

Fall 2008

yes!

Building a Just and Sustainable World
ISSUE 47

*The Food Crisis:
How to Solve It*



Purple America

**HOW TO
BREAK THROUGH
RED-BLUE
POLITICS**

10 Policies for
a Better America

How the Middle
Class Got Stuck

Why My Conservative
Dad Turned Green

David Korten:
We Are Hard-Wired
to Care

www.YesMagazine.org

US \$6.50 Canada \$6.50



7 25274 87100 1

“YES! is my absolute favorite magazine.”

**Activist and folksinger
Pete Seeger
has been a YES! subscriber
since 1997**



“YES! Magazine prints lots of small stories that big publications think are not important. But it’s these millions of small stories that will save the world.”



www.YesMagazine.org/pete

- See Michael Bowman's photo essay of Pete Seeger at home.
- Read Sarah van Gelder's interview with Pete.
- Become a YES! "Dedicated Friend" and receive the new Pete Seeger film, *The Power of Song*. (See Page 61)

SUBSCRIBE 800/937-4451 or www.YesMagazine.org



“ There are those who would quickly love each other if once they were to speak to each other; for when they spoke they would discover that their souls were only separated by phantoms and delusions. ”

ERNEST HELLO

19TH CENTURY FRENCH PHILOSOPHER

Student Raj Dhillon in conversation with a homeless woman in Toronto. Researching a project on transient housing, he wanted to know more about her circumstances.

JAMES SCOTT



Politics That Break Through

You've probably been there. It's a family gathering, maybe Thanksgiving or a wedding, and someone starts a political conversation that is as ill-informed and jargon-filled as Fox News. You hear assumptions about the world that are so alien, you wonder if you're living on the same planet. There seems to be no way to have a meaningful dialogue, much less find common ground.

But common ground is just what we discovered in researching this issue of YES! We found a nation less neatly divided than those red-blue state maps would have us believe. There are now more "Independents" than registered Republicans, so the red-blue divide is already obsolete. But more fundamentally, when it comes to the critical issues of jobs, war, and health care, among others, large majorities want the same things. We want to be treated with respect and are prepared to offer it in return. We want our hard work rewarded with decent pay. We want quality education and health care for our children. And we want security in the face of economic, ecological, and geopolitical crises.

In this issue, we offer an American agenda based on 10 areas of broad agreement. What if, instead of letting the candidates, lobbyists, and corporations set the agenda, we set it ourselves, based on what we want, and evaluated candidates based on which of them would best meet our priorities?

To get to that common agenda, we'll have to reject the belligerence that has dominated politics in recent years. Comedian Jon Stewart was right when he accused those who turn politics into a shouting match of "hurting America." The politics they create exasperates ordinary people, reduces complex issues to simplistic catch phrases, and dumbs down government.

Instead of contributing to real solutions, these pundit smackdowns set back efforts to deal with today's global crises. We desperately need a politics that draws on our

collective creativity and intelligence to bring us together in an all-hands-on-deck drive for solutions.

This issue of YES! spotlights Americans who are reaching beyond their usual comfort zones to find that common ground. Among them are Thomas Sheppard, a two-time Bush supporter who is greening his New Jersey farm, and evangelical pastor Joel C. Hunter, who is making poverty and climate change a top priority at his Northland Church.

It's a challenge to bring Americans together when we're reeling from the effects of an economic meltdown and a war that has devastated rural and urban families alike. Some people have risen to that challenge and others have not, as we see in David Sirota's report on his travels around the United States. First we visit the Minutemen, who take out their rage and sense of powerlessness on an even more marginalized group. But then we go to New York, where members of the Working Families Party are bringing people together to work for economic fairness. Coming together or turning against those less powerful—this, more than red or blue, is the critical choice point.

The latest science on the human brain offers reason to hope we'll choose to come together, suggests David Korten, in the wrap-up to our Purple America section. New research shows that we literally get high from helping others. Except when provoked into anger or fear, people are predisposed to collaborate. If we follow those impulses, if we pool our talent and smarts and work together, we can turn the crises that threaten our world into an impetus for transformation. Now there's something to talk about at Thanksgiving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah van Gelder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor

CONTENTS

THE ISSUE 47 THEME

PURPLE AMERICA

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



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.

A NEW AGENDA

Americans want many of the same things. One of these days, politicians will have to get out of the way and let us have them.

REACHING OUT

Stories of people with the courage to reach out to people who are different, to overcome stereotypes, and to create authentic community.

BREAKING OPEN

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

I8

Seeing Red, Feeling Blue: Who's Rising Up?

The old red-blue political divide is breaking down as Americans look for answers to economic pain and global insecurity. Stories of a home-grown populist uprising. *By David Sirota*

19 :: **JUST THE FACTS: How the Middle Class Got Stuck**

24

What's Good for Families

Living wages mean working parents can support their kids. Time off means they can raise them.

By Nanette Fondas

26

Health Care for All

Doctors, business owners, and others want national health insurance—and are prepared to do what it takes to get it. *By Daina Saib*

34

Farmer & Daughter

A farmer's daughter learns that her once-conservative dad is turning into a tree-hugger.

By Kate Sheppard

38

Gay & Straight Talk

LGBT youth take a road trip to conservative Christian campuses.

By Noah Grant

37

Great Correction

Folksinger Eliza Gilkyson, offers hope in her new CD, *Beautiful World*.

45

Media We Can Trust

Fair and accurate news offers a basis for reality-based debates. But how do we tell if it's fair?



42

48

We Are Hard-Wired to Care

We're taught that ruthless competition and fear are the natural state of humanity. New science shows we evolved to cooperate, and that opens up possibilities for a whole new way of doing politics. *By David Korten*

28

The Housing Fix

Housing trusts offer affordable housing immune to speculation and loan sharks. *By Dan Fireside*

30

Jobs You Can Count On

Tired of dead-end jobs, low-wage workers start co-op businesses. *By Layla Aslani*

32 :: OUR OWN AGENDA: 10 Policies for a Better America

40

Immigrants & American-Born

Hundreds gathered across the U.S. to grapple with the human side of immigration. *By Pramila Jayapal*

42

Churches & Social Justice

Christian conservatives put aside hot-button issues to focus on poverty, global warming, and peace. *By Valerie Saturen*

46

Tools for a Populist Uprising

Smart ways to make change together. *By Layla Aslani & Noah Grant*

OTHER FEATURES

12

Battle in Seattle: The Film

What actually happened when protesters shut down the WTO meeting in Seattle? The corporate media have one story. Activists have a very different story. Now it's a feature film: *Battle in Seattle* opens soon, but how real is it? *By David Solnit*

52

Welcoming Strangers to the Table

Feeding the hungry. This simple act turned out to be both revolutionary and controversial for Sara Miles, a lesbian who had just converted to Christianity. *An interview by Madeline Ostrander*



52

- 1 FROM THE EDITOR
- 4 READERS FORUM
- 6 SIGNS OF LIFE :: *Calling Iranians, New Climate Targets, Banning Uranium, First Nations' Victories, Banning Bottled Water, Look Who's Growing Their Own Food*
- 10 PEOPLE WE LOVE
- 11 COMMENTARY :: *Raj Patel: How to solve the food crisis*
- 16 THE PAGE THAT COUNTS
- 56 IN REVIEW :: BOOKS, MUSIC & FILM
Hands-on guides to greening your home
- 60 FROM THE PUBLISHER
- 62 YES! BUT HOW? :: *Cat litter, junk mail, electric bikes*
- 64 UPDATE :: *Children helping children*

READERS FORUM

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



WANT THIS ISSUE?

www.YesMagazine.org/store
or call 1-800-937-4451

Green Jobs for Veterans

I was happy to read Dr. Tick's article in your Summer 2008 issue. I know a number of Vietnam vets who are working with Tick—it's remarkable work.

However, Tick doesn't focus on the very real economic challenges faced by returning veterans. There is an enormous need to combine vets' psychological and spiritual healing with economic reintegration.

I've been involved in creating the Veterans Green-Jobs Alliance, www.veteransgreenjobs.org. Environmental restoration and "green jobs" provide a powerful context—work that has meaning in addition to real economic potential.

BRETT KENCAIRN
Denver, CO

A Friend to Israel

I spent last summer informing myself about the issue of Israel/Palestine, including a trip to the West Bank and Israel with a political study group in May.

After I read Stephen Zunes' piece on Israel in your Summer 2008 issue, I was left with some misgivings. I'm concerned about his assumption that the U.S. and Israel have a "com-

mon interest in peace and fairness." But I agree that "tough love"—criticizing Israel's Palestine politics—is certainly part of being a good friend to Israel.

EDWIN RUTLEDGE
Unterhaching, Germany

Saint Pete

The Spring 2008 issue was so inspiring that my wife and I subscribed to the print edition, and I proudly wore my new YES! button to our Earth Day Sunday service.

The most exciting part for me was Sarah van Gelder's excellent interview with Pete Seeger.

In church at our Sharing of Joys time, I discussed nominating Seeger to be a Unitarian Universalist saint, "Saint Pete," and I sang parts of Pete's Hudson River rescue song "Sailing Up, Sailing Down," "The river may be dirty now but she's getting cleaner every day."

I also recently signed an online petition to nominate him for a Nobel Peace Prize, www.nobelprize4pete.org.

BOB MOORE
Lake Forest Park, WA

Unbelievably Helpful

It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by the environmental crisis. It can cause a

tors around the planet and spread technology for clean, safe, renewable energy.

ALICE SLATER
New York, NY

Kudos for Veterans Article

I am a new YES! reader, and was pleased to find Edward Tick's "Heal the Warrior, Heal the Country" in your summer issue. I'm a veteran of World War II (1943-47) and the national security state (1951-65).

Truly, as Tick writes, "War poisons the spirit, and warriors return tainted." Dr. Tick has helped me and, I hope, countless other veterans to better understand our rages and other symptoms.

GORDON CHAPMAN
Yellow Springs, OH

No to Nuclear Fuel

George Shultz, interviewed in your Summer 2008 issue, advocates nuclear disarmament to counter nuclear proliferation. But his approach would allow only certain countries to produce reactor fuel with international controls—a policy that has already accelerated construction of "peaceful" nuclear reactors by countries who fear nuclear technology will be denied to them. Each reactor has potential to become a bomb factory.

For nuclear disarmament to succeed, we must stop metastasizing nuclear reac-



Editorial Staff

EXECUTIVE EDITOR	Sarah van Gelder
MANAGING EDITOR	Doug Pibel
SENIOR EDITOR	Madeline Ostrander
CONSULTING EDITOR	James Trimarco
ART DIRECTOR	Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT	Noah Grant
EDITORIAL INTERN	Layla Aslani
ONLINE MANAGING EDITOR	Audrey Watson
ONLINE EDITOR	Adam MacKinnon
ASSOCIATE ONLINE EDITOR	Lilja Otto
ONLINE SPANISH EDITION	Lilja Otto, Guillermo Wendorff

Contributing Editors

Jen Angel, Jill Bamburg, Walden Bello, Pamela O'Malley Chang, Holly Dressel, Carol Estes, Lisa Gale Garrigues, Van Jones, David Korten, Frances Moore Lappé, Jonathan Rowe

Positive Futures Network Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PUBLISHER	Frances F. Korten
BUSINESS MANAGER	Rod Arakaki
FULFILLMENT MANAGER	Sally Wilson
CIRCULATION DESIGN MANAGER	Sharon Booth
CIRCULATION COORDINATOR	Melissa Anderson
CIRCULATION/DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE	Paula Riehle
MEDIA & OUTREACH MANAGER	Susan Gleason
EDUCATION OUTREACH MANAGER	Jing Fong
DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR	Jessica Lind-Diamond
OFFICE MANAGER	Gretchen Wolf
DATA SYSTEMS PROGRAMMER	Kevin Audleman
BOOKKEEPER	Martha Brandon
EDUCATION INTERN	Brendan Clarke
EXECUTIVE INTERN	Elizabeth Fiala
MEDIA & OUTREACH INTERN	Carrie Guss

PFN Board of Directors

David Korten chair, Jill Bamburg vice-chair, Tanya Dawkins secretary, Alisa Gravitz treasurer, Puanani Burgess, Richard Conlin, Danny Glover, Dal LaMagna, Michael Ramos, Sarah van Gelder

Communications Advisory Board

David Bennahum, Andy Himes, Eric Magnuson, Sarah Miller, Gifford Pinchot

Volunteers

Anna Anderson, Catherine Bailey, Max Bartick, Anne Boucher, Susan Callan, Brenda Clarno, Ginger Danz, Lisa Down, Norman Keegel, Barbara Kowalski, Jonathan Lawson, Kim MacPherson, Kyle Miller, Sandy Mitchell, Glenn Morrissey, Phil Murphy, Sada Ross, Jackie Terry, Roger Weinheimer, Richard Wilson, Lisa Yarrow

YES! (ISSN 1089-6651) is published quarterly for \$24 per year by the Positive Futures Network at 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-2870. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to YES! 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-2870

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$24 per year

CALL: 800/937-4451; 206/842-0216 **FAX:** 206/842-5208

WEBSITE: www.yesmagazine.org **E-MAIL:** yes@yesmagazine.org



YES! is part of the Creative Commons movement. We don't use standard copyright licensing on our work because we want you to pass along our stories of hope and positive change. See our online Reprints Page for easy steps to take when sharing our content: www.yesmagazine.org/reprints

Newsstand circulation: Disticor Magazine Distribution Services, Attn: Dave Kasza, 905/619-6565, dkasza@disticor.com

sort of "I don't know where to begin" paralysis.

Your article "Beyond Lightbulbs: The Jones Household Goes Carbon Free in 10 years" (Spring 2008) was unbelievably helpful. Would it be possible to turn the article into a small poster for folks looking for guidance?

SARA SHARPE
Nashville, TN

Glad you asked! You can order the Jones family poster for just \$1 plus shipping. Discounts available for bulk orders. Order online, or download a version you can print, at www.yesmagazine.org/posters.

Good Travel Reading

On a recent trip to Boston I ended up reading YES! cover to cover. Your magazine was the only plus to being stuck at the airport. I enjoyed every article, including the picture of (executive

director) Fran biking to work. I look forward to reading the next edition.

SALLY MILLICHAMP
Springfield, IL

Cutting back on Carbon

I'm 69, and wasn't sure I had enough time to lower my carbon footprint.

Then I read in YES! that for every day you skip meat you'll save carbon ("Beyond Lightbulbs," Spring 2008).

About 12 years ago I quit eating meat. My diet now is fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds (except for chocolate ice cream and an occasional veggie pizza). I've lost 30 pounds, and my blood pressure and cholesterol went back to normal.

When I look around, I see a lot of folks who could save a whole lot of carbon and money using my method.

RICH RUBASCH
Viroqua, WI



Hey, look! This is no ordinary dull white paper with occasional imperfections. The paper you are holding is New Leaf 100% recycled, 100% post-consumer waste, process chlorine-free paper. Wow.



YES! ONLINE

YES! EDUCATION CONNECTION: Inspiring stories of teachers and students in action :: Posters, fact sheets, lesson plans

PHOTO ESSAYS: Equality Ride: LGBT road trip to conservative campuses :: Rick Steves in Iran

VIDEO: Comic against Racism :: Live from Mainstreet

ALSO: Tried and true green living advice ... Must-see film picks ... Uplifting music ... Cartoon caption contest

WWW.YESMAGAZINE.ORG/FALL08

Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



FOREIGN POLICY

Thousands Oppose War with Iran

👍 Activists and political leaders across the country are saying “no” to U.S. military action against Iran and demanding that the U.S. government pursue real diplomacy with Iran.

Broad coalitions—including veterans groups, mainline faith groups like the Episcopal and United Methodist churches, and advocacy organizations—have organized call-in days and online letter-writing campaigns. The events are a response to aggressive posturing by some elements in the Bush Administration, and to a congressional resolution (H.Con.Res. 362) advanced by both political parties that urges the president to halt gas exports to Iran through what amounts to a blockade. A blockade would constitute an act of war.

The opposition campaigns have garnered tens of thousands of public responses and drawn support from across the political spectrum.

“Our message is simple,” said Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) at a June 11 press conference organized by the Campaign for a New American Policy in Iran, “It’s time to talk to Iran.”

Outside Washington, D.C.,



JAMES FELDER/SNAPSHOTARTIFACT.ORG

Enough Fear, an international peace group, organized direct phone calls from New York to Iran on January 19, as part of a people-to-people diplomacy effort. The group invited New Yorkers passing by to pick up a telephone and talk with volunteers in Iran. Questions ranged from weather to differences in the two countries’ health care systems.

city councils in Cambridge, MA, Santa Cruz, CA, and Evanston, IL; voters in Urbana, IL; and dozens of mayors have supported resolutions against U.S. military action in Iran. Demonstrations and vigils against war with Iran are being held in at least 40 cities.

Public outcry has reached the ears of some lawmakers. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) initially supported H.Con.Res. 362, but later recanted. In a response to a letter from a Peace Action activist, Frank explained his new position on the resolution. “[W]e should have a very clear distinction between sanctions and military action,” he wrote, “and [a] blockade clearly falls on the wrong side of that line, so I will be making clear my opposition to that.” Reps. William Lacy Clay (D-MO), Steve Cohen (D-TN), and Thomas Allen (D-ME) have withdrawn their support, and Robert Wexler (D-FL) says he will seek rewording of the resolution.

Prominent foreign policy experts have also joined the call for diplomacy. Former U.N. Ambassador Thomas Pickering has proposed that the United States and Iran negotiate a plan for multinational oversight of enrichment of uranium in Iran, an arrangement that would allow Iran to participate in uranium enrichment but ensure that uranium is not used in

“ Just as thousands were drawn to ... the Klondike in the late 1800s, the green energy gold rush is attracting legions of modern-day prospectors in all parts of the globe. ”

ACHIM STEINER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE U.N. ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME, COMMENTING ON THE RELEASE OF A NEW U.N. REPORT DOCUMENTING A 60 PERCENT RISE IN GLOBAL RENEWABLE ENERGY INVESTMENT, TO \$148 BILLION AT THE END OF 2007.

weapons production. In a May 13 letter to the United Nations, Iran indicated its willingness to negotiate on this proposal.

The Bush Administration has insisted that Iran cease all uranium enrichment, but has also shown signs of a shift on Iran. The White House recently sent a top official to six-party nuclear talks in Geneva.

Activist groups like United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) say this shift is a response to public pressure. But they are wary in light of the Bush Administration's track record. As recently as July, President Bush told Israel he was prepared to take military action if negotiations with Tehran failed, according to information from a senior Pentagon official reported in the *London Times*.

"This is no time for complacency," said Leslie Cagan, UFPJ's national coordinator.

Robert Naiman is senior policy analyst at Just Foreign Policy, www.justforeignpolicy.org

Interested? See our online special issue at www.yesmagazine.org/iran

ALSO ...

Army Private Robin Long was deported on July 15 to the U.S. from Canada, where he had sought refugee status. Long had deserted his unit rather than deploy to Iraq. Two other U.S. resisters received permission to stay in Canada, at least for now.

On June 3, the Canadian Parliament passed a non-binding motion urging an end to the deportation of U.S. Iraq War deserters. The legal situation of the roughly 200 deserters remaining in Canada is unclear.

ENERGY

Climate Activists Set 350 ppm Target

What will it take to avert dangerous levels of climate disruption? Scientists say atmospheric CO₂ needs to be reduced from the current level of 385 parts per million (ppm) to no more than 350 ppm. Activists are taking up the call, pressing world leaders to set goals at the upcoming Copenhagen, Denmark, climate negotiations that can achieve the 350 ppm goal.

The effort is led by Bill McKibben and other climate activists who in 2007 coordinated Step It Up—a network of hundreds of nationwide citizen events. The group has adopted the name and website 350.org and is inviting people around the world, especially youth, to plant trees, organize bike rides, write letters, host pot lucks, all with the aim of raising awareness of the 350 ppm goal.

The number 350 is "the most important number in the world," says a statement on the group's website. "It contains, rightly understood, the recipe for a very different world, one that moves past cheap fossil fuel to more sensible technologies, more closely-knit communities, and a more equitable global society."

—Noah Grant

ALSO ...

The governments of Ireland and British Columbia, Canada, have banned uranium mining, which contaminates water, soil, and air, and causes



MELISSA GASSER MYERS

The U.S. has surpassed Germany as the world's largest wind-energy producer. In Texas, oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens has turned to wind as the answer to the nation's energy problems. Pickens has leased hundreds of thousands of acres for a wind farm in West Texas, where he plans to build the world's largest wind farm to power the state's cities. The wind energy can displace natural gas generation, Pickens believes, freeing it up to fuel cars and trucks. Pictured above, a single turbine blade is transported through Fredericksburg, Texas.

elevated cancer rates among miners and nearby residents.

Ireland prohibits nuclear power generation, so it "would be hypocritical to permit the extraction of uranium for use in nuclear reactors in other countries," said natural resources minister Eamon Ryan.

British Columbia does not currently have uranium mines, although mining companies have their eye on the province. Earlier this year, the northern territory of Nunatsiavut placed

a three-year uranium mining moratorium on Labrador Inuit land.

New Hampshire recently became the 10th state to join a regional cap and trade program that will require power plants to purchase allowances for greenhouse gas emissions beginning in 2009. Money paid by utilities will be used to insulate homes, increase furnace efficiency, and for other conservation efforts.



RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK

Grassy Narrows residents and activists have worked for years to stop the clear cutting of First Nations lands. Shown here is a blockade of the Trans-Canada Highway.

HUMAN RIGHTS

First Nations Halt Clear Cutting

Indigenous communities in Canada scored a major victory on June 3, when Abitibi-Bowater, one of North America’s largest newsprint and forest products companies, halted logging on the traditional territory of the Grassy Narrows First Nation in Ontario.

The company yielded to a decade-long campaign led by Grassy Narrows, a community of 1,000 people, and backed by a coalition of human rights and environmental groups, including Amnesty International, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the

Rainforest Action Network.

The campaign began in December 2002, when two young mothers from Grassy Narrows felled two trees across the area’s major logging road. Their action sparked the longest running blockade in Canadian history.

The Grassy Narrows victory is part of a thriving movement for indigenous self-determination in Canada. Dozens of First Nations from the Haida in British Columbia to the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) in northern Ontario are asserting control over their land.

The issue drew national attention from the press and support from prominent leaders after six activists from the KI nation were

arrested for protesting mining on native land in northern Ontario. In response to the protests and public outcry, provincial politicians protected 56 million acres in northern Ontario from mining and logging, and promised to change the province’s outdated mining act to give First Nations more decision-making power over resource extraction on their land.

Grassy Narrows activists, who see protection of their land and their culture as intertwined, are working to empower their youth and revive their culture and language.

Jessica Bell is a former organizer for Rainforest Action Network, where she worked to support Grassy Narrows. Today, she works for the California Food and Justice Coalition.

Labor Supporting Same-Sex Marriage

Labor unions in California are backing the right of same-sex couples to marry.

The California Teachers Association and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) locals are preparing to fight Proposition 8, an initiative that seeks to overturn a May decision by the California Supreme Court that effectively legalizes same-sex marriage. Gay and lesbian union members succeeded in getting a resolution against the initiative passed at the California Labor Federation’s biennial conference in July.

The nation’s labor unions have long been ahead of the curve on supporting gay rights. In Wisconsin, for example, unions representing public employees, teachers, communications workers, and others fought an unsuccessful campaign to defeat a 2006 measure banning gay marriage and civil unions.

But analysts say labor is now in a stronger position to defend the rights of gays and lesbians across the country.

In New York and Pennsylvania, unions have lobbied for passage of statewide non-discrimination legislation.

In addition, eight international unions have come out in full support of same-sex marriage, and many have lobbied for a federal law protecting gays, lesbians, and transgender people from employment discrimination.

–Noah Grant

“ The Government of Canada now recognizes it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes ... to separate children from rich and vibrant traditions ... We apologize for having done this. ”



👍 **CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER** APOLOGIZED FOR POLICIES THAT FORCIBLY SEPARATED ABORIGINAL CHILDREN FROM THEIR FAMILIES, FROM THE 1870S TO THE LATE 20TH CENTURY, AND PLACED THEM IN BOARDING SCHOOLS WHERE THEY WERE SUBJECTED TO ABUSE.

WATER

Mayors Lead on Bottled Water

👍 The U.S. Conference of Mayors has voted to eliminate the use of bottled water by governments and to encourage the use of municipal water. The non-binding resolution was adopted at the mayors' annual gathering, held in Miami in June.

The mayors cited the environmental impacts of bottled water. Production of plastic bottles uses the energy equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil and generates more than 2.5 million tons of CO₂ per year, the resolution notes.

The mayors also noted the higher cost of bottled water: 40 percent of bottled water comes from municipal water systems, yet bottled water typically costs 1,000 to 10,000 times more.

—Layla Aslani

Get Ready For the Next Big Floods

👍 The torrential rainfalls and floods that have devastated the Midwest are occurring with increased frequency as a result of climate change, say environmental groups. Federal planning should adjust forecasting, mapping, and levee construction, they say, to take into account the new reality

The Midwest experienced two 100-year floods in the last 35 years, and two 500-year floods—one in 1993 and one this year.

But it's not only climate

change that is to blame. River management, wetland destruction, and real estate development in flood-prone areas have all worsened the flooding, according to environmentalists.

The National Wildlife Federation and American Rivers are pushing for changes to make federal flood insurance legislation now in negotiation between the House and Senate reflect the new conditions. In particular, the two groups want to see updated flood forecasting and more realistic mapping of flood-prone areas.

Protection of wetlands and a fresh look at levees and other river modifications used by the Army Corps of Engineers are also needed, environmentalists say.

—Madeline Ostrander

FOOD

Home Grown Food on the Rise

👍 In response to soaring food prices, the number of gardeners in the U.S. is on the rise. George Ball, the owner of the W. Atlee Burpee Company, says sales of vegetable and herb plants and seeds are up 40 percent compared to last year. A \$100 investment in a garden can produce \$1000 to \$1700 worth of vegetables, he says.

Community gardens across the nation report long waiting lists, while Yahoo says searches for “vegetable,” “organic,” and

“container gardening” have more than doubled since last year.

Food prices rose 4 percent in 2007. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts they will rise another 4.5 to 5.5 percent in 2008.

—Layla Aslani

ALSO...

👍 **The Farm Bill**, which passed Congress in May, contains a record \$78 million for organic agriculture research, five times the current funding level, and \$22 million to help farmers and handlers get certified as organic. The bill also includes a \$10.3 billion increase in funding for nutrition programs, including food stamps, and \$35 billion in subsidies for agricultural commodity programs.



SHANE RHYNE

Shane Rhyne and Ruth Sapp of Knoxville, Tennessee, brought their interest in local food systems into their front yard. This summer, they dug up their lawn and replaced it with vegetable gardens.



Hari Kondabolu
Comic Against Racism

Hari Kondabolu, 25, started doing stand-up comedy in high school, but it wasn't until after 9/11 that he found his true voice, producing smart, thought-provoking jokes about subjects few comics touch, like racism.

Kondabolu uses comedy to point out hidden assumptions about immigrants. After hearing a xenophobic remark from a fellow comic, "I [responded] by writing material that ... gave a fuller picture," Kondabolu says, "[a] bit about reducing the immigration rate by either making billboards that convince people that America is not as great as they think it is or by ending the exploitation of developing nations."

A rising star, Kondabolu has appeared on Comedy Central and "Jimmy Kimmel Live." Inspired by his second job as an immigrant rights advocate, he recently moved to London to pursue a Master's degree in human rights, but plans to resume his stand-up act when he returns to the U.S. this fall.

 www.YesMagazine.org/hari
Comedy about racism and other dangerous subjects



Erica Wheeler
This Land is Your Land

As a young adult, Erica Wheeler studied environmental science, but her career hit a turning point when she realized data alone couldn't move people to care about conservation. An interest in labor union history drew her to folk music. "I loved that those union songs could cut right through and tell the truth." Wheeler began writing songs about the human connection to place.

Wheeler now leads writing workshops that help people connect with the land. "The place could be the lilac bush in your grandmother's backyard or a wilderness peak, but if people find that personal connection, they will want to act on behalf of places they care about." She creates safe space for people to grieve places they have lost, and find inspiration to protect places they love.

Wheeler has partnered with the Trust for Public Land to produce a new CD, *Good Summer Rain*, that celebrates American landscapes.

 www.YesMagazine.org/ericawheeler
Music from Wheeler's new CD



Eloisa Tamez
Fighting for a World Without Borders

A leader in the fight against the U.S.-Mexico border fence, Eloisa Tamez gained national attention in January after refusing to allow government surveyors onto her border property in Texas.

Her three-acre property lies along the Rio Grande and is all that remains of a 12,000-acre piece given to her family by Spain in 1767. The fence would pass through her land, likely dividing it in two.

The U.S. government plans to build 700 miles of border fence, including 70 miles in the Rio Grande Valley by year's end. In April, the Department of Homeland Security waived more than 30 environmental and land-use laws in order to expedite fence construction. Tamez calls such actions "an abuse of power, overtaking people who have minimal or no recourse at all to be able to fight the government."

Tamez was ordered by a federal court to allow government access to her land, but she continues to voice opposition and has vowed not to give up.



Bill Moyer
Giving Politicians a Backbone

You might run into Bill Moyer striding alongside a giant polar bear, or a walking puppet of the U.S. Constitution. Or you might hear him on the radio, conversing with a person who could be "the ideal secretary of defense"—if our government had a "backbone."

Founder of the Backbone Campaign, Moyer organized a group of artists in 2004 on Vashon Island, Washington, to bring a puppet of a giant spine to the Democratic National Convention. Each vertebra was a platform plank like "no corporate personhood" and "civil unions for all." The campaign called on political leaders to take a stand on issues Americans care about.

The Backbone Campaign along with other progressive groups have created a "shadow cabinet," a dream team of leaders with progressive values. Visitors to www.backbonecampaign.org, can rank nominees for secretary of state, for example, which include journalist Bill Moyers (no relation) and activist Medea Benjamin.

COMMENTARY :: *Raj Patel*

A GRASSROOTS FIX FOR THE FOOD CRISIS

The food crisis is only getting worse. With the floods in the Midwest, the price of corn has now broken through the \$8/bushel mark—it was barely above \$2/bushel in 2000. The price rises in corn and other staples threaten to push nearly a billion people toward hunger worldwide. Thousands of the world's hungry have taken to the streets in food protests in dozens of countries. But, despite the outcry, governments are doing little to substantively change course in the way the world's food is produced.

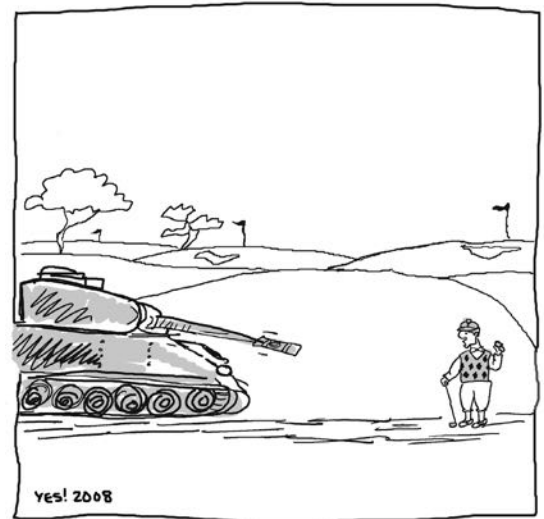
World leaders met in June at the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome to address the challenge. They concluded in fairly general terms that there was a need for food aid, investment in agriculture, and support for more research. While these are important, they're not new ideas. Indeed, much more time was spent, not coming up with new solutions, but redoubling a commitment to old ones.

Unfortunately, it's the old ideas that have created the conditions for the crisis. They have moved us to a world in which more and more food is distributed by multinationals, where that food is grown and shipped around the world using fossil fuels, and in which poor peoples' entitlements to food have been pared to the bone.

There is, however, no shortage of serious thinking about how the world might feed itself in the future. The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, a brain trust of over 400 scientists from industry, governments, the academy, and international organizations, recently bent themselves to the question of how we'll feed a world of 9 billion people (the number projected for 2050).

The answer, they suggest, is right under our noses. It involves a deep shift in the way our food comes to us. More and more scientists are encouraging us to abandon the food system of the past century, and to go local and organic. Instead of industrial agriculture, they recommend increasing support for agroecological farming—a way of growing food that builds, rather than destroys ecosystems. Instead of spraying chemicals to get rid of pests, grow plants that attract beneficial insects. Instead of applying fossil-fuel-based fertilizers to the soil, a technique that destroys the soil's own capacity to regenerate, lace the fields with legumes, which naturally help to fix nitrogen in the soil.

Improved farming science alone won't fix things, though. As much as they need nitrogen in the soil, tomorrow's food systems need democracy on the ground. The problem of starvation is one not of production—we produce more than enough food to feed everyone—so much as poverty and dis-



*Intimidation only breeds resentment and resistance;
I'm still marking it a bogey.*

REGINALD I. DURANT

I think you're looking for the Gulf War.

PAUL VENTURA



www.YesMagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

tribution. To fix this deeper problem, progressive groups and citizens are showing national governments that the best way to solve hunger is through active citizen participation.

Groups like Via Campesina, the 150-million-strong international movement of peasants and landless workers, have advocated a suite of policies that, together, they call "food sovereignty." They're policies that are exceptionally forward-thinking. A central demand is for women's rights—not a demand that we might normally associate with peasants. Similarly, they call for a progressive reorganization of the international economy—an end to the unfair trade systems that the European Union and United States governments are so very keen on. Instead, they propose the one thing that governments are most afraid of—a democratic conversation about food, about how it should be grown, how shared, how distributed.

It's a call that's being heeded around the world. In increasing numbers of city halls, people are making it happen. By making local governments pay attention to hunger, a range of organizations, working on everything from local food purchasing programs to farmers markets, are shaping the future of food. The lesson is clear—to feed the world, we're going to have to develop a taste for more democracy. **V**



Raj Patel is author of *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System* (Melville House, 2008).

Watch an interview with Raj Patel and Amy Goodman at www.YesMagazine.org/patel



REAL OR RE-ENACTMENT?

The Battle for Reality

What really happened at the 1999 WTO demonstrations in Seattle? On television, it looked like vandalism and random violence. On the streets, it looked like part festival, part uprising, part police riot. Now there's a movie version. Activist and author David Solnit was there—organizing in the streets and speaking up on the set.

David Solnit

My stomach clenched the first time I heard that actor Stuart Townsend was making a mainstream movie about the 1999 shutdown of the WTO ministerial meetings, *Battle in Seattle*.

I was an on-the-ground organizer in Seattle, and for me and many other activists, the event was a high point in our social change work. It was a moment when organized resistance became a genuine popular uprising, successfully shutting down the opening day of the WTO meeting, taking over the downtown core of a major American city, and contributing to the

collapse of negotiations that would have increased poverty, destruction, and misery around the world.

But for years, that story has been distorted. In mainstream media, the Seattle protesters have been portrayed either as violent extremists or as irrelevant “flat-earth advocates ... and yuppies looking for their 1960s fix” as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman put it.

The story of Seattle has itself become a battleground, one where activists fight the lies and disinformation used to stoke public fears and justify repres-

sion against grassroots movements across the U.S.

Now Townsend wanted to tell our story, and I wondered if he'd do any better.

What would a multimillion-dollar Hollywood-star-studded film tell Americans about the sometimes life-or-death struggle against trade policies that threatened to wreck local economies and dismantle environmental protections the world over? Would it tell about the extraordinary power of 50,000 ordinary people in Seattle and their millions of counterparts around



REAL OR RE-ENACTMENT?



www.YesMagazine.org/wtoquiz

Photographer Kevin Sharp paired his photos of the 1999 event with stills from the new film. You might be surprised by what's real and what's not.

PHOTO AT LEFT IS A FILM STILL COURTESY REDWOOD PALMS PICTURES. PHOTO AT RIGHT BY KEVIN SHARP, SHARPPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

the world to demand a just and democratic world—or repeat media myths about riots and violence that activists had fought so long to change?

Who's Really Rioting?

In the days after the Seattle uprising, I wrote this description:

On November 30, 1999, a public uprising shut down the World Trade Organization and took over downtown Seattle, transforming it into a festival of resistance. Tens of thousands of people joined the non-violent direct action blockade that encircled the WTO conference site, keeping the most powerful institution on earth shut down from dawn until dusk. ... Long shore workers shut down every West Coast port from Alaska to Los Angeles. Large numbers of Seattle taxi drivers went on strike. All week the firefighters union refused authorities' requests to turn their fire hoses on people. Tens of thousands of working people and students skipped or walked out of work or school.

But, in the words of Britain's Envi-

ronment Minister, Michael Meacher, "What we hadn't reckoned with was the Seattle Police Department, who single-handedly managed to turn a peaceful protest into a riot." As police fought our blockades with armored cars and fired rubber, wooden, and plastic bullets, as well as tear gas, pepper spray, and concussion grenades, the corporate media looked for ways to dismiss a popular uprising as merely a few dozen people window breaking corporate chain stores. The cops and politicians also tried to use this as cover for their repression and brutality.

Activists continued to engage in non-violent direct action throughout the week, despite a clampdown that included nearly 600 arrests, the declaration of a "state of emergency," and suspension of the basic rights of free speech and assembly in downtown Seattle. Corporate media promoted the impression that Seattle was staged by a fringe group of extremists whose violent tactics were to be feared. Despite this, a month later a January 2000 opinion

poll by *Business Week* found that 52 percent of Americans sympathized with the protestors at the WTO in Seattle.

Ever since, corporate media and government authorities have used distorted images of Seattle to characterize all major mobilizations in the U.S. and internationally as potential "violent riots."

In the lead-up to mass demonstrations against the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, for instance, local police agencies produced a video that combined images of activists breaking windows with fringe-sounding quotes from some Eugene activists that were used extensively by "60 Minutes" and other corporate media outlets. Police showed the video to the Los Angeles City Council just before a vote on funding a massive police presence and new riot gear to counter the demonstrations. The Council was scared, and the funding measure passed.

One of the most troubling of the many distortions of the Seattle story is a report on the New York City Police >>

The Battle for Reality

» Department's intelligence program, which attempts to justify the widespread suspension of civil liberties, mass arrests, and unrestrained spying and harassment that took place during the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City. The report says that the history of activist groups "is one of extreme violence, vandalism

feedback. Townsend finally agreed just as he began filming in Vancouver, British Columbia. I pored over the script for three days in the back room of his production offices and was required to hand it back each day before I left. I circulated a summary for feedback to a group of activists I'd worked with in Seattle. I wrote up an analysis of prob-

Theron), a European member of Doctors Without Borders, an African trade minister, a TV news reporter and her cameraman, the mayor, the chief of police, and a handful of organizers from the Direct Action Network.

The African trade minister exposes the undemocratic internal process of the WTO, while the doctor argues

Several other former Seattle anti-WTO organizers also showed up during the filming to try to influence the film. I think we made some positive changes and shifted Townsend's views a bit, but it was too late to change the film's basic narrative.

and unlawfulness," and it links anarchists and "direct action specialists" to "extreme violence" and "terrorism operatives."

More recently, references to "violent riots" at the Seattle WTO have increased as nervous authorities attempt to justify the suspension of civil liberties in the face of mass mobilizations planned for the 2008 Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

Whose Script?

Two years ago, Stuart Townsend called me up. He had heard that I was involved in the organizing that led up to the Seattle protests.

In 1999, I had moved to Seattle for six months to help organize with the Direct Action Network, a broad umbrella group that provided a framework for thousands to coordinate resistance during the week of WTO.

I'm also an arts organizer and I worked with many other artists, groups, and activists to make the giant puppets, art, and street theater that were very present in Seattle. This was all part of an effort to find new language and new forms of resistance.

Townsend asked if I would talk to his art department about puppets. He emphasized that the film "was not taking sides," but would tell the story through the eyes of the different people involved.

I asked to read the script and offer

lems we saw in the script, then met with Townsend and his assistant on the fourth day of filming.

I could tell he did not want to change the script so late in the process. A dozen of us met a few days later and organized a pressure campaign, applying tactics we often used in anti-corporate campaigns. We sent a strongly worded group letter demanding changes, called everyone we could think of connected to the film—friends of Stuart, people working on the film, and friends of friends, and we asked a couple of nonprofits not to cooperate with the film until our concerns had been heard.

We rewrote more accurate, alternative sections of the parts of the script we had problems with, but the filmmakers accepted only a handful of our revisions. Several other former Seattle anti-WTO organizers also showed up during the filming to try to influence the film. I think we made some positive changes and shifted Townsend's views a bit, but it was too late to change the film's basic narrative.

The Story Line

The movie follows several intertwined stories through the five days of the Seattle events.

Central characters include a low-ranking riot cop (Woody Harrelson), his pregnant wife who works in a downtown clothing outlet (Charlize

against drug industry patents that leave poor countries unable to afford medicine.

An activist named Django talks about the WTO ruling against the Endangered Species Act, which overturned U.S. trade rules that required the international fishing industry to protect sea turtles.

Street action and police rioting supplemented with actual footage from Seattle bring back the intensity of the streets that week. Townsend's docudrama plot twists make strong critical statements against corporate media and police violence. This movie can help shift the corporate media distortions of Seattle if it's widely viewed.

At the same time, Townsend's story also repeats some marginalizing myths and stereotypes about activists.

Let's start with the riot cop played by Harrelson. The most three-dimensional character in the film, he has a job, a wife, and a child on the way. Meanwhile, the Direct Action Network organizers appear to have no jobs, families, or even homes. Their motivations come not from everyday grievances shared by most Americans, but from unusual personal circumstances. For instance, one of them has an axe to grind because his brother was killed in a forest protest.

Townsend also fails to grasp the real reasons for Seattle's success. His movie implies that the activists "won" be-

cause police were caught by surprise, were too lenient, and waited too long to use violence and chemical weapons, and to make arrests.

But our actions were no surprise. As democracy researcher Paul de Armond writes in the most thorough analysis of the Seattle events to date, “The Direct Action Network and AFL-CIO plans had been trumpeted loudly, widely, and in considerable detail in the press by the organizers.”

We won because we were strategic, well organized, and part of strong local, regional, national, and international networks.

Decentralized networks are more flexible and stronger than top-down hierarchies like police agencies and city authorities, and this played to our

ing, education, and alliance-building that made Seattle possible. Battle in Seattle’s greatest contribution may be that it reminds us of this and spurs us to action.

A group of Seattle anti-WTO veterans launched the Web site RealBattle-inSeattle.org, which aims to correct some of the film’s misrepresentations.

“Stories are how we understand the world and thus shape the future,” explains a statement on the site. “They are part of our fight against corporate power, empire, war, and social and environmental injustice, and for the alternatives that will make a better world.”

The real Seattle reshaped the story of what is possible for millions of people around the world.

In the days before, during, and after

movements joined already thriving global south movements to push back corporate capital’s efforts to further concentrate power and wealth.

The WTO meeting in Cancun, Mexico, fell apart in 2003 because of farmer-led protests.

The same year, the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) attempted to impose corporate rule on the Western Hemisphere, but collapsed due to hemisphere-wide popular opposition.

And the WTO has become increasingly irrelevant and powerless. As I write this the WTO is trying desperately to revive itself, using the pretext of the food crisis to argue for expanding the policies that created the crisis and the accompanying widespread hunger and poverty.

My attempt to engage with Townsend’s movie helped me see how important it is for members of social movements to tell our own stories—not just about Seattle, but about all our struggles and victories—and to tell them loudly, publicly, and compellingly.

advantage.

Many individuals and allied groups who had minimal contact with the Direct Action Network understood and supported the strategy, and participated in the action without ever attending a meeting or bothering to identify with a specific group.

Writing a People’s History

My attempt to engage with Townsend’s movie helped me see how important it is for members of social movements to tell our own stories—not just about Seattle, but about all our struggles and victories—and to tell them loudly, publicly, and compellingly.

Widespread amnesia about the history of movements and rebellion is part of what has made grassroots organizing in the U.S. so difficult. Many activists have romanticized Seattle as a semi-spontaneous rebellion that arose as if by luck. This ignores the key strategizing, mass mobilizing, network-

Seattle, thousands of Indian farmers in Karnataka marched to Bangalore in a solidarity action, and over a thousand villagers from Anjar held a procession.

In 80 different French cities, 75,000 people took to the streets, and 800 miners clashed with police. In Italy, the headquarters of the National Committee for Bio-Safety was occupied. Activists took over the WTO world headquarters in Geneva.

Turkish peasants, trade unionists, and environmentalists marched on the capital of Ankara.

A street party shut down traffic in New York City’s Times Square, activists took over U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshevski’s offices, and thousands marched in the Philippines, Portugal, Pakistan, Turkey, South Korea, and across Europe, the United States, and Canada.

In the years that followed Seattle, global justice and anti-capitalist activists were re-energized as northern

As the globalized system of poverty, war, and ecological destruction seems to be teetering, perhaps the battle simply to tell our own stories and histories is as important as any in the struggle to make history. 🗨️

This article is an adaptation of a longer essay from the new book, The Battle of the Story of the Battle of Seattle (AK Press 2008) edited by and with essays by Rebecca Solnit and David Solnit and including the original “Resist the WTO Call to Action” and 1999 Direct Action Network broadsheet.



David Solnit is an anti-war, global justice, and arts organizer. He was a key organizer in the WTO shutdown in Seattle in 1999 and in the shutdown of San Francisco the day after Iraq was invaded in 2003. He is editor of *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World* (City Lights Publishers, 2003) and co-author with Aimee Allison of *Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment, End War and Build a Better World*.

 www.YesMagazine.org/wtofilm
Battle in Seattle film trailer

Number of states whose lawmakers have moved to restrict sales of foreign-made American flags: **10**¹

Value of U.S. flags imported in 2007: **\$4.7 million**²

Percentage of women recommended for hire based on resumés created by researchers for a recent study: **84**

Percentage of women recommended for hire when otherwise identical resumés indicated they were mothers: **46.8**

Percentage of men recommended for hire based on resumés created for the study: **61.7**

Percentage of men recommended for hire when otherwise identical resumés indicated they were fathers: **73.4**³

Number of stay-at-home moms in the United States in 2006: **5.6 million**⁴

Number of stay-at-home dads in the United States in 2006: **159,000**⁵

Amount of asparagus, in pounds, that the winner of this year's World Deep-Fried Asparagus-Eating

Competition consumed: **8.8**⁶

Time, in minutes, of the contest: **10**⁷

Number of full-size sport utility vehicles GM sold in 2002, the peak selling year for the vehicles: **600,000**

Number of full-size SUVs GM is on track to sell this year: **less than 250,000**

Number of truck and SUV production plants GM will close in an effort to shift production to smaller vehicles: **4**⁸

Estimated number of centenarians in the United States in November 2007: **84,331**

Projected number of centenarians in the United States in 2040: **580,605**⁹

Number of journalists killed in Iraq since 2003 as of July 2008: **130**¹⁰

Number of journalists killed during World War II: **69**

Number of journalists killed during the 20-year conflict in Vietnam and Cambodia: **63**¹¹

Number of magazines about cats in 2007: **13**

Number of magazines about dogs in 2007: **69**

Number of magazines about horses in 2007: **141**¹²

Original tree-planting goal of the United Nations Environment Programme's Billion Tree Campaign: **1 billion**

The number of trees planted within the campaign's first 18 months: **2 billion**

The campaign's new goal of trees to be planted by the end of 2009: **7 billion**¹³

Complete citations at www.yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. "Oh Say, Is That Banner Made in the U.S.A?" **2.** "The Fourth of July 2008." **3.** "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" **4.** "Mother's Day: May 11, 2008." **5.** "Father's Day: June 15, 2008." **6.** "Joey Owns Stockton." **7.** "Competitive Champs to Vie for Fried Asparagus Title." **8.** "G.M. Shifts Focus to Small Cars in Sign of Sport Utility Demise." **9.** "Older Americans Month: May 2008." **10.** "Iraq: Journalists in Danger." **11.** "59 Journalists Who Died Covering the News in 2005 Added to Journalists Memorial." **12.** "Number of Magazines by Category." **13.** "Billion Tree Campaign to Grow into the Seven Billion Tree Campaign."

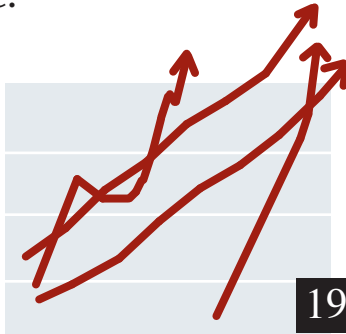
PURPLE AMERICA

Maybe this year's campaigns will focus on real issues, like jobs and the environment, instead of personalities and hot-button issues. Or maybe not. The people in these stories aren't waiting to find out. They're setting their own agenda for America—one that doesn't fit the simplistic categories of Red and Blue.



18

The Uprising. David Sirota talks to the new populists and finds where we're coming together—and falling apart.



19

How the Middle Class got Stuck. Surging prices, stagnant wages, spiraling debt. This is what "stuck" feels like.



24

What We Care About. Secure families. Health care for all. Good jobs and housing. Here's how we could have it all.



32

10 Policies for a Better America



34

Conversations Across the Divide
 :: The greening of my farmer father.
 :: Gay and lesbian youth on a road trip to conservative colleges.



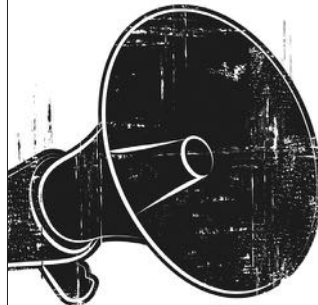
40

:: Honest talk about immigration.
 :: Conservative Christians find their roots: caring for the poor and the Earth.
 :: Media built on trust.



37

Eliza Gilkyson Offers a Song of Hope. And a place for her neighbors to talk about it.



46

A Populist Toolkit. Dialogue, trust building, online tools, direct action, and more.



48

We Can't Help Caring About Each Other: It's not just The Golden Rule; it's hard-wired into our brains.



Seeing Red & Feeling Blue

IN PURPLE

DAVID SIROTA TRAVELS THE COUNTRY AND FINDS A POPULIST UPRISING THAT'S READY TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF U.S. POLITICS.

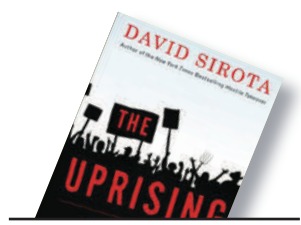
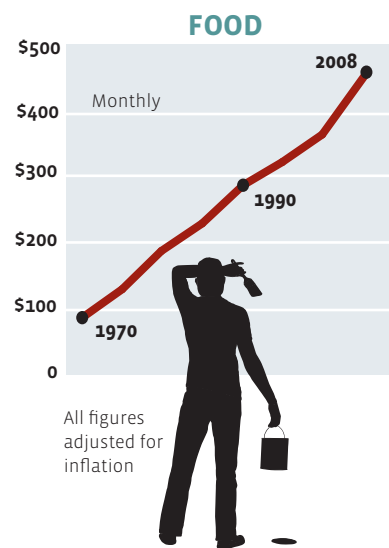
David Sirota

BY ALL MEASURES, those of us Americans not in the top 1 percent of income earners are under enormous economic pressure and most of us feel powerless to influence those who act in our name. Public attitudes toward Washington are reaching record levels of animosity. A Scripps Howard News Service poll in 2006 found a majority of Americans saying they “personally are more angry” at the government than they used to be. And there’s a growing backlash against the hostile takeover of our government by Big Money interests.

It’s the natural reaction from a country that is watching its pocket get picked. Wages are stagnating, health-care costs are skyrocketing, pensions are being looted, personal debt climbs—all as corporate profits keep rising, politicians pass more tax breaks for the superwealthy, and CEOs pay themselves tens of millions of dollars a year.

“There’s class warfare, all right,” billionaire Warren Buffet recently told the New York Times. “It’s my class, the rich class, that’s making war, and we’re winning.”

But that may not be true for much longer.



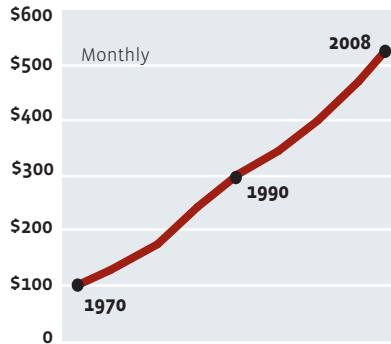
This article was adapted from *The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington*. Copyright © 2008 by David Sirota. Published by Crown Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

AMERICA

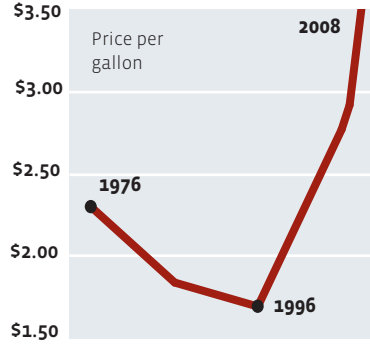
Just the Facts: How the Middle Class Got Stuck

The price of the things we need keeps going up.

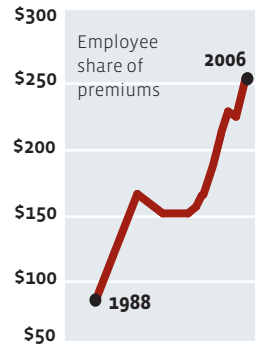
RENT



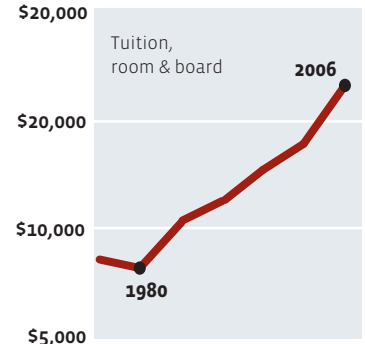
GAS



HEALTH INSURANCE



COLLEGE



Source citations: www.yesmagazine.org/47facts

RESEARCH AND GRAPHICS BY NOAH GRANT, LAYLA ASLANI, AND DOUG PIBEL
YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2008

In a year of travel to report for my new book, *The Uprising: An Unauthorized Tour of the Populist Revolt Scaring Wall Street and Washington*, I found those who are fighting back: shareholders running resolutions against corporate boards, third parties shattering the two-party duopoly, legislators kicking down lobbyists in state capitals, bloggers orchestrating primary challenges to entrenched lawmakers, or—on the darker side—armed, enraged suburbanites forming vigilante bands at our southern border. What connects these disparate uprisings is both the sense

that America is out of control, and an anger at the government for creating the crises we now face.

In Helena, Montana, I watched Kirk Hammerquist testify before the state legislature in opposition to a tax measure designed to give more breaks to wealthy, out-of-state property owners. Hammerquist owns a construction company in Kalispell, and has got the whole cowboy look going—jeans, boots, and a mustache.

“I was driving down last night on an ice skating rink,” he says, recounting his journey through the snowstorm

that just hit. “And I said, ‘why the heck am I doing this?’”

“This state is really becoming a playground of the wealthy—we know it, we can’t deny it,” he says. “And don’t get me wrong, I have nothing against wealthy people—I’m trying my hardest to be one. ... But to sit there and work on a three- to five-million-dollar home for an owner that is going to be there for a couple of months in the summer ... and to think the guy that’s working with me [putting] all this pride and sweat into that house is going to get less [of a tax refund] than that per-



This is a populist uprising—a “politics that champions issues that have a broad base of popular support but receive short shrift from the political elite.... It explains why today’s uprising defies the clichéd red and blue states that flash across our television screens every night.”



DRUM MAJOR INSTITUTE

In May, Working Families Party executive director Dan Cantor endorsed Maryland state Senator Gloria Gary Lawlah’s landmark Fair Share Health Care bill. The Working Families Party’s endorsement has become the most influential in the state of New York, and the mobilization of volunteers and votes is making the difference in key races.

» son who is going to come play here for a few months—I tell ya, it made me drive all night. I speak for a lot of people, the guys that work with their hands. I had to come down and represent them.”

In Seattle, I talked to the founder of an unlikely high-tech labor union about the way a fundamental sense of unfairness is driving a growing number of high-tech workers to put aside the libertarianism that has in the past led them to vote Republican and dislike unions, as issues like wages and health care pull them in a populist

direction. They are reacting to working conditions that keep them on a permanent “temporary” employment status. They have watched as 221,000 American tech jobs were eliminated by offshore outsourcing between 2000 and 2004. As one Microsoft employee told me, every tech worker now fears coming in to work to find their entire division outsourced to India.

In New York, I met with the grassroots organizers and campaign volunteers of the Working Families Party, which has used the state’s fusion voting laws to bring together voters

across the political spectrum under the banner of higher wages, fair taxes, affordable housing, civil rights, and campaign finance reform—issues too often ignored in modern politics.

This is a populist uprising—a “politics that champions issues that have a broad base of popular support but receive short shrift from the political elite,” as the Atlantic Monthly’s Ross Douthat says. “This explains why you can have left-populists and right-populists,” he adds. And it explains why today’s uprising defies the clichéd red and blue states that flash across our television screens every night.

Those in the uprising are sick and tired of a political system that ignores them. Without inspiration, whatever uprising sympathies people may have are easily quashed under a sense of helplessness. But as the stories in my book show, when that inspiration exists, the uprising intensifies.

More than any time in recent history, people are ready to take action in response to the emergency that is the state of the world today.

Fear, Frustration, and Simple Answers

The Minutemen are gun-toting guys who patrol border areas looking for people trying to sneak into the United States from Mexico. They’ve been labeled everything from patriots, to vigilantes, to racists. Though they see different enemies and are plagued by paranoia, they too exhibit the pure, unadulterated frustration prevalent throughout the rest of the uprising.

As the world has gotten increasingly complex over the last thirty years, America’s public discussion about the world has gotten simpler. Issues like foreign policy, globalization, and im-

migration have added all sorts of gray shades to the political landscape. But with so much complexity and so many conduits of propaganda, the only messages that break through are the most crisp sound bites and the most simple explanations.

For someone like Rick, who spent 20 years developing a landscaping business in southern California, this has created a terrifying fog—one that eliminates any sense of security or control. He sees complex demographic shifts make whites a minority in his town. He watches global economic forces stress his business. He got involved with the Minutemen because he got sick and tired of trying to battle it out with other businesses that employ low-wage illegal immigrants.

“They don’t gotta pay workman’s compensation, no liability insurance,”

he says. “I just can’t compete with them.”

But he, like all of us, has become addicted to simple answers—so addicted, in fact, that he barely notices when those answers conflict with each other.

When we talk about the environment, he says, “This country is being destroyed from within by its own government.” He says environmental regulations “are running business out of this country faster than you’ll ever know.” Yet he complains that smog is destroying Los Angeles.

When we talk about his time at Douglas, the California defense contractor now owned by Boeing, he says the company moved many of its operations from Long Beach to China.

“We’re losing our jobs, and these are good-paying union jobs,” laments the same guy who was just ripping on

unions.

Right after saying it’s time to arrest corporate executives who hire illegal immigrants, he’s railing on “these politicians who’re banging on large industry, saying big business is bad.”

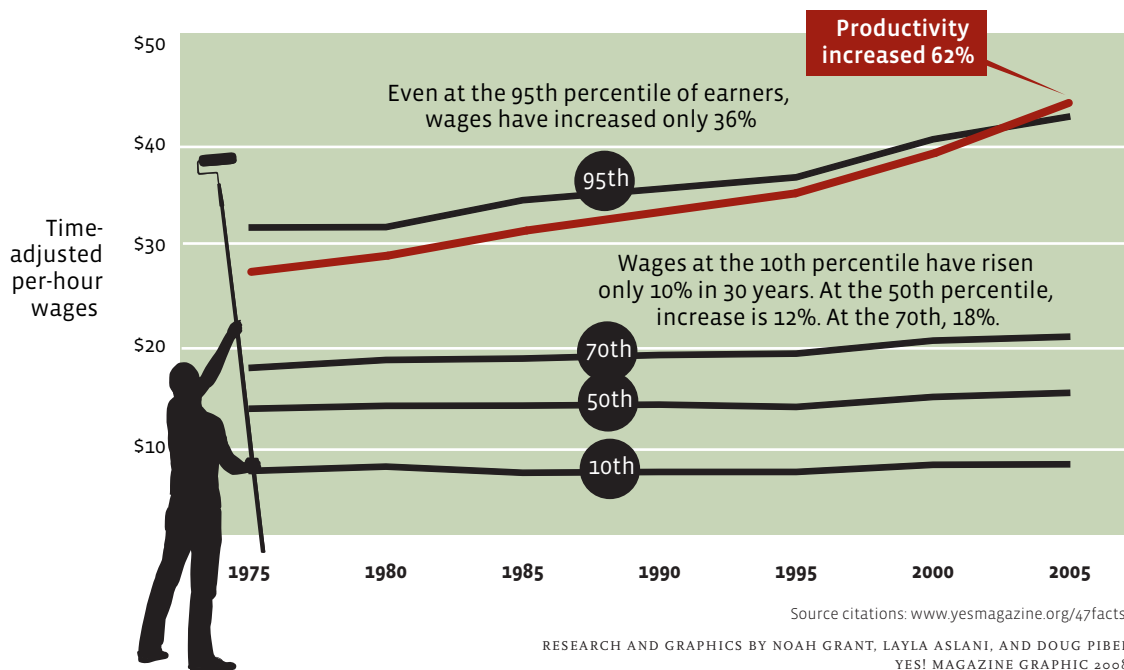
Joining the Minutemen is his way of taking some action in response to the emergency that is the state of the world today.

Right-wing politics has thrived by using fear and resentment to divide socioeconomic classes along racial, cultural, and geographic lines. The big problem for working-class whites, Ronald Reagan basically said, was black “welfare queens” stealing their tax dollars and inner-city gangs threatening mayhem. The big problem for yuppie Midwesterners, George W. Bush says, is middle-class East Coasters who want to legislate secular hedonism and take >>

PURPLE AMERICA

Just the Facts: How the Middle Class Got Stuck

We’re more productive than ever but wage-earners—especially those in the lower half—are getting little of the benefit of all that hard work.



If more people continue becoming part of this uprising, we will not only transcend the partisan divide that gridlocks our politics, but reshape the very concept of what is possible.

» away their guns. The themes and the villains change, but the story line stays the same: a set of people in the economic class just below you is taking your stuff and threatening your way of life—and if those people are dealt with harshly, your troubles are over.

Joining the Minutemen allows participants to immediately behold the illusion of results in a society whose problems are so seemingly immense and immovable that activism can feel like a waste of time. It also locks them into warfare against their natural socioeconomic allies.

The Working Families Party

But in most places the uprising takes a positive form. In the bustling streets beneath New York's skyscrapers, and in upstate towns far away from Manhattan, the Working Families Party (WFP) has become the uprising model with the most potential to convert all the populist anger and frustration into functioning political and legislative authority.

When I was reporting on the WFP, the party was channeling that anger into Craig Johnson's state senate challenge in heavily Republican Nassau County, a key race in a strategy to create the first Democratic-majority senate in New York state's recent history. When I visited the Johnson headquarters, it had the energy of a presidential campaign, and was the entire rainbow of races, colors, and ages. Though a Sunday, the office was packed with people running around making phone calls, preparing for door-knocking runs, and doing all the unglamorous tasks of local organizing. They were there because the WFP promises to champion their issues—and it delivers.

That scene is the WFP at its core: a somewhat chaotic, somewhat ragtag

squad of political ground troops in the uprising. Need a crowd for a rally? Call the WFP. Need an expert field staff to help increase turnout in a contested election? Call the WFP. You ask Democratic politicians in New York what the WFP truly brings them, and they'll all say one thing: people.

The WFP has created a space on every New York ballot for working people to organize around. It does this by taking advantage of New York's election laws, which allow a minor party to cross-endorse another party's candidate and effectively "fuse" with that party on the ballot.

On New York general election ballots in 2006, for instance, you could vote for Hillary Clinton on the Democratic Party line or the Working Families Party line, and either way your vote counted for Clinton.

Fusion's benefits revolve around its ability to bring together culturally disparate constituencies under a unifying economic agenda, without risking a self-defeating spoiler phenomenon where a stand-alone third party candidate like Nader or Perot throws an election to the very candidates they most oppose.

A century ago, the culturally conservative, sometimes anti-immigrant Populist Party (or People's Party) would often use its ballot line to cross-endorse Democratic candidates. The Democratic Party tended to be more urban-based and immigrant-dominated. But both parties were progressive on core economic issues like jobs and wages. Fusion voting helped make class solidarity more important than cultural division at the ballot box.

In a presidential election, a farmer could support progressive economic issues by voting for a Democratic candidate on the Populist line and not

feel like he was betraying his feelings on, say, temperance. Meanwhile, an urban immigrant could vote for the same candidate on the Democratic line and not feel like he was endorsing the anti-immigrant views of rural America. By fusing their votes, they were more likely to get people elected who would serve their shared interest.

Fast forward to 1998, when New Party organizers—including Dan Cantor—joined with New York's big labor unions and grassroots groups to try to use New York's fusion laws to secure a ballot line for a new third party—one with a very narrow platform focusing on higher wages, fair taxes, affordable housing, civil rights, and campaign finance reform. The calculation was that the narrower and more populist the agenda, the more sharply the Working Families Party could define itself in voters' minds, and the more clout it could have on its chosen issues.

"We want to stand for issues that often don't get heard over the din of money," Cantor told Long Island's largest newspaper. *Newsday* reported that Cantor said he wanted residents to hear the name "Working Families Party" and remember: "That's the party that thinks wages should be higher."

The party began delivering the votes. In 2000, 102,000 WFP members voted for Hillary Clinton, including a significant number from demographics where support for Clinton was otherwise low. In 2001, the WFP provided the margin of victory for a Democrat in a tight race for a seat in the Republican-controlled Suffolk County legislature.

These and other victories have led to the WFP establishing a unique public image. A 2005 Pace University poll showed that the single most influential endorsement in New York City mayoral elections is the WFP's—more

important than the state's major newspapers, current or former officeholders, or other advocacy groups.

The WFP's work for Craig Johnson paid off. WFP canvassers knocked on 45,000 doors and roughly half of the 3,600 votes that provided Johnson his margin of victory were cast on the WFP's ballot line. The New York press credited the WFP with playing a decisive role in the election.

The Future

The belief that people—not dictators, not elites, not a group of gurus—should be empowered to organize and decide their destiny for themselves seems so simple, and yet is far and away the most radical idea in human history. “Denial of the opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity and democracy,” legendary organizer Saul Alinsky wrote.

Putting that principle into action requires genuine courage and selflessness, because participants in the uprising must make their own personal

power a lower priority than popular control.

The activism and energy frothing today is disconnected and atomized. The odds against connecting it all into a true populist movement are daunting, but these stories and the others in my book show the opportunity. If more people become part of this uprising, we will not only transcend the partisan divide that gridlocks our politics, but reshape the very concept of what is possible.

Dan Cantor told me, “We have to go to people where they are on the issues they care about.” For the first time in many years, they are ready to put aside partisanship and work for shared goals. The question is whether or not we seize this fleeting moment and make it one of exponential change. **v**



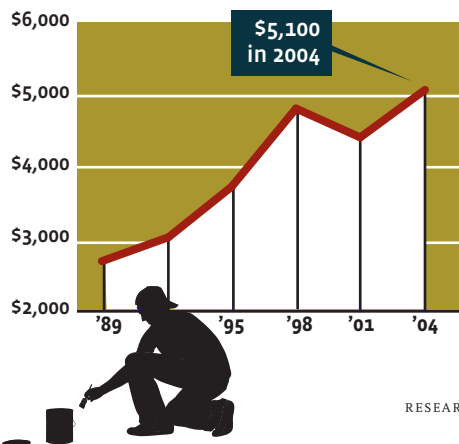
David Sirota is a political organizer, nationally syndicated columnist, a senior fellow at the Campaign for America's Future, and founder of the Progressive States Network, both nonpartisan research institutions.

PURPLE AMERICA

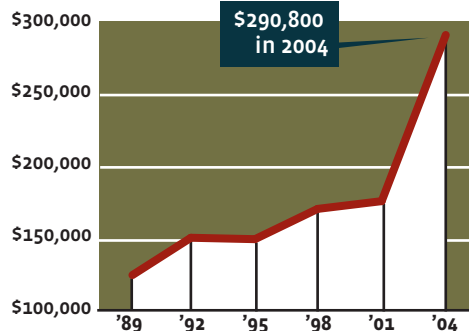
Just the Facts: How the Middle Class Got Stuck

We're going deeper into debt just to stay afloat. Massively so since 2001. The U.S. savings rate is at zero for the first time since the Depression. Home equity is at an all-time low.

CREDIT CARD DEBT



MORTGAGE DEBT



Source citations: www.yesmagazine.org/47facts

RESEARCH AND GRAPHICS BY NOAH GRANT, LAYLA ASLANI, AND DOUG PIBEL
YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2008

An Agenda That Puts

DURING AN ELECTION SEASON, we often step back and allow the candidates to set the agenda. But that agenda may be more about polarizing us and getting them elected than about the real changes we need. Here's an agenda based on the realities facing Americans, and what we want for our families, communities, and country.



Nearly three-quarters of U.S. mothers are in the paid labor force. Mothers earn 27% less than their male counterparts; single moms earn 34% to 44% less.

FAIRNESS FOR WORKING PARENTS

Nanette Fondas

With the November presidential election drawing near, we may see groups of Americans pitted against one another: young versus old, blue states versus red, liberals versus conservatives.

But there is one issue that cuts across these (supposedly) opposing groups: the importance of family. There is a growing consensus that the U.S. needs to build both public and private sectors that are friendly to families in order to remain the economic and democratic leader of the globe, as well as to fulfill our human calling to care for our tiniest, most innocent citizens.

But can we do it? What would an America that is truly friendly to families look like?

First, it would recognize that Ameri-

can mothers are occupied with two roles: mothering and working. When she has on her “working” hat, she’s a breadwinner, just like dad. Today nearly three quarters of American mothers are in the paid labor force. Six out of 10 moms with children under age six work full time. You know these mothers: they cut your hair, scan and bag your groceries, prepare your taxes, teach your children, run local businesses, and maybe even serve as your pastor, pediatrician, or mayor.

Today’s economic realities require two incomes from the vast majority of households, even those in which the mother might choose a reduced work schedule if it were available and devoid of penalties such as pay cuts, loss of upward mobility, and benefits like health insurance and retirement plans. The global labor supply unleashed by the Internet and other technologies has leveled the playing field for workers in many industries, ensuring that American parents—even that new mom down the street who is still breastfeeding her infant—will feel continued pressure to work more.

But employment is only half of what mom’s expected to do. As soon as she gets home, she puts on her “mothering” hat. She holds, feeds, and cuddles her infant; talks, plays, sings, and reads with her toddler (oops, potty-trains, too); stimulates, teaches, and

disciplines her pre-schooler.

Sounds like fun, and it is. But these days, “mothering” means even more, whether mom works full time at home or in the paid labor force: supplementing her children’s education, sometimes advocating for them when special circumstances arise; guarding against an ever-changing landscape of commercial and technological advances that seek to gobble up childhood; staying abreast of dangerous ingredients in food and toxins in toys and other products; and coordinating children’s social, athletic, and academic commitments. In Salary.com’s 2008 Mother’s Day survey, stay-at-home mothers reported working 94.4 hours per week. It’s no wonder the term “executive mom” is catching on.

So an America that is truly friendly to families would recognize that mothers wear two hats and thus move toward social policies and employment practices that bridge work and family.

To support “mothering” it would offer paid leave following birth or adoption, or to care for a sick child, parent, or self; educational excellence in the early years (child care and pre-school) as well as elementary and secondary school; after-school programs and other supplements to the traditional school day and calendar (including the need for remedial, accelerated, and summer programs); and

People First



At a Venice, California, hair salon, Kyla works while daughter Lilikoi hangs around. Kyla often brings her daughter to work to save on child care costs.

RACHEL KERNS

access to affordable health care. This would lighten the burden of the two-hat mom, especially for the millions of mothers in America who are trying to solve these problems individually and piecemeal, year after year. You've seen them, Blackberry in one hand, science project in the other, scrambling to get a sick child to the doctor, frantically patching together a child-care plan for summer vacation that is stimulating (possibly) and affordable (rarely).

Support for moms' (and all parents') working role would include: flexible work arrangements, such as flex-time, telecommuting, compressed schedules, job sharing, part-time with parity, and on-ramps to ease back into work after time away to care for children.

And don't forget fair wages. We've all heard about the wage gap between men and women. But mothers face a double whammy. Women who are not mothers earn 10 percent less than their male counterparts, while mothers earn 27 percent less and single moms earn 34 to 44 percent less.


Further, having a baby is a leading cause in the United States of "poverty spells"—temporary dips into poverty. That's partially because 51 percent of new mothers lack paid maternity leave; those with the lowest-paying jobs are least likely to have it.

Those who deny mothers equitable wages would be wise to remember a basic finding of anthropological research: when more resources are



» placed in the hands of mothers, they use them to invest in their offspring, a nation's future human capital.

We have a long way to go. The U.S. lags far behind other industrialized nations in support for working families. For example, the U.S. is one of only four countries, of 170 surveyed, without paid family leave for new mothers—the other three are Papua New Guinea, Swaziland, and Lesotho. The U.S. is tied for 39th with Ecuador and Surinam for enrollment in early childhood education for three- to five-year-olds. And according to a report issued just weeks ago, the governments of 20 countries are ahead of the U.S. in workplace flexibility. Of 21 countries surveyed, 17 have laws allowing parents to move to part-time work or otherwise adjust their working hours; five allow working time adjustments for those with family care-giving responsibilities; and five give everyone the right to alternative work arrangements.

One of the great challenges at this moment in U.S. history is to find peaceful harmony at the nexus of work and family. Few Americans would be anything but grateful to see progress toward this goal. So this November and beyond, when politicians and corporate leaders lay claim to a family agenda, put on your “mothering” hat and ask, “Is this what mothers and families need?” Then put on your “working” hat and ask, “Does this help me thrive at work and at home?” If your answers are “yes, yes,” then it doesn't matter if it comes from a Democrat or Republican, an old-timer or newcomer. What matters is that he or she recognizes how many hats moms wear. 



Nanette Fondas is the author of award-winning articles on the economics and sociology of work, family, and management. Nanette was a Rhodes Scholar and taught business administration at Harvard, Duke, and the University of California. She is on the MomsRising.org executive team and she's the mother of four children.

For source citations, see online version at www.yesmagazine.org/yes47fondas

DOCTORS' ORDERS: HEALTH COVERAGE FOR EVERYONE



A CNN/Opinion Research Poll last year showed 64% of Americans would be willing to pay higher taxes for a national health care system.

Daina Saib

You wouldn't know it from the candidates' debates or reports on the major television networks, but a majority of Americans favor a government-run health insurance system similar to Canada's.

Those lining up to support single-payer health care include medical professionals, business people, and many Republicans. Dr. Rocky White has been all of those things.

White is a former Republican, from a conservative, evangelical background, who got interested in health care reform nine years ago when his own medical practice slipped into the red. His research into the health care system led him to conclude that the problem wasn't just in his practice—the health care system itself is broken, and a single-payer program is the most efficient way to fix it.

Under the single-payer system, doctors' offices and hospitals remain private for-profit or non-profit institutions. But the federal government covers the bills for patient services, with funds coming from taxes. The patient gets the health care they need. Paperwork and billing are kept to a minimum. Employers no longer have the difficult task of choosing, administering, and paying for health insurance for employees. Everyone is covered.

The current setup is as complicated as single-payer is simple. Today, the discerning consumer must wade through a complex system of pre-existing condition exemptions, co-



Dr. Rocky White, a former Republican, has become a leading advocate of single-payer, national health insurance.

pays, and deductibles—if they have coverage at all. Arguments over billing among doctors' offices, insurance companies, patients, and their lawyers eat up millions of dollars. An estimated \$25 out of each \$100 spent goes to paperwork, profits, and executive pay and bonuses. And disagreement over medical coverage is one of the most common sources of labor disputes for employers who have seen insurance premiums double since 2000.

With these inflated costs, it's little wonder that in 2006, the last year for which government figures are available, 47 million Americans had no insurance at all, including 8.7 million children, or that 68 percent of bankruptcies in the U.S. come as a direct result of medical expenses among people who *do* have insurance.

When White learned about Physicians for a National Health Program and their plan for a single-payer health care system, he saw it was similar to his own idea and he joined their effort.

Other medical professionals have had a similar reaction. The American College of Physicians—the largest organization of medical specialists in the country—endorses single-payer health care as does the California Nurses Association, the largest organization of registered nurses.

And so do 55 percent of Americans, according to a CBS News poll conducted in September. In another poll, 64 percent said they would be willing to pay higher taxes for a national health care insurance program.

In Congress, HR 676, the “Medicare for All” bill introduced by Representative John Conyers, Jr. of Michigan, currently has 90 co-sponsors—more than any other health care reform proposal—and the endorsement of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Republicans for Single-Payer

Support for single-payer health care is not just strong among progressives. George Swan, for instance, is a health care administrator, self-described “Purple Republican,” and a founder of Republicans for Single Payer.

“It’s about being American and doing what’s right,” Swan says. “What’s right is not paying a 30 percent premium to the insurance system and receiving sub-standard health care.”

Business owners are also supporting single-payer health care. For 25 years, Jack Lohman owned a company that provided cardiac monitoring services to hospitals. Today, he’s a co-founder of the Business Coalition for Single Payer. A “lifelong Republican,” Lohman argues that conservatives should support single-payer because it’s pro-business.

“For the same 16 percent of GDP that we are spending on health care in the U.S.,” he says, “we could provide first-class health care to 100 percent of the people.” And single-payer would “get health care off the backs of corpo-

rations so they can be more competitive with products made overseas.”

John Arensmeyer spent 12 years running an e-commerce company with 35 employees. Then he founded the Small Business Majority to advocate for the interests of small businesses, particularly on health care issues. Sharp rises in health care costs for small businesses are hurting their ability to survive, Arensmeyer says. “It’s antithetical to what we’re all about as a country, which is to allow people the freedom to go out and start new enterprises.”

Small business has often been portrayed as opposing health care reform, but SBM’s research shows that small businesses are interested in being part of the solution—even if it means paying higher taxes.

Walter Maher, former vice-president of public policy at the DaimlerChrysler Corporation, sees the problems in similar ways, although he looks at health care costs through the lens of large corporate employers.

General Motors, he says, is paying people to leave their jobs so they can hire replacements at 50 cents on the dollar with reduced health benefits. “It’s sad,” he says. “You have a giant albatross around your neck because you choose to provide a good standard of living for your employees.”

Money in Politics

If the current system is so unpopular among medical professional, patients, and business owners, what’s keeping it in place? Most advocates for single-payer agree that money in politics is the greatest obstacle to change. During the 2006 election cycle, the health care industry spent \$99.7 million on campaign contributions. Lobbying on health care issues topped \$446 million in 2007.

For Jack Lohman, that’s the crux of the problem. “Both McCain’s and Obama’s plans for health care are lousy,” he says. “Although both claim they’re not taking lobbyist money, somehow this money is getting through. They are each supporting

health care that keeps the insurance industry involved.”

And all that money can buy a lot of misinformation and scaremongering. Rocky White says he finds that people get interested in the single-payer approach if they understand what’s actually being proposed: “When people realize that all that it is,” he says, “is a publicly owned insurance company, all of a sudden business people start to lose that fear that ‘Oh my God, we’re going to become the Soviet Union.’ Even Republicans say, ‘This really makes a lot of sense.’”

While White would like to see reform happen on a national level, he believes it’s more realistic to work at the state level for now. And for him, that means Colorado. White sits on the board of Health Care for All Colorado, a nonprofit, volunteer-run group with 250 members that includes Democrats, Republicans, physicians, business people, college professors, and economists. And he is running for a Democratic seat in the state legislature to add “the voice of medicine” to the debate.

“Any time a state has studied it, they find that single-payer is the most cost-effective and covers everyone,” White says. His proposal for a single-payer system in Colorado is being studied by a blue ribbon commission created by the Colorado Legislature.

In May, the 6,000 delegates to the Colorado Democratic Party Convention endorsed a pro-single-payer resolution that will be forwarded to the national convention in Denver in August.

If one state can make a single-payer plan work, White believes, it could start a cascading effect similar to what took place in Canada during the 1940s and ‘50s.

“People are discouraged, they’re angry, they’re upset,” White says. “But politics is the process that drives policy, and if we don’t get involved in the political process we’ll never make a difference.” ▼

Daina Saib is a former YES! editorial assistant.

COMMUNITY LAND TRUST KEEPS PRICES AFFORDABLE —FOR NOW AND FOREVER



No CHT homeowner has lost a home to foreclosure in the past year. Among the nation's 200 community land trusts, foreclosures are 30 times lower than the national rate.

Daniel Fireside

Since the recent housing boom went bust, the news has been filled with stories of panic-stricken homeowners, skyrocketing foreclosure rates, and multi-billion-dollar taxpayer bailouts.

It's especially striking, then, that not a single owner of a house, condo, or co-op purchased through the Vermont-based Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) has experienced a foreclosure in the past year. Nor do any of the renters in the more than 1,600 CHT apartments have to fear eviction because of the mortgage meltdown. It's the kind of track record that has brought the CHT international accolades and sparked an affordable housing revolution.

Over the past 25 years, the CHT has become one of the largest providers of affordable housing in the tri-county area surrounding Burlington, the state's largest city, and home to its priciest homes and tightest rental market.

The genesis of the idea took form in the late 1970s, when environmentalist Rick Carbin formed the Vermont Land Trust to preserve open space as developers bought up farms. Instead of buying and holding land, as some land trusts do, the trust bought undeveloped properties at the edge of urban areas and resold them, often at a profit, but with strict limits on future development.

Then, in the early 1980s, wealthy out-of-town speculators began driving up the cost of housing in Burlington. Longtime working-class residents were being priced out of their homes and neighborhoods. Frustration reached a

boiling point when the political establishment cut a deal with big-time developers to put upscale apartments on the city's scenic waterfront. Voter disgust with this plan to privatize public space led to an upset mayoral victory in 1981 by socialist gadfly Bernie Sanders and his ragtag Progressive Coalition.

Sanders and the coalition quickly sought to develop institutions that would have a lasting impact. They established the Burlington Community Land Trust as an independent non-profit corporation in 1984 with backing from the Burlington City Council and \$200,000 in seed money. While the land trust was designed primarily to promote sustainable home ownership in the city, the Lake Champlain Housing Development Corporation, set up at the same time, focused on rental properties in the areas surrounding Burlington. The two organizations merged in 2006 to form the nonprofit CHT.

The trust became a central part of the area's affordable housing effort—one that bridges the ideological divide between a flawed free-market approach and heavy-handed government intervention. Both Democratic and Republican politicians found it difficult to oppose a program that promotes homeownership and offers life-long renters a "piece of the American Dream."

Housing Trust 101

Buying land through a housing trust starts when the trust acquires a parcel through purchase, foreclosure, tax

abatements, or donation. The trust arranges for a housing unit to be built on the parcel if one does not yet exist, then sells the building but retains ownership of the land beneath. The new homeowner leases the land for a nominal sum (for example, \$25 per month), generally for 99 years or until the house is resold.

This model supports affordable housing in several ways. First, homebuyers have to meet low-income requirements. Second, the buying price of the home is reduced because it does not include the price of the land. Third, the trust works with lenders to reduce mortgage costs by using the equity of the land as part of the mortgage calculation. This reduces the size of the down payment and other closing costs, and eliminates the need for private mortgage insurance. In all,





CRAIG LINE FOR CHAMPLAIN HOUSING TRUST

the trust can cut the cost of home ownership by 25 percent or more.

For longtime CHT member Bob Robbins, purchasing a home through the trust was the only affordable option. “We did not have access to money for a down payment on a regular home, and at our income level, we wouldn’t have qualified for a mortgage,” Robbins says. “Through the CHT, we were able to purchase a \$99,000 home with just \$2,500 down.”

Unlike federal programs that only help the initial buyer, the CHT keeps the property affordable in perpetuity by restricting the profit buyers are able to take when they sell the house. According to the terms of the CHT leases, homeowners get back all of their equity plus the market value of any capital improvements they made. However,

they only get 25 percent of any increase in the value of the house, and none of the increase in the value of the land.

This model gives the buyer access to the benefits of homeownership otherwise beyond her means, including tax deductions, wealth accumulation through equity, and stable housing costs. In return, she gives up her chance at windfall profits. A study of trust homes sold to a second generation of buyers showed that members were realizing a net gain of 29 percent on the money they had invested. “These aren’t sky-high returns,” says CHT executive director Brenda Torpy. But most CHT

New homeowners at a land trust development in the Old North End neighborhood of Burlington, Vermont. In the early 1980s, soaring housing costs were pricing longtime residents out of their own neighborhoods, and so the nation’s first municipally funded community land trust was born. Today it’s the nation’s largest, and this year it’s being honored with a prestigious U.N. World Habitat Award.

homeowners would never have been able to buy homes otherwise.

“We’re trying to stop the concentration of land in the hands of a wealthy minority,” says Torpy.

The CHT has become an increasingly important force in Burlington’s housing market as well as in the surrounding counties, even as city administrations have come and gone. After 25 years, the trust has over 2,100 households living in its homes, condos, and apartments, not concentrated in pockets of poverty, but spread throughout the area. Since the 2006 merger of the Burlington Community Land



» Trust and the Lake Champlain Community Development Corporation into the CHT, the trust has become one of the region's largest managers of rental property.

The CHT is remarkable not only for its size, but for its promotion of community empowerment. CHT tenants and owners vote for and serve on its governing board, along with government officials and other city residents with technical expertise, such as architects and urban planners. The system is designed so that all interested parties have a voice and a vote, making it an experiment in democratic self-governance as well as an affordable housing program.

Booms Without the Bust

CHT employs several strategies to make sure their model succeeds, even during tough times. They offer homes below the market rate—typically half the price of a comparable open-market unit. Unlike shady mortgage brokers, “we’re not going to let people take risky mortgage products,” says Chris Donnelly, CHT’s director of community relations. And if residents run into trouble, the land trust works with them. “It’s not hand-holding,” Donnelly says. “It’s standing next to the homeowner.”

A study conducted in December showed that foreclosure rates among members of 80 housing trusts across the United States were 30 times lower than the national average.

Tenants in the trust’s rental properties are also benefiting from CHT’s commitment to affordability and community building. By leveraging grants and subsidies, and because they aren’t seeking a profit, CHT is able to keep rents up to 30 percent below market rate, even though they use the most environmentally rigorous building standards and set aside funds to cover future maintenance and repairs. The trust fixes up the buildings that for-profit companies won’t touch. “When a fire destroys a block, we’re the ones who come running in to restore the neigh-

borhood,” says Donnelly.

“We’re going to steward these places forever,” says Donnelly.

Housing advocates in Burlington have created a sustainable model for affordable housing through shrewd politics and a belief that housing is a fundamental human right rather than a commodity. Their model is being emulated across the country. There are 200 community land trusts in the United States today, including in large cities like Atlanta and Cincinnati. Washington, D.C., is in the midst of creating a 1,000-home land trust with advice and support from the CHT. Half of these trusts started up in just the past seven years.

Back in Burlington, the main obstacle to CHT’s expansion is money. The trust relies on government programs, grants, and donations to bring new properties into its model. “We’re doing about 25 new homes each year, and about 25 to 30 resales. We could easily do 100 sales a year if we just had enough cheap capital. The model has been proven to work. It’s gone to scale. It would be a great way to fill the need without the problems we’re seeing nationally,” says Donnelly. But public funding has been flat or falling in recent years, and the economic downturn will make other funding harder to find.

Donnelly hopes that the recent troubles in the conventional housing market and some international accolades will help spur more interest in the land trust model.

In October, CHT will be honored with a World Habitat Award at the annual gathering of UN-HABITAT, the global agency dedicated to sustainable living. The award is one of only two given out each year. Donnelly is proud of the achievement. “It’s like the Nobel Prize for sustainable development and housing.”

Daniel Fireside is book editor at *Dollars & Sense* magazine, www.dollarsandsense.org. An earlier version of this article appeared in *Dollars & Sense*. Interested in joining or starting a land trust in your city? Contact the National Community Land Network, cltnetwork.org.



Co-op members earn 50-100% more than they would make working for a conventional cleaning company. On average, their household incomes have increased by 45%.

CREATE YOUR OWN WORKPLACE

Layla Aslani

Maria Rosales always dreamed of owning her own business and had the know-how to do it. She grew up helping her parents run a restaurant, market, and farm in Mexico, and later helped her sister with her work at a banana export business. But when Rosales immigrated to the United States, she found she lacked the formal education and capital to start her own business. So she took a job on a Silicon Valley electronics assembly line.

Life changed for Rosales years later when she learned about Women’s Action to Gain Economic Security, or WAGES, a San Francisco Bay-area organization that helps low-income women start businesses. The staff of WAGES invited her to join four other women in starting a cooperative.

Under a cooperative business model, each participant is both a worker and an owner of the venture, sharing the costs and profits equally.

“Cooperatives give more people access to business ownership,” says WAGES executive director Hilary



IRENE FLOREZ

Co-op owner-members, left to right, Bertha Naranjo, Guadalupe Serrato, Gloria Artega, Francesca Barua, and Maria Rosales attended the 2008 National Worker Cooperative Conference and led a workshop on building inclusive cooperatives, local networking, and strategies for fully engaging Latina immigrants as co-op members.

Abell. And they provide jobs that put workers' well-being first.

That's more important than ever in today's sluggish economy, when big companies are downsizing and outsourcing jobs to lower-wage countries. Unemployment in the United States now stands at 9.9 percent if workers who have given up looking for jobs and the underemployed are included. Add in the U.S. prison population, and the rate is 11.3 percent.

For corporate employers, obligations to shareholders means a never-ending search for lower costs, and that often means employees are shunted aside.

But that can't happen at a cooperative, because the workers, managers, and shareholders are the same people. They don't need to make huge profits for shareholders to stay in business, and there's no pressure to keep wages low.

Co-ops also have the advantage of needing only modest amounts of capital to get started. "People can pool their skills and resources," says Abell.

From the beginning, Rosales and her coworkers made the decisions, including choosing to run a housecleaning service.

WAGES trained the women to work with safe and natural cleaning products like vinegar, baking soda, and vegetable-based soaps. The women, accustomed to using harsh chemicals, were skeptical at first. But they were won over when the products worked well

without causing the rashes and headaches that had plagued them when they used chemical cleansers.

That was in 1999. Today Rosales works as a general manager for Emma's Eco-Clean, the company she started with the other women from WAGES. The increased demand for all things green helped Emma's expand to 25 worker-owners. Meanwhile, WAGES launched two other eco-cleaning businesses and is planning a fourth.

One of those companies, Natural Home Cleaning Professionals, announced a year-end profit of more than \$90,000 last year. The worker-owners voted to take 70 percent of that amount in bonuses and put the rest into growing their business.

Sharing the Wealth

While successful in some markets, the cooperative business model faces challenges. One is that co-ops are just catching on in the U.S., which means financing new projects is difficult, and guidance for young cooperatives is scarce. To help fill the void, WAGES provides advice to those trying to start a co-op. "We don't want other people to have to learn the hard way," Abell says.

WAGES also shares co-op know-how through local, regional, and national co-op networks including the United States Federation of Work Cooperatives, a grassroots organization

founded in 2004.

Another challenge is that each co-op worker-owner assumes much more decision-making responsibility than an employee in a conventional business. They must be prepared to vote on everything from the annual budget and hourly rates to whether an under-performing member should be asked to leave.


"We are like a family," Rosales says, and that helps with decision making.

Also important are the goals co-op members share. These include earning better wages and benefits than are offered at other jobs available to these women. "I worked for 11 years, and the most I made per hour was \$11," says Rosales. At Emma's, "everybody is making from \$12 to \$15 an hour."

The cooperative model has also paid off for Claudia Zamora, a worker-owner at Natural Home Cleaning. Like Rosales, Zamora emigrated from Mexico and worked in the cleaning and restaurant industries before joining the cooperative. She was scared at first—she had to contribute \$400 to join, and had to go in with seven other women on a \$14,000 loan. But the benefits were worth it. Zamora was able to purchase a home, and she can arrange her schedule around the needs of her two children, ages five and eight.

For Rosales, one of the biggest rewards is working in a job her family is proud of. Her oldest daughter, a 21-year-old college senior, talks about her mom to her friends. "She sends me e-mails, and says how much she admires me and how much she appreciates all the hard work I do," says Rosales.

Also important is the empowerment and business knowledge Rosales has gained. "I feel like I can do any type of business now with the experience I got here," she said.

As jobs in the corporate economy disappear overseas or fall victim to downsizing, workers may choose to create their own jobs through cooperatives that they can control. 

Layla Aslani is an editorial intern at YES!
Interested? www.wagescooperatives.org

10 POLICIES FOR A BETTER AMERICA

A YES! TAKE ON WHAT AMERICANS WANT



ECONOMY

- Repair and rebuild neglected bridges, railroads, schools, and other infrastructure, designing for climate change and a post-petroleum world.
- Extend unemployment insurance benefits.
- Provide tax relief to middle- and low-income families, and reinstate fair taxes on high-wealth individuals and corporate profits.
- Adopt the Employee Free Choice Act to increase opportunities to unionize.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

67%

Favor public works projects to create jobs.

55%

Favor expanding unemployment benefits.

73%

Say corporations don't pay a fair share of taxes.

76%

Support tax cuts for lower- and middle-income people.

71%

Say unions help their members; 53% say unions help the economy in general.

FAMILIES

- Make the minimum wage a "living wage" adequate to keep working families out of poverty.
- Provide everyone vacation and family leave.
- Provide gay and lesbian couples with the legal protections afforded to straight couples.
- Make bankruptcy and foreclosure laws protect families first, not predatory lenders.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

64%

Are not confident that life for our children's generation will be better than it has been for us.

80%

Support increasing the federal minimum wage.

59%

Favor guaranteeing two weeks or more of paid vacation.

65%

Believe same-sex couples should be allowed to marry or form civil unions.

75%

Want to limit rate increases on adjustable-rate mortgages.

CONSTITUTION

- Fully restore habeas corpus for all people in U.S. custody.
- Protect our right to privacy and freedom from warrantless search and seizure.
- Keep the internet free of corporate and government censorship and obstruction. Protect "net neutrality."
- Restore the balance of power between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

70%

Support restoring habeas corpus rights for detainees at Guantanamo.

59%

Would like the next president to do more to protect civil liberties.

58%

Believe a court warrant should be required to listen to the telephone calls of people in the U.S.

68%

Believe the president should not act alone to fight terrorism without the checks and balances of the courts or Congress.

ENERGY & CLIMATE

- Take a leadership role in reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions.
- Maximize the conservation and efficient use of existing energy supplies.
- Launch and fund ambitious research & development programs, offer tax credits, invest in public works projects, and focus government procurement to jumpstart renewable energy deployment.
- Invest in public transit and intercity rail.
- Tax carbon; use revenues for renewables and to help ratepayers.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

79%

Favor mandatory controls on greenhouse gas emissions.

76%

Believe that oil is running out and a major effort is needed to replace it.

90%

Favor higher auto fuel efficiency standards.

75%

Favor clean electricity, even with higher rates.

72%

Support more funding for mass transit.

HEALTH CARE

- Offer all Americans the option of joining a single-payer national health insurance program, paid for with tax dollars.
- Break the drug companies' monopoly and lower drug prices by allowing Americans to buy prescription drugs abroad.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

73%

Believe our health care system is in crisis or has "major problems."

64%

Believe the government should provide national health insurance coverage for all Americans, even if it would raise taxes.

55%

Favor one health insurance program covering all Americans, administered by the government, and paid for by taxpayers.

69%

Believe the government should make it easier to buy prescription drugs from other countries.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

- Lead a global effort to abolish nuclear weapons.
- Rule out unilateral attacks, deploying weapons in space, and torture.
- Phase out U.S. role as global police, and instead work through the U.N. and other international agencies to develop and enforce international law.
- Work with other countries to improve global health and environment.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

73%

Favor abolishing nuclear weapons, with verification.

80% favor banning weapons in space.

81%

Oppose torture and support following the Geneva Conventions.

76%

Say the U.S. should not play the role of global police.

85%

Say that the U.S. should not initiate military action without support from allies.

79%

Say the U.N. should be strengthened.

IRAQ & IRAN

- Develop a timetable for a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.
- Build no long-term military bases in Iraq. Leave control of Iraq's oil in the hands of Iraqis.
- Fund an international effort to help restore the economy and infrastructure of Iraq.
- Abolish future uses of private mercenaries.
- Enter into negotiations with Iran about nuclear issues and regional stability. End threats of attack and attempts to destabilize the Iranian government.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

63%

Want U.S. forces home from Iraq within a year.

57%

Say going to war in Iraq was the wrong decision.

47%

Favor using diplomacy with Iran. 7% favor military action.

67%

Believe we should use diplomatic and economic means to fight terrorism, rather than the military.

ELECTIONS

- Provide public financing for elections campaigns.
- Bring back the Fairness Doctrine and get broadcasters to open the people's airwaves to free campaign information.
- Require voter-verified paper ballots that are audited and can be recounted.
- End partisan districting and voter-roll purges.
- Fully implement the Voting Rights Act and enforce existing laws against vote suppression.
- Restore voting rights to ex-felons who have served their sentences.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

86%

Say big companies have too much power.

74%

Favor voluntary public financing of campaigns.

66%

Believe intentional acts are likely to cause significant voting machines errors.

80%

Say ex-felons should have their voting rights restored.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Drop punitive sentences for drug possession and other nonviolent offenses in favor of substance-abuse treatment, fines, community service, and restitution.
- Offer training and counseling to prepare inmates for a crime-free life after release.
- Channel youth into schools and jobs, not jail.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

65%

Believe attacking social problems is a better cure for crime than more law enforcement.

87%

Support rehabilitation rather than a "punishment-only" system.

81%

Say job training is "very important" for reintegrating people leaving prison. 79% say drug treatment is very important.

IMMIGRATION

- Implement trade policies that strengthen, not undermine, rural economies south of the border, reducing the poverty and displacement that spur migration. Start by ditching NAFTA.
- Increase minimum wage and worker protection for all, documented and undocumented.
- Provide a pathway to legal status and citizenship for immigrants already here.

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

56%

Believe NAFTA should be renegotiated.

80%

Favor allowing undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. to stay and apply for citizenship if they have a job and pay back taxes.

64%

Believe that on the whole, immigration is good for the country.

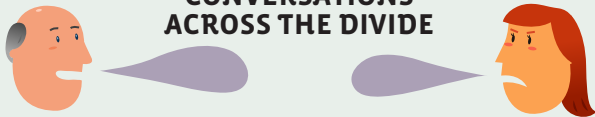


www.YesMagazine.org/purpleagenda
Download this poster and find poll citations

Research by Sarah van Gelder and Noah Grant
Illustrations by Brandon Laufenberg/istock

YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC, 2008

CONVERSATIONS
ACROSS THE DIVIDE



HOW DO WE FORM a more perfect union—or at least find enough common ground for a civil conversation? Breaking out of red-blue stereotypes is a good place to start. And listening to the hopes and fears that lie beneath the rhetoric. Respect helps, along with the expectation of transformation—our own as well as our adversaries’.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALEX MATHERS/ISTOCK

Farmer & Daughter

MY REPUBLICAN DAD SAW
THE LIGHT. AND IT WAS GREEN.



Thomas Sheppard in 1988 with Kate and her baby brother Alex.

Kate Sheppard

It started with a lawn sign war. It was 2000. I was 16, and sold on Ralph Nader, even though I couldn't actually vote. I staked a Nader lawn sign in front of my parents' house. It was quickly stashed in the garage. I put it out again. And again, back to the garage. Dad was rooting for Bush.

I never really felt like my politics fit in my family. There was my conversion to vegetarianism (the same as "communism" in Dad's book), my stance against President Bush and the Iraq War, and my growing commitment to environmental work. Dad griped that I was becoming one of "those radical environmentalists."

So when my father called a few years ago to ask me about this whole organics thing, I was confused. He asked, did I buy organic? Where did I shop? I was a college student at the time, so the answers were "When I can afford to"

the New World and started a subsistence farm about two miles from where my father and his brothers, Erwin and David, farm today in a town called Cedarville. My great-grandfather Gilbert procured the first tractor in Cedarville, a Case steam tractor, some time during the 1920s.

Today the Sheppard brothers farm 1,500 acres of lettuce, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, asparagus, and squash on one of the last vestiges of garden in the Garden State. And for my whole life—and as long as my father can remember, too—they've grown everything "conventional." Now, back when the first Sheppard brothers arrived, "conventional" probably meant horse-drawn plows and cow manure. But in our backward lexicon, it's come to indicate the use of very unconventional methods: petrochemical fertilizers, diesel tractors, and genetically modified

ing into what I considered my rebellion. What do you want here, old man?

But a visit home a few years later tipped me off to the possibility that we might agree on more than I'd thought. A new shopping complex was being built a few towns over, one of those strip malls of big box stores and acres of parking. It was going up right where a farm had been when I was younger. I asked Dad about it, and we shared an eye roll. "They're taking all this space in the country for these mega stores," said Dad. "We're going to have three Wal-Marts in Cumberland County. What the hell do we need three Wal-Marts for?" Our county has less than 150,000 people. Not much to disagree with there. I didn't expect to hear Dad espousing anti-corporate sentiment, and it felt good to have something to bond over.

It touched a deep nerve within me. Each time I go home, the suburbs of

I've always figured myself the political outsider in the family ...
So at first it seemed almost an affront for Dad to be venturing
into what I considered my rebellion.

and "The closest grocery store to campus."

I was sort of flattered that Dad thought of me as his de facto source of information about the young and eco-minded. Turns out he'd been reading in agricultural trade publications that organics were the next big thing. My father, though not always in tune with the latest on the environmental front, was ever a savvy businessman: He wanted in.

My father, Thomas Sheppard, has been a farmer since he was old enough to wield a shovel. Actually, since before he was even born. The Sheppards came to what would become the United States from England in 1683, and promptly put down roots in Cumberland County, New Jersey. The first four Sheppard brothers arrived in

plants.

Given that the brothers, along with everyone in the country for the most part, have become accustomed to fossil-fuel and chemical-intensive methods of growing food, I was surprised that my father was willing to venture into organics. Dad's a farmer, businessman, lifelong Republican, and two-time Bush voter who drives one of those massive, gas-guzzling pickup trucks. In our town of 2,000, he's a member of the three-person town council, and the three of them take turns being mayor. It's his turn right now.

I've always figured myself the political outsider in the family. After graduating, I moved to the city and took a job as an environmental reporter, and became a bike-riding, Whole Foods-shopping urbanite. I got as far away from the farm as possible. So at first it seemed almost an affront for Dad to be ventur-

Philadelphia sprawl farther and farther into South Jersey, taking over land that was farms only months before. I can't help but mourn the lost history and culture of rural America, even though I've moved away. And imagine how Dad must feel. It's not just history for him; it's his livelihood. Dad says farmers in the area have been selling their land because of the congestion and development. "There was so much traffic around they couldn't get equipment up the road," he says.

Regardless of political affiliation, farmers remain the closest Americans to the earth. Though I write about these issues every day, I can't really understand the impacts of today's environmental problems like farmers do—decreasing open space, sprawl, shifting weather patterns, droughts, floods, invasive species. These long-term hazards to humankind are much >>

» more immediate threats to the livelihood of folks like Dad, so caring about them isn't as much a political issue as a matter of necessity.

But how often we “environmentalists,” and the political Left in general, forget this. How much we confine ourselves by writing off these folks as party-line Republicans.

In recent years, the realities of the agricultural economy have increasingly led Dad across the political line. There's the increase in fuel costs: My family's farm consumes 1,000 gallons of diesel every week during the growing season, guzzled by the tractors, combines, and tractor-trailers that haul the vegetables to grocery stores along the East Coast. And while the farm used to grow lettuce that would be sold locally, it now has to compete with giant farms on the other side of the continent, and other continents.

Organics give small farms like Dad's a niche in the large chain grocery stores, and an “in” with rapidly expanding “natural” markets like Whole Foods. The strategy seems to be working—I spotted Sheppard Farms asparagus in a Whole Foods for the first time just a few weeks ago.

Of course, Dad and his brothers have had a lot to learn as they've greened the farm. Classes in organics didn't really exist when the three of them attended Cornell University's agricultural program, one of the best in the country. Right now they have only 40 organic acres out of 1,500, and they're trying to learn how to get better yields out of them, and how to expand. “They say as you get deeper into organics, you'll reap more benefits as the soil gets further away from the time that chemicals were used. It will have time to recover,” says Dad. “That could be just urban legend. Er, rural legend.”

The next big project he's hoping to tackle is greening the farm's energy supply. The farm is located along the Delaware Bay, and bay breezes lend great potential for wind energy. Dad hopes the wind turbines could be a source of income.

He's also considering investing in solar panels, which could bring the

farm's energy costs down from 16 to 10 cents per kilowatt-hour right away. He's even thinking about lobbying to get the town to go solar.

“We could put solar panels on the new firehouse,” says Dad, “change those natural gas heaters to electric heaters and produce our own. That might be the more economical and more environmentally friendly thing to do.” I never expected to hear the phrase “environmentally friendly” coming out of Dad's mouth.

But Congress keeps stalling on an extension of the tax credits for renewable energy, which are set to expire at the end of the year, and the lack of market assurance right now has put the solar industry in a holding pattern. I cover this action day-to-day on the Hill, so Dad called recently to find out how his representative, Frank LoBiondo, had voted on the extensions.

I assumed, based on party affiliation alone, that he'd voted against them. I was wrong. I guess that shows my own political biases. Dad said he'd call anyway, just to make sure LoBiondo knew how important these extensions are. It was the first time I'd heard Dad talk about calling his legislator about an environmental issue, so I was pumped. Isn't this what I spend my life working on—giving citizens the information they need to push for political reforms?

Tough economic times have made him more politically active in other areas as well. New Jersey has been in dire financial straits for quite a while, and this winter, the governor proposed total elimination of the state's Department of Agriculture. That, of course, angered my father and the other remaining vestiges of the agricultural community in the state. Dad bussed to the capitol to protest. Other farmers brought goats and tractors, creating quite a scene in Trenton. Considering he's made fun of me for protesting the Iraq War, it was funny to see Dad on his first political march. And the farmers won: The governor backed off the proposal.

The farming experience has made him break from the party line in other areas as well—like immigration. Dad says the country's immigration policies

are both mistreating immigrants and imperiling the domestic agricultural sector. He understands this, since the farm relies heavily on immigrant workers, mostly from Mexico.

“The Sheppards never had any green cards,” he adds. In Dad's book, if the first Sheppards rolled off the boat without permission to be here, who are we to tell others they don't have the same right? Many of the men and women Dad hires were farmers back home in Mexico, too, but hard economic times forced them to come to the U.S. A few years ago, Dad even went to visit a village in Mexico that a lot of his workers call home, wanting to see where these folks are from.

I told him recently that I think he's slowly becoming a liberal, whether he likes it or not.

“I think it's more being a fiscal conservative,” Dad said. “I would say I'm a fiscal conservative and socially liberal.”

I asked him whether he'd vote for Bush a third time.

“Oh, hell no,” he retorted.

“Dad, how'd I come out a liberal?” I asked.

“I was more liberal when I was your age,” he said.

I might argue that he's migrating back that direction, from a Bush-hugger to a treehugger. But in recent years I've realized that a lot of my beliefs aren't in spite of where and how I grew up—they're because of it. I care about the land because it's from the land that my family makes a living. I care about food sources and security because I never had to think twice about where mine came from growing up—I could just walk out back and pick a tomato or a pepper. I care about open space and clean water and air because I can't imagine a childhood without them.

And so does Dad. Even if we may never agree on a lawn sign. ♣



Kate Sheppard is the political reporter for *Grist*, and has also written for *The American Prospect*, *In These Times*, *Alternet*, *The Guardian*, and *Bitch*. When not braving the wilds of Capitol Hill, she's out searching for bike lanes and defending the honor

of the Garden State.

from *The Great Correction*

Eliza Gilkyson

Everyone tied to the turning wheel
Everyone hiding from the things they feel
Well the truth's so hard it just don't seem real
The shadow across this land

People 'round here don't know what it means
To suffer at the hands of our American dreams
They turn their backs on the grisly scenes
Traced to the privileged sons

Down through the ages lovers of the mystery
Been saying people let your love light shine
Poets and sages all throughout history
Say the light burns brightest in the darkest times

It's the bitter end we've come down to
The eye of the needle that we gotta get through
But the end could be the start of something new
When the great correction comes

Down to the wire running out of time
Still got hope in this heart of mine
But the future waits on the horizon line
For our daughters and our sons

I don't know where this train's bound
Whole lotta people trying to turn it around
Gonna shout 'til the walls come tumbling down
And the great correction comes

YIZHOU JIANG
FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/DANNIAO



Eliza Gilkyson wrote this song for "Last Sunday," a monthly gathering in Austin, Texas, she co-hosted with University of Texas professor Robert Jensen and Presbyterian minister Jim Rigby. They created a space

in which people could get together to face with honesty deepening economic, political, cultural, and ecological crises. "We wanted to provide a place to discuss, grieve, and mull over our future without having a need for an immediate solution other than the comfort of each other's presence," Gilkyson says.

 www.YesMagazine.org/gilkyson
Listen to Eliza Gilkyson's *The Great Correction*

 www.YesMagazine.org/lastsunday
Read Robert Jensen's "The Last Last Sunday?"



“I was told I was going to Hell. ... Now I want to work toward reconciliation and loving our neighbor.”



JOSH VARNER



www.YesMagazine.org/equalityride
Photo essay from the '07 Equality Ride

An Oklahoma Baptist University student watched and listened for a few minutes, then had the courage to introduce herself and shake the hand of every one of the Equality Riders. It was a moving moment for the bus riders.

LGBT Road Trip Breaks Through Stereotypes

Noah Grant

On March 22, 2007, a bus pulled up in front of Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. A group of 25 young people got out and formed a line at the edge of the campus, which college administrators had forbidden them to enter. One of them announced that they had come to share their experiences with homophobia and Christianity.

Hundreds of students milled around eyeing the newcomers. A few approached and engaged them in conversation. Others got on their knees and prayed for God to forgive the riders. One black student compared the treatment of the riders to the treatment of African-Americans during the civil rights movement. The riders' leader said they wanted to come on to the campus to talk with other students. As five of them attempted to enter school property, policemen arrested them.

This encounter was part of the 2007 Equality Ride, a tour that brought 50 young people to 34 conservative campuses across the United States.

The riders hope to show the humanity and spirituality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and to represent others on campus who are too scared to speak out for themselves. Following the teachings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., riders see Conservative Christians, not as enemies, but as "victims of untruth." The ultimate goal is reconciliation, not confrontation or "winning."

That philosophy is so essential to Soulforce, the group that organizes the rides, that they named their organization with the English translation of Gandhi's word for nonviolent activism, "Satyagraha." Soulforce was founded

to overcome the religious bigotry at the root of homophobia.

That doesn't mean they have anything against religion itself. Many of the participants in the 2007 Equality Ride are life-long Christians who want to talk about tolerance with others who share their faith. Several are former students at religious colleges the ride visited in 2006, its first year.

Vince Cervantes, one of the 2007 riders, attended a Christian college and endured "reparative therapy" for his same-sex attractions. "It gave me a deep understanding of the harm of homophobia within the faith community," he says.

Angel Collie went through the ordeal of coming out in a conservative Baptist family at age 14. "I was told I was going to Hell," Collie says. "Now I want to work toward reconciliation and loving our neighbor."

Relationships with LGBT friends motivated Abigail Reikow and other straight allies on the ride.

Not all schools reacted to the riders like Mississippi College did. At some universities, administrators embraced the ride as an educational opportunity and set up breakfasts, debates, discussion groups, and other forums for interactions between students and riders. "Easily more than half were welcoming," says Soulforce outreach director Jarrett Lucas. Even at colleges where the riders were not allowed on campus, they were still able to connect with students, often at a nearby location like a coffee shop. At Mississippi College, the riders who avoided arrest shared lunch with students off campus, where they continued their dialogue.

Some students wanted nothing to do with the riders. Others wanted to confront them over their sexuality or their interpretation of the Bible. But many were interested in talking, despite differences in beliefs. Some students, "didn't seem to know what to do with a bunch of Joe Schmoes," said one rider, who guessed they were "expecting lumberjacks and drag queens." The majority of those who disagreed were civil. Some of the students had never spoken with a gay person, let alone one who shared their deep commitment to Christianity.

Robin Reynolds, one of the 2007 riders, was inspired to see "the look a person gets when they've never heard an idea before."

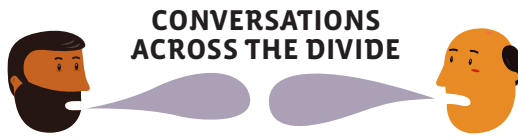
"It was harder to throw out one-liners and rely on stereotypes when students were face-to-face with LGBT people," she said.

Some students approached the riders because they wanted to know how to support their LGBT friends and family. Others were closeted gay and lesbian students who thanked the riders for showing them they weren't alone.

After the riders moved on, students continued the conversation through emails and Facebook. Some have started Gay-Straight Alliances on their campuses to keep the momentum of the ride going.

The Equality Ride will hit the highway for a third time this October, this year visiting colleges exclusively in the South. As Angel Collie put it, "there's a lot more people out there that we need to reach." 7

Noah Grant, YES! Editorial Assistant, is an activist for LGBT rights.



“The breadth, depth, and sheer wisdom of the conversations that night belie the idea that immigration is a divisive issue.”

Immigrants & American-born: “Are you listening?”

Pramila Jayapal

On June 19, 2008, a group about as ethnically diverse as you could imagine clustered around tables at Seattle’s United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 21 union hall to watch a video and discuss immigration.

On screen appeared the face of Michael Graves, an African-American man who had worked at a plant owned by Swift and

Company, the world’s third-largest processor of beef and pork.

“They held me with no reason and no probable cause,” Graves said. “I’m a U.S. citizen, born and raised here. I was treated as a criminal, on a normal day when I ... just went to work.”

Graves was among thousands of workers investigated during raids by agents

In Takoma Park, Maryland, 13 people gathered for a provocative discussion on the poor conditions of detention centers across the nation and unwarranted raids, all within the overarching theme of “What kind of America do we want to live in?”

DINAH CHUNG



from Immigration and Customs Enforcement at six Swift meat-packing plants in late 2006. The agents held many workers for hours on little or no evidence—and without food or water, or access to telephones or even restrooms. They were not allowed to retrieve documents that in many cases would have proven their legal status.

Produced by the national UFCW, the film told a difficult story, about raids that ultimately placed 1,300 workers in detention centers, divided families by splitting noncitizens from their American-born children or from spouses with legal status, traumatized workers and denied them basic civil liberties like access to legal counsel, and cost Swift thousands of dollars.

The audience at the union hall—which included Japanese Americans, Hispanics, blacks, and whites—shared reactions to the film, then launched into a discussion on an even more difficult question: What kind of America do we want? And how is immigration part of that America?

The gathering was one of hundreds held across the country as part of a campaign called the Night of 1,000 Conversations and organized by The Rights Working Group, OneAmerica, and a coalition of civil rights, immigration, and faith groups. The coalition began the conversations in 2007 as a way to break through the divisiveness of the national immigration debate and get people talking face to face. That night, more than 2,500 people in 28 states sat with strangers and talked about what immigration might mean in a country known as a “nation of immigrants.”

At the Seattle union hall, the audience split into groups of five to ten. The participants didn’t divide themselves by race, as sometimes happens in diverse groups. Instead, each table included people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Some groups featured unlikely conversation partners: East African and Indian; Vietnamese and Mexican; Japanese and Colombian and Korean; African American, white, and Na-

tive American. There were software engineers and activists, factory workers and homemakers, government employees and teachers.

One group included a Japanese-American woman, an East African immigrant man, a native-born Hispanic woman, an immigrant South Asian man, and a native-born white woman. Immigration meant something different to each of them.

For the Japanese-American woman, the discussion brought up fears as she recalled the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. “Have we learned nothing?” she said. “Can we not see that depriving people of their basic rights is bad?”

The East African participant voiced outrage. “It’s just hypocrisy,” he said. “The U.S. wants to be the leader ... other countries look [to]. But what they’re doing here is even worse than what some of the dictatorships are doing elsewhere ... locking people up just because they are Muslim and therefore ‘possible terrorists.’ You just don’t expect that from America.”

Another participant expressed frustration that it would take him 20 years to gain legal residency and citizenship through Homeland Security’s convoluted visa system.

The gatherers brought difficult racial questions into the open. When one participant opined that African Americans’ attitudes were partly to blame for urban social problems, another was quick to challenge him. “They face discrimination every day,” he said, “in employment or on the street.” As the two talked, they found agreement: both felt our education system needed a fix to serve all communities, immigrant and native-born.

This was not the only conversation that revealed a common agenda. Participants agreed on the need for a path for immigrant workers to become legal residents. “They just want to work hard,” one participant said. “This country was built by immigrants.”

And many participants were open about their personal struggles. When one woman shared how her undocu-

mented mother had worked to provide her a better life, another person described fleeing from persecution in his war-torn home country. Stories of the barriers they had overcome revealed their common hopes and dreams.

Participants also came to understand the importance of refusing to be silent. Many were inspired by the example of the workers picked up in the Swift raid, whose testimony has become the basis of a lawsuit against Homeland Security for violations of constitutional rights. Many wanted to demand that the government answer for policies that unjustly denied immigrants access to legal counsel and due process. They snapped up voter registration materials and postcards to send to Michael Chertoff, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, demanding human rights protections for immigrants.

Across the country, participants shared similar stories and moments of inspiration. One New York participant wrote, “If other conversations were as productive as ours, then this is a truly innovative grassroots movement with the potential to make great waves.”

Talking about immigration in this country’s charged political environment is not easy. The breadth, depth, and sheer wisdom of the discussions belie the idea that immigration is a divisive wedge issue. The conversations demonstrated the power of coming face to face with others who may not, at the surface, hold the same views. As we delve deeper, we begin to find common hopes, and a shared vision of an America that lives up to its ideals of democracy for both citizens and immigrants. **Y**



Pramila Jayapal is the founder and executive director of OneAmerica (formerly Hate Free Zone), and the author of *Pilgrimage to India: A Woman Revisits Her Homeland*.

Interested? www.nightof1000conversations.org and www.weareoneamerica.org



www.YesMagazine.org/swiftraids

Video about the 2006 raids on Swift meat-packing plants



“As a movement progresses and matures, it begins to define itself by what it’s for instead of what it’s against.”

Evangelicals’ Faith Leads Them to Issues of Environment, Social Justice



SUSAN MEGY

The Rev. Gloria White-Hammond is head of the Save Darfur Coalition, an alliance of over 180 faith-based, advocacy and humanitarian organizations. White-Hammond is a pediatrician and pastor of Bethel AME Church in Boston.

Valerie Saturen

A passion for environmental action and social justice is spreading in what some may consider unexpected places. Had you walked into Northland, A Church Distributed—an evangelical megachurch in Florida—one Saturday morning last August, you would have found parishioners in Kevlar suits sifting through the congregation’s trash. Their mission: to fulfill what they consider the biblical imperative to be good stewards of the Earth. Led by senior pastor Joel C. Hunter, an advocate of the pro-environment, evangelical Creation Care movement, the churchgoers sorted about 30 bins of trash in order to assess the congregation’s environmental impact.

After the church showed the film “The Great Warming,” featuring National Association of Evangelicals spokesman Richard Cizik, they wanted to take action. When they were finished assessing the congregation’s waste, they created a 140-page audit of the church’s solid waste, energy management, landscaping, and water use, which formed the basis of Northland’s strategy for lowering its carbon footprint. Creation Care at Northland didn’t end there. After services another weekend, the church held a Creation Care event with 30 environmentally-friendly vendors and organizations. Then, in February, evangelical leaders hosted an interfaith summit at North-



CHARLENE SHEPARD & CHRIS GARRISON

Each year about 20 students from the University of Wisconsin in Madison travel to Palatka, Florida, to build affordable housing for Habitat for Humanity. The Crossing (“where faith meets life”), a campus ministry at University of Wisconsin, organizes outreach programs that get young people involved with the “problems and possibilities of our world.” Groups have also traveled to Israel/Palestine, and to Mississippi to help with Hurricane Katrina cleanup.

land, training religious leaders to promote sustainability within their own congregations.

Rev. Hunter is one of a growing number of evangelicals creating an alternative to an evangelical political platform long dominated by hot-button issues such as gay marriage and abortion. While maintaining a socially conservative platform, Hunter and others are expanding their agendas to address concerns such as global warming, poverty, education, and peacemaking. His recent book, *A New Kind of Conservative*, sounds a call for social justice and compassion for the disadvantaged. According to Hunter, younger generations are avoiding the negative tone and single-issue focus of the Christian Right. “As a movement progresses and matures,” he says, “it begins to define itself by what it’s for instead of what it’s against. It starts to think of pro-life in terms of life outside the womb as well as inside the womb.” He likens

this shift to the changes a person goes through while growing up. “When you’re in middle school, you define yourself as who you hate and what you hate. But when you grow up, you start to say, ‘Now, what do I like? What do I want to build? What do I want my life to mean?’”

Black and Hispanic evangelicals have played a major role in shifting the agenda. A 2004 poll by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. for *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* and *U.S. News & World Report* showed that while white evangelicals considered socially conservative moral values their first priority (37%), 41% of black and 34% of Hispanic respondents placed a different moral issue—the economy—first.

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, leader of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), believes Hispanic evangelicals serve as a natural bridge between the “righteousness platform” of white evangelicals and the

“justice platform” of the black church. While the approximately 15 million Hispanic evangelicals in America often oppose abortion and gay marriage, many also hold progressive, populist views on issues such as poverty, health care, education, and racial equality.

Immigration is one contentious issue Rodriguez hopes to see depolarized. The NHCLC envisions a “middle path” between upholding the rule of law and exercising compassion toward the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants already living in the U.S. In response to HR 4437, the 2005 bill designed to rein in illegal immigration, NHCLC drafted a proposal calling for comprehensive immigration reform that would include penalties and the payment of back taxes while “bringing immigrants out of the shadows” and providing a path to citizenship.

Rodriguez’s concern for social justice stems from his upbringing in >>

» Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he witnessed economic upheaval and the decline of industry. As the region transformed, he saw rising levels of violence and racial inequality that persisted as the city grew increasingly diverse. In neighboring Allentown, where the high-school graduation rate was only 60.7% in 2005, evangelical pastors are making efforts to become a “firewall” against gang violence and high dropout rates. In collaboration with Allentown mayor Ed Pawlowski, the NHCLC-affiliated Third Day Worship Center launched an initiative to address these problems, creating an after-school mentoring program for at-risk youth. The effort, coinciding with the creation of Allentown’s Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, was part of Generation Fuerza (Generation Strength), an NHCLC campaign to reduce teen pregnancy, dropout rates, and gang involvement. Generation Fuerza advocates will begin meeting with Congress in October to promote this agenda.

The social justice approach extends beyond the domestic sphere. Evangelicals for Darfur, a member of the Save Darfur Coalition, includes advocates across the political spectrum, from Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention to Jim Wallis, editor of the progressive *Sojourners* magazine. In 2006, the group ran full-page ads in 10 major newspapers entitled “Without You, Mr. President, Darfur Doesn’t Have a Prayer,” urging support for international peacekeeping forces and multilateral economic sanctions. In addition to pushing for action, the group solicits donations for relief efforts and promotes education about the genocide.

Other evangelical groups are advocating peace between Israelis and Palestinians. They urge a two-state solution to the conflict, offering an alternative to the approach of more visible leaders such as John Hagee, founder of Christians United for Israel (CUFI) and senior pastor of the Cornerstone megachurch in San

Antonio, Texas. Hagee is an influential proponent of Christian Zionism, which takes literally the biblical Book of Revelation and views an apocalyptic war in the Middle East as a necessary precursor to the Second Coming of Christ. As Christian Zionists, Hagee and his organization believe that Israel has a divinely sanctioned right to the West Bank and Gaza, and are actively involved in lobbying Washington to oppose “land for peace” and the creation of a Palestinian state.

Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding was founded in part to counter what the organization calls “a rising tide of Western interpretation of the nation of Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.” Its Executive Director, Leonard Rodgers, believes the key to understanding lies in forming personal ties between American evangelicals and Middle Eastern Christians and Muslims, which the group accomplishes through its Living Stones delegations to the region. The organization is especially committed to forging ties with Middle Eastern Christians, a community Rodgers says few Americans are aware of. “When you introduce them and they build a relationship, they begin to understand the Middle East through the eyes of a Middle Easterner,” he says.

Last November, about 100 leaders signed an open letter by Evangelicals for Social Action, a group devoted to social and economic justice. “In the context of our ongoing support for the security of Israel, we believe that unless the situation between Israel and Palestine improves quickly, the consequences will be devastating,” the letter reads, commending Israeli and Palestinian leadership for supporting a two-state solution. The letter reaffirmed the call for peace contained in a July 2007 open letter to President Bush signed by 39 prominent evangelical leaders.

A key factor in the changing face of evangelicalism is the appearance of a young generation that is more expansive in its social outlook. While they are likely to share the socially conserva-

tive approach of their parents, younger evangelicals are being shaped by the dynamic world of globalization, technology, and online social networking.

Ben Lowe, 24, studied environmental biology at Wheaton College and is active in several Creation Care groups on Facebook. Last year, he brought together student leaders from 15 campuses for the January 2007 Wheaton Creation Care Summit and participated in Power Shift 2007, joining tens of thousands of other young adults in Washington, D.C. to confront global warming. He now works for A Rocha, a Christian organization devoted to conservation. Although his peers sometimes express suspicion toward environmentalism, they often change their minds once introduced to the issue in a biblical context. “Once we show from the Bible that being good stewards of the environment is our privilege and responsibility,” says Lowe, “then my peers are usually very enthusiastic and supportive.”

Rowan University graduate Dan Lebo, 22, now attends Palmer Theological Seminary. He received a scholarship to work with Evangelicals for Social Action and helped distribute its call for Middle East peace. “The American political landscape can be a very frustrating place for younger evangelicals,” says Lebo, because the issues they care about fall across the spectrum. “It would be very hard to pigeonhole young evangelicals into any political sphere. However, at the same time we are becoming very politically engaged. We realize how important politics can be to the welfare of our society and our world and are understanding that being apathetic about politics doesn’t help anything or anyone.”



Valerie Saturen is a freelance writer living in Tacoma, Washington. Her work focuses on politics, the Middle East, and the environment. She can be reached at vsaturen@yahoo.com.



“Trustworthy journalism should help us keep each other honest and help get us past these reptilian instincts for conflict. It helps us discern the truth. It leads us to embrace change.”

Media We Can Trust

Americans don't trust the media, and with good reason. Newspapers and television networks have been cutting investigative reporting budgets for decades, while making up for it with partisan punditry that does little to help untangle tough issues like the housing crisis, global warming, and the Iraq War. No surprise, then, that in a recent Harris poll more than half of Americans said they don't trust the press.

Where can these skeptical folks go for information? Increasingly, they've been turning to the Internet, where there's been an explosion in new media ventures in the past five years, including individual and collaborative blogs, hyperlocal news sites supported by small businesses, open-publishing sites for grassroots news, and member-funded sites employing professional journalists. Several of the biggest political stories from the past year have come out of the blogosphere and independent web journalism, including Talking Points Memo's revelation of political firings of U.S. Attorneys, and the Huffington Post's OffTheBus report of Barack Obama saying Americans cling to guns and religion because they're bitter.

But the question remains: how do you separate the accurate and well-researched from the partisan-driven infomercials?

NewsTrust.net, an innovative project created by former journalist and web developer Fabrice Florin, relies on the savvy of its readers to find news stories that stand up to critical scrutiny. Each story listed on the site includes a link to its original posting, plus a composite user evaluation: Is the author fair? Is the article based on factual evidence or hearsay? Are there multiple named sources or are they anonymous? As NewsTrust users from across the political spectrum answer these questions and add their own comments, they contribute to a public conversation built on a shared appreciation of journalistic quality.

To make sure that conversation stays civil, NewsTrust has departed from typical Web formats. There is no place to comment, because, as Florin puts it, “There's no incentive for people to behave well” when they comment.

NewsTrust also takes the time to learn about its users. The site's staff googles each new reviewer to find out if he or she is a notorious “troll,” a “flamer,” or someone who disrupts internet civility, and then boils the information down to an initial rating score.

“On a fundamental level,” says Florin, “trustworthy journalism should help us keep each other honest, and help get us past these reptilian instincts for conflict. It helps us discern the



KAIZAR CAMPWALA

Fabrice Florin of NewsTrust.net

truth. It leads us to embrace change, and to develop humility, respect, curiosity for factual information, and the willingness to contemplate new solutions to old problems.”

Media critic and author Jeff Cohen says the linked nature of online news is inherently well-suited to projects like NewsTrust. “Internet-literate folks know to be skeptical of attack pieces. ... That's why Limbaugh or Bill O'Reilly-type demagoguery flourishes on TV and radio, but not as easily on the Internet where you have to produce your sources, and link to them.”

TOOLS FOR A POPULIST UPRISING

Ready to collaborate across Red and Blue? Here are some ways to get started.

Noah Grant and Layla Aslani



HOW TO GET MEDIA ATTENTION

HOW TO CROSS THE DIVIDE

Before you talk, listen. Attend community gatherings. Get to know the people you want to reach and listen to their hopes and fears.

Discuss things that connect you, like being a parent or dealing with high gas prices, to build trust before bringing up issues that might spark disagreement.

Highlight others' points of view. For example, talk about how an Afghani villager feels about us attacking their country.

Avoid attacks on politicians or others who hold different views, and the United States.

Focus on why the issues matter to you. Speak from your heart and experience.

Avoid jargon-filled language. Ask yourself if you come across as friendly or as a know-it-all.

Avoid emphasizing problems. Suggest actions people can take, and talk about examples of success.

Source: article by Doug Orbaker

Find a newsworthy angle on your event or cause. Human interest, controversy, civil disobedience, superlatives (first, biggest) help.

Create a short press release. Make it accessible and factual, with contact information.

Find journalists who cover issues related to your own.

Develop a 30-second pitch for your story. Don't lie or exaggerate—build a reputation for accuracy.

Highlight previous coverage of your issue when pitching your story.

Identify knowledgeable and articulate spokespeople. An unexpected spokesperson (a veteran for peace or a doctor for single-payer health care) can be especially interesting to a journalist.

Don't give up if a journalist isn't interested. Correct them if they get the story wrong, and thank those who cover it well.



HOW TO BUILD A COALITION

Identify a goal that is widely shared, for example, increased support for education. Avoid taking positions on unrelated issues; learn to respectfully “agree to disagree” on topics not essential to your purpose.

Research potential allies who share your concerns, including religious, political, civic, and neighborhood groups.

Explore participants’ interest and concerns about collaborating, and explore ways to address both.

Structure decision making so that power is shared among coalition members and timely action is possible.

Clarify your plan. Set short-term and long-term goals. Choose among strategy options: large, public campaigns, behind-the-scenes lobbying, popular education, etc.

Encourage coalition partners to reach out to their own network of friends and allies to widen support.



HOW TO ORGANIZE ONLINE

E-MAIL LISTS

To keep members of your group informed, set up a listserv (find them at riseup.net or Google). Listservs allow people to subscribe, unsubscribe, and share files easily.

WRITE EFFECTIVE E-MAILS

- Get the reader’s attention with an interesting hook.
- Make the text straightforward, not wordy, and break it up with bullet points and short paragraphs.
- Include everything the reader needs to take action and ask recipients to forward the e-mail.
- Limit e-mails to once every couple of weeks, except during a campaign climax.

HOW TO BLOG

Post short, confident pieces on a single subject. Update frequently, and reference your e-mails, along with information on how to subscribe to your e-mail list. Free blogging sites include: www.blogger.com, www.wordpress.com, and www.sixapart.com/typepad.

OTHER USES OF NEW MEDIA

Share photos on Flickr or videos on YouTube. You can link to these shared images from your website, blog, or e-mails.



HOW TO BUILD TRUST

Offer reciprocal liberty. Each of us relies on society’s commitment to freedom to assure our own liberty. I’ll respect your liberty if you’ll respect mine.

Remember that diversity includes diversity you don’t like. Treat your opposition with fairness and respect, as potential allies rather than as certain enemies.

Bust a few stereotypes, and start thinking about somebody else’s problems. You’ll make new friends and change others’ view of you. Gays against pension cutbacks, women for drug reform, blacks for small business, whatever.

Use short-term, easier wins to build momentum for the difficult issues that may take years to get.

Describe a future worth fighting for. Optimism is deeply ingrained in American culture. We need to point out what’s wrong without simultaneously casting a pall over others’ vision of the future.

Source: Sam Smith at prorev.com



HOW TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION

Direct action can bring people together while raising awareness. Here, for example, is a model developed by City Life/Vida Urbana for protesting foreclosures:

Seek advice from an organization that provides legal advice and support for those facing foreclosure.

Canvass the neighborhood to find support. Tell the story of the family involved, and explain how a foreclosure harms the community.

Warn the bank that a protest is planned. Send out press releases.

Gather neighbors, family, friends, faith groups, and organization members at the house for the scheduled foreclosure. Hold signs and use a megaphone to tell the story of the homeowner.

If successful in thwarting the foreclosure, use the extra time to negotiate with the lender.

Source: City Life/Vida Urbana

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHERYL GRAHAM
AND ROY KONITZER/ISTOCK

YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC, 2008

WE ARE HARD-WIRED TO CARE AND CONNECT

The good news: The changes we must make to avoid ultimate collapse are identical to the changes we must make to create the world of our common dream

David Korten

THE STORY OF PURPLE AMERICA is part of a yet larger human story. For all the cultural differences reflected in our richly varied customs, languages, religions, and political ideologies, psychologically healthy humans share a number of core values and aspirations. Although we may differ in our idea of the “how,” we want healthy, happy children, loving families, and a caring community with a beautiful, healthy natural environment. We want a world of cooperation, justice, and peace, and a say in the decisions that affect our lives. The shared values of purple America manifest this shared human dream. It is the true American dream undistorted

by corporate media, advertisers, and political demagogues—the dream we must now actualize if there is to be a human future.

For the past 5,000 years, we humans have devoted much creative energy to perfecting our capacity for greed and violence—a practice that has been enormously costly for our children, families, communities, and nature. Now, on the verge of environmental and social collapse, we face an imperative to bring the world of our dreams into being by cultivating our long-suppressed, even denied, capacity for sharing and compassion.

Despite the constant mantra that “There is no



alternative” to greed and competition, daily experience and a growing body of scientific evidence support the thesis that we humans are born to connect, learn, and serve and that it is indeed within our means to:

- Create family-friendly communities in which we get our satisfaction from caring relationships rather than material consumption;
- Achieve the ideal, which traces back to Aristotle, of creating democratic middle-class societies without extremes of wealth and poverty; and
- Form a global community of nations committed to restoring the health of the planet and sharing Earth’s bounty to the long-term benefit of all (see YES! Summer 2008).

The first step toward achieving the world we want is to acknowledge that there is an alternative to our current human course. We humans are not hopelessly divided and doomed to self-destruct by a genetic predisposition toward greed and violence.

Culture, the system of customary beliefs, values, and perceptions that encodes our shared learning, gives humans an extraordinary capacity to choose our destiny. It does not assure that we will use this capacity wisely, but it does give us the means to change course by conscious collective choice.

The Story in Our Head

The primary barrier to achieving our common dream is in fact a story that endlessly loops in our heads telling us that a world of peace and sharing is contrary to our nature—a naïve fantasy forever beyond reach. There are many variations, but this is the essence:

It is our human nature to be competitive, individualistic, and materialistic. Our well-being depends on strong leaders with the will to use police and military powers to protect us from one another, and on the competitive forces of a free, unregulated market to channel our individual greed to constructive ends. The competition for survival and dominance—violent and destructive as it may be—is the driving force of evolution. It has been the key to human success since the beginning of time, assures that the most worthy rise to leadership, and ultimately works to the benefit of everyone.

I call this our Empire story because it affirms the system of dominator hierarchy that has held sway for 5,000 years (see YES! Summer 2006). Underlying the economic and scientific versions of this story is a religious story which promises that enduring violence and injustice in this life will be rewarded with eternal peace, harmony, and bliss in the afterlife.

To reinforce the Empire myth, corporate media bombard us with reports of greed and violence, and celebrate as cultural heroes materially successful, but morally challenged politicians and corporate CEOs who exhibit a callous disregard for the human and environmental consequences of their actions.

Never mind the story’s moral contradictions and its conflict with our own experience with caring and trustworthy friends, family, and strangers. It serves to keep us confused, uncertain, and dependent on establishment-sanctioned moral authorities to tell us what is right and true. It also supports policies and institutions that actively undermine development of the caring, sharing relationships essential to responsible citizenship in a functioning democratic society. Fortunately, there is a more positive story that can put us on the road to recovery. It is supported by recent scientific findings, our daily experience, and the ageless teachings of the great religious prophets.

Wired to Connect

Scientists who use advanced imaging technology to study brain function

report that the human brain is wired to reward caring, cooperation, and service. According to this research, merely thinking about another person experiencing harm triggers the same reaction in our brain as when a mother sees distress in her baby’s face. Conversely, the act of helping another triggers the brain’s pleasure center and benefits our health by boosting our immune system, reducing our heart rate, and preparing us to approach and soothe. Positive emotions like compassion produce similar benefits. By contrast, negative emotions suppress our immune system, increase heart rate, and prepare us to fight or flee.

These findings are consistent with the pleasure most of us experience from being a member of an effective team or extending an uncompensated helping hand to another human. It is entirely logical. If our brains were not wired for life in community, our species would have expired long ago. We have an instinctual desire to protect the group, including its weakest and most vulnerable members—its children. Behavior contrary to this positive norm is an indicator of serious social and psychological dysfunction.

Happiness Is a Caring Community

These neurological findings are corroborated by social science findings that, beyond the minimum level of income essential to meet basic needs, membership in a cooperative, caring community is a far better predictor of happiness and emotional health than the size of one’s paycheck or bank account. Perhaps the most impressive evidence of this comes from studies conducted by University of Illinois professor Ed Diener, and others, comparing the life-satisfaction scores of groups of people of radically different financial means. Four groups with almost identical scores on a seven-point scale were clustered at the top.

Consistent with the Empire story that material consumption is the key to happiness, those on *Forbes* magazine’s list of richest Americans had an average score of 5.8. They were in a statis- ➤

Elders gather at the community center in Baker Lake. The Inuit are highly sociable people, and the community centers are busy in the evenings.

JOHN HASYN



www.YesMagazine.org/inuit

John Hasyn’s photo essay on daily life among the Inuit of Nunavut, in northern Canada

Beyond the minimum level of income essential to meet basic needs, membership in a cooperative, caring community is a far better predictor of happiness and emotional health than the size of one's paycheck or bank account.



JEFFREY GENTRY



GEOF WILSON
FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/GEOF THEREF

A study comparing life-satisfaction scores found that among the highest scorers were the Pennsylvania Amish (5.8) and the Masai (5.7) of East Africa.

» tical tie, however, with three groups known for their modest lifestyles and strength of community: the Pennsylvania Amish (5.8) who favor horses over cars and tractors; the Inuit of Northern Greenland (5.9), an indigenous hunting and fishing people; and the Masai (5.7), a traditional herding people in East Africa who live without electricity or running water in huts fashioned from dried cow dung. Apparently, it takes a very great deal of money to produce the happiness that comes with being a member of a caring community with a strong sense of place. The evidence suggests we could all be a lot healthier and happier if we put less emphasis on making money and more on cultivating caring community.

The purple American desire to create a society of healthy children, families, communities, and natural systems is no fluke. It is an expression of our deepest and most positive human impulses, a sign that we may overall be a

healthier and less divisive society than our dysfunctional politics suggest.

Learning to be Human

If the properly functioning human brain is wired for caring, cooperation, and service, how do we account for the outrageous greed and violence that threaten our collective survival? Here we encounter our distinctive human capacity to suppress or facilitate the development of the higher order function of the human brain essential to responsible adult citizenship.

We humans have a complex three-part brain. The base is the “reptilian” brain that coordinates basic functions, such as breathing, hunting and eating, reproducing, protecting territory, and engaging the fight-or-flight response. These functions are essential to survival and an authentic part of our humanity, but they express the most primitive and least-evolved part of our brain, which advertisers and political demagogues

have learned to manipulate by playing to our basest fears and desires.

Layered on top of the reptilian brain is the limbic or “mammalian” brain, the center of the emotional intelligence that gives mammals their distinctive capacity to experience emotion, read the emotional state of other mammals, bond socially, care for their children, and form cooperative communities.

The third and, in humans, largest layer is the neocortical brain, the center of our capacity for cognitive reasoning, symbolic thought, awareness, and self-aware volition. This layer distinguishes our species from other mammals. Its full, beneficial function depends, however, on the complementary functions of our reptilian and mammalian brains.

Most of the development of the limbic and neocortical brains essential to actualizing the capacities that make us most distinctively human occurs after birth and depends on lifelong learning

acquired through our interactions with family, community, and nature. Developmental psychologists describe the healthy pathway to a fully formed human consciousness as a progression from the self-centered, undifferentiated magical consciousness of the newborn to the fully mature, inclusive, and multi-dimensional spiritual consciousness of the wise elder.

Realizing the fullness of our humanity depends on the balanced development of the empathetic limbic and cognitive neocortical brains to establish their primacy over the primitive unsocialized instincts of the reptilian brain. Tragically, most modern societies neglect or even suppress this development.

A depersonalized economic system with no attachment to place disrupts the bonds of community and family and makes it nearly impossible for parents to provide their children with the nurturing attention essential to the healthy development of their limbic brains. Educational systems that focus on rote learning organized by fragmented disciplines fail to develop our potential for critical holistic thinking. Leaving social learning to peer groups lacking the benefit of adult mentors limits development of a mature, morally grounded social intelligence. We are conducting an unintended evolutionary experiment in producing a line of highly intelligent but emotionally challenged reptiles wielding technologies capable of disrupting or even terminating the entire evolutionary enterprise.

The Power of Conversation

Getting out of our current mess begins with a conversation to change the shared cultural story about our essential nature. The women's movement offers an instructive lesson.

In little more than a decade, a few courageous women changed the cultural story that the key to a woman's happiness is to find the right man, marry him, and devote her life to his service. As Cecile Andrews, author of *Circles of Simplicity*, relates, the transition to a

new gender story began with discussion circles in which women came together in their living rooms to share their stories. Until then, a woman whose experience failed to conform to the prevailing story assumed that the problem was a deficiency in herself. As women shared their own stories each realized that the flaw was in the story. Millions of women were soon spreading a new gender story that has unleashed the feminine as a powerful force for global transformation.

The voluntary simplicity movement organizes similar opportunities for people to share their stories about what makes them truly happy. The fallacy of the story that material consumption is the path to happiness is quickly exposed and replaced with the fact that we truly come alive as we reduce material consumption and gain control of our time to nurture the relationships that bring true happiness.

We must now begin a similar process to affirm that those of us who choose to cooperate rather than compete are not fighting human nature. We are, instead, developing the part of our humanity that gives us the best chance, not merely for survival, but for happiness.

The process of changing the powerful stories that limit our lives begins with conversation in our living room, library, church, mosque, or synagogue. By speaking and listening to each other, we begin to discover the true potentials of our human nature and our common vision of the world. It is not a new conversation. Isolated groups of humans have engaged in it for millennia. What

is new is the fact that the communications technologies now in place create the possibility of ending the isolation and melding our local conversations into a global one that can break the self-replicating spiral of competitive violence of 5000 years of Empire.

As this conversation brings a critical mass of people to the realization that the Empire story is both false and devastatingly destructive, we can turn as a species from perfecting our capacity for exclusionary competition to perfecting our capacity for inclusionary cooperation. We can create a cultural story that says competition and polarization, whether the red-blue political divide or the rich-poor economic one, is not the inevitable result of being human. It is the result of suppressing the healthiest part of our humanity.

There are no trade-offs here. The institutional and cultural transformation required to avert environmental and social collapse is the same as the transformation required to nurture the development of the empathetic limbic brain, unleash the creative potentials of the human consciousness, and create the world we want. It is an extraordinary convergence between our reptilian interest in survival, our mammalian interest in bonding, and our human interest in cultivating the potentials of our self-reflective consciousness. ▼



David Korten is co-founder and board chair of YES! His latest book is *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*. His website is www.davidkorten.org.



Purple America Resource Guide

The information and links you need to find out more.
www.YesMagazine.org/resourceguide47

Purple America Discussion Guide

Get a group together and have a conversation.
www.YesMagazine.org/discuss47



MARK PRITCHARD

WELCOMING STRANGERS

ACTIVIST **SARA MILES** ON HOW FEEDING OTHERS MAKES US MORE HUMAN

Interview with Madeline Ostrander

Sara Miles never expected to find herself at an Episcopal church handing out bread, beans, tomatoes, and groceries to crowds of San Franciscans. A lesbian former atheist and journalist, Miles had for years been suspicious of church-run charities.

Then again, Miles had always been conscious of the power of food to connect people. While reporting on the mid-1980s insurgency in the Philippines, Miles remembers vividly how

a family she encountered en route cooked up fish and corn gruel for her and the group of guerrilla soldiers she traveled with. “Over and over again, I was fed and taken care of by total strangers.”

In 1995, Miles was living in San Francisco and happened into a service at St. Gregory’s Episcopal church in the Mission District. Out of pure curiosity, she took Communion. She recognized something in that moment that resonated with her—strangers hand-

ing her bread and wine.

Over the coming months, Miles became a convert and regular church attendee. When she stumbled on a pamphlet from the San Francisco Food Bank, she saw an immediate connection between her faith, her activism, and her preoccupation with food. She convinced St. Gregory’s Church to let her start a food pantry.

Now, eight years later, the pantry serves hundreds of families each week. It is open to anyone and staffed

by volunteers from the communities it serves. Her work has inspired more than a dozen other food pantries in the area, and is chronicled in her book, *Take This Bread* (Ballantine 2007).

I met Miles in a coffee shop in downtown Seattle. In person, she defies labels. She is both devout and, at times, deeply critical of Christian dogma. She struck me as a radical whose activism is not tied to any particular ideology, but rather to a simple, practical fact—everyone eats. She frowned when I suggested that her faith activism might be motivated by progressive politics.

Her cell phone buzzed every few minutes. “They’re trying to run the food pantry without me,” she explained.

Madeline: You have said that running a food pantry is subversive. How?

Sara: In this country, people think you have to eat the right thing with the right people. In most government-

Diversity is complicated. It’s not like a pretty picture that kindergarteners draw. The work at the food pantry requires an understanding that people are coming for very different reasons. They have food and hunger in common.

The pantry is run by the same kinds of people it serves—people who came because they were hungry, and then wanted to help out and do something. That makes us different from a lot of other places. We’re not run by nice church ladies helping the unfortunate. Our volunteers are ex-cons, meth heads, transsexual sex workers, and little old black ladies living on pensions. We have Russians, Indians, Chinese, black people, Latinos, teenagers, and old men.

Madeline: It sounds like challenging work on any number of levels.

Sara: Are you kidding? It’s so much fun. It’s the best thing I do all week—

views among our members, but mostly liberal to progressive. And we work closely with the Samoan Assembly of God, a very fundamentalist congregation. But we feed people in the same way. They’re not telling people what to believe, and neither are we.

Madeline: You have said Christians are united by bread. What does that mean?

Sara: Bread is the mechanism for understanding ourselves as part of one body, instead of just private individuals.

Madeline: So it’s basically a way of understanding our connectedness?

Sara: Exactly, on a very basic human level.

Madeline: How has being gay affected your experience with the Church?

Sara: I don’t think it’s ever been an issue. St. Gregory’s is probably about half gay and half straight. But I think the experience of being gay is good preparation for being a Christian. You understand that there’s another world that is real, beneath the official world.

Madeline: You mean being gay prepared you for a more radical understanding of Christianity?

Sara: No, it prepared me to be a Christian, where people are willing to believe that the expected narrative of the world—in which kings and armies are powerful, and a little baby is helpless—is not the real narrative. We’re willing to believe that a homeless girl could wind up being the mother of God. Christianity is about turning the norms of the world on their head, and saying, “It’s not what it looks like.”

Madeline: What happened to your worldview as you began to engage with and feed so many different kinds of people?

Sara: I had a great deal of suspicion >>

TO THE TABLE

run programs, you have to prove you deserve food—fill out a 20-page application to get food stamps; show your rent receipts, your utility bills, and your social security number; be a legal immigrant, a good person, upright, and hardworking.

At St. Gregory’s, we don’t care about that. We say there is enough food for everybody, and everybody is welcome. It’s not our business to judge you or kick you out. We’ll feed anybody.

Madeline: Who comes to the pantry?

Sara: Everybody. We started with 35 people, and now serve close to 600. We go through demographic waves. We were serving Russian immigrants, and then a wave of monolingual Chinese grandmothers—and I don’t speak Cantonese!

feeding people and listening to their stories. We unload the truck. We set up. We give away about nine tons of groceries a week. And in the middle of the day, I prepare a meal so all the volunteers can sit down together and eat. I love to cook for them.

It’s not just giving people food. It’s a community of people who know each other intimately. We know when somebody has a fight with their boyfriend, or when somebody goes to jail.

Madeline: You have worked with food pantries in many different kinds of churches, some more conservative than your congregation. Is it difficult to bridge those differences?

Sara: It’s interesting. We’re an Episcopal church. We have a gay priest. I’m gay. We have a range of political

Welcoming Strangers to the Table

» about church people. The challenge for me is to try to understand myself as fundamentally like other people. And that doesn't mean that I want to be everybody's best friend. But it does mean it's not as easy for me to write off whole chunks of people. I can't say, "I could never talk to that person; that person is a Baptist, or a Chinese grandmother."

Madeline: When has your work brought you in conversation with someone unexpected?

Sara: Every week. Sitting in a van with a homeless guy who's eating pieces of American cheese and talking about St. Paul's Letters to the Corinthians. Having an old lady grab my hand and start speaking in tongues to me. Carrying a jar of somebody's ashes out of the mortuary in the parking lot in Daly City with the transsexual with AIDS whose husband just died. There are a million things I didn't plan to be doing, and I am incredibly grateful for all of them.

Madeline: Why grateful?

Sara: I want what anyone wants—to have more life, to see and do more, to be allowed into people's lives and not only the nice parts. To wind up sitting in the county hospital with somebody who just got into a fight with his buddies over some crack. It's real life, and I get to be there talking with him and hearing incredible stories about his childhood. It's depth of experience.

Madeline: Did you meet resistance to your work within the church?

Sara: Oh, yeah. We do the food pantry right in the center of the church, around the altar. It's a beautiful building. People were afraid, "What will happen if we open up the building to all these poor people?" People thought it was crazy.

But I said to them, "This is what

you do every week at Communion. You break bread and offer it to strangers. You fed me. I was a stranger. Now I'm going to feed other people. This is the same thing."

I believe there actually is not much difference between Communion and feeding strangers. And that's what I told people at the church.

Madeline: And how did they respond?

Sara: The process of change is complicated. But I allowed people to experience something that mattered to them—to acknowledge that they were hungry, too,

and had something they wanted to give.

Madeline: Now you're not speaking of physical hunger.

Sara: Well, here's what I mean. My volunteers are extremely poor, some living on the streets. They show up every Friday at 7:30 in the morning and work for eight or ten hours, because they're hungry to give something and connect with other people.

One of my volunteers is an ex-con. He had a heroin habit for years, lives very hand-to-mouth, and came to the pantry to get food. I asked him to give



SARA MILES


Volunteers at Sara Miles' food pantry in San Francisco hand out groceries every Friday. The pantry is largely staffed by people from needy communities.

I allowed people to experience something that mattered to them—to acknowledge that they were hungry, too, and had something they wanted to give.



me a hand. Week by week, he took on more responsibility. Now, he's the guy in charge and runs the entire program. When we incorporated, he joined the board. The circumstances of his life have not changed, but his sense of himself as a leader is enormous. He manages 40 people every week.

Offering people the chance to give is incredibly empowering.

The people in my church aren't any different. They might have more money, but the desire to care for and feed other people doesn't belong to rich or poor. It's a universal thing. 

Madeline Ostrander is senior editor at YES!

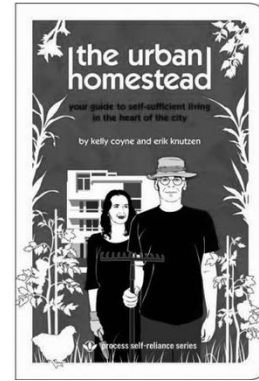
Share the Abundance

Every year, millions of tons of uneaten food in the U.S. head for the landfill. But grassroots movements, inspired by age-old traditions, are finding ways to redistribute excess food. A process called "food rescue" delivers extra restaurant and kitchen meals to those in need. And gleaning, a tradition that dates to Biblical days, shares surplus harvest from farms and gardens.

Many gleaning and food rescue projects are run by small, grassroots organizations. For instance, Community Harvest of Southwest Seattle, a neighborhood project, enlists volunteers to gather fruit from trees in residential yards so local homeowners can donate unpicked fruit that would otherwise fall to the ground and go to waste. The Campus Kitchens Project, a network of colleges and high schools in the Midwest and on the East Coast, uses excess food from school kitchens and cafeterias to make nourishing meals.

Some food banks also accept individual donations of extra fruits and vegetables from the garden. To learn more or find a project near you, contact the Society of St. Andrew, www.endhunger.org, or America's Second Harvest, www.secondharvest.org.

—Layla Aslani and Noah Grant



The Urban Homestead

KELLY COYNE AND
ERIK KNUTZEN

Process, 2008, 330 pages, \$16.95

**The Northwest
Green Home Primer**

KATHLEEN O'BRIEN AND
KATHLEEN SMITH

Timber Press, 2008, 304 pages, \$24.95

Green, Sweet Home

REVIEWED BY
PAMELA O'MALLEY CHANG

Once thought that being an architect would give me the knowledge and experience to make good design decisions. As my career progressed, I found that involved clients—who studied their options and looked for something better—inspired me to find more creative solutions. Clients who barely took the time to understand the basics never motivated me to produce anything beyond “bland.”

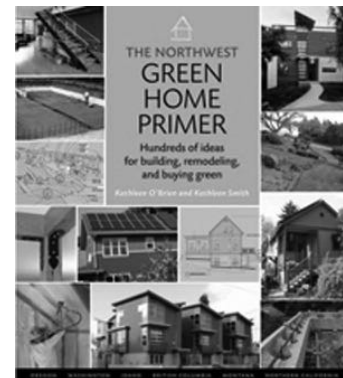
Over time, I came to believe that as a society, we had become bad clients. How many of us had time to earn a living and educate ourselves to make informed decisions about our homes and neighborhoods? We had abdicated our responsibility for the built environment and ended up with sprawl, indistinguishable tract houses, sick building syndrome, and oversized homes that wasted land, energy, and materials.

Green construction is the opposite of not-my-responsibility architecture—it recognizes the importance of individual

choices. When a green designer selects, say, a particular slope and orientation for a roof, she knows that choice affects how well the building withstands wind, rain, sun, or snow. She considers what type of roofing materials will be appropriate and where windows may be placed to brighten dark interiors or avoid late afternoon glare. She knows that cumulatively, thousands of similar decisions can raise or lower a city's temperature, replenish or deplete its water supply, and speed or slow the rate at which construction waste is sent to landfill. Green design is the expression of a mature society's desire to live as if each of these decisions matters.

The Northwest Green Home Primer is a comprehensive text for anyone who chooses green design for home construction or renovation. While the *Primer* focuses on the Northwest (emphasizing that effective green solutions are always specific to their local environment), the book's overall approach is adaptable to any region.

The authors, building consultant Kathleen O'Brien and architect



Kathleen Smith, are specialists in sustainable design. Both live in green homes that they helped plan. Their credentials are impeccable, and their research thorough.

Readers who like dense technical details may enjoy this text cover-to-cover. Others can learn a lot just by grazing. The book has well-organized checklists and is full of helpful illustrations and case studies. You can glance at a diagram to understand how a heat pump provides summer cooling and winter heating by circulating fluid from your house to deep in the ground where

EXCERPT :: THE URBAN HOMESTEAD

Pop off the acorns' little hats, then peel them. Then grind them up: The easiest way is in a blender. Fill it with whole acorns, then add water. Line a colander with an old dishtowel or piece of cheesecloth. Pour the mash in, and let the excess liquid drain away. Tie up the corners of the cloth, and transfer the bundle of mash to a big bowl of water. Let it sit until the water goes cloudy/dark, then dump the water and refill the bowl. Put the mash through several changes of water over the course of a day. After processing, the mash can be used right away, frozen, or dried in a low oven or dehydrator until it resembles corn meal. Toss a little acorn flour into any baked good—cookies, bread, pancakes—or cook it up with water, like oatmeal.

temperatures are stable. Or you can look at photographs showing examples of temporary ponds, which you could construct in your yard to help replenish your local aquifer.

O'Brien also draws on insight from her own home design process and tells how it saved her money and energy in the long-term: "We set our sights on exceeding [the] rigorous ... [state] energy code. ... As a result, we insulated ourselves somewhat from rising energy prices. ... We built our home in 1998, at ... roughly one to two percent more than what it would have cost to build ... conventionally."

I wish this book had been available when I did my own green renovation. More importantly, I hope that homeowners, buyers, and builders will use this book to acquire the knowledge to challenge architects to build green.

In a lighter but arguably deeper-green vein, *The Urban Homestead* is a good-natured (in all senses) guide for urbanites who want to live off the land without leaving the city limits, by such means as greening their homes and growing, preserving, and composting their own vegetables. The authors offer *Homestead* as "an affirmation of the simple pleasures of life."

"We bake our own bread because it is better than what we can buy," they write. "We raise our own hens because we like chickens and we think their eggs are worth the trouble ... There's mead brewing in our guest bedroom

because you can't buy mead ... and because fermentation is the closest thing to magic that we know."

If such activities appeal to you, you'll find yourself reading this book the way gardeners read seed catalogs in mid-January. Along the way, you'll encounter instructions for cooking acorn meal (see above), building a self-watering plant container, and making clay-and-seed balls for lobbing wildflowers into fenced vacant lots. You'll learn how to be an urban forager—from fruit-picking to dumpster-diving—and how to harvest gray water from your laundry or shower.

The authors, a husband and wife team, do their urban farming in Los Angeles. They dispense opinionated tips and useful resources. Despite numerous typos, *Homestead* is a book I'll want to give to my frugal-foodie relatives.

Ten years ago when I completed my own home renovation, I concluded that green design would hardly make a drop of difference unless it became ordinary and accessible. *The Northwest Green Home Primer* and *The Urban Homestead* bring complex choices about homes and food within almost anyone's grasp. Together, these books give me hope that ordinary people can reclaim decision making from the "experts" and inspire us all to live more creatively and responsibly.

Pamela O'Malley Chang is an architect, acupuncturist, and YES! contributing editor. She inadvertently maintains habitat for urban deer in Berkeley, CA.

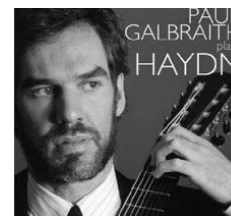
YES! PICKS ::

Musical inspiration while putting out this issue



Seeing Things

He's the son of Bob Dylan, and roots music doesn't get any better than this. **Jakob Dylan's** poetry reflects on serious topics: from war ("War Is Kind") to perseverance in the face of adversity ("Will It Grow"). But even these darkest moments are tempered with the knowledge that we've faced down these demons before. And who better to remind us?



Paul Galbraith Plays Haydn

Sometime in the '80s, classical guitarist **Galbraith** stuck two extra strings on his guitar to expand its high and low range, allowing master keyboard works to be played on a guitar. His Haydn sonatas will slow down your day and leave you breathing a little deeper.

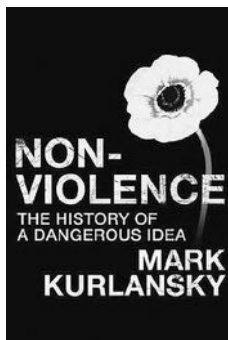


Staring at the Sun

You've heard **Peter Buffett's** music even if you didn't know it. He's a long-time composer for film and TV. Recently he's discovered his own voice, literally: contemporary folk with a familiar hint of the '70s.



Have a listen at www.YesMagazine.org/music



Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea

MARK KURLANSKY

with a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Modern Library, 203 pages, 2006, \$14.00

REVIEWED BY JAMES TRIMARCO

In *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, best-selling author Mark Kurlansky describes the movements—often religious in origin—that have denounced war in favor of active nonviolent resistance. He details their history, celebrates their victories, and underscores the discipline they have shown in the face of repression.

From the war resistance of the early Christians to the celebrated struggles of Gandhi, Kurlansky's stories show the stalwart determination nonviolence requires. Its practitioners must confront their opponents armed with nothing but their courage, solidarity, and tactical creativity.

Especially courage. Early Christians who refused to join the army risked jail or torture at the hands of the Romans. During World War II, the U.S. government imprisoned so many conscientious objectors that they made up a sixth of the federal prison population. Gandhi's followers braved British gunfire during peaceful strikes and protests, while members of the American civil rights movement, who borrowed many of Gandhi's methods, took repeated beatings at the hands of police.

Under this pressure, many nonviolent activists turned their backs on their principles. Examples include William Lloyd Garrison, an abolitionist and advocate

of peaceful resistance who later embraced the Civil War, and members of the Students for a Democratic Society, who resorted to bombings under the leadership of the Weathermen.

Kurlansky sees these lapses as tactical mistakes that prolonged the problems they were supposed to solve. "History teaches over and over again that a conflict between a violent and a nonviolent force is a moral argument," he writes. "If the non-violent side can be led to violence, they have lost the argument and they are destroyed."

The primary appeal of nonviolence, then, is its effectiveness. Against all conventional wisdom, Kurlansky argues convincingly that the most successful campaigns in the battle for American independence were the boycotts and acts of civil disobedience, like the Boston Tea Party, that took place before the shooting war. "It seems quite possible," he reasons, "that British withdrawal could have been achieved by continuing protest and economic sabotage."

He offers similar views on the American Civil War, World War I, and even World War II. "More Jews were saved by nonviolence than by violence," he argues. In Denmark, for instance, the government in 1943 refused to enact anti-Semitic legislation, hid its entire Jewish population, and protected 1,500 foreign Jews, while its population engaged in strikes and destroyed German trains. Jews in France and the Netherlands, countries where the resistance was largely armed, fared worse. Meanwhile, U.S. bombers failed to disrupt concentration camps, because the American government believed they were of no military value.

These lessons from history not only show how great a resolve nonviolence requires, but help to develop that resolve in the reader. Kurlansky never pretends it will be easy, but he makes an eloquent case that a courageous, faithful, and active nonviolence is the best way to bargain with power.

James Trimarco is a consulting editor for YES!



Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime

KENNETH HELPHAND

Trinity University Press 320 pages, 2006, \$34.95

REVIEWED BY ANN LOVEJOY

Gardens made in wartime, in internment and concentration camps, in French and German trenches, among the Bosnian barricades, all have in common a fierce and persistent hope that exists wherever seeds and soil and water can be found.

Helphand shows us tiny pocket gardens tended between battles in the Ypres Salient in 1914, in Minidoka and Manzanar in 1943, in camps near Baghdad in 2004. Made with nothing but determination and fed with hunger for beauty, grown magically from blood-stained soil or in dust-dry deserts, these small gardens are little miracles of faith in a benign and fruitful future. As cities burn and forests are destroyed, people will always plant beans and roses.

Citing psychologist Abraham Maslow's pyramidal hierarchy of needs, Helphand quite rightly fits gardening into both the wide base level of physical need, where bodies are nourished, and the pinnacle of self awareness, where souls are fed.

Ann Lovejoy, gardener and garden writer extraordinaire, is author of 18 books on gardening.



GREEN PLANET FILMS

FILM ::

Ahmed and the Return of the Arab Phoenix

Directed by Giuseppe Bucciarelli, 2007, 23 minutes

REVIEWED BY LAYLA ASLANI

Syria is known more for contentious politics than conservation efforts, but in *Ahmed and the Return of the Arab Phoenix*, director Giuseppe Bucciarelli uncovers a small but powerful story of environmental success in the country's desert—the return of the bald ibis, a bird previously thought extinct in Syria.

The short film follows a shepherd named Ahmed in his efforts to restore the ibis's habitat in Al Badia, home of Ahmed's desert people, the Bedouins. And the stars of the film are not the typical National Geographic, khaki-wearing experts flown in from halfway around the world, but a modest, ad-hoc group of scientists, hunters-turned-environmentalists, and Bedouins.

Though the film doesn't elaborate much on Bedouin history, Ahmed's interest in desert conservation is much more than symbolic. Bedouins have struggled for centuries to defend their traditional pastoral livelihood in Syria, which is now threatened by environmental degradation. In Bedouin lore, the ibis represents wisdom, and to

Ahmed their return is a sign that his people's way of life can be restored.

The film exposes a side of Syria not often portrayed by the mainstream media. The haunting music and shots of the streets, ancient ruins, and wildlife depict the country as a mythical place where history exists alongside the present and remind us of Syria's ancient past as a cradle of civilization. (Al Badia is near the Euphrates River on the Iraq border.) Bucciarelli sometimes romanticizes Syrian culture, but without overdoing it.

Ahmed and his partners face many challenges, including lack of funding, limited public awareness, and the elusiveness of the birds.

The film is a humanizing portrayal of one person's struggle in a tough environment, but Ahmed's ultimate hopes are nearly universal. "For my children," he says, "I would like a better life, more education, [and] keeping their traditional Bedouin culture with some love for nature and wildlife."

Layla Aslani is a YES! editorial intern.



www.YesMagazine.org/phoenix

Check out the movie trailer

YES! PICKS ::

Maddening and motivating independent films

Good Food

Moving Images, 2008, 72 min.

Through candid interviews with farmers and business owners and idyllic scenes of fields and farmers markets, *Good Food* highlights the health, environmental, and societal benefits of locally grown organic food. It is a fun introduction to the politics of food and may inspire you to patronize your local farmers market.

Un Poquito de Tanta Verdad (A Little Bit of So Much Truth)

Corrugated Films, 2007, 93 min.

With the help of citizen-controlled radio and TV stations in Oaxaca, Mexico, a movement that started with a teachers' strike escalated to massive protests in 2006 demanding the resignation of governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Using on-the-ground footage and interviews, the film delivers a compelling story of the power of activism and local media.

PLANNING YOUR WILL?

Keep the YES! Voice Going for Generations



Name the Positive Futures Network (publisher of YES!) in your will or as a beneficiary of your investment account.

Call Jessica Lind-Diamond at
206/842-5009 Ext. 213

FROM THE PUBLISHER



Imagine that every day you could see a “YES! Take” on the news that points to the transformational possibilities that lie in every crisis.

YES! Takes on the News

Do relentless headlines of war, foreclosures, gas prices, fires, and floods leave you wondering if there is any way out? YES! gives you a quarterly window on real solutions, and you tell us it's a real help. But you've also told us to be more frequent and more timely. So now imagine that every day you could see a “YES! Take” on the news that points to the transformational possibilities that lie in every crisis.

Already, we're offering a YES! Take on some of the news as our articles are regularly picked up on high-traffic news and opinion sites such as AlterNet and Common Dreams.

But seriously ramping up a program to get high visibility for daily YES! Takes was just another dream on a long list. Until recently. Here's what happened.

As you may know, our intrepid editor, Sarah van Gelder, has a blog on the YES! website. In June the staff urged her to get on The Huffington Post to give her version of the YES! Take wider visibility. Before applying, she posted a blog entry to show a YES! approach to current news, based on Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's June 11 apology to the aboriginal people of Canada. Harper had apologized for the government's placement of aboriginal children in boarding schools where they experienced various kinds of abuse. The U.S. had a similar practice, so Sarah asked, “Canada Says

Sorry. Will We?” She offered examples of other deeply felt apologies that had led to social healing. Susan Gleason, our media and outreach manager, shot out a link to her media contacts, and the post was picked up widely in both the U.S. and Canada.

Once registered on The Huffington Post, Sarah blogged about John McCain and Florida Governor Charlie Crist's call for offshore oil drilling. She didn't just say it's a bad idea that won't solve the oil crisis. She brought in the deeply researched energy solutions featured in the Spring '08 global warming issue of YES! That blog entry was widely syndicated to many sites, including *The Los Angeles Times*.

In late June, House Resolution 362 approached a vote in the U.S. Congress. Supported by both parties, the resolution included allegations about Iran's nuclear capability and recommended inspection of everything entering or leaving Iran—which would amount to a blockade that many experts say would be an act of war. The resolution was barely mentioned in the mainstream media. Sarah asked the question: “Are Congressional Democrats Leading the Way to War with Iran?” But she didn't merely sound the alarm. She pointed to solutions featured in the YES! Summer '08 foreign policy issue—how Iran could actually help the U.S., and how the only real solution to proliferation is to abolish

all nuclear weapons—a position that even George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, and other cold warriors now advocate (see YES! Summer '08). That post also got picked up widely—including on *The New York Times*' website, which syndicates some Huffington Post headlines. We were ecstatic as we watched these YES! Takes on the news move out to ever larger audiences through the power of the Web.

Now we're eager to expand this program, and you can help. You can drive up our visibility on the Web by reposting YES! stories to your own website or blog—and add comments and recommendations wherever you see YES! articles posted. You can share YES! articles on sites like MySpace, Care2, NewsCloud, Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, and Digg. If you're on Facebook, join the YES! Magazine group.

You can also help by becoming a Dedicated Friend of YES! (see the form on the next page or go to “donate” on the YES! website). With your support, we could reach the dream of a daily YES! Take on the news.

In this fluid time of change, a positive vision takes on extraordinary power. This is a time to infuse the Web with the possibilities of achieving the world we want.

Fran Korten, Publisher

WHO WE ARE ::

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

NEWS AND NOTES ::

Set the Political Agenda

In this hot political season, do you want to help set the agenda? We'd like to help you deliver copies of YES! to your local, state, and U.S. representatives to show the policies you want—on global warming, health care, foreign policy, etc. Mix and match five back issues, and get them for just \$3 each (normally \$4). Order before September 30, and get a free 11 x 17 poster version of the 10-point agenda on pages 32-33. Order online (www.yesmagazine.org/store) or call 1-800-937-4451. It's a great way to promote a real agenda for change.

Gifford Pinchot Retires

In 1996, Gifford Pinchot and his wife Elizabeth helped found the Positive Futures Network. For the next 12 years, Gifford helped guide us with creative ideas and brilliant insights. At our winter board meeting, Gifford announced he would step off our board. We're not losing him, as he has joined our Communications Advisory Board. Gifford has a full plate as president of the nation's first green

business school—the Bainbridge Graduate Institute, founded in 2002 to offer an MBA based entirely on the principles of social and environmental sustainability.

Education Outreach Manager



In late April, Jing Fong became our new education outreach manager. She brings a wealth of experience in community outreach in both

private and public sectors. She's worked on education policy at the Washington State Legislature and co-chaired the Multi-Cultural Advisory Council of the Bainbridge Island School District. Jing is enthused about connecting teachers with YES! resources to inspire students to be contributing global citizens. She lives on Bainbridge Island with her teacher-husband, Barry Hoonan, and their children, Isabelle and Keats.

YES! PICKS ::

Things To Do, Places To Go



www.YesMagazine.org/events

For an expanded listing of upcoming events

Dialogue & Deliberation

October 3-5, Austin, TX. This high-energy conference gathers people from across the field of dialogue and deliberation. Learn motivational tools for thoughtful and challenging conversations about the things that matter most and how to have an impact on the discussions around us. Pre-conference workshops include "Racism and White Privilege" and "Managing Difficult Conversations." www.thataway.org

Live From Main Street

August 24, Denver, CO. September 28, Columbus, OH. October (TBD), Seattle, WA. Tour the country in a series of town hall events hosted by Laura Flanders and find out what really matters to everyday Americans this election season. A project of The Media Consortium. www.livefrommainstreet.org

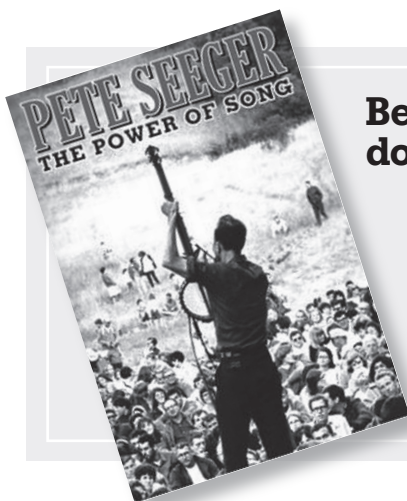


www.YesMagazine.org/mainstreet

Clips and updates from the events

Green Festivals

November 8-9, Washington, D.C., November 14-16, San Francisco, CA. Global Exchange and Co-op America produce these regional gatherings with workshops and 350-plus green and fair-trade businesses and nonprofits. Frequent speakers include Amy Goodman, Van Jones, Frances Moore Lappé, David Korten, and Medea Benjamin. Also featuring organic food and drink, live music, and eco-films. www.greenfestivals.org



Become a Dedicated Friend of YES! with a monthly donation of just \$10, and you'll receive ...

The DVD *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song*

Your subscription to YES! included (no more renewal notices!)

Quarterly updates from our publisher

Future free gift offers of books, CDs, or calendars

Invitations to YES! events

Sign up at www.yesmagazine.org/donate. Or call Jessica Lind-Diamond at 206/842-5009 ext. 213



YES! BUT HOW?

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

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

CAT LITTER BUG

I have cats and am concerned about where their litter comes from and where it goes. What can I do to make my cats' litter box more environmentally friendly?

Pet waste disposal is a tricky matter. First, let's focus on the type of litter you should use. Many conventional litters contain clay that is strip-mined, a practice that is not sustainable. A variety of alternatives are available, but some are made from virgin materials such as wheat and wood, which is not a good use of those resources. Instead, choose one that is made from material such as old newspaper or reclaimed sawdust.

Once you find a new litter, transition your cats to it by mixing it in with the old litter. If your cats refuses to use their box, lengthen the transition period or keep looking for a sustainable litter they like.

Your new litter may have different clumping or odor-absorbing characteristics. If you notice an odor, sprinkle baking soda in the box to eliminate it. Use non-stick cooking spray on the bottom of the box to prevent litter from sticking. Also, be diligent about scooping the litter box daily;

well-maintained litter lasts longer, decreasing the need to change it.

Although some litters can be flushed or composted, be cautious about doing this. Cats can carry the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*, called Toxo for short, in their intestines. They spread the parasite's egg-like cysts, called oocysts, through their feces. Toxo does not harm most people, but pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should avoid cat waste as the parasite can cause birth defects and brain damage. Additionally, if Toxo enters the water cycle it can infect and kill sea otters. The Sea Otter Alliance asks people to put cat poop in the trash because the oocysts may not be killed by sewage treatment.

If you do compost cat waste, have a veterinarian check your cats for pathogens and keep them indoors to avoid infections. Compost the litter in a container separate from water sources and your other compost. Give the material plenty of time to decompose and never spread it near or over anything you will eat or drink.

For a thorough review of alternative litters, visit www.thelighthouseonline.com/articles/natural.html. —L.A.

Our Issue 47 researchers

Noah Grant buzzed his hair so he could look like David Beckham. He's enjoying his time at YES! and having a lot of fun with the other interns. **Layla Aslani** will take her YES! experience to Michigan's Upper Peninsula where she'll write for her hometown newspaper, plant an organic garden, and scheme to have chickens within town limits, despite an ordinance against them.



Layla Aslani

Noah Grant

THE END OF JUNK

I'm worried about the environmental impact of all the junk mail I get. Is there an easy way to stop receiving it?

SILVIA CASABIANCA

Advertisers send out more than 62 billion tons of junk mail per year, and 44 percent of it goes into landfills without ever being opened. Producing and disposing of it uses 100 million trees, 28 billion gallons of water, and enough energy to power 2.8 million cars. You can greatly reduce the amount of unwanted mail you receive by taking a few easy steps.

First, go to the Direct Mail

Association's website at www.dmchoice.org/consumerassistance.php and sign up for their "Mail Preference Service." This will get you off their national advertising mailing list. You can do it directly through their website or print out a form and send it in (you'll need a credit card for verification, but it won't cost you anything). This will take care of the bulk of your junk mail for five years, after which you'll need to register again.

Second, gather all the unwanted mail order catalogs you receive and go online to www.catalogchoice.org. Using their free service, create a login name and click through



LESLI LARSON

YES! PICKS :: Electric Bicycles

Lots of people like the idea of biking, but bad knees, disabilities, or poor health deter many of them. Others are turned off by the thought of showing up to work (or a date, or a party, or church...) with their shirt stuck to their back with sweat. For those who need a little help joining the two-wheel revolution, electric bikes can be the answer.

Electric bikes give you the benefits of cycling: no gas costs, free parking, no traffic jams, and lots of fresh air. At the same time, they let you choose how much to exert yourself. They have a range of 12 to 30 miles, which makes them perfect for trips to the grocery store or park, as well as short commutes.

Deciding which electric bike to buy can be intimidating given the huge range of options. To get you started, we've broken

things down to a few key considerations.

Kit or Bicycle? You can buy a complete new electric bike or a kit to retrofit your own bike. Full bikes range from \$400 to \$4,500. Kits start at \$450 and go up to \$2,000, and require some assembly skill. But they give you more freedom in picking a bike and battery pack that fit your needs.

Which Battery? There are four types of batteries for electric bikes, ranging from the low-end sealed lead acid to the high-end lithium ion, with the NiCD and NiMH in between. The more you spend, the lighter and longer-lasting the battery will be. Battery capacity (measured in "watt hours"), determines the range of the bike between charges.

How Much Power? The power of electric bike motors is measured in watts, ranging from 250 to 750. Anything between 350 and 450 is enough for most riders to reach a good speed and have no problems getting up hills.

How Expensive? This depends on your answers to the questions above. No matter what price range you're looking at, make sure the manufacturer has been around for a while and check out some reviews online (do a search for "reviews of electric bikes"). —Noah Grant

their list of hundreds of catalogs and check the ones you don't want, using your name and address as they appear on the covers. After about 10 weeks, the changes will take effect. When new catalogs come, you can simply add them to the list to stop them as well.

Finally, to stop pesky pre-approved credit card offers, call 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688) or go online to www.optoutprescreen.com.

Taking these three simple steps costs you nothing, reduces your footprint on the Earth, and eliminates the headache of sorting through piles of junk mail.—N.G.



**HELP STUDENTS LIKE 15-YEAR-OLD
GRACE SHAPE A BETTER WORLD**

Your support gets YES! education materials into the hands of teachers and students nationwide

**Donate at www.yesmagazine.org
or call 800/937-4451**

Got a good idea to share with your lawmakers?
Oh. That many?



**CHOOSE ANY
5 ISSUES!**

We'll bundle your favorite 5 (or more!) for only \$3 each, plus shipping.

Keep them for yourself, or send them to people who could use some inspiration. Help set our nation's agenda.



Call 1-800-937-4451 or use the order form on Page 57

**FREE!
AGENDA
FOR AMERICA
POSTER**
if you order before 9/30

UPDATE

HAS THE PROMISE OF THE STORIES WE'VE PUBLISHED TURNED INTO REALITY?



FREETHECHILDREN.ORG



www.YesMagazine.org/ittakesachild

At left, Craig Kielburger, who started Free the Children at age 12, visits a classroom in Kenya. Watch a film clip from the documentary “It Takes a Child,” the story of how Craig Kielburger started his journey.

Children Helping Children

9 years ago in YES! ... we reported on 16-year-old Craig Kielburger who, at age 12, got together with some friends to form Free the Children (FTC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to abolishing child labor worldwide (see YES! Fall 1999). Kielburger’s youth, passion and dedication helped his work gain major media attention in both the United States and Canada, his home country. Inspired by Kielburger, young people around the world started FTC chapters and created their own campaigns for more humane labor practices.

Today ...

Free the Children is the world’s largest network of children helping children with over 1 million youth involved worldwide. FTC’s programs in developing countries address a wide variety of problems, from education to health to sanitation. The organization recently built its 500th school and estimates more than 50,000 children attend these schools daily.

Most recently, FTC launched the “O Ambassadors” program with Oprah’s Angel Network. Through

the program, groups of students raise funds and awareness about development projects around the world. The inaugural group of O Ambassadors went to Kenya to build a school with funds they raised. The students returned inspired to make even more changes; they started by raising \$5,000 to build a well in the community they visited.

FTC continues to prove that youth doesn’t prevent people from making a significant change in the world. Most of the FTC staff is under 30 years old and more than 60 percent of the FTC budget comes from fundraisers organized by youth.

Kielburger serves as the chair of Free the Children, while his brother Marc is the chief executive director. Now 25, Kielburger has earned a degree from the University of Toronto and is a student in the Kellogg-Schulich Executive MBA program. Kielburger has traveled to more than 50 countries, received four honorary doctorates, written best-selling books, and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize four times.

—Layla Aslani

Interested? See our original story at www.yesmagazine.org/freethechildren. It’s one of more than 2,000 YES! Magazine articles in our online archives.