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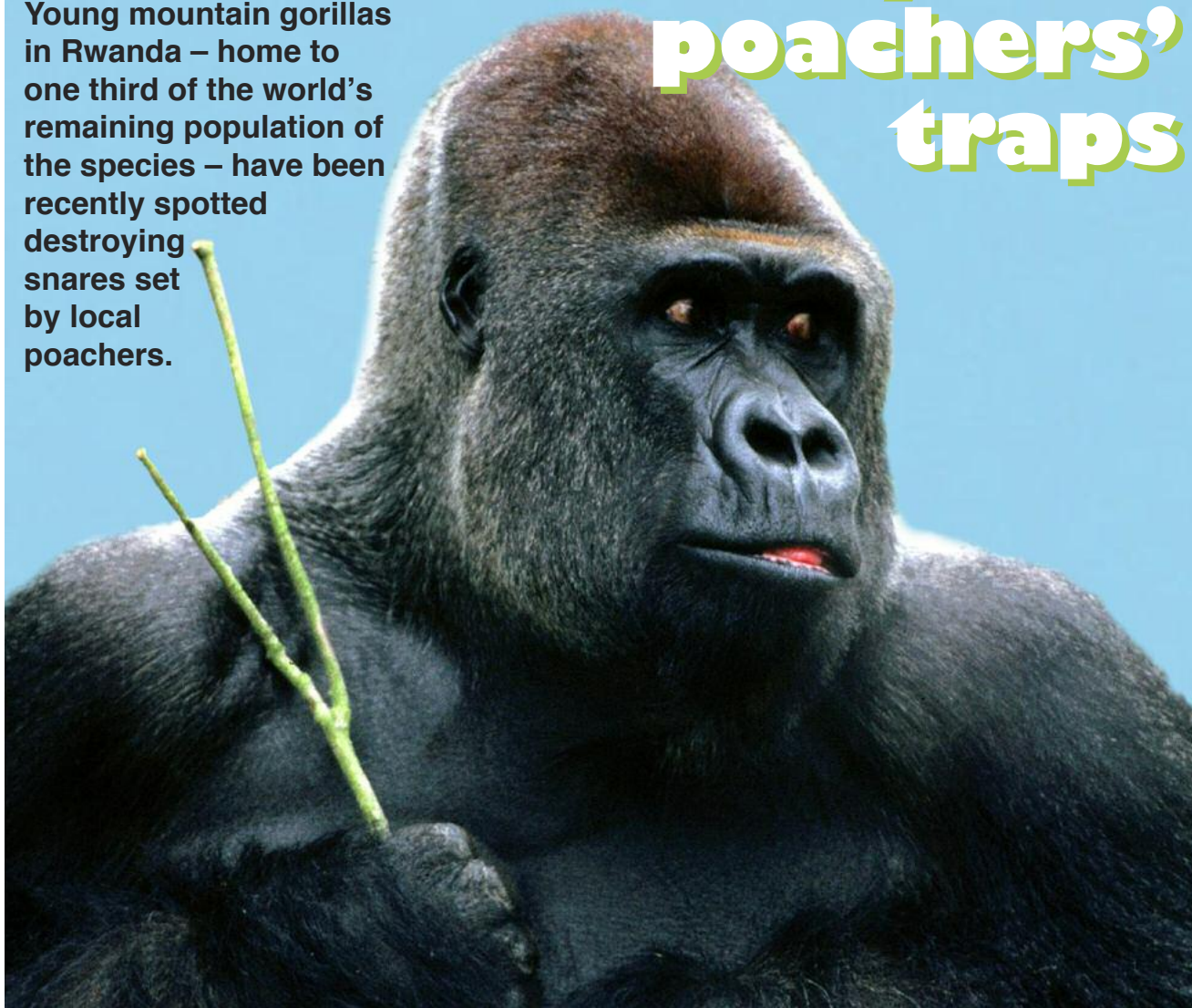
Fall/Winter 2012 *from around the world, and right next door...*

Positive News™

www.positivenewsus.org

Young gorillas destroy poachers' traps

Young mountain gorillas in Rwanda – home to one third of the world's remaining population of the species – have been recently spotted destroying snares set by local poachers.



The traps set by bush-meat hunters are set for antelope and other animals, but sometimes capture the gorillas. Adults are generally strong enough to free themselves. Youngsters aren't always so lucky. The reserve trackers usually destroy the traps, and gorillas are very likely to have learned how to destroy them by watching the trackers in Volcanoes National Park in North West Rwanda.

Veronica Vecellio, program director of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, said: "We knew that gorillas do this, but all of the reported cases in the past were carried out by adult gorillas, mostly silverbacks [alpha males in gorilla groups]."

In July, however, two juveniles and one blackback - aged 8–12 years - worked together to deactivate two snares and the way they did it demonstrated an "impressive cognitive skill," said Veronica.

Poachers' snares pose one of the biggest threats to mountain gorilla populations, often maiming and killing the animals. But a bigger drive towards conservation and international awareness has seen gorilla numbers grow by 17% over the last 15 years, said a spokesperson for the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund. There is now a total population of 800 in existence.

"Our battle to detect and destroy snares from the park is far from over. But today we can proudly confirm that gorillas are doing their part too," said the spokesperson.

More Information:

gorillafund.org
Content by Rachel England
for Positive News UK

Why Positive News?

**It brings hope
Exemplifies solutions
Inspires to action**

We envision a world in which people treat each other with respect and kindness, where we consider the Earth to be our home to care for and to enjoy. And we see that this world is in the process of emerging!

Positive News is a reflection of this widespread movement and tells its powerful stories.



France creates Robin Hood Tax

Robin Hood Tax campaigners have welcomed an announcement by the French government to implement a financial transactions tax (FTT). The 0.2% tax will be collected on all transactions involving French companies that are valued at more than 1.5 billion dollars.

The Robin Hood Tax activists who have been campaigning since 2010, hope the tax will direct a portion of funds from large corporations to positive initiatives such as reducing poverty and tackling climate change.

The new French tax is expected to raise half a billion euros next year and President Francois Hollande has indicated that a proportion of this will be used to help fight global poverty and HIV-AIDS.

David Hillman, spokesperson for the Robin Hood Tax, said, "It's great news that France is forging ahead with a Robin Hood Tax, showing it's capable of putting the interests of people before the profits of a privileged few."

A further nine European countries are expected to join France by creating their own FTTs by December 2012.
Source: Positive News UK

Media should report solutions, says former BBC broadcaster

The British press features too many negative and irrelevant news stories that don't accurately reflect what's going on in the world, former BBC broadcaster Martyn Lewis said recently.

Speaking to an audience at the Good News for the Media event held at the British Museum, Martyn said most media outlets do not tell people stories about things that are truly shaping our world.

Continued on Page 7

Farmer's Market puts a new spin on rutabaga

FUN Page 12

Helen Keller: the Radical

SOCIAL JUSTICE Page 8

One man plants a forest

EARTH Page 20



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Chinese Standing up to Growing Pollution

Thousands of Chinese protesting against pollution from a huge paper factory in eastern China have taken to the streets this summer. The protesters claimed victory in late July when the Chinese officials canceled the industrial waste pipeline project after the demonstrators occupied a government office, destroyed computers, overturned cars and threw documents out the windows.

The sewage pipe from the paper mill discharges in the port of Lusi, one of four fishing harbors in Qidong. Protests against environmental degradation have increased in China, where three decades of rapid and unfettered industrial expansion have taken their toll. The demonstrators had seized bottles of liquor and wine from the offices along with cartons of cigarettes, items that Chinese officials frequently receive as bribes in return for allowing polluting projects to be built. Discharges were set to climb to 150,000 tons of sewage a day when the mill was fully operational, according to residents quoted by the state-run *Global Times* newspaper. One protestor, who for safety reasons only gave her name as Qindong Longhuisheng estimated the number at 100,000.



"There are people everywhere, on walls, cars, rooftops, in streets," another blogger said. Such protests "suggest that the middle class, whose members seemed willing to accept in the 1990s that being able to buy more things equaled having a better life, is now wondering whether one's quality of life has improved, if you have to worry about breathing the air, drinking the water, and whether the food you're eating is safe," Jeffrey Wasserstrom, of the University of California Irvine told Reuters.

Earlier the same month, Shifang city in the southwestern province of Sichuan scrapped plans for a copper plant after thousands of protesters, including high school students, clashed with riot police.

Content from:

www.CommonDreams.org

Major manufacturer of consumer products to remove harmful chemicals



The former, which is released over time by preservatives in products, was declared a carcinogen by the U.S. government last year. The latter, a byproduct of a process that makes other ingredients gentler for the skin, has been linked to cancer in animals.

Johnson & Johnson already announced plans to remove a list of potentially harmful chemicals, including formaldehyde, from its personal care products by 2015. It's the first such move by a major manufacturer of consumer products. J&J already announced that it would remove questionable chemicals from its baby products by 2013, but the company is now extending that commitment to its adult product lines, which include popular brands like Neutrogena, Aveeno and Clean & Clear. The company will phase out ingredients like formaldehyde and 1,4 dioxane.

Online map charts Rise of New Economy

There are signs of a new, alternative economy building around us, such as the growth of local currencies, community skill-sharing projects or time-banking networks, and businesses that are reinvesting their profits in ways that benefit local people. The same is happening throughout the world, with innovative groups working to build a more sustainable economy from the ground up.

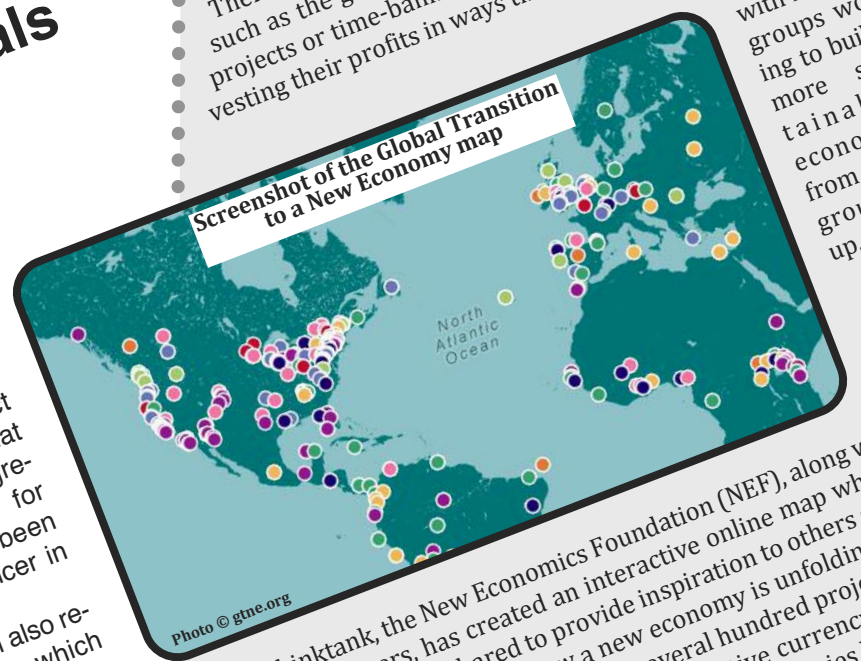


Photo © gtno.org

UK thinktank, the New Economics Foundation (NEF), along with a group of partners, has created an interactive online map where these initiatives can be shared to provide inspiration to others and give a clearer global picture of how a new economy is unfolding. The map launched so far, such as BNB – an alternative currency in Switzerland, which can be swapped with other local currencies like the Alsace in France and the Baden in Germany. Also included are various credit unions in the US, eco-villages and land co-operatives in Ireland and the Kareti barter system in Greece. Each project is color-coded to represent which section of the economy it fits into and project details are also listed. The creators of the map, including Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, the New Economics Institute and the Green Economy Coalition presented the map at the Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, at the end of June. "We want to show policy makers what's happening in the new economy," says Victoria Johnson, senior researcher at NEF. "The map is in its early stages but shows innovative small scale responses to big challenges. There is not one magic bullet to change the economy, but this will show the breadth of initiatives." The map is part of a

Switzerland Named Most Eco Country

Switzerland is leading the world in pollution control and natural resource management, according to the 2012 Environmental Performance Index. Latvia, Norway, Luxembourg and Costa Rica also made the top five in the survey of 132 countries. Researchers at Yale and Columbia Universities produced the index in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. Switzerland scored highly because of its 'ecosys-



tem vitality' and environmental health. In particular, it was commended for a strong performance in biodiversity and habitat protection, and in air control. The bottom five were South Africa, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iraq. Latvia, Azerbaijan, Romania, Albania and Egypt were noted for their improvements this year; Latvia in particular for eliminating coal power and for actively reforestation.

Content form Positive News UK

Bhutan to become self sufficient in vegetables



Bhutan has set a target of growing all of its own vegetables by 2014. The announcement made by the Bhutan Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) sets out plans to decrease the country's dependency on imports and support its farming industry.

Currently at 60% self-sufficient in vegetables, Bhutan needs to almost double its production to meet the target. This will require an additional 23,850 million tonnes of crops to be grown. The government will not be banning imports, but instead plans to support domestic agriculture.

To help extend the growing season, 216 greenhouses will be provided in order to combat the country's harsh winters. Irrigation and harvesting improvements will also be made, with government subsidies for water pumps, storage tanks and hose pipes.

Seeds will also be subsidised to encourage farmers to plant more crops. In 2007, Bhutan set out plans to become the world's first country to have a completely organic agricultural system, which it aims to achieve by 2020. This goal was reiterated at the Rio+20 climate change conference in June by the Bhutanese prime minister, Jigmi Thinley.

More Information:
www.moaf.gov.bt
Positive News UK

Reported by Tom Lawson for Positive News UK

Solar Energy Could Quadruple in Five Years

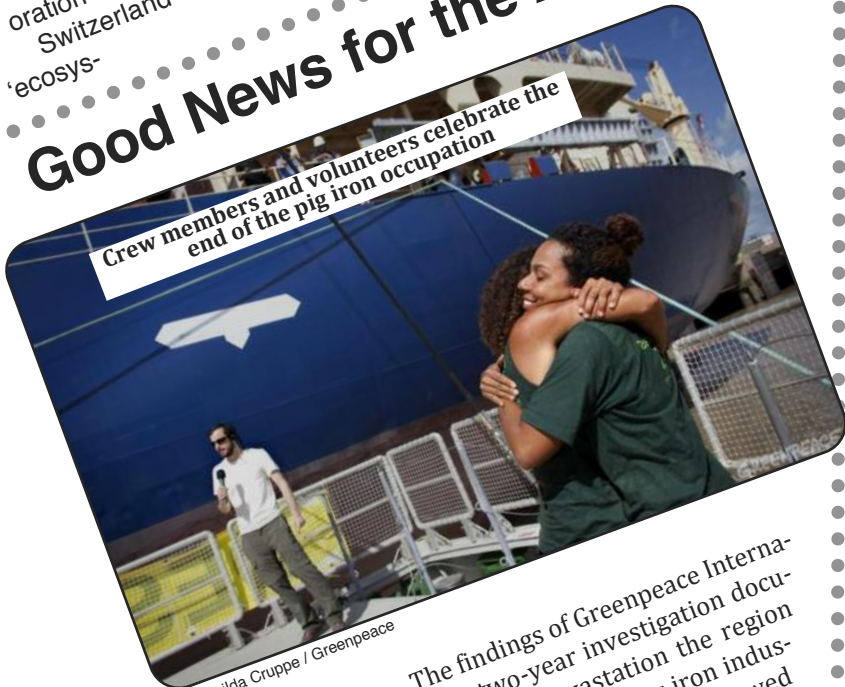


The world's solar power generating capacity could grow by 200-400% over the next five years if there is political will, according to the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA). At a conference in Italy, the secretary general of the EPIA, Reinhold Buttgereit, said that Germany, the world's biggest PV (photovoltaic solar energy) market, is likely to be the main global driver of growth in capacity this year, followed by China, the United States and Japan. Around the world several new major projects are planned. In the US, up to 601 large-scale solar installations are due to be in place by 2015, which could result in a national total of 17 gigawatts of solar capacity. Nearly two-thirds of this is set to come from projects in California, which aims to produce 33% of its energy from renewables by 2020.

In Dubai, a multi-billion dollar solar park covering 48 sq km is expected to produce 1,000 MW of energy by 2030, increasing the contribution of solar to the country's total energy supply from less than 1% to 5%. It is part of the country's strategy to reduce its carbon emissions 30% by 2030.

Reported by
Claudia Cahalane from
Positive News UK

Good News for the Amazon!



The pig iron industry has committed to finally changing its ways – all seven pig iron companies in the Brazilian state of Maranhão recently signed an agreement not to source wood charcoal that comes from forest destruction, slave labor or encroaches into indigenous lands. For years, the industry's progress or efforts to address these issues were either ineffective or only symbolic. Today, however, we've seen a significant step towards protecting the forest and its people.

This summer, activists occupied the anchor chain of the Clipper Hope, a barge that carries pig iron, the primary ingredient for steel used by the world's leading carmakers. Pig iron from this region is often processed using wood charcoal made from rainforest wood, which is often illegally logged. To make matters worse, the charcoal is 'cooked' in clay ovens by workers under conditions that can only be compared to slavery.

Story from:
Greenpeace International

wider project called Global Transition 2012, an international network of organizations and leading thinkers working to achieve an outcome from the Rio+20 conference that "catalyses a global transition to an economy that maximizes wellbeing, operates within environmental limits and is capable of coping and adapting to global environmental change."

More Information:
www.gtne.org
Positive News UK

Reported by Claudia Cahalane for Positive News UK



Occupy the Dam: Brazil's Indigenous Uprising

In the Amazonian backcountry, tribes are challenging construction of the world's third-largest dam—by dismantling it. John Perkins reports what they can teach us about standing up to injustice.

This summer, hundreds of indigenous demonstrators began dismantling a dam in the heart of Brazil's rainforest to protest the destruction it would bring to lands they have loved and honored for centuries. The Brazilian government is promoting construction of the massive, \$14 billion Belo Monte Dam, which would be the world's third largest once completed in 2019.

The Belo Monte Dam is the most controversial of dozens of dams planned in the Amazon region and threatens the lives and livelihoods of thousands of Amazonian people, plants, and animals. Situated on the Xingu River, the dam is set to flood roughly 150 square miles of already stressed rainforest and deprive an estimated 20,000 people of their homes, their incomes, and even their lives.

Moreover, the influx of immigrants will bring massive disruption to the socioeconomic balance of the region. People whose livelihoods have primarily depended on hunting and gathering or farming may suddenly find themselves forced to take jobs as manual laborers and servants.

History has shown again and again that dams in general wreak havoc in areas where they are built, despite promises to the contrary by developers and governments. Hydroelectric energy is anything but "clean" when measured in terms of the excruciating pain it causes individuals, social institutions, and local ecology. The costs—often hidden—include those associated with the privatization of water; the extinction of plants that might provide cures for cancer, HIV, and other

diseases; the silting up of rivers and lakes; and the disruption of migratory patterns for many species of birds.

The indigenous peoples threatened by the Belo Monte Dam, include those of the Xikrin, Juruna, Arara, Parakanã, Kuruaya and Kayapó tribes. They—as well as local flora and fauna—have been greatly effected by other hydroelectric dams, while rarely gaining any of the potential benefits. Now they are fighting back.

Indigenous leaders from these groups have asked the Brazilian

the mega-dam has not yet been presented in local villages; also, that a system to ensure small boat navigation in the vicinity of the cofferdams, temporary enclosures built to facilitate the construction process, has not been implemented. Without such a system, many will be isolated from markets, health care facilities, and other serv-

“The indigenous people's occupation of the dam garnered international attention, connecting their situation to other events across the globe.”



Three hundred indigenous people, small farmers, fisherfolk, and locals occupied the Belo Monte Dam project, removing a strip of earth to restore the Xingu's natural flow and "freeing the river"

government to immediately withdraw the installation license for Belo Monte. They demand a halt to work until the government puts into place "effective programs and measures to address the impacts of the dam on local people." They point out that a promised monetary program to compensate for the negative impacts of

ices.

The cofferdams have already rendered much of the region's water undrinkable and unsuitable for bathing. Wells promised by the government and Norte Energia have not yet been drilled. The list of grievances goes on and on and is only the latest in a very old story of exploitation of

nature and people in the name of "progress." Far too often, this has meant benefiting only the wealthiest in society and business.

Yet here in the backcountry of Brazil, there is a difference: the makings of a new story. The indigenous people's occupation of the dam garnered international attention, connecting their situation to other events across the globe—the Arab Spring, democratic revolutions in Latin America, the Occupy Movement, and austerity strikes in Spain and other European nations. Brazil's indigenous protesters have joined protesters on every continent who are demanding that rights be restored to the people.

Stories take time to evolve. This one, the story of people awakening on a global level to the need to oppose and replace exploitative dreams, is still in its beginning phase. And the first chapter has been powerful, elegant, and bold.

A few years ago I was invited, with a group to Ladakh, a protectorate of India, to meet with the Dalai Lama. Among a great deal of sage advice he offered was the following: "It is important to pray and meditate for peace, for a more compassionate and better world. But if that is all you do, it is a waste of time. You also must take actions to make that happen. Every single day."

It is time for each and every one of us to follow that advice.

Opposing the Belo Monte Dam project provides an opportunity for you and me to honor those words, and those leading resistance to it can help us understand the importance of looking around—in our neighborhoods as well as globally—to determine what else we can do to change the story.

Story from YES! Magazine,
www.yesmagazine.org

Victoire du Québec: Front yard garden gets to stay!

Recently, a couple in a small Quebec city of Drummondville got a tasty dose of victory. Josée Landry and Michel Beauchamp who grow vegetables in front of their house were ordered this summer to remove the plot do to it's in compliance with the city code. A street-facing veggie garden cannot occupy more than 30 percent of the front yard.

The couple refused to lay down their spades. They placed a bed in their garden and held a "bed in". The local media paid attention, and Kitchen Gardens International got behind them

with a petition that gathered tens of thousands of supporters.

In August, the Drummondville Municipal Council not only backed down, but they have invited Michel and Josée to help implement new guidelines that will allow residents to nurture their gardening aspirations.

It helps transition the case from one of confrontation to one of collaboration.

Petition organizer Roger Dorion is hopeful this could help other frontyard farmers as well. He said: "The Drummondville case was one of the highest

profile examples of a local municipality challenging the right to grow food in one's own yard. While it took place in Canada, it quickly attracted international media attention because of the garden's beauty and productivity. The win is significant because it helps establish a precedent that other urban and suburban gardeners can refer to when similar challenges arise in other parts of the world."

The Drummondville case is an inspiring example of transition from confrontation to collaboration.



Michel and Josée's plentiful garden



Below are excerpts of a talk given to environmental organizers on motivating people based on hope rather than discouragement. Elizabeth Saunders explains why organizing through fear and guilt is ineffective.

Good morning. As some of you know, I am Clean Water Action's Massachusetts Legislative Director and I've worked for Clean Water Action for 11 years. I have the privilege of coordinating a broad coalition called the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, which is working to pass laws and policies that will prevent harm to our health from toxic chemicals and I also work on campaigns to remove toxic and recyclable products from our waste stream.

For nearly the entire time that I've been working with CWA we have been working to pass two bills. The Safer Alternatives Bill would create a program for systematically replacing toxic chemicals with feasible safer alternatives. The Electronic Waste Producer Responsibility Bill would make manufacturers responsible for the recycling of computers and televisions at the end of their lives.

Both of these bills are very common sense pieces of legislation. Both have been pending before the Massachusetts legislature for a

decade, which is too long. But I don't actually want to focus on the details of these campaigns here today. I've been thinking about a bigger picture and I want to share that with you.

The Real Goal

The real goal that we are working towards is bigger than any of our campaigns. It is ending the degradation of the environment. Let's just pause right there and take a moment to let that sink in. What will it take to get there?

One thing that it will take is motivating people for the long haul, and to do that we have to stay motivated ourselves.

Environmental groups often motivate people based on fear (I've done that) or guilt (I've done that too). However, fear and guilt only get us so far. They might motivate someone to action briefly, but that motivation will fizzle out soon. Mostly fear and guilt are immobilizing and alienating.

What really gets people going, and keeps them going, is hope and connection with other people.

Last week I had the opportunity to hear Bill McKibben speak. Bill is the founder of 350.org—an international organization working to end climate change.

Bill McKibben's Idea

Bill McKibben started his talk with some statistics about rising sea levels, increased carbon in the atmosphere, and other scary information. I was barely listening. Then he started to show photographs from an international day of action that 350.org organized a year or two ago. The pictures were of people in countries all over the world holding up signs that said, or standing in formation to spell out, "350." People in Asia, Africa, South America, Europe. Now THAT is hopeful!

Then he showed a slide that was of three photos spliced together, and he explained that each of these photos was taken along the shores of the Dead Sea. In one photo a group of people from Jordan formed the 3, in the second a group from Palestine formed the 5, and in the 3rd a group from Israel formed the 0. That slide made me cry. And it made me want to be a part of the next international day of action that 350.org organizes.

Here at Clean Water Action we do a good job of incorporating hope into what we do. We always present our campaigns with a "problem, solution, and strategy." Two of those three things are hopeful!

To motivate people based on hope, we have to find that hope for ourselves. And you have to be genuine about it in order to offer hope for the long term.

On discouragement

The opposite of hope is discouragement. Let's face it, we all struggle with discouragement. Let's see a show of hands: Who feels discouraged while doing this work sometimes? [nearly everyone.]

One could look at my work and argue that 10 years without votes on important and commonsense legislation would be ground for discouragement. And yes, sometimes that gets me down and I feel discouraged. One could also argue that there are reasons for me to be

hopeful. For example, there have been policy victories, a coalition of dedicated people that have worked together for 10 years, legislators who really want our bills to pass, and chemicals that manufacturers have taken out of their products.

We are surrounded by both discouraging and hopeful things all the time. Our challenge as organizers is to acknowledge the discouragement, let ourselves feel it briefly so that it doesn't just build up inside, and then put it aside and put our attention on the reasons to be hopeful.

If we focus too much on the discouragement and fear, we get weighted down by it. We stop being able to think freshly. We stop being able to see the reasons to be hopeful. And we're not effective organizers.

If you focus only on the hopeful parts and don't acknowledge the hard feelings, you're also missing something important. It's not that you don't have them, we all do, it's that when we don't give them space, we pack them into a little box somewhere in our brains, and at some point they're going to start leaking out.

So this is about striking a balance.

On importance of being listened to

I want to offer a tool to help you strike that balance which I'm going to call a "listening partnership." In a listening partnership you team up with one other person. Pick a length of time, say 10 minutes. Then for the first 5 minutes one person talks while the other listens. Then for the next 5 minutes you switch.

It is really valuable to be listened to and to have a place where you can say what's on your mind without worrying about what the other person is going to think or say. It's also important to take turns so that there isn't one person who ends up listening to everybody all the time, while

someone else is venting their feelings to everyone all day.

If you're discouraged, a listening partnership is a good place to talk about it and get it off your chest. Let that discouragement know that it has a place to be recognized and aired, and then you can decide to put your attention off of it the rest of the time.

I use this tool often, and it can turn a hard day around. It's helpful to have a tool to use when that discouragement or other hard feelings come up.

Yesterday morning, someone shared with me something another environmental leader had said, when asked whether he ever felt discouraged by the continued progress of climate change. He said, no, he isn't discouraged because his job is not to end climate change. His job is to get up every day and do the best that he can, and offer something positive to the people that he interacts with. That is what you do as environmental activists every day. Every time, when you make someone feel a little more hopeful, is a victory.

It matters that you're here. And it matters that we're doing this work together. And it matters that no matter how long you work for Clean Water Action, I think that each of us can count on the fact that everyone in this room is in the fight to end the degradation of the environment and to create a just world together. And that is a reason to be hopeful.



Elizabeth Saunders

••• Grow-Your-Own Bike •••

Making the most of the southern African country's bamboo plants, two Zambians and two Americans have set up a company that is crafting high-end, lightweight bicycles with frames made out of the locally grown bamboo.

Dubbed Zambikes, the company is putting its custom-built Zambian bikes on roads around the world, offering pedal enthusiasts a unique ride while helping to empower local communities back home.

"It's a plus to have a product that is grown in Africa, made in Africa and exported to everywhere else in the world," says Zambikes co-founder Mwewa Chikamba. "It's rare that we have such incentives coming through - mostly we are importing stuff from the rest of the world."

Eye-catching, super light and extremely durable, bamboo bicycles have gained traction in recent years, becoming a popular alterna-

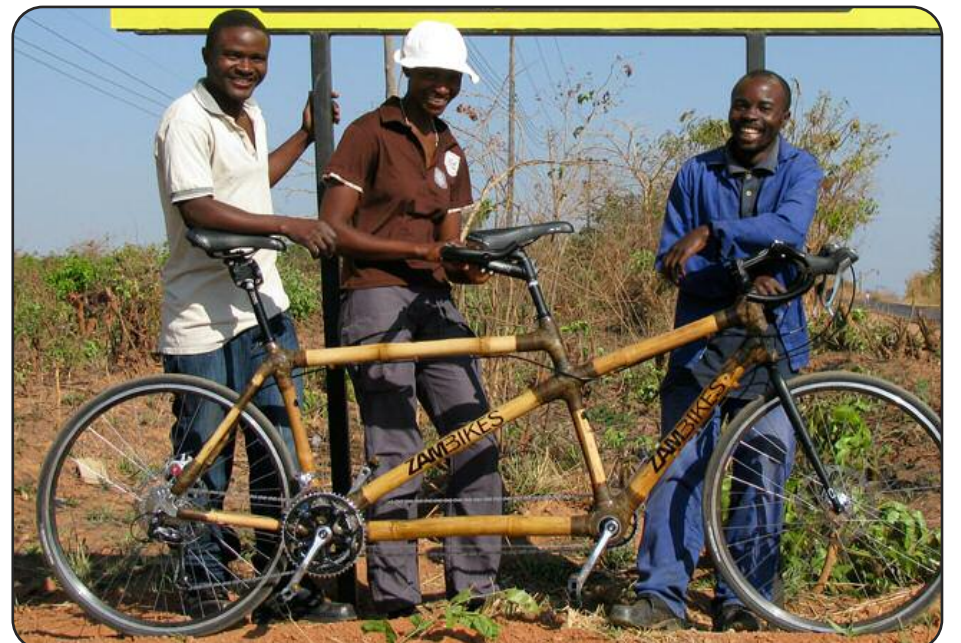
tive to traditional steel or aluminum bikes. The material, one of nature's fastest growing resources, has great shock absorbing abilities that contribute to a smooth and eco-friendly ride.

So far, the company, which employs some 40 people, has produced about 500 hand-made bamboo frames, and this year alone it expects to crank out another 450.

In addition to bamboo bikes, Zambikes is also making steel bicycles to cater to the local market's needs for inexpensive transport, having so far produced about 10,000 of them. It is also producing cargo carts and bicycle ambulances that are designed to easily transport patients to a health center.

More information:

Zambikes.org
information@zambikes.org





Restaurant offers discount to phone-free diners

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — A Los Angeles restaurant is offering a deal to customers who agree to look at their fellow diners instead of their phone screens.

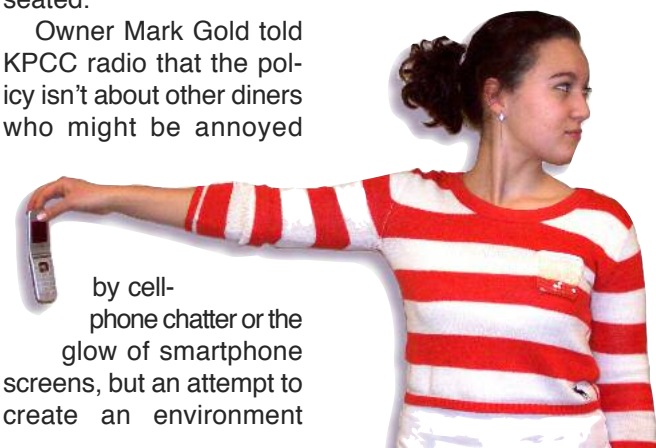
Eva Restaurant is giving a five percent discount to customers who will leave their cellphones with staff when they are seated.

Owner Mark Gold told KPCC radio that the policy isn't about other diners who might be annoyed

where diners connect to each other instead of to technology.

Servers make the offer when they introduce themselves.

Mark says nearly half take advantage of the discount, and many express gratitude at the opportunity to let go of their devices for a while.



by cell-phone chatter or the glow of smartphone screens, but an attempt to create an environment

Art project reveals kindness on London underground

by Tom Goulding

For some social commentators, the stereotype Londoner is an unfriendly commuter on the underground railway, burying their head in a book. But, one of the capital's leading artists has decided to dispel this myth.

Michael Landy has captured the generosity on the subway that often goes unreported. For his project, Acts of Kindness, run in association with Art on the Underground, the artist invited passengers and staff to share stories of kindness they have experienced. He then installs these inside Central line trains and stations.

Hundreds of stories have been submitted on the project website over the past year and have sprung up on pillars, platforms and sliding doors, as well as on late-night animations

commissioned for Channel 4.

One story reads: "After a miserable week and particularly difficult day, I was returning home on the tube [subway], trying to hold back the tears. I'd noticed a gentleman further up the carriage was writing a letter, but I didn't take much notice. Until the letter was eventually passed up the carriage to me. I kept this letter with its kind words and smiley face for many years. The kindness of this stranger always reminds me not to lose faith in people or society."

The project was inspired by Michael's first landmark installation, Break Down, in 2001, in which he destroyed all his possessions in order to find his true identity. The experience made him contemplate the value of kindness and what motivates strangers to help one another.

In an interview with Acts of Kindness curator Cathy Haynes,

Michael says the subway was an ideal platform for the project: "You become more aware of people because you're in such a condensed space. Perhaps because of that we disappear into ourselves... This project is about feeling a sense of being connected to each other. That's what 'kindness' means - we're kin, we're of one kind."

With the arrival of underground WiFi, more people may be tempted to switch off from the world around them. Yet, if Michael's installation has proved anything, the real opportunities to interact are right in front of us.

More Information:

<http://art.tfl.gov.uk/actsofkindness>

Story from Positive News UK

Guess what... Contrary to popular misconception, the European country whose inhabitants work the hardest is Greece! Greeks on average work 42.2 hours per week.

Source: Online News Association

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The Mass of Information: where the media puts its focus helps shape our world

by Sean Dagan Wood, Editor
of Positive News UK

On 4 July 2012, scientists at the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva in Switzerland announced the discovery of a new particle. Physicists are almost certain it is the Higgs boson particle, validating a theory put forward nearly 50 years ago by Peter Higgs and five others.

The theory states that there

is an invisible energy field throughout the entire universe, made up of Higgs particles, which gives mass to the building blocks of life.

Professor Brian Cox told the BBC it is "without doubt one of the greatest scientific discoveries of all time."

The mass of particles of matter depends on how much they interact with the Higgs field, how much it 'clings' to them. Some particles are

slowed down by the field, giving them more mass, whereas some, like particles of light, are less affected.

In a similar way, there is a 'field' of information pervading our lives. What it clings to are facts and ideas, and it gives these 'mass'. Where the media puts its focus, effects the weight given to different pieces of information. Inevitably, this influences our thoughts, conversations, beliefs, choices and

actions. In telling stories about our world, the media doesn't just reflect our reality, it also helps shape it.

In taking responsibility for its crucial role in shaping our social

consciousness, the media has the opportunity to not only inform people about the world's problems, but to also expose the solutions.

As we continue to question the mechanics of the universe, so must we continue to question the mechanisms by which we communicate about our world.

I think there needs to be a change of consciousness with the news ... to try to seek a higher ground. Why can't it be more representative of the way the world really is? I think we don't know what the bombardment of crime and violence does to our minds, I think we're in denial about it.

- Oprah Winfrey



Burma ends media censorship

Reporters in Burma no longer have to submit stories to state censors before publication, the Press Scrutiny and Registration Department (PSRD) has confirmed.

Tint Swe, head of PSRD, told AFP news agency: "From now on, our depart-

ment will just carry out registering publications for keeping them at the national archives and issuing a license to printers and publishers."

Journalists in the country are said to be delighted with the decision, following 50 years of tight controls.

Previously, censors could stall the publication of stories by months and send journalists to prison if they disapproved of articles.

Spokesperson for the Committee for Freedom of the Press, Zaw Thet Htwe, told independent Burmese publication *Irrawaddy*: "It's

a real improvement, but the 2004 Electronics Act, as well as the draconian 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act, should also be abolished."

Reported by Rachel England

Media should report solutions...

Continued from Page 1

He himself was once threatened with being fired from the BBC for speaking about wanting to see more positive news stories.

"I had a routine look at the BBC website recently, and out of 10 stories, seven of them were negative," he said.

"What about all the positive change that's happening? I see so many great stories that just aren't getting picked up. Where are the reporters looking at how the riots last year have brought communities together?"

"A balanced news agenda should hold an accurate mirror to the world. News stories should be about things that have the potential to shape the world. We don't need to hear and see graphic details of a bus crash in Humberside. That is relevant to locals, but it

does not belong on the national news."

Recounting an incident from his days at the BBC, the broadcaster said: "Martin Bell, my colleague at the time, covered 14 wars. He chartered the disintegration of those cities. When he asked the BBC if he could cover the rebuilding of them, they just said no, and sent him on to the next war."

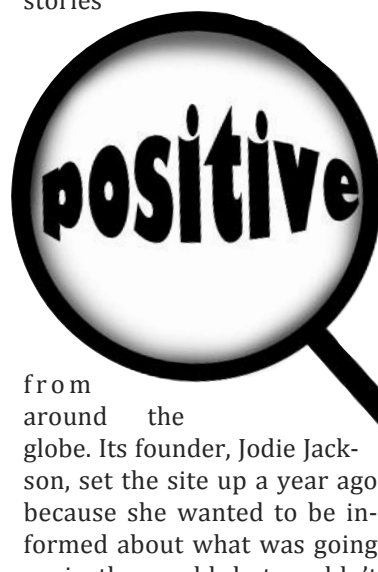
"But, people should know about changes that offer hope. There are some amazing solutions happening to the problems in our world and the mainstream media isn't covering them. Journalists analyze everyone else, but they are defensive when someone analyses them."

He said he believed persistently negative reports have given people a skewed and depressing view of the world.

"News stories should be

about things that have the potential to shape the world."

The event was organized by the website *What a Good Week*, which rounds up positive news stories



from around the globe. Its founder, Jodie Jackson, set the site up a year ago because she wanted to be informed about what was going on in the world, but couldn't face all the bad news she was coming across.

"I hear of so many people

switching off from the news altogether because it's just so negative," said Jodie. "I almost became one of them myself but decided instead, to search for the positive things that are going on in the world, to get more of a balance."

Following Martyn's and Jody's speeches, the editor of *Positive News UK*, Seán Dagan Wood took to the floor.

Seán said there was a clear and growing hunger for positive news with a spate of websites and good news initiatives launched in recent years. "As well as dedicated good news sources such as *Positive News*, some mainstream media organizations are now branching into positive content - such as the

LA Times, which has set up a Twitter feed for its positive stories following reader demand.

In places from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Italy to Israel there are media outlets trying to get more positive stories out.

"*Positive News* has also initiated sister papers in Argentina, the US, Spain and Hong Kong. There is a huge amount of support out there for changing the news agenda. Yet, a test we did in July showed that the average British newspaper's content is only around 16% positive."

Seán also announced that *Positive News* is working in partnership with media organizations Reporters De'Espoirs and Ideal Media, to build an international alliance of solution-focused media groups and journalists.

More Information:

www.goodnewsforthemedia.com

Reported by Claudia Cahalane

Philippines President calls for more good news

The president of the Philippines has called on the media

to shun sensationalism and make more effort to balance negative news with positive stories.

Addressing delegates at an event celebrating 25 years of the Philippine news program *TV Patrol*, President Benigno "Noy" Aquino III said: "Today,

more than ever, we need people to make a commitment to a higher standard in journalism. I am not saying that media should be there to praise the government all the time. But the news shouldn't be about competing with other outlets on who can sell the most negative headlines."

He added: "How long can an audience withstand negativism day in

and day out?... The media, the government, and the people must work together to create an environment of positive, progressive discourse between them. We must veer away from negativity and sensationalism," he said. "Since when did it become bad to report good news?"

Reported by Rachel England

Page content from Positive News UK





Helen Keller: *the Radical*

The inspiring story of how Helen Keller, blind and deaf from the age of 18 months, learned to cope with her disabilities is widely known, thanks largely to the Academy Award-winning movie *The Miracle Worker*, which crystallized her image as saintly superhero. But what about the other side of this revered icon?

What we rarely hear about is that when the blind-deaf visionary learned that poor people were more likely to be blind than others, she set off down a pacifist, socialist, and feminist path that broke the boundaries of her time—and continues to challenge ours today.

Until Helen began working for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) in 1924, she openly advocated women's suffrage and opposed child labor and capital punishment. She also joined the Socialist Party.

Below is a copy of a letter she wrote to Senator Robert La Follette in 1924:

So long as I confine my activities to social service and the blind, they compliment me extravagantly, calling me 'arch priestess of the sightless,' 'wonder woman,' and a 'modern miracle.' But when it comes to a discussion of poverty, and I maintain that it is the result of wrong economics—that the industrial system under which we live is at the root of much of the physical deafness and blindness in the world—that is a different matter!

It is laudable to give aid to the handicapped. Superficial charities make smooth the way of the prosperous; but to advocate that all human beings should have leisure and comfort, the decencies

and refinements of life, is a Utopian dream, and one who seriously contemplates its realization indeed must be deaf, dumb, and blind.

She sent \$100 to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) with a letter of support that appeared in its magazine *The Crisis*—a radical act for a white person from Alabama in the 1920s.

At an antiwar rally in January 1916, sponsored by the Women's Peace Party at New York's Carnegie Hall, Helen said, "Congress is not preparing to defend the people of the United States. It is planning to protect the capital of American speculators and investors. Incidentally this preparation will benefit the manufacturers of munitions and war machines. Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought! Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder! Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human beings! Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction! Be heroes in an army of construction!"

We applaud this great visionary and activist for her brave actions and inspiring vision of humankind.



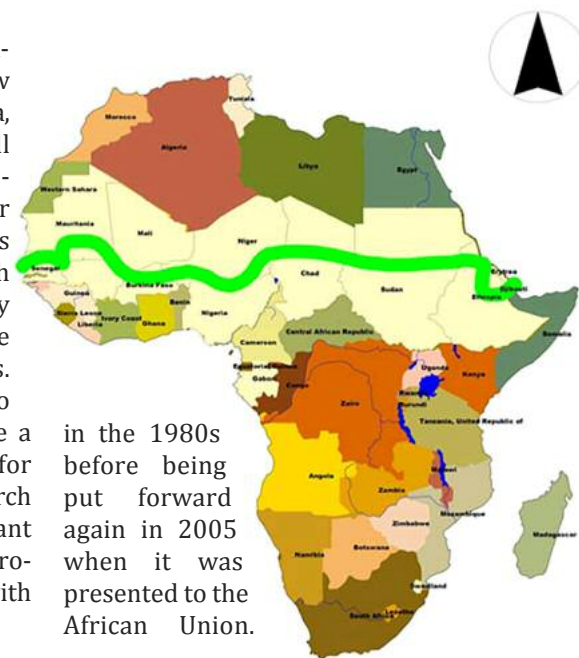
Great Green Wall to halt desertification and unite African nations

by Tom Lawson

The planting of a 4,000 mile 'wall' of trees and shrubs across Africa has begun in an ambitious effort to halt the southward spread of the Sahara desert and stop vulnerable sub-Saharan habitats from drying up.

Called the Great Green Wall, it will be nine miles wide and will traverse 11 countries in the Sahel zone of sub-Saharan Af-

erosion and desertification, which now affects 40% of Africa, the vegetation will help to retain moisture for water sources such as Lake Chad, which has been slowly drying up during the past few decades. Organizers also hope it will create a valuable habitat for wildlife, help research into drought tolerant plant species and provide local people with food and fuel.



in the 1980s before being put forward again in 2005 when it was presented to the African Union.

“Planting trees is good for us. Those trees can bring water and water is our future. Water can solve our problem.”
~ Alfaca, a herdsman involved with the project.”

rica, from Senegal in the west and across the continent to Djibouti in the east. Planting started in Senegal in July.

The wall is planned to be almost continuous, with breaks only for streams and mountains.

Other than stopping

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) believes the wall will also be a symbolic achievement for co-operation and stability in Africa.

Thomas Sankara, then head of state in Burkina Faso, first proposed the project

Since then, the project has gained international support outside the continent.

The Global Environment Facility, which provides grants to developing countries for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters and land degra-

dation, has invested \$108m to support the project. Other international development institutions have so far given a total of \$3bn. (US).

Content from:
Positive News UK

© Dorothy Voorhees



Tree planting in Senegal

Did you know?

Average monthly earnings for Americans
with a Bachelor's degree: women \$3,750, men \$5,117;
with an advanced degree: women \$5,000, men \$6,667.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Freedom – an Ideal and an Agent for Change

The power of an idea whose time has come is stunning. One such idea is embodied in the word freedom, which has been so much in the forefront of our thoughts recently.

In fact, the history of the past 250 years has been deeply affected by the idea of freedom as people struggled with the injustices and imposed poverty of a world order that focussed on the preservation of the wealth and safety of the few at the expense of the misery, destitution and slavery of the many.

Unsurprisingly, moves to establish various freedoms – even the idea of freedom itself – have usually been suppressed by the state. An interesting example of this is Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy" which Beethoven used in his 9th Symphony.

What most people do not realise is that the poem was originally an ode to 'freedom', but that the censors would never have allowed it to be published in this form. So Schiller used the word freude (joy) to replace freiheit (freedom). Just see what a difference this makes to the first line of the poem – Joy, beautiful spark of the gods, instead of Freedom, beautiful spark of the gods. Joy is mystical and no threat to the established order: freedom is a call to action based on a vision of a better future.

Like all suppressed things, the

yearning for freedom erupts to the surface in unexpected ways with unpredictable and sometimes astonishing results.

In the Second World War when a large portion of humanity had had most of their freedoms extinguished and there existed a real possibility that the whole of humanity would become enslaved to distorted ideologies, President Franklin Roosevelt gave out to the world what he called the Four Freedoms.

Freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world; freedom of every person to worship God in their own way – everywhere in the world; freedom from want – which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world; The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor, anywhere in the world.



Freedom Monument, Riga, Latvia

These four freedoms became adopted as the visionary ideals for the post-war era.

What a tragedy for humanity

that during the last 70 years these freedoms have continued to be denied to so many people and trampled on in so many countries of the world. Yet, despite severe setbacks the idea of freedom is gaining power and momentum. It is pulsing with renewed insistence in the consciousness of an awakening humanity.

Just when oppression, injustice, poverty and terror seem to be immovably entrenched, it is then that the light of freedom shines into the world with a new brilliance and galvanizes ordinary people into extraordinary action.

Many of the important stepping stones of the past 70 years have been connected with freedom – the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, the Tiananmen Square protests, the East European "velvet revolution" and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the dismantling of Apartheid in the early 90s in South Africa, the protests against military dictatorship in Burma in 2007.

And more recently the idea of freedom has produced a ferment of change in the Arab world. One after another, tired and corrupt regimes are buckling under pressure from a new generation of educated and committed and, most importantly, ordinary people whose main characteristics are a desire for change

inspired by the will to do good. Some commentators have been calling it the 'leaderless revolution', while others are perceptively calling it 'leaderful', as initiative, vision, resilience and the capacity for sacrifice seem to be the property of all.

This tells us that true freedom is a resource of the spirit which always focuses on the good of the whole. Perhaps we are also being shown that we experience the greatest freedom when we serve, at whatever personal cost, because we love humanity and the world.

It is said that the next super power will be world public opinion. With the widespread and rapidly increasing availability of mobile and satellite phones and the internet, public opinion now has a vehicle for articulated vision and practical goodwill. Well used, it can indeed be a great empowering agency for all of humanity. It is a means to change our world for the better that is more powerful than any ideology or military power. All this is helping to produce a world where freedom, responsibly used, will characterize the new humanity that is being born in these turbulent yet exciting times.

More information:

Worldgoodwill.org

Pakistani People Collaborate to Couter Anti-Islam Views

by Caroline Jaine

Recently the news has been filled with so-called 'Muslim rage' in response to an anti-Islam film made by a US citizen. Pakistan hit the headlines accompanied by images of mobs hurling stones and vehicles blazing. However, another group of Pakistanis took to the streets with a different message.

Faran Rafi is a 23-year-old recent graduate of Lahore University of Management Sciences. He started sharing the idea of cleaning up the mess left behind by the protesters, using Facebook and Twitter. Within a day Faran had more than 5,000 people registered on his Facebook page and a wealth of support on Twitter.

The following day in Islamabad over 100 people turned up to help. They were from all walks of life, and different ages. "We had retired army officers, teachers, journalists, young entrepreneurs, film-makers, students, between the age of 6 to 60," said Faran.

Carrying brooms and trash bags, the group set about picking up spent teargas shells and broken glass, sweeping the

streets and repainting walls. Some carried placards with messages of peace. Simultaneous clean-ups also happened in the cities of Lahore and Karachi, where there had been other riots.

When asked what motivated him, Faran said: "It was evident that the image of Pakistan that was being projected outside the country was going to be of nothing other than violence and rage. However, the situation on the ground is much different.

"What the western and other media portrayed Pakistan as, seemed more like a country filled with angry, violent extremists who would

“Carrying brooms and trash bags, the group set about picking up spent teargas shells and broken glass.”

only do harm to the society. This was done to prove to the world that the image they have of our country and religion is wrong. Most Pakistanis are not like that.

"We are promising young individuals



who want peace and harmony in the world. We are the people who want to develop our nation and take it forward. We believe in inter-faith harmony and justice. Although, yes, we do condemn the blasphemous film, it does not mean that our only resort is to create havoc. We believe that as individuals it is our responsibility to set a positive image of the country and the religion, to show the world that we are just like them.

Thus, this Project Cleanup for Peace was initiated to gather masses and help them do something productive."

Faran was concerned that some thought he and his friends were funded from outside Pakistan, and explained, "All the money used in the project was from our own pockets. I know students [who] told me that they spent their savings and pocket money to get paint and other materials."

The experience has had a huge impact on the group. They plan to conduct a clean-up drive in underprivileged schools across Pakistan to help create sanitation facilities, decorate class rooms, fix furniture and make other needed repairs.

Story from Positive News UK



25 amazing facts about Finland's unorthodox education system

Since it implemented huge education reforms 40 years ago, Finland's school system has consistently come at the top for the international rankings for education systems.

So how do they do it?

It's simple — by going against the evaluation-driven, centralized model that much of the Western world uses.

- ◆ Finnish children don't start school until they are 7.
- ◆ They rarely take exams or do homework until they are well into their teens.
- ◆ The children are not measured at all for the first six years of their education.
- ◆ There is only one mandatory standardized test in Finland, taken when children are 16.
- ◆ All children, clever or not, are taught in the same classrooms.
- ◆ Finland spends around 30 percent less per student than the United States. (US \$7,743 and Finland \$5,653.)
- ◆ 30 percent of children receive extra help during their first nine years of school.
- ◆ 66 percent of high school students go on to college. The highest rate in the European Union.
- ◆ The difference between weakest and strongest students is the smallest in the World. "Equality is the most important word in Finnish education," says Olli Luukkainen, president of Finland's powerful teachers union.
- ◆ Science classes are capped at 16 students so that they may perform practical experiments every class.
- ◆ 93 percent of Finns graduate from high school. (17.5 percent higher than the US.)
- ◆ Elementary school students get 75 minutes of recess a day in Finland versus an average of 27 minutes in the US.
- ◆ Teachers only spend 4 hours a day in the classroom, and take 2 hours a week for "professional development".
- ◆ Finland has the same amount of teachers as New York City, but far fewer students. 600,000 students compared to 1.1 million in NYC.
- ◆ The school system is 100% state funded. Every school has the same national goals and draws from the same pool of university-trained educators. The result is that a Finnish child has a good shot at getting the same quality education no matter whether he or she lives in a rural village or a university town.
- ◆ All teachers in Finland must have a masters degree, which is fully subsidized by the state.
- ◆ The national curriculum is only broad guidelines.
- ◆ Teachers are selected from the top 10% of graduates.
- ◆ In 2010, 6,600 applicants vied for 660 primary school training slots.
- ◆ The average starting salary for a Finnish teacher was \$29,000 in 2008. (Compared with \$36,000 in the United States.)
- ◆ However, high school teachers with 15 years of experience make 102 percent of what other college graduates make. (In the US, this figure is 62%.)
- ◆ There is no merit pay for teachers according to test results.
- ◆ Teachers are given the same status as doctors and lawyers.
- ◆ In an international standardized measurement in 2001, Finnish children came top or very close to the top for science, reading and mathematics. It has consistently come top or very near every time since.
- ◆ And despite the differences between Finland and the US, it easily beats countries with a similar demographic. Neighbor Norway, of a similar size and featuring a similar homogeneous culture, follows the same same strategies as the US and achieves similar rankings in international studies.



Matching adults who live

Paul Van Slambrouck writes about a program which puts together at-risk teens and business-world mentors

San Francisco, CA - To the pumping beat of Aretha Franklin, and with pizza-laden paper plates poised precariously on their laps, families sit in the crowd at the assembly hall of Horace Mann Middle School.

They are waiting. They are looking slightly anxious.

It's not graduation day — though it is something akin. The seventh and eighth-graders here are at a pivotal time in their young lives, when school dropout problems can begin, experts say.

Recognizing the threat, these families are participating in a one-of-a-kind program called Spark, which aims to boost graduation rates through one-on-one apprenticeships.

The meeting will pair students with volunteer apprentice teachers in what Spark cofounder Chris Balme calls a "beautiful and amazingly awkward moment." Lawyers, hair stylists, and software developers will meet up with students who have selected their occupations as the ones they would most like to learn about.

The adult volunteers march in, find their apprentices, and begin a relationship that will likely transform both their students and themselves.

Spark apprenticeships offer weekly, semester-long, one-on-one workplace experiences to economically disadvantaged teens.

In 2004, Chris and Melia Dicker, both teachers, founded Spark. For

“So far 98 apprentices or are on track



g kids with ve their dream

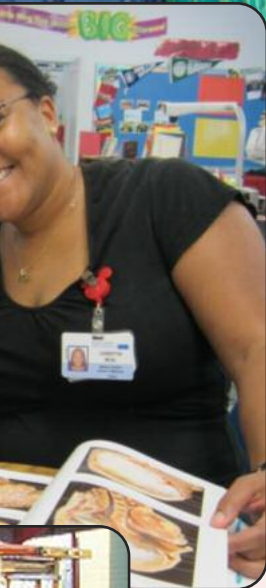
the first two years neither took a salary; all the funds they raised went into the program. Today, Spark has a staff of 16 and a \$1.1 million annual budget.

Apprenticeships are “not rocket science,” says Holly Depatie, Spark board chair. But other mentoring programs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs of America, while pairing youngsters with adults,

percent of Spark
have gone on to college
k to go.”

don't specifically target learning about jobs.

Spark has grown rapidly since its inception. Enrollment grew by more than 50% year over year, and after five years, Spark expanded from the San Francisco Bay Area to Los Angeles in 2010 and Chicago in 2011, with plans to expand to Oakland and Philadelphia this year.



It's early to judge Spark's success, but so far 98 percent of its apprentices have gone on to college or are on track to go.

For the volunteer mentors, the experience is often life-changing, too.

Spark “gave me a new purpose, something that I really care about,” says Erik Newton, a San Francisco attorney who worked with a seventh grade girl from one of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

Back at the Horace Mann orientation, a shy and somewhat withdrawn student, Marchel Smith, found her confidence growing as the night wore on. As part of a Spark exercise, she was asked what superpower she most wished she had. “Walking through walls,” she answered.

That's exactly what she may be about to do, courtesy of Spark.

More Information:

www.sparkprogram.org
415.626.5470
info@sparkprogram.org
Content from Dailygood.org

How to Build a Bike Train

Forty years ago, almost half of US kids biked to school. Here's a smart idea for getting kids pedaling again.

by Maya Jacobs

It's hard to describe how endearing it is to look over my shoulder and see a line of cycling children stretching a block behind me. I feel like a mama duck, leading a line of two-wheeled ducklings.

It's the inaugural ride of the Thornton Creek Elementary School Bike Train, the first bike train in all of Seattle.

In 1969, according to the National Center for Safe Routes to School, 48 percent of kids aged 5 to 14 regularly walked or biked to school. In 2009, it was just 13 percent. A major reason for the change is that parents didn't feel safe letting their kids bike on their own. Bike trains—in which an adult chaperone rides a predetermined route, picking up children along the way—are a way to make it easier, and safer, for kids to bike to school.

We round the corner to collect two more kids waiting patiently with their bikes at the ready. The train slows enough for the kids to hop on board, and then picks up speed again. By the time we reach school, our train is comprised of 13 laughing children, all proud to have made



their morning commute on their own. With high fives and whoops, we are greeted by the 20 riders who took the north-bound route. The school's three bike racks are already overflowing, and the nearby posts are quickly filling up with bikes.

The Thornton Creek trains are just a small piece of the burgeoning Seattle bike-to-school network. Bike trains, which were part of my senior capstone project at the University of Washington, introduced me to some of the most inspiring people I know: families who have never owned a car, ten-year-olds who have cycled from Seattle to Portland, students who ride to school daily, rain or shine.

Bike-to-school programs are taking off all over the city. On Bike-to-School Day, for instance, 120 people participated in Bryant Elementary's group ride. Biking to school may be simple, but its positive impact is enormous. Bike-to-school programs address large global issues from climate change to childhood obesity. With each group ride, children are empowered to take charge of their own transportation—they learn to be more confident cyclists, and that they don't have to depend on cars to get around. They (and their parents) learn which of their classmates live nearby, making it easier to build networks for friendship and support.

Perhaps the most inspiring aspects of these programs are the communities they form, the confidence they instill in our youth, and the promise of a healthy, playful, and environmentally conscious generation.

More Information:

Story from *YES! Magazine*
www.yesmagazine.org

Tips on how to do it:

1. **Involve your community:** Find a group of interested parents through school and neighborhood message boards, listservs, or newsletters.
2. **Assess your location:** Is it hilly? Flat? Busy? Residential? Map safe and busy streets, as well as general topography.
3. **Create routes:** Using your school directory and your knowledge of the area, design safe, accessible routes that allow as many students as possible to join in. Routes two miles or less are most accessible for young children.
4. **Get feedback:** Display preliminary routes for other parents, finesse routes for safety, accessibility, and efficiency. Do a trial ride.
5. **Determine bike train dates:** Chose one or more days a week for the bike trains to run. Implementing these trains during more pleasant weather is a good way to ensure ridership!
6. **Get the word out:** Host a meeting, post your routes online, flier your school and neighborhood.

**Global
Peace
Project**



VIDEOS in 33 languages
Go to YouTube link below:

www.youtube.com/user/peaceproject2000/videos

Website: www.Global-Caring-Ethics.com

Ebook: www.issue.com/globalcaringethics/docs/globalcaringethics



Why Laugh?



- ✧ Laughter lowers the blood pressure.
- ✧ Apart from signaling joy, it helps with group bonding.
- ✧ It puts a devilish twinkle in your eye.
- ✧ Destroys your conservative reputation.
- ✧ You can't be depressed or in pain when you're laughing.
- ✧ Laughter fills the body with oxygen, giving it instant energy.
 - ✧ According to research, 15 minutes of laughter equals 2 hours of sleep.
 - ✧ A Vanderbilt University study found that laughter burns a bit more than one calorie per minute.
 - ✧ So keep on laughing and get ready for the Global Belly Laugh Day on January 24.

Farmer's Market Puts a New Spin on Rutabaga

by Donna Beckwith

ITHACA, NY - As with all great traditions, the origin of the Rutabaga Curl is lost in the mists of time. Margaret MacCasland remembers, "[Vendor] Chris Gartlein had a barrel fire at the Farmer's Market. Sometimes he heated food or hot drinks over it. One year my son Scott, Chris' apprentice, got the idea to make Stone Soup. Kim McKnight contributed a frozen chicken by sliding it down the board walk. Someone else started rolling veggies...."

The Rutabaga Curl Website states: The sport of Rutabaga Curling was born on a cold December day, the last market day of the season. The few vendors huddled together for warmth and camaraderie waiting for occasional customers. Talk turned to unusual sports. Curling came up. Before we knew it, wares were being 'hurled' down the market's floor. Potatoes, cabbages, bread, even frozen chickens were fair game.

Vendor, Steve Sierigk of Acorn Design, saw potential. "What better way to celebrate the last market of the season than with a light-hearted faux Olympic sport - the Rutabaga Curl?" Steve asked. In 1998 "I came down and laid out a court of play. Rules were loose but there was a target and

"We never know what is going to happen. It is unscripted community theatre at its best. We have had contestants dress up in costumes representing not only countries, but concepts! We have an outstanding community chorus sing a highly altered version of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus each year, with the word Rutabaga being the main theme. We have even had tongue in cheek protest groups calling for an end to Rutabaga Cruelty!"

most everyone joined in the fun."

Each year, Steve made the games more and more sophisticated ap-

pearing like a real sport. "We have referees, a Parade of Athletes, Olympic Music, an emcee calling the games, a celebrity opening toss.

It feels just like a real sport, and for the day, perhaps it really is."

On December 22, after 15 years at the helm, The Most Highly Esteemed Grand Imperial Commissioner of the International Rutabaga Curl, Steve will be handing the games over to Peter MacDonald of MacDonald Farms. "Peter will put his own spin on things, so I don't think I need to give him much advice other than to keep tongue firmly implanted in cheek - and never break character - as the Curl is serious business."



© Jerry Feist

More Information:

www.rutabagacurl.com

Laugh, Damn You! Wisdom from a Master Laughter

When he walks into a room, you have no choice but to laugh. When he laughs, it is infectious and impossible not to join him. Meet the world's king of laughter, Belachew Girma of Ethiopia, the Guinness World Record holder for the longest non-stop laughter.

At the 14th World Genius Impossibility Challenger Competition, he established world record by laughing non-stop for 3 hours and 6 minutes.

Today, he runs a laughter academy for those who would like to learn to laugh as heartily as he does. Twenty years ago, however, he himself had little to laugh about. After losing his wife to HIV, he became an alcoholic and a drug addict. His life felt hopeless and lonely.

He says it all changed after he read a book about laughing on cue and learned how to laugh for no particular reason. "A man is no poorer if he can still laugh. So, when we say 'If somebody laughs, he is no more poor', it means, laughing by itself

avoids poor spirit. And it motivates for productivity and for working. It encour-

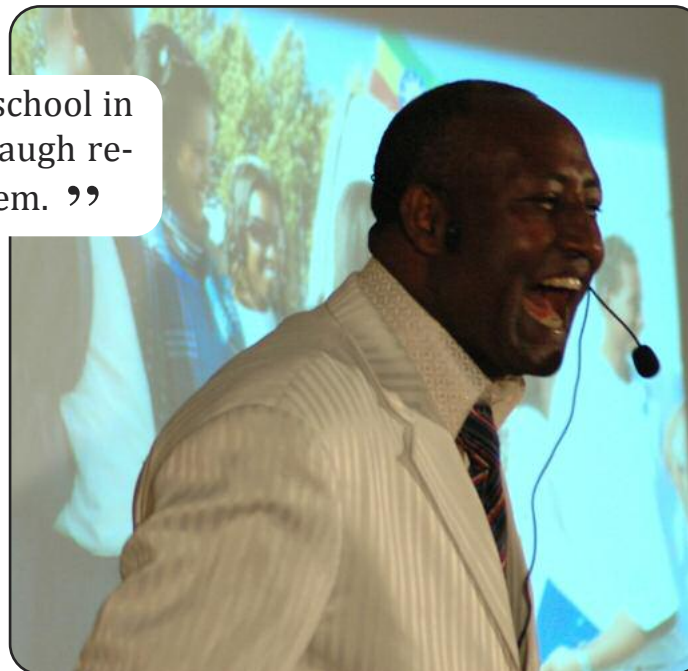
"He established the first laughter school in Africa in order to teach people to laugh regardless of the problems around them."

ages," Belachew says.

Every Saturday evening, he and his students meet on a rooftop of a four story building in Addis Ababa to practice laughing on cue.

Belachew believes laughter can be a solution to many problems as it motivates productivity and also induces positive thinking. Among his students are pregnant women, cancer patients and people who have difficulty laughing for various reasons.

Engineer Alemayehu Ambessie has cancer. His business collapsed and he fell into debts as a result of his illness. Thanks to laughter, he says, things are looking up. "By laughing my health is reverting to nor-



mal. Not only my health, I am very happy with my life. My business has experienced a loss, a big loss in millions and I have

debts to settle in hundreds of thousands of Birr. In spite of all this, I am one of the happiest persons in the world," he claims.

Belachew believes laughter is especially beneficial to pregnant women who can ease their pain and prepare for childbirth through laughter training. He is confident that it also helps the child to develop happier and healthier in the womb.

Additionally, the laughter master works as a laughter therapist with Ethiopia's orphaned children.

More Information:

laughterworldmaster.com



TOP 5 REGRETS OF THE DYING

by Bronnie Ware

For many years I worked in palliative care. My patients were those who had gone home to die. Some incredibly special times were shared. I was with them for the last three to twelve weeks of their lives.

People grow a lot when they are faced with their own mortality. I learnt never to underestimate someone's capacity for growth. Some changes were phenomenal. Each experienced a variety of emotions, as expected, denial, fear, anger, remorse, more denial and eventually acceptance. Every single patient found their peace before they departed though, every one of them.

When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do differently, common themes surfaced again and again. Here are the most common five:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me



This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honored even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made.

It is very important to try and honor at least some of your dreams along the way. From the moment that you lose your health, it is too late. Health brings a freedom very few realize, until they no longer have it.

2. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings

Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others. As a result, they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming. Many developed illnesses relating to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result.

We cannot control the reactions of others. However, although people may initially react



when you change the way you are by speaking honestly, in the end it raises the relationship to a whole new and healthier level. Either that or it releases the unhealthy relationship from your life. Either way, you win.

3. I wish I hadn't worked so hard



This came from every male patient that I nursed. They missed their children's youth and their partner's companionship. Women also spoke of this regret. But as most were from an older generation, many of the female patients had not been breadwinners. All of the men I nursed, deeply regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence.

By simplifying your lifestyle and making conscious choices along the way, it is possible to not need the income that you think you do. And by creating more space in your life, you become happier and more open to new opportunities, ones more suited to your new lifestyle.

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends

Often they would not truly realize the full benefits of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down. Many had become so caught up in their own lives that they had let golden friendships slip by over the years. There were many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time

and effort that they deserved.

It is common for anyone in a busy lifestyle to let friendships slip. But when you are faced with your approaching death, the physical details of life fall away. People do want to get their financial affairs in order if possible. But it



is not money or status that holds the true importance for them. They want to get things in order more for the benefit of those they love. Usually though, they are too ill and weary to ever manage this task. It is all comes down to love and relationships in the end. That is all that remains in the final weeks, love and relationships.

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier

This is a surprisingly common one. Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits. The so-called 'comfort' of familiarity overflowed into their emotions, as well as their physical lives. Fear of change had them pretending to others, and to their selves, that they were content. When deep within, they longed to laugh properly and have silliness in their life again.


When you are on your deathbed, what others think of you is a long way from your mind. How wonderful to be able to let go and smile again, long before you are dying.

Life is a choice. It is YOUR life. Choose consciously, choose wisely, choose honestly. Choose happiness.



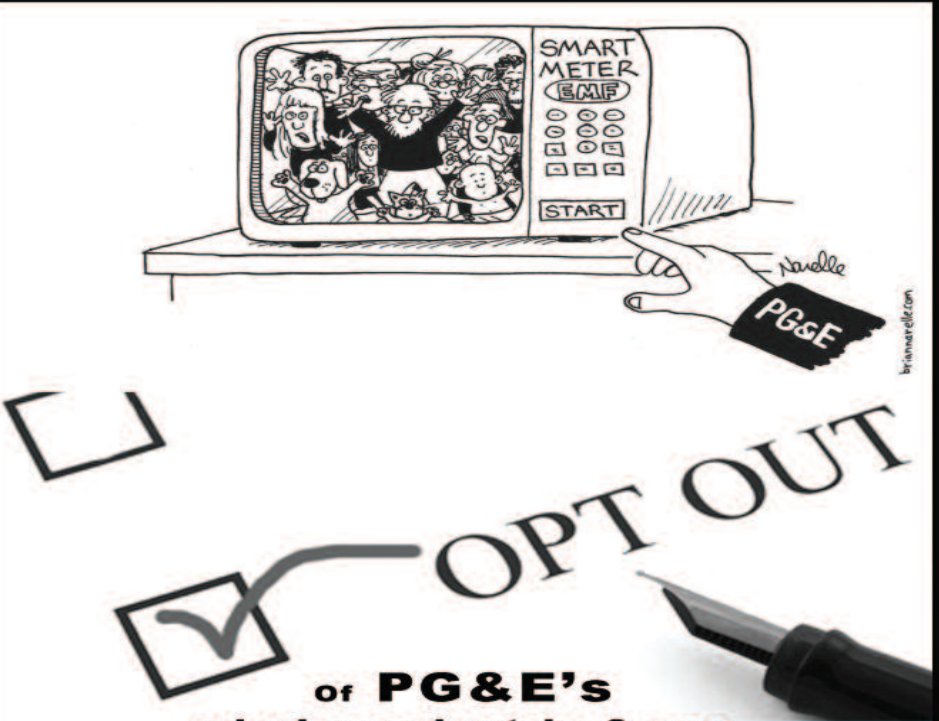
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Did You Know that laughter is the workout of our inner organs—like 'inner jogging'—in both instances endorphines are released giving us the temporary high, like the joggers high?

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Textile Locavore

We often think about local food—but what about local fabric?
Here is one woman's quest to know her "fibershed."

Rebecca Burgess tried "the fibershed challenge"—to live for one year, in clothes made from fibers (and natural dyes) that are solely sourced within a geographical region no larger than 150 miles from her front door in San Geronimo, California. Here are her insights.

I lived for about 6 weeks in one outfit.

Our wonderful cotton farmer, Sally Fox, who now lives 90 miles from me, grew the cotton. Sally sold me cotton yarns and fabric that had been milled years ago from an era when we had manufacturing equipment in the region. The old organic and color-grown yarns were handknit by friends and local designers. My mother sewed my first pair of Sally Fox cotton pants. The cotton was woven into a wonderful soft flannel—several of my garments are made from this naturally brown and green cotton fabric.

I had never before realized the power and importance of clothing—we wouldn't leave

our houses without it, and yet we generally think nothing of the processes that took place to create our garments.

The Fibershed project was designed to bring me into relationship with the source of my clothes. Like a food or watershed, a fibershed is the geographical region where one can source all the fibers and dye plants to create their garments.

Our region—Northern California—is well designed for a fibershed experiment. We have thousands of pounds of wool that are thrown away each year, creating plenty of raw material to make gar-

The many microclimates of our region give us the opportunity to grow a range of dye plants. We grew indigo in the first year to supplant the need for blue dye—which is petroleum-based and rich in neurotoxic heavy metals.

The project brought many artisans and farmers in our region together—it has been a community building process at every level. We made a point of connecting each designer, seamstress, knitter and felter with their raw material base.

Those connections have changed the face of the community itself. At least four new textile businesses have been started this year. Fibershed is now an official nonprofit so we can continue to analyze our supply chain and support im-

provements and advancements within it. We have cultivated a marketplace which supports individual artisans and farmers to collectively gain access to more of our community.

Sally Fox now has plans

“Future Fibershed communities will rely upon renewable energy powered mills that will exist in close proximity to where the fibers are grown.”

ments. We have many ranchers experimenting with raising alpacas, angoras, and mohair goats. There is a very hot growing season in California's Central Valley, allowing us to grow a variety of color-grown cottons.



Rebecca Burgess

for the first farm-based, solar-powered, North American cotton mill, and the Fibershed is thriving. It is a pure example of what a community can do to manifest a sustainable material culture, beginning with the most basic of needs—our clothes.

More Information:
fibershed.wordpress.com
fibershed@gmail.com
Story from YES! Magazine



Sally Fox and her organic cotton



Loom



Sheep will provide wool





A Business Experiment without Ego

Bela Shah interviews Rob Haddad about his company's unique management approach

VANCOUVER, Canada - Rob Haddad is a unique kind of entrepreneur. The founder of the vintage clothing company True Value Vintage, and vintage jewelry supply company *Ifoundgallery*, Rob decided about a year ago to try running the business without a manager.

"There is a lot of turnover in retail, especially with managers. Tricked by their own ego, many managers develop an idea that all of the store's successes can only be attributed to their leadership. This slowly disintegrates any notion of team spirit in an environment where everyone's role matters and should be recognized."

Rob believes that the core of ego is self-centered fear. Instead of hiring anyone that they feared were more qualified, he discovered that some of his managers hired employees that were less skilled

and easier to control. After a particularly distressing experience, Rob realized that maybe a new approach was in order.

"All of my employees brought different skills to the table. In a meeting with my staff, I asked them, 'What about, if we approach this from a community based team approach, rather than one person having all the power?' Questions such as, 'What area do you want to work in? What do you like most about this job and how can we pursue that with you as a team member?'" spurred the conversation with his staff in a new direction. Many of his long term employees decided to take leadership roles in sales, marketing, and design and Rob noted that their overall happiness also increased.

Rob empowers his employees by encouraging their dreams. One employee, who is now a fashion designer, has been with the company since she was 16 years old. Rob remembered that he had 30,000 yards of fabric in his warehouse and offered it to her to design a collection. "No pressure, no stress, just have fun and do what you went to school for, if that's what you would like to do," he told her. She was thrilled.

However, almost a year after the experiment began, a few kinks have undoubtedly arisen. In retail stores, much of the front end staff is filled by young people who are used to someone who is holding them answerable in some way. So, the question that Rob is grappling with now is how to lead his store without managing it.

The core team is led through opportunities that Rob creates which allow them to tap into their skills and talents. And in effect, they are becoming natural

leaders in certain areas of the company. But for the short term staff that is less invested in their jobs, perhaps there can be hybrid of management and leadership that can balance each other?

Rob has been presented with the option of selling the business all together. The main reason he has held onto it is for the

sake of his long term employees. "I mostly keep it open because of the staff. Some of the people that work there love what they're doing. I want to see them continue to thrive and grow as individuals in their selected professions."

This is Rob's form of service, helping his employee's dreams come true. As we chatted, a potential solution organically arose. What if there were rotating managers?

Rotating managers would create temporary opportunities for leadership. Since each person would only be manager for a month, the position might be understood as a unique opportunity to learn and grow, not only for him or herself, but also for the entire store as an ecosystem. It would be a very Buddhist way of running the business.

Rob's calling to serve others has influenced other business ideas as well. He is currently exploring ways to create "food for the people", a model that would distribute nutritious food to needy families.



Rob Haddad

The Story of Change

Review by Christiana Söderberg

Annie Leonard is well known among environmentalists. In 2007 she launched her first animated clip called *The Story of Stuff*, which highlighted the fundamental flaws of our wasteful consumer society.

She has since produced a series of short animations about more 'stuff' (bottled water, cosmetics, etc) and is back with *The Story of Change*. In this latest offering, Annie makes a plea for us to stop acting primarily as consumers and to embrace our roles as responsible citizens.

There are three important ingredients for creating tangible change, she says. The first is having a big idea – even if it doesn't seem doable now, you're allowed to dream. The second is forming a community around your idea, and the third is turning it into action.

Annie points out we are better equipped than ever to bring about real change, with social media enabling us to connect like never before. She

finishes by asking what kind of changemaker the viewer is, reminding us of the many opportunities for us each to make a unique contribution.

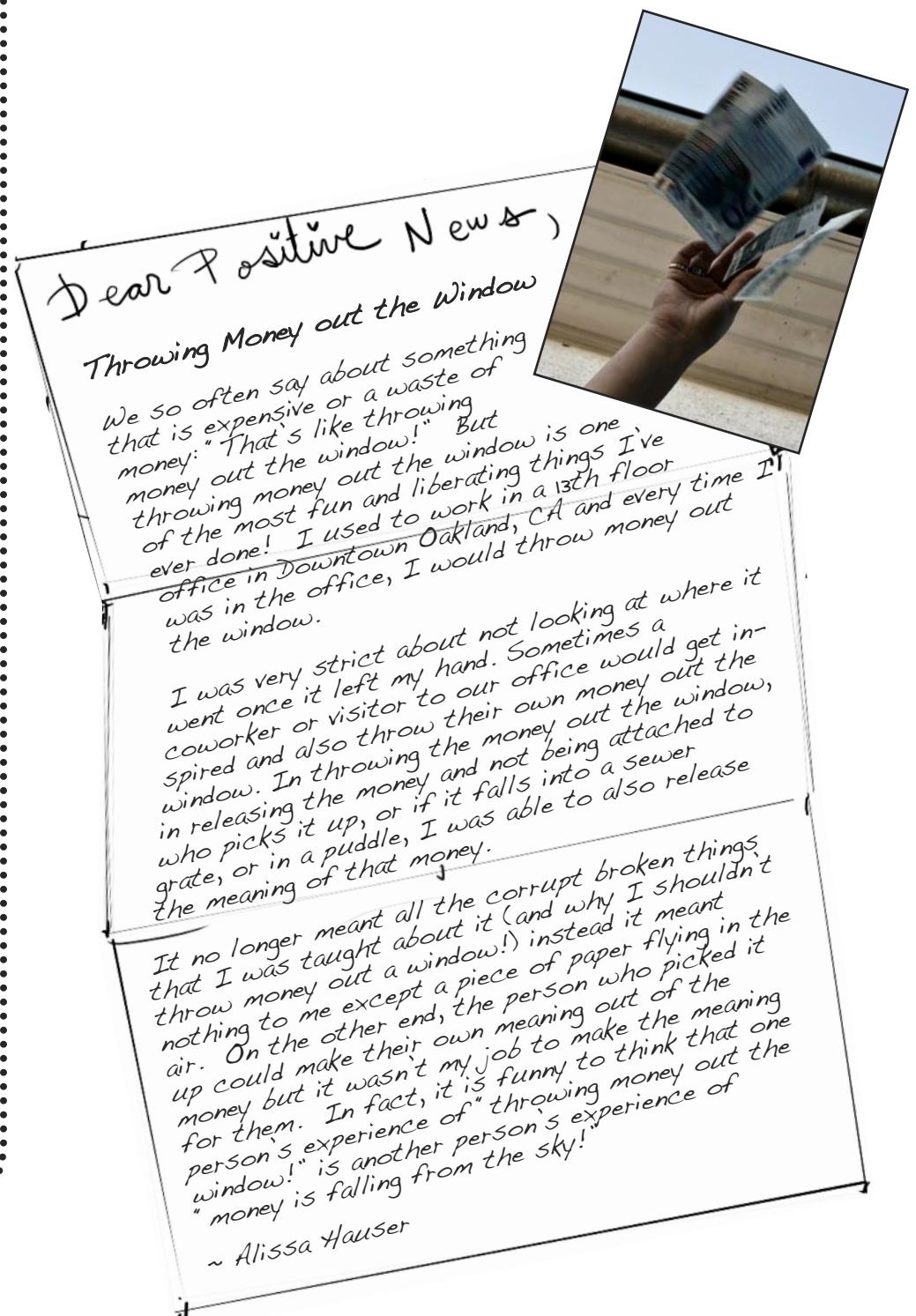
This is my favorite presentation from *The Story of Stuff* because it raises some key environmental issues, including the fact that we can't shop our way to a greener world and that attempting an eco-perfect life in today's dysfunctional economic system is more or less impossible. In Annie's own words: "It's like trying to swim upstream when the current is pushing us all the other way."

The overriding message is that we need to create a new story, not only one about practical change but about ourselves and who we want to be – a story which will reach out beyond the green and already converted, to include the whole world in all its beautiful diversity.

Story from Positive News UK

Watch online:

www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-change/





The Business 9 Women Kept a Secret for Three Decades

by Lori Weiss

Somewhere in West Tennessee, not far from Graceland, nine women — or “The 9 Nanas,” as they prefer to be called — gather in the darkness of night. At 4am they begin their daily routine — a ritual that no one, not even their husbands, knew about for 30 years. They have one mission and one mission only: to create happiness. And it all begins with baked goods.

“One of us starts sifting the flour and another washing the eggs,” explained Nana Mary Ellen, the appointed spokesperson for their secret society. “And someone else makes sure the pans are all ready.

Over the next three hours, The 9 Nanas will whip up hundreds of pound cakes, as part of a grand scheme to help those in need. And then, before anyone gets as much as a glimpse of them, they’ll disappear back into their daily lives. The only hint that may remain is the heavenly scent of vanilla, lemon and lime, lingering in the air.

Even the UPS driver, who picks up hundreds of packages at a time, has no clue what these women, who range in age from 54 to 72, are doing. What he doesn’t know is that he’s part of their master plan. A plan that began 35 years ago, when the “sisters” got together for their weekly card game, something their husbands referred to as “Broads and Bridge.”

“Pearl says it was all her idea,”

Mary Ellen teased, “but as I remember it, we were sitting around reminiscing about MaMaw and PaPaw and all the different ways they would lend a hand in the community.” MaMaw and PaPaw are the grandparents who raised four of the women.

“MaMaw Ruth would read in the paper that someone had died,” Mary Ellen remembered, “and she’d send off one of her special pound cakes. She didn’t have to know the family. She just wanted to put a little smile on their faces. And we started thinking about what we could do to make a difference like that. What if we had a million dollars? How would we spend it?”

The Nanas began brainstorming

“One of the sisters suggested that we should all start doing our own laundry and put the money we saved to good use. So among the nine of us, we’d put aside about \$400 a month.”

And then the women started listening. They’d eavesdrop at the local beauty shop or when they were picking up groceries. And when they heard about a widow or a single mom who needed a little help, they’d step in and anonymously pay a utility bill or buy some new clothes for the children.

The Nanas would find out where the person lived and send a package with a note that simply said, “Somebody loves you” - and they’d be sure to include one of

MaMaw Ruth’s special pound cakes.

The more people they helped, the bolder they became

“We gave new meaning to the term drive-by,” Mary Ellen explained how they’d drive through low-income neighborhoods looking for new help recipients. “Then we’d return before the sun came up, like cat burglars, and



drop off a little care package.”

For three decades, the Nanas’ good deeds went undetected, that is, until five years ago, when Mary Ellen’s husband started noticing extra mileage on the car and large amounts of cash being withdrawn from their savings account.

“He brought out bank statements and they were highlighted!” Mary Ellen said, recalling the horror she felt. “I tried to explain that I had bought some things, but he had this look on his face that I’d never seen be-

fore - and I realized what he must have been thinking. I called the sisters and said, ‘You all need to get over here right away.’”

So 30 years into their secret mission, the 9 Nanas and their husbands got together and the sisters came clean. And that’s where their story gets even better - because the husbands offered to help.

“They were amazed that we were doing this and even more amazed that they never knew. We can keep a good secret! All but three of them are retired now, so sometimes they come with us on our drive-bys. In our area, all you need is an address to pay someone’s utility bill, so we keep the men busy jotting down numbers.”

The mission expands

It wasn’t long before the couples decided it was also time to tell their grown children. And that’s when happiness began to happen in an even bigger way. The children encouraged their mothers to start selling MaMaw Ruth’s pound cakes online, so they could raise money to help even more people. And it wasn’t long before they were receiving more than 100 orders in a day.

“The first time we saw those orders roll in, we were jumping up and down,” Mary Ellen said with a laugh. “We were so excited that we did a ring-around-the-rosie! Then we called all the children and said, ‘What do we do next?’”

That’s when they moved their baking operation into the commercial kitchen of a restaurant owned by one of their sons, where they can sneak in before sunrise and sneak out before the staff comes in.

And that million dollars they once wished for? They’re almost there. In the last 35 years, the 9 Nanas have contributed nearly \$900,000 of happiness to their local community.

But that doesn’t mean they’re too busy to continue doing the little things that make life a bit happier. Sometimes they just pull out the phone book and send off pound cakes to complete strangers. And if the Nanas spot someone at the grocery store who appears to need a little help, it’s not unusual for them to start filling a stranger’s cart.

“This is our way of giving back,” Mary Ellen said. “We want people to know that someone out there cares enough to do something. We want to make sure that happiness happens.”

More Information:

Happiness-Happens.com
Story from the Huffington
Post’s Good News Channel

Mayor Robin Hood on a Crusade for the People

Joey LeMay reports how the Robin Hood tale became a Spanish reality.

In a small town in Spain, Juan Manuel Sanchez Gordillo, Spanish lawmaker and mayor of Marinaleda, has been on an anti-austerity crusade to combat the potential of cuts to unemployment benefits, civil service pay and tax increases in light of the country’s mounting budgetary deficit.

By strangling the country’s budget, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy could potentially implement a \$125 billion bailout for the country’s banking system while privatizing public assets and cutting social

services. Spaniards are also up against a 25 percent unemployment rate – one of the highest in Europe.

Enter Sanchez Gordillo

The mayor has been a catalyst for an uprising that hopes to prevent the strict austerity measures from taking effect. He recently made headlines for organizing supermarket heists that entailed taking food from grocers and using it to feed the poor. Activists working with Sanchez have faced arrests while the mayor has put his own job on the line.

“I have no problem in answering for my actions,” Sanchez has said. “All we did

was make a symbolic and peaceful gesture. The crisis has a face and a name. There are many families who can’t afford to eat.”

Sanchez wants to be sure that his cause is more than intercepting loaves of bread at grocers across Spain. That’s why he has rounded up more than 1,000 anti-austerity activists to march across the country to meet with other mayors and legislators

with a message of defiance. He urges them not to comply with austerity measures and new reforms. His mes-

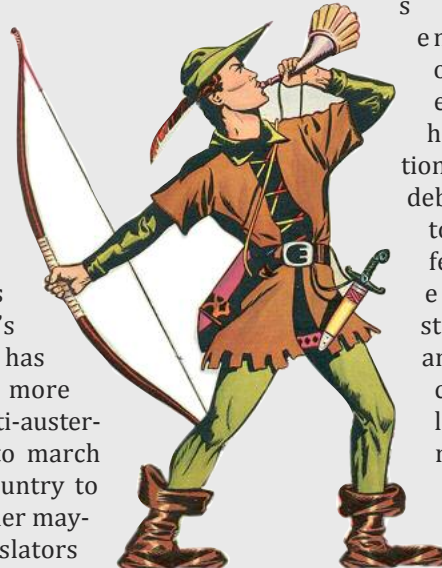
s a g e encourages other leaders to halt home evictions, skip their debt payments to Spain’s federal government, stop layoffs and refuse to comply with local budget reductions.

His message remains

on target: Do not bail out the banks when poverty levels in Spain have increased 15 percent since 2007.

In his own city, he is attempting to implement a cooperative farming system that could feed the community, only to run into other obstacles: The government owns the land that could be used for farming.

In response, Sanchez and members of his activist movement have occupied the farmland for nearly three weeks, saying they will not leave until the political climate in the country improves with the benefits of its citizens in mind.





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The Man Who Planted a Forest

More than 30 years ago, a teenager named Jadav “Molai” Payeng began planting seeds along a barren sandbar near his birthplace in India’s Assam region.

It was 1979 and floods had washed a great number of snakes onto the sandbar. When Jadav - then only 16 - found them, they had all died.

“The snakes died in the heat, without any tree cover. I sat down and wept over their lifeless forms,” Jadav told the Times of India.

“It was carnage. I alerted the forest department and asked them if they could grow trees there. They said nothing would grow there. Instead, they asked me to try growing bamboo. It was

painful, but I did it. There was nobody to help me,” he told the newspaper.

Now, that once-barren sandbar is a sprawling 1,360 acre forest, home to several thousands of varieties of trees and an astounding diversity of wildlife — including birds, deer, apes, rhino, elephants and even tigers.

The forest, called the “Molai woods” after its creator’s nickname, was single-handedly planted and cultivated by one man - Jadav, who



is now 47.

Jadav has dedicated his life to the upkeep and growth of the forest. Accepting a life of isolation, he started living alone on the sandbar as a teenager - spending his days tending the burgeoning plants.

Today, Jadav still lives in the forest. He shares a small hut with his wife and three children and makes a living selling cow and buffalo milk. According to the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Gunin Saikia, it is perhaps the world’s biggest forest in the middle of a river.

“We were surprised to find such a dense forest on the sandbar,” Saikia told the Times of India, adding that officials in the region only learned of Jadav’s forest in 2008.

“[Locals] wanted to cut down the forest, but Jadav dared them to kill him instead. He treats the trees and animals like his own children. Seeing this, we, too, decided to pitch in,” Saikia said.

Finally, Jadav may get the help and recognition he deserves.

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