Fall 2005

yes!

a journal of positive futures

Operation Homecoming
How to end the war in Iraq

Utah Phillips Ani DiFranco
Linking young audiences to radical roots

7 Ways to Keep Your Marbles

How to Save Social Security
And why young people should care

Can Old Folks Save the World?

respecting elders, becoming elders

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Issue #35

How does one keep from "growing old inside"? Surely only in community. The only way to make friends with time is to stay friends with people . . . Taking community seriously not only gives us the companionship we need, it also relieves us of the notion that we are indispensable.

—Robert McAfee Brown

Anne-Marie Weber

Dear Reader,

Linda Wolf

Here's what got me thinking about doing a *YES!* issue on elders. I was invited to my friend and colleague David Korten's 65th birthday party. The party was pleasant enough, but I could feel that he was down in the dumps. From 65 on, it's all downhill, right? What's to celebrate?

Then, another friend arrived, Tim Iistowanohpataakiiwa, a Native American priest and traditionalist. Tim offered a simple ceremony inducting David into the ranks of elderhood.

After that, something shifted for David. He now calls the ceremony one of the most important gifts of his life. "Rather than passing into irrelevance on the path to death," David writes in the introduction to his upcoming book, "I was initiated into elderhood as mentor, teacher, and wisdom-keeper."

This shift in perspective on aging is what this issue of *YES!* is about.

While insurance adjusters and health-care planners note with trepidation our lengthening life expectancy, and leisure industries scramble to cater to bored retirees, we are proposing that there is still work for elders to do. But it's a different kind of work.

While most policy discussion centers on the burden of growing numbers of retirees, we would like to suggest that elders are an invaluable resource whose capacities for far-sightedness and compassion have never been needed more.

In traditional cultures, elders have often been the ones who take a stand for the well-being of not just themselves but of future generations.

Consider today's accelerating crises: climate change, the gap between rich and poor, our addiction to oil, the erosion of democracy and human rights. When have we had a greater need for the wisdom of elders?

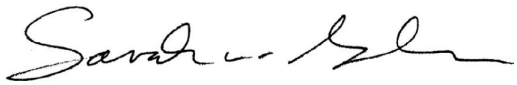
The good news is that the largest cohort of elders ever to live at one time has arrived. What we don't know is what sort of leadership these elders will offer and what sort of life they will choose to lead.

You could think of this issue of *YES!* as a guide to some of the choices that are involved in conscious eldering—whether as a grandparent or a sage (or both), a musician or a person coming to terms with serious illness (or both), an Israeli witness to human rights abuses or an elderly woman feeling the creakiness in her bones (or both).

This issue is also a guide to the good life for elders. After all, would we expect baby boomers to put up with anything less than a meaningful old age? Boomers will expect to age with dignity, great company, good health, an active spiritual life, and a way to make meaningful contributions.

If you're a young person, what has this got to do with you? You too will one day get old—if you're lucky. In the meantime, you may be caring for elderly parents. You may be looking for a mentor or a wise confidant. You may need a grandparent for your kids, or a surrogate grandparent for yourself. And an elder out there may need you to care about them, to challenge them, and to share your passions.

The truth is we need each other across the generations. And in this time of mounting crises, we need our elders to act as elders and take a stand for the next seven generations.



Sarah Ruth van Gelder
Executive Editor

P.S. Would you like to share your experience with eldering or with elders? Are you interested in discussing this issue, or connecting with *YES!* readers in your community? E-mail us at editors@yesmagazine.org or write to the address on page 4.

contents

respecting elders, becoming elders

Barbara Peacock

also . . .

Justin Sullivan

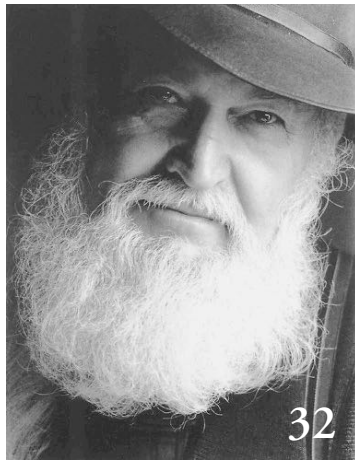


photo provided by Fleming & Associates, Inc.

departments

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readersforum

Write to us! Send your response to a *YES!* article, your stories about making the world a better place, or your ideas for connecting with *YES!* readers to editors@yesmagazine.org*

Roots in Berea

I copied and sent to friends and family the article in *YES!* (Summer 2005) on the Berea College Ecovillage. We are creating an eco-village here in Detroit, so I knew these friends would want a copy.

I gave all my children a copy, because Berea is close to home. Berea is in Madison County, Kentucky, 15 miles from Richmond, where I was born. All of my five children went to a summer science camp at Berea while in high school.

My radical ways are traced back through my mother, grandmother, and great-grandfather (D.B.). D.B., who was four years old at Emancipation, enrolled at Berea College in 1879. He was in school with James Bond, grandfather of civil rights leader Julian Bond. Quite a few folks were radicalized at Berea in the 1880s. D.B. would get put off the bus every Saturday with my mother for refusing to sit in the back during the 1930s and '40s.

Thanks so much from my family for the article on Berea.

Jim Embry
Detroit, Michigan

A *YES!*-inspired Pilgrimage

I made a trip to Portland, Oregon, solely inspired by the article "Street-Corner Revolution." Three of us drove down from Seattle on a quest to find these neighborhood sites described in the article—a sculpted cob elephant on a community sauna, a lending library and produce-sharing station, mosaics and painted sunflowers—all on public land.

They were all there, just as pictured—only a little wetter. We saw the garden, kids' playhouse, and the tea tree, too. I even traded some clothing at the free exchange (that's what the produce station becomes when produce is out of season) for a small feathered bird ornament.

I planned to send it to you to prove my story, but we had a particularly nice flight attendant on the trip back, so we left the bird tied to the seat back instead.

Anima Sarah LaVoy
Director, SwingSemester.org

City Repair Branches Out

Since "Street-Corner Revolution" ran in the *YES!* Summer 2004 issue, Portland, Oregon's City Repair Project has been inspiring creative activities in communities across the U.S. and Canada. Portland's City Repair representatives have shared the City Repair story with more than 50 communities, providing resources and creating toolkits to guide organized group action and intersection repairs.

So far more than a dozen cities have created groups hosting community tea houses, urban natural building projects, and intersection repairs.

A cob bench can now be found at the Oakland Zoo, courtesy of Oakland City Repair. Seattle City Repair reports that the Department of Neighborhoods gave Seattle City Repair a $10,000 grant this year to organize their efforts and work with Portland City Repair.

For more information about City Repair and its organizing

* *or write to us at:*
Editors, *YES!* magazine
PO Box 10818
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

guidebook and DVDs, visit www.cityrepair.org.

Katrina Zavalney, City Repair
Portland, Oregon

Taos Readers Create Community

I was one of 12 *YES!* readers who met on June 30th, at a home near Taos, New Mexico, for tea, dessert, and discussion. We were a diverse lot in terms of age, background, and methods of making a living. But we shared an outrage at those in power we believe are taking our country, and the world, in a direction we don't wish to go. And we have all found that reading about those who are engaged in positive action has helped us stave off the despair that anger often generates.

Many had already adopted sustainable practices beyond recycling. Several, including our hosts, had built "earthships"—homes built into the earth with dirt-filled used tires and lots of south-facing glass. They live "off-the-grid" with solar panels and rainwater-harvesting cisterns.

Kevin, produce manager in a local grocery, is buying more from local farmers rather than agribusinesses that truck food over great distances. Bob has learned to live simply on a few hundred dollars a month.

Some of us (an editor, a museum archivist and artist, a speech/language therapist, a nonprofit organizer) are living more conventionally. We have all engaged in political action to some degree, even if just signing petitions and sending e-mails. But a common thread in the discussion was that so much more needs to be done and we often feel powerless.

We are going to continue to meet and use our *YES!* community to regain our power—to learn from and support each other, to turn despair into action. We are grateful to the magazine for providing this forum and encourage reader get-togethers in other regions. Dessert helps!

Helen Rynaski
Taos, New Mexico

Join Readers Groups

I would love to get together regularly with other fans of *YES!* in Racine, Wisconsin, to talk about ideas and to generate actions we can take to promote healthier lives. If you live in my area and are interested in coming together once a month, call me at 262/637-3119.

Betty Brenneman
Racine, Wisconsin

I'm interested in meeting *YES!* readers in Albuquerque. I want to meet people who believe that a better world is possible and who have the passion to help create that world! I'd love to host a gathering of *YES!* readers at my house in Albuquerque. If you'd like to attend, please contact me at gypsyjuice@yahoo.com.

Margaret Ambler Kamp
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Editors' Note: If you are interested in forming a *YES!* readers' group in your community, please send postal mail to the address on page 4 or e-mail us at YEScircles@yesmagazine.org. We'll help you contact *YES!* readers in your area.

Correction

We omitted a credit for the architectural drawing of the Growing Vine Street Project ("The New City Beautiful," Spring 2005). The drawing was by Carlson Architects. We regret the error.

Continued on page 61

yes! Fall 2005
Issue #35

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Unanimous: It's Time for Action on Climate

Paul Sakuma

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, center, and Burien, Washington, Mayor Arun Jhaveri, left, at the World Environment Conference in San Francisco. Nickels challenged mayors to adopt the Kyoto Protocol

Mayors from across the country and the political spectrum voted unanimously in June to support a climate protection agreement, forming the nation's largest coalition of elected leaders working to halt global warming. Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels led the drive for the agreement, which challenged the U.S. Conference of Mayors to join 141 countries in adopting the Kyoto Protocol.

The Bush administration continues to reject the Kyoto Protocol, but 173 mayors in 37 states, from Austin, Texas to Bellevue, Nebraska, have signed the mayors' agreement, which calls for a 7 percent reduction in 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 2012.

"Mayors across America are making it clear; we're not going to wait for the federal government to do something to prevent the production of greenhouse gases," said Nickels in a statement marking the agreement's signing.

"We can't stop global warming without emissions reductions in cities," and that means energy efficiency, renewable energy, smart growth, and public transportation, Nickels said. Cities account for three-quarters of the world's energy consumption.

The International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), a nonprofit that supports local governments to fight global warming, helped 156 U.S. cities reduce greenhouse gas emission by 23 million tons in 2004 through their Cities for Climate Protection Campaign.

Although the mayors' agreement is non-binding, ICLEI will be helping Nickles monitor cities' progress and acting as a support network for the mayors.

Building on the momentum created by the conference, ICLEI, in concert with actor Robert Redford and Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson, hosted the Sundance Summit in July to provide additional tools to U.S. mayors to mitigate global warming.

U.S. cities aren't the only ones taking action to reduce pollution. Mayors from 50 cities around the world signed the Urban Environmental Accords in San Francisco in June. These commit cities to 21 actions for sustainable urban living and address seven environmental concerns for the world's largest cities: water, energy, waste, urban design, transportation, urban nature, and environmental health.

As part of the global effort to address global warming, New Zealand has become the first country to introduce a tax on emission of carbon that will make oil and coal more costly, and hydro, solar, and wind relatively cheaper sources of energy. In a different twist, Japan is asking businessmen to take off their traditional suits and ties and don "Cool Biz" apparel this summer to allow office air conditioners to be set at a mandatory 82.4 degrees to save energy.

—Megan Tady

Megan Tady is a free-lance writer and a former* YES! *intern.

Workers Win Minimum Wage Raises

With the federal minimum wage stagnating since 1997, the states are stepping in to bring wages up. Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Wisconsin became the latest states to raise their minimum wages this year, bringing to 17 the number of states with minimums higher than the federal rate. Hawaii and Maryland may follow soon;

their legislatures also passed raises this year.

Five states now raise their minimum wages automatically with inflation. Last fall, Florida and Nevada voters overwhelmingly voted to join Oregon and Washington in indexing the minimum wage to inflation (see *YES!* Spring 2005), while Vermont's legislature in June passed a bill to do the same.

Adjusted for inflation, the federal minimum wage has fallen to 40 percent of its 1968 value.

In March, Senator Edward Kennedy introduced an amendment to the federal bankruptcy bill that would have raised the federal minimum, but it was stripped from the final bill.

Cities are also taking action to raise wages. According to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), 130 municipalities have passed living wage laws raising pay rates to as high as $13 an hour for employees of firms that contract with the cities. In Chicago, in the wake of debates over Wal-Mart's push to enter the city, Alderman Joe Moore is sponsoring a "Big-Box Living Wage" ordinance that requires chain stores like Wal-Mart to pay workers $10 an hour and provide benefits.

Although voters across the political spectrum have shown support for higher minimum wages, raises face hurdles. Both Maryland's and California's Republican governors vetoed bills raising state minimums. In Maryland, the legislature had passed the measure with a majority large enough to override the governor's veto, but as of press time has yet to do so. In California, activists are working to put a minimum wage initiative on the fall ballot. In Wisconsin, the law raising the minimum passed the Republican-controlled legislature only after a measure was included prohibiting higher local-level minimums, such as those in effect in Madison and Milwaukee.

—Carolyn McConnell

Native American Trust Fund Reform Urged

A nine-year court battle by Blackfeet accountant and banker Elouise Cobell has prompted a coalition of American Indian leaders to propose a multi-billion dollar settlement to Indians and dramatic reform of the Indian trust fund. The proposal may be implemented in federal legislation being introduced this year. The trust fund has been unable to account for billions of dollars in oil, gas, and land-use royalties the government has collected on behalf of an estimated 500,000 individual Indians. Indian leaders estimate the amount owed to be at least $100 billion.

For decades, Cobell has sought to change policies and practices of the U.S. Department of Interior that deny Indian families land-use profits owed them. In 1996, she filed a class action case (Cobell v. Norton) on behalf of 300,000 Indian families. A federal judge hearing the case in 1999 said the accounts were so botched that it was impossible to know what was owed to whom, especially since Interior had destroyed hundreds of boxes of documents. Officials of several U.S. administrations have been held in contempt of court for failing to account for the monies, and the federal courts were placed in charge of overseeing the process of fixing the trust funds.

The Allotment Act of 1887, intended to assimilate Indians into American society, divided 90 million acres of reservation land into individual lots called allotments. The federal government awarded allotments to tribal members, but took charge of these lands and leased them to gas, oil, timber, grazing, and mining companies. About $300 million a year flows into the trust fund. That money was supposed to be passed to the Indians, but Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs often failed to do so. Despite complaints and congressional investigations, Native Americans have never received all the money due.

Both the Clinton and Bush administrations refused to settle the case, but in June, tribal leaders converged on Washington to urge a $27.5 billion settlement and offer a set of 50 principles for reform of the trust fund. Senators John McCain of Arizona and Byron Dorgan of North Dakota are sponsoring legislation to implement many of these recommendations, including fixing the trust system without taking money away from other Indian programs, reallocating splintered lands, and assuring proper future accounting of Indian trust funds. After 118 years and with compound interest owed, according to federal courts, the price tag is enormous. Indian leaders regard the $27.5 billion figure as significantly discounted.

Many American Indian communities are desperately poor and tribal governments are chronically short of funds to pay for health care and education.

—Patricia Powers

For more information, go to www.fcnl.org. Patricia Powers is a member of the Friends Committee on National Legislation, Native American Advocacy Program.

Wal-Mart Draws Canadian Opposition

Canadian opposition to Wal-Mart is heating up. This spring, Wal-Mart closed a store in Jonquiére, Quebec, where employees won union certification—only the second to unionize among North America's 3,413 Wal-Mart branches and the first among Canada's 264 branches. The closure

Terry Ashe

Congress of American Indians President Tex Hall, left, Elouise Cobell of the Blackfeet Tribe, center, and Jimmy Goddard, from the same tribe, visited Capitol Hill in February to press for reform of federal management of royalties from Indian lands

Gustavo Ferrari

Women's rights activist Rola Dashti, left, and Dr. Massouma al-Mubarak, second left, the first female cabinet minister in Kuwait, sing Kuwait's national anthem as Kuwait's parliament grants women political rights

brought down the wrath of a group of Quebec nuns, caused hundreds to protest, and drew the concern of the Catholic Church. A second Quebec Wal-Mart store unionized in Saint-Hyacinthe in January. It remains open.

On May 6, the day the Jonquiére Wal-Mart was slated to close its doors for good, hundreds of Canadians formed a human mosaic that turned the famous Wal-Mart smile into a sneer to protest the firing of almost 200 employees. The store cited financial problems as the cause of the closure. According to a poll by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada, 80 percent of Canadians believe this to be a pretense for removing the union less than a year after its accreditation.

The Wal-Mart website reads, "Because we believe in maintaining an environment of open communication, we do not believe there is a need for third-party representation." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, union grocery workers in the U.S. receive an average of $10.65 per hour, $2.38 more than Wal-Mart employees.

The U.S. has only had one successful Wal-Mart unionization attempt. In 2000, 10 meatcutters from Jacksonville, Texas, voted seven to three to start a union. Two weeks later, Wal-Mart centralized meat packaging nationwide, eliminating their jobs.

Union certification is easier in Canada, where, under Quebec law, the Labor Board automatically grants union certification if 50 percent of employees sign cards favoring unionization of their workplace.

In the U.S., union certification can take place only after a lengthy election process in which there are few penalties for employer intimidation of workers. According to a study by Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University, half the U.S. companies that face union campaigns threaten to close their plants and one-fourth fire at least one union supporter to derail the campaigns.

—Valerie Doyle

For information about worker and community opposition to Wal-Mart practices, go to www.wakeupwalmart.com.

Kuwaiti Women Win Political Rights

After years of pressure from women's rights groups, in May Kuwait's parliament granted women the right to vote and stand for election. The vote came too late for municipal elections in May, but weeks later, the first two women in the country's history were appointed to the municipal council. On June 12, Kuwait's first woman cabinet minister was appointed.

Women will be able to participate in the next parliamentary elections in 2007 and in municipal elections in 2009. Conservative opponents of women's rights had repeatedly blocked the changes, and Islamists loudly disrupted the swearing-in of the new woman minister for planning, Massouma al-Mubarak.

Until now, only male Kuwaiti citizens over 21 who were not members of the police or military could vote. According to the Al Jazeera news service, that means only 139,000 voters are registered to cast ballots out of 960,000 Kuwaitis. With women over 21 voting, the figure could reach 339,000.

—Carolyn McConnell

Wind Power Takes Off

One of the world's largest wind farms is now planned for the Greater Thames Estuary, 12 miles off the coast of England. The estimated $2.75 billion project will include 270 wind turbines spread over 152 square miles and is projected to supply 1,000 megawatts (MW), enough electricity to power about one quarter of the homes in London. The project, to be completed by 2011, will be built by London Array Limited, a consortium that includes Shell Wind-Energy and others.

Concerns have been voiced by some environmentalists that the wind farm may harm wildlife and shipping. Other environmental organizations, including Friends of the Earth, support the project as a significant move toward addressing climate change through emissions-free power generation.

Due in large part to rising fuel prices, 2004 was a banner year for wind power, especially in Europe. According to the Global Wind Energy Council, global wind power capacity in 2004 grew 20 percent to a total of 47,317 MW, with 72 percent of the new installations in Europe. The leaders are currently Germany and Spain with 16,629 MW and 8,263 MW of capacity respectively.

The U.S. has 6,740 MW of wind capacity on-line. According to the American Wind Energy Association, U.S. developers will bring between 2,000 and 2,500 MW of new U.S. wind power projects on-line this year, breaking previous records. California is likely to remain in the lead in the U.S, with more than 365 MW of planned projects. However, other states, such as Texas and New York, are catching up.

With increased demand, suppliers of wind equipment have begun to raise prices, raising capital costs of wind turbines. However, no developer has cancelled a wind project recently because of costs, and experts see the cost increases as a sign that the industry is growing more profitable and healthier. Stable operation costs—including zero

fuel costs and zero risk of depletion of the fuel—make wind power an increasingly attractive alternative to fossil-fuel generation as fossil-fuel prices continue to increase unpredictably and supplies show signs of depletion.

However, William Kelly writes in California Energy Circuit that the U.S. wind industry is still tenuous and its health will depend in part on whether Congress extends the federal wind production tax credit, which is set to expire at the end of the year.

—Rik Langendoen

Indigenous Power Swells in Bolivia

Latin America's growing resistance to corporate globalization exploded again in May and June, when hundreds of thousands of predominately indigenous Bolivians took to the streets, calling for nationalization of the country's natural gas and creation of an indigenous-controlled state.

The centrist president, Carlos Mesa, was forced to resign on June 6 and was replaced by interim president and head of the Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodriguez.

Early presidential and congressional elections will take place in December, and Congress has agreed to a referendum next July to reform the constitution and create an assembly with greater representation of Bolivia's indigenous people, who make up 65 percent of Bolivia's population.

July's election will also include a referendum on regional autonomy for the eastern section of Santa Cruz, which is rich in natural gas deposits and inhabited predominately by wealthier, European-descended and mestizo residents. Many there are afraid that the growing movement for indigenous power and nationalization of resources will frighten off corporate investment.

A key contender for the presidency is Evo Morales of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), an Aymara coca farmer who has fought U.S.-backed eradication of the traditional coca plant and narrowly lost the last presidential election. Other leading candidates are former president Jorge Quiroga and Samuel Doria Medina, a cement magnate and former government minister.

Morales advocates a 50 percent tax on earnings of multinational corporations. More radical solutions are favored by Felipe Quispe, leader of the Pachakutik Indigenous Movement. Quispe calls for complete nationalization of gas resources and the creation of an Andean state controlled by indigenous people and composed of parts of Boliva, Peru, and Argentina.

This spring's protests erupted after Congress agreed to tax corporations profiting from Bolivian natural resources, but stopped short of nationalization.

Waving the multi-colored flag known as the Wiphala, symbolizing continental unity of indigenous people, demonstrators blocked roads, lit sticks of dynamite, swarmed down from the shantytown hills of El Alto into La Paz and converged on cities throughout the country. These demonstrations followed similar actions in October 2003, when protestors brought down president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, and in 2000, when Bechtel corporation was forced by massive popular resistance to abandon its water privatization project, which put the cost of water out of reach of many local residents.

—Lisa Garrigues

Lisa Garrigues is a* YES! *contributing editor.

Cities Go Wireless

This spring, the movement for community wireless networks won a major victory, when Philadelphia Mayor John Street launched a project to create a citywide wireless Internet network. The project aims to break down the "digital divide" that keeps the city's economically and socially disadvantaged citizens from accessing the Web.

In November, Mayor Street's plans were almost blocked when Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell signed a law that banned local governments from delivering broadband services without first getting permission from the local phone company. Wireless Philadelphia was permitted to continue with its project after Governor Rendell amended the bill to go into effect after January 1, 2006.

Thanks to lobbying from telecom giants such as Verizon—which argue that municipalities have an unfair advantage because they can use tax dollars and tax-exempt bonds to fund their networks—more than a dozen states

Dado Galdieri

Bolivian Aymara indigenous priests protest the policies of President Carlos Mesa in La Paz in May

have passed similar bills that restrict local governments from offering wireless services.

Nonprofit Wireless Philadelphia is faced with the task of raising funds for the $10 million project and administering it. Its goal of installing 3,000 wireless nodes across 135 square miles of the city is one of the largest undertakings of its kind within the U.S.

Wireless Philadelphia will offer free Internet access in some public spaces and affordable internet service throughout the city by partnering with a number of Internet service providers. If all goes as planned, the city should have all 3,000 nodes installed by the summer of 2006.

Other cities have already begun to provide wireless access. In Portland, Oregon, self-employed workers, telecommuters, and students can use the Web and send e-mails from local coffee shops, thanks to the Personal Telco Project. This nonprofit organization, with the support of volunteers, grants, and business owners, has set up 100 wireless "hot spots," or nodes, throughout the city since 2000. The network will soon expand into North Portland, serving an additional 3,000 residents.

Personal Telco is based on a set of guidelines known as the Wireless Commons Manifesto, a national charter created in 2003 by the movement for community wireless, leaders of which include Personal Telco founder, Adam Shand. The guidelines ensure that the network remains an open entity, in which people can anonymously sign on and share information free of charge.

Seattle provides wireless access on a commuter train line between Tacoma and Seattle, on several Washington state ferries, and in open hot spots in several city neighborhoods.

—Becky Brun

To learn more, see www.wirelessphiladelphia.org, www.personaltelco.net, and www.freenetworks.org. Becky Brun is a former* YES! *intern and free-lance writer living in Portland, Oregon.

Ed Andrieski

Bob Megrath, executive director of Coloradans for Voting Integrity, speaks in favor of paper ballots at a rally in Denver last year

States Turn to Paper Ballots

Twenty-one states have passed laws requiring voter-verified paper ballots. Such legislation has passed but awaits governor's action in three additional states; legislation is pending in another 14 and the District of Columbia.

Paperless electronic voting machines were widely adopted by states and counties as a solution to problems in the 2000 presidential election. However, the machines caused a number of problems in 2002 and 2004—including in Florida, where 35 percent of precincts lost votes or tallied more votes than voters; Maryland, where touch screen machines froze when voters pushed the "Cast Ballot" button; Indiana, where vote totals and number of voters disagreed. A grassroots movement criticized the machines for making recounting and verification of ballots impossible, and began pressing for paper ballots. (See "Safeguarding the Vote," *YES!* Summer 2003.)

That movement is now showing results. Before 2003, only New Hampshire and South Dakota required paper ballots.

At the federal level, Representative Rush Holt, Democrat of New Jersey, reintroduced his bill from last year as H.R. 550, the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2005; the bill has 143 cosponsors. Republican Representative Jim Gibbons of Nevada introduced the Voting Integrity and Verification Act of 2005. Both amend the Help America Vote Act to require voter-verified paper ballots and are endorsed by Verified Voting, the organization founded by Stanford computer scientist David Dill, which has been in the lead on electronic voting issues.

—Doug Pibel

Doug Pibel is a* YES! *contributing editor. For more on electronic voting, see* YES! *Summer 2003, Fall 2003, and Winter 2004, and senior editor Carolyn McConnell's blog, www.yesmagazine.org/cmblog.

Saudis Warn of Oil Shortfall

Saudi Arabia is privately warning European and U.S. energy officials that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) can't meet the world's projected demand for oil, the *Financial Times* reported in July. The International Energy Agency projected that the oil cartel would have to boost production from current levels of 30 million to 50 million barrels per day by 2020 to meet demand. The Saudis say OPEC will fall short of that by 4.5 million barrels per day.

As the world's biggest oil producer with the world's largest reserves, Saudi Arabia has been widely seen as the source that could best meet rising global oil demand. However, energy investor Matthew Simmons warns in his recent book, *Twilight in the Desert,* that Saudi Arabia is at or near the peak of its production. He argues that Saudi Arabia's giant oil fields are 40 to 50 years old, are becoming depleted, and continue to produce at high levels only because the Saudis have begun using secondary recovery methods, including water injection.

—Carolyn McConnell

The* Financial Times *article is available at www.energybulletin.net/newswire.php?id=7156.

the page that counts

Number of people on the U.S. "no-fly" list in September 2004: 19,000
Number of people on the list in April 2005: 31,000[1]
Number of times Senator Ted Kennedy was stopped and questioned at airports in March 2004 because his name appeared on the list: 5[2]
Percent of American children expelled from school before they reach kindergarten: 6.67[3]
Average annual health care costs of an elderly person with income under $10,000/year: $14,692
Average annual health care costs of an elderly person with income over $30,000/year: $8,855[4]
Average amount each American spends on health care each year: $4,887
Average amount each Canadian spends on health care each year: $2,702[5]
Number of the 44 attempted gun purchases by people on the FBI terrorist watch list that the FBI failed to prevent last year: 35[6]
Number of interstate highways in Hawaii: 4
Number in Puerto Rico: 3[7]
Percent of Americans who say they do not follow international news because they lack background knowledge: 65
Percent of Americans who say they do not follow international news because there is too much war and violence: 42[8]
Percent of National Guard and reservists who could not be deployed last year because they had serious dental problems: 20
Percent of National Guard members without dental insurance: 40[9]
Number of U.S. newborns named Lexus since 2000: 1,495
The name's popularity rank: 792[10]
Shrinking of glaciers in the Alps each year since 1970: 1%
Years until the Alpine glaciers melt completely, if summers continue to be hot and dry: 50
Size of the blanket that a Swiss ski resort is using to try to save its glacier: 3–4,000 square meters[11]
Number of peer-reviewed articles on climate change published in scientific journals between 1993 and 2003 that disputed the reality of human-caused global warming: 0[12]
Number of American medical schools, out of 126 surveyed, that required students to take a course on death and dying before graduation: 4[13]
Miles per gallon that the Toyota Prius hybrid gets, city/highway: 60/51
Miles per gallon that the Ford Escape hybrid gets: 36/31
Miles per gallon that the Chevy Silverado hybrid gets: 18/21[14]
Percent increase in sales of the Prius over the last year: 21.3[15]
Number of times a moose rang a family's doorbell in Buvikåsen, Norway, before giving up: 2[16]

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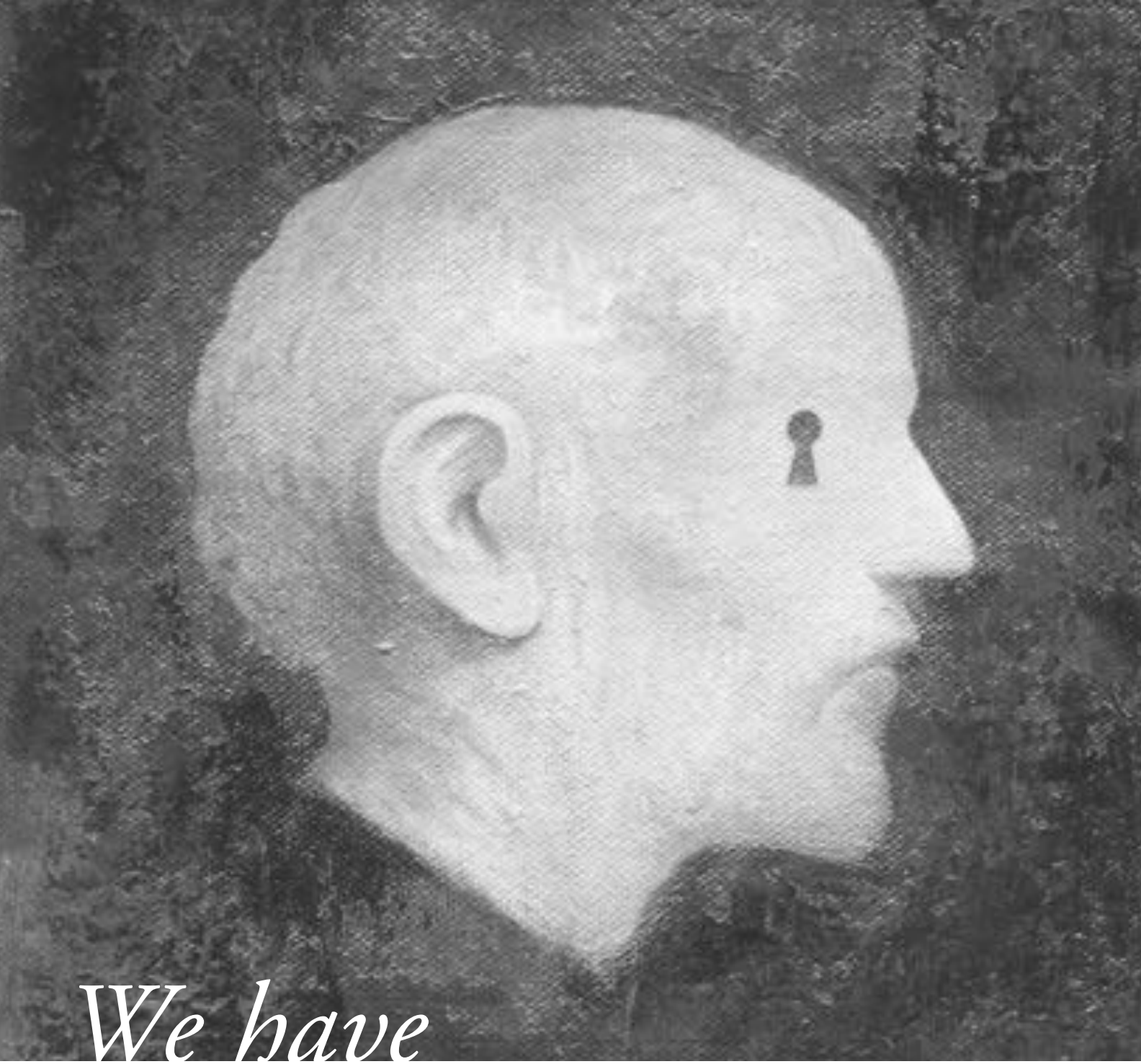


Gerard Dubois/ Marlena Agency

We have the largest cohort of elders ever to live. What if these people, steeped in life experience and with access to the perennial wisdoms, turn out to be our saving grace?

what is old age for?

William H. Thomas

Old age is humanity's greatest invention, and on an even deeper level, it invented us. Old age transformed the way our most distant ancestors gave birth, reared their young, lived together, and fed themselves. Later it propelled the development of culture, language, and society.

Humans are primates, and among all primates we are most closely related to chimpanzees. We hold 98 percent of our genetic code in common with them. Yet a comparison of human and chimp life cycles reveals some unexpected differences.

Human beings can live twice as long as our nearest relatives—surprising in itself. Astonishing, however, is that all of this additional longevity follows the loss of fertility. Chimp and human females become fertile at nearly the same age and remain fertile for about four decades. For the aging chimpanzee, death follows hard on the heels of the loss of fertility. The human female possesses a nearly 50-year longevity bonus that follows the end of fertility. Our postreproductive longevity exists because it affords our species a unique and powerful competitive advantage. Hidden within this extraordinary elongation of life is the story of who we are and how we came to be.

The first grandmother

One million years ago on the plains of Africa, a hominid child cries out from hunger. Her mother has recently given birth and is distracted by the needs of her helpless infant. The delivery was long and difficult and much blood was lost. The mother barely has the strength to nurse her infant. She can neither feed nor care for her older child. The mother of the new mother, the grandmother of the crying child, is moved to act. Thus was the first tentative step taken down the long road that led to the development of the modern human being. The deliberate enlistment of grandparents into the work of rearing the young stands as a defining characteristic of Homo sapiens.

Substantial advantages accrue to offspring who can be cared for by two generations of adults. The extra food and attention significantly improve survival rates. University College researchers in London found that in Gambia, infant mortality rates dropped by 50 percent if the maternal grandmother was present in the household (interestingly, no benefit was found when the paternal grandmother was in residence). Ruth Mace, one of the researchers, noted that the presence or absence of the father had no bearing on infant survival: "If the grandmother dies, you notice it; if the father does, you don't."

Research in India has found similar results. Surely the grandmothers' contributions of time, energy, and material resources across generational lines are important, but that is not all there is to it. Humans, in

Sue Kyllonen

particular humans living in active multigenerational families and communities, benefit from intergenerational affection.

The genius of human longevity

The development of menopause and the refinement of grandparenting played a critical role in the physical evolution of the modern human, but the story does not stop there. About 40,000 years ago, another remarkable round of adaptations changed how people lived. Homo sapiens generalized the benefits of grandparenthood by linking old age to the work of social evolution. The development of human culture—its refinement, storage, and transmission—was woven into the fabric of old age.

An African proverb says, "The death of an old person is like the loss of a library." In these words are embedded the important role given to older adults in many African cultures. After a person has productively lived his or her life as an adult in the community, he or she is honored by initiation into the elder circle. This usually happens around the age of 65.

These elders, now masters of the school of life, have the responsibility for facilitating the transition from childhood to adulthood of new generations. They are responsible for and oversee the process of initiation. The idea of elders as "library" also reveals the fact that only the elders have full access to the tribe's knowledge base. The elders safeguard the highest secrets of the tribe and protect its medicine and inner technologies. They incarnate the wisdom of the society, which they happily share, often in the form of storytelling.

Anyone in the last half of life can attest to the difficulties, the aching joints, the fading eyesight. What is open to interpretation is the meaning of these changes. What if they are understood as a form of preparation (not unlike adolescence) for a new life as an elder of the community?

The physical decline that comes with aging actually cements the relationship between old and young. Indeed, an old man still capable of stalking, killing, and butchering a mastodon would have little inclination to spend hours doting on grandchildren, telling them stories, and instructing them in the ways of their people. An old woman still capable of producing young of her own would hardly be inclined to pour time, love, and attention into the lives of her grandchildren. The physiological changes that accompany old age, and upon which contemporary society heaps unlimited scorn, are actually essential preconditions for a socially productive old age.

Human elders have long been known as peacemakers, and for good reason. The physical changes that accompany advancing age make conflict, armed and otherwise, worthless to the old. Like statesmen serving their final terms in office, elders are freed from the tactical maneuvering that defines the struggle for adult rank and prestige. It is this freedom that allows them to put forth unique interpretations of the problems faced by their families and communities. The awareness of one's mortality that normally arises in late life—and so terrifies adults—opens new perspectives for elders on the world in which they live.

Being an elder

The promises of the current anti-aging fad perpetuate an illusion of unlimited longevity. This strengthens the characteristic adult devotion to doing, having, and getting. The result is an underdeveloped, increasingly dysfunctional population

Elders, now masters of the school of life, have the responsibility for facilitating the transition from childhood to adulthood of new generations

of developmentally delayed adults who are prone to catastrophic errors of judgment. The mania for having and getting diminishes the value of stewardship in our culture. The preservation of resources for the benefit of those yet to be born, or even for the common good of those living now, is airily dismissed as simple-minded idealism. At the root of it all is the adult fantasy of unlimited time, unlimited wealth, unlimited resources, and unlimited information.

Adulthood itself is a right and fine thing. I am an adult. I love adulthood. I find daily pleasure in living as an adult and have no interest in returning to the childhood I have outgrown. Nor am I ready to enter into an elderhood that requires perspective, experience, and judgment that I do not yet possess. Adulthood, rightly understood, provides us with a productive, potentially glorious interlude between youth and old age. The problems begin when we conceive of it as a permanent necessity, an apex of human experience that must be defended and enlarged no matter what the cost.

Adulthood is chained to the rock of doing. When two adults meet, it is rare for more than a minute to pass before one of them pops the question, "What do you do?" Adults inhabit a world of tasks and schedules, payments, obligations, and jobs that need to be done. Yet in all this busy doing, they may ignore deeper questions of whether those tasks are worth doing and whether they foster meaningful relationships. These are questions not of doing but of being.

Doing and being are best thought of as two sides of one coin. As humans age, the action-oriented strategies of DOING-being give way to the indirect and subtle influence of BEING-doing.

Consider how adults and elders bake cookies. The adult tends to approach cookie baking as one more item on a long list of things to do. The children are either banished from the proceedings or—if the adult is feeling particularly guilty about a perceived deficit in the "quality time with the children" account—the children will be included, with some apprehension. The cookies are baked with dispatch, and dire warnings about eating raw cookie dough (possibly salmonella) are issued along with lessons about the virtue of cleaning up as you go.

The elder is much more likely to want to bake cookies than to have to bake cookies. As a result, children are more than welcome. Eating raw cookie dough? "Never mind what your mother says; go right ahead." Flour, sugar, and eggs are used with abandon. Bizarre and experimental cookie shapes are welcomed. The crucial difference between the adult and the elder is that the former is fixated on the doing while the latter seeks the being. The adult cares about the cookies and is happy to log some quality time if possible. The elder cares about the relationship and is content with the cookies no matter how they turn out.

The central social and cultural challenges of our time revolve around the malignant enlargement of adulthood and the adult obsession with DOING-being. Adulthood, intoxicated by its own might, is intent on remaking youth and old age in its image. It has already defined the best child as the most precocious child. The *wunderkind* mimics adult behaviors and styles of work and learning. Likewise, adulthood demands that those who would remain worthy defy their age and continue to think, walk, talk, look, and work like adults.

Liberating elders

In 21st century America, only two categories of people still face routine and even permanent institutionalization—criminals and the elderly. In the last half of the 20th century, prisons and nursing homes both experienced a steady rise in the number of inmates. The true nature of the nursing home is especially obvious to those schooled in the ways of institutions. One prisoner wrote to tell me how much the nursing homes where he visited his grandmother reminded him of prison, and I have received many communications like this one from a former nursing home resident:

I have recently returned from "rehabilitation care" in a nursing home. I have pretty severe cerebral palsy and had breast cancer surgery. The nursing home environment did more to slow the healing process than help. I got a terrifying glimpse into a future in such facilities. I would rather die than have to exist in such

The old and frail are able to surmount the dizzy bustle that clings to the young—to enter a time and place in which the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human life take precedence

Clemens Kalischer

a place where residents are neglected, ignored, patronized, infantilized, demeaned, where the environment is chaotic, noisy, cold, clinical, even psychotic.

Early advocates for the aged understandably concentrated their efforts on eradicating the mistreatment of the old. They were among the first to speak openly against the agism and overt bigotry practiced toward the aged. The much broader effort to liberate elders and elderhood, however, has yet to be truly begun. Such a crusade is necessary not because it can right wrongs that are visited on older people (although it can) but because it is the essential precondition for a new culture committed to a better quality of life for people of all ages.

The elder-guided society (I call it Eldertopia) is and should be run by the vigorous adults of the time. Elders should intervene at critical points to ensure that the adults take into account perspectives that are too easily ignored by those gripped by the fever of rank and wealth.

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans over age 65 has more than tripled, and those who reached age 65 in 1998 could expect to live on average another 17.8 years. Far from being ravenous locusts determined to consume an ever-increasing share of scarce resources, our growing number of elders represents an unprecedented windfall. I believe that the elders of our time form the only force capable of returning adulthood to healthier bounds. Consider the gifts a liberated elderhood could offer our society.

Elders have always made important contributions to the young of their families and communities. For thousands of years, relationships between young and old have made life better for both groups. In Eldertopia, all school construction and remodeling projects would include housing and community services for elders.

Elder councils could provide a balancing perspective that considers the long-term consequences of any proposed action. The topics addressed might well include matters that the conventional political system would rather sweep under the rug.

Elders have long spoken for Earth, its living creatures, and the children who are yet to be born. Eldertopia would have an Elder Conservation Corps that would tackle projects that strengthen the health and vitality of the natural world.

Any honest accounting of the potential influence of elders and elderhood must address the contributions not only of fit and energetic elders. It must recognize the contributions that people who are weak, ill, infirm, dependent, demented, disabled, and dying can make to this struggle. The old and frail are able to surmount the dizzy bustle that clings to the young—to enter a time and place in which the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human life take precedence over the humdrum workings (and failings) of organs, tissues, and systems. This is among the most admirable of all human endeavors. What the old and frail do is show us the way. They provide us with greater insight into and a clearer perspective on the human condition.

The most elder-rich period of human history is upon us. How we regard and make use of this windfall of elders will define the world in which we live.

 William Thomas is a geriatrician who created the Eden Alternative and the Green House Project (see page 22).

Steve and Rita Old Coyote interviewed by Dee Axelrod

parenting: the sequel

these grandparents bring savvy and compassion to the task of raising another generation

Growing older doesn't mean slowing down when there are grandchildren to raise. In the United States alone, 4.5 million children live in households headed by grandparents, and the trend is on the increase, with 1.2 million more elders raising grandkids than there were a decade ago.

A demanding task at any age, parenting presents particular challenges to older people, but the intergenerational relationship can also be uniquely rewarding. For Native American elders Rita and Steve Old Coyote (Filipino-Stalö and Cree, respectively), raising grandchildren with extended family in Suquamish, Washington, means a chance to pass along traditions—and to play.

RITA: Steven and I, when we got together, we were always on the road traveling. But I told Steve, I want our kids to know their grandfather, I want them to know my dad, Ramon Cari. He's one of the Filipino pioneers. He came to the United States in 1930.

We moved to Suquamish in 1981. This house was in the paper for rent. As soon as I touched the gate, I knew it was our place, that my kids would be raised here.

I have a son, James—he'll be 32 next month. Jessi just turned 28. Janaka is 23, and Alyssum is 21. We have seven grandchildren now. James has a boy who's 12, Bearon. Jessi has Johnathan and Jenavieve, and Janaka has Christopher, who was just born on the 19th of June, and Noelani, who's two. Alyssum has Koh-Kai, who's almost three. And Awasis, who

is one. Alyssum's pregnant and she's due in August. So that will make eight.

DEE: Are all the kids living here except for Bearon?

RITA: People talk about how kids should grow up and move away. But I never thought that. You know, it gets a little hard sometimes, but I love this.

DEE: I was thinking of the connections from generation to generation. I know that you, Steve, had a grandmother who was important to you.

STEVE: My folks, I didn't hardly even know them. They were always messed up. I lived with my grandma most of the time. When you're little you need something to hang on to. You need a stable person. And she was it. She was the one that gave me the only stability I had in those days.

Everybody was really poor. We had to hunt, we had to raise and pick whatever else we could to fill in the gaps. She had one dress on, one in the closet, but she always was generous. She used to make medicine and give it to sick people. She always fed the bums that came by, set them on the porch with a bowl and a cup of water, and made them feel it was OK to be there.

I'd go fishing with her. She'd watch us play hockey. She was always there.

DEE: You've seen the birth of almost every grandchild. What's that like?

RITA: When Bearon was born and his mother, Skylene George, had him in the hospital, I was there, and it was the first time I ever witnessed it. It was so incredible.

STEVE: Johnathan took forever.

RITA: Well, Jessi had a hard time with both of her babies. With Jenavieve, Jessi's blood pressure shot up and so they took her a month early. Jessi was in the hospital for a couple weeks, and Jenavieve wasn't really healthy, either. I'd get up in the middle of the night and go to the nursery and just sit there with her. And everything was all quiet and dark, and she would be there, just laboring to breathe. And I would talk to her and pray, really pray.

STEVE: None of us were sure that she was going to be alive day-to-day. And Jessi, she sat with that girl day after night. She would comfort her and coax her and love her and rock her. Jessi never quit, she never gave up. She willed that baby to life.

RITA: At one point I didn't think Jenavieve's little spirit was with her. And I told Steve, you know, it just seems like her little spirit didn't come with her, it's stayed somewhere. So we did a ceremony and called her spirit to her. And then, all of a sudden, she was there. There was light in her eyes.

DEE: Does being there for their births make a strong bond?

RITA: Right from the get. Janaka did Caesarean, too. The second one, I was with her, and what an incredible experience that was. It was something entirely different. It took a while, it took longer than I thought it would. Then they held him up, and Dr. Macintyre, she goes, Happy birthday, little boy! With Alyssum, when Koh-Kai was born it was a long labor.

Her doctor, Dr. Zapata, was just yelling at her, "Push, push, push," and we're all screaming at her, "Push push, push," and finally she…

STEVE: She raised way up, and she yelled, "Get outa there!"

RITA: With Awasis, they induced her, and she was really suffering. It turned out the baby was sideways. So that was a quick C-section, they wheeled her in right away. But we were there.

DEE: You were involved when the babies came home. Sometimes you'd stay up all night.

RITA: You just do what you've got to do. I love cuddling them, they go to sleep in my arms. And there's nothing like it in the world. You know, it's so amazing thinking, as I hold these little ones, these grandchildren that are the children of my children, the great grandchildren of my dad and of Steve's parents, I just see the continuation of life. In my veins flows my dad's blood, and in my children's veins flows my dad's blood. And now here are these grandchildren and in their veins flows my dad's blood. To me, that's honorable, to carry on my dad, his memory and his legacy.

DEE: Steve, you've spoken about wanting to teach your carving to the next generation.

RITA: Bearon came to him a month ago and said, "Grandpa, can you help me carve this?" and he took out a picture of these carvings that are on Easter Island. So, Grandpa said, "Sure, let's do it." He showed him the wood grains and how to hold the knife. Everything, you know.

And there were things Bearon told Steve. Bearon said, "You can hear the wood. You can feel how the knife goes through the wood." And Steve said, "It's in his blood."

STEVE: It's like, what you want out of it is already there, it's been in that tree for hundreds of years. All you do is take away what's not already part of it. Bearon's got that concept.

DEE: You always have so much fun with them. I walk in the gate and there's always a bunch of little kids clustered around.

RITA: They're all over having a good time, and I think, that's what we do. We love them and we play with them. It's so cool being old and being able to be a little kid.

STEVE: Koh-kai, Noelani, and Jenavieve were on the trampoline jumping around and they holler, "Grampa, come and jump." And I'll go jump with them. Hell, yeah, play in the mud with them.

RITA: I love it when I go in the house in the morning and they come running and they fight over my lap.

DEE: But it's not just passing on traditions and it's not just playing. The fathers have not been as much involved. You've done a fair amount of hard-core work.

STEVE: Just what's got to be done for the kids. That's all that matters. We rush them to the hospital. We've hauled them to the doctor when they're throwing up in the middle of the night. And all that stuff that goes with it, that's just part of it. Sometimes you think about it, because we get pretty well drained financially. It doesn't have a thing to do with how we are with the grandkids, though. Not a thing.

RITA: They're gifts from God, and it's up to us to love them and nurture them and teach them compassion because they learn all the time from what's around them.

And so I can't even begin to describe the love that I have for them. There's no words.

Steve Old Coyote holds his three- week-old grandson, Christopher James. All photographs for this article by Linda Wolf

STEVE: I think for me, the very core of it, the very vortex of our relationship with each one of those kids, is that they're not afraid of us. We never hurt them, we never hit them or throw them around or spank them, so it's good like that, with them.

RITA: For me, I sit and I hold my grandchildren and I look into their eyes and I wonder what their lives are going to be. I pray for that light of protection to be around them, because God chose them to be here. And I want them to fulfill their destinies on this earth.

Japanese families are getting smaller while the ranks of the aged are growing. A co-operative has stepped into this vacuum, connecting thousands of elders who have something to give and something to receive

of, by, & for seniors

Robert Marshall

Tanaka Michiko, age 76, came in to change sheets at NewGreen Nursing Home in Kawasaki, Japan, "just to help" the other members of the cooperative linen-changing crew. Residents and staff beamed when they saw her, and she had something to say to each person she encountered. Tanaka had undergone stomach surgery six weeks earlier and lost more than 25 pounds. But Ito Aiko, crew chief, couldn't keep her away.

Tanaka was able to find work, take time off for surgery, recover at home with the help of home health care aides, and return to work, all at her own pace, because she is a member of Japan's new senior co-operative.

Koreikyo, or Seniors Co-operative, is a hybrid consumer and worker co-operative of, by, and for seniors. Its mission is to help seniors remain in their homes as long as possible. The co-op gets frail seniors the help they need to stay independent and helps able seniors—who often face age discrimination—find work that pays, keeps them active, and adds meaning to their lives. Members can both provide services and receive them, as Tanaka did.

Koreikyo, Japan's first (and so far only) seniors' co-operative, was started in 1995 by a retired labor organizer in his 70s who was suffering from diabetes. Because of his health challenges, Nakanishi Goshu looked for ways seniors might help themselves by helping each other. Nakanishi was among those who founded the Elderly and Chronically Unemployed Peoples' Union in the early 1970s.

By May 2000, more than 27,000 seniors had joined Koreikyo chapters around Japan, and today Koreikyo has more than 100,000 members and a chapter in each of the country's 47 provinces. The goal is 1 million members.

Eroding family support

Koreikyo's growth is one sign that the co-op is tapping into the profound needs created by Japan's shifting demographics.

"I don't have any children of my own; I never married," says Yoshida Kyoko, age 78, another member of the linen-changing crew at NewGreen Nursing Home.

During World War II, Japan lost nearly 3.3 million young men. As a result, more than 2 mil-

lion women did not marry and raise children. This group of women, Yoshida among them, cared for elderly parents. But now that they are in need of long-term care, many lack families to care for them. About half of Japan's aged continue to live with their families, but falling birth rates suggest that extended family living will be less a part of Japan's future. Yet, as in the U.S., the number of the elderly continues to grow.

"Without a family of my own, this chance to work here and rely on Koreikyo means a great deal to me," Yoshida says.

Owned by seniors, serving seniors

All Koreikyo members make a one-time purchase of a capital share in the co-op when they join (about $50 U.S., which is returned to members when they leave the co-op). They also pay an annual $30 membership fee, which includes a newsletter subscription. Their investment entitles them to the services their chapter provides.

Typical of co-operatives everywhere, Koreikyo is run democratically. Members elect a board of directors and officers. What makes Koreikyo unusual is the way it combines features of both consumer co-operatives, which are common in Japan, and worker co-operatives, which are not.

A "pay-as-you-go" ticket system functions as a kind of care-giving and -receiving currency. Members buy books of tickets, and as they use co-op services, they turn over the appropriate number of tickets to the co-op member providing the service. Service providers in turn redeem the tickets they've collected for their pay—or use the tickets to pay for services they receive. The co-op retains a small amount from each transaction to pay staff and to finance expansion.

Koreikyo members debate how much of its resources should be devoted to commercial services and how much to activities members enjoy with each other for their own sake. But Koreikyo offerings transcend such distinctions, as I learned when I met Uchida Hiroshi at the Kanagawa chapter office. He and his wife became members so Mrs. Uchida, who has diabetes, could use Koreikyo's transportation service to get to and from her twice-weekly dialysis treatments. Koreikyo transportation is a bit cheaper than taxis, and the couple prefers the personal touch and safety of the co-op drivers.

The day I met him, Uchida was at the co-op office looking for an activity for himself. "I've lived in this area for a long time, but I haven't been involved locally," he said. "It is much more difficult for men than women. Everything is about work for men. But you can't just stay home all the time watching TV. You'll go *boke* (senile) in no time."

Koreikyo members do lots of activities together, not all of them exactly what one might think would be part of a business. In addition to their home-helper service, nursing home assistance, and transportation for health care appointments, the Kawasaki chapter offers clothing re-tailoring and home repair and renovation. It also offers touring and hobby groups (knitting, doll-making), social service volunteer opportunities, reading and discussion circles, fund-raising activities for Koreikyo and charitable institutions, and newsletter publishing. In other parts of the country, chapters cook and deliver home meals, and run daycare centers for seniors and assisted living centers.

Koreikyo is also becoming an educational institution. In 2000, the Japanese government instituted a long-term nursing care insurance program that reimburses families for home helper services. The catch? Only certified home helpers could be paid, and not members of one's own family. Overnight, the program created an immense demand for home-helper training that would lead to certification. Koreikyo members started programs to train and certify themselves as home helpers, and then opened these programs to the general public.

Reshaping aging

There is no mass-membership organization for Japan's elderly such as AARP in the United States. Koreikyo staff has set a long-term goal of making Koreikyo that kind of advocate for Japan's elderly. In the meantime, Koreikyo has become a force that is changing the daily lives of the elderly more intimately than any advocacy group could.

"It is so important for people to help each other and do things together," says Uchida. "This is really the principle behind co-operatives, whether consumer co-operatives or medical co-ops or senior co-ops. What can people do together—that's what we have to discover."

In offering elders not only services and employment but independence, meaning, and connection, Koreikyo is reshaping the nature of aging in Japan.

Robert Marshall teaches anthropology at Western Washington University. He has been studying cooperation and co-operatives in Japan since 1989 and worked at the Kawasaki Koreikyo during the summer and fall of 2002. All names, except Nakanishi Goshu's, have been changed. Monoprint of grass on page 20 by Wendy Orville.

Housing alternatives for seniors

Photo courtesy the Green House Project

where will I live?

Carolyn McConnell

being warehoused in a nursing home is a fate many dread. What are the alternatives for a more dignified elderhood? Where would you want to live?

The Green House Project is William Thomas' vision of what could replace nursing homes (see his article, page 13). These are small residences, either free-standing homes or portions of apartment buildings, housing six to 10 people. The homes are integrated as much as possible into the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Each resident has a room to him or herself, and each room opens onto a central common room for socializing and dining. Long hallways that disable the frail, nursing stations, and medication carts are abolished. Nurses visit as needed, and residents keep medications in their own rooms. Staff are called *shahbazim* and are intended to serve, in Thomas' words, as "midwives of a new elderhood." The first four Green Houses opened in Tupelo, Mississippi, in 2004 and others are in the works in Michigan, Nebraska, Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina. See www.the greenhouseproject.com.

Thomas sees Green Houses as a form of **intentional community**. Because they foster supportive community, intentional living arrangements can be good living options for elders. Intentional communities are based on shared values or goals, such as environmental sustainabilitiy, as in Ithaca Ecovillage, or religious values, examples of which range from the deeply traditional, intergenerational Bruderhof Communities to Pilgrim Place, a California community for politically active retirees from progressive Christian leadership posts.

Among the most promising forms of intentional living is co-housing, which originated in Denmark and was first introduced in the U.S. in Davis, California, in 1991. Residents have their own dwellings that center around extensive common facilities. Now elder-targeted co-housing is taking off in both Denmark and the U.S. Some elder co-housing projects, such as Silver Sage Village in Boulder, Colorado, are situated next to intergenerational projects.

Charles Durrett, an architect who specializes in co-housing, has a forthcoming book on elder co-housing based on his research in Denmark. For workshops on elder co-housing, see www.eldercohousing.org (the next workshop is September 22–25). For information on co-housing communities, see www.cohousing.org, and, for intentional community resources more generally, see the Fellowship of Intentional Communities, www.ic.org.

While not solely directed at elders, the **National Shared Housing Resource Center** offers both shared living residences and match-up programs, which help home providers find a compatible home seeker to pay rent or provide services in exchange for a reduction in rent. See www.nationalsharedhousing.org.

If you wish to remain in **your own home,** home healthcare and other support can help. See www.cms.hhs.gov/pace and www.aarp.org/families/ (resources include Housing Choices, Home Design, and, under Caregiving, Finding Help.). Homes can also be designed or retrofitted to suit your needs as you age. See Design for Aging, www.aia.org/dfa.

7 ways to keep your marbles

Jeannette Franks

The general wisdom was, until recently, "If you want to live a long, healthy life, choose your grandparents wisely." While of course one can't, just 30 percent of physical aging is genetically predetermined, according to an eight-year study of 1,000 well-functioning seniors, by MacArthur "genius" grant recipients John Rowe and Robert Kahn.

Gerard Dubois/ Marlena Agency

And, keep in mind, genetics isn't fate.While problems such as Alzheimer's and heart disease do have a genetic component, lifestyle trumps genes. Physical aging is shaped by lifestyle choices in physical exercise, diet, attitude, and social support.

1 Exercise

Brain and body are connected; what is healthy for one promotes fitness in the other. What constitutes a minimum of exercise? The Lifetime Fitness Program, a research-based program, guides participants through 20 minutes of aerobic activity, 20 minutes of upper- and lower-body weight training, and a 10-minute stretch-and-flex routine three times a week. Older participants lose weight, feel better, have fewer falls and fractures, and experience social benefits.

2 Friendship, not necessarily family

Evidence suggests that whether it's praying or putting, hiking or poker, the getting together is what enhances wellbeing, not the activity. People who see other people on a regular basis are sick less and live longer. A recent study found that folks with close friends and confidants lived longer than those who don't, while tight family relationships made no difference in mortality. In fact, avoiding negative family members may enhance health and longevity.

3 Have a positive attitude

What lifestyles, then, do prevent age-related declines? A fascinating body of research by David Snowdon on the aging brain, known as the Nun Study (http://web1.mccs.uky.edu/nunnet/) gives enticing clues. An analysis of handwritten autobiographies from 180 of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at the average age of 22 found that positive emotional content was strongly associated with health and longevity six decades later. Feeling bad about getting old may be bad for you; studies by Becca Levy of Yale University show that holding negative aging stereotypes may not only result in a decline in memory and self-efficacy, but may shorten your life by almost eight years.

4 Be intellectually stimulated early

A computer analysis of the sisters' essays in the Nun Study found that greater idea density and verbal complexity predicted a lower risk of Alzheimer's. When one researcher was asked what this meant, she replied, "Read to your children." Perhaps a lively and well-educated brain is more resistant to disease.

5 Stay intellectually engaged

Whether the activity is bridge or crossword puzzles, mental exercise may be as key to keeping the mind supple as physical activity is to the body's functioning. A seven-year study of 1,772 subjects suggests possible benefits (www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/57/12/2236).

6 Eat a healthy diet

Most of us know that a healthy diet means moderation in meat, sugar, and fat and plenty of vegetables and fruit, but we might not know just how those fruits and veggies benefit the brain. Studies at Tufts University's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (www.nps.ars.usda.gov/programs/108s2.htm) suggest that the capacity of fruits and vegetables to absorb damaging free radicals cuts the risk of dementia, while the same anti-oxidant-rich foods also prevent some loss of learning and memory function. And don't forget hydration—most of us need more water than we drink. Dehydration causes cognitive malfunctions.

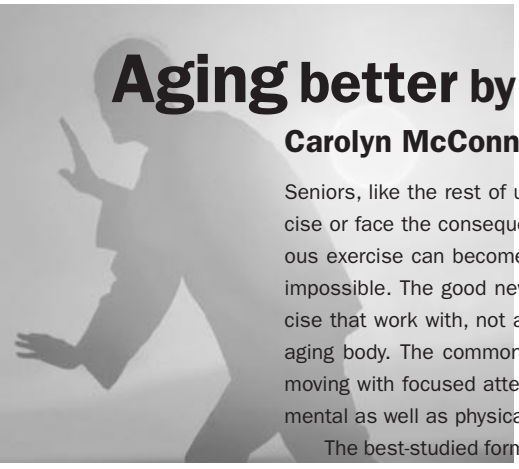
7 Curb nasty habits

Don't smoke. Smoking constricts blood vessels and may decrease cognitive capacity. A moderate glass or two of wine, though, may be beneficial.

While any of the above may enhance your later years, the synergy from combining them is suggested by a major research project just published in *Neurobiology of Aging*. The study on dogs divided 48 older beagles into four groups. The first received regular food and standard care. A second received standard care and a diet rich in antioxidants. The third was fed a regular diet but had a stimulating environment. The fourth group received the special diet and the challenging and enjoyable environment. While the groups with improved diet or improved environment did better than the standard care and nutrition group, it was the dogs that received both better food and environment that did best with complex learning tasks.

It's a no-brainer: An engaging social environment, combined with good nutrition and daily exercise, helps keep the brain healthy. Older people who are involved with friends, physical activities, and lifelong learning profess joy at being alive. Wholehearted participation in these pursuits gives meaning to old age and helps elevate the quality of life for those years.

Jeannette Franks, Ph.D., is the exercise instructor for Suquamish elders. Thanks to Richard M. Baker, M.D., for checking facts.
Find out more at www.lifetimefitness.org and www.sciencedaily.



Aging better by moving smarter

Carolyn McConnell

Seniors, like the rest of us, are often told to get more exercise or face the consequences. Yet as the body ages, vigorous exercise can become uncomfortable or even downright impossible. The good news is that there are forms of exercise that work with, not against, the natural changes in the aging body. The common thread among these practices is moving with focused attention, which may be why they offer mental as well as physical benefits.

The best-studied form of exercise for elders is tai chi, an ancient Chinese practice combining movement and meditation. Sequences of movements called "forms" are derived from martial arts practices originally modeled on the movements of animals and birds. Transitions from one posture to the next are seamless, as practitioners move slowly and gracefully through a form.

Tai chi reduces pain, stress, and depression in otherwise sedentary seniors, studies find. With physical function improved by the practice, seniors are better able to perform not only daily activities of living, such as eating, dressing and using the toilet, but exercise as demanding as running or lifting weights. Perhaps most importantly, tai chi improves balance, according to researchers from Chung Nam National University in South Korea and Emory University in Atlanta, among others. The Emory researchers found that tai chi reduced by almost 50 percent the risk of a potentially fatal or disabling fall—a deep source of fear for seniors and a leading reason why seniors wind up in nursing homes.

Other movement practices that incorporate gentle movement and meditative attention, such as Feldenkrais, yoga, and qi gong, may also be useful for seniors. For more information, see www.feldenkrais.com, www.thetaichisite.com, and www.qi.org. Many local YMCAs, gyms, and community centers offer yoga, tai chi, and other movement classes for seniors.

retirement crisis: real or imagined?

Serge Bloch/ Marlena Agency

Gar Alperovitz

Social Security is in crisis, according to some. Private pension systems—like United Airlines' and Enron's—are also unraveling. And Americans' rate of savings is dropping through the floor. Will you have the money to retire? Will anyone?

What is missing from our national conversation on Social Security is a sense of outrage. My own all too slow-burning sense of outrage was kindled recently when I took over the affairs of an elderly relative after she went into a nursing home in Wisconsin. Her Social Security check, after a lifetime of work as a baker, was $760 a month. What would happen to her and to others who had worked all their lives if payments were cut by as much as a third, as would occur under some of the Bush Administration's schemes? And what if our retirement security relied on risky stock market bets like those involved in various privatization plans? Social Security is the sole source of income for one-third of Americans over age 65.

The Social Security crisis "is a crisis in the same way that a car headed westward in the middle of Kansas faces a crisis. If it doesn't stop or turn, the car will eventually fall into the Pacific Ocean"

The present "pay-as-you-go" Social Security system operates on the principle that today's workforce will pay benefits for current retirees—just as current retirees once paid for those who retired before them.

This system works well when both the economy and the work force are growing. When the economy stalls, though, or when the cohort of retirees grows faster than the workers who pay the bills, problems begin to multiply. Projections now suggest that the ratio of retirees to workers—which was 5-to-1 in 1960 and 3.3-to-1 in 2004—will move to 2-to-1 in 2040.

Additional challenges stem from the increase in average life spans. Current male life expectancy is 74 years but is expected to grow to 85 years by the end of the 21st century.

Nonetheless, the claim that there is a crisis that forces us to undermine a system that has brought so many seniors out of abject poverty is a vast overstatement. The Social Security crisis "is a crisis in the same way that a car headed westward in the middle of Kansas faces a crisis," says economist Dean Baker. "If it doesn't stop or turn, the car will eventually fall into the Pacific Ocean, but it's hard to get too worried about that possibility."

Conservative projections indicate that it will be necessary to begin to tap the Social Security Trust Fund to pay benefits by 2017, and the fund will be exhausted by 2041. Thereafter, if nothing is done, benefits would be reduced to the amount being paid into the system by those in the work force at the time—meaning benefits would be about 74 percent of what they would otherwise be.

Baker and other analysts point to modest changes, like raising the $90,000 limit on income subject to payroll taxes, postponing the age of retirement a bit, and other adjustments that could easily manage the short- and medium-term problems.

Even if such proposals were to be enacted, they would provide only partial solutions for seniors. Our retirement problem goes far beyond these commonly discussed questions.

Retirement's three-legged stool

Social Security is just one leg of the three-legged stool of our retirement security. Private pensions and private savings make up the other two legs, and both have begun to decay as income has stagnated, as corporate practices have shifted, and as labor's power and progressive politics have faltered.

Further complicating the picture is the severe under funding of many plans. Retiring workers in companies facing bankruptcy are unlikely to receive full retirement benefits even if their pension plans are taken over by the Federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation—a painful reality that others faced earlier in connection with the LTV Steel, National Steel, Bethlehem Steel, and Pan Am bankruptcies. Those working for United Airlines are the most recent casualties.

Which brings me back to my Wisconsin relative. Shouldn't the richest country in the history of the world be increasing, not decreasing, its support for those in the final years of life?

The Nobel prize-winning conservative economist Robert Fogel proposes that we should begin retirement earlier (routinely at age 55), not later, and that the number of years free from work at the end of one's career should increase as the nation's wealth increases over the course of the century.

Fogel does not flinch from the implications. Greater personal savings would finance the changes for middle- and upper-income groups. For low-income people, his plan would be financed in part by a tax of 2 or 3 percent "applied progressively to the top half of the income distribution."

Former Bush Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil has also recently proposed a system of savings and investment that would yield the equivalent of a $1 million annuity for every American. It too would be financed in significant part by taxes based on the idea that "those of us who are more fortunate can help those of us who are not."

Especially in times of economic uncertainty, shifting investment risk onto individuals through private accounts could create many losers. But over the long haul, with progressive taxes, institutional investment of some portion of enhanced social secu-

rity assets could yield higher benefits than a pay-as-you-go system. All traditional private pension plans and public employee pension plans are based on this understanding.

Economist Thomas Michl has proposed revoking the Bush income tax cuts to begin funding a system that could return participants the same yield as a diversified portfolio of stocks. He has also concluded that a progressive wealth tax dedicated to funding Social Security should be considered.

Fixing the private pension system

Sociologist Robin Blackburn has offered a partly public, partly private system that would revolutionize retirement financing. A first tier would simply expand and increase Social Security. A second would seek to make existing private pensions more secure by, among other things, requiring companies to contribute stock to pooled funds in order to maintain investment diversification.

Blackburn's third strategy would require firms to issue and set aside stock equivalent to 10 to 20 percent of profits each year in order to increase pension fund capital. The stock would be managed by publicly accountable agencies. Financing through a "share levy" of this kind (like current stock options given to top executives) dilutes the value of outstanding stock and, in practice, is thus similar to a wealth tax.

the dos & don'ts of social security reform

Amy Chasanov

Proposals for radical changes to Social Security may undermine its basic function—to keep the elderly, permanently disabled, and orphans out of poverty. What can we do to fix Social Security without destroying it?

DON'T panic. Social Security is not in crisis and is not about to go bankrupt. Two government agencies estimate that Social Security can pay 100 percent of promised benefits for the next 36 to 47 years.

DON'T try to solve the shortfall with benefit cuts. The president's proposal to cut guaranteed benefits for those with incomes greater than $20,000 is unfair to today's 40- and 50-somethings, who have paid more than their fair share, to younger workers who would face the steepest benefit cuts, and to low- and middle-income Americans who rely on it.

DON'T privatize Social Security. Private accounts would leave most workers worse off: they'd borrow money from the government and, at retirement, take a big cut in their Social Security checks to repay the loan, plus 3 percent interest, plus inflation. Private accounts make Social Security less solvent, requiring trillions in new government borrowing while the U.S. is running record debts.

DO increase revenue through raising the wage cap. Social Security taxes only the first $90,000 of wages. Most people don't even know there's a cap because only 6 percent of Americans hit it, yet the cap represents a lot of lost revenue for Social Security. A primary reason for the long-term shortfall is not aging baby boomers, but greater wage inequality—the rich are getting richer, and more of their wages are escaping taxation. Raising the cap so that it covers 90 percent of wages—about $145,000 in 2005—would address 40 percent of the projected shortfall. That's plenty for now.

DO consider other ways to raise revenues. If we don't raise the wage cap, there are other fair ways to raise revenue. We could reverse some of the Bush tax cuts and dedicate the revenue to Social Security. We could impose a new tax on the wealthiest Americans or allow the government to invest some of the Trust Fund's assets in the stock market. The estimated 75-year shortfall is a moving target; we can close some of it now and revisit the question in 10 or 20 years when we know what the economy looks like.

DO strengthen the entire retirement income system. We should be increasing guaranteed Social Security benefits, encouraging employers to provide pensions, and raising the national savings rate. Promising strategies to help low- and middle-income workers save for retirement include making enrollment in 401(k)s automatic unless workers choose to opt out; improving the "saver's tax credit" beyond 2006 and making it refundable to those who don't owe taxes; and offering matching funds to workers who invest in IRAs and 401(k)s.

Two-thirds of Americans get more than half of their retirement income from Social Security, and one-third get more than 90 percent. Social Security keeps millions of disabled workers, dependents of deceased and disabled workers, and retirees out of poverty each year. This rich nation can easily afford to continue funding this safety net. We can't afford to put it—and Americans—at risk.

Amy Chasanov is the former deputy policy director at the Economic Policy Institute, www.epinet.org.

A proven success story

These proposals, some by leading conservatives, all use some form of tax on the wealthy to fund long-term retirement security, which is appropriate in an economy that has been systematically redistributing wealth from low- and middle-income workers to the wealthy for the last decades.

Still another approach, with a proven track record, is employee ownership. An employee making $20,000 a year in a typical ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Program) accumulates $31,000 in stock over 10 years, according to a 1990 study by the National Center for Employee Ownership. That's no small feat considering that the median financial wealth was just $11,700 during this period. A Massachusetts survey done in 2000 found that ESOP accounts average just under $40,000. More workers are now involved in such companies than are members of private-sector unions in the United States.

If the United States merely does as well in the 21st century as it did in the 20th, the economy will be producing an estimated $1 million a year for every four people by century's end. There should be more than enough to go around if we get our priorities straight. The 20th century saw two world wars, the Great Depression, and the Korean, Vietnam and other wars, so the projection of the trend is by no means extreme. But even if we discount the estimate, the idea that we cannot afford a decent life for our seniors is absurd.

It's time for all of us to confront the moral as well as the economic questions at the heart of the Social Security debate. I'm one blue state American who is ready to join hands with conservatives like Robert Fogel and Paul O'Neil and get on with building a morally valid retirement system commensurate with America's inherent economic strength.

This articles draws on Gar Alperovitz's book *America Beyond Capitalism* (www.americabeyondcapitalism.com). See review in *YES!,* Summer 2005. Gar Alperovitz is Lionel R. Bauman professor of political economy at the University of Maryland.

10 reasons

young people should care about Social Security

1. ***Because you love to visit your grandparents***—at their house. Before Social Security, most families had all the generations living under one roof, and without Social Security, half of all seniors would live in poverty. Right now. Today.
2. ***Because this is not only about retirees.*** This is about the kid down the street whose dad died. That kid gets Social Security now, so the family can pick up the pieces. They have a lot to lose.
3. ***Because you're paying into it every month,*** and that money had damn well better be there when you need it!
4. ***Because taking Social Security money out of the fund*** so people can invest it in "private accounts" means having to cut benefits even more.
5. ***Because investments are a gamble.*** A system that depends on good luck and bad luck can't provide a safety net guarantee.
6. ***Because the only way to pay current benefits*** if people take their money out of Social Security to invest is to borrow trillions of dollars for decades to come. That's a loss that young people are going to have to make up through tax increases.
7. ***Because "The White House, in a private memo*** to conservative allies, strongly argues that Social Security benefits paid to future retirees must be significantly reduced," according to the *Wall Street Journal*. "To fail to make benefit cuts while diverting payroll taxes to workers' personal accounts," the memo argues, "would be irresponsible."
8. ***Because some politicians want to trick you.*** If you think Social Security won't be there for you, you're falling right into the trap. They want you to think that, because they don't want to pay your benefits. Don't let anyone trick you into thinking you've got nothing to lose.
9. ***Because the reason Social Security needs more money*** in the future is that younger generations are living longer. It's important to keep the Social Security guarantee at about the same level it is today—not less—even if that means paying a little more to get it.
10. ***Because Social Security is retro chic.***

Rock the Vote (www.rockthevote.com) is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to building political power for young people.

checkpoint women

Each day, thousands of Palestinians must pass a gauntlet of Israeli checkpoints to get to work, receive medical care, or visit family. And every day, the Israeli women of CheckpointWatch, many of them elders, show up to witness what is being done in their names

Judith Kirstein-Keshet

Qalandia, December 18, 2005
Observers: Ivonne M., Daniela Y., Aya K., Netania G. reporting.

It was very, very cold. We encounter five freezing [Palestinian] men, who have been detained for four hours ... Their IDs were taken, it isn't clear why, perhaps at random. They weren't crossing the checkpoint, and as far as they know they were just walking.

With them were standing two freezing taxi drivers ... whose IDs were taken too, keys confiscated, just for parking in the wrong spot. The soldiers wouldn't talk to us, wouldn't let us approach.

But after seeing us make conspicuous telephone calls [to senior officers and human rights NGOs], about an hour later they released the five pedestrians. (Ivonne has a unique quality to seem 'a big guy', to seem to be holding power. Soldiers always become nervous when they watch her make her phone calls.)

There seems to have been an alert [about an alleged terror attack]. Many additional border police in jeeps, in combat expressions and demeanor, play Rambo with cars and people. Pointing their guns, they shout from afar at people to stand, open their bags, coats, lift their shirts. Startled people freeze at their sight. Ivonne, pretending to be calm, told them that it might be dangerous to point their guns at people, and they did in fact stop pointing after that ... The scene was disturbing, terrifying.

This is an example of the reports that CheckpointWatch has been issuing from the West Bank for the last four years. In 2001, in response to press reports about human rights abuses at Israeli military checkpoints, three women—Ronnee Jaeger, a Canadian activist living in Israel; Adi Kuntsman, a feminist scholar; and I, a long-time activist—decided we wanted to serve as witnesses of what the Israeli government was doing there in our names. These checkpoints are not border crossings but war zones. They prevent Palestinian access and freedom of movement not only into Israel, but within their own territory, the Occupied West Bank.

Today, CheckpointWatch numbers more than 500 Jewish-Israeli women, our ages ranging from 21 to over 70. All members are volunteers. Working in groups of four or five, we conduct four shifts a day, 365 days a year, in all weather. The work is emotionally and physically challenging and often dangerous, as when soldiers open fire, or throw tear gas grenades at Palestinian civilians attempting to cross the checkpoints. It requires long journeys on poor roads, long hours of exposure to the elements. It demands tremendous energy in engaging with the military and recording the tribulations of the Palestinian men, women, and children wishing to go about their daily lives. For the latter may not move, for any purpose whatsoever, without a permit. They cannot access shops, medical care, schools, or family celebrations without passing through a checkpoint at gunpoint. The checkpoints, and the permit system that supports them, have nothing to do with security, everything to do with control, with humiliation, and with oppression.

Watchers, the women of CheckpointWatch, have taken it upon ourselves to monitor as many checkpoints as possible. After four years of activism we have acquired expertise and knowledge on this difficult subject. We report by e-mail after each shift to a list of subscribers and post these reports at www.machsomwatch.org They provide a fascinating, if harrowing, picture of Palestinian life under occupation and the experiences of Israeli women who oppose that occupation. A thousand stories, tragic, funny, grotesque are reflected in these reports.

CheckpointWatch has always generated considerable media attention in Israel and abroad. While emphasizing the courage and spirit of Watchers, almost every report picks out the fact that many, perhaps the majority, of our women are middle-aged or older. Supposedly there is something piquant in the "elderly" taking on the daunting task of calling the Israeli military to account—for essentially that is what our work is about. That is our innovation and the challenge we present in requiring the army to be accountable to the civilian estate. We are not a curiosity but one of the largest and most active Israeli protest groups. The aging of our members is irrelevant.

If not us, who?

And yet if not older women, who else will take on this task? I myself am 62 years old. Thirty years ago, and until my retirement five years ago, I was struggling with a career and a host of other responsibilities. My activism was limited to tasks I could do from home or in my spare time, such as it was. Adi Kunstman was 27 when we began the project and at

the time was the driving force behind it. Today at 32 she is in the process of writing her PhD with no time or energy to spare for activism. How many women between the ages of, say, 25 and 45 can take time off work, pay babysitters, leave the dinner on the stove for the family, and take off for several hours, never knowing when they will return? Not many.

Nor is the stereotype of the mellowed, mature woman, with a fund of patience, assertive yet non-confrontational, universally true. Some of our younger members set a better example in that regard. True, we 60-somethings benefit by our "invisibility": we are not sexual targets for young soldiers, we can appear as non-threatening at a variety of levels. This is not to say that our members are not sexually aware or attractive, simply that at a certain stage in one's life sexuality is differently expressed or perceived and is less apparent to the 19- and 20-year-old soldiers encountered at the checkpoints. Also, in a very real sense we are not "combatants," eligible as young women are for military service. We represent a reminder of the home front, mothers and grandmothers left behind. We encounter hostility or indifference on the part of soldiers, but we also meet those who respond to our presence as a reminder of their civilian lives. Some Watchers find their relations with the soldiers a source of emotional conflict. As parents or grandparents of soldiers, they know the difficulties these young men and women face and have indeed, to the protest of their colleagues, succumbed to the temptation to provide them with treats. That is not what CheckpointWatch is about. We require members to leave their maternal instincts at home.

Age is less a component of our membership profile than are class and status. The average Watcher is white, Ashkenazi (of European heritage), middle class, and with a professional or academic background. We have flexible time and usually own cars, which give us mobility. We are women with the resources to commit to a demanding task. Regardless of age, we are women in our prime, although the more mature members do have one significant advantage over our younger colleagues: We have status and connections that enable us to approach even the senior echelons of the military or members of Israel's parliament. This is not because younger women are less competent, simply that they are more likely to encounter prejudice or be regarded as lacking seriousness. This is the reverse of the agism to which we older women are subject.

Watchers are not killing time. Nor are we trying to hold old age at bay, for we do not define ourselves by our stage of life. Observing is not a cozy time-filler for the newly or long-retired. Checkpoint-Watchers are unique activists in a unique situation. Many Watchers, particularly the founding members, the first 30 to 50 women to join, come from a history of political activism. The form of activism may have been different when they were raising children or building careers, but the will, the interest, and the energy were always there. All Watchers, regardless of age, are driven by the dictates of conscience, a concern for the moral well-being of Israeli society that we believe is compromised by the ongoing occupation and its evils, such as the checkpoints, which are part of the deliberate policy of disrupting Palestinian daily life. Despite the political changes and declarations regarding the "easing of conditions," the situation remains substantially unchanged in 2005, as this excerpt from a recent report indicates.

Supposedly there is something piquant in the "elderly" taking on the daunting task of calling the Israeli military to account

June 13, 2005

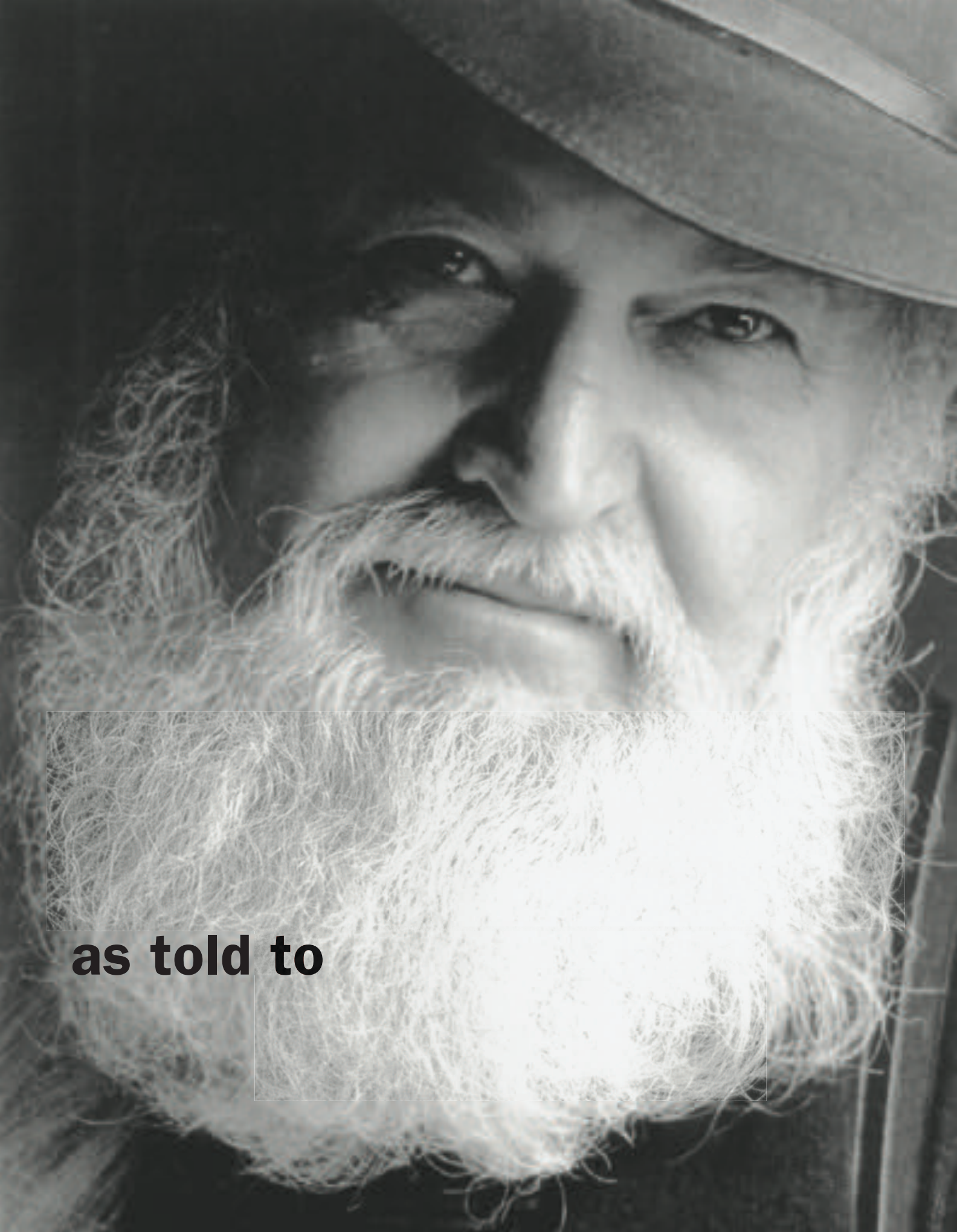
Observers: Alix W., Aliya S., Susan L. reporting.

At the Tulkarm entry/exit a long line of vehicles, and they're checked efficiently, if slowly. It's slow, as the dusty dirt path is too narrow for more than single file, one by one.

Only two of the three new concrete "positions" are manned, one of the two soldiers checking only pedestrians and aiming his gun all the time as he calls people to stand back, to come one by one. The line of vehicles around the bend on the dirt path numbers, so we're told, over 50. It's very slow, hot, and dusty.

The women who undertake the difficult task of monitoring human rights abuses at checkpoints and opposing the occupation are both politically aware and fortunate in having the time and resources to commit themselves to taking active steps to protest, and even resist, Israeli government policy. They are indeed a positive model for women of all ages, wherever they may be, to "…take arms against a sea of troubles and, by opposing, end them" (Hamlet).

Judith Kirstein-Keshet's book, *CheckpointWatch: Testimonies from Occupied Palestine,* will be published by Zed Books, London, in December 2005. CheckpointWatch's annual report can be downloaded at www.machsomwatch.org.



as told to

the folk rock on

What did a young rock star like Ani DiFranco see in folk music's old codger? The answer has young fans singing about Wobblies, strikes, and Mother Jones

We met each other a number of years ago when Ani was doing a single in Philadelphia. She was playing at one venue, and I was playing at another, but we were boarded in the same house with Professor Kenny Goldstein. That was 15 years ago.

She was young, but she was doing better and better, owning what she does.

One of the admirable things about Ani is that she didn't wait for somebody to record her; she started a record company. She owns what she does, which is near to the heart of any Wobbly.*

We both wound up with the same agent, Fleming and Associates in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ani was in the office, and she found a tape of one of my performances. Out of curiosity, she took it to listen to while she was driving in her car.

She decided that she wanted her audience to hear those songs and stories that I tell. Our collaboration came together through her genius; she has the most powerful intellect I've ever encountered. She wrote me a letter and she said, just send me recordings of concerts.

I had several boxes of recordings. I'd finish a concert and someone would hand me a tape. A lot of the stuff had been in the basement under water, but I sent her 100 hours of tapes. She wrote in a letter that she wanted to take the stories and mix in her music and her sounds. I was skeptical, but one paragraph convinced me. She said, "Not that there's anything wrong with your performance as it stands, but I'm aware of the vertigo a young audience experiences when the music stops and they're left at the precipice of words and ideas."

Now, anybody's going to say that to me, I'll work with them. So I sent her off the tapes, and I didn't know what was going to show up until it arrived in the mail. And I was stunned. I thought it was really very beautiful, what she did.

She had taken all those tapes to a studio in Texas and cleaned them all up digitally, and did a masterful job of actually restoring what, in any other context, would be regarded as field recordings.

So we recorded that one song called "The Past Didn't Go Anywhere," and then several years later she wanted to record another one, only this time in front of a small, live audience in a studio down in New Orleans in the French Quarter. And, once again, she did the mixing right at the board with her band—me performing, and she and the band doing backup vocals on Joe Hill's song.

The audience was made up of—well, this is a mark of Ani's people in her office in Buffalo—they called and asked who I wanted invited to this little studio that holds maybe about 30 people. They asked if I knew anybody in New Orleans. I said, get

You get something essential that helps you make your way through life from your elders. To be in that oral culture, I make myself learn songs not from books or from records, but from living human beings

hold of the Catholic Worker Hospitality House, the soup kitchens, the homeless community—and those are the people who showed up. They were invited, and they were ready to sing.

So you've got people laughing and singing. And what she did with this instrumentally and music-wise was just stunning. It sounded like something that would be very appealing to young people.

Let me tell you about the effect of her decision to do this—just one example, because there's been an exhaustive correspondence that's come to me over this.

I met a man from Normal, Illinois, who was working at the Caterpillar factory, a union man. His daughter was a young teenager who didn't know anything about the union. One day, she came down to breakfast and asked what he knew about Mother Jones. When he asked her where she learned about that, she said she had this record, "Fellow Workers," from Ani DiFranco.

That blossomed into her going with him to union meetings, going to the workplace. It blossomed into a real understanding of what was happening in that workplace, and why the union movement was so important. And that story could be told over and over again, about how that record went out there and did its work among young people.

The upshot is that when I go to play a town and the posters are out and the publicity is out, some of Ani's audience is going to show up, and we get along fine.

There's one group down here in the Bay Area that started showing up on the sidewalk in front of the places I was playing in Redwood City. They're called Radical Cheerleaders, and they do cheerleading with these stone radical raps on the sidewalk to entertain people waiting to come in. They're part of a national network of street theater cheerleaders.

I went out there and sang with them, and they started showing up in other places. Finally, I invited them to come and get on the stage when I played Davis, California. They came to my 70th birthday party, and I got them on the stage again. Then they took over the sidewalk outside of the concert hall.

So, through Ani, I got access to young people and they got access to me. She unplugged the channel.

Ani gave young people the chance to access a different kind of world through me that hearkens back to the early oral culture. It's a setting where you get something essential that helps you make your way through life from one of your elders.

To be part of that oral culture, I make myself learn songs not from books or records, but from living human beings. It's the same with stories I shape to suit my needs.

Making it through hard times

I've learned from young people, too. The young people I've met through Ani have taught me to stay awake. They're called the "X Generation," but I think they are the "Y Generation," because they're always asking why bullshit is happening.

I find that being able to hang out with those young people gives me more creativity, more real imagination than I can remember from when I was their age.

It's that creative spark, that creative leap, we desperately need now.

Because we are—and I am talking about the peace movement now—we are stuck. We have failed. We have to rebuild the whole progressive movement, and it's going to be built on innovation, and that's going to come from young people. But we old folks have to be there, so that they don't have to make the same mistakes that we made.

It's going to be built on sacrifice. A lot of us are going to be giving up a whole lot more than we're comfortable with now, because we're facing fascism square in the face.

It's always been tough. There's a little song about that called "We're Singing Through the Hard Times, Waiting for the Good Times to Come." We have to do something together—one of the reasons these old labor songs are so important.

I remember how old Fred Hansen, a longshoreman in Houston and an I.W.W. dock worker, would

use those songs to keep peace when we went out on strike on the docks. The rule was no booze and no guns, because that would give the bosses an excuse to get an injunction and call in the National Guard and break the strike.

Since there was no strike relief, tempers would start to rub raw. Before somebody got mad enough to pick up a brick and throw it at the company guard, Hansen would start singing these old songs—he'd get people singing. When they were singing together they weren't throwing punches and throwing rocks. There's a real practical use for these songs, singing together and expressing our solidarity through song.

If I sing Joe Hill's "Pie in the Sky," I get to tell the story of the Spokane free speech fight, which I learned from Herb Edwards, a Pacific Norwegian logger, long since dead. I can tell that story about how it was organized, how it was run. And then be able to say—because they did win that fight—it didn't take any ballot boxes, it didn't take any political parties. It was called direct action, and it comes to us highly recommended. And everybody gets it right away, today. They get to singing the song together.

A good time to be alive

It's years ago that I first sang that song, and I don't feel all that different from the way that I felt when I woke up coming out of the army nearly 50 years ago. Well, when I stop getting old, I'll be dead, so I like getting old.

I think that what's most important is keeping alive a sense of curiosity. The other gift that I was given from childhood was memory. I always have something that I'm trying to memorize; it's like lifting weights to keep your muscles strong. If I wake up in the middle of the night and I can't sleep, I'll go over songs and stories to make sure the words are all where they need to be.

Of course I know I'm going to pop off, it's just a given. I stave it off as well as I can. I have congestive heart failure that was diagnosed 10 years ago. It took a long time to get all the medications right, and I ingest a pharmacopoeia, daily.

I do yoga for seniors, an hour of stretching every morning. I get out there and work. I leave town twice a month at least, including travel and performance time.

I feel a profound sense of mission. It's a good time to be out there, doing what I do.

It's always a good time, but this is a particularly good time, because the ship of state is in dire straits. And we're on it.

Steven Stone

Ani DiFranco and Utah Phillips take a break backstage during the performers' 1996 appearance together at Chautauqua Auditorium in Boulder, Colorado

So, it's a good time to be out there getting people to laugh and be alive.

Joseph Campbell said all we really want is to be completely human and in each other's company. That's why I want to be on the stage; I want to be with people in front of people.

I want us to laugh together and to sing together. And to think together. Because I have issues that I want to deal with, and we'll talk and sing about those. And I want people, when I come to town, to talk and sing and tell stories. I want them to feel better when they leave than when they came.

Yeah. More hopeful.

* Wobblies are members of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.), a labor union that became known, in the opening decades of the 20th century, for its militant advocacy of workers' rights. Utah Phillips, born in Cleveland in 1935, has performed his original folk music-based songs for a half century. Find him at www.utahphillips.org.

radically righteous babe

I walk in stride with people
much taller than me
and partly it's the boots but
mostly it's my chi
and i'm becoming transfixed
with nature and my part in it
which i believe just signifies
i'm finally waking up

From "Evolve," by Ani DiFranco, 2003

by Dee Axelrod

There are artists whose work is creative—and then there are artists so charged with creative power that it's impossible to find the seam between the art and the life.

Surely singer-songwriter Ani DiFranco's individual approach to her craft, her crowd, and her causes has earned her a berth with the latter.

DiFranco was 14 in 1984, the year she began composing songs, accompanying herself on acoustic guitar. She was just 15 when she left her family home in Buffalo, New York, to move in with friends and play solo gigs in local clubs.

DiFranco's reputation for percussive guitar work and pointed lyrics began to build. Patrons who came into the noisy bars to drink and schmooze would turn their chairs around to watch the kid with the shaved head and all the piercings who could really put a song across. DiFranco's influence began to extend beyond the region as she toured in her Volkswagen van. After gigs, people would ask for tapes, and so she made a demo.

As she emerged onto the larger music scene, DiFranco made a decision that would shape her professional life and help forge a path others would follow.

Making an end-run around the recording-distribution apparatus of the music industry, DiFranco founded her own record label, Righteous Babe, in 1990. She took charge of getting the word out about her work by enlisting "street teams," cadres of volunteers to publicize her tours and releases.

Control of the sounds and the sales gave DiFranco freedom to hone her aesthetic, a sometimes raucous, often poignant melding of folk and rock. She penned blunt lines in the first person, lyrics for songs rooted in her own experience.

But if autobiography is the common stuff of song, few songwriters have a resource like DiFranco's protean intellect. Her vision can take a 360-degree turn to illuminate subjects ranging from the vagaries of love and loss to the state of the nation and the plunder of the natural world.

Her Righteous Babe Foundation supports an impressive range of grassroots organizations addressing such issues as reproductive rights, gay and lesbian causes, and anti-nuclear protest. DiFranco has also lent her voice and presence to events like last year's March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC, and has toured Thai and Burmese refugee camps, tangibly demonstrating her belief that the personal is, now and forever, political.

at the mercy of strangers

Wendy Lustbader

In a culture that values independence above all, many are terrified of growing dependent on the care of others. What could bring dignity and even meaning to the frailty we may face at the ends of our lives?

We have come to fear frailty more than death. We imagine being "put" in a nursing home, like a jar on a lonely shelf. Will a parade of paid strangers take care of me someday? Frailty coupled with abandonment has become our most dire existential dread. Not everyone has a partner whose life would pause for an illness and for whom no other priority would compete. An otherwise loving son or daughter may be caught up in the flurry of raising a family and earning a living. Friends may be preoccupied with their own troubles and endeavors. Anyone can end up living at the mercy of strangers, having to count on kindness or ache from its absence. Ordinary life activities, distracting and hurried as they are, tend to obscure this truth. Beneath our many doings, time and damage accrue, but we avert our eyes. Asking ourselves, Who would take care of me if I got sick? seems to threaten our other aims. But pushing aside what we fear only adds force to it.

Disability obscures individuality like a mask. When a doctor speaks to the person pushing a wheelchair rather than to its occupant, utter negation occurs. "How is she feeling today?" The one who has been negated can always shout, "I am fine, doctor," thereby declaring her continued status as a person, but the harm has already been done. To be overlooked, to be discounted even for a moment, wounds even after apologies have been extracted or hasty recognition has been won. To have to fight to be seen—that is the damage.

The end of my soul's dominion will surely arrive on the day that I find myself lined up in a hallway in a row of wheelchairs waiting to be loaded into an elevator, then transported to a dining room and positioned into a row of waiting mouths. I may overhear one staff member say to another, "I've got to cut this one's meat, then I'll feed that one." At this juncture, I will have become an object rather than a subject. I will have become "that one" who must be acted upon, rather than a person engaged in her own life. I will have become someone's task. I will have become my needs.

If I do reach the point where I can no longer feed myself, I hope that the hands holding my fork belong to someone who has a feeling for who I am. I hope my helper will remember what she learns about me and that her awareness of me will grow from one encounter to another. I am certain that my experience of needing to be fed will be altered if it occurs in the context of my being known.

Unless I can let my caregivers know who I am, the eyes looking at me will merely reiterate my physical deterioration. They will perceive only my gnarled fingers and the stark metallic fact of my wheelchair. Just another old lady. Much is presumed on the basis of such surfaces. I know I will recoil from my helper's singsong voice, that well-meaning tilt of her head, her every gesture that exudes kindliness. All of this will consign me to a category, "the frail," the boundaries of which will be difficult to breach.

Are there ways to maintain the self in such situations? Perhaps we have the most to learn in the places we least want to reside. The "difficult people" in nursing homes are those who refuse to be diminished. I have watched them demand, threaten, and rage until their requests are heeded. Their dignity causes trouble in systems of care meant for efficiency. They insist on the prickly assertion of self in places where idiosyncracy is inconvenient. These are the people who will not let the staff forget what makes them different from the others. "You'd better open Martha's drapes the way she likes them or you'll hear about it." Martha's spirit survives in the very ways she makes sure her preferences disturb the routines. In the predicament we currently call long-term care, outrage remains one of the best ways for people to preserve themselves.

I want to amount to more than the sum of the tasks my body imposes. No matter how few of my powers remain, I want to go on existing in my preferences. I will find evidence of myself in the way I like to arrange things on my desk and the peace I find

Perhaps we have the most to learn in the places we least want to reside. The "difficult people" in nursing homes are those who refuse to be diminished. Their dignity causes trouble in systems of care meant for efficiency

in looking up at the sky through the branches of a tree. Far from a trivial charade, having my choices respected will give me precious continuity with earlier versions of myself. I will want to take refuge in the habits of decades. I will still need the solitude I have always craved. It is unlikely that I will develop an interest in bingo. I will want to stay up late at night until my book is finished. I will want to know about the lives of the people I rely on, especially the one who holds my fork for me. If she would talk to me, if we could laugh together, I might even forget the chagrin of my useless hands. We would have a conversation, rather than a feeding.

A further worth

Are there ways to become more as the body becomes less? Over the years, we become accustomed to taking our worth from other people's regard or our accomplishments. Yet there is a further worth awaiting us in remembering and contemplating, in thinking things over, in letting all that has been said and done assemble itself into something we can grasp.

Keeping physically active in later years is much praised, but movement inward may prove more significant. A great deal ends up being deferred during the course of a busy life, even for those who strive to live deliberately. The ways to avoid ourselves are myriad and tempting; this inner work is easily set aside for another day. For most of us, the steadfastness required for sitting still and looking inward must be imposed, if not earlier by discipline, then later by necessity.

Being stilled by illness also transports us out of our patterns with each other. Relationships bounded by privacy and self-sufficiency tend to break open. Merely the touching necessitated by need may change all the rules. A physical therapist tells how a stroke led to the reconciliation of a father and son who had not spoken in years:

My patient was a large man, and the dead weight of his stroke made it impossible for his tiny wife to move him. His son agreed to come over and learn how to do a wheelchair transfer, but he came in looking so hostile I wanted to call off the whole thing. He didn't even say hello. I explained that he had to grip his father in a bear hug and then use a rocking motion to pivot him from the bed to the wheelchair. The son went over to the bed where his father was sitting and put his arms around him, just like I said. He got the rocking motion going, but then I realized that both of them were crying. They stayed like that for a long time, rocking and crying.

Discoveries are launched in all directions. The helper loses distance from his own fragility: This could be me. Sympathy is so ingrained in us that it can override the barriers our higher faculties would interpose; even the tiniest babies are gripped by the sound of another baby's cry. Seeing his father's desperation, the son rendered help instinctively. When another's plight is relieved, both the giver and receiver get a lesson in hope.

Someday I may need to be put on the toilet, but what if I am assisted tenderly because my helper has begun to love me? What if she has been assigned to me consistently for many months and we have had the time to know each other? There will be a quality of subtlety and delicacy in our exchanges, a mutual regard that will elevate this lowly act for both of us.

In 1987, the Nursing Home Reform Act attempted to mandate such knowing, in part through administration of an assessment instrument, the Minimum Data Set (MDS). Detailed information was to be collected about each individual's needs and preferences. Nationwide, the data are being duly noted, but few facilities turn this information into actually knowing the person. In most nursing homes, relationships are still considered secondary to tasks. Front-line workers are still supervised in a regimented manner that precludes the very responsiveness that frail people crave. These caregivers spend the most time with residents but are relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy, receiving the least pay, the least training, and the least respect. They have so little power that caring too much about the plight of those they assist leaves them feeling helpless and frustrated. They remain the powerless serving the powerless.

We supply empty care, then equate frailty with emptiness. What if we recognized that relationships

are the core of care for frail persons? What if we decided that hands-on caregivers should minister to needs beyond the physical? What if these caregivers were seen as doing the most valuable work in the facility? Their relationships with residents would then be regarded as the hub of nursing home life, with all other functions supporting what goes on at this level. We would value the time these workers spend with frail people and make sure they received compensation, training, and recognition commensurate with this worth.

When my time to receive care comes, I hope my helper will read aloud a few of my favorite poems and inscribe an insight for me in the pages of my journal. This way she will help me elevate my day into something I can abide. If I awaken in the night with a poem of my own and she gives me a hand jotting it down, she will help turn sleeplessness into satisfaction. As earnestly as she strives to keep me clean and clothed and fed, I hope she will feel free to help me transport myself beyond my physical diminishment.

The soul's domain

If so many of us would rather die than go to a nursing home, why do these configurations of care continue in spite of our fear and revulsion? Traditional nursing homes seem to express the limits of our hope. So long as we believe that little meaning can be found in frailty, so long as we presume a wasteland of degradation, then we will see nothing about these settings that can be changed. We will conclude that frailty itself drains life of meaning. There is a Sufi saying that two veils separate us from the divine—health and security. When we lose our health and must face the insecurity of needing help, we may be overtaken by questions belonging to other realms. Humbling circumstances may enlarge us, in spite of ourselves. An 86-year-old woman once recounted to me how severe arthritis brought her "kicking and screaming" into the domain of her own soul:

One morning, I was sitting at my kitchen table, staring into space. It was one of those windy days when the sun keeps coming out and going in. All of a sudden, a sunbeam crossed my kitchen table and lit up my crystal salt shaker. There were all kinds of colors and sparkles. It was one of the most beautiful sights I'd ever seen. But you know, that very same salt shaker had been on that kitchen table for over fifty years. Surely there must have been other mornings when the sun crossed the table like that, but I was just too busy getting things done. I wondered how much else I'd missed. This was it, this was grace. I needed crippled hands before I could sit still. Sometimes you have to be stopped right there in your tracks before you can see that all the beauty in life is right in front of you.

It should not be necessary to wait to be incapacitated. We can look for beauty and embrace our ultimate fragility any time we choose. Doing so would tell us what kind of life to lead. Once we begin living in terms of the question, Who would take care of me if I got sick? the whole of life transforms. The question mandates a shift in the order of things, making a life rich with generosity and kindness more desirable than any other kind of fortune. From this vantage point on the extreme edges of vulnerability, it is clear what needs to be done. What if we started by fashioning places where more than just our physical survival were assured? What if we put the question of care in times of sickness at the center of our lives? Just as the civil rights movement and the women's movement resulted from a convergence of urgency and opportunity, there would be a burst of collective will to transform the lives of vulnerable people. The deterioration of our bodies may not be preventable, but the meaning of frailty can be altered.

 Wendy Lustbader, M.S.W., is the author of *Counting on Kindness: The Dilemmas of Dependency*, and co-author of *Taking Care of Aging Family Members,* both published by Free Press. All photos by Dan Lamont.

can elders save the world?

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

The work of elders may never have been so important as it is today, when the continuation of life on Earth is at stake and wisdom is in short supply

Keri Coles/www.focus-photography.ca

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi shares a moment with the Dalai Lama

I didn't know what was happening to me when I reached my 60s. I wanted to be the same workaholic I had always been, but I couldn't anymore. I couldn't keep up. I was depressed in situations where I had no reason to be. I felt like I had a guilty secret that I couldn't share with others. I kept pretending that I still could do what I used to do.

My inner work involves a mystical form of Judaism called Kabbalah. As part of that work, I do a nightly examination of conscience. I ask myself: What was this day all about? What did I do? How did I feel? How did I relate to people?

It became clear to me as I did this work that the spiritual practices I had been doing up to that time couldn't help me with the new season of life into which I had entered.

Seasons

It was then that I began to look at life from the point of view of seasons. It seemed to me that the biblical seven years are important time periods, and that each seven-year span could be represented by one month in a hypothetical year. If the Feast of Nativity, December 25, is birth, by the end of January you'd be seven years old. By the end of February, you'd be 14, and by the end of March you would be 21. Then comes the spring of life. By the time you are 42, you are at the end of June, and you're figuring out what you are going to do when you grow up. And you have summer—July, August, and September—to do your life's work.

There is a script for each of these phases. From one to seven, you're a toddler and you start kindergarten. From 14 to 21, you become an adult. You have a script for all of life until you reach retirement age; then there are no more scripts. You're no longer

a "productive-consuming" adult, so you fall off the perimeters of visibility and must be warehoused until you kick off. From 60 on, when you are in the October and November of your lifetime, there aren't any good models.

It is very difficult to live without a script, so from 65 on, many of us just continue playing the same games we played before.

The Spiritual Eldering theory is this: In the first months, January, February, and March, we are in the world of sensation. In the spring months, we move into the world of feeling. We are in the world of reason in the summer months. But in the fall, we go to a place of intuition, of spirit, and we need models on how to do this.

In aboriginal and native societies, elders have a place; they sit in council together.

There's a wonderful dance that is done at the Jewish wedding of the youngest child. The mother puts on a crown and dances with joy that the last child is out of the house and the burden is over. But then what does she do? Then she becomes the *shtetl* who carries under her apron a pot of food for somebody. So the script is there.

In our society we have been given an extended lifespan, but we don't have the extended consciousness to go with it.

We have the largest elderly population ever, and we have a planet that is sick and is trying to heal itself. Do you see why elders are so needed today?

But you don't become an elder unconsciously. Nobody is going to do it for you—not mommy, not a teacher, not rabbis, not priests. You've got to do this work yourself.

As baby boomers enter the elder years, I'm seeing people learning to do the work of *spiritual eldering*.

Harvesting

Why is it that people are often depressed about getting older? One reason is that most people, when they get older, have a long history of plowing and of sowing seeds, but not much history of harvesting.

How do you harvest a lifetime? You need internal tools that add to awareness.

Every day, for example, I walk toward the future. What do I see as I look ahead? The angel of death.

Oy! I don't want to look.

So I back into the future. But what happens if I back into the future? I see the past.

Oy! I remember what I did wrong, and I remember the disappointments.

So I cut myself off from the past. As to the present, I don't want to think about the diminishments, so I have little awareness of the present either.

When you don't look at the future or at the past, and you don't pay much attention to the present, you're in a box of crunched, narrow consciousness. This is the psychic field of Alzheimer's. No future, no past, very little of the present. Intentional non-consciousness. Invincible ignorance.

October: the Ancient of Days

When I stretch my awareness of time, I get in touch with an aspect of God that is called the Ancient of Days, which is witness to everything that has ever happened and ever will happen. That's my companion for eldering. This kind of meditative work is what needs to be learned in October.

When I go inside myself and start checking the past, I come to things that I don't want to look at—the file in which I keep my failures, the things I don't like, the things that are not yet reconciled. Anxiety keeps me away from there.

But in that file may be treasures. Imagine I had some stocks from before the Depression that I thought were worthless and I put them in a file of failures. And then one day I see in *The New York Times* a name that sounds familiar. I go to the filing cabinet and pull out the stock certificate, and by now it has become very valuable.

So it is with failures. What I felt at the time was a failure may be what moved me in a new direction; the fallout of my failures may be where my successes are.

Letting go of vindictiveness and forgiving are other parts of the harvest work of October. To give you an illustration, the prisoner does his time in prison, but the warden does time in prison, too. Every time you hold somebody in the prison of your anger, you tie up vital energy in the grudge.

Remember the phrase from the Psalms that goes "Thou prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies?" This is often interpreted as vindictive: I'm going to have a good dinner, and you're not.

Instead, in this October work, I hold (imaginary) testimonial dinners for the people who did me wrong: Because you did this nasty thing to me, you turned me away from a routine life to an extraordinary life. You didn't know you did it for my good, but you did it anyway. Today I honor you for having been a difficult teacher, and I let you go free.

The more energy we can recover from the past, the more life comes back to us and the more energy we have for the present. That's why we say, "Teach

us to number our days that we may get at the heart of wisdom."

If you don't recover the past, you won't get to the wisdom. Wisdom comes from having learned from experience.

How do we expand awareness of the present? There is a kind of conversation that I call spiritual intimacy that many of us crave more than any other form of intimacy. It sometimes happens when you sit on an airplane next to a stranger and have a conversation that doesn't require you to tiptoe around the landmines of everyday relationships. It feels so good to be heard and be understood.

You can consciously initiate a conversation of this kind with a trusted confidant. Take turns asking each other questions such as these: What are my questions? How do I perceive my problems? What troubles me?

One Hasidic master said, "When someone comes to me with his problems, I listen to his Higher Self give me the solution. Then I offer the solution that he has brought to me."

Finally, in opening up to our higher capacities, we need to bring in the body's contribution to extended awareness, keeping in mind the old Hermetic axiom, "As above, so below." This means, among other things, that the brain/mind and body are mirror images of each other, reflecting and intensifying the capacities of each.

November and service

Imagine for a moment you've done the October work and become an elder.

To understand what it means to be an elder, recall that God told Moses, "Speak to the elders." The elders of the church serve as mentors and guides. The Russians call their spiritual director *staretz*, which means an elder. The Sufis call their teacher a *shaikh*, which means an elder. There is work for the elders to do at this time to give over to the next generation and to help heal the planet.

So you could do what Jimmy Carter did. As an elder citizen of the planet, you could do conflict resolution or build affordable housing for Habitat for Humanity.

I'm thinking of an elder corps. Instead of sending young soldiers into the world's trouble spots, we would send in elders. They would meet with those who had lost grandchildren on both sides of the conflict and grieve with them. I think that with such conversations, the aggravated political climate would yield to wisdom and compassion.

We have the largest elderly population ever, and we have a planet that is sick and trying to heal itself. Do you see why elders are so needed?

What if we are caught in the crossfire? It's better than dying from emphysema. And if we are unarmed, I doubt if we would get shot.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "I've been to the mountain." I have a contribution to make that is made deeper and richer by my witness at the painful spots on the planet. This is my work now.

Within the context of eons, our personal lives and actions are both meaningless and intensely meaningful. On the one hand, we're specks of dust on a little planet in an obscure corner of the Milky Way. On the other hand, we're inhabitants of a planet that is trying to save its life. Earth needs a cadre of conscious elders who are aware of their task for healing the planet.

December and the exit from life

The December work is preparing for the passage from life in such a way that a child can come to the bedside of a dying grandparent and say, "Oh, wow, so that's how it goes."

A good completion would take away much of the fear associated with death, which, in our culture, is often translated to "Eat and drink and take drugs, for tomorrow we shall die."

The work of December is also to leave a moral legacy. This means deputizing the next generation: This is what is unfinished; would you continue that for me?

Can you imagine if people who are not afraid of dying told the truth to their children and grandchildren and worked with them consciously when a will is written?

When I would ask my dad (God rest his soul) what he wanted to have done with his remains, he would give me a sort of nasty rebuke like, "You can't wait until I die."

Then one day I said to him while taking a walk, "Dad, the following are the arrangements I've made for my remains."

He listened and wanted to correct me a little bit,

but then he got to talk about what he wanted for himself. And it was a relief for him to be able to talk about that because he couldn't talk to his own father about death.

Do you see what intergenerational healing has to be done so that people are not so afraid of dying?

I would like to see an elders' ashram where people wouldn't try and cheer us up with old television reruns, but would let us do the serious work that we want to do. It's so much easier to do this work with other people; the atmosphere gets filled with that electric, shared wave of people doing their inner work.

A good death would be one that says, "I'm not hungry for more life, and I don't think I've overstayed my time here."

It used to be that life began and ended at home. Then we took it to the hospital, and now birth and death have become pathologies.

Instead of being in intensive care, with tubes in you, strapped to the bed, can you imagine being surrounded by loving people as you prepare to die? Can you imagine having a chance to once again glimpse what life is about and to give thanks for the privilege of having had the chance to live?

You begin to appreciate what those last rites are all about, where somebody says, "Taste it once again, a taste of salt. Feel again a soft and gentle touch with oil." All of these things are a way of saying, "Go out in a nice way."

If the right December work is done, the work of grieving for those left behind is easier. Taking the sting from death would help us to live in greater harmony with the process in which life recycles itself for further growth and consciousness.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi is the author of *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* (1995, Warner Books) and the founder of the Spiritual Eldering Institute, www.spiritualeldering.org.

Lynn Brofsky, monotype

Now I become myself

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places;
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"Hurry, you will be dead before—"
(What? Before you reach the morning?
Or the end of the poem is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density! ...
... Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move.
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!

— May Sarton

elder resources

Jacob Galfano

advocacy

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is a nonprofit membership organization for people 50 and over, offering resources, advocacy, and community service opportunities. www.aarp.org, 888/687-2277.

Alliance for Retired Americans is a progressive, grassroots organization allied with the AFL-CIO that presses for action on retiree legislative and political issues at the federal, state, and local levels. Partners with a network of community-based groups on senior issues. www.retiredamericans.org, 202/974-8222.

Compassion & Choices, a nonprofit founded as The Hemlock Society, assists competent, terminally ill adults who face end-of-life trials through advocacy and counseling on hospice care, navigating the health care system, and ways of hastening death. www.compassionandchoices.org, 800/247-7421.

Gray Panthers has been active for 35 years in 28 local networks, working from an intergenerational perspective on social problems such as peace, housing, health care, and jobs. Steps for action on these issues are available on its website. www.graypanthers.org, 800/280-5362.

The National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC) advocates access to health care, retirement, and security, and federal rights for low-income elders through litigation, legislation, agency representation, and assistance to attorneys and paralegals. www.nsclc.org, 202/289-6976 in Washington, DC, 213/639-0930 in Los Angeles.

Older Women's League (OWL), a national grassroots organization, voices the unique concerns of aging women through research, education, and advocacy. Information is provided for starting chapters not yet included in the organization's network of 60 cities. www.owl-national.org, 800/825-3695.

intergenerational

Elderhostel Intergenerational Programs offer educational traveling experiences that adults of all ages can share with children or grandchildren. Its website offers a searchable database for 8,000 programs in 90 countries. www.elderhostel.org/programs/inter

generational_default.asp, 877/426-8056.

Elder Tot Centers is a nonprofit organization that promotes intergenerational community-based childcare. Its website offers tips for developing these projects, including financial mechanisms. www.etcenters.org.

Generations United is a membership organization focused on intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. New online virtual resource center (IPath) facilitates intergenerational communication regarding its 350 programs. www.gu.org, 202/289-3979.

mind/body

Spiritual Eldering Institute is a multi-faith organization that promotes educational programs, leadership training, and community development for all generations. Website offers information on conferences, workshops, and resources for further reading. www.spiritualeldering.org, 303/449-7243.

Third Age is a free online organization that provides an array of resources and articles on health and wellness of spirit, mind, and body. www.thirdage.com.

volunteer opportunities

Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI), in concert with a network of local organizations, offers a range of outdoor volunteer opportunities in many states and one of its newest in Mexico. A list of sample programs is available on its website. www.easi.org, 540/788-3274.

Experience Corps offers service opportunities for those over 55. In 14 cities, its 1,800 members receive training and work in teams to help young students struggling to learn to read. Its website offers resources for launching new projects nationwide. www.experiencecorps.org, 202/478-6190.

The Peace Corps enables elders to employ their experience, maturity, and ability in developing nations whose cultures value these insights. 460 of its volunteers are over the age of 50 and continue to serve following their return home. www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=learn.whovol.older, 800/424.8580.

Senior Corps provides opportunities for more than half a million older Americans to apply their experience and skills to meet community challenges through three programs: Foster Grandparents, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and Senior Companions. www.seniorcorps.gov, 800/424-8867.

staying in your home

The Center for Universal Design specializes in housing styles that benefit people of all ages and abilities, including those essential to elders. www.centerforuniversaldesign.org, 800/647-6777.

Elder Care Locator is a public service of the Administration on Aging. Find free resources for senior services nationwide by telephone or by using the easy three-step searchable database on its website. www.eldercare.gov, 800/677-1116.

books and films

Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives, by David Snowdon, assesses the effects of aging by observing the lives of 646 nuns. Includes details about the study and suggestions for further reading. Bantam, 2001.

Caregiving: The Spiritual Journey of Love, Loss, and Renewal, by Beth Witrogen McLeod, documents practical advice from professionals in the fields of medicine, finance, spirituality, and aging. Offers an appendix of resources, further reading, and websites on caregiving. Wiley, 2000.

Coming of Age: The Story of Our Century by Those Who've Lived It, by Studs Terkel, includes interviews of 69 individuals ranging in age from 70 to 99. Includes dialogues with the acclaimed, such as artist Jacob Lawrence, actress Uta Hagen, and economist John Kenneth Galbraith, and the unknown. St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Creative Aging: A Meaning-Making Perspective, by Mary Baird Carlsen, emphasizes a creative, meaning-making discussion of aging by blending theoretical analysis with practical, illustrative personal stories. W.W. Norton, 1996.

Dying Well, by Ira Byock, discusses the fears associated with dying and the decisions that can enable growth and enlightenment. Includes a discussion guide for use by book clubs and classes. www.dyingwell.org/discguide.htm. Riverhead Books, 1998.

Elder Abuse & Neglect: Causes, Diagnosis, and Intervention Strategies, 2nd edition, by Mary Joy Quinn and Susan K. Tomita, presents a comprehensive model for detection, assessment, and intervention in elder abuse and neglect. Provides legal tools for courtroom proceedings in its appendix. Springer, 1997.

"Grow Old Along With Me," a documentary film, discusses how aging enables a creative process as a means to reach one's full humanity. Hosted by Julie Harris, Richard Kiley, Hume Cronyn, and James Earl Jones, it explores the works of artists Frederick and Claske Franck, opera singer Shirley Verrett, photographer Leni Sonnenfeld, and Buddhist nun Pema Chodron. Maryland Public Television. Available for purchase at www.olddogdocumentaries.com/vid_goawm.html.

The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America, by Thomas R. Cole, describes how religious, political, and philosophical beliefs about aging have changed over time by tracking the decline of religious values and the rise of economic individualism. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Prime Time: How Baby-Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America, by Marc Freedman, explains how baby boomers will renew and reenergize life in America by committing to social activism and volunteerism in their elder years. Offers an appendix of resources for action. PublicAffairs, 2000.

What's Worth Knowing, by Wendy Lustbader (see page 37), is a collection of 104 interviews with 70-, 80-, and 90-year-olds that illustrate the clarity, experience, and wisdom of elders approaching the ends of their lives. Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2004.

Winter Grace: Spirituality & Aging, by Kathleen Fischer, explores spirituality for elders, commenting on memories, friendship, love, and interdependence within the Christian community. Its appendix suggests sources for further reading. Upper Room Books, 1998.

U.S. public opinion is turning against continued occupation of Iraq. But how might we extract ourselves?

Operation Homecoming

How to end the Iraq war

by Erik Leaver

Sandy Huffaker

Estyn Anderson, two, smiles as his dad, Sergeant Warren Anderson, tries to kiss him during a homecoming for the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing on March 1, in San Diego. The U.S. Marines returned home from a seven-month tour of duty in Iraq.

"There is an old military doctrine called the First Rule of Holes: If you find yourself stuck in one, stop digging."

—The late Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, U.S. Navy

The invasion, occupation, and continuing war in Iraq has cost the lives of more than 1,700 U.S. soldiers. Thousands more have been physically and emotionally scarred. Iraqis have suffered in even larger numbers. The BBC reports that nearly 25,000 Iraqi civilians have lost their lives and their country has been shattered by violence and continues to languish. Cities such as Fallujah, population 300,000, have been virtually destroyed.

Ending the U.S. occupation of Iraq is the only way to move closer to peace and reconstruction. U.S. and coalition troops are both the cause of and the magnet for the violence in Iraq, not its solution. A goal that would help both the troops currently in Iraq and the Iraqi people would be to bring the troops home by January 2006.

Setting a date will transform the dynamics in Iraq. Iraqis will start to realize that they are in control, not the U.S., and this will give them hope that they will

be an independent nation with the responsibility to create their nation on their own terms.

Ending the occupation

The U.S. operates out of approximately 50 locations, including 14 "enduring bases" in Iraq with unabashed names like "Camp Slayer," "Forward Operating Base Steel Dragon," and "Camp Headhunter." Iraqis have on their soil 150,000 U.S. soldiers, an additional 30,000 coalition troops, and 20,000 U.S. military contractors who conduct 12,000 or more patrols each week.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi resistance has grown larger and stronger. In November 2003 the Pentagon estimated that there were about 5,000 Iraqi resistance fighters.

Today, estimates range from 16,000 to 40,000 fighters with about 200,000 supporters. The continuing presence of U.S. troops has strengthened, not weakened, the resistance.

With the withdrawal of the occupation forces and the resulting end of the Iraqi structures supporting those forces, the major target for resistance attacks will disappear.

Supporting the young people who just say no

by Larry Kerschner

As U.S. popular support for the occupation of Iraq has fallen, so has military recruitment.

In an attempt to turn this around, the Army recently added $500 million to its recruitment budget, raising the total for the program to $1.3 billion. Another 1,000 recruiters have been added to bring the total for the Army and the Army Reserve to nearly 7,500.

In 2002, the military spent $6.3 million for a video game, "America's Army," as a marketing tool. Over the past three years, the U.S. Department of Defense has been quietly compiling a database with personal information on about 30 million high school and college students.

Concerned parents, students, and activists are finding ways to counter the military sales program. Here are some ways you can get involved:

Take the "I will not kill" pledge. The Fellowship of Reconciliation has launched the "I will not kill" campaign in an effort to educate youth about the reality of war and their right to say no to killing (www.forusa.org).

Find alternatives to military service as a way out of poverty. The American Friends Service Committee presents alternatives to the military as a way out of poverty and other points to consider before enlisting in the military (www.afsc.org/youthmil).

Keep your school free of recruiters. The Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors offers "The Military Out of Our Schools Organizing Kit," which can be downloaded from their website, www.objector.org. United for Peace and Justice offers many resources, including forms for opting out of the No Child Left Behind mandatory military access to high school children (www.unitedforpeace.org). Washington Truth in Recruiting has information on developing resolutions on military recruiting for local school boards to consider (www.watir.org).

Listen to the veterans. Fire Mountain Chapter Fellowship of Reconciliation (Washington state) has a counter-recruitment CD for distribution free to high school students. The CD consists of veterans speaking from their personal experiences about what you should know before signing up for the military. The statements are interspersed with original anti-war music. (Contact peacepoet@gmail.com.) Veterans who oppose the use of war as a tool of foreign policy are willing to speak to interested citizens (www.veteransforpeace.org).

Larry Kerschner, a Vietnam infantry veteran, works with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Veterans for Peace, and Voices in the Wilderness. Graphic: from the U.S. Department of Defense video game, "America's Army."

Iraq's best chance

January's elections were an important first step toward democracy, but Iraqis still have little oversight over U.S. operations, which affect Iraqi security, natural resources, reconstruction, and the economy. The elections appear to have deepened Iraq's sectarian divisions between the Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds. These divisions stalled the formation of the government and are slowing the writing of a new constitution. Politicians who are seen as collaborating with the U.S. increasingly are targeted by insurgents.

Having Iraqis in charge of their own security is a goal that the Bush administration and the peace movement can agree upon. But that can only happen in a truly sovereign nation. The police and military forces the U.S. is trying to create in Iraq have failed to provide security for the Iraqi people because they are fighting in a war that puts anyone associated with the U.S. occupation at great risk.

At the same time, soldiers and police officers lack training, and with unemployment in Iraq ranging between 30 and 70 percent, many Iraqi soldiers are loyal only to the paycheck they receive. More importantly, Iraqi security forces cannot succeed as long as the U.S. is leading a war on the ground in Iraq, as it is unclear who the security forces are fighting for—the U.S. or a nascent Iraqi government with no real power or popular support.

What will happen when U.S. troops are withdrawn? No one can say with any certainty. But it is certain that if Washington continues to "stay the course," U.S. troops will continue to die, and they will continue to kill. And Iraq's reconstruction will remain stalled.

It is likely that the withdrawal of U.S. troops would lead to the collapse of at least some parts of the current government, but some of its institutions—including the police, the military, and other security agencies—could survive under new leadership untainted by association with the U.S. occupation.

Without an outside enemy occupying the country, it is also possible that the kind of secular nationalism long dominant in Iraq would again prevail as the most influential political force in the emerging Iraqi polity, replacing the fundamentalist tendencies currently on the rise among Iraqis facing the desperation of occupation, repression, and growing impoverishment.

It is unlikely that the violence will completely disappear with the end of the occupation, or that the Iraqi military can rebuild itself instantly after U.S. troops are withdrawn. As a result, there should be plans for providing temporary peacekeeping or security assistance if Iraq requests it.

Temporary on-the-ground security assistance cannot be imposed by U.S. (or U.S.-led coalition) forces. Nor can an international peace force function safely if it is perceived as colluding with an occupying force.

Only a truly multilateral force can be credible to the Iraqi people. For example, a combination of United Nations blue-helmet peacekeepers and temporary forces accountable to the Arab League and/or the Organization of the Islamic Conference could provide international legitimacy as well as regional accountability. The effect would be to reduce regional tensions and encourage neighboring countries to provide support throughout Iraq's reconstruction process.

A plan for withdrawal

Once a date for troop withdrawal has been announced, the following steps can facilitate phasing out U.S. involvement and building peace and reconstruction:

1. **Reduce number of U.S. troops and end offensive operations.** As a first step to withdrawal, the U.S. should declare an immediate cease-fire and reduce the number of troops deployed in Iraq. Continuing offensive operations will only escalate the violence and make Iraq less secure and less safe. The U.S. should pull troops out of major cities and shift troop strength to guarding the borders to stem the flow of foreign fighters and money used to fund the resistance. If Iraqi security forces need help maintaining order, they can invite in outside forces.

2. **Declare that the U.S. will not maintain a permanent military presence in Iraq.** Congress needs to affirm its commitment to a responsible withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq. A congressional resolution clarifying that the U.S. has no plan to control Iraq's oil, to establish permanent military bases in Iraq, or to suppress Muslims, would deprive insurgents of their central organizing message. Without such a resolution, Iraqis will assume that the U.S. intends to make the occupation a permanent feature of Iraqi life.

3. **Hand over the restoration of services to Iraqis.** The U.S. government and its contractors have

failed to restore public safety, public services, strengthen institutions, or provide jobs. By giving Iraqis control over reconstruction funds, more Iraqis will get jobs and projects will be better targeted to the needs of Iraqis. Lowering the unemployment rate will weaken insurgency recruitment efforts.

4. **Put the brakes on fraud, waste, and abuse.** Lawmakers should clamp down on the rampant war profiteering that has caused widespread waste, fraud, and abuse. To do this, the U.S. must stop awarding no-bid contracts and open-ended, "cost-plus," multi-billion dollar contracts such as those awarded to Halliburton and Bechtel, and increase oversight over the military and its contractors.

5. **Make reparations.** The United States owes a massive financial debt to Iraq. Over time, the obligation must be honored to repay Iraq for the collapse of their economy as a result of the economic sanctions of 1990-2003 and for the damage of the 2003-2005 invasion and occupation. The United States must also follow through on promises of reconstruction funds, beyond the small amount so far released.

6. **Enter into negotiations.** As with any guerrilla war, the Iraqi resistance is unlikely to be defeated by military means. Political and diplomatic solutions are the keys to ending the violence. Recent news reports indicate that some discussion between insurgent groups and the U.S. military have occurred. But even more important than negotiations with the U.S. is a dialogue between the insurgents and newly elected Iraqi leaders.

Looking Forward

All scenarios in today's war-ravaged Iraq are risky. Maintaining the U.S. occupation in Iraq, with U.S. troops killing and dying in Iraq, violates U.S. and international law, the U.N. Charter, and the Geneva Conventions. Clearly this is not the way forward.

A January 2005 Zogby poll found that 82 percent of Sunnis and 69 percent of Shiites favor U.S. withdrawal either immediately or after an elected government is in place. How withdrawal is accomplished will be our legacy. What we propose is that that legacy be based on giving the Iraqis true control over their political, economic, and military conditions.

Erik Leaver is policy outreach director for the Foreign Policy In Focus project www.fpif.org at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

Justin Sullivan

A San Francisco girl sits among boots memorializing each U.S. soldier that has been killed in the Iraq war. The boots are part of the Eyes Wide Open exhibit of the American Friends Service Committee

by Rebecca Clarren

Organic Produce Goes to School

All photos by Jason Houston

Farmers are struggling to stay on the land. Meanwhile, obesity is epidemic among U.S. children. A movement is creating a solution to both problems by linking schools to sources of local organic produce. The kids don't seem to miss the deep fryers

Loaded onto fifth-grader Cameron Landry's blue plastic lunch tray are signs of a quiet revolution taking place in schools across the country. Missing are the brownies, french fries, and cookies that have become standard ingredients of public school lunches. Here at Lincoln Elementary in Olympia, Washington, organic salad greens, a fat bunch of purple grapes, and a pile of carrots crowd around a taco.

Landry, an 11-year-old with a mess of curly blond hair wearing a clip-on tie with a t-shirt, doesn't complain about the lack of sweets. Instead, he actually says he likes getting the variety of food and choices.

"I eat breakfast and lunch at school, and this is pretty different than what I'm used to getting at home. It's much healthier," he says as he loads up his taco with cucumbers from the bin marked with a student-created "organic" sign. "I like it. This way we're not getting hyped up on sugar, sweets, and stuff."

This may sound unexpected from a member of the demographic for whom Happy Meals were

created, but in schools across the country, children are gobbling up more fresh vegetables and fruit at lunch due to a grassroots movement referred to by parents, farmers, and teachers as "farm-to-school."

Started in 1996 in one Santa Monica, California, school and another in the Florida panhandle, the movement has since exploded. In 2000, the United States Department of Agriculture funded nine different universities and nonprofits throughout the country to jumpstart other farm-to-school programs. The groups set up pilot projects at different schools, conducted evaluations of what worked, and then used the information to train parents, farmers, and food service providers on how to create a farm-to-school program in their own communities.

Today, more than 400 school districts in 23 states use regional fresh produce at school lunches, reaching an estimated 750,000 children. While limited research has been conducted on the impact on obesity or increased attention in the classroom, studies show that students have increased their fruit and vegetable servings by 25 percent.

For parents and activists that leap is significant in an era when children nationwide are experiencing an epidemic of obesity. Today more than 15 percent of all U.S. children are overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Simultaneously, by purchasing produce directly from local growers and not multinational corporations based in, say, Mexico, the farm-to-school movement aims to conquer another troubling trend in American food production and consumption. For while children are getting fatter, family farmers are experiencing lean times: 22 percent of farmers have incomes below the poverty level, according to most recent statistics. Due in large part to such financial challenges, America is losing its small-scale farmers at a dizzying pace. Yet in small lunchrooms like Landry's, lunch trays heavy with fresh, healthy food offer hope: farm-to-school programs increase farmers' incomes by an average 15 percent.

"Kids and farmers are both vulnerable populations; this is a way to meet the needs of both and benefit both groups," says Marion Kalb, director of the national farm-to-school program for the nonprofit Community Foods Security Coalition, one of the groups involved from the movement's beginning. Most adults find canned green beans unappetizing, and so do kids, she notes. "Overall the strength of the program is that produce from farms tastes good."

Paul Flock, the food services supervisor for the Olympia School District, points to an unplugged and abandoned deep fryer in the back of the Olympia High School kitchen and jokingly asks if I know anyone who needs one. A 20-year veteran in food services, Flock says that school lunch wasn't always such a nutritionist's nightmare. Through years of budget cuts for education, school districts have looked to school lunch as a way to make money. To that end, cafeterias started to sell food they knew kids would buy, such as chicken nuggets, french fries, and cookies. "We were advocating unhealthy food choices to make a dollar," says Flock.

Today, Flock buys hundreds of pounds of produce from eight different regional farmers. It's not cheap—compared to the 90 cents/pound he used to pay for chopped iceberg lettuce, Flock now spends $5/pound for a leafy mix of endive, radicchio, and leaf lettuce. To subsidize this increased budget, Flock stopped buying desserts and eliminated a contract with Domino's Pizza. A grant from the Washington Department of Agriculture helps to make up the financial difference.

A growing chorus of national experts says spending the extra money up front benefits society in the long term.

"If you have unhealthy kids, you're going to have unhealthy adults, and there will be huge monetary costs to society," says Marion Nestle, author of the award-winning book *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health.* "This program fills a gap that the government really ought to be involved in. But the government's hands are tied because it's sold out to big business. So people are taking things into their own hands."

Where good food comes from

Just a few miles down the road from Olympia High School, sprightly tomato plants and green onions dance in the light wind that blows through the Kirsop Farm's broad fields.

"This fresh organic produce is as good as it gets," says farm co-owner Colin Barricklow, grinning beneath a broad straw hat. "It seems like this is what kids should be eating."

For the past three years, Kirsop has delivered hundreds of pounds of potatoes and squash to the Olympia schools five times a season. While the farm also sells to local co-op grocery stores and directly to consumers through farmers' markets and subscription shares, known as community-supported agriculture, selling to the district has provided some-

thing often elusive for small farmers: a stable market and a steady demand where prices can be negotiated up front. Such sales have spelled the difference between success and failure for many new farmers in the area, says Barricklow's wife, Genine Bradwin.

As she walks down a long row of potatoes, she adds that maintaining farms like theirs in a community where subdivisions threaten to gobble up open space is also an important cultural element.

"Most parents want farms in the community so their kids can see where their food comes from and can experience the ideal of a farmer with a pitchfork standing in the field," she says. "If a cafeteria gets its food from California or Mexico, it doesn't support that vision or experience."

Helping to sustain small farmers helps the entire community to thrive financially, says Judith Redmond, board president of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, a California nonprofit based in Davis. Family farmers, she explains, spend most of their money locally for supplies, such as seeds and tractor parts, which is why studies have shown that every dollar a farmer earns generates $10 in the local community.

"Keeping the local economy moving is something very clearly done by farm-to-school," says Redmond, while on lunch break from working at the organic farm she owns and runs. "Several hundred thousand dollars of produce have already been sold by farmers to Ventura schools in just a few months of this season," she notes. "It's very exciting."

Despite the program's remarkable successes, there remain challenges. Many schools no longer have the infrastructure to wash or chop fresh produce. Often, school districts distribute heated, premade, processed food from centralized kitchens.

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, signed by President Bush in June 2004, promised to help schools or nonprofits develop infrastructure and conduct research necessary to provide local produce for lunch. As of spring of 2005, the act has yet to receive any funding. Such money would make a critical difference in reaching additional school districts and, more importantly, changing the culture of school lunch.

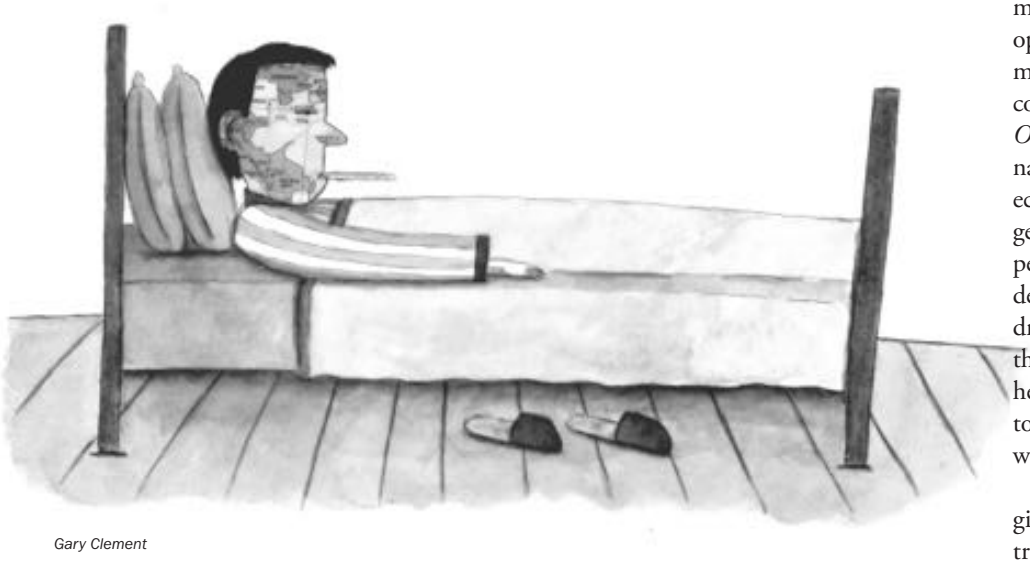
Yet even with fledgling budgets, the cadre of educators, parents, and farmers who have helped the farm-to-school programs take root say they are dedicated to making the movement grow and flourish. For Lincoln Elementary's principal, Cheryl Petra, providing children with fresh fruits and vegetables is central to her job as an educator.

"We're the wealthiest nation in the world—it shouldn't be revolutionary to think about what we feed our children"

"We have a mandate to take care of our children. One way to do that is to feed them well," says Petra. As she folds her long legs under a child-sized table in the cafeteria, Petra simultaneously gives one child a hug and asks another to stop yelling. "We're the wealthiest nation in the world—it shouldn't be revolutionary to think about what we feed our children. We're the adults and we need to provide food that nourishes out children. It's the right thing to do."

Rebecca Clarren is a free-lance writer who lives in Portland.

Diagnosis: Failing Empire



Gary Clement

DILEMMAS OF DOMINATION: The Unmaking of the American Empire

by Walden Bello

Metropolitan Books, 2005, 272 pages, $25.00

reviewed by Saul Landau

When students ask me to define globalization, henceforth I will direct them to Walden Bello's *Dilemmas of Domination.* In this well-organized and clear presentation about this enigmatic concept, Bello defines U.S. empire and globalization as inseparable. From the clear-eyed perspective of the margins of empire (he is Filipino), Bello sees that these forces have deeply negative implications for both Third World people and those of the United States.

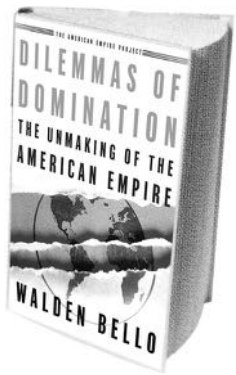
The "e" word remains unmentionable in the U.S. political vocabulary, but Bello argues that the empire has begun to unravel precipitously, with consequences Americans can no longer afford to ignore. The invasion and occupation of Iraq has forced the U.S. military to overextend itself, thus making empire into the proverbial elephant in the American living room. This invisible beast in all of its forms has helped induce immense budget deficits and national debts. By crossing the Rubicon into Iraq, Bush has also exacerbated a growing economic crisis based on overproduction. Indeed, Bello argues, the U.S. imperial project that has dominated six decades of global economics, politics, and war, has begun a dangerous descent.

This analysis pairs well with Chalmers Johnson's *Sorrows of Empire.* Whereas Johnson argues from the perspective of a U.S. scholar seeing empire as destroying the republic, Bello focuses on how U.S. domination has become the major obstacle for Third World development.

Bello offers data galore as an antidote to those who have presented globalization as the necessary medicine that will cure underdevelopment. Contrary to Thomas Friedman's apologia for the new order of corporate wealth, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree,* Bello shows that multinational corporate giants destroy economic harmony and obstruct genuine communication between people. Backed with ample evidence, he contends that a few hundred giant conglomerates designed this world business system and, with help from the U.S. government, seek to acquire ever more of the world's wealth and labor power.

Simultaneously, Bush strategists seek to establish "full-spectrum dominance," a concept that led them into thinking the U.S. military possessed infinite elasticity. Instead, they find themselves in a quagmire in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military overextension goes hand in hand with what Bello calls "a crisis of political legitimacy."

By bombing civilians and employing routine torture and other dubious techniques, the Bush Administration has lost not only the "hearts and minds" of the Islamic world, but has called into question among Americans the legitimacy of the U.S. political elite. Bello



looks beyond Bush's declining approval ratings to a larger public understanding of the "transparent corporate domination of the political system as well as widespread restrictions on the civil liberties of citizens."

Yet millions of Third World people continue to try to enter the United States and millions more see its commercial aesthetic as attractive. Bello does not directly address how these facts coincide with the loss of legitimacy, but he implies that economic crisis will deflate the U.S. as a job market and an appealing culture. He points to the "widening gap between the growing productive potential ... and the capacity ... to purchase its output." That is, to maximize profits, in a capitalist economy companies try to maximize output and minimize wages. So where will the buyers for these multiplying products come from?

As the U.S. economy slides, institutions like the U.S.-backed IMF, WTO, and World Bank also lose legitimacy. Bello says that these world financial giants, which claim to offer development models for the Third World, have instead "delivered severe instability." Instead of helping poor countries to advance, these financial despots have "disciplined and re-subordinated the developing countries in the interests of the United States and other center economies."

The U.S. and other developed economies have grown as a result, but the number of people living in poverty has dramatically increased as well from 130 million in 1980 to 180 million in 1990.

For this and other reasons, Bello sees the collapse of U.S. empire as a blessing and an opportunity. He wants empire to fail, for the Third World's sake as well as for America's. The collapse of American empire is "a precondition for the reemergence of a democratic republic. That was the American promise before it was hijacked by imperial democracy."

This scholar-activist has written a manifesto on how globalization works and fails—and on the crying need to change it. His activism joins his analysis in calling for more action, more protest, more politics to bring down the imperial structure. He calls on readers to abandon their identities as consumers and become citizen-actors to help guide the world toward a reasonable and just way of producing and distributing wealth.

Saul Landau's latest book is The Business Of America: How Consumers Have Replaced Citizens. *He is an Institute for Policy Studies fellow and teaches at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.*

CANCER-GATE: How to Win the Losing Cancer War

by Samuel S. Epstein, MD
Baywood Publishing, 2005, 377 pages, $24.95
reviewed by Judy Brady

Once a rare disease mostly affecting the old, cancer is now the leading cause of death in the United States. Unlike AIDS, cancer generally is not a disease we can catch from each other, and while a small percentage of cancers may be linked to individual genetic makeup, "cancer genes" don't account for the enormous increase in cancer rates during the last half of the 20th century.

We don't know what causes cancer, the pundits say. Nonsense, says Dr. Samuel Epstein.

For more than a quarter of a century, Dr. Epstein has been exposing cancer's causes. His groundbreaking and still preeminent book, *The Politics of Cancer,* published first in 1979 (updated in 1998), is an exhaustive account of what lies behind the cancer epidemic, and he has continued to publish articles and books about why so many of us, despite our efforts to lead a healthy life, will fall victim to this disease.

In this latest book, *Cancer-Gate,* Dr. Epstein has put together under one cover articles he wrote in the last 15 years. It is a book which everyone should read who has ever wondered why cancer strikes and kills more and more of us, despite the billions of dollars spent annually on cancer research and treatment. More importantly the book examines the most crucial question of the cancer debate: Why is the general public so unaware of what is causing the cancer epidemic?

Dr. Epstein—along with many eminent scientists—believes that the industrial and agricultural pollutants to which we are all involuntarily exposed are the primary culprits in the cancer scourge. But why this sort of information is hidden from most Americans is a different question, and here is Epstein's unique contribution.

In *Cancer-Gate,* he points to some of the industries that have permeated our water, air, soil, and food with carcinogenic substances because it is cheaper and easier to pollute than to protect public health. He points to regulatory agencies which fail to put the brakes on industrial pollution. He points to elected officials who are wooed

away from their duty to protect public health by industry lobbies and industry money. He points to members of the scientific community who appear more interested in lucrative research and policy-making careers than in identifying and exposing the ways in which the carcinogens surrounding us make us sick. And he points to what he calls the "cancer establishment," public and private organizations charged with fighting the war on cancer —principally the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the American Cancer Society (ACS), which spend enormous sums of taxpayer and charity money but have failed to stem the epidemic.

Epstein charges that in laying the blame for cancer on bad lifestyle choices and defining prevention as inventing more pills, these two institutions have avoided confrontation with polluting industries. Instead of investigating the sources of carcinogens, the NCI has become, according to one retired NCI official whom Epstein quotes, a "government pharmaceutical company" by concentrating its money and resources on developing drugs to prevent or treat cancer instead of identifying and addressing the causes of the disease. Yet, as the NCI itself admits, "complete remission and cures continue to elude us."

The wealthiest "charity" of its kind in the world, the ACS abounds with conflicts of interest, Epstein says. Its board is made up of executives from the pharmaceutical, investment, banking, and media industries. Not surprisingly, the ACS has been the most prominent exponent of what Epstein refers to as the blame-the-victim approach. In its campaign against smoking, for instance, it never went after the tobacco industry nor ancillary industries like advertising agencies or public relations corporations that promoted smoking. Instead, it guilt-tripped the smoker.

Another major avenue of exposure to carcinogenic substances is through the food we eat, but, as Dr. Epstein describes, the ACS has actually protected pesticide manufacturers when public disclosure of the dangers presented by pesticide use was threatened.

The ACS' involvement in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) every October is, according to Epstein, a major public-relations scam. NBCAM was started originally by a major pesticide manufacturer, Zeneca, and is still financially supported by it and other industries that contribute to everyone's body burden of carcinogenic chemicals. Together they present a one-sided picture of the breast cancer epidemic by limiting the message of NBCAM to supporting mammography and research into treatment. Under the leadership of organizations like the ACS and the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the "pink ribbon" campaign has become a multi-million-dollar business. One can buy hundreds of products and services under its banner. Millions of people, believing they are helping a good cause, shop for pink ribbon products and run for the cure every year.

In fact, Epstein says, the money from these efforts goes not toward steps that actually save lives, but primarily toward a misinformation campaign that consistently ignores the environmental/industrial sources of cancer. Amid the music and food, glorious speeches about cancer survivors and fluttering pink flags, and under the shadow of sponsors that include corporations like Chevron, BMW, and Ford Motor Company, no one even whispers about carcinogens.

Epstein is unremitting in his insistence that we could win this war on cancer if we changed our approach from what he calls damage control to implementing primary prevention at the sources of the carcinogens. This has not made him a popular figure. There are a lot of people in this country who have a vested interest in not changing the current approach to cancer.

Epstein says outright that we do not need another 30 years of spending billions of dollars on research. Instead, he believes that efforts should be directed at informing the public about what is in our food, air, water, and manufactured products, protecting workers from carcinogenic exposures at their jobs, and encouraging the development of nontoxic alternatives.

It is unlikely in today's social climate that Dr. Epstein's suggestions will be taken seriously by

policy makers. But if a majority of Americans learned why and how pollution is killing us, they might shift from running for the cure to challenging polluters, leaving the policy makers to follow. That's where *Cancer-Gate* comes in. Get it.

Judy Brady has battled two cancers (the second caused by the treatment for the first) and has spent 25 years studying, speaking, and writing about the politics of cancer.

DELAYING THE REAL WORLD: a 20-Something's Guide to Seeking Adventure

by Colleen Kinder

Running Press, 2005, 240 pages, $12.95

reviewed by Meredith Dearborn

Colleen Kinder doesn't like cubicles. After avoiding the corporate track by volunteering in Cuban nursing homes, she returned to the U.S. to steer her peers away from movable half-walls, channeling her distaste into a how-to book called *Delaying the Real World.* This well-researched manual is squished full of ideas to help 20-somethings creatively avoid getting stuck in a narrow career track, at least for a little while. She covers esoteric volunteer work, overseas travel, internships at home and abroad, and finding the best watering holes of a new American hometown—all without a trust fund. The book quotes an eclectic bunch of wanderers and lists hundreds of organizations to help young people not waste their footloose years. Kinder has even set up a Delaying the Real World fellowship to help them find the cash to embark on an adventure.

As a freshly minted college graduate with itchy feet myself, I understand the pull of stability and steep incomes. More than a few of my classmates shot straight into investment banking jobs in big cities, and now, feeling stifled in their starched collars, find themselves wishing they had taken time to explore both their opportunities and the world.

For better or worse, *Delaying the Real World* is written almost exclusively for the young American educated class. She assumes that her readers will soon funnel themselves into either graduate school or a career with medical benefits. As such, the book stops short of asking critical questions: What's so distasteful about the "real world"? What counts as "real"? And why is it inevitable that we must end up there? Although Kinder writes that "redefine real" is one of the fundamental tenets of her plan, she still assumes that the end point of an adventure is a stable, settled life and well-paying, white-collar career—a.k.a. reality—and that doing something untraditional is a résumé-building, educational tool, not a life in and of itself.

The book also shies away from addressing those young adults who are chained to the cubicle by their student loans, or those who have never been to college, whose vision of a "real world" future may lie in a truck's cab or a hospital's laundry room, rather than a cubicle. It leaves one to wonder how to get those folks to Prague.

Kinder does offer ideas for how to finance adventurous living. She focuses on volunteer opportunities that provide a stipend or housing (although she does include many that would require subsidy) and she suggests supporting oneself in a dream internship by working in food service and giving up one daily foible (although the foible she chooses as an example is the daily grande latte, which seems to assume a significant amount of disposable money). Some of the opportunities she mentions offer the perk of deferring college loan payments. Still,

she assumes one can make use of the kind of networks and resources college brings, and that one always has a comfortable parental home full of free food as a money-saving fallback.

Kinder's project is simply to stave off the drudgery so educated idealists can live a little first, and live better later. It's a valid goal, particularly if the book succeeds in reaching 20-somethings who have so far ignored their wanderlust: both those who had never considered the possibility of living abroad on a budget, and those who committed early to spend their 20s climbing the corporate ladder. She is spot-on in her observation that a "year off" should in fact be considered "year on," in which the post-graduate learns what truly makes him or her tick—a process that can only lead to a more personally fulfilling career and life. Kinder cites a surprising number of traditionally successful careers that began with a plane ticket to Costa Rica, an internship in Burlington, Vermont, or caring for an ailing mother at home. The U.S. may radically change if every future CEO spends time volunteering with street kids in Burkina Faso and if every politico remembers paying for her ski-bum winters working tirelessly for meager tips.

Meredith Dearborn is a former YES! intern who now works for Global Exchange.

Linda Wolf

Get Your Optimism Fix

Does bucking the forces of a globalized, gas-guzzling, sweat-shop economy sometimes seem hopeless? Do you find it outrageous that Wal-Mart has become America's biggest private employer? Are you weary of hearing about outsourcing, downsizing, and the latest mega-merger?

If so, I have just the antidote for you (and me).

It's called the Green Festival. There are two coming up—one in Washington, DC, from September 24 to 25 and another in San Francisco from November 5 to 6 (see www.greenfestivals.com for details). The festivals are a joint project of our good friends at Co-op America and Global Exchange.

I went to my first Green Festival last November. I had followed the development of this idea since 1997, when it was just a gleam in the eye of Alisa Gravitz, head of Co-op America and a board member of the Positive Futures Network. Four Green Festivals had been held since 2002, all of them successful, with tens of thousands of people attending each one. So I expected a good experience.

But I was not prepared for the jolt of optimism the festival injected directly into my psyche. The festival I attended was held in San Francisco just days after the November 2004 elections. I arrived deeply depressed about the prospects for this country in the immediate years ahead. But as I eased my way through the throngs of energized people in the huge, noisy center, my depression lifted like a San Francisco fog on a sunny morning.

The enormous center was lined with booths selling everything from candles to cleaning agents, finance to fashion, mushrooms to magazines. The products incorporated recycled and natural ingredients, renewable resources, local economies, indigenous design, responsible business practices, and fair trade. Booths for advocacy, service, and education, showcased multiple ways to make a better world and enlist people to get involved in building that world. People leaning against pillows engaged in thoughtful discussion circles on diverse topics such as how to develop local living economies and how to reclaim the media. There were spaces for gorgeous art, vibrant music, and heathy food.

It was clear to me that the businesses, non-profits, artists, and visionaries at the festival weren't going to let bad policies from the federal government stop them. They were moving ahead to create an economy that's healthy for our bodies, our communities, and the living planet.

What I found so powerful about the Green Festival was the impact of the collective experience. Usually we see the changing economy in little pieces, like looking at a landscape through a keyhole. We glimpse fair trade coffee here, organic cotton there, maybe a solar panel somewhere. But each effort seems too insignificant to make the kind of difference our world so desperately needs.

At the Green Festival, the door is flung open to show the whole landscape. Suddenly, you can touch and taste and feel an economy that uses a whole lot less oil and creates a whole lot more community. You can see that it's dynamic and it's huge. The alive, smiling faces of the people creating it and the thousands learning about it tell us this is the fun side of the revolution.

So join me at the Green Festival for an optimism fix. At the upcoming festivals in Washington, DC, and San Francisco, you can meet people you've seen in *YES!,* such as Amy Goodman, Van Jones, Gifford Pinchot, Michael Nagler, Joanna Macy, John de Graaf, and John Todd. I'll be at the *YES!* booth in both DC and San Francisco with my colleague Susan Gleason.

Together, we can feel the pulse of the emerging economy that embraces our environmental and social challenges with such creativity and verve.

Fran Korten
Executive Director

New Life at *YES!*

There must be something in the water. Managing editor Michael Leonen and his wife Anna were blessed with a 7 pound, 9 ounce baby boy, Eric, on July 12.

And Carolyn McConnell, senior editor, is expecting her first baby in August.

All these babies mean changes in the editorial department.

Michael switched from full-time managing editor to part-time telecommuting production manager. Carolyn will be starting on maternity leave in early August, and returning in a part-time capacity in early December.

Welcome, Dee

Dee Axelrod agreed to fill in as associate editor during the various leaves, and we've been so impressed with her work that we've asked her to stay on as our senior editor. We are delighted that she has agreed. You can find her articles in this issue, including her interview with Steve and Rita Old Coyote, and her pieces on Utah Phillips and Ani DiFranco. Dee has had a varied background as an artist, college professor, and most recently a newspaper reporter. She has three children and lives on Bainbridge Island, but will soon move to Suquamish.

Audrey Watson

Events & Announcements

The Intergenerational Current: Across the Lifespan and Around the Globe

September 13–17, 2005, Washington, DC. Generations United's 13th international conference will highlight such intergenerational topics as grandparents raising grandchildren, becoming an advocate for legislation around child care and financial support for elders, starting programs to bring generations together, and intergenerational approaches taken in other countries. For more information, go to www.gu.org/training.asp.

Western Raging Grannies Gathering

September 16–18, 2005, Camp Casey, Whidbey Island, near Seattle, Washington. Program will include Radical Cheerleaders, Raging Grannies history, media issues, kites for peace, and more. For more information, contact Rosy Betz-Zall at 206/782-9305 or e-mail Elisabeth Hebert at vardoulacha@comcast.net.

Green Festivals

September 24 & 25, Washington, DC, and November 5 & 6, San Francisco. Two-day events to accelerate the emergence of a new economic paradigm. Festivals unite green businesses, social and environmental groups, visionary thinkers, and thousands of community members in an exchange of ideas, commerce, and movement building. *YES!* staff will be attending both Green Festivals. Sponsored by Co-Op America and Global Exchange. For more information, visit www.greenfestivals.com.

Bioneers 16th Annual Conference

October 14–16, San Rafael, California. A hub of practical solutions for restoring the Earth—and people—including conservation of biological and cultural diversity, traditional farming practices, and environmental restoration. For more information, visit www.bioneers.org/conference or call 877/BIONEER.

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

November 13–19. Screenings of a new film by Robert Greenwald of Brave New Films, who made *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* and *Uncovered: The War on Iraq*. Brave New Films plans to screen the film initially not in theaters, but in homes, community centers, union halls, churches, and the like the week of November 13. To sign up to host a screening and for more information about the film, visit www.walmartmovie.com or call 800/525-8212.

Teaching Peace, Teaching Justice

Are there better ways of resolving disputes than resorting to force?

The writers published in *YES!* think so. Riane Eisler, in "Spare the Rod," argues that a culture steeped in domestic violence will choose aggressive means to solve international disputes—and that making our intimate relations more peaceful can help create international peace. In "Through My Enemy's Eyes," a man serving a life sentence for murder commits to ending his own violent and unjust ways. In "Youth Court," youth offenders are tried by a jury of their peers, with the resulting firm-but-fair sentences working out suprisingly well.

These are a few of the *YES!* articles in the new Peace and Justice Curricular Module, available from our *YES!* Education Program, to support K–12 teachers in discussing issues of conflict, war, and nonviolence in their classrooms. Download it free from the *YES!* website, www.yesmagazine .org—look for the Education Connection link.

Kim Corrigan

The teaching module consists of 13 *YES!* articles, with questions for students and a glossary for each article, as well as a special Page That Counts index of related statistics and an extensive resource guide for deeper learning and engagement.

Founded in 2001 to support teachers and students in exploring challenging issues of peace, sustainability, and justice, the *YES!* Education Program now works with more than 3,400 educators nationwide. Kim Corrigan, who directs the program, and her interns bring the solutions found in *YES!* into K–12 and college classrooms—through special subscription offers, copies of the magazine, topical curricular modules, and professional development events.

Kim has co-sponsored recent education summits on the privatization of water resources, the future of oil, and a follow-up to the 1995 international conference for women in Beijing, featuring guest speaker Medea Benjamin.

Supporting the *YES!* Education Program

The Education Program depends on the support of our Dedicated Friends, who make monthly or quarterly contributions to support the magazine and the programs that bring *YES!* into schools. If you would like to become a Dedicated Friend of *YES!,* fill out the coupon below and send it in. Or call 800/937-4451 (ask for Ezra), or sign up at www.yesmagazine.org—click on the "donate" button.

Yes! I would like to become a Dedicated Friend of the Positive Futures Network

Your subscription to *YES!* is included when you sign up for a monthly or quarterly donation—

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Continued from page 5

Join an Eco-Village

We are planning to start an eco-village in the north of Portugal. We would like to live there with nice people such as we think your readers are.

We would like to make a village for 150 people, where we could grow most of our food, make money by inviting visitors for holidays, produce our own energy, and live like neigbours. We want to develop skills to live without polluting the earth we live on.

Now we are looking for about 10 grown-ups who have the courage to start a village—planning, building, and giving form to structures that help people to find their way to a way of living that is less unpleasant than the "normal" nowadays.

Write me at Uiterburen 38, 9636 EE Zuidbroek, Nederland, or leo.joke@tiscali.nl.

Leo Oord
via e-mail

Farm Apprentices Wanted

I have owned and operated a (sustainable, self-contained, bio-interactive) small homestead farm nearly all my life. Marilyn and I are 60 years old with a new (half-completed) community-supported agriculture 30-plus-acre homestead. It is rapidly becoming more than we can develop physically.

So we are offering three six-year apprenticeships to small families or individuals. This is an opportunity to afford an alternative lifestyle, free from being a wage slave. We seek partnerships based on sweat equity, sacrifice, and creativity. First comes production partnerships, later comes land partnership. We will provide raw material help for housing and table. For the philosophical, green person, this alternative allows you to become totally independent.

The homestead farm and co-op community must be honest, empathic, free, equal, ecoistic, and personally for alternative development. Critical thinking skills are mandatory. All training and education will be tailored to the individual. There is no cost to those chosen for an apprenticeship.

Call 870/447-2669, e-mail slettmala@yahoo.com, or write us at the address below.

Boyd and Marilyn Nelson
Shady Grove Co-Op
876 Trace Ridge Road
Leslie, Arkansas 72645

News on Building Community

Thank you for listing Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) and New Village in your resource guide in the Summer 2005 issue.

New Village is now publishing books instead of a journal. Two of our first books this fall profile the Village of Arts and Humanities and many other community-building programs in North America. We are also publishing a book about green job training for those people in and recently released from jail, and a guide to ecological design and building schools.

You can learn about these and upcoming titles on our new website, www.newvillagepress.net. The press is a project of ADPSR, whose correct phone number is 510/845-1000.

Lynne Elizabeth, director
New Village Press
Oakland, California

YES! and the Good Life

One again, *YES!* has put into words an explanation of why and how I am reveling in the "good life" of my second childhood at 84.

I moved to Bainbridge Island in 1992 to be a volunteer for then *In Context* and am still able to help at *YES!* enough to say these have been the happiest and most satisfying years of my life.

Millie Smith
Bainbridge Island, Washington

Musicians on a Good Place

At my regular monthly stint as emcee for the Tuesday Night Victory Music Open Mic at Third Place Books in Seattle, I ask each participating musician a non-music question about themselves before letting them go on stage.

Inspired by the Summer 2005 issue of *YES!,* at the May show I asked, "What two things make a great place?"

Here are some of their answers.

Landscape and water; cold and rainy climate; ocean and warm weather; friendly people and a lake; good public transportation and a library; a place with more bars than churches; a good bed and some peace and quiet; community and love—lotsa love; seclusion and a woman; a cat and a good book; nice scenery and lenient landlords; beer ... and, uh ... more beer; music, books and food; nudity and a pair of binoculars; more than a one-song night at Victory; family—that's the one and only important thing in life; a place that's safe: safe to be me and safe to be you.

My personal favorite answer of the night: Excellent acoustics—and a dishwasher.

Deb Seymour
Seattle, Washington

sustainableliving

Searching for simple and practical ways to live sustainably? Want to be part of the solution? Looking to create a safer world for yourself and your family?

Yes! But How?

Lumber Certification

I want to buy lumber that has been responsibly harvested, but there seem to be several standards of certification. How do I know which one is best?

The two main standards of lumber certification in the U.S. market are issued by the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

SFI is the lumber industry's own standard of certification, and SFI licensees may opt for self-evaluation over scientific third-party assessment.

According to EcoTimber, a sustainable logging company based in San Rafael, California, SFI promotes practices that "fail to renew intact ecosystems, instead converting them into long-rotation agricultural plots."

In contrast, FSC requires that accredited third parties certify that a company curbs chemical and pesticide use, fosters biodiversity and watershed health, and treats workers and communities justly. For a list of 537 companies that are FSC-certified, see www.fscus.org/certified_companies.

Meredith Dearborn

Water Temperature

Help settle a dispute. I think that warm dish water (with soap, of course) and warm rinse water do as good a job cleaning dishes as water that is as hot as you get with a standard water heater. The reason it matters to me is that one can set the water heater to a lower setting and save energy. What do you think?

Lower water temperature will save energy and money, but reduce sanitization. If this is a concern, use appropriate detergents to disinfect your dishes. A vegetable oil-based soap and chlorine-free sanitizer work well with lower water temperatures and are environmentally friendly. Allow your dishes to air-dry to avoid using a towel that can transfer germs.

While dishwashers use high water temperature to kill germs and effectively sanitize, it is a painful idea to subject your bare hands to these conditions when washing dishes manually. But you may not actually save energy by avoiding the dishwasher. A booster heater, which raises the temperature of water in dishwashers, allows you to lower your water-heater temperature—typically to 120 degrees—while keeping dishwasher water hot enough for detergents to clean effectively.

The ideal solution is to use a fully loaded, full-size dishwasher with a phosphate-free detergent. (Smaller washers can mean multiple loads, using more water and energy.) Minimize pre-washing and rinsing (most modern dishwashers actually operate better when dishes are scraped but not rinsed).

More information can be found at www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo/factssheets/eewtrhtr.html and http://www.oxyboost.com/index.html.

Jacob Galfano

Recycling Electronics

Due to growing concern about responsible electronics recycling, we are revisiting a question from our Fall 2004 issue. Computers and cell phones are a ballooning source of waste in America, but without stringent regulation or transparency in the recycling process, it's difficult to know how best to dispose of them. So what should we do with all those old electronics?

First of all, don't just throw them in the trash! Computers, along with most other electronics, contain heavy metals and chemicals, including cadmium, mercury, brominated flame retardants, and lead, which threaten groundwater if left in landfills. Lead is also a component of monitors and television screens.

As we wrote in the Fall 2004 issue, there are plenty of electronics recyclers claiming to safely process them. Unfortunately, 50 to 80 percent of all electronic waste is exported to Asia, and, although responsible recycling of e-waste does happen in developing

countries, there is no way to be sure where your computer is headed after it leaves your desk.

While there is no federal legislation holding computer producers responsible for their disposal, Massachusetts and California have banned computer and TV monitors from landfills, and California has added a recycling fee to the cost of new electronics. In the private sector, The Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition introduced the Takeback Campaign that led both Dell and Hewlett-Packard to start recycling programs.

Some recycling companies have made their process transparent. The Basel Action Network (BAN) has published a list of "E-Stewards"— recyclers promising to meet BAN's criteria for sustainable and socially just disposal of used electronics. Although there is no audit process, BAN's list (www.ban.org/pledge/Locations.html) is the best resource right now.

If you live in California or Massachusetts, you can find information about responsible disposal from your town's sanitation department.

Finally, eBay has teamed up with Intel and other computer manufacturers to launch the Rethink campaign, an online clearinghouse for responsible disposal of e-waste (http://rethink.ebay.com). The site offers opportunities for donation and resale as well.

As a consumer, of course, the best way you can minimize your old computer's impact on the environment is to extend its life. Whenever possible, consider upgrading your current PC instead of buying a new one. Reusing your old machine for data storage, playing mp3s, or networking can stem the tide of old machines headed for the landfill. Consider donating a machine that is only slightly obsolete to charity.

When you do buy a new machine, consider a flat-screen model; the chic new screens use less lead and energy (although slightly more mercury) than their clunky counterparts.

Meredith Dearborn, with thanks to Cyril May of Yale Recycling

Organic Food

Reading YES! has made me more aware of the dangers of pesticides and the cruelty of factory farming. Since I can't afford to completely stock my fridge with organic foods, I'm wondering how I should prioritize. Which foods are most important to buy organically?

Katie Gideon, Seattle, WA

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) publishes a wallet guide that lists produce most likely to contain pesticide residue and the fruits and vegetables least likely to harbor contaminants. You can download the guide at www.ewg.org/foodnews.

According to EWG studies, the most-contaminated fruits and vegetables are peaches, strawberries, apples, nectarines, pears, cherries, raspberries, imported grapes, spinach, celery, potatoes, and bell peppers. Produce least likely to contain pesticides includes sweet corn, avocado, cauliflower, asparagus, onion, peas, broccoli, pineapple, mangos, kiwi, and papaya.

The more fat in a particular food, the more likely that the toxin level is high, since fat stores chemicals. And foods with thin, exposed skins and a high water content, such as blueberries, do soak up and store toxins.

Try planting your own organic garden. If the prospect seems overwhelming, start small with a few potted tomatoes and herbs. Visit www.organicgardening.com for some helpful tips.

Another strategy is to join, or start, a buying group to purchase organic foods at discount rates through a co-op, or buy in bulk from a store.

Try to buy meat and dairy that are local and organic, free-range or natural. Buy wild salmon, not the farmed fish that is full of PCBs and wreaks havoc on the environment. Try sardines—a low-mercury, economical fish. See www.ewg.org/reports/brainfood/sidebar.html for a list of high-mercury-content fish to buy wild or avoid altogether.

Lisa Kundrat

Send your questions to:
Yes! But How?
YES! magazine
PO Box 10818
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
E-mail: editors@yesmagazine.org
Please include your name, address, and an e-mail address or telephone number

YES MEN strike again

Posing with Gilda, the Golden Skeleton, mascot of the "Dow" Acceptable Risk Calculator

Just how much is a human life worth? When does collateral damage impinge on shareholder value?

The Acceptable Risk Calculator will provide the answers, two "Dow representatives" told a London bankers conference.

The calculator can also pinpoint the best regions on earth for ventures that may have very high death tolls.

The bankers applauded, signed up for free one-year licenses for the calculator, and posed for photos with Gilda, the Golden Skeleton, mascot of the Acceptable Risk Calculator.

But the new licensees are in for a disappointment. The Dow reps were actually Yes Men impostors, and the calculator is a hoax.

One of the impostors had appeared on BBC World TV in December to announce that Dow would take full responsibility for the clean-up at Bhopal (see *YES!* Spring 2005).

And they showed up again at Dow's annual shareholders' meeting in Midland, Michigan, to propose that Dow use its $1.35 billion quarterly profits to clean up the Bhopal plant site and fund the clinic there.

Despite their confessed history as impostors, the Yes Men continue to receive speaking invitations through their website, http://dowethics.com. See http://theyesmen.org for video and photos of Yes Men pranks. The Yes Men, alas, have no relationship to *YES!* magazine. The Sambhavna Trust Clinic of Bhopal serves victims of the accident, whose numbers continue to grow due to groundwater contamination from the uncleaned plant site; see www.bhopal.org.