

***The Peace Press* – December 2008 / January 2009**

The Economic Shakedown

Getting Centered – Launching a Moral Revolution

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

*All the wars, they will be fought again
The holy dove, she will be caught again
Bought and sold, and bought again
The dove is never free. – Leonard Cohen
Treat your enemies as if they were precious jewels,
it is from your enemies you will learn tolerance.
– His Holiness The Dalai Lama*

Living in a country desperate to create a new narrative, we can take a few minutes to look around and see how other places attempted and are succeeding to build bridges of understanding.

In Nigeria amidst economic chaos and political corruption in the past fifteen years, there has been a grassroots creation of the third largest film production company in the world. It was an endeavor created with the concept that “there is no life without stories.” We know about Hollywood and Bollywood, but how many know of Nollywood? This grassroots movement creates over 2,000 movies a year that are accessible to those earning close to a dollar a day. The films reflect their “reality”, and are helping the people of Nigeria create a new narrative beyond corruption, crime and repression. The only mandate for a Nollywood film is that it must have a message. The influence and accessibility of films reflect a changing population and is helping Nigerians create a new narrative for themselves, with choices, education and values that do not reflect western culture.

The US Presidential election brought a change in power and provides the peace movement with an opportunity to help create and reflect our new narrative, to redefine itself. How the left will chose to express and create that narrative will be varied and challenging. We can steep ourselves in the non-productivity of the left kicking the left, or we can acknowledge our differences and go forward with the same recognizable goal: that of preserving people and the planet for future life.

We in the US have been governed by a puppet for eight years and taught to fear those who were around him more than him, as he is weak and disordered.

Will we recognize diplomacy when we hear it? Will we recognize healing, lack of shame, understanding, insight, when it finds us?

Many have been traumatized.

The Struggle is ongoing.

We know that we cannot solve our economic and social problems without addressing US foreign policy and its consequences.

We can explore beliefs and expressions beyond what the corporate-owned media feeds us. By going on a “fast for truth” beyond what is easily found, we are given an opportunity to develop and nurture a mental flexibility with different belief systems.

While I was in the UK last winter the libraries were offering weekly teach-ins on “Islamaphobia.” The term is just beginning to make it onto national progressive covers, even though it has been a foreign policy shaping blindness for over a decade. Recognizing when it and other “misinformation-created phobias” exist would be valuable for all of us.

Meanwhile Michael Eisenscher, National Coordinator of US Labor Against the War, has launched a campaign in support of labor rights in Iraq. They also sponsored US tours for Iraqi labor leaders in 2005 and 2007, reaching thousands of working people directly and hundreds of thousands more through media reports. Michael and I, along with two members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, were recently asked to present at the American Public Health Association Convention in San Diego. We were invited by the Peace Caucus to speak about Labor, Peace and Public Health, and Building Alliances to End the Iraq War. The Peace and Justice Center library has the DVD produced by USLAW, which examines the real cost of the occupation of Iraq.

During last month’s visit to El Salvador, I learned that ALBA, a coalition of governments organized by Hugo Chavez (including Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Paraguay, Uruguay and Ecuador) is bypassing state governments that will not buy gas from the coalition and selling directly to municipalities. Diesel oil sold by ALBA is 30 cents cheaper than the state regulated gasoline. Workers and peasants wait in line to purchase from ALBA while the EXXO Station next door sits empty. ALBA also offers credit to the municipalities if their oil profits are used for public projects. Imagine oil profits used to support public projects. We in the US impose embargos against such practices.

Newly licensed doctors, many educated in Cuba, perform community service with ALBA and offer free corrective eye surgery examinations to repay their tuition. Candidates needing corrective surgery are flown, free of charge, to Cuba or Venezuela for the treatment.

I have a dream to give indigenous people a voice by bringing community service together with cultural immersion. I believe indigenous voices offer a lesson for me and others. Moral progress is needed for us to remain considerate of each other’s welfare. We may vary in our approach to identify these needs.

Launching a moral revolution has got to be hard, but what better time is there than now? Cooperation will always eventually trump conflict.

Will social organizations collapse? It took awhile to get to where it is now. Expanding our caring could be the tipping point we are waiting for. Caring why “other people hate us” is not a crazy concern. Understanding the behavior of others can lead to empathy with them. Empathy can lead to understanding.

What is your dream? What is your hope?

The Importance of Supporting/Buying From Locally Owned Businesses

by Elaine B. Holtz

Our national and global financial systems are coming apart and as a community we need to start preparing ourselves for some of the challenges that lay ahead. These challenges are an opportunity to begin to evaluate how as a community we can evaluate how to spend our dollars or trade for services and make sure that we are supporting our local businesses.

We as a community more than ever in our lifetime need to understand the importance of supporting our local merchants and farmers. According to the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), significantly more money re-circulates in your community when you buy

from locally owned businesses because locally owned businesses tend to purchase from other local businesses, service providers, and farms. Purchasing locally helps grow other businesses as well as your community's tax base for public service.

Local businesses provide most new jobs: Small local businesses are the largest employer nationally, and in most communities provide the most new jobs to residents. One-of-a-kind businesses are an integral part of a community's character. Because Local owners have much of their life savings invested in their businesses, they have a natural interest in the long-term health of their community. People who own local businesses live in the community and are less likely to leave.

Local businesses encourages investment in the community: A growing body of economic research shows that in an increasingly homogenized world, entrepreneurs and skilled workers are more likely to invest in and settle in communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character.

Competition and diversity lead to more choices: A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long term. A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based not on a national sales plan but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.

Research indicates that the local business owners tend to support their non-profits in the area. According to the BALLE research nonprofit organizations receive an average 350 percent greater support from local business owners than they do from non-locally owned businesses. Various studies have shown that your locally owned business provides better quality customer service.

An additional reason for buying locally is these businesses have less environmental impact: Locally owned businesses can make more local purchases, requiring less transportation, and generally set up shop in town or city centers as opposed to developing on the fringe. This generally means contributing less to sprawl, congestion, habitat loss, and pollution.

Besides goods and services, buy locally grown produce. Almost daily we read about an out-break of salmonella or other related problems with our food. This is because food has to travel so far to get to the consumer. It has been suggested that food be grown within 100 miles of it's use. Local farmers markets are important. We get to talk with the growers, find out what type of growing methods they are using and where the food comes from, and we can buy fresh produce which has much more nutritional value.

Shopping at locally owned businesses puts three times the dollars into our local economy. Researchers have found that the economic impact of shopping for goods and services at locally-owned businesses is significantly greater than at non-local alternatives. In Austin, Texas, Civic Economics found that for every \$100 spent at a local bookstore, \$45 stayed local; but for every \$100 spent at a chain store, only \$13 stayed local. Transferring some of this money from chain or internet businesses to local businesses can have a huge impact.

Don't give your money away, keep it in our community, buy local. By doing this we will build a stronger and more resilient community, one that can meet the many challenges ahead.

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Financial Permaculture

by Susan Lamont

Permaculture, which most of us think of as a way of approaching agriculture, has four principles: care of the earth; care of people; setting limits to consumption and population; and give away or re-invest surplus. Therefore, it is about so much more than how we grow our vegetables. According to Penny Livingstone and James Stark, of The Regenerative Design Institute, “the prime directive of permaculture is to take responsibility for our own existence and that of our children. Our work as permaculturists is to prevent energy from leaving before basic needs of the whole system are satisfied. Cooperation, not competition, is the very basis of future survival for existing life systems.”

In a *Peace Press* article in 2007, I wrote about studying permaculture. Since then, I’ve learned about a new tweak on the permaculture scene – Financial Permaculture.

Financial permaculture is an economic model for creating sustainable and green communities. In a world with crashing economies and crashing eco-systems, local communities are looking for ways to take solutions into their own hands. Therefore, this fall, several organizations came together and held a summit, using the small town of Hohenwald, Tennessee for a financial permaculture design charrette. Hohenwald is located near The Farm, the experiment in communal living which began in 1971, which hosted the event.

In attendance and presenting workshops were small business owners, city council members, financial advisors, permaculture designers, investors, accountants, construction workers, philanthropists, students, and more. One of the primary organizers of the gathering was Catherine Austin Fitts, president of Solari, Inc. (www.solari.com), who is featured regularly on FlashPoints on KPFA. Fitts is a former managing director of the Wall Street firm Dillon, Read & Co., Inc. and former Assistant Secretary of Housing under Bush senior. She now works to help communities invest locally and sustainably.

The workshop organizers – the Financial Permaculture Design Team – summed up themselves and their work as “an interdisciplinary coalition of individuals from the business, non-profit, and education sectors who have come together to create a forum to address the economic and environmental challenges of the day. Through grassroots organizing, participatory design, and democracy we work with local, regional, national, and international communities to create holistic and regenerative economic solutions for local and global sustainability. In order to create and to implement solutions to the complex issues facing communities across the world today, we are seeking to create and implement new economic models across cultures, sectors, and generations, and believe non-partisan and interfaith coalitions as well as organizational alliances are essential.”

I will be following the work of this group and hope that they will issue a report on their work in Tennessee. There are many people and organizations which have taken up this model, without necessarily applying the word permaculture to it. The work of Paul Hawken and of Van Jones would certainly fit in this category. There is also a Permaculture Credit Union, founded in New Mexico, (www.pcuonline.org), which provides banking in all states and gives loan discounts for earth-friendly projects.

As the current economic model fails, it is hoped that Washington, DC will be more willing to look new models, such as Financial Permaculture. In the meantime, it is possible to work with these models locally. That’s where I find my hope.

Green Revolution

by Susan Lamont

Our economy is in a recession, and if you've lost your job or your home, it's a depression. Your representatives – from Barack Obama to Nancy Pelosi to Lynne Woolsey – have the answer: it's an \$850 billion bailout of the criminals who put us there. Not help for you, not help for me, not yet. First, we have to wait for the smoke to clear. Fingers are crossed and your representatives are promising that if there's anything left after all that money they're printing (as fast as they can) has been dumped down the rabbit hole, promise, promise, promise, they'll give you some. And if there isn't any left? Just have a little patience. Surely, it will trickle down.

If you're looking for a place to apply pressure, inside the Beltway is a good place to start. But if you're looking for creative solutions, look to small groups within your community who envision a new, green economy – one that creates jobs without destroying the planet. According to the organization created by Van Jones, Green For All (greenforall.org, and yes! there's a chapter here in Sonoma County – just call the Center to get connected), “there's already a huge green economy developing. In 2006, renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies generated 8.5 million new jobs, nearly \$970 billion in revenue, and more than \$100 billion in industry profits.” Green jobs, which are usually local jobs, can provide pathways out of poverty and rebuild a strong middle class.

According to Al Gore (technically no longer inside the Beltway), if we look at our “seemingly intractable challenges, we can see the common thread running through them... If we grab hold of that common thread and pull it hard, all of these complex problems will begin to unravel and we will find that we're holding the answer to all of them right in our hands. The answer is to end our reliance on carbon-based fuels.”

And everywhere we look, there are people with the answers to help us do that. One such entrepreneur is Harry Hagaman, local peace and environmental activist, who has patented a straw building panel using agricultural by-products, FSC-certified lumber, and 100% recycled steel, which, unlike traditional straw bales, will fit into standard construction. Our county, our country and our planet are filled with people like Harry – people with the answers.

More and more options are available for building green, gardening green and living green and there are more and more designers, contractors, store owners and organizations helping us to do just that. Look for inspiration in ways to change your life by growing your own food, reducing the carbon footprint of your home and cutting back on water use from Petaluma-based Daily Acts (daily-acts.org). This transition – one that we must make – has the power to fuel our economy with greatly reduced reliance on carbon-based fuels.

Oakland-based activist Van Jones has offered his solution to the economic/environmental crisis in the November 17 issue of *The Nation* (thenation.com/doc/20081117/jones). He calls for a Green Growth Alliance to be created from five principle groups – labor, social justice advocates, environmentalists, students and faith organizations. Of those in the peace and social justice movements (and many of us overlap into the other categories, as well), Jones writes, “Legions of people have committed themselves to the ideal of opportunity for all. Advocates for economic justice, civil rights, immigrants' rights, women's rights, disability rights, gay rights, veterans' rights and other causes should seize the opportunity to ensure that the new, green economy has the principles of diversity and inclusion baked in from the beginning.”

Wherever we turn for the solutions to the current crisis, it is important to remember that the crisis of our economy and the crisis of our environment are inextricably linked. Joseph Stiglitz puts it well: “The laws of nature and the laws of economics are unforgiving. We can

abuse our environment, but only for a while. We can spend beyond our means, but only for a while. We can free ride on the investments made in the past, but only for a while. Even the richest country in the world ignores the laws of nature and the laws of economics at its peril.”

It's Time for Progressives to Put Democratic Socialism on the Political Agenda

by Bruce Pardoll

In an article I wrote for the June-July 2007 *Peace Press*, I argued that liberalism was dead because its structural basis in Keynesian demand-side economics had become obsolete and could not compete with the program of supply-side, “free trade” economics that had largely supplanted it. For a quarter of a century – until its recent virtual collapse – unregulated “free market” economics brought acceptable profit rates. Deregulation and unprecedented tax cuts for the rich and the corporations, as well as vast cuts in social spending, allowed for net profit rates that would otherwise have been unattainable.

However, supply-side economic policies created a wealth distribution problem not seen since 1929. Ninety percent of the working population has lost between 7%-10% of its income since 1973. Moreover, in spite of all the apparent successes fostered by unregulated finance and “free trade”, the *overall* trajectory of the real economy (i.e., the non-financial part) was one of declining profit rates and near stagnation between the mid-1970s and today, the notable exception being the “Clinton boom” of 1995-2000.

Now, of course, whatever astronomical profits were attained in the F.I.R.E. economy (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate) have been wiped out as the US and world economies descend into the greatest economic catastrophe of the past 70 years. Mainstream economists tell us that the unregulated, unsustainable practices of commercial and investment banks are to blame. It is implied that if we had but stricter banking regulations, the economy would still be sailing along smoothly. But a wealth of evidence suggests a deeper, more fundamental cause. Furious global competition from foreign competitors – many of whom simply produce better and cheaper goods and services than the US – cut sharply into US corporate profits during the past three decades. Without sufficient new technologies to significantly increase the productivity of labor and with too much effective competition in the global economy, growth in the US real economy was often nearly stagnant.

So what were rich investors to do with their surplus wealth – that is, the riches they had accumulated from not paying taxes and from obtaining obscene salaries and benefit packages for their CEOs? Well, they did what they were more or less forced to do. They expanded their investments in the F.I.R.E. sector. And while they were at it, they increased their use of all the new investment vehicles that were available to them under deregulation, and invented some new ones to boot. They kept investing in the speculative bubble economy they had created through manic trading and investment in stocks, bonds, real estate, hedge funds, bundled mortgage securities, sub-prime and adjustable rate mortgages and all kinds of other leveraged investments. By 2007, 43% of all corporate profits came from the financial sector. This contrasts with the yesteryears of regulated trade and finance when financial profits were between 9%-19% of all corporate profits.

So now, with the virtual collapse of the world economy, what does this all mean? Perhaps President Bush had it right in his 2008 budget message (*before* the financial meltdown) when he said “our longer term budgetary challenge (is) the unsustainable growth in Medicare, Medicaid

and Social Security. By 2040, spending on these and other mandatory programs will crowd out discretionary spending – for Defense, Homeland Security or Education – unless we take steps to reform these programs” (i.e., cut them out altogether). In a May 25 Reuter’s News Service story, David Lauder reported that “the Medicare Hospital Insurance Fund will run out of assets by 2019.”

Besides its inexorable long-term tendency towards declining profit rates and increasing misery with wealth polarization, capitalism’s Achilles heel has always been its imperialist military spending and yes, Social Security, as the elderly population grows. The current economic collapse exposes for all to see the hypocrisy and sham of corporate capitalism. We are now all witness to the vast program of “socialism for the rich” embodied in the \$700 billion bailout package. And don’t believe for a minute that \$700 billion will be the limit. Noted economist Jack Rasmus estimates that the total bailout may eventually be as high as \$4 trillion. Do you think that a democratic administration in 2009 is going to implement a national health care plan? Think again. The past and ongoing costs of imperialist war, business bailouts and the amount of government debt thus incurred will preclude any future for quality education, social services, health care or social security as we have known it.

As a socio-economic system that supposedly provides a measure of security to most of its subjects, capitalism is simply unsustainable. And this takes no account of the looming tipping point that will bring an ecological holocaust if not halted – a problem that capitalism refuses to seriously countenance. Collective democratic proprietorship of the major means of production, oriented to maximum feasible local control and to the material and spiritual welfare of all humankind and the earth’s ecosystems, is the only way out. It’s going to have to be democratic socialism or the darkest of dark ages.

The Real Culprit

by Will Shonbrun

It’s all the fault of the free-market deregulators. No, no, it’s all the fault of the greedy, sub-prime mortgage lenders. Un-unh, it’s those rapacious speculators who played the market like slick Enron gamers. Wrong again, it was the sickeningly usurious banks and Wall Street geeks who shuffled around bundles of crappy mortgage-backed securities from one institutional dupe to another. Think again, John and Jane Public, it’s all because China got too filthy rich, and dumped a gazillion dollars into US markets, thereby inflating, and devaluing, and doing whatever it is that they did to bring financial ruin to the world. Let’s see, has anyone been left out? Oh yes! It’s the credit industry, the credit mentality, the buy it now, pay for it... whenever, virus that’s infected Americans for the last half-century. It’s the entitlement mongers. It’s you and me and the rest of the 95% of us who don’t make \$3 million bucks a year, and don’t care if we’re in debt up to our nostrils. Of course, it was all OUR FAULT!

Oh, it’s so simple. How could we have not known it was all our doing – this whole financial meltdown? It was us! We wanted houses and cars and colleges for our kids, and medical care and wage increases and vacations and, you know, all those outrageous extravagances, like food, shelter, clothes, and so forth. Greedy, bad, welfare-grubbing, no-account Americans who want government to coddle them and buy them lunch. Now we know who got us, 95% of us anyway, into this mess. It’s our own something-for-nothing, screw-you-l’ve-got-mine, nothing-counts-but-me, you know, human nature. How could we not have seen that?

So, okay, what are we going to do about it? Everyone knows you can't change human nature. Well, everyone except evangelicals and psychoanalysts. Left to our own devices, we humans are a brutal, aggressive, club-wielding lot only out for our own survival. If you don't believe me go to any playground. It's horrifying. They don't call it a jungle gym for nothing. All right, all right, we know it was us and our unbridled, ego-driven human natures who are responsible for THE CRASH. Does that mean it's all hopeless and we'll be living out the Mad Max scenario for the next millennia?

Of course not fellow (by nature) miscreants. Like the (incontrovertibly stupid) song says, "We will survive." Sure there'll be a few rough years – cardboard box housing, bread and ketchup dinners, dumpster-diving employment – but we're Americans! We'll bounce back! We always do. We may have to forego some of the luxuries for a while – jobs, housing, food, that kind of stuff – but we'll be back stronger than ever. We rebounded bigger and better from other crashes and this one's no different. The Dow will rise again, new funding will ride in from somewhere, we'll be able to borrow our brains out once again, and, and...we'll probably repeat the whole circus again sometime down the line. It's human nature.

Stone Soup: Cooking Without F.I.R.E. – Transnational Socialism

by Jack Wikse

The recent transformation of global investment is creating an unprecedented collaboration between the central banks of the industrialized nations to underwrite the end of what has been termed the "F.I.R.E." economy. F.I.R.E. stands for finance, insurance and real estate and has been the core of the "service" economy developing in the US since the early 1970s. In 2004, Loren Goldner wrote that a capitalist crisis like the current one "resembles a poker game where the table is swept clean and all cards and chips must be redistributed for the game to continue at all." (home.earthlink.net/~lgoldner/.dollarcrisis.html).

In this redistribution of income, "nomad dollars" held outside the US are being converted into tangible wealth and major currencies are being adjusted to reflect new world economic realities. Peak oil and global warming have called the question on the F.I.R.E. economy. Offshore hedge funds (20-50 years of tax free investment!) have been manipulating the market as the old system readjusts and the banks hold on to their assets. The collapse of the American market for foreign imports has brought India and China into the vortex as well. Dollars that have been recycled back into the US (some 80% of the world's savings) to support the domestic F.I.R.E. economy are being revaluated. The global system that has supported the consumer financing of auto and housing sales is no more.

In response, national governments have stepped in, not to stabilize the market (over which they have little control) but to establish a new stage of global capitalism. This might be called transnational state capitalism, indicating that the systems of state capitalism that have been developing since the Second World War have now outgrown national boundaries and become finance without borders. I think this new stage could as well be called "transnational socialism" on the model of national socialism as it developed in Germany during the Second World War. This is socialism from the top down, involving the collaboration between nation states and transnational financial institutions to facilitate new mergers among global investment banks that will survive the reorganization of the F.I.R.E. economy. The massive public suspicion of this bailout suggests that people are aware that this is an elite realignment, and that it will continue to downsize the US economy into relation with global conditions.

The rationale for intervention by the US Department of the Treasury was first formulated by Congress in the Employment Act of 1946 which gave the federal government and especially the Office of the President the duty “to foster and promote free competitive enterprise, to avoid economic fluctuations or to diminish the effects thereof, and to maintain employment, production and purchasing power.” But capitalism has become transnational. Barack Obama’s election marks the transition to a transnational US Presidency. The rhetoric of sacrifice during war time and “Country First” (McCain’s rallying cry) is quite consistent with Obama’s proposals about mandatory national service that include increasing the size of the US military and bringing more troops into Afghanistan. If this is a way to “move on,” we should get off the train.

Obama received overwhelming monetary contributions from transnational financial and corporate interests. He felt confident to campaign in Germany saying, “Our time has come.” If we are to overcome intensified patterns of militarism that usually emerge out of the chaos of market redistributions, we will have to embrace a more fundamental reorganization of society. I doubt it will be possible for a Democratic Party majority to shift capital to the forms of social transformation necessary to withdraw our forces from doing the work of the transnationals.

There is a collection of wonderful Sufi stories – The Tales of Nasrudin – in which a holy fool recognizes that poverty is overtaking his town. He begins to cook stone soup, and as more and more people become interested in it, adding vegetables and whatever they have, the village manages to eat and be nurtured. In addition to political education that expands our awareness of the ways in which global capitalism has been selling away our future, we should learn from Nasrudin to remember that we are interdependent – and that we need to share our resources in order to survive this great transformation.

What Obama’s Election Means For The Center

by Susan Lamont, President of the Board of Directors

The *Press Democrat* called me the day after Barack Obama’s election. I and our director Elizabeth Stinson share the role of “mouthpiece” for the Center. Many of our members were celebrating that day. They had worked very hard on Obama’s election and were deservedly joyous about seeing their candidate elected and the chance for an extension of the Bush regime foiled. But I, as representative of the Center, and, by extension, its Mission Statement, was less than euphoric.

Here is the statement I made:

As an individual, I did not vote for Obama – I voted third party (Green-McKinney). I like to say I voted for a woman and an African-American. I do not think we can have meaningful change within our current two-party system. The Democratic Party is a master at accepting the votes of liberals/progressives and then marginalizing their issues. Bill Clinton knew how to use progressive rhetoric to cover up his agenda, which actually took the country to the right. I look beyond Obama's pretty words and see that his advisors are completely embedded in the military/industrial complex.

As president of the Peace & Justice Center, I am delighted to see the end of the Bush era, but I worry that people within our community will become complacent. I worry that there will be a tendency to cut Obama a lot of slack and wait to see where he goes. I believe it is our job as citizens and as peace and justice activists to tell him where we want to go and to do that loudly and emphatically – from his first day in office – no, actually, from today. We do not want an expanded war in Afghanistan, we want single-payer healthcare, not corporate healthcare, we

want the repeal of the Patriot Act. These needs are as important under Obama as they were under Bush.

The PD conflated my personal opinion of the Democratic Party with my statement as president. Upon reading the quotes in the paper, there were those who complained of my lack of support for the party and its candidate. But it is important to understand that the Center cannot, by law, support any candidate or party – no matter how many members support that candidate. But more important to me is that the positions of Barack Obama on so many issues do not reflect the values of our Mission Statement.

As of this writing (Nov. 22), Obama has appointed hawks, Clintonites, and neo-cons – hardly reflecting the change he promised. At this dire time, imagination is needed and we have been given tired retreads. Therefore, we have our work cut out for us. First, **you can keep abreast of Obama's appointments at directory.presidentialtransition.gov/** and then **you can let Obama's team know what you want for this country and the world at change.gov/page/s/contact**. Many of those who have access to Obama's ear have the same moneyed interests that have controlled this country for so long. We must make sure Obama hears us. If he doesn't listen, we must be quick to express our disapproval. And if he does, we must be quick to thank him.

Elizabeth Stinson, in her *Getting Centered* article, has given us examples of people's grassroots movements – empowering movements which have bypassed government. We need to be doing the same thing, starting right here in Sonoma County. Washington, DC is not planning to give us what we need. Please do not be complacent. We must get active in local currency, local power, local businesses, local healthcare – local, local, local. Put your energy behind a group and if one doesn't exist, start one!

I became active in the Center because it stands for the same things I stand for. Our Mission Statement is one we can be proud of and is an excellent yardstick for measuring our government and our goals outside of government:

The Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County envisions a world of peace, justice and freedom. It is a revolutionary and empowering vision of a democratic community where differences are respected, conflicts are addressed nonviolently, oppressive structures are dismantled, and people live in harmony with the earth, nurtured by diverse traditions that foster compassion, solidarity, and reconciliation. Therefore, we commit ourselves to replace violence, war, racism, and economic injustice through active nonviolence as a transforming way of life and as a means of radical change – personally, locally, nationally, and globally.

So celebrate the end of the Bush era and your hopes for change. And then please get down to the hard work of making sure it happens. The Center will support you!

Hopes and Fears

by Eduardo Galeano

Once in office, will Obama prove that his bellicose threats against Iran and Pakistan were just words spoken to lure in a certain category of voter during the election? Let's hope so. And let's hope he isn't for a moment tempted to repeat the exploits of George W. Bush. After all, Obama had the dignity to oppose the war in Iraq while the Republican and Democratic parties cheered the announcement of this bloodbath.

During his campaign, "leadership" was the most frequently used word in Obama's speeches.

As President, will he continue to believe that his country was chosen to save the world, a toxic idea that he shares with almost all of his colleagues? Will he continue to assert that the US is the leader of the world and believe in its messianic mission to command?

Let's hope that the current crisis, which is shaking the imperial foundations, will at least serve to provide the incoming government with a healthy dose of realism and humility.

Will Obama accept that racism is permissible when practiced against countries that his country invades? Is it not racism to meticulously tally the deaths of the invaders of Iraq while ignoring with Olympian arrogance the far larger number of Iraqi dead? Isn't it racist that the world has first, second, and third class citizens and first, second, and third class dead?

Obama's victory was universally celebrated as a victory in the battle against racism. Let us hope that from his first acts as President he accepts and lives up to this beautiful responsibility.

Will the Obama Administration confirm yet again that Democrat and Republican are two names for the same party?

Let us hope that the will for change that these elections have consecrated is more than just a promise and a hope. May the new Administration have the courage to break with the tradition of the single party disguised as two that at the hour of truth behave almost identically while they pretend to be fighting one another.

Will Obama make good on his promise to close the sinister prison at Guantánamo?

Let us hope so, and that he will end the sinister blockade of Cuba.

Will Obama continue to believe that it is a good idea to build a wall along the Mexican border to keep Mexicans from crossing into the US, while vast sums of money move across without ever showing a passport?

During the campaign Obama never candidly discussed the subject of immigration. Let us hope that from today on, no longer having to worry about losing votes, he will be able and willing to abandon this idea of the wall—which would be far longer and more shameful than the Berlin Wall—and indeed all walls that violate people's freedom of movement.

Once President, will Obama, who supported the recent gift of \$700 billion to the banking industry, continue the usual practice of privatizing profits while socializing losses?

I fear that he will, though I hope that he won't.

Will Obama sign and abide by the Kyoto agreement, or will he continue to allow the biggest polluter on the planet to pollute with impunity? Will he govern for people, or for automobiles? Will he shift the devastating course of a way of life in which the few steal the destiny of the many?

I fear he won't, though I hope he will.

Will Obama, the first black President of the United States, realize the dream of Martin Luther King, or the nightmare of Condoleezza Rice?

This White House, which is now his house, was built with the labor of black slaves. Let's hope he never forgets that.

Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan writer and journalist, is author of "The Open Veins of Latin America" and "Memories of Fire."

I Never See It in Congress

by Regina Record, recipient of first SRJC Peace and Justice Scholarship Award

Martin King's phrase, "True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice" has been said many times, in many ways, and for thousands of years. The risk of being ostracized from a group for speaking honestly about justice is too intense for many. And yet we are free. Gandhi deduced passivity as a form of violence because violence can only happen where people do nothing to prevent it.

"The struggle of man (sic) has been a denial of what is within: every time we risk, we touch the divinity." Reverend James Lawson attributes his idea to Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of Thomas (70: 1-2): "If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth [will] destroy you."

A close examination of most scholarly translations of the Bible reveals a subtle difference in the meaning of Jesus "turning the other cheek." Most generic translations cite Jesus as saying "Do not resist the one who is evil." But the meaning is actually closer to "*Do not react violently to one who is evil.*" These renderings entail a complete contradiction! And nonviolent reactions are a force that kings do not want to reckon with.

A. J. Muste lends another example of how to practice justice. While picketing on a street corner alone, someone walked up to him and said: "You fool! You think you can change the world?" Muste responded: "No, but I am not going to let the world change me!"

Henrik Ibsen devoted his life to writing a series of very different plays wherein the underlying theme could not be ascertained unless the plays were studied as a whole. The types of characters that Ibsen championed in one play were presented as villains in the next. As an entire work, Ibsen seemed to warn us against the danger that lies in any group: that violence is alive and well whenever an individual fails to stand up for what he or she really thinks.

There are countless examples of justice against violence by church members, librarians, lawyers, humanitarians and even by police. Our hearts surge with hope whenever they rise from stages, or classrooms, or buses, on trains. But I am disturbed when it doesn't happen. I never see it in Congress.

This essay was awarded a \$250 Scholarship. Applications for awards are available at the SRJC Scholarship Office, Plover Hall.

Petaluma Approves A Community Impact Report for New Commercial Development

by Martin Bennett

Historically the City of Petaluma has been a model in Sonoma County for implementing innovative public policy that encourages smart, responsible, and equitable growth. Since the 1970s Petaluma has led the way by adopting growth controls on new housing, an urban growth boundary (or UGB), 'smart codes' to promote mixed-use and vibrant public space downtown, a jobs-housing linkage fee to fund affordable housing, and a living wage ordinance that sets community labor standards. Many cities in the region have followed Petaluma's example. Today, for instance, every city in the county has established a UGB.

Recently, Petaluma has again provided leadership by adopting the first 'Community Impact Report' (CIR) requirement for new commercial development of more than 25,000 square feet including retail, grocery, and hotels. A CIR is a comprehensive analysis of the fiscal and

economic impacts of a proposed major development project. The report is relatively brief, the developer pays for it, and a city-designated consultant does the work. Its purpose: to evaluate the potential positive and negative impacts of a project.

A CIR will, for example, assess the contribution of a proposed project to the local tax base. Will a project generate new revenue such as sales tax, property tax, or the bed tax? Will a project increase city revenue or simply move around part of the tax base from one project to another?

A CIR will evaluate the economic viability of a project by analyzing market conditions and projected sales or occupancy rates. The report will also examine the impacts of a proposed development on local business. Will a project fill a market niche or will loss of sales hurt existing businesses?

The report will assess the employment characteristics of new jobs created, including the number of full and part-time jobs and wage levels and benefits. A CIR will ask: what type of jobs will the project bring to the city?

A CIR will also examine costs to the taxpayer of the proposed project including necessary infrastructure improvements and increased demand for public services such as police, fire, and road maintenance. Finally, the report will identify hidden costs such as public subsidies for Food Stamps, Medi-Cal, and uncompensated medical care for workers filling new jobs that may not pay a living wage or provide health insurance.

All too often, particularly with the current dramatic decline of city and county revenues, there is a rush to provide a new development 'quick fix' which might boost sales tax revenue. The CIR is a 'balance sheet' that will give policy makers and the public complete and objective data in regards to the benefits and costs of a proposed project.

A project, for instance, may bring a significant number of new jobs to the community, but if most of these jobs are without medical benefits, what will be the impact on local hospitals and public clinics? According to a 2006 study by the New American Foundation California counties spend \$1.8 billion annually to provide health care for 1.3 million uninsured adults. A CIR will enable policymakers and the public to evaluate the trade-offs and public costs of a project.

CIRs can help avoid delays and costly lawsuits that hurt both the developer and the public. A CIR is completed early in the development process, and prior to the completion of the required Environmental Impact Review (EIR). Residents are encouraged to participate in the process, providing comment and submitting additional evidence at a public hearing when city officials and staff review the CIR.

Unlike the required EIR, a CIR is much briefer and does not mandate changes to mitigate negative impacts. However, the CIR can facilitate a public dialogue between residents, the city council, and the developer at an early stage, resulting in changes to the project and the devising of 'win-win' solutions in response to concerns both policymakers and residents and raise.

Moreover, developers will no longer have to deal with community concerns in an ad-hoc or piecemeal way. The CIR will showcase the community benefits of a proposed project and facilitate the development of a community consensus. This should enable a project to move forward expeditiously to obtain permit approvals and thus shorten the time line for the developer.

Petaluma has just adopted a revised twenty-year General Plan that emphasizes city-centered infill development and mixed-use projects designed to attract employers who provide good jobs with a living wage and benefits, and enhancing the diversity of retail outlets while

ensuring that existing local businesses will thrive. The council will be able to use the information collected for a CIR to see if a project conforms to the new General Plan and is a "net positive" for the community.

Martin J. Bennett teaches American history at Santa Rosa Junior College and serves as Co-Chair of the Living Wage Coalition. Please go to www.livingwagesonoma.org for more information about the CIR.

Our Economy

by Rebel Fagin

The bailout of Wall Street without first reinstating regulations like the Glass-Steagall Act, was a rip off. When those on Wall Street claimed "We just can't tell what's in the troubled assets", I got suspicious. Hiding "troubled assets" is a way of laundering stolen money to cover for money spent without proper oversight. This is obstruction of justice. The bankers who lost this money are the same ones who manage the US government's money at the New York Federal Bank. This bank lost four trillion of our dollars in the past decade and now those same people are in charge of managing the bailout. No, the bailout is only intended to prop up the economy until Bush is gone.

The Federal Deposit System can always print more money. Unfortunately money without product behind it means nothing. This is called a bubble economy and it is exactly what Wall Street has specialized in since Reagan. Prior to the crash, approximately 1/3 of the money in Wall Street, was representative of nothing more than paper. Deeds on the holdings of deeds. Nothing substantial like nails, cars, shirts, or dentistry.

America is the number one money laundering nation in the world and most of that is done on Wall Street. If you or I go into a bank with a briefcase with \$10,000 in it we will have to answer to the Feds. However, if I own a company that has stocks listed on the Exchange, then I can have all the ready cash I need. Let me explain: Let's say you are a Colombian cocaine dealer and you have all sorts of illegal money you can't spend. As a, let's say, car dealer listed on the Exchange, I sell you a bunch of cars. Now you have cars you can sell for legal money and I have all the drug money. As a company listed on the stock exchange I can put this money into the profits for my stock, no questions asked. This increases the value of my stock, but represents nothing. This is part of the reason for the stock market crash.

Our economy is our wealth. Reality is our wealth. Nature is our wealth. Industrial capitalism is not our wealth. The consensus reality that we live in is not the real world. The real world is the natural world. Pollution happens when a natural system produces more garbage than it can clean. The ravenous hunger of industrial capitalism creates its own form of pollution by consuming all the resources it can find. Capitalism is linear and expansionist. We live on a finite planet where that kind of thinking is doomed. Coexistence and sustainability work in a finite system. Our wealth is in clean water, clear skies, and soil we can grow in. Pomo and Miwok people lived around here for at least 10,000 years without destroying the planet. In less than two hundred years, Euro-American culture has consumed most of this wealth. 90% of the large, ocean-going fish are extinct. Extinction means forever. This is a capital loss. A loss of true wealth. No economic system can outlast its resource base.

Now it is possible for our natural capital and regulated, community based capitalism to coexist if we invest in community and don't just look out for number one. Abandon corporate America and support your neighborhood. Don't invest in holdings of paper; invest in tangible items people really use like apples, shoes, or solar panels. Don't buy at Safeway. That money

leaves the neighborhood and goes to the stock-holders worldwide. Shop at your locally owned market that hires local people and keep the money in your community. Buy food from farmers markets. It is fresher, healthier, and keeps the money at home. All of this invests in the world you live in and not in the fantasy world of the bottom line and maximizing your profit. It's quite simple really: When you make the world a better place you get to live in a better place.

Sources Solari.com, Catherine Austin Fitts and Derek Jensen from KPFA, Bookchin, Murry *Remaking Society* (1990), Ruppert, Michel *The Truth & Lies of 9/11* (2002).

Bank Failures

by Bob Miller, Composer/Songwriter, 1931

We pay taxes for good roads,
Pay taxes on our schools
Taxes for this, taxes for that
Then workin' harder than mules.
By skimpin' we saved a few dollars
Put 'em in a big bank vault
Somethin' is wrong 'cause that money is gone
And it certainly isn't our fault.
If you play in water you're bound to get wet
What's the use of workin' if we stay in debt?
We gotta break our backs and continue payin' tax
Good people, we're a-bloat upset!

Just why our money went bye bye
Nobody seems to explain
Times are hard, ain't it a shame
We gotta pay those taxes again
Our clothes are slouchy and ragged
Our hearts are burdened with care
The failure of the national banks
Is nearly more than we can bear.

If banks ain't safe for us people
Why then allow 'em to run?
Big iron vaults can't open themselves
Folks somethin's gotta be done!
Our hard earned money's gone bye bye
Gone in that big bank crash
We're in a mess, folks, a terrible mess
Can't get credit and we ain't got cash.

If I Could

by Armando Garcia-Dávila

If only for a moment, I would silence the world's motors and the roar of the airplane would not be so much as hum. The thunder from the locomotive would become less than a moan.

No blaring horns, no screeching brakes, no screaming police sirens would come from the avenue. The din of Industry would cease and the factory would drop into a coma, its smoke would lift allowing the forest to inhale deeply. Once again we would drink from the river. The miracles of dawn and dusk would reclaim their sacred stillness.

The parrot would quit his squawking and children would play a game of statues. The wino, realizing the gift of his existence, would leave his bottle corked.

The right would swing to the left; and the left would not know where to turn. Politicians would be left without plots to hatch and the devil would run out of tricks.

Shouts would turn to whispers, whispers to thoughts, thoughts to prayer. Chicks in their nests, would sleep and in every canton, hamlet, town and city, one would only hear the rhythmed breathing of deep slumber, and the throbbing of his own heart and the only sounds interrupting this immense meditation would be the wisps of butterfly wings and a prayerful chant quietly echoing in each canyon.

“Love.” “Love.” “Love.”

Oh, to Break Loose

by Debra Birkinshaw

I sit at a favorite café table in a courtyard. I hear the splashing of water in the nearby fountain and lean in as if to hear the inspired words of Robert Lowell, a like-minded poet who is no longer alive, except in my mind and heart. Our imagined dialogue reflects the dilemma we continue to face. “Shall we each make the choice to awaken, to really see and be grateful for the bounty that our earth offers, and try to preserve it? Will we hold sacred the lives of all beings, clearly seeing our interconnectedness with all life? Or, in our arrogant supposition that we can reign over nature, will we choose to dismantle the earth we know? Will we encroach on each other in our effort to plunder all our planet contains, right down to its very core? In our clumsy effort to reassemble all the elements in order to appease our shortsighted desires, will we destroy this gift we call life?”

I hear Mr. Lowell’s words, as clearly as if he was seated next to me in this café. He is so good at pointing out the disparity between the constructive, creative traits and the destructive darker nature of humankind.

Waking Early Sunday Morning

an excerpt from Robert Lowell

O to break loose, like the Chinook salmon jumping and falling back, nosing up to the impossible stone and bone-crushing waterfall –raw-jawed, weak-fleshed there, stopped by ten steps of the roaring ladder, and then to clear the top on the last try, alive enough to spawn and die. Stop, back off. The salmon breaks water, and now my body wakes to feel the unpolluted joy and criminal leisure of a boy –no rainbow smashing a dry fly in the white run is free as I, here squatting like a dragon on time’s hoard before the day’s begun!

...O to break loose. All life's grandeur is something with a girl in summer ... elated as the President girdled by his establishment this Sunday morning, free to chaff his own thoughts with his bear-cuffed staff, swimming nude, unbuttoned, sick of his ghost-written rhetoric! No weekends for the gods now.

Wars flicker, earth licks its open sores, fresh breakage, fresh promotions, chance assassinations, no advance. Only man thinning out his kind

sounds through the Sabbath noon, the blind swipe of the pruner and his knife busy about the tree of life.

Pity the planet, all joy gone from this sweet volcanic cone; peace to our children when they fall in small war on the heels of small war – until the end of time to police the earth, a ghost orbiting forever lost in our monotonous sublime.

Robert Lowell 1964

I picture him. He shakes his head, resigned. It is as he has foretold. More than 40 years later, we are at a tipping point, with perhaps ten years remaining in which to turn our lives around – we must do or die.

I want to tell him that we face the abyss, yes, but we are building a bridge as we descend, and it may catch our fall. It may hold.

People meet at the Environmental Center in Santa Rosa to educate and to problem solve. The Water Coalition reaches into the political realm so as to have influence regarding our water supply on the regional and state level. Nearby, the Sonoma County Conservation Council hosts meetings for an entire federation of local groups concerned about our air, our fish, our birds, our land.

Across town, the Sonoma County Conservation Action monitors the politicians, assessing their receptivity to environmental causes for voters. South of there, in a rural part of town, is a farm where college students engage in various forms of constructive activities – music, gardening, dialogue, action.

Out West, nearly touching the ocean, the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center presides over an ecological preserve that educates thousands every year. Institute for Local Economic Democracy is poised to guide our county in purchasing electricity for all users – commercial and residential – directly from green energy providers, rather than from Pacific Gas & Electric. Throughout our county are Daily Acts that sustain our body and soul taking place.

Oh yes, it is possible to break loose of the hold that our over-reaching habits have on us, for the good of the world. We all have to wake up to that choice – our lives depend on it.

For information on some of the Sonoma County organizations mentioned above, see the following websites: scwatercoalition.org, envirocentersoco.org, conservationaction.org, oaec.org, bitethehand.org, daily-acts.org.

Support Our Species

by Tom Pringle

Dear Friends and Supporters:

On December 1st (before you receive this issue of the *Peace Press*), I will head south (along with the economy) to the Colonia of El Tecolote in the coastal hills of Tijuana. I consider this to really be my second home. Every year I go to Mexico with brand new shovels for those workers who need them for building and planting. I give the shovels away in return for their old ones. If you could see these battered and worn shovels, you would know just how hard the people of Tijuana work with these tools and how much they need the new ones that I bring to them.

The Peace & Justice Center sponsors this work. If you would like to also support this work, your tax-deductible donation can be made to the Center – just be sure to write “Shovel Project” in the memo line, or the funds will not reach me. You may also donate on the Peace & Justice Center website using PayPal. Donations can also be sent directly to me at 2138 Siesta Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95409 – however those would not be tax-deductible.

If you would like more information on the “Shovel Project”, I can be reached at 707-539-8386. I will report back on the trip in a later issue of the *Peace Press*. Thank you for any help you can give. I am on a mission to save the planet, one baby step at a time.

Peace and thank you.

"... If we act to erase material poverty, there is another greater task, it is to confront the poverty of satisfaction - purpose and dignity - that afflicts us all. Too much and for too long, we seemed to have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product – if we judge the United States of America by that – that Gross National Product counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for the people who break them. It counts the destruction of the redwood and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and counts nuclear warheads and armored cars for the police to fight the riots in our cities. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

– Robert F. Kennedy, March 18, 1968

Watch money. Money is the barometer of a society's virtue. When you see that trading is done, not by consent, but by compulsion – when you see that in order to produce, you need to obtain permission from men who produce nothing – when you see that money is flowing to those who deal, not in goods, but in favors – when you see that men get richer by graft and by pull than by work, and your laws don't protect you against them, but protect them against you – when you see corruption being rewarded and honesty becoming a self-sacrifice – you may know that your society is doomed.

– Ayn Rand, 1957