

from around the world, and right next door...

Portugal Cut Addiction Rates in Half by Decriminalizing Drugs

Over a decade ago, the Portuguese had one of the worst drug problems in Europe. So they decriminalized drugs, took money out of prisons, put it into holistic rehabilitation and found that human connection is the antidote to addiction.

By Johann Hari

Nearly 15 years ago, Portugal had one of the worst drug problems in Europe, with one percent of the population addicted to heroin. They had tried a drug war, and the problem just kept getting worse.

So they decided to do something radically different. They resolved to decriminalize all drugs, and transferred all the money used to arrest and jail drug addicts to spend instead on reconnecting them to their own feelings and to the wider society.

The most crucial step is to get addicts secure housing and subsidized jobs so they have a purpose in life, something to get out of bed for. In warm and welcoming clinics, I watched as they are helped to learn how to reconnect

with their feelings, after stunning them into silence with drugs to medicate years of trauma.

In one example, several addicts were given a shared loan to set up a removals firm. Suddenly, they became a group, bonded to each other and to society, taking responsibility for each other's care.

The results of all this are now in. An independent study by the British Journal of Criminology found that since total decriminalization, addiction rates have fallen and injection (IV) drug use is down by 50 percent. I'll repeat that: IV drug use is down by 50 percent.

Decriminalization has been such a manifest success that very few people in Portugal want to go back to the old system. The main campaigner against decriminalization back in 2000 was Joao Figueira, the country's top drug cop. He offered all the dire warnings that we would expect: more

crime, and more addicts. But when we sat down together in Lisbon, he told me that everything he predicted had not come to pass—and that he now hopes the whole world will follow Portugal's example.

This example isn't only relevant to addicts. It is relevant to all of us, because it forces us to think differently about ourselves. Human beings are bonding animals. We need to connect and love. The wisest sentence of the twentieth century was E.M. Forster's: "Only connect!" But we have created an environment and a culture that cut us off from connection, or provide only the parody of it offered by the Internet. The rise of addiction is a symptom of a deeper sickness in the way we live—constantly directing our gaze towards the next shiny object we should buy, rather than the human beings all around us.

The writer George Monbiot has called this "the age of loneliness." We have created human societies where it is easier for people to become cut off from human connections than ever before. Bruce Alexander, the creator of Rat

Park (see more information on page 16), told me that for too long, we have talked exclusively about individual recovery from addiction. We need now to talk about social recovery—how we all recover, together, from the sickness of isolation.

This new evidence isn't just a challenge to us politically. It doesn't just require us to change our minds. It requires us to change our hearts as well.

Loving an addict is really hard. When I looked at the addicts I love, it was always tempting to follow the tough love advice: an addict who won't stop should be shunned. It's the logic of the drug war, imported into our private lives.

But in fact, I learned that isolation will only deepen their addiction—and that you may lose them altogether. I came home determined to draw the addicts in my life closer to me than ever—to let them know I love them unconditionally, whether they stop, or whether they can't. To let them know that I really care.

This article is reprinted from Yes! Magazine (www.yesmagazine.org) and adapted from Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Day of the War on Drugs (chasingthescream.com).

For information about related new research see page 16

“Decriminalization has been such a manifest success that very few people in Portugal want to go back to the old system.”



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Former students say “we won't pay our debt”

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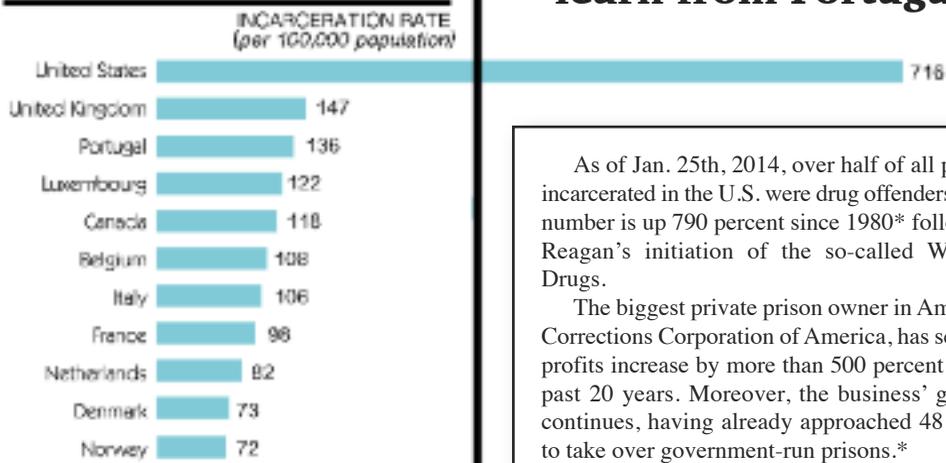
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Positive News is a reflection of this widespread movement and tells its powerful stories.

INCARCERATION RATES AMONG FOUNDED NATO MEMBERS



Source: <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/global>

What can the U.S. learn from Portugal?

As of Jan. 25th, 2014, over half of all people incarcerated in the U.S. were drug offenders. This number is up 790 percent since 1980* following Reagan's initiation of the so-called War on Drugs.

The biggest private prison owner in America, Corrections Corporation of America, has seen its profits increase by more than 500 percent in the past 20 years. Moreover, the business' growth continues, having already approached 48 states to take over government-run prisons.*

*Congressional Research Service
**Truthout www.truth-out.org

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Dear Reader,

You choose the world of *Positive News* because it nourishes you in some deeply personal way.

Positive News is heart-crafted with the conscious aim of creating a better world for all. Through the two million newspaper copies printed over the past 13 years and daily digital stories, we document the movement of humanity's caring, ingenuity and love for life. And what an amazing journey it's been!

Many of you reach out to say thank you. Some of you tell us that we have made a real difference in your lives.

If *Positive News* nourishes your life with hope and inspiration, we invite you to protect

this wellspring of positive change.

You might have noticed the absence of our newspaper during the past six months. We have just recently secured funding for the present edition and rushed to get it into your hands as quickly as possible. We hope you enjoy it!

This achievement was produced through the combined efforts of a multitude of good-willed people with enlightened minds and insight into the needs of our world. Our deepest thanks to you all!

We still need to raise \$40,000 to continue printing *Positive News* for another year.

It doesn't matter how big or small your contribution is. What matters is that you par-

ticipate with a sense of joy, a sense of peace, a sense that *Positive News* helps right the balance between positive and negative. If your budget is constrained, we thank you for your good wishes.

May this season of new life bursting forth everywhere bring you joy, inspiration and vitality. May we each, in our own special ways, create a more alive world today.

With gratitude for you, we hope for a spring of positive changes for all.

~Ilonka Wloch,
Editor

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This Is What Solidarity Looks Like



People around the world are standing up together to support equality, justice and a right to live free from fear of the police. In light of the Black Lives Matter movement, people across the globe have been standing up in solidarity, linking their own struggles to that of African Americans in the U.S.

Black Lives Matter is the rallying cry of people who understand that all humans are one family, and all humans deserve equal rights.

The Black Lives Matter movement is part of a lineage of civil rights activism that has shaped, and will continue to shape, our society. People all over the world are coming together to demand a world where justice is for all!

*To find out more:
www.facebook.com/BlackLivesMatter*

Clockwise from top left: Ferguson, USA; Gaza, Palestine; Tokyo, Japan; Seoul, South Korea; Toronto, Canada; Delhi, India; Paris, France; and Buenaventura, Colombia.

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~ Daliya Robson

India's top court rules in favor of free speech

India's top court has struck down a law that gave authorities powers to jail people for offensive online posts, a verdict praised as a victory for free speech in the world's largest growth market for the Internet.

Judges ruled this spring that Section 66A of the country's Information and Technology Act "hit at the root of liberty and freedom of expression."

The legislation was challenged in the Supreme Court by law students, bloggers, writers and rights groups following arrests across the country for statements posted on social media sites.

The petitioners argued the "draconian law" introduced in 2008 by the last government was misused by politicians to hound critics.

Source: Al Jazeera



Solidarity Not Fear: World Social Forum opens in Tunisia

Under the slogan "Together to pursue the revolution of rights and dignity," over 4,000 organizations from 120 countries attended the 14th World Social Forum, which took place from March 24 to 28. The groups ranged a wide breadth of nations and causes, from the global peasant movement La Via Campesina, to the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, and the international feminist-action movement World March of Women.

Climate justice and global feminism were key themes this year—including a track organized by Tunisian feminists to address the social and economic conditions driving gender inequality on a global level. Participants held workshops, discussions, cultural events and public actions on topics including the global anti-austerity fight, war and militarism issues and the Black Lives Matter movement.

"There are so many different organizations and people here coming together to show solidarity," said Khantouche, who is attending the Forum as a delegate with the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance.

Wi-Fi banned in French nursery schools

This past winter, the French National Assembly made history by passing a new national law to reduce exposures to wireless radiation electromagnetic fields.

The law states that Wi-Fi and wireless devices will be banned in "the spaces dedicated to home, to rest and activities of children under three years." Additionally, in schools for children up to 11 years of age, Wi-Fi routers should be turned off

when not in use for pedagogic purposes.

The law also requires that residents have access to cell tower radiation measurements near their homes. Conditions of how to inform the public as well as involvement of the local authorities are specified as are the steps to follow in case of disagreement.



Heart-solar

All solar farms are lovely, but this one will downright steal your heart. Once built, its 7,888 panels will form a four-acre valentine, visible only from above, on Grand Terre, the biggest island of the South Pacific archipelago New Caledonia.

This heart will pump two megawatts of sun-powered electricity through the



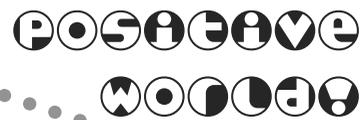
Woman designs mosque



In Turkey, there are more than 80,000 mosques, which were all built by men—except for one. That lone exception to the rule of male architects is the Şakirin Mosque in Istanbul, designed by Zeynep Fadillioglu. The first female designer of a mosque, the internationally recognized creative also designed two other mosques in Qatar in 2010.

Zeynep's work evokes the magic of the Ottoman Empire, while maintaining a contemporary feel. She describes it as a "modern take on traditional values" in a recent

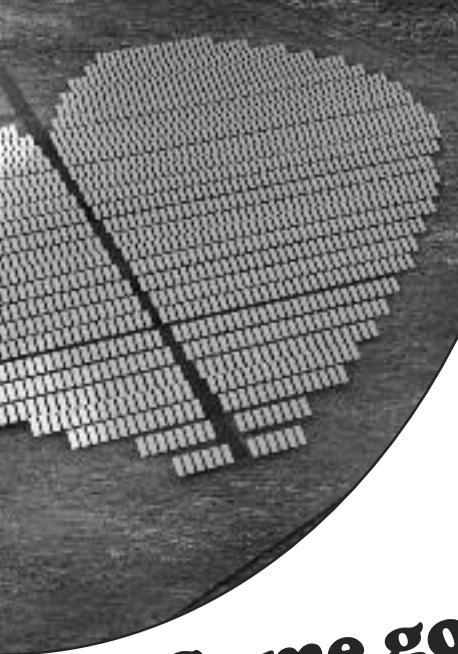
interview in *Designboom* magazine. It was with that look in mind that she designed the Şakirin Mosque in her hometown of Istanbul, a work that has become a symbol of modernity and progress. In mosques women and men pray in separate rooms. Often the women's side is not as nice as the men's. Zeynep made sure that in the Şakirin Mosque the women's side would be just as enjoyable, noting with satisfaction that "today, [her mosque] belongs to the 'must-sees' of Istanbul."



Heart-shaped power plant

arteries of the New Caledonian grid. The design mirrors a nearby heart-shaped swath of wild mangrove—the Coeur de Voh, or Heart of Voh. This project says, “Hey, Sun. We love you. Thanks for the juice.”

Source: grist.org



Estonia welcomes civil partnerships

Estonia has passed a new law allowing same-sex couples to enter into civil partnerships, making it the first former Soviet state to grant legal recognition to gay partners. The law, which will take effect in 2016, has been hailed by some as a sign that Estonia is moving away from Moscow’s conservative influence and aligning with its more liberal Scandinavian neighbors.

“The Constitution dictates equal treatment of all citizens. In a society that respects human rights ... homosexual couples have full rights to enjoy family life and a right not to be condemned,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, a strong supporter of the reforms, as he signed the bill into law.

Source: Positive News UK



Wind power now the cheapest form of electricity in Denmark

Wind power is now the cheapest form of new electricity in Denmark, government officials have announced.

In 2013, one-third of Denmark’s electricity came from wind power, and it is likely the renew-

able alternative will continue to grow in popularity with the decline in costs.

Wind plants due online in 2016 will cost half the price of coal and natu-

plants. According to the national Energy Agency, wind power will now cost approximately four cents per kilowatt hour. Commenting on the new analysis, Rasmus Pe-

tersen, Danish minister for Climate, Energy and Building stated: “We need a long-term and stable energy policy to ensure that renewable energy, both today and in

the future, is the obvious choice.”

Source: Positive News UK



Some good news for rhinos

With only 1,000 rhinos left in all of Kenya, preserving them is critical. The country has seen a loss of 100 rhinos over the last three years. But active strategies

and political will lend optimism to the wellbeing of Kenya’s rhinos.

In response to the crisis, Environmental Cabinet Secretary Judi Wakhungu said Kenya is developing regional wildlife enforcement strategies and networks both in the country and on a global level.

“In order to combat wildlife crime, we have strengthened policies and legal frameworks, increased law enforcement capacity and developed effective judicial systems,” said Ms. Wakhungu.

Source: www.thedodo.com



Campaigners push for Homeless Bill of Rights

A coalition of over 125 social justice groups in the U.S. is campaigning for a Homeless Bill of Rights to be introduced to state legislatures, in an effort to end the criminalization of people who live on the streets.

Advocates working in Colorado, California and Oregon have argued that local laws have criminalized life-sustaining actions such as sitting or sleeping in public places. They argue that these laws unfairly target those perceived as undesirable, including the homeless, in an attempt to push them out of public spaces.

“Imagine if every shopper in Times Square that sat down got a ticket. It would never happen. It’s so blatantly racist and classist,” Paul Boden, executive director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), told Al Jazeera. He noted that those earmarked for police attention tended to be nonwhite and dressed in such a way to suggest

poverty. The coalition has compiled over 1,300 interviews with homeless individuals and said it has identified six priority areas to be included in the Homeless Bill of Rights: the right to move freely and sleep in public spaces without discrimination; the right to sleep in a parked vehicle; the right to eat and exchange food in public; the right to obtain legal counsel; the right to access hygiene facilities 24/7 and the right to use the defense of necessity in any criminal prosecution.

In the coming months, the coalition will work with lawyers to develop the bill based on the most common complaints in each of the three states, and then find state representatives to sponsor the bills.

Source: Al Jazeera





Muslims in Norway form a protective human ring around a synagogue

By Balazs Koranyi

More than 1,000 Norwegian Muslims formed a human shield around Oslo's synagogue on Saturday, Feb 14, offering symbolic protection for the city's Jewish community and condemning an attack on a synagogue in neighboring Denmark the previous weekend.

"Humanity is one, and we are here to demonstrate that," Zeeshan Abdullah, one of the event's organizers told a crowd of Muslim immigrants and ethnic Norwegians who filled the small street around Oslo's only functioning synagogue.

"There are many more peace mongers than warmongers," Zeeshan said as organizers and Jewish community leaders stood side by side. "There's still hope for humanity, for peace and love, across religious differences and backgrounds."

Norway's Jewish community is one of Europe's smallest, numbering around 1,000, and the Muslim population, which has been growing steadily through immigration, is 150,000 to 200,000. Norway has

"Humanity is one, and we are here to demonstrate that," Zeeshan Abdullah, one of the protest's organizers, told a crowd of Muslim immigrants and native Norwegians.

a population of about 5.2 million.

As the head of Norway's Jewish community organization Ervin Kohn told the AFP news agency, "Working against fear alone is difficult and it is good that we are so many here together today."

More Information:

Content from the Jerusalem Post



Participants join hands to form a human shield as they stand outside a synagogue in Oslo, Norway

German couple pay Greece \$954 "war reparations"

Tourists enter town hall to hand over check saying they want to make up for their government's attitude

A German couple visiting Greece, walked into a town hall on March 18 and handed over €875 (\$954) in what they said were Second World War reparations.

Dimitris Kotsouros, the mayor of Nafplio, a seaport in the Peloponnese, said: "They came to my office yesterday morning, saying they wanted to make up for their government's attitude. They made their calculations and said each German owed €875 for what Greece had to pay

“A German couple have been hailed as ‘heroes’ after paying out what they described as their personal share of World War II reparations to Greece.”

during World War Two.”

Mr Kotsouros said the money has since been donated to a local charity. The couple chose his town "because it was the first capital of Greece in the 19th century," he added.

Greek media identified the pair as Ludwig Zacaro and Nina Lahge. Ludwig is retired and Nina works part time. They did not have enough money to pay for two, one paper said.

Athens is struggling under a debt mountain that amounts to about 175 percent of the country's annual economic output. The country has long claimed that Germany owes it payment for a forced wartime loan and other reparations, and the prime minister,



Nafplio, the first capital of Greece in the 19th century

Alexis Tsipras, recently said Greece had a "moral obligation" to claim payment.

Several senior Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens in Germany have also said their nation should consider paying reparations.

Nearly 70 years have passed since the end of the war, during which the Nazis occupied Greece for four years and forced the Greek central bank to give the Third Reich a loan that financially ruined the country.

The dispute has grown in intensity because of tensions between Athens and the

rest of the eurozone as Germany leads demands for economic austerity that Greece and other southern European countries are struggling to handle.

Figures from some sources in Athens put the amount still owed by Germany at around €162bn (\$177bn), or more than half the level of debt that Greece is struggling with.

More Information:

Content from Agence France-Presse





The Corinthian 15: Striking their Student Loans and Standing Up for Free College

By Katherine Russell

A group of former students from the for-profit Corinthian Colleges have gone collective—and are seeking not only to erase their student-loan debt but also to spark a larger movement seeking free higher education in the United States. The group, known as the Corinthian 15, are decrying predatory student-loan practices by declaring a “debt strike” and by so doing have taken the first-ever stance of an organized refusal to pay their federal loans.

In the case of the Corinthian 15, the students are saying that because the company lied to them about job placement rates and payment rates—actions that have already

“Rolling Jubilee, which calls itself a “strike debt project,” has abolished more than \$13 million of student debt from Everest College.”

been investigated in numerous lawsuits across several states—they will not pay the federal loans they took out. In a letter to the Department of Education, they call themselves “the first generation made poor by the business of education” and claim “even beyond for-profit schools, tens of millions of students are in more debt than they can ever repay.”

The action comes at a crucial mounting of student loan debt, which is now estimated at 1.3 trillion dollars owed by 40 million borrowers. More than 85 percent of this debt is owned by the U.S. government, which has continuously slashed education funding at the state and federal levels, thus forcing more students to borrow as tuitions increase sharply in a never-ending cycle of ballooning student indebtedness. The Huffington Post reported in 2012 that the cost of a college degree in the U.S. had increased 1,120 percent in 30 years.

With students now leaving college with an average of more than \$25,000 in debt, a sluggish economy is further dragged down by their inability to purchase big-ticket items like cars and houses. In fact, student loan debt is fast outpacing all other consumer debt to such a degree that when—not if—it crashes, its reverberations will place the economy in a new recession of massive proportions.

Also noteworthy is a chilling trend of cradle-to-grave indebtedness. According to new data cited by the federal watchdog Government Accountability Office, more than half of federal student loans held by borrowers over the age of 75 were in default—resulting in record numbers of Social Security payments gar-



nished, thus bankrupting seniors.

Sarita Gupta, executive director of union rights advocacy organization Jobs With Justice, points out in a recent congressional blog for The Hill that “it’s becoming increasingly impossible to age securely in America without incredible wealth, which is further and further out of reach for younger generations.” Given that scenario and the ramifications of escalating student debt, Sarita advocates a complete economic overhaul: “If our economy doesn’t work for students, and it doesn’t work for workers, and it definitely doesn’t work for seniors . . . isn’t it time for a different approach?”

In the meantime, movements are sprouting up all over the nation requesting that the government addresses the growing student-debt crisis. Rolling Jubilee, which calls itself a “strike debt project,” has abolished more than \$13 million of student debt from Everest College—part of the Corinthian Colleges Inc. network and the target of several fraud investigations—with the larger goal of the complete eradication of student debt, as well as other forms of “predatory lending,” according to its website.

“Access to vital common goods, like ed-

“To current and former college students across the country, we say: we stand with you to demand the end of a higher education system that profits from all our dreams. Join our fight. We won’t pay.”

ucation and healthcare, must be available for free, as they are in almost every other wealthy country,” their website states. In order to accomplish this goal, “debtors need to be able to organize together and use their debts as leverage.” As well as supporting Everest students in their actions for complete federal loan forgiveness, Rolling Jubilee has also launched the Debt Collective, “a platform for debtors around the country to find each other and fight back.”

A coalition of the Nation Magazine, Daily Kos, Working Families, Campaign for American’s Future and The American Federation of Teachers recently sent out a series of mass emails petitioning support of the Corinthian 15, as well as cancellation of all student loan debt. The idea of a blanket debt forgiveness—known as a jubilee—has been used throughout human history, from the Egyptian pharaohs to FDR’s New Deal, to level the playing field

within an unjust economic reality.

For the Corinthian 15 and a growing coalition of organizations, the joyous relief of jubilee is not a far-fetched—or far-off— notion. According to Jen Kern of Working Families, a student-loan debt jubilee would cost less than the 2001 Bush tax cuts. As the Corinthian 15 write in their Department of Education manifesto, “To current and former college students across the country, we say: we stand with you to demand the end of a higher education system that profits from all our dreams. Join our fight. We won’t pay.” To which the Rolling Jubilee proclaim on their website, “The debtor’s revolt has begun!”

More Information:

rollingjubilee.org
debtcollective.org

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Monkeys for Equal Pay

Dutch scientist makes case for a sense of justice and compassion amongst animals

By Barry J. Bergman

In a lively UC Berkeley campus appearance hosted this March by the Greater Good Science Center, Frans de Waal, a primatologist and ethologist, offered compelling evidence that capuchin monkeys—namesakes of an order of Catholic friars—not only recognize inequity, but are quick to challenge it.

Frans played a video of an experiment he'd done with pairs of capuchin monkeys, housed side by side in glass cages. In return for handing a pebble to a researcher, one monkey receives a bland piece of cucumber, which she's happy to get—until she sees that her partner's reward for the very same task is a tasty grape.

She gives it another try, but instead of a grape gets cucumber again. This time she hurls the cuke back at the researcher, rattles her cage and pounds the floor in angry protest. It's a tantrum similar, in fact—as another video showed—to that of a human toddler who sees her older brother get a cookie, only to get half herself.

During Frans's experiments, monkeys rewarded equitably rejected the cucumber just five percent of the time. If their partners received a grape, however, they refused their lower pay at a rate of 50 percent. And when partners were given a grape "for free," without even having to pick up a pebble, rejections soared.

Such behavior, said the Dutch-born scientist, now at Emory University, is further evidence that humans are not the only species to boast a moral code, and that

“It struck me that after fights they [chimps] would come together, they kissed and embraced each other.”

morality is separate from God and religion. Instead, it's related to what he calls the "pro-social tendencies" of primates and other animals, a self-awareness—and awareness of others—that gives rise to emotional responses like reconciliation, empathy and consolation.

"I've seen chimps kill each other," said Frans, "so I'm very fully aware of their competitive side." After studying aggression in chimps as a student in the Netherlands, though, "It struck me that after fights they would come together, they kissed and embraced each other, and that was actually more interesting than the aggression itself."

And chimps aren't the only nonhuman animals with a bent for reconciliation.

He described the difference between two kinds of macaques, rhesus monkeys and stump-tails, and the cultural influence that one can have on the other. Rhesus monkeys, he said, are "very hierarchical," prone to punishing subordinates and not keen on reconciliation. Stump-tailed monkeys, by contrast, are "very tolerant and engaging."

"I usually compare them as the New Yorkers and the Californians," he said.

In one experiment, juvenile stump-tailed and rhesus monkeys were housed together for five months—during which the stump-tails' mellowness rubbed off on their more belligerent cousins.

"What we're showing here is how strongly reconciliation behavior in rhesus monkeys can be affected by the social environment," said Frans. "Which means that humans, of course, can also be affected by the social environment."

He cited studies that reveal "big cultural differences" between America and Japan, where children reconcile "much more" than their U.S. counterparts—likely due, according to researchers, to the way teachers in each country handle conflict in class and on the playground.

"Teachers in the U.S., as soon as there's a fight among kids they step in and stop it," he said, while in Japan "they let them fight, and reconcile on their own."

During his talk, Frans employed data, humor and videos to break down commonly held beliefs about the differences between human and nonhuman animals. There were chimps showing empathy by unselfishly caring for their partners' well-being, for example, and a pair of elephants figuring out how to haul in a tricky feeding apparatus by coordinating their efforts.

And while his listeners were rapt throughout, they witnessed plenty of evidence of "yawn contagion," which, like other manifestations of empathy—human and not—rises and falls in relation to others' perceived "otherness."

More Information:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans_de_Waal
 Content from Greater Good Science Center



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U.K. passes tough new transparency law for oil, gas and mining companies

A historic new law came into effect in the U.K. that will help reduce poverty and corruption in resource-rich but poor countries.

As of January 1, 2015, the new rules compel U.K. oil, gas, mining and logging companies to publish details of the payments they make to governments across the world for access to natural resources. This move will help make hundreds of billions of pounds worth of taxes, royalties and license fees available to public scrutiny.

Currently, such payments are largely made in secret, leaving vast amounts of public money vulnerable to corruption. With 887 million people living on less than \$1.25 a day in resource-dependent countries, the U.K. rules have the potential to help large numbers of people escape poverty.

"This is a game changer for citizens in

some of the world's poorest countries," said Global Witness Director Simon Taylor. "We applaud the U.K. government for bringing these deals out into the open, and we urge other countries to follow suit." Global Witness has been campaigning for such measures for over 16 years.

Companies are required to publicly disclose payments for every project they operate in all countries with no exception. Firms that fail to report fully, truthfully and accurately could face criminal prosecution. The law's passage puts the U.K. at the forefront of a global movement for greater transparency in the extractive industries, and sends a strong signal to regulators in Canada and the United States who are developing similar mandatory rules.

Reported by Global Witness



Paris halves cars on roads and provides free public transport

By Patrick Kulp

A severe air-pollution spike that has left Paris and much of northern France covered in a thick cloud of toxic smog prompted French authorities to cut the city's traffic in half, starting in March.

The emergency measure allows cars with license plates ending in odd numbers to drive on odd-numbered days and vice versa, according to French newspaper Le Monde. The restrictions do not apply to taxis, hybrid or electric cars, and vehicles carrying more than three people.

Additionally, Paris cut down speed limits to about 12 miles per hour, according to The Guardian, and made all public transportation free in a bid to discourage Parisians from driving.

Air pollution has gotten so bad recently in the City of Light that the Eiffel Tower seemed to nearly disappear within a haze of smog. Winds swept the noxious mix of pollutants across the English Channel to the United Kingdom and other parts of Western Europe.

A similar air-pollution crisis blanketed the cityscape in smog around this time last

“The Parisians' health is not negotiable”
~ Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo

year, prompting the French government to enact the same emergency driving ban.

Initially, even though Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo had called on the French government to limit the number of cars on the road, French Minister of Ecology Ségolène Royal resisted taking such drastic measures in hopes that the situation would improve. But later on, Mayor Hidalgo

announced on Twitter that the government had agreed to her requests.

"The Parisians' health is not negotiable," she tweeted, according to a Google translation. "I stand by my request for [the] establishment of alternating traffic."

Content from Mashable.com

Feds propose to protect 39,655 square miles for endangered whales

In response to the efforts of conservation and wildlife protection groups, the National Marine Fisheries Service proposed recently to protect 39,655 square miles as critical habitat for North Atlantic right whales. Only about 450 of the critically endangered whales exist today, and without additional protections the species faces a serious risk of extinction.

The Fisheries Service's proposed rule would protect crucial habitat for right whales, including northeast feeding areas in the Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank region and calving grounds from southern North Carolina to northern Florida. However, the proposal entirely ignores the species' twice-yearly migratory routes through the mid-Atlantic.

The proposed rule responds to a September 2009 petition filed by the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, The Humane Society of the United States and Whale and Dolphin Conservation. Issuance of the proposed rule was also compelled by a settlement agreement resolving litigation over the agency's delay in taking action on the petition.

"Right whales are at an extinction

“Proposal will protect calving, foraging areas of last remaining 450 whales.”

crossroads right now—offshore oil drilling, military sonar and commercial shipping on the Atlantic pose a serious risk to their survival. Protecting critical habitat between calving and foraging areas will be essential to saving these majestic whales," said Miyoko Sakashita, oceans director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

More Information:

www.biologicaldiversity.org
Content from Common Dreams



Happy Beluga whale



Five Love Notes to My Grandmother

By Tesa

I was just in France to visit my grandmother, who is very dear to me. I don't get to cross the Atlantic very often, and she's now 96 year old, so every time I go to visit, the two of us are very aware that it might be the last time we see each other.

The last time I visited her in December of 2004, I did a series of short video interviews about her life. I asked her what it was like to grow up with her father in the 1910's (her mother died during labor) and to live through the German occupation alone with two young children, with a husband away at a prison camp in Germany.

I asked her about her greatest memories and life learnings so far, her favorite books, foods, stories. I also asked her about her spirituality and her thoughts about death. I learned a lot of amazing new things about her I never knew before. These were very intimate conversations and a very special time for both of us.

This year, I did not really have questions, only a great urge for her to know how loved she is. I cooked for her and read her stories. I gave her a foot massage, which I was amazed to discover was her first ever!

Before leaving, I was looking for a way to leave something meaningful behind besides the memory of our time together. So I wrote her five different love and gratitude notes to let her know how much she means to me, and hid them in different places where I knew she would eventually find them.

One I hid under the sheets, on her pillow. Another I left hanging from the lamp shade that she reads under in the evening. Yet another was laid by her toothbrush. One I stashed in the mailbox that she eagerly checks every day. And a last one I balanced



on her car's steering wheel (she still drives to the nearby village a couple of times a week to run errands!).

I left really joyous knowing that these cards would surely cheer her up after I left (she lives by herself). She called me as I was traveling back to Paris to catch my plane and said "I found your three cards! By the time I discovered the third, I was laughing out loud! They did me so much good. Thank you so much!" I smiled to myself, knowing she still had two more to go! It was Sunday, so I guessed she had not yet checked her mailbox or driven her car.

As I was sitting on the plane back to the U.S., I remembered that one of my friend's guiding principles is to treat everyone like family, and so I was thinking about ways to practice that in different settings, including on a plane ride. I decided that on my next flight, I would bring and write five anonymous appreciation cards for different people on the plane, including the pilot who probably does not get thanked enough for taking us safely to our destinations.

Content from

Content from KindSpring.org

Panhandler Thanks Community After Securing a Job



Thomas Joseph Bennett, a former addict whose life wasn't easy, was spotted out on the street in Worcester, Massachusetts holding up a different kind of panhandling sign, and thanking those who've helped him in the past: "My miracle is you. I got a job. To the people who felt my pain, Thank You! My love and respect to u all."

Source: Good News Network

Vancouver resident sells unconditional love on Craigslist

A real estate posting goes viral and sums up our human condition with a \$0 deal offer

By Jill Slattery

Vancouver man Brice Royer is selling something unheard of before.

In the second-most expensive city in the world, what Mr. Royer is selling is his most prized possession and one of the hottest commodities in the world—unconditional love.

The Vancouverite posted an ad in the real estate section of Craigslist on

March 12, advertising unconditional love for \$0. He did not expect people to take him seriously, but in a few short days, he'd received numerous offers and over one million views.

Take a read through Royer's advertisement below:

More Information:

Content from Vancity Buzz



I'm selling unconditional love for \$0.00

Hello, I am selling unconditional love for \$0. Infinite square feet lot. Includes refreshing air, sunshine, the Earth, beautiful mountains and the ocean. A stunning 'classic' heritage made 4.5...

VANCOUVER.CRAIGSLIST.CA

Hello, I am selling unconditional love for \$0. Infinite square feet lot. Includes refreshing air, sunshine, the Earth, beautiful mountains and the ocean. A stunning 'classic' heritage made 4.5 billion years ago. Address: Earth, Solar System, Milky Way.

Available now to serious buyers. Perfect for the first-time buyer and experienced investors feeling empty and trapped with stress and pressure to maximize return on investment because of family and stakeholders expectation.

HISTORY: I received it a long time ago when I was born. I received the gift of life from my parents, the sun, the water, the Earth, the air, a smile, a hug, a helping hand, without being asked anything in return. I didn't earn any of them. They belong to public domain, the commons, "Mother Earth" or God, if you're religious.

At some point, my ancestors were afraid and decided to own land that once belonged to everyone, sell services that were once freely given, and even own humans through debt. Since it was claimed or stolen by those who made the laws themselves with a series of 'legitimate' transfers, then any law that enforces private

ownership is perpetuating a crime. Not all laws are morally just. Only recently, slavery was legal and women weren't allowed to vote. Why pay for something that was stolen from you? They made a mistake. I'm sorry. Let's start fresh with this new sale.

Although I am only one human and my time and resources are limited, my soul and the intention of love is eternal, and so is yours ... and I would like us to share that experience.

PAYMENT: I don't accept cheques or mortgage payments, only cash payments of \$0. You are also welcome to re-sale it for \$0. But I must warn you ... it will multiply once you do.

CONTACT ME: If you would like to join this incredible investing opportunity, you can email me by clicking on 'reply' to this post or visiting gifteconomy.ca Thank you, The Seller

P.S.: Yes, I am for real. I'm a cancer patient who believes that love can heal.

P.P.S.: If you are disappointed and missed out on the \$51 million Point Grey mansion recently sold in Vancouver, then you are in luck. What I am offering is priceless.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS: Unconditional love is in high demand in today's Vancouver housing market. I will give you a 100% commission of \$0.00 on the sale. Please inquire for details!

Frequently Asked Questions:

"Why are you selling the Earth for \$0?" I'm simply correcting the housing bubble. The Earth's asking price for its abundant gifts to us has always been \$0.00.

"What does free property have anything to do with unconditional love?" Everything. Here's a beautiful poem that may answer your question: "Even after all this time the sun never says to the earth, 'You owe me.'" Look what happens with a love like that. It lights the whole sky." – Hafiz, a Persian poet of the 1300s.

"Can you do that? Is this legal? What if the government evicts me?" Since I'm returning the Earth which rightfully belongs to everyone, then it makes all previous legal title claims over the Earth invalid. Love is rebellious and revolutionary.

Please, live and eat freely on this Earth wherever you choose as long as it does not

cause harm to others. If your government enforces an eviction based on outdated and immoral private property laws, which ignored the formal laws of the commons and of indigenous people, then you can simply show them this "new" title deed of the Earth's unconditional love which I have sold to you for \$0.00. If they refuse to accept it, you may wish to take them to their own Supreme Court to change this law, and who knows, you may eventually win because what I stated above is based on historical facts!

"What interesting emails have you received since posting this ad?" Someone sent me an inspiring letter from the Chief of Seattle in the 1800s. "The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? ... One thing we know—there is only one God. No man, be he Red man or White man, can be apart. We ARE all brothers after all."

Weapons of Mass Instruction



In celebration of World Book Day (March 5), Argentinian artist Raul Lemesoff constructed yet another book tank.

This time he converted a 1979 Ford Falcon into a new roving library on wheels with an exterior framework capable of carrying 900

free books.

Raul refers to his militaristic bibliothecas as Weapons of Mass Instruction (Arma de Instruccion Masiva), which he drives around the streets of Argentina giving free books to anyone who wants one, as long as they promise to read it.



Who wants a novel?

The artist's intent behind his creative bookmobiles is "to battle ignorance and spread knowledge." He jokes in a video about his project, "My missions are very dangerous. I attack people in a very nice and fun way."

More Information:

Watch how it all came together vimeo.com/121404768



How the U.S. Is Building a People-Powered Economy

By Sarah van Gelder

Six years ago, the global economy nearly collapsed. Now big corporations and the wealthy are recovering well. But that's not the case for the vast majority of Americans: according to calculations by author Les Leopold, the richest seven percent gained \$5.6 trillion net assets from 2009 to 2011, while the remaining 93 percent lost a combined total of \$669 billion.

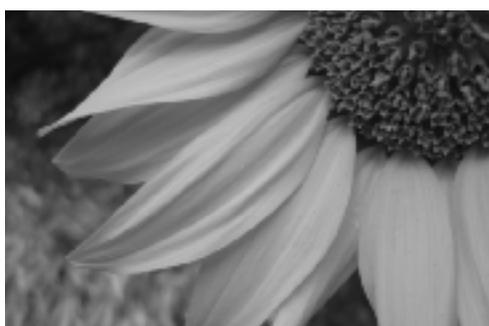
Americans are not content with this state of affairs. According to a recent report by the Pew Research Center, 62 percent believe the dominant economic system favors the powerful, while 78 percent believe too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies.

This enormous economic divide is just one reason people are losing patience with the corporate economy—and why many are turning to initiatives that build a new economy. Grassroots groups, local entrepreneurs and broad-based coalitions are building the foundations of an economy that distributes economic benefits widely and minimizes damage to the environment.

Here are five big shifts:

1. Local food grows everywhere

Local food, once a tiny niche market, has gone mainstream. The growing, processing and marketing of local foods is booming—not just on the crunchy West Coast, but also in Appalachia in the eastern U.S., in abandoned neighborhoods in Detroit, Michigan and towns and cities



throughout the country.

Through farmers markets and direct purchases from growers, the food travels quickly from farm to table, keeping it fresh and nutritious.

Avoiding red meat and dairy may be a more important way to avoid contributing to the climate crisis than eating local, and local food isn't always greener. Still, a local diet does reduce emissions from food transportation, support local jobs and connect people to their neighbors and local environment.

2. More workers own their jobs

Worker-owned co-ops have been spreading, particularly since the recession. While they, like all businesses, can struggle, they can also help keep good jobs stable and keep money in the community.

In the Bronx in New York City, the 2,300 employees who work at Cooperative Home Health Care Associates get better pay, more job security and more training for career advancement than their counterparts at competing firms. More than 1,000 of them are owners in the company, and 90 percent are women of color.

In Chicago, workers at a manufacturing plant who were laid off when the plant was shut down bought out the factory and now operate it as New Era Window and Doors.

The most famous example of worker ownership, however, is the Mondragon Cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain (see our Summer 14 Edition), which has more than 70,000 worker-owners in more than 200 enterprises. Labor unions and community activists in the U.S. are beginning to emulate Mondragon's success, especially in hard-hit Rust Belt regions.

3. The economy goes DIY

Maker, DIY and sharing culture is blossoming. Young people especially are repurposing old clothes into fashionable art, making art bicycles, building tiny houses and writing open source software.

While some peer-to-peer platforms, such as Uber and Airbnb, have raised controversy, some people are truly sharing—not for money. Online platforms like Couchsurfing let people share their homes with travelers. Others have started “pay-it-forward” restaurants where you pay not for your own meal, but for the person behind you in the line.

An ethic of reuse and no waste, a bias for local and small-scale, and a preference for generosity make this a particularly creative space in the emerging new economy.

4. Money grows more responsible

Shortly after the recession, millions of people shifted their accounts from too-big-to-fail banks to community banks and credit unions. Now some are going further. Campaigners in 22 states aim to open government-owned banks at the state, county or municipal level to finance local economies and keep profits nearby.

The latest trend, in light of the threat of climate disruption, is to divest from holdings in coal, oil and gas companies. To date, more than 800 global investors have pledged to divest over \$50 billion. Redirecting assets from big corporations and Wall Street to sustainable local enterprises is providing investment capital needed to fuel the new economy.

6. Innovation emerges to protect our resources

Some of our society's most precious resources belong to all of us. These common assets include fresh water, the Internet, green spaces in our cities and the storehouse of knowledge we inherit from previous generations.

The new economy draws on the wealth of these and other common resources, but does so in a way that neither depletes

“Alternative business models such as worker-owned cooperatives are gaining ground, proving that a more just and sustainable future is possible.”



Worker-owners from Chicago's New Era Windows and Doors celebrating their opening on May 9, 2013



Brooklyn Grange (BG), a farm on top of the Brooklyn Navy Yards, a redevelopment mixed-use industrial park

them nor excludes others. That means protecting water quality, keeping the Internet open, protecting the stability of the climate, and ensuring access to a good education—for ourselves and for those not yet born.

The new economy emerging from these initiatives is not a new ideology or a utopian mirage. It's built on grassroots-led, pragmatic actions that people around the U.S. and around the world are taking to create widely shared, sustainable prosperity.

More Information:

Reprinted from YES! Magazine
www.yesmagazine.org





El regalo de Saphichay

Estimados lectores de Positive News,

Me gustaría compartir con ustedes, el maravilloso trabajo que se está llevando a cabo en los alrededores de los Andes peruanos, para la supervivencia cultural y los derechos indígenas.

Este movimiento para reconectar con la identidad indígena comprende preservar y revitalizar las ceremonias tradicionales, las prácticas de recuperación, los ritos de paso, la agricultura saludable y sostenible y los idiomas nativos.

El enfoque de Saphichay es único, pretende conciliar las diferencias entre las comunidades nativas y mestizas, no rechaza ni el antiguo ni el nuevo. Con demasiada frecuencia, las comunidades abandonan las prácticas tradicionales, las juzgan atrasadas o anticuadas, las relegan al pasado y las niegan sitio en la modernidad, a pesar del hecho de que la ciencia occidental moderna parece hace poco haber tomado conciencia de muchos de los sistemas complejos que eran bien establecidos en las metodologías indígenas.

Con demasiada frecuencia, cualquier uso de prácticas modernas por los pueblos indígenas se considera invalidar la "autenticidad" de su identidad indígena. Como resultado, las comunidades mestizas que mantienen su existencia en tierras ancestrales se han aislado de sus identidades, su herencia legítima de ricas historias y su legado ancestral. Saphichay tiene como objetivo conectar estas comunidades a sus historias y crear espacio para la cultura indígena en el mundo moderno.

Hace apenas medio año, Saphichay trabajó con jóvenes urbanos de las afueras de Lima, en un proyecto de Cuenta Cuentos. Estos estudiantes de la escuela intermedia, mayoritariamente indígena, recogieron historias de sus abuelos, tíos, tías, padres, vecinos, etc. Los estudiantes escogieron algunas historias de entre esta colección maravillosamente diversa, y convirtieron sus selecciones en obras cortas de teatro. Los jóvenes entonces recibieron

una invitación para realizar su teatro en Machu Picchu, en una reunión internacional de la paz.

Est@s chic@s no permitieron que nada se les estorbara su camino. Desde Cusco, debido a limitaciones financieras, tuvimos que caminar 21 millas a Aguas Calientes, el pueblo donde se encuentra Machu Picchu. Al día siguiente, fuimos a la inauguración, donde l@s jóvenes por primera vez vieron nuestras ceremonias tradicionales, y pudieron participar en ellas. Ver los rostros y el lenguaje corporal mientras ell@s se anclaron en quiénes son y de dónde vienen, mereció toda la pena del viaje.

Aquella fue una oportunidad increíble, y, para much@s, la única oportunidad que tendrán de visitar uno de sus propios sitios ancestrales, encontrarse cara a cara con sus raíces culturales, y conocer a otros miembros de la comunidad indígena que continúan a practicar sus tradiciones. Los proyectos culturales como este, ayudan no sólo para preservar nuestras historias y prácticas, sino también para fortalecer las relaciones familiares y comunitarias intergeneracionales, que a menudo se pierden en los entornos urbanos. Uno de los participantes jóvenes, Marco C. de Ventanilla, Lima, escribió, "gracias a Saphichay por darnos esta oportunidad de volver a conectar con nuestras tradiciones que me ayuda a sentirme orgulloso de mis raíces".

Desde entonces, l@s jóvenes han tenido más que nunca ganas de aprender acerca de sus tradiciones y honrar a sus antepasad@s en lugar de canjearlos por algo nuevo y brillante de la televisión.

~Paloma

Traducido por
Blair Sandler

The Gift of Saphichay

Dear Positive News Readers,

I'd like to share with you some wonderful indigenous rights and cultural survival work that's being done down in the Andes and surrounding areas of Peru.

Preserving and revitalizing traditional ceremonies; healing practices; rights of passage; healthy, sustainable, agricultural practices and native languages are all part of a movement focused on reconnecting with indigenous identity.

Saphichay's approach is a unique one in that it seeks to reconcile the differences between native and mestizo (mixed indigenous and European blood) communities rather than to reject either the old or the new. Too often, communities abandon traditional practices as backwards or outdated, relegate them to the past and deny them a place in modernity, in spite of the fact that modern Western science seems only recently to have become aware of many of the complex systems that were well established in indigenous methodologies.

Too often, any use of modern practices by indigenous peoples is claimed to invalidate the "authenticity" of their indigenous identity. As a result, mestizo communities that maintain their existence in age-old homelands are cut off from their identities and their rightful inheritance of rich histories that connect them to their ancestral legacy. Saphichay aims to connect these communities

to their histories and create space for indigenous culture in the modern world.

Just last year Saphichay worked with urban youth from the outskirts of Lima in a storytelling project. The idea was for these largely indigenous, middle-school students to collect stories from their grandparents, uncles, aunts, parents and neighbors. The students selected a few stories from this beautifully diverse collection, which they turned into short theatrical pieces. The youth then received an invitation to perform their theatre in Machu Picchu at an international peace gathering.

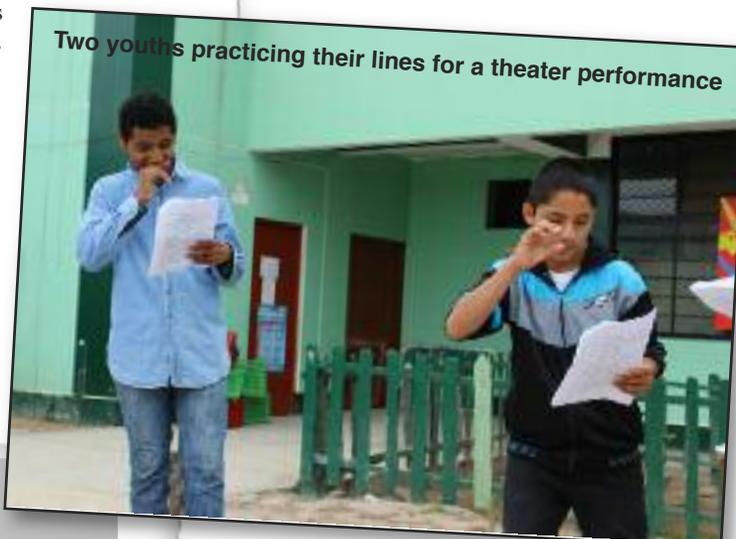
These kids were not going to let anything get in their way. From Cusco, due to financial constraints, we had to walk 21 miles to Aguas Calientes, the town where Machu Picchu is located. The next day we went to the opening, where the youth for the first time saw what our traditional ceremonies looked like, and got to participate. Seeing their faces and body language at the experience of anchoring into who they were and where they came from made the whole journey well worth it.

This was an amazing opportunity, and, for many, the only chance they would get to visit one of their own ancestral sites, come face-to-face with their cultural roots and meet other indigenous community members who still practice their traditions. Cultural projects like this help not only to preserve our stories and practices but also to strengthen familial and community-based intergenerational relationships, which are often lost in urban settings. One youth participant, Marco C. from Ventanilla, Lima, wrote, "Thanks to Saphichay for giving us this opportunity to reconnect to our traditions which helps me feel proud of my roots."

Since then, we have had youth more eager than ever to learn about their traditions and honor their ancestry rather than exchange it for something new and shiny from the television.

~Paloma

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www.saphichay.org



El proceso de paz en Colombia rescata a 5.000 de la muerte o lesión

De Blair Sandler

El diálogo entre el gobierno y los rebeldes Farc (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) pretende poner fin a más de 50 años de conflicto armado en Colombia, el cual ha cobrado alrededor de 220,000 vidas.

Debido a las negociaciones, se han evitado en el año pasado la muerte o lesión grave de cerca de 5000 combatientes y civiles, según un informe de la Fundación Paz y Reconciliación. La mejora en la situación en Colombia siguió varias

treguas unilaterales de las Farc, que han ido de la mano con progreso en el proceso de paz. El resultado ha sido una reducción de 40% en la violencia, y una disminución de 60% en desplazamientos



These protesters commemorate the tens of thousands of "disappeared" from the armed conflict in Colombia. They represent a part of more than one million people who demonstrated for Peace and Justice in Colombia on April 9, 2013

forzados.

"Creo que el 2014 fue el primer sorbo de la paz", aseguró León Valencia, director de Paz y Reconciliación, y co-autor del informe.

Peace Process in Colombia saves 5,000 from death or injury

By Blair Sandler

The dialogue between the government and FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) aims to end more than 50 years of armed conflict in Colombia, which has cost about 220,000 lives.

Because of the negotiations, about 5,000 cases of death or severe injury to combatants or civilians were avoided in the past year, according to a report from the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation. The improvement in the situation in Colombia followed several unilateral ceasefires by FARC, which went hand-in-hand with progress in the peace

process. The result was a reduction of 40 percent in violence and 60 percent in forced displacements.

"I believe that 2014 was the first taste of peace," declared León Valencia, director of Peace and Reconciliation and co-author of the report.

*Para más información
(For more information):*

.....
*Lo Que Hemos Ganado
(Fundación Paz y Reconciliación) www.pares.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Descargue-Informe-Completo.pdf*



Teens Today Are Actually Great – 7 Positive Trends Prove It

By Kristy Cooper

Have teens gotten a bad rap in recent years? They are typically characterized as self-involved, reckless and only interested in 'sharing' on their phones, but in reality, the youth of today are actually behaving more virtuously than they have in years.

Statistics tell an optimistic story. From smoking and drug use to unwanted pregnancies and abortions, the trends today show most teenagers are making good choices. They are even volunteering in their communities more than ever before.

Smoking has become uncool

According to national CDC statistics, cigarette smoking among high school students is at the lowest level in 22 years.

The rate is cut almost in half, leaving just 15.7 percent of teens smoking in 2013.

Drunk driving is far less common

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey has revealed that at half as many high school students say they got behind the wheel drunk in 2011 compared to 1991.

Drug abuse is down

Recreational use of prescription pain relievers continue a three-year decline, part of an overall two-decade trend. The number of high school kids using was 33 percent lower than a decade ago, according to the recently released national survey Monitoring the Future. The survey noted that marijuana use remained stable, even with the increase of states allowing recreational use.

Unwanted pregnancy and abortion has plummeted

Teen pregnancy has declined almost continuously for more than two decades, plummeting from 61 to 26 births per thousand girls, according to federal health statistics. Also, the rate of abortions among women under 20 has fallen since it peaked in the early 1990s, according to 2014 research by the nonprofit Guttmacher Institute.

Kids are 'hanging in there' until graduation

Efforts to keep teens in school are paying off. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported the high school dropout rate has decreased from 12 percent in 1990 to seven percent in 2012.

Today's teens regularly volunteer more

A higher number of teens in twelfth-grade are volunteering at least once per month. The proportion rose from 24 percent in 1991 to 37 percent in 2012, according to Child Trends. The nonprofit research center that tracks youth trends considers it an encouraging trend: "Teens who volunteer are more likely to have positive academic, psychological and occupational wellbeing."

Armed with the facts of these positive trends, the next time you hear complaints about today's youth, you can inject the conversation with some rays of hope."

More Information:

.....
www.cdc.gov/media/DPK/2014/dpkyrbs.html
www.childtrends.org/?indicators=volunteering
www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/reproductive-health/teen-pregnancy/trends.html



Teens read poetry at African American Museum and Library in Oakland, CA

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First-grader starts a 'buddy bench' epidemic

A Pennsylvania student came up with a simple idea to eliminate loneliness and foster friendship on the playground

Sometimes it's the simplest ideas that can make the biggest difference.

Everyone knows it can be tough for some kids to make friends. Some kids are just innately shy; they may feel awkward and inadequate to the task of putting themselves forward to other kids. All too often, such children can be singled out for bullying, making their difficult situations just that much more painful.

However, at Roundtown Elementary

School, in York, PA, a young student named Christian Bucks came up with an idea that was brilliant in its simplicity. Take a bench, place it on the playground and designate it the "buddy bench," a place where children could sit when they were looking for someone to play with.

Christian's story:

In the spring of 2013, when Christian was in the first grade, there was a possi-

bility that his family was going to move to Germany. While looking at a website for a school overseas, he saw a picture of a special bench on the playground. He asked about it and liked what he heard. He thought it would be a really great addition to the playground at his current school, Roundtown Elementary.

He knew there were some kids who felt lonely at recess, and he thought the buddy bench could put an end to that. He told his

teacher and his principal about the bench and they thought it was a great idea. Since it was the end of the school year, the principal said he would look into it over the summer and they would get it in place in the fall.

In the end, Christian didn't move to Germany, so he was able to stay at Roundtown. Sure enough, his principal researched it and let Christian help pick out the bench in the fall! After the buddy bench arrived, Christian gave a presentation to the school board to explain its purpose. Before it was placed on the playground, Christian spoke in front of his whole school at a community morning meeting to explain the buddy bench concept and show a video about it that he'd made with the principal. The kids loved it, and were very excited for the bench to be placed on the playground!

Christian has heard from students and adults across the country who are creating buddy benches in their schools and communities. He is so excited by this and eager to see the buddy bench movement spread.

More Information:

buddybench.org



Kids gather at White Bluffs Elementary School's buddy bench in Richland, WA, inspired by Christian Bucks' buddy bench in PA

When a cheerleader with Down Syndrome was bullied, players walked off the court

By Deneen Smith

The peer pressure of middle school isn't always the easiest atmosphere in which to stand up for what's right.

But last year, when some members of the crowd at a Lincoln Middle School basketball game in Kenosha, WI began making fun of Desiree Andrews, a cheerleader who has Down syndrome, boys from the team decided to intervene.

During a time out, a member of the team went into the crowd to have a talk. "One of the kids stepped up and said, 'Don't mess with her,'" said Brandon Morris, who was the boys' seventh-grade coach last year. "Then all of the guys got together to show her support."

Eighth-grader Miles Rodriguez, 14, remembers the game when kids in the stands were giving Desiree a hard time. "We were mad; we didn't like that. We asked our sports director to talk to the people and tell them not to make fun of her," he said.

'D's House'

In a tradition that started last year, the introduction of the starting lineup for Lincoln's boys' basketball team always includes Desiree, said coach David Tolefree. After the introductions, and just before the start of play, the boys run over to Desiree for high-fives and fist bumps.

The school renamed Lincoln's gym "D's House" in her honor, and students wear T-shirts celebrating her inclusion with the team.

"They have really stepped up, almost like they are big brothers to her," David said. "It's good to see."

Celebration

In March, for their last home game of the season the team held a 'D's House'

celebration.

The basketball team and cheerleaders gathered at the center of the gym for a group huddle. "Whose house? D's house!" the boys chanted.

Eighth-grader Ben Woods, 14, a student at Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum who plays on the Lincoln basketball team, said he and his teammates are glad to support Desiree and to promote kindness at the school.

"It's really a good message," Ben said. He said he is also happy to see the reaction of the crowd to the team's efforts.

"I think it's great because some people thought Lincoln was a bad school, that it had a bad reputation, and I think this helps people think differently about that."

Desiree said she loves cheerleading because she likes to dance. About the boys' support, she said, "It's amazing."

Her dad agrees. "It's been a godsend to us," he said. "Those boys, I tried to talk to them in person, but I couldn't keep the tears back."

Laura Stone, a Lincoln teacher and the cheer coach, said she thinks Desiree's participation on the team, and at school, has helped her students grow and become more compassionate.

"She has been very special to us," Laura said.

More Information:

Content from Kenosha News



Cheerleader Desiree Andrews



Toss it Away? No Way!

By Heather Crawford

"Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without," reads a sign at the Repair Cafe in Pasadena, CA. At the monthly cafes, organized by Transition Pasadena, people from the community meet to share skills, get things repaired, give things away and have a great time doing it!

"I do a lot of things in the community," says Adelaide Nalley, a local resident, "but [the Repair Cafe] stood out as something unique; I'd never seen anything like it! There was so much energy in the room. I left feeling super-energized."

Through participating in the repair cafes, Adelaide has not only had all manner of items repaired—wooden sculptures, Vitamix blender, a moth-eaten cashmere sweater—she has also gotten her hair trimmed, learned how to repair her bicycle, volunteered as a Spanish translator and taken home free items brought by community members, such as clothing, fruit from local trees and even worms!

The first Repair Cafe was started by Martine Postma in The Netherlands in 2009. A year later, the nonprofit Repair Cafe Foundation was founded to support

local groups around the world to start their own cafes. Since then, it has grown to 18 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Japan and Norway, to name a few.

The benefits to the community are many. Participants not only redirect goods from landfills, while conserving natural resources and helping consumerism take a downward slide, but they also make fun new connections.

Repair Cafes also provide people with the space and time to interact within the gift/sharing economy, so that everyone can experience a sense of abundance. Even if you have nothing to repair, you can simply enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and chat up the neighbors. Or lend a hand with someone else's repair job. Or perhaps get inspired at the reading table by leafing through books on repair and DIY (do-it-yourself) projects.

So what does the future hold for all the broken toasters of the world? There is hope! As Repair Cafes continue to pop up in communities around the world (think: your town!), toasters will have a second chance at life, while cafe-goers will be invigorated by a sense of interdependence, the very fabric that knits communities together.

The Repair Cafe Foundation has recently partnered with six other organizations in creating a new European coalition for repairable products. The coalition aims to raise public awareness, facilitate constructive dialogue on new business models related to repairable products and

promote a regulatory environment that enhances product reparability and durability.

More Information:

repaircafe.org/
www.transitionpasadena.org



Repairing a computer at the Repair Cafe in Palo Alto, CA

The rich are not the happiest, according to survey

Most studies into the relationship between income and happiness, or wealth and wellbeing, have shown little correlation between these two important aspects of life, but they have shown a significant correlation between income equality and happiness.

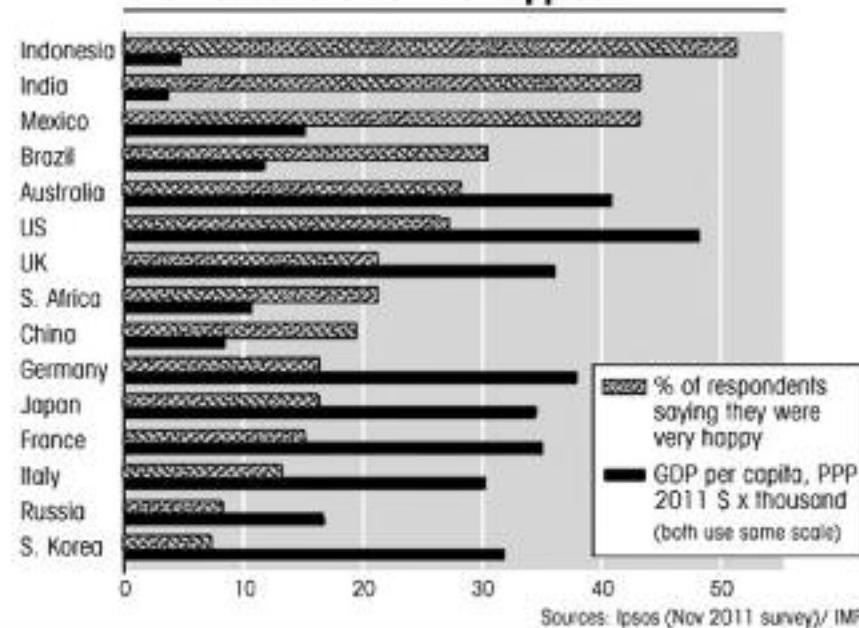
As the chart shows, some of the poorest coun-

tries have some of the happiest people, just as long as the wealth is spread reasonably fairly. Obviously there are other factors one must take into consideration, such as climate and culture and the way people respond to such surveys, but the important point as far as this investigation is concerned is that a reduc-

tion in average incomes doesn't have to mean a decline in wellbeing, and if such a reduction can be accompanied by greater equality, could even lead to greater happiness.

Reported by Michael Roscoe for *New Internationalist*

The richest are not the happiest



The Rat Park Experiment: Let's Play, not Shoot up!

Canadian experiment discovers the likely cause for addictions

By Johann Hari

It is now one hundred years since drugs were first banned—and all through this long century of waging war on drugs, we have been told a story about addiction by our teachers and by our governments. This story is so deeply ingrained in our minds that we take it for granted: There are strong chemical hooks in these drugs, so if we stopped on day twenty-one, our bodies would need the chemical. We would have a ferocious craving. We would be addicted. That's what addiction means.

This theory was first established, in part, through rat experiments—ones that were injected into the American psyche in the 1980s, in a famous advertisement by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. You may remember it. The experiment is simple. Put a rat in a cage, alone, with two water bottles. One is just water. The other is water laced with heroin or cocaine. Al-

“The Rat Park rats had colored balls and the best rat-food and tunnels to scamper down and plenty of friends: everything a rat about town could want.”

most every time you run this experiment, the rat will become obsessed with the drugged water, and keep coming back for more and more, until it kills itself.

The ad explains: “Only one drug is so addictive that nine out of ten laboratory rats will use it. And use it. And use it. Until it's dead. It's called cocaine. And it can do the same thing to you.”

But in the 1970s, Bruce Alexander, a professor of Psychology in Vancouver BC, noticed something odd about this experiment. The rat is put in the cage all alone. It has nothing to do but take the drugs. What would happen, he wondered, if we tried this differently?

So Professor Alexander built Rat Park. It is a lush cage where the rats have colored balls, the best rat-food, tunnels to scamper down and plenty of friends: everything a rat-about-town could want. What, Alexander wanted to know, will happen then?

In Rat Park, all the rats obviously tried both water bottles, because they didn't know what was in them. But what happened next was startling.

The rats with good lives didn't like the drugged water. They mostly shunned it, consuming less than a quarter of the drugs the isolated rats used. None of them died. While all the rats that were alone and un-



happy became heavy users, none of the rats that had a happy environment did.

More Information:

Content from *Huffington Post*



Alaska Bolstered Its Economy and Curbed Inequality

After 30 years, the practice of paying every resident—including children—at least \$1,000 has made Alaska one of the least unequal states in the U.S. Here's what the rest of us can learn

By Peter Barnes

There has long been a notion that, because money is a prerequisite for survival and security, everyone should be assured some income just for being alive. The notion has been advanced by liberals such as James Tobin, John Kenneth Galbraith and George McGovern, and by conservatives like Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Richard Nixon.

It's embedded in the board game Monopoly, in which all players get equal payments when they pass Go. And yet, with one exception, Americans have been unable to agree on any plan that guarantees some income to everyone. The reasons lie mostly in the stories that surround such income. Is it welfare? Is it redistribution? Does it require higher taxes and bigger government?

But then, there's the exception. Jay Hammond, the Republican governor of Alaska from 1974 to 1982, was an independent thinker who conceived of, and then persuaded, Alaska's legislators to adopt the world's first system for paying equal dividends to everyone. In Hammond's model, the money comes not from taxes but from a common resource: North Slope oil.

Benefits to Alaskans

Using proceeds from that gift of nature, the Alaska Permanent Fund has paid equal yearly dividends to every resident, including children, ranging from about \$1,000 to over \$3,000.

(Bear in mind that a family of four collects four same-sized dividends.) Paying such dividends regularly for more than thirty years has bolstered the state's economy, reduced poverty and made Alaska one of the most equal states in the U.S.

The question that US-ers in the lower 48 might now ask is: Did Alaska find the right formula? If it can convert part of its common wealth into equal dividends for everyone, can the rest of us do the same?

Reasons to be inspired

One reason to ponder Alaska's dividends is climate change. It might seem odd that dividends based on oil could presage a remedy for climate change, but such is the case. Imagine if we charged companies for using another common resource—our air—and distributed the revenue equally to all. If we did this, two things would follow. First, higher air pollution costs would lead to less fossil fuel burning and more investment in renewables. And second, households that used less dirty energy would



Alaskans don't see their dividends as welfare or redistribution ... but consider their dividends to be their rightful share of their state's natural wealth

gain—their dividends would exceed their higher costs—while households that used a lot of dirty energy would pay. This would spur both companies and households to do the right thing.

A second reason for considering Alaska's model is our long-lasting economic stagnation. Not counting asset bubbles, our economy hasn't sparkled for decades, and neither fiscal nor monetary policies have helped much. Tax cuts for the rich have benefited no one but the rich, and as Mark Blyth and Eric Loneragan recently wrote in the forum *Foreign Affairs*, pumping trillions of dollars into banks hasn't stimulated our economy either. What's needed is a system that continually refreshes consumer demand from the middle out—something like periodic dividends to everyone that can be spent immediately.

A third reason for looking north to Alaska is the current stalemate in American politics. Solutions to all major problems are trapped in a tug-of-war between advocates of smaller and larger government. Dividends from common wealth bypass that bitter war. They require no new taxes or government programs; once set up, they're purely market based. And because they send legitimate property income to everyone, they can't be derided as welfare.

In this regard, it's worth noting that Alaska's dividends are immensely popular. Politicians in both parties sing their praises, as do the state's voters. One attempt in 1999 to transfer money from the Permanent Fund to the state treasury was trounced in a referendum by 83 percent. Nationally, Alaska's model has been lauded by Fox News commentators Bill O'Reilly and Lou Dobbs as well as liberals like Robert Reich.

The reasons for this popularity are pretty clear. According to several surveys, most Alaskans consider their dividends to be their rightful share of their state's natural wealth.

Moreover, because the dividends are universal rather than means-tested, they unite, rather than divide, Alaskans. If only "losers" got them, "winners" would be resentful. Universality puts everyone in the same boat. No one is demonized and a broad constituency protects the dividends from political attack.

How might a common wealth dividend system work at the national level? The easy part is distributing the dividends. As in Alaska, enrollment could be done online and payments could be wired electronically at a cost of pennies per transaction. The Social Security Ad-

Guaranteed Minimum Income DID YOU KNOW?

☞ In the First Muslim Caliph Abu Bakr (Muhammad's successor) introduced a guaranteed minimum income, granting each woman, man and child 10 dirhams annually, later increased to 20 dirhams.

☞ In 1795, American revolutionary Thomas Paine advocated a Citizen's Dividend to all U.S. citizens as compensation for "loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property."

☞ Napoleon Bonaparte echoed Paine's sentiments and commented that "man is entitled by birthright to a share of the Earth's produce sufficient to fill the needs of his existence."

☞ In his final book, *"Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?"*, Martin Luther King Jr.

wrote: "I am now convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective—the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income."

☞ In November 2009, the mayor of the Santo Antônio do Pinhal municipality in Brazil passed into law a basic income program that would reserve six percent of its tax revenue to fund an unconditional dividend for all persons who have resided in the municipality for five years or more.

☞ France was one of the first countries to implement a minimum income, called the Revenu minimum d'insertion. In 2009, it was turned into Revenu de solidarité active, a new system which provides low-wage workers a complementary income.

ministration could set that up in a jiffy.

The harder part is collecting the revenue. In my latest book, *"With Liberty and Dividends For All,"* I show how, over time, we could generate enough revenue to pay dividends of up to \$5,000 per person per year. Initially, a sizable chunk would come from selling a declining number of permits to dump carbon into our air. Later, more revenue could flow from our monetary infrastructure, our patent and copyright systems and our electromagnetic airwaves.

Consider what \$5,000 per person, per year would mean. If a child's dividends were saved and invested starting from birth, they'd yield enough to pay for a debt-free college education at a public university. In midlife, \$5,000 per person would add 25 percent to the income of a family of four earning \$80,000 a year. In late life, it would boost the average retiree's Social Security benefit by about 30 percent. Thus, dividends from common wealth would provide a badly needed boost for poor and middle-class families during what promises to be a lasting shortage of good-paying jobs.

Thomas Paine would approve

Surprisingly, the core idea behind Alaska's dividends is over two centuries old. In his 1796 essay *"Agrarian Justice,"* American patriot Thomas Paine distinguished between two kinds of property: "natural property, or that which comes to us from the Creator of the universe—such as the earth, air, water ... [and] artificial or acquired property, the invention of men." The first kind of property, Paine argued, belongs to everyone equally. It is the "legitimate birthright" of every man and woman, "not charity but a right."

And Paine went further. He proposed a practical way to implement that right: create a "National Fund" to pay every man and woman a lump sum (roughly \$17,000 in today's money). Revenue would come from what Paine called "ground rent" paid by landowners. This was a remarkable feat of analysis and imagination, and it's time to apply it broadly.

Continued on p.19

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It All Goes Wrong Anyway

By Ajahn Brahm

Wherever you live—in a monastery, in a city, or on a quiet tree-lined street—you will always experience problems and difficulties from time to time. This is just the nature of life.

So when you have problems with your health you shouldn't say, "Doctor, there is something wrong with me—I'm sick";

rather, you should say, "There is something right with me—I'm sick today."

It's the nature of the human body to be sick now and again. It's also the nature of the septic system to need pumping out when you don't expect it, and it's the nature of the water heater to sometimes break down. It's the nature of life to be this way.



Cartoon by Leah Pearلمان



Recycling Makes One Sexier

Attraction is a funny thing. The qualities you think make someone the hottest thing on the planet might make your best friend give you some serious side-eye. What makes one person attracted to another person can be so varied, and that's what makes it such an interesting subject—which is probably the reason why scientists and researchers are constantly doing different studies about it.

Here's one such study: a recent PepsiCo survey found that recycling, which is something that seems very unsexy, can actually make you seem even sexier. According to Glamour, a research team polled more than 1,140 Americans over the age of 18 and found that recycling and showing concern about the environment can make you seem way more attractive. It almost sounds too easy!

Out of everyone polled, 40 percent said they would think more highly of someone after finding out that they recycled. Only 25 percent said they would be more attracted to someone with a graduate degree, 18 percent said an impressive job would make someone seem more attractive, and only 8 percent were more into a hefty bank account.

Furthermore, 21 percent of the people said they would be turned off if they found out a first date didn't recycle at all, and 22 percent said they had expressed obvious disappointment when witnessing someone not recycling. In conclusion, two in five of the people surveyed were looking for a significant other who cares about the environment.

Source: www.care2.com

Wallpapers to save you from your smartphone

Designer, artist and feminist Molly McLeod has a smartphone problem. It's one you might possibly be familiar with: spending too much time staring at your phone.

As a response, Molly created playful designs that can be used to remind us (with a healthy dose of irony) to stop staring at our tiny screens all the time.

"I find myself habitually looking at my phone when I'm commuting or idly waiting for something," she writes on her website, "so I thought I would make my phone give me this gentle reminder. There are always other interesting things to look at if you look up!"

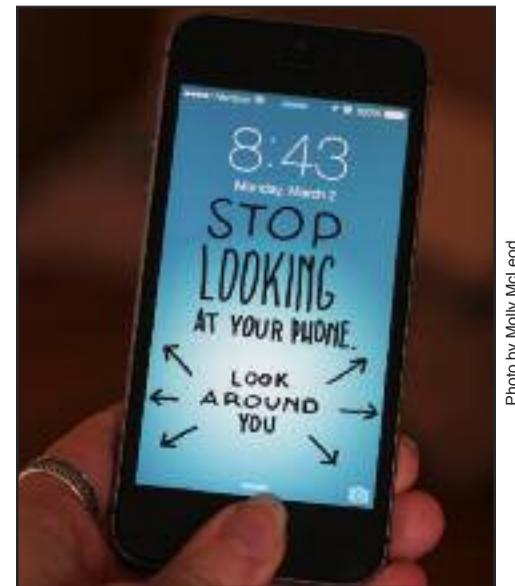


Photo by Molly McLeod

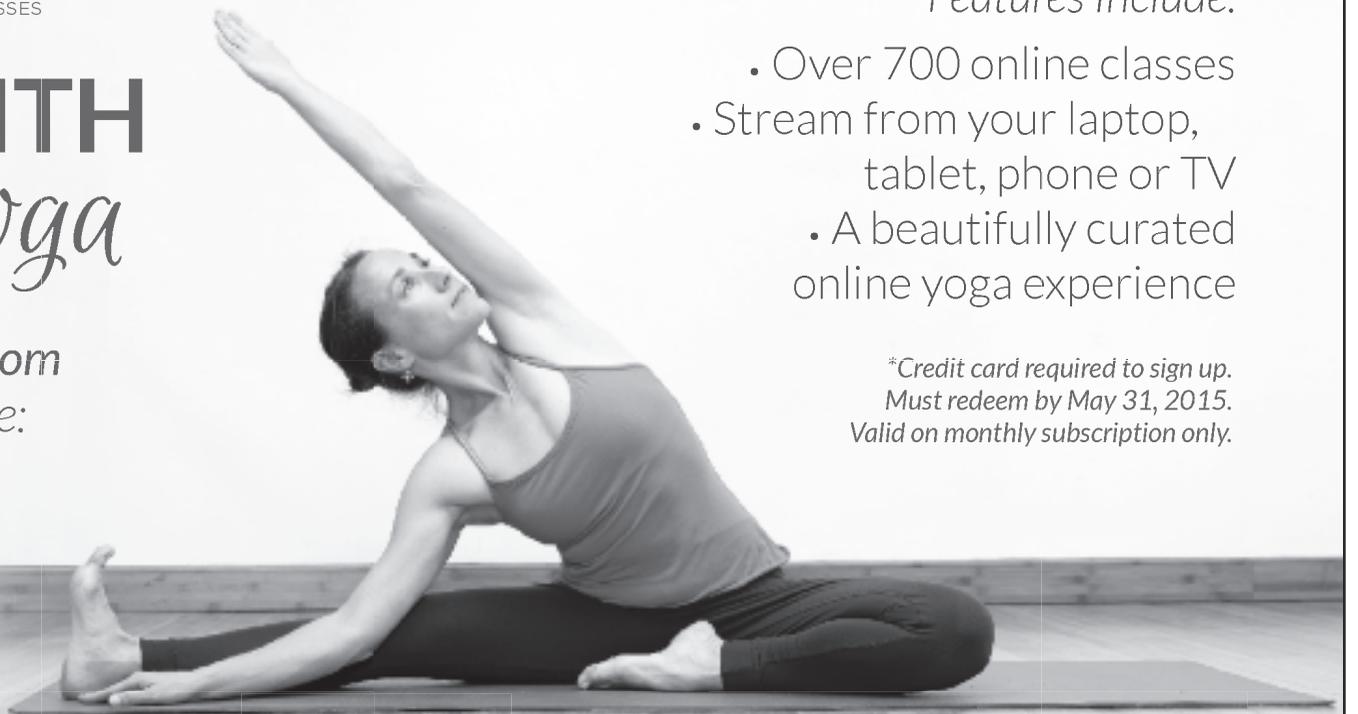
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Alaska Bolstered Its Economy ...

Continued from p.17

And here's the best part. If Paine's idea and Alaska's model were applied at sufficient scale, the implications would be vast. The current tendencies of capitalism to widen inequality and devour nature would be self-corrected. Instead of plutocracy and climate change, our market economy would generate

widely shared, earth-friendly prosperity. And it would achieve these goals automatically, without much need for government intervention.

Is this wild-eyed dreaming? Possibly, but no more so than universal suffrage or social insurance once were. Common wealth dividends could be the next step in our na-

tion's long march toward equal rights.

More Information:

www.peter-barnes.org
Content from Yes! Magazine
www.yesmagazine.org

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Prayer Flags of Hope

Border moms invent ingenious way of supporting themselves

By Rosario Escobedo

A grassroots work project called Guerilla Prayer Flags is providing employment, hope and inspiration to struggling families on the outskirts of Juarez, Mexico, a border city ravaged by drug wars and violent crime.

Mothers of special-needs children, widows and community activists are creating beautiful prayer flags, inspired by the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, out of pieces of cloth, recycled bottle caps and can tabs in a small workshop amidst sprawling pallet houses, washed-away dirt roads and families struggling to meet basic needs.

The project began when Siba Escobedo, a long-time Juarez aid worker, and her friend from Mexico, Sofia Aleman, a widow with five children, began brainstorming ways that they could create a cooperative business to offer employment and independence to local women.

Because the two worked together at a local community center for families with special-needs children operated by the Sisters of Charity, they knew many hard-working mothers for whom working outside of their homes posed a real hardship. "I like working here a lot because I can be with my kids," said Griselda Lopez, who stopped sewing to give her youngest

“The mission of the business is to provide employment to those who needed and deserved it, to use recycled materials available locally, and to spread the message of peace and hope anywhere and everywhere—guerilla style.”

son Daniel a hug and a kiss. Most parents who live in the area work for *maquiladoras*, factories that manufacture products for U.S. companies. "If you have a special-needs child, you can't even work there," Siba explained.

Ideas abounded, but the insurmountable problem was the rampant extortion and violence faced by businesses in Juarez: it had become downright dangerous to operate a storefront.

A breakthrough came one day when Siba's daughter mused that it would be nice to find locally made prayer flags like the ones she ordered online from Tibet or



Lupe and Perla mixing fabric into the dye to achieve the most vibrant colors possible

Nepal. After sharing some images of prayer flags with Siba and Sofia, Guerilla Prayer Flags was born.

The mission of the business is to provide employment to those who needed and deserved it, to use recycled materials available locally and to spread the message of peace and hope anywhere and everywhere—guerilla style.

Thanks to the original idea of transforming piles of junk into garlands of hope, Guerilla Prayer Flags can now be found

beautifying the city of Juarez and in retail stores across New Mexico and Colorado. They feature 20 different themes ranging from Tibetan Buddhist to Virgin of Guadalupe, from Goddess to Holiday Advent and Social Justice.

More Information:

www.ragstobritches.org
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