Timeline

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The Season of Light

As the editorial staff of Timeline began planning this issue, the news continued to be filled with stories of war, preparations for war, and the threats posed by terrorists and weapons of mass destruction. We asked ourselves how we might respond to this sense of

impending darkness. The approach of the winter solstice in December provided a metaphor.

In Earth's Northern Hemisphere, as the time of the winter solstice grows near, darkness occurs earlier and lasts longer with each passing day. For our ancient ancestors it was often feared that the sun would disappear, never to return. But we now know that there is a cycle to the seasons and even in the darkness there is the promise of light.

The sun is the constantly renewing source of energy and life for planet Earth, the home we share with all other species, all races, all nations, and all religions. The knowledge that we are part of one interdependent, interrelated living system is the light that renews us with hope. This issue of Timeline is dedicated to the pursuit and expression of that eternal promise.

In Ireland, at a place called Newgrange, is a huge circular stone structure estimated to be more than 5,000 years old. It covers an acre of land and has an entrance passage almost 60 feet in length. Above the entrance is a stone box, built to allow a shaft of sunlight to penetrate all the way into the central chamber at dawn on the winter solstice. The sunlight illuminates intricate carvings of spirals, eye shapes, and solar discs. What those early people thought about their world is still a mystery. But they most certainly recognized a connection. Once the sunlight struck the stone they knew that the days would grow longer and eventually new food crops and newly born animals would assure their survival.

The promise of the coming of light has continued to be the source of inspiration and renewal for cultures and religious traditions around the time of the winter solstice. Native Americans had special rituals involving images of the sun, as did cultures in Pakistan, China, and Tibet.

Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, begins three days before the new moon closest to the solstice. This tradition commemorates the oil lamp that burned a miraculous eight days without refilling following the reconsecration of the temple in Jerusalem around 500 B.C.

Buddhists celebrate Bodhi day in December. This is the time for remembering the enlightenment that came through the Buddha that preceded his teaching ministry.

Christmas is the time to honor the birth of Jesus. For Christians, Jesus is the "light of the world," calling people to love one another, forgive your enemies, and to love God.

Today, many seem to have lost this connection to the fundamental, seasonal, hemispheric events, the cycle of seasons. But others are seeking to regain that connection, to return to our sense of belonging—belonging to the Earth and to one another. Seasonal cycles are a

reminder that there are rhythms to lifetimes of balance when lightness and darkness are equal and times of imbalance where there is a predominance of light or dark.

If we have been experiencing the "dark" times recently—with bombings, threats of war, terrorist activities, environmental degradation, starvation, disease—we can take the time to pause and reflect upon where we are and where we wish to go.

What kind of ritual or ceremony will aid our deeply felt recognition of the sacredness of everything so that our response during our nonritual times will be that of protection, care, and gratitude?

In this season of balance of dark and light, can we join together in families, groups, across cultural barriers to celebrate life? Can we honor the great wise ones—Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Jesus, Buddha—who through their insights and dedication gave us directions to live together in peace?

Can we give thanks to the Earth for its generosity in providing what we need to sustain us? And can we reflect, with feelings of gratefulness, upon the Sun, without which there would be no life?

Winter Solstice, www.candlegrove.com
Circle of Life: Cycle of Seasons, published by Foundation for Global Community

In the Name of Peace: The Assisi Decalogue

More than 200 leaders of the world's major religions came together in January this year in Assisi, Italy, in the largest meeting in history of world religious leaders.

Among them were Pope John Paul II and several Cardinals; Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of all Orthodox Christians; Jewish Rabbis, including some from Israel; thirty Muslim Imams from Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan; ministers representing Baptists, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals; Disciples of Christ; Mennonites; Quakers; Moravians; Buddhists; the Salvation Army; representatives from the World Council of Churches; a number of monks, gurus, and others representing Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and native African religions.

Unanimously, they agreed to condemn "every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion….No religious goal can possibly justify the use of violence by man against man." They issued a ten-commitment statement they called the Assisi Decalogue for Peace. In March, the Pope sent a copy of the Decalogue to all the world's heads of state.

The Assisi Decalogue

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.

2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures, and religions.

3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among people, for these are the premise of authentic peace.

4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with his own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.

5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.

7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.

8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based upon justice.

From the World's Great Faiths

As the human soul has journeyed along a path charted by many of the great faiths, the same essential truth has been expressed in different words.

Buddhism
Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.

Hinduism
Do naught unto others what would cause you pain if done to you.

Judaism
What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man.

Christianity
All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

Islam
No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

Taoism
Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.

The Search for a Nonviolent Future
A Book Review by Mac Lawrence

"From moment to moment, it is a profoundly religious choice whether to commit to violence or to democracy. While the preeminent task of the warmaker is to be the biggest, baddest combatant you can be, the preeminent task of the peacemaker is to weave combatants, weakest victims first, back into a social fabric of mutual trust, mutual safety, mutual security." Criminologist Harold Pepinsky

I had lunch the other day with a friend. When I mentioned Michael Nagler's book, *Is There No Other Way?* he dismissed nonviolence as a wimpy, impractical, unworkable idea. It's a view that's shared by many, many people. Hopefully, Nagler's book will help change some minds.

As one reviewer, author Bill McKibben, notes: “Nonviolence often seems the tactic of the naive idealist. As Michael Nagler shows, it may really be the strategy of the shrewd and practical among us, who have to figure out some better way than the carnage of the last century for dealing with our problems. This is a vital book for us as individuals, as communities and nations, maybe even as a species.”

One of Nagler’s main points is that the concept of nonviolence is often misunderstood. Even Gandhi, whom Nagler uses as an example throughout the book, found it hard to get the idea across to people, including his own followers.

Nagler notes that the word “nonviolence” gives the impression of passive resistance or weakness. It is just the opposite. Nonviolence, he says, is the use of inner, moral power against physical force. It is action without hate, with a respect for diversity, with respect for the “enemy,” with compassion, and above all, with uncommon courage—a willingness to absorb punishment or even death in the face of the violence. He quotes Gandhi: “Nonviolence that merely offers civil resistance to the authorities and goes no farther scarcely deserves the name.”

Nonviolence is really where the power is, claimed Gandhi. “Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by fear of punishment, and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.”

One of the many examples of the power of nonviolence in Nagler’s book is the march for voter’s rights in Birmingham in 1964. The marchers, converging on the City Hall, were blocked by a solid line of police and firemen. The marchers were ordered to disperse. When they continued to advance, police commissioner Bull Connor shouted “Turn on the water!” But the fireman refused Connor’s repeated orders and the marchers went through the line. Nagler’s comment: “Political power, we hear, grows out of the barrel of a gun; but in this case the police had all the guns, while the marchers, it would seem, had all the power.”

Nonviolence works, Nagler observes, because there is a deep place in every one of us which seeks peace and harmony. It is our natural condition. Even the most violent people often can be reached at a deeper level in the face of nonviolence.

Nagler admits there is no assurance that the use of nonviolence in any situation will immediately resolve that situation, though he cites dozens of examples where it does. But he adds the following assurances: Any use of nonviolence adds to the possibilities of peace; any use of violence reduces the possibilities of peace. Nonviolence is integrative; violence is disintegrative. Anything we do to reduce violence anywhere will do something to reduce violence everywhere.

Nagler emphasizes that it takes training to develop nonviolent responses, noting: "There is nothing unrealistic about the tension between compassion and savagery in the same person, because that is the condition in which we find ourselves. [But] when someone opposite you is upset," he says, "you don't have to be."

Nonviolence not only takes training, Nagler says, but it must become a way of life. This way of life "begins in inner struggle—specifically, the struggle to keep negative forces such as anger, fear, and greed from having sway over us. It's a struggle that has immense spiritual benefits for the individual and leads to an exhilarating sense of purpose that is very often lacking in modern life."

Gandhi exemplified this struggle and its reward, says Nagler, and he quotes Gandhi: "It is not that I am incapable of anger, for instance, but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control. Whatever may be the result, there is always in me conscious struggle for following the law of nonviolence deliberately and ceaselessly. Such a struggle leaves one stronger for it. The more I work at this law, the more I feel the delight in my life, the delight in the scheme of the universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of the universe that I have no power to describe."

One of the keys for Nagler to achieve the condition of nonviolence is meditation. "'Meditation' may be the only word in the English language with a less-agreed upon meaning than 'nonviolence'; and that may not be a coincidence." To Nagler, meditation is "getting the mind under control. This one-pointed attention is the psychological key to nonviolence." The Dalai Lama refers to meditation as "internal disarmament" which Nagler says "enables us to intervene right where violence starts, at the very roots of hostile thoughts."

Nagler devotes several chapters to the causes of violence and why it is so prevalent today. He points to two causes—hate and a lack of meaning in life, both of which are fed today by the violence that permeates the media, an educational system which prepares youth for jobs but not for life, the use of words like "target" and "kill" that creep into everyday language, and even scientific reductionism. He has particularly harsh words for the criminal justice system, backing his arguments with the comments of such experts as Ruth Morris, author of the landmark book *Penal Abolition,* who characterizes our system as "an expensive, unjust, and immoral failure."

How we see life, Nagler says, and how we relate to others (including the environment) are influenced, even determined, by the culture we grow up in. Experiments show that aggression and violent behavior can be taught, he notes, but nonviolent behavior can also be taught. The media plays an important role in the increase in violence by trivializing it. Young people often commit violence without realizing that the results of their actions are real, in contrast to the virtual violence they see on TV, video games, and in the movies.

The structure of the book moves from the individual attaining nonviolence, to the community, to a discussion of peace in the world (which he defines as "not just the absence of war"). Nagler reviews the historical episodes where nonviolence prevailed, noting that in each case it was due to a single person who understood the need for nonviolence and its power.

One of the stories he uses is that of Badshah Khan (see *Timeline*, May/June 2002). A Pashtun Muslim leader, Badshah Khan, inspired by Gandhi's nonviolent campaign for freedom from British colonialism, persuaded tens of thousands of his fellow tribesmen in Afghanistan and parts of neighboring Pakistan to embrace Gandhi's vision. Khan's nonviolent army, called the "Servants of God," swelled to 80,000 volunteers. The British did everything they could to destroy the "Red Shirts" and to provoke them to violence, but to no avail. For a decade and a half, Badshah Khan and his nonviolent Red Shirts played a key role in achieving independence in the region. "Individuals are the ones, not groups," notes Nagler. "For 'soul-force' you need souls."

Will we ever achieve a truly peaceful world? Though Nagler does not lay out a specific plan, he makes clear that there has to be a third alternative to the dilemma we face, which was so clearly stated in the words of a teenager whom Nagler quotes: "Either I don't give in to my rage, which means going crazy…or I give in to it, which means I go to jail." In hailing nonviolence as the third way to respond, Nagler admits: "In the real world, violence does, at least sometimes to be sure, achieve its immediate purpose." But "there's trouble somewhere down the road." One unfortunate outcome of violence is: "Whenever we prepare minds for war we unprepare them for life…a severe hidden cost of the war system—and, by extension, of all violence.

"Violence is keyed to the lowest image of the human being. Nonviolence is keyed to the most exalted. This is one of the reasons violence drives us apart, while nonviolence appeals directly to the a sense of meaning, while a life of violence confers at best fleeting and shallow satisfactions."

Nagler concludes: A society run by violence "loses vitality, their focus blurs, their priorities start to drift as people lose their sense of what it is they are supposed to do….We need new ideas and fresh energy to break out of the closed circle of discourse surrounding violence....Nonviolence is that kind of energy."

Is There No Other Way? *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*
by Michael N. Nagler
Berkeley Hills Books, Berkeley, CA. 2001. $15.00.

Michael N. Nagler is Professor Emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the founder and chairperson of the University's Peace and Conflict Studies Program, and currently teaches courses in nonviolence and meditation. Nagler is the author of America Without Violence*, and coauthor of an English edition of* The Upanishads.

Blips on the Timeline

The term "blip" is often used to describe a point of light on a radar screen. Here are some recent blips which indicate positive changes toward a global community.

A Carbon Tax for New Zealand

New Zealand has unveiled a carbon tax to help it meet the goals of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which the country expects to ratify by year's end. The tax, which would be implemented in 2007 assuming Kyoto has come into effect, would boost retail gasoline prices by up to 6 percent, diesel prices by up to 12 percent, and natural gas and electricity prices by as much as 9 percent, according to government documents. Coal users would be the hardest hit, with a 19 percent price hike. New Zealand emits between 70 and 90 million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, making it the fourth-largest per capita producer after the United States, Australia, and Canada. What revenue the tax generates will be used for climate-change projects and to offset cuts in other taxes.

Cops Switch to Hybrids

Law enforcement agents in Florida have pledged to protect not just their citizens, but the environment as well. Sunshine state sheriffs have begun buying hybrid cars for their deputies: About a hundred of these cars have been sold to police departments across the state. Hybrids use an electric motor in combination with a gasoline engine to take advantage of energy that would otherwise be wasted, particularly in stop-and-go driving. Since they use less gas, hybrids reduce air pollution.

Hybrids can also be seen as a mobile symbol of patriotism. Using less gas reduces our dependence on foreign oil, fundamentally altering the equation that leads to terrorism. Not to mention that hybrid cars help tackle global warming, and save the sheriffs money at the gas pump, leaving more resources for crime fighting.

The Power of Peaceful Protest

In Escravos, Nigeria, 600 women peacefully seized control for 10 days of an oil terminal by threatening to remove their clothes, a traditional shaming gesture that would have humiliated and damned Chevron Texaco throughout the region. Takeovers of oil sites are

common in the oil-rich Niger Delta by men armed with machetes and guns, threatening corporate executives with kidnapping and sabotage. But the women were a different matter, explained an Africa analyst: "You can't send in baton-wielding police or army on unarmed women. Nobody wants to go down that road."

The women are protesting the crushing poverty in which villagers live amid the region's oil wealth. Said Rita Lori Ogbebor, a protest leader and former television program director: "We are very emphatic on the education of our children and the fact that the oil companies should put back [into the community] the equivalent of what they have taken out."

Greening of the Big Apple

New York's Lower Manhattan will soon see one of the world's first green residential skyscrapers. Located in Battery Park City, a stone's throw from Ground Zero, the 27-story tower will include solar panels, purified air, super-insulated walls and windows, and a rainwater collection system. The building is designed to use 35 percent less energy than a conventional structure and is being made from recycled materials in order to qualify for a New York State green-building tax credit. To reduce pollution from truck transportation, at least 40 percent of the components will be manufactured no farther than 500 miles from the job site.

Evolutionary Politics
An Address by Representative Dennis Kucinich

Last month, as the debates began in Congress about authorizing the President to go to war against Iraq, Representative Dennis Kucinich, (D-OH) visited the Global Community offices in Palo Alto to address a standing-room-only audience.

Kucinich noted that the world view which allows us to consider such actions as attacking Iraq dominates our current thinking. But this world view is obsolete, he said, and needs to be replaced by a more realistic view.

We are in a period of chaos," Kucinich said, "which is driven by fear, by control, by power, by secrecy, mistrust, fragmentation, isolation, and by policies which use the lexicon of unilateralism and of preemption,

"But that world view—that system—cannot stand. That system is falling apart—we're seeing its last gasp right now. We are in the midst of an evolution in politics. We're not seeing the beginning of a new empire, because that's ridiculous. What we are seeing is this old energy playing itself out in the world. And with its disintegration we will see a new integration; chaos will yield to harmony."

Kucinich believes that this political evolution can occur fairly rapidly. He noted that biological evolution throughout history has not always taken place at a steady rate. "Fossil records show that evolution has been static for most of the time, but the state of equilibrium is punctuated by rapid change that occurs suddenly over a brief period of time. Discontinuity between two generations has far-reaching consequences for conscious evolution and for societal change. When an evolutionary stage reaches its limitations and begins to decline, it creates disruption, chaos, and social disorder. In the decline state, an evolutionary system cannot change incrementally, it has to transform into a new evolutionary entity by conscious evolution."

One such rapid transformation, Kucinich noted, was the birth of America in 1776. It was not just an American revolution, he pointed out, but an evolution in human consciousness, an event that created a new form of government for this country, and for the world. We need to imagine and work for such a sudden shift today. One way to help bring about the change, he said, is to talk with others about the world we envision, to bring others together to dialogue, to bring back the kind of community that as a nation we've known in the past. Our words will help create the kind of world we want, Kucinich believes.

"It's a conscious effort. We have to call it forward. That's the power of consciousness—to call it forward.

"The world is multidimensional. The new vision is an holistic one that understands the power of intention and the power of cooperation, of mutuality, of trust, of seeing the world as one. That vision then becomes our outer reality. Ours is the ability, through our consciousness, to create peace, to create love. The organ of transformation is the human heart because there is nothing—no weapon ever made—that is more powerful than a human heart.

"Our Founders, and those who followed in that spirit, had an understanding of America's connection to something transcendent. We need to recreate the America of our dreams, an America that is a country of peace, a country that stands for human rights, that works for total nuclear disarmament, that leads the way to abolish biological and chemical weapons, that works to achieve cooperation in protecting our global environment, that works to achieve cooperation in international law through an inter-national criminal court, that works to abolish all land mines, that works for a small-arms treaty. We need to confirm America's purpose through cooperating with a community of nations, with the understanding that our country's role always has been to be a light to the world."

Conflict and Change

When asked a question regarding the inevitability of conflict, Kucinich replied: “Some people in Washington today buy into that theory. The danger there is one of a self fulfilling prophecy because if you put your consciousness in the direction of conflict, you’re quite likely to get that conflict. Instead, we need to make nonviolence an organizing principle in our society for domestic as well as international policy. Internationally, we need to focus on intervention and mediation, and celebrate what Franklin D. Roosevelt called ‘the science of human relationships.’

“One view of history is that events happen and we’re just bystanders—these forces somehow don’t yield to human involvement. Another view is that we can intervene—that’s why we’re here. We can change things. Through knowledge and love, we create the world anew every day. The cold, flat, and often dead dictums of history need to be given an infusion of compassion and energy to create new possibilities.”

Dealing with Anger

When asked if he experiences anger when working for peace, and if so how he handles it, Kucinich responded: “When you’re involved in political action, there is always a conflict in experiencing negativity at the same time you’re trying to do something positive. All of us have that experience. The difference is not being angry, because negativity is really an intent that somehow gets embedded in anger. It’s hard not to be angry: Our country is about to wage an immoral war in Iraq. But if we can avoid getting hooked by the anger—try not to judge the individuals involved, but keep our eyes focused on creating that world that we desire—then there’s hope. You bring that hope to the moment because you are claiming the essence of your own humanity. Each of us has the power to change someone else’s thinking, and as we approach that moment—inspired and with compassion—chances are we may well change people’s thinking.”

The System and Power

When asked about his reaction to being in Washington, Kucinich said: “One of the surprises I had when I first got to Congress was about my stereotypes about Washington. I found that there are a lot of thoughtful men and women in Washington. They’re very skilled and very bright and very caring. The problem is the system; it’s something that can be almost overwhelming. You get into Washington and you become part of the system. You see this huge bureaucracy, the structure of the buildings; everything says, I’m here, I’m part of the system.

“That system has almost a specific gravity and you can get caught in it—particularly with respect to power. In Washington people are sometimes confused by the power that’s embedded in the structure of government. If you come to Washington seeking power, you’re in trouble because you have to have that sense of power before you get there. It’s confusing when people are elected to an office by a process which seemingly confers

power on them, then find that winning that office didn't give them power. Then they feel powerless—powerless to stop even a war. That's the paradox. So there are many good people in Washington and it's just the system."

Local Politics

"The work that I do as a practical matter in politics begins with going to people's homes, going door-to-door—either myself or having others do it—and talking to people. We need to start a new conversation in this country. In some ways we've lost that capacity. Our politics removed itself from the grassroots years ago when federal campaigns began relying on TV to communicate the message. Activities that were aimed at going directly to people began to change, and the emphasis was 'raise the money so you can get on TV.'

"In its terminal stage, it's reflected in members of Congress spending four days a week on the phone at the party headquarters in Washington and not having time to participate in the debates. Because they're raising money so they can get on TV. And they seldom see their own constituents. I repeat: They're good people—it's a bad system. So we need to go back to door-to-door, talk to our neighbors, have that conversation over the fence, reach out to each other again. That's how you do it. People talking to people. People on the phones calling about something. When a real person calls you about something that's going on in the community, it registers."

Building Community

Kucinich continued: "Today we have the electronic Town Hall—Web chats, Web pages, e-mails—that enable us to connect with each other. That's a real power today. And if you extend the old grassroots campaigning to the Web you can have a national campaign on almost anything. That helps build a sense of community, which is some of what we've lost in this so-called modern society where people bowl alone, and eat alone, and watch movies alone, and do their banking alone. It's by capturing that sense of community that we become empowered, that we become once again 'We the People' as a conscious, collective expression of our hopes and aspirations. As we reconnect as a community, that's when we start to affirm some of our basic rights. What is the right to assemble? We have to celebrate it by coming together. What is freedom of speech, except that someone stands up and expresses a point of view in a community meeting. We have to exercise those freedom muscles again, and then we strengthen our country.

"How it works out depends on our own willingness, our own belief, our faith in ourselves that we can make a difference. We lose that at times. We see these big institutions and think that they're impenetrable, not accessible, we can't move them: 'I can't do anything about that. I make a phone call and it goes into the wastebasket—nobody cares.' Not so. You can change anything. There is no institution in a democratic society that is beyond our reach. If we have faith in ourselves, then we can have faith in our country."

A Department of Peace

Congressman Kucinich has drafted a bill (HR 2459) to create a Cabinet-level Department of Peace in the U.S. government to address underlying causes of war and violence and propose structural changes in our institutions and society.

Kucinich: "There are successful programs out there being done by nongovernmental organizations that are helping build understanding among diverse peoples. The Department of Peace would not only help those programs, but would seek to develop new programs internationally that would deal with problems of scarcity, of human security, of want, sickness, poverty, all of those elements that can serve as combustible materials for social conflict. It would have people right on the scene, to train, to mediate, and to show people there's another way.

"Nongovernmental organizations should not be the only ones doing this kind of good work. It really ought to be a focus of our government which currently spends $400 billion a year for what's called defense. But it really doesn't defend this country in the way that we need defending, which is a defense of our basic values, a defense of human rights, a defense of the power of compassion, a defense of the power of love, a defense of the power of interconnection, the power of wholeness. We have the ability and the resources to do that. So the Department of Peace would have that mission in foreign policy.

"Domestically, it would look at the whole range of challenges in our society. We live with a sociopathology of violence which we have just come to expect as commonplace: violence in the home—spousal abuse, child abuse; violence in the community—gangs, police-community relations, racial violence, violence against gays. These symptoms suggest that we don't have a grip on violence in our society. Yet, through education, we can find a way to show children that they can learn how to deal with their feelings, that they can get help if they're having trouble, that they can learn peace-sharing, mutuality, reciprocity, and how to be a human being.

"It's easy to advocate for peace. It's much tougher to be the peace that you advocate. The hymn says 'Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me.' In this new peace movement that we speak of we have to help each other find that peace in our own lives. A great place to practice is in the home. If you're in a loving relationship, you learn about the challenges every day of trying to keep the peace. Those relationships are a gift because they show us how we work out conflict in our own lives, how we negotiate, how we resolve. If we're advocating peaceful change, we can do it as an individual, certainly, because each of us has an enormous power. But we can also do it as a community because the synergistic power of a community, as you know, is awesome."

A complete text of HR 2459 is available on the website: www.house.gov/kucinich

Why Work for Social Justice?

A Perspective by Emile Bruneau

Emile Bruneau is currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in neuroscience. He has taught high school science, coached women's rugby and karate, and worked in cultural empathy and cross-cultural conflict resolution in Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S. The following is excerpted from a talk he gave at his church in response to the question "Why work for social justice?"

Raised as a hippie by a single father, I lacked some components of normalcy: shoes, a car, haircuts, organized religion. But from my father, and later from my stepmom and school, I acquired a moral ethos—a kind of "religion of empathy"—that is the foundation of my social and world views.

When I was younger, my message of empathy was: "How would you feel if you were that person, that cat, that tree?" This simple teaching directed me early in life towards more deliberate action.

After college, I worked in some townships and hospitals in South Africa, traveled to Kenya by bike, and most recently, made a trip to Ireland. In these places, my empathy was stretched to larger groups of people, and I learned more clearly what social *injustice* was—enough to realize that I needed to begin rewriting the many internal tapes that I was socialized with.

I remember hearing a story a few years back: A man in his twenties wanted to change the world; by his thirties he thought that perhaps he would work instead to change his family; in his forties, he decided that maybe he could just change himself. I remind myself of this often to remember humility and the importance of personal change and growth.

At the same time, the story disturbs me because it implies some lack of faith in a person's ability to effect social change. I know that I can affect others because others have influenced me. More than this, I have always felt that there exists some palpable force that I imagine as love, or joy incarnate. I suppose that if empathy is my "religion," then love is my "god."

What I choose at each "choice moment" can either diminish this entity, or help it grow. This love force responds to and propagates a ripple effect, allowing one loving act to multiply into many. Much social change comes from these cumulative ripples, and I want during my life to cast as many stones into the water as I can.

The question on my mind is not why work for social change but why *continue* to work for social change? This seems to be a problem that many burned-out activists face. It is the "Sisyphus problem." The Greek character Sisyphus was doomed eternally to roll a massive boulder up a hill, only to have it roll back down just before reaching the summit. [As an example], in Ireland I was told by a fellow counselor that soon after most of the students and counselors had departed at the close of our intense three week cross-religion experience working on peace and reconciliation, the remaining two-dozen kids broke out into a brawl that split the group down Protestant and Catholic lines. I also had these kinds of experiences in high school fighting against racism, homophobia, and classism: every year, similar problems, similar issues, similar arguments.

Many disgruntled teachers and activists have predicted that the frustrations of working for social change will dim my fire. But I have had a growing realization about Sysiphus that is quickly becoming a philosophy: his story only becomes a tragedy if he doesn't *like* pushing the boulder, or if he is fixated on the summit. What if he has a friend there to help him push? What if they make a game of it and take a different route every time? What if they sing while they work? What if they actually enjoy the exertion and get stronger in the process?

The premise is set: the boulder must be pushed. But whether it is a comedy, a drama, or a tragedy is up to the one pushing. So why continue working for social justice, even in the wake of frustrated outcomes? Because I want to do the right thing; because I want to help love grow; because I want to continue changing myself; and because, no matter where the boulder rolls, I enjoy the pushing.

It Will Be a Great Adventure
A Perspective by Elizabeth Sawin

Just now despair lives close to the surface in many of the people I know. It leaps out at surprising times.

Walking up a hill with my neighbor Phil, a bottle of milk in his arms, my daughter on my back, I'm thinking how warm the spring day feels when he stops suddenly and speaks. "We had a friend over this morning—an expert in landscaping. I mentioned that we were thinking of planting a sugar maple tree. He told us that maybe we shouldn't—because climate change could make it impossible for sugar maples to live in Vermont in a matter of decades."

For a moment all we can do is stand together in the April sunshine and try to comprehend Vermont without sugar maples. None of that dappled welcoming shade on summer afternoons. Fewer splashes of red on the hills each October. Children who must go to the library to learn how maple syrup used to be made in their hometowns.

Reports on the decline of ecosystems around the world keep streaming in at us, even as people around the world kill and maim each other in the name of security, justice, or revenge. All the while our government systematically undermines the sort of international agreements—from the Kyoto accord to the anti-ballistic missile treaty—that could make the world safer.

Just now it is easy to listen to the voice of despair, the voice that says, "Anyone who thinks there's a way out doesn't understand the magnitude of the problem."

Of course, despair does nothing to provide our children a world with sugar maples and safety. If we assume all is lost—if we stop working for change—we create a self-fulfilling prophecy. But it is one thing to recognize this fact and another to keep going day after day in the face of frightening trends and a reckless national leadership.

I don't think there is a magic cure for despair, but there are things I've learned from watching people who are able to carry on in the face of seemingly intractable problems. Especially I have learned from the woman who founded the Institute where I work. Donella Meadows was a scientist and writer who spent thirty years analyzing and communicating about problems from poverty to pollution without allowing despair to slow her stride. From watching her in action I've created a short list I turn to when despair threatens.

• In their deepest essence, people are good. We've created social and economic rules that make it hard for us to act out of this goodness, but what we have created we can change. We could tax pollution and consumption and reward land stewardship. We could invest in healthcare instead of weaponry. From the abolition of slavery to women getting the vote, our history shows us that people of dedication can change the rules under which they live. And Donella Meadows' example convinced me that focusing on the dysfunctional system rules rather than the people trapped by those rules frees one from the sort of preoccupation with blame and enemies that in the end only fuels despair.

• Small changes can snowball. When and where this will happen is unpredictable. But, if enough people are taking small stands and making small changes, a system can shift, suddenly, dramatically. It is because of this possibility that a trend is not a prediction. Each time you speak the truth or act out of love for something beyond yourself you create the possibility of someone else doing the same. You create the possibility of an upward spiral.

• It will be a great adventure. Imagine how you would be living in a better world, and then try to live that way in this one. Not everything you do will take off into a snowball of change, but everything you do is an opportunity to live your life out of your deepest convictions. The complement to Donella Meadows' writing and teaching was a private

life that rejoiced in the fertility of a vegetable garden or the satisfaction of insulating a leaky farmhouse wall. She held a beautiful balance—her work in the world was also lived out in small practical ways in one community, on one piece of land. We live in uncertain times, but we can relish the beauty and the resiliency all around us, and we can align our lives with both.

There is so much at stake. The trends are scary and they seem likely to get worse before they get better. There are going to be times, perhaps many of them, when we think—"I don't make a difference, and it's too late anyway." But always, we have the option to reply in a voice that is just a little bit louder than that sly whisper:

People are good.

Small changes can snowball.

It will be a great adventure.

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Looking to Nature for Answers
A Book Review by Joe Kresse

Rather than always going for the technological fix, which often brings with it unintended consequences, why not find solutions in the way Nature does, and pay for those solutions, which really means paying for "Nature's services."

New York City has long been reputed to have some of the best drinking water in the U.S. How has New York achieved this goal? With a modern, high-tech water filtration plant? No. The answer, as wonderfully explained by authors Gretchen C. Daily and Katherine Ellison is that New York relies on Mother Nature for its great water!

In 1989, however, this was at risk as the City was faced with an order from the Environmental Protection Agency to build a filtration plant that could cost a budget-busting $6 to $8 billion. This order was to be issued because increased population and tourism in the Catskill Mountains watershed was causing a "creeping cumulative impact" on the water supply.

As engineers began to think about building the filtration system, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., an attorney for Riverkeeper, a group formed to protect the Hudson River, started looking at alternatives. A real estate agent volunteered that the City could buy all the land in the watershed for about $1 billion, much less than the cost of the plant. This point was very

persuasive in convincing government officials also to look at alternatives. In addition, while the City didn't own much acreage in the watershed, it did have the power to condemn land within it and to regulate development as well.

So officials got to work to keep the water supply pure enough to avoid having to build a filtration plant. So far, the EPA has given the City an extension on determining whether a filtration plant is needed. To get this far the City has bought land (especially to create buffers around its reservoirs), constructed new storm sewers and septic systems, and updated existing sewage plants in the watershed area. Further, it has worked with upstate farmers to limit pollution, and paid $140 million to local governments and businesses in the watershed to keep their land supplying natural water filtration. How much longer New York can continue without building the plants depends on its continued success in keeping the watershed functioning as a natural filter, free of contaminants.

Kennedy said he hoped the lesson would last. "Good economic policy is always good environmental policy," he maintained. "Whenever you see people trying to pit the economy against the environment, it's always in terms of short-term benefits. If you want to treat the planet as if it's a business in liquidation, you can generate cash flow and the illusion of prosperity, but our children are going to pay for our joy ride. It's just deficit spending, a way of making a few people rich by making everyone else poor." In New York, it was the city government, responding to federal and local activist concerns, that led the effort to recognize the value of Nature's assets and slow down the "deficit spending."

This story, one of ten in the subject book, is a good example of what the authors are getting at. Rather than always going for the technological fix, which often brings with it unintended consequences, why not find solutions in the way Nature does, and pay for those solutions, which really means paying for "Nature's services." Here, New York officials saw that there was a greater value to having the land filter the water than in spending money on a giant filtration plant. And additional benefits, such as less sprawl in the watershed, more ecological farming techniques, increased desirability of the area to tourists because of its excellent condition—all have come about.

Engineers' solution was to straighten and channel the river in concrete. Instead, Napa residents came up with their own plan, which they called a "living river" approach. "The waterway and its adjoining land would be coaxed back into ancient patterns. Planners would relocate homes, businesses, and even railroad tracks built on the floodplain and would bar future development there. The Corps, in a stunning reversal of approach, would raze levees and either remove bridges or rebuild them at higher levels. More than 650 acres of wetlands would be created or restored—even right in the middle of downtown, where an oil-storage facility once stood—and the land would periodically sop up floodwaters as it had done in centuries past."

While this plan cost more than the Corps' original scheme, it has brought about a hugely successful revival of downtown Napa, which has brought in increased revenue to offset the increased costs, reduced flood insurance rates, and provided cleaner water.

Why aren't there more projects like these? Because Nature's services haven't been valued in the economic equation. And paying a landowner for services such as providing habitat for biodiversity, water filtration, carbon sequestration, and other services upon which our very survival depends, is a really new concept. The authors (Daily is an interdisciplinary scientist at Stanford and Ellison is an investigative journalist) say there are three basic steps to creating projects like these that use and value Nature. The first step is to identify that there are alternatives. This requires great creativity and the willingness to break with conventional wisdom. The second step is to identify the implications of each alternative being considered. "This can be an enormous task because the implications can be so sweeping and varied." But it's looking at the implications that leads to taking more of a systems view. And finally, the third step is to compare the alternatives. "This is the truly sticky part because it invariably means comparing apples and oranges and even passion fruit." Some things can be expressed in dollars but others not. Some effects will be short-term, others long-term. Some issues are economic, others moral.

"In the end—and fortunately—these kinds of comparisons needn't require pinpoint precision. It didn't really matter, for instance, that the costs of protecting New York City's watershed weren't dead certain. Planners knew that the watershed option would cost much less, and confer many more benefits, than the next cheapest alternative, that of building a water filtration plant. At the same time, the very process of considering a natural-asset approach in these early efforts has been worthwhile because it has drawn in a much greater variety of people, information, ideas, and values than is normally the case in planning development. Consider the cases of New York and Napa. Once a commitment was made to give attention to environmental services, it became necessary to involve people who would normally be left out, such as upstate farmers in New York and steelhead trout experts in Napa. This point of departure meant that the final shape of the projects much more genuinely reflected the values—often hard to quantify in dollars—of people whose lives would be most directly affected."

While many in the environmental community blanch at the idea of putting a price tag on Nature, which many of us feel is sacred, it is nonetheless a way of getting the attention of those whose lives are lived wholly in an economic world. This book gives some good examples of how this idea can work.

The New Economy of Nature The Quest to Make Conservation Profitable *by Gretchen C. Daily and Katherine Ellison Island Press/Shearwater Books, Washington, D.C. 2002. 25.00.*

Between You and Me
by Donella Meadows

Between you and me, there is a line. No other line feels more certain than that one. Sometimes it seems not a line but a canyon, a yawning empty space across which I cannot reach.

Yet you keep appearing in my awareness. Even when you are far away, something of you surfaces constantly in my wandering thoughts. When you are nearby, I feel your presence, I sense your mood. Even when I try not to. Especially when I try not to. If you are on the other side of the planet, if I don't know your name, if you speak a language I don't understand, even then, when I see a picture of your face, full of joy, I feel your joy. When your face shows suffering I feel that too. Even when I try not to. Especially then.

I have to work hard not to pay attention to you. When I succeed, when I close my mind to you with the walls of indifference, then the presence of those walls, which constrain my own aliveness, are reminders of the you to whom I would rather not pay attention. When I do pay attention, very close attention, when I open myself fully to your humanity, your complexity, your reality, then I find, always, under every other feeling and judgment and emotion, that I love you.

Even between you and me, even there, the lines are only of our own making.

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