

The 15th Anniversary Issue

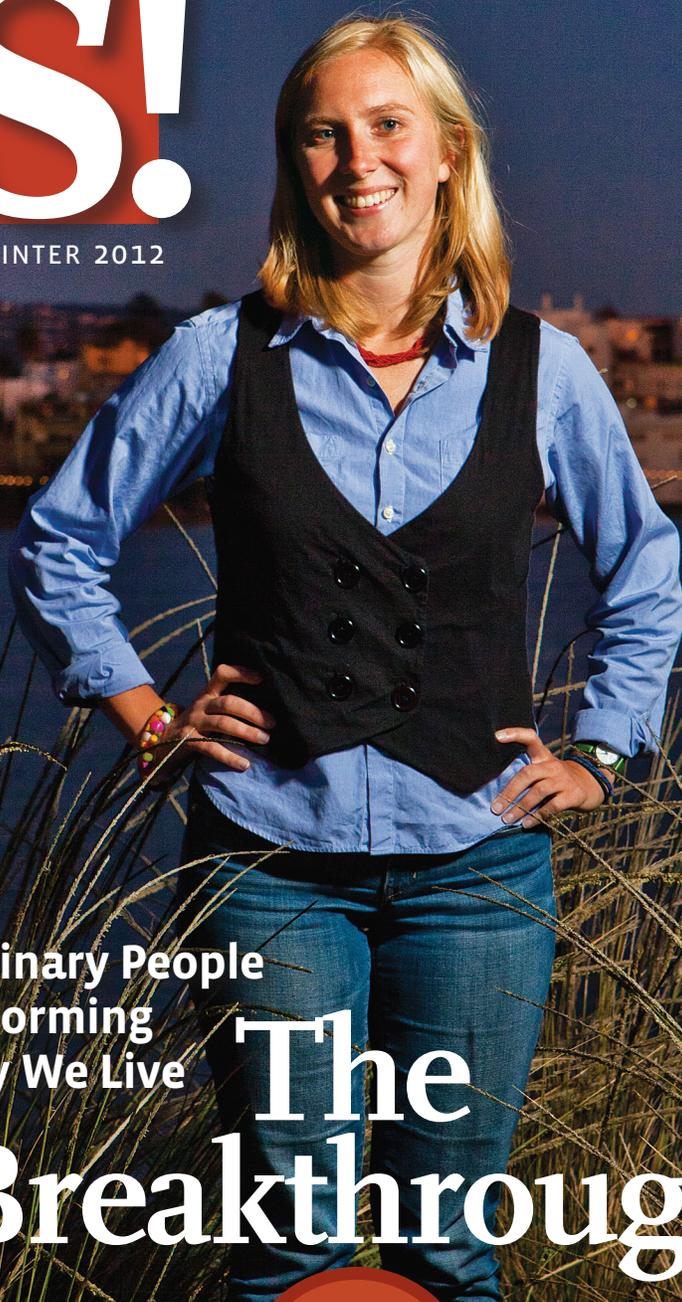
POWERFUL IDEAS,
PRACTICAL ACTIONS

yes!

WINTER 2012

Why Occupy Wall Street
Is Too Big to Ignore

Farmers Go Wild: It's Even
Better Than Organic



May Boeve of 350.org
*Friendship—a powerful
source of energy*

15 Extraordinary People
Transforming
the Way We Live

The Breakthrough



15

*Selected by Wendell Berry, Naomi Klein,
Pete Seeger, Van Jones, Frances Moore Lappé,
David Korten, Eve Ensler, and others*



YES! Turns 15

Welcome to the 15th anniversary issue of YES! Magazine.

We began YES! in the basement of a house. A visitor back then would have walked past a deep blue Earth flag on the entry wall, ducked under some cables that connected the offices to the internet, and found a small, busy group of staff and volunteers, working away at old Macintosh computers, surrounded by stacks of books and papers.

Like many start-ups, we had few resources but a lot of passion. We felt that we had a story to tell, but, even more, that we had a lot of questions.

At the time, Clinton was in the White House. The economy seemed to be booming, and the United States was, at least nominally, at peace. But we felt that our society was on an unsustainable track. Climate change, species extinctions, the growing inequality between rich and poor, the obsession with consumerism, the increasing power of corporations and Wall Street—all signaled that big change was needed.

A few in the media were reporting on these issues, but almost no one was reporting on the people answering these challenges by restoring ecosystems, reaching across divides, and working to create better communities.

It turned out people were looking for these sorts of stories, and our readership grew. Many tell us that YES! helps readers see that they aren't alone in their aspirations, and encourages them to get involved in making the world a better place.

Those comments tell us we're doing our job, because we don't believe there is a single leader somewhere who is going to show us all how to live better or to re-orient our world. We believe the changes are coming from you, and me, and that person over there. That's why we decided to highlight some of the people we find especially inspiring in this anniversary issue.

After 15 years of encountering extraordinary people, there were hundreds we could have chosen—so we turned to long-time grassroots leaders, activists, authors, artists, board members, advisors, and to you, our readers, to help us identify the people you most admire.

As I've gotten to know these "Breakthrough 15," I've been struck by how much each of them does to bring people together and to encourage those they work with to discover their own power. These are individuals who aren't looking to get attention for themselves, so you may not have heard of them. They lead from the ground up, planting the seeds of great ideas and then helping them take hold.

In each case, they tune in to some of the deepest needs of our time, whether it's for art and beauty, for food that can nourish our bodies without depleting the soil, for universal access to health care, or for dignity at work.

As we were preparing this issue, Occupy Wall Street came onto the scene. (Find our ongoing coverage and check out the book we just completed, *This Changes Everything*, at YesMagazine.org). This movement takes this sort of humble leadership to another level. Decisions at the Occupy gatherings' general assemblies are made by consensus, and no single individual stands out; instead, there are opportunities for everyone to offer leadership.

YES! has been out of the basement for a decade. And we're thinking about the next 15 years, which promise to be extraordinary as the full implications of climate change and other environmental and social challenges become more evident. The sorts of activists who are showing up, such as those featured here and at Occupy Wall Street, are more needed than ever.

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor



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PHOTO BY BIRCH HINCKS

PHOTO BY ERICA CAMILLE FOR YES! MAGAZINE

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To celebrate 15 years of YES! Magazine, we asked some of our longtime heroes to choose 15 people whose ideas and work are transforming the way we live. Here's who they picked. *By Madeline Ostrander*



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PHOTO BY PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE



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May Boeve is 350.org's executive director. She was photographed at home in Oakland by Lane Hartwell for YES! Magazine.

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READERS FORUM

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



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Not Alone

That was the best issue yet! It really spoke to me, made me feel like I'm not alone in this laid-off, patchwork, part-time working world, and gave me hope and actions to take! There are a lot of creative people out there—thanks for telling me their stories. They gave me ideas and stimulus and the relief of knowing there are a lot of others out there who are getting by doing it differently than the “normal” 40-hour work week, and helping make the world a better place to boot.

LILA MORRIS
Port Angeles, Wash.

So Others Have Work

In 2009, so many people were out of work that we decided to choose voluntary underemployment, to live on just my husband's income.

Not identifying myself with a career took getting used to. Even with challenging volunteer work, I feared that I was underachieving, and giving up financial security. But we live in an era of automation: there aren't enough jobs for everyone to have one. Any of us who can get by on less has to, for the sake of the broader community. Two years into the experiment, my husband and I are content, and feel a sense of belonging in our city—good thing because there's no travel budget anymore! Seriously, once basic needs of shelter, food, and safety are assured, it's amazing how little stuff you need, and how your desire to “get away” fades.

ALEXA MERGEN
Sacramento, Calif.

Plumbing With Jeans

Just want you to know I really enjoy, and share, your magazine!

The past issue had a section about re-using blue jeans, and I have attached a pic of my re-use.

Because I located my 3,000-gallon rainwater storage tank almost too close to the down spout, I couldn't connect the two with a rigid piece of plumbing.

So ... I used the leg of a nearly worn-out pair of blue jeans. And it works!

Peace.

RON FERRELL
Oklahoma

Happiness Is a State Bank

I was ecstatic when I read the article on page 46 of your Fall 2011 issue on the Bank of North Dakota, the only state-owned bank in the United States.

Since 1919 this bank has not only helped create jobs; it also has guaranteed student loans for thousands of North Dakota students.

The current junior U.S. Senator from North Dakota, John Hoeven, ran the State Bank of North Dakota before he became Governor of North Dakota.

Hats off to a great issue.

CURTIS L. TOGSTAD
Jamestown, N.D.

Spreading the Word

I have just received “New Livelihoods” and am very excited with the possibilities. I've notified government at all levels in the hope that we can give a hand up to local people wanting to start community programs, here in Victoria and across Canada.

JOANNA WILKINSON
Victoria, British Columbia

Optimism vs. Honesty

I was introduced to YES! when Bush was president (enough said) and I had my first teaching job fresh out of college. Since I was living in an incredibly conservative community, your arrival on my doorstep was a breath of fresh air. I usually took you with me into the classroom, shared entire issues with students, and developed some very memorable lessons.

Not only were your stories inspiring, but I gradually felt that I was living in some of them. I founded a hip-hop club, a 350.org chapter, and even took students to Tim DeChristopher's trial. But as I became more involved in the community, and more experienced with my projects, I grew more honest about what I was doing, and less optimistic. ...

I began to wonder about all of the positive projects which I

had read about in YES!, and realized how strange it was that your magazine never wrote about failure, or at least how many difficult obstacles were overcome. Perhaps you felt you did include that and I missed it. Maybe you didn't want to share depressing news in the spirit of hope and optimism. It might have been because your magazine is called YES! and not YES, But There's Also Some Crappy Stuff.

There have been times when I myself over-emphasized optimism and hope because without it, I feared that action would not be taken. Years later, I look back and know that those who were up to the challenges would

have been there anyway. They would, however, have appreciated more honesty so that we could have all been better prepared for what was to come.

RUSSELL EVANS
Montrose, Colo.

Sami's Story

Thank you for your article "Standing on the Side of Peace" in the Fall issue! I am renewing my subscription because of it.

SUBSCRIBER COMMENT,
NAME WITHHELD.

ISSUE 59 CORRECTION:

On page 57, Israel's construction of a section of a separation barrier in the village of Bil'in, Palestine, began in 2004.

Winter 2012 Issue 60

yes!

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Get the YES! take on the growing Occupy Wall Street movement:

yesmagazine.org/occupy

10 things you can do to support the occupation (without sleeping outside)

Naomi Klein: Why #OccupyWallStreet is the most important thing in the world right now

David Kortzen: How the 99% might finally change the Wall Street game

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PHOTO BY GABE FALSETTA/PEOPLESWORLD.ORG

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Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



OIL

Tribes Join Fight Against Pipelines

 In recent months, two proposals for transcontinental oil pipeline projects have galvanized opposition from tribes and First Nations across the United States and Canada.

TransCanada's Keystone XL and Enbridge's Northern

Gateway pipeline projects would begin in the heart of native territory—central Alberta, a region rich in tar sands bitumen, a viscous form of petroleum that's notoriously polluting to extract. Keystone XL would pump bitumen through the Midwest and West to the Gulf of Mexico; Northern Gateway would cross British Columbia to the Pacific. From those locations, tar sands oil would, according to some analyses, likely be shipped to

overseas markets, especially China. On the way, the pipelines cross tribal territories and resources. If either pipeline is approved, tribal governments and native organizations are likely to launch a series of legal actions, some of which could lock the projects in years of litigation.

Canadian First Nations may be in an especially strong position to stop the Northern Gateway project. Canada's constitution recognizes indigenous rights, and some recent legal rulings suggest that First Nations still have a say in decisions that affect their traditional territories. A group of First Nations in Alberta, Manitoba, and British Columbia have signed a declaration that opposes the construction of any oil pipeline without native consent.

In the United States, the most significant challenge may focus on whether TransCanada's pipeline can cross the Mni Wiconi pipeline, which provides drinking water to some reservation communities in South Dakota. Tribes have some legal authority over decisions that affect Mni Wiconi. Oglala Sioux Tribal President John Yellow Bird Steele has said that TransCanada won't get permission from Pine Ridge to build across tribal drinking water supplies unless it agrees to specific safety guarantees and protection of cultural and environmental

resources, according to *Indian Country Today*.

Climate scientist James Hansen says boosting production in Alberta tar sands, the world's second-largest carbon reserve, would launch catastrophic climate-change scenarios. His prediction stirred vigorous opposition to Keystone XL among climate activists, including indigenous environmentalists. In late summer, more than 1,200 people were arrested in Washington, D.C., in a plea to President Obama to block State Department approval of Keystone XL.

—Madeline Ostrander

ALSO

The European Union is considering a directive to block import of the most environmentally destructive fuels, like tar sands oil.

OCCUPY WALL STREET

“Horizontal” Organizing Key to Protest’s Success

 Since about 200 people camped out in lower Manhattan on September 17, answering *Adbusters* magazine's call to Occupy Wall Street, Americans at Occupy protests

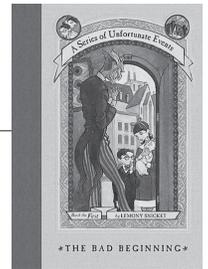


SHADIA FAYNE WOOD / TARSANDSACTION.ORG

Protesters, including 350.org's Bill McKibben, were arrested this summer in Washington, D.C., demonstrating against the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would carry Alberta tar sands bitumen across the heart of the United States.

 yesmagazine.org/pipeline-protests “Criminals” for a stable climate.

Lemony Snicket, author of the children's books *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, in his "Thirteen Observations made by Lemony Snicket while watching Occupy Wall Street from a Discreet Distance."



“HISTORICALLY, A STORY ABOUT PEOPLE INSIDE IMPRESSIVE BUILDINGS IGNORING OR EVEN TAUNTING PEOPLE STANDING OUTSIDE SHOUTING AT THEM TURNS OUT TO BE A STORY WITH AN UNHAPPY ENDING.”

across the country have participated in a direct form of democracy some call “horizontal” organizing.

Protesters who met to develop a response to the *Adbusters* call made decisions in a general assembly, using a non-hierarchical process consistent with their concerns about the misuse of power. They were inspired by other recent movements, like Spain's *indignados* and Greece's anti-austerity demonstrations.

The protest grew rapidly the first month, with thousands participating nightly in Occupy Wall Street's general assembly. Facilitators guide the discussion of agenda items. After discussion, they ask for consensus—participants wiggle their hands in the air to agree to a proposal and cross their arms to block it. The general assembly uses modified consensus: If a block cannot be resolved through additional dialogue, consensus can be reached by nine-tenths of the assembly.

Working groups are what really make things happen in Zuccotti Park. The sanitation working group cleaned the park to forestall eviction, the food working group provides three meals a day, and the “Declaration of the Occupation of New York City” was drafted by a working group. The joint general

assembly/working group structure allows large decisions to be made by the whole group and small, logistical ones to be made by anyone who sees a need.

Marina Sitrin, author of *Horizontalism*, about the decentralized uprising in the wake of Argentina's 2001 economic crisis, was part of the first OWS assemblies. She explains that horizontal organizing is integral to a protest about the corporate takeover of American democracy. “Horizontal organizing is about new ways of relating where people both have more participation and more space to participate.”

—Olivia Rosane

PLASTIC TOXINS

Cities Take Up “Ban the Bag” Fight

 Environmental activists are reducing plastic waste pollution by tackling disposable plastic bags, one city at a time. About 20 U.S. cities and towns have passed disposable bag reduction laws, including San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

Whether they impose a nominal fee for single-use, disposable bags, or ban them altogether, the laws encourage consumers to develop habits to replace

disposable bags, particularly those made from plastic.

The most recent city to join the effort to ban the bag is Portland, Ore., which has banned single-use plastic bags at the checkouts of large retailers. The change was met with overwhelming support from most Portlanders, says Stiv Wilson of 5 Gyres Institute, who helped give out free reusable bags at grocery stores to ease the transition for shoppers on October 15,

when the ban took effect.

The Portland ordinance, unanimously approved by Portland City Council, was the culmination of a four-year campaign by the Surfrider Foundation Portland Chapter, 5 Gyres Institute, and the Oregon League of Conservation Voters. It reflects growing public concern about the environmental impact of disposable plastic.

“Plastic bags typically have a low recycling rate, seem to be



PHOTO BY LANE HARTWELL

A protester at Occupy Oakland holds a message for the Oakland Police Department, a day after officers used tear gas and riot gear to clear away the encampment outside City Hall. One protester was critically injured. The next night, protesters were back in larger numbers.



BAN THE BAG PDX PHOTO

The Bag Monster campaign was created by the ChicoBag Company. Each monster is wearing 500 bags, the number of bags the average person uses each year. Across the country, cities are taking the initiative to ban plastic single-use shopping bags.

 yesmagazine.org/plastic Music Video: Why paper or plastic shouldn't be a question at all.

littered often and have an easy alternative in reusable bags," says Bill Hickman, coordinator of the Surfrider Foundation's "Rise Above Plastics" program. "We hope that people understand some of the unintended consequences that go along with a disposable lifestyle."

Disposable shopping bags are a significant source of plastic pollution in the oceans, where scientists have identified five huge gyres of "plastic soup." "We've reached a tipping point where we can't keep up with the stuff that's in the ocean," says Wilson, who has visited three of the gyres for research. "I've seen it firsthand, and it's startling."

Proponents of ban-the-bag ordinances have faced powerful industry-backed counter-campaigns. The American Chemistry Council, a trade group representing plastics manufacturers, defeated legislation for a statewide ban on single-use

bags in California, and spent \$1.4 million in Seattle in 2008 to defeat a referendum that would have imposed a 20-cent fee on disposable grocery bags. Plastic bag manufacturer and recycler Hilex Poly Company funded a campaign that defeated Oregon's proposed statewide ban earlier this year. Campaigners hope the success of municipal ordinances will motivate grocers to support statewide bans in the near future.

—Rebecca Leisher

Interested? surfrider.org, 5gyres.org

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Girl Scouts Take Aim at Their Own Cookie Ingredients

 Years of work by two Girl Scouts to save endangered

orangutans is paying off. In 2007, Madison Vorva and Rhiannon Tomtishen were working on their Girl Scout Bronze Award. Their project was raising awareness of the threat to orangutans from destruction of tropical rainforest habitat to make way for palm oil plantations. Then Vorva and Tomtishen, who were in seventh grade at the time, realized that the cookies sold to raise funds for Girl Scouts were part of the problem. Thin Mints, Trefoils and the nine other varieties of Girl Scout cookies contain palm oil. Determined to make a difference, the girls started Project ORANGS, a national campaign to make Girl Scout cookies rainforest-safe. They've inspired people to send more than 70,000 emails to the CEO of Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA), circulated a petition signed by the likes of Jane Goodall, and collaborated on the creation of a "Rainforest

Heroes" badge.

Vorva and Tomtishen earned a partial victory in late September when GSUSA announced plans to move to a sustainable source of palm oil by 2015. Until then, GSUSA will purchase Green Palm Certificates that support the sustainable production of palm oil. Tomtishen and Vorva welcomed the announcement but said they won't be satisfied until palm oil is out of the cookies for good.

—Jen Horton

ENVIRONMENT

Hope For Salmon as Dams Come Down

 The largest dam removal project in U.S. history began in September, marking a victory for a campaign that spanned more than two decades.

The Elwha Dam, built in 1914, and the Glines Canyon Dam, built in 1925, stretch across the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. They were constructed without fish ladders, blocking migratory fish from spawning. The river's salmon runs, once consisting of more than 400,000 fish, are now fewer than 4,000, and its subspecies of Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The dams were built across territory belonging to the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe, which had fished the Elwha for generations. The tribe fought for dam

“IT’LL BE A LONELY PLACE OVER THERE AT BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD, I’M AFRAID.”

👍 **Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer**, announcing that he will ask the U.S. government to let Montana set up its own universal health care program and suggesting that not many will choose to keep their private insurance.



THE NORTHWEST INDIAN FISHERIES COMMISSION

Billy Frank Jr., Nisqually tribal elder and chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, during ceremonies celebrating the removal of the Elwha Dam.

removal from the beginning, and was joined in its efforts in the mid-1980s by conservation groups including the Seattle Audubon Society, Friends of the Earth, Olympic Park Associates, and the Sierra Club.

Together, they eventually forced a dam removal settlement with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Under the resulting 1992 Elwha Restoration Act, the Department of the Interior evaluated methods to restore the river’s ecosystem and associated fisheries, and

determined in 1994 that it was necessary to remove both dams. But the dams remained in operation for the next 17 years, while \$325 million to pay for demolition and cleanup was raised, largely through the National Park Service budget and a stimulus grant generated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Removal of the dams will take about three years; experts believe fish will return to the upper reaches of the Elwha as soon as one year after that. Brian Winter, the Elwha project

manager, estimates it will take a further 25 to 30 years for the river to return to its natural state. Conservation groups hope the restoration of the Elwha will provide a model for improved management of American rivers.

Federal officials estimate the dam removal will create at least 760 jobs, and a further 446 annual jobs in recreation and tourism once it is completed.

—Jennifer Kaye



yesmagazine.org/elwha Time-lapse footage of the dam’s destruction.

IMMIGRATION

New Rights For California’s Undocumented

👍 Several laws signed by California Governor Jerry Brown this autumn will improve life in the state for undocumented immigrants, recognizing their civil rights and improving their prospects for education and employment.

One of these, AB 131, builds on AB 130, signed this summer. These two laws, collectively known as the “California Dream Act,” enable eligible undocumented students at California colleges and universities to receive private or state-funded financial aid as of January 1, 2013.

“Passage of AB 131 will be the opening bell in the savviest investment California has ever made,” said UCLA student Justino Mora, in a statement released by the Coalition for

Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. “I know I represent high interests for my family, my community, and my country if I am given this chance.”

Brown also signed a law that prohibits police at DUI checkpoints from arresting people solely for driving without a license and then impounding their cars, a practice that has disproportionately affected undocumented immigrants.

The Fair Treatment for Farm Workers Act, signed by the governor, will make it easier for California’s approximately 400,000 farmworkers to join unions and negotiate for fair labor rights. This was a victory for campaigners, who saw three previous versions of the law vetoed by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The governor also signed AB 1236, which prevents local governments from making mandatory the federal E-Verify system for checking employee citizenship. This contrasts with the policies of states such as Arizona, where E-Verify is mandatory.

A push to make E-Verify mandatory nationwide is being spearheaded by Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, who claims it will free up 7 million jobs now held by undocumented immigrants. But in Georgia, where tough immigration laws have driven out large numbers of undocumented immigrants, a study earlier this year found the state had a shortage of 5,244 farm workers, leaving unharvested crops rotting in the fields.

—Jen Horton

BICYCLES WE LOVE



DE CAFÉ RACER PHOTO

NETHERLANDS *School Bus is Bicycle Built for 10*

Some lucky Dutch schoolchildren can now put their seemingly endless energy to good use, by powering their own school bus. Dutch company De Café Racer produced an eco-friendly bicycle-bus that is steered by an adult and pedaled by up to 10 children.

The bright yellow bus is designed for riders aged 4 to 12, and its stability and high visibility provide a safe, early introduction to cycle commuting in a country where bicycling is a way of life and 95 percent of teenagers bike to school at least some of the time.

The bus has a base speed of 10 miles per hour, and a motor for backup if the students are too tired to pedal or need help with hills. Other features include a music player and a canvas cover for shelter on rainy days. There's even a bench seat where two additional children can sit back and enjoy the ride.

PITTSBURGH *Collective's Motto: Ride it Forward*

It's an organization that says it all in the name: Free Ride. The Pittsburgh bike collective lets riders earn a refurbished pair of wheels by volunteering their time and labor at the Free Ride warehouse.

Clients start by bringing in an old, broken bike. They learn bike repair skills as Free Ride staff guide them through the process of refurbishing a bike for their own use. Once their own bike is fixed, they can repay the cost of supplies and training by teaching their new skills to others. Free Ride also repairs and sells bikes, and offers bike repair classes to youth.

Free Ride's website describes this pay-it-forward structure as "get a bike, fix a bike, give a bike," and stresses that the organization is even more about education than bike repair. The idea is that learning bike maintenance can keep people on two wheels for a lifetime.

HANGZHOU *Bike-Sharing on a Big Scale*

Hangzhou—a city of 7 million in southern China—has a bike-sharing system so successful it's reinstating bicycles as emperors of the road. The program has grown to 50,000 bikes since it started in 2008, making it the largest public bike system in the world—far surpassing Paris, the second-largest with an impressive fleet of 20,000.

Hangzhou's Public Transportation Corporation developed the system to reduce traffic congestion and help residents get to areas public buses don't reach. On an average day, 240,000 bike trips are made on Hangzhou's wide roads and segregated bicycle lanes. The bike scheme is free to users for the first hour, and each subsequent hour costs only a modest fee. It's also convenient—bikes can be returned to any of 2,050 stations, and the stations are no more than 1,000 feet apart. The city plans to expand the system to 175,000 bikes by 2020.

MINNEAPOLIS *Self-Service Bike Repair Kiosk*

It's easy to see why *Bicycling* magazine named Minneapolis "Best Bicycling City" last year. The City of Lakes is also a bike-friendly urban landscape.

The most popular route for cyclists and pedestrians is the Midtown Greenway, which now has a handy self-service bike repair kiosk thanks to local inventors Chad DeBaker and Alex Anderson. The Bike Fixtation kiosk at the Greenway transit shelter, open from 6 a.m. to midnight, offers an elevated repair stand equipped with eight essential tools, a free air compressor, and a vending machine stocked with energy drinks, snacks, bike accessories, patch kits, and even hand warmers for chilly rides. The kiosk also has tutorials for the novice mechanic on how to use the tools to fix a flat.

The inventors plan to open a second kiosk, and eventually hope to sell Bike Fixtation kiosks in other cities, keeping cyclists across the country cruising after a breakdown.

 yesmagazine.org/fixtation

COMMENTARY :: *David Korten*

OCCUPY WALL STREET: A NEW CONVERSATION

Occupy Wall Street announced itself to the world September 17, 2011, when a thousand people gathered in New York's famed Wall Street financial district. Modest by the standards of mass protest, it was largely ignored by media.

Within a month the protest—inspired in part by the Egyptian occupation of Tahrir Square and other protests of the “Arab Spring”—involved hundreds of thousands of people in hundreds of encampments in the United States and around the world. It had become a major media event, and attracted hundreds of millions of sympathizers. An October 11 poll found that 54 percent of Americans had a favorable opinion of the protest and overwhelmingly agreed that:

- Wall Street and lobbyists have too much influence in Washington (86 percent)
- The gap between the rich and poor in the United States is too large (79 percent)
- Executives of financial institutions responsible for the financial meltdown in 2008 should be prosecuted (71 percent)
- The rich should pay more in taxes (68 percent).

Wall Street is the symbolic center of an economic system that works for the richest 1% at the expense of the other 99% and uses its outsized financial and media muscle to corrupt government and deepen the divide.

Occupy Wall Street protesters want a future for themselves and their children. They want an economic system that works for everyone. They want a government that answers to everyone.

Do they have a clear plan? No. But they have a deep faith in our ability as a nation to work it out through democratic dialogue. Their accomplishment is already monumental.

They have forced the corporate media machine to focus national attention on Wall Street banks and corporations as the primary threat to U.S. prosperity and security. This opens the window for a much-needed national conversation on the economy's purpose, values, and structure.

America is a tale of two economies. The Wall Street economy answers only to faceless financial markets and is devoted to financial deception, manipulation, and speculation to maximize financial returns to its most powerful players. The Main Street economy is directly accountable to real people who have a natural interest in building healthy communities with thriving local economies and natural environments.

After the Wall Street economy drove the nation into the Great Depression of the 1930s, Americans put in place rules to constrain Wall Street and strengthen Main Street.



“I just have the feeling this is going to change everything.”

CHIEMI WALTERS

“Maybe we should have opted for conservation instead of bigger capacity.”

ALEX GUY



yesmagazine.org/cartoon for more reader captions

This shifted economic power from Wall Street financiers to Main Street entrepreneurs who view the creation of jobs as essential to their business success and have a natural interest in contributing to the health and prosperity of their communities.

America went on to build a strong middle class, lead the world in industry and technology, and make the American Dream of a secure and comfortable life in return for hard work and playing by the rules a reality for a substantial majority of Americans.

Wall Street interests mobilized in the 1970s to dismantle the restrictions on their power. It was class war and Wall Street won. The Forbes Magazine list of the world's billionaires set two records in 2011: total number (1,210) and combined wealth (\$4.5 trillion—equal to the German GDP).

The America envisioned in the Declaration of Independence is still a work in progress. It is time to declare our national independence from Wall Street and change the rules to shift power from the 1% Wall Street economy to Main Street economies that work for all. ⑦



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



MILITARY RESISTANCE

Near the gates of Fort Lewis, anti-war veterans serve up support and solidarity (along with double-tall lattes) to their friends in uniform

Iraq War veteran Josh Simpson is a founding member of Coffee Strong, outside Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

PHOTOS BY PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE



Dean Paton

The .45 caliber single-action, semi-automatic Colt pistol known as the M1911 in military parlance is an extremely destructive handgun at close range. On June 26, 2011, U.S. Army Ranger Jared August Hagemann removed his M1911 from its holster. The 25-year-old already had carried the sidearm with him on eight deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, so he knew how much damage even a single round could do against flesh and bone. It was late Sunday evening at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and Hagemann stood in a training area, stalked by a terrorist more relentless than any Taliban suicide bomber. His opponent's name: post-traumatic stress disorder, the clinical term for a severe form of anxiety usually known by its acronym, PTSD.

Staff Sgt. Hagemann placed the muzzle against his right temple and pulled the trigger. His obituary, published by his hometown paper in California's San Joaquin Valley, said only he had "died unexpectedly," words his widow would dispute.

U.S. veterans of post-9/11 combat are taking their lives in alarming numbers, and PTSD seems to be the primary cause. If the military's response is inadequate, is anyone else ready to help GIs heal their psychic damage? And

against the majesty of Mt. Rainier, JBLM was recently called "the most troubled base in the military" by *Stars and Stripes*, the officially sanctioned newspaper of the Department of Defense.

THOUGH JBLM IS NOMINALLY IN STARBUCKS COUNTRY, its neighborhood coffeehouse is no ordinary caffeine bar. Wedged between the southbound lanes of Interstate 5 and a Subway sandwich shop, Coffee Strong is run by vets and strategically positioned 300 yards from JBLM's gate. Active-duty personnel and veterans get free java and advice. Civilians patronize the shop as well, which exists mostly on donations from those who support its cause.

The coffeehouse is part of a grassroots movement of veterans and pro-GI, anti-war Americans determined to help active-duty personnel and discharged veterans receive benefits due them, get out of the military, or cope with what the U.S. government either can't or won't treat effectively: PTSD, the mental illness caused by experiencing trauma, like the horrors of war.

"In the last month of his life, Jared put a gun to his head three times. He told me every day was a struggle to wake up and want to live," Ashley says. "He said the things he had seen and done, no God would have forgiven him."

A STRONG BREW

what are combat vets to do when PTSD shreds their souls, yet their commanders order them back to fight in Helmand Province? For the third time?

Ask Ashley Joppa-Hagemann, Jared's widow and the mother of their two children. She's sitting in a coffeehouse not far from Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), a military reservation in western Washington that is home to 100,000 soldiers, Marines, Air Force personnel, their families, and civilian contractors. Sprawling across 91,000 acres set

JORGE GONZALEZ BEGAN VOLUNTEERING at the coffeehouse in 2009. He saw it as a chance to help comrades and their families, and also as a kind of self-treatment. A Specialist E-4 in the army, Gonzalez returned from Iraq in 2007. After a couple of months, he realized he was suffering from PTSD and went to JBLM's mental health professionals. What he experienced when he attempted to get help within the military system is not unusual.

"When I finally sought help, I was >>



Volunteers at Coffee Strong prepare handouts on Operation Recovery, Iraq Veterans Against the War's campaign for an end to redeployment of traumatized troops and recognition of their right to heal. Coffee Strong is calling for a Congressional investigation into the causes of violence and suicides among combat veterans at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The Coffee Strong website, coffeestrong.org, lists actions civilians can take: sign a statement of support, donate, spread the word, or write to a U.S. Representative.

» put on what I call the Army's 'quick fix' program—the antidepressant Zoloft," he says. "After that, I was seen once a month by the psychiatrist, usually for five minutes, maybe ten, and that was just to get my prescription renewed."

Gonzalez says his doctors never discussed coping strategies. "I was depressed. I had thoughts of suicide," he says. "But there was never really any advice from the psychiatrist, like, 'This is what you could be doing to get better.'"

Just as frustrating, he felt his chain of command never supported his attempts to recover from PTSD. "There was no interest in pulling me away from any training," he says. "I was always going out, coming back, getting my prescription filled."

After a year of zero progress, Gonzalez quit taking Zoloft. Then he left the army. He still struggles with depression and PTSD, "but now I cope with it like this: I am here at Coffee Strong trying to help soldiers and their families get the help they have been asking for."

One dangerous practice in today's military, say Gonzalez and his Coffee Strong compatriots, is that soldiers traumatized during their time in combat zones return home suffering from PTSD, and, instead of getting the medical and psychological help they need to heal, their commanders order them back to the fighting. Those who resist are branded "sissies" or malingerers, and earn the scorn of superiors.

The activist group Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) credits this attitude with the frequent episodes of violence related to combat stress that occur at JBLM; these include some domestic crimes so shocking, like the waterboarding of a child, that they've been reported in the national media. Coffee Strong activists point to a series of army investigations that found "systematic" shortcomings in how the army treats soldiers just back from war.

At JBLM, Gonzalez says, 50 soldiers have killed themselves since the beginning of the Iraq War, and this trend

spiked in 2011—with 11 suicides from January to October. A Pew Research Center poll released in October found that 44 percent of post-9/11 veterans say they have had difficulty adjusting to civilian life, 47 percent say they feel irritable or angry, and 37 percent say they have struggled with post-traumatic stress. One in three vets polled now says the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not worth fighting.

None of which seems surprising to a Specialist E-4 named Greg who turned up at Coffee Strong one Saturday last September. Because he remains on active duty, he withheld his last name: "You only have to go on one deployment to see the truth," he says. "America destroyed Iraq. When I got back, I didn't want to kill myself, but I had days where I told myself, 'If this is how I'm going to feel for the rest of my life, then I don't want to be alive.'"

After Greg returned from deployment, he felt a growing anger toward superiors in his chain of command. "I'm not a hothead or a sore person that gets in trouble," he says, "but I was literally afraid I might see them again and break a chair over their head or something."

So Greg self-referred to Family and Soldier Readiness Services at JBLM for mental health counseling. He was shocked at the ineptness of his treatment. "This lady is giving me handouts and telling me to take deep breaths. And I said, 'Lady, this is a big problem. When I was in Iraq, I had an officer who was crazy and vicious.' We were a couple months from going back to Iraq, and I was afraid I was going to harm this person. And she was giving me pamphlets?"

Then he heard about Coffee Strong. "I walked in one day, I sat down, it took me a long time; I tried to explain myself. Jorge was there. He said, 'I get it; I was in the infantry too.' And I knew he got it," Greg recalls, "because of what he said."

Greg followed the advice he got at Coffee Strong, and eventually found a new therapist within the Army system who gave him psychological insight

and advice. He helped Greg transfer away from the superiors in his unit.

“When I found out about Coffee Strong and Iraq Veterans Against the War, I felt like, ‘Hey, this is okay. There are thousands of other people that feel the way I do. There must be smarter ways we can take care of ourselves,’” Greg says. “Talking to Coffee Strong was a huge help to me.”

COFFEE STRONG, WHOSE NAME IS A TAKEOFF on the “Army Strong” ad campaign, was started in 2008 by veterans from IVAW. Their aim was to help soldiers get services, and along the way focus some of the anti-war sentiments they knew existed among active-duty personnel. It’s one of three active anti-war coffeehouses near U.S. military bases. Under the Hood Café was launched outside Fort Hood, Texas, by 18-year Army wife Cynthia Thomas when her husband was sent on his third deployment. Norfolk OffBase, in Virginia’s Hampton Roads area, is perhaps more of a resource and organizing center than a full-blown cafe, but it calls itself a coffeehouse nonetheless.

All three enterprises trace their roots to draft resistance counseling during the Vietnam War era, when Quakers and then others helped draft-age men explore alternatives to fighting: going underground, moving to Canada, jail time, seeking conscientious-objector status. Add the support of veterans who counsel GIs based on their own experience of the system, and you have a well-respected method of resisting war by supporting the humanity of the soldier. Coffee Strong is firmly in this tradition, and boasts a luminary board of directors, including Noam Chomsky, former foreign service officer and retired Army Colonel Ann Wright, journalist Dahr Jamail, and, before his death, the historian Howard Zinn.

Two paid staff and about a dozen volunteers keep Coffee Strong open. All the volunteers pull a shift behind the espresso machine, says Kelly Beckham, who’s volunteered at the shop for more than a year. “But we do more

than just make coffee.”

Volunteers talk with the soldiers, answer questions, and connect them with a cadre of specialists who help with discharge papers, veterans’ benefits, or getting access to PTSD counselors within the military or from private health care.

“When you’re a volunteer at Coffee Strong, you hear all the time how hard it is to get proper treatment, or just get their paperwork processed,” says Beckham. “Or, they’re upset with lack of support from their chain of command, how any kind of personal problems get swept under the rug.”

Word is that some commanders on base disapprove of the cafe’s anti-war stance, although, Beckham says, “We give benefits advice to anyone, whatever their opinions about the military are.” She pauses. “We are taking care of what the army has left behind. People shouldn’t have to come to a coffee shop to get help with benefits or do their paperwork for medical treatment.”

Cesario Larios, one of the founders of Coffee Strong, believes so strongly in the project’s mission that he’s using vacation days from his paid employment to help out as a volunteer. He says that encouraging GIs to stand up for their rights, including the right to heal, is a first step to opening up room for soldiers to take a moral stance against war.

“That’s why I’m involved,” he says, “so we can encourage soldiers who have huge moral reservations about what the military is doing. Some of them are choosing alcohol and drugs to avoid the reality of feeling trapped within their military contract, and a future that includes more deployments that they don’t wish to take part in—that’s why we’re seeing more suicides. I think that if we can show them that there is a broad base of support from vets and civilians, they will begin to see there is another way.”

BETWEEN DEPLOYMENTS, JARED HAGEMANN grew more alienated and less functional. Ashley says he’d routinely down a six-pack of beer while driving around in his truck. Sometimes he’d guzzle

a 24-pack: “And that’s how we spent the first few years of our marriage.” In 2009, after returning from another combat deployment, Jared checked himself into 5 North, the psychiatric ward at JBLM’s Madigan Army Medical Center. He was separated from his wife at the time, and she remembers that, when he was released, Jared phoned and said he was scared to be alone, that she was the only person he trusted.

She raced to find Jared with his Colt in his hand. Soon afterward, some Rangers arrived. Jared said he wanted out of the unit. They told him if he left the Rangers he would either go to jail or be sloughed off to the regular Army, where he likely would face a 15-month combat deployment.

Jared tried the antidepressant Celexa, but didn’t like its effects. He saw several counselors at JBLM. Some forced him to talk about what he’d seen and done in combat, and Ashley says it would send him into a drunken rage for two weeks. The Army accused him of using PTSD as a ruse to get out of work, and said if he wanted counseling he would have to schedule it on his own time.

“The Rangers knew all about our problems, but they were no longer doing anything to help,” she says. “I even went to the base commander; he told me, ‘That’s normal. It’s normal for the men to come back and drink, abuse their wives and their children.’

“And I told him, ‘That’s not Jared. My Jared doesn’t do that.’

“And he just said, ‘That’s how they handle it.’ And that was that.”

Not until Jared’s suicide did Ashley find dependable support: “I haven’t really gotten any support from the military at all. Coffee Strong treats me like I’m human. They check up on me. They’ll even watch my kids and play with them.

“Whenever I needed somebody to talk with, Jorge and the others at Coffee Strong—they’ve been there for me. They’re amazing.”

Dean Paton is Seattle correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Coffee Strong film: groundsforsistance.org

Percentage of Muslim Americans who say military attacks on civilians are never justified: **78**

Protestants: **38**

Catholics: **39**¹

Percentage of all the waste generated by a typical school that could be recycled or composted: **80**²

Amount of oil and gas money designated by the United States for rebuilding Iraq after the 2003 invasion: **\$9.1 billion**

Amount the U.S. Department of Defense was unable to properly account for: **\$8.7 billion**³

Percentage of 16- to 34-year-olds who use a phone as their primary timepiece: **60**⁴

Pounds of carbon dioxide each square meter of public forest in western Washington and Oregon soaks up per year: **1.1**

Pounds of carbon dioxide emitted from driving one mile: **1.1**

Number of acres of federal and state forest land in Oregon and western Washington: **11.8 million**

Number of acres needed to soak up the two states' carbon emissions from gasoline: **23 million**⁵

Average number of people killed annually in shark attacks from 2001-2010: **4**

Number of sharks killed annually by people: **26-73 million**⁶

Percentage of Americans receiving Social Security retirement who say they "have not used a government program": **44**

Percentage receiving unemployment insurance who say they "have not used a government program": **43**⁷

Number of nuclear power plant sites in the United States: **65**⁸

Number of sites reported to be leaking radioactive tritium: **48**⁹

Percentage of people age 18 or older married, in 1960: **72**

In 2008: **52**

Average age at first marriage for men in 1960: **22**

For men in 2008: **28**

For women in 1960: **20**

For women in 2008: **25**¹⁰

Amount the USDA spent in assistance payments to large industrial farms in 2010: **\$13.7 billion**¹¹

Amount the USDA spent to support small and medium farm operations: **less than \$100 million**¹²

Complete citations at yesmagazine.org/ptc

1. Abu Dhabi Gallup Center, 2010. **2.** Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2010. **3.** U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 2009. **4.** YouGov U.S. Panel Survey, 2011. **5.** Department of Forest Ecology and Management, Oregon State University, 2011. **6.** Florida Museum of Natural History. **7.** Cornell University's Survey Research Institute, 2008. **8.** U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2009. **9.** U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 2011. **10.** Pew Research Center, 2010. **11.** Congressional Budget Office, 2011. **12.** Union of Concerned Scientists, 2011.



Meet the **Justice Warriors, Eco-Innovators, Happiness Architects,** and **Change Artists** Who Are Transforming the Way We Live.

Madeline Ostrander

We live in a moment when it is hard to have faith in the power of an individual, unless that individual has money, or celebrity, or both. The average cost of a successful campaign for Senate in 2010 was \$9.8 million, while the median household income is around \$50,000. The federal lobbyist population is nearly 12,000, according to the Center for Responsive Politics; meanwhile *The New York Times Magazine* reports that it's so hard for citizen groups to bend the ears of federal politicians they sometimes enlist the help of the glamorous—Nicole Kidman, Natalie Portman, George Clooney—just so they can get a meeting. It's no wonder ordinary Americans have rarely felt more powerless, more disillusioned with government, or less capable of slamming the brakes on our nation's course toward economic ruin.

And then a story breaks into the news that for a moment shakes our cynicism—such as when thousands of people

camp out in a park near Wall Street and in public spaces across the country and insist that we, the ordinary folk who make up 99 percent of the population, have voices, faces, stories, and, most importantly, power of our own.

This issue is dedicated to the power of the 99 percent—and to a group of people who aren't looking for leadership from those with entrenched wealth and influence. For a decade and a half, YES! has covered the solutions and movements that answer the economic, environmental, and political challenges our world faces. In this issue, we're marking our 15th anniversary by turning our attention to 15 individuals behind those movements. We have named them the YES! Breakthrough 15—a group of people who are shattering our sense of powerlessness.

We believe it's never been more important to recognize how influential ordinary people can be. Our representatives, under the influence of campaign contributions from companies like Koch Industries and Bank of America, are making a mess of things. Scientists predict we're headed toward climate disaster and severe food shortages that »



Ai-jen Poo
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Deepak Bhargava
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Henry Red Cloud
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Will Allen
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» will affect half of the world's population, but Congress has stalled every effort to pass climate-change policies. The government has given banks trillions of dollars in bailouts and unsupervised loans while cutting services to millions of people without jobs or health care. Three-fourths of the public feels that the country is heading in the wrong direction. It's high time for us to take matters into our own hands.

The Power of Personal Stories

Not that it will be easy. For those of us without wealth and status, power has to come from somewhere else. From humility, which allows us to draw inspiration from the strengths of others. From a willingness to dive in, make mistakes, tell the truth, and respond to what's in front of us—which looks more and more like a state of emergency. Author Margaret Wheatley writes in *Turning to One Another*, a book on hope and community, "In a crisis, the space is wide open for contribution ... People have a deep desire to help, so they perform miracles. We discover capacities we didn't know we had."

Thousands of people all over the United States are responding to crises at every level. We chose a small group, just 15, not only to celebrate our years of magazine coverage but also so that we could invite you into their lives. There is strength that comes from knowing one another's stories. Personal stories remind us that others face the same difficulties and vulnerabilities we do. We discover our own power when we realize we aren't alone and recognize humanity all around us.

We chose these 15 people because each offers a solution, an idea, or a vision that is bold enough for the time we live in now. We required each to be a present-moment leader—not

someone resting on years of past accomplishment, but a person whose vision is still evolving. We wanted the 15 to represent movements and innovations that are ripe, vital, and urgent.

We asked for a lot of help. We turned to nearly 70 longtime activists, authors, political leaders, scientists, artists, and storytellers—heroes and innovators themselves with deep roots in social change. We asked readers to send ideas. We reviewed more than 100 nominations: Each of them had a story that was powerful and evocative in its own right. From those many stories, we selected a group that spans multiple generations, cultures, communities, and issues. We wanted each to be a true innovator, an agent of what psychologist Robert Gass describes as transformational change. They are engaged in the radical reimagining of social systems and political structures. They hold a positive vision of possibility for the future, yet each is unafraid to do work that is messy and full of contradiction. They are not just thinkers but people deeply in touch with the heart of our current crises—and with the righteous anger, compassion, and love that moves people to take radical action. And they have enough humility to seek true collaboration—with dozens, hundreds, or thousands of other people.

We believe that, together, these 15 are driving some of the most important cultural shifts, solutions, and innovations that Americans will need to face the challenges of coming decades.

For example, we live in a time of deep political and economic polarization—and we will need to leap the divide. Ai-jen Poo, founder of the Domestic Workers Union, is someone who sees what Gass calls "creative tension" in

PEOPLE POWER

PEACE & JUSTICE



Nipun Mehta
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Grace Boggs
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PERSONAL STORIES REMIND US THAT OTHERS FACE THE SAME DIFFICULTIES AND VULNERABILITIES WE DO. SHARED POWER COMES WHEN WE REALIZE WE AREN'T ALONE.

“irreconcilable opposites.” She is battling for the rights of some of the most powerless and most essential workers in our economy—those who care for the sick, young, and elderly. But she has courted seemingly unlikely allies: By appealing to their ethics and compassion, she has led families who employ nannies, maids, and caregivers to march beside domestic workers in campaigns for worker rights. Poo calls it “organizing with love.”

We will have to get real about the sacrifices needed to get our society off fossil fuels before climate change dries our rivers, unravels our agriculture, and floods our coasts. Conventional wisdom claims Americans aren't willing to give anything up, but activist Tim DeChristopher says sacrifice and radical action are a relief and a joy. When he put himself at risk and in prison to stop oil and gas drilling in Utah, his example was part of what inspired more than 1,200 people to get arrested in Washington, D.C., to try to halt the construction of an oil pipeline.

We will need to prove that a human-scale economy can grow without interference or backing from big finance. Since the collapse of American manufacturing, parts of the Rust Belt look like a dead zone. But in Detroit, 96-year-old Grace Boggs has inspired people living in the inner city to begin reconstructing the fabric of their neighborhoods—by creating

gardens, making art, and rebuilding houses. Their work belies the idea that poor, urban communities are a lost cause.

And we will need the determination and persistence to put the “demos,” the people power, back in democracy. We will need people like Alison Smith, who was a stay-at-home mom when she began volunteering and eventually became a leader in a campaign that revolutionized election financing in Maine, providing public money to turn middle- and working-class people into competitive candidates for office. “All I really did is show up!” she says. “Then ... other doors opened. I spoke to groups, spoke to reporters, testified at the legislature. I never planned on doing those things ... on making this my life's work. But I kept showing up because something about the work fed my soul.”

Most of all, the power and transformation we'll need in this century will come from everyone with something to give, not just the few or the elite. The contributions of each of the Breakthrough 15 are, in the words of Smith, “just a tiny sliver of the whole endeavor, and all by itself it wouldn't amount to much.” We offer you their stories as an invitation—to show up, to take heart, to nourish your imagination, to break through the cynicism and prove that we have enough power and creativity to build the world we need. ❶

Madeline Ostrander is senior editor of YES! Magazine.

AI-JEN POO

Organizing Labor—With Love

Talk to Ai-jen Poo about her work and it won't be long before you hear language you don't often hear in the midst of intense social movement campaigning. For one, she does not shy away from talking about "organizing with love."

A 37-year-old organizer based in New York City, Poo is founder of Domestic Workers United (DWU), a group that waged a successful campaign for landmark legislation in New York state recognizing the labor rights of nannies and housekeepers. Now, as director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), she is spearheading an even more ambitious effort, a Caring Across Generations campaign designed to address the crisis in how we care for our children, our elders, and the disabled in this country.

"I believe that love is the most powerful force for change in the world," Poo says. "I often compare great campaigns to great love affairs because they're an incredible container for transformation. You can change policy, but you also change relationships and people in the process."

How does this view square with the fact that campaigns often involve a lot of conflict and acrimony?

"I think that you can love someone and be in conflict with them," she says. "And I think that it's the same thing when we're trying to transform a fundamentally unequal society. There's a level of discomfort and conflict that has to happen in order for us to achieve a more loving fate."

This focus on love has had a profound effect on many of Poo's colleagues. "So many of us wouldn't be the leaders we are without her," says Danielle Feris, Director of Hand in Hand, an organization for employers of domestic workers. Prior to creating Hand in Hand, Feris recounts, "I had dinner with Ai-jen and told her my idea. And she said, 'Do it. This is needed in the world.'"

"If that dinner hadn't happened I don't know whether I would have had the courage to found an organization. She has that effect on people, to make us believe in ourselves and believe that we can do what's needed." >>



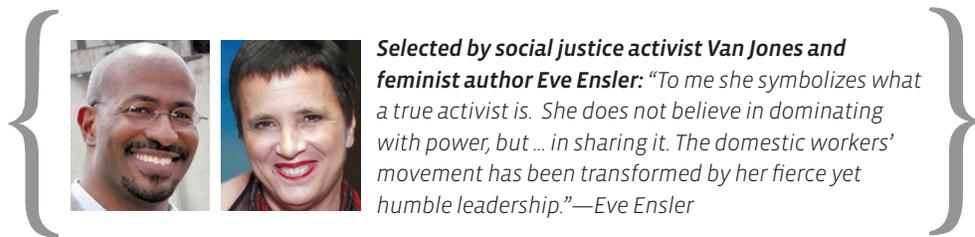
HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“It’s precisely the people who are considered the least ‘likely’ leaders who end up inspiring others the most. Everyday people and everyday acts of courage eventually change everything.”

AI-JEN POO



PHOTO BY ERICA CAMILLE FOR YES! MAGAZINE



Selected by social justice activist Van Jones and feminist author Eve Ensler: “To me she symbolizes what a true activist is. She does not believe in dominating with power, but ... in sharing it. The domestic workers’ movement has been transformed by her fierce yet humble leadership.”—Eve Ensler

» Through the Eyes of Women

Willowy and soft-spoken, Poo has emerged over the past decade as one of the country’s most visionary organizers. She says that she never could have predicted her current career path, but she had strong role models early on. Her parents were immigrants from China, her father a scientist who had been a pro-democracy activist in Taiwan. She was even more influenced by her mother, a doctor, and her grandmother. “They were both really strong women with a lot of wisdom,” she says. “I always knew that if we could just see the world through the eyes of women we’d have a much clearer picture of both what the problems are and what the solutions are.”

Poo first experienced the power of organizing as a student activist. In the spring of 1996, while majoring in women’s studies at Columbia University, she was one of more than 100 students who occupied the rotunda of the university’s Low Library. They demanded that the university hire more faculty members in the field of ethnic studies and broaden its curriculum to acknowledge the diversity of the student body. The students stayed overnight in the library despite threats from the administration, and the next morning 22 of them were arrested. Subsequently, the activists staged a five-day takeover of one of the college’s main administrative buildings, highlighting their demands by teaching their own courses in the occupied space.

The pressure led to gains including the creation of the university’s Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. Poo says, “Working with a really diverse group of students around our shared goals gave me a sense of how powerful campaigns can be if they’re strategic—how it is possible to really make change.”

The Work That Makes All Other Work Possible

After graduation, Poo took up organizing that highlighted the experience of women in the low-wage workforce. At the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, she participated in outreach efforts that targeted women workers who were among the most underpaid and vulnerable to exploitation in New York City. Domestic employees emerged as a key group. Along with farmworkers, domestic employees were explicitly excluded from New Deal labor rights protections. They at once provide essential support for their employers’ families—“doing the work that makes all other work possible,” as Poo has put it—while also raising their own children and often sending money to family members abroad.

Traditionally, domestic workers have been considered impossible to organize. “We call it ‘the Wild West,’” Poo says. Nannies and housekeepers have no centralized employer and no employee breakroom where they might commiserate with others. Workers must negotiate their employment relationships individually, with no clear standards or public oversight. Absent any effective labor protections, domestic employees calling in sick or taking time to deal with a family emergency risk losing their jobs. Even though they are among the lowest-paid workers in the country, some caregivers are expected to be on-call around the clock. Those who are undocumented immigrants fear that speaking up could jeopardize their ability to stay in the country.

By the late 2000s, DWU was pushing for legislation in New York state that would recognize the rights of these caregivers for the first time. Poo traveled repeatedly to the state capitol alongside DWU members to lobby lawmakers. She says, “I remember asking Angelica Hernandez [a DWU leader] how many times she’s been to Albany. She said 27 times, to tell her story.”

Hernandez and others at times spoke of finding families who treated them with dignity, and of their affection for the children and elders they cared for. But they also described abuses, such as working 12 to 15 hours per day and being paid only \$135 per week.

“In 2007, I began working for a family in Manhattan, cleaning their apartment; I would later also begin to take care of their child,” Hernandez said. “I had to clean, do laundry, iron, take clothes to the dry cleaner, go food shopping, and prepare food for the entire family. I used to work constantly, day and night, taking care of the child and then cleaning while he slept.”

Mona Ledesma, a Filipina immigrant who had worked for eight years as a nanny and housekeeper in the United States, testified about having to resign a full-time job to avoid the sexual advances of a male employer, and about being accused by another employer of stealing a \$2 can of Niagara starch for ironing clothes. She told the State Assembly, “I am not a thief. I am not an object for sexual pleasure. I am a human being.”

No Unlikely Allies

Such testimonials, combined with six years of determined effort on the part of DWU and its allies, paid off in September 2010, when New York state passed the nation’s first Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights. The legislation gave groundbreaking legal recognition to domestic workers,

guaranteeing at least three paid days off per year, at least one day off per week, and overtime pay for workweeks of more than 40 hours.

“It’s been transformative for me to participate in a movement where you actually see a historic breakthrough,” Poo says. “When we first got to Albany we were told, ‘Good luck with that. This legislature will never pass it.’ And we just thought, ‘Why on Earth would people be against such a basic measure that’s about equality and opportunity?’”

Feris, who works with employers of domestic workers, points to Poo’s focus on coalition-building as an important

so that we can be a nation that takes care of one another, across generations.”

NDWA Field Director Jill Shenker adds of Caring Across Generations, “There are some pretty radical ideas in the campaign, yet we’re doing it. Ai-jen has the audacity to put forward these bold ideas, and has a clear strategy for moving them forward to make the impossible possible.”

Beyond organizing Caring Across Generations, Poo has been busy carrying the momentum of the 2010 success in New York forward in other parts of the country. The NDWA is now active in 17 cities and 11 states. Several

“OUR CAMPAIGNS ARE ABOUT SAYING THAT EVERYBODY’S LIVES ARE VALUABLE, ABOUT SAYING THAT WE SHOULD HAVE A SOCIETY AND AN ECONOMY WHERE EVERYONE’S HUMAN DIGNITY IS RECOGNIZED.”

factor in the bill’s success. “One way in which Ai-jen’s leadership has been so critical is that she doesn’t see any group of people as unlikely allies,” she says.

One might expect that those who hire domestic employees—the constituency targeted by Feris’ organization—would oppose the organizing efforts of these workers. But DWU and its allies saw that many families valued the fact that domestic employees are caring for the most precious people in their lives. In 2009 they held a Children and Families March, made up of employers and children cared for by domestic workers, walking alongside DWU members and their own kids—all in support of the bill of rights.

Strength in Connection

Poo’s organizing continues to be about making connections. Whether as parents looking for quality daycare for our kids, people with disabilities, or immigrants seeking a path to citizenship, we all have a stake in the care crisis in the United States. Poo believes that we should all be part of a movement to address this crisis.

On July 12, more than 700 grassroots leaders—along with officials such as Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis—gathered in Washington, D.C., to launch the Caring Across Generations campaign. Domestic workers’ groups, women’s organizations, disability rights campaigners, elder advocates, immigration reformers, unions, and faith-based groups announced a unified drive to confront issues raised by the “Age Wave” in America, where, every eight seconds, someone turns 65.

Its goal, Poo has written, is to “transform public policy

states, including California, are considering versions of the Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights. Recently, Poo and her organization have used the theatrical release of *The Help*, a movie about domestic workers in the 1960s, to draw attention to ongoing abuses faced by domestic workers—pointing out that most have no greater legal protections than their counterparts of a half-century ago.

When asked what she thought of the movie, Poo laughs and confesses that she has not yet had a chance to see it and is only partway through the book. Finding time to live a balanced life is something Poo seeks to emphasize in her organization. She tries to go hiking when she’s able, and she maintains a dedicated yoga practice. “It’s a really big part of my life,” she says of her yoga. “It allows me to stay centered and connect to my purpose in times of conflict or obstacles.”

In the coming year, Poo’s work will involve reaching out more broadly than ever. Following up on the Washington, D.C., event in July, other “Care Congresses” will take place in more than a dozen cities across the country. And they will involve an ever-greater number of allies.

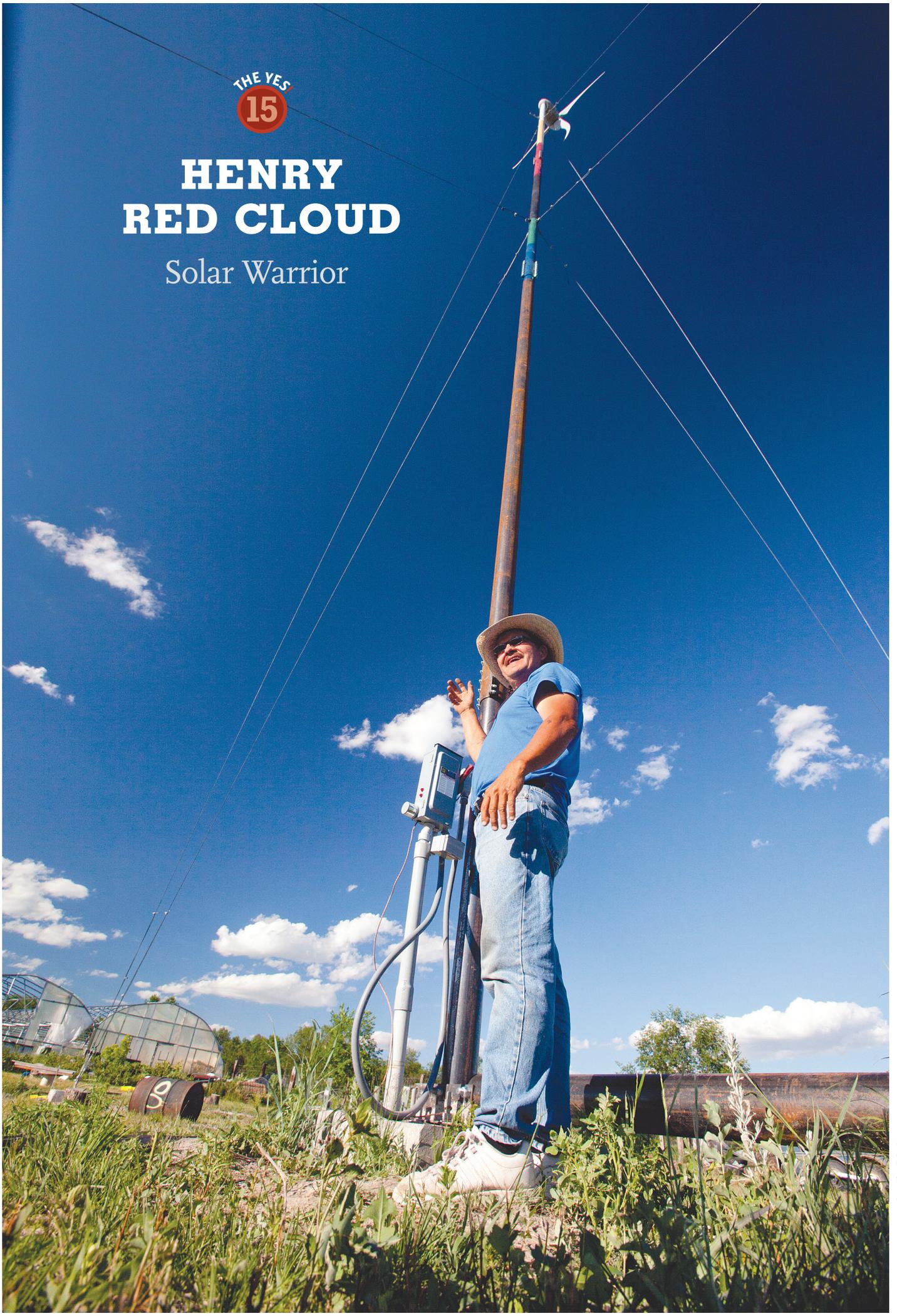
“To us, it’s really important that people see this as a movement to transform care for everybody,” Poo says. “I think our campaigns are about saying that everybody’s lives are valuable, about saying that we should have a society and an economy where everyone’s human dignity is recognized. The only way to get there is through love and through harnessing the power of how we are connected and interdependent.”

—Mark Engler

THE YES
15

HENRY RED CLOUD

Solar Warrior





Selected by author Naomi Klein:

“Tribes are under intense pressure to allow their lands to be punctured by fossil fuel development. Red Cloud is showing that there is another path out of poverty.”

Henry Red Cloud’s address is 1001 Solar Warrior Road on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. But the road sign hasn’t arrived. A windmill towering over the cottonwoods in the draw of White Clay Creek marks the location of Red Cloud Renewable Energy Center and his “Solar Warrior Community.”

It consists of a mud-and-straw-bale roundhouse for trainings, a whimsically painted Quonset hut factory for assembling solar air heaters, an array of solar panels from Germany, a horse trailer that doubles as a paper recycling center for making insulation, a vegetable garden, and a new concrete foundation for what will become a 20-person dormitory.

Here Red Cloud directs the work of Lakota Solar Enterprises, his American Indian-owned and operated business dedicated to providing renewable energy to some of the poorest communities in the United States.

The business has been part of a journey home for the 52-year-old Oglala Lakota man. He left the reservation to join the civil rights movement in the 1970s, then found himself working construction, walking high steel in cities around the country.

But when he returned home, he faced the reality of few jobs and little housing. He crafted teepees and took volunteer training from Trees, Water & People, which later became his partner organization.

One night, trying to sleep in the back seat of his car, Red Cloud had the vision for Lakota Solar: training people right on the reservation to build and install solar heaters so they could study at home and support the extended family, or *tiospaye*. Later, he added a buffalo ranching cooperative to the enterprise.

“The house, the buffalo, renewable energy: I’m not into it to become a millionaire,” Red Cloud says. “I’m just here passing it on to the next generation like the grandfathers did for us. That way surely their prophecy is going to be realized.”

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“Hope is the most important thing that people need to regain. I just want to be one example of someone who overcame hardships—one source of hope. That’s all we need to start seeing possibilities for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.”

HENRY RED CLOUD

Red Cloud’s 16-month-old granddaughter is the seventh generation descended from Makhpiya Luta, or Chief Red Cloud, who negotiated the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, which left 60 million acres of buffalo hunting grounds to the Great Sioux Nation—until Congress later whittled it into smaller reservation parcels.

“Our ancestors made a treaty with the U.S. government,” Red Cloud recounts. But they also made “a pact with the Creator for seven generations”—hearkening to a well-known prophecy that they would suffer if they did not provide for their descendants’ future prosperity.

Red Cloud was raised by his grandparents. “You can get an education and you can live a comfortable life,” he remembers his grandfather saying, “but if you want to have a really good life, create some work for other people.”

To date, the Red Cloud Center has trained 84 people, most of whom have secured jobs based on the experience—a striking accomplishment given the staggering unemployment across Indian country.

Lakota Solar Enterprises has built and installed more than 1,200 small-scale individual solar heating systems. The heaters save low-income homeowners up to 30 percent on utility bills that, over the course of a freezing Northern Plains winter, can add up to more than \$1,000. The systems are Red Cloud’s own innovation: For two years, he fiddled with a 1970s design to come up with the \$2,500 unit his business produces today. “We’re using 21st century material and tweaking it Lakota-style,” he says.

Recently, Red Cloud has engaged 24 Northern Plains tribes as partners. The tribes have been spending millions of dollars of federal funding to assist tribal members with energy costs, such as propane. Now they can use some of the money for energy efficiency and to send tribal members to Red Cloud’s renewable energy courses.

Red Cloud also has contracts to install wind turbines and solar arrays atop public health clinics on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian Reservations. He hopes the projects will help topple what he considers to be a wall of skepticism about green building techniques—the legacy of failed development projects on the reservations.

“We are just getting back to the memory of the old way and becoming sustainable again,” Red Cloud says. “We have always had our Sun Dance ceremonies. We’re warriors doing our warriors’ deed in the 21st century for the seventh generation.” **Y**

—Talli Nauman



Selected by activist Pramila Jayapal: “Deepak lifts up real leadership from the grassroots. He is one of those people I am certain will change the world dramatically for the better.”



DEEPAK BHARGAVA

A Voice for the Grassroots, Inside the Beltway



OURFUTURE.ORG PHOTO

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“Throughout history, social change—abolition, suffrage, civil rights, and worker rights—has depended on the work of millions of people. We are called today to build another such movement for a just society—and each and every person can make a unique and powerful contribution.”

DEEPAK BHARGAVA

When Deepak Bhargava and his family emigrated from India to the Bronx, they landed in a tough neighborhood that didn’t look much like “The American Dream.” Growing up, Deepak watched many of his friends drop out of school and get stuck in low-wage jobs or caught up in the criminal justice system.

“Those experiences,” says Bhargava, “gave me a great deal of insight into what it means to be an outsider in our society, and a great appreciation for the effects of economic deprivation.”

Bhargava’s life trajectory was quite different from that of many of his old school friends. He went to Harvard and graduated *summa cum laude*. After graduation, he went straight to work for the community organization ACORN, tackling the sort of inequality he’d seen in his old neighborhood.

Today Bhargava, 43, is executive director of the Center for Community Change, an organization with origins in the civil rights movement. He brings considerable know-how to building grassroots campaigns to reform immigration law, housing, retirement security, and employment.

One of the issues closest to Bhargava’s heart is the welfare and civil rights of immigrants—in fact, he was arrested for taking part in an immigration law reform protest in front of the White House.

In March, Promise Arizona, which the Center for Community Change helped create, was instrumental in defeating a string of bills that would have added additional restrictions to the state’s anti-immigrant laws, including prohibiting undocumented immigrants from driving or attending state colleges, and revoking U.S. citizenship from the children of undocumented immigrants.

Bhargava is now putting his progressive, ground-up leadership style to work on a movement to transform the economy—“Take Back the American Dream,” a collaboration between MoveOn.org, the organizer Van Jones, and the Center for Community Change.

With ideas collected from 130,000 people, and informed by 1,500 house parties all over the country, they’ve put together a 10-point plan to promote green jobs, education funding, and Medicare for all Americans. **V**

—Lyysi Burton



Selected by YES! reader Regina Siegel: "I feel this is one of the most important issues today, and he has the answers right there in his home-made systems."

THE YES!
15

WILL ALLEN

Growing Justice in Food Deserts

Will Allen has the charisma of a professional athlete—which he was. He has the organizational skills of a business executive—and he was that, too. He's also winner of a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship. Since 1993, he's done what he loves best: returned to his roots as a farmer. But not just any farmer. "Social justice is wrapped around everything that we do—every step that we take every day is about social justice and food justice," Allen says.

Allen is founder and CEO of Growing Power, two acres of greenhouses growing food fertilized with worm compost or with fish waste from the low-cost aquaponics system that he designed. It's located on the outskirts of Milwaukee, in a part of town burdened with low income, and without full-service grocery stores.

Providing fresh food in an urban food desert is a big part of what Growing Power does. But it also is involved in more than 70 projects and outreach programs across the country and around the world. One of them, Growing Power Chicago, is run by Allen's daughter, Erika.

Another, Feed Denver, is a research and education center for urban and sustainable agriculture and one of Growing Power's 15 regional outreach training centers. Lisa Rogers, executive director of Feed Denver, says that Allen has a way of talking about growing food that makes sense. "I was able to approach it just as a human being who eats food," she says. "I could actually start growing produce and jump into the 'Good Food Revolution' and try and make a real change in the community."

The "Good Food Revolution" is Allen's term for what he's trying to accomplish. "I think it's reached that stage that it's now a revolution," he says. For all that high-flying rhetoric, Allen remains grounded. He is "a kind and humble person

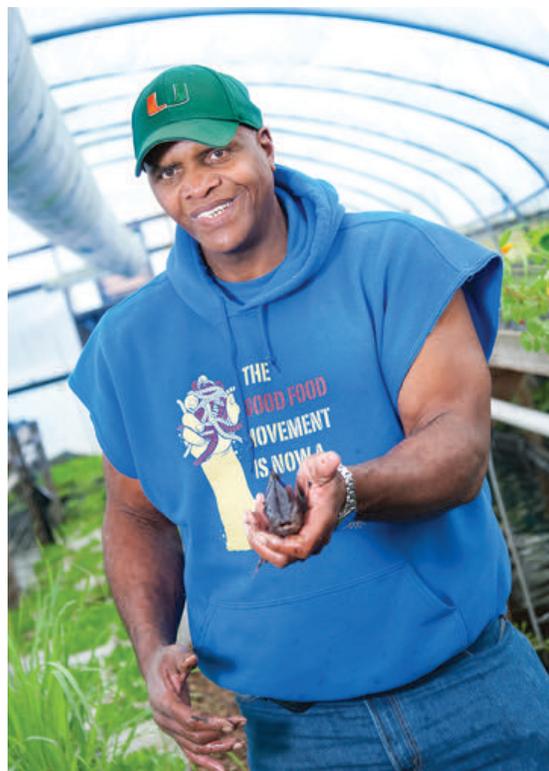


PHOTO BY PETE AMLAND / UWM

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

"Go out and take action regardless of how perfect your initial project will be ... go into action, because we as a society have got to the point where we like to sit around and plan things and do feasibility studies and lock them away in a closet.

Now is the era for going into action."

WILL ALLEN

... who really wants to get people involved. And he is the kind of guy who has his hands dirty," says Anupama Joshi, co-author of *Food Justice* and director of the National Farm to School Program at the Center for Food & Justice.

The time is right, Allen says. "We've got more people hungry than ever before, even middle-class folks, so now is the time to take action, and actually go out and develop the infrastructure that produces this locally grown sustainable food system." ▼

—Doug Pibel, with reporting by Laura Kaliebe



WES JACKSON

The Seeds of a Perennial Revolution



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“Most people want to see immediate results from our work. At the Institute, we like to joke with each other: ‘If you’re working on something you can finish in your lifetime, you’re not asking the right questions.’”

WES JACKSON

Above, Wes Jackson is introduced at the 2010 Prairie Festival, with Wendell Berry and his wife, Tanya, in the audience.

PHOTO BY DENNIS DIMICK



Selected by Wendell Berry: “I know of nobody who has thought more carefully or responsibly about the problems of agriculture and their possible solutions.”

Just over the horizon, Wes Jackson envisions new ways to grow staples to feed us all. He doesn’t imagine thousands of acres of wheat, or mile-wide expanses of hybrid corn. Jackson sees a domestic analog of the prairie where families harvest perennial sorghum or sunflowers. He imagines tropical hill-sides growing perennial rice intermixed with other grain species. Most promising of all, he predicts commercial use of a perennial relative of wheat, kernza™, that has been advanced by The Land Institute, which he co-founded.

His devotion to the patient work of producing perennial food crops came to him, he says, while he was walking the Konza Prairie, a native tallgrass prairie near Manhattan, Kans., with a group of students in 1977. He had just launched The Land Institute. He found himself drawing inspiration from the vegetation system this prairie soil supported. “Here was an ecosystem that was not experiencing soil erosion,” he recalls. “It had evolved to require low inputs, and to suffer low levels of loss.” Why couldn’t agriculture do the same?

By contrast, a 1977 survey of farms by the U.S. Comptroller General (GAO) had found that 84 percent of U.S. grain farmers lost more than 5 tons of topsoil per acre annually—the maximum limit recommended by soil scientists as an allegedly “sustainable” level. The erosion of topsoil carries nutrients, chemicals, and fertilizers downstream or downwind.

“It looked to me like soil erosion in the 1970s was as bad as it had been 30 years before, at the time the Soil Conservation Service was first formed. I asked myself, ‘How could that be?’”

After study and reflection, Jackson devised the mission that has fueled his career ever since. He would work to mimic the systems of the natural prairie, with its wide variety of plants growing together. He would focus on developing perennial crops that produced edible seeds, and required far fewer inputs than most of modern agriculture. He would address what he calls “solving the problem of agriculture” by creating new ways to produce grain that drew inspiration from natural energy flows, and did not require annual disruption of the soil. His would be an agriculture far more closely attuned to nature.

Jackson credits his daughter Laura, now a biologist at the University of Northern Iowa, with helping him to stay grounded on this path. At the end of a two-year leave of absence, he faced the choice of staying in Kansas, or returning to a secure position at California State University—Sacramento, where he had been hired as the first chair of one of

the nation’s first environmental studies departments. “We held a family discussion,” he recalls. “Laura reminded me we should work in obedience to our vision, not to career success.”

Thirty-five years later, Jackson’s most significant success has been the refinement—through painstaking plant breeding rather than gene-modification shortcuts—of kernza, a perennial grain that originated in Turkey and Afghanistan. Often called “intermediate wheatgrass,” it is a very distant cousin to commercial wheat. It holds additional nutrients, and has a low gluten content.

Kernza was brought to the United States by the USDA. Its yield was enhanced, and its stalks strengthened, through selective breeding, primarily by Peggy Wagner at the Rodale Research Institute. Now The Land Institute’s Lee DeHaan hopes to bring it closer to commercial use.

“When I started, the typical seed weighed 3.5 milligrams,” DeHaan told the *Salina Journal* late in 2010. “Now, our best seeds are 10 milligrams.” Since then, Jackson says, the size has increased to 12 milligrams. That’s a bit more than one-third the size of a standard wheat berry, but it’s productive enough that the Institute sells small bags of the grain at the annual Prairie Festival. Nearby bakers mill it into flour, and a local brewer brews it into small batches of beer.

Jackson acknowledges that commercial production of other grains is still a ways off. Meanwhile, he has attracted a strong contingent of doctoral researchers to the Institute, who tackle long-term cultivation of perennial varieties. Jackson speaks of the dire need for sustained funding for perennial research and development. “To get to the threshold level, we would need about \$1.6 billion. That’s a fraction of what we now spend subsidizing ethanol.”

It is also a tiny fraction—one hundredth—of what the United States now pays each year for the energy needed to fuel its food system. As oil supplies dwindle, and as climate fluctuates, Jackson feels the efficiencies of perennials will become all the more critical.

“If we make this commitment to long-term research, we will have a whole different way of looking at the land,” Jackson continues. “Virtually all of nature’s systems are based on perennials. This has been in a very real sense our Biblical fall, to move away from that. We have to get in phase with nature’s economy. Why should agriculture depend on an extractive economy?”

—Ken Meter

yesmagazine.org/nature-as-measure

An excerpt of *Nature as Measure: The Selected Essays of Wes Jackson*

THE YES!
15

MAY BOEVE

Friendship to Carry Us Through Crisis

Four years ago, after despairing over the U.S. government's failure to act on climate change, I found myself demonstrating with thousands of people in all 50 states. I wanted to know who had organized "Step It Up," which was, at the time, the world's largest action on climate change. When I dug around, I found it was a small group of, well, kids—May Boeve and a circle of 20-somethings—friends from Middlebury College who would soon go on to build an activist network that has organized record-breaking global protests.

What on Earth made May and the rest of the Middlebury group think they could accomplish such mass-scale actions? How did they not become paralyzed by the scale of the task? What makes May and the rest of the 350 kids heroes to me is that they never waited for an answer. They built a movement based on the desire to grow their friendship and concern for the world to include an ever larger circle.

"I wanted to be surrounded by others who wanted to change the world," May told me. Back in college, she had, in some ways, felt isolated: It had taken her much of her college career to find a community that shared her concerns. Once she found it, she didn't want to let it go.

While some students bond and form groups around rock-climbing or chess, May and her friends formed a community while working together to force Middlebury to reduce its carbon emissions. When they graduated, they planned to move together to Billings, Mont., to help stop the building of new coal-burning power plants.

But author Bill McKibben, who brought world attention to climate change with his book *The End of Nature*, approached them and asked if they might instead turn the power of the group friendship to the task of building a national and, later, an international climate movement.

With McKibben's prestige behind them, they used phones, email, social networks, web pages, and community connections to reach every grassroots and impromptu citizens' group they could.

On April 14, 2007, their nationwide coalition mounted Step It Up—simultaneous actions in 1,400 communities

across the country. Next, the group formalized itself into the organization 350.org, named for the number of parts per million of carbon dioxide that the atmosphere can safely contain, according to models by NASA scientist James Hansen.

At first, 350's goal was to mobilize world opinion in advance of the 2009 United Nations negotiations in Copenhagen, where activists hoped world leaders would forge a binding international climate-change agreement. On Oct. 24, 2009, they organized people in 181 countries to stage 5,200 demonstrations demanding global action on climate change: CNN called it "the most widespread day of political action in our planet's history."

The group succeeded in producing an incredible show of grassroots strength, but it was not enough to stop the negotiations from falling apart. When it became likely that Copenhagen would deliver no meaningful action, May and a group of other American youth attended a meeting with the United States' chief negotiator, Todd Stern, and other members of a U.S. State Department delegation. May was crying so hard about the failure of the negotiations that she almost could not speak. She kept thinking of a group of 6,000 schoolchildren in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, who had participated in 350's first international day of climate action: They reminded her how many lives were at stake all over the world.

She realized that there was no policy point she could make that would have an impact. The only thing she could do was appeal personally on behalf of the global movement of friends she and the 350 team had built. "I want you to know, if you fail to rise to the challenge," she said to Stern, "that you are personally responsible to all the millions of people who have tried to let you know how important this issue is."

Despite the disappointment at Copenhagen, the climate movement has only gotten larger and stronger. The 350.org group has continued to organize major worldwide events: a global work party in 188 countries on Oct. 10, 2010, and Moving Planet, more than 2,000 events to show the world that it's possible to stop using fossil fuels (by traveling by bicycle, foot, boat, and other means).

This year, 350 merged with its sister grassroots organization, 1Sky, which worked exclusively in the United States. The organization itself has little official hierarchy—everybody pitches in. May has become its executive director in part because she is good at building partnerships.

Thanks to May and her crew, millions of people in thousands of locations around the world have come together to express the depth of their friendship to each other and to all of us. It is the friendship of humanity. **v**

—Colin Beavan



Selected by “No Impact Man” Colin Beavan:
“The global climate protests of 350.org grew from friendship among May Boeve and a group of college kids who wanted to help the world. They show us what we, too, can achieve through community.”



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“Believe that the world can change, and commit to your part of the solution.

Look at the world with clear eyes, but remain hopeful, and celebrate!

When you feel challenged, reach out and reach in.”

MAY BOEVE

PHOTO BY LANE HARTWELL FOR YES! MAGAZINE



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“I believe in the 3/4-baked philosophy.

People chase perfection—trying to ‘fully bake’ their ideas before they share them with the world.

Too many people end up never sharing their ideas, songs, dreams, novels, and inventions.

The 3/4-baked philosophy is about finding that right time to share your work—letting the community fully bake it. The more you do this, the more you put yourself out there, the more success you have.”

JASON F. MCLENNAN



Selected by author and thought leader

David Korten: “Jason’s ability to combine breakthrough thinking with large-scale practical application exceeds that of any of the extraordinary social innovators it has been my privilege to know.”



JASON F. MCLENNAN

Bringing Buildings to Life

Against the century-old church next door, the modest, modern building that houses the science lab of Seattle’s private Bertschi School could seem out of place. Its metal roof glints in the daylight, a surrounding garden of native grasses rustles in the breeze, and in-ground windows offer a view of the water that flows beneath. Jason F. McLennan remembers when the owners cut the ribbon on this 1,400-square-foot addition.

Then, he recalls, the children started chanting. Not “Bertschi!” but “Liv-ing build-ing! Liv-ing build-ing!”

Those elementary-schoolers knew what stood before them—a structure built to have minimal environmental impact, to exist in an almost symbiotic relationship with its surroundings, operating more like an ecosystem, less like a consumer. McLennan has led the charge on this approach to building design and in 2006 kicked off the Living Building Challenge, a call to architects to take “green” a giant step forward.

And in winter 2011, children cheered an architectural feat.

“It was humbling,” McLennan says, months later, gazing at the Bertschi building on an unseasonably cool summer morning.

The man who has been called a “change agent” in the world of sustainable architecture is in fact a humble one. Immersed in an expensive profession, promoting a cause that some might call trendy, McLennan is direct and decisive, a down-to-earth neighbor who can talk composting toilets or philosophy. His gentle demeanor masks a hotshot in his field.

McLennan, chief executive of the Cascadia Green Building Council and of the more recently formed International Living Future Institute (ILFI), wants to revamp the concept of “green,” which, he points out, still involves the consumption of nonrenewable resources—just fewer of them. To be certified “living,” a building (or a park, or a street, or a remodel) must meet criteria within seven categories: site, water, energy, health, materials, equity, and beauty. “Health” includes

attention to air quality, for example, while “equity” considers issues such as fair trade. Three projects, in such disparate places as Hawaii, Missouri, and New York, have achieved living status, while about 100 others, including Bertschi, are in various stages of certification; ILFI aims to have living buildings in all 50 states, each Canadian province, and every country in the world. A transformation to living buildings won’t happen overnight, McLennan said, but it’s a start.

“Each building, each project creates a ripple effect around it. It changes the way people think. When there are enough of these examples, then a sudden and large-scale shift will be possible. We can’t control the timing of major shifts in civilization, but we can increase the likelihood that a shift will occur.”

A Lifelong Learner

McLennan, now 38, grew up in the factory city of Sudbury, Ontario, where he planted trees as part of a community effort to clean up industrial areas. Then McLennan saw the city redeveloped into commercial sprawl; bulldozers leveled some of the very areas he and his fellow community members had worked to restore. It spurred McLennan—who as a child sketched houses, castles, and ships before progressing to drafting classes—to chart a career in architecture.

He attended the University of Oregon, which had a reputation for its progressive program, then joined the Kansas City-based firm of BNIM Architects. As he expanded his knowledge of and experience in green building, he began pushing the concept even further. McLennan’s boss at BNIM, Bob Berkebile, said the young Oregon graduate joined a team designing a green-building prototype at Montana State University. McLennan, Berkebile said, not only put in long hours on the project but sometimes stayed up until 2 or 3 a.m. peppering him with questions and engaging in broader discussions about life.

“Our talks were about trying to understand the world, trying to develop a strategy for changing the outcome of the the »

» human experiment,” Berkebile said. “Jason was then and is now a lifelong learner.”

McLennan went on to become the youngest principal at the firm and grew increasingly focused on expanding the concept of green building, incorporating the biomimicry ideas of Janine Benyus—who advocates replicating natural systems—along with the architectural strategies of Berkebile and other architects. Push beyond LEED certification—the existing gold-standard for environmental building—McLennan determined, to a design approach that doesn’t just take less but gives back.

“He’s clearly driven by an internal fire that is unique. If I had a chance to clone him, I would be all about doing it,” Berkebile said. “He is a nexus of a lot of important things in human history—the right person for the right time.”

Building as Teachable Moment

The Bertschi School spreads over a city block, incorporating an old church, vintage homes, and a LEED-certified academic and performance space. Around the time board members and administrators began discussing plans for the science wing, a couple of young architects attended a conference where McLennan gave a speech about living buildings. The two, Chris Hellstern and Stacy Smedley, approached McLennan afterward and pledged to complete a living building within a year. They eventually connected with Bertschi’s administration and began designing the science wing. Hellstern and Smedley donated their fees; Bertschi students provided input on some of the features. The stream that carries gray water from a cistern to the garden, visible via those underground windows? By request.

LEED and other green-building strategies had long appealed to Hellstern, but, he said, until he heard McLennan speak, he wasn’t sure how to do more.

“Jason ... really helped to illuminate a path to being a part of something greater than LEED work,” said Hellstern, whose firm, KMD Architects, helped form the Restorative Design Collective. That organization of architects has convinced some manufacturers to offer or switch to healthier, more environmentally friendly products. KMD is rewriting specifications to eliminate toxic materials from its projects.

The permeable concrete on the walkway, the solar panels on the roof, the indoor wall of plants for treating gray water, the structural insulated panels in the lab—every item in Bertschi’s new addition was chosen to meet living building standards and to help the students learn about natural resources. Three times a month, Bertschi administrators lead tours of the buildings—not just for prospective students, but for teachers and students from other schools, and, of course, architects.

The most popular feature on opening day—this is, remember, a school—was the composting toilet. “We had a line out the door,” said Stan Richardson, Bertschi’s director of technology and campus planning. The longest segment of any tour, Richardson added, is the discussion in the bathroom.

McLennan sees it as simply one element of the larger picture. Living buildings must consume as few resources as possible, and what they produce should be reused, be it water that would

otherwise go down the drain or human waste that would be flushed into the sewer. Natural systems reuse and regenerate.

“This project exemplifies integration,” McLennan explains. “In most buildings, the systems are the backdrop. There is no system in this building that is not a teachable moment. They all matter, and they all have something to offer.”

Less Bad is Not Good Enough

The living-building philosophy stretches the green-building concept, which, McLennan points out, still relies on using fossil fuels, unhealthy building materials, and the labor of people who are treated unfairly. Moving toward a living building process, then, is about more than just construction; it’s about a fundamental shift in attitudes, culture, and economics. But while it is easy to push living building among architects and environmentally conscious communities, McLennan acknowledges the obstacles, particularly the political ones, in society at large. Not to mention the additional, upfront costs of living-building materials, or the difficulties in finding the appropriate local sources—though he hastens to point out that the long-term savings, such as in utility costs and the broader conservation of resources, make up for that. Fighting climate change, habitat loss, pervasive toxins, and social injustice, he believes, are worth the undertaking.

“You can’t help but feel a great deal of despair and a great deal of concern for humanity and other species. But if you’re really paying attention, you can’t help but be made optimistic by some of the intelligent work all around the world,” he said. “Complex human beings can be optimistic and hit with despair at the same time. You have to sit with your pain and be smiling.”

McLennan and his wife, Tracy, try to adapt the principles of living buildings into raising a family of four children—“living” as lifestyle, if you will. They shop consignment, choose minimal packaging, participate in a CSA. His briefcase is worn and scuffed—a look that, in a child’s stuffed animal, would be called “loved.” He drives a Prius, but because he lives on Bainbridge Island, Wash., he can walk to the ferry and ride the bus around Seattle. He lives in a 1970s house, which he improves, as finances allow, to living building standards. But McLennan is no environmental saint. Although he does as much as he can via email and by phone, he flies to presentations of his work—sometimes that’s the only effective way to get the word out, he says. “I’m not perfect,” he explains, nor is the living-building movement asking people to be. What it does instead, he says, is urge people to change.

“The world of green building is a world that is a little less bad, but that’s no longer adequate,” McLennan explains. “All planetary systems are in decline. It’s time to examine the whole paradigm. It’s no longer good enough to be a little less bad. We have to be a lot more restorative.

“That’s why we have to get to work. You have to persevere.” ❶

—Kim Eckart

THE YES!
15

LILY YEH

Beauty in Broken Places



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“My light doesn’t shine bigger than anybody else’s. Kindle the light in other people, so we shine together. The light from all of us will transform the darkness of ignorance and greed in our world into compassion and joy.”

LILY YEH

Lily Yeh was home in Philadelphia, between planes—back from Palestine, en route to Taiwan—and yet she was practically bubbling over. She was infused with energy because she was doing what she does best: using art to bring about healing, self-empowerment, and social change.

“I have found that the broken spaces are my living canvas,” Yeh says. “In our brokenness, our hearts reach for beauty.”

Yeh is the founder of—and force behind—Barefoot Artists, an organization that revitalizes neighborhoods around the globe through the transformative power of art. In Palestine, that meant working with villagers to create a wall mural that Yeh calls “The Palestinian Tree of Life.” In China, it meant transforming a once imposing, prison-like school into a bright and brilliant place for learning. In Rwanda, it meant helping people heal the still-raw wounds left from that country’s genocide with a memorial to the lost.

In each of the locations, Barefoot Artists collaborates with

locals, joining with them to create something beautiful or soothing or enlightening. As Yeh sees it, she is igniting the light of creativity that rests in all people.

“My message is that your light is as bright as mine. It’s like sunlight. There’s no difference. You just need to have it lit,” she says. “It’s not about just me. It’s about a lot of people, working together.”

“The project has to take root in people’s minds, emotions, and hearts. How do you do that? By working with them, by listening to them, by opening my heart. And when I have the space to listen, they usually open their hearts and share something and then we have the deep bonding and we can do something meaningful together.”

The Barefoot Artist, a documentary about Yeh that will be released next year, showcases these projects. The film reveals how Yeh’s journey led from the search for healing from her own brokenness to the healing of brokenness in others.

And the result of that journey, says Tom Kaiden, president >>



Lily Yeh leads a community arts workshop presented by The Cleveland Foundation last year.

CLEVELAND FOUNDATION PHOTOS

» of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, has shown the world “how art can help tackle really difficult social and economic issues.”

Making Whole What is Broken

Yeh is 70, yet she seems at least 20 years younger. She is a petite woman, about five feet tall, but she has a larger presence, seeming to fill a room with her positive energy. When talking about her work, she jokes that “This old girl did something good.”

But it’s hard to think of her as old. She still scurries up precarious ladders to paint, still enthuses about her projects, her hands waving in the air as she speaks. Recently, on a trip to Rwanda, villagers gave her a chief’s staff, a sign of respect. They said she could use it when she gets old and needs help walking.

Born in China but raised in Taiwan, Yeh credits her parents with encouraging her creative side. “I owe everything to them,” she says.

Her childhood also set the stage for her later drive. Her father had three children from another marriage as well as the five children he had with Yeh’s mother. For years, the two families existed in totally separate worlds. Yeh talked about an unspoken pain she felt when she was growing up but could not quite name.

“My work is about finding what is broken and turning it into whole. This endeavor to make things whole may have derived from my life’s desire to bring the two families together into one,” she says.

When Yeh was 15, she began studying traditional Chinese



Selected by author and conservationist Terry Tempest Williams:

*Because she is a builder of communities through art;
Because she understands beauty is not optional,
but is a strategy for survival;
Because she takes that which is broken—a piece of tile,
a village, a human heart, and listens to what it
has to say and then begins the process of
engagement;
Because through engagement, she inspires;
Because through inspiration, she acts;
Because through action, transformation occurs;
Because through transformation, vibrant communities are
created through loving participation;
Because when Lily Yeh comes to your town, magic occurs;
Because she understands that laughter is as expressive as
tears because joy is born out of sorrow;
Because when she sings, children follow her with joy;
Because when the children are happy, the mothers pay
attention;
Because when mothers pay attention, the world changes;
Because when I followed Lily Yeh to Rwanda in 2005, my
world changed
Because Lily Yeh made me a mother;
Because Lily Yeh creates peace through her wound;
the wound of being human;
Because she is empathy in action and that redefines love.*

I nominate Lily Yeh as a transformative leader because she is a healing grace on the planet who is fearless. She reminds us not only what is possible but necessary.

I submit this nomination, humbly, so grateful to call Lily my friend, my sister.

*With deepest bows,
Terry Tempest Williams*

landscape painting. She loved it, but she recognized its main drawback: She was copying the works of her teachers and other masters, not creating her own. In her book *Awakening Creativity*, she compared it to having her feet bound.

Her creative awakening came after she moved to the United States in 1963 to study painting at the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Fine Arts. She found the art scene there to be wild and experimental.

“I felt transported from the wispy and idyllic art world of the past into the volatile and powerful new reality of the twentieth century,” she writes in *Awakening Creativity*. “Coming in contact with modern art in America shook to the core my understanding of art, its purpose, value, and relationship to society.”

So even though her teachers in Taiwan lamented her creative transformation, Yeh blossomed. She began teaching at Philadelphia's University of the Arts, eventually becoming a tenured professor.

Still, she says, her work didn't finally mature, didn't find its center, until 1986, when she began working on what would eventually become the Village of Arts and Humanities in a tough pocket of North Philadelphia.

Years later, people would tell her she saved the neighborhood. Yeh sees it differently: "I was the one being helped in the most profound way," she says.

Vision Amid the Desolation

North Philadelphia is marred, not only by empty, overgrown lots and decrepit buildings, but also by drug dealing and more serious crimes.

While Yeh saw potential, the local children called her "the crazy Chinese lady."

But when they saw her working on a lot in their neighborhood, they grew curious and drew closer. Soon she had them, and their once-suspicious parents, working on cleaning lots, creating mosaics and murals, building benches, and planting trees. A neighborhood transformation had begun. It would continue for years, eventually encompassing more than 200 lots.

"There she was, in this place that was so extraordinarily abandoned and desolate, but she had a vision," says Jeremy Nowack, president and CEO of the philanthropic William Penn Foundation. "I always loved the metaphor that she used the existing rubble and abandonment to make something beautiful. She's someone who has made the city into a canvas."

The Village of Arts and Humanities eventually developed into a nonprofit organization with everything from after-school and theater programs to home refurbishment initiatives. Some see it as a national model for neighborhood revitalization.

Yeh loved the work. But after 18 years, she was ready for a new challenge.

"I wanted to bring the gift of beauty to true broken and traumatized places in the world," she says. "That's why I started Barefoot Artists."

And while she's no longer at the Village, she's left behind her legacy.

"As Philadelphia deals with these hard economic times, many of us are looking at Lily's projects to spark new ideas and find new ways that we can use art to empower communities, bring people together, and transform lives," Kaiden says.

Art as Shared Prosperity

Barefoot Artists is a bare-bones operation. Whereas the Village at one time had a budget of more than \$1 million, Barefoot Artists gets by on about \$75,000. It is a largely volunteer organization. It has no office or paid staff.

"Although we are very small, we deliver so much," Yeh

says. "We collaborate and utilize the resources and expertise of volunteering individuals and organizations."

Once, when Yeh was building the Village of Arts and Humanities, a neighborhood resident asked her why she was "pouring money into the ground" when there were real problems like AIDS and drug abuse in the community.

Yeh said it was a tough question, but a fair one. Her answer? "I can't solve these huge social problems, but I can open up new possibilities and spaces where, through creativity and working together, we might come to new solutions."

And Barefoot Artists has shown it's not just about painting or art workshops. In Rwanda, it's launched many innovative programs, including job training in sewing and basket weaving, and a Saturday arts program for children. It has also started a system of microcredit lending which provides community adults, especially women, with money to start their own businesses and to buy livestock.

When Yeh first went to Rwanda seven years ago, the Rugerero survivors' village of 100 families where she focused her work only had two water taps and no electricity. She obtained grants and partnered with others, including Engineers Without Borders, to bring the village water, sanitation, and solar power.

"It isn't just the beauty of the artwork," she says. "It really is a shared prosperity. Not the Wall Street prosperity, not the capitalist prosperity but simply a shared prosperity for all villagers."

The Palestine trip, Yeh said, was one of the most challenging projects she's ever undertaken. There were political tensions beyond her control. At one point, she worried about completing her mission.

Yet she persevered. And she left behind a transformative piece of art, covering one wall outside a girls' school with a mural that so moved residents that they could only say, "Beautiful, beautiful" as they beheld it. The design features an ancient olive tree bursting with huge flowers surrounded by doves of peace in a star-filled night sky. It was inspired by the stories and images that emerged from the workshops she had with residents. Yeh completed the painting with the help of locals and volunteers.

"It's a new kind of empowerment. People's minds are opened to new possibilities and affirmation," Yeh says.

She worked with a local leader and left behind resources so that the new creative energy released in the refugee camp can continue to inspire people to take positive action in their struggle for justice and human dignity. Already, others have requested that someone beautify their buildings—and their lives—with the bright colors brought by Lily Yeh.

"When I see people's lives transformed for the better, it gives me deep fulfillment," she says. "It makes my life meaningful." 

—Natalie Pompilio

 A photographic journey through *Awakening Creativity*
yesmagazine.org/yeh

NIPUN MEHTA

An Economy
To Feed Your Soul



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“In practice, there is no grand chasm to cross. Just do the small act of kindness for the person in front of you, right now. Small acts may or may not change the world, but they definitely change you. And when you look at the world with fresh eyes, it’s a whole new realm of possibilities.”

NIPUN MEHTA

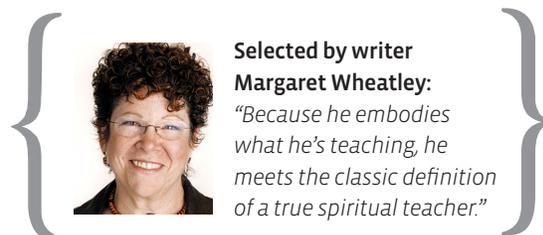
"A ccording to the IRS, I'm definitely poor, but anyone who knows me will tell you that I live like a king," says Nipun Mehta. Mehta, a 34-year-old software engineer in Berkeley, Calif., believes that embracing generosity is the key to liberating people from greed and redefining wealth. This is not a new idea, but promoting relationships and community rather than currency is especially valuable in times of economic austerity. For more than a decade, Mehta has integrated what is known as gift economics into the modern world, by way of the Internet. People share their material possessions, time, and skills, gifting these through a network and relying on others to do the same. Essentially, the gift economy is a system where goods and services are not sold or exchanged, but given freely.

Mehta's life was once very different. He studied philosophy and computer science at the University of California–Berkeley, and landed his first job at Sun Microsystems before graduation, setting himself up for a life of privilege. But Mehta's family had moved from India when he was 12. The desire to give, a cultural value from his early childhood, was reignited as he witnessed the dot-com greed of the '90s. Family members thought he was crazy when he left his job. "My ultimate intent was that I wanted to be a better person," says Mehta, and that's hard to argue with.

Since then Mehta has formed ServiceSpace, a nonprofit with influential projects ranging from the positive e-news service DailyGood to Karma Kitchen, a restaurant chain in Berkeley, D.C., and Chicago that operates on a model of peer-to-peer generosity. Each patron pays forward for the next diner's tab.

Mehta realizes the gift economy is not an immediate solution to America's economic woes, but says it does offer inner transformation, while creating a pattern for change. "All this, though, starts with a simple thing—be kind today," he says. "Even if just for a moment, that's how the whole pattern emerges, and then one fine day, you wake up and realize that you're swimming in the spirit of gift economy." 🗣️

— Jennifer Kaye



**Selected by writer
Margaret Wheatley:**

*"Because he embodies
what he's teaching, he
meets the classic definition
of a true spiritual teacher."*



YesMagazine.org/karma-kitchen

Karma Kitchen, an experiment in generosity.

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“We think we have no power when in fact we have more than enough power.”

TIM DECHRISTOPHER

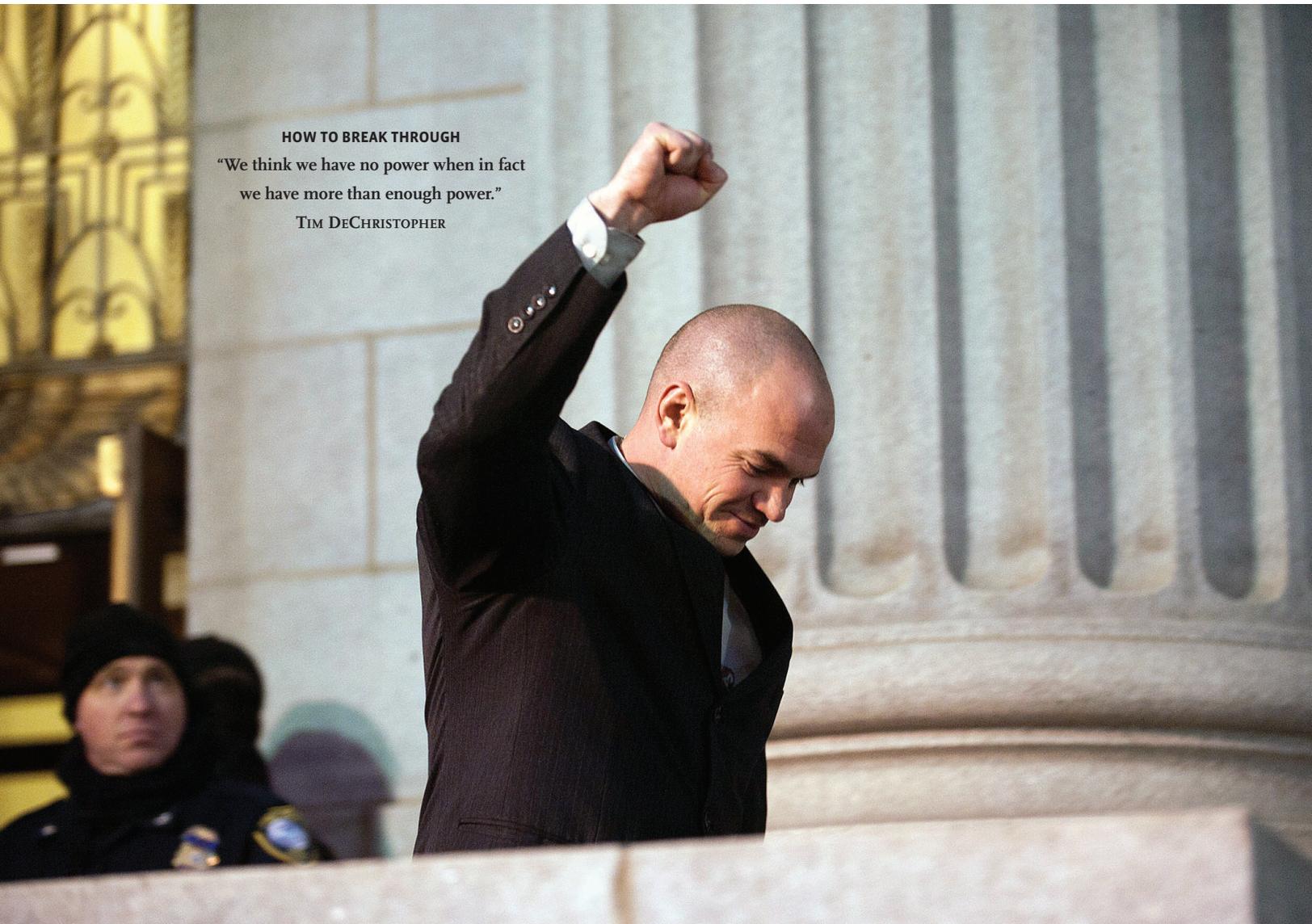


PHOTO BY ED KOSMICKI



TIM DECHRISTOPHER

Sacrifice—It’s Not Too Much to Ask

There’s an idea—permeating nearly all that we say and do about climate change—that people aren’t willing to take real action to slow the warming of our planet, because it’s asking too much: too much inconvenience, too much sacrifice, too much planning ahead.

Tim DeChristopher has come to believe the opposite: We need to ask more of ourselves, and of each other.

That conviction has motivated much of DeChristopher’s activism, including his now famous decision, in December

2008, to attempt to stop the Bush administration’s fire sale of oil and gas development leases by posing as a bidder. He knew his actions might well land him in prison, but felt it was worth the risk. Though that action was unplanned (he was mistaken for a bidder and played along), DeChristopher says he had gradually been “building up the general commitment to take this level of risk, to be ready when the time came.”

At the time of the auction, DeChristopher was a student of economics at the University of Utah. He’d returned to



Selected by the Yes Men, political pranksters Mike Bonanno and Andy Bichlbaum: “We’re sure Tim’s version of monkey-wrenching would have made Edward Abbey whoop and holler with delight. His actions have inspired a generation of new climate activists.”

school after more than five years working with teenagers—essentially wilderness therapy for “troubled” youth that most of society wasn’t sure how to deal with. He gradually realized that the teens had good reason for their anger and apathy. They understood how dysfunctional their world already was and how difficult their future would become, and they didn’t know what to do about it. “I started to feel like I was helping perfectly healthy kids adjust to a broken world,” DeChristopher explained.

The experience led to his decision to study economics—to interrogate the beliefs by which we set our societal priorities, to find out why the world felt so “broken.” At one point, he was posed an exam question about the very auction he

“MY FUTURE WILL LIKELY INVOLVE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. NOTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE TODAY WILL CHANGE THAT.”

would later disrupt: With only the oil and gas industry bidding on the parcels, would the price reflect the true cost of extracting the fuel? On the exam, he explained the environmental costs that would be ignored; later, when handed his bidder’s paddle, he at first tried simply to drive up the prices of parcels. Only after accidentally winning one did he decide to try to win others outright.

Nearly three years later, DeChristopher is serving a two-year term at a federal prison in California (he was convicted of making a false statement and violating the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act). When he gets out, he has every intention of continuing to push himself—and the climate movement—to make bigger demands and take bigger risks. “Given the destruction of our democratic institutions that once gave citizens access to power, my future will likely involve civil disobedience,” he told the court during his sentencing hearing. “Nothing that happens here today will change that.”

DeChristopher has often expressed frustration with what he has called the “spineless strategies” and “sell-out compromises” of mainstream environmental organizations. He believes that thinking too small—focusing on minor regulations or incremental changes—can be a self-defeating proposition: Not only are you underestimating your own power, you’re trading away your ability to increase it and inspire others to join you. In the face of the profound moral and existential crisis that is climate change, he argues, the

best way to mobilize people is with work more worthy of their passion and the immensity of their mission.

DeChristopher believes that failing to respond to such a profound threat isn’t just dangerous for environmental reasons, but also for psychological ones: The result, as he’s seen, is too often anger, frustration, apathy, or despair. In contrast, DeChristopher says his decision to take big risks feels deeply right: It’s a relief to stop pretending that everything is fine. It feels healthier to turn fear and anxiety into action than to ignore them.

Through DeChristopher’s example, many others have found that difficulty can sometimes be easier to face than inaction. A few months before going to prison, DeChristo-

pher spoke to 10,000 young climate activists at PowerShift. He excoriated “the cowardice of the environmental movement” and asked his audience why they were attending a conference when they could be out trying to close coal plants. He warned them that stopping climate injustice would be impossible without genuine sacrifice—of their school and career plans, of their comfort and convenience, of their clean records.

The crowd cheered.

Later in the summer, just weeks after DeChristopher began his prison term, some of those same activists were arrested in a protest that author Bill McKibben led outside the White House, trying to stop the construction of a pipeline that would carry oil from Canada’s tar sands across the Great Plains. And a few weeks after that, America’s major cities began to fill with ordinary people sleeping in parks and facing down police in defense of economic justice. Many of them were energized, not put off, to be making genuine sacrifices on behalf of their beliefs. From prison, DeChristopher congratulated them for not being afraid to express what they were feeling—and encouraged the climate movement to follow their lead. 📍

—Brooke Jarvis

Interested? peacefuluprising.org

Download the free poster: Protests that shook the world —with laughter—at yesmagazine.org/laughtivism

THE YES!
15

DR. DEB RICHTER

The Universal Cure

Deb Richter resolved to fix the health care system almost as soon as she began practicing medicine more than two decades ago in inner-city Buffalo. “I was very naive, I guess,” recalls Richter. “A lot of my patients didn’t have insurance. I would prescribe medicines for patients but they wouldn’t be able to afford them, and then they would just get sicker. I was mortified.”

It was the tragedy of a brother and sister who had been diagnosed with juvenile diabetes that brought things sharply into focus. “They kept up with their insulin and needles, but they often couldn’t afford the 50-cents-apiece test strips when they didn’t have insurance,” says Richter. By the time they became her patients, the siblings were in bad shape. The boy lost his vision, his health declined, and he died at 21. His sister had a fatal heart attack at 25.

Richter realized that she was facing a turning point. “I didn’t want to change where I practiced just so I wouldn’t have to witness this. I knew I couldn’t continue to practice if this situation continued. I didn’t want medicine to just be for wealthy people.”

Instead of hanging up her stethoscope, she joined Physicians for a National Health Program, a leading doctors’ group that advocates for universal health care coverage with just one insurance provider—the government. “What they had to say made sense to me—24 percent of health care was spent on paperwork and transaction costs. Other countries didn’t spend that.” She eventually served as the group’s president.

Richter became convinced that the likeliest route to a national single-payer system would be state by state. She and her husband and two young boys moved to Vermont in 1999, where they bought a house just two blocks from the statehouse in Montpelier. It suited a physician-activist who was raising a family. “I could testify before the legislature and walk home to do the laundry.”

Richter kept up her medical practice three days a week, while lobbying for a single-payer system the other two days. She cornered politicians, wrote editorials, spoke to Rotary clubs, and gave hundreds of talks. In 2005 the legislature



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“I never felt like I had a choice about getting involved in this struggle ...

I couldn’t stop and I never will.”

DR. DEB RICHTER

passed a major health care reform bill, but the governor vetoed it. “That was one of my lowest points,” recalls Richter. Work and advocacy were taking up all her time. “I was hardly seeing my family. If we couldn’t get it done in Vermont, where was it ever going to work?”

Then Vermont voted in Governor Peter Shumlin, who recognized that skyrocketing health care costs had reached a crisis point for businesses and the middle class. The iconoclast Vermont politician Bernie Sanders moved from the U.S. House to the Senate, and was in a more powerful position to clear roadblocks at the federal level. Grass-roots advocates focused their energies, as did Richter. This May, Vermont became the first state in the nation to pass a



PHOTO BY KURT BUDLIGER FOR YES! MAGAZINE

single-payer health care plan.

Richter is proud of the achievement, even though she concedes that Vermont's health care bill is not quite comprehensive and could still get derailed before it's fully enacted over the next six years. She continues giving public talks, shepherding the Vermont bill and lobbying for a national health care plan, as well as practicing medicine.

"This will be an enormous change for people without insurance," says Richter of the Vermont bill, which will guarantee every resident an essential health benefit package from birth. "Now that we have this in Vermont, we need to make sure it happens everywhere." ●

—Dan Fireside

Selected by the YES! editors:
"She packed up and moved her life and family so she could push for the only health care solution that makes sense to us: single-payer health care." —Madeline Ostrander

ALISON SMITH

Elections Money Can't Buy



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

"I kept showing up because something about the work fed my soul ... Everyone can show up for something.

And who knows where it will lead?"

ALISON SMITH

raised enough \$5 contributions could receive public money to mount a competitive campaign. Smith met with newspaper editorial boards and spoke wherever anyone would have her. "I found that as an ordinary person I had more credibility than the political professionals. When people asked why I was involved, I'd repeat over and over how if we could just break the links between money and politics, we'd begin to have a solution."

The initiative passed with 56 percent of the vote, and changed Maine's politics. By 2010, 80 percent of the state's candidates were participating, and Vermont, Arizona, and Connecticut had launched similar programs. Smith now works with a new generation of activists in Maine to defend, preserve, and strengthen Clean Elections.

"One of the great things," she says, "is that these reforms require citizen participation. For ten years, Maine people have made the system work, supporting Clean Election candidates with qualifying contributions of \$5. Without the pressures of fundraising, candidates put a premium on voter contact. Once elected, lawmakers know that their only debt is to the voters. Although our law has come under attack, Maine people always rise to defend their Clean Election system.

"As former U.S. Senator from Maine, Ed Muskie, once said, 'Campaign finance reform is not for the short-winded.'" 

— Paul Loeb

Alison Smith profile adapted from *Soul of a Citizen* by Paul Rogat Loeb. Copyright © 2010 by the author, reprinted by permission of St. Martin's Griffin.

When Alison Smith was raising her kids in a small Connecticut town, a developer illegally drained the water from a large marsh adjoining her backyard. "Gradually it dawned on me that he'd broken the wetland regulations. I went to a town meeting and waited for someone to say something. Nobody did. So I voiced my opinions as best I could, red-faced, hesitant, and embarrassed. I found all these other people were thinking the same thing."

Shortly afterward, Smith joined the League of Women Voters, and began working on wetland and recycling issues, first in Connecticut and then in Maine. She became a more confident activist with experience, and by the time the League asked her to help get a campaign finance reform measure on the ballot, she jumped at the chance.

"We've become so used to being disgusted with elections and politicians," says Smith. "We assume that almost anyone who gets in will be corrupt. I didn't know whether the initiative would pass, but I didn't want cynicism to rule my life."

The initiative offered a Clean Election Option, where candidates who pledged not to take private funding and who



Selected by author and activist Paul

Loeb: "An ordinary citizen who found her voice, became a leader, and showed us it's possible to confront the intractable: money in politics."



Selected by educator and author Parker Palmer: "Eboo's personal offering of heart and mind, and his widely lauded work on interfaith cooperation, give me hope in a world dangerously fragmented by religion-driven animosities."

THE YES!
15

EBOO PATEL

Crossing the Divide —With Faith

Eboo Patel's aspiration is simple: for people of all religions, and those with no religion, to coexist in peace. He says it is his calling as a Muslim and as an American.

Spreading this message was not always easy after 9/11 when anti-Muslim sentiment ran high in the United States, but Patel rose to the challenge with grace and dedication. He founded the Interfaith Youth Core (ifyc.org) in Chicago in 2002, which he calls his "double full-time job." The 35-year-old father of two is also an advisor for the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, and the author of *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*.

Patel grew up in a Chicago suburb. He went to the University of Illinois, then studied at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, taking a Ph.D. in the sociology of religion. His awareness of interfaith issues goes back to high school. In one instance, Patel did nothing to protect a Jewish friend who was the target of anti-Semitic remarks. Years later, his friend told Patel he had felt betrayed. Patel told the story to his father, who said that he had betrayed Islam, too.

"In Islam, [you] stand up for those who are suffering, especially when they're close to you, and especially when that suffering is a result of religious prejudice," says Patel. He decided never to be silent about prejudice again.

Patel believes religion is the most volatile cultural divide the world faces, and youth can be a force behind either violent radicalism or peace and justice. "Our long-term goal is to help make interfaith cooperation a social norm. We think that if a generation of college students is inspired to become interfaith leaders, and first change their campuses, then they will go on and change the world."

The idea of campus interfaith groups is catching on. More than 200 colleges have participated in IFYC Interfaith Leadership Institutes.

Patel, a widely praised spokesperson for tolerance who also deals with hate comments on his blog, says there will always be people who believe we're better apart than united. He remains optimistic.

"I don't want to forfeit the world that I love, the religion that I love, the country I love to the forces of division." 

—Kate Malongowski



LOUISVILLE PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY PHOTO

HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

"Have big dreams but focus only on what you can control: your own thoughts, words and actions.

This was Gandhi's way ... in the words of Buddhist poet Gary Snyder, our job is to move the world a millionth of an inch."

EBOO PATEL



Selected by author Frances Moore Lappé: "Lucas shows us that no matter the odds, we have a choice. He chose courage, now thousands of others have discovered theirs."



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

"Never think that you can't do something without even trying first."

LUCAS BENITEZ

PHOTO BY JEFFERY SALTER

THE YES!
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LUCAS BENITEZ

Dignity in the Fields

Lucas Benitez, 35, doesn't call himself an organizer but an "animator." This distinction says it all to me: My greatest heroes aren't those who perform acts of bravery that most of us would run from. They're those whose genius is enabling others to find courage within themselves—to act, not as lone heroes, but in common cause with others. Animators, says Lucas, are "people who animate the community to join and struggle together."

In this world, it's the courage of the animator we so desperately need.

Lucas, who arrived here at age 16 from Guerrero, Mexico, and helped found the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), is the first kind of hero, too. At great personal risk—sweating, he says, through his fear—Lucas was the driver for a daring 2001 rescue of four Florida farmworkers who were brutalized and effectively enslaved by growers. He played an important role in convicting those responsible: brothers Juan and Ramiro Ramos, who'd made millions holding workers against their will by, according to the FBI, "threaten[ing] them at gunpoint, promising torture and death if they tried to escape."

CIW started in 1993 when Lucas and other workers got together to discuss working conditions. In 1995, they staged a weeklong protest that forced a grower to change his decision to lower pay. But an incident in 1996 galvanized Lucas and CIW. A teenage field worker had asked his foreman for a water break. The foreman refused; the worker stopped for a drink anyway. The foreman beat the worker brutally. Lucas helped spread news of the attack and more than 500 workers gathered in protest, waving the victim's bloody shirt. The action grew to a boycott of the foreman lasting several weeks. In keeping with his belief in acting as an animator, Lucas was not the leader of this action. Instead, he used it as an opportunity to build confidence among the farmworkers in their own power and the power of collective action. Lucas keeps the teenager's blood-stained shirt with him to this day.

Since then, CIW has grown to 4,000 members. Its work encompasses advocating for better working conditions and wages for the fieldworkers of Immokalee, Fla., and elsewhere, fighting against modern-day slavery, and working to

bring justice to the American food system.

Lucas and his colleagues are strategic, systemic thinkers, both in how to build CIW's strength in the farmworker community and how to leverage its power within a corporate food system.

To build solidarity and shared knowledge, they created their CIW low-power radio station, "Radio Conciencia," as well as a co-op to help workers buy food and other necessities at fairer prices than the local stores charged. Their tactics have included a 30-day hunger strike by six members in 1998 and a 230-mile march from Ft. Myers to Orlando in 2000.

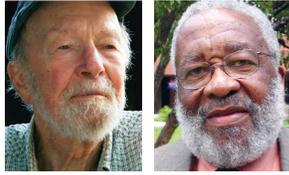
Early on, CIW decided to focus demands for change beyond the growers themselves, targeting instead the centers of corporate power on which the growers depend. Yielding to a four-year, CIW-organized boycott, Yum! Brands (Taco Bell) agreed in 2005 to meet all the workers' demands. For the first time in history, a corporation paid money down the supply chain, directly to farmworkers. The corporation also used its leverage to force growers to provide better working conditions. Two years later McDonald's followed suit; Burger King and Subway have also signed "Fair Food" agreements guaranteeing better working conditions, a complaint-resolution procedure, health and safety programs, and worker-to-worker education.

Today CIW and Lucas are focusing their energies on the supermarket industry. Only Whole Foods Market has stepped up to sign the Fair Food agreement, so they're ramping up the pressure on Trader Joe's and Publix.

Lucas says his goal is making "the Florida tomato industry a model of social accountability." His effectiveness, I believe—showing up in a string of critical alliances with church and student organizations as well as remarkable victories by the CIW over two decades—lies in a steady, understated leadership style that exudes moral conviction. He embodies the dignity, grounded in clear purpose, that he seeks to enable all farm workers to experience. Lucas' life proves that courage is contagious. **Y**

—Frances Moore Lappé,
with reporting by Jennifer Kaye

 yesmagazine.org/immokalee: How Immokalee Workers fight back against abuses in the fields.



Selected by folksinger Pete Seeger and historian Vince Harding: “Grace Boggs has showed hundreds of thousands of people how they can save their families by saving their home neighborhoods, and thus the world, and thus our human race.” —Pete Seeger



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH

“We must be convinced that the power of ideas is greater than that of the Pentagon and political parties. We must embrace the conviction that each one of us has the power within us to create the world anew.”

GRACE BOGGS

THE YES!
15

GRACE BOGGS

96 Years of New Ideas

Grace Boggs, 96, moves slowly with the help of a walker through her home packed with books, pamphlets, copies of articles, and things printed on paper. It's a metaphor for her life. Moving slowly and thoughtfully through politics led her and her husband James Boggs to a philosophy of Marxist humanism focused on creativity, change, and social responsibility rather than a rigidity of ideas.

The long, unconventional life of activist-philosopher Grace Lee Boggs began in 1915 in Providence, R.I. Born to Chinese immigrant restaurant owners, Boggs earned a Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr College in 1940 partly because anti-Oriental sentiments kept her out of work. She went to Chicago on a whim, got a job paying \$10 a week in the philosophy library of the University of Chicago, and became involved with the Workers Party.

She married James Boggs, a divorced black auto worker, in 1953 after moving to Detroit to work at *Correspondence*, a socialist workers newsletter. Their lives together focused on the struggle for radical social change in Detroit and around the world. Since James' death in 1993, Grace has moved away from confrontational politics and toward growing political consciousness through local community organization. Although she may struggle physically, her ideas still move comfortably among creative young people, black community groups, and leftist philosophers.

"Grace doesn't talk down to you; she doesn't come like that to young people," says Invincible (aka Ilana Weaver), a spoken word artist and activist who was 21 when she met Boggs through Detroit Summer. "She comes to you with questions rather than lecture to find out what's relevant to you and tries to relate to it. ... My whole life has been transformed by my work with Detroit Summer. First of all as an artist I ground all my art in a larger purpose and vision for community change that's led by the community."

Boggs co-founded Detroit Summer as a way to help young people find meaningful activities when there is little work available, let alone positive influences in their lives. They paint murals, design T-shirts, teach digital media and other skills to create projects around social issues such as environmental »

PHOTO BY GARRETT MACLEAN

» justice, youth self-image, and school. One project, “Another Detroit is Happening,” used still photography and digital audio to document ground level community organizations working under the mass media radar.

“Here in Detroit the devastation of deindustrialization has made it possible for very ordinary people to grasp extraordinary ideas,” says Boggs, whose grassroots James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership is itself an extraordinary idea. “It isn’t often that an industrial empire collapses. The collapse of industrialization is the collapse of an idea that for 200 years has seemed to most people to be the epitome of civilization.”

Transformation and change are the essence of Boggs’ life. Part of this focus is the difference between rebellion and revolution. Rebellion involves physically seizing power over politics and economic vehicles, but revolution involves changing how you think and act based on those changes. These ideas came from involvement in the local community, activism on a global scale, and searching discussions with political activists of all stripes. Boggs has rubbed elbows with the likes of former Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah but she is just as likely to take inspiration from a discussion with a local disabled teenager.

Over the course of her lifetime she’s had working relationships with the likes of black activist Malcolm X, social theorists C.L.R. James and Immanuel Wallerstein, singer Harry Belafonte, and actors Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Danny Glover. Davis wrote the foreword to her 1998 biography *Living for Change*; Glover did the same for her 2011 book with co-author Scott Kuroshige, *The Next American Revolution, Sustainable Activism for the 21st Century*.

“Grace thinks,” says longtime friend Shea Howell, a professor of communication and journalism at Oakland University near Detroit. “Grace changes. She’s not the same person she was a day ago. She’s constantly reevaluating, thinking. She’s always open to new ideas. There aren’t a lot of people like that.”

Boggs’ influence now is wider than ever before. She has seeded or influenced projects from the Detroit Agricultural Network to the Beloved Communities Initiative, a network of creative communities across the country such as Barrios Unidos in Santa Cruz, Calif., Milwaukee’s Growing Power, New Mexico’s Tewa women, the Truth and Reconciliation commission of Greensboro, S.C., and others.

The words Detroit and agriculture might seem contradictory, but such is the visionary approach Boggs brings to any subject. Why not agriculture in a city with tens of thousands of vacant lots and a lack of access to fresh, healthy food? The image of Detroit is that of a rusting, post-industrial wasteland with a dim future. Most political and business leaders have been loath to try anything other than propping up the failing system. Boggs is far beyond that. She’s thinking about how the city is on the vanguard of the entire world going through its post-industrial trauma.

“She’s thinking about reshaping our city and how people

on the local level can essentially transform their neighborhoods and create a new construct on the urban environment,” says Ron Scott, president of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality and a member of the Boggs Center board of directors. “On the international level, she’s talking about the impact of the Arab Spring, what does that mean in terms of the shift of thinking about relationships and power on an international level.”

Although Boggs sees herself now as more of a resource person than an organizer, she stays in the middle of the action, participating in the ReImagining Work conference in Detroit this October. As the nation’s economic discussion anemically revolves around the concept of job creation, Boggs is less concerned with jobs than with exploring work that is meaningful to us as human beings.

“Unless we make a distinction between jobs and work we are going to be like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*, appendages to a machine,” Boggs says. “How do we do the kind of daily activity that grows our souls so that we don’t have to make up for the indignities of our labor? Jobs are not the answer; jobs are the problem. Now we’ve reached a stage where creating things can be done by robots. So what we have to do is create ourselves. That’s what *The Next American Revolution* is all about, creating better selves.”

As Boggs nears 100 years she has probably seen more go down in the world than was possible in any other epoch. The temptation to look back over the years is inevitable, but Boggs is always open to exploring even the most painful issues.

“I don’t have that much longer to live so I have to think about what it is I have to do before I go gently into that dark night,” she says. “And what I’d like to do, I think, is help people understand that ideas and thinking historically and philosophically is as important to rebuilding a country and a community and making a revolution as activism. Most people think of revolution as taking power from somebody else. And I think of revolution as transformation of ourselves.”

It isn’t such a big leap to move from growing food to growing souls. If that is the missing ingredient then there is a good chance that it will be added to the recipe for recreating the world. Boggs, through the wonders of electronic communications, is in contact with people around the world on a weekly basis. She hopes to have many, many people who are familiar with her style of philosophical thinking committed to seeing the Boggs Center and the community into the future. Almost anyone who speaks about her says that Grace has changed their lives.

“I think Grace is a gift to the city,” says Howell. “She, perhaps more than anybody I know, thinks about Detroit as a place where the future is being created every day. At a time when all the old solutions are gone, she has enormous faith in the capacity of people to create something new. And that’s a gift.”

—Larry Gabriel

Read an excerpt from *The Next American Revolution*.
YesMagazine.org/seeds-of-hope

FROM THE PUBLISHER



I LONGED FOR SIMPLER SURROUNDINGS. SO I MADE A RESOLUTION: EACH WEEK I WOULD MOVE MORE STUFF OUT OF THE HOUSE THAN CAME IN.

Let's Unstuff the Holidays

For many Americans the holiday gift-giving season is all about stuff. Buying stuff, wrapping stuff, mailing stuff. Given out of love or obligation, the giver hopes the recipient will want the gift. Many, especially the young, are enthralled. For others, gifts of things may be an unwanted burden.

I'm one of the latter. I tell my loved ones, if you want to give me things, make them ones that I can immediately consume, like food, soap, or candles. Or make them not stuff at all—a massage, a meal at a favorite restaurant, or help around the house.

This holiday season, when, for so many people, cash is scarce and the need for healthy relationships great, is a good moment to unstuff our holidays. And for those of us with too many belongings, it's a great time to unstuff our homes.

My un-love affair with stuff kicks in every time we move. Arriving in the new spot, I find the mound of stuff overwhelming. I swear I will never buy another object. But once everything is tucked into place, my resolve drops away.

That changed in November 2008 when I read the YES! article about Dee Williams. You may remember Dee. She was on the cover of the Sustainable Happiness issue, smiling, with legs dangling from the loft

of her 84-square-foot house. Dee, who downsized from a much bigger house, had gotten her belongings down to a mere 300 objects. If she brought in something new, she got rid of something old. Even though I had no wish to live that spare a life, I kept mulling on Dee's feat. Did she count a pair of socks as two or one?

My fascination with Dee's downsizing made me aware once again that my belongings felt burdensome. The house felt stuffed. It was hard to find things. I longed for simpler surroundings. So I made a resolution: Each week I would move more stuff out of the house than came in. That was three years ago.

Over those three years, drawer by drawer, closet by closet, the house and garage cleared out. Now, we no longer fight our way through chairs and boxes to get from the car to the kitchen door. It's easy to find the perfect vase for that rose or the right pan for the pizza.

With so many people in need, I wanted to be sure our excess belongings found good uses. I easily found opportunities. During an especially cold December, Seattle's organization for the homeless asked for sleeping bags, jackets, and blankets. I had extras of all three. The local thrift

shop, where business has been brisk, welcomed my clothes and tablecloths. The wildlife shelter put out a call for old sheets and towels, of which I had many. #OccupySeattle was happy to receive my extra tarp.

Last May, for my 70th birthday party, I asked guests not to bring gifts. Instead of receiving, I gave. For each of the 42 guests, I wrapped in newspaper an object gleaned from my closets—a wooden salad fork and spoon, a Hawaiian necklace, a garden trowel, a Balinese bird mobile. Each guest chose a wrapped gift and then, amid uproarious laughter and much hawking, they traded until most everyone went home with something they wanted.

Now my belongings no longer feel like my enemy. I have what I want and know where it is. I experience a delightful ease of living. And I carry the satisfaction that things I no longer need are in the hands of others who can use them.

So as the holidays approach, I look forward to a time of relationships, food, and fun—with a minimum of stuff.

Fran Korten, Publisher



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YES! PICKS ::

Things To Do, Places To Go

New Partners for Smart Growth

February 2-12, San Diego. Join leaders from across the United States in this annual exploration of smart growth solutions to reduce dependence on foreign oil, create a more resilient economy, assure a healthy population, foster more equitable development, and expand transportation and housing options for all. newpartners.org

Nonprofit Technology Conference

April 3-5, San Francisco. The annual Nonprofit Technology Network event brings together nonprofit leaders and techies for an energized three days of collaboration. Participants will share cutting-edge technological innovations, best practices, and real world experiences from the nonprofit sector. nten.org/ntc

Earth Summit 2012 (Rio+20)

June 4-6, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the face of mounting economic, ecological, and social crises worldwide, thousands will gather at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (also referred to as Rio+20, acknowledging the initial summit, held in 1992), to pursue solutions for communities to live peacefully and sustainably on a strained planet. A key focus for this summit will be building the green economy. earthsummit2012.org

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

Why We Named YES! in Our Wills

We named YES!—along with our family—in our wills for one simple reason: To make sure that the voice of YES! survives and thrives for decades to come.

We'd like to invite you to do the same.

You may feel, as we do, that future generations will face many difficult transitions—getting off of fossil fuels, learning to settle international disputes peacefully, and localizing economies to strengthen communities and live in harmony with nature.

These challenges are enormous. That can be a source of disempowering despair or great bursts of creativity. We know that today, YES! helps people approach these challenges with energy and creativity. We want to make sure that YES! is there to help people with the challenges of tomorrow.

You too can help make sure YES! will guide people through the transitions ahead. Below you'll find the information you need to name YES! in your will or as a beneficiary of your bank or retirement account.

Whether you've already named YES! in your will, or



PHOTO BY CRYSTAL SATKO MOORE FOR YES! MAGAZINE

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Thank you for considering joining us to ensure that YES! will be there for many years to come.

—David and Fran Korten

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“Frogs are an indicator species,” Jack Gray explains, leaning over a small, muddy pond to look for tadpoles.

Here on the 170-acre Winter Green Farm, 20 miles west of Eugene, Ore., Gray has raised cattle and grown vegetables and berries for 30 years. It’s a sunny April day, but water pools in the pastures, evidence of the rains this part of Oregon is known for.

Gray is in his mid-50s and agile from decades of working outside. He built this pond to provide habitat for native amphibians, because bass in another pond were eating the red-legged frogs and Western pond turtles.

Cows graze in a field behind him; wind whispers through a stand of cattails, and two mallards lift off. Gray points out the calls of killdeer, flycatchers, and blackbirds. Up the hill a flock of sheep chomp on long grass. “They’re part of a controlled grazing to try to control reed canary grass, which is an invasive species,” Gray explains. “It tends to smother areas. It makes deserts almost.”

Gray, his wife, Mary Jo, and two other families co-own Winter Green Farm. They are committed to something Jo Ann Baumgartner, director of the Wild Farm Alliance, calls “farming with the wild.”

The words “wild” and “farming” may seem at odds. In the last century, with the development of petroleum-based pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, farms were increasingly modeled on industry. “Fencerow to fencerow,” mono-crop farming emphasized high production and minimized the importance of biodiversity. Farmers ripped out vegetation, cut down forests, shot predators, and filled in wetlands and streams. Today, agriculture is a major cause of the habitat loss that puts endangered species at risk.

Practitioners of wild farming, also called conservation-based agriculture, seek to reverse industrial agriculture’s devastating effects on wildlife by adopting farming methods that support nature. They envision a landscape where farms meld into the environment and mimic the natural processes



Jack Gray (right) of Winter Green Farm outside Eugene, Ore., is committed to farming without harming surrounding wildlife and natural ecosystems.

PHOTOS BY PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

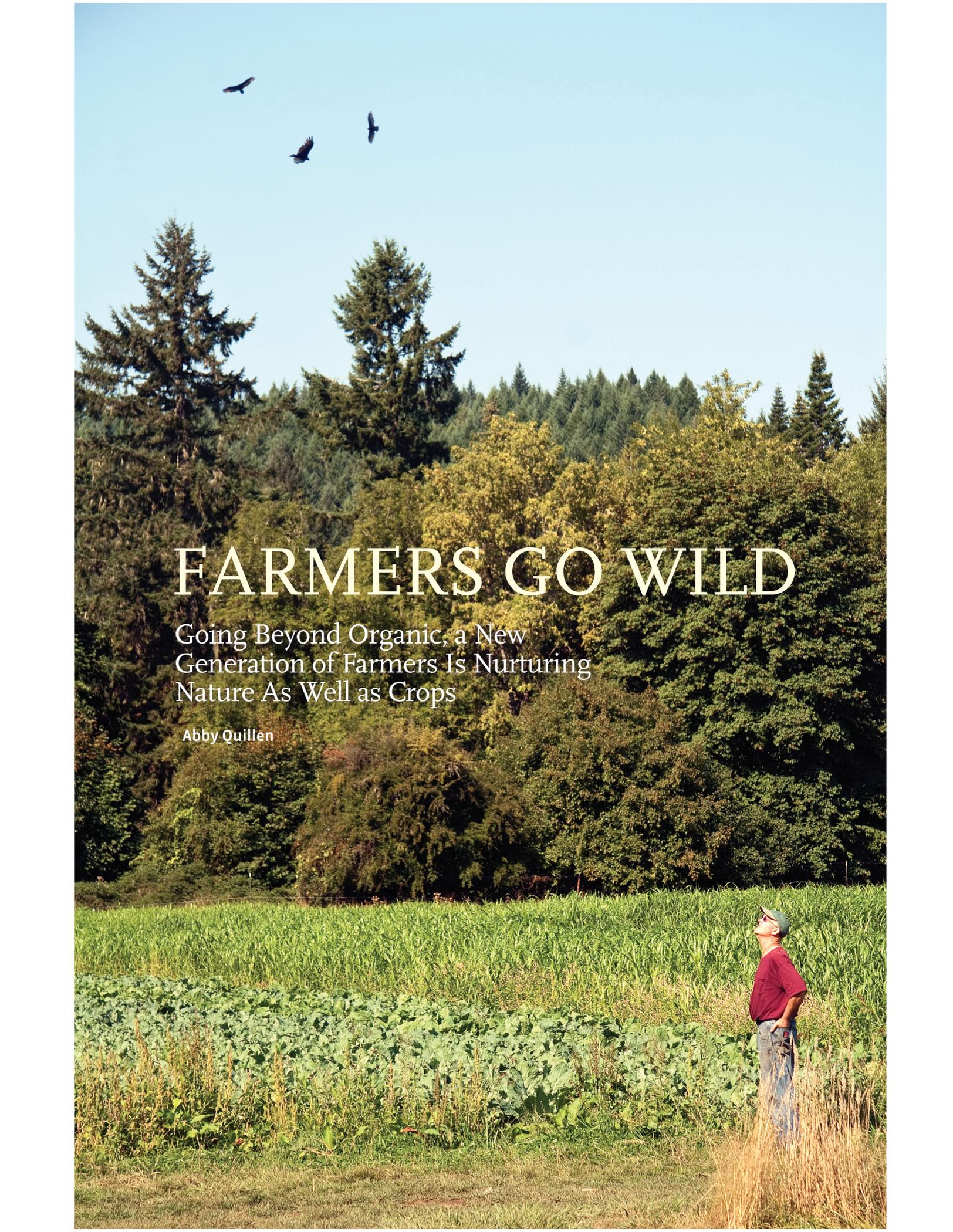
that surround them. If wild farming sounds like organic farming, that’s because both are based on a similar vision: that farms should be managed as natural systems. Most wild farms employ organic practices, like nontoxic pest management, composting, and crop rotation, all of which encourage biodiversity.

However, farming with the wild goes a step beyond organic and looks at how farms can support nature and wildlife at the larger ecosystem or watershed level. For a farmer, that might mean planting native plants and hedgerows along the borders of fields to provide habitat for wildlife and beneficial insects, finding ways to accommodate fish and large carnivores, preventing genetically engineered organisms from interacting with native species, and networking with other farmers and agencies to create wildlife corridors that connect wilderness areas.

The Mountain Lion and the Lamb

Wild farms exist all over the country, from North Dakota’s grasslands to Florida’s marshes, and by their nature, they vary based on the farm and the geography. In the Bridger Mountains of Montana, at Thirteen Mile Lamb & Wool Company, Becky Weed and Dave Tyler are committed to predator-friendly ranching. They use guard llamas, instead of guns, traps, or poison, to protect their cattle and sheep from coyotes, bears, mountain lions, wolves, and eagles. They take a risk with their non-lethal approach to predation and occasionally lose sheep, but they support a healthy ecosystem where predators control populations of their natural prey, like mice, rabbits, gophers, and deer. They also qualify for certification from Predator Friendly, an “ecolabel” that touts the sustainability of their products and helps ranchers get premium prices from

»

A photograph of a farmer in a field looking up at birds flying over a forest. The farmer is wearing a red shirt and a cap, standing in a field of tall green crops. In the background, there is a dense forest of evergreen and deciduous trees under a clear blue sky with three birds flying.

FARMERS GO WILD

Going Beyond Organic, a New
Generation of Farmers Is Nurturing
Nature As Well as Crops

Abby Quillen

THEY ENVISION A LANDSCAPE WHERE FARMS MELD INTO THE ENVIRONMENT AND MIMIC THE NATURAL PROCESSES THAT SURROUND THEM.



At Winter Green Farm, Jack Gray designed culverts with gentle angles and rocky beds to mimic natural creek contours to help fish migrate.

Photo Essay: yesmagazine.org/wild-farming

» conservation-minded customers.

In the arid Mimbres Valley of Southwestern New Mexico, at the No Cattle Company, Michael Alexander and Sharlene Grunerud grow fruit, vegetables, and flowers using an ancient Spanish “acequia” canal system for irrigation. They’ve installed bird perches and bat boxes on the sides of their fields, and the free-tail and big brown bats they attract feed on their worst insect pests: codling moths, cucumber beetles, and corn earworm moths. Alexander and Grunerud also see benefits from accommodating larger wildlife at their farm, like bears, foxes, mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes. The bears feed on fallen apples, eating the codling moth larvae inside, and the coyotes, as well as ravens and hawks, help control the population of pocket gophers.

The families and farm animals at Winter Green share their land with elk, deer, coyotes, beavers, possums, skunks, osprey, black-shouldered kites, red-tailed hawks, and other wildlife.

Winter Green Farm boasts

certification from Salmon-Safe, an eco-organization that protects endangered wild salmon and steelhead habitat. Last summer Gray rebuilt a culvert on Evans Creek so that fish could swim through, and he’s installed fencing along Evans and Poodle creeks to keep cattle away from the waterways.

But farming with the wild is not only about protecting nature and ecosystems, says Baumgartner, who, along with other conservation-minded agricultural experts, founded the Wild Farm Alliance in 2000. Wild agriculture also benefits farmers. Planting native plants to attract beneficial insects can increase pollination of fruits and melons and protect farmers from the consequences of declining honeybee populations. Moving cattle every few days to mimic the actions of wild migratory grazers, a practice called management-intensive grazing, keeps cattle healthier and improves the land. Studies show that by restoring wetlands and waterways, farmers can reduce pesticide runoff and *E. coli*

contamination on a farm by as much as 99 percent. Gray has implemented all of the above practices and says he sees the benefits in healthy soil, grass, cattle, and crops.

And in 2001, he and his fellow farmers planted a hedgerow, a narrow strip of trees, shrubs, ground cover, and vines bordering fields. Jude Hobbs, a horticulturist and permaculture expert who helped the farmers at Winter Green plant their 300-foot hedgerow, explains that hedgerows can create shade for waterways and provide wildlife habitat. Hedgerows also benefit farms; they can decrease wind damage, reduce soil erosion, attract pollinators, and provide extra income opportunities.

Wild farming always requires management—and compromises. Gray laughs as he talks about some of his problems with wild animals, particularly the crows that like to feast on his blueberries.

“We used these tapes in the fields that supposedly sound like the death song of a crow—horrendous squeals and stuff,”

Gray says. “You’d come out and find them perched right on top of it.”

Gray also tried hanging Mylar tape and putting out huge balloons with eyes on them. But nothing distracted the crows from their favorite food. Finally he put netting over the blueberries and a mile of woven-wire fence to stop elk from eating the berries. He laments some of the trade-offs. “It changed the patterns of the elk. They’ll go elsewhere, where they used to cross at certain spots of certain streams. We loved to have the elk right outside our kitchen window.”

A Field of Weeds

Wild farmers face political and economic challenges that can be more formidable than crows and elk. Baumgartner and other wild-farming advocates have witnessed a shift away from conservation-based farming in the last five years, especially in the Salinas Valley of California, the top vegetable-producing region in the country, where the Wild Farm Alliance is based. In September 2006, bagged spinach grown in the valley was contaminated with *E. coli*, which sickened 205 people in 26 states and killed three. Cattle, feral pigs, and grazing deer were implicated, although the source of the outbreak was never found.

“There was this gunshot reaction of, ‘Let’s get rid of all wildlife and habitat on farms,’” Baumgartner says. Farmers throughout the Salinas Valley, under pressure from large buyers and suppliers, bulldozed trees and hedgerows, filled in ponds, and removed and trapped wildlife. The Wild Farm Alliance has worked overtime trying to educate farmers and certifiers about the benefits of wild farming and convince government officials to include conservation in food-safety legislation. The shift away from conservation was particularly distressing, because many more large conventional farms will need to transition to wild farming to reconnect the nation’s fragmented wildlife habitat. And it can be slow and difficult for farmers to learn new methods—even

with government assistance.

Less than 50 miles from Winter Green Farm, in Oregon’s Willamette Valley, farmer Clint Lindsey is adopting a number of conservation measures. Lindsey, 31, and his dad run A2R, an 870-acre farm near Corvallis. Two years ago, like the majority of farmers in the valley, they grew conventionally grown grass seed, a pesticide-and-fertilizer-intensive crop. Then the grass-seed market collapsed, a victim of the economy and the housing market.

A2R was on the brink of bankruptcy when Lindsey met a group of farmers who were testing the viability of growing edible crops in the valley for local markets. He and his dad decided to transition the majority of their acreage to organic grains, beans, and edible seeds.

A2R qualified for a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a department of the USDA, which invests millions of dollars of grant money each year in helping farmers support healthy ecosystems. The grant helped Lindsey and his dad replace chemical pesticides and fertilizers with a pungent-smelling compost tea made of liquefied fish, kelp, and compost. They also agreed to a number of other practices, including planting peas during the winter months to help fertilize the soil, curtail runoff, and attract beneficial insects.

Lindsey says it’s too early to tell whether the area will benefit the farm by attracting pollinators or pest-eating birds. But preserving the land helped A2R gain certification from The Food Alliance, an ecolabel that requires farmers to meet an extensive list of biodiversity and wildlife conservation requirements.

The challenges of transitioning are not just economic. Lindsey says his dad, who has grown conventional grass seed for 30 years, struggles to adjust psychologically to a style of agriculture that more closely resembles nature. “For a conventional farmer, these fields are a complete mess,” Lindsey says. “One of the biggest challenges is getting used to seeing a field full of weeds and figuring

out what to do about it, because you can’t spray herbicide on it.”

A2R is at the beginning of a long journey to becoming a healthy ecosystem. Despite the challenges, Lindsey is enjoying the process. “It just became a heck of a lot more fun to farm. For a long time we’d been looking at ways to turn our farm from just a factory turning out grass seed into something that was a valuable asset to the community and to our family.”

A Wild Hope

Even in a nation dominated by giant mono-crop farms and animal feedlots, there are hopeful signs about the future of conservation-based agriculture. The acreage of farmland in conservation and wetlands-reserve programs jumped 20 percent between 1997 and 2007, and the 2008 Farm Bill further increased funding for conservation projects.

Since 2002 the government has studied the environmental impacts of NRCS agricultural conservation projects and found that wild farming makes a difference. For instance, stream improvements made by ranchers on private land in Montana increased the population of trout by 59 percent, and native vegetation buffers planted by farmers along the borders of fields dramatically increased the population of Northern bobwhites and several upland songbirds in 14 different states, according to the NRCS.

In its decade of existence, the small, nonprofit Wild Farm Alliance has been successful at getting conservation included in national organic standards and state and federal food safety legislation. But wild farming’s greatest hope may be the growth of local food networks, farmers markets, and community-supported agriculture, as well as the emergence of third-party ecolabels. These movements connect farmers with consumers, enabling all of us to choose food grown in ways that protect and support wild nature. 🍷

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

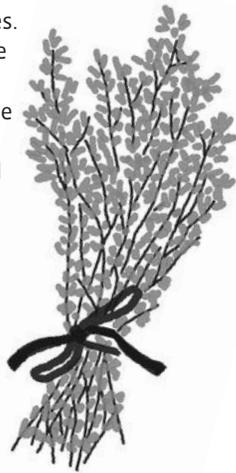
YES! But How?

1

THYME GARGLE

Thyme has a natural antiseptic called thymol, which is an active ingredient in some mouthwashes. It also soothes the throat. Thyme tea can also be used as a gargle for a sore throat, or drunk to ease stomach cramps.

Steep one tablespoon of dried thyme in one cup boiling water. Strain, let cool, and gargle or drink.—K.M.



2

ORGANIC LIP BALM

Immune systems aren't the only things that take a hit in winter; skin also shows the wear of those chilly months. Lips lose moisture more quickly than other parts of the face because they don't have sweat or sebaceous glands. Gentle protection from homemade lip balm is an appealing alternative to using store-bought brands made from petroleum jelly.

For this version you'll need 2 tbsp. coconut oil, 1 tbsp. grated cocoa butter, and 1/4 tsp. vitamin E oil (or the oil from 3 capsules). If you like scent and flavor, add a drop of rose, peppermint, vanilla, or sweet orange essential oil.

Melt the coconut oil in a stainless steel pot over low heat. Stir in cocoa butter until melted. Remove from heat, add vitamin E oil and stir. Pour the mixture into a container—empty baby food or cosmetic jars, or small tins from the beauty supply store or herbalist. Let set for three hours.—J.K.

6 Recipes for Winter Wellness

Kate Malongowski and Jennifer Kaye

3

ROSEHIP SYRUP

Rosehips are the berry-like seed pods left after rose blossoms fall. These overlooked fruits contain up to 20 times as much vitamin C as oranges. It's best to harvest rosehips in the autumn, after the first frost turns them bright red and soft. Be sure not to use rosehips from plants treated with pesticides.

Gather about 4 cups of rosehips and wash them thoroughly. Remove the stems and any flower remnants. Boil in 2 cups of water for 20 minutes in a covered saucepan. Strain the mixture through a jelly bag, cheesecloth, or fine sieve. Return the clear juice to the saucepan, add 1 cup of sugar, and boil for 5 minutes. Pour into warmed, sterilized jars or bottles, seal and store in the refrigerator. The resulting glowing red syrup makes an attractive gift, tastes great with desserts or diluted as a drink, and helps keep colds at bay throughout the winter.—J.K.



During World War II in Britain, when torpedoes halted the shipment of imported foods like citrus fruits, volunteers gathered 450 tons of wild rosehips a year to make vitamin C syrup for the nation's children.

4

FIRE CIDER

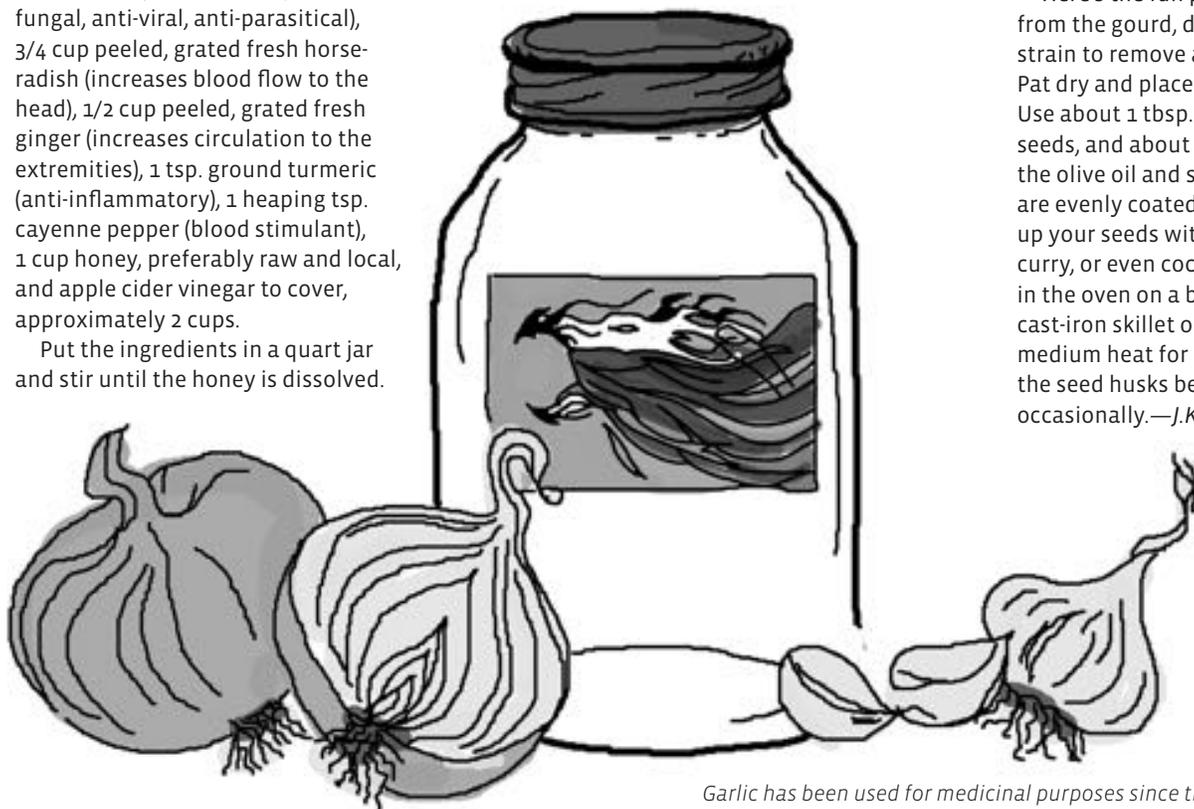
Stave off a cold with fire. Well, almost—fire cider. This unusual concoction of immune-boosting ingredients will also clear sinuses, but it's not for the weak of heart. Some people like to age their fire cider for several weeks, so they start a fresh batch every autumn for winter cold season.

You'll need: 1 small onion, peeled and chopped (contains natural anti-histamines), 5 cloves garlic, peeled and minced (anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-viral, anti-parasitical), 3/4 cup peeled, grated fresh horseradish (increases blood flow to the head), 1/2 cup peeled, grated fresh ginger (increases circulation to the extremities), 1 tsp. ground turmeric (anti-inflammatory), 1 heaping tsp. cayenne pepper (blood stimulant), 1 cup honey, preferably raw and local, and apple cider vinegar to cover, approximately 2 cups.

Put the ingredients in a quart jar and stir until the honey is dissolved.

Cover the mouth of the jar with a square of waxed paper, and fasten the lid tightly. Put in a cool, dark place, and let sit undisturbed for six to eight weeks. Once your fire cider has matured, strain and squeeze the mixture through cheesecloth. Stored away from light and heat, fire cider will last up to six months.

When needed, take by the spoonful. It can also be used as a salad dressing or as a chest rub.—K.M.



6

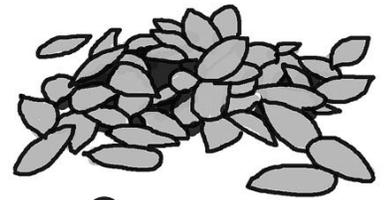
GINGER HONEY TEA

There's nothing like the combination of ginger and honey to fight off winter illness, whether it's tummy trouble or a head cold. Ginger promotes healthy digestion, eases nausea, and can help dry excess mucus in the nasal passages, while honey is a natural antiseptic. A touch of lemon adds an antioxidant that's high in vitamin C, too.

Take a 1-inch piece of peeled ginger root,

6 cups water, 1/3 cup honey, the juice of one lemon and four bags of your favorite tea. Add a slice of rind if your lemon is organic. Slice the ginger into coins, and combine with the lemon rind, water, and honey. Bring to a boil in a small pot. Add the tea bags and steep. Add lemon juice, strain into a teapot, and serve.

Many people keep ginger and honey in their pantries and prepare a ginger-honey mixture whenever someone falls ill.—K.M.



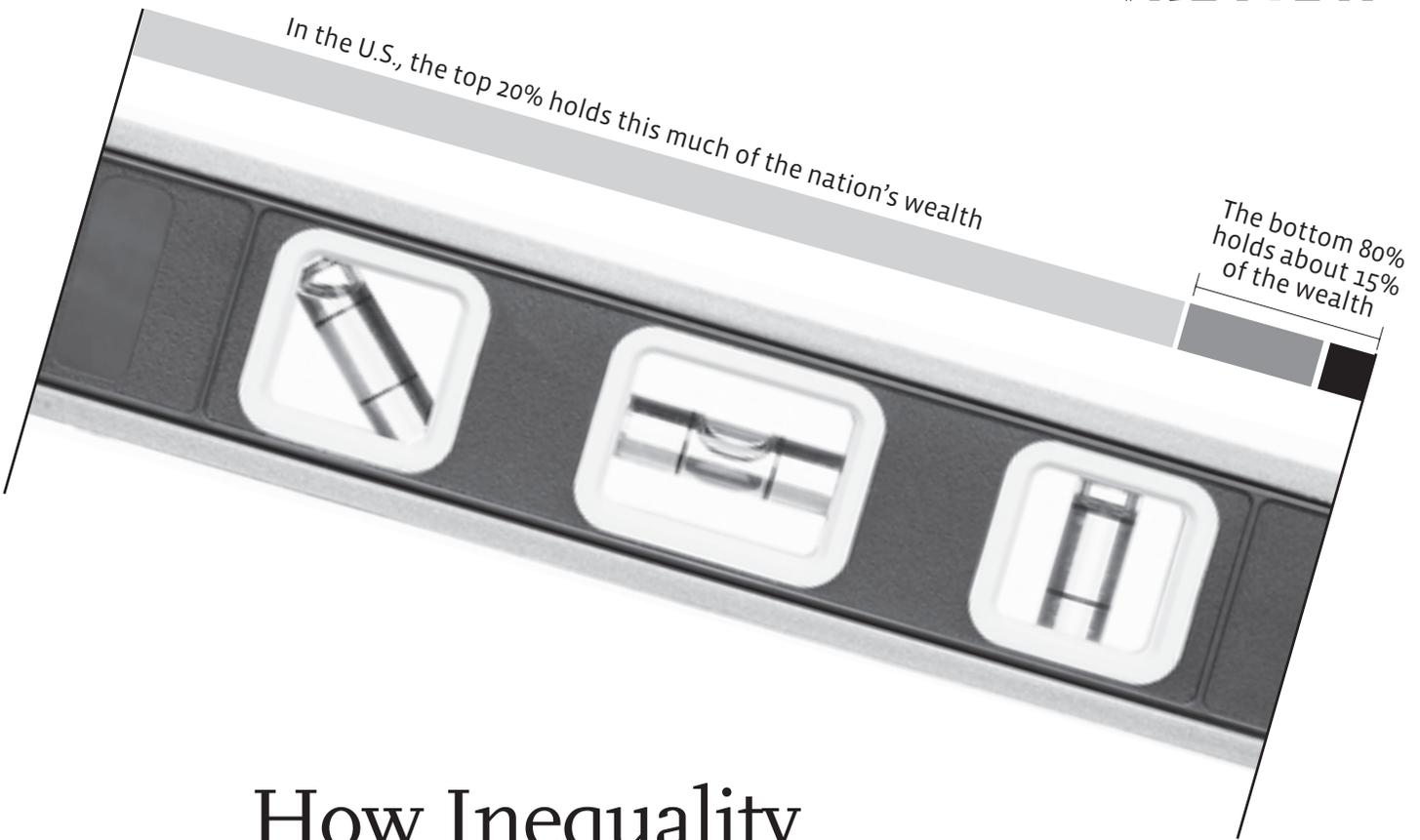
5

ROASTED SQUASH SEEDS

Squash and pumpkin seeds are a great source of zinc, a mineral that supports the immune system. If squash or pumpkin is on your autumn menu, you can also roast the seeds to stock your winter wellness pantry.

Here's the fun part: Remove seeds from the gourd, de-gunk, rinse, and strain to remove any stringy bits. Pat dry and place in a small bowl. Use about 1 tbsp. olive oil per cup of seeds, and about 1/2 tsp. salt. Stir in the olive oil and salt until the seeds are evenly coated. Feel free to spice up your seeds with a pinch of cumin, curry, or even cocoa powder. Roast in the oven on a baking tray, or in a cast-iron skillet on the stovetop on medium heat for 15 minutes or until the seed husks begin to pop. Stir occasionally.—J.K.

Garlic has been used for medicinal purposes since the Egyptian pyramids were built. In the early 1700s, French gravediggers drank a mixture of crushed garlic and wine as protection against the plague. During World War I, soldiers were given garlic to prevent gangrene.

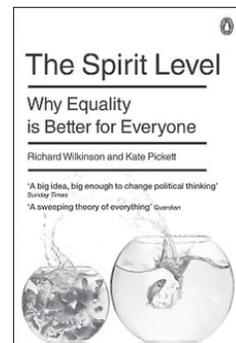


How Inequality (and Misery) Trickle Up

REVIEWED BY KRISTY LEISSLE

A recent report using income data from the 2010 Census drew attention to a harsh aspect of wealth inequality in the United States, already among the highest in the world. The number of Americans living in poverty increased to 46.2 million, and 6.7 percent crossed the threshold into “deep poverty.” Without food stamps and unemployment insurance, an additional 6.8 million would have fallen below the poverty line. Meanwhile, the top 1 percent continue to command a fifth of the nation’s income, and for an increasing number of Americans, the dream of middle-class security is ever more elusive.

The Spirit Level, by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, which has sold more than 100,000 copies since its 2009 publication in Britain, offers insight beyond the bare facts of the census income data. Our national response to the hardships caused by the market crisis of 2008 has been to apply more of the same economic system—subsidize the banks in the hope this gets the economy growing again. But as Wilkinson and Pickett argue from their opening pages, “Economic growth, for so long the great engine of progress, has, in the rich countries, largely finished its work.” Once wealth rises past a certain level, the benefits to life expectancy, health, and >>



The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone

RICHARD WILKINSON AND KATE PICKETT

Bloomsbury Press, 2010, 331 pages, \$28.00

» happiness stabilize, and then stagnate.

The crux of *The Spirit Level* is that the best measure of a country's well-being is not GDP or wealth overall, but its distribution of wealth. Of the developed countries (the focus of the book), those with highest income inequality—the United States, Britain, and Portugal—have the lowest levels of social “goods” such as educational achievement, long life expectancy, gender parity, and trust among neighbors. They have the highest rates of mental illness, obesity, violent crime, teen pregnancy, and incarceration. When the lion's share is captured by a few,

THOUGH THE UNITED STATES STILL HAS A HIGH AVERAGE INCOME COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES, ITS INEQUALITY ENSURES THAT AMERICANS SCORE LOW ON ALMOST EVERY MEASURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING.

and the rest divide the remainder into increasingly tiny slivers—the “deep poverty” of more than 20 million Americans—social ills rise. Take the statistics on violence: along with the Scandinavian countries, Japan ranks highest on income equality; it also has the lowest homicide rate in the developed world. By contrast, the United States suffers from the highest murder rate, 64 people per million annually.

It is not only those at the bottom of the ladder who suffer. One of the remarkable insights of *The Spirit Level* is that income inequality affects all social classes, not just the poor. The most unequal countries have rates of mental illness five times higher than the most equitable—for everyone. A baby born in the United States is twice as likely to die before reaching its first birthday as a baby born in Japan; average life expectancy for an American is three years shorter than for a Swede. The authors emphasize that subtracting the poor from the analysis does not change the score. “Inequality,” they suggest, is “like a pollutant spread throughout society.”

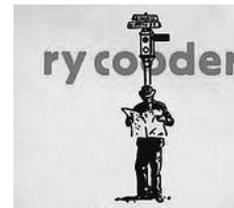
It also seeps into the spirit. Some social ills, notably poor educational performance and violence, correlate with an individual's relative income level rather than absolute wealth of a society. As record numbers of Americans watch their class status fall, they tend to compensate in unhealthy ways—from prioritizing conspicuous consumption over basic needs (the “affluenza” virus) to acts of violent crime. Though the United States still has a high average income compared to other countries, its inequality ensures that Americans score low on almost every measure of psychological well-being.

Wilkinson and Pickett's work is germane in this moment of crisis because it gives us something to work toward: reducing inequality. Their evidence is robust, and almost inarguable. Graph after graph, generated with data from the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and all fifty U.S. states, show the same correlation: Where income inequality is high, social ills are all but inevitable. Reducing inequality—not increasing growth—must form the centerpiece of any effort to improve well-being.

As Wilkinson and Pickett recognize, change must be political, institutional, and individual. Their suggestions for moving forward are too wide-ranging to offer a clear template for change—their analytical strength lies in their area of expertise, public health—but the central message is crucial: We must reduce inequality. If we can achieve that, our reward will be a higher spirit level, for everyone. 📌

Kristy Leissle is a writer and professor of Global Studies at the University of Washington, Bothell.

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



Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down

This is the sound of the venerable **Ry Cooder** stamping his feet. Song by song he gives a whipping to greedy bankers and war profiteers and offers a few soulful songs of immigrants and general hard times. In the Guthrie/Seeger vein, “No Banker Left Behind” offers Wall Street protesters an anthem.



Ukulele Songs

On tour in Hawaii, **Eddie Vedder** went out for beer and came back with a ukulele. Here, Vedder's voice is unleashed from the tidal wave sound of Pearl Jam. With that growl balanced bravely on only four strings, he has created something improbable and lovely.

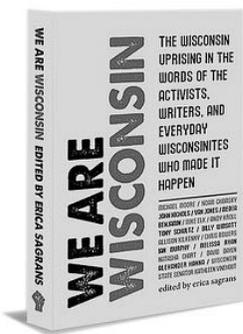


The Bridge School Concerts: 25th Anniversary Edition

The nonprofit Bridge School for kids with communications disorders has been **Neil Young's** charity of choice for 25 years. This offers performances from his annual benefit concerts: a long lineup of musician friends often performing with him.

🎵 Have a listen at
www.YesMagazine.org/music

IN REVIEW ::



We Are Wisconsin

ERICA SAGRANS, ED.

Tasora, 295 pages, \$18.00

REVIEWED BY JOSH EIDELSON

Six months after Madison was occupied by students, teachers, and working people opposed to their governor's anti-union bill, "Wisconsin" remains not just the name of a state, but shorthand for a movement.

It was a mass uprising that developed by the hour—sometimes faster. People knit together in defiance of threatened arrest. Pizzas arrived that had been ordered by supporters in Europe. Activists organized cleaning crews. Cops finished their shift policing the capitol and joined other workers to occupy it.

How do you capture the outrage and insights of a people's movement just as it becomes history? Erica Sagrans has collected some of the best Wisconsin-inspired writing in *We Are Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Uprising in the Words of the Activists, Writers, and Everyday Wisconsinites Who Made It Happen*.

The book provides thoughtful assessments of Wisconsin's lessons, and documents the energy of the movement, with original and reprinted essays and articles from established thinkers like John Nichols, Medea Benjamin, and Van Jones. Journalists share space with academics and activists, and a childhood neighbor calls Scott Walker to account.

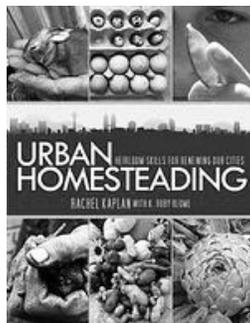
Contributors consider a range of explanations for why the Wisconsin moment struck where and when it did: social media, inspiration from

Egypt, the state's radical legacy, and (most persuasively) an existing progressive infrastructure reacting against an existential threat to organized labor. The book airs conflicting views on key strategic debates: how much to comply with police during the occupation; how much effort to put into recalling Republicans in the weeks that followed.

We Are Wisconsin also charts how the protest is inspiring new progressive organizations, and challenging and reinvigorating American labor. It establishes the importance of Madison, Wis., just as a new wave of protest spreads from Wall Street to cities and towns around the world.

Josh Eidelson is a freelance writer and a former union organizer. His website is josheidelson.com

 yesmagazine.org/wisconsin
Meet the people behind the Madison protests



Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills For Sustainable Living

RACHEL KAPLAN

WITH K. RUBY BLUME

Skyhorse Publishing, 2011, 292 pages, \$16.95

REVIEWED BY OLIVER LAZENBY

Want to grow food and live the sustainable lifestyle but lack the space? *Urban Homesteading: Heirloom Skills for Sustainable Living*, by Rachel Kaplan with K. Ruby Blume, a glossy bible for self-sufficiency in the city, will have you tearing out your driveway to sow a garden, and diverting gray water to irrigate it. The book's beautifully presented and amply illustrated projects are all geared toward typical city-sized lots, and interspersed with case studies

of actual homesteads and working urban farms, like the two-acre rooftop farm in Brooklyn, where greens grow amid rooftop vents.

Local food is central to this vision of urban sustainability, and the authors cover a lot of ground. They explain methods for growing, storing, preserving, and gleaned. Medicinal herbs, solar cooking, and even raising and butchering animals are described. Projects for house-bound harvesters, including lesser-known foodie ventures like raising rabbits, cultivating mushrooms, and lacto-fermentation, make this not just a practical guide for homestead DIYers, but entertaining for armchair homesteaders too.

While producing food locally is arguably the best way to live lighter on the Earth and limit dependence on a flawed global economy, it's not the limit of Kaplan and Blume's appetites. They also provide advice about storing rainwater and using gray water, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, designing for passive heating and cooling, building with cob, and reducing garbage production.

The book provides, not just the how-tos, but the why-tos for living an ecological lifestyle. Readers are urged to start building community and local economies where they are, with whatever projects they find interesting. The aim isn't solitary self-sufficiency, but working with neighbors to create a more fulfilling life.

The authors are brimming with enthusiasm for transforming their environment, and at times this leads to a prose style some readers will find too dependent on buzzwords, as in the introduction: "This book tells the story of this grassroots do-it-yourself cultural explosion rooted in the urban earth, a homegrown guild of people generating resilient, local culture."

Most of the time that enthusiasm is a good thing—it's hard to read *Urban Homesteading* without feeling the itch to grab a sledgehammer and replace some pavement with parsnips.

Oliver Lazenby is a former YES! intern, a freelance writer, and a farm laborer.

FILM ::



The Last Mountain

Directed by Bill Haney, 2011, 95 min.

REVIEWED BY Ayla HARBIN

There's a rumbling in Coal River Valley, W.Va., and it's more than the explosives detonated by Massey Energy in mountaintop removal. A community has lived here for generations. In that time they have seen coal mining production increase, but jobs disappear. They have seen friends and family get sick and die from exposure to the toxic byproducts of coal mining. They have seen the tops of the Appalachian Mountains blown to ashes. And now they are looking for change.

The Last Mountain follows these residents-turned-activists in their efforts to save Coal River Mountain, the last mountain in the area not yet blown apart to extract coal. They present their evidence in thoughtful and moving interviews. In contrast, Massey CEO Don Blankenship's proclamations are

sweeping and obviously erroneous.

With millions of dollars paid to lobbyists and political campaigns, health and environmental violations ignored, and a pool of toxic sludge next to an elementary school, it's easy to see who the bad guy is. When protesters are told they must leave Massey company property or be arrested for trespassing, activist Bo Webb states the irony succinctly: "You are trespassing on us everyday!"

The protesters have a powerful champion in Robert Kennedy Jr., who tells the story of his environmental activism beginning in childhood. He links Massey's practices to decades of corporate environmental degradation in the United States, and emphasizes the importance of protective laws. Although it helps to have a political superhero in your corner, it's clear that the greatest moral authority against Massey is the local people who pay the real costs of the coal giant's operations.

The fight in Coal River Valley continues, with activists working to shift the local economy to clean energy. They hope that a view of the last mountain may one day show not a toxic wasteland, but sleek wind turbines cresting the ridge.

Ayla Harbin is an intern at YES!



www.YesMagazine.org/films60

Watch the trailer

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