



# GREEN HORIZON

*Magazine*

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION

# EN ROUTE

**THE OLD**

clutching gods  
of greed and  
power

**The**

**battle  
gets  
tougher,  
clearer,  
sharper**

**THE NEW**

coming in with  
firm steps,  
confidently

See in this issue dramatic struggles for the new in the din and smoke of the great transition

Don't miss the last page. It's about Bernie . . . and Jill

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# Revisiting the Statue of Liberty

WITH HECTOR LOPEZ

EDITORS' NOTE: We've taken from the messages Hector Lopez of Connecticut sends to the International Committee of the US Green Party the magnificent cry of the Statue of Liberty. He asks where has the stunning symbol of the woman with her torch of freedom and her immortal words gone? Are they only just words to cover up or distract us from what is now actually going on in the country—the country now ruled (cruelly mis-governed) by an entrenched political-economic class? Hector's is a potent voice crying "foul"; he speaks from his long and courageous fight for the people of Puerto Rico and their country ground down by the oppressive policies of this class. He writes: "Is this lady

watching the misery sent to Puerto Rico by a government that Puerto Ricans do not elect and did not invite to our shores?"

Can we breathe new life into these words and into the symbol itself? Can we apply these symbols in a creative way to the startling and terrible struggles of the homeless all over the world today? We must have dialogue. It must be dialogue that includes a powerful focus on the meaning of these symbols for social, economic, spiritual, and political well being of all the people in the countries within which, from which, and to which the homeless are forced to struggle. Can a creative resolution be attained within the confines of an outmoded nation-state system?

## THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand a mighty woman  
with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

## THE TEAM

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# *The* THOUGHTS WITHIN

We don't have an overall specific theme this time that includes most or all of the articles. We have a medley of articles, some of which go together, such as the two articles on the rights of Indigenous peoples; and such as the commentary on Pope Francis's historic Encyclical and the urgent call by Ben Kjelshus mirroring the Pope's "On the Care of Our Common Home."

But all of the articles have a certain lilt to them. The lilt is the degree to which each one, though rooted in the extant reality of life now, poses the possibility of transformation and reveals a pathway to transformation. Please read them in that light and you will glean more from them than might have thought.

Another way of saying the same thing is to look at the articles as gateways to a new framework, or better said, as gateways to a new paradigm. What we strive for is to usher our minds not only into a new framework, or paradigm, but into savoring and contemplating taking steps to get there faster and freer than before—and realizing that we are living it now in its beginnings. Such can be the healing and inspiring of words.

Please consider in that light the new way to think about Israel/Palestine that Justine McCabe invites us to undertake; Meg Chittendon's way to think and creatively conduct the education of children; Steve Welzer's review of the provocative thoughts of a provocative writer; Finland's Marko Ulvila on a failed but exciting new political party eruption in India; and Rob Richie's ever-courageous and ingenious shepherding of us to replace an unworkable and oppressive electoral system in the United States.

I've left for the last my musings about Bernie. As you reach the last page of the issue you will see my unorthodox call to Bernie (which I know will go unheeded) to join the Green Party's Jill Stein in her valiant bid for the presidency of the United States. Yet there is the potential for transformation there, even there.—JR

# Indigenous People in the Eye of Climate Disruption

BY ROMI ELNAGAR

*“We need to reconnect with the earth and end this mindset that we have that we can take whatever we want without ever giving back or understanding the harm that we are doing to the planet. It’s this mindset of destruction, of greed, that is tearing apart our planet. We need to change the fundamental beliefs of our entire society.”*

~ *Xiuhtezcatl Martinez*

“What we are fighting to protect is the survival of this generation and the continuation of the human race,” fifteen-year-old climate activist Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez told the United Nations General Assembly on June 29.

“My father raised me in the Mexica [Aztec] tradition. I learned from [him] is that ...every living thing is connected because we all draw life from the same earth and we all drink from the same waters. What I learned from my cultural heritage is that this life is a gift and it is our responsibility to respect and protect that which gives us life.

“I stand before you representing the indigenous peoples of this earth, and those that will inherit the effects of our climate crisis that we face today as a global community.

“We are facing a crisis that affects every living system on our planet. What a lot of people fail to see or simply ignore is that climate change isn’t an issue that is far-off in the future; it isn’t solely affecting the icecaps and the poles or the sea level rise in our oceans. It’s affecting us right here, right now and will only continue to get worse.

“We are approaching twenty-one years of United Nation climate talks and in the last twenty years of negotiations, almost no agreements have been made on a binding climate recovery plan. Our window of opportunity to take action is shrinking as the problem exponentially increases. We need you to take action at COP 21 [2015 Paris Climate Conference] before it’s too late.

“We need to reconnect with the earth and end this mindset that we have that we can take whatever we want without ever giving back or understanding the harm that we are doing to the planet. It’s this mindset of destruction, of greed, that is tearing apart our planet. We need to change the fundamental beliefs of our entire society.

“We have to remember that we are all indigenous to this Earth and that we are all connected.”

Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez’s speech can be viewed at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/07/05/video-15-year-old-climate-warrior-address-un-calls-climate-change-human-rights-issue>.

## UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

*The following are two of some 15 paragraphs dealing with indigenous rights to their lands, environment and the conservation of “their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals.”*

### Article 25

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

### Article 29

Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

## GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS NATIVE AMERICANS

Global climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable in human society; Native Americans will suffer from climate change, yet they are the least responsible for it.

The concerns of Indians are recognized by the Obama Administration, if only verbally. At the beginning of May, it released its Third National Climate Assessment, which warns that the consequences of climate change, both now and in the future, “will undermine indigenous ways of life that have persisted for thousands of years.” Among the “key vulnerabilities” of indigenous peoples, the Assessment’s Chapter 12, which deals exclusively with indigenous communities, identifies permafrost thaw and the loss of Arctic sea ice, as well as food insecurity and loss of traditional knowledge about ecosystems.

“Climate change poses particular threats to Indigenous Peoples’ health, well-being, and ways of life,” the report warns. “Chronic stresses such as extreme poverty are being exacerbated by climate change impacts such as reduced access to traditional foods, decreased water quality, and increasing exposure to health and safety hazards.”

The Assessment goes on to observe that erosion and flooding—the results of climate change—are forcing communities in some areas of Alaska, Louisiana, the Pacific Islands, and other coastal locations to move away from “historical homelands to which their traditions and cultural identities are tied.”

In Louisiana, the rising sea level threatens tribes like the Houma, the Pointe-au-Chien, the Atakapa-Ishak and the Biloxi-Chitimacha Choctaw, all of whom are recognized by the state but not by the federal government. They have hunted and fished in the marshes along the coast for hundreds of years, but were cheated out of their tribal lands by the oil companies and others, who told them they were signing leases, which were in fact quit-claim deeds. Since the 1930’s they have seen companies dredge the wetlands for thousands of miles for pipelines and navigation canals.

And they have watched as the wetlands disappear, a process that has been directly attributed to the activity of the oil and gas companies on which so many Louisianans—including tribal members—depend upon for their livelihoods. A study by the US Geological Survey claims that 36 percent of wetland loss is due to actions of these companies.

The study was commissioned by the oil and gas industry.

Because they lack federal recognition, tribes have not been compensated for the heavy losses caused by BP Deepwater Horizon spill of 2010; the oyster beds and shrimp fishing of the Point-au-Chien tribe were devastated, for example. The Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizers, a local group, says the oil companies petitioned the Bureau of Indian Affairs against recognition of the Houma tribe. Changes in procedures made by the Obama Administration at the end of June may ease the

path to recognition for some tribes; at the time of this writing, it is unclear if this will be the case with the Louisiana tribes.

From Louisiana to the Pacific Northwest, climate change is stressing tribes as never before. The Sauk-Suiattle people on the northern Washington state coast are moving offices and homes upstream and away from rivers that increasing threaten to flood in the wake of glacial melt and global warming. “Because of the warming climate, [river migration] is much more likely and poses an unacceptable level of risk to the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe over the next several decades,” says a report by a private environmental planning company, Natural Systems Design, which warns of severe and irretrievable damages and possible loss of life will result if residents and facilities are not moved out of their current location. The EPA and the US Geological Survey have also warned that the river will reach the tribe’s housing in twenty-five years, or sooner if the rate of global warming speeds up.

Part of the tribe’s problem is that logging has disturbed the watershed farther upstream, and global warming has reduced nearby glaciers by more than half in the last century. The tribe’s fishing is also affected by global warming. The salmon which spawn on the Sauk River are affected by higher temperatures, which make it harder and harder for them to survive and grow.

The Quinault and the Quileute on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state also face relocation in the wake of rising sea levels. There are fears of an earthquake like the Fukushima disaster in 2011 and the Quileute are moving an entire village to higher ground. Further north, rising sea levels have caused erosion, collapsing homes into the sea in Alaska.

While global climate change means that coastal communities suffer from a surfeit of water, elsewhere climate change means drought, affecting Indian communities and non-natives alike throughout the southwestern US. Researchers from NASA as well as Cornell and Columbia universities predict that global climate change will lead to increasingly several droughts in the coming decades. In the past, tribes could simply pull up stakes when local conditions became untenable, but when land is divided and owned by individuals, and Mother Earth no longer belongs to all her children, that’s not possible. Water, too, is now being commercialized and privatized, and that bodes ill for the future for Native Americans and non-natives alike.

In California, severe drought has led to water restrictions throughout the state, with the Sierra snowpack this year on the order of 10-15% of normal. Tribes such as the Hoopa Valley Tribe on the Klamath and Trinity Rivers, and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation in Yolo County have suffered. The Hoopa Valley Reservation has had mandatory water restrictions, and this summer has been completely without water when tanks ran dry. The high number of arson fires, and problems at the water treatment plant have compounded the problems, and low water levels in Trinity Lake promote bacterial growth, which affects the migratory fish population.

## NATIVE AMERICANS CONFRONT CORPORATIONS TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

Drilling offshore in the Arctic by Shell Oil is bitterly opposed by Native Americans and environmentalists. In June, Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club, the National Resources Defense Council and the Iñupiat (an Inuit, native Alaskan people) were among 12 groups that announced their intention to challenge the Interior Department's renewal of the lease in the Chukchi Sea, where Shell plans to drill for oil. The groups criticized the rushed decision, made in time to suit the oil company's schedule, as mistaken and unlawful. They say that such a decision will cause global warming to increase above the 2 degrees Celsius limit agreed upon by nations around the world, which many now say is too high a limit.

In spite of this opposition, and in spite of its lip service to environmentalism such as its recommendations about the Arctic in its 2014 National Climate Assessment, in July the Obama Administration granted Royal Dutch Shell the final permits to drill.

The Arctic Ocean is a complex ecosystem say native people, and climate change is seriously affecting coastal communities there, melting the ice needed for whaling activities and to support hunters. The amount of ice each year is unpredictable and fluctuates because global warming is just beginning its impact, say Native Alaskans Colleen Swan and Shearer in *Conductive Chronicle*. They say the Arctic is not yet well understood by scientists, such as those from NOAA, and there still is not enough information for government to be issuing permits for oil development offshore.

Environmentalists and Native Alaskans fear that there is a 3-to-1 chance that oil drilling will result in a spill, and there is no way to clean that up given conditions in the Arctic. They point out that drilling activities in the leased area threaten crucial habitat for endangered Pacific walrus, including mothers and calves in an area rich in food, the Hanna Shoal. Drilling could cause herds to move away from foraging areas, which are not easy for them to find.

"The oil companies and the government who issues ... permits will continue with business as usual and the oil companies will recover. They have reserves to fall back on. We don't. Once we lose our livelihood, our subsistence way of life, it's gone for a long, long time." This is the predicament in which hunter-gatherers and marginal communities around the world are finding themselves.

## IN PERU, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES STRUGGLE AGAINST OIL COMPANIES

Not only in the US and Canada, but in Latin America, too, Native Americans have suffered the encroachments of corporations like Shell Oil on their lands. In the Amazon, indigenes led by Alberto Pizango and his organization, AIDASEP ["Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest" in English], gained international attention when their nonviolent resistance to oil companies was met by force from the Peruvian government. In 2008, the US and Peru concluded a free trade

agreement, under which Peru was to change its laws to allow foreign companies to exploit resources.

Indigenous tribes insisted that some of the new government regulations threatened the safety of their natural resources, and began protests in August 2008. The Peruvian Congress repealed two of the laws required under the agreement, and promised to examine and vote on others. When that didn't happen, protests and blockades resumed in April 2009.

That summer, clashes with the government turned violent. During a confrontation in the jungle near the town of Bagua on June 5, 2009, forty-one Indians were killed and more than 200 injured when hundreds of nonviolent protesters were attacked by the Peruvian police. The government came under international criticism, particularly from human rights groups, for its brutality in the incident and for undermining press freedom. The Prime Minister later resigned and apologized for failing to consult with the Indians, but Pizango was forced to seek asylum in Nicaragua, and upon his return was arrested on charges of sedition. He and other defendants in the case are currently awaiting the outcome of their trial and are facing life imprisonment.

Other oil companies besides Shell have also been accused of exploiting natural resources and polluting indigenous lands in the Amazon. Occidental Petroleum recently settled a ten-year-long lawsuit against it by EarthRights International and Amazon Watch, who litigated on behalf of the Achuar people on the Corientes River in northern Peru. The suit alleged pollution from oil drilling and was settled out of court. The attorney for EarthRights said that the case could set a precedent because American courts agreed that a company could be sued in the US for damages that company caused overseas.

The company had been pumping wastewater from its wells directly into rivers and streams, a practice outlawed in the US. Children had sickened and died from drinking the water. Under the settlement, the Achuar people were awarded money for education, health care, and community development, including activities to raise money and food, such as a fish farm. Their lands are far from cleaned up, though, with high levels of heavy metals, volatile organic compounds and hydrocarbons remaining, and the Indians are asking the Peruvian government why the cleanup is being terminated.

The Achuar are not alone in their struggle against government and big corporations. "Climate change is affecting the whole planet... and everything is out of balance," Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Vice-Chairman Lee Juan Tyler, told leaders of Northwest tribes at a conference last March. "We need to sit together for our future. Men are going to destroy our own mystical place if we don't."



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# Aboriginal Rights:

## *Declaration by Green Party of Canada*

JON OLSEN

The glaring exception to everything one loves about Canada can be found in the profound inequality of life on First Nations Reserves and life for off-reserve urban Aboriginal people across Canada. Water that is too hazardous to drink; serious health problems from diabetes to tuberculosis, addiction, and suicide; unacceptably poor housing stock; high unemployment rates – all make a mockery of our progress elsewhere in maintaining our ‘social safety net.’

Canadians like to forget that Canadian Aboriginal policy is similar, if not the same, as what was white South Africa based apartheid. Many non-natives are unaware of the fundamental human rights violations occurring within our midst.

Canadian Aboriginal peoples, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit, know that the fundamental assumption of colonial powers since the first Europeans arrived in what is now Canada has been a policy of assimilation.

Unbeknownst to most non-native Canadians, and even some First Nations, the ultimate disposition of land claims agreement is the extinguishment of Aboriginal title. This is an inherent right of indigenous people and its extinguishment violates international human rights law. Various human rights committees within the United Nations system have frequently been critical of Canada’s treatment of and laws regarding Aboriginal peoples.

Finally, in November of 2010, after years of stalling, the government of Canada quietly signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The delay was unconscionable and embarrassing. Now action is required.

As government, the Greens will speedily move to implement the UN Declaration. We will also restore the \$5.1 billion commitment and the specifics of the Kelowna Accord. One of the central features of the landmark Kelowna Accord, reached between federal and provincial, territorial and First Nations governments in Canada in November of 2005, is the creation of ‘baselines.’ Baselines are critical to assess the levels of Aboriginal health and well-being.

The issues impacting Aboriginal people in Canada are complex and cannot be assessed without a full sense of the searing violence of generations of occupation and assault upon their traditional cultures and values. The legacy of the residential school system remains a factor in mental health and wellness. No Canadian should be satisfied with the failed policies of the Indian Act, the huge bureaucracy of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the enormous outlays of funding for lawyers and ‘experts’ in the interminable comprehensive claims process.

Something fundamental needs to shift. That shift must begin with dignity for all Aboriginal peoples: respect, an end to policies of assimilation, and strong support for health and education on and off reserve. Health specialists and behavioral experts need to be trained from within communities to provide the proper support for fetal alcohol syndrome children. Work must be intensified to ensure more programs that involve elders mentoring young people. Employment opportunities in resource-based industries on Aboriginal territories will be encouraged. Trap lines will be protected. We will work to sustain the Inuit hunting culture that is under rapid assault due to the impacts of the climate crisis. The Green Party of Canada will ensure that governments

and corporations alike respect the 1990 Supreme Court of Canada Sparrow decision upholding Aboriginal rights such as fishing and the right of Aboriginal peoples to be consulted about decisions and accommodated in those decisions that impact their resources and their future. The June 2014 Supreme Court decision in the Tsilcoltin case sets a blazing path for recognition of Aboriginal title. The intergenerational and communal nature of title must be respected.

We must work together to ensure no more communities are added to the list of shame in Canada: Oka, Ipperwash, Gustafson Lake, Sutikalh, Sun Peaks, Cheam, and Caledonia. Never again. Our shift in attitude will mean true nation-to-nation dialogue and negotiations. It will mean a just accommodation of Aboriginal peoples' aspirations and an equitable sharing of Canada's natural resources. It will mean full recognition of the cultural, political, and economic contributions of First Nations, Inuit, Innu, and Métis people to Canada and an end to the prejudice.

#### GREEN PARTY MPS WILL:

- ◆ Honour Canada's fiduciary responsibility, treaty rights, and other rights of Aboriginal peoples, including their inherent rights of self-government;
- ◆ In partnership with Aboriginal Peoples, work towards the creation of an Aboriginal Lands and Treaties Tribunal Act to establish an independent body to decide on specific claims, ensure that treaty negotiations are conducted and financed fairly, and ensure that treaty negotiations and claims resolutions do not result in the extinguishment of Aboriginal and treaty rights;
- ◆ Immediately implement the lands claims agreements already negotiated and languishing for lack of funding, particularly for First Nations in the territories;
- ◆ Review all existing federal policies on self-government, in consultation with Aboriginal representatives, to ensure they are achieving the goals of Aboriginal peoples;
- ◆ Ensure that negotiations of treaties and self-government are not based on the extinguishment of Aboriginal title and rights, and on assimilation, but on reconciliation of rights and title, and that negotiations recognize the diversity of traditional self-governance;
- ◆ Fully implement the recommendations of the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, thereby embarking on true nation-to-nation negotiations on a full range of outstanding legal issues and land claims;
- ◆ Ensure that Canada upholds the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- ◆ Launch a full inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women;
- ◆ Support the restoration of the \$5.1 billion commitment of the landmark Kelowna Accord reached between federal and provincial, territorial and First Nations governments in Canada in 2005, with the proviso that the ensuing programs do not lead to greater infringement on Aboriginal and treaty rights;

- ◆ Ensure that every First Nations, Metis, and Inuit child has access to quality educational opportunities based on the expressed cultural, political, and social priorities of the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit governments following meaningful consultation;
- ◆ Increase access for First Nations education by removing the 2% funding cap and fully funding the program back log (at a cost of \$424 million);
- ◆ Ensure that governments and corporations respect the Sparrow decision (recognizing the Aboriginal right to fish), the Haida decision (the right of Aboriginal peoples to be not just consulted but their concerns accommodated regarding decisions that may impact their resources and their future), and the Tsilhqot'in decision;
- ◆ Negotiate and legislate primary hunting, fishing, trapping, and logging rights for Aboriginal peoples on traditional lands, especially lands under federal jurisdiction, subject to standards of sustainable harvesting;
- ◆ Respect the Douglas Treaties of southern Vancouver Island;
- ◆ Launch and maintain new processes driven by Aboriginal priorities and legal entitlements, to provide for interim measures prior to settlement of treaties, and address governance issues, a just and fair share of lands and resources, legislative inconsistencies, policy inequities, reconciliation and, if in accordance with the wishes of First Nations, the phased-out elimination of the Indian Act;
- ◆ Promote Aboriginal culture, language, and history as a fundamental source of Canadian identity;
- ◆ Support the development of Aboriginal education curricula that are language and culture specific;
- ◆ Assist the delivery of health care, education, and other services in a way that incorporates traditional practices and recognizes the role of extended families and elders;
- ◆ Set up task forces to address the treatment of Aboriginals in the Canadian justice system and to investigate and address the disappearance of Aboriginal women;
- ◆ Ensure, through consultation with indigenous organizations representing the concerns of Aboriginal women, that the rights of Inuit, Métis, and First Nations women are protected.



**JON OLSEN**

is a long time peace and justice activist and a Green Party member for 25 years. A graduate of Bates College in Maine with a degree in philosophy, he went to the University of Hawai'i for a Master's Degree in the same field. He returned to Maine in 2001, serving twice on the Steering committee of the Maine Green Independent Party. He has conducted town caucuses and gathered signatures for Green Party gubernatorial candidates. His recent book, *Liberate Hawai'i*, describes the legal and historical research done by Hawaiian scholar-activists. The book documents the illegal claim of the US to the sovereignty of Hawai'i and demonstrates its fraudulent nature as well. Olsen draws a parallel with the similar fraudulent attempt by the late USSR to do the same to Lithuania.

# Pope Francis and Laudato Si'

## THE CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME

COMMENTARY BY STEVEN SCHMIDT AND JOHN RENSENBRINK

Bill McKibben writes in a recent *New York Review of Books* (Aug 13, 2015) that *Laudato Si'* stands as “one of the most influential documents of recent times. It is, therefore, remarkable to actually read the whole document and realize that it is far more important even than that. In fact, it is entirely different from what the media reports might lead one to believe. Instead of a narrow and focused contribution to the climate debate, it turns out to be nothing less than a sweeping, radical, and highly persuasive critique of how we inhabit this planet – an ecological critique, yes, but also a moral, social, economic, and spiritual commentary.”

McKibben adds: “It’s no use trying to categorize the text as liberal or conservative; there’s some of each, but it goes far deeper than our political labels allow.”

McKibben, in his point that the Catholic pontiff is going “far deeper than our political labels [liberal or conservative] allow,” reiterates what *Green Horizon* and many of the leading thinkers in the world’s Green parties have been urging people to consider – a perspective that appreciates Petra Kelly’s declaration of a green path “being neither left nor right, but in front.”

*Green Horizon*, most recently in its previous issue, Spring/Summer 2015, has continued to explore this ‘out in front’ path. (See “Neither Left nor Right: Green Dreams, Detours and New Visions”.)

There is more, much more in *The Care of Our Common Home* that Greens and other provocative thinkers have presaged for decades.

The Pope speaks strongly about the need to see integral connections between ecology and the economy. He accurately states that there is no way in which the economy can or should be treated as it has been treated, as if it is utterly separate from the environment.

Other sectors of society have also been mistakenly treated as if they are separate from ecology. Racial oppression and prejudice; poverty and near-poverty of billions of people; gender oppressions; generally the intense issue of the callous and often criminal treatment of immigrants and the homeless—these are examples. Indeed all dimensions of political, social, cultural, and economic life, the daily life of all peoples, are integral to one

another—and ecology is intimately central to all. He dwells on this.

In Chapter 4 he frankly and forthrightly puts it forth as a fundamental and illuminating concept: Integral Ecology. By featuring connections in this way, he brings forward the inner and unassailable understanding of our common plight, putting this understanding streets ahead of where it is now. It is a creative reverberation of what the Greens have been pounding away at. Integral Ecology is a conceptual leap long needed—a brilliant tool to help the world save itself.

The role of religion, within broader strife, is changing. An interconnected world is delivering new perspectives. Historic dogmas of the past are being challenged. Awareness of science is growing. Environmental security threats, degradation, and resulting poverty are being acknowledged. And, in this regard, in an unprecedented eco-encyclical, the Pope speaks of Integral Ecology as much more than a Catholic endeavor. Global change is foreseen as the encyclical is addressed to “every person living on this planet.”

Let’s pause and note here that the definition of the word ‘catholic’ itself [1. Of broad or liberal scope; comprehensive; 2. Including or concerning all humankind; universal] can be regarded as part of a ‘Catholic’ call for an Integral Ecology.

Worldwide there are more than 1.25 billion ‘Catholics’. The Catholic faith, for good and bad, has played a prominent role in the history of Western civilization. Its role can be debated, but the Catholic’s move now toward environmental-economic awareness and green values is a powerful acknowledgment of green beliefs—and a newly restated worldwide foundation for action.

Our world is moving toward awareness of the need for an ecological future. *Green Horizon* intends to continue and deepen our engagement with the ideas and values that are beginning to spread out within the concept of an Integral Ecology — exploring its depth and its breadth.



**READ THE ECO-ENCYCLICAL** <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/06/18/read-the-encyclical-for-yourself-laudato-si/>

**CHAPTER 4** <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/06/18/laudato-si-chapter-four-integral-ecology/>

**MORE ON LAUDATO SI' REFERENCED IN GREENPOLICY360** [http://www.greenpolicy360.net/w/Pope\\_Francis\\_on\\_the\\_Environment](http://www.greenpolicy360.net/w/Pope_Francis_on_the_Environment)

# Climate Disruption and Moral Obligations

## WE FACE EXISTENTIAL CHOICES

**BEN KJELSHUS**

*How shall we respond to the reality of climate disruption? Do we not have a moral obligation to respond to that reality?*

*What's needed is a resistance revolution.*

The debate over climate change is over. The evidence is overwhelming that climate disruption is the result of human activities.

How shall we respond to the reality of climate disruption? Do we not have a moral obligation to respond to that reality? In context of the reality of climate disruption and the reality of depleting natural resources, do we not have a responsibility to take concerted actions for the future, for our children's future, and for the future of the living planet?

Recent science tells us unless we reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million—we're now at 387 parts per million and expanding—we will cause massive and irreversible damage to the planet. There are environmentalists who claim we have already passed the tipping point—we're facing the collapse of all civilizations.

We know time is not on our side. Even so, by taking committed, short-term action steps in reversing the massive damage done and being done to the planet, there is hope. There is hope in building a mass movement—a movement of movements that would be engaged in hard-hitting resistance to counter the controlling, greedy, distrustful actions of the fossil fuel industry and their cohorts.

### **CLIMATE CRISIS: A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE**

The author Naomi Klein recently came out with a seminal book *This Changes Everything—Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Klein states that climate change represents a historical opening for positive progressive transformation. She writes “As part of the project of getting our emissions down to the levels so many climate scientists recommend, we have the chance to advance policies that dramatically improve our lives, close the gap between rich and poor, create large numbers of good jobs, and reinvigorate democracy from the ground up.”

But this won't happen unless we take on the fossil-fuel industry, their cohorts, and global capitalism big time. As Naomi Klein points out “Meeting science-based targets will mean forcing some of the most profitable companies on the planet to forfeit trillions of dollars of future earnings in leaving the vast majority of proven fossil-fuel resources in the ground.” Then she asks this crucial question, “Has an economic shift of this kind ever happened before in history?” In our present situation, with the elite power structure controlling our government, governmental forces would not allow such an economic shift.

Naomi Klein points out that the abolition of slavery movement was such a transformation comparable to the needed economic transformation facing us today. Klein comments, “If climate justice carries the day, the economic costs to our elites will be real—not only because of the carbon left in the ground, but also because of the regulations, taxes and social programs needed to make the required transformation.”

What becomes apparent is that the climate issue is closely linked to economic issues. Therefore, the climate disruption issue can be a powerful force to make the transition

*It's imperative we make the transition to the world view of ecological consciousness, of humans living in harmony with the planet, and to abandon the stance of domination over nature*

for a positive redistribution of wealth. This will take the building of a mass movement. To be successful this requires the coming together of several movements and organizations dealing with positive social justice and climate change. It will take a mass movement to demand strategic planning and huge amounts of public funding—such as a Marshall Plan for the Earth, patterned after the Marshall Plan the United States launched on the international level after WWII, and such as the Green New Deal on the national level. The US Green Party has proposed the Green New deal to make the transition from a fossil-fuel based energy system to a renewal energy based energy system.

There is hope offered by various forms of resistance to the disastrous actions of the fossil-fuel industry and global capitalism. Protests and blockages are now being performed in many parts of the world. Resistance involves a set of actions that, as Brad Werner says it, “does not fit with the capitalist culture.” This involves environmental direct action, protests and blockages. Well expand on this later.

## CONFLICTING WORLD VIEWS

We realize there is a good deal more involved here—more than dealing with policy changes in reversing the course of climate disruption. There's the reality of conflicting world views on how we relate to the earth. There's the prevailing world view of dominance, of control over nature. This is the prevailing world view of western civilization. The planet is viewed as inert, as a commodity, a resource, and resources for global capitalism. The prevailing world view has a long history. It is solidly embedded in the bible: Genesis 1.28, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”

The other world view—the view generally held by indigenous peoples—is living in harmony with nature. We are part of nature, not above it. The prevailing world view is characterized by high energy use, high consumerism and unfettered use of the world's resources. The ecological world view is characterized by low energy use, low consumerism, and by the understanding that indeed the earth's resources are fragile and precariously limited.

Let's face it! We have been—to too great an extent—influenced by the prevailing world view. We consume too much. We use too much energy. Without any real resistance taking place, global capitalism continues its depletion of natural resources and moves

our civilization towards a catastrophe. I'm appalled by the thought that due to the control, greed, near-sightedness, and additive practices of the fossil-fuel industry and the ruling elite, we face not only the possible catastrophe of civilization but the possible devastation of the living planet.

One area of hope is Pope Francis' recently released encyclical. The encyclical has the call for a “bold cultural revolution”—to turn around the harm done to the planet from climate warming caused mainly by human activities. There's the Pope's visit to the United States in September, 2015 which offers encouraging opportunities to bring the climate disruption issue to the mass media and the general public.

The public release of the encyclical is well timed. It is being quite influential throughout the world not only among Catholics. It could well have considerable influence with world-wide, grass-roots groups in actions on the climate justice issue prior to and during the UN Climate Change Conference being held in Paris from Nov. 30 thru Dec. 11, 2015. The objective: to achieve in over 20 years of UN negotiations a binding and universal agreement on climate from all nations of the world. Overreaching goal of the conference is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit the global temperature increase 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Conference could be an explosive event initiating steps leading to a turn-around on climate change.

What's encouraging is the increase of protests world-wide where there have been mining and drilling projects—open-pit mining, gas fracking, building tar sand pipelines. These projects have been called Blockadia. We do hear of protests over the tar sand pipe line and gas fracking, but the mass media does not report the extensive protests taking place world-wide.

What's needed is a resistance revolution. What's needed is a mass movement, a movement of movements involved in resistance—which includes environmental direct action, protests, and blockages. It will mean building economic alternatives such as setting up cooperatives and regional food systems. It will mean making the transition from a fossil-fuels energy system to a renewable energy system.

There is a personal element involved here. I would say a religious factor. How shall we respond to the reality of climate disruption? Do we not have an obligation to deal seriously with that reality? In context of that reality and the reality of depleting natural resources, do we not have an obligation, a responsibility for the future, for the future of our children, all the world's children and for the living planet?

*The personal choices we make will depend on the extent we recognize our obligations and responsibilities to the future, to our children and to the living planet.*

## EXISTENTIAL CHOICES

We have choices—hard choices. We have existential choices. The word existential used here takes the approach of concern on choices, free will and personal responsibility.

From the existential approach how do we respond to climate disruption—recognizing that climate disruption is the most pressing moral issue of our time? The personal choices we make will depend on the extent we recognize obligations and responsibilities to the future, to our children and to the living planet. Making existential choices involves finding meaning for our lives during these turbulent times. We have real choices to make.

There's the choice of skirting responsibility, going along with the status quo, to continue being immersed in the world of high energy use and high consumption. Such a collective pattern leads us toward consequences that will be catastrophic.

There's the choice of limited resistance in which we need to be involved. We need to be involved in recycling, reducing and reusing. We need to be involved in food sovereignty—taking over control of our food system—control that corporations presently have.

Being engaged in limited resistance, we need to be involved in building ecologically sustainable communities. One notable such endeavor is the Transition movement—building Transition Towns “from oil dependence to local resilience”.

There are other projects areas of limited resistance such as placing solar panels on our homes and garages.

As we must be active in areas of limited resistance, these actions while appealing could well be insufficient considering time is not on our side. It would appear we have only years not decades to reverse the direction of climate disruption.

There is the existential choice of diligent resistance, hard-hitting resistance. There's a book about fighting back: Deep Green Resistance by Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, and Derrick Jensen. This book is about creating a culture of resistance, about creating an actual resistance. The authors state “The strategy of Deep Green Resistance starts by acknowledging the dire circumstances that industrial civilization has created for life on the planet. The goal of DGR is to deprive the rich of their ability to steal from the poor and the powerful of their ability to destroy the planet.”

In this scenario of all-out attacks on the infrastructure of capitalism, the goal is 90% reduction of fossil-fuel consumption. This, indeed, would be a formidable undertaking. To be engaged in such activity would face an intense counter attack from the establishment—from government forces defending the fossil-fuel industry.

The authors of Deep Green Resistance state, “For perhaps the first time in history, those in power are globally off balance and occupied by worsening crisis after crisis. This provides key opportunities for resistance groups to seize and retain the initiative.”

We need to heed Naomi Klein's claim: “Only mass movements will save us now.” I assert we take action on that claim and engage in movement building. It will take a mass movement to be engaged in hard-hitting resistance in various forms to counter the controlling, greedy, addictive behavior of the fossil-fuel industry and global capitalism.

There are real political opportunities with the 2016 elections. Progressives have the opportunity to support and work for candidates who advocate climate justice – such as presidential candidates Jill Stein of the National Green Party and Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

In addition, we'll need to deal with the conflicting world views of how humans relate to the planet. It's imperative we make the transition to the world view of ecological consciousness, of humans living in harmony with the planet, and to abandon the stance of domination over nature.

The reality of climate disruption presents formidable and daunting challenges. How do we respond to climate disruption? I assert we respond by taking on the existential choice of recognizing our responsibility, our obligations to the future, to the future of our children, to future generations, to the future of the planet and its flora and fauna. I assert we respond by taking on existential choices of deliberate, concerted, near-term actions in three general areas:—building a mass movement to reverse the direction of climate disruption and to create a political and economic transition,—embracing a culture of resistance,—creating the transition to the world view of ecological consciousness.

Let's acknowledge Einstein's statement: “Those who have the privilege to know, have the duty to act.” Yes, there are areas of hope. Let's take on existential choices of Hope!



**BEN KJELSHUS**

is founder of the Kansas City Food Circle, a founding member of the Greater Kansas City Greens and the Progressive Party of Missouri. He is a retired city planner and a former Unitarian Universalist minister. He and his wife Carol live in Greenwood, Missouri.

# “Growth” is NOT the Answer

GREG GERRITT

My goal is the most widespread prosperity possible in Rhode Island. This also has direct application to other states and, if I may say so, to the planet as a whole. It is my contention that we are moving in the wrong direction because a few people are using their money to create a public policy arena that is toxic to our community. To combat this we need information and honest analysis, not a Chamber of Commerce fantasy.

The fantasy is that old industrial states will reach 3% economic growth per year on a regular basis.

Study of places around the world experiencing rapid economic growth in the last few hundred years points out the conditions necessary for rapid growth, essentially 3% per year or more growth for an extended period of time. [Immanuel Wallerstein *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Academic Press, 1976.]

To grow rapidly places need at least one of three things to be happening. Most of the industrialized west has none of these things happening, and therefore low growth rates are very common.

The first category is a natural resource boom. Fossil fuels and minerals are often involved, but even more important are forests and forest products. Cities cannot get built or grow without new sources of wood. And as the forests are usually gone soon after a city gets started, the race to expropriate from forest communities the wood used in new cities is going faster now than ever before in human history. Less than half the global forest remains, deforestation destroys millions of hectares every year, and forest people are under continuous attack.

Rhode Island has no natural resources that can stand additional pressure, and therefore we shall not get large scale natural resource based growth, though agriculture is one of our growth industries.

The second condition for rapid growth is a rapidly urbanizing population of rural dwellers coming into the city for their first taste of urban life. Most migrants in the US are moving from one city to another.

The third condition for rapid growth is to be a mega city with historic ties to one of several industries that globalize well such as finance, entertainment, medicine, and communications/computers.

The primary job of the Bureau of Economic Analysis is to report on the rate of economic growth and parse the data a bit. A recent release ([http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp\\_state/gsp\\_newsrelease.htm](http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_state/gsp_newsrelease.htm)) discussed the final numbers for economic growth in 2014 nationally and by state. This report stated that the growth rate of the USA in 2014 was 2.2% up slightly from the 1.9% in 2013. Since the worst of the recession growth has averaged 2.2% per year in the US. Despite frenetic efforts by the political class all the kings horses and all the kings men could not put the growth machine back together again. And never will.

Rhode Island was tied for 28th in the rankings at 1.2%. But if you look at the data state by state it tells you the business climate mania, the Chamber of Commerce ideology that sets the agenda, has almost nothing to do with how well the economy of the various states are doing. The reports on how poorly business climate indexes predict economic growth are legion. My favorite is from the Business Curmudgeon. <http://journal.c2er.org/2013/02/business-climate-revisited/>. Good Jobs First also has a good report on the business climate scam. Grading Places: What Do the Business Climate

*Since the worst of the recession, growth has averaged 2.2% per year in the US. Despite frenetic efforts by the political class all the kings horses and all the kings men could not put the growth machine back together again. And never will.*

*If we want to end poverty, especially among the most disenfranchised and marginalized members of the community, we cannot keep giving tax breaks to millionaires to develop brownfields into high-end properties.*

*It's time to give up the fantasy that growth is helping us build better communities when it is all ending up in the pockets of the few and the planet is falling apart.*

Rankings Really Tell Us? by Peter Fisher, with a Preface by Greg LeRoy, May 2013 <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/gradingplaces>.

The first thing that jumps out from the BEA data is that 9 of the 10 states with the highest growth rates are in the West (the exception is West Virginia) and that at least 8 of the top 10 have some sort of fossil fuel boom going on. In other words nearly all of the states leading the US in growth rates are destroying the planet, especially its water and climate, for a temporary fix today. Fracking is the only thing keeping the national growth rate above 2%.

If you look east of the Mississippi, no region has a growth rate above 1.7%, though 9 of the 10 states with growth rates between 1.9 and 2.8% are in the east. The Southeast and the Mid Atlantic states are at 1.7%. New England is at 1.6% and the upper Midwest is at 1.4%. Of the Rust Belt states, Rhode Island's 1.2% growth rate is right in the middle and we are third in New England ahead of Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut. MA and NH lead New England at 2.3%. Boston, the only really large city in New England, leads with its knowledge economy, but even with Harvard and MIT Massachusetts cannot rival the growth rates of a fossil fuel boom.

Texas and North Dakota lead the growth parade, with North Dakota growing by 9% in 2014 after growing by 15% the year before. Only 16 states are above the national average in economic growth with 34 states below the average. This is indicative of booms in the fossil fuel states, rapid growth in a few megacities and everyone else trending downwards.

Many of the slowest growing states are low tax, weak regulation states which further demonstrates the futility of the business climate agenda and points out how each place has unique challenges. Hello Mississippi.

Many scholars are now writing about the end of rapid economic growth for most of the industrial world. They look at the industrial revolution and the 1870's fossil fuel revolution as aberrations in the growth rate, and see a trend back to the long term average of 1%. Robert Gordon helped get it started. [Robert J Gordon "Is US Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts Six Headwinds." NBER Working Paper No. 18315 Issued in August 2012.]

One way to compare economic policy outcomes is to compare adjoining states with reasonably similar underlying economies but different policies. The poster children for austerity for the people and tax cuts for the rich are Wisconsin and Kansas.

Wisconsin grew slower than Rhode Island last year despite Governor Walker's breaking unions, cutting taxes and shrinking the state budget. Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois, all grew faster. Minnesota and Illinois are not following the Chamber of Commerce cliff jumping frenzy. Michigan is jumping off the austerity cliff, but its economy has been so anemic for so long with the loss of the auto industry it has nowhere to go but up even as its infrastructure breaks down.

Kansas went even farther along the bunny trail of tax cuts to the point where its schools started shutting down for the year

in May when they ran out of money and the economy still grew less than 2%.

Kansas's austerity program went so far that they had to shut the website of Kansas Inc., the state economic development agency. This is a big loss as Kansas Inc. did the definitive study comparing business climate indexes and economic performance, finding almost no correlation, and the study is no longer available on the web.

Analysis of growth rates points to a few things that seem relevant for RI. The first is that it is the economic and natural resources of a state, its history, geography, the size of its cities and its connections to the global economy have a much greater influence on economic growth rates than tax policies, regulatory regimes, or business climate. If all the top 5 growth rates are found in fracking states hell bent on global destruction, and none of the states with the slowest growth are involved in fracking, planetary destruction seems to be the key indicator of growth as long as you forget to subtract the damage done from the Gross State Product.

The second is that growth is fading away in the US and will soon be gone. This is especially the case in states that were the heart of the Industrial Revolution like Rhode Island, but no longer fit the growth profile in the 21st Century. Industrialization in the rich economies no longer employs a broad working class or boosts it into the middle class. Now computers eat jobs rather than create them, and we have no mechanism for creating good jobs for people with High School diplomas. We are going to have to get ready for a steady state economy and we are going to have to figure out how to create prosperity and employment under those conditions.

#### **PONDER THIS FROM MCKINSEY CONSULTING.**

[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/health\\_systems\\_and\\_services/Africa\\_A\\_continent\\_of\\_opportunity\\_for\\_pharma\\_and\\_patients?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck-oth-1506](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/health_systems_and_services/Africa_A_continent_of_opportunity_for_pharma_and_patients?cid=other-eml-alt-mip-mck-oth-1506)

"In a world of slowing and stagnating markets, Africa represents perhaps the last geographic frontier where genuinely high growth is still achievable."

June 2015

by Tania Holt, Mehdi Lahrichi, and Jorge Santos da Silva

McKinsey is saying, that rapid growth anywhere except in the very poorest and rapidly urbanizing places is likely to be a short term resource boom or real estate bubble, followed by a bust. Combined with the slowdown of growth in China, zero growth in much of western Europe, the collapse of ecosystems everywhere, and the growing inequality in which the anemic growth all ends up in the hands of 1% of the population, one has to conclude that Rhode Island is very unlikely to ever achieve high growth rates again. No matter what tax policy and give aways they come up with. And the effort to achieve rapid growth is likely to do significant harm by damaging ecosystems and increasing inequality.

Since RI is not going to achieve high growth rates again, we need policies that will create the most widespread prosperity in the low to zero growth environment we find ourselves in.

The prescriptions of tax breaks for the wealthy, and subsidies for everyone who wants to build a building downtown definitely contributes to greater inequality in RI, and as Piketty (*Capital in the 21st Century*) and others have pointed out, increasing inequality makes it very hard to run an economy that works at all well. When 99% of the income gains are going to 1% of the population, it is hard to have a consumer-oriented economy and get economic vitality from consumption. What is frustrating about the policy disaster is that the results we are seeing are exactly what would be expected based on the policies offered.

### THE UNCOVERING OF THE I-195 LAND AND THE RI ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE.

Brownfields are a critical component of the Rhode Island economy of the future. But before we look at brownfields we need to bring in some lessons from the forest as to what kind of development is needed in RI communities.

Forest health may be the most important indicator of ecosystem health on Earth, and a critical factor in the economic growth of cities. The people who live in forests are often the most marginalized and disenfranchised people in a country, just like those who live near brownfields.

With the global forest half gone, and our understanding of the role of forests in keeping our planet alive, folks are realizing that it no longer is useful or makes sense for our communities to allow anyone to displace the forest people and steal their forest. In fact the World Bank found that economic development is most helped, locally and nationally, by providing secure tenure for the forest people and making sure all of the benefits of economic development accrue to the poorest people in the community, since if any of it leaks out it defeats the poverty ending agenda and harms the overall health of the national economy as well as the forest and the people in the community. [Managing Forest Resources for Sustainable Development: An Evaluation of World Bank Group Experience, prepared by the Independent Evaluation Group, distributed internally on December 28, 2012 <http://www.redd-monitor.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ForestCODE-Jan-2013.pdf>]

Now think of areas near brownfields as the RI equivalent of forest communities, inhabited by the most disenfranchised and marginalized members of the community. Taking a hint from the World Bank we have to realize that for the reopened I-195 land to really benefit Rhode Island economically it needs to be used to build equity and create benefits for the lowest income people in the community.

But the plan is to attract more wealthy folks and the very wealthy folks who buy land and build buildings with large subsidies (essentially a transfer of wealth from the community to some of its wealthiest members) and tax breaks.

There is a breakdown in the system, and the breakdown is the belief that churning property in the city is actually economic development for the 21st century. In most older cities this system has failed for the last 50 years by making inequality worse.

If we want to end poverty, especially among the most disenfranchised and marginalized members of the community, we cannot keep giving tax breaks to millionaires to develop brownfields into high-end properties. We have to stop the upcycling that requires a subsidy. If that means no one can afford to build buildings, then lets use the land for purposes that can spread the benefits widely and that means brownfields for community food security.

In the growth game as currently played the 1% gets 99% of the growth in income. But we need prosperous communities, and that means spreading the wealth in a shrinking economy.

Here on Earth, and in Rhode Island, for the sake of ecological healing and the future of food, we need to use less, and considering how many people really do NEED more, then the 1% and the middle class in the industrial world are going to have to use less.

Some people think that is impossible or it would be horrible. But we have to think about prosperity rather than growth. We have to reduce inequality, heal ecosystems, shut down the war machine, create zero carbon emissions, and reforest and farm our sprawl. Spending less can create a happier, healthier, and more vibrant community if we do it right.

In Providence start with food security and turn the I-195 land into farms, not biomedical labs or baseball stadiums. If we keep thinking economic development starts with real estate speculation and subsidies for the rich, we shall be stuck forever. If we think we need to relax environmental protections to grow the economy faster, remind yourself that for 99% of us growth left town years ago, and ecosystem health underlies our prosperity. Its time to give up the fantasy that growth is helping us build better communities when it is all ending up in the pockets of the few and the planet is falling apart. Its time to explore the real consequences of growth with a Full Cost Accounting System. Then lets build a prosperous future with solar energy, peace, and real justice.



**GREG GERRITT**

is the founder of the think tank ProsperityForRI.com and the Coordinator of the Environment Council of Rhode Island's office and Compost Initiative, Greg Gerritt has been involved in efforts to create a sustainable economy since the 1970's when he began building solar buildings and creating organic homesteads. Currently involved in exploration/activism around the ecology/economy interface, urban agriculture, compost, river restoration, making videos of tadpoles in the burial ground, Green politics and the administration of the Environment Council of Rhode Island, Gerritt has been the leading advocate in RI for making sure ecology is actually a component of efforts to create a sustainable economy in Rhode Island and in 2012 received a Merit Award from EPA Region 1 for advancing the cause of compost in Rhode Island.

# *The Work of Culture:* Transforming the US—Israel “Special Relationship.”

JUSTINE MCCABE

*Symbols and rituals are progressive to the degree that they can fire the human imagination to express, grapple with, and transform . . . issues of life, suffering, and death, the nature of vengeance and compassion, war and peace, hate and love.*

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE “WORK OF CULTURE”?

I recently saw the Broadway musical *Amazing Grace*, about John Newton’s agonizing moral journey in eighteenth century Britain from slave ship captain/trader to leading abolitionist (as well as composer of the compelling hymn of the same name). This production powerfully illustrates “the work of culture” described by anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere<sup>1</sup> as “the process whereby symbolic forms existing on the cultural level get created and recreated in the minds of people.”

The work of culture is a creative process. It is a process of symbolic transformation: as individual members of a society and its institutions engage in this process, their personal and collective longings—for security, liberty, happiness—as well as personal and collective difficulties—conflicts, aggression, guilt—can be transformed into publicly accepted systems of meanings and symbolic forms. In feedback fashion, these meanings and forms organize, and are re-organized by, the individual members of that society, and the society itself.

The “work of culture” offers much toward understanding any society, including its politics.

For starters, Obeyesekere emphasizes that symbols—whether personal or collective—can be characterized by two dialectical functions, regression and progression, forming the poles of a unified continuum—the very nature of symbolic process.

Regressive movement in symbolization involves a turning back and dwelling in or near the earliest motivations and impulses of human beings. These early motivations include the whole realm of basic needs: for nurturance, protection, attachment, recognition—and their frustration. It also includes fantasies of omnipotence and perfection; fears of abandonment, separation, merger, domination, annihilation; feelings of insecurity and incestuous and aggressive impulses.

By contrast, the progressive movement of symbols also involves these early motivations and conflicts but engages, works with them, actively reorganizing them in a direction away from their archaic sources and primitive forms, and towards their transformation and beyond—to considerations of the ontological, even the numinous, in human existence.

This is nothing particularly new to the psychoanalytically savvy reader. However, what is salient here is viewing symbolic forms qualitatively, that is, viewing them in terms of their degree of remove from these earliest motives. This perspective produces, according to Obeyesekere, “different levels of symbolization. Some come closer to, some more distant from, the motivations that initially . . . triggered the symbolic formation.”

Thus, more “regressive” symbols and rituals may provide catharsis for the individuals and groups employing them. However, the release of negative or primitive impulses and emotions happens just superficially and temporarily, only to return anew, formatively unchanged. Moreover, any change can only be superficial because such symbols are, by definition, constituted more “simply” precisely because they have moved only/primarily in

*The Confederate flag removal was a small symbolic gesture in the larger context of the US history of slavery. Racism goes on. But it does illustrate what doing the progressive “work of culture” can accomplish if governments were to engage it more*

a “regressive” direction. That is, they have little difference in form from—and actually have more resemblance to—the underlying primitive motives and impulses themselves. As such, they lead the symbolizer(s) back toward, or but a short psychological distance away from these deep human urges and conflicts.

Although by definition, all cultural symbols have some remove from their motivational underpinnings, symbolic forms that operate with relatively little remove, tend to repetitively evoke the darker side of any person’s psyche. Thus, without the requisite complexity to enable “symbolizers” to enter, rise through and transform this darker side, such regressive symbols leave them repetitively returning to, or lingering around, more primitive motivations, chronically unable to “see the light.”

By contrast, the progressive movement of symbols takes up these earliest human preoccupations and moves them toward reorganization and transformation. Indeed, symbols and rituals are progressive in so far as they are sufficiently complex and developed to go the psychological distance well beyond their underlying sources. This is where multiple levels of meaning may be made. By demonstrating a progressive capacity, such symbols attest to the virtually unlimited potential we have as human beings to meaningfully rework, reform our most primitive urges, motivations, and experiences.

Thus, symbols and rituals are progressive to the degree that they can fire the human imagination to express, grapple with, and transform the ontological concerns that are generated in and beyond childhood, and throughout the human life cycle: issues of life, suffering, and death; the nature of vengeance and compassion, war and peace, hate and love.

Amazing Grace does the transformative “work of culture” quite well by facilitating the passage of the audience along with the actors through the painful struggle of Newton’s dark experience dealing in slavery, and then “into the light” of Newton’s individual and societal transformations: seeking moral freedom for himself and for everyone. (Indeed, with his efforts, British slavery was abolished in 1807). Ultimately, like Newton, the play moves us all—to act.

But sadly, in most societies, the arts and some religious traditions are much better at doing this transformative “work” than are political bodies, especially national governments.

### **THE REGRESSIVE NATURE OF THE AMERICAN-ISRAELI “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”**

To illustrate this, consider the governments of the US and Israel, countries whose national formative acts—dispossession

and ethnic cleansing of their native peoples and their denial—constitute significant, albeit reprehensible, components of their “special relationship.”<sup>2</sup> These components continue in the form of unequivocal political/financial support by the US for Israel’s gross violation of Palestinian human rights under an illegal occupation and apartheid-like system within the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) as well as for its non-Jewish citizens.

Two recent events put into high relief the “regressive” commonalities of that relationship. Yet these also represent possibilities for a change in direction to include progressive elements that might even contribute eventually to a transformation of that relationship.

One, the Iran nuclear agreement, forged by Senator John Kerry for the Obama administration and endorsed by the international community, challenges the bond between the two countries. This deal is vehemently opposed by the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu<sup>3</sup>, American Zionists and many AIPAC-fearing members of Congress as an “existential” threat to Israel—“our sacred ally” according to my Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT)<sup>4</sup>. Yet, this non-violent solution to what many see as a non-problem (Iran has no nukes, does not intend to make any), puts a spotlight on the relationship’s pernicious nature.

On the regressive side, it raises the question of whether Congress will deepen this ultimately self-defeating alliance by deferring to Israel’s demands and reject this international effort for peace. Or will Congress oppose the Israeli government and endorse a deal that could help stabilize a Middle East whose volatility has transmogrified into constant chaos and violence, especially since the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq?

In terms of the “work of culture,” this is an opportunity for the US government to recognize the primitive character of its relationship to a Zionist Israel, which is evidenced historically by American kowtowing to Israeli hysteria and bullying<sup>5</sup> and supporting Zionism’s racist policies—at high moral and security cost to the US. All these policies keep Israelis, Palestinians—and Americans—in the symbolically regressive terrain of aggression, vengeance and masochistic suffering.

To move in a progressive direction, Congress would support the deal, thereby helping to defuse the worst threat of its failure—an Israeli military attack on Iran and nuclear proliferation in the region (Israel already has nukes<sup>6</sup>). Of course Congress would likely “suffer”<sup>7</sup> via AIPAC disfavor (e.g., by AIPAC’s undermining “unfaithful” political candidates like former US congresswoman Cynthia McKinney; or withholding millions in campaign contributions), as well as bear accusations of anti-

Semitism, like that from Republican presidential candidate, Mike Huckabee that the Iran nuclear deal “will take the Israelis and march them to the door of the oven.”

Actually, Huckabee’s allusion to the Nazi Holocaust is a good example of a politician relegating us—“citizen-symbolizers”—to dwell only in the regressive side of human experience—fear, aggression, unresolved suffering. There is no movement (language/action) to engage us in and through these distressing experiences with the aim of encouraging us toward the human potential for peace and cooperation that can exist (and has) even among diverse peoples.

However, if Congress were to support the deal, it would also be starting—however slowly—to disorganize the destructive nature of the US-Israeli alliance, reflect the opposition of a majority of Americans to providing special compensation to Israel over the deal,<sup>8</sup> and to even echo Secretary Kerry’s tearful rendering of the agreement as a triumph of peace over war: “When I was 22, I went to war . . . I went to war and it became clear to me that I never wanted to go to war again.”<sup>9</sup>

## **FLAGS AND THE AMERICAN-ISRAELI “SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP”: THE CONFEDERATE FLAG**

A second situation relevant to this discussion is the Confederate flag controversy that followed the murder of nine African-American members of Charleston’s historic Mother Emmanuel AME Church by the avowedly white racist Dylann Roof during a bible study meeting in the church into which he had been welcomed. While less obvious, the connection to the American-Israeli “special relationship” exists in the ignominious meanings of both flags: the Confederate flag as a symbol of racism, slavery and apartheid-like Jim Crow laws for African-Americans especially; and the Israeli flag, a symbol of dispossession, racism and apartheid particularly to Palestinians in Israel, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), or to millions of refugees world-wide.

The “work of culture” is clearly evident in this controversy.<sup>10</sup> That flag, originally a symbol of resistance against the “North” by racist segregationists who wanted to protect the white privilege and superiority embodied in the enslavement of African-Americans, was revived by southern whites during the 20th century, particularly in response to the threat of abolishing Jim Crow laws by the civil rights movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s.

Public response to the murders focused on whether the Confederate flag should continue to fly atop the South Carolina (SC) statehouse in Charleston (as it had since 1961): supporters claimed it as a symbol of southern “pride” and “heritage”; opponents saw it as a symbol of racist hatred and slavery and should be eliminated from all public buildings.

Clearly, as a symbol, the Confederate flag is a regressive one, with little “symbolic remove” from those primitive motives and impulses that constituted it: hatred, aggression, inferiority, insecurity, and fear of the “other.” Whatever release of negative emotions is accomplished for those who would fly it, the release is superficial and temporary—the emotions neither digested nor transformed. Because the constituent elements of the flag resemble the underlying motives of its supporters—to enslave, to aggress, to be superior—the feelings evoked by the flag return, formatively unchanged.

And, at the extreme, this symbol of hatred can evoke hateful actions. Dylann Roof often appeared in photos with the Confederate flag.

Then, shortly after the June 17th murders, the SC legislature recognized it as a racist symbol and voted it off public grounds, with Republican Governor Nikki Haley signing the removal law on July 9, 2015. In the intense debates leading up to that vote, the “work of culture” became apparent. Wading through the pain and guilt associated with slavery and Jim Crow, the legislators struggled for 13 hours of contentious debate to find their way and did—in their vote. As SC State Rep. Jenny Horne said, the legislators must take “this symbol of hate off these grounds,” that it would be “adding insult to injury” to the victims’ families if the flag were allowed to continue flying. Haley herself described the process of transformation that had occurred: from the murders to profound expressions of forgiveness and prayer by the victims’ families which, in turn, Haley believed, led to compassion from the larger society, ultimately embodied in the action to remove the flag.<sup>11</sup>

The Confederate flag removal was a small symbolic gesture in the larger context of the US history of slavery. Racism goes on. But it does illustrate what doing the progressive “work of culture” can accomplish if governments were to engage it more.

## **THE ISRAELI FLAG**

Turning now to the Israeli flag and what it may mean for many—for Israelis, Palestinians, the US-Israeli relationship, for peace—when the symbolic constituents of this national emblem continue to be regressive as described above.<sup>12</sup>

The Israeli flag is a blue hexagram—the Star of David—between two blue horizontal stripes on a white background. The blue stripes represent those of the Ashkenazi tallit, the traditional Jewish prayer shawl; the Star of David, a symbol of the Jewish People, Judaism.

Israel’s identity as Jewish and democratic, is oxymoronic since 25% of its citizens are non-Jews—mostly Palestinian Muslims and Christians—who suffer under an apartheid-like system that

by law privileges Jews. How can this national symbol not be alienating to these non-Jewish Israelis, among others?

In addition to the fact that this flag represents such state actions as illegal military occupation and colonization—600,000+ Jewish settlers in the OPT with no end in sight—the flag originated after the First Zionist Congress of 1897. The Zionist movement’s aim was to create a Jewish state in a country that was already inhabited by Palestinians; a “Jewish” state which came into being by dispossessing the majority non-Jewish native population who owned 94% of the land in 1947; a “Jewish” regime that continues to violate international law by preventing the refugees from returning to their homes in Israel because they are not Jews.

Thus, this flag predominantly represents the regressive movement in symbolization we visited above, by constantly directing Jewish-Israelis and those with whom they would make peace (Palestinians), back to the earliest motivations and impulses in all human beings: fear/paranoia, greed, aggression, insecurity; fantasies of omnipotence, rejection of the “other,” and masochistic suffering that never ends. Like the Confederate flag, the constituent elements of the Israeli flag have little symbolic remove from the underlying motives of its Zionist supporters—to occupy/dispossess, to exclude (non-Jews)<sup>13</sup>, to aggress, and dominate. Again, the negative primal feelings are evoked by the flag return formatively unchanged. And in feedback fashion, the extreme actions derived from these feelings continue: the bombing of Gaza in 2014 and now, rejecting the peace offered by the Iran nuclear deal and opting for more conflict.

By contrast, for change in a symbolically progressive direction, Israeli actions—the flag itself—would move a greater psychological distance from these primal motives and impulses. The flag would have to become one depicting what’s so, the multicultural, de facto “one state” that now exists between the Mediterranean and River Jordan; the Israeli regime would change by choosing a democratic sharing of the land and cooperation over its current exclusivity and violence. In sum, a progressive symbol would, by definition, be consistent with the progressive actions it evoked.

Finally, Israel could move in a progressive direction if the U.S. takes a different stance:

Does the U.S. continue to encourage regression by giving Israel support for its bad behavior? Or do the US and Israel begin to acknowledge and suffer through the guilt and shame of the past, on the way to reorganizing its relationship toward supporting human rights and democracy for all, surely the only road to genuine security for all?



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**ENDNOTES**

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(Haley acknowledges the inclusivity toward Roof by his victims: “Nine people took in someone they did not know, that did not look like them and in true love, and true faith, and true acceptance, they sat and prayed with him for an hour.”)

12 Of course this discussion also pertains to the American flag, which I consider in a more extensive paper from which this essay is drawn (“The U.S. Culture of Violence and the Work of Culture”).

13 “This is our Israel, this is for the Jews. No Palestinian should come to Israel.”: A Palestinian-American’s story of being detained at Ben-Gurion Airport.” (The link includes a picture of the Israeli flag at the airport):  
[http://mondoweiss.net/2015/07/palestinian-americans-detained?utm\\_source=Mondoweiss&utm\\_campaign=bc21c47239-RSS\\_EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_b86bace129-bc21c47239-309259818](http://mondoweiss.net/2015/07/palestinian-americans-detained?utm_source=Mondoweiss&utm_campaign=bc21c47239-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b86bace129-bc21c47239-309259818)

# *The Gift of Wonder:* Empowering Children to Keep Asking

MEG CHITTENDOM

*How we meet children's questions fundamentally shapes how they develop as thinkers, innovators, and as people.*

*What she wanted for her child was to feel curious about, and connected to, the world around her, to feel a sense of wonder. After all, isn't it wonder that leads to discovery and learning?*

Perhaps you remember a time when you had a little one who followed you around all day, peppering you with questions - big questions, like: Why is the sky blue? Why is fire hot? Why do we dream? Sometimes you may have attempted an answer, only to be met with a quick and emphatic, "But why?" Eventually, you may have had to resort to the old, "Just because" or else found yourself trying to explain quantum physics to a four-year-old.

Little ones ask a lot of questions. In their article, "The Creativity Crisis" (Newsweek, July 2010), Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman note that preschool children ask their parents around 100 questions a day...whereas middle schoolers ask close to zero. That's a troubling trajectory. The authors suggest that by middle school, children do not stop asking questions because they've lost interest: rather, it's the other way around.

I believe that how we meet children's questions fundamentally shapes how they develop as thinkers, innovators, and people. With this in mind, I'd like to give you an idea of how we work with the question of questions at the Bay School, a Waldorf school on the coast of Maine.

Let's take as an example the classic childhood query, "Why is the sky blue?" Meg Gorman, a long-time Waldorf high school teacher and teacher of teachers, shares a relevant story in her book, "Confessions of a Waldorf Parent". Meg first encountered Waldorf education through her daughter's enrollment in a Waldorf kindergarten. Initially, she was very skeptical. She and her husband were both scientists, and they were particularly put off by the kindergarten teacher's suggestion that they consider responding to their child's "why" questions by saying something like, "it is, isn't it," rather than trying to provide an answer. For example, if a child asked why fire is hot, one might say, "it is hot, isn't it" and leave it at that.

Meg thought this sounded ridiculous and was very pleased when, not long after, her daughter gave her the chance to demonstrate just how silly this suggestion was. They were sitting outside together one sunny afternoon, and her daughter asked her, "Mama, why is the sky blue?" Meg smiled to herself and said pointedly, "yes, it is blue, isn't it." Her daughter was silent for a while. Then, she turned to Meg and said, "Mama, I know why the sky is blue: It's because of your blue eyes."

In that moment, Meg realized two things. She realized that, had it not been for her daughter's teacher, she would most certainly have launched into a mini-lecture regarding the interaction between light waves and particulates in the sky, and her daughter would most likely have said nothing at all. She also realized that, when it came down to it, what she wanted for her child was to feel curious about, and connected to, the world around her, to feel a sense of wonder. After all, isn't it wonder that leads to discovery and learning? Because Meg didn't say, "Here is THE answer," she gave her daughter the opportunity to engage with her own question. This meant her child could come back to that same question again and again, each time developing an answer out

of her own direct and evolving experience of what is real and meaningful. And, even better, that answer could lead her to the next good question.

Am I telling you that, at the Bay School, teachers spend all their time standing beside their students saying, “Yes, I wonder about that too?” It’s a bit of an oversimplification, perhaps, but in a way, this is the gesture we are striving for when we’re doing our best teaching: to wonder with our students in a way that inspires continuing curiosity, creativity, and connection. How we “wonder with” our students, however, evolves as they do, and I’d like to give you a picture of what that might look like, using as an example this same quintessential childhood question, “Why is the sky blue”.

Let’s say our little girl is in second grade now. Nobody told her when she was five that there is an answer regarding the source of the sky’s blueness, so she’s still wondering about it. At this age, her teacher is likely to work with this kind of question through story, through legends that reflect ancient humans’ wonderings about the blueness of the sky. Because these legends were born out of people’s observations, many have some element of what might be called scientific truth to them. For example, the legends of the nomadic Ostyaks of Siberia portray the sky as a tent that arches protectively over the earth. This is not so unlike how a scientist would describe our atmosphere today: a thin, protective veil that maintains the conditions necessary for our survival on Earth. These are the kinds of images that are richly present in the stories a teacher at the Bay School might bring in second grade. Such stories stimulate wonder and allow children to try on different lenses through which people have considered the great questions of life over the course of human history.

It is worth noting that, in second grade, we are not analyzing these stories and comparing and contrasting them with what is actually true (as if we knew). That would be the equivalent of Meg having responded to her daughter with, “Oh, don’t be silly, dear, the color of the sky has nothing to do with the color of my eyes.” If what we’re looking to cultivate is curiosity, creativity, and connection, what a loss that would be.

It’s so tempting to rush children along, especially in today’s world when we seem to always be rushing. And it’s so easy to assume that if something would be useful and interesting to discuss with grown-ups, it would be even better to start earlier. Why wait? Thoreau writes, “I am struck by the fact that the more slowly trees grow at first, the sounder they are at the core, and I think that the same is true of human beings.” In the early years at the Bay School, we’re seeking to strengthen the core sense of wonder and interest in the world by giving it time to take hold in a meaningful and enduring way.

Let’s fast forward: now our little girl is in 6th grade. She’s still interested in the sky above her. Now when she asks why the sky is blue, our wondering with might look something like this: “Well, let’s look at that blue. Where is it most blue? When is it not blue?” We accompany her in deepening her observation.

Meanwhile, in school, she is participating in experiments that give her a firsthand experience of the behavior of light and air. She will experiment with prisms and witness the separation of light into its constituent parts. Where do these colors come from? Where were they when we couldn’t see them? Or could we see them? She will experience how, when you add milk or detergent to water and shine a light through it, it takes on a blue hue. Why does it turn blue, not red? Do different colors behave differently? She’ll also observe that a tissue tucked inside a cup and dipped upside down into a bucket of water stays dry. Why doesn’t the water fill the cup? Is there something in the cup besides the tissue that keeps the water out? What could that something be? By witnessing the phenomenon before her, she is able to begin to develop her own sense of the nature of light and air and how they interact with one another.

Throughout all of this, the emphasis is less on what concrete conclusions we can draw from our observations than on what new paths of inquiry we have opened up. What are the implications of what we are observing? Where else do we see these tendencies at play in nature? In society? Einstein once said, “It’s not that I’m so smart, I just stay with the questions longer.” We try to stay with the questions longer.

This is basically what Stuart Firestein, professor and director of a neurology lab at Columbia University, spoke about in his intriguing TED talk, entitled “The Pursuit of Ignorance.” As a science professor at the university level, he spent years teaching out of a massive text book that basically implied it contained within its nearly ten pound heft the answer to every question in the universe. Meanwhile, as director of a research lab, he was continuously disappointed with his research assistants’ apparent inability to think creatively. Firestein says he finally realized that, if he and his fellow scientists in academia wanted to cultivate capacities for actual scientific discovery in their students, force-feeding them a diet consisting primarily of prepackaged answers was completely counterproductive. Firestein suggests that too often in education we give students the impression that the world is like a puzzle and, through acquisition of knowledge, you gradually assemble the pieces until you have the full picture. In fact, Firestein asserts, there is no such thing as a completed picture. On the contrary, he likens our understanding of the world to the ripples that arise when a pebble is dropped in the water, emphasizing that the questions widen right along with the discoveries. How much more compelling is it for a student to have the sense that each discovery leads to new layers of potential discovery, rather than giving them the impression that all the answers have already been found and their work is to memorize them? Particularly in the age in which fact-based knowledge is generally just a quick Google search away, won’t the quality of the questions we ask matter more and more? Even Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google, says, “We run this company on questions, not on answers.”

Let’s go back to our little girl, who’s in 8th grade now and

getting ready to set off for new adventures. This year, her teacher will be guiding her and her classmates in synthesizing more explicitly what they themselves have observed over the years, harkening back to those 6th grade experiments and perhaps even to those 2nd grade legends. Through Socratic dialogue within the class, her teacher will strive to let the children's questions lead them to meaningful conclusions which then inspire new paths of inquiry. These paths that can serve to guide and motivate their learning as they move on to high school and beyond.

My husband and I have just applied for our two little ones to enter the Bay School's early childhood program this fall. When our littlest graduates from high school, it will be 2030. When she retires (if retirement still exists), it'll likely be around 2077, creeping right up on the year 2100. If you think back to what things were like 62 years ago - 1953 - what a different world it was! No internet, no iPhones, no Facebook, no concern about climate change. So much has changed even in the past decade. We really have no idea what kind of challenges and opportunities today's children will face in the world of the future. But it's a pretty safe bet that having a deep sense of connection to and

curiosity about the world, coupled with the capacity to ask really good questions, will serve them well.

It was William Butler who said that education is not filling buckets, it's lighting fires. When I think of my little ones starting school next year, I am filled with gratitude that they will be coming to a place where their teachers will be striving with all their might to light the fires in them that will lead them to their own ever-evolving next best questions.



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has taught in Waldorf elementary school settings for the past decade. She has also taught adults through the LifeWays Certification Program, the Essential Online Conferences, and the Center for Anthroposophy. Prior to becoming a teacher, she worked for several years as a mediator on national public policy issues in Washington, D.C. She received her M.Ed. from Antioch University in 2008 and her B.A. from Connecticut College in 2000. She lives with her fellow Waldorf teacher husband and their two young children on a coastal homestead, where they produce much of their own food, sing often, and make things for pleasure and purpose out of wool and wood. [www.singwaldorf.org](http://www.singwaldorf.org)

## *In Memoriam*

# Remembering Betty and Terry

In the last issue (Spring/Winter 2015) we briefly noted and mourned (page 33) the sudden passing of two creative and stalwart participants in our *Green Horizon* venture: Betty Zisk and Terry Fowler. We promised our readers further acknowledgement in the next issue (this one) concerning the light and wisdom, humor and love their lives have meant for us and inspired in us. —Eds.

**BETTY ZISK.** Betty will forever remain in my mind as one of the most courageous, people-dedicated and brilliant scholar/activists I've known. She was both a superb professional and an ardent fighter for justice, the environment and peace. She invited me each year, for several years, to participate with her in discussing social and political movements with her exciting classes at Boston University. From the start, in the 1980's, she saw the need and potential for a Green Party. She was a critical factor in steadying the new party, inevitably vulnerable to attacks both from within and without. Her dedication to Quaker values and principles tied in closely with the Ten Key Values of the Green Party and movement. Also from the start, she sagely and in a very timely way supported *Green Horizon Magazine*. She wrote for it and gave us editors the wit and wisdom of her advice, doing it always in a gentle and yet also provocative way. We miss her greatly and with feeling.

—John Rensenbrink

**EDMUND P. (TERRY) FOWLER.** Terry Fowler was a gentle, congenial and brilliant man who dedicated himself in mind and action to helping save this world from itself. Although being a patriotic American, he could not bring himself to participate in America's great War Crime in Vietnam and moved to Canada where he practiced his art of being a professor and advocate of a new paradigm as to how to make cities and life in Canada and the rest of the world sustainable. He was way ahead of his time, but he spent what short time he had here wisely and warmly with friends, colleagues and family. I, for one, will miss knowing that he, as an intellectual and political soul mate, is no longer around, but I know his family will miss him a lot more. He is now in a much better universe than this dark one. His light will synthesize much better where he is now than it was able to on this dark planet.

— His loving and admiring colleague, Ted Becker

# Review of Ted Trainer's *The Conserver Society*

*The Conserver Society*

By Ted Trainer

London: Zed Books, 1995.

BY STEVE WELZER

Where is the greenest place on earth? Arguably Melbourne, Australia, home of the Simplicity Institute, an education and research center “seeking to foster a transformation of consciousness that highlights the urgent need to move beyond growth-oriented, consumerist lifeways.” It was founded in 2010 by Dr. Samuel Alexander and Dr. Simon Ussher. Their vision is one of an eco-communitarian future which draws heavily on the writings of their mentor, Ted Trainer.

Trainer, a professor of Social Work at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, is a familiar figure to many eco-activists as the originator of the “Simpler Way” ([simplerway.org](http://simplerway.org)). After following the development of his analysis of industrial-consumerist society for some time, I thought I was reasonably familiar with his work; yet I was startled recently when I happened to pick up an early volume of his titled *The Conserver Society*. It was a revelation to see how—twenty years ago, in just over 200 pages—Trainer had so fully anticipated the most important trends of the current phase of the “greening” movement.

Recently de-growth, resilience, re-skilling, cohousing, “DIY” (do-it-yourself), “food not lawns,” re-wilding, energy descent, sharing economy have all become buzzwords of the movement; yet not only were these concepts laid out succinctly in *The Conserver Society* but, moreover, they were melded into a holistic vision of where we need to go—in an especially comprehensive and coherent way. Below I’ll summarize the book’s key ideas in order to convey the prescience and scope of Trainer’s inquiry.

## ON SOCIAL CHANGE

Ted Trainer is not a reformist. He acknowledges that every reform we can win is of value, but he stresses that our work must be guided by a radical (“going to the root”) vision of transformation. Efforts that achieve a series of reforms but fail to alter our fundamental civilizational trajectories will ultimately be inadequate, perhaps even futile.

For example: Reformers advocate the elimination of unemployment through sharing around of the economy’s labor requirements. Trainer doesn’t disagree with this, but, at the same time, he wants us to consider the problem of unemployment within a different context. Deprivation of work and remuneration in a rational economy would make no more sense than “unemployment” (no chores, no provision) within a household. There is constantly much to be done to sustain life within any human unit—household, village, region, nation.

There should be no issue about anyone willing and able being denied participation in productive activity. But the institutions of a capitalist (or state-socialist) Leviathan are too remote and bureaucratic to “optimally allocate the labor resource,” no less to pay attention to the “right-livelihood” fulfillment of individual citizens. There was

*This book, written twenty years ago, fully anticipated the most important trends of the current phase of the “greening” movement.*

*Atomized individuals and families will not be able to meet the challenges we face at this critical juncture of our species history. Doing so will require the support and compensatory satisfactions that only community can provide.*

*There are many things we are supposed to take for granted in our current world of impersonal institutions that real communities would never countenance.*

*We need to learn to be satisfied with material sufficiency and a local, limited domain of experience.*

no unemployment in the Soviet Union, but systemic labor imbalances were pervasive despite repeated attempts to make fine-tuning adjustments. And Soviet citizens had a telling aphorism: “We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us.”

Trainer says our perspective should be: less and less labor employed by mega-institutions, more and more allocated to the straightforward sustenance of our home communities. In fact, local, interdependent efforts to “hold up the sky”—together—are the bedrock requisites for building community.

Trainer is a revolutionary, though a partisan of a soft variety of revolution. He says that, rather than expending ourselves in skirmishing with The System, we’d be better off disengaging from it—for the most part turning our attention to the positive endeavor of building the new society within the shell of the old. That doesn’t mean he’s anti-electoral or anti-legislative. He acknowledges that democratic and eco-communitarian policy advances open doors to transformation and thus are worth fighting for. But, rather than having the perspective of “taking power,” we should be thinking in terms of devolution of power.

## GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Communitarian praxis fosters a sense of “we”—“we” administer our affairs, “we” are responsible for the social and ecological commonweal—whereas in our current society just about all levels of government are perceived as “they.”

Trainer writes: “At present we are governed. We do not govern ourselves. This is not good for us; people should be in control of their own affairs and should make the decisions about issues that affect them. . . . This is not possible in our gigantic, complex, and bureaucratized societies with their manifold systems that can’t function without hoards of professionals, bureaucrats, and administrators. It is possible only when most functions have been devolved back to the regions and localities.”

There could and should be higher-level coordinative bodies for the sake of interregional cooperation. But the lowest practical level of sovereignty is the most preferable. Taxation should be mostly of, by, and for the localities.

In regard to political efficacy, Trainer says that Green Party electoral campaigns should prioritize their educational function. In doing so they can help lay the groundwork for the cultural/consciousness shifts that will be needed to have the citizenry comprehend and embrace “the Great U-Turn” (the devolutionary path). Like the Greens, Trainer talks about “overgrowing the government” rather than overthrowing it!

## LIFEWAYS

In my recent series of articles, “Thoughts For My Grandchildren,” I reflected upon two counterposed human lifeways. After Gary Snyder, I called them the “Old Ways” (stable, community-based, nature-embedded) and the “New Ways” (associated with the growth-oriented state/development/technology complex). A similar duality has occurred to many writers in recent decades. In his Ishmael trilogy, Daniel Quinn talks about “Leaver Culture” and “Taker Culture.” Trainer uses the terminology: “Conserver Society” versus “Consumer Society.”

All of these elucidations recognize how misguided it has been that the ideology of progress has conjured a goal of the generalization of affluence. Not only is this goal unattainable (the horizon always recedes) but the pursuit is oppressive. We’d be happier if we relaxed our standards and learned to live more lightly. All but the currently Very Rich could improve their quality of life by acknowledging and cultivating the satisfactions deriving from simplification, localization, and rejuvenation of community; by recognizing that the hyper-individualism and competitiveness of capitalist-urban-industrial society is neither natural nor desirable.

We need to learn to be satisfied with material sufficiency and a local, limited domain of experience. Many current norms and practices lead us in the wrong direction—and, moreover, are too expensive. Communitarian ways of solving problems and handling matters such as childcare, education, eldercare, and healthcare tend to be less expensive than institutional ways.

And simpler would be more serene. The pace and scale of life in the hypermodern era is numbing. It leaves us restless, craving the next stimulus, addicted to “innovation.” In this respect Trainer’s discourse is reminiscent of Paul Goodman’s when the latter described himself as a “Neolithic Conservative” and advised: “Innovate in order to simplify, otherwise as sparingly as possible.” Goodman noted that the profit-driven, limits-defying, balance-insensitive innovation associated with our touted “progress” can be disruptive and disorienting. Trainer agrees. His vision of social equanimity is attuned to conserving not only natural, but also cultural resources.

The de-stressing of people and the planet will to some extent require a return to “old way” paradigms such as: extended-family-within-village-within-home-territory. It will surely require a return to the human scale in most things. Trainer doesn’t shy away from advocating population reduction and de-growth. But, on the other hand, he doesn’t talk about “going back” to

some kind of pastoral arcadia. He notes that small cities can be ecological if inclusive of urban gardening and designed around groups of communitarian neighborhoods. There is no one right or best way to achieve sustainability. Cultural diversity is a key value for the Greens and for Ted Trainer.

## COMMUNITY

We evolved to live in community—the necessary (though not sufficient) basis for sane and sustainable human lifeways. Atomized individuals and families, making their best efforts, will not be able to meet the challenges we face at this critical juncture of our species history. Doing so will require the support and compensatory satisfactions that only community can provide. Living more lightly will be more easily accomplished and most effectively done together.

The populace of a nation-state; a network of “friends” on social media; the co-residents of a suburban township—these are examples of faux community. Real community is based on stable, familiar, face-to-face relationships of people who interdependently sustain their lives together. The cohousing and ecovillage movements seek to re-create such. Trainer says that the emergence of ecovillages as models “could well represent one of the most important turning points in history, the beginning of the pioneering experiments that might soon show us how best to go about the (re-)establishment of settlements in which people can live contentedly and responsibly.”

Real community is the locus of sharing, caring, and participatory culture. It fosters a sense of place and identity. There are many things we are supposed to take for granted in our current world of impersonal institutions that real communities would never countenance: homelessness, unemployment, gross inequality, destitution, educational failure. Impersonal authority—security in a real community would be provided by something like a Neighborhood Watch rather than a police force.

The issue of educational failure is instructive. Rampant in our society, it’s a function of institutionalized schooling. The minority of children who thrive under the fabricated conditions of make-work assignments, memorization, and testing are rewarded. Those who can’t relate to those conditions (whether the problem is with their inappropriate enculturation for such or their particular schools or their particular dispositions) are penalized and denigrated—often with life-long consequences. In a real community what we call “education” would be inherent and incidental. The community itself and its daily functioning would be the main educational resource.

## ECONOMICS

Trainer, like the Greens, has a post-capitalist conception of “community-based economics” encompassing a mixture of public, private, and cooperative enterprises. He says: “The model for an acceptable free-enterprise sector is given by the small firm owned and run by those who work in it. Here the main concerns

are to derive a reasonable income by providing a worthwhile service, rather than to grow, get rich, and someday become a corporate empire.”

Currently “the economy” is perceived to be an idiosyncratic, almost exogenous realm—complex and abstract—the vagaries of which affect society like the weather(!). Under rational conditions it would simply be the straightforward production of life’s necessities and comforts. All such activity would be accountable to and, at a macro level, under the guidance of the community as a whole (economy of, by, and for the community). Cottage industries, regional currencies, and local financial institutions would be key features. Goals would include deconcentration of wealth; less dependence upon imported goods and niche export production; allocation of resources away from the national centers.

In regard to the process of transitioning to a post-capitalist society, Trainer rejects the Marxist-progressivist paradigm of social change, advocating instead a strategy of disdaining the large corporations while favoring (even subsidizing, for the time being) local entities. This applies as much to the currently “under-developed” countries as it does to our own. Trainer: “In no area is the contradiction between the conventional and alternative paths so stark as with respect to Third World development. There are thousands of economists, advisers, bankers, engineers and others working to develop the Third World without the slightest understanding that their methodology is totally mistaken. The dominant conception of development is one in which it is not possible for reasonable living conditions to be achieved unless there is a long process of capital investment, urban growth, export development, borrowing, selling of natural assets, invasion by foreign firms, and seeing most of the country’s resources and production geared to the whims of a small number of mostly foreign consumers.”

## THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Trainer’s thinking in these areas is reminiscent of that of E. F. Schumacher. Technological development, efficiency, and mechanized productivity are of secondary importance relative to community solidarity, individual wellbeing, and right-livelihood. We should shift toward employing technologies and methods that a local village populace could produce and maintain.

In regard to food production, permaculture should become our watchword. Topsoil erosion losses have plagued our civilization for millennia; the advent of industrial agriculture has led to an accelerating depletion of this basic natural capital. This issue may be less publicized than that of climate change, but it conceivably could have more dramatic consequences in the near future.

Living more lightly will require population reduction and “energy descent.” Trainer goes beyond just advocating for renewable energy sources. Clearly we have to wean ourselves off of fossil fuels as quickly as possible (and avoid the temptation to

turn to nuclear energy—it's toxic and expensive); but we should have no illusions about renewables being able to supplant fossil fuels as sustainers of the kind of affluent lifestyles we've aspired to under the regime of consumer society.

Downscaling will be necessary and it should become a virtue. Our houses should be smaller and clustered. There must be a radical reduction of the number of cars and trucks. The paving over of the land should be reversed; many roads should be converted to horticultural usage. The public transit infrastructure should be expanded, especially light rail. Beyond public transit: less personal travel, less transportation of goods.

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Many advanced environmental thinkers were starting to insightfully address one or another of the above-mentioned issues during the latter half of the twentieth century. But Ted Trainer was one of the first to put it all together in a thoroughgoing holistic vision of “where to go and how to get there.” I can't think of a significant area where the perspective of *The Conserver Society* strikes me as faulty or deficient, except to say that in his zeal for promoting the transition Trainer has a tendency to minimize the resistance that will inevitably be encountered. His inclination is to convey a hopeful tone (avoiding the catastrophism that can

make people averse to reading environmental tracts) and not dwell on the challenges involved. I sympathize when he asserts that the transition could be achieved relatively quickly and painlessly—given a prior deep transformation of consciousness. I agree with him that the transformation has already begun (I think it started in the Sixties). But my sense is that the consciousness changes to date have been superficial relative to what Trainer feels will be required.

It can't be foretold when movements for deep change will start to achieve critical mass (movements such as: bioregionalism, permaculture, Transition Towns, ecovillages, Green politics). Efforts by those like Ted Trainer and his disciples at the Simplicity Institute—who are striving to lay the groundwork—are of vital importance. We should all be following their lead.



**STEVE WELZER,**

a co-editor of this magazine, has been a Green movement activist for over twenty years. He was a founding member of the Green Party of New Jersey in 1997 and recently served on the Steering Committee of the Green Party of the United States. Steve holds a Master's degree in Economics from Rutgers University. He lives in East Windsor, New Jersey, and is pursuing a project to establish an ecovillage in that state.

# Letters to the Editor

## TO THE EDITOR,

Thank you for another excellent issue of *Green Horizon*, (Spring/Summer 2015). Herewith a brief comment on a couple of the pieces.

I was very pleased to see the poem by Margaret Wheatley. I hope to read more of her work in future issues.

Linda Cree is “right on” in her essay of “Greening the Population Issue.” I urge her to work with her state party to submit her suggested plank to the GPUS Platform Committee.

Paul Krumm, who wrote about “rules,” is a friend of mine from many years back. We speak the same language. I also have a love/hate relationship with rules. The frustration I experienced as a delegate to the GPUS National Committee was due in part to the inability of the Committee to prevent some members from dominating the discussion – often disparaging the opinions of others. I wish Paul (and those of like mind) good success in

establishing better rules. The U.S. Green Party is losing many good Greens and their creative ideas with the present system.

Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks, *Florida*

## TO THE EDITOR,

I'm grateful that you encouraged me to write the article on population (Spring/Summer 2015), and very honored to have it in *Green Horizon!* GH is one of the few publications I always read cover to cover, and always come away from it feeling better informed on issues I care about—and re-inspired.

Linda Cree, *Michigan*

# PROGRESSIVE POPULISM: *Does it work?*

## Consider the Aam Aadmi Party in India

MARKO ULVILA

In recent years populist political parties have become important players around the world, well beyond Latin America, where the tradition is perhaps the strongest. With the increasing populist tendencies in the US presidential campaigns, right and left, it is interesting to look at the experiences. This article presents the story of the progressive populist Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in India that has governed the Delhi state since December 2014.

The global surge of popular movements of 2011 gave birth to an interesting progressive populist political party in India, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). It was formed from the momentum of a large anti-corruption movement. Since December 2014 it has ruled the Delhi state government with a strong mandate. Many important environmental movement leaders had joined the party and its agenda is close to the green parties around the world. However, in early 2015 the party leader Arvind Kejriwal purged progressive personalities from the leadership, and the party has lost much of its élan.

### FROM AN ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT TO AAM AADMI PARTY

When the Arab Spring was in the spotlight of global media, also India had a popular movement making headlines. The struggle was pointed against corruption and it mobilised in a unique way people from diverse sections of the society, from traditional left to rather apolitical urban and middle-class youth and professionals.

The movement was branded Anna movement after its firebrand leader Mr. Anna Hazare. The 70-year old veteran of Gandhian movement was able to turn the frustration of the society into an mass action. Its rallies attracted hundreds of thousand people across the country and abroad. The fast-until-death sessions of Anna Hazare created tremors in the political establishment of the country.

The main concrete demand of the Anna movement was the establishment of an independent, strong and well resourced ombudsman (lokpal in Hindi). Eventually some state governments went ahead with forming weak ombudsman's offices and the central government promised to do the same. These small gestures evaporated most of the steam from the movement. Towards end of 2012 the momentum of the struggle had declined with only minor improvements in the political structures. A weak lokpal bill was eventually legislated in 2013 by the Congress government.

The experience how the political system managed to tame the vivid anti-corruption movement made several the people in the Team Anna, the leadership committee of the movement, to play with the idea of setting up an alternative political party to change the balance of power in the system. The thought got support and in November 2012 Mr. Arvind Kejriwal announced a new party with the name Aam Aadmi (party of the common man). It draw together people from various walks of life, with large parts coming from non-political professional classes or Gandhian movements. Anna Hazare chose not to join the party as he has big doubts of the party system in general.

### THREE ROUNDS OF ELECTIONS

The first action of the new party was to contest the Delhi State elections in December 2013. It had only a year to set up the party structures and to prepare the manifesto and campaign. The extensive and mainly positive mass media coverage that the Anna movement had received continued also with the AAP. Delhi had been ruled by

*However, after the huge victory, trouble inside the party started. Given the diversity in the party membership there were important differences in the views, but they had been put aside for the elections. Now that there was no longer need to shy from debate, a number of senior leaders questioned a number of Kejriwal's choices and his rather authoritarian style of leadership.*

*Besides India, many other countries have witnessed emergence of a very interesting progressive populist parties – as well as terribly rightist ones. In a follow-up article in the next issue the case of Podemos of Spain will be discussed.*

increasingly corrupt government by the Congress party, so there was plenty of material to campaign with. The overall goal of the party was true democracy, or swaraaj in vernacular.

To everyone's surprise, the AAP got 28 out of the 70 seats in the Delhi Legislative Assembly. The main opposition party, the hindu-nationalist BJP got 31, but was not able to form a government on its own. Congress Party with only 8 seats decided to support the new-comers from outside, and Mr. Arvind Kejriwal became the chief minister of Delhi. AAP government in Delhi initiated number of reforms favourable to the common, low-income people. It continued also in a protest and campaign mode and addressed problems with the central government through demonstrations lead by chief minister Kejriwal. However, only after 49 days in the office Kejriwal announced his resignation because Congress declined to support a radical bill on the state ombudsman. Delhi transited to a bureaucratic administration.

One reason for Kejriwal's resignation was the national elections that were to be held within a year. Given the rocketing success in Delhi state many people in the AAP thought it is time to do the same nation-wide. So the preparations for the national elections started, and AAP put up some 400 candidates in the 545 constituencies of India. The party got a good result in some of them, but because of the electoral system of first-past-the-post, got only four MPs, all of them from Punjab. In Delhi AAP was increased its vote share, but all seats went to BJP. BJP wan the national election with clear margin and Mr. Nardendra Modi became the prime minister.

Because of the media hype and earlier Delhi experience many people considered the AAP performance disappointing. However, for a party that was hardly two years old the result can be considered a grand success. In the national manifesto the party had articulated well its pro-poor agenda, commitment to true democracy and some environmental aims as well.

After a few months AAP got its spirits up again with fresh Delhi elections announced for December 2014. The party prepared very comprehensive manifesto through consultations in numerous localities around the capital in a process called Delhi dialogue. Its campaign draw big popular support and AAP was able to set the agenda for debate. All older parties had difficulties to compete with the fresh and this time more professional approach of AAP. The outcome was a huge surprise even to most enthusiastic AAP supporters: it got 67 seats out of the 70. Congress was wiped out and BJP left with only three seats. Kejriwal was able to form a government firmly on his own.

### PURGE IN THE PARTY

However, after the huge victory trouble inside the party started. Given the diversity in the party membership there were important differences in the views, but they had been put aside for the elections. Now that there was no longer need to shy from debate, a number of senior leaders questioned a number of Kejriwal's choices and his rather authoritarian style of leadership.

In the 2014 Delhi elections Kejriwal was so focused on wining

that in selecting the candidates the ability to fund the campaign became central. Also the screening of candidates for clean record was relaxed. Even the unique transparent system reporting the party funding was compromised in couple of cases.

Two founding leaders of the party with a movement background, Mr. Yogendra Yadav and Mr. Prashant Bushan, asked clarification for such deviations from the party ideals and rules. Instead of having open debate inside the party and taking corrective action, Kejriwal's closest associates attacked the critics in public and accused them of anti-party activities. A bitter fight amid remarkable media attention took place, and in the end the critical leaders were purged from the party. The authoritarian nature of Kejriwal's leadership became known to all, and great many of the AAP supporters and activists were terrible disappointed.

The critics did not want to split the party, but after the purge had no place in the AAP. They started a process of consultations around the country with the banner swaraaj abhiyan (democracy campaign). It, along with another campaign with farmers and agricultural workers rights is drawing lots of support, but so far no party or election activity is announced.

The AAP has decided to focus on Delhi government and it is not contesting state elections elsewhere. Thus its phenomenal growth might be over and it becomes a regional party of firm standing in Delhi.

### LESSONS LEARNED

The AAP story is very fascinating in terms how a progressive movement can in a short time grow into a party-political force that makes a difference. It is difficult to find parallel to the election victory of December 2014 where a two year old party wins more than 50 % of the vote. From a green angle this is something to celebrate and to learn from.

However, the shortcoming of a charismatic leadership and immature party structures are all too obvious in the case of AAP. Especially in South Asia where nearly all parties operate with a supremo mode, it seems to become a limiting factor for AAP. Success and accent to power became supreme and the quest for internal democracy got compromised.

In a larger picture such an instant rise to power should blink some warning lights as well, since the content of a movement that attains power can also be reactionary, as we have seen in France with the rise of the almost fascist National Front of Le Pen.

Besides India, many other countries have witnessed emergence of very interesting progressive populist parties - as well as terribly rightist ones. In a follow-up article in the next issue the case of Podemos of Spain will be discussed.



**MARKO ULVILA**

is an active member of the Green party in Finland. Over the years he has been a political adviser to a green minister in Helsinki and Member of European Parliament in Brussels. He lives in Tampere, Finland in a 100-year old log-house estate managed by a collective.

# Ranked Choice Voting:

## *Embracing a move from margins to the mainstream*

ROB RICHIE

In my 23 years at FairVote, I've seen my share of advances and setbacks. I've gone from years of working from home to having a staff of more than ten, then twice seen our budget boom and bust. We've played lynchpin roles to introduce ideas like universal voter registration, a constitutional right to vote and the National Popular Vote plan, but making progress often has felt like two steps forward, one back.

That's been particularly true of our core work on ranked choice voting (RCV, "instant runoff voting") in both its winner-take-all and proportional representation (PR) form. From 2002-2008, RCV won 14 of 17 times on the ballot, peaking in 2006 with victories in measures to implement RCV in Minneapolis (MN), Oakland (CA), and Pierce County (WA) along with an advisory measure in support of the PR form of RCV in Davis (CA). We then had three years of mostly defeats, including by seven votes in Aspen (CO), by 4% in Burlington (VT), and, when seeking to win the PR version, by 5% in Cincinnati.

Greens know what it's like, of course. Over these same years they've had their share of victories and defeats, times of elation and of frustration. Indeed, some have overlapped with ours at FairVote, as Green activists have played a key role in some of the most important campaigns for RCV. Throughout, the state of the world and our nation's politics has provided a near-daily reminder of the urgent need for a politics where new voices can speak truth to power. Passively following the path of least resistance and the "lesser evil" is not an option in these complex times of war, ecological deterioration, inequality and economic uncertainty.

RCV represents a necessary step forward to a politics of pluralism and shared representation. When used to elect one person, it means that voters can rank their favorite candidates without any calculation of 'wasted votes.' Instead, you rank the candidates, and if your first choice ends up in last, your ballot goes to your next choice until a candidate wins with a majority. When used to elect more than one person, the ranking is the same, but there's a key new feature: the percentage of the vote needed to win declines in relation to the number of seats. When electing nine, as they do in Cambridge (MA), it takes just over 10% to win – as was key to the 2013 win in Cambridge by Nadeem Mazen, a then-29-year-old Arab American who went from being a spokesperson for Occupy Boston to city council in his first run for office.

For those seeking to crack the code of plurality, winner-take-all politics, I have good news: ranked choice voting is on the move. We're gaining new allies, finding new opportunities and overcoming old forces of resistance. Embracing this movement

for RCV to the mainstream does mean working with allies that reformers might have expected – but it's essential to victory.

Let's start with the drive to win RCV in Maine. Last fall, just days before the November elections, the Maine Secretary of State okayed the language of a petition to establish RCV for all primary and general elections for state and congressional elections, starting in 2018. A massive volunteer effort flowered, covering more than 100 polling places and collecting far more than half the signatures necessary to place RCV on the 2016 ballot.

The campaign that has developed is truly exciting. They've developed partnerships across the political spectrum and across the state, including leading Democrats, Republicans independents and Greens and community leaders from small rural towns to the bigger cities along the coast. The state's leading newspapers have endorsed RCV, and it seems that it's a rare day that some backer doesn't have yet another letter in a local Maine paper making the case for RCV. (See [RCVMaine.com](http://RCVMaine.com))

We've also made giant strides in overcoming the frustrations we've experienced with our voting equipment industry – one dominated by for-profit vendors who are far more likely to see RCV as an opportunity to get more money from customers than problem-solve. Due to years of effort and pushing forward for implementation of RCV in cities adopting it, we're reaching a tipping point where the major vendors will have ways to run RCV elections. That should only get better in just the next four years, to the point where consideration of RCV can entirely be a matter of policy debate, not logistics and associated costs.

That change is allowing serious talk of RCV in more cities, including Seattle, New York, Washington, D.C., and, on this year's ballot, Duluth (MN). It also means looking for chances to go statewide, including with unlikely allies. For instance, most Greens hate the "Top Two primary," which knocks out all but two candidates in low-turnout, unrepresentative primary electorates – and contributed to California having the greatest single decline in voter turnout of any state in the nation from 2010 to 2014. But a growing number of Top Two advocates are interested in ways of building RCV into their proposal – perhaps a "top four" proposal with RCV in both the primary and the general, or variations of the Louisiana system that get rid of a pre-general election contest entirely.

Look also for a new bill in Congress in the coming year to make a huge change: require all states with more than one House Member to use RCV in multi-winner districts, including wherever possible with five-seat districts and a victory threshold of 17% of the vote. The prospect of such legislation seemed remote just a few years ago, but now I see it as eminently winnable

in the next decade. It provides a fluid way to elect more women, people of color and other kinds of diversity, and represents by far the best way to end gerrymandering, reduce polarization between the major parties, and eliminate today's partisan skew that means Republicans can control the House with just 45% of the national vote, and in turn make them prisoner of their shrinking base rather than evolve with today's changing electorate.

Many of those arguments aren't of much interest to Greens, but each one brings to our reform drive a constituency that can help win change. We'll be doing a lot of that in the years ahead, with growing chances to win change wherever you are and

work with people you might never expected to be allies Keep in touch with us at FairVote.org for new wins and new ways to get involved with this reform drive in your community.



**ROB RICHIE**

has directed FairVote since 1992. His office is in Takoma Park, Maryland. He is co-author of *Whose Votes Count*. He is a guest on many national media including NPR, C-SPAN, NBC News, CNN, and FOX. Rob has been a speaker at the American Political Science Association conventions, National Latino Congress, and the National Conference of State Legislatures. He and his wife Cynthia Terrell live with their three children in Takoma Park.

# Bernie: Think About It!

**JOHN RENSENBRINK**

The seemingly endless cycle continues. In the waning decades of the last century it was Jesse Jackson; in the dawning years of the new century it was Dennis Kucinich; and now in this second decade of the new century it's Bernie Sanders. It's a pattern, well known and bitter. It's hard to know fully what it is. A sudden and temporary flash of light in a darkened political world? A goad to the Democratic Party to do better? A decoy to keep progressives tied to the Democratic Party? All of the above in some ways? But they all end the same way: in dire disappointment, in rueful second guessing, in sad failure.

But a better understanding of the political world tells us something different. Even earlier than 2015/16, and surely now, the political world includes a sparkling, energetic, and altogether exciting alternative to the Democratic Party. It is an alternative that progressives have a hard time perceiving. They can't wean themselves away from the Democratic Party. Or they give in to the sagging feeling that a different party like Jill Stein's Green Party, no matter how close its message is to what's really needed, just "can't win". Or they think that though it might be a good idea to back a likely alternative, Bernie's message is good enough so let's go with that instead of going out on a limb. All this spells timidity—unwarranted timidity.

They certainly spell a fatal failure of political smarts and common sense. Bernie can't win. It's as simple as that. The economic/political class that runs the United States, can't afford and won't permit it. They have powerful means and connections to make it not happen. So even in the totally unlikely case of Bernie getting the Democratic nomination, his message and he himself will be hemmed in and made irrelevant from the start. The notion that, in spite of all, the message and the man will prevail is not only doomed but deluded and perverse. He and his message will be whittled down to dust. There's just too much at stake for the

oligarchy/militarist powers that control Washington to allow it to happen; and most certainly the top ranks of the Democratic Party who are steeply and deeply tied in with the military industrial complex will not countenance either Bernie's message or Bernie himself. He must be sidestepped. Or pushed to a point where it doesn't matter if he is the candidate; he will have become their candidate in every way. If he predictively loses, he will back the victorious Democratic nominee. The script will follow the pattern.

**SO WHY DOES BERNIE DO IT?**

So why does he not sign on to Jill Stein's campaign? This question is as necessary as it is bemusing. Indeed, why not? He won't of course, but why not? Stein is certainly as viable a candidate as is Bernie. But there is a tremendous difference. Stein truly is an alternative; Bernie is not. He can't be. If Bernie wants an alternative he must realize that it can only come from outside the entrenched two-party domination of American politics. The Green Party has been building for this for 31 years and they have come far. Why shouldn't Bernie give them the benefit of the doubt and jump into the fray side by side with Jill? What can he lose? Measure it against what he can gain—what his progressive followers can gain, and what the country and the world can gain. What is gained is the emergence of a truly powerful opposition and healing movement in the United States. Our country needs that. The world needs that. The planet needs that. The poor need that.

**OH BERNIE: THINK ABOUT IT!**



**JOHN RENSENBRINK**

lives in Maine, is professor emeritus of government at Bowdoin College, helped found 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 forthcoming book is entitled, *The Big Change: Signs of a New Beginning*.



# GREEN HORIZON

## *Green Horizon Sustainers 2014-2015*

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Theresa Amato and Todd Main, Illinois  
Stephen A. Baker, Pennsylvania  
David and Gillian Bath, Florida  
John Battista and Justine McCabe, Connecticut  
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Dee Berry, Kansas  
Antonio Blasé, Maine  
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