



GREEN HORIZON

Magazine

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TRUMP



AMERICA

**THE CULTURE IS CHANGING:
Rejuvenation in the Wings**

But What About the Green Party?

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LETTERS

Priority

TO THE EDITOR

I think we need to make and maintain a primary focus on our flawed electoral system itself—that is the primary reason an alternative party is needed.

People understand, on a basic level, that this political system cannot/will not give them what they want, and this is why so few participate. Take almost any popular issue—majorities support an end to war, free education and healthcare/making sure other basic needs are met, transition to a carbon/nuclear-free economy, etc. But the political system does not respond to these majorities, at least not quickly enough—why? Because it inherently is inadequately democratic and representative. Our electoral structure itself virtually guarantees that only two major political parties can be viable, because only the winner gets anything. With this fundamental structure, even if a party can replace one of the major two, which has happened historically, the structure itself is conservative and resistant to change. To continue ruling, you need to continue getting over half of

voters to back what must necessarily be a very broad political platform. Add in the influence of corporate interests, and we get the chronic disenfranchisement of the majorities in favor of progressive/Green policies. The major parties may slowly pick up some of our policy proposals. In fact, they need to in order to maintain power and preserve the current system. However, they will never willingly address the fundamental structure that gives them excessive influence.

So we need to urge people to understand, essentially, that until we proportionally represent political minorities, significant majorities will also remain inadequately represented by our structurally undemocratic electoral system. For me, this is the key work a transformative party, what I believe the Green Party can be, must do.

Jared Laiti
Green Party, California

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Politics and Culture are Related

For this issue, we received a plenitude of outstanding and timely essays spanning a wide variety of subjects. Studying them and getting comments about them from one another, we saw that they paired off into two channels. Or say that they occupied different but adjacent fields. One field dealt mainly with dire political troubles and trials and with exciting political possibilities that are underway. The other field dealt with cultural and social renewal. We then also felt that—given a blend of politics and culture—no matter how stymied and perversely backward our politics are, not all is lost by any means.

This is so, both because there is an abiding spirit of America that zooms forward in spite of all; and because beneath our politics there now rise cultural forces that will demolish the present political overlay presided over by Trump. A better politics and strong social and cultural forces will intertwine—are intertwining—to shape the life and destiny of a better America. A better America in collaborative interaction with the other nations of the world will rescue the planet.

The articles are arranged in a manner suitable for the reader to see that politics and culture, though usually treated and thought about as very separate, are actually two sides of the same coin. Be emboldened to expect and demand of contemporary writing a deep awareness of the close connection between culture and politics— and between theory and practice. As this happens we will all walk our talk better. In that light we realize that Trump either has no culture or that he has an alien culture altogether. His demise is then assured.

—JR

Trump vs. America

JOHN RENSENBRINK

Trump's symbol is The Wall. The symbol of the real America is the Statue of Liberty.

Trump believes he has found an elixir. Since we were great once, we can and will be great again. He imagines a story about America. It's altogether the wrong story, a false story, a fell story.

The spirit of America that he appeals to as springing from our past is false. He conjures up a fell spirit and presents it as the real thing. Not that the real spirit of America didn't falter time again, often shamefully, even evilly. But it recovered time and again. The enduring spirit of our country is vibrant, future oriented, experimental, inclusive of others, problem-solving, ready for can-do action, and expectant of new and exciting things.

Trump's message is one of negativity towards others, suspicious of others—at home and abroad. Trump's symbol is The Wall. The symbol of the real America is the Statue of Liberty.

WILL HE GET AWAY WITH IT?

Even if in the very short term the American people fall for him, are cowed by him, are carried away by the fear and resentments he daily stokes, even so the fell spirit he exudes and spreads as in Tolkien's Mordor cannot win. He and his crowd are self-destructive. The real spirit of America will re-assert itself, is now re-asserting itself, and is finding new ways to re-invent itself in the face of new challenges.

Many states of the union, each girded and buoyed with their own will and power, are not buying it. Congress is wary and wearying of his pretensions. Some big businessmen and women across the country are having second thoughts and getting restive. Millions of small businesses do not want to be pushed around and will not be pushed around. The plethora of cooperatives and municipally owned utilities in the land are showing a new way to build an economy. Unions are showing much of their old mettle. Small farms and small markets are coming back. People on their own and in their localities are building a creative economy underneath the consumerist and alienating policies and politics of the corporate upper crust. (Many outstanding books, blogs, and hard copy publications report a surge of local action. Please become familiar with the writings of Gar Alperovitz, Sam Smith, David Korten, and Howard Zinn).

In a word, the spirit of independence, do-it-ourselves, and community-building is strong even underneath the often cloying and dampening conformity and the "giving in" to status quo conventionality. It's even become o.k. to talk about politics! In the same vein, it has become de rigueur, even chic, to stop smoking and to ban smoking in public places, leading the still smoke-stuck world by example. The days of Frankie Sinatra and Humphrey Bogart are gone--when smoking seemed literally correlative with acting and singing! Stopping smoking is just one example of a rising tide of concern for better health and for an effective universal health insurance system.

In the past few decades there have been huge changes in America's social values and practices. The status of women, the power of women, the values of women have changed America forever. That fundamental change is, by example, changing the world. Who could have predicted, just a few decades ago, the widespread change towards acceptance of homosexuality and gay marriage. Similarly, awareness grows, deeper and deeper, of the pain, injustice, terror and unspeakably patronizing attitudes and practices

The Left for some time has risked being perceived as turning their back on America, giving up on America.

inflicted upon people whose color is black, brown, yellow and red by white people. This leads to a deeper dimension of struggle. It goes way beyond the polite and mutual self-satisfactions of tolerance. The deeper awareness is leading to serious, defiant and revolutionary resistance. It is this depth of resistance that Trump and his crowd, can't handle and find strange and terrifying. Their response is "Let's make America great again," meaning "Let's go back to white dominion, white privilege, white terror." It's all part of the fell spirit, the false spirit, that they reveal and in which they dwell.

WHAT ABOUT THE LEFT AND THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA?

It's complicated. For one thing, I must admit that, being part of the Left (according to the prevailing lingo), I tend to be especially critical of the Left. Also, being part of the Green Party, and a co-founder, I am especially critical of the Greens. So I should start out being aware of such seemingly built-in tendencies.

We on the Left do tell ourselves that we spend too much time and energy criticizing and berating one another. We do it to the point of splintering into warring camps. But it goes on unabated nevertheless. In like manner we Greens do it to one another. We render ourselves vulnerable to dismissal by others on the Left who seem ever eager to pile shame upon us. Disturbing yes, but true, all too true. Consequently one result is that the millions of people who do not regard themselves as on the Left or on the Right are turned off and confused.

Both the Left and the Greens (as a hopeful variant and pacesetter) are zealous in their attack on the Right, proud of their opposition and resistance, trying to out-shout the other shouters (often dismissing the latter as not really shouting enough) and failing entirely to bend their energy to figuring out a story of America that truly swings. They cultivate a culture of indignant hate to match the fell culture of hate that spews forth from Trump and his crowd.

Something peculiar here. Their indignant hate, indiscriminately taught and spread around, comes off to immense numbers of the people as hatred for America. At an earlier point (in the 60s) it came off as the callow rebellion of the youth against the pigs. But now it has become a steady chant of misgivings, negativity and righteous slander. The Left for some time has been risking being perceived as turning one's back on "America," giving up on America. One can readily see how this plays out in the workplaces, churches, kitchens, neighborhoods and streets of America. It gives the Trump crowd all they need to excoriate the Left and make the Left the enemy of America. In foreign policy, the chant in countless demonstrations has been, "America

out of X." Next year it's "America out of Y" and the next year it's "America out of Z." On and on. It's become an industry.

Unintentionally, naively for the most part, the Left puts the onus on "America," and not on the warped government and oligarchy and militarists that illicitly produced X, Y, and Z. The mass media make the most of it and drive further and deeper the cleft between the people in their daily lives and their need and desire to believe fully in their native land. Words of an old hymn come to mind, "Oh who will show us any good, exclaims the troubled multitude!"

To fill the void, "Something wicked this way comes!" It has come in the form of Trump and his crowd.

CAN THE GREEN PARTY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

One answer, with a shrug, is "Probably not." The reason I say this is twofold. There is (carefully hidden) immense skepticism and fear of the Green Party and un-reasoning opposition to it, as if its very existence is harmful! And there is stumbling awkwardness by and within the Green Party.

Fear, and accompanying jealousy, is rife. It comes from the Democratic Party especially. On many vital matters their leaders are in cahoots with the Republican Party. They resist pressures to institute political change that would open the doors to collaborative politics and thus to direct engagement in solving problems by millions of people. Ranked Choice Voting and the easing of horrendous ballot access requirements are so important because they can lead to a framework of moderate competition among parties seasoned by a spirit of collaboration. But opponents of RCV, both left and right, have been slamming the door shut on that possibility, apparently not caring a hoot about the fate of the nation and the planet.

The challenge thrusts itself in front of Democrats especially for if they would let down their rigid guard against any competition, fully embracing it instead, they and the Greens would be able to work together. How very healthy that would be! Given a spirit of friendly competition (which stems from the spirit of America itself), a way would be found to overcome decisively the hovering alien and fell cloud of Trump's negative politics.

All this is nice to think about and does give one a sense of options. But it's unlikely.

Not that a course of action by the Greens that features going it alone with inner strength and self-confidence has any greater chance of success. But precisely because inner strength and self-confidence have not so far been present, one may be pardoned for hoping that after 35 years the Greens will and can find that elusive inner strength and self-confidence.

“Be together, not the same!” It’s our own home-made and home-bred elixir. It’s a powerful example for the world; a far superior and attractive way forward for the planet than the narrow minded fell spirit of Trump.

A THRILLING CREATION BY THE GREEN PARTY

Part of this is the possibility that Greens will grow in maturity. This may happen. Part of this is the already substantial and thrilling creation by the Green Party of many Caucuses, composed of identity groups--Black, Women, Latinx, Lavender, and Youth. They are flourishing. Caucuses of Native Americans and of Elders are on the horizon. This captures the energies, cultures, ways of life of everyone, distinctly and differently and all together. This, the Rainbow, is so much an expression of the abiding spirit of America: “Be together, not the same!” It’s our own home-made and home-bred elixir. It’s a powerful example for the world; a far superior and attractive way forward for the planet than the narrow minded fell spirit of Trump. We Americans can show forth this way of relating! The countries and peoples of the planet will receive it with respect. It’s a great foundation for an effective foreign policy!

The Green Party has also, from its beginning in 1984, created and been guided by The Ten Key Values: Ecological Wisdom, social justice, grass roots democracy, non-violence, decentralism, respect for diversity, post-patricarchal values (gender equality), community economics, global responsibility, and sustainability.

These values are intrinsically good and timely. They are also a tremendous and fruitful source of inner unity and policy-relevance for those who come forward to run for office and prepare themselves for governance.

UNCERTAIN PROSPECTS?

And once again: what really can we say about our prospects as a country, a Green Party, and about recovering from the slough into which we’ve stepped and now can’t seem to get out of?

In the past few decades, Green has burst forth everywhere. Stores, supermarkets, banks, churches, corporations too, and sports, have suddenly and magically in the last decade traded on their allegiance to and promotion of Green! But in politics not so much. The Democratic Party has held back. It has in fact suppressed efforts by many for a new day. But right now there are intimations of renewal among Democrats. Of fight back. Of new energies, especially from women and young people.

Yet there are crippling and crucial failures. They continue the tendency of Democrats to be as imperialist and militarist in foreign policy as the Republicans. They are just as absorbed by and immersed in corporate funding as the Republicans. They have been slow in recognizing and doing something about

climate change. They have been sluggish in actually meeting the everyday compelling needs of working people.

They have been slow--have indeed resisted out of base fear--efforts to reform our electoral system. Overall they love best to be on both sides of the fence, often just hanging there. On most things needing action they tend to be too little and too late.

Several things coalesce to make the Green Party unable to fill the void. As already noted, they are caught up in internal battles with one another, suspicious of one another, just like the Left in general. Many Green leaders are less than enthusiastic about electoral activity. They are more interested in ideological disputes. They’ve been arguing for decades over where, when, and how socialism fits in—or not. Many have no, or very little, inkling of what it takes to actually run for politics. Many are diverted from learning about politics and getting serious about running for office and learning the ins and outs of governing. Hoped-for political maturity and effectiveness are stymied, stifled by a too easy assumption that politics is not worthy of careful study and willingness to learn. Nor is there sufficient willingness to take risks. Or any at all.

I’d say, based on my 35 years (from the start) of experience and participation in the councils of the Greens that, in general, Greens have been tentative and feeble in regard to electoral politics. They spend an inordinate amount of time responding to groups and organization that are going to bat for causes and--baffling to me--getting into fierce arguments among themselves over whether to support or not support this cause, that cause—“no, not that one, but this one!” There are thousands of “causes!”

Is all this an excuse for not closing with the stark and appalling fact that the greatest thing afflicting America is its political failure? Maybe the challenge is too great. I can see that, but there still is a chance. A chance that a Green Party can make a course correction. That it can become a catalyst for rediscovering and renewing the Spirit of America.



JOHN RENSENBRINK

Co-editor of *Green Horizon*, John lives in Maine, is professor emeritus of government at Bowdoin College, co-founded the Maine and U.S. Green Parties, is founder and member of the latter’s International Committee, and the author of *Against all Odds: the Green Transformation of American Politics* (1999). His new book is *Ecological Politics: for Survival and Democracy* (2017). The publishers, Lexington Press, issued the book in paperback in June.

Toward a Progressive Electoral Alliance *Under the Green Banner*

DENISE BRUSH

In most democratic countries, the use of a parliamentary system based on proportional representation means that there is room for a healthy number of political parties to vie for power, gain legislative seats, and form alliances to govern. Not so in the U.S. We have always had a predominantly two-party system—initially the Federalists and the Whigs, then for the past century and a half the Republicans and the Democrats. Our “bipartisan” system has solidified to the point where third parties now face nearly insurmountable barriers to voting success in almost every state as well as nationally. The inability of third parties to obtain more than a small percent of the vote is used as another way to prevent alternative candidates from participating in the political processes (such as televised debates) that could help gain a greater share of the vote.

The Commission on Presidential Debates only lets candidates who are on the ballot in every state participate, which is currently impossible for most third parties. In many states minor party candidates have to obtain tens of thousands of signatures or meet a variety of difficult requirements designed to keep them off the ballot. In my own state, New Jersey, a gubernatorial candidate has to raise \$450,000 to participate in the statewide televised debates, which is rarely achievable for a third-party candidate. The Democrats and the Republicans have rigged the system and have no trouble getting on the ballot, getting in debates, getting media attention, and of course, winning.

THE SYSTEM IS ENTRENCHED AND STAGNANT

The concept of a bipartisan system has become entrenched in federal and state governments. The rules of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives assume that the Majority and Minority leaders will always be either a Democrat or a Republican. Many states have laws requiring that citizen commissions must have equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats, completely ignoring the possibility of third-party members. Local governments frequently forbid political parties from participating in community events or using community spaces, as if politics is something dirty that nice people shouldn't be exposed to. Progressive organizations that could be great allies for minor parties are forbidden by the IRS to participate in politics. The unspoken assumption is that the United States will always and forever be ruled by either Republicans or Democrats, with no room for anyone else.

From where things are now, it's a steep road ahead to get to the point where alternative party candidates hold elective office in more than a handful of local offices in the United States. Advocates of “more voices and more choices” are going to need to push for change on a number of fronts. Given the success of ranked choice voting (RCV) in Maine, I think that campaigning for RCV should be a priority of third parties in each state while the momentum is still fresh. If we get a few more states to follow Maine's example, we could eventually see a real third party (not just independent) congressperson or senator. Another key issue that affects third parties is corporate personhood—we need to campaign hard to reverse the Supreme Court decisions that allow corporate lobbyists to fund the major party candidates. The third change we need to push for is an end to the electoral college. It is a relic of the eighteenth century that makes no sense in the twenty-first century. The winner of the popular vote should be president, period.

Our “bipartisan” system has solidified to the point where third parties now face nearly insurmountable barriers.

Campaigning for ranked choice voting should be a priority of third parties in every state.

Let's persuade the proliferating progressive groups in this country to join forces with the Green Party.

TOWARD A PROGRESSIVE ELECTORAL ALLIANCE

But these changes are years away, at best. In assessing the current situation, we need to recognize that we now have three political camps in the United States. There are the far-right partisans who think Trump is making America great again, and their neo-Nazi, racist, and libertarian friends; the military-industrial establishment forces who control our capitalist system, whether they call themselves Democrat or Republican; and the progressives—Greens, socialists, and left-liberals—who realize that the world is rapidly spiraling into climate change-fueled catastrophe and we need to start doing something about it immediately.

In my opinion, the latter should be making an all-out effort to persuade the many and constantly proliferating progressive groups in this country to join forces with the Green Party. In alliance we could make a serious bid to not only run a candidate for president but also candidates for the House and the Senate in 2020—a coordinated campaign that would harness the energy of all those protesters we've seen at rallies and elected officials' offices during the past two years. Unfortunately, as the 2018 mid-term elections have shown, we are also going to have to push back on voter suppression efforts in many states, in order to make it possible for all our supporters to vote in the future.

It's clear that there is a large number of potential voters all over the country who support progressive ideas like single payer health care, gun control, environmental protection, and the need for a rapid transition to renewable energy. We need to convince them that their future lies with the Green Party. Instead of trying to pull the Democrats to the left, which will never succeed because it runs counter to the "zero sum game" logic of a two-party system, organizations like Our Revolution, Progressive Democrats of America, DSA, and Indivisible should be persuaded to join with the Green Party to create a large and powerful progressive party that is independent from the Democrats. With the numbers and resources of these organizations allied together, it would be possible to run campaigns that bring in enough voters to get candidates into debates and surmount the other obstacles to winning that currently hold the Greens back.

GREENS NEED THE RESOURCES OF THE WIDER PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY

Assuming that our efforts at persuasion are successful, we might need to compromise on accepting limited amounts of money from small-business corporations. But we would have to remain very strong in regard to upholding progressive values and the essential points of the Green platform. Values are the bedrock

of the Green politics movement, and that cannot change. But without the expanded number of people and resources of the wider progressive community, Greens are not likely to win office and be able to achieve political change. What the Greens can offer progressives is a party that respects their policy views and will fight for them unconditionally, not cave in to "moderates" every time the going gets tough. Supporters of Bernie Sanders learned in July 2016 that the Democratic Party will never let the progressive wing gain or keep political power as Democrats. The only way forward is for them to go independent. The Greens have the most viable alternative party, just waiting for enough people to join such that they can start winning elections.

This is a very serious time in this country and in the world, a time when we need to step up our game in order to confront multiple crises. It is very unfortunate that the United States is facing the worldwide existential crisis of climate change while in the throes of a major constitutional crisis, with an unqualified president whom I believe should have been impeached immediately upon taking office. On top of that, we still haven't achieved universal health care and gun control, which other countries accomplished in the twentieth century—and we are still dealing with immigration and racial justice issues that should have been resolved years ago.

If the United States brought home all our service members around the world and closed all our overseas bases, we would have enough money to start working on solving these issues. Things are only going to get worse the longer we wait. But the newly elected Democrats in the House won't be able to do much in the next two years, with Republicans controlling the Senate and executive branch and the moderate wing of the party firmly in control. By the 2020 election we need to have in place *an electoral coalition that runs progressive candidates on the Green ballot line*. That's our best hope for winning key offices. Then we can look forward to having representatives committed to advancing the kind of legislation that will reinforce our grassroots efforts as we work on the real change that needs to happen.



DENISE BRUSH

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Ranked Choice Voting and Fair Representation Are *Winning*

ROB RICHIE

Last November, democracy itself was on the ballot. Memphis voted to fight off two ballot measures to repeal ranked choice voting (RCV) before its prospective first use in 2019, Maine held the first-ever RCV elections for Congress in our nation's history, with voters ranking their candidates in two U.S. House races and a U.S. Senate race. Voters considered statewide ballot measures for redistricting reform in five states, restoration of voting rights for people with felony convictions in Florida, and ethics, campaign finance and voter access laws in several states.

And democracy won. Landslide majorities backed better elections in states both red and blue in a clean sweep. Mainers handled RCV easily, and flipped one outcome in the RCV tally in a congressional race after the Republican incumbent ran a polarizing congressional campaign. In the wake of these democracy wins, I've been approached by many with a simple question: "what next?" As a strategist for democracy, my recommendation for any party or electoral group trying to gain public support is straightforward: Earn the trust of the changing American electorate by supporting and passing fair voting rules that invite competition and electoral accountability for your side as well as everyone else.

HR 1 IS INSUFFICIENT AND LIMITS THIRD PARTY ACCESS

House Democrats' first bill of the 2019 legislative session, HR 1, is a start. With provisions on voting rights, voter access, campaign finance and redistricting, it is designed to take most of the 2018 wins national.

But HR 1 is silent on accommodating and embracing greater voter choice and limits third party access. Whereas at present third party candidates for president receive federal funding if they raise \$5,000 in each of 20 states, HR 1 raises that by five times to \$25,000 in each of 20 states. This is a hurdle which practically no third party candidate can surmount without financing from the wealthy. This defeats the purpose of publicly funded elections.

It would be strategically smarter to support a new way that enables voter choice, not limit it. Millennials and Gen Xers are fed up with the status quo, as shown by how many register as independent and backed Bernie Sanders' political revolution in the 2016 presidential primaries. An essential way to truly earn their enduring support is to back ranked choice voting, fair representation systems and fair ballot access laws across the United States.

As readers of this magazine know, RCV lets voters rank candidates and not be forced to choose "the lesser of two evils." Coming into 2018, RCV was used in 10 cities, often having been won with the help of local Greens. Today it is slated to be used by at least 22 cities and counties in upcoming elections. RCV had a particularly big year in Maine. First, after the legislature in 2017 effectively repealed a 2016 ballot measure to establish RCV, Mainers mounted a "people's veto" referendum campaign by gathering signatures last winter. The people's veto earned a spot on the June 2018 ballot. By winning with a solid margin, it kept RCV for all federal and state primary elections and for US Senate and House elections in November. Future governor and state legislative races will only have RCV with a state constitutional amendment because of a 2017 state supreme court opinion.

The people's veto was helped by many Mainers getting to vote first with RCV in the contested primaries for the Republican and Democratic nominations for governor. Turnout reached a record high for Democrats and the second highest ever for Republicans. With seven candidates and no candidate with more than 33 percent in the first round, the Democratic race went down to an instant runoff between the final two candidates; nearly nine in ten Democrats ranked candidates, and more than three times as many ranked at least six candidates as one.

MAINE MADE HISTORY IN USING RCV IN NOVEMBER AS WELL

With more than double the voters at the polls, Maine made history in using RCV in November as well. The RCV contest for U.S. Senate drew more votes than any midterm race ever in Maine, "blank ballots" were sharply down in the RCV races from those in recent elections for those offices, and the shares of votes going to third party and independent candidates in the congressional races were higher than in all but one other House race in the nation with two major party nominees (Utah's 1st district).

In Maine's 2nd congressional district, the nation's single most expensive congressional race, RCV was key to Democrat Jared Golden's upset of Republican incumbent Bruce Poliquin. Golden's 45.5 percent of first choices put him in second place, after the first choices were tallied. With RCV, the votes of the 8.2 percent who voted first for independent candidates made the difference because when your first choice is in last place, your

ballot goes to your next ranked choice. Poliquin said he wouldn't rank any other candidate second, while Golden pursued a populist message that earned second choice endorsements from the two independent candidates. He won 51 percent to 49 percent. Maine easily fended off a federal legal challenge.

In part due to Maine's challenging ballot access laws, Green candidates weren't on those November ballots. But the opportunity for third parties in Maine is clear. They can run aggressively and earn all the votes they can. If they end up being eliminated in the RCV tally, their voters will need to be taken seriously by the remaining candidates.

MANY CITIES ARE MOVING OR HAVE ALREADY MOVED TO RCV

Going forward, RCV is moving across the country. After Santa Fe's breakthrough use of RCV in March 2018, New Mexico's second largest city Las Cruces voted to establish RCV for its elections in November 2019; Albuquerque may join it in doing so. After fighting off a slew of attacks by risk-averse incumbents, Memphis advocates are poised for a breakthrough of their own in finally implementing RCV this fall. As many as six cities in Utah may use RCV in the wake of progress in the legislature and cities with support from across the spectrum; in Utah, the basic arguments about the fairness of RCV are prevailing.

That fairness argument should prove key in other advocacy opportunities that include chances for big wins this year in big jurisdictions like New York City (a charter commission may put RCV on the November 2019 ballot) and Montgomery County, Maryland (local option legislation is advancing, and the county seems ready to act on it), along with smaller cities. Voter Choice Massachusetts is doing a remarkable job preparing for a 2020 ballot measure, and bills have been introduced in states in every region of the country.

RCV has another application that could serve the Democrats well: the presidential nomination process. The Republicans' big field in 2016 rewarded Donald Trump. Democrats should support RCV in early caucus states like Iowa and Nevada to turn the spotlight on candidates best able to represent the party. Democrats could make this change with action by the state parties and Democratic National Committee; big pushes are being made in states like Iowa, Maine and New Hampshire, and Maine may also act to put RCV in for its November 2020 presidential election.

BUT RCV ALONE ALSO ISN'T ENOUGH.

But RCV alone also isn't enough. Even though the 2018 elections flipped control of the House and turnout reached 50 percent, more than three in five House races were won by landslide margins of greater than 20 percentage points, and 156 Republicans still won by at least 10 percentage points in a strongly Democratic year. FairVote's Monopoly Politics report has already projected winners in more than 350 of the 435 congressional races in 2020. Nearly all those winners are in

districts that wouldn't be much more competitive with impartial redistricting. That means more than a third of Americans live in safely Republican districts that are likely to never elect a Democrat, including most African Americans in the South, another third live in safely Democratic districts.

In today's highly partisan climate, the core problem is the winner-take-all rule where 51 percent of votes gains 100 percent of power. Electoral organizing is impossible to sustain when you have no chance to win. Take Richard Ojeda, the populist progressive who earned 44 percent of the vote in a West Virginia district that Trump overwhelmingly carried in 2016. Ojeda's performance was impressive, but still well behind, and he briefly tried a longshot campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination as likely being a better chance for him than winning in his home district. Nationally, expect less energy in such districts in 2020, not more. Third parties had a tough 2018 in our highly charged partisan climate.

Yet Congress could change this equation overnight. The New York Times in a full-page editorial last November embraced the Fair Representation Act, which was HR 3057 in the last Congress and soon will be introduced again by its sponsor Congressman Don Beyer. The Fair Representation Act combines RCV with what is known as multi-member districts—that is, putting together adjoining districts and electing more than one person with the proportional representation form of RCV. In such a system, 51 percent of the votes will win the most seats, but not all: any 20 percent group of like-minded voters will be able to elect one out of five seats.

Suddenly, every single vote in the nation would count in every election, from West Virginia coal country to the Texas panhandle to Brooklyn. People from across the spectrum could organize literally everywhere, and far more women and people of color would likely win election. It wouldn't be easy for third parties to win, but it would now take 17 percent of the vote in most districts, and a third party candidate would never be called "spoilers." If the major parties aren't responsive, they will lose. That's accountability, and that's what parties need to accept to earn more trust from younger Americans.

It's time to respect the vote. Legislators wanting to build support should pass voting rights protections, campaign finance reform, the National Popular Vote plan, and impartial redistricting, to be sure. They should also pass ranked choice voting everywhere they can and build support for the Fair Representation Act to show Americans they are ready to embrace fairness, choice, and a truly representative democracy.



ROB RICHIE

is president and CEO of FairVote (www.fairvote.org).

Something Was *Rotten* in Pennsylvania

I was privileged to be a plaintiff along with Jill Stein on the exemplary lawsuit that challenged several critical election laws and procedures in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. When the suit was settled last November it resulted in a guarantee that (a) paper ballots will be used by 2020, and (b) post-election audits will be initiated in 2022.

We have far to go toward assuring full electoral integrity. Pennsylvania was, and is still, shamefully backward when it comes to rights of voters and ballot access. The state has even been called the poster child for gerrymandering. And, in the seven years I've lived here, apparently the only method by which one can seek redress is by lawsuits. To their almost singular credit, the Green Party has filed several such suits, thus leading the movement to enhance electoral integrity for Pennsylvania voters.

TWO KEY REVELATIONS

In the process of bringing the suit, two key revelations emerged. One was the absurdly complex rules for seeking a recount. Described as “Byzantine” by Stein’s attorneys, the paperwork process required 27,474 voters in 9,158 districts to bring notarized petitions to county election boards, in time for shifting, divergent and secret deadlines. Meanwhile, one court demanded that the 100-plus voters who petitioned for the recount post a \$1 million bond to move forward with their case!

In addition, Stein’s suit pulled the curtain back exposing the seriously flawed voting machines that were used in most of the state, the Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) machines. We know that in the 2016 national election there had been reports all over the country of exit polls not matching up with voting machine results. This was especially the case in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin.

In December of 2016, Jill Stein’s campaign initiated recount efforts in Pennsylvania, represented by Illan Maazel of the New York firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady and John Papianou of the Philadelphia firm Montgomery McCracken Walker & Rhoads. Stein and Randall Reitz (a PA voter) filed an injunction requesting that the vote totals of the election not be certified until a recount could be performed. The complaint was thorough in its criticism of the recount process in the state: “This labyrinthine, incomprehensible, and impossibly burdensome election regime might make Kafka proud. But for ordinary voters, it’s a disaster.” *Touché*, counsel!

Not surprisingly, when faced with the demands for a recount and an examination of the voting machines, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania fought back, defending its requirements to have a recount considered. The state also defended the so-called untamperability and reliability of the DRE machines. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, which has been urging states to replace all paperless voting machines, more than eighty percent of Pennsylvania’s voters used electronic machines that do not leave an auditable paper trail.

By January of 2017 it was becoming clear that Jill Stein’s suit had legs. Donations accumulated to support the continuing effort. Despite grumblings from some political

EMILY COOK

Jill Stein asked for a forensic review of Pennsylvania’s electronic voting systems.

This could have been an opportunity for the Tom Wolf administration to rectify a perverse and embarrassing situation.

Once the recount procedures travesty had been exposed by Stein et. al.,
a future instance of systemic failure would be unconscionable.

gadflies, social media trolls, and even objections from certain quarters of her own Green Party, Stein proceeded with a complaint which gave the case standing. And although, in the end, precedent was ruled out in the settlement, the decision is nevertheless highly significant and far-reaching. It is likely to motivate efforts nationwide to address the problem of hackable machines with unverifiable votes.

JUST A PATTERN OF ERROR?

In my research for this article I was fortunate to have guidance from 2006 Green Party US Senate candidate Carl Romanelli. He directed me to public government links of vote totals which showed that, in my county (Montgomery) alone, there was excessive undercounting of presidential votes in every precinct I was able to check! This was disconcerting, to say the least. Was it a pattern of error or something more nefarious? How could a voter ever find out if the electronic voting machines would simply regurgitate garbage out from garbage in? or if they possibly had been hacked?

In their complaint against the state in the US District Court for the Eastern District of PA, Stein's recount team alleged, among other things: "Because Pennsylvania's voting machines were susceptible to hacking and its recount provision difficult to invoke, the Commonwealth had unconstitutionally abridged the (First Amendment) right to vote." Stein asked for a forensic review of Pennsylvania's electronic voting systems [note: in a related effort, the Greens recently won the right to inspect similar machines in Wisconsin].

Stein's team submitted a meticulously researched recount request. It was denied by Judge Paul S. Diamond, essentially because it could not be immediately *proven* that there were any significant problems in the state with the machines and that a "twelfth hour recount order that Plaintiffs seek would disenfranchise six million Pennsylvanians."

Clearly, the Court wanted to summarily dispatch the pesky Greens who are accustomed to ridicule, scapegoating, or getting ignored. But this time Stein had amassed public support toward correcting a problem that affects *every voter in Pennsylvania*.

AN UNCONSTITUTIONAL MESS!

Given the complexity of the rules and the abbreviated timeframe, it was no surprise that the Stein campaign was not able to complete any of the recount procedures. How can a candidate or voter prove there was fraud or mistakes in the vote total if the machines cannot produce verifiable results? With over 9,000 districts, how were the plaintiffs to initiate a recount in each one before the time to file such petitions expired?

Jill Stein managed to organize one hundred petitioners after the Court set a December 5, 2016 hearing date. She then asked for more time. The Court refused—and required the plaintiffs to post a \$1 million bond! The Court did acknowledge that it would modify the bond until the hearing was over, but that's a large risk no one should be obliged to take.

Stein's team asserted that the time limits, fees, voter residency requirements and petition requirements "operate in tandem" to make recounts all but impossible for voters to challenge state-wide election outcomes. County Election Boards around the state were found to inconsistently enforce time limits for the filing of recount petitions and failed to provide notice as to when such petitions had to be filed in the first place. Their procedures were often inconsistent with state law. The suit asserted that Stein's lawyers received conflicting instructions from state officials and could find "no consistent guidance regarding when each county had computed its vote and when the deadlines to file recount petitions would expire." It was, in a word, an unconstitutional mess.

BEFORE:

NO ONE COULD DEFINITELY AUDIT AN ELECTION

Stein and Reitz amended their complaint to include four additional representative PA voters, including myself. In January (2017) the State of PA moved to dismiss the whole case. The following month Stein et. al. filed a response alleging that 85% of PA voters cast their ballots on six DRE voting machine models which are "unreliable, vulnerable to interference and error, and susceptible to hacking," and noted that, without a paper record of votes cast ("paper trail"), election officials and voters cannot ensure that the machines properly record votes.

Anyone paying attention could have seen that an overhaul was needed.
Stein's lawsuit clearly revealed this.

As of 2022 automatic robust audits will be required before election results can be certified.

What about the remaining 15% of voters? They cast paper ballots. That might seem to be more acceptable, but the ballots are tabulated using optical scan machines which can be hacked. The upshot is that no one can definitively audit an election in the state of Pennsylvania. One wonders why any administration or court would be against remediating this problem, considering the times in which we live.

Likewise, this could have been an opportunity for the Tom Wolf administration to rectify a perverse and embarrassing situation in regard to the egregiously complex recount process. Yet the state was intransigent about sustaining it. I cannot imagine any self-respecting attorney defending—or judge upholding—the PA recount rules with any seriousness in a courtroom.

A crucial point one must make is that the Green Party was acting in the interest of the voters. For that reason, it was disappointing to see the PA League of Women's Voters choose not to join the suit, as requested by both Carl Romanelli and myself, even as amicus. Among the plaintiffs were voters from a variety of political parties. But it seems that the League was so concerned about the perception of being affiliated with the Greens in any way that they missed an opportunity to join an important nonpartisan suit.

A SUDDEN BREAKTHROUGH

By early 2018, the situation was looking inauspicious for Governor Wolf's administration. One could only conclude that it was increasingly embarrassing for him and the Department of State as the case wore on. On the day that the lawyers for the state were to file their briefs to continue fighting Stein, Wolf sent out a surprise directive that all counties were to purchase paper ballot voting machines by the 2020 primaries!

Apparently, the administration came to recognize not only that the plaintiffs were correct but also that the state would be in jeopardy going forward in any close election. Once the recount procedures travesty had been exposed by Stein et. al., a future instance of systemic failure would be unconscionable. Some action needed to be taken.

The state government had embarrassed itself in trying to defend its backward recount procedures. Up until 2016 the procedures had never been truly tested, but anyone paying attention could have seen that an overhaul was needed. Stein's lawsuit clearly revealed this. Voters then took notice that their legislature was complicit in a variety of electoral system iniquities, such as gerrymandering and ballot access suppression, as well as unverifiable voting.

AFTER THE CASE: AUDITS WILL BE AUTOMATIC

A settlement was reached in November of 2018. Perhaps its most important provision is the stipulation that, as of 2022, automatic robust audits will be required before election results can be certified. Such audits will provide an essential safeguard by cross-checking paper ballots against machine totals using hand counts and the human eye for comprehensive verification.

A working group was to be formed by January 1, 2019 toward implementing the terms of the settlement. I was pleased to see that the capable Alex Halderman was slated to be in the group—the only member representing the plaintiff's side of the lawsuit, as far as I know. The working group is to complete a written report by January of 2020. The PA secretary of state then will direct that pilot auditing occur in 2021 and that auditing be fully implemented by the 2022 general election.

Once the working group writes its report and dissolves, what the voter can expect in the future is unclear. A hard-won provision of the settlement was the right of the plaintiffs to reopen the suit if we find a reasonable basis to believe that the defendants are in non-compliance with the terms. But the best-case scenario will see new auditable voting machines enabling facilitated recount requests.

Hopefully, in the wake of the Jill Stein lawsuit, Pennsylvania has transitioned from a system in which it was all but impossible to audit to one that is capable of supporting an effective precertification auditing process. Extensive vigilance and monitoring on the part of electoral system reformers and voters will be called for.

To be sure, there are other very serious social and economic ills in my state such that a citizen could protest that contentions over recounts and voting machines may seem frivolous, a burden to the taxpayer and only a concern of the privileged. I think they would be wrong. Without a high degree of electoral system integrity, government loses trust and authority. A voter's ability to initiate a recount or have their vote verified should matter to everyone because the true outcome of an election affects us all through policy and pocketbook.



EMILY COOK

is a social worker living in southeast Pennsylvania. She received her M.S.W. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1998. She's a longtime Green activist, having run for Princeton (NJ) Township Committee in 2001 and having served as Chair of the Montgomery County (PA) Green Party from 2014-2016.

Book Review by Greg Gerritt

RED/GREEN Revolution: The Politics and Technology of Ecosocialism

by Victor Wallis

—Political Animal Press, 2018

Wallis stays away from casting aspersions and demonizing others in the movement and relates better to democracy, which lends credibility to his argument.

I should say right out that I am not a socialist. I regularly use class analysis to analyze local economic development efforts, maybe using it more in front of legislative hearings and city council meetings than anyone else in the neighborhood. But you can use an analysis based on class without being a socialist. I also bring in ecology, justice, and an understanding of how things can go astray if one small group is allowed to dominate.

I believe in a mixed economy, with some things properly done by the government, and many things properly done by individuals and communities. I am fine with a variety of land tenure systems. There are many different ways to get work done, to feed and clothe communities, to provide the necessities and pleasures of life. As long as they are not based in oppression, dominance, and violence and do not permanently (or near permanently) distort the system, I am interested in seeing how they work, not saying no. I am sure an ecosocialist would write a different analysis of the ideas Wallis presents in his book.

Wallis has written a very readable and informative book. When I read it I found much that is in concordance with my understanding of the world as well as some that is not. Refreshingly, while much of my experience with avowed leftists is rather troubling, with exclusionary and provocative language and anti democratic actions at the core of their work, Wallis stays away from casting aspersions and demonizing others in the movement and seems to relate better to democracy, which lends credibility to his argument.

WAS MARX REALLY ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE?

Much of the early sections of the book turn on the idea that Marx truly was an environmentalist. I have read *Capital* and some other of Marx's writings, including some of the short quotes that Wallis and his predecessors have used over the years to show how ecologically aware Marx was and how, despite his productivist main thrust, he knew that we had to take care of the Earth, but I have not focused on Marx. In some ways it feels to an outsider that the whole eco-socialist *raison d'être* is found in those small excerpts.

DO SOCIALISTS DISMISS EVERYONE ELSE'S WORK DELIBERATELY?

After Wallis starts the book with a recitation of his intellectual roots in Marx and in ecological policy he attempts to describe the ecological crisis of our time. I have no argument with his recitation of the ecological collapse we see around us. He hits the highlights and the right themes in the discussion of the ecological crisis, but his recitation of where this awareness comes from seems a bit off balance. Maybe because I have been one of the people shaping Green Party philosophy and practice over the years, and translating it into actual campaigns and work on issues in my community, I feel Wallis gives very short shrift to the Green Party's articulation of the connections between economy, ecology, equality, and community. Time and again he discusses his program and misses that for more than 30 years the Green Party has been articulating

Ecology, Equality, Democracy, Peace and created some of the earliest “life is round” political statements on the planet along with the bioregionalists. The Green Party clearly was a piece of the intersectionality that Wallis both cherishes and dismisses, but this is never acknowledged. I only saw one mention of the Green Party in the book and “Green Party” is not even in the index.

That is a bit disturbing, but also expected as for the last 30 years, while waiting for the mass movement revolution for socialism, instead of building parties and organizations focused on solving problems today, ecosocialists and their intellectual predecessors in the movement, have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to change the Green Party, as weak and ineffective as it has been in some places, into an arm of the socialists. I take that as a statement on how ineffective the practice of waiting for Godot, for the working class mass movement that the socialists are waiting for, that they feel they can not move forward without it. I guess it is taboo among the left to dismiss the fantasy of the one true unified mass movement, that only the working class can change the world, but after 35 years of constantly hearing about it, and the American public getting no where near to creating it, you have to wonder if the myth of the mass movement is a capitalist plot to keep the left focused on an unattainable methodology so that they are less involved in what decisions are being made that affect lives today. I have yet to see an avowed ecosocialist come to a city zoning hearing and critique from a socialist perspective the building boom that is bankrupting our society with new buildings built by millionaires for the medical industrial complex.

A UNIFIED MASS MOVEMENT?

Even as a true believer, Wallis seems to despair that the mass movement, so central to the socialist model, will ever happen, but he insists that it will, that it must, and that when it happens we shall all live happily together. It is like the ancient Greek plays where some divine intervention sets it all to right at the end, even though hubris is what usually brings downfalls.

I tend to be skeptical of the whole mass movement phenomenon, at least as some unified thing, but I am happy to acknowledge that millions and millions of people, in the USA and around the world, are actively seeking the better world that is possible. It just is not a socialist movement.

The socialists seem stuck on the vision of the one unified movement under working class socialism. The ecosocialists add in the ecological perspective and have created a program rather similar to the Green Party's. The ecosocialists have recognized this, and therefore try to marginalize the Green Party, historically and in local politics, so that they can take it over and co-opt it into their vision of a muscular, not actively non-violent, socialist party instead of recognizing the diversity of the movement and the need to have multiple channels and approaches.

What they also miss is that the people who are attracted to the Green Party are not necessarily socialists, and understand the need for a diverse movement ideologically as well as culturally,

Victor Wallis received his Ph.D in Political Science from University of Indiana in 1970, and taught Political Science there from 1970 to 1994. From 1996 to the present he teaches in the Liberal Arts Department at the Berklee College of Music. During that time, he has been Managing Editor of the journal *Socialism and Democracy* for 20 years—1996 to 2016. He has also been a leading member of the Caucus for a New Political Science, an off-shoot of the American Political Science Association.

and therefore do not wish to be part of a socialist party, which means that if the ecosocialists take over a local Green party, they get an empty shell.

ECOSOCIALISM AND THE GREEN PARTY

The ecosocialists think the Green Party is weaker than it actually is because they do not understand decentralization, but it is that actual decentralization that gives the Green Party resilience and frustrates socialists, as there are never enough of them to take over everything.

Here might be the crux of the matter. While ecosocialists claim that ecology is at the heart of their program, as does the Green Party, ecosocialists do not take to heart the key lessons ecosystems teach us. It is important to have a diversity of flows and structures and ways of being rather than putting all of your eggs into one centralized basket and trying to analyze everything with the same tool. We all know that if you only have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Diverse systems are more stable and resilient. There seems to be no place in the ecosocialist vocabulary for hybrid systems, for cooperatives that make a profit, for matrilineal indigenous land tenure systems, for a nation of small farmers and shopkeepers despite the fact that 50% of all Americans work for small businesses and that small farms are popping up everywhere based on local farmers markets. I am no expert on the market systems of West Africa, but they predate Marx, and are often the way women make a living. Do we eliminate such markets? Does the government own everything? Hell, the ecosocialists even seem to want to eliminate Mao's Let 1000 Flowers Bloom. If the government does not own everything, is it socialism?

TAKING ON THE GROWTH ECONOMY MYTH

The one place where Wallis seems to stray from what seems to be eco-socialist orthodoxy in my neighborhood is that he gets it that the economy is going to shrink, that it has to shrink, and that the shrinkage will be partially due to the elimination of toxic and violent industries and practices. Ecosocialists in my neighborhood seem to ignore the ecological crisis and the need for a smaller economy, trying to dismiss it as hippie stuff, so it is good to see an ecosocialist with more common sense and a better grasp of the ecological crisis even if he does not get how ecosystems actually work.

The world Wallis describes is very similar to the one I describe, and the kinds of things we need to see, but socialism does not respect small farmers, tradespeople, tinkers. It seems to lack understanding of innovation and jerry rigging. Of meeting customers on their terms in order to meet their needs. Would socialists stand for a nation of small farmers and shop keepers? How about a world like that described by Rudolph Steiner where individuals can innovate and do well, but the community has a voice/vote on where to invest money and children do not inherit? That is not socialism, but it makes lots more sense than the current system, and solves nearly all of the problems socialists say we need socialism to solve. Cooperatives, collaboratives, why not a whole different range of ownership options, all within a community investment framework amid a radical practice of democracy? Maybe the ecosocialists do not understand democracy any better than they understand ecology? There may be a million things wrong with our electoral system, but actually voting and actually counting the votes is never a bad thing.

Maybe I was the wrong person to look at this book. I have had some rather unpleasant experiences with socialists and ecosocialists in my neighborhood. But as they fit a pattern I have seen shadowing the Green Party for nearly 35 years, I cannot outrun my history. The socialists and ecosocialists that have been the most successful are those that work the hardest for democracy and in their community. They gain respect by doing the work of

democracy while bringing the values and principles to the daily grind of making the community a better place to live. This includes directly confronting the capitalist class, but also knowing that elections relate to the long term work to create the better world.

Wallis' book is very readable, but it is all based on a core of wishing and hoping. A better grounding in ecology would benefit both Wallis and Ecosocialism. And that better understanding of ecology might lead to a better understanding of diversity and resilience in the work to create a better world.



GREG GERRITT

is the Administrator of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, leading the RI Compost Initiative, and for which he received a 2012 EPA Region 1 Merit Award. Greg's blog is ProsperityForRI.com. He is the watershed steward for, and founder of, his local watershed organization Friends of the

Moshassuck. Greg helped found the Green Party of the United States and the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. He has been involved with many projects from organizing his High School for the first Earth Day and running as the Green Party candidate for Mayor of Providence. He currently focuses on bringing what he has learned from exploring the ecology/economy interface to the public policy debate in Rhode Island, making nature videos in the North Burial Ground, diverting stormwater to create amphibian habitat, and furthering the development of the environmental community in Rhode Island.

LETTERS

Continued from page 2

Global Warming and Migrations

LETTER TO THE EDITOR :

The recently-released report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Global Warming of 1.5 degrees C" warns that global warming is likely to rise to 2 degrees C or more above preindustrial levels. This would be devastating in many areas, and we have only twelve years to slow global warming before it becomes catastrophic. The Report also details the extensive damage that global warming is already causing: droughts and forest fires here, and flooding there, along with rising ocean levels as glaciers are melting.

Global warming is among the pressures that cause the migrations of people. These are likely to become more frequent, especially as cities on the seashore are flooded. Migrants head for the United States because it is rich and seems to offer opportunities, but our President is trying to keep them out by sealing the border. Unfortunately, the wealth of America is temporary, largely based on the burning of fossil fuels to power industrial modes of production. Every gallon of gasoline burned puts 5.6 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This burning must be reduced because it is, along with deforestation and chemical

farming practices, the major cause of global warming. The food industry, from farming to food processing and distribution, is a major user of fossil fuels. The industrial food system can and should be changed, but how could this be done?

One possibility is to welcome migrants instead of trying to turn them away. Since the current Administration denies climate change and expresses hatred of migrants, this could be a policy of the next President. More hands will be needed to replace machines, and this country has a lot of land. Many migrants already have some farming experience. They should be helped to acquire land, taught skills in organic food production on a small scale, and required to produce for local markets for a specified period. Organic methods should be required because they produce safer food without reliance on chemicals derived from fossil fuels and because they can also sequester carbon from the atmosphere into the ground. Internal migrants who want to farm should be given the same subsidies and opportunities. This is a solution to the "problem" of migration and will help to mitigate the speed and severity of global warming.

Maynard Kaufman, Michigan

Letters, continued on page 38

The National Lobby by Greens in DC

Editor's Note: Because we misread the dates of the event described in this article, thinking it was in May, not April, we unfortunately missed timely publication. We apologize profusely to Jennifer Sullivan and her co-organizers. We alert our readers that the April event will likely be followed by other events of a similar kind. We commit to timely publication of articles about them.

Question number one: What is the biggest drawback for non-corporate funded candidates for public office?

Question number two: What is the one common denominator that causes wars, threats to immigrants, continued lack of proper response to murders of African Americans, poverty, disinformation, continuing use of dirty energy, stagnant wages, high drug prices, massacres at schools, bad international policies, student loan debt, climate change, lack of health care and housing and more?

If you answered “corporate money and humungus private money from the super- rich in our elections” to both questions, you would be spot on. Name anything that can’t be traced to bribery of our elected leaders. You can’t. We have such an ordeal to get ballot access and affording the cost factor for running candidates, because money is spent to eliminate the competition we (or other “third parties”) would give.

A WOMAN-LED GREEN PARTY LOBBY

The Women’s Caucus of the Green Party of the United States is asking Greens from each state to unite in a national lobby to get money out of elections and have them 100% publicly funded. This is a women initiated and Green Party grassroots led effort. You do not have to be a Green party officer or delegate to join in.

This is taking place starting Monday, April 1st through Friday April 5th 2019 in Washington DC— a great time of year to be in DC.

This is an issue that affects our Green Party in particular, but USA democracy in general. Coming before April 15 (tax day) we can show how our tax dollars could be better spent. They can and should be better spent by not having them diverted to help corporate bottom lines or whims of bad players seeking to add to their wealth.

Because 2019 is an off election year, this action will allow the Greens to stay visible on the national stage in an issue that 83% of USA voters from all sides agree about. By being a national effort, we increase the odds of getting a sponsor to our bill and show that the Greens are a national party.

CHALLENGING THE PROGRESSIVE WING IN CONGRESS

It’s another approach to the unbridled flood of money let loose by the Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United. It can also highlight the Green Party. It presents a strong challenge to the duopoly to focus primarily on the money issue. It throws down the gauntlet to the progressive wing in Congress to go beyond what they are proposing with election reform. With HR 1 they have not gone far enough and also have put in some bad ideas with actual voter suppression and we need to speak to

JENNIFER SULLIVAN

This action will allow the Greens to stay visible on the national stage on an issue that 83% of USA voters from all sides agree about.

Getting our elections publicly funded—at every level—is the most important issue for all of our candidates and one that the Disappointingocrats can not co-opt.

We, in the Women's Caucus, well know that Greens have been hard at work many years in peace marches, social justice rallies and the hard-fought campaigns for our candidates and getting ballot access in our 50 states. Beyond these being co-opted, we are often marginalized. Rarely, are we allowed an opportunity to speak out as Greens and you know we are seldom allowed in fair debates.

this. At least, the bill does show that they know voter reform has to be addressed.

This is the first of what we hope to be a series of national actions led by Greens during the off election years that keep them in the national news. This will help when and where they do run candidates as they will be seen as a party with the sort of platform that offers a valid alternative to the dominant 2 party system.

The Women's Caucus feels that this lobby will help expand the party's base with the media exposure, give those who go to DC to lobby a valuable experience and bring a rightful focus on this crucial issue. We will show that the Green Party is the only national level party that does not take dark, corporate or special interest PAC funds and our candidates run on small grass roots donations only. Thereby, our candidates are more able and willing to really follow through with our promises to those who vote for us.

Funding a fair playing field in elections via public money will cost taxpayers less. This is so because there will be no special funneling of tax dollars to help a corporation's bottom line or to give the very wealthy undeserved extra tax breaks. We will never get to the point of a fair share by waiting for the corporate parties to do it for us. We must make that effort and the demand.

ELECTIONS TO BE PUBLICLY FUNDED AT ALL LEVELS

Getting our elections publicly funded - at every level - is the most important issue for all of our candidates and one that the

This is the first of what we hope to be a series of national actions led by Greens during the off election years that keep them in the national news.

Disappointingacrats can not co-opt. Greens own this issue! There are marches and rallies in DC and across the country on issues that Greens participate in, but rarely are Greens acknowledged as speakers, even if it is an issue that we are more true on than any party, such as the science of ecology or the practice of peace.

We, in the Women's Caucus, well know that Greens have been hard at work many years in peace marches, social justice rallies and the hard-fought campaigns for our candidates and getting ballot access in our 50 states. Beyond these being co-opted, we are often marginalized. Rarely are we allowed an opportunity to speak out as Greens and you know we are seldom allowed in fair debates.

This is something for Greens to get excited about and be part of. Many of us are not able to devote the time it takes to run for office, but we could make this trip. If unable to travel to DC that week, some of us could sponsor someone or help with the coordination listed below where a variety of skills and interests come into play.

Imagine Greens from every state in a group photo on the steps of the Supreme Court. We also have someone who would sponsor an event TBA with speakers on Wednesday, April 3rd.

If you are on Facebook, and are not already a member, please visit: "National Lobby for 100% Public Funding Only for ALL Elections" event page and our website: www.greensvs greed.org.

Also, information can be found at:

"The Greens Go to Washington: For a People's Lobby" or our "Green Party National Women's Caucus" page for more information.



JENNIFER SULLIVAN

is a lifelong feminist activist and currently one of the delegates to the Green Party of the United States for the Women's Caucus. About herself, she writes: "I was born in the Chicago area and am currently living in Florida. I have traveled to four continents and all but four of our United States. I have seen climate change in African countries and Alaska, people's politics in Cuba, Venezuela and Oaxaca and the amazing rail system in Europe." She exited the Democratic Party in 1972. Hosted two seasons of a broadcast TV show in Tampa called *On the Table With the Green Party* and a radio debate show called *The Fairness Doctrine* on Tampa's WMNF-FM. Has served as a national delegate for the Green Party of Florida and also a state co-chair. Currently organizing the 2019 national lobby to get public funding only for all elections.

Lost and Finding Our Way Amid *Indifference* and *Denial*

WILLIAM H. SLAVICK

Although we are beset by massive, existential challenges, as a nation and species, you would hardly know it from the tenor of the 2018 elections season, which, save for a few new voices, was much like 2016.

Despite the McConnell Senate's do-nothing-save-steal-a-Supreme Court-seat record and the widening Washington swamp of unsavory Drumpf plutocrats, the number of Democratic seats in play, sexism, racism, Drumpf's campaigning, and increased vote suppression slightly increased the Republican Senate majority. Voter suppression, more draconian than the old \$2 poll tax Jim Gus Galloway hauled his sweating 300 pounds up our shallow porch steps to collect in rural Tennessee in the 30s, also enabled Republicans to capture several strongly contested governorships.

Despite another humiliating Clintonista/Wall Street loss in 2016—to a con artist shyster business cheat/arrogant TV bully, whom Bernie Sanders would have handily dispatched, Democratic party honchos had, in 2018, still learned nothing. They had discouraged, opposed, even undermined progressive would-be candidates for Congress—even after the youthful newcomer, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ended a party stalwart's career. They ran against what was now Drumpf's party more than on the issues—growing appreciation of the effects of climate change, unprecedented income inequality increased by a tax cut for the super-rich, racist opposition to immigration and acceptance of refugees from our wars and imperial meddling abroad; an obscene and obscenely wasteful military budget increased billions beyond Pentagon requests, and Republican assaults on freedoms of speech and assembly. After the election again signaled radical change, the honchos denied Keith Ellison the party chair.

In the face of such Democratic ineptitude, I had expected little on election night, hoping only that Republicans would not prevail in eleven contests. They won nine before losing the remaining two. Stacey Abrams' loss of the Georgia governorship appeared attributable to her opponent's removal of over 100,000 voters' registrations as Georgia elections commissioner! John Lewis now appeared to be the symbol of 60s racial progress repealed.

How? How the sudden open sexism and racism? How the acquiescence in greed rampant? The transparent fraudulence of Drumpf? Tolerance of Drumpf's appointments of saboteurs

of office responsibilities? Our failing democracy teeters on the brink of environmental disaster and fascist implosion. If any 2018 candidate challenged these realities head on, it escaped my hearing.

IT IS TIME FOR A RECKONING

How have we come to this? The puzzle pieces are many. Isolation from the endless wars of Europe soon gave us an unprecedented sense of security. Our extensive natural bounty was deemed open for the taking, many thousands of natives slaughtered, starved, or infected with typhoid notwithstanding. Centuries of enslaved, indentured, or openly exploited immigrant labor created wealth—and plutocracy—and fueled an illusion of superiority and exceptionalism. Might made right as the Mexican and Spanish American wars demonstrated. Capitalism fostered the illusion that wealth was in the reach of all and industrialization brought jobs and a consumer society. World War I did not

touch our shores. The Great Depression required a maturity in statecraft reflected in the New Deal, public job programs, welfare, public housing, Social Security, a highly graduated income tax, increased unionization of workers, and regulation of industry. A burgeoning middle class developed. World War II made us leader of the free world. The Soviet

Union fell asunder. We were, among mere mortal nations, assayed as superior, as exceptional, and by one Secretary of State “indispensable.” And, if never mentioned, beyond judgment.

But postwar prosperity with an adequate safety net for those left behind did not content the corporate powers. Ronald Reagan's presidency brought a frontal attack on government programs, taxes, unions, and regulations that had blocked or restrained corporate greed. Reagan, the Bushes, and Bill Clinton deregulated at the expense of the environment, ended “welfare as we know it,” and encouraged globalization that ended our manufacturing preeminence. Bye-bye to jobs, wages, benefits, and security. As the prospect of achieving the American dream receded, the powers perpetuated that illusion, feeding the public sanitized news and passive 24/7 entertainment and spectacle. The chronically unemployed millions now cut from welfare rolls were expected to simply disappear. Cultural guardians—churches, academe, media, and unions—abdicated moral and ethical responsibility. The

Our failing democracy teeters on the brink of environmental disaster and fascist implosion.

Constitution's call for "promotion of the general welfare" became, in Washington, an anachronism. Government was the enemy of freedom. For Catholic bishops whose Church espoused the common good, and evangelicals, politics began and ended with abortion, however insincere or hypocritical politicians' opposition.

Anchorless in faith, reason, and community; self-absorbed, preoccupied with staying afloat economically; and excused from social responsibility, we have become increasingly indifferent to the millions who suffer worldwide from a rapidly changing economic system, equally rapid changes in public policy, and from needless violence. Here political propaganda blames victims. Welfare "reform" penalizes them for their fates rather than addresses the dehumanization resulting from unchecked greed. Drumpf ascendant is incapable of any compassion for our economic victims nor Hispanic refugees fleeing certain death. Make America white again is an immoral, unattainable goal—but a license for racist abuse. Meanwhile, health care costs have soared, making it prohibitive for many, even with supposedly Affordable Health Care.

Our illusion of exceptionality fosters a foreign policy that has resulted, with little public criticism, in our responsibility, since World War II, for more than twenty million violent deaths—from Vietnam to Honduras, Libya, and Syria; for repeated wars of aggression; for destroyed countries; for dozens of repressive criminal regimes, and wide displacements and famine.

Emblematic of this de facto impunity for all manner of war crimes has been our financing, arming, and political enabling of the Zionist campaign to appropriate all of Palestine. Now millions of Palestinians, whose land, water, and natural resources have been systematically stolen, must anticipate and suffer what Israelis callously call "mowing the lawn"—murderous military attacks on civilians designed to reaffirm their hopeless subjugation. Often an apologist for Israel, even the New York Times now acknowledges, in an op ed, that the Israeli Occupation and violent repression are intolerable. We rationalize our addiction to violence as our exceptional privilege and give little consideration to demilitarizing our foreign policy and abandoning use of force to gain markets and resources.

Greed currently controls all three government branches. Now add Drumpf's denial of climate change and subversion of any U.S. commitment to saving our planet. This is especially outrageous since it is our pollution that has contributed most to the present existential crisis, confirmed decades ago by Exxon's research on effects of carbon emissions (followed by challenges of its own conclusions) to protect short-term profits! The dire effects are already upon us. Rising seas, flooding, unprecedented

storms have combined with war to create over 80 million refugees, a challenge to our common humanity that Drumpf determinedly ignores.

Perhaps brainwashing, endless propaganda and deceit, engendered hatred, the speed of change, the fear of failure and loss, and insatiable and unobtainable desires have, to greater or less degree, unhinged millions of us and affected us all, breeding indifference, irrationality, and contempt for anything unfamiliar or alien. Perhaps a great despair haunts the millions who refuse to recognize reality or facts as unarguable.

Christianity is based on recognition of the dignity of every person and our necessary care for one another. Somehow, we must call our lost neighbors back to that reality, whether clothed in religious terms or not. Strange as it sounds to say it, we must restore recognition of reality as obligatory—for all. Otherwise, chaos and licensed violence ensue.

In politics, we now need prophetic voices and their fair hearing, voices that demand an affirmation of government's responsibility to serve the common good. We do not enjoy licentious exceptionality. We are one small part of one human race.

Our various faiths all tell us we are commonly responsible—to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and welcome the stranger in our midst. Our Constitution's commitment to require our government to "promote the general welfare" cannot be translated to mean to foster unfettered greed and luxury for .01% or while billions of fellow mortals, all with one finite life to live, face poverty and early ends. It cannot be translated as our endless resort to violence around the world. Presently, we have no such voice in the broad leadership of any branch of our government, religious institutions (Pope Francis the recognized exception), universities, media, or other NGOs. Bernie Sanders is still denied the media audiences his redemptive message should command.

We require effective grassroots organization everywhere.

And we need voters who will demand of every candidate for public office a commitment to serve the common good before party and billionaire donors' wishes and to oppose everything that does not.

We are not a gang of thieves. We are a human society. To that basic truth we must return.

Strange as it sounds to say it,
we must restore recognition of
reality as obligatory—for all.
Otherwise, chaos and licensed
violence ensue.

BILL SLAVICK

is a long time Catholic peace and social justice advocate. He was a candidate for the U.S. Senate in Maine in 2006.

Stolen Election

A Review of *One Person, No Vote* by Carol Anderson, Bloomsbury Publishing (2018)

The last several state and federal elections should be written up in the history books as a stolen election. In a blistering attack on the Republican Party's use of voter suppression, Carol Anderson in her book, *One Person, No Vote* brilliantly documents with facts and names the nefarious methods used across the political landscape to inhibit, prohibit, and intimidate African-Americans, minorities, young and poor voters from exercising their Fifteenth Amendment right to vote, thus boosting the chances for Republican nominees.

The large turn-out for Al Gore in the 2000 election by black, Hispanic, and Asian voters, drove home the idea to the GOP that it was imperative to block those groups from the polls by any means necessary. *"Paul Weyrich, a conservative activist and founder of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which eventually crafted voter suppression legislation that spread like a cancer throughout the United States, was brutally clear: 'I don't want everybody to vote.' The Republican Party's 'leverage in the elections quite candidly goes up as the voting populace goes down.' That is to say, the GOP learned that voter suppression applied ruthlessly and relentlessly could deliver victory"* (p. 49). ALEC, whose goal is to advance free market and limited government principles, i.e. protecting the wealth and power of the 1% "makers" from the 99% "takers," is an organization founded and funded by the Koch brothers' network. ALEC exists in all 50 states, and drafts conservative, right-wing, libertarian legislation, in this case model voter ID legislation limiting turn-out of the Democratic and Green voter base, that is then passed on to receptive legislators in those states to pass into law.

THE INVENTION OF VOTER FRAUD

But to succeed in a stealth campaign of voter suppression, the GOP needed to invent a bogeyman: "voter fraud." In spite of the fact that the lie of voter fraud had been and has been disproven time and time again, Republican operatives, such as Thor Hearne (national election counsel to Bush-Cheney '04), relentlessly railed against rampant voter fraud, using righteous sounding organizations such as the American Center for Voting Rights as their bullhorn. Republicans in office, such as Kris Kobach (Kansas Secretary of State), seized on the mantra of voter fraud under the guise of protecting the integrity of the ballot box, masking acts of aggressive voter suppression behind the nobility of being "civil minded."

The passage of the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), guided through Congress by Senator Kit Bond (R-MO), an ardent promoter of the voter fraud lie, included language, at his insistence, requiring that people have identification in order to vote. That legislation, along with the Justice Robert's Supreme Court's ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder* in 2013 that gutted Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, opened the floodgates for voter suppression laws that mushroomed throughout the country. *"As a result, the rash of voter ID laws, purged voting rolls, redrawn district boundaries, and closed and moved polling places were the quiet and barely detected fire that burned through the 2016 presidential election, evaporating millions of votes and searing those who hadn't even been under the original VRA....In Milwaukee County, which is overwhelmingly African American, fifty thousand fewer votes were cast in a state that Donald Trump won by only twenty-seven thousand ballots"* (p. 42). The Koch brother's network stealth campaign to control all levers of power for their own oligarchic rule was succeeding.

BOB HAWK

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In 2016, the Economist Intelligence Unit, which had evaluated 167 nations on sixty different indicators, reported that the United States had slipped into the category of a “flawed democracy,” where, frankly, it had been “teetering for years.”

State Voter ID laws were crafted by Republican legislators based on the types of photo identification that minorities, the poor, and people of color did not have or had much more difficulty in obtaining, i.e. drivers’ licenses. In Alabama, for example, HAVA’s list of valid identification such as a utility bill, social security card, or even the government-issued public housing ID were no longer accepted, just the state issued photo ID driver’s license. Republican Governor Robert Bentley, under the guise of fiscal exigency, then closed 31 driver’s license offices in mostly black counties. “With no viable public transportation, no access to vehicles, and the closest DMV sometimes nearly fifty miles away and only open for a few days a month, many Black Belt county residents were simply and completely disfranchised” (p. 68). In Texas, a similar voter ID law requiring a state issued driver’s license was passed two hours after the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision. “Republican legislators recognized that it would require some citizens to travel up to 250 miles round-trip to obtain a license...(since) one-third of the state’s counties, including some of those that are heavily minority, do not have DMV’s” (p. 69).

THE VOTER ROLL PURGE AND PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING

Voter Roll Purge is another one of the pernicious tactics used by Republicans to disenfranchise minorities, people of color, the poor and young voters, i.e. those statistically voting Democrat. Illegally interpreting the 1993 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), which allowed routine maintenance, even scrubbing of voters, Republican secretaries of state used non-voting as a reason for wiping out millions of voters, even though that criterion was expressly forbidden in the NVRA. In Ohio, Secretary of State Jon Husted purged 1.2 million voters, mostly from the minority cities of Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, from 2011 to 2016 because they voted infrequently. In Georgia, Secretary of State, Brian Kemp (who narrowly defeated the 2018 Democrat candidate for Governor, Stacey Abrams) oversaw the elimination of more than one million citizens from the voter lists between 2012 and 2016. In Kansas, Secretary of State, Kris Kobach, suspended the right to vote of 35,314 citizens because of his xenophobic belief that there was a widespread problem of noncitizens voting, which was later proven in the Tenth Circuit of the U.S. Court of

Appeals in 2016 to be little more than “pure speculation” with “precious...little evidence.” *Kobach also championed the Interstate Crosscheck program that in 2016 led to the purging of 271,000 voters in Arizona, 450,000 in Michigan, and almost 600,000 in North Carolina, even though...researchers at Stanford, Harvard, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania discovered that Crosscheck has an error rate of more than 99 percent*” (p. 87).

Partisan gerrymandering is another method used in an orchestrated way to disenfranchise those voters who statistically voted Democrat, as Carol Anderson documents. North Carolina Republicans brought in Tom Hofeller, a top mapmaker using demographic data and trends, who “was able to wring every last available GOP district out of a state and do so in a way that provided safe districts where there could never be a viable challenge from a Democratic candidate” (p. 105). GOP legislators in Wisconsin went even further, sequestering themselves in a hotel room for months to draw up a gerrymandered map “...in which ‘Democrats could not regain control even if they won all swing districts.’” (p.109). “*When put to the test, the redistricting exceeded the Wisconsin GOP’s expectations. In the 2012 election, although Obama carried the state by seven points and Democrats received more than 50 percent of the vote, they garnered only 39 percent of the seats in the general assembly. And each subsequent election yielded an increasing number of Republican seats that was decidedly disproportionate to the votes GOP candidates received*” (p. 109). In October 2017 the Supreme Court in *Gill v. Whitford*, vehemently argued by Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Neil Gorsuch, refused to rule on this crass disenfranchisement, citing a previous ruling, led by Justice Anthony Scalia, in *Vieth v. Jubelirer* (2004) that partisan gerrymandering was beyond the scope of any judicial scrutiny. The conservative Koch brothers’ network stranglehold on the levers of power was complete: citizens no longer had effective recourse through the courts.

But the list of pernicious voter suppression tactics does not end there. Slashing the days and times for early voting in Ohio, Indiana, Florida and North Carolina, removing or reducing polling stations from minority neighborhoods, not replacing antiquated voting machines, not allocating sufficient resources to properly staff or supply voting stations in minority precincts: all these were employed to restrict those voters who statistically voted Democrat. Under the guise of fairness and equity, the Secretary of State in Ohio allocated only one polling station per county for early voting. That meant that Pickaway County, with fewer than 60,000 residents (of whom 1,881 are African-American), received the same number, one, of polling stations as Hamilton County, with a population of more than 800,000, where urban, largely African-American Cincinnati is located. “*This electoral resource distribution policy uses geography as a proxy for race and puts a distinct burden on voters who live in major urban areas in the state – Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, etc. – and, therefore, disadvantages blacks.*” (p.118). In Indiana, the GOP-dominated state legislature determined that it was Marion County, home to Indianapolis and

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A Future for Everyone?

Editor's Note: This is the first of two parts. The second part will be published in our next issue.

Few would deny there are serious problems in America; in fact all over the world. While it is true that many of these problems, such as poverty, bigotry, crime, climate disruption, permanent war, and rampant militarism have been passed down unsolved by preceding generations, we alone are responsible for what is unquestionably the gravest entry of all—the imminent extinction of our entire species through intensification and diffusion of the foregoing ills.

What sort of future should we be planning as we watch robots taking over more and more of our jobs, as water is disappearing and endangering our food supply, as climate change destroys entire communities, and our technology devises ever more ways to easily kill humans anywhere?

Since the beginning, humans have been striving to expand materially. Who can blame them? They need to eat. They want to feed their children. They want shelter to protect them from weather extremes. They want to be nurtured when they are ill... even when they are not ill. To procure these survival needs, they have had to work. But beyond survival, work often conferred physical comforts and personal prestige and power in their communities; hence, continuous unlimited growth became the goal.

Now here we are today. Families and tribes have grown into large nations and along with the growth in size, the desire to acquire additional wealth and power also grew. Over the years we have used our intelligence to develop incredible material objects to provide comfort... as well as to destroy everything, including, finally, ourselves.

Now that we have arrived at the brink of self-annihilation, what can we do?

Ironically, there is no dearth of solutions to our social and environmental problems. Every day new books, articles, lectures or television programs offer a variety of ways to eliminate one or another of them. Why then have our festering social wounds continued? Here are several interrelated reasons.

First, as we well know, large institutions change slowly if at all, preferring by far to maintain themselves and existing conditions however ineffective or even harmful they may be. Even to the general public, the known always appears safer than the unknown. Most social institutions in this country are large, hence suffer from this syndrome. Social critics expend much energy attacking the problems through books, protests, and petitions, but since these attacks usually address only one of the problems, such as homelessness, global warming, or epidemics, the overall system remains in place. Moreover, criticisms often consist of exhortations to change without specifying the nature of the change, or even worse, how to get from here to there. It is not surprising that they have little effect.

The problem of inertia in large institutions is compounded by the fact that there are many possible solutions to each problem rather than only one. This creates another dilemma—each suggested solution has its detractors whose arguments reinforce the already substantial fear of change. The result is conflict and confusion in society as a whole and the common response to conflict is paralysis.

Perhaps the worst obstacle to change is that most of the proposed solutions are theoretical; they have never been tested in a large group of people to see if they work.

As a result, billions of tax dollars are wasted on unsuccessful hypotheses while the country continues to suffer from the problems. Many citizens are eager to improve

GENEVIEVE MARCUS

Beyond our goals of survival and nonviolence, we must have a reason for our survival.

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the system, but do not know in which direction to channel their energies. The untested array of sometimes incompatible solutions to the growing array of problems finally induces apathy and hopelessness rather than purposive action.

Considering these obstacles to change separately and in combination it seems unlikely that the United States will change its course sufficiently or in time to prevent the catastrophes scheduled to occur around 2040 by some of our most advanced prediction methods. However, it is only unlikely, not certain. Awareness of these deterrents to change implies the opportunity to mitigate their force and perhaps save ourselves yet.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO CHANGE

Much of the technology that has changed the material world has come out of laboratories.

What if cities, nations, the WORLD decided to approach social change as an experiment; an experiment specifically designed to test what seem to be positive solutions to social and environmental problems? Instead of wasting resources on failed or questionable proposals applied to existing communities, what if a new type of city was created specifically to test and demonstrate solutions for everyone to see?

Experimental Cities, Inc. is a nonprofit educational research organization formed in 1972 to seek positive solutions to social and environmental problems afflicting all large cities worldwide. It calls these experimental cities Earthlabs. While there are many ideas about how such experimental communities could be structured, based on its 45 years of research, ECI has developed the following proposal for a first Experimental City with a population of 20,000-50,000 as an example:

This experiment starts by basing the entire proposed city on Values or agreements instead of laws. The Earthlab will be designed according to the following four Values and all of its inhabitants will agree to abide by them. It is hoped that all future Earthlabs will hold these same values however differently they are designed.

THE FOUR BASIC DESIGN GOALS—VALUES

1. The most important goal is to preserve our species. If we fail to do this there is no point to this or any other discussion. It hopes to achieve this goal by eliminating the ubiquitous deadly threats that surround us by means of its design and philosophy. At the top of the list is saving our air, soil, and water. Saving ourselves necessitates that we save the planet that sustains us.

2. Recognizing that survival in today's technological world is not likely unless we finally give up the archaic primitive use of violence to resolve conflicts, *nonviolence* will be a basic value practiced by the community to the best of their ability. Violence often stems from the wish to dominate, from fear and insecurity, and from greed. The Earthlab will strive for optimal rather than maximal lifestyles as a sustainable goal. By demonstrating a satisfying life free from its main causes, it hopes to reduce violence in this and other cities.

3. Beyond our goals of survival and nonviolence, we must have a *reason* for our survival. We do not know what that might be for everyone, so we propose that the third value and goal is to design social systems that provide every individual in the City with the equal opportunity and encouragement to realize their fullest potential. Only then might we discover reasons why human survival is important and be motivated to stop killing each other. What might result from the realization of everyone's human potential?

4. The fourth value will be to experiment with the concept of Equality. The Preamble to our Constitution and many other documents worldwide promise to treat every individual equally. It is written that God created us all as equals. So why, then, have slavery and other forms of dominance been practiced with a passion from the beginning? The experimental cities will factor in equality as a major design objective. It will provide a rare example of a city designed and managed equally by women and men from the beginning. The results of this equal participation in the creative process may be especially instructive.

It should be stated that Equality does not always imply sameness. Equality is also a variable subjective perception of one's personal worth or power. One can feel equal or more powerful than others if one has achieved a comfortable amount of what one subjectively considers power. For example, if Joanne greatly values writing and is pleased with her writing ability, she will not feel less powerful as a person than someone with a high degree of athletic or scientific skill because the latter skills would not make her feel personally powerful.

DESIGNING THE VALUES: OBJECTIVES

So how can we realize everyone's fullest potential? How can we eliminate poverty and violence at the same time as we strive to preserve the planet? ECI has integrated the thinking of experts from many fields and proposes that we experiment with the following design objectives to realize its Values as a start:

- A) An Earthlab must provide a guaranteed means of basic survival for everyone. This would eliminate the current problem of poverty and insecurity from which many other problems arise, especially crime and violence. We are proposing a Double Economy which will be described in the City Systems section (in Part Two, next issue).
- B) It must be an environment that provides multiple lifelong opportunities for learning, growth, and self-expression. An Earthlab will explore what the next stage of human evolution will be as we are increasingly being replaced by machines who can think faster and more comprehensively than we can. What will we need to learn or know? We foresee the future possibly emphasizing human creativity instead of financial gain. This transition would be revolutionary. Imagine every human taught and encouraged to be creative. Who knows what the world would be like if creativity became the cultural objective?
- C) Equality will be studied in numerous ways throughout the experiment. Feeling “less” than others is another major cause of many social problems. The Experimental City as an entity will hold the formal perspective that the value, the importance of every individual in the City is equal. If I think Linda is more valuable than John, that is just my personal view and has no effect on either person within the perspective of the City.

These objectives, then, are the cohesive purpose of ECI; its design and evaluation criteria. Every proposed solution whether economic, medical, or architectural, must, to the best of our combined knowledge, manifest these values and goals. How to translate them into specific designs will, of course, produce numerous proposals. It is hoped there will eventually be many experimental Earthlabs exemplifying these values throughout the world.



GENEVIEVE MARCUS, PH.D.

Lecturer, scholar, author, editor, television producer, research director, and CEO of Experimental Cities, Inc., a nonprofit organization seeking positive solutions to social and environmental problems afflicting cities worldwide. Dr. Marcus graduated from UCLA summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, completed a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology and served as a lecturer in the music department. She worked with the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra, served on the board of Experiments in Art and Technology where she collaborated with scientists at UCLA, CalTech, USC, and UCSD designing projects. With partner, Bob Smith, she co-founded Experimental Cities, Inc. in 1972. Dr. Marcus's work has centered on equality between women and men. Her research led to the book, *Equal Time: Maintaining a Balance in Today's Intimate Relationships* (Frederick Fell, 1982) and workshops on relationships conducted in cooperation with the Humanistic Psychology Association, The World Future Society, and the Association of Marriage and Family Counselors. She published a newsletter, *The New Relationships* for several years. She also founded and served as editor-in-chief of a newsletter for educators, *Computer Users in Education*.

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most of the state's African Americans, that tilted the race for Obama in 2008. They then passed a law, while Vice President Pence was the governor, that restricted those counties with at least 325,000 residents to only one early voting site unless there was unanimous agreement from the bipartisan county election board, in which Republicans had a built-in veto. While smaller (and whiter) counties successfully applied for and received more early voting sites, Marion (Indianapolis) and Lake (Gary) with 62 percent of the state's African American population, lost early voting sites. “As a consequence, and as could be expected, early voting in Marion County plummeted by 26 percent” (p.152).

Since the founding of the Republic, the rich, powerful and privileged have attempted to limit who can vote: those who didn't own land; slaves; women; African-Americans; Native Americans. Jim Crow laws were enacted, and lasted for many decades. Now those same rich, powerful and privileged few have almost irrevocably seized control of all levers of power at the local, state and federal level through voter suppression, packing the Supreme Court, and a relentless campaign of disinformation, lies, and the outright stealing of our elections. The flood of dark money pouring into our campaigns via *Citizens United*, the rulings in *Shelby County v. Holder* and *Vieth v. Jubelirer*, and the 50-year stealth campaign of the Koch brothers' network to create an unassailable oligarchy: all these are threatening the very foundations of our democracy. “In 2016, the Economist Intelligence Unit, which had evaluated 167 nations on sixty different indicators, reported that the United States had slipped into the category of a ‘flawed democracy,’ where, frankly, it had been ‘teetering for years” (p. 97). Even now as I write this, GOP legislators in Michigan and Wisconsin are actively pursuing legislation that would limit the powers of incoming Democrats, ignoring the will of their electorates. In her final pages, Carol Anderson cites some efforts to combat the threat of voter suppression, but the 2020 election may be the last chance to restore the right, not the privilege, of the Fifteenth Amendment. For those who wish to read further about the Voting Rights Act and the effort to scuttle it refer to *Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*, Ari Berman (2015). One can also recall the powerful critique in *Grand Illusion, The Myth Of Voter Choice in a Two-Party Tyranny*, by Theresa Amato. New Press, 2009.



BOB HAWK

is a retired organic farmer and ecologist, and still active homesteader on his 54 acres in Walden, Vermont. He received a B.A. in Political Science from Bowdoin College in 1968, a Diploma in German Studies from the Interpreters Institute of the University of Heidelberg, Germany in 1971, and a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Johnson State College in 2007. He is also a founding member and 10-year Board member of a regional land trust, Northern Rivers Land Trust.

JOBS SUCK

What's the Alternative?

STEVE WELZER

The jobs-creation mantra of progressives is a little disconcerting.

Rebels of the Sixties Generation were determined to find **right livelihood** instead of mere “jobs.”

In modern life we “go out” from our family or community to work at a job that supports an institution.

Mass institutional-technological society (let's call it MITS) is inherently destructive. It destroys ecological balances. It destroys community. It destroys all good intentions, all strivings for the ideals that Greens value: democracy, justice, equality, peace, sustainability, responsibility.

Why, then, has it come to be prevalent within our modern socio-economic reality? Because it's conducive to productivity and profit. It has developed over five millennia as a result of a civilizational preoccupation with productivist and exploitative values.

Early on it manifested in an ecologically toxic form of intensive agriculture and an egregiously complex division of labor. It gradually spread from enclaves, overran the original human lifeways, became dominant worldwide, and now most of us work for it. It provides us with jobs.

But as we work those jobs, we're sustaining the MITS leviathan. That's why, even though it's understandable, in an immediate sense, to prioritize addressing the problem of unemployment, nonetheless, from the standpoint of an ultimate vision of a better society, the jobs-creation mantra of progressives is a little disconcerting.

THE SYSTEM FORCES US TO FOCUS ON INCOME

We seem to be locked into the MITS paradigm. Our livelihoods are dependent upon having jobs within the system (whether the system is capitalist or socialist, i.e., whether the means of production are owned privately or publicly). MITS enables the awesome technological efficiencies and productive economies-of-scale the modern world (with its high population levels) seems to require. MITS generates an abundance of commodities at a relatively cheap economic price.

But we pay too high a *social* price for those benefits.
And the jobs suck.

Rebels of the Sixties Generation vowed not to work for the Man, the System, the Machine. Speaking from the steps of Sproul Hall (University of California, Berkeley) in December of 1964 Mario Savio intoned: “There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part. And you've got to put your body upon the gears and upon the wheels...upon the levers, upon all the apparatus...and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all.”

What could be clearer, the rebels said: The daily grind is anathema. It puts us on a treadmill to nowhere. Jobs within the System are boring, even if benign. But often they are not benign, they are exploitative and contribute to the overall toxicity of the globalized productive megamachine. Following the lead of E. F. Schumacher (*Small Is Beautiful*, 1973) the young visionaries were determined to find *right livelihood* instead of mere “jobs.”

But the intervening decades have shown that doing so is not easy. Unable to conceive of how that might be accomplished, the progressive movement dropped back to a position of focusing on income, calling for more, better, guaranteed, higher-paying jobs.

From *Green New Deal Advocates Should Address Militarism* by Medea Benjamin and Alice Slater: “Some members of Congress are showing their historic mettle by

supporting a Green New Deal. This would not only start to reverse the damage we have inflicted on our collective home, but it would create hundreds of thousands of good jobs.”

From the *Platform of the Movement for a People's Party*: “Create millions of living wage jobs modernizing the infrastructure that powers American life and commerce.”

Such is representative of boilerplate verbiage encountered in most any typical progressive advocacy article or electoral platform. Rather than right livelihood, it's now considered creditable (“win-win”) to promote the idea of advancing through technological/ecological development while at the same time creating more income-providing jobs.

The left wonders why this vision doesn't much resonate.

From *The Abolition of Work* by Bob Black: “People don't just work, they have ‘jobs.’ One person does one productive task all the time on an or-else basis. Even if the task has a quantum of intrinsic interest, the monotony of its obligatory exclusivity drains its satisfaction/fulfillment potential. A job that might engage the energies of some people, for a reasonably limited time, is just a burden on those who have to do it for forty hours a week.”

Should progressives be clamoring for more of that particular sort of misery? We hear: “The current reality is that having a secure job paying a living wage is surely a whole lot better than the alternative” . . . the implication being that the alternative is a condition of scrounging for income, suffering the vagaries of the “gig” economy, lacking social status and productive expression. Etc.

Let's see if we can conceive of a better alternative.

LIBERATION FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL WORKPLACE

Human beings are social animals. For most of our species history productive activity was carried out for the benefit of family (primarily), clan (secondarily), and community (a tribe or village). For the sake of this discussion let's define *community* in the way that it used to be experienced—as an interdependent group of individuals and families who identify with their collective-in-a-particular-place and who sustain life together in that place. Within that context the interdependence of productive activity—accomplishing, together, what needs to be done—is a social bond.

In modern life we “go out” from our family or community to work at a job that supports an institution. Businesses, governmental agencies, non-profit enterprises, labor unions, professional practices, hospitals, universities, etc. are all institutions. They may be small or large, heartless or congenial, exploitative or benign—but they're not communities.

Under capitalism most privately-owned enterprises are run autocratically. Leftism has critiqued that, maintaining that labor could be transformed if the workers were in control. Alienation could be overcome through collectivization.

That may or may not be the case, but it seems that academics are more inspired by that vision than are members of “the working class.” Gradually, as one Marxist experiment after another failed

during the twentieth century, socialists began to recognize that the idea of the working class or “the people” owning and controlling a complex industrial economy was a chimerical notion. So they modified their conception of workers democracy toward prioritizing self-management of the workplace . . . a localized version of collective ownership and control.

The idea still doesn't seem to resonate. Why? The answer might be that people find it burdensome to think that they not only should trudge to work and labor seven or eight hours a day, they also should take responsibility at a more macro level for making managerial decisions. Actual workers don't really seem to care so much about self-managing the institutional workplace. What they would prefer, actually, would be *liberation* from the workplace.

THE ALTERNATIVE

We need to abandon the MITS paradigm. We need to stop caring about its abundance of commodities and technological marvels. We need to let go of its productivist values. Instead, we need to re-embrace communitarian values.

Consider how work is accomplished within the family. Pauline cleans the gutters. If they're not cleaned, everyone can see the rainwater pouring out the sides. Laurie takes out the garbage on Monday and Thursday mornings. If she didn't, family members would see it accumulate and smell it decomposing. Bobby dries the dishes because they need to be dried and put away. Val does the laundry because it needs to be done. The work is not accomplished via a jobs system where family members are timed, confined, and paid.

At the Sanelife Ecovillage there's lots of work to be done to sustain the community and its environment. There's a sense that we have control over our division of labor. We collectively and straightforwardly assess needs and then allocate tasks in order to get the work accomplished. No one is relegated to one task done all the time as a job. No one is timed, confined, or remunerated with a paycheck.

Paychecks incentivize people to do more work. For the individual, overtime can be lucrative. For society as a whole, a full employment goal can result in government-sponsored task creation. It's a sorry sight when progressives sit around trying to come up with make-work schemes.

Institutions are prone to work-padding. In that sense they're not very efficient at all. In a real community it would be to everyone's advantage to try to *minimize* the work. Work-reduction would be a logical goal.

At Sanelife Ecovillage most of our needs are met through exchange of services and produce in-kind. We sustain each other by working together. We have to “hold up the sky” together. But we're sensitive to the issue of life-balance. This year individuals are being asked to put in forty units of work a week to accomplish all necessary tasks. But perhaps next year we'll make a decision to live a little more simply and reduce the requirement to 38 units. Or maybe we can find efficiencies such that our standard

In a community it would be to everyone's advantage to try to minimize work.

A goal of "creating jobs" would be viewed as perverse.

of consumption will be maintained with just 38 units of work per community member. Obviously, our *quality of life* will increase if we can sustain ourselves while working less time.

A goal of "creating jobs" would be viewed as perverse. So would the idea of a "Universal Basic Income" not related to work. The community might resolve to support an elderly or disabled member who has contributed in the past, but, otherwise, all who are capable need to contribute. We strive to make the work convivial and fulfilling. We vary tasks. Much work is done in teams. We do what's necessary and then we stop.

It results in quite a different feeling from the alienated labor done for impersonal institutions. The contributions of individuals are visible, acknowledged, and appreciated.

That includes children.

CHILDREN GAIN ESTEEM FROM CONTRIBUTING

As in the family, children in the Sanelife Ecovillage often start doing simple chores for the community at around age six or seven. It's beneficial for them to start taking on responsibility at an early age. Children can be wonderfully productive by the time they're twelve.

Enlightened future people will chastise our society for segregating children from the family and community into the isolated, artificial make-work institutions called schools. By doing so we withhold from them the natural and genuine esteem that comes from being recognized as productive members of society.

The modern problem in regard to "child labor" is attributable to the fact that the MITS paradigm is prone to exploitation. Some exploitation can occur within any milieu, of course. It's much more of a problem within the MITS context of impersonal institutions. Within a familial or communitarian context empathetic eyeballs directly see and care. When no one in particular is closely watching, as is often the case in mass society, irresponsibility is rampant. Within an Old Ways village context, how were children of twelve protected from work exploitation without a government agency enforcing laws against it? Neighbors were watching.

How were children educated in the absence of institutionalized schooling? Paul Goodman: "Until quite recently, most education occurred incidentally. Adults did their work and other social tasks. The children were not excluded." He asserted that participation by, contribution from, and integration of the young into the social/productive life of the community could most effectively yield the "educational" desiderata that our schools strive for but too often fail to achieve: knowledge, character, and esteem. Learning, he said, flows from interaction with adults and peers within a context of common, socially valued activity.

Within mass institutional-technological society the vital functions of growing up have become hermetically redefined in school terms. The young rarely see adults involved in their productive activities. The institutional simulations set up as part of "educational curricula" in schools are artificial and solipsistic. Under those conditions, students feel that their objective is to become expert in the academic process: "... the young discoverers are inclined to discover what will get them past the College Board examinations."

Community-based education requires that the work life of adults, as a matter of course, includes "apprentice attention time." Just as children most thrive within families where the parents give them real responsibilities, treat them as valued co-contributors, and help them to become such, so would the young learn best by having community members attend to the educational function organically within the course of everyday activity. "Bottom line" efficiency would be sacrificed to the extent that adult workers make time to, in essence, nurture younger workers—through demonstrating, guiding, monitoring, appraising.

THE DEEP GREEN VISION OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Paul Goodman: "Let's get kids out from within those institutional walls. Let's liberate them from their social segregation and enable them to take their place as community members." I think that should apply to everyone, young and old alike. For adults it means liberation from the jobs system.

A true alternative to MITS would involve a reconceptualization of what constitutes "the good life." It would elucidate how right livelihood flows from the organic sustenance of meaningful local community life (which, by the way, was Gandhi's contention).

For the time being, for better or worse, it remains incumbent upon the left to put forward proposals to counter unemployment. But Greens could go beyond common leftism by bringing in to the discussion our vision of a deeper form of social transformation. If we explain it well and point to living examples of the alternative (the rejuvenated communities that are starting to spring up worldwide) our vision will resonate—because people deeply feel that something crucial has been lost in modern life. And: their jobs suck.



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Five Lessons from Eastern Congo: *The Do's and Don'ts of Basic Change*

ALEXANDER PETROFF

President of Working Villages International

In early 2006, I walked across the Rwanda border into the Democratic Republic of Congo, searching for land to start Working Villages International's (WVI) first agricultural project. I had founded the organization a few months earlier, in order to test my college thesis on rural economic development. I spoke none of the languages, had raised around \$15k in startup money, and knew only one person, who soon turned out to be a huckster and ran off with all the organization's money. I was 23 years old. My plan was to get 1000 families out of poverty through farming.

This past year Working Villages successfully exited our work in Congo after having gotten 10,000 families out of poverty, by irrigating 15,000 acres and generating an economic base of approximately \$30 million a year. This wealth caused a massive economic boom in the towns we worked in, greatly reduced militia violence, and allowed a people long under the heel of a corrupt monarch to finally gain their freedom. In short, we took a starving people on their knees from a decade of war and put them on their feet. Here are 5 lessons I learned the hard way that helped to make that success possible.

INCENTIVES MATTER... ALWAYS:

This one is perhaps the most important lesson for someone wishing to do systems change on a social or economic level. It was a hard lesson for a Yankee like me to learn, but without it, an endeavor is unlikely to ever be realized. Incentives matter, always, and with everyone. In Congo I learned the troubling reality that the world is not split between good people who do good things, and bad people who do bad things. There are only humans, each one as capable as the next of the full range of human expression. Given the proper incentives, anyone is capable of anything—good or bad. This is heresy to the Yankee way of seeing the world. Nevertheless, it is a fact. And, a conflict zone like Eastern Congo makes the fact too blatant to ignore.

I learned that incentives could turn people who were trying to kill me into my allies, or cause my allies to rob me blind. So in every interaction I learned to take nothing for granted, and to understand what the interests, cares, and values of the person I was working with were. Then, as much as I could, I arranged the incentives accordingly. I discovered that if I was serious about systems change, I couldn't always choose who I worked with, but I had a lot of control over the incentives necessary to steward them to work towards the outcomes I was trying to achieve.

TWO REASONS WHY SYSTEMS WORK THE WAY THEY DO

This next lesson grows from the previous one. As a Yankee who had never been out of the eastern US before I went to Central Africa, I had my own ideas, of right, wrong, fairness, justice, and how the world should work. Then I was exposed to systems of social and economic organizations that not only made no sense, but were, in some instances, morally repugnant to someone like myself with an education from Hampshire College. I set out to change as many of them as I could, in order to reshape the social order to fit the morals of a 21st century East Coast Liberal. This caused me to learn the hard way that there were two reasons that systems were arranged in a way I didn't understand.

We [Working Villages International] took a starving people on their knees from a decade of war and put them on their feet. Here are five lessons that I learned the hard way that helped to make that success possible.

The first reason is because—just or unjust—they worked. Human systems of organization are rarely planned in advance on an ideological basis. Instead they are emergent phenomena that happen organically and over time. Perhaps later they are codified, but they emerge because they work in the contexts they are shaped by. The second reason systems exist the way they do is because they used to work and no one got the memo that they stopped working.

In Congo I learned that before I went uprooting social systems I found disagreeable, to make really sure which of these two reasons was at play. There were two reasons for this. The first is because as humans we are not as smart as we think we are, and if we are going to break something that works, we want to be really sure that what we replace it with works just as well—not just on paper, but also in the real world contexts that it will exist in. There is no law of the universe that states that the destruction of a system of injustice will result in a system of justice. In fact, history has plenty of examples of things getting worse as a result.

The countryside of Central Africa is littered with failed social and economic experiments, initiated by well-meaning Westerners, whose interventions ended up damaging or even tearing apart the communities they were trying to help. In fact I have seen this happen more often than not. The second reason to be careful is more practical. Just about any attempt at social and economic change causes winners and losers; my 12 years of work in Congo was no different. Incentives matter and systems that appear unjust are nearly always quite beneficial to some. Trying to change them is pretty much guaranteed to turn those whom the system benefits into your enemies. And, this leads us to the next lesson.

CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

When I started working in Congo, as a student right out of Hampshire College, I was not only committed to non-discrimination in my workforce, but I also wanted to encourage diversity by ensuring that 50% of WVI's workforce were women. As an employer I figured it was up to me whom I hired, and in such an impoverished area where unemployment was over 98%, I thought the incentives were on my side to change the social order. The result was humbling. At first much of the work we did was historically done by both men and women, so the policy was easy to enforce. However, as the project grew, it started

to evolve into areas where gender roles were well established. When we started constructing brick buildings to keep our crops safe from weather and pests, we hit a snag. All the bricklayers in the valley where we worked were men. This presented a problem to my 50-50 employment policy.

My solution was to agree to hire bricklayers only if they also trained female brick layers to work alongside them. No matter that 99% of bricklayers in the US and UK are male, I was going to make sure that the injustice did not continue under my management. Unfortunately, my reading of the incentive structure was backwards. It turned out that bricklaying was a complex skill with a high enough barrier to entry that the local market was able to be controlled by a guild of brick layers.

The massive unemployment, rather than working in my favor, provided a reverse incentive for the guild members to train additional bricklayers, especially as they realized that many of them would be training their own replacements. At first, they said they couldn't find any women willing to apprentice them. I didn't buy it for a second. No matter, I thought: I would refuse to be a party to perpetuating sexism!

Undeterred, and with a sense of moral righteousness, I sent my managers north to the big



city of Bukavu to hire brick layers who would teach women who already worked for us in the valley how to lay bricks. The Bukavu bricklayers were also from a guild, but they didn't mind teaching people so far away that wouldn't compete with them in Bukavu. The local guild however, did not just roll over: their livelihood was under threat. They harassed the women who apprenticed the Bukavu brick layers, making their lives intolerable until they asked to be reassigned to other work. The local bricklayers also harassed Bukavu bricklayers who had taken their jobs, so that we had to move them to a walled compound to keep them safe, further driving up the costs for employing the already more expensive Bukavu workmen. Work slowed to a crawl, and the crops we were going to store in the new brick buildings began to rot and be consumed by pests. That was when I realized how important it is to choose your battles.

I had come to the valley to help the starving and impoverished people there. The food we were growing to feed them was rotting and I was spending money that could be helping that community on employing people from a distant city, and was poisoning the social relations of the people I was trying to help in the process. Was I there to get rural people out of poverty

or enforce a gender theory not even adopted in the countries that produced it? My attempts to make life better were actually making them worse.

I would like to say that I learned my lesson and never made the same mistake again; however, that would not be honest. Over time though, I learned how to choose my battles, based on understanding the costs and benefits of a fight, within the context of my organization's mission. However, if I had learned it sooner, I wonder how much more I could have helped the people of eastern Congo, and how much less damage I would have done in the process. Before I go about changing something now, I first ask myself, "What potential harm am I going to do in the process?"

UNDERSTAND THE POWER DYNAMICS YOU ARE WORKING IN

Sometimes though, you do the math and search your heart and decide you need to fight for something, even if it means making enemies. If you want to succeed at your endeavor, it is necessary to understand how power moves within the system you are trying to change. This is something that is not in your face in the US. When you go to get a loan at the bank, you need to provide a lot of documentation, when you apply for a job you write applications and need references, you fill out forms to apply for grants, you vote for political representatives who are mostly beholden to a small number of people whose names are not on the ballot. All of this masks how power actually works in our system.

In Congo the veneer is absent, and it is very clear how power moves through a system. Power is the province of humans, not forms or institutions. All of the documents and processes you pass through in your attempt to make change are simply formalities; in the end there is a human, or a small group of humans, that will either say yes or no, to your bank loan, your grant, or your political policy wishes. If, after your intervention, they are not inclined to give you the desired outcome, all of the paperwork or protesters you can bring to bear will not matter in the least.

When you decide to fight for something, identify which humans need to say yes or no. Then map out the best strategy you can, using what you know or can learn about their interests, cares, and values for how you are going to get them to say yes or no. Everything else is window dressing. In Congo we were successful because whatever we were trying to do, regardless of whether it was an infrastructure project, a mass mobilization, a lobbying campaign, or the defense of our lands from armed groups, we asked some very simple questions about how power moved. For example: "Who do we need to say yes or no to this, in order to achieve our desired outcome?" "What will it take to get them to say yes or no?" As we are only human ourselves, we will sometimes come up with the wrong answers to one or more of these questions; however, without addressing them from the start, we are walking blind in the wrong direction.

SHOWMANSHIP VS. LEADING BY EXAMPLE

When I first launched my project in Congo I needed a headquarters building. I thought it was important to lead by example and to have the building be a symbol of the values I was trying to impart to the community I was working in. So I had a thatched roof installed instead of one of metal sheeting. A well done thatched roof lasts longer, is quieter in a rain storm, and is far cooler in the equatorial sun than a metal roof. It is also a lot cheaper. I thought over time this would gain my organization respect in the eyes of the community and maybe even inspire others to follow my example. Nothing of the kind occurred. People thought I was crazy. What is more they thought our project was weak, and in Eastern Congo that is much worse. The site became a target for militias, soldiers, and corrupt officials with nothing better to do. Our workers faced near constant harassment on the way to work, and I earned a mocking name which literally translates to "Grass White Person."

This was a hard lesson for me to absorb, and it took me several years of stubborn resistance to see what was being communicated. I was trying to communicate one thing to the people of the valley, but they were receiving something else. After the project had grown considerably, and the time came to build another HQ, we took a different tack. We looked at what the local people would value and constructed an over-the-top building with an imposing wall around it, tiled metal roof instead of sheets, beautiful out buildings, and even a fountain in front. That changed everything.

Militias, soldiers, and officials, all kept their distance, as they believed that a person who could build a compound like that was too powerful to risk upsetting. No one bothered our workers anymore, and the name that was given me quickly transformed from a joke into a name of respect. I learned that leading by example is a service to your mission only if people understand what you are trying to communicate. Different cultures may understand the same action differently, so you must understand how the people you are trying to communicate with will receive your example before you act.

I walked into Congo with a firm understanding of my morals and ideologies, however, it was my education in understanding the perspectives, contexts, and incentive of those who I was working with that caused my work to be a success.



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A New Movement for Ecovillagers, Part 2

This is the second of a three-part series focusing on innovative ways to foster places of equity, integrity, and sustainability.

JOEL ROTHSCHILD

Ecovillagers Alliance

We cannot achieve better human habitat as long as we try to purchase it, or even to design it, like a consumer product.

Work with what you have. Work with whom you have. Avoid the master's tools.

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Something radical is happening here, but you wouldn't necessarily notice. From the street, this looks like just another block of century-old brick rowhouses, semi-attached like pairs of conjoined twins, with front porches over tiny curbside yards—which, now that you squint, appear to include more native-plant rain gardens and fruit trees than on neighboring blocks. The real surprise is hidden, though. Only when you step between two houses and into the alley behind can you see the real paradigm shift underway.

Where you would expect private back yards fenced into rows, instead you see a single expansive campus, part university quad and part Central Park, crisscrossed by walking paths. People of all ages come in and out of the houses' back doors—which, now that you're here, look more like front doors, even the ones on second-floor apartment porches, decorated with different colors and rocking chairs and welcome mats.

Where are these people going without cars from their front-looking back doors? It could be the edible forest garden, or the old garage now providing a massive bike shed. It could be the carriage house converted to a children's house, with a game room for teens upstairs and a daycare and play space for smaller ones downstairs, plus a room of cubbies marked for the ages of toddlers whose clothes can be swapped in and out. It could be the two old garages set up as a shop space attached to a well-stocked tool library. It could be the guest house with rooms anyone can sign out for visiting relatives. It could be the alley's old brick warehouse, with its lush rooftop vegetable garden, where neighbors file past the giant chimes announcing that a Commons House dinner is ready for anyone who wants to eat together tonight. Some, instead, are walking down to the Commons dining room from the upstairs offices, workshops, and studios of a dozen small enterprises.

As you stroll this vibrant super-backyard, you can see some subtler benefits of a neighborhood sharing its basic resources. Holistic land and water management are possible across the entire green space. Swales can lie where they'll best catch the rain. Flowers and herbs can grow where the sunlight best suits them. The wooded area is more wild and rich than an isolated backyard shade tree. A frisbee thrown past that sprawling playground structure won't land inaccessibly behind a neighbor's fence. And those solar panels spread across the many rooftops, is the power they generate distributed through a smart neighborhood microgrid? It wouldn't take an enlightened power utility coming along to make that possible.

This neighborhood's most progressive features may not be visible at all. With yesteryear's single-family homes retrofit into a diversity of units from five-bedrooms to studios, a diversity of life stages can now live side by side—young families, empty-nesters, a group of friends sharing one kitchen to save money. At least as important, this neighborhood accommodates a diversity of wealth backgrounds and income

“Ecovillaging” can be one more powerful form of social movement organizing.

levels by keeping some units purposefully inexpensive, using its Resilience Fund as necessary to hold the community together.

Perhaps most radical are the things you can't see here because they don't exist. You see no predatory businesses like liquor stores and payday lenders taking advantage of vulnerable neighbors. You see no businesses pumping out dangerous waste, emissions, or effluent. There certainly are businesses here, providing local livelihoods, but they are coordinated with the neighborhood as a whole to ensure common well-being.

You see no “For Sale” signs, which means no real estate speculators, which means no house flipping, which means no spikes in cost. That means no one suddenly priced out and forced to leave. In fact, you cannot see a single resident here who is in debt for their housing. Imagine that! An entire neighborhood where the right to a home doesn't condemn the not-already-rich to a lifetime of debt.

Welcome to the Ecovillage Neighborhood developed, owned, and democratically governed as a Community Land Co-op. This one isn't real—at least, not yet. It's in the works now where I live in Pennsylvania. Should it be where you live, too?

ORGANIZE AND THEY WILL BUILD IT

I've long since lost count of the times progressive-minded architects and developers repeated that old *Field of Dreams* line, “build it and they will come.” The thinking goes, our neighborhoods are laid out for cars and stuff, not for humans and relationships. This much is obviously true. For better social outcomes, what we need is to start over with new buildings and grounds that are conducive to community and virtuous living, right? This is, by the way, the very same logic behind every “urban revitalization” project that has plowed under slums, also known as poor folks' neighborhoods, to replace them with the next generation's slums. I only wish I could count one time I have seen this thinking lead to truly progressive results.

In Part 1 of “A New Movement for Ecovillagers” (*Green Horizon*, Summer/Fall 2018) I argued we cannot achieve better human habitat as long as we try to purchase it, or even to design it, like a consumer product. Contrast this capitalistic

approach with social movements, where we look for progress to result from patterns of action. *People before profit, process before product.* Likewise, contrast well-meaning ecovillage and cohousing communities that nonetheless reproduce privilege, suburbanization, and high prices with the diverse, urban, and affordable Los Angeles EcoVillage (LAEV).

WHAT ARE THE KEY LESSONS FROM LAEV'S SUCCESS?

- **WORK WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.** Don't look for the perfect land to colonize, look in your own backyard. How could the land and buildings there be retrofit in service to the common good? To imagine a world of just, sustainable neighborhoods, first imagine your neighborhood as just and sustainable.
- **WORK WITH WHOM YOU HAVE.** Don't look for the perfect outsiders to recruit, as though your neighborhood is a pro sports franchise. Talk to your neighbors, talk to your friends! Look for the common cause that may already quietly exist. To imagine a cooperative, abundance-sharing world, first imagine cooperating with your present-day neighbors. Host a potluck and try sharing some abundance today.
- **AVOID THE MASTER'S TOOLS.** (Humble apologies to Audre Lorde.) If institutional financing is designed to leech resources from people and ecosystems, then don't use it. If individual private ownership was invented by elite classes to consolidate their supremacy over every other community, don't use it. Any “necessary evil” is probably just evil, and evil shouldn't be necessary. *Rely on the people instead.*

In short, Los Angeles shows us how ecovillaging can be one more powerful form of social movement organizing. What do I mean by *organizing*? For example, a labor union *organizes* teachers to stand up for humane, safe, and well-resourced classrooms. It doesn't look to replace the schools (like some charter advocates would) or the teachers (like some legislatures would) or to import the management practices of corporate capitalism. First

We recognize our neighborhood is a whole system, so what we want is a way to own and guide our neighborhood as a whole.

We want to share the costs, benefits, and stewardship of the land and buildings that comprise our common habitat. So we own shares in a Community Land Cooperative.

and foremost, the union helps teachers find common cause in the workplaces and ideals they already share, then facilitates the teachers taking action together to build power behind this common cause.

The neighborhoods we already share—the buildings, resources, and ecologies we call Home, and the ideals we hold for that Home—these could be the ultimate common cause. So what would be the teachers’ union equivalent for my neighbors and me?

THE COMMUNITY LAND CO-OP

We recognize our neighborhood is a whole system, so what we want is a way to own and guide our neighborhood as a whole. We want the ability to plan for the long-term material needs of ourselves and the people we live among, because we want to live in a thriving place. To these ends we want to share the costs, benefits, and stewardship of the land and buildings that comprise our common habitat.

Therefore, instead of individually owning patches of land, to be bought and sold and speculated upon like any other commodity, we own shares in a Community Land Cooperative. This “CLC” represents our shared interest and enables us to make decisions as a community. To ensure that decision-making is democratic, the first share we each buy is one, and only one, voting share. One member, one share, one vote.

Now that we have a democratic basis for holistic neighborhood stewardship, how do we get the land and buildings under its permanent control? Here we need the same money we might have spent buying a home in the open market—only we’re not buying and selling homes, because that’s how we’d get speculation, gentrification, and a lack of holistic, democratic coordination of neighborhood resources. Instead we buy equity shares in our CLC, as much or as little as each of us chooses. Equity share purchases give the CLC money to spend on real

estate. Equity shares are non-voting, so we each still have one voting share and one vote equal to our neighbors.

What does the CLC do with the real estate it owns? It rents it back to us! We have become *Tenant-Owners*, renters who own the landlord. Tenancy does have its benefits. As Tenant-Owners we can up-size, down-size, or move away, without needing to sell anything, simply by starting a new lease. We can also buy or sell equity shares, however it suits our own finances, without needing to move. We don’t take on every responsibility of property management like conventional home owners do. As Tenant-Owners of a CLC we can each focus on contributing the things we’re good at. And, critically, one doesn’t need to be cash-wealthy to become a Tenant-Owner. First and last month’s rent plus the cost of one voting share is enough to take part.

Of course, ownership has its benefits as well. As residential and business tenants pay in rent, our CLC puts that revenue first toward taxes and property management, which we oversee democratically as co-op members. What becomes of the remaining revenue? The surplus is paid to equity share owners as a regular dividend, proportional to their shares. Instead of principal and interest to a bank, we are now paying perpetual dividends to ourselves. And instead of an incentive to sell our homes for profit, we have an incentive to stick together and ensure the entire community thrives. ROI (return on investment) for this *social* investment reflects the neighborhood’s strength as a whole system of buildings, resources, residents, and community enterprises.

Hyphenated Tenant-Ownership breaks down the oldest caste divide in our society. Good riddance! It also opens new possibilities for financial security and flexibility. Take, for instance, a retiree who has accumulated a lot of equity shares. If this Tenant-Owner’s dividend would equal 80% of their rent, they may opt to

To ensure that decision-making is democratic, the first share we each buy is one, and only one, voting share. Beyond that, equity share purchases give the CLC money to spend on real estate.

What does our CLC do with the real estate it owns? It rents it back to us!
 Tenant-Ownership breaks down the oldest caste divide in our society.

forego their dividend in exchange for the CLC forgiving 80% of the rent they owe. Financially, this would be the rough equivalent to owning a home free and clear. But what if this retiree decides to downsize to a one-bedroom unit? It's just a new lease, they don't have to sell any equity shares they don't want to. Now maybe the dividend is 120% of the rent they owe, so on top of free housing—no taxes or maintenance fees!—there is some cash coming in like a pension.

How might a younger Tenant-Owner without a lot of savings plan on becoming that retiree? They can propose an agreement with the CLC to pay an amount *more* in rent than they owe, in exchange for the equivalent gradual accumulation of equity shares.

At a more macro level, the CLC's membership may vote to shave off a percentage of every dividend to set aside in a Resilience Fund, for community-strengthening investments such as subsidizing units to ensure community cohesion (and lower vacancy) during hard times, start-up support to community enterprises, and energy retrofits to reduce the ongoing cost of heating and cooling buildings.

As members of a co-op, we each have some responsibility to pitch in on tasks, show up at meetings, and make decisions together. In exchange, we get to weigh in on the fate of our whole block, not only an arbitrary sliver of it. We get to consider the block's natural and built resources holistically, to seek the most creative and beneficial ways to organize, develop, and share them. We get to weigh in on how community enterprises conduct their business in the midst of our homes. We get to live in—*gasp!*—a real grassroots democracy.

The ecovillage neighborhood's street-facing facades interface with the regular, extractive, capitalist world at large, while a very different, more progressive world is unfolding in back. Much in the same way, our Community Land Co-op provides the financial and management functions of neighborhood stewardship with a kind of protective container. On the outside, the CLC is a property rental and management business owned by many private shareholders. On the inside, it's a way for us to erase the line between rentership and ownership, to integrate decision-making for homes and businesses sharing our block, and to share the local abundance together as we, the people, see fit.

THE PATH AHEAD

Community Land Co-ops are substantially different from traditional housing co-ops. In some respects they are patterned more directly after worker co-ops and cooperative investment funds. This hybrid approach emerges from neighborhood organizers around the US, including groups I've been privileged to work with in Seattle and Washington, DC, wrestling with the limitations of housing co-ops as well as the community land trusts that often rely on them. Specifically, housing co-ops are designed narrowly for housing *per se*, leaving out the livelihoods, greenspace, food, energy, and other services that comprise human habitat. They also tend to look like condo or homeowners associations, reproducing the dog-eat-dog dynamics of any private homeownership market. We have been striving for a more holistic way.

The final of this three-part series will pick up where this new movement stands today. Groups have begun learning together how to form and operate Community Land Co-ops. The next step is for cooperators with access to capital to divest from harmful financial instruments and reinvest into a network of cooperative neighborhoods. A long process of legal preparations is nearing the stage when a divest-and-reinvestment cooperative will be available for anyone to join.

With these new tools in hand, activist communities will have new opportunities for work in reparations, restorative justice, environmental justice, and economic re-localization. The movements behind these aims have long been subject to the heavy drag of market (and state) resistance, especially in the ownership of land and buildings. It is time to revolutionize the literal ground beneath our feet!



THE ECOVILLAGERS ALLIANCE (EVA)

is a nonprofit coalition of educators, healers, storytellers, and organizers dedicated to cultivating Community Land Co-ops in service to ecovillagers and ecovillage neighborhoods across the US. Joel Rothschild is an EVA founder and servant-leader. Once part of the Ravenna Kibbutz community in Seattle, today Joel lives in the city of Lancaster, PA, at the site of a new ecovillage neighborhood in formation. Joel is also working to organize Moshav Derekh Shalom, a residential center for the study and practice of nonviolence to be part of the Lancaster ecovillage.

Forging Intergenerational Paths: Creating a Green Party Elders Caucus

DEE TAYLOR

We are working and living longer. With that come challenges.

Just yesterday many of us were young—vibrant, inquisitive, eager, passionate. Today we still possess these qualities, yet suddenly we find ourselves graduated from “young” to the status of “senior citizen.” We are fortunate to be part of the population of people that have witnessed phenomenal and rapid changes in the world in our lifetimes. Collectively, the older generation has a wealth of experiences that have been influenced by these remarkable changes.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in July 2015 the number of people age 65 and older in the United States was 47.8 million. “This group accounted for 14.9 percent of the total population. The age 65 and older population grew 1.6 million from 2014. The projected population of people age 65 and older in 2060 will be 98.2 million. People in this age group will comprise nearly one in four U.S. residents. Of this number, 19.7 million will be age 85 or older.”

We are working and living longer. With that come challenges. For example, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “American elder poverty rates top most nations.” (Age 65+=21.5%). The National Council on Aging reports:

“Over 25 million Americans aged 60+ are economically insecure—living at or below 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL) (\$29,425 per year for a single person). These older adults struggle with rising housing and health care bills, inadequate nutrition, lack of access to transportation, diminished savings, and job loss. For older adults who are above the poverty level, one major adverse life event can change today’s realities into tomorrow’s troubles.”

Age discrimination is also a stark reality in American Society. For example a Supreme Court decision in 2017 makes it harder for some people later in their work-lives to prove they were victims of bias in the workplace. The Journal of Gerontology (September 2015) reported that the increasing ratio of retired to employed workers is partly due to ageism and represents an increasing loss of productive capacity in our nation.

These are just some examples that provide the motivation behind an effort among Elders in the Green Party to form an Elders Caucus.

Approximately 40 Elders in the Green Party, representing numerous states, are working together towards becoming an accredited caucus of the U.S. Green Party’s National Committee. They believe that Elders are underrepresented.

There is sentiment among other Greens that Elders are not underrepresented and that the Party does not need an Elders Caucus. However, those Greens that believe such a caucus is a necessity believe that the most important aspect of the definition of “underrepresent” is the *inadequacy* of representation of seniors.

The Elders Caucus members believe that the purpose of the Caucus is “to provide wise conceptualization, drawing on our collective wisdom, in order to provide good theoretical leadership for our party.” This includes providing education on issues of special interest to elderly people; drafting Green Party position statements, press releases, and platform

U.S. Census Bureau May 2017 report:

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/cb17-ff08.html>

National Council on Aging Economic Security for Seniors Facts:

<https://www.ncoa.org/news/resources-for-reporters/get-the-facts/economic-security-facts>

Green Party Elders Caucus Resource website:

<https://greenpartyElderscaucus.wordpress.com>

<https://greenpartyElderscaucus.wordpress.com/research-and-rationale>

Social Media:

<https://www.facebook.com/GPUSElders>

amendments on issues affecting seniors; providing linkages to Green-kindred organizations that advocate for seniors; and promoting actions on issues affecting seniors.

The Elders Caucus also aims to focus on all issues that affect the world, not necessarily focused uniquely on senior citizens. These include the connection in the Caucus platform to the Declaration of Human Rights, anti-war and the budget for militarism, health care for all, climate change, nuclear disaster, tuition-free education, and a guaranteed basic income for everyone.

Linda Cree, an Elder from the Green Party of Michigan, states,

“As an Elders Caucus, we seek to do more than advocate for issues affecting the elderly. We can also use our many years of combined life experience to bring a longer-range perspective to the challenges facing all of us as a nation, and as a political party. We know how important context is to understanding. Hopefully the Elders Caucus can provide a deeper and richer context on issues as needed by our fellow Greens. This isn’t a new idea, of course. We’re taking our cue from the time-honored tradition of consulting with the Elders that’s part of many Indigenous cultures.”

Through deep discussion, many issues have arisen specific to the interests of Elders in the Green Party.

Caucus members seek to develop a thorough understanding of the discrimination that Elders face, through earnest familiarization of the issues facing older people. Topics include the reduction of public services, special needs transportation, leaving a livable planet and a just society for the youth of the future, the enhancement of Medicare coverage, the protection of Social Security, employment discrimination, income, health (costs and services), the high rates of poverty among the elderly, prescription drug prices, health care programs, long term care, retirement programs, and family leave to care for loved ones in the later years.

DEEP CONCERN ABOUT AGEISM

There is much concern about ageism from Caucus members:

“Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age. Ageism is widespread and an insidious practice which has harmful effects on the health of older adults. For older people, ageism is an everyday challenge. Overlooked for employment, restricted from social services and stereotyped in the media, ageism marginalises and excludes older people in their communities.”

“I was actually told not to mention my age when applying for jobs.”

“Ageism is everywhere, yet it is the most socially ‘normalized’ of any prejudice, and is not widely countered —like racism

or sexism. These attitudes lead to the marginalisation of older people within our communities and have negative impacts on their health and well-being.”

“Employment discrimination is also a problem for many people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond if they decide to—or are compelled to—stay in the workforce). In an era when employees are seen as disposable, this affects both those who are trying to retain jobs and those who are unemployed and seeking new jobs.”

Overall, recognizing the short amount of time left in this life, there is grave concern about the future of the planet, and all its life, and a sense of urgency to take immediate action.

The administrative tasks facing the Elders Caucus members include writing bylaws, developing a platform and recruiting more members. After this work is complete, the application will be submitted to the Accreditation Committee and then the National Committee as a whole will vote to form this caucus...or not. One thing for sure is that regardless of the outcome, this group is comprised of committed Greens who will continue to work on the issues that face Elders in the Green Party and in society.

I personally have a rich repertoire of memories and experiences that span the age spectrum, shaping me as a person, including the work of my grandmother and my mother with the elder population. As I grow into elder-hood, I appreciate the lenses I have been afforded through those experiences. My hopes and desires regarding the figurative passing of the torch are that we all—of all ages—forge these intergenerational paths together to harness the collective love, passion, energy, wisdom, caring, ideas and fortitude to continue the work to protect life on our planet. As Elders we hope to leave a clear path to the continuation of that work. An exciting and hopeful path to lead that struggle lies within the Green Party.

Greg Gerritt, Rhode Island, contributed to this article.
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DEANNA “DEE” TAYLOR

is a member of the Green Party of Utah. She is a member of the Green Party Peace Action Committee, Annual National Meeting Committee, Green Pages and the National Women’s Caucus. Dee is a career educator and has a M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction and a M.Ed. in Special Education specializing in Transition. She is a Program Specialist with Utah State University.

Originally from Maryland, she has lived in Salt Lake City with her husband, Tom King, since 1997. They are very active in their community, serving on the Board of their Community Council and the Utah Committee for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Dee and Tom are co-founders of Blue Sky Institute, an educational non-profit. They have four children and six grandchildren, grow and preserve much of their own food, and enjoy camping and hiking. Dee is looking forward to turning 60 this year.

LETTERS

Continued from page 16

As More of Us Wake Up

LETTER TO THE EDITOR,

I love your recent letter appealing for funds. Here is my check, a “toe up.” Can’t do a whole leg. However, it comes with “buoyant brilliant” vision for transformative actions in every quarter of the movement for values shifts. A long slow slog will become ever brighter as more of us wake up and become creative in ways to heal, mend and discover our common humanity.

Abhi Hudson
Florida

Reality, Science, and Belief

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I approach this Letter in the mode of philosophy (my academic background). Bear with me, please. Physical reality is what we encounter as living beings, and includes heat and light from the sun, water, soil, precipitation, climate, and an assortment of biological parameters. Taken in the aggregate, we call this Nature. This reality (Nature) does not care a bit what any of us believes. It just IS, and as living beings we must adapt to it and not the other way around.

That said, we have to recognize that human beliefs do enter the equation of how we relate to our Superior Officer—Nature. In the present era, far too many in positions of power—among others—lack a grounding in scientific reality. We see this in robust denials of the reality of climate change and also of the interlocking connections we call the web of life. Opposition to reality never ends well. Those reading this piece will almost certainly have beliefs grounded in reality when it comes to climate change. So far so good.

However, there are other areas where some Greens and others we loosely call “progressives” utterly fail the test of aligning their beliefs with reality. I will discuss two of them in hopes that such erroneous beliefs (that do not end well) will be eradicated. But first, notice that those who seek to promote anti-scientific beliefs (i.e. “fake news”) refer to those of us who seek truth no matter where it goes as (CIA term) “conspiracy theorists,” in a derogatory manner with a shipload of baggage that comes with that term.

THE LIE ABOUT LEE OSWALD

But those of us who are ardent truth-seekers must swat away such epithets as if mosquitoes and forge ahead. That term, in its disdainful form, was in fact propagated by the CIA against any who dared to question the now thoroughly debunked view that Lee Oswald acting alone, assassinated President John Kennedy. This view was promulgated as the cover-up of real forces behind the nefarious deed, despite contrary evidence (here fragmentary):

1. Oswald was on the 2nd Floor of the building at the time of the assassination drinking a coke.
2. He was an FBI informant “on loan” to the CIA after having been a double agent sent to the USSR, posing as a “defector.”
3. He admired JFK and was anxious to prevent the impending assassination attempt, and likely is the “Lee” who had successfully disrupted the attempt three weeks earlier in Chicago.
4. An Oswald “double” was active in Dallas that day and was later evacuated on a US military plane.
5. Unlike Allen Dulles, recently fired by JFK for the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Oswald had no motive.
6. JFK was hit from bullets from the front, etc. etc. etc.

For those who want to understand deeply this coup against US Constitutional government, and the origin of today’s reckless trend, please read the most comprehensive book with thousands of footnotes as documentation: *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why it Matters* (2010) by James Douglass. Also highly recommended is Judyth Vary Baker’s 2010 book, *Lee and Me*.

THE LIE ABOUT 9/11

The other major debunked matter is the government’s narrative of the collapse of the three (not two) high rise buildings on 9/11/2001. What began as holes in that narrative became a ten year forensic evaluation along with the application of well known principles of physics by the very people most capable of such analysis: a team of architects, engineers, chemists, and physicists. By their intense and rigorous research, they have proven with certainty that neither fires nor plane impact alone could possibly have caused those collapses, especially not Building 7 which was not impacted by any plane. In fact, all three collapses were in fact irrefutably caused by controlled demolitions, with the planes acting as a diversion. These scientists do not speculate on *who* was responsible, merely presenting a rigorous scientific analysis. For reference, please see the vital work done by these scientists at www.ae91truth.org, and in particular their documentary video, “Experts Speak Out” and available on line.

It is sometimes said that “there are none so blind as those who will not see.” Unfortunately, within our ranks, some such exist, either from sheer ignorance (not willing to look at the evidence) or from some deep psychological denial. A few are esteemed and renowned left scholars. The starting point for intellectual integrity is to accept what science has determined, not the seemingly peripheral, yet important questions like:

1. Motivation
2. Who was responsible
3. Why no one involved has claimed responsibility
4. Pseudo-scientific articles that use faulty science to support the government’s narrative.

It is imperative that we distance ourselves from a government that has consistently lied on almost every major issue, and instead pursue Truth no matter where she will lead. Nature is in charge, we are not. We fight her at our own peril.

John Olsen
Maine



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