine and cheese with Dick Cheney. Read on.

Kristin Kolb is a writer living in Seattle.

Interested? A jail sentence for civil disobedience led Wilson to co-found a project to improve the conditions of the 70,000 incarcerated in Texas. texasjailproject.org



American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of its Food

JONATHAN BLOOM

Da Capo Press, 2010, 360 pages, \$26.00

REVIEWED BY LAURA KALIEBE

We Americans waste a staggering amount of food—25 to 50 percent of all food produced in the United States. It happens at all stages of the food production cycle. Some is left to rot in farm fields; some is discarded by grocers for not being the right size, shape, or color; and some makes it all the way to our plates, only to languish as leftovers at the back of the fridge or get pushed into the trash or garbage disposal. All of this adds up to approximately 160

billion pounds of edible food waste annually in the United States.

Food waste has economic, ethical, and environmental implications. Food that ends up in a landfill wastes the resources used in growing it, and, as it decays, emits methane, a greenhouse gas that traps heat more effectively than carbon dioxide.

While many Americans are concerned about the ethical sourcing of their food—a bevy of books, articles, and blogs have breathlessly chronicled food’s journey from farm to table—the topic of ethical food disposal is often kicked to the curb. Which is why Jonathan Bloom’s discussion of the subject in *American Wasteland* is so refreshing. Bloom, a food waste expert who writes the blog Wasted Food, leaves no landfill unclimbed and no Tupperware container unopened in his examination of the systemic causes of food waste from both industrial and household perspectives. Written in an engaging tone, the book examines food waste issues both large (the paradoxical coexistence of food waste and hunger) and small (the size of our plates), adding historical, cultural, and even religious context. For every problem Bloom finds, he proposes a change that could help ease our country’s food-waste problem.

Bloom profiles creative ways to counteract food waste, from students at Reed College who “scrounge,” eating other students’ leftover food in the cafeteria, to the new technology behind anaerobic digesters, to Great Britain’s successful campaign against food waste that includes a landfill tax. Bloom also lists ways households can reduce food waste and proposes more sweeping systemic changes in a section called “If I Were King of the Forest.”

American Wasteland makes an interesting and persuasive argument for why you should care about food waste and what you can do about it—proving that you can have your cake, and eat the leftovers too.

Laura Kaliebe is a Wisconsin-based journalist.

FILM ::



Queen of the Sun

Directed by Taggart Siegel, 2010, 82 minutes.

REVIEWED BY OLIVER LAZENBY

Gunther Hauk has dedicated his life to nurturing honeybees. He loves, maybe even worships, the fuzzy black and yellow insects. Thirty years ago he bought a farm and planted a variety of flowers, plants, and herbs, all for the benefit of the bees. “I had that feeling of urgency to start this biodynamic farm with a bee sanctuary at its heart,” he says.

Hauk is just one of the passionate beekeepers in director Taggart Siegel’s *Queen of the Sun*, a creative documentary that chronicles the startling disappearance of entire hives, while offering a gorgeous, romantic, and sometimes eccentric tribute to the honeybee.

The film also shows why bees need devoted advocates. Colony collapse disorder, in which whole hives die off, has been responsible for alarming losses in recent years. The epidemic threatens more than just honey production, as bees play an important role in pollinating 40 percent of crops. There is no proven cause of colony collapse disorder, but the most likely suspects—monoculture on a monstrous scale, the use of pesticides and herbicides, and industrial beekeeping, which limits genetic diversity and disease resistance—are described.

“If we kill all the bees, there will be no agriculture,” Slow Food president Carlo Petrini says in the film. That may be an exaggeration—flies, beetles and other insects also pollinate plants—but bees are vital to our current food crops. *Queen of the Sun* makes a good case for bees as “the canary in the coalmine” that signals the damage we are causing to other pollinators and the natural world.

Taggart Siegel juxtaposes facts and statistics with episodes of nature worship that, although whimsical, highlight the intrinsic value of bees, the honey they produce, and the colorful flowers that employ them and have evolved alongside them. Bees are small but essential engines of the ecosystem. “We should actually be revering them because they are actually keeping us alive as opposed to the other way around,” says one rooftop beekeeper in London.

The filmmaker’s enthusiasm for the beauty of this creature is infectious. If *Queen of the Sun* doesn’t inspire you to become a beekeeper, it will at least give you a deeper appreciation for the essential work bees do, and our own stake in their survival.

Oliver Lazenby is an editorial intern at YES!

Egypt: Seeds of Change

Al-Jazeera English, 2011, 25 min

The young organizers behind the Egyptian uprising are revealed in this short documentary for Al-Jazeera, available online. Handheld camerawork by reporter Elizabeth Jones captures the suspense and elation inside the ad-hoc headquarters of the April 6th Movement during 10 days early in the protest. We watch as the hopes of years become history. A unique primer for would-be nonviolent revolutionaries everywhere.

Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune

First Run Features, 2010, 97 min

A definitive and long-overdue tribute to songwriter Phil Ochs, a leading voice of Vietnam-era protest. Ochs’ life was intense and tragically brief, but his legacy of soaring melodies and incisive lyrics still inspires.

Watch film trailers at
YesMagazine.org/58films



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DITCH THE FRIDGE

It's time for me to replace my refrigerator and I was wondering if I really need another as big as the last. I'd like to downsize or be rid of it altogether.

Great-granny knew that most foods actually don't need refrigeration and that other methods often work better to preserve freshness and flavor. Many fruits and veggies are best kept out of the fridge, but in a cool, ventilated space.

A closet, mudroom, basement, or garage may work if you'd like to create a modern version of great-granny's pantry. If you live in a low-humidity area, you could try a zeer, a North African pot-in-pot that keeps contents cool by evaporation. If you're ambitious and your home permits, you could create a root cellar or look into building a cold cabinet into the north wall of your home.

Some city dwellers live fridge-free by shopping locally and often, container gardening, and joining a community garden or CSA. People who have access to land may be able to grow more of their own food and harvest as needed. Leafy greens, for example, may be harvested repeatedly, and many root vegetables stay fresh in the ground. Healthy hens in the backyard provide an ongoing supply

of fresh eggs (unwashed eggs have a protective coating that helps preserve them at room temperature). Some people who've kicked the ice habit find that drinking water cool, rather than iced, is actually better for their digestion.

If you do decide to replace your old fridge with a smaller one, look at Energy Star ratings and keep in mind that chest freezers and refrigerators are much more efficient than the standard upright models.

Finally, disposal of refrigerators should involve careful recovery and recycling, particularly for older models that contain CFCs. So make sure your old fridge is handled according to the guidelines of the EPA's Responsible Appliance Disposal Program.—R.M.

Interested? epa.gov/ozone/title6/608/disposal/household.html

COMPOSTING TOILETS

I've read that composting human waste is much more environmentally friendly than disposing of it in water-based sewage systems. Could I install a composting toilet in my home?

Standard water-based sewage systems account for about 30 percent of household water use: Even low-flow toilets use 1.6 gallons of water with each flush.

Composting toilets don't use

Our Issue 58 researchers

Oliver Lazenby is a recent graduate of Western Washington University's environmental journalism program. He loved writing about human waste and hopes to continue his compost education. **Robert Mellinger** plans to continue his studies in permaculture, ecological psychology, and systems design while looking at—and writing on—contemporary issues through these trifocals.



Robert Mellinger

Oliver Lazenby

water and are odor-free and sanitary if maintained properly. In a matter of months, they break human waste down into unobjectionable compost.

Municipal planning authorities across the country are coming around to the idea that composting toilets are not only better for the environment, but safe for public health, too.

One example comes from a private elementary school in Seattle with 233 students. The Bertschi School's new science wing is designed to be completely self-sufficient, which

includes composting human waste. A vacuum flushes the toilet into two composting tanks, which can hold a total of six months' worth of waste. Janitors dump bark dust into the tanks to add carbon to the mixture, and slide a handle in and out to aerate.

Composting toilets can cost more than \$1,000 at home stores, but the Humanure Handbook says you can do it yourself. Mount a toilet seat atop a 5-gallon bucket. Use sawdust to cover your "business," eliminate odor, and encourage the composting process. Use undyed,

YES! BUT HOW ::

unscented toilet paper. Add the results to the rest of your compost, making sure it's safe from flies, rodents, and the like. Some people empty the bucket into a container like a 55-gallon drum.

This only works with a well-tended compost pile that gets hot enough to kill any pathogens. Experts recommend composting for a year to add a margin of safety, since common germs and parasites don't survive that

long in soil.

The result will make great compost for trees, flowers, fruits, and fruiting vegetables, although cautious gardeners avoid using it on root crops. Contact your County Health Department to find out the regulations about composting toilets in your area.—O.L.

Interested? *The Humanure Handbook*, now in its 3rd edition, is a detailed source on the biology of composting human manure: humanurehandbook.com

YES! PICKS ::

Rocket Stoves

When Americans pull out their grills for the traditional summer barbecue, a debate will be reignited among those with a taste for outdoor cooking and sustainability. Charcoal or gas? Inevitably, the charcoalites will find themselves in a smoky corner arguing that charcoal from sustainably harvested trees is carbon neutral, while the gas-heads will make the argument that a cleaner burn outweighs the non-renewability of fossil fuel. So, which is the better option?

Neither. Try a rocket stove instead!

Approximately half the world's population cooks with solid fuel—a significant contributor to carbon emissions, deforestation, and serious health conditions from inhaling pollutants. The Aprovecho Research Center set out to address these problems in the developing world, but the rocket stove design is applicable anywhere.

One Aprovecho study showed that with sustainably harvested wood, a rocket stove produced only 41 percent of a traditional three-stone fire's harmful emissions. A charcoal stove produced 61 percent *more* emissions than a traditional three-stone fire. This number did not account for emissions from the production of charcoal.

And forget about chopping firewood; the highly efficient design allows you to use twigs and wood scraps from your backyard. The rocket stove's small air intake and insulated chamber burn fuel at a high temperature, resulting in almost complete combustion, producing little smoke, particulate or emissions. The design can also be adapted to heat a home.

Why not replace your carbon-monster barbecue with a DIY rocket stove this summer? The simplest design on the Aprovecho website uses six adobe bricks. Another requires large and small tin cans, 4-inch stove pipe, a brick, and a grill top. There are more instructions for making simple devices you can try for low-carbon cooking. —Robert Mellinger

Interested? aprovecho.org/web-content/media/rocket/rocket.htm

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